PAHANKANUWA SERMONS

English Translation Collection

Sermons 001-170

Original Sermons

Most Venerable Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

Complete Digital Reference Edition

Compiled from the English translations of the Pahankanuwa Sermon Series.

"Sabba-dānaṃ dhamma-dānaṃ jināti"

"The Gift of Dhamma Excels All Gifts"

Dhammapada 354

ABOUT THIS COLLECTION

Welcome to this collected edition of the English translations of the Pahankanuwa Sermons delivered by Most Venerable Katukurunde Nanananda Thero.

This volume brings together the complete set of translated sermons in a single reference work designed to facilitate Dhamma study, reading, searching, contemplation, and long-term preservation.

The Pahankanuwa Sermon Series contains extensive explanations of the Buddha's teachings, drawing from the Pāli Canon and addressing a wide range of subjects including:

- The Four Noble Truths
- Dependent Arising (Paṭicca Samuppāda)
- Impermanence (Anicca)
- Suffering (Dukkha)
- Non-Self (Anattā)
- The Noble Eightfold Path
- Mindfulness (Sati)
- Concentration (Samādhi)
- Wisdom (Paññā)
- Meditation Practice (Bhāvanā)
- Nibbāna

PREFACE

The English translations presented in this volume were prepared from digitised editions of the Pahankanuwa sermon series.

The original sermon texts were derived from OCR-processed versions of publicly available PDF editions and translated through a collaborative workflow involving:

• OCR correction

• AI-assisted translation

• Human review

• Human proofreading

The project is intended as a freely accessible resource for Dhamma study and reference.

Throughout these sermons, Venerable Katukurunde Nanananda Thero draws extensively upon the Dhammapada, Sutta Nipāta, Majjhima Nikāya, Saṃyutta Nikāya, Aṅguttara Nikāya, Udāna, Itivuttaka, Theragāthā, Therīgāthā and many other canonical sources.

May this collection assist readers in deepening their understanding of the Buddha's teaching and encourage the cultivation of virtue, concentration, wisdom, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

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Pahankanuwa Sermon #1

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Taṇhāya jāyatī soko,

taṇhāya jāyatī bhayaṁ;

Taṇhāya vippamuttassa,

natthi soko kuto bhayaṁ.

From:

Verse 216 Piya Vagga (the Chapter on Affection)of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

Today is the Poson Full Moon Poya Day. As the day our island received the Buddha's Dispensation (*Buddha Sāsana*), the Poson Poya is a highly valuable day for us. What is meant by the Buddha's Dispensation is the Buddha's path of Dhamma, the path to Nibbāna. It is recorded that the great Arahant Mahinda, having arrived at the Missaka rock in Mihintale with a retinue, addressed King Devānampiyatissa as "Tissa, Tissa" to bestow this path of Dhamma upon him. Thus, directing the attention of the king—who was engaged in hunting deer, an unrighteous act—towards the Dhamma, the great Arahant Mahinda systematically bestowed the Buddha's path of Dhamma—the path to Nibbāna—upon this island. The Buddha too acted in this manner; he went in search of individuals who possessed the potential to realize the Dhamma, and even if they were in the most destitute of conditions, if they were capable of receiving the gift of Dhamma—the realization of Dhamma—he would visit them. He bestowed this Buddha's Dispensation—that is, the path of Dhamma, the path to Nibbāna—upon them. The background story (*nidāna-kathā*) to the stanza we just recited also shows how the Buddha brought the Buddha's Dispensation directly to a certain poor brahmin.

On one occasion when the Buddha was residing at Jeta Grove, a certain brahmin of wrong view was preparing his field. At that time, the Buddha visited the spot. Since this

brahmin held wrong views, even though he saw the Buddha from afar, he pretended not to see him and went on with his work. But the Buddha went right up to him and asked, "Brahmin, what are you doing here?" The brahmin replied, "Venerable Gotama, I am preparing a field." That was all. The Buddha went back. On another day, the brahmin was ploughing his field. On that day too, the Buddha went there and asked, "Brahmin, what are you doing?" "Venerable Gotama, I am ploughing." The Buddha went back, and the man continued his work. Next, on another day, the brahmin was sowing seeds in his field. On that day too, the Buddha went there. "Brahmin, what are you doing?" "Venerable Gotama, I am sowing." With that, the conversation ended, and the Buddha returned. Now the crop in the field was growing. One day, the brahmin was weeding his field. On that occasion as well, the Buddha went there and asked, "Brahmin, what are you doing?" "I am weeding, Venerable Gotama." Then came the time to guard the field. Now the paddy crop was ripening. On that occasion too, the Buddha went there. "What are you doing, Brahmin?" "I am guarding this field." "That apart, Venerable Gotama, you come to me constantly. You must be a friend of mine. From today, I accept you as my friend. When the crop of this field is harvested, I will not consume it without giving a portion to Venerable Gotama," he pledged. The Buddha then returned.

Now the crop had ripened. With great expectations of harvesting the crop the following day, the brahmin went home. That night, a torrential downpour with thunder and lightning poured down, and the entire crop was completely washed away into the river. In the morning, when the brahmin came to the field and looked, the entire field was desolate. He was struck with unbearable sorrow. He grieved most of all because he could not give a portion of the harvest to his friend, Venerable Gotama. At any rate, having returned home, the brahmin, out of grief, boycotted food—fasted—and lay down in a room. On that day too, the Buddha went to the brahmin's house and asked, "Where is the lay disciple brahmin?" The household members said, "He is sleeping over there, unable to bear the sorrow of such a loss." The Buddha went up to him and asked, "What is this, Brahmin?" The brahmin replied, "Venerable Gotama, I had such great expectations; I had resolved that after the crop ripened, I would not consume it without giving a portion of it to you. But such a great disaster has befallen me. Out of grief, I am fasting, abandoning all hope of life, and lying down." The Buddha asked, "Do you know the cause of this sorrow?" The brahmin said, "I do not know, do you know?" "Yes, Brahmin, I know." It was on that occasion that the Buddha preached the stanza we mentioned earlier:

Taṇhāya jāyatī soko

Taṇhāya jāyatī bhayaṃ

Taṇhāya vippamuttassa

Natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ

"From craving arises sorrow, from craving arises fear. For one fully freed from craving, there is no sorrow; whence fear?" This was all that the Buddha preached. Yet, it is

recorded in the Dhamma that upon hearing this Dhamma, a great revolution of the mind occurred within that brahmin, and through the sequence of insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), he realized the noble fruit of the path of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-magga-phala*).

Therefore, we must reflect a little on how such a great mental revolution occurred. How did these insight-knowledges arise? Insight (*vipassanā*) means a special way of seeing. It was with the mental picture of his field that the brahmin had gone home and lay down. What constantly came to his mind was that desolate field. The Buddha uttered that stanza to provide the brahmin, who was staring at that field in his mind, an opportunity to look at his own mind. The brahmin thought his sorrow was caused by the desolation of the field. But after the Buddha uttered that stanza, he must have realized that the sorrow arose not because the field was desolate, but because his mind was desolate. Alongside the growth of the crop in that field, something else had also grown: the craving in his mind had sprouted and grown. What he would do with the harvest, and so many other things. You, lay devotees, know how those who engage in farming work. With what a vast array of expectations do they watch the paddy grow! In that same way, various desires and expectations had grown in this brahmin's mind. When the paddy was destroyed by that torrential rain and washed down the river, all those desires and expectations were washed away too. The brahmin was then constantly conjuring up the image of that desolate field in his mind. Because of this, he lamented, grieved, and sorrowed. The revolution brought about by the Buddha's stanza was so great that instead of looking at the field, the brahmin looked inward; he looked at his own mind.

This looking inward, dear devotees, is what is called *yoniso manasikāra* (wise attention) in the Dhamma. Reflection with wisdom. Wholesome or unwholesome states arise from the mind. The mind is the forerunner of everything. The Buddha has declared: *"manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā..."*—"Mind is the forerunner of all states, mind is chief, they are mind-made." It has been declared in that manner. Just so, the brahmin realized here too that the primary cause for the arising of this sorrow was his own mind—it was something that had sprung up from within his own mind.

So when the Buddha declared: *"taṇhāya vippamuttassa, natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ"*—"for one fully freed from craving, there is no sorrow, whence fear?"—the brahmin understood that eradicating this craving (*taṇhā*) right there was something within his own power. The crop that had been washed away could not be recovered. There was no remedy for it. Instead of that, fasting and sleeping, or fasting unto death, was not the remedy. Thus, the ultimate result of the revolution that occurred within the mind of the brahmin who understood this reality was the attainment of the noble fruit of Stream-entry, which is far more noble than even universal emperorship.

This story began with him as a brahmin of wrong views. Now, with the attainment of this fruit of Stream-entry, dear devotees, a person is known as a noble disciple (*ariya-puggala*). He attained a state of nobility, a supreme state. Right view arose. Such a massive mental revolution occurred. This brahmin might not have been a learned man.

He was also a poor man. Yet, such a great thing occurred because of the profound Dhamma that is present here. This is something worthy of reflection for all of us.

These days, we often hear people say: "This is not the time to focus on the profound aspects of the Dhamma. This is a time of great hardships, disasters, and calamities. We should think about that Nibbāna, about those profound things, only after this country overflows with milk and honey." Some people think so. But, dear devotees, there is a kind of thing in the world called "blessings in disguise." Some disasters and calamities come just like blessings. Now, for this brahmin, the desolation of this field became a great blessing. Through the mental revolution that arose from it, he was able to attain that noble state of an Ariya—praised in a wonderful way by the Buddha—which is far superior even to universal monarchy.

Therefore, from these disasters, calamities, and shocks, we can bring to light the Four Noble Truths: suffering (*dukkha*), the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering which is peace—Nibbāna—and the path to it, the practice—the Noble Eightfold Path. When we reflect on bringing forth insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) from these calamities, and when we think about knowledge, our minds usually run to universities, which are so common nowadays. They have an artistic name, *sarasavi* (academies of learning). Many people try to enter these universities. Those who have entered them try hard to graduate—to pass out.

But, dear devotees, many do not know that we are all currently in a certain university. It is called the "University of Life." In other universities, there are various sciences, arts, and technologies to study. In this University of Life, there are only three subjects to master and pass. What are they? The Buddha has shown them as: gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*).

"Gratification" (*assāda*) refers to the side of pleasure—enjoyment—the fivefold sensual pleasures, gratification. This is the first lesson. I think everyone present here has passed this lesson with flying colors. Every samsaric being has passed this subject of fivefold sensual pleasures.

The next lesson is "danger" (*ādīnava*). The hardships, trials, and adverse consequences in life that one has to undergo in the pursuit of those fivefold sensual pleasures. Troubles, hardships, disasters, calamities—all these belong to the category of danger. The gratification is minimal, while the danger is immense; yet most people remain in the gratification class. They do not even incline to think about the danger. They do not direct their minds to look at them. But, dear devotees, it is through this danger that one can progress to the next class.

"Escape" (*nissaraṇa*) means departing from saṃsāra. Faring on (*saṃsaraṇa*) means moving in this saṃsāra, like turning in one spot. You know that when a vehicle travels a long distance, that mileage is recorded. But no matter how far it travels, what happens? The wheel itself spins in the very same spot. In the same way, from one perspective, we have traveled in this saṃsāra for an infinite time. We use terms like "infinitely long

saṃsāra." But what is the use of traveling this far? We have merely spun in the very same place. We can understand this as the spinning of the wheel through birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness. Or else, it is just the effort exerted to fulfill one's expectations, and of that too, there is no end. Just like that wheel spinning in the same spot.

Thus, wandering on (*saṃsāra*) is a spinning, a wandering in the self-same place. And "escape" (*nissaraṇa*) means jumping out of that circle, departing, freeing oneself from saṃsāra. This grade of escape—this subject of escape—this lesson of escape—is what remains to be passed. In this world, in this era, the supreme being who first passed these three lessons in this University of Life was the Buddha, and following him, the Arahants. Now, this brahmin too attained the first noble state in that university, which is the fruit of Stream-entry. If we learn lessons from this University of Life according to the circumstances, that is what remains for life. That is what supports one's liberation.

The Buddha has shown through various similes how grand the liberation obtained through this fruit of Stream-entry is. On one occasion, taking up a little soil on his fingernail, the Buddha asked the bhikkhus: "Is this little soil on my fingernail more, or is the great earth more?" The bhikkhus replied: "Venerable Sir, this soil on the fingernail is very little. The soil of the great earth is much more." Drawing upon that simile, the Buddha declared that the amount of suffering in saṃsāra that a Stream-enterer has escaped and put an end to is like the soil of the great earth. The suffering (*dukkha*) that remains to be ended is extremely little, like the soil on the fingernail. Why is that? A Stream-enterer is reborn in saṃsāra at most seven times. Furthermore, he does not fall into the lower realms (*apāya*). That is a vast, wonderful relief. For a non-Stream-enterer, the lower realms are like his own home; one never knows when, due to what kind of unwholesome karma, one might have to go to the lower realms. Due to the transformation of the revolution that took place in the Stream-enterer's mind, due to that noble state, due to the arising of the Eye of Dhamma brought about by the insight-knowledges, the capacity to perform unwholesome deeds that lead to the lower realms was destroyed. None of the unwholesome deeds committed in the past can drag him back to the lower realms. Such a wonderful liberation is received by a person even through the fruit of Stream-entry. That is why the Buddha declared that the saṃsāra suffering remaining for a Stream-enterer to experience is like the little soil on the fingernail, while the saṃsāra suffering from which he is freed is like the remaining soil of the great earth.

He has shown other similes as well. The suffering remaining to be experienced is like two or three drops of water drawn from the great ocean, while the mass of suffering already exhausted—the mass of suffering from which he is freed—is like the remaining water in the great ocean. He has given another such simile: if the Himalayas were to gradually wear away until only seven tiny pebbles, each about the size of a mustard seed, were left. Those seven pebbles are like the suffering remaining for the Stream-enterer to experience, while the mass of suffering already ended is like the portion of the Himalayas that has worn away. In this way, various similes have been shown. There are four paths

and fruits: Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship. One can imagine how great and how noble the liberation received even from the very first of these is.

Therefore, that brahmin of wrong views, who had been leaning on his hoe weeding the field and addressing the Buddha as "Venerable Gotama," attained the fruit of Stream-entry after his crop was destroyed—a state which the Buddha considers superior even to universal emperorship, mastery over the entire world, or rebirth in the heavenly worlds. From this, we can see that these "profound Dhamma" things—these "insight-knowledges" things—are not limited only to the educated, to graduates, or to those who have gone to universities. If you, who engage in agricultural pursuits, also resolve to benefit from your University of Life, these states can indeed be attained. Since that brahmin of wrong views had a certain deep potential of merit, he underwent such a transformation upon merely hearing the Buddha's Dhamma stanza.

You might feel a bit of doubt as to why the Buddha, the supreme leader of the three worlds, with so much work to do and so many duties concerning the Sangha, visited several times the place where this brahmin ploughed his field. The Buddha went there not waiting for the brahmin's field to ripen to obtain a share of his harvest, but waiting for the brahmin's mind to ripen in order to bestow a share of the harvest of the deathless, great Nibbāna that he himself had attained. The brahmin's mind ripened on the very day his crop was destroyed.

Sometimes, your minds too ripen when you face disasters and calamities. Today, there is no need to speak anew about these things—how one's children and relatives meet their end in various circumstances. Sometimes through incurable diseases, sometimes through great shocks, they meet with destruction amidst great blazes. Even after receiving such lessons from the University of Life, Buddhists fail to achieve even what that brahmin of wrong views achieved, because they do not apply their minds to them. Instead, some people think that we should reflect on these things—the profound Dhamma, Nibbāna, the supramundane paths and fruits—only when this country becomes prosperous and overflows with milk and honey. "Until then, let us look to uplifting the economy; it does not matter what happens to righteousness (righteous living)." Such are the opinions prevalent in the world.

But you can understand from this short story—nowadays people read short stories, novels, and such things with great interest, but there is no moral lesson to be taken from them other than mere enjoyment. However, through Dhamma stories and life accounts, there are many lessons we can learn. When we read about the lives of the Elder bhikkhus and bhikkhunis in this Dispensation, and about the lives of the lay disciples, we see that for many, the realization of this noble Dhamma of Nibbāna came at times when they faced massive shocks. The accounts of Kisā Gotamī, Paṭācārā, and others, and of individuals like Aṅgulimāla—it was through those experiences amidst great life problems that they realized the Four Noble Truths.

Therefore, we too have such opportunities. That is what we referred to as "blessings in disguise." "Blessings in disguise" means that they appear to us as disasters, as calamities, as shocks. But for what purpose do those shocks occur? A certain opportunity comes in saṃsāra known as the "opportune moment" (*khaṇa-sampatti*). The Buddha has shown the value of this opportune moment. The "moment" means an instant. "Do not let the noble moment pass you by," the Buddha has declared.

"Khaṇo ve mā upaccagā,

khaṇātītā hi socanti,

nirayamhi samappitā"

"Do not let the noble moment—the opportune juncture—pass you by. For if that moment passes you by, you will have to fall into hell and suffer." What is meant by this noble moment?

The Buddha mentioned on certain occasions that most people in the world say, "The world works by the hour, the world works by the hour," meaning that this world is a place where work is done by the moment or by time. Nowadays, time has become so complicated that it is almost impossible to keep track of it. But the Buddha identified the "opportune juncture" as the wise human life-existence obtained during the era of a Buddha's appearance. It is through the convergence of many factors that one is able to obtain a wise human life-existence during the appearance of a Buddha. Even if a Buddha appears, if one is born in the animal realm, the ghost realm, or the demon realm, the opportunity to incline toward this Dhamma, live righteously, realize Nibbāna, and escape saṃsāra is not afforded. But if during the era of a Buddha's appearance, in a place where the Dhamma exists, one obtains a human life-existence without physical or mental disabilities and with intellectual capacity, that is called the "opportune moment" (*khaṇa-sampatti*). The Buddha has constantly advised us to make use of this opportune moment. He has shown its value.

Why? Especially as mentioned here, the Stream-enterer escapes hell—the very first escape. Everyone must contemplate that while the complete release from saṃsāra—from the entirety of saṃsāra—is obtained through Arahantship, the wonderful liberation obtained through the first path and fruit itself is the escape, the release, from the terrifying state of falling into the lower realms. The Buddha and the great Arahants who possessed higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) have declared that for an infinite time, world-beings undergo immense suffering in the animal realm, the ghost realm, the demon realm, and hell. Since there is such a calamity-ridden, risky condition in the world—in life—without pushing aside these noble states, insight-knowledges, paths and fruits, and the Four Noble Truths, one must learn lessons from the disasters and calamities one experiences, and from the experiences of these terrifying times.

Some people solve the same math problem every day. The more they solve it, the more they get it wrong. The correct answer never comes. That is exactly how beings in this saṃsāra fare on, unable to understand the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha himself

declared: "Monks, it is because of not understanding the Four Noble Truths that both you and I have fared on in this saṃsāra for such an infinite time, shrouded in ignorance and bound by craving." The experiences gained from life must be used to support the realization of the Four Noble Truths. If any disasters or calamities befall us, they are the truth of suffering (*dukkha*) declared by the Buddha. Just as that brahmin realized: "This is a portion of that suffering which has come to me; at the bottom of this lies craving (*taṇhā*)." That is something done through wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).

"Wise attention" (*yoniso manasikāra*) means reflecting with wisdom. If certain things spring up from somewhere, looking right there—at that. If you look beyond that, you will never realize the truth of it. "Unwise attention" (*ayoniso manasikāra*) means improper reflection.

Indeed, the Buddha has declared that there are four factors that support the attainment of Stream-entry: association with superior persons (*sappurisa-saṃseva*), hearing the true Dhamma (*saddhamma-savana*), wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), and practice in accordance with the Dhamma (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*). "Association with superior persons" means associating with virtuous people, with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). "Hearing the true Dhamma" means listening to the Dhamma. "Wise attention" (*yoniso manasikāra*) means reflecting with wisdom. Next, "practice in accordance with the Dhamma" means practicing according to the Dhamma—the Noble Eightfold Path. So these are the four factors.

Now, some might wonder if these four were completed for that brahmin. But for someone who has fulfilled these qualities in past saṃsāra, that profound realization can be attained with a very slight stimulus. Understanding comes to different individuals in different ways. Even among you, there are some who understand when only a little is said. There is a saying in society: "I understand when things are just turning." Just like that, there were people who understood when things were just turning. There were those who, when the Buddha just turned to use one or two words, understood and realized Nibbāna right then. Some people have to be told at length. For some, various expedients have to be used. Here too, the Buddha, to generate confidence (*saddhā*) in the brahmin, frequented his field and established a close relationship. The Buddha saw that such a loss would befall the brahmin—not that he did not see it, and not because he expected a share of the harvest. But gradually, taking special pains for his sake, he brought the Buddha's Dispensation directly to the brahmin. The result of that was the brahmin's attainment of liberation.

In the same way, you too must strive to understand the reality of life and the reality of saṃsāra through your life problems and disasters. Do not always remain in the gratification class, as if staying in a comfortable grade. The Buddha declared that there is a side of danger in this: "I went in search of gratification in the world. Whatever gratification (*assāda*) there is in the world, I understood it. Next, I went in search of danger (*ādīnava*). I understood that danger. Next, I researched into the escape (*nissaraṇa*)—the departure—from the world." The word "research" is used here. That is a word used in modern times for academic work: "research." Two words have been used:

anariya-pariyesana (ignoble search) and *ariya-pariyesana* (noble search); improper searching and proper searching.

The Buddha, through this noble search, realized that escape—Nibbāna. Having realized it, the Buddha then helped world-beings—devas, humans, destitute individuals, men and women subjected to various abuses, great bandits, morally corrupt people, and also the bhikkhus, various sectarians, wanderers, Niganṭhas, and so on—everyone. He saw that these beings also possessed certain good qualities from their past saṃsāra. Preaching Dhamma in a way that subdued their bad qualities, he brought them to the practice in accordance with the Dhamma.

Here, association with superior persons helps. Next, hearing the true Dhamma. That brahmin received all four of these at once. The greatest noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) in the world visited that brahmin's field—that home. Thus, the benefit of a superior person was received. Hearing the true Dhamma was accomplished even through those lines of the stanza. Next, wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). The brahmin, applying his mind, turned to look at his own mind instead of the mental picture of the field, and understood that truth. Through wise attention, the path to the practice in accordance with the Dhamma was also paved.

In this day and age, someone might think that the practice in accordance with the Dhamma means dedicating one's entire life to the Noble Eightfold Path. Indeed, for some, such dedication is necessary. But for one who has fulfilled those qualities of Dhamma in the past, that practice in accordance with the Dhamma is completed in a very short time. When a person detaches their mind from the world and fasts, saying, "I do not want this life," defilements are low in that person. Although they have abandoned the expectation of life with a wrong notion, upon the Dhamma hitting the brahmin at such a juncture, the Noble Eightfold Path must have been completed within his mind. That is something extremely profound.

Now you know that many people love to see the colors of a rainbow—especially young children. Looking up at the sky during a cloudy day when it is about to rain, it is something we can see only rarely. Even though we cannot always see it in the sky, we can see the beautiful colors of the sun's rainbow by looking at a tiny dewdrop hanging from a leaf on a vine, aligned perfectly when the sun is rising. It shines like a gem. Within it, those rays can be seen. Through a tiny dewdrop, one can see something like a rainbow. In the same way, if through a short stanza—a line of a stanza, a word—one looks precisely in line with the target, if one has established Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), then one can see Nibbāna through it. The mental revolution that occurred within that brahmin was just such a thing.

Reflecting deeply in that manner, we can derive many moral lessons from this Dhamma story. Likewise, we must constantly reflect on the way our lives pass, and the true nature of life. The Buddha has shown the true nature of this life—reality (this word is used in society now), "things as they really are"—in four statements, four Dhamma themes (*dhamma-uddesa*). These four are:

Upanīyati loko addhuvo (The world is swept away, it is impermanent)

Attāṇo loko anabhissaro (The world is without shelter, without a savior)

Assako loko sabbaṃ pahāya gamanīyaṃ (The world has nothing of its own, one must depart leaving everything behind)

Ūno loko atitto taṇhādāso (The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving)

We receive a fine explanation of these four Dhamma themes from Venerable Raṭṭhapāla. Venerable Raṭṭhapāla was declared foremost among those who went forth out of faith in this Dispensation. The Buddha often bestowed foremost positions (*agga-ṭṭhāna*) upon his disciples in various fields. Foremost in wisdom was Venerable Sāriputta. Foremost among those possessing psychic powers was the great Venerable Moggallāna. Foremost among attendants was Venerable Ānanda. Just as universities award various degrees nowadays, this was done as an example to the world. If you want wisdom, look this way. If you want psychic powers, look that way. If you want matters of personal attendance, look here. In that way, if you want to see the power of faith (*saddhā*), the wonderful miracle of faith, look at Venerable Raṭṭhapāla.

For Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, having heard the Dhamma from the Buddha once, asked his parents for permission to go forth. Venerable Raṭṭhapāla was from a very wealthy family. When he asked his parents for permission at that young age, it was not granted. He lay down on the floor right there, saying, "Either death or permission to go forth." He began a fast unto death. Finally, unable to resolve this otherwise, his friends gathered and pleaded with his parents, and they barely managed to obtain permission for him to go forth. After becoming an Arahant, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla visited his home village. When he visited the Kuru region, King Koravya of that Kuru country asked him: "Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, why did you go forth at such a young age, having been born into such a wealthy family? What was the reason for your going forth?" On that occasion, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said, "It was because I heard, knew, saw, and understood the truth of four Dhamma themes declared by the Buddha—four Dhamma themes that declare the reality of life—that I went forth. Not without reason." Now, when we say "out of faith," some might wonder why out of faith. What are these four points? We have already mentioned them.

He declared to the king that the nature of the world is: *"Upanīyati loko addhuvo"*—"The world is swept away, it is impermanent." The king asked him to explain what this meant, as it seemed somewhat like a riddle. Then, to explain it, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla asked the king: "Great King, when you were around twenty or twenty-five years of age, did you have great physical strength and bodily vigor? Were you skilled in the art of commanding elephant, horse, chariot, and infantry forces, in managing elephants and horses, and in the arts of the sword and bow?"

"O yes, in those days I felt there was no one as powerful and strong as I. I even felt as if I possessed psychic powers, so great was my physical strength and vigor."

Venerable Raṭṭhapāla then asked: "Well, Great King, is it the same now?"

"O no, not now. Now I am around eighty years of age. A decrepit old man. Now sometimes when I think of placing my foot here, I place it over there. Even my limbs are no longer reliable."

"That, Great King, is what the Buddha declared: *'Upanīyati loko addhuvo'*—the world is swept away by old age, it is impermanent. The world is impermanent. The world means world-beings—life; that is the truth of life."

Then the king declared: "Marvelous, Venerable Sir, extraordinary is this matter! How true is that which the Buddha declared!" Thus, the true reality of the life of both the poorest destitute and a great king is what the Buddha declared in this Dhamma phrase.

Next, the king asked Venerable Raṭṭhapāla about the second point: "Venerable Sir, why was it declared: *'Attāṇo loko anabhissaro'*? The general meaning of that is: 'The world is without shelter, without a savior.' Even today, if one says this, someone might be startled. 'The world is without shelter, without a savior; why was this declared?'"

The king asked: "I have elephant, horse, chariot, and infantry forces. I have so much protection. Why was this declared?"

Venerable Raṭṭhapāla then asked the king: "Great King, do you have any chronic illness?"

The king replied: "Yes, Venerable Sir. I have a severe wind-disease. At times when that wind-disease becomes acute, my relatives and friends surround me, and I hear them say: 'Now King Koravya will pass away; he will die.'"

Venerable Raṭṭhapāla asked: "Great King, on such occasions, can you tell those relatives and friends: 'Please, all of you join together and share a little of my pain, to reduce my pain'? Can you do that? Can you share your pain with those relatives and friends to get some relief?"

"I cannot do that," the king declared.

"That, Great King, is what the Buddha declared: *'Attāṇo loko anabhissaro'*—the world is without shelter, without a savior. One cannot obtain protection in such situations." Then too, the king accepted it, saying, "What a marvelous, extraordinary thing!"

The king next asked: "Now in this palace I have gold, silver, pearls, gems, and abundant wealth and grain. Despite this, why does Venerable Raṭṭhapāla declare: *'Assako loko sabbaṃ pahāya gamanīyaṃ'*?"

The meaning of that is: the world is a place where there is nothing that one can call one's own; it is a place where one must depart leaving everything behind. When he asked the

meaning of this statement, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla enquired: "Now, Great King, you live well, enjoying these fivefold sensual pleasures. When departing for the next world, can you take these with you? Or do you have to leave them behind, handing them over to someone here? You have to leave them behind, do you not?"

"Indeed, Venerable Sir, I cannot take any of these with me. I must go to the next world in accordance with my own karma, carrying only the good and bad deeds I have done," said the king.

"That is what the Buddha declared: the world has nothing of its own, one must depart leaving everything behind." The king accepted that.

Next, the final statement is what is relevant to the stanza we recalled at this time: *"Ūno loko atitto taṇhādāso"*. The king asked what the meaning of this was too. The meaning of that passage is: "The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving." Then, to make the king realize this directly, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla asked several questions.

"Now, Great King, you rule over this highly prosperous Kuru country, do you not?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Now, suppose a spy or a trustworthy person comes to meet you. He comes and gives such news: 'I have come from the eastern direction. In that direction lies a very wealthy and prosperous country. You can conquer it very easily.' Upon hearing such news, Great King, what would you do?"

"I would conquer that country as well."

"Next, he asks: 'Well, suppose a messenger comes similarly from the western direction and says: "Your Majesty, in that direction lies a great territory, you can easily conquer it."'"

"Then I would seize and conquer that as well."

He said the same for the northern direction and the southern direction. When the king stated this, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla drove the point home: "It is because of this that the Buddha declared: 'The world is insufficient.' It is a place of constant lack. It is never satisfied. It is a slave to craving (*taṇhā*)." Even the king was a slave to craving. The king thought he was the ruler. Even today, there are those who hold various titles of "sovereign" or "director." Though the word "sovereign" has a general meaning, every single one of them is a slave to craving—*taṇhā-dāsas*. Even the king was a slave to craving.

Therefore, escaping this slavery to craving is what is called freeing oneself from craving (*taṇhā*). Nibbāna is the calming of this thirst of craving. The moment that thirst is calmed. Like a feverish patient begging for water, this thirst of craving has pushed us through saṃsāra for an infinite time. It is never satisfied, no matter how much it is filled with extremely colorful things, or with the most precious luxuries. When we think of the

pleasures of a universal monarch, the pleasures enjoyed by the super-rich in what are called "developed countries" nowadays are "beggar's pleasures." Universal monarchs enjoyed such vast pleasures, yet they were not satisfied by them. This is the nature of craving.

This fire of craving can never be extinguished by adding fuel to it. Instead, the fire must be put out right where it arose—right there—just as that brahmin eradicated craving (*taṇhā*) right there regarding his field. Along with that, he grasped a profound point. He understood that this is the trick to escaping saṃsāra. Because he realized this secret, he attained the state of Stream-entry. By bringing to light this principle through the life problems, disasters, and calamities we experience, we can benefit from those blessings in disguise.

Therefore, whether they are calamities of the times or various other revolutions that occur in the world, we must strive to bring forth this Buddha's Dispensation from within them. "Buddha's Dispensation" is a grand word, a weighty word. Nowadays, only the sound of words remains, while the meaning tends to slip away. Especially with words related to the Dhamma, the sound increases more and more, but the meaning slips away. One such word is "Buddha's Dispensation." Nowadays, if one says "Buddha's Dispensation," buildings come to mind. Various things might come to mind when hearing "Buddha's Dispensation."

But when we reflect deeply, the very same Buddha's Dispensation that the great Arahant Mahinda brought to Sri Lanka and handed over to King Devānampiyatissa is what the Buddha went and gave to that poor brahmin at his home. The ultimate goal of that Buddha's Dispensation is Nibbāna. Its philosophy of life is the Noble Eightfold Path. Its vision is Right View and the Four Noble Truths. Its path of life is the way of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*). This is the Buddha's Dispensation. Therefore, on a day like today, Buddhist devotees must bring to mind and protect this very Buddha's Dispensation.

These are the things that help protect this Buddha's Dispensation. Now, we declared that four factors help in attaining the state of Stream-entry. First, "association with superior persons" (*sappurisa-saṃseva*)—when reflecting on daily life, this is a matter that must be put to use with great mindfulness and consideration. A "superior person" is identified in the Dhamma as a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). A noble friend is a person—whether lay or monastic—who possesses Dhamma knowledge, lives according to the Dhamma, and practices meditation. The person who lives a life in accordance with the Dhamma is the superior person. Such a superior person is like a lighthouse to society, like a lamppost. You know very well what a "lamppost" is. A lamppost is an object that gives light to others. Just like that, the person known as the "superior person," the "noble friend," is a lamppost.

The greatest lamppost in the world is the Buddha, the supreme leader of the three worlds, who radiated the light of the Dhamma. Below him stands the Great Sangha of the eight noble individuals, or lay and monastic devotees who lead lives in accordance with

the Dhamma and practice meditation. Every one of them is a lighthouse, a lamppost, a superior person, a noble friend. It is through associating with such noble friends that one's progress is secured, and liberation from saṃsāra can be attained.

On the other hand, when we think about it, bad friends (*pāpa-mittas*) are the ones who are in the majority in the world, in society. Keeping such people as far away as possible—and if possible, avoiding them completely—one must live one's life being cautious of them. Why? Because through associating with bad friends, one meets with terrifying ruin.

On one occasion, Venerable Ānanda, attempting to express the value of this association with noble friends, said to the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, as I see it, noble friendship (*kalyāṇa-mittatā*) is half of the holy life; noble friendship is worth half of this Dispensation."

The Buddha declared: "Ānanda, do not say so. It is not half of the Dispensation; the entirety of this holy life is noble friendship. The Dispensation is indeed noble friendship, the blessing of noble friendship."

Now, it is due to a certain noble friendship that you have gathered here. You might not know one another. Personally, you might not have individual relationships. But in terms of Dhamma—by way of listening to Dhamma and being inclined toward Dhamma—you possess the quality of noble friendship. That is how a Buddha's Dispensation exists. Through association with bad friends, the Dispensation declines. It is by seeking out noble friends, associating with them, and taking what should be taken from them—taking their help—that a Buddha's Dispensation is protected. Association with superior persons—*sappurisa-saṃseva*—is an extremely rare thing. The Buddha has pointed out six rare things:

> *Dullabho buddhuppādo lokasmiṃ*
>
> *Dullabho manussattapaṭilābho*
>
> *Dullabhā khaṇasampatti*
>
> *Dullabho pabbajjā*
>
> *Dullabhaṃ saddhammassavanaṃ*
>
> *Dullabho sappurisa-saṃsevo*

The era of a Buddha's appearance is extremely rare. Human existence is extremely rare. Likewise, the opportune moment is rare. The opportune moment, as we mentioned, is the intelligent human existence, free of physical and mental disabilities, obtained during the appearance of a Buddha. That too is rare. Rarer still is the going-forth. Next, rarer still is the hearing of the Dhamma. Rarer than all of these, finally, is association with superior persons (*sappurisa-saṃseva*).

Association with superior persons is just like the bullseye at the center of a target board. Why? Even if a Buddha's appearance is rare, within that, many more factors must converge for a person to obtain liberation. Even if the era of a Buddha's appearance is obtained, a human existence must be obtained. Along with a human existence, the opportune moment, the going-forth, and next, the hearing of the Dhamma. In this way, factor by factor, they become increasingly rare. If the correct association with a noble friend is properly received, Nibbāna is hastened for that person. Luckily for that brahmin, he met the greatest noble friend in the world. That is why he obtained that state so quickly.

The same goes for hearing the true Dhamma. One must incline one's ears and direct one's mind to hear the Dhamma leading to Nibbāna. One must strive to understand the Dhamma. Hearing the Dhamma is not a mere customary ritual. It is something to be listened to with focused attention, with a concentrated mind, collecting the qualities within oneself that support Nibbāna, to the extent of attaining the paths and fruits even during the moment of hearing the Dhamma.

Next, during such hearing of Dhamma, wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)—reflecting with wisdom—takes place. That brahmin, having reflected with wisdom, stopped staring at the field and suddenly began to look at his own mind by way of wise attention.

Next, the mental revolution that arises from such looking is what is called the practice in accordance with the Dhamma (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*). For some, it is completed in a single moment. But for many, it must be practiced over a long period as a preliminary stage. That is how one's lifestyle must be shaped. That lifestyle is what is called the Noble Eightfold Path. Through that Noble Eightfold Path—Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*)—one's entire life is molded in accordance with the Dhamma.

Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) means correct vision—the correct philosophy of life. Having understood good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome, and the Four Noble Truths—suffering (*dukkha*), the cause of suffering, the release from suffering which is Nibbāna, and the Noble Eightfold Path which is the way to it—one puts this view, this Right View, at the forefront. It is declared: *"sammā-diṭṭhi-pubbaṅgamā"*—Right View is the forerunner. Everywhere, view is chief; it goes ahead. Even when you travel on a road, why do you look a bit ahead? You look ahead to establish a resolution, a determination, regarding the place you are going. Similarly, if there is an understanding of the Four Noble Truths through Right View, one establishes Nibbāna as the target, thinking: "My journey is a journey to Nibbāna, a journey toward Nibbāna." The "Buddha's Dispensation" is a lifestyle with Nibbāna as its target, not buildings.

Thus, if Right View—correct vision—has arisen, next comes Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) which follows correct vision. In accordance with that philosophy of life, one must cultivate good thoughts—wholesome thoughts. Thoughts of loving-kindness

opposed to hatred, thoughts of harmlessness opposed to cruelty—these thoughts must be cultivated constantly.

If such Right Intentions have arisen, the words spoken by that person are also correct words: words that are true, words that do not cause division among others, gentle words that are not harsh, and words that are in accordance with the Dhamma. Thus, one uses good speech.

Next, the course of action is Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*): abstaining from bodily misdeeds such as killing living beings, stealing, and sexual misconduct.

Next, correct living is Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), which contains the factors mentioned in the livelihood-as-the-eighth virtue (*ājīv'aṭṭhamaka-sīla*) we undertook on this occasion. It speaks of abstaining from wrong livelihood. Nowadays, many are enslaved by the effort to uplift their economy and incline toward wrong livelihoods. Whether they do so out of poverty or other reasons, the Buddha prohibited them because they support one’s passage to terrifying places in saṃsāra, such as hell. What are they? Trade in weapons, trade in living beings for meat, trade in poison, trade in flesh, and trade in intoxicants. The Buddha declared that making a living from these leads to one's ruin. Sometimes, one can get rich quickly through them. But despite becoming rich, because one has to suffer their terrifying consequences, the Buddha prohibited them. Therefore, abstaining from wrong livelihood and establishing a correct lifestyle is a source of great relief for a person. Such a person has no regret. That mind is always pure. Even a person with immense wealth does not possess that purity. Nor does someone with a large salary have that happiness. One's blamelessness—this is called the happiness of blamelessness (*anavajja-sukha*). The happiness of being correct. The absence of regret is a great comfort. A person who obtains immense wealth sometimes cannot sleep. They remember that they obtained that wealth through improper means. Therefore, one who expects ultimate comfort must necessarily examine their livelihood.

Sometimes, some are addicted to wrong livelihoods inherited through generations. "We cannot abandon the jobs passed down from our parents. They are what we have inherited as our habit. Those are what we are used to." But if one has correctly understood the word of the Buddha, regardless of the loss of profit to oneself, one shapes one's livelihood in accordance with the Dhamma. Sometimes, one turns to a righteous livelihood that brings a small wage or a low income. That is what is called correct living.

Through the effort exerted to cultivate Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), there arises within that person Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), correct striving. Real effort is the energy exerted to prevent unwholesome thoughts from entering one's mind, to abandon unwholesome thoughts already present in the mind, to generate wholesome thoughts not yet present, and to maintain and consolidate wholesome thoughts already present. This fourfold effort is what is called Right Effort.

The person who exerts effort in this way lives with Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), correct awareness, due to the mindfulness they apply. Like a good gatekeeper. If

mindfulness is well applied, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) are clearly understood. One clearly understands one's body, feelings (*vedanā*), mind, and thoughts that come to the mind. It is through the systematic development of these Four Foundations of Mindfulness that one can even attain the noble states of absorption (*jhāna*) known as Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

If the Noble Eightfold Path is completed within someone in that manner, Nibbāna is right there. Simultaneously with the supramundane completion of the Noble Eightfold Path, one can attain the realization of the paths and fruits: Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship.

Therefore, you must understand that if we speak of a Buddha's Dispensation on a day like today, that is what the Buddha's Dispensation is—it is the Noble Eightfold Path, the Four Noble Truths, or the cultivation of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*). Other than by describing it through such terms, the Buddha's Dispensation cannot be described by way of buildings or symbols. Therefore, if protecting that Buddha's Dispensation is our duty as Buddhists, we must also be eager to shape our way of life and our vision of life accordingly.

The story presented in this Dhamma sermon is a simple, ordinary story. We should not dismiss it saying these are things found in ancient books. Unlike the novels and short stories of today, these are directly related to the experiences of our University of Life. Therefore, you must strive to realize Nibbāna through those very experiences.

Especially, the occasion of hearing the Dhamma is declared by the Buddha as an "occasion of liberation" (*vimuttāyatana*), a place to attain liberation. There are various kinds of liberation. But the Buddha has declared the places where liberation from saṃsāra can be attained. The occasion of hearing the Dhamma is one such occasion. The occasion of preaching the Dhamma is also such an occasion.

So if you have listened well to this Dhamma, many wholesome thoughts—supporting that liberation, supporting life—must have arisen within your stream of consciousness at this time. Making those wholesome feelings (*vedanā*) a strong supporting condition, you must wish: "May we be freed from this terrifying, dreadful saṃsāra, and may we be able to realize the supreme, great, deathless peace of Nibbāna, free from all saṃsāric suffering such as birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness."

Likewise, we must wish: "May the host of devas and brahmas who protect the Dispensation, and whatever deities residing in this place, and all those who desire merit and Nibbāna, rejoice in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma!"

Similarly, we must make the aspiration: "May all beings, including our own relatives and friends, from the lowest hell up to the highest heaven, who desire merit and Nibbāna, rejoice in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, and being freed from all saṃsāric suffering, may they be comforted by the great, deathless peace of Nibbāna!" Keeping this aspiration in mind, let us now share merit by reciting the stanzas in this manner:

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #2

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Kumbhūpamaṁ kāyamimaṁ viditvā,nagarūpamaṁ cittamidaṁ ṭhapetvā;Yodhetha māraṁ paññāvudhena,jitañca rakkhe anivesano siyā.

From:

Verse 40 from the Cittavagga (Chapter on the Mind) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

Our Supreme Buddha has on many occasions depicted this effort of practice (*yoga*) to escape from this extremely terrifying suffering (*dukkha*) in *saṃsāra* as a battle against Māra—a war against Māra. We must think a little as to why the Buddha presents this concept of Māra, and why He instills this concept of warfare into our minds. Generally, lay devotees who begin meditation to escape from this suffering (*dukkha*) in *saṃsāra* encounter a multitude of obstacles from both outside and within. In the face of these obstacles, the meditating yogi often becomes weak-minded, discouraged, and starts to shrink back. It is precisely to remove this tendency to shrink back, and to encourage and strengthen them, that the Buddha depicted this battle against defilements (*kilesa*) as a war against Māra. The reason for this is that bringing out the combative nature inherent in the human mind helps to strengthen the mind in times when it is discouraged and hesitant. That is why in various places in the Buddha's teachings we find such wondrous battle slogans, battle slogans regarding the war against Māra. It is just such a battle slogan, in the form of a verse (*gāthā*), that we have selected as our theme on this occasion.

The background story that led the Buddha to expound this verse is recorded in the scriptures as follows: While the Buddha was residing at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī, five hundred monks who were practicing insight meditation took their meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from the Buddha and set out for a distant village, intending to practice insight meditation in a quiet, suitable location. Having arrived at a certain

village, and as these practitioners were wandering through, the faithful residents of that village inquired about their intentions. Having understood that they were seeking a place suitable for meditation, they invited them, saying, "Venerable Sirs, there is a very secluded forest grove near here. May the Venerable Sirs reside in association with this grove during these three months of the rainy season. This will be an excellent opportunity for us as well to observe the moral precepts, and to cultivate faith in the Triple Gem." Following this invitation, the monks entered the secluded forest grove. The tree deities (*vruksadevatā*) inhabiting the trees in that grove, out of respect for the moral virtue of the monks, thought: "Since these monks are highly virtuous, it is not proper for us to stay high up on the trees while they are on the ground." So they descended from the trees, thinking that the monks would reside there only for that night. However, the next day too, the monks returned to the same place after going to the village for alms. Then the deities realized that they would have to remain on the ground continuously. When the monks continued to stay for several days, the deities understood that they might stay there for several months. Then they thought: "Somehow or other, we must drive these monks away. Otherwise, we will not be able to climb back onto our trees and reside in them." Thinking thus, what did they do? They began to project various terrifying forms in the places where the monks meditated. They showed frightening figures such as headless corpses, made non-human noises around the walking meditation paths, and displayed terrifying things to scare the monks. Because of the fear that arose in their minds, the monks could not get proper sleep and fell ill, with different monks suffering from different ailments. While discussing this among themselves, after they expressed having seen such sights, they thought: "This is not a suitable (*sappāya*) place for us. This is a place with such non-human disturbances. We must find another place. But first, we must inform the Buddha of this matter." Thus, they went back to see the Buddha.

The Buddha asked, "Monks, why have you returned?" Then they explained, "We are facing such disturbances and troubles." But the Buddha declared, "Monks, nonetheless, you must go back to that very place. That is the best place for you." The monks pleaded again, saying, "Oh, we can no longer go there." Then the Buddha said, "Monks, you went there without a weapon. This time, set out taking a proper weapon with you."

Then the monks asked, "Bhante, what is that weapon?" That weapon is what the Buddha then presented as the *Metta Sutta*. For the first time, for the sake of those monks, the Buddha expounded this *Metta Sutta*, which is of great benefit to the world. The Buddha advised the monks: "Memorize this *Metta Sutta*, and upon entering that forest grove, chant it even from afar as you enter. Put it into practice constantly." Following these instructions, the monks entered the forest grove while chanting the *Metta Sutta* right from the entrance. Based on that *Karanīyametta Sutta*, they developed a mind of loving-kindness (*mettā*). Due to the power of that loving-kindness, the minds of the deities who had previously harassed them became soft and gentle. It is recorded that—far from harassing them—they even came forward to welcome the monks, perform various duties, and even organize protective measures for them. Those non-human noises and various apparitions completely vanished. An environment was created where the monks could meditate well and put their minds at ease. The minds of the Venerable Sirs became

concentrated, aided by the concentration of loving-kindness (*mettā samādhi*). Having concentrated their minds, the monks then inclined their minds toward insight meditation. Reflecting on this cage of the body, thinking of it as being like a fragile clay pot, and contemplating its unstable nature, its impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature, all five hundred of them began to develop insight. At this moment, the Buddha, residing many leagues away at Jetavana monastery, observed those monks. It is a special characteristic of the Buddha that no matter where or how far the monks to whom He had given meditation instructions went, He would include them in His net of Buddha-knowledge. Since He possessed a wondrous Buddha-knowledge that cannot be replicated by any machine of modern times, the Buddha was always keeping track of how the minds of His disciples were operating. Therefore, He saw that all five hundred of them had now entered the path of insight, and that their thoughts were directed in that direction. Basing His teaching on the very concept of the clay pot that they had taken up as their meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*), the Buddha then uttered the verse we mentioned at the beginning. This verse is so meaningful, and it contains such deep aspects of meditation, that it is recorded that upon hearing it, those monks attained Arahantship with the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā-patta*).

Let us recollect that verse of the Dhamma once again:

> *Kumbhūpamaṃ kāyamimaṃ viditvā*
>
> *Nagarūpamaṃ cittāmidaṃ ṭhapetvā*
>
> *Yodhetha māraṃ paññāyudhena*
>
> *Jitañca rakkhe anivesano siyā.*
>
> "Knowing this body to be like a clay pot,
>
> Establishing this mind like a fortress-city,
>
> One should fight Māra with the weapon of wisdom,
>
> And protect what is won, remaining without settling down (without making a home of it)."

"Knowing this body to be like a clay pot" — understanding this physical form to be like a fragile clay pot. Most often in the world, ordinary worldlings commit various demeritorious deeds for the sake of this body. Forgetting that this body is bound to break, that it decays moment by moment, that no matter how much effort is made and how much comfort is provided, they will have to abandon this body in about a hundred years or a little more—forgetting all this, most people commit sins for the sake of this body. In truth, it may be because even those monks gave undue prominence to the body that they became afraid and declared, "Oh, we can no longer go there." Now, you all know very well that a person going to war cannot fight if they maintain such attachment to their body. Similarly, it is for this reason that the Buddha presents the concept of the

battle against Māra to the meditating yogi. If one bases their efforts on the idea of pampering and preserving this body, that yogi can never succeed in their life's spiritual task.

A person going to war makes a self-sacrifice for its sake. Someone who has plunged into a river with the determination of "do or die" relies on the attitude: "death or crossing over." Thus, they engage in the task by offering their life until victory is achieved. This should be the attitude of the yogi. That is why the Buddha, instead of sending them elsewhere—instead of saying, "Well, monks, I will find you a good place where there are no such troubles"—told them to go to that very place. However, there is a difference here: what did the Buddha give as the weapon for this war against Māra? That is what we must actually contemplate at this time. When we think of war, a massive array of weapons comes to mind—the conventional weapons of that particular era in the world. But when those monks asked, "Bhante, what is the weapon we are to take?" the Buddha presented loving-kindness at that moment. It was with that weapon that they stilled their minds. That is what we must contemplate. Through that, the tranquility aspect of the monks was completed. And they learned a lesson: if we are to be released from *saṃsāra*, we must make a sacrifice. If we start working with the intention of holding onto this body and protecting this breaking clay vessel, we can never realize Nibbāna—this understanding must have dawned on those monks through that very experience. That is why, as soon as they became concentrated, they turned their minds to insight. Therefore, "Knowing this body to be like a clay pot"—according to the very thought of those monks, confirming it further, the Buddha said to make use of that idea.

Having understood that this body is like a fragile clay pot, next: "Establishing this mind like a fortress-city"—what must actually be protected, what must be guarded like a fortress-city, is this mind. The value of protecting this mind is expressed in the next line. Keeping this mind in that state as a fortress-city that must be protected, then:

"One should fight Māra with the weapon of wisdom" — next comes the battle slogan: Fight Māra with the weapon of wisdom. Earlier, He gave the weapon of loving-kindness for tranquility. Now He says to fight Māra with the weapon of wisdom.

Next: "And protect what is won, remaining without settling down (without making a home of it)" — If you have fought and won something, protect it. But do not settle down there. Do not hold onto that very thing and stop there; do not be attached to it. In those two lines, there is an extremely useful piece of advice for meditating yogis.

Then, "Fight Māra" — who is this Māra? Who is the Māra who can be fought with the weapon of wisdom?

When we speak of Māra, various images might come to mind based on paintings one has seen. However, if we think deeply, the real Māra for the meditating yogi is thought—which is called "applied thought" (*vitakka*). Along with this Māra, a great army of Māra flows behind. If we think about our own minds, how our minds operate, especially when we fall into defilements, how rapidly a stream of thoughts (*vitakka-dhārā*) flows! Being overwhelmed by them, we get entangled in a mass of great sins according to our actions

and go toward hell, the animal realm, and so forth. Therefore, Māra is this very thought (*vitakka*). The army of Māra is the army of thoughts. So, one must fight this Māra with the weapon of wisdom. What is this weapon of wisdom? Next, let us think about that too. If we think deeply, the weapon of wisdom is the special task that the yogi has to perform. What is it? "Contemplation" or "attention"—which is called "attention" (*manasikāra*). It is through contemplation of the way our mind operates—and of everything—that wisdom is developed. Why? Because through contemplation, the force of those thoughts (*vitakka*) is broken. With mindfulness and clear comprehension, one understands the true nature of each thing as it arises, thinking: "this is this, this is that." In that moment, the rapidly running stream of thoughts is subdued. Thus, to fight against Māra—this Māra of thoughts—and the stream of thoughts flowing into the mind, and to gain some control over them without letting them wander aimlessly, one must contemplate. If anger arises—"here is a mind of anger." Likewise, the objects coming to the six doors of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—these must be contemplated right at those very places. The action relevant to meditation—insight meditation—that a yogi has to do is contemplation. It is the contemplation of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Thinking of these as Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), the breaking-up nature of these parts is felt right there. Without taking the breaking-up things as permanent, one sees how they arise in those very places, how they exist for a very brief moment—comparable to a mere fraction of a second—according to that contemplation. They come, they exist, they pass away. Seeing this nature of arising and passing away within one's own mental continuum is indeed the fundamental task of insight meditation. Therefore, that contemplation, that attention (*manasikāra*), which performs this task, is what is shown here as wisdom. In truth, the purpose of insight meditation is to understand these phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). We gain our understanding of the entire world by correctly understanding these phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*).

The mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) are things that anyone can identify by looking at their own mind. No special word is needed for feeling (*vedanā*); everyone knows that when we speak of feeling, it is not only pleasant feeling and painful feeling but also neutral feeling—all of them. Perception (*saññā*)—recognition. These can be called perceptions. Based on feeling, various perceptions are formed. Next, according to perceptions, intentions (*cetanā*) arise—various intentions. Everyone knows what intention is. Next is contact (*phassa*). A feeling of contact arises regarding a point of impact of these. Next, there is attention (*manasikāra*)—contemplation. These five factors are often taken as mental phenomena. Next, physical phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*) are shown as earth, water, fire, and wind (*pathavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*)—the four great elements out of which our body and external things are formed. It is by combining these that such forms (*rūpa*) are conjured up and shown in an extremely wondrous way. It is these four elements that conjure up and show these forms. If one understands these few points, it is as if they have understood the entire world.

What helps us to escape from this *saṃsāra* is the understanding of the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Here too, among these phenomena, attention (*manasikāra*)—or contemplation, which comes at the end—is extremely important. It is

through that contemplation that we understand these. Therein lies the most wondrous thing. If we need a comparison, we can compare these five factors to the fingers of our hand. Feeling (*vedanā*) is like the little finger. Next, perception (*saññā*) is like the ring finger, on which rings are worn—various recognitions. Next, the middle finger is like feeling (intention). The index finger is like contact (*phassa*). If we take it like that, then attention (*manasikāra*) is the thumb. Thus, the thumb is principal. This thumb—as is evident to oneself—can know the state of the little finger. Likewise, it can know the state of the other fingers when necessary. The thumb comes close to the little finger, and contact between the two occurs. The others are also like that. Thus, even though the thumb stands apart, it is the leader, the chief. It is with the help of this thumb that the entire group of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is recognized. It is just like when a group of people collectively commit a crime, if there is no witness to give evidence, what does the court sometimes do? It grants a pardon to one of the perpetrators. The pardon is given on the condition: "You must tell the truth. Only if you tell the truth will you be pardoned." Then, when that person comes forward and tells the truth, they also get caught, but the case is proved. Similarly, here we use one of the five mental phenomena to understand these phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). We use this very contemplation. However, this is not improper attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), but correct contemplation. That is to say, in the beginning, he was indeed a thief of the gang. But after he begins to give evidence, he gives evidence like a witness. Similarly, preventing improper attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), one is directed to contemplate with wisdom (which is wise attention, *yoniso manasikāra*). In this way, applying wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is indeed this wisdom, attention, contemplation, through which one understands the true nature of these things. Moreover, through that very contemplation, one gets the opportunity to identify the elements—earth, water, fire, and wind. One understands hardness, softness, and so on, through contact (*phassa*). This is the fundamental task of insight meditation. Therefore, that is the weapon that helps to conquer the army of Māra: attention (*manasikāra*)—contemplation—wise contemplation.

Furthermore, if it is a weapon—as in a sword fight, one must wield one's sword extremely rapidly to ward off the enemy's sword blows. Similarly, in attention too, one must make contemplation as quick, as rapid as possible, if one is to win this battle against Māra. The path to making it rapid is what the meditation masters point out according to the occasion—in the beginning, they contemplate these as: "form, form", "sound, sound", "smell, smell"—even odors are contemplated in the same way—"taste, taste", and so forth. Even a thought: when a thought arises, understanding it as "a thought"—if an angry thought comes, when it is understood as "a thought", the stream of thoughts is broken through that understanding. It is through such rapid contemplation that this stream of thoughts can be conquered.

"One should fight Māra with the weapon of wisdom"

Next: "And protect what is won, remaining without settling down (without making a home of it)" — Here, an amazingly deep idea is expressed. What was specifically mentioned to those monks as "protect what is won" (*jitañca rakkhe*)? Generally, as

obstacles that arise for a yogi, we can take the attachment to the concentration of loving-kindness that they have attained. Now, these monks too were those who had gained some progress through concentration. Because when concentration arises, along with it comes a great pleasure—a physical pleasure. Thus, they take it as something great, thinking: "this is the ultimate thing, this is indeed the pleasure of Nibbāna." There is a tendency to be deceived in this manner. These are also called defilements of insight (*vipassanā-upakkilesa*)—when various lights appear, when comfort is felt in the body, when stillness is felt, when special understandings come. One grasps all of these tightly. Thinking, "Now I have realized Nibbāna, I have become a Stream-enterer," such a state occurs. That is why it is said, "protect what is won" (*jitañca rakkhe*). If there is some concentration one has attained, it must indeed be protected. However, "remaining without settling down" (*anivesano siyā*)—if one settles down there, one can never reach the state one hopes for. Therefore, do not settle down in them; one must guard against that. That is the word of the Buddha here, in particular. A special instruction helpful for meditation subjects is mentioned in this verse. Generally, a meditating yogi falls into delusion if there is no teacher's guidance. The reason is that when they receive things they have never received before, such as physical pleasure, from the side of concentration, the mind is inclined to indulge in them. That must be prevented. To use a war metaphor: while a warrior is fighting, if there is a real war going on, they must also have a fortress. If at some point, for whatever reason, the warrior's weapon is broken, or for necessities such as taking food and drink, they retreat to that fortress, attend to those matters, rest, and then go back to the battle. But if, after returning to the fortress, they remain there sleeping, they can never win that battle. Similarly, there is a certain necessity for tranquility too. Tranquility means concentration. But what is the wonder of the Buddha's Middle Path? It makes use of all these, but does not grasp onto even one of them; it does not settle down in them. For it is mentioned in the Dhamma that if one grasps onto anything in the world, Māra pursues them through that very thing:

> *Yaṃ yaṃ hi lokasmiṃ upādiyanti*
>
> *Teneve māro anveti jantuṃ*
>
> (Sutta Nipāta, 1108)

"Whatever they grasp in the world, by that very thing Māra pursues the person." Such is the nature of the mind. That is what is called the battle against Māra. The mind is always looking to perch on, to grasp, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Such a grasping nature can be prevented through that contemplation. When one contemplates rapidly, that grasping (*upādāna*) nature is cut off, and those things slip away through contemplation. One contemplates, and then lets it go—in this way, by understanding its nature, that delusion is removed. If there is delusion, one is inclined to grasp it completely. When understanding comes through attention (*manasikāra*) and wisdom, one does not tend to grasp it. It is its impermanent (*anicca*) nature that is then understood. It is understood that these are things that come and go. In association with that, then, one is able to go forward on the "path of insight" (*vipassanā-vīthi*). On the path of insight, on the cognitive series of insight—it can also be called cognitive series (*citta-vīthi*)—to go

forward on the path of insight, do not get stuck or attached to those things you have conquered. Making use of them, applying that power of concentration, instead of getting attached to them, basing oneself on equanimity—with the help of equanimity—understand that state of the Dhamma. This is the Buddha's instruction in this verse.

"And protect what is won, remaining without settling down (without making a home of it)" — meaning, do not settle down in them. The nature of this mind is always to build houses. The mind is always looking to build houses. The Buddha uses the word "dwelling" (*nivesana*) in the sense of a house. It is connected with the idea of settling down. Now, if we wisely contemplate the Buddha's Dhamma—it is just like when building a house, we erect scaffolding. We erect scaffolding while constructing the building. But no one should think of living on the scaffolding. If they live on the scaffolding, the building will not be completed. They keep removing them and going higher. The path of the Dhamma—the Middle Path—is just like that. Thus, "And protect what is won, remaining without settling down"—this advice is an extremely useful matter for us, generally for those who are practitioners—or those engaged in meditation. Because quite often, among meditating yogis, when asked about their results, they express with great joy, "I have such and such experiences." But they do not know that they have been deluded, being overwhelmed by the defilements of insight (*vipassanā-upakkilesa*). "Oh, lights are clearly visible. There is a wonderful pleasure. I can sit for as long as I want; I can sit for hours." But they have perched there. They have perched in that concentration they attained. There is no forward journey. That is why "remaining without settling down"—it is through that contemplation that we can finally win this battle. Because wherever there is grasping (*upādāna*), Māra is right there. One is subjected to Māra right there. Such a wondrous Dhamma is present here. Thus, according to that verse, we can understand how important this attention (*manasikāra*) is, which helps us to reveal the three characteristics of impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) in this insight meditation. Everything is caught through this very contemplation. Even if it is not expressed in words, when one sees how those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) come, exist for a very brief moment—a fraction of a second—and pass away, their impermanent (*anicca*) nature becomes clear. Likewise, if something is impermanent, if it changes, no pleasure can be found there—if it turns around, if it breaks up. Because of that, its nature of suffering (*dukkha*) is understood. One also understands, realizes, and sees directly that taking such a thing as "mine" or "myself" is foolishness. Therefore, to understand those three characteristics through direct realization, that contemplation is helpful. Contemplation, then, as mentioned, is in the beginning: "form, form", "sound, sound", and so on. That is to say, in the ordinary world, we use names like "there is a car", "there is such and such a person", "a woman", "a man", and if needed, further details about those persons; these are necessary in the ordinary, everyday conventional world. They cannot be dispensed with. But the insight yogi must get away from these if they are to realize Nibbāna, if they are to transcend the world. In mundane terms, we identify everything that comes by name. These are called "signs" (*nimitta*) and "features" (*anuvyañjana*). We take signs of things seen and heard. It is due to the lack of control over those signs that we are overwhelmed by this stream of defilements and experience various sufferings in this long *saṃsāra*. Therefore, to escape

from these, the yogi engaged in meditation must make a special effort to break the habit of taking signs. That cannot be broken all at once. But a factor that helps in this is perception (*saññā*)—recognition. First, a basic experience of something comes. Based on that, one recognizes it. It does not stop there. Next, feelings (*vedanā*) arise regarding this. Most often, feelings of anger, or a strong attachment to what is pleasant. Thus, the true state of all of these is understood by a person through that attention (*manasikāra*). Thinking in this way, what the ordinary world understands through many words, one tries to understand extremely briefly in contemplation, without following perceptions. One stops right there, taking it as purely "form" or "sound". A process akin to "elision on the spot" (*lath tana lop kirima*) must take place there. Thus, as one goes on, as one goes further and gains progress in insight, one has to contemplate even the mere contact of awareness, the mere sensing. Stop right there. That rapid contemplation. Just like in the sword fight we mentioned, while both are fighting in the same way, to defeat the enemy, one must be strong enough to ward off the enemy's blow with a speed greater than the speed with which the enemy wields their weapon. Similarly, to prevent thoughts running at an unspeakable speed—at the wondrous speed of this army of Māra—one must perform this contemplation with equal rapidity. If this contemplation weakens, what happens? One is caught by perceptions. The Buddha has declared that perception (*saññā*) is a mirage. A mirage is such that when seen, one chases after it. We take this perception to mean knowing this correctly. We feel like knowing what this is. Now, if someone is traveling on the road—a person who is prepared to go on a journey, let us say they set out to go to Colombo. But if this person, while going in the vehicle, looks around and starts watching how beautiful the things around are, how they are—they will never get to Colombo, if they think they must stop and look fully at everything their mind goes to. That is the thing.

Then, someone might think: "If we do this, we won't be able to live in the world, will we?" One can live in the world forever, if one wishes. But the Buddha is showing the path to escape from this *saṃsāra*. Therefore, the yogi must especially make an effort to break this habit of taking signs for the sake of this task—the task of realizing Nibbāna. That is why it is done systematically. It is not closing the eyes. It is not blocking the ears. To restrain these senses, first, one removes those concepts of thinking "it is such and such a thing", removes conventional names, and begins contemplation by thinking "this is form", "this is sound". As one goes on and goes further, one sees that this too, in some way, is a catching in the mirage of perception—even if just a little. In this way, at some point, one can develop the strength to break that stream of thoughts right at the mere touch, right at the mere sensing, through that attention (*manasikāra*). It is through that, indeed, that the arising and passing away nature of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) can be directly realized, and one can reach states such as the realization of the paths and fruits.

Thus, many such matters are contained in this verse. We must contemplate that we are living in an extremely rare era of a Buddha's appearance, having obtained a human life. We hear about meditation quite often, and everyone says they are practicing it. However, the targets of that meditation, most often, do not help to escape from this suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra* in the way the Buddha declared. Generally, they are trapped in

purposes such as comforting the body, obtaining freedom from physical illness, seeing good visions, or fulfilling various other mundane things, curing illnesses, and so on. Those are indeed the settle-downs. Instead, if a state of concentration has arisen through some tranquility (*samatha*) meditation object, one must contemplate the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) of that concentration. In everything, there is this aspect of gratification (*assāda*) and the aspect of danger (*ādīnava*)—the Buddha has declared that there are three things in the world: gratification, danger, and escape (*nissaraṇa*). There can be a good side to these, but along with it, there are many dangers. Therefore, one must escape from this—escape—escape from all of these is what is meant here. Within grasping (*upādāna*) lies continuation; within letting go lies cessation. Understanding this, then, as the mind is trained in the arising and passing away nature in the world, one realizes: "If we grasp this, we will turn around along with it and go to ruin." In that way, then, one does not remain even in that concentration. Even during the Buddha's time, teachers like Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, whom the Buddha initially approached as teachers, had reached extremely high states through concentration and tranquility. But because they were attached to and stuck in them, they were unable to realize Nibbāna. Therefore, the greatest light that the world receives through the appearance of a Buddha is this light of insight (*vipassanā*). It is the valuable matters relevant to this insight meditation that are contained in this verse. According to this, we must contemplate that we must enter this path of the Dhamma to the best of our ability—even in daily life—and try to detach ourselves from these as much as possible. For that, we may have to make a great sacrifice. What is the reason for this? Especially for lay devotees leading a household life, when practicing insight meditation, a great problem can sometimes arise. This complex society actually runs along that mirage of perception. Chasing after the mirage like deer, this world looks—not just inclining toward the mundane side—the world that is inclined to the mundane looks to deceive these humans and make them mad, either to sell their own things, or to direct them to other things, to drag them in. We live in the midst of many such forces. In such an era, when one observes the precepts on a day like today—a *Uposatha* day—some physical seclusion (*kāya-viveka*) is obtained. One is able to detach one's mind from those things. That habit of detaching must be increased. It is through that indeed that renunciation (*nekkhamma*) arises. Thus, regarding that body: there are three types of seclusion—physical seclusion (*kāya-viveka*), mental seclusion (*citta-viveka*), and seclusion from acquisitions (*upadhi-viveka*). When physical seclusion arises, a certain pleasure arises from it. But that is not complete. It is not complete merely because we say, "We are in a very secluded place without any noise." Next, through physical seclusion, one develops mental seclusion, having detached the mind. Next is seclusion from acquisitions (*upadhi-viveka*)—letting go of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) is the ultimate thing. Form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—letting go of these five aggregates, these five heaps that we have been clinging to and traveling with for a long time in *saṃsāra*, is what is done through this insight; that indeed is the realization of Nibbāna.

Why are these called five heaps? The ordinary world thinks of this form (*rūpa*) as one thing, as "my form". When we take a photograph, the idea that comes to our mind first is

"this is my form". But the power of change within this, the speed of change, the changing, is not visible to us. That is why, when a friend comes after a long time, they ask, "Oh, how much you have changed!" It was not at that moment of seeing that it changed. Nor did it change suddenly during that period. Such is the case with this form. In truth, form changes very slowly. Even faster than that, this mind changes. This mind changes extremely rapidly. But we take even that mind as a self, as "me" and "mine", and remain entangled in delusion—the entire world. This is what is called "view of existing group" (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). This is regarded as "self". One thinks, "form is my self." It is the same with feeling (*vedanā*). We take feeling also as one. It appears to us all at once as one thing. But when the insight yogi applies that attention (*manasikāra*) to this, they see that there are many quiverings here. Feeling is like many quiverings arising and passing away. Regarding form, it can also be understood through the comparison of the clay pot. Likewise, form is something made by many elements—earth, water, fire, and wind. Next, feeling is also like that. It is a vibrating event, changing extremely rapidly according to contact (*phassa*). There are many sensings there—what is called the aggregate of feeling is a heap of feelings. It is not one. Then, how can we say "it is me" to a heap? They are oppressed by arising and passing away. Next, perception (*saññā*)—recognition. That too is a heap of recognitions. Generally, we say we recognized all at once. "I recognized all at once," is said in ordinary usage. It is not all at once; we recognize something through a large number of recognitions extremely rapidly. We take that entire heap, the bundle, as one. It is the same with intention (*cetanā*). Intention too is extremely rapid. There are many intentions there—a heap of intentions. We call that Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). All those things including feeling, perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and intentions are Preparations. A heap of fabrications. A power of fabrication inside the mind. We think of such a heap of fabrications as "me" and "mine". But an even more serious delusion is this mind—consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The place where this feeling of "me" lies hidden. Now we know, breaking through the enemy's fortresses one by one, the final fortress, like the city of Vijitapura, is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is where the greatest magic lies. That is why the Buddha compared this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to a magic illusion. It is not easy to escape from an illusion. That is why the Buddha declared that when one thinks deeply in daily life about the comparisons He gave for the five aggregates, one can realize Nibbāna through that. Form is compared to a lump of foam. Feeling is compared to a water bubble.

A lump of foam—when we see a lump of foam, we tend to take it as one with the perception of solidity. It looks beautiful. But there are many bubbles of foam there—extremely subtle. Similarly, the Buddha has compared feeling to water bubbles that arise and pass away extremely rapidly when rain falls on water. Feeling is like many quiverings. Next, perception (*saññā*)—it is compared to a mirage. We also mentioned the mirage just now. That is to say, there is no end to recognition. This running after what this is—it is entirely like the running of a deer after a mirage. In the end, there is nothing there. It is an illusion that drags one along. In the end, it ends in a magic illusion. That is perception.

Next, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are compared to a banana trunk. There is no core, no heartwood in a banana trunk. The fact that there is no heartwood. There are many layers of fabrication. There is a tendency in the world to take many fabrications as one. Then, those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) made through this mind are the heap of thoughts (*vitakka*) going on inside the mind. In the final analysis, it is indeed by the mind that these are fabricated and taken up.

Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā — manoseṭṭhā manomayā

— is the word of the Buddha. Mind is the forerunner. In the final analysis, this world is conjured up by the mind itself. Such is the state. There is a great, wondrous thing here, in a way that no other teacher has declared. Then, what is the cause of that delusion? Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is compared to a magic illusion. When a magician shows an illusion at a crossroads, in a public place, everyone who sees it stands with open mouths, shouting "ah" and "oh", being deceived and amazed by this great wonder. But only the magician knows that what is being done here is entirely a lie—showing a lot of things that do not exist. Similarly, it is our mind, our consciousness (*viññāṇa*), that conjures up and shows what does not exist as if it exists. This state cannot be understood by the ordinary world. It cannot be understood through logic. Intellectuals cannot understand it through degrees. This must be understood by oneself through one's own wisdom, in the manner of *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*. By *viññūhi* is meant those with real wisdom—not merely pandits. This is something that must be understood by oneself through that insight wisdom. No one else can do it. Even the Buddha cannot do it. Having established oneself in some moral virtue, having developed concentration—a state of concentration—then, through that attention (*manasikāra*)—entering insight meditation with correct guidance—it is through that attention that the true state of this illusion of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) can be understood. It is through this that one can escape from this illusion. What is called letting go of these five aggregates is this. They are not things to be grasped by the hand and thrown away. If at some point, through this wisdom, the aggregate of form is understood as the aggregate of form, one understands right there that there is nothing to grasp here; one is not caught. One is not caught in grasping this. Next, it is the same with feeling (*vedanā*). When the comparison of the water bubble is understood by oneself, one understands that there is no core here, nothing to be taken. Its essence-less nature. Perception (*saññā*)—the mirage. Next, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—the banana trunk.

Thinking that there is heartwood in a banana trunk, and thinking of making a wardrobe, someone carries a banana trunk home for the first time—when they look at it, when they touch and examine it, they see that there is another layer beneath it. Similarly, what the Buddha declared here is understood by the insight yogi through the word "comprehension" (*sammasana*). Comprehension is something like gently touching and examining. What the world does is clinging tight (*parāmasana*). Letting go of this habit of clinging tight, the extremely subtle way of contemplation called comprehension is what helps in insight. Now we know, generally when sharpening a razor, one holds it in a way that it can be flipped. Holding it in that way, when rubbing the razor up and down

on the whetstone, it must be done in a way that the edge does not get blunted. It is done to align the edge, not to blunt it. If grasped too tightly, that razor gets blunted. Instead, by holding it in that subtle way and drawing it back and forth, a razor can be sharpened. Similarly, in the same way, without getting bound to even one thing in attention—without getting bound to perceptions, feeling, or any of those—one contemplates them just as they come, like in a sword fight, and stops right there. Going on in this way, through this path of insight, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, one can directly realize the supreme, peaceful happiness of Nibbāna, which is obtained by the calming of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—what is called *sabbasaṅkhārasamatho*.

Thus, according to that teaching of the Buddha, you have received the opportunity to hear many instructions on this *Uposatha* day that will help you to incline toward meditation. Without stopping at merely hearing, one must think: "I too must enter this path, associate with those who can give instructions and guidance, obtain them, and make an effort to escape from this extremely terrifying suffering of *saṃsāra*." Likewise, having established oneself in good moral virtue, even at this moment of listening to the Dhamma, with a concentrated and stilled mind, allowing room for understanding, one's moral virtue, concentration, and wisdom must have developed to some extent through listening. Traveling on that path of moral virtue, concentration, and wisdom, may you cultivate and develop those faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) within your own mental continuums as the benefit of listening to this Dhamma. One must make a determination, a wish, that this listening to the Dhamma may help to realize the supreme, peaceful Nibbāna which helps to cross over this suffering of *saṃsāra* shown by the Buddha. Likewise, if there is a mass of merit we have accumulated through expounding the Dhamma and listening to the Dhamma up to this moment, may all beings from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including the assembly of deities who protect the Dispensation (*Sāsana*), who rejoice in this, rejoice in the mass of merit accumulated by us on this day at this moment. Having rejoiced, may they all realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their own sought-after enlightenment (*bodhi*). Likewise, may all those who have passed away in the name of each of you rejoice in this mass of merit and gain the strength to put an end to suffering! Wish in that manner. Now, at this moment, we shall transfer merit by reciting these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #3

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Nagariṁ yathā paccantaṁ,

guttaṁ santarabāhiraṁ;

Evaṁ gopetha attānaṁ,

khaṇo vo mā upaccagā;

Khaṇātītā hi socanti,

nirayamhi samappitā.

From:

Verse 315, from the Nirayavagga (Chapter on Hell) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

It was on an Esala full-moon poya day that the Supreme Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, first revealed to the world of devas and humans the path to Nibbāna—namely, the Four Noble Truths—which he discovered after practicing six years of austere practices. Therefore, today is an extremely valuable poya day. Viewed from another perspective, this can also be regarded as a day of great significance for the Dispensation (Sāsana). When considered as the poya day that marks the commencement of the rains retreat (*vassa*) for the Sangha, this Esala full-moon poya day is highly important. Now, the term used in ancient texts to refer to the Buddha's Dispensation is "Dhamma-Vinaya." "Dhamma-Vinaya" is applied to designate the Dispensation of the Teacher because both the Doctrine (Dhamma) and the Discipline (Vinaya) are relevant to it. When thinking of the rains retreat, this period is considered highly important from the side of the Discipline because it is specifically connected to a group of disciplinary rules of the Sangha. However, during the time of the Buddha, as we can see from ancient

stories, the rains retreat was also regarded as an extremely valuable period from the side of the Dhamma, the aspect of the Doctrine. For there was a custom in the Buddha's day: when the Buddha was alive, the members of the Sangha would go to meet the Buddha before the rains retreat to obtain meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Then they would depart for a remote, secluded area, spend the retreat in a suitable place, meditate according to that meditation subject, and make every effort to realize Nibbāna within the rains retreat. They had a great desire to bring back that joyful news to the Buddha. Looked at in this way, the wise and far-sighted Sangha of that time considered the realization of Nibbāna as the noblest, highest meritorious deed—as the rains-retreat offering—to be accomplished during the rains retreat. If they strove as much as possible and aroused effort during those three months but were unable to realize Nibbāna, a certain sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) would arise within those monks. Because when they went to meet the Buddha again after the rains retreat, the question the Buddha would often ask—after first exchanging pleasantries and inquiring about their well-being in a friendly manner—was: "Monks, have you fulfilled the purpose of your ordination?" If they were unable to answer this properly, it would cause great dejection in the minds of those monks. To put it briefly, it would be like going to see the Buddha empty-handed. Therefore, the monks made great efforts to realize Nibbāna within the rains retreat. Now, the story that clarifies these matters is the one associated with the verse we have taken as our theme.

While the Buddha was residing at Jetavana monastery, a group of monks went to a remote border village—though we use the word "remote" (*piṭisara*), what is meant here is a village situated on the frontier—to spend the rains retreat. During the first month, those monks were able to carry out their meditation work well. They received good support and requisites from the lay supporters. However, in the second month, a band of thieves—a gang of robbers—raided the village and took the villagers captive. Thereafter, the villagers began to organize security measures. Fearing that the gang of thieves would return and attack them again, they started putting up defense systems. They erected various kinds of ramparts and fortifying walls, implementing certain defensive arrangements for their streets. Because of this, the monks experienced disturbances. Consequently, despite their efforts, these monks were unable to fulfill their intended goal. When these monks went to visit the Buddha after the rains retreat, the Buddha asked them, "How was it, monks? Did you spend the rains retreat comfortably and in peace?" Then those monks explained: "Venerable Sir, during the first month we lived well without any trouble. But afterwards, due to the situation that arose in the village when thieves raided, the villagers—our lay supporters—focused their minds on setting up security measures. Consequently, we faced various shortcomings, and we were unable to practice meditation properly during the rains retreat." They offered this as their excuse. At that moment, the Buddha said: "Monks, indeed that is so. A comfortable lodging is not something that is obtained every day. It is not something to be constantly expected. That is the normal course of things. But what should you have done? Just as those people protected their city, you should have protected yourselves. Just as those people were diligent in protecting their village, you too should have secured your own safety." Declaring thus, he spoke the verse we have taken as our theme:

Nagaraṃ yathā paccantaṃ

guttaṃ santarabāhiraṃ

evaṃ gopetha attānaṃ

khaṇo ve mā upaccagā

khaṇātītā hi socanti

nirayamhi samappitā

The meaning of this is: just as a city situated on a frontier is well-fortified internally and externally—inwardly and outwardly—meaning, just as a frontier city is well-guarded within and without, in the same manner, "*evaṃ gopetha attānaṃ*"—so should one guard oneself. "*Evaṃ gopetha attānaṃ - khaṇo ve mā upaccagā*"—the next phrase indicates that one must perform this task without delay: "*khaṇo ve mā upaccagā*"—do not let the moment pass you by. Do not allow the proper moment—the opportunity—to slip away. The next two lines express the danger (*ādīnava*) that arises from not properly following this advice: "*khaṇātītā hi socanti - nirayamhi samappitā*". If one allows the moment to pass, what happens to such people? "*Khaṇātītā hi socanti*"—they will have to weep, wail, regret, and sorrow. "*Nirayamhi samappitā*"—because they will have fallen into hell, and falling into hell, they will have to suffer. In this way, the Buddha uttered an instructive and admonishing verse. It is said that upon hearing this verse, those venerable monks attained Arahantship. Thus, when we reflect on this verse, we can see the profound Dhamma within it. Many times, when monks apply their minds to the Dhamma and meditation, putting effort into those tasks, the Buddha would preach such a verse of Dhamma as if to complete whatever was lacking in their efforts. Therefore, we can understand that even a single passage of Dhamma or a verse from the Buddha can help in the final consummation of the monks' endeavors, enabling them to complete their meditation subjects. This is probably why it is mentioned that the monks attained Arahantship upon hearing this very verse. Be that as it may, let us reflect on the depth of this Dhamma verse according to our own capacity.

Now, this simile is highly apt. We employ similes on such occasions because they help the Dhamma point penetrate deep into the mind. "*Nagaraṃ yathā paccantaṃ - guttaṃ santarabāhiraṃ*"—we can understand that this simile is extremely relevant to our present times as well. Thus, what is spoken of here is the guarding of a frontier city, both from within and from without. Likewise, the monks are told, "*evaṃ gopetha attānaṃ*"—to secure self-protection in this manner. Even nowadays, "self-protection" (*ātmārakṣāva*) is a commonly used term. However, in modern times, when people speak of self-protection, they generally mean bodily protection—guarding the physical body. Employing bodyguards, they only protect the physical body. As for the mind, the attitude in the world is often that it does not matter if it is handed over to devils and Death (*Māra*). But when the Buddha spoke of self-protection here, he meant guarding the mind. For what we carry through this round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) is this mind—the

mental continuum. As for this body, this bodily cage, we leave it behind. Therefore, the Buddha gave prominence to guarding the mind. Here too, the meaning to be taken is not merely guarding the body, but guarding the mind. To guard the mind, a certain degree of concern for the body is indeed necessary. But what most people do is guard the body without any care for what happens to the mind. If we grasp this profound meaning as guarding one's own mind, let us next consider this security system—what is said here regarding protection.

If we reflect in accordance with the Dhamma, who is the security guard of the mind? It is mindfulness (*sati*). In the Dhamma, it is stated: "*sati ārakkhasārathī*"—mindfulness is the guarding charioteer. The task of taming the mind, of guarding the mind—that responsibility is borne by the sentry called mindfulness. Now, when this sentry of mindfulness is well-uniformed, we can understand it more broadly as mindfulness and situational awareness (*sati-sampajañña*). At times, wishing to render *sampajañña* into a Sinhala term, we have translated it as "awareness" (*dänuvatbava*). Or else, remaining mindful with clear comprehension; the clear comprehension that goes hand-in-hand with mindfulness. Thus, what is spoken of here is mindfulness coupled with awareness. Now, when security guards are deployed in the world, in a place like a city, protection is set up both inside and outside. In a city, there is usually an inner gate, an entrance gate, then the fortifying walls, ramparts, and so on. Externally, there are watchtowers, sentry boxes, and moats. In ancient times, various security measures—defensive arrangements—were put in place to protect cities. Even nowadays, a sentry is typically posted at a gate. When posting a sentry at a gate, that gate must be very narrow. If it is a large gate, the incoming crowd can rush in. In the same way, if we consider mindfulness (*sati*) from the perspective of the Dhamma—the word *sati* also carries the meaning of memory. However, when we speak of right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) in the Dhamma, it refers to constantly established mindfulness. This is something relevant to the present moment. For if the mind starts running to the past or jumping to the future, that gate becomes wide. What, then, is the gate we have to guard? From the perspective of the Dhamma, it is the six sense-doors: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Including the mind, these are the six sense-doors. The five external senses are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body; and then there is the mind, the mind-faculty. These six sense-doors are what must be guarded. While guarding these six doors, the army of Māra, the army of defilements—the enemy host—is constantly waiting to break in. The army waiting to invade consists of sense-objects. For the eye, they are visual forms; for the ear, sounds; for the nose, smells and fragrances. In this manner, the enemy forces that agitate the mind and lead it into attachments, attraction, delusion, and bewilderment are waiting to invade. And they arrive with extreme rapidity. In such a situation, when a large crowd arrives at the gate, they must first be told: "You must come in a queue." They must come in a queue, one after the other. Otherwise, this gate cannot be guarded. Making it a narrow gate in that manner is precisely the easiest way to keep the mind in the present. What is spoken of here is keeping the mind in the present without running to the past or leaping to the future, and directing mindfulness to each and every thing as it arrives. Along with that mindfulness, what does one do through mindfulness? A certain practical

boundary is needed. Relying on that awareness, one applies attention. A certain attention (*manasikāra*), a reflection is applied.

Let us suppose there is a security guard: his duty is not to sleep. Remaining fully awake, he casts an inquiring eye on each person who arrives. This depends on his skill. It must be done very rapidly. He cannot hold up any single person for a long time there. They arrive, he subjects them to scrutiny, and if they are to be let in, he lets them in; if they are to be turned away, he turns them away. There are only these two options. Therefore, what is required here is skill; that reflection cannot be carried out at length. Today, as you lay devotees well know, at such checkpoints there is something called an identity card. Even if there were no identity cards in the past, there must have been some way of identifying people when they arrived. An identity card has a name and a photo (form). Thus, the person is identified by this name. This person arrives with a certain physical form corresponding to that identification. But what usually happens? If enemy forces or spies arrive, they come in disguise. Not in their true form. Therefore, they must be recognized. If the sentry is highly skilled, he will not allow them to engage in idle chatter; he will demand that they present their identity card and prove their eligibility to enter. In the same way, if we consider it from the perspective of the Dhamma, there is a general method for identifying these incoming objects—these enemy forces. It is called Name-and-Form (*Nāmarūpa*). They are identified by reflecting on them as Name-and-Form (*Nāmarūpa*). Let us say a visual object comes before us. Some form arrives. This is what happens to an insight meditator. The incoming form comes in disguise. We speak of color configurations—their colors, all kinds of colors, and various outlines. Because of this, the mind might become fixated. Without directing the mind to those details, one reflects: "This is just a form." Thus, no matter what kind of form arrives, the meditator reflects, "form, form" (*rūpaṃ, rūpaṃ*). He does not go any further than that. For the Buddha has pointed out that if one goes further, the mind cannot be restrained. It gets dragged into defilements. This is what is called grasping at signs (*nimitta*) and secondary features (*anuvyañjana*)—meaning, the sign and the other characteristics grasped in accordance with that sign. When that person sees a form—be it a person or an object—since a multitude of other thoughts, defiled thoughts, can invade concerning it, he briefly notes it as "form."

Furthermore, what is relevant here, in brief, are the three characteristics: the characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). It is by applying these three seals that every object is let through. Thus, what helps to stamp these three characteristics is nothing other than this recognition. Now, mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) are shown in the Dhamma to consist of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Here, we are trying to align this with the Dhamma. Mental phenomena are generally things associated with the mind. So, the things associated with the mind are feelings (*vedanā*). A person recognizes something—even a small child who does not yet know how to speak recognizes things—through these very factors. Through experiencing something, or experiencing what is given to them, on the basis of the feeling (*vedanā*) therein. Or through a perception (*saññā*) of it. Then, the thoughts that arise regarding

them, their contact (*phassa*), and how we attend to them. When viewed deeply in this manner, these are the mental phenomena that support insight (*vipassanā*). Next, when considering material phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*), one does not think about those color configurations or color designs mentioned earlier. Of all the things that exist in the world, what are the primary elements out of which both our bodies and external things are made? Earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). Both this great earth and our bodies are made of the element of earth, which represents solidity. Then there is the element of water, representing the flowing nature of liquid. Then fire, representing heat; and air, representing wind. Our bodies and external things are composed of elements related to these four. For this reason, when reflecting in accordance with the Dhamma, the sentry of mindfulness must comprehend things in this manner through attention. One must not let the mind run after the various external signs of the incoming form, because if one does, defilements will flood in. If we take Name-and-Form (*Nāmarūpa*) in this way, this is the identity card. We let things pass by looking at this identity card. Now a sense-object has arrived; we do not cling to it; it is gone. It came and went, came and went. Through this, we understand impermanence (*anicca*)—the impermanent nature of each of these things, their nature of coming and going. This is how it is with the eye, ear, nose, and so forth. Now with a sound—when we hear a word, there is simultaneously a contact (*phassa*) at the ear. When a drum or a *rabāna* is struck, a resonance echoes for some time. When you strike something like a *rabāna*, a resonance naturally follows. In the same way, the thoughts that arise in the mind through words also produce a certain echo. That is how one is able to remember and recall. In this manner, we can understand regarding the ear. One can understand each of these senses in this way. Regarding the tongue, even a small child can understand it very easily. Thus, through all these senses, objects come flooding in, arriving with great speed. Now, the meditator identifies them with a certain degree of equanimity, in a manner that does not lead to being dragged along or trapped by attraction. Within that identification, within that reflection, wisdom (*paññā*) becomes active. Therefore, to realize Nibbāna, one must develop both mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom. This wisdom is activated at that moment through that very reflection. That is, applying mindfulness, one identifies it. This must be done with extreme rapidity. The reason for this, as the Buddha has declared, is that the objects flooding into our senses in this world arrive at tremendous speed.

On one occasion, the Buddha declared to the young Brahmin Ajitha:

> *Yāni sotāni lokasmiṃ*
>
> *sati tesaṃ nivāraṇaṃ*
>
> *sotānaṃ saṃvaraṃ brūmi*
>
> *paññāy'ete pidhīyare*
>
> (Sutta Nipāta, Verse 1039)

Whatever streams there are in the world, mindfulness is their barrier. I call mindfulness the restraint of the streams. "*Paññāy'ete pidhīyare*"—but it is by wisdom that they are completely shut off, that these streams can be fully closed. So, with this mindfulness—just as with a rapidly flowing river, one cannot build a dam all at once; one has to employ some means to temporarily hold back the rushing water. It is like the security guard stopping the invading crowd, telling them, "Hold on a moment." Then they are subjected to examination. Through this examination, the true nature of the person is understood. If it is a defiled object, it is pushed away completely. In this manner, even with water, it is only after the dam is built that the work is complete. Wisdom is the dam—wisdom, deep understanding, comprehension of the Dhamma, the true nature of things.

Thus, what we have here is a matter directly relevant to meditation. It is by understanding this that the monks must have attained Arahantship. So, what is spoken of here is guarding the mind; the mind is the city. It is said to have six gates. Apart from the mind itself, which refers to the thoughts that enter it, there are the other external objects: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch (*phassa*). When these come flooding in, one must apply mindfulness—mindfulness coupled with awareness—and reflect on each one. This reflection must be done with extreme rapidity. It is not about uttering long sentences. If it is a form, one notes "form, form" twice. If it is a sound, "sound, sound." In that way, the mind is given the designation "smell, smell," "taste, taste." Through this designating, it is understood, and the matter is ended there. This is the kind of discipline that one adopts in meditation, in insight meditation. This is the meaning that the Buddha has expressed in this verse. In short, what is spoken of here is Nibbāna—the factors that support Nibbāna. That is why, next, the Buddha says: "*khaṇo ve mā upaccagā*"—"do not let this opportunity to realize Nibbāna pass you by."

This "moment"—the opportune moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*)—is described in the Dhamma in this way: the Buddha has stated that a human birth obtained during the period of a Buddha's appearance—that entire life—should be regarded as a single "moment." The Buddha said: "Monks, the people of the world often say, 'The world is bound to the moment, the world is bound to the moment' (*khaṇakicco loko*). They say that this world is a place where tasks must be done on time, on the instant. But what the right moment is, and what the wrong moment is, the world does not know." Then the Buddha declares: "Monks, now a Buddha has appeared in the world and is preaching the Dhamma. Yet, a certain person is born in hell. In that case, even though a Buddha has appeared, one does not get the opportunity to realize Nibbāna. That is what is called an inopportune moment." That is, the Buddha points out eight inopportune moments when the timing is wrong—moments that are not the right opportunity. Showing these eight, he states that one who is free from these eight obtains the opportune moment during the period of a Buddha's appearance. So, as mentioned first, a Buddha has appeared and preaches the Dhamma, but this unfortunate person is born in hell. Then it is impossible to benefit from this Dhamma and bring suffering (*dukkha*) to an end. That is the first. Next, it is stated—and it is the same: a Buddha has appeared and preaches the Dhamma, but that person is born in the realm of departed spirits (*peta-loka*). Third, a Buddha has appeared and preaches the Dhamma, but this person is an animal, born in the animal

realm. In such a situation, too, it is impossible to travel along the path to Nibbāna and be freed from the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra. Likewise, a Buddha has appeared and preaches the Dhamma, but a person is born in a very long-lived class of devas—in a celestial realm. While indulged in the pleasures of that heaven, they do not get the chance to practice the holy life (*brahmacariya*) in the Dispensation, develop the three characteristics—the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—and bring the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra to an end. It is difficult because of the sensual pleasures and various other reasons in those realms. The human world is indeed the best place for realizing Nibbāna. Furthermore, a Buddha has appeared and preaches the Dhamma, but a person is born in a remote border region. Generally, it is said that Buddhas are born in the Middle Country (*Majjhima-desa*) of India (*Jambudīpa*). Therefore, one born in that Middle Country has obtained a fortunate birth. That is to say, during the time of the Buddha, there was a situation in that region where one could hear the Dhamma and live in accordance with it. If, in such a time, a person is born in an extremely remote region, where one does not even get to hear the Dhamma, and where the fourfold assembly—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen—does not visit, then such a person cannot benefit from this Dhamma. Thus, that opportunity is not a proper one; it is an unfortunate time. Next, a Buddha has appeared and preaches the Dhamma, and a person is indeed born in the Middle Country, residing in that very region. However, that person holds wrong views. He is blinded by strong wrong views. Such a person cannot benefit from the Dhamma. That opportunity is indeed an unfortunate one. Next, it is shown: a Buddha has appeared and preaches the Dhamma, but this person cannot understand anything that is explained. He lacks wisdom. That is, his wisdom is immature. Such a person cannot benefit from the Dhamma. Thus, that opportunity is also an unfortunate one. Finally, in the last instance, a person is highly wise, is born in the Middle Country of India, and all other conditions are complete, but a Buddha has not appeared, and the Dhamma is not preached. That is the eighth instance.

In this way, the Buddha declares that there are eight inopportune moments. If, escaping these eight inopportune moments during the period of a Buddha's appearance, a person obtains a birth in a suitable region where they can hear the Dhamma and live in accordance with it, without any sensory impairments and possessing wisdom—that, the Buddha declares, is an extremely rare moment, a precious opportunity. Therefore, you should think of yourselves as having obtained such a noble opportunity. It is this opportune moment that the Buddha urges us not to waste. If that moment is missed, if that opportunity is lost, the Buddha gives a simile: it is just like a merchant who gets an opportunity to buy goods at a cheap price, but fails to take advantage of it and later regrets it. In the same way, one will have to regret if, during a time when one can benefit from the Dhamma—an extremely rare opportunity obtained in this unimaginably long saṃsāra—one fails to make use of it. What is meant by "making use of it"? It is realizing Nibbāna, bringing the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra to an end. At the very least, as mentioned, it is obtaining a supramundane state by attaining the path of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga*), which helps one escape the lower realms. This is how we have to understand this verse.

That is why: "*khaṇātītā hi socanti, nirayamhi samappitā*"—if that noble moment is allowed to pass, what happens to that person is that they fall into hell, suffering and sorrowing. Indeed, as we said before, people nowadays make so many efforts to protect the body, but because they are not concerned with guarding the mind, during this brief lifespan, after setting up various security systems, they sometimes meet their death at the hands of those very guards. In the end, where do they go and take birth? In the realms of departed spirits, the realms of *yakkhas*, in woeful states, or in hell. We hear various stories of people being born in such places. It is in such an extremely unfortunate era that we live. But you, devout lay followers who reflect wisely, must always bear in mind the Buddha's advice: what is meant here by self-protection is guarding the mind. Guarding the mind means applying mindfulness to those doors—the six doors connected to the mind—and assigning the duty belonging to the sentry in a manner appropriate to one's meditation. Regarding the awareness called *sampajañña* that goes hand-in-hand with mindfulness, it is presented in four ways in the Dhamma. A person practicing a meditation subject has to apply that awareness in accordance with their meditation subject. That is to say, when a sense-object arrives, they have to consider: "Is this object helpful to the meditation subject I am practicing? Is it useful? Is it purposeful?" Next, they must also consider: "Is it suitable (*sappāya*) for my meditation? Is it appropriate? Is it fit?" Moreover, they must examine whether they can maintain their meditation subject at all times through every such object. Lastly, they must acquire the ability to look at that object without being deluded by it. Reflecting deeply in this way, just as that security guard maintains a high degree of awareness in fulfilling his assigned duty and responsibility, the meditator, the person dedicated to meditation, guards their own meditation subject. The meditation subject is the only thing one has to guard. It is through maintaining those meditation subjects that one is able to realize Nibbāna. This is why *sampajañña*—awareness or clear comprehension—must be understood in a very broad sense.

Thus, the objects that help in guarding mindfulness in this manner are what the Buddha has declared as the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). That is, we are not talking about other things or external things here. One establishes mindfulness on the very body received—this body. Next, on feelings (*vedanā*). Next, on the mind—understanding the nature of the mind in its various states. Next, on the thoughts that enter the mind. These can be taken generally as: body, feelings (*vedanā*), mind, and thoughts. Establishing mindfulness on these means constantly living in the present moment. Usually, people live either in the future or in the past. Thinking about what is to be done in the future, or thinking about what has happened in the past, people generally live with a dead past and an unborn future. The Buddha has given the advice to remove this tendency and to strive, as far as possible, to live in the present.

Here too, we can think of that sentry. If that sentry starts running after a person who has already passed his guard post, he will not be able to perform the duty belonging to his office. By directing full attention within a brief moment and inspecting them, he understands the situation and lets that person go. He then stands ready for the next person. A skilled and clever sentry is always ready for whoever arrives. In the same way,

one who has well-established mindfulness understands each and every incoming object in its true nature—in its true nature as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—and lets them go. Why does he let them go? Because they are things that have the nature of constantly coming and going, things of an impermanent nature. Understanding the impermanent as impermanent—this is indeed through direct experience. By practicing mindfulness in this way, that wisdom gradually develops. Wisdom means understanding. It is by understanding, on this basis, that everything existing in the entire world is of an impermanent nature that one is able to realize Nibbāna. For there exist perverted views in the world. These are called *vipallāsa*—four perverted views are spoken of: taking the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent; taking the foul (*asubha*) as beautiful; taking what is characterized by suffering (*dukkha*) as pleasant; and taking what is not-self (*anattā*) as self. It is within these four perverted views that the world lives. The Buddha declares that it is because of these four perverted qualities called *vipallāsa* that beings wander long in this saṃsāra. The path of living in accordance with wisdom—by turning away from this perverted state, turning away from delusion, from bewilderment, and from ignorance—is what is called the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).

This is not something that costs much. It costs nothing at all. However, one has to make a certain sacrifice. Regarding the things that the world—or rather, the pompous, ostentatious world—usually thinks of as important and valuable, and regarding the values one personally attributes to them, one must reconsider them and arrive at a Dhamma-compliant conclusion concerning them, as well as about the way one's life is being spent. Now, even though the Buddha described this lifespan as a single moment, people generally divide this life, this one brief moment, and set aside a portion, saying, "This is the final part of my life." They think that activities like listening to sermons, meditating, and keeping precepts are for the final stage of life. But the Buddha constantly reminds us of diligence (*appamāda*), and of the fact that the time of death is uncertain. On one occasion, to arouse spiritual urgency, the Buddha spoke a certain verse:

Ajjeva kiccamātappaṃ

ko jaññā maraṇaṃ suve

na hi no saṅgaraṃ tena

mahāsenena maccunā

—Bhaddekaratta Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya

Strive today itself; who knows if death will come tomorrow? For there is no bargaining with Death (*Maccu*) and his great army. One cannot enter into a treaty with Death (*Māra*) and his great host, can one? One cannot say, "Give me a little time until I am free from my children, until I retire from my job, because I couldn't perform other meritorious deeds—meaning, I couldn't practice meditation, I couldn't set aside time." One cannot make a contract with Death (*Māra*) in that way. That is the reality that prevails in the world. Therefore, a wise human being who is born during the period of a

Buddha's appearance in this long saṃsāra, in a region where they can hear the Dhamma and live in accordance with it, must regard this entire life as a single moment.

So that moment—that is precisely why the Buddha said the world states, "The world is bound to the moment, the world is bound to the moment." Everyone says that this world is a place where one works on time. Even today, in a city, we hear this all the time. In offices and other places. Where worldly work is done, the talk is always of efficiency and promptness. When traveling in vehicles, there too, the talk is of promptness. Yet, when it comes to the journey of the Dhamma, the journey in the Dispensation, or meditation, there is no such urgency. Such is the state of affairs in the world. The Buddha's vision is quite different. In short, to establish that mindfulness, we may sometimes have to perform even our daily activities slowly. Diligence (*appamāda*) in the Dhamma means bringing forth mindfulness regarding these very activities. Thus, to bring forth mindfulness, especially in the beginning, one may have to carry out one's postures and activities slowly, like a sick person. Why? Because sense-objects flood in with great rapidity. When these are brought through a narrow gate and made to pass one by one, managing them is easy. For this reason, performing everything slowly, one must gradually gain a deep understanding of them. But if we look at the life stories of those wealthy people holding high positions who are deemed "successful" in daily life, that is not how they have spent their lives. Clinging to a vast array of tasks, losing sleep, and committing various offenses, they have simply accumulated wealth. Yet, the Dhamma does not speak of such things. Leaving behind that vast accumulation of wealth, turning toward a simpler attire, and living by the principle of "simple living and high thinking," one should—even with difficulty—observe the precepts on a poya day or a holiday. Setting aside time for that, one must personally test the truth of the Dhamma proclaimed by the Buddha. One must personally put it into practice. If one spends even a single day in that manner, one can gain an entirely different experience compared to the experiences gathered over a whole lifetime. That is why the Buddha declared this Dhamma as "*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*"—to be personally realized by the wise.

You lay devotees often hear and recite the six qualities describing this Dhamma. "*Svākkhāto*"—well-proclaimed is the Dhamma. Why is it said to be well-proclaimed? This Dhamma is said to be properly proclaimed not merely because the Buddha's Dhamma is sweet, nor only because those words and that teaching are perfectly complete, but because in a deep sense, it is "well-proclaimed" (*svākkhāto*) because one can obtain the results by practicing it. "*Durakkhāta*" means poorly proclaimed. The Buddha stated that in a poorly proclaimed Dhamma, dispensation, or religion, it is the lazy person who lives in comfort. But in a well-proclaimed (*svākkhāta*) Dhamma, one that is properly preached, the Buddha declares that it is the energetic person who lives in comfort. This is a profound idea. That is to say, in a teaching preached in a wrong manner, with wrong views, if a person lives properly according to it, he goes to hell. Therefore, the lazy person lives in comfort there. However, in this well-proclaimed Dhamma, it is the energetic person who can live in comfort, who lives happily. The lazy person lives in misery. The person who does not perform today itself what ought to be done—that task mentioned earlier—will regret it. They will suffer in this life, and they

will suffer on their deathbed. Then, in an even more terrifying manner, as expressed by "*nirayamhi samappitā*", they will fall into hell and have to suffer. Furthermore, they will have to seek the help of living relatives, visible or invisible, in various ways. It is because such a state of affairs exists in saṃsāra, in the world, that the Buddha delivered these teachings on many occasions. Such is the quality of "well-proclaimed" (*svākkhāto*) in this Dhamma.

"*Sandiṭṭhika*" means that by practicing this Dhamma, one can personally experience and test its efficacy in this very life, in a directly visible manner. The Nibbāna spoken of in the Buddha's Dhamma is not something to be obtained only in a future world. In almost all other teachings, the ultimate goal, the highest attainment, is presented as a state to be reached only after death. Our Buddha alone declared that in this very life—"*diṭṭhe'va dhamme*" means in this present life—the bliss of Nibbāna can be realized, and the ending of the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra can be accomplished right here. Thus, in that higher sense, it is not only the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry and so forth; even in daily life, as we mentioned earlier, a person who sets aside even a single day, performing movements slowly, maintaining a suitable meditation subject, and testing the truth of those teachings in accordance with that meditation subject, can develop faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha in a single day. This is not a faith found merely in books, but one arising from within oneself, thinking: "The Buddha has indeed preached such a Dhamma!" That is *sandiṭṭhika* (directly visible). Next, "*akālika*" means that this Dhamma has the nature of yielding results without delay. It is not like a gift that is awarded. In some worldly matters, when someone achieves a certain status, they are given a prize; one has to present one's credentials and wait until the prize is awarded. There is no such thing here. The result comes immediately upon the fulfillment of these conditions. The Buddha demonstrated this in both very simple and very profound ways. He explained it in a simple way when a certain Brahmin asked. He inquired: "Venerable Sir, what is the meaning of *sandiṭṭhika*, *akālika*, and *ehipassika*?" The Buddha explained it to him in a way that he could understand, even from his perspective as a Brahmin. "Now, Brahmin, let us say you have greed (*lobha*) regarding something. If, by putting in some effort and understanding the value of generosity, you remove that greed—at that very moment, do you not realize, 'Because of that greed, I suffered so much; now, because I have given up that greed, I have received this much peace'? That is what is meant by *sandiṭṭhika* and *akālika*. The result is obtained right there; there is no need to wait. It is the same with hatred (*dosa*). Now, you get angry with someone; you arouse hatred. When that hatred arises, your face changes completely, becomes distorted, and you suffer a certain pain and dejection because of that hatred. If you remove that hatred through thoughts of loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*), at that moment a great peace is obtained. You experience it right there. It is the same with delusion (*moha*). If, when delusion arises, you act with established mindfulness, and perform the reflection properly at that moment, the benefit of that wisdom is present right there. This is how it is in a general sense." When viewed in a deep sense, simultaneously with the fulfillment of the Noble Eightfold Path, the fruit of Stream-entry is attained. The Buddha does not have to come and say, "Here, I grant you Stream-entry." There is no such thing.

It is declared there that it is inherent in the Dhamma itself, obtained by practicing the Dhamma. "*Akālika*"—it yields results without delay.

"*Ehipassiko*" means "come and see." It invites one to come and look. It is not the Buddha who says "come and see," but the Dhamma itself. This Dhamma cries out, "Put me into practice and see." Thus, it is the Dhamma that is *ehipassiko* here. "Come and see"—"Come and look, practice and see." It makes an invitation in this manner. "*Opanayiko*" means that the nature of this Dhamma is such that one factor leads to another in a wonderful manner, in accordance with the law of cause and effect. Now, anyone can understand this easily. If a person who held wrong views listens to the Dhamma from the Buddha to develop right view, understands good arguments, understands wholesome and unwholesome actions, and gains some understanding of the Four Noble Truths—at that point, right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) arises in that person to a certain extent. Along with that right view, wholesome thoughts arise in him: "Renunciation is good; leaving behind (*nekkhamma*) is good; non-harming is good; loving-kindness is good." In that direction, thoughts of loving-kindness, wholesome thoughts of that nature, arise. That is right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*). This is why the Buddha declares: "*sammādiṭṭhissa sammāsaṅkappo pahoti*"—in one of right view, right intention, wholesome thoughts, arise naturally, effortlessly, and spontaneously. In that way, instead of remaining bound by stinginess in the household life, ordination—that renunciation (*nekkhamma*)—is seen as something highly valuable. Likewise, turning away from violence and maintaining thoughts of non-harming and compassion is seen as highly valuable. Turning away from hatred, thoughts of loving-kindness. In this way, through thoughts, that person reaps benefits at that very moment. Here lies "*opanayiko*"—it leads from one stage to another. In one of right view, right intention arises. In one of right intention, appropriate, wholesome speech issues from the mouth. Truthful speech, speech that unites others, gentle speech, and speech in accordance with the Dhamma issue from his mouth. Thus, "*sammāsaṅkappassa sammāvācā pahoti*"—in one of right intention, of wholesome thoughts and aspirations, wholesome speech issues forth precisely because of those wholesome thoughts. Next, "*sammāvācassa sammākammanto pahoti*"—the person who purifies their speech thinks: "I maintain thoughts of renunciation, loving-kindness, and non-harming in this way. That is how I purify my thoughts, and that is how I purify my speech. Therefore, actions like killing living beings, stealing, and sexual misconduct are not fitting for me." Thus, he naturally abstains from them as well. Thereafter, it is not merely a matter of doing this for a day or two, but one shapes one's livelihood—one's lifestyle—according to it, even if some sacrifice is required. Thinking, "These are not things to be observed occasionally only on poya days. I must align my entire livelihood, my whole way of life, with this path," that person makes an effort and refines his right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*)—a proper way of living. And the person who has established a proper way of living, through his endeavors, next exerts right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*). True effort does not mean engaging in some physical labor until one sweats profusely. What is true energy? It is remaining highly attentive to the mind, preventing unwholesome states that are about to arise, abandoning unwholesome states that have already arisen, bringing forth wholesome states, and consolidating those wholesome states that have arisen within oneself. This is the fourfold effort. This is the energy that

arises in a person who makes a certain sacrifice in their livelihood to establish a righteous way of living. Then, through that very effort, as he applies it, he naturally falls into the aforementioned establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*); the Four Establishments of Mindfulness are fulfilled. For that person is constantly attentive to his own mind, and to the body that acts in accordance with that mind. The body and the mind function in connection with each other. The ordinary person is subordinated to the body and ignores the mind. The Buddha shows that the mind is the forerunner, in accordance with the Dhamma: "*mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā*." Now, in the book called the Dhammapada, presented as the opening for many verses proclaimed by the Buddha, as the door to that treasury of gems, is: "*Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano seṭṭhā manomayā*"—mind is the forerunner of all things, mind is supreme, they are mind-made. No one can disprove this. Not even a worldly scientist can disprove this. Such is this wonderful teaching. For this reason, the Buddha gave priority to the mind. The Buddha declared: "*cittena nīyati loko*"—the world is led by the mind. It is through the mind that the world thinks about these things. The scientist does his work in the laboratory with the mind. Thus, everything is led by the mind. Even going to the moon is done by the mind. Everything is done by the mind. Some people might misunderstand these things and interpret them in a perverted way. But what is present here is that the mind is primary in everything. That statement made by the Buddha is eternally true: "*cittena nīyati loko*." That is why the Buddha gives priority to the mind.

If that proper vision called right view arises in one, the lineage of Dhamma factors arising from there is what is called the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha has declared that this practice is superior to all other paths in the entire world. There are all kinds of broad paths in the world, paths where one can travel in comfortable vehicles, various kinds of paths. However, the Buddha declares: "*maggānaṭṭhaṅgiko seṭṭho*"—the path with eight factors is the best. In that way, when this mindfulness is fulfilled through the Four Establishments of Mindfulness, concentration (*samādhi*) naturally grows within such a person. By applying the mind to a single object, just as that sentry applies mindfulness well to each arrival, a certain concentration arises within him, even if only for a brief moment. Thereafter, he is able to sustain it for a longer duration. It is through the fulfillment of this Noble Eightfold Path that one can realize this noble Dhamma of Nibbāna, be freed from all the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra, and find peace in the deathless bliss of Nibbāna.

Therefore, today is a very valuable poya day. It is the day the Buddha set the Wheel of Dhamma in motion. Thus, we must strive to set this Wheel of Dhamma in motion within our own mental continuums to escape from this aforementioned mass of suffering (*dukkha*). Today, on this precious day, you have established yourselves in your respective precepts, or in a noble virtue, and have listened to the Dhamma in this manner for about an hour. During this time, you may have been able to realize those aforementioned Dhamma principles to some extent, according to your own store of merit and capacity of wisdom. In short, had you spent this time on other things, on worldly matters, such a peaceful and pure group of thoughts would not have arisen. The value of the Dhamma, in terms of being *sandiṭṭhika* and *akālika*, must be understood accordingly.

Now, by listening to the Dhamma for this long, you lay devotees have gathered a great store of merit. As a benefit, you can realize at this very moment those qualities declared by the Buddha: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). With a certain measure of faith, followed by corresponding energy, you have remained in this posture during this time, established mindfulness accordingly, listened to the Dhamma, and experienced a certain degree of concentration. If a certain understanding of the Dhamma has arisen, wisdom has developed through it. Reflecting in this way, you must firmly resolve to travel along this path of Dhamma, gradually, step by step, and derive the maximum benefit possible from this human life—the maximum benefit from this opportune moment. Making such a resolution, you should aspire: "By the power of the great merits accumulated through listening to the Dhamma, may I gain the strength and power to realize the deathless supreme Nibbāna in this very life, as quickly as possible, through the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship."

Likewise, we must share this accumulated store of merit—the store of merit accumulated by both of us through preaching and listening to the Dhamma—with the devas. May the assembly of devas who protect the Dispensation, and whatever deities reside in this sacred place, joyfully appreciate these merits! May they all realize the supreme deathless Nibbāna through whichever of the three states of awakening (*bodhi*) they have aspired to! May they protect us and the Dispensation! In the same way, may all departed relatives, and all beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, appreciate this merit of our preaching and listening to the Dhamma! Having appreciated it, may they be freed from all suffering (*dukkha*) states and reach happy states, and practicing meditation as quickly as possible, find peace in the supreme deathless Nibbāna! With this aspiration, recite these verses to share the merit:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #4

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yogā ve jāyatī bhūri,

ayogā bhūrisaṅkhayo;

Etaṃ dvedhāpathaṃ ñatvā,

bhavāya vibhavāya ca;

Tathāttānaṃ niveseyya,

yathā bhūri pavaḍḍhati.

From:

Verse 282 from the Maggavagga (Chapter on the Path) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The Sublime Dhamma expounded by the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha—that Buddha-word—is indeed a path of practice that helps one escape the suffering of *saṃsāra* and realize Nibbāna. Therefore, no matter how comprehensively one studies the Buddha's teachings, complete with commentaries and sub-commentaries, or commits them to memory, if one does not walk this path of practice consisting of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), the ultimate purpose of the Buddha's teaching is not fulfilled. One cannot realize Nibbāna. Meditation is especially essential for realizing Nibbāna. Without meditation, no one can attain Nibbāna. The word that conveys this meaning of engaging in meditation is '*yoga*'. In other religions, the word '*yoga*' may be used in various other senses. However, in our Dhamma, '*yoga*' refers to meditative attention—to meditation and reflection. '*Ayoga*' means non-application to meditation. Thus, '*yoga*' is application to meditation, and '*ayoga*' is the

lack of application to meditation. It is to demonstrate the difference between these two that we have chosen as our theme today this verse uttered by the Buddha.

The background story related to this verse is a highly exemplary tale. During the time when the Buddha was residing at Jeta Grove, there was a senior elder named Poṭhila. This Ven. Poṭhila was an expert in the *Tipiṭaka*, having committed it entirely to memory, and was an acharya who taught the Dhamma to five hundred pupils. Judging by the standards of today, you all know how various degrees are awarded—he was an elder worthy of being honored with great titles such as *Tipiṭakācāriya* or *Tipiṭaka-vāgīssarācāriya*. Yet, despite Ven. Poṭhila being so full of book learning, he did not turn his mind toward meditation. He did not think about his own Nibbāna, or his own release from *saṃsāra*, no matter how many pupils he taught. The Buddha, thinking of this monk, felt a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*). "Alas, even though he is so highly educated, he still has not thought about his own Nibbāna." What was the device the Buddha used to instill a sense of urgency in this monk? When Ven. Poṭhila came to pay respects, the Buddha would address him as "Empty Poṭhila" (*Tuccha-Poṭhila*). However the word '*tuccha*' is used in society, its literal meaning is 'empty'. Thus: "Come here, Empty Poṭhila. Welcome, Empty Poṭhila. Sit down, Empty Poṭhila. Ah, well, go now, Empty Poṭhila. There goes Empty Poṭhila." In this manner, whenever Ven. Poṭhila approached, the Buddha would use those words—the word '*tuccha*'. This monk felt a deep sense of urgency. "Alas! The Buddha—my Teacher—addresses me with this word 'empty', me, who am so highly educated and who teaches such a vast number of pupils!" Now, why did the Buddha out of great compassion give him this "insulting nickname"? It was to arouse in that monk a sense of urgency regarding deliverance from *saṃsāra*, and also to shatter the pride born of his learning and his large following.

For one who is practicing virtuous qualities in this Dispensation (*Sāsana*), while engaged in activities like meditation, it becomes necessary to receive various instructions under the guidance of a teacher. To receive such instructions, humility is indispensable. This monk must have thought, "Now I know everything." An already filled pot cannot be refilled; it must be emptied before it can be filled. It was with this intention of emptying him and shattering his pride that the Buddha began addressing this monk as "Empty". Yet, this monk did not become angry because of it. He did not harbor ill-will or hatred toward the Buddha, thinking, "He is disrespecting me." Understanding his own position, he then decided, "Now I must abandon all these pupils and leave. I must go to some forest monastery, go to a remote forest, and meditate." Having made this resolution, the next morning he taught his pupils for the last time. As soon as the very last pupil departed, in a manner unseen and unnoticed by anyone—almost in disguise, or rather, simply unnoticed—he departed before dawn. Having traveled hundreds of leagues away, he arrived at a certain forest monastery. In that forest monastery, there resided thirty monks—all of whom were Arahants. This elder approached the chief monk of the monastery and requested, "O venerable sir, please be my refuge." That is, to help him achieve Nibbāna. This elder first said, "Alas, are you not a person of such vast learning? It is from people like you that we too have to learn." "Alas, do not say so, venerable sir! I have come seeking refuge. Please give me a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) for

Nibbāna." To break his pride further, the chief monk sent him to the second monk. That monk sent him to the next. In this manner, they passed him along until he was sent to a newly ordained seven-year-old novice monk (*sāmaṇera*) who sat at the very end of the entire community of monks. This novice was no ordinary person; he was an Arahant. When Ven. Poṭhila approached, this young novice, who was indeed a great Arahant, was sewing a robe in a quiet spot. Ven. Poṭhila came up to the novice, paid respects, and pleaded, "Venerable good sir, please be my refuge; please help me." Then this novice also said, "Alas, venerable sir, you are an elder who is very elderly, learned, and of great erudition. When we ourselves ought to learn from you, why do you speak like this?" "No, no, do not say so. I have come with the hope of realizing Nibbāna. Please help me. If you tell me to, I am even prepared to jump into fire." Thus he expressed his obedience. To remove any remaining pride and test his obedience, the young novice pointed to a pond nearby and said, "If so, venerable sir, step into that pond over there." Ven. Poṭhila, who was wearing fine, valuable robes, stepped into the pond just as he was. As soon as he stepped in, and the edge of his robe was barely wet, the young Arahant novice called out, "Come back, venerable sir!" and then began to deliver the lesson.

You, devout listeners, can imagine what that scene must have been like. A seven-year-old novice—how cute and delicate a novice, yet an Arahant! And the other monk, highly learned, gray-haired, and possessing a very imposing appearance. Yet, that elder sat squatting, ready to learn this lesson in order to realize Nibbāna. He was prepared to learn from this seven-year-old novice a lesson he had been unable to learn for so long. What was the lesson given by this Arahant novice? He gave a simile that anyone can take deeply or simply: "Then, venerable sir, let us suppose there is an anthill with six holes. A monitor lizard enters through one of those six holes. If one wants to catch this lizard, what should one do? One must block five of the holes and watch over the single hole through which the lizard entered. By watching there, one can catch the lizard. In the same way, venerable sir, we have six sense bases—like the anthill, in this body of ours. Various objects enter through these six sense doors. If we want to 'catch' those objects that have entered—here, 'catching' means understanding in a deep sense. As is commonly said nowadays: 'I couldn't catch what was said.' It is that kind of catching that is meant here. Catching the lizard means truly understanding the real nature of the object—various objects, which we call 'sense-objects' when we think of various things. Truly understanding the real nature of the object is what is meant by catching the object. Just as one blocks the five holes to catch the lizard, among these six sense bases, one must close the five doors of the external senses, namely the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, and engage in guarding the door of the mind (*manas*), also called 'the mind' (*sita*). That is the idea." There was no need for further elaboration. No sooner had the young novice spoken this simile than Ven. Poṭhila's past merits came to the fore, and he understood it deeply. Immediately upon that realization, the Buddha, who had been watching this event from hundreds of leagues away, using his Buddha-knowledge to further encourage Ven. Poṭhila—to inspire him to apply himself to the meditation subject—uttered the verse we took as our theme:

Yogā ve jāyati bhūri,

ayogā bhūrisaṅkhayo;

etaṁ dvedhāpathaṁ ñatvā,

bhavāya vibhavāya ca;

tathāttānaṁ niveseyya,

yathā bhūri pavaḍḍhati.

"*Yogā ve jāyati bhūri*"—*yoga* means application to meditation, meditative attention. Through that meditative attention, one can gain wisdom as vast as the earth itself; one can obtain a great result. "*Ayogā bhūrisaṅkhayo*"—but if there is no such meditative attention, no such application, what happens is the decay of wisdom. Wisdom is destroyed; understanding fades away. "*Etaṁ dvedhāpathaṁ ñatvā bhavāya vibhavāya ca*"—knowing these two paths, this fork in the road, fully understanding these two paths branching in opposite directions, one toward progress (*bhava*) and the other toward decline (*vibhava*); "*tathāttānaṁ niveseyya yathā bhūri pavaḍḍhati*"—"conduct oneself in such a way that wisdom may grow, walk that path, turn onto that path." This is how the Buddha advised Ven. Poṭhila through this verse. It is recorded that, encouraged by this advice, Ven. Poṭhila applied meditative attention with great speed and became an Arahant. From this, we can understand that there is a depth in that verse sufficient to aid one in attaining Arahantship. Why? Because the Dhamma he had studied was presented as a meditation subject through that simple simile of the monitor lizard and the anthill by the novice monk.

Now, we can draw many lessons from this story. Let us first look at that. First of all, we see in this story the difference between book learning (knowledge) and wisdom. This is something that many people confuse nowadays. Ours is an era overflowing with knowledge. What with science and various other arts and crafts—if you look at a library, it is filled with books. There is such an abundance of knowledge overflowing in the world. But wisdom is not that. Wisdom is a subtle understanding. Most people lack it. Especially, wisdom here means the deep understanding that leads to the realization of Nibbāna—the deep understanding of the Four Noble Truths. Most people do not have that. They do not strive for wisdom either. Instead, they carry a heavy burden of knowledge, spend their lives crushed by its weight, and in the end, when they die, they might be born in woeful states, as animals or hungry ghosts (*petas*). Why? Because one cannot escape *saṃsāra* with a mere burden of knowledge. For wisdom, one must travel the path of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla-samādhi-paññā*) and undergo training in it. Or to put it in another way—wisdom means unifying the mind through some meditation subject, developing the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), and realizing the Paths and Fruits. The difference between these two is clearly illustrated here: although the elder Ven. Poṭhila possessed qualifications worthy of receiving various high academic degrees, he had not realized Nibbāna, the true purpose of the Buddha's teaching. He had not even attained the stage of a Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). Yet that seven-year-old novice, a newly

ordained monk whom we call a "little monk," was no ordinary little one but a great Arahant. Such is the vast gulf between book learning and wisdom.

Furthermore, when we think of the word "empty" used by the Buddha, which might appear as a form of disparagement, we can understand that the primary quality needed to practice a meditation subject and train according to it is humility. Although Ven. Poṭhila had shortcomings initially, how humbly did he seek refuge from the novice at that moment! This is exemplary for everyone—an incident worthy of drawing a lesson in discipline. Thus, he demonstrated the quality of humility, setting an example for the world. Despite his vast learning, he humbly and respectfully sought advice from one who had supramundane realization. Ven. Poṭhila has given us a wonderful example.

On the other hand, look at the simile that was given, and also the training that demonstrated the spiritual majesty of that novice. He told Ven. Poṭhila to step into the pond, and the elder obeyed that majesty. Next, the simile given by the young monk: the simile of the monitor lizard entering an anthill. This 'anthill' carries a profound meaning. The simile of the anthill is shown in the Dhamma itself. This physical frame, born of parents, nourished by food and drink, and constructed from the four primary elements—earth, water, fire, and wind (or *paṭhavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*)—is compared to an anthill. The six holes of this anthill are the six doors. The five external sense bases—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—are like the five external holes. Why are they called "holes"? They are "doors". Through these doors, we receive various objects. The eye sees forms, the ear hears sounds, the nose smells odors, the tongue tastes flavors, the body feels touch, and the mind receives thoughts. Thus, objects stream in through these six doors. Yet, there is a specialty here. It is the mind that experiences, that "consumes," the objects that stream in through the five external senses—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. If we were to view this like a picture, the five external senses are situated around the periphery, with the mind in the center. All the messages—sensory messages—from those five are deposited in the mind. If we think of the anthill, we can imagine that the mind is like the topmost hole of the anthill. It is the principal one. The five external senses are like the five holes around it. We can contemplate it in this way for a moment. We usually think that the eye apprehends the object, or the ear apprehends the object. But from wherever they are received, they ultimately deposit in the mind.

The mind is foremost. This is one of the most special and supreme statements in the Buddha's teaching. Though modern science may not give it such consideration, the Buddha's teaching accords the primary place to the mind. The first two verses of the Dhammapada begin with the words: "*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā*." This is like a fundamental principle of the Buddha's teaching. "*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*"—'*dhammā*' here refers to the things that are objects of the mind. We can call them "things." Mind precedes everything we consider to be "things." The mind is foremost in these. "*Manoseṭṭhā*"—the mind is supreme. "*Manomayā*"—when we truly ponder over it, they are mind-made; they are fashioned by the mind. Regarding what is taken as a "form" or a "sound" and so forth, it is the aspect connected to the mind that the Buddha highlights. These are, as it were, constructed by

the mind itself. Therefore, it is through the mind itself that this problem must be resolved. What does it mean to resolve the problem through the mind itself? It is by reflecting on (attention to) the incoming objects. Through reflecting on these objects, one understands their true nature—their true nature according to the Dhamma. What do ordinary people do? They run after the form that meets the eye to see it better. They run after the sound that meets the ear. These are perceptions (*saññā*). The Buddha compared perceptions to a mirage. What is a mirage? During the hot season, due to atmospheric and climatic conditions, a deer sees a shimmering, flickering phenomenon on the ground, mistakes it for water, and runs after it. The more it runs, the further away it recedes. That is why it is called a mirage, or *mṛgatṛṣṇikā* (the deer's thirst). The thirsty deer runs after it. The Buddha compared perceptions to that very mirage. If so, how much do we exhaust ourselves trying to see a form clearly nowadays, such that microscopes are not enough, telescopes are not enough! To that extent we analyze and analyze them. Yet, that does not bring us closer to the Dhamma. It does not bring us closer to seeing the reality expounded by the Buddha. It does not ultimately help us comprehend the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*).

The same applies to sound and other sense-objects. People run far after these. What is the danger (*ādīnava*) of this running? Why do they run? It is because of desires for them. Running after these perceptions causes the growth of defilements known by various names such as craving (*taṇhā*), desire, and greed. Instead of that, what one is told to do—especially in insight (*vipassanā*) meditation—is to note (or contemplate) each of these things briefly. That yogi, the practitioner (*yogāvacara*), is traveling the path to Nibbāna, a journey to Nibbāna. Now, even if we are traveling a long distance, if we are heading toward a destination, but we keep stopping our vehicle everywhere because "here is a beautiful view" or "here is a good song" and stay to watch and listen, we will not be able to complete our journey. It becomes a cause for delay. Therefore, one who seeks Nibbāna diligently, when applying oneself to that yogic practice, to meditation, to meditative attention, does not chase after a form that is seen. One does not run after it. Instead, one presents to the mind: "Form, form," noting it in that manner twice as "this is merely a form." That is what is called noting, meditative attention. "Form, form." Similarly with a sound—if it is a song, without analyzing who sang it or what kind of song it is, the meditator seated in meditation finishes it right there by noting: "Sound, sound." "Sound, sound." Likewise with smells—whether an odor or a fragrance. That too is a certain sensation—an odor or fragrance. One notes it briefly and finishes it right there. In this manner, even if a thought arises, without letting that thought grow or proliferate, one notes it as a thought. One notes it as "merely a thought." It is through this that, instead of running after the mirage, one can halt the mind. Halting this running mind is the specific training done here.

What have we been doing for a long time in this *saṃsāra*? Just as the deer runs after the mirage, we ran after the perceptions received through our senses. There is never any satisfaction. The deer runs to quench its thirst, but its thirst only increases, and it cannot find water to end it, because there is no water there. Similarly, we run after a "thing"

conjured up by our minds to satisfy our desires. The things we conceive as "things"—those "things" are indeed those sense-objects. But not a single one of them can be grasped by us. Their true nature cannot be caught. We cannot be satisfied by looking with the eye or hearing with the ear. Instead, the Buddha tells us to close those five doors and note the things that come to the mind in the manner described. Even the arising thought is noted as a thought—without submitting to that thought, without allowing it to grow. Recognizing it as "thought, thought," one finishes it right there. In this way, like "nipping it in the bud," this insight attention is what is meant here by "catching the monitor lizard"—it is understanding the true nature of the object. These "monitor lizards"—these objects—have been deposited in the mind in a highly subtle manner for a long time throughout this long *saṃsāra*. The objects we created in the past *saṃsāra* due to perceptions entering the mind lie, as it were, dormant within the mind. They wake up and try to escape through the five external senses. A certain past perception regarding a form seen by the eye arises—emerging from within the mind—and grasping the external form, one runs after it, thinking, "Ah, what a beautiful form!" "Ah, what a good song!" "What a sweet sound!" and runs after it. These also emerge from the mind. Once they emerge and begin running through the five external senses, they cannot be stopped again. Instead, what does one do? The meditator closes those five doors, denies them entry, treats them briefly, nips them in the bud, and remains watchful of the mind. What is used to aid this watchfulness? That is what is called mindfulness and full awareness (*sati-sampajañña*). *Sati* means mindfulness. *Sampajañña* can be called "clear comprehension" or "awareness"—the capacity to understand something, meaning a capacity for comprehension. Thus, we can say mindfulness and understanding. With mindfulness and understanding, one—not informing others, but oneself—becomes aware of something. "Its nature is such." If it is a form, that too is a mirage. That too is a perception. Therefore, without running after it, one stops right there, noting "it is merely a form, it is merely a sound."

It is through such noting that one can gradually free oneself from perception (*saññā*). And having freed oneself from perception, wisdom can emerge—that deep understanding. What is that deep understanding? As the Buddha declared, there is an impermanent (*anicca*) nature in everything in this world. One must realize this impermanence for oneself. Through this noting, one gains the capacity to realize it. If we contemplate impermanence in a bit more detail: in everything, there is an arising and a passing away. It is this arising and passing away that is called impermanence (*anicca*). Be it form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), or consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—this entire fivefold group of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) is impermanent. It is these five heaps called the five aggregates that we refer to as "I" and "mine". This is a heap of form. Sometimes we take a photograph and proudly say, "This is my form." What was recorded there? A series—a continuity (*santati*)—of forms that change with extreme rapidity. This is presented as a single entity by that perception, like a mirage. There is such a tendency in the world to present things in this way. Due to the weakness of our sensory apparatus, we do not see that rapid change. This is called the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*). Everything in the world has a way of appearing as a "compact thing", a "real thing", a "true thing", a "permanent thing". Just

as the mirage seen from afar is thought to be water, though there is only a shimmering, vibrating mass there. Similarly, not only what is far away, but also this body of ours right here changes with extreme rapidity, moment by moment. That is form. Feeling (*vedanā*) is also like that. People say, "Oh, my feeling," thinking of it as a single thing. But there too, when one notes with mindfulness and understanding in the manner of meditative attention, one sees that there is a vast array—a heap—of feelings. Perception (*saññā*) is also a heap of layers. It is with a heap of perceptual layers that we recognize someone. We take that heap of layers as a single entity with extreme rapidity through the perception of compactness—as a form. Likewise, our intentions called Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). They too arise and pass away with extreme rapidity. Even consciousness (*viññāṇa*), though we call it "the mind" or "my mind", arises and passes away with a speed "beyond comprehension". While such a state of affairs exists in the world, we generally take these through the perception of compactness as a single entity and refer to them as "I" and "mine". When we say "I", if there is an "I", there must also be something belonging to me. Thus, by dividing these two, we create this *saṃsāric* knot: "I" and "my things". In this way, a delusion (*moha*) is created due to the perception of compactness.

When someone engages in that meditative attention, gaining some concentration (*samādhi*), they steady the mind. First, they stop the running mind by not allowing it to run—by remaining watchful of the mind. Then, as they note even more deeply, they see that here there is only a heap of arising and passing away. There is no "thing" that arises and no "thing" that passes away. In the end, even what was taken to be a "thing"—even that is not there. The feeling arises that here there is only a vibrating mass. Although we say "thing" in common parlance, regarding this object—even this object called a "thing"—it is seen that there is nothing here to cling to. Why? Because that perception of compactness is removed, and it is seen as a mere mass—everywhere, wherever one looks. As that realization draws near to a practitioner (*yogāvacara*), they perceive their own body, feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), and everything else as a vibrating mass. This cannot be shown to another; it is realized by oneself. That is what is called "realization" (*pratyakṣaya*). Through such an understanding, next, a disenchantment (*nibbidā*) arises: "Is it not a mere thing of arising and passing away that I have been clinging to and desiring as 'I' and 'mine'?" Furthermore, when the effort to recreate these ceases, what is increasingly seen is their dissolution, their breaking-up nature. Due to that dissolution, a fear arises. If we are holding onto something, clinging to something for refuge, when that thing we are holding onto breaks, we feel a certain fear and urgency (*saṃvega*). In the same way, as the practitioner contemplates the five aggregates in this manner, the realization comes: "There is nothing to be taken here. There is nothing to hold onto. This is a highly dangerous state. We are singing joyfully while sitting on a pile of crumbling foundations throughout this entire *saṃsāra*." Therefore, indeed, it is due to delusion (*moha*) and ignorance (*aviĵjā*) that we have traveled for a long time in *saṃsāra*, like the deer running after the mirage. Instead, when that understanding emerges here, when wisdom arises, it is seen that this form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that were taken as "I" and "mine" are all changing with extreme rapidity, breaking up. They arise and pass away. In this way, the insight knowledges mature.

Therefore, we must consider the value of this attention (*manasikāra*). Attention is something done entirely within the mind. The meditator does not do anything visible in the world, like a hen sitting on her eggs. What they do is not seen. Yet, it is through this attention occurring within the mind that their wisdom grows. It is difficult for ordinary people to understand this. Through this meditative attention, someone at some point gradually comes to realize: "Throughout this entire *saṃsāra*, I have been engaged in a futile journey due to ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*). Taking this crumbling thing, this rapidly changing thing, as 'I' and 'mine', I have spent this *saṃsāra* overwhelmed by a torrent of defilements, a heap of defilements. We undergo various births (*jāti*) according to our kamma." As this understanding deepens and deepens, one gains the strength to let go of this. Now, when we say "letting go" (or abandoning), one might get the feeling that something held in the hand is slipping away. If viewed in that way, a question arises: "How can one let go of the five aggregates?" Although we use the word "letting go", what occurs here is something quite different. As the practitioner notes in that manner, they see this arising and passing away, and next, they see its breaking up. They begin to perceive it as breaking up even faster than it arises. Consequently, a certain fear arises, a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) arises. Likewise, the danger (*ādīnava*) of this becomes clear—the realization that there is nothing to hold onto. Next, the understanding arises that one must be released from this. The path to that release is indeed that disenchantment (*nibbidā*). Now we know that if a young man or woman who likes to look neat and well-groomed, having dressed up to go to a nice festival, suddenly has a dead dog, a dead snake, or a dead human corpse thrown onto their shoulders, how quickly they would shake their shoulders to fling it off! Similarly, when that realization about their dangerous nature arises, a certain disgust, a disenchantment, emerges from within the mind. This disenchantment is not something one talks about to others. This disenchantment arising from within oneself is used as an aid to escape from *saṃsāra*. Why? Because bondage in *saṃsāra* is based on craving (*taṇhā*), desire, and attachment called grasping (*upādāna*)—the mind's holding onto things. What we have here is a holding on by the mind. Right now, we are not holding onto anything with our hands. But you, devout listeners, know well how many things we hold onto with our minds! What does it mean to "own" this entire world? It is a holding on by the mind. How did kings who conquered the entire world own the world? They held onto it with their minds, through craving (*taṇhā*). They thought, "This is mine." Even this physical frame of ours does not belong to us, in truth. For they say there are eighty families of worms living inside it—and lice on the head. It belongs to all of them. This is called "common to many" (*bahu-sādhāraṇa*). This body is something common to all. Similarly, our gardens and lands belong also to thieves and enemies, to monkeys and wild beasts. Yet, "ours"—everything is ours. Our country is ours, our village is ours, our world is ours—we commonly refer to all of these as ours. But when we look at the reality, not a single one of these is ours. The Buddha declared this truth, which is generally considered bitter. Bitter though it may be, if it is the truth, we must accept it.

It is through such a vision of truth that one is able to escape from *saṃsāra*. The path that helps in this is this meditative attention. Therefore, you all should contemplate today. One might think that these stories we present as similes are things that cannot be put

into practice in daily life. But how did that seven-year-old novice attain such a supreme state, the state of Arahantship? Was it by reading books? Was it by acquiring vast knowledge? No. It was through meditative attention. That little monk caught the monitor lizard in the anthill correctly. Because he closed the five holes of the five external senses and caught the lizard correctly through the hole called "the mind," he became an Arahant. Thus, the seven-year-old novice taught Ven. Poṭhila a highly practical lesson for daily life. We too must make use of it. We must make it a practical thing in our daily lives. We often say "it is impossible in this day and age." Yet, through this simile, we see that we can create a place for this meditative attention even in our daily lives. Some might wonder, "How can things stop with mere noting, as described? Don't we have to run after these in daily life?" But the meditator does not contemplate from such a narrow perspective. For a long time, we have been living in this great deception. A great deception called ignorance (*avijjā*) or delusion (*moha*) has been created because of these five senses. To understand their true nature, a certain training is required, as declared by the Buddha. First, one must restrain body and speech by undertaking some virtue (*sīla*), just as you have undertaken virtue on this occasion. Established on that virtue, to concentrate the mind means to unify the mind. It is to a unified mind that this reality becomes visible. A scattered mind does not perceive the reality of the world. Therefore, removing the causes that distract the mind, one must steady the mind on some meditation subject.

Once the mind is unified in that manner, if this noting is done properly, one gradually begins to realize that regarding what we took as a single entity—taken through the perception of compactness—here there is only a mass, a heap. Why is it perceived as a heap? It is because each part is perceived separately. Now, looking at a broom, when we examine it closely to see if it is "a broom," we see that here there is only a heap of coconut-leaf midribs. Then, each midrib is seen separately. Within that separate seeing lies those phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). That is a moment when a certain deep aspect of the Dhamma, namely Name-and-Form, is understood. Now, according to the Dhamma expounded by the Buddha, in truth, there are only Name-and-Form here. There is no "I" here. That is the Buddha's teaching. Although we commonly think of "Name" (*nāma*) as just a name, it actually refers to these five factors: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Even in our daily life, we experience some feeling, and based on that feeling, we form a certain recognition (perception). Based on that recognition, we think—intention. Through those thoughts, we make a certain contact, an attention to a certain point. This is what is called Name phenomena.

Next, what is the Form (*rūpa*) part of this? What is considered Form is the four primary elements: earth, water, fire, and wind (*paṭhavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*). These four elements are mixed in a highly subtle manner. In what we call water, the other elements are also present. But because the water element (*āpo-dhātu*) is more prominent in it, we call it water. In this way, these four great elements (*mahābhūta*) are like four ungraspable spirits mixed together in a wondrous manner. It is from these four elements that our body is constructed. Now, we protect this body as "I" and "mine", keeping others at a

distance, looking after it, cleaning it; but after this physical frame dies and is put in a cemetery or graveyard, how will others recognize it? In the end, everything turns to earth. It is by taking the essence of this earth as food that our body was built up. Over a long period—twenty, thirty, or a hundred years—this physical frame was built up. Next, when it decays, it turns to earth again. Arising from earth, it becomes earth. That is what is there. Thus, there are only the four elements. But we do not realize this in daily life. The mind does not perceive it. This is understood in a highly subtle manner by the meditator. So, that is what is called Form. In the language of the meditator, when one says "Form," what is understood? The four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. While others say, "This is a beautiful form," "an attractive form," "how beautiful this form is!", to the one with deep wisdom, the understanding arises: "What is here? Just the four elements."

The same applies to what is called the mind, or the Name phenomena part. There too, there is a feeling (*vedanā*) that is directly experienced. There is a perception (*saññā*) formed through it. Even while sitting now, there is some feeling, such that one can say, "Ah, it hurts over there in that spot." Next, there is a recognition: "Did a mosquito bite?" A feeling arises. Next, there comes a perception of touch—of the point of contact. All of this is done through attention (*manasikāra*), which is noting. In the final analysis, it is noting. It is through noting itself, then, that one understands the emptiness of an object. We began with the story of "Empty Poṭhila"—about emptiness. That was in another sense. But here, what ultimately comes is an emptiness called voidness (*śūnyatā*). This means seeing through the object. What ordinary people do is run after an object, like the deer running after the mirage. What the practitioner (*yogāvacara*) does is stop, look at the object, and see through the object. Seeing through the object means seeing the impermanence (*anicca*) of the object. What was taken as an object is something that arises and passes away with extreme rapidity. Now, let us suppose we are looking at a candle flame. That large candle flame looks beautiful, yellow, or with a hint of red, appearing in a beautiful form. How does this appear when that meditative attention is developed? It appears like a mass of candle flames arising and passing away with extreme rapidity. It is not a single flame. Similarly, let us think of a stream of flowing water, or water pouring from somewhere. Now, a stream of water in a conduit or a waterfall appears from afar like a silver wall. When one looks closely, in the end, what is there is a stream of water falling and breaking with extreme rapidity, not remaining the same for a single moment. It is also seen dispersing. It is perceived as a single entity because of the perception of compactness. But to that understanding, to wisdom, it is ultimately understood that there is no "thing" here to be taken as one. "No thing." This object is finally seen through. This is a wondrous thing. It begins with the object; it begins with noting the object. But it ends with seeing the emptiness of the object—seeing through the object.

It is through that seeing through that one ultimately realizes for oneself that there is nothing here to be held onto as "I" and "mine". Only if there is an "I" can there be something belonging to me; if there is no "I", there is also nothing belonging to me. Furthermore, one realizes that the perception of "I" here is a kind of ignorance, a

delusion, deposited in the mind for a long time due to ignorance (*avijjā*), which society incites and tries to maintain. This realization cannot be understood by shouting it to society. No one can make another do it by merely explaining it. Why was Ven. Poṭhila unable to understand this despite learning so many books? The Buddha declared this Dhamma, this Well-expounded Dhamma, as *sandiṭṭhiko*, *akāliko*, *ehipassiko*, *opanayiko*, *paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi* (to be personally realized by the wise), and so on. Why? Because this is something that must be realized by the wise, each for themselves. No one else can make one realize it. The path to be applied for that is what was called *yoga*—meditative attention, proper meditative attention.

Taking some meditation subject—let us say, mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*)—even through this process of inhalation and exhalation that remains with us from birth to death, some can arouse this wisdom. This is a very well-known fact. Although we say "I take a breath," what is here is actually a series of breath-waves. Exhaling a breath is also a mass of waves, of vibrations. But this wave-like nature is generally not perceived. Why is it not perceived? "I am breathing." "This is my breath." Let us suppose we took a breath filled with the fragrance of beautiful flowers with great pleasure. Or we breathed in something like the scent of joss sticks. "I" took a breath, but it cannot be retained. That is the cosmic law (*dhammatā*). No matter how eagerly we took that breath, we cannot retain it. The chest gets tight. Therefore, that breath must be exhaled. Within that exhalation, there is a similar mass of vibrations. So, in the final analysis, one has to say that what arises is a mass of vibrations, and what passes away is also a mass of vibrations. In the end, that too passes away, and those vibrations are perceived in a highly subtle manner. This cannot be understood through external instruments, no matter how subtle those instruments may be. It is understood through the wisdom developed within oneself. It is through this understanding that one is able to let go of the five aggregates. Even if one commits suicide thinking, "I must get rid of this physical frame," one does not escape the problem. It only worsens. Next, one is born again somewhere according to kamma. Nowadays, many people sacrifice their lives, calling it "life sacrifice" or "life dedication," for some thing or person they love—viewing it as a great thing. One cannot escape *saṃsāra* in that way, because there are so many kammic potentials embedded in consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Instead, what is advised is to realize those supramundane states through wisdom.

There are four stages of release from this *saṃsāra*, namely Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship. Within our minds, there are forces that drag us down to the four woeful states—sinful forces. The supramundane wisdom of the Stream-enterer has the power to destroy those unwholesome forces. A Stream-enterer is not born more than seven times in *saṃsāra*. Furthermore, they do not fall into the four woeful states. That is the greatest guarantee obtained from Stream-entry itself. That is why the Buddha declared the Fruit of Stream-entry to be supreme, more than lordship over the entire world, more than universal monarchy, more than going to heaven. For a universal monarch is a righteous king, but in the ordinary world, a kingship is a position where committing sin is almost unavoidable. As a result of those sins committed, they are next born in terrible hells, as

hungry ghosts, or as demons. But the Stream-enterer is released from the four woeful states. That is the first supramundane state. Next, the Once-returner returns to this world only once more. They may be born in heaven and return to the human world only once. These are named according to how they shorten *saṃsāra*. Non-returning is the third stage. They do not return to this world. They end *saṃsāric* suffering in the Brahma realm itself and attain final Nibbāna (*parinibbāna*) as a noble Arahant. That is the state of Non-returning. Arahantship is this final life. After this life, there is no further birth (*jāti*). Birth is suffering (*jāti dukkha*)—although ordinary people celebrate birth with great festivities as birthdays. What a suffering birth is! Yet the child does not remember it, and sometimes the mother does not remember it either. Not only that, if we look with our eyes wide open, according to the state of the world, is it not because of birth (*jāti*) that all these troubles arise? Even this physical frame of ours is due to this birth (*jāti*). Due to the craving (*taṇhā*) and mental grasping (*upādāna*) we created in the past, we received a certain body according to kamma. Sometimes one might be born blind, mute, or deaf, and how much suffering must one undergo because of that? Well, let us suppose one is born without any such defects, with all limbs intact. Even then, to nourish this body, to survive, from the day of birth, only if parents and others feed and look after us can we live. When the time comes that we can no longer depend on them, then through the sweat of our brow, getting soiled in mud, undergoing various hardships, we must earn a living. Such is the situation for protecting this life—for maintaining this physical frame. Thus, that is the suffering born of birth (*jāti*). Next, what comes together with birth is aging (*jarā*). From the very day of birth, we age. We usually say we have grown old, reached old age, by setting a certain limit—saying it is after forty or thirty-five years. But in truth, this aging begins from birth itself. Even the hair on our head that is born keeps aging. When this aging accelerates, ailment and disease come. Gradually, sickness also joins and worsens this problem. In the end, this culminates in death (*maraṇa*).

It is because of these four—birth, aging, sickness, and death (*jāti, jarā, vyādhi, maraṇa*)—that the Buddha abandoned such royal luxury and departed. Other sufferings in the world are minor. They can increase or decrease. These four are common to everyone. Therefore, if someone contemplates this *saṃsāric* state with wisdom, instead of running after that vast array of knowledge held by the world as conventional truth, what they must do is apply themselves to this path of practice—to *yoga*—declared by the Buddha, just as Ven. Poṭhila did in the end when he learned that "lesson." One must turn away from *ayoga* (non-practice) and engage in *yoga* (practice). *Yoga* means meditative attention. In this way, one must approach those who can give instructions on a meditation subject, receive instructions from them, and—humbly like Ven. Poṭhila—walk that path of the Dhamma. For a long time in *saṃsāra*, we have been running in a futile race. Like the deer running after the mirage, in this life, we set certain goals in our childhood. A small child looks at the lives of adults and develops desires for their lands and houses, the vehicles they use, and so on. Those very things are given to the child as toys, and are placed before them on the day they are first fed solid food. Those are the target objects of their parents' desires. It is those objects that the little child goes and grasps on that first feeding day. Next, the child dedicates their entire life to that grasped object. Those are the toys of small children. There is no need to speak separately of the

toys of grown-up children. They spend their entire lives chasing after them. Sometimes they sacrifice their lives. But in the end, they are empty things. One can never escape *saṃsāra* through such things.

Instead, what must be done is to stop that running and try to halt the mind, using the object of a meditation subject. Even to the robber Angulimāla, that bandit, the Buddha said, "I have stopped, you too stop." It is just like that. This stopping is what the world needs—not running. Everyone invites us to run. Halting this running is what is called meditative attention. To help in this, by nipping the incoming objects at the sense doors in the bud through a meditation subject, noting them in a highly subtle manner—endowed with mindfulness and full awareness (*sati-sampajañña*)—one becomes able to realize for oneself the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) expounded by the Buddha. If everything changes, if everything is of the nature of arising and passing away, if one is oppressed by them, if they break up with extreme rapidity, this is a highly dangerous thing—this is suffering (*dukkha*). If we keep patching up and using a vehicle whose parts are falling apart, how troublesome is that? What a suffering! Similarly, this body of ours—even if we take food and drink, we must nourish it again in a few hours. We take this inhalation with great pleasure, smelling a nice flower, but we have to exhale it. The same applies to other things. Because of this breaking-up nature, this changing nature, this mutability (*vipariṇāma*), the Buddha declared this to be *dukkha* (suffering). Identifying these three marks should be the goal of everyone's life: the characteristic of impermanence (*anicca*), the characteristic of suffering (*dukkha*), and the characteristic of not-self (*anattā*). If this is suffering, if it is something painful, if there is indeed no pleasure here, how can one proudly claim it as "I" and "mine"? It breaks up precisely because it cannot be kept under one's control. If it could be called "mine," it should behave as I wish. But this is not such a thing. In a way we did not expect, at a moment we did not expect, the things we desire, the things we hold onto, the things we possess, change, break, and are destroyed—they are separated from us. Such is the nature of this *saṃsāra*.

The one who has directly realized this nature with wisdom attains that supreme bliss of Nibbāna, which is called the calming of all Preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*) expounded by the Buddha. Nibbāna means Nibbāna. Throughout this entire world, throughout this entire *saṃsāra*, there is a burning. Wondrously, the world burns within and without. The Buddha declared: "Monks, everything is burning." The eye, the ear, the nose, and all these are burning. The world lives amidst such a multitude of burnings. Through the Dhamma expounded by the Buddha, having escaped from these burnings, he showed the path to that supreme Nibbāna. That path of practice is what is called the Buddha's teaching. Its essence is the application of that practice. Therefore, you, devout lay disciples, having undertaken the valuable Noble Eight Precepts (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-sīla*) on this valuable Uposatha day—and there are those here who have undertaken even more valuable precepts—having restrained body and speech in whatever manner, have now listened to several Dhamma points related to the Buddha's teaching. Through this—by means of the similes and other examples we presented—even if you adopt only the practical aspects necessary for your daily lives, if not everything, that is sufficient. Next,

what is important is that in your daily life—not as a mere experiment, but incorporating it into your lifestyle, incorporating it into your daily routine, dedicating at least a short time of the day to this meditative attention, even a few minutes, or if possible, when you have free time, or even by taking leave—you turn toward this, and apply your life to that supreme task, duty, and purpose of *saṃsāric* release, the realization of Nibbāna, which has been neglected due to falling into negligence in this long *saṃsāra*.

At this moment, within this Dhamma sermon, we believe that several valuable Dhamma teachings helpful for Nibbāna have been deposited in your minds. You listened to this with faith (*saddhā*). Faith is a highly valuable quality. So much so, the Buddha declared this faith to be a spiritual faculty (*indriya*) as well as a spiritual power (*bala*) that aids in realizing Nibbāna. Mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—we believe that you have gained the strength to develop these to some extent by listening and reflecting on this Dhamma sermon. Therefore, by applying a pure mind, body, and speech with the strength you have received, which is considered the benefit of listening to the Dhamma today, if a great mass of wholesome states (*kusala*) has arisen, let us now share all those merits with those who expect them and wish to receive them.

Whatever sublime mass of wholesome merit we have gathered through this preaching and listening to the Dhamma on this occasion, may the guardian deities of the Dispensation, the assembly of Devas and Brahmas, and especially all the deities presiding over this place, rejoice in this mass of merit! According to their own aspirations, may they realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through one of the three Bodhis (Awakenings)! May they protect the Dispensation and us! We must make this aspiration. Similarly, may all beings—including one's own departed relatives—from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, who wish for merit and seek Nibbāna, rejoice in this noble merit and realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna as quickly as possible through their aspired Bodhi. Reciting these verses, share the merits:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #5

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Sīladassanasampannaṃ,

dhammaṭṭhaṃ saccavedinaṃ;

Attano kamma kubbānaṃ,

taṃ jano kurute piyaṃ.

From:

Verse 217 from the Piyavagga (Chapter on Affection) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The arising of a correct understanding regarding the true purpose and the true values of the Dispensation of the Buddha (*Sammā Sambuddha Sāsana*) within both the laity and the clergy is a cause for the long endurance of the Dispensation. Therefore, the Blessed One utilized various opportunities to highlight those purposes and values. He praised practice-oriented disciples with special praise and showed them special regard. Why? Because practice (*paṭipatti*) is the very life of the Dispensation. Where there is no practice, realization (*paṭivedha*)—namely, the direct experience of the Paths and Fruits, the realization of Nibbāna, and the bringing of an end to the sufferings of *saṃsāra*—cannot be achieved. Because of this, on many occasions the Blessed One extolled the value of cultivating a mutual relationship between both the laity and the clergy in a manner that fosters the growth of supramundane qualities.

The verse we have just recited, along with its background story, serves as an excellent illustration of this. One morning during the period when the Blessed One was residing at the Veḷuvana Monastery, He entered the city of Rājagaha for alms, accompanied by a retinue of five hundred monks, including the eighty chief disciples. That day was a festival day in Rājagaha, a day of celebration. Perhaps it was a festival similar to the New

Year celebrations we speak of today. At that very moment, a group of five hundred children was leaving the city, carrying baskets of oil cakes (*kāvum*). When those children encountered the Blessed One, they placed their baskets of oil cakes to one side, paid homage to the Blessed One and the Saṅgha, and then, taking their baskets of oil cakes, they departed; they bypassed that spot. After they had gone, the Blessed One asked the monks:

"Monks, would you like to partake of oil cakes?"

"Where are there oil cakes, venerable sir?"

"Why, did you not see that group of children passing by here carrying baskets of oil cakes?"

"Venerable sir, to whom would children like that give oil cakes?"

"Monks, do not say so. The reason why those children did not offer oil cakes either to me or to you is that the true owner of the oil cakes is walking behind." Saying this, He added: "Monks, we must only leave after partaking of the oil cakes." So saying, the Blessed One sat down with the community of monks under a tree nearby.

Who was this monk, the "owner of the oil cakes"? Walking separately behind this group of five hundred was the great Arahant, Venerable Mahā Kassapa—who constantly received praise from the Blessed One, who had even received the Blessed One's own robes as an offering in exchange for his own, and who had been designated by the Blessed One as foremost among those who uphold the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*). He was the foremost venerable monk in terms of ascetic qualities. That venerable monk, in accordance with his habitual practice, and because he loved solitude, was walking slowly behind, detached from the main crowd. Then, when the children carrying the baskets of oil cakes saw this venerable monk, they developed a wonderful sense of faith, confidence, and joy. They paid homage by prostrating with the five points of contact, and offered the baskets of oil cakes in their entirety to the venerable monk, saying, "Please accept this, venerable sir." Venerable Mahā Kassapa said to those children: "Children, our Teacher and the community of monks are seated there at the foot of that tree. Go and make an offering to all of them if you have anything to offer." Having said this, Venerable Mahā Kassapa proceeded to the foot of the tree where the Blessed One was seated, accompanied by the group of children. Then those children offered the oil cakes to the entire community of monks, headed by the Blessed One. They stood watching until they finished eating, and even offered water. After the water had been offered and they had finished partaking of the oil cakes, a whisper—a few critical words—was heard among the monks: "These children seem to have distributed alms based on personal preference. While the Blessed One Himself and great elders like the chief disciples are present here, they offered all the oil cakes to Venerable Mahā Kassapa who was walking behind."

Hearing this, the Blessed One declared: "Monks, do not speak thus. My son Mahā Kassapa is dear to gods and humans. Therefore, gods and humans—not only humans but

even gods—venerate and support Mahā Kassapa with almsfood and the four requisites." Having declared this, He uttered the verse we took earlier as our theme:

Sīla-dassana-sampannaṃ – dhammaṭṭhaṃ saccavedinaṃ

Attano kamma kubbānaṃ – taṃ jano kurute piyaṃ

Let us examine its meaning. '*Sīla-dassana-sampannaṃ*' — there is a fourfold virtue (*sīla*) belonging to the monks. It is called the fourfold purification of virtue (*catupārisuddhi-sīla*). To mention them briefly: first is the virtue of restraint according to the Pātimokkha (*pātimokkha-saṃvara-sīla*), which includes the disciplinary rules laid down by the Blessed One. The training regarding this is one. Next is the virtue of restraint of the sense faculties (*indriya-saṃvara-sīla*), which means restraining and guarding the sense faculties—the eye, ear, nose, and so on—from defilements; this is the second. Next is the virtue of purification of livelihood (*ājīva-pārisuddhi-sīla*), which concerns obtaining the four requisites righteously and properly without resorting to improper means; this is maintaining purity of livelihood. Fourth is the virtue concerning the use of requisites (*paccaya-sannissita-sīla*), which means utilizing the obtained requisites through wise reflection (*paccavekkhaṇa*), considering the true purpose of using them, and turning that use into a form of meditation. In this manner, there is a fourfold virtue for the Saṅgha. Venerable Mahā Kassapa, foremost in ascetic qualities, was fully accomplished in this fourfold purification of virtue. Thus, that is 'virtue' (*sīla*).

Next, '*dassana*' refers to right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). By virtue of the realization of the Paths and Fruits—since we are referring here to an Arahant—he is endowed with that right view. Thus, '*sīla-dassana-sampannaṃ*'. '*Dhammaṭṭhaṃ*' means "established in the Dhamma." He is properly established in the Dhamma. Having directly experienced the supramundane Paths and Fruits, he stands firmly established in the Dhamma; hence, '*dhammaṭṭhaṃ*'. Next, '*saccavedinaṃ*' means he has understood the Four Noble Truths properly; hence '*saccavedinaṃ*'. Furthermore, '*attano kamma kubbānaṃ*'. '*Attano kamma kubbānaṃ*' means, devout friends, "one who does his own work." Here, "one's own work" refers to the work belonging to the monks as taught by the Blessed One, which is the cultivation of the threefold training of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), which aids in the attainment of Nibbāna. Thus, it means one who performs this personal work of virtue, concentration, and wisdom.

Thus, the meaning of this verse is: a monk who is endowed with virtue and right view, who is properly established in the Dhamma, who has understood the Four Noble Truths, and who does his own work—him the folk hold dear (*taṃ jano kurute piyaṃ*). Such a monk becomes dear to the people. This is what the Blessed One declared. Upon hearing the sermon delivered in connection with this verse, all five hundred children became Stream-enterers (*sotāpanna*); they attained the noble Fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*).

Now, when we look at this verse and story, it might seem like a mere "oil-cake sermon" suited for the New Year. But this is not just an ordinary oil-cake sermon. It contains a highly valuable fragrance of virtue and a flavor of the Dhamma. Let us try to absorb it.

First, let us reflect on this: Venerable Mahā Kassapa was a highly special person in this Dispensation. Although there were the chief disciples, their spiritual qualities were of a different category. Venerable Mahā Kassapa was unique because he properly observed all thirteen of the noble ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*)—practices that support virtue and aid in guarding virtue in the best possible manner. Venerable Mahā Kassapa observed many of these rigorous practices, such as subsisting only on almsfood, forest-dwelling, wearing rag-robes, being content with only three robes, and so forth. And because he loved seclusion, he walked apart from the crowd in that manner. On several occasions, the Blessed One delivered special discourses to the Saṅgha, pointing to him as an exemplar. Highlighting the unique characteristics of his lifestyle, the Blessed One illustrated Venerable Mahā Kassapa's conduct and his relationship with laypeople through two beautiful similes. According to the verse, Venerable Mahā Kassapa appears to have been extremely popular—even among little children. Nowadays, we know that for a monk to be popular, he is expected to associate closely with laypeople, participate in their affairs, and support them actively. Yet, from the two similes given by the Blessed One regarding Venerable Mahā Kassapa's lifestyle, we understand something entirely different.

What were the similes given? The Blessed One gave the simile of the moon (*candūpamā*), saying that Mahā Kassapa associates with families like the moon. When walking from house to house for alms, Venerable Mahā Kassapa was just like the moon. Why was the moon chosen as a simile? '*Nicca-navakā, kulesu appagabbhā*'—the moon is always new. It is renewed day by day, whether during the waning or waxing fortnight; it is always something fresh. Similarly, even though Venerable Mahā Kassapa walked from house to house for alms, he was always "new" to those laypeople. How was he new? Because he did not have excessive involvement with those lay devotees. We know there is a common village saying: "The comb of the rooster seen twice a day (loses its novelty and value)." Such a state arises if one associates too closely. But there was no such familiarity with Venerable Mahā Kassapa; he was like the moon. The moon is reflected in our well, in the pond, and everywhere—yet no one can grasp it. No one can capture the moon. In the same way, even though Venerable Mahā Kassapa visited lay households, no one could "grasp" him. Therefore, he was said to be '*kulesu appagabbho*'—unobtrusive among families. He had no excessive intimacy or improper relations with families. Illustrating these two qualities through the simile of the moon, the Blessed One on one occasion advised the monks to live taking Venerable Mahā Kassapa as their model.

The Blessed One also gave another simile: the '*jarūdapāna*' simile, meaning an "old, abandoned well." Venerable Mahā Kassapa was compared to someone looking down into an abandoned well. When someone peers into an old, dry well, they do so without any intention of falling in, keeping their body and mind detached and balanced. The Blessed One praised Venerable Mahā Kassapa, saying that he walked for alms among laypeople just like someone looking down into an old well with body and mind fully composed and detached. From these two similes, we can see that Venerable Mahā Kassapa does not fit

the modern conception of "popularity"; he could not have been a "popular" figure in that sense. But, my friends, there are two levels of popularity. There is a popularity that comes from wealth, position, and power. That is a highly superficial popularity that fades away very quickly. The popularity that arises due to virtuous qualities is something far deeper. Here we see that when it comes to small children, they often sense things almost by instinct. Compared to the minds of adults, which are cluttered and agitated by various thoughts, critical judgments, and biases, children possess a purer mind. They can sometimes sense spiritual virtue instinctively. This must be why those five hundred children—not that they lacked respect for the Blessed One and the rest of the Saṅgha, whom they did worship—were particularly captivated by the ascetic quality of Venerable Mahā Kassapa as he walked alone. Being so captivated, they offered their entire baskets of oil cakes to him. This shows that there must have been some innate meritorious potential within those children. There is a saying, "The growing tree is known by its leaves." Similarly, within these children, like a healthy growing tree, there was an inner spiritual strength. It was precisely because of this that, upon hearing the sermon, they so quickly attained the noble state of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). The Blessed One declared that even the state of Stream-entry—though it is only the first of the Paths and Fruits—is superior to sole sovereignty over the earth (*cakkavatti*). Why? Because a Stream-enterer has to undergo a maximum of only seven more lives in *saṃsāra*, and is forever freed from the four planes of misery. They attained such a state.

We can also understand how the minds of these children were prepared on that occasion. First, they felt inspiration (*pasāda*) toward Venerable Mahā Kassapa's virtues; they recognized those virtues through the short verse uttered by the Blessed One. The meaning of that verse, which we analyzed earlier, helped them understand: "Our minds were inspired because Venerable Mahā Kassapa possesses these noble virtues." When one rejoices with sympathetic joy (*muditā*) over something, one simultaneously grows in that very quality. Consequently, the inspired minds of those children became even purer. Next, we can understand that their act of generosity (*pariccāga*) helped to purify their minds further. Here, it was not merely the oil cakes that were relinquished; the amusement associated with those oil cakes was also relinquished. Those children had set out with the intention of going to the park, eating those oil cakes, and playing games. Yet, all five hundred of them, with one mind, offered all those oil cakes to the Saṅgha headed by the Blessed One. Thereby, their sacrifice was made complete. Their minds became exceedingly joyful and clear. It was with such a joyful mind that they subsequently attained the state of Stream-entry through the realization of the Paths and Fruits. Thus, we can see that there is a valuable flavor of Dhamma and a fragrance of virtue within this story.

Reflecting further, according to the words of the Blessed One, Venerable Mahā Kassapa's popularity among both gods and humans was a popularity born of his virtuous qualities. There is a common notion today, particularly in this day and age, that the Saṅgha are those who subsist on the four requisites provided by lay devotees, and therefore they must repay a certain debt. It is seen as an exchange, a transaction. Indeed, there is truth to this; there is a transaction involved here. But the manner of repaying this debt is what

differs. It is not like the repayment of an ordinary worldly debt. This debt is repaid by rendering a supramundane benefit in return for mundane things. This is why the verse states: '*attano kamma kubbānaṃ*'—"doing one's own work." In society, a person who does only their own work is often called "selfish" (*ātmārthakāmī*). In that sense, the Blessed One describes Venerable Mahā Kassapa as someone working for his own welfare. But as this self-interest (*atmārtha*) is being fulfilled—and what is this self-interest? It is the fulfillment of the qualities of virtue, concentration, and wisdom that aid in the attainment of Nibbāna—the welfare of others (*parārtha*) is simultaneously accomplished. Therefore, here, one's own welfare becomes the welfare of others. When we consider the four requisites offered by devotees to the Saṅgha, offering these is different from giving to beggars, the poor, and the needy. My friends, giving to the poor and needy is done primarily out of compassion (*karuṇā*), whereas offerings to the Saṅgha are made primarily out of faith (*saddhā*). Therefore, on many occasions, to remind the monks of their proper duty, the Blessed One declared: "Monks, you consume the food given out of faith (*saddhādeyya*)." You live by consuming food offered through faith. Hence, you must repay that debt. You must repay that debt. How is this debt repaid? The Dhamma points out four ways of utilizing the four requisites. What are these four?

First:

> *Theyya-paribhoga* — use as a theft. To use a common expression, it is like "eating by theft," using requisites like a thief.

Second:

> *Iṇa-paribhoga* — use as a debt, like using something on credit.

Third:

> *Dāyajja-paribhoga* — use as an inheritance, using something received as a legacy.

Fourth:

> *Sāmi-paribhoga* — use as an owner, utilizing the requisites as the rightful owner.

These are the four concepts mentioned in the Dhamma. Let us analyze each of them in some detail.

Theyya-paribhoga (use as a theft) means utilizing the four requisites without possessing any virtuous qualities such as virtue (*sīla*). Through this, the user—the monk—becomes a debtor to the laity. No matter how much he tries to repay the debt on a worldly level, according to the Dhamma he remains a debtor. He may have to repay that debt over a long period in *saṃsāra*. Such is this condition. It is *theyya-paribhoga*—like "eating by theft."

Next, the second aspect is *iṇa-paribhoga*—use as a debt. This second condition is slightly better than using as a thief—it is taking as a loan. It is unavoidable. The four requisites are essential for the survival of the Saṅgha. Some kind of support is necessary for sustenance: robes (*cīvara*), almsfood (*piṇḍapāta*), lodging (*senāsana*), and medicinal requisites (*gilāna-paccaya*)—something to wear, food to eat, a place to dwell, and medicine. These make up the four requisites. But these requisites are taken by the monks as a debt. Now, we know that if someone takes a loan—say, for a business venture or for agriculture—but wastes it with no intention of ever repaying it, he is not truly a mere debtor, but a thief. On the other hand, if someone utilizes the loan properly and systematically to achieve its intended purpose in business or farming, and pays the interest in due course, then that person is a true debtor. He is someone who fulfills the duty of a debtor. In the same way, how has the Blessed One explained *iṇa-paribhoga*, the "use as a debt"? If a monk utilizes each of those four requisites—robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicinal requisites—by reflecting upon them (*paccavekkhaṇa*) and considering them with wisdom, it is like utilizing them as a responsible debtor. There are two sides to this reflection. Let us take almsfood—food—as an example. Usually, lay devotees use food not only to appease hunger, but also out of desire for taste, to build up the body, or to beautify the complexion. Such are their purposes. Since such motives are unbefitting for monks, the Blessed One declared that they should reflect on the true purpose of the food—the almsfood—they consume. "I take this food only to sustain this body, to cross over this *saṃsāra*, and to lead this noble life of celibacy (*brahmacariya*)." Thus, reflecting on the true meaning of food—almsfood—with wisdom is one side of it. Furthermore, that is not all. The partaking of almsfood is turned into a form of meditation. How? "This almsfood I consume is made of the four elements: earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). My body, too, is a body composed of these very elements." "Even though this almsfood is clean, once it enters this repulsive body, it becomes repulsive." What is achieved through this? Two forms of meditation are performed: the contemplation of the elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*) and the contemplation of repulsiveness (*asubha-manasikāra*). That is it. As we said earlier, when one takes a loan, it is the duty of a true debtor to keep the purpose of the loan in mind, to work towards it, and to pay the interest on time. Here, too, the same is done. Regarding each of the four requisites—for instance, food: "I took this as a loan. For what purpose? To sustain this body in order to cross over this wilderness of *saṃsāra*." Thus, the purpose is considered. Next, what is the payment of interest? It is turning towards meditation. "This almsfood and my body are both creations of the four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind." From that itself, the truth of not-self (*anattā*) is realized within it—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). Not only that, but it is also turned towards the aspect of repulsiveness: "This clean food becomes defiled upon entering my filthy body." Lo, through this, interest is paid. Why? Because this is a journey towards Nibbāna. For the journey to Nibbāna, meditation is essential. Thus, through the use of requisites, meditation is performed. That is the payment of interest. Why did we explain this in such detail? Because some people interpret this differently. Some believe that simply by reflecting upon the requisites while consuming them, monks are freed from debt. That cannot be called correct; there is a shortcoming in that view. A

monk is not freed from debt merely by reflecting on the requisites while utilizing them. There is still work to be done further ahead. This will become clear when we explain the other points.

That was the second aspect—*iṇa-paribhoga* (use as a debt). Next, what is the third aspect? *Dāyajja-paribhoga*—use as an inheritance, utilizing them by considering them as a heritage. It is explained like this: let us suppose a monk has attained the state of Stream-entry. From the moment of that attainment, that monk is a true son of the Buddha. Those who stand in the three states of Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), Once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), and Non-returner (*anāgāmi*) are the true sons of the Buddha. However, they have not yet finished their work. Such individuals are called trainees (*sekha*)—those who are training properly in this Dispensation. They have not finished their work. Such individuals utilize these four requisites just as children use their parents' belongings, treating them as an inheritance. When parents are not at home, little children fearlessly use things belonging to their parents—even though they are not their own, because they belong to their parents. Similarly, the use of the four requisites by monks who have realized the initial Paths and Fruits—Stream-entry, Once-returner, and Non-returner—is compared to children utilizing their parents' belongings. This is *dāyajja-paribhoga*. That is the third aspect.

Finally, there is *sāmi-paribhoga*—use as an owner. Truly, in every sense, utilizing the four requisites as their rightful owner. This occurs only after one becomes an Arahant. At the moment of attaining Arahantship, the liberated person is described as one who is debt-free. That is why—since we were speaking of Venerable Mahā Kassapa—Venerable Mahā Kassapa, who became an Arahant seven days after his ordination, expressed this on one occasion: "For only six days did I consume almsfood as a debt; on the seventh day, I consumed it debt-free." What did he mean by that? That until six days had passed, he had not attained Arahantship, but on the seventh day, he did. From this, it is evident that an Arahant partakes of almsfood free of debt. There is no debt left to be repaid. Whatever else they do—if they perform any special favor for the world—they do so out of compassion for the world (*lokānukampā*), out of empathy for the world. That is why the Blessed One waited until the first sixty disciples became Arahants before sending them in various directions for the welfare and happiness of the many (*bahujana-hitāya bahujana-sukhāya*), and not before. After they became Arahants, the Blessed One did not tell them, "Go and repay your debts," but rather, "wander free from debt." Those sixty were not sent with the idea that they should go and preach the Dhamma to repay their debts. We emphasize this particularly because some people interpret it incorrectly. When the Blessed One told those sixty to wander "for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many," He did not mean they should go and repay a debt. For the remainder of their lives, Arahants do this purely out of compassion for the world. Yet it is said: '*anaṇā vicaranti loke*'—"they wander debt-free in the world." From that point on, they wander without debt. Becoming debt-free in this manner is the true release from the bond of debt. Only from then on does *sāmi-paribhoga* (use as an owner) exist; they consume the four requisites as their rightful owners. This is what illustrates how the debt is repaid.

Furthermore, we know that through the repayment of debt and the development of virtuous qualities, Arahantship is described as a state of debtlessness, a debt-free state. The Blessed One, the Arahants, and the Pacceka Buddhas utilize the four requisites entirely free of debt. Because of the supramundane value inherent in this transaction, you, my friends, may often hear during almsgiving ceremonies that three conditions must be fulfilled for an offering made by lay devotees to be of great fruit and great benefit (*mahapphala mahānisaṃsa*). What are those three conditions?

Dāyaka-sampatti (the excellence of the giver)

Deyyadhamma-sampatti (the excellence of the gift)

Paṭigāhaka-sampatti (the excellence of the recipient)

Dāyaka-sampatti does not mean the material wealth of the donor; it refers to the excellence of virtue that a true donor should possess. It is being complete in a range of virtuous qualities. If one is complete in faith (*saddhā*), the intention of relinquishment (*pariccāga-cetanā*), virtue (*sīla*), and so forth, then they are a true donor. That is *dāyaka-sampatti*. *Deyyadhamma-sampatti* refers to the righteousness of the gift itself. It is that which has been earned and gathered righteously—not something obtained through theft or violence. Moreover, it is prepared nicely and offered with respect, not cast away carelessly. That is *deyyadhamma-sampatti*. *Paṭigāhaka-sampatti* refers to the recipient's side. When we consider *paṭigāhaka-sampatti*, in the highest sense, those worthy of receiving offerings are the Buddhas, Pacceka Buddhas, and Arahants. Following them are those who progress according to their virtuous qualities. That is *paṭigāhaka-sampatti*. It is based on this that offerings become of great fruit and benefit. This very matter has been expressed in a verse, often using the simile of agriculture:

Khettūpamā arahanto

Dāyakā kassakūpamā

Bījūpamaṃ deyyadhammaṃ

Etato nibbattate phalaṃ

The Arahants are like fields—like fertile fields. '*Dāyakā kassakūpamā*'—the donors endowed with all those qualities of a donor are like skilled farmers. '*Bījūpamaṃ deyyadhammaṃ*'—the object offered is like good seed-paddy. '*Etato nibbattate phalaṃ*'—from this, the true fruit arises, becoming of great fruit and benefit. It is explained that a vast mass of merit flows in this manner.

Accordingly, we understand that the Blessed One has shown us the proper, systematic, and righteous relationship between laity and clergy through this story and verse, for the sake of future generations and the progress of the Dispensation in the future. In addition, let us reflect a little further. When we began telling this story, some might have wondered: "Is this real? Is it a true historical event?" There is a very deep matter here.

Anyone who reads about the Blessed One's life is filled with awe and wonder at His great wisdom and great compassion. The Blessed One, having a perfect comprehension of the three periods of time—past, present, and future—watches, as it were, like one watching a play unfold. The minds of people in the world are visible to Him. What people do and say, and their past potentials, are all visible to Him. That is why the Blessed One spoke in that manner: "Monks, would you like to eat oil cakes?" and then, "Let us leave only after eating the oil cakes." What was the Blessed One doing here? Throughout the four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand aeons of fulfilling the paramis, there is no oil cake He had not consumed, no cake He had not eaten. An oil cake was nothing new to Him. Nor did He have any particular craving to feed oil cakes to the Saṅgha. But there is a very deep purpose here. The Blessed One created this opportunity for those five hundred children—having seen their supporting conditions (*upanissaya-sampattī*), having seen the moment when their faith would emerge, and having seen that by acting upon that faith they could achieve the realization of the Paths and Fruits—it was to facilitate this opportunity that the Blessed One declared, "We shall only proceed after eating the oil cakes." Therein lies—we must reflect—the skill in means (*upāya-kosalla*) of His great compassion. It is truly wondrous. At the same time, a noble quality of the Blessed One that we, and the world, can take as an example is His praising of a noble quality even in His own disciple. With anyone else, if they were offered nothing while their pupil was offered oil cakes, their face would turn sour—perhaps looking like an oil cake itself! Such things happen constantly in society: "They did not offer oil cakes to someone of my virtue, yet they offered them to my disciple." Instead, what did the Blessed One do? He said: "Monks, although those children did not give oil cakes either to you or to me, the true owner of the oil cakes is coming behind. Let us wait until then." Through this, the Blessed One gave a great example to the world. He also utilized that opportunity to declare the noble virtues of Venerable Mahā Kassapa through such a verse. Within this, there is a message for the Dispensation; it contains a message showing exactly how the relationship between laity and clergy should be maintained.

Thus, we can harvest many such insights from this story and this verse. Within this New Year "oil-cake sermon"—as we mentioned earlier—there lies a fragrance of virtue and a taste of Dhamma. The more you, my friends, reflect on this, the more you can absorb its flavor. This is a wonderful opportunity for that.

Furthermore, you, my friends, are currently preparing for the New Year festival. Let us contemplate the natural principles (*dhammatā*) inherent in it. What is this New Year festival? The wheel of time keeps turning and turning. It never stops anywhere, nor can it be stopped. The wheel of time is just like a cogwheel. Caught in it, the wheel of our life also wears away, and without our even realizing it, our lifespan is spent. We cannot stop this. We are constantly pushed forward, with no time to pause and reflect. This is why certain customs have arisen. Many people do not understand the deeper meanings of New Year customs; they treat it merely as an occasion for amusement. Now, regarding the New Year, you know there is a period called '*nonakatha*' (the non-auspicious time). *Nonakatha* means the period when there is no astrological juncture. There is a belief in the world that everything—all worldly activities—must be done at an auspicious

astrological time (*nakatha*). Therefore, when there is no such auspicious time to perform worldly activities, it is the *nonakatha*. Some people think: "Well, we cannot just spend the *nonakatha* doing nothing, so let us do some meritorious deeds." That is a mistaken idea. This *nonakatha* is designated as the "period for meritorious deeds" (*puṇya-kālaya*). If we consider it deeply, it is indeed a "meritorious period." How does it become a meritorious period? We must make that *nonakatha* period a pause in our lives. We should treat it as a small rest, a pause amidst our busy activities. There is the Old Year, and there is the New Year. Between the two, there lies the *nonakatha*. We must make this a meritorious period—not by eating, drinking, and making merry, but by pausing and reflecting calmly. "What were the wrongs committed by me over the past year—through body, speech, and mind? What were my shortcomings towards neighbors, relatives, friends, and the Triple Gem? What are my shortcomings in terms of virtues? What are my shortcomings regarding virtue (*sīla*)?" We must examine these. Now, you know that during the New Year festival in households, houses are thoroughly cleaned, rust is removed, and, what is more, they even build a brand-new hearth to begin the New Year. This renewal—we must turn this into a renewal of the mind. It should be an opportunity to renew the mind—washing away the accumulated trash and rust of the mind, looking towards the future in accordance with the Dhamma, and making it a meritorious period to align our thoughts, wishes, and conduct in such a way that our lives incline towards Nibbāna and avoid falling into states of deprivation within this perilous *saṃsāra*. This is what that opportunity, that pause of the *nonakatha*, should be used for.

For such an occasion, we have presented several refined reflections through this Dhamma sermon. Accordingly, one can ponder: "Having understood these virtuous qualities, and having correctly understood the values and purposes of the Dispensation, how should we maintain the relationship between laity and clergy? What are the values of this Dispensation? What is considered a 'transaction' in the Dispensation? What has the Blessed One shown us? How should we mold our lives accordingly?" This *nonakatha*, this meritorious period, is an excellent opportunity to reflect on these matters. Our life—while the wheel of time turns endlessly with no beginning or end—this life-wheel of ours, caught and worn away by that cogwheel, is not such a grand thing. It is something that could cease at this very moment. Generally, one's maximum lifespan is now almost unpredictable. Although we say a hundred years, it is currently much less than that. In addition, due to various other disasters and external or internal hazards, we cannot say when our life will end. Even while we are talking, if the heart suddenly stops, a life is ended right there. Such is this perilous situation. This is the brevity of life. Next, we must reflect on the lengthiness of *saṃsāra*—how long we have been suffering in this *saṃsāra*, being born and dying repeatedly. Our true situation lies between these two. Reflecting on this, what has the Blessed One declared for our release from it? The collection of virtues outlined by the Blessed One as virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), or as giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*). There are many details within these. We must reflect on all of them, and utilize this *nonakatha* period, this meritorious period, in the proper manner. Now you know, my friends, that in commercial shops at the end of the year, they hold "sales" to clear out old stock, selling

them cheaply just to get rid of them and bring in new goods. Similarly, what we must do is clear out the trash of our minds—even if we have to give it away to whoever will take it—and renew our minds. That is what the New Year truly means. The New Year is not a renewal of clothing, the cleaning of houses, or painting. A true New Year must be a New Year where we grow in virtuous qualities. That is what a festival means—internally.

Thinking along those lines, we must also reflect on the example set by those little children in our story. Especially in this day and age, those little children offer a great example to lay devotees. For on that day, those children did not go to the park carrying baskets of oil cakes with the intention of offering them to the Saṅgha. They went to eat, drink, and enjoy themselves. Yet, they relinquished that. They relinquished that very intention. They offered that highly delicious food—the oil cakes—entirely to the Saṅgha headed by the Blessed One. Instead of the taste of those oil cakes, they received a far superior supramundane taste, by attaining the Fruit of Stream-entry at that very moment. In that manner, we must reflect that the Blessed One has introduced to us a set of noble values far superior to worldly values. The Buddha's Dispensation (*Buddha Sāsana*) means living in accordance with those values and shaping our lives by them. If we reflect on the example set by these children, though some level of amusement may be necessary, if we spend this New Year eating, drinking, and making merry in a way that degrades our future and leaves our lives destitute, we will have to pay a debt for it. We will have to suffer for a long time in *saṃsāra*. Therefore, for a festival to truly bring happiness to one's mind, there must be peace of mind. Indeed, everyone would agree that peace is the highest happiness in the world. The path to that peace is what the Blessed One has introduced as the peace of Nibbāna. That is it—that further shore. In order to bring that peace, which is beyond this shore, closer to our daily lives, some revision of our lifestyle, schedule, and daily routine may be necessary. If every merit-seeking friend reflects in this way, then the coming *nonakatha* period will become a truly auspicious time (*nakatha*). Actually, we should realize—some might think that if they do something during the *nonakatha*, it will bring bad luck (*apala*). But, my friends: "It is bad luck (*apala*) if, having attained human birth, one remains without performing wholesome deeds." Bad luck means that having attained human birth, one remains without performing wholesome deeds, rendering it fruitless. That is what *apala* means. Thus, the true auspicious time is this period of the appearance of a Buddha (*buddhōtpāda-kālaya*). Since we have obtained such a truly auspicious time, we must utilize this opportunity. Since we may not be able to do this every day, the wise of the past must have designated this *nonakatha* at the end of the year as a meritorious period, creating a small pause to make use of it. But what did the unwise do instead? They added various unnecessary things to that *nonakatha*, turning it purely into paths of amusement that cause their downfall. Therefore, we must reflect in accordance with the Dhamma, making this meritorious period a truly meritorious one, purifying our minds, and starting the New Year better by reflecting on and correcting any shortcomings in our virtue (*sīla*).

Especially, the issue of livelihood is a major problem for lay devotees in this day and age. The world is progressing in a perilous manner in search of material development. This is

an era that thinks only of the economy, disregarding righteousness. People do not realize this until they fall into the ultimate abyss. Consequently, this is an era where various forms of wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) come to the forefront for the sake of acquiring and earning wealth quickly. Wise Buddhist devotees must reflect on their livelihood, placing the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One at the forefront. Sometimes there may be shortcomings and scarcities in daily life. One might not be able to get rich quickly. However, one must make a special effort to cultivate that noble virtue of abstaining from wrong livelihood, just as we have undertaken here today. Nowadays, some might think that the things pointed out by the Blessed One are impossible to practice. Abstaining from raising animals for slaughter, the trade in meat, the trade in weapons, the trade in poisons, and the trade in intoxicants—it has come to a point where people feel they would have no job left if they avoided these. In this way, society is heading towards a dangerous precipice. Yet, one must reflect: "Shall I continue to suffer in this long *saṃsāra*, or shall I make some sacrifice to escape from it, now that I have obtained this rare opportunity of a human birth (*khaṇa-sampatti*)?" One must reflect on this with wisdom. No matter what society says, or even how others in one's own household think, wish, or live—each of us is born alone and dies alone. Therefore, each person is responsible for their own action (*kamma*). The Blessed One has declared:

Kammassakā, māṇava, sattā

kammadāyādā kammayonī

kammabandhū kammappaṭisaraṇā,

kammaṃ satte vibhajati

yadidaṃ hīnapaṇītātāya...

"Beings are owners of their actions, heirs to their actions, born of their actions, related to their actions, and have actions as their refuge. Action distinguishes beings as inferior and superior..." This action is what we own. This action is our inheritance. It is due to action that we are born; action is the cause of our birth. Furthermore, action is our kinsman. Action is our refuge. Therefore, we must take responsibility for the actions we perform. Therefore, it is our duty to adjust our lifestyle. Those shortcuts are often dangerous. Shortcuts and rushing are often dangerous. If one resorts to unrighteous means to quickly accumulate and earn wealth, or to quickly solve household problems, that person will surely have to suffer for it someday.

Therefore, during that period of calculation—treating the *nonakatha* as an occasion to take stock—one must reflect on one's income over the past year. If we look at "income" in a worldly sense, it is a budget seen in figures. In a deeper sense, what is a budget? The income side consists of meritorious deeds (*puñña*), and the expenditure side consists of harmful deeds (*pāpa*). "What are the harmful deeds committed by us? What are the unwholesome deeds? What are the wholesome deeds (*kusala*), the meritorious deeds, that we should have done, could have done, or made an effort to do?" Such is the reflection. Now, in this manner, we must settle a "transaction" regarding ourselves as

well. Part of the New Year festival is settling disputes with neighbors and resolving transactions; that is how we begin a New Year. But there is also an internal transaction that must be performed. We must not remain indebted to this life, this rare human existence we have obtained. How many die indebted to the human existence they obtained? They were born as humans, yet they live and die like human hungry ghosts (*preta*) or human demons (*yakṣa*). To avoid falling into such a state, this is a wonderful opportunity to strive and adjust our lifestyle.

Therefore, you, my friends, must align yourselves with a way of life appropriate to that human existence. Nowadays, when speaking of a good life, many people say—and it has become a sort of fashion—"We do not commit sins, we do no wrong." It is easily said. But merely saying "we do no wrong" does not complete the task. There is a positive side to it: one must perform wholesome deeds (*kusala*). Developing the mind—general principles, principles of virtue (*sīla*). It is not merely a matter of undertaking precepts. One must reflect on them, continually checking daily whether one's lifestyle is maintained in conformity with virtue. Next, one must not stop there. In this Dispensation, the true purpose of virtue is concentration (*samādhi*) and meditation (*bhāvanā*). If we do not build concentration upon the foundation of virtue, then virtue is of little avail. Therefore, virtue is essential. Whether it is the Five Precepts, the Eight Precepts with Livelihood as the Eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*), the Ten Precepts, or the Eight Uposatha Precepts, any virtue is undertaken in order to discipline body and speech, and thereby to calm the mind and bring it to concentration. Therefore, we must be diligent about this concentration—this calmness. There are two aspects to this concentration: tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). One calms the mind on a wholesome object. Practicing some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) such as loving-kindness (*mettā*), recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), repulsiveness (*asubha*), or recollection of death (*maraṇasati*) during leisure moments in daily life. Especially in the morning, before going to sleep at night, or when others are asleep, one should find some quiet time as part of the daily routine. By practicing a meditation subject like loving-kindness even for a short time—five or ten minutes—the mind becomes purified and concentrated. Through this, the mind becomes calm. Next, one must not stop at that. Those who cultivated only concentration and achieved higher supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*) existed not only during the time of a Buddha but also in eras when no Buddha appeared. Yet, they could not bring an end to the suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra* through that alone. Therefore, the Blessed One pointed out that based on concentration, one must then cultivate insight (*vipassanā*). This is the purpose of virtue and concentration. The wisdom of insight is what is meant by virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla-samādhi-paññā*). An effort must be made to develop that wisdom.

One should not think, "How can we do these things while living in a household?" In the past, during the time of the Buddha and even more recently—as we just mentioned, those little children realized the Fruit of Stream-entry. This involves not only concentration but also insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). This is a very subtle thing. At various times during our long journey in *saṃsāra*, we must have practiced meditation to some extent. Those practices remain deposited in our minds, stored in our

consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is like a hidden treasure, but we are unaware of it. Even if there is a golden plate lying in the corner of our kitchen, we might not recognize it. Only when we make a scratch on it, perhaps with a pin, can we identify it. Similarly, deep within our mental continuum—in fact, we have obtained this human existence through a special meritorious potential. Within it, there may lie those potentials of past Dhamma study and meditation. They remain hidden. Whether one is a layperson or a monk, in order to unearth them, one must begin insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). Meeting with qualified teachers of meditation and with the help of spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), one must direct the mind to insight meditation in terms of impermanence, suffering, and not-self (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*). In daily life, everything one encounters in one's lifestyle should be made a testimony, an illustration, of this Dhamma. Through them, one must train to see the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) taught by the Blessed One. When the mind is habituated to this, then at some point, one can realize the Paths and Fruits almost instantaneously, just as we saw. There is a story from the past where a princess, seeing worms in a toilet she visited, developed the perception of bloating—reflecting on how worms infest a body after death. That single, fleeting thought aided her even to attain Arahantship. Similarly, instead of allowing our minds to be agitated or defiled by lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) by the things we see on the road, read in newspapers, or hear in the news, we must see through them the three characteristics taught by the Blessed One: impermanent, suffering, and not-self (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*). That unique perspective is indeed insight (*vipassanā*).

Now, some today might say that, whatever may have been the case in the past or the lifestyle of our ancient Sinhalese ancestors, these things cannot be practiced in the present era. In the past, our mothers of old—as recorded in Dhamma texts and literature—even when pounding paddy, would not let the husk peel off without turning it into meditation, reflecting on impermanence. Such was their practice. Now, even though various luxury goods have been produced in the world, you, my friends, must see impermanence even through them. "Is not that which is in the living room today in the kitchen tomorrow? And on the next day, is it not finally in the dustbin?" Everything—all these things considered modern, novel, and beautiful—how they proceed towards destruction, towards the mouth of decay. Furthermore, we must see through all these various fashions, high-ranking positions, and those who reign supreme—how their fortune changes, collapsing in a single hour or a single moment. Through these, we must see the three characteristics taught by the Blessed One. None of these are strange things; none of this is unusual. We commonly say, "This is an accident," as if there is a category called "accidents." But in truth, there are no accidents in nature. Let us suppose a wheel of a moving vehicle suddenly comes off, or some such event occurs, resulting in what is called an accident. This did not happen only at that precise moment. It had been loosening gradually before it finally came off. Because we failed to see it, we call it an "accident." That is exactly how it is. That is one aspect of our "accidents." The events that occur to us, the disasters we face—underneath them lies action (*kamma*). That wheel of action. Not a single one is a "sudden accident." The Buddhas and those possessing supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*), upon seeing these, display a slight smile. Why? "I saw this happening—yet it cannot be prevented." That is why they smile slightly.

Consider a mother watching her little child trying to stand up. He must stand up somehow, but each time he falls, she smiles gently, doesn't she? Similarly, when the Buddhas see human beings destroyed by these so-called "accidents" and lamenting, They think: "Alas, these people did not see this coming. The cause for this is some unwholesome deed committed aeons ago. They are now experiencing its result (*vipāka*)." Such is the situation in this world. Truly, there are no "accidents" in nature; they are natural occurrences. To the word "natural," we must add—usually we use "natural" only for inanimate or lifeless things in the world—but the result of action (*kamma-vipāka*) is also included in this. Action, too, has a result. Just as we spoke of farming when discussing merit and demerit, the Blessed One has declared:

Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ

Kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ

"According to the seed that is sown,

So is the fruit that is reaped.

The doer of good reaps good,

The doer of evil reaps evil."

In whatever manner one sows, in that manner one reaps the harvest. The doer of good, the performer of wholesome deeds, reaps good results. The doer of evil reaps painful results (*dukkha*). Therefore, because of such a law, on a valuable Uposatha day like today, we must resolve to treat the coming *nonakatha* period as a true meritorious period—undertaking a special review, a retrospection, and a re-examination of our lives, and based on the lessons learned therefrom, resolve to start the coming New Year with a good lifestyle and a good schedule. This New Year and the Uposatha day have coincided; considering this as an opportunity to shape our lives in accordance with the Dhamma, you, my friends, should reflect on the purity that has arisen in your minds through listening to the Dhamma for an hour today. Endowed with the Eight Precepts with Livelihood as the Eighth or the even higher Eight Uposatha Precepts, you have listened to the Dhamma, disciplining body and speech, and generating firm faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem. Rooted in the energy (*viriya*) born of that faith, you sat on the floor in this manner, applying your minds to listen to the Dhamma despite various obstacles and difficulties. The mindfulness (*sati*) applied in that effort, the mindfulness applied to listen to every single word of this Dhamma sermon, and the calmness that arose in the mind as a result—by applying the mind to these virtuous qualities of faith and so forth, or as recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*)—can indeed be considered as concentration (*samādhi*). In that manner, this listening to the Dhamma has served as a foundational training in developing the faculties and powers (*indriya, bala*) of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), which aid in the attainment of Nibbāna. It is through this that you, my friends,

will one day be able to realize the truth of Nibbāna. One should wish: "May we have the strength and power to realize that noble Dhamma of Nibbāna without delay, in this very life, within this human existence obtained during this noble era of the appearance of a Buddha!"

Furthermore, we must share these merits with the deities: "May all the guardian deities of the Dispensation—the assembly of devas and brahmas—rejoice in whatever mass of wholesome merit we have accumulated by preaching and listening to this Dhamma! May they continue to protect the Dispensation and us, and may they realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through their desired path of awakening (*bodhi*)!" Likewise, we must make an aspiration for our departed relatives and all living beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who might be waiting to rejoice in the merits of this Dhamma preaching and listening: "By rejoicing in these merits, may they be released from painful conditions (*dukkha*) and reach happy states! May they associate with spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), fulfill all wholesome qualities such as meditation, and find peace in the noble, deathless Nibbāna!" Thinking thus, let us now share the merits by reciting these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #6

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Anupubbena medhāvī,

thokathokaṃ khaṇe khaṇe;

Kammāro rajatasseva,

niddhame malam attano.

From:

Verse 239 from the Malavagga (Chapter on Impurity) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

Today is the Vesak full-moon poya day. The Vesak poya day is an extremely noble day for the Buddhist world, because all three events—the birth, the enlightenment, and the final passing away of our Greatly Compassionate Fully Self-Enlightened Buddha—took place on a Vesak full-moon day like today. In fact, Vesak day is the Buddhist New Year, the Vesak day on which the Buddhist Era begins. Various people in the world have different concepts of a new year. In the Western world, they have formed a sense of a new year at the beginning of January. Likewise, a sense of a year has been formed based on planetary movements. Similarly, we in the Buddhist world consider this Vesak full-moon poya day, as we recollect the Buddha, to be our New Year.

Therefore, understanding this matter well and recollecting the virtues of the Buddha, today is a beautiful day, a peaceful day, and a pure day for the Buddhist devotee who wakes up in the morning. Buddhists offer various kinds of colorful decorations, offerings, and homage to the Greatly Compassionate One who, over an extremely long period of time—impossible to measure even in billions of eons—fulfilled the extremely difficult perfections (*pāramīs*), giving up His eyes, head, flesh, and blood, and attained

Buddhahood, because the Buddha pointed out to them the path to Nibbāna which extinguishes the suffering fires of saṃsāra.

In making decorations to pay respect and homage, we actually need to consider that there are two types of decorations we can make to honor the Buddha: external decorations and internal decorations. What is called external decoration is the decoration that can be seen outwardly on Vesak day, such as flags, Vesak lanterns, pandols, and so forth. What is called internal decoration is decorating one's own mind by spending this day observing precepts (*sīla*), listening to the Dhamma, and practicing meditation (*bhāvanā*), thereby cultivating in one's mind-state (*citta-santāna*) those virtues pointed out by the Buddha. This, then, is internal decoration. Similarly, when considering offerings, the Buddha Himself pointed out that respect and homage can be paid to Him through two types of offerings: material offerings (*āmisa-pūjā*) and offerings of practice (*paṭipatti-pūjā*). What is called material offering is offering oil, flowers, lamps, incense, food and drink, medicinal drinks (*gilān-pasa*), etc., to the Buddha. The offering of practice is the cultivation of those virtues of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), which constitute the path leading to Nibbāna pointed out by the Buddha. Out of these two types of offerings, the Buddha praised the offering of practice as the nobler offering. Thus, the faithful Buddhist devotee gradually directs the program that begins with external decorations toward internal decorations.

Similarly, the beginning made with material offerings is gradually inclined toward the offering of practice. Indeed, the Buddha always exhorted and instructed us to bring about progress within ourselves in such a systematic way, regarding both decorations and offerings. There is a story, a simple little narrative, which clarifies this matter well, and is mentioned in the Dhamma commentaries as the background story (*nidāna*) to the verse we recollected earlier. One day, a certain brahmin—a faithful brahmin, who must have had some degree of faith in the Saṅgha—came to the place where the bhikkhus assembled in the morning to drape their robes before entering the village for alms-round, and just stood there watching. As grass had grown quite high in that place and there was morning dew, the brahmin saw that when the bhikkhus draped their robes, the corners of the robes became wet with dew. Having seen this, this lay devotee thought, "I must clean this place a little," and after the bhikkhus had left, he brought a hoe, weeded the grass, and prepared a circular, cleared area like a small threshing-floor. On the second day too, this person came and watched while the bhikkhus were setting out for the village for alms, probably to see if there was any shortcoming in the work he had done. While watching, he noticed that because the grass had been removed, there was now dust. Seeing that the corners of the robes were soiled with dust as the bhikkhus draped their robes, this lay devotee brought white sand after the bhikkhus had left, spread it, and eliminated the dust. On the next day as well, he came to the spot and watched in the same manner. On that day, the sun was shining harshly early in the morning. Seeing that the bhikkhus were sweating due to the sun's heat, he thought, "I must make a small shelter here," and after the bhikkhus had left, he prepared a small shed, a shelter. Again, on another day, he came and watched, and on that day it was

raining heavily. Seeing that the bhikkhus were harassed by the rainstorm, he thought, "I must build a small hall here." Thus, he built a small hall there, a small hall for the bhikkhus to assemble when going for alms-round. Next, he thought, "Now I must offer this hall to the Saṅgha led by the Buddha." He invited the Buddha and the Saṅgha—it was not a grand place—conducted the Saṅgha around that hall, offered an alms-giving, and before the sharing of merits (*anumodanā*), this devotee declared to the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, Blessed One, I began this great meritorious deed in a very small way. First, I weeded the grass as mentioned before and cleared a small area like a threshing-floor. Next, I sprinkled some sand there. Next, I made a small shed. Next, I built a small hall in this manner, and now I have also performed an alms-giving." On that occasion, praising the brahmin, the Buddha declared: "So it is, Brahmin, a wise person, moment by moment, step by step, doing wholesome deeds, removes all defilement-rust from his own mind-state," and having said so, He uttered the verse we mentioned earlier. Indeed, that verse is an extremely simple one. It is also a verse so valuable that anyone can make it a motto for their life, and it is valuable enough to be memorized and used as a guiding principle. It is a verse found in the Malavagga of the Dhammapada.

Anupubbena medhāvī

thoka thokaṃ khaṇe khaṇe

kammāro rajatasseva

niddhame malamattano

Its general meaning: "Medhāvī" means the wise person, the intelligent person. "Anupubbena" means gradually, step by step. "Thoka thokaṃ" means little by little. "Khaṇe khaṇe" means moment by moment. "Kammāro rajatasseva": "Kammāra" means a smith. Here it refers to a gold- or silversmith. "Rajatasseva" means as in the case of silver, or like working with silver. "Attano malaṃ niddhame": blows away the rust (or impurities) in one's own mind-state, just as a smith blows away the dross (rust) of silver. The meaning of the verse is that the wise person, the intelligent person called "medhāvī", removes the defilement-rust from his own mind-state. If the Buddha declared any verse, even if it is a single-stanza verse, each and every word in it conveys an extremely deep meaning, and moreover, it fits together so well and is organized in such a wondrous way that not even a single word can be removed. Furthermore, within every such verse, there is a Dhamma-potency capable of making a person realize Nibbāna.

Such a valuable taste of liberation (*vimutti-rasa*) is contained in every such verse. Now, if we contemplate a little deeply on the terms mentioned in this verse: "Medhāvī" is applied to those who have, by birth, a good situational wisdom, a wisdom suited for the occasion, and whose intellect has matured through saṃsāric experience—those who have the strength of good wisdom and intelligence, even if they do not have much formal education. Such is the "medhāvī" person. The word "anupubbena" is an extremely valuable word—meaning "gradually" or "sequentially." It indicates systematic progress. A special characteristic of this Dhamma is systematic progress. There is a wonderful

systematic progress in this Dhamma. If the Buddha pointed out any category of Dhamma, they fit into each other like the links of a chain. Furthermore, on one occasion, the Buddha declared to Pahārāda, the lord of the Asuras: *"Seyyathāpi Pahārāda, mahāsamuddo anupubbaninno anupubbapoṇo anupubbapabbhāro, na āyatakeneva papāto; evameva kho, Pahārāda, imasmiṃ dhammavinaye anupubbasikkhā anupubbakiriya anupubbapaṭipadā, na āyatakeneva aññāpaṭivedho."* "Just as, Pahārāda, the great ocean has a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, a gradual shelf, and not an abrupt precipice; in the same way, Pahārāda, in this Dhamma-Vinaya, in this Dispensation (*Sāsana*), there is gradual training, gradual action, gradual practice, and no abrupt penetration of final knowledge." Thus, the Buddha declared, comparing the Dhamma and the path of practice of this entire Dispensation to the great ocean.

The great ocean—as you lay devotees know—the seashore is a very beautiful place where even a small child can gather seashells. Then, as one goes in little by little, one can step into the waves. It gradually becomes deeper and deeper. As one goes further in, it is extremely deep. In the same way, in the path of practice in this Dispensation too, anyone can approach and make a start at their own level. There is such a nature of the Dhamma drawing one in gradually, step by step. Thus, when speaking about deep matters, the entire Dispensation, or the path of Dhamma, the path of practice, is compared to the great ocean, considering its depth. In some other instances, where this Dhamma is shown as something that goes upward little by little, leading to higher things, the simile of a flight of stairs, a staircase, is used. Just as one climbs a staircase, this Dhamma takes one upward little by little, step by step. Thus, the simile of the great ocean shows its depth. It goes deeper and deeper. On the other hand, in the case of a staircase, like a flight of stairs to climb a mansion, one climbs it step by step and reaches the top. This is the wonderful characteristic of this Dhamma indicated by the word "anupubba"—gradual sequence. It takes one from one stage to another, signifying a systematic connection where each stage is linked to the next.

Next, "thoka thokaṃ khaṇe khaṇe". These few words also carry a very deep meaning. Outwardly, they seem very easy and simple to understand, but the meaning beneath them is highly valuable. "Thoka thokaṃ" means little by little. "Khaṇe khaṇe" means moment by moment. If we examine the meaning of these words: little by little, or systematic progression. If one says "just a little," there is no systematic progression in that. When one says "little by little," it conveys a sense of systematic progress. If one says "just a moment," there is no systematic progress in that. When one says "moment by moment," there is systematic progress. Thus, what is shown here, what is given to the world here, is a certain "perception of possibility." A perception of possibility means the feeling that one can do something. This is not present in many people. Now, if we tell someone today about sermons, meditation, or other Dhamma activities—especially regarding the Dhamma—the response we often hear is, "Where is the time for such things? We have so much work. Where can we find time to do these? We don't even have time to breathe."

They make various complaints of this sort. The best medicine for such people is what the Buddha has shown here: "thoka thokaṃ khaṇe khaṇe"—little by little, moment by moment. This practice, or rather this theory, this fundamental principle, is applied in the world in various ways to worldly matters as well. As you lay devotees know, there is the "savings campaign." No one has excess money to throw away, but everyone, thinking of their children and their future emergencies, saves little by little as and when they find the opportunity. A big task from a small beginning. In the same way, it is also found in this path of Dhamma. The Buddha gives us this idea here: without wasting time saying "we have no time, we have so much work," one can make a small beginning in these wholesome qualities (*kusala-dhamma*) and develop them systematically.

He gives the world a perception of possibility with these few words: "thoka thokaṃ khaṇe khaṇe". One should not misunderstand this and think it is enough to do just a little and stop there. Little by little. The person who can do a little can bring a great deal closer through that little. If they do not engage in it even a little, it cannot be done at all. Similarly, if one applies oneself properly for one moment, that person can carry it forward from moment to moment. Now we know that a great river, which flows into the sea with a great roar, sometimes begins with just a few drops of water falling from a roof. In this way, everything gathers together and becomes a great thing. In another such place in the Dhammapada, the Buddha has shown another very appealing simile, on an occasion when He was speaking about performing meritorious deeds:

Māvamaññetha puññassa – na mandaṃ āgamissati

Udabindu nipātena – udakumbhopi pūrati

Pūrati dhīro puññassa – thoka thokampi ācinaṃ

"Do not underestimate merit, thinking, 'This small merit will not yield its results to me.' Do not think of it lightly, do not look down on it." Next, the simile given is: "Udabindu nipātena – udakumbhopi pūrati." When it rains and water drips from the roof little by little, if a pot is placed there, after some time the pot becomes full. "Udabindu nipātena..." Due to the falling of water drops, "udakumbhopi pūrati" even a water pot becomes full. Following that, based on that, one can think: "Pūrati dhīro puññassa – thoka thokampi ācinaṃ." "Dhīra" means the wise person. That wise person, the intelligent person, "thoka thokampi ācinaṃ"—the word "thoka thokaṃ" is used here too—accumulating little by little, "pūrati puññassa" becomes filled with merit. Thus the Buddha declared. In that light, we can understand that these few words, "thoka thokaṃ khaṇe khaṇe", are extremely valuable words.

Let us also contemplate the next simile given: "kammāro rajatasseva". We said that the word "kammāra" is used here not for a blacksmith who hammers iron, but for a smith who works with gold and silver. We generally say goldsmith. But the simile given here is about silver. That too has been declared by the Buddha with a specific meaning. As you lay devotees know, silver is a substance with a bright white luster. It is a white object. But the condition regarding this white object is what is mentioned here: "kammāro

rajatasseva niddhame malamattano". Yet, this silver has rust bound to it. When a smith finds a piece of silver bound with rust, he cannot remove its dirt all at once according to the theory mentioned; those who work with gold and silver know that they do this through a systematic process—heating it little by little, cooling it, letting it rest for a while, and so on. In the very same way, just as a smith removes the rust from silver, systematically, little by little, moment by moment, so should one "attano malaṃ niddhame"—remove the defilement-rust that has accumulated in one's own mind-state over a long period in saṃsāra. This is what the Buddha pointed out in that verse. Thus, through this, besides the perception of possibility, another deep idea is brought out. There is no need to explain anew that there is rust bound in our mind-state; we know it is rusted so much that a Buddha is hardly needed to tell us. We suffer because of it. Sometimes, the ordinary person does not know the nature of that rust—how powerfully it is bound. That is what the Buddha brings to light. But the more valuable point is that beneath that rust, there is a certain luster. That is something that gives great inspiration and courage to the world. The Buddha declared this fact in a wondrous way, in a way no other teacher has declared—the nature of this mind. He declared on one occasion that there is a natural luster in the mind, and that it has been covered by this defilement-rust.

"Pabhassarāmidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ,

tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ.

Taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti,

tasmā assutavato puthujjanassa cittabhāvanā natthiti vadāmi"

"Bhikkhus, this mind is luminous. Radiant. Bright. But *'tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ'*—it is defiled by adventitious, external impurities, adventitious defilements that have come from outside. *'Taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti'*—the uninstructed ordinary person who lacks knowledge of the Dhamma does not understand this as it really is. *'Tasmā assutavato puthujjanassa cittabhāvanā natthiti vadāmi'*—therefore, I say that the uninstructed ordinary person who lacks knowledge of the Dhamma does not take interest in the development of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*), in meditation." Next, the other side is shown:

"Pabhassarāmidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ,

tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vippamuttaṃ.

Taṃ sutavā ariyasāvako yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti,

tasmā sutavato ariyasāvakassa cittabhāvanā atthiti vadāmi"

"Bhikkhus, this mind is luminous. There is also an occasion when it is freed, released from those external defilements. The instructed noble disciple who has knowledge of the Dhamma understands this as it really is. Therefore, for the instructed noble disciple who has knowledge of the Dhamma, there is development of the mind. That person engages

in meditation. Thus the Buddha declared." Accordingly, we can understand that this gives great courage to the world: there is a natural, inherent luster, a radiance in our mind-state, and there is a possibility of bringing out that radiance. If we begin to remove this rust systematically, little by little, moment by moment, then one day, depending on the strength one has accumulated continuously in saṃsāra and also on one's present effort, even an ordinary person can develop those supramundane states, those deep and extremely pure states that are beyond the comprehension of ordinary people, and achieve mental purity (*citta-pārisuddhi*). This is what is highlighted for us in this verse.

Next, the Buddha has pointed out the course of action for this on various occasions and in various ways. Specifically, one is a simple simile. A simile which even a small child can understand, shown by the Buddha, is the simile He showed to the young Venerable Rāhula on how to purify this mind, and the advice given based on that. On one occasion, the Buddha asks the novice Rāhula: "Kiṃ maññasi, Rāhula, kimatthiyoādāso?"—"What do you think, Rāhula, what is a mirror for?" He asks what a mirror is for, just as one would ask a young child. Then Venerable Rāhula replies: "Paccavekkhaṇattho, bhante"—"Venerable Sir, it is for the purpose of looking at it with close attention, for reflection." Then, the Buddha, based on that simile, declares: "Evameva kho, Rāhula..."—and here He used that word "paccavekkhiitvā" (having reflected). "Paccavekkhiitvā" means looking back with close attention, considering with wisdom. "In the very same way, Rāhula, considering with wisdom, paccavekkhiitvā paccavekkhiitvā—reflecting again and again, one should perform bodily actions. One should perform bodily actions considering them with wisdom, reflecting again and again with wisdom. Similarly, regarding verbal actions, and regarding mental actions..." in this manner He declared the method of purifying the mind.

Then He explains in more detail: "Rāhula, if you have to do some work with your body, before doing it, contemplate, reflect."—He uses that word "paccavekkhiitvā".—"Look at that action with wisdom, just as one looks into a mirror. Consider with wisdom: 'This action I am going to perform, will it lead to my own harm? Will it lead to the harm of others? Will it lead to the harm of both?' Contemplate in this manner beforehand. If, upon contemplating, you realize: 'If I do this work, it will have such-and-such bad consequences, it will turn out badly for me, badly for others, badly for both sides,' then refrain from doing that action." That is before doing it. Similarly, while doing it—if, by some chance, you did not realize it at the beginning, and are carrying it out. But, even while carrying it out—the Buddha declares next—reflect in the same manner while doing it. Look at that work with wisdom, just as one looks into a mirror: "If I continue this action in this way, will it lead to my own harm, to my ruin? Will it lead to the harm of others? Will it lead to the harm of both?" If you realize this while carrying it out, you must stop it right then and there, aborting it immediately, declared the Buddha. If, on the other hand, you realize: "No, this work I am carrying out does not harm me, it is good for me, it is for my benefit, for the benefit of others, for the benefit of both sides, it does not cause any harm," then continue with that action, He pointed out in that manner. That is while doing it. Not only that, but also after doing it. There are some actions that one does not understand before doing, nor while doing, but only after doing them does

one understand their true nature. Therefore, after doing it as well, reflect in this very same way—look and see. "If I have performed an action through the body, did that action lead to my harm, to my ruin? Did it lead to the harm of others? Did it lead to the harm of both?" If it was so, if you realized it so, on that occasion—indeed, nothing can be done about it now, but—the course of action the Buddha points out there is a method belonging to the bhikkhus. That is to go to the Teacher, that is, the Buddha Himself, and declare, "Oh, such a mistake was made by me," as in the declaration of offenses (*āpatti-desanā*). Or else, go to one's elders among the bhikkhus and declare, "Such a mistake was made by me," and also promise, "I will not do such a thing again." That is what is called restraint in the future (*āyati-saṃvara*). One resolves not to do it again. That is how bodily actions are done. In the very same way, by that same theory, following that same method, consider verbal actions too—before doing, while doing, and after doing. Similarly, mental actions. Mental actions are the thoughts we have about various things. Contemplate on them too: "This flow of thoughts, these thoughts, do they lead to my welfare, to the welfare of others, to the welfare of both?" In this way, the Buddha pointed out that Dhamma principle on that occasion, based on the simile of the mirror.

Then He declares it as a natural law (*dhammatā*): "Rāhula, whatever recluses and brahmins in the past purified their bodily actions, purified their verbal actions, purified their mental actions, they all did so following this very principle, this very method. Whatever recluses and brahmins in the future will bring about purity in their actions of body, speech, and mind, they will do so following this method. Recluses and brahmins of the present time also do so following this method." In this way, the Buddha declared this sutta discourse to Venerable Rāhula.

The mirror used here is extremely useful to us. You lay devotees know about mirrors very well. There are mirrors in homes. There are even full-length mirrors in homes that show the entire body. But they show only the body. This is not a mirror that shows the body—it is a Dhamma-mirror. It is a mirror that shows the mind. This Dhamma, based on this, is entirely a mirror that shows the mind. It shows the impurity of the mind. Yet, from this, one can think: now for you lay devotees, when combing hair, or preparing and grooming the face, before doing so, you look in the mirror to see if there is any place on the face or hair that needs to be adjusted. You also look while doing it. After doing it, you look back again to see if there is any shortcoming in how well you have groomed yourself. In the very same way, one must look into this Dhamma-mirror. According to the principle shown in the Dhamma, whether it leads to the harm of others, to one's own harm, to the harm of both, and so on—it is the narrative of wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala-akusala*) that was spoken of there. If it leads to harm in that manner, it is unwholesome. If it does not lead to harm, it is wholesome. If it leads to welfare, it is wholesome. You can easily understand that. In that way, this is a Dhamma-mirror; this Dhamma is entirely a mirror. To what extent? A certain bhikkhunī who had attained Arahantship, a senior Arahant nun, declared regarding her own realization: *"Dhammādāsaṃ apekkhitvā"*—"I looked at my face in the Dhamma-mirror." Looking at the face here means looking at the mind. "I adjusted these by looking into the Dhamma-mirror," she said.

In that light, we can understand that this advice given by the Buddha in the sutta discourse is helpful to us in our daily practical lives. The biggest problem for all of us is finding time. Next, how to do this—there is no perception of possibility. Also, how to make a start, how to carry it on. In this way, we have found excellent advice in these sutta discourses. Similarly, on another occasion, the Buddha delivered a sutta discourse containing a highly valuable simile.

There is a sutta called the *Accharāsaṅghāta Sutta*. Lay devotees, "accharāsaṅghāta" means the snapping of fingers. You know what snapping fingers is. Sometimes, holding the thumb and the middle finger together, a small sound, a click, is made. Exorcists too, when performing rituals or when a demon needs to be driven away, snap their fingers in this manner. But here, in this discourse, the Buddha refers to the duration of a finger-snap. Only a very short time is taken for this. It implies a mere moment. In the *Accharāsaṅghāta Sutta*, the Buddha preaches, "Bhikkhus..."—He addresses the bhikkhus, but He is informing the beings of the three worlds of this matter—"Even for the short duration of a finger-snap, if any bhikkhu develops a mind of loving-kindness, even within that short duration of a finger-snap, of such a bhikkhu I say: he is one who acts in accordance with the Teacher's instruction, follows the Teacher's advice, and does not consume the alms-food given by the world in vain; he is one who lives without leaving the practice of absorption (*jhāna*) empty, without wasting it, and without failing to practice absorption. Thus I declare." That is to say, even for a mere moment, a short moment like a finger-snap, if someone develops a mind of loving-kindness, that too is a form of absorption (*jhāna*) to some small extent. It is, to some small extent, practicing in accordance with the advice shown by the Buddha. And because of that very reason, a certain strength is received from it for one's bhikkhu-hood, a value is added to it. That is why it was declared that such a person is fit to consume the alms-food.

One should not misunderstand from this that meditation is something that must be limited only to a short duration like a finger-snap. But what is shown here is that if someone starts with a short time like a finger-snap, that person can carry that path of practice forward. Now we know that the big works in the world are done by those who obtained time from such short moments. If one trains the mind to do a valuable work in a short time, that person, while performing their various daily duties, can recollect the Buddha's advice—"There is a duration of a finger-snap available here, isn't there? I can apply that to meditation"—and walk on that path. In that manner, He declared regarding the mind of loving-kindness. Next, "Bhikkhus, if someone, even for the short duration of a finger-snap, develops the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), recollects impermanence—that is the meditation on impermanence. The meditation on that impermanence is insight (*vipassanā*). Next, similarly, the perception of suffering (*dukkha-saññā*), if they contemplate the nature of suffering in this saṃsāra—whatever is impermanent is suffering (*dukkha*). Next, if they contemplate that this painful thing is not-self (*anattā*), if they practice mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*), if they develop recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*), recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*)—if a bhikkhu practices these meditations even minimally, even for the duration of a finger-snap, I declare that

bhikkhu to be one who acts in accordance with the Teacher's instruction." From this sutta discourse too, we can understand that what is given here is the "perception of possibility." A perception of possibility is given to "the beings of the three worlds." This duration of a finger-snap... now we took the simile of the "exorcist". The similes given by the Buddha are extremely deep and meaningful. Now we know, just as exorcists sometimes snap their fingers to drive away demons, here, by maintaining a wholesome mind for that short duration of a finger-snap, one secures an opportunity for the "demon of defilements", or rather that defilement-rust, to be removed. In that way, there too, what the Buddha pointed out is the value of engaging in these activities by generating a "perception of possibility" in one's daily life.

Therefore, if one is to perform activities of this kind, there is something else that must be used as an aid. We are presenting what you lay devotees, these Buddhists, can practically use as an aid. One must also understand the importance of this kind of work. The Buddha brought this to light frequently on many occasions. In this Dispensation, this is known as the "sources of urgency" (*saṃvega-vatthu*). All vehicles and so on have a certain speed. To generate this speed, various fuels are added—whether it is regular or super. In the same way, to go on this journey of the Dispensation, a certain speed is required. That speed is called urgency (*saṃvega*). The fuel-like things that aid that speed are called the sources of urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*). What are these sources of urgency? They are not things that can be touched with hands, nor can they be bought with money. But these matters—

Jāti jarā vyādhi cuti apāyā

Atīta apāyatuka vaṭṭa dukkhaṃ

Idāni āhāra gavesi dukkhaṃ

Saṃvegavatthū imāni aṭṭha

Contemplating according to the Buddha's word: we have been born in this saṃsāra for an endless time. Thinking about this birth (*jāti*), or rather this birth itself, about this life—what a terrifying occasion birth is! Mothers know this, even if the young child does not. Next, from the moment of birth onward, is there not suffering (*dukkha*)? Birth is suffering. Thus, even if a Buddha does not say so, it is something the world must understand. In this age, however, they consider it something to celebrate. It is an occasion worthy of weeping—obtaining this birth. For an extremely long time in saṃsāra, we have committed this foolishness. The very first gift of that birth, the birthday gift, is death. If one is born, death is assured for that person. The next station on the way to death is aging (*jarā*). From birth—birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*). Aging is the second source of urgency. Birth, aging, next illness (*vyādhi*)—as one goes into aging, as the body decays, illness approaches more and more and aids it. Diseases. Next, falling away (*cuti*), and finally it ends in death. Thus: birth (*jāti*). Next, growing old, which is called aging (*jarā*); becoming aged. Next, illness. Next, death. Next, contemplating on the past according to the Buddha's word—how much suffering we have undergone in the past saṃsāra! Next, if

we do not see Nibbāna, if we do not realize Nibbāna, how long in the future—according to the Buddha's word—we will travel in this saṃsāra from an extremely long, beginningless time, as the Buddha declared; then in the future too, we will have to suffer in the same way. The suffering of the past rounds of rebirths (*vaṭṭa-dukkha*) including the planes of misery (*apāya*). The foolishness of this spinning in one place in saṃsāra, the suffering caused by this—one must contemplate on this daily. Similarly, the effort made to search for food in this life. How painful is that? One must think about how animals struggle for this food. Sometimes, for wealthy people, obtaining food might seem like a small thing. Perhaps, like Venerable Anuruddha in the past declaring how rice is "born", thinking that food is obtained simply by its coming to the table. But how much does one toil throughout the day for this bit of food? That too is suffering (*dukkhaṃ*). In that way, these sources of urgency, the painful nature of life, of saṃsāra, must be contemplated upon constantly. Contemplating according to that urgency, then, like saving a little when thinking about emergencies and children, one must make an effort to apply the short moment available for some merit, for some Dhamma, for a sermon, or for meditation.

It is due to the lack of such urgency (*saṃvega*) that ordinary Buddhists gradually move away from the Dhamma. Because of that, suffering increases in this world, and they accumulate suffering for the next world too. Thus, this Buddha-Dispensation is a program of removing a multitude of rust. The Buddha pointed out this rust. There are various kinds of rust in the world, but above all those kinds of rust, what is pointed out as the real rust is:

> *...malā ve pāpakā dhammā – asmiṃ loke paramhi ca*
>
> *Tato malā malataraṃ – avijjā paramaṃ malaṃ*

In this world and the next, evil deeds are indeed a real rust. Committing sins is a major rust in the world, a well-known type of rust. Next, even more than that, "tato malā malataraṃ"—the greatest rust of all is: "avijjā paramaṃ malaṃ"—ignorance is the supreme rust, that lack of knowledge, that non-knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, that foolishness, that ignorance. The ignorance present in saṃsāric beings. That is the greatest rust. Therefore, it is to cut away this rust that the Buddha pointed out the Noble Eightfold Path as the Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). There too, we have a gradual program. What is this Noble Eightfold Path? It is often limited only to words. Many do not understand its value. A wonderful Dhamma-way is present here: Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*)—these eight factors are pointed out as the Noble Eightfold Path.

If we express this in the language we understand, Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) means "correct seeing." Here, "seeing" does not mean the sight seen by the eye. It is the vision of life—the view regarding life. The view regarding the world. It can be called correct seeing. Next, Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) means "correct thinking and wishing." Next,

Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*) means "correct speaking"—correct words. Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*) means "correct doing." Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) means "correct living"—the method of maintaining life. Next, Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) means "correct exerting"—effort. Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) means "correct recollecting"—the right kind of mindfulness. Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) means "correct unifying of the mind"—unifying the mind in the correct way. As time is insufficient to describe each of these in detail, to mention them briefly: Right View means everyone has a vision of life. Even a criminal, everyone has some vision of life. Even a grasshopper has a vision of life—which ends in burning. If someone's vision of life is correct, they can progress from that point onward. If someone's vision of life is wrong, there is ruin from that point onward. Thus, the first step is indeed the vision of life. That is pointed out in the Dhamma as Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). On the one hand, if we point it out at a shallow level, considering only this saṃsāra, it is the understanding of good logic—the understanding of wholesome and unwholesome deeds. There are benefits of giving (*dāna*) and so forth in the world; there are fruits and results of wholesome and unwholesome kamma; there is this world, there is the next world; there is mother, there is father, and so on, pointed out as ten matters. It is a view that aids in performing wholesome deeds, in performing merit. It is a view that helps one not to go to planes of misery in this saṃsāra, but to go to happy realms.

But going deeper than that is the Four Noble Truths. Right View is the understanding of the Four Noble Truths pointed out by a Fully Self-Enlightened Tathāgata Himself—that this entire saṃsāric existence, this very five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), is suffering (*dukkha*); that the cause of this suffering is craving (*taṇhā*); that the place where this thirst of craving is quenched is Nibbāna; and that the very path to that Nibbāna is this Noble Eightfold Path. If someone's vision of life is prepared in this manner, a certain transformation begins to occur within them systematically, little by little, moment by moment—just as when one steps onto the first step, as one foot is placed, the other leg rises. Thus, if this view called Right View, this vision of life, has arisen in someone, a subtle transformation regarding thoughts begins to occur systematically in that person. That is pointed out as the intention of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*), the intention of non-ill-will (*avyāpāda-saṅkappa*), and the intention of harmlessness (*avihiṃsā-saṅkappa*). Generally, "nekkhamma" means the idea of leaving the household life, the thought of renouncing the home. When saying this, one should not think it is something belonging only to the bhikkhus. Leaving the household life actually means that this saṃsāra is suffering. Now, even lay devotees sometimes declare in times of distress that they want to ordain. At least in the deeper mind of these Buddhist devotees, there is some inclination toward that ordination. They are aided in this by the sight of the bhikkhus, by associating with the bhikkhus, and so on. On such occasions, what arises in these devotees is the intention of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*)—the thought of renouncing. That is a wholesome thought. It is a wholesome mind. It is by the generation of thoughts of renouncing over an extremely long period of time that a person gets the strength even to ordain.

In that way, the mind inclines toward the concept of renunciation. The intention of non-ill-will (*avyāpāda-saṅkappa*)—that is, thoughts of loving-kindness, thoughts opposite to anger. Next, the intention of harmlessness (*avihiṃsā-saṅkappa*)—refraining from violence and practicing harmlessness; thoughts of "may no being be harmed." These thoughts are called Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*). Guided by those thoughts, that person's words also change next. Those words are: avoiding lying, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous talk. That person tries to refrain from them. This is spoken of in the eightfold livelihood-precepts (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*) observed. Next, while speaking those good words, refraining from those evils, if they use truthful words, words that unite others, meaningful words, gentle words, then that person next thinks, "My actions must also be in accordance with my words"—to refrain from those wrongs called killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. They try to refrain from destroying life, stealing, and sexual misconduct. This is Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*)—correct action; "correct doing" is that.

Next, it does not stop there. Sometimes, a big problem for many in this day and age is the question of livelihood, the path of living. From various quarters, from various high places, support is given to drag one down to unrighteous paths. Because of that, the life of the Buddhist goes toward ruin on a large scale. Thus, wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) means incorrect ways of living. One must abandon them. The Buddha pointed out, as things that should not be done by a Buddhist devotee, as occupations that should not be done: trading in weapons, raising animals for slaughter, trading in flesh, trading in poison, trading in intoxicants. One must try to refrain from these and establish a righteous livelihood. Otherwise, that Buddhist path of life, that livelihood (*ājīva*), cannot be completed.

If someone has established their livelihood in this way, even with difficulty, even with some sacrifice, it does not go to waste. It is through the effort applied for that, next, through that effort, that person enters the ground of practice, the ground of meditation, automatically. Automatically, they get the eligibility to enter. Because, through the effort made to establish one's livelihood, what is it that one does, what is being done inside the mind? There is a major work-share in that. That is what is called Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*)—"correct exerting." That is the real effort. It is not an effort made in the world. It is an effort made inside the mind. What is that effort? The effort applied to prevent unarisen unwholesome states from arising. The effort applied to discard arisen unwholesome states. The effort applied to arouse unarisen wholesome states. Next, the effort applied to protect, to consolidate arisen wholesome states. To consider briefly, then, within this fourfold effort, there is a very great, valuable meditation. It is through going on continuously in that meditation that Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*)—good recollecting, a good mindfulness—arises in that person. Just as if a guard were given a job—"Do not let bad people enter here, if there are bad people, drive them away from here, draw good people close, treat them well"—if a guard were given such a job, that person would have to perform that duty without sleep, without falling into negligence. In the very same way is that great upheaval that occurs in the mind-state of the devotee who exerts himself regarding his livelihood. Because of that great transformation, that great

effort, exertion, and endeavor, a valuable quality, a very rare quality arises in that person systematically: Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*)—correct mindfulness, correct recollecting.

When mindfulness properly emerges, what it is directed toward, contemplating in accordance with the Dhamma, is the four establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). One begins to think about the nature of this body. About the feelings (*vedanā*) arising in this body, about the nature of this mind, about the thoughts that come and arise in the mind—regarding these. This is what is called the four establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Those four establishments of mindfulness are the sole way (*ekāyana-magga*) to Nibbāna. The sole way, an infallible path—those four establishments of mindfulness. Thus, through developing that establishment of mindfulness, next, if someone has gained the strength to maintain that mindfulness for a short time, as that time is gradually increased, that person can develop a certain concentration (*samādhi*). That person's mind can be settled. In that way, through correct unification of the mind, the mind can be unified on some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). What is done by that is one-pointedness of mind (*cittekaggatā*). In this day and age, we use a word: "personality". To indicate the idea of a person's life, we say "personality." Actually, personality emerges here. Just as when one begins to build a stupa and places the pinnacle, if Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) has arisen in some mind-state, that person's personality becomes unified. Reaching that state is what is called completing the Noble Eightfold Path.

If someone has completed that Noble Eightfold Path supramundane-wise, right there is Nibbāna. This path of Dhamma is so wonderful that the Buddha has declared: this well-proclaimed (*svākkhāta*) Dhamma is *sandiṭṭhiko, akāliko, ehipassiko, opanayiko, paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*. That is to say, this well-preached Dhamma, Dhamma-practices—these are practices that are not empty. This is a Dhamma with an "infallible practice that yields results properly." Therefore, it is well-proclaimed (*svākkhāta*). "Sandiṭṭhika" means that in daily life, one can see its results right here in this world, before one's eyes. They can be put into practice. As expressed in "thoka thokaṃ khaṇe... khaṇe", starting little by little, slowly, there are benefits to the extent that one performs. Next, similarly, it yields results according to the timeless (*akālika*) law. As we specifically declared, when the Noble Eightfold Path is completed, right there is Nibbāna. There is no need for another person to come and say, "Have you completed it now? Well then, I give you Nibbāna." That is the timelessness (*akālikatā*) of this Dhamma.

Next, "ehipassika" means "come and see." The Dhamma itself draws one in. The Buddha does not say, "Come and see" in a promotional way. Often, street vendors on the pavements invite people, saying "Come and see." It is not that kind of thing the Buddha has shown here. It is the Dhamma itself that says, "Come and see." Just like saying, "Taste and see," it means "Put me into practice in this way and see if there are results." That is the meaning of "ehipassika"—"come and see." Similarly, "opanayika" means it has the strength to draw one from one stage to another. We said, according to the simile of the great ocean, it draws one from one to another. There is a systematic progress from

one to another. Just as when climbing a flight of stairs, there is a connection from one step to another. Therefore, if one has made a beginning in this path of Dhamma at any point, if a proper beginning has been made, from that point onward there is progress for that person—not automatically, but if one applies oneself.

In that manner, the Buddha pointed out the qualities of *ehipassika* and *opanayika*. Next, *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*. There is no need for another person to come and tell wise people; they can put it into practice and realize it for themselves, as the Buddha declared. Whether there is a result of this path of Dhamma, whether this saṃsāra can be ended in this very life, in the manner of *"diṭṭheva dhamme"*—right here in this life—whether that bliss of Nibbāna can be realized or not, one must perform it and see. In that way, the Buddha declared here. Therefore, there is no reason for these lay devotees to hold back regarding this path of Dhamma because of their lay status. In the past, even during the Buddha's time, Anāthapiṇḍika and others—when considering the wealthy of today, Anāthapiṇḍika was someone with wealth hundreds and thousands of times greater. Yet, he was a Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) lay devotee. The children of that lay devotee, that young devotee, also achieved the realization of the fruits of the path (*magga-phala*). The great lay woman devotee Visākhā, next Citta the householder, Hatthaka of Ālavī, and so on—there is a long list of lay names among those who achieved the realization of the fruits of the path.

Those noble ones did not spend their time in vain. They applied the correct path of Dhamma at all times. They discussed the Dhamma with the Buddha, engaged in sermons and meditation—in that manner they spent their lives. In that way, Buddhist devotees who lead their lives successfully can reap the results of this path of Dhamma today too. Therefore, you lay devotees must contemplate: now today, especially because of the work and so forth in their lives, many people hold back in this day and age. Many speak of finding time for these works. And because of that very reason, they fall into negligence.

This diligence (*appamāda*) is a fundamental word of the Buddha. Like the letter "A". These cannot be postponed. That is, we hear many say that it is after retirement that they can perform these sermons and meditations. But after retirement, other problems come. Or else, due to physical weaknesses, they cannot perform them. Thus, it is because of this postponing that we have traveled in this saṃsāra for such a long time. To generate fear of saṃsāra, the Buddha has delivered wondrous discourses on some occasions. There is a series of discourses called the *Anamatagga Saṃyutta*. On one occasion, to thirty bhikkhus who practiced meditation, who had arrived from the city of Pāvā, the Buddha delivered an extremely urgent (*saṃvegajanaka*), extremely wondrous discourse. So powerful was that discourse that it is declared that at the end of the discourse, those bhikkhus became Arahants. How was that discourse delivered? The Buddha began in this manner: "Bhikkhus, this saṃsāra is extremely long, its beginning cannot be seen. A beginning of this saṃsāra cannot be seen by anyone; of these beings who have traveled for an extremely long time, covered by ignorance (*aviijjā*) and bound by craving (*taṇhā*), a beginning is not seen." Next He declares—asking a question to the bhikkhus—"Bhikkhus, what do you think? In this long time, as you traveled in this saṃsāra—is the

blood shed by your being decapitated greater, or is the water in the four great oceans greater?" The bhikkhus respectfully declare, "Venerable Sir, if we have understood the Dhamma preached by the Blessed One properly, the blood shed by our being decapitated as we traveled in this saṃsāra during this extremely long time is indeed greater, and the water in the four great oceans is less." Next, the Buddha did not stop there: "Bhikkhus, when you were born as bulls, that is, born in the animal state as cattle, is the blood shed by your being decapitated greater, or is the water in the four great oceans greater?"

There too, the bhikkhus had to answer continuously. Then He asks—now someone might think that this is a question about the blood shed by being born in those various births in the entire saṃsāra. But the Buddha asks, bringing out the matter of each individual animal: "Bhikkhus, when you were born as cows, born as buffaloes, born as goats, born as chickens, born as pigs, is the blood shed by your being decapitated, having been born in each of those births, greater, or is the water in the four great oceans greater?" To all of those, the bhikkhus reply: "Venerable Sir, if we have understood the Dhamma preached by the Blessed One properly, that shed blood itself is greater, and the water in the four great oceans is not greater." Having answered in that manner, by the time it ended, how deeply was the understanding of the nature of saṃsāra generated within those bhikkhus!—they had arrived there without any prior path-attainment or realization, but they had meditated well—at the end of that discourse, it is mentioned that they were freed from all defilement-rust, realized the extremely pure Nibbāna, and ended the suffering of saṃsāra.

In that light, you lay devotees too must contemplate: on the dark side of this saṃsāra, there may be present in many—even though you are now living as lay devotees—meritorious qualities and meditations accumulated over endless time through spending many lives as ascetics, or appearing as bhikkhus in past dispensations. But, like sparks of fire under ashes, if we do not make some effort and exertion regarding them, we will not be able to perform sermons and meditation, and we will never be able to reap results from them. Therefore, what we have to think is to generate the "perception of possibility"—there may be a certain strength present within us, we may have fulfilled certain perfections (*pāramīs*) in saṃsāra; relying on them, and adding present effort to them, we must walk on this Dhamma-way. As the Buddha pointed out, gradually—just as wise people do—gradually, little by little, moment by moment, like a smith removing the rust of silver, we must resolve to remove the defilement-rust present in our own mind-states.

Today—as we declared—is the Buddhist New Year. If we made such a resolution on a day like today, according to that resolution, daily recollecting such a verse, keeping it as a motto, we should apply even a short time—five minutes, ten minutes, or a minute—that is available to us before going to sleep. Now, what many say is, "We have no free time." Government holidays and so forth are received in plenty. Free time is not something given; it is something one must secure. Holidays are indeed received in plenty. But one has no free time. Free time is something that must be secured with effort. If there is the desire, if there is that speed called urgency (*saṃvega*), if one is trained in that Dhamma-

way without negligence, that person has time, has a moment, can make a start at least little by little. Then, you lay devotees, based on this Dhamma sermon, to bring your own lives closer to the path of Dhamma, following the noble path of Dhamma preached by the Buddha, the Noble Eightfold Path, gradually and systematically practicing meditation, developing virtue, concentration, and wisdom—one must wish: may we, at some point, through the attainment of the supramundane paths of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmī*), Non-returning (*anāgāmī*), and Arahantship (*arahatta*), be freed from this entire suffering of saṃsāra and realize the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna. At this moment, even while listening to this sermon, if you listened to the Dhamma with a meditative mind-attention from moment to moment, all unwholesome states in your minds were dispelled, they were removed, and instead, a mass of wholesome thoughts, a refined mass of wholesome thoughts, was generated in your mind-states at this moment. One must wish: may that mass of wholesome thoughts aid the effort to see Nibbāna in this very age, may it be a supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for realizing Nibbāna.

Similarly, now, this accumulated mass of merit—if we too have accumulated a mass of merit in the form of preaching the Dhamma, and you in the form of hearing the Dhamma—if there is an assembly of devas and brahmas, such as the guardian deities of the Dispensation who remain awake in this era of the Dispensation's decline, may those deities too... Next, in this place, in this sacred place, the lamp-post (*pahan-kaṇuva*)—especially as you know—is a place of special power. If there are any deities or other beings associated with such places, may all of them who desire merit rejoice in this merit of hearing the Dhamma and preaching the Dhamma. Having rejoiced, may they be freed from all saṃsāric suffering and realize the noble, supreme, peaceful, deathless Nibbāna through a wished-for enlightenment (*bodhi*). Thus we must share the merits with the deities. Similarly, if there are any beings, including your departed relatives, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, who wish to receive merit, may all of them rejoice in this merit and be comforted by the noble, deathless Nibbāna. With this wish, share the merits by reciting these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #7

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Cakkhumā visamānīva,

vijjamāne parakkame;

Paṇḍito jīvalokasmiṃ,

pāpāni parivajjaye.

From:

Verse 28 from the Appamādavagga (Chapter on Heedfulness) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

After attaining supreme enlightenment (*Sambodhi-ñāṇa*), when our Buddha gazed upon the world with His Buddha-eye, this world appeared to that Buddha-eye just like a pond of blue lotuses or red lotuses. In a lotus pond, some flower buds are submerged in the water, growing beneath the surface. Some other buds have grown to be level with the water's surface, just barely emerging. Yet other buds have risen above the water, standing tall and ready, as if waiting expectantly for the sun to rise.

Just so, based on that simile, the Buddha understood the diverse levels of intelligence of beings in this world. Some people, whose samsaric intelligence is extremely low, live attached to and deeply immersed in the world itself. They do not think about a next world. They do not think about Nibbāna or about bringing an end to the suffering (*dukkha*) of samsara. There is another group of human beings who possess the strength to think—even occasionally—about the next world and the suffering of samsara in a way that allows them to gain some minor understanding. Then there are others who have developed their minds by practicing meditation for a long time in samsara. They are like those lotus buds that have risen above the water, waiting for the sun to rise. As soon as the rays of Dhamma from the Buddha-Sun—our Buddha—fall upon them, they blossom.

Such humans, individuals with a developed mind, a cultivated mind, blossom just like a lotus flower when the rays of the Buddha's Dhamma fall upon them. The Dhamma-eye arises in them; their eyes are opened.

Although this sermon is based on the Udāna Pāḷi, the story also appears with certain variations in the commentary to the Bālavagga of the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*.

When the Buddha was residing in the Veḷuvana Monastery in Rājagaha, one day He was preaching the Dhamma to a large gathering near a street. In that same city of Rājagaha, there lived a very poor leper named Suppabuddha. On that day, as he went in search of food, he saw from afar a large crowd gathered on this street. He thought, "Surely, this must be a place where food is being distributed. If I go near this crowd, perhaps I might find some food," and hurried towards them. He approached. Upon arrival, however, he realized, "This is not a place where food is distributed. The Ascetic Gotama is preaching the Dhamma to this crowd. No matter, I should at least listen to some of the sermon," and sat down to one side. At that moment, the Blessed Buddha, with His Buddha-knowledge, scanned, examined, and reflected upon the minds of that entire gathering to see who among this great crowd could understand the deep Dhamma—the Dhamma of Nibbāna—that He was preaching, and who could understand it best. To that Buddha-knowledge, to that Buddha-eye, appeared Suppabuddha the leper sitting at the edge of the crowd. Realizing, "He is the one who can quickly and thoroughly understand the Dhamma I preach," the Buddha then focused on that leper, and in accordance with the Enlightened One's method of teaching, as if preaching specifically to him, systematically commenced the sermon with the graduated discourse (*anupubbi-kathā*).

The graduated discourse, meritorious ones, is a specific method and path of preaching used by the Buddha when He expounds the Dhamma. Unlike you here who have sat down after undertaking the precepts, people of various classes and backgrounds would come to Him. To prepare their minds and shape them in the manner necessary to understand a deep Dhamma, the Buddha employed a certain method of teaching. This is described as: "He expounded the talk on giving (*dāna-kathā*), the talk on virtue (*sīla-kathā*), the talk on heaven (*sagga-kathā*), the danger, degradation, and corruption of sensual pleasures (*kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ okāraṃ saṅkilesaṃ*), and the benefits of renunciation (*nekkhamme ca ānisaṃsaṃ*)." It is presented in this manner.

What is meant by "the talk on giving" is the teaching first given on giving—praising generosity and explaining that giving is a practice rich in fruits and benefits. Next, in "the talk on virtue," He explains that just like the sacrifice of material goods in giving, the sacrifice made through the restraint of body and speech is also highly beneficial. Following that, in "the talk on heaven," He explains that as a result of giving, undertaking precepts, and so forth, rebirth in the heavenly worlds is possible, and He relates accounts of those reborn there. Thus, while the listener's mind is focused on and delighted by the pleasures and splendors of the heavenly realms, the Buddha next points out the danger (*ādīnava*) and the undesirable, negative side of the fivefold sensual pleasures enjoyed both in the human and heavenly worlds—*"ādīnavaṃ okāraṃ"*—showing that they are extremely low. He explains that sensual pleasures are something

common even to animals, a low state that cannot be considered noble—*okāraṃ*. Next is "corruption" (*saṅkilesaṃ*)—showing how many people go astray and generate defilements due to sensual pleasures. This is the sequence of danger, degradation, and corruption. Once their minds have been directed to these drawbacks, the Buddha next expounds the benefits of renunciation. He then extols and praises those high virtues of departing from the household life—becoming a monk—as a most valuable and noble practice, a practice that aids in departing from samsara and realizing Nibbāna, separating oneself from the fivefold sensual pleasures.

In this manner, while the Buddha was delivering this graduated discourse on this occasion, and explaining about renunciation—the departing from the household life—He kept watching how Suppabuddha's mind was working. Then the Buddha perceived that the mind of Suppabuddha the leper was now prepared to hear the deep Dhamma—that it was a ready mind, a malleable mind (*kallacittaṃ, muducittaṃ*), and a mind free from hindrances (*vinīvaraṇacittaṃ*), with the sensual thoughts, angry thoughts, sloth and torpor, restlessness, and doubt or hesitation that obstruct concentration having been removed. The Buddha realized that Suppabuddha's mind was now highly uplifted and clear (*udaggacittaṃ, pasannacittaṃ*), waiting expectantly, as it were, for what would be said next. At that moment, the Buddha preached that profound teaching of the Four Noble Truths, which is introduced to the world only by the Buddhas themselves, namely: suffering (*dukkha*), its origin (*samudaya*), its cessation (*nirodha*), and the path (*magga*). He explained that these five aggregates we grasp—form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—indeed, this entire samsaric existence, is suffering (*dukkha*); that its cause is craving (*taṇhā*); and that the quenching of this thirst—this burning of craving—is Nibbāna. Nibbāna is the supreme happiness. The path to this is the Noble Eightfold Path: Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. Thus the Buddha declared the Four Truths.

At that moment—a simile is given—just as a clean cloth, well-washed and free of stains, would easily take dye, the Four Noble Truths were thoroughly understood by the prepared mind of Suppabuddha. Sitting right there in his seat, it is said that "the stainless, dustless Dhamma-eye arose" (*virajaṃ vītamalaṃ dhammacakkhuṃ udapādi*), meaning he realized the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*) through the path-knowledge of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*). Thus he attained that state. However, no one else knew of his attainment; only the Buddha knew. At that moment, a massive change, an internal transformation, had occurred in that leper. So much so that Suppabuddha saw Nibbāna. He saw Nibbāna with the first path-knowledge, "having seen the Dhamma" (*diṭṭhadhammo*), "having reached the Dhamma" (*pattadhammo*). Furthermore, his doubts and hesitations regarding these matters, regarding the Dhamma, and regarding the path to Nibbāna were eliminated, and he entered into that practice. He also attained the state of confidence—fearlessness in this Dispensation.

That first path-knowledge is a supramundane (*lokuttara*) state. Having attained it, and once the sermon had ended, this leper approached the Buddha and in praise declared,

“Excellent, Bhante! Excellent, Bhante! Just as”—then he gives a simile—“Just as one, Bhante, might set upright what had been overturned, or reveal what had been hidden, or point out the way to one who is lost, or hold up an oil lamp in the dark so that those with eyes might see forms, even so has the Blessed One clarified the Dhamma in various ways. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma for refuge, and to the Saṅgha for refuge. May the Blessed One accept me as a lay disciple who has taken refuge from this day forth for as long as life lasts.” Having made this declaration of joy, he departed from that place.

Before he could go very far, a fierce cow with a young calf gored Suppabuddha the leper, putting him to death. The monks, seeing this incident, approached the Buddha and asked, “Bhante, Blessed One, that leper whom the Blessed One had just inspired with a Dhamma talk has died. Where is he reborn?” Then the Buddha declared, “Monks, Suppabuddha was a wise man. Suppabuddha was a wise man. Practicing in accordance with the Dhamma I declared, he broke three of the ten fetters of samsara. He attained that noble state of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*)—a state superior even to universal monarchy—whereby he will never be reborn in the four woeful states and will undergo at most seven more births (*jāti*) in this samsara.”

Having attained this, now, at this very moment of speaking, Suppabuddha the leper is reborn in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven, outshining the other devas in terms of his retinue and physical complexion. Why? Because, by drawing close to this Dispensation, Suppabuddha the leper developed those virtues of faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*). By listening to just that one sermon, through that discourse, Suppabuddha the leper acquired five such virtues: faith, virtue, learning (Dhamma knowledge), generosity (the quality of sacrifice), and wisdom (the capacity to realize Nibbāna, the power of understanding). The Buddha declared this to the monks. These are indeed called “Noble Treasures” (*ariya-dhana*). Faith, virtue, learning, generosity, and wisdom are the five treasures belonging to the Nobles (*ariyas*) in this Dispensation. In this way, He declared it.

Then, one of the monks asked, “Bhante, Blessed One, why did Suppabuddha, who obtained such a high state, become a leper? Why was he so poor? Why was such a fortunate person born in such a life?” Thereupon, the Buddha related his past story: “Monks, in the past, in the very distant past, Suppabuddha the leper was a treasurer's son (*seṭṭhi-putta*) in this very city of Rājagaha. One day, as this treasurer's son was leaving the city to go to the pleasure garden, a Paccekabuddha named Tagarasikhī was entering the city for alms. Seeing the robes worn by this Paccekabuddha, the treasurer's son, intoxicated by pride, conceived a feeling of disgust: 'Who is this leper, wearing the garments of a leper?' Thinking thus in a derogatory way, he spat in that direction, turned his left shoulder towards him—which in ancient times was a sign of disrespect, since turning one's right side, known as circumambulation (*padakkhiṇā*), is a sign of respect—and, uttering insulting words and spitting, he went on to the garden.”

Next, the Buddha declared the karmic result (*vipāka*) of the unwholesome deed that the treasurer's son committed within that brief moment. It is recorded in the Dhamma in

terms of retribution: *"Bahūni vassāni, bahūni vassasatāni, bahūni vassasahassāni, bahūni vassasatasahassāni niraye paccitvā."* Due to that evil karma committed in a single brief moment, the treasurer's son Suppabuddha boiled in hell for many years, many thousands of years, and many hundreds of thousands of years. Having boiled there and endured severe suffering, as a residue of that karmic result—as the remaining portion—he was born in this very city as a leper and a pauper. Having thus declared the terrible retributive aspect of that evil karma, the Buddha uttered that Dhamma verse which we took as our opening theme:

Cakkhumā visamānīva

Vijjamāne parakkame

Paṇḍito jīvalokasmiṃ

Pāpāni parivajjaye

"*Cakkhumā*" means a person with sight. "*Visamāni*" refers to uneven places—potholes, rugged ground, thorny thickets, and so on are called "uneven" (*visama*). Just as a person with sight avoids uneven places on the ground, "*Cakkhumā visamānīva, vijjamāne parakkame*" means that while there is the energy and strength to avoid those uneven, rugged places on the ground, and when it is possible to do so, a sighted person—if he has the capacity, the sight, and the strength—will surely walk avoiding those potholes and thorny thickets. That is what is expressed here. Showing this simile, "*Paṇḍito jīvalokasmiṃ, pāpāni parivajjaye*" means that, in the same way, a wise person—a truly wise, intelligent person—what does he do? In this world of the living, in this human world, he completely avoids and keeps far away from that category of evil deeds. In this manner, the Buddha delivered this instructional verse on that occasion.

Let us therefore contemplate the lessons we can draw for our lives from this verse as well as from this story. Even from this present account of Suppabuddha the leper, we can gain much inspiration. Suppabuddha came to the place where the Buddha was preaching while searching for food, having approached upon seeing a crowd. He thought he might find something to eat there. However, after coming close, when he realized that this was a place where a sermon was being preached, he did not turn away with contempt, as some people with a materialistic view nowadays might say: "Can we eat sermons?" Instead, what did he do? He sat down, thinking, "I, too, must listen to some of the sermon." At that moment, we can imagine what arose in his mind: sacrifice, letting go. You too, meritorious ones, perform acts of giving (*dāna*), offering alms, and so forth. In all of these, what is expected is this very sacrifice—letting go. Thus, on this occasion, he could have turned back to search for food. Instead, he sat down, thinking, "Even if there is no food, it does not matter; I must at least listen to some of the sermon." So great were the benefits of that sacrifice that he was able to obtain the fruit of Stream-entry, which is superior even to universal monarchy, and secured a heavenly rebirth after death. This fruit of Stream-entry is the first step on the path to Nibbāna—comprising the stages of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*),

and Arahantship. He attained that state, eliminating all samsaric suffering (*dukkha*) except for a maximum of seven lives. He will never again go to the four woeful states. Such a noble state did Suppabuddha the leper attain through that sacrifice made in his mind.

Next, let us consider the Buddha's method of preaching the Dhamma. The Buddha always preaches the Dhamma by targeting the person in the gathering whose mind is prepared, who has developed their samsaric intelligence. Here we see that just because a person is at the edge of the crowd, the Buddha does not marginalize them. There may be kings, princes, treasurers, wealthy elites, high-born people, scholars, and wise men—worldly intellectuals—in the large crowd. But the Buddha does not preach the Dhamma to them; He preaches to the person who is advanced in terms of their samsaric intelligence level. When we contemplate this, we can gain a very deep understanding. The Buddha does not look at the world through the eyes of ordinary society. As we mentioned regarding the state of a lotus or water-lily pond, some flower buds may be hidden beneath the leaves. Similarly, there may be individuals who, due to some severe past evil karma, are born poor, destitute, leprous, and afflicted with various other misfortunes in this world. Yet within that person, there may lie the capacity to realize Nibbāna; they may have practiced meditation in past samsara. This gives immense encouragement to turn towards this Dhamma. Thus, no one can be marginalized. Perhaps even in this very gathering, there may be those in a poor and destitute state who think, "We cannot walk this path of Dhamma; we cannot listen to sermons and do these things." However, they can take inspiration from the story of Suppabuddha the leper. No matter what they might think of themselves, they too might be like those lotuses that blossom the moment the rays of the Dhamma—the rays of the Buddha-Sun—fall upon them. From this, we can draw a highly valuable lesson.

Next, regarding how Suppabuddha had the Dhamma-eye arise when the Buddha preached the Dhamma—it is mentioned there as: *"Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ, sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ"* ("whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease"). Many try to learn that deep Dhamma, such as Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), from books. Dependent Arising is a profound Dhamma. It is the basic principle of that deep Dhamma that Suppabuddha the leper understood here by listening to just one sermon. What is its meaning? "Whatever has the nature to arise, all that has the nature to cease." This means he thoroughly understood impermanence (*aniccatā*): that everything in the world has the nature of arising and ceasing. Here, "everything" refers to these five aggregates we grasp, namely: form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is a heap of form. Here, "the aggregate of form" (*rūpakkhandha*) means a heap of form. We take it as a single form. Through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), we take it as one thing. Bound by the thoughts of "I" and "mine", worldly people think of form as "my body" and try to groom and decorate it. When a feeling (*vedanā*) arises, they think "it is my feeling". Perception is recognition; they think "it is I who recognize this". Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), intentions, expectations, and so forth are also usually regarded as a single unit. Next is consciousness (*viññāṇa*); when we say "my mind", we think of it

as a single mind. Yet, these are a multitude. In reality, although worldly people take them as one due to the perception of compactness, within each of these lies a vast multitude. That is why in one place the Buddha gave those similes—highly profound similes. The more one contemplates them, the more one can realize Nibbāna through any single one of them.

This aggregate of form, what we call form, is something made up of the elements of earth, water, fire, and air (*pathavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*) which constitute everything in this world. Next, the Buddha compares this to a lump of foam. When a stream flows, if a log gets stuck, foam gradually accumulates there. If one looks at this lump of foam, it is seen to change at every moment. It arises and ceases, arises and ceases. Similarly, this skeletal frame is made of the foam of milk, the foam of rice, and the foam of gruel. When food is consumed throughout the day and digested, it is from these that this body-cage is built—what we call "this body". In this way, one can deeply contemplate the lump of foam.

Likewise, feeling (*vedanā*)—the Buddha showed that feeling (*vedanā*) is just like a water bubble. When it rains heavily and water pours from the roof, water bubbles form and, in an instant, in that very fraction of a second, they vanish. They do not last long; it is for a very brief moment. As the rain falls, a tiny, beautiful water bubble is formed. Immediately, it bursts. Feeling (*vedanā*) is just like that. Though we take it to be one, it is like a series of bursts—it is a multitude. That is the understanding.

Next, perception (*saññā*) means recognition. The Buddha compares recognition to a mirage. You, meritorious ones, know what a mirage is; during the hot dry season, on a road or a plain, one can see what looks like flowing water in the distance. Due to the heat, vapor rises and something shimmering and moving is seen far away. That is called a mirage, and deer are fooled by it, thinking it is water. Thinking there is water, they run towards it. The more they run, the further the mirage recedes. The Buddha describes perception—recognition—as such a thing. We say, "I recognized so-and-so, it is indeed that person and no other." Again, a distant object, like a beautiful mountain view, might appear to us here. Thinking it is beautiful, we might take a photograph of it and then decide to go there to see the view closely. Once we get there, that beautiful view is gone. When we turn around and look back, perhaps the beautiful view is now on this side. In this way, perception too is made of layers upon layers. When examined, there is nothing substantial to be found here either.

Next, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—which refer to our intentions, expectations, and thoughts—these too are compared by the Buddha to a banana trunk. There is no heartwood, no essence, no substance. Just like a banana trunk, there is only a heap of sheaths here, though it does not appear to be a heap of sheaths. Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are described in this manner. The intentions, expectations, and so forth that we generate are also of this nature.

Next is consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—what we call "my mind". This too is not a single thing. It is something that arises and ceases with extreme rapidity. Furthermore, look at what is shown by this. To this mind, various things are presented, distinguishing one thing from

another as separate entities. However, both this and that, both of these have the nature of arising and ceasing. This is merely a heap of illusions. The Buddha compares it to something shown by a magician or an illusionist through sleight of hand. He conjures up and displays what is non-existent as if it exists. In that same way, it is said that certain things are conjured up and shown to our mind, that there is a nature of conjuring up illusions.

When this is told to worldly people, they do not understand it immediately. Nor do they wish to understand it. However, to someone who has deeply contemplated along the lines of the three characteristics of impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) over a long period in samsara, these matters become deeper and clearer as they reflect on them. That penetrative seeing is what is called wisdom—the true state of the world. Thus, what is meant here is that Suppabuddha the leper understood, through the Buddha's discourse, that everything in this world arises through causal conditions, which is called Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*); the fact that "whatever has the nature to arise, all that has the nature to cease." What helps in this is these five aggregates—these five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) that we hold onto. What we hold onto as "I" and "mine" is either form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), or consciousness (*viññāṇa*). For each of these, one puts a label "This is I", "This is I". It is when the reality—the true nature—of this is understood, meritorious ones, that one can realize the noble fruit of Stream-entry and so forth through the supramundane path-knowledge. Therefore, through this story, we can reflect on these matters, realizing that we too must have practiced meditation to some extent in samsara. We must make an effort to bring these to the surface, as they might be hidden within. In this way, we can learn many things from this present story.

Similarly, when we reflect on those five treasures—faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—even through a single discourse, someone listening to the Dhamma generates faith through it. They generate faith in the Triple Gem. Next, when the benefits of virtue are explained, they undertake virtue. The Buddha presents it there as if they are undertaking the precepts. Indeed, during the Buddha's time, when the Buddha preached the Dhamma through the graduated discourse, people undertook the precepts in their minds. Even without formally asking to undertake the precepts, they would undertake them mentally, thinking, "What a good practice this is! From today onwards, I will protect this practice." That is it. They generate faith, they establish virtue. Next, "learning" (*suta*) means they retain this Dhamma well, holding it firmly in their minds. Then, as they understand the Dhamma, they realize that what must truly be done is to let go of everything—sacrifice. It is through that sacrifice that the understanding called wisdom (*paññā*) arises. Generally, worldly knowledge is something gathered, something accumulated. Worldly knowledge aims at accumulating and obtaining various positions, degrees, and so forth. However, meritorious ones, wisdom (*paññā*) is shown as a power of penetrative seeing, a power of comprehension. It is the emergence of a Dhamma-eye, the emergence of an eye of wisdom, so that what is hidden in the world is opened and seen, or what is concealed is

clearly visible to one's own eye. In this way, we can understand the beneficial side of the fruits of such virtues.

Next, when we reflect on that past story declared by the Buddha—which is closely connected to the verse—every one of us can develop a great sense of fear. How many grave unwholesome deeds might we commit unknowingly in this samsara, in this life? Meritorious ones, who did Suppabuddha, as a treasurer's son in the past, insult by polluting his mind in that brief moment, spitting, and showing disrespect? Even though he was wearing a soiled robe, in the forests of that time, before the appearance of Buddhas, noble beings called Paccekabuddhas arise. By their own efforts, they attain a state of Buddhahood. They cannot guide others to realize Nibbāna, but they are called "Paccekabuddhas"—Private Buddhas. The Buddha, the Paccekabuddha, and the Arahant are the three greatest individuals in the world. Therefore, showing disrespect to the noble objects in the world is an evil karma that brings extremely severe retribution. This is called "insulting the Nobles" (*ariyūpavāda-kamma*). Disrespecting, abusing, or insulting those who have attained the paths and fruits, such as Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, Arahants, and Stream-enterers, is declared to be the karma of insulting the Nobles. It is a grave unwholesome karma. That is why he boiled in hell for many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years, and many hundreds of thousands of years. Reflecting in this way, these are indeed the uneven places, the rugged potholes of the world. One must be careful of these if one has eyes—'eyes' here meaning Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), correct vision. From this, the value of having correct vision is evident. The ordinary worldly person is blind. As the Buddha declared: *"Andhabhūto ayaṃ loko, tanukettha vipassati"* ("Blind is this world; few here see clearly"). The Buddha has shown that this entire world is blind, and only a very few understand through insight (*vipassanā*). Worldly people think they have eyes; they get glasses to improve their physical vision. Yet, meritorious ones, the Buddha declared that the worldly person is blind. To eliminate this blindness—blindness is eliminated to some extent when one distinguishes good and bad, black and white, and understands merit and demerit by listening to the Dhamma. Next, what Suppabuddha the leper did is far deeper. By understanding that noble basic principle of Dependent Arising and the Four Noble Truths, he caused the eye of wisdom—the Dhamma-eye—to arise. It is called the Dhamma-eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*)—the path-knowledge of Stream-entry. When that eye arises, the doors to the four woeful states are closed forever. That is a massive gain, an unimaginably great gain. Therefore, one must be careful of these uneven places, these rugged potholes in the ordinary world. Falling and getting injured in these during travel is a minor thing. But in this samsara, if we fall by polluting our minds, corrupting our speech, and ruining our actions, we will have to endure severe retribution for aeons. That is the lesson we can draw from this past story.

Furthermore, many people generate pride regarding their wealth, position, and power. Carrying pride about these things, they look at the world. Suppose a beggar, like Suppabuddha the leper, came among this crowd. Perhaps someone would cover their nose, and another might look at him with angry eyes, even if they do not tell him to leave. Yet, unknowingly, there might lie within that person the capacity to realize Nibbāna. It is

such a thing. Suppabuddha the leper committed that mistake in his past life. But in this life, he did not repeat it. Instead, as if having thoroughly learned the lesson, without showing disrespect to the sermon at that moment, and without saying "Can we eat sermons?", he sat right there and began to listen to the sermon. Let us reflect on what kind of sacrifice that was.

Now, in this verse, the Buddha declares: *"Cakkhumā visamānīva, vijjamāne parakkame."* Hearing the word "energy" (*parakkama*), some might think this is something belonging only to kings like Parākramabāhu. But, friends, the Buddha declares that in every single person—be they poor, a traveler, destitute, wealthy, educated, or uneducated—there exist three kinds of energy. The Buddha presents these three energies as: the element of initiation (*ārambha-dhātu*), the element of persistence (*nikkama-dhātu*), and the element of exertion (*parakkama-dhātu*). Here, "element" (*dhātu*) refers to a fundamental principle. The element of initiation (*ārambha-dhātu*), meritorious ones, is the energy we all have to start something anew. Even a small child has it; before the parents arrive, children make this and that. That is the initiatory energy—the capacity to produce something new. There exists such an element of initiation. Next, the element of persistence (*nikkama-dhātu*) is the energy within us to continue what has been initiated. Then, the element of exertion (*parakkama-dhātu*) is the energy in the mind to crush, overcome, and conquer the obstacles and disasters that arise while carrying it out, and to press forward to victory. This too exists in our mental stream. What was meant here by *"vijjamāne parakkame"* is that with such exertion, these things can be avoided. They can be let go of; they can be bypassed. While this is possible, and when one has sight, why does one not do it?—this is what the Buddha asks.

At that moment, what Suppabuddha the leper did was also a kind of exertion. That is, he conquered his mind. The mind might have said, "No, go search for some food, there is no use listening to this." Perhaps he felt that way; it is not mentioned in the story. Generally, if a destitute person is hungry, they think that way. Yet, this person sat right there, thinking, "I must listen to some of the Dhamma." That too is a victory. Through that exertion, Suppabuddha the leper attained that noble state of Stream-entry, achieving a victory far greater than universal monarchy. Now, the moment we hear the word "exertion" (*parakkama*), we often think of battle—warfare. This word was also utilized by the Buddha. The Buddhist too has a war to wage. This war is not only for monks but for the layperson as well. It is called the battle against Mara (*Māra-saṅgāma*). For this battle against Mara, there is a war cry of the Buddha—not only in this Dispensation but in the Dispensation of all Buddhas. There is a war cry in a beautiful verse:

Ārabhatha nikkamatha

Yuñjatha buddhasāsane

Dhunātha maccuno senaṃ

Naḷāgāraṃva kuñjaro

If we render this into English:

Begin! Exert! Apply yourselves to the Buddha's Dispensation!

Destroy the army of Death, as an elephant crushes a reed hut!

There is such a war cry. Thus, when worldly people think of battle and war, they think of defeating and killing other humans to achieve victory. That is what the world considers to be exertion, bravery, heroic deeds, and courage. But even if we think so, it seems the Buddha did not think that way. For the Buddha has declared in the Dhammapada:

Yo sahassaṃ sahassena

Saṅgāme mānuse jine

Ekañca jeyya attānaṃ

Sa ve saṅgāmajuttamo

Though one may conquer a million men in battle,

Yet he who conquers himself, is indeed the greatest of conquerors.

A highly heroic, valiant warrior goes to war and—though he is just one warrior—defeats a million enemies. Consider what a feat that is! One person defeating a million enemies. Yet the Buddha shows something greater than that: *"Ekañca jeyya attānaṃ, sa ve saṅgāmajuttamo"*—conquering this single "self" that one conceives of. Conquering oneself is called "self-conquest" (*ātma-vijaya*). "Conquering oneself" means practicing giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation; cultivating the virtues of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla-samādhi-paññā*); developing these virtues of the Dispensation; practicing meditation; and, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, realizing the noble Dhamma of Nibbāna. It is conquering all samsaric suffering (*dukkha*) and the Mara of defilements. The Buddha also declared that He fought that battle with Mara and defeated Mara's army. This army of Mara resides in the mind. It is an army of Mara that arises in the mind that is ultimately and profoundly indicated here. Thus, the Buddha utilized the concept of "war" or "battle" to bring out that power of energy within human beings—the energy of initiation, the energy of persistence, and the energy of exertion. Now, you prepare to perform some heroic feat. You equip yourselves with the necessary gear, clothing, and weapons, and get ready. Then you go forward. As you go forward, enemies appear. You strike those enemies completely, crush them, and achieve victory. That is what exertion is. Thus, the element of initiation, the element of persistence, and the element of exertion—it is based on these three energies that we conquer even the disasters that come in our day-to-day lives.

If that is so, then the Buddha shows a far greater victory—conquering oneself, self-conquest. In accordance with that concept of self-conquest, we must realize that every victory we achieve in this world ultimately turns into a defeat when viewed from the perspective of the next life. If a person with supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*) or a Buddha were to tell us where some of these worldly victors are reborn, how much dismay

(*saṃvega*) would it cause! The places where those we think of as heroic and valiant are reborn after death are often extremely tragic. This is the nature of the world, the nature of samsara. But the Buddha has shown us the truth of these matters, even if we do not like it. Therefore, if one is wise, if one has eyes, if one has Right View—meaning correct vision—one must accept the Buddha's word. Thus, in this way, "he indeed is the supreme conqueror" (*sa ve saṅgāmajuttamo*), and *"saṅgāmajī"* means the conqueror of the battle. The path to this is to abandon evil deeds in this world, remove the unwholesome, and always incline the mind toward the wholesome—in mind, body, and speech—guarding the three doors of mind, body, and speech. If we have a fortress, we protect it from enemies. We guard it night and day, not allowing enemies to enter. Just so is the meditator, the practitioner of yoga (*yogāvacara*), or the person who aspires for Nibbāna. Cultivating the virtues of virtue, concentration, and wisdom, they guard the three doors of their mind, body, and speech. If we contemplate even deeper, there are six doors: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. In this way, by guarding these doors, they protect the fortress. Then, in their place, they cultivate the wholesome qualities—virtue and concentration. Through concentration, they unify the mind. Removing the scattered nature of the mind, they then generate the power of penetrative seeing called wisdom (*paññā*) in their mental stream. It is through that wisdom (*paññā*) that they can realize Nibbāna and conquer all samsaric suffering (*dukkha*).

Therefore, one must make an effort to bring forth this power of exertion for the battle against Mara that must be waged. We must begin this from right where we are. In daily life, there are various obstacles to this. In daily life, many people spend their lives attached to and immersed in the world, just like those lotus and water-lily buds submerged in the water. But the Buddha has declared that no one should pollute their mind based on their external social status. If one has made the initiation, perhaps one might attain those states much faster than expected. Suppabuddha the leper would not have even thought that such a noble state would be attained by him when he went there. Yet, he attained it. In that manner, what supports this is the "perception of capability" (*haki-saññā*). The perception of capability, friends, is the understanding: "I can do this." We know that when we need to overturn or remove something, if we think right away "I cannot do it", we are already defeated. At least an effort is worth making. Generating the effort with the thought "I must do this", one then thinks "I can do this". That is called the "perception of capability". It is by putting forward this "perception of capability" that one must walk this path of Dhamma.

The Buddha has assured us that we can walk this path. At times, like a mother urging her child to drink a bitter medicine, the Buddha declares to the monks—and though He declares it to the monks, He declares it to the entire world: "Monks, it is possible to abandon, to eliminate, this category of the unwholesome. It is possible to be freed from them. It is possible to destroy them. Likewise, it is possible to cultivate the wholesome. If it were not possible to abandon the unwholesome, I would not tell you to do so. It is because it is possible to abandon the unwholesome, monks, that I say this to you." In this way, He sometimes urges them. On other occasions, to increase their effort, He says: "Monks, abandon just two things, and I guarantee that you will become Non-returners:

abandon greed (*lobha*) and hatred (*dosa*)." It is because of this urging nature that we sometimes refer to the Buddha as "Mother Buddha" or "Nectar-like Mother" (*Amā Mæṇi*). It is due to that quality of great compassion.

Therefore, in accordance with the Dhamma of the Buddha, we must reflect on our own lives. What we expect from listening to such a story—this Dhamma talk is not a fabricated story, a novel, or a short story. These are true events. They are accounts of how various individuals met the Buddha during His time and attained those noble states. These are excellent examples and lessons for us. Through these, we must understand that this power may also reside within us, and we must make an effort to bring it forth. Even on this occasion, you, meritorious ones, undertook the valuable precept of Right Livelihood as the Eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). One must reflect on each of these precepts. What do we do by undertaking these precepts? By saying *"samādiyāmi"* (I undertake), I make a determination to abstain from destroying life—that is, from killing living beings. Even in protecting that determination, one can gain an understanding of those states called the element of initiation, the element of persistence, and the element of exertion. I determined, "I will not kill living beings." Yet, for various reasons—whatever they may be, whether for food, for pleasure, due to the instigation of others, to acquire more wealth, or to satisfy hatred—the mind inclines towards killing; a thought arises. But the moment that thought arises, one must recall this precept in accordance with what is called the element of initiation, the element of persistence, and the element of exertion on this Dhamma path. "It is not good to do that. It has such retributive consequences. I have undertaken the five precepts; I have undertaken the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*. This is one of those precepts. I myself accepted this and promised to practice it." Thinking thus, one makes an effort to protect it. Exerting such effort, at some point, one completely pushes aside that unwholesome thought that arose in the mind. Sometimes, it is difficult to push it aside. At times, one even has to fight against it. The mind might say, "Just this once—it does not matter—even if there are consequences, let's do it. It cannot be avoided at this moment. This is 'timely' and 'appropriate'. According to the situation, this must be done." In this way, the unwholesome arises from deep within the mind. That is indeed Mara standing behind, saying, "Do it, do it!" It is at that very moment that faith is needed—unshakable faith, firm faith in the Triple Gem: "The Buddha's word is indeed true." Reflecting thus, if one firmly decides, "No, I will not break this," and banishes the unwholesome thoughts, that indeed is exertion. It is the same regarding theft, sexual misconduct, lying, harsh speech, and those unwholesome deeds mentioned, as well as wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) at the end—which many find unavoidable to maintain their living. Yet, one must make an effort regarding these to see if they cannot be overcome. Trading in weapons, trading in poison, trading in intoxicants, breeding animals for slaughter, trading in flesh—one must contemplate these matters and see if we cannot conquer them. For there is a terrible retributive side to these.

In the Buddha's Dispensation, there was the Venerable Mahā Moggallāna. Venerable Moggallāna possessed a special power—his supernormal knowledge (*abhiññā*). Because of his supernormal powers and noble power of perfections (*pāramī*), he would travel to

the heavenly worlds and ask the devas about the merits that helped them attain those states. Next, he would go to the hells and ask the beings in hell the reasons for their suffering—what evil karma they had committed. Through this, he declared to the world: "These are the terrible retributive consequences; therefore, do not do these things." If we have to pay for these in samsara for a very long period, there is no use in performing these "clever feats" in a single life. Therefore, we must make a special effort to escape from samsara. Consider the dangerous state of this mind—we never know when it will incline towards evil. That is why meditation is necessary to "tame" this mind. To eliminate the instigations of this mind and its demands, we must systematically cultivate some form of meditation. We must make an effort to calm the mind. Just as the Buddha preached the deep Dhamma only when Suppabuddha the leper's mind became calm and clear, so too should one strive to concentrate the mind. In daily life, one should practice recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*)—by constantly reflecting on the virtues of the Buddha—loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*), foulness meditation (*asubha-bhāvanā*), and mindfulness of death (*maraṇassati*). You, meritorious ones, know these as the four protective meditations (*caturārakkha-kammaṭṭhāna*). By constantly practicing and training in such things, one must attempt to gather the mind that runs wild in the world, anchoring it within a deep, wholesome thought, and make an effort to unify the mind.

Furthermore, there is a great energy in that unified mind. If this flowing water is collected in a reservoir, and then taken through pipes, or channeled under mountains through a tunnel, and directed through a single pipe—why is it brought out? It is to rotate an iron wheel. There is enough energy in this flowing water to rotate an iron wheel. But to generate this, a special method is required. Similarly, this scattered mind must be concentrated. Having concentrated it, one must then attempt to look at the reality of the world with that concentrated mind. Suppabuddha the leper must have used the retributive result of that evil karma to develop disillusionment (*nibbidā*) towards these five aggregates. If one is physically beautiful and strong, and proud of one's body, it is difficult for that person to understand that this form is suffering (*dukkha*), that it is a heap of diseases. The Buddha refers to this body-cage as *"roga-nīḷaṃ, pabhaṅguraṃ"* (a nest of diseases, fragile). The Buddha declares it is a fragile nest of diseases. At other times, it is declared in the Dhamma to be *"nava-dvāro mahā-vaṇo"* (a great wound with nine openings). Hearing this, some might even get angry: "Why did the Buddha disparage this?" The story of Rūpanandā mentions those who got angry in this way. But a person with faith in the Buddha thinks, "This is true." It can easily be understood by one who has such physical weakness. No one needs to tell them; everyone is repulsed by this body if they are a leper. Thus, when he reached that state, Suppabuddha the leper made use of that retributive result of his evil karma, like a "blessing in disguise". In that way, we must reflect that walking this path of Nibbāna is not about waiting for this land to overflow with milk and honey, to obtain a prosperous and wealthy life, and then to realize Nibbāna. If we have some shortcomings—whether in terms of wealth, body, or illnesses—we must use that very thing to bring forth those powers called the element of initiation, the element of persistence, and the element of exertion. Why? Because we often learn the lesson through the retributive result itself. It is only when the teacher

beats the student that the "math" is solved correctly. Likewise, although we have endured countless sufferings from Mara in this extremely long samsara, we did not learn the lesson. The Buddha has shown us the way to learn that lesson.

Therefore, you, meritorious ones, should be glad that you spent this time shaping your lives by utilizing the Dhamma declared by the Buddha. On this occasion, you determined to keep the valuable precept of *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*. Likewise, during this time of listening to the Dhamma, you must reflect that you made an effort to develop the five faculties (*indriya*) and the five powers (*bala*) that will aid in your Nibbāna some day. It is by bringing forth the five faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*) that one sees Nibbāna. Faith is a faculty. "Faculty" (*indriya*) means a ruling power—a ruling state in one's mental stream. We must crown this—faith. Next, we must bring forth energy—*viriya*. Energy must be turned into a faculty. Next is mindfulness—*sati*, then concentration—*samādhi*, and then wisdom—*paññā*. Listening to the Dhamma helps in developing and generating these faculties. If these faculties are generated, they become "powers" (*bala*) for that person: the power of faith (*saddhā-bala*), the power of energy (*viriya-bala*), the power of mindfulness (*sati-bala*), the power of concentration (*samādhi-bala*), and the power of wisdom (*paññā-bala*). You engaged in listening to the Dhamma on this occasion, which serves as a supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for generating them. You must contemplate that a multitude of wholesome thoughts was deposited in your mental stream at every single moment. From them, numerous other samsaric benefits flow. There is no need to emphasize this. But above all, we must reflect on the nature of suffering (*dukkha*) in this samsara, which the Buddha has declared on countless occasions. Therefore, in this rare era of a Buddha's appearance, we must utilize every wholesome acquisition—we must "invest" them—for the sake of Nibbāna, for the peace of Nibbāna, and to bring an end to the suffering of samsara.

Contemplating thus, make the aspiration: "By utilizing this store of merit accumulated through listening to the Dhamma and undertaking virtue for this long, may we obtain the strength and power to bring an end to all samsaric suffering (*dukkha*)—such as birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and disease—in this very life, through the penetration of the paths and fruits starting with Stream-entry, just like Suppabuddha the leper." Likewise, you must aspire: "May all the guardian deities of the Dispensation, and any deities presiding over this sacred place who await merit and aspire for Nibbāna, rejoice in this store of merit accumulated by us through expounding and listening to the Dhamma. Having rejoiced, may they realize the noble, supreme Nectar of Nibbāna through whichever state of awakening they have aspired for." Furthermore, aspire: "May not only our departed relatives who have passed away, but also all beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akanittha heaven who desire merit and Nibbāna, rejoice in this store of merit of ours. Having rejoiced, may they be released from all samsaric suffering (*dukkha*)—such as birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and disease—and find peace in the supreme, noble, unaging and deathless peace of Nibbāna." Aspiring thus, share the merits by reciting these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #8

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Phandanaṃ capalaṃ cittaṃ,

durakkhaṃ dunnivārayaṃ;

Ujuṃ karoti medhāvī,

usukārova tejanaṃ.

Vārijova thale khitto,

okamokataubbhato;

Pariphandatidaṃ cittaṃ,

māradheyyaṃ pahātave.

From:

Verse 33 and 34 from the Cittavagga (Chapter on the Mind) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

Today, this Poya day is recognized as the Adhi Vesak (Intercalary Vesak) Poya day. The very word "Vesak" is sufficient to arouse a deep devotion and faith in pious Buddhists towards the Buddha, His life, and His immense store of virtues. We all know that we define a Buddha as a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) who shows the path to Nibbāna when beings in this saṃsāra, having burned in the suffering (*dukkha*), oppression, and fire of this round of rebirths for an extremely long time, finally direct their minds towards (the deeper meaning of) life. The Buddha Himself declared Himself to be a noble friend to the world.

With the appearance of a Buddha, an opportunity arises for us to receive instructions that reveal this path to Nibbāna. Saṃsāra, then, is a journey akin to moving in a circular track. When we attempt to steer the mind—which has become accustomed to the momentum of running on this circular track—away from it, to direct it toward that noble state of escape, of liberation called Nibbāna, the mind does not listen. Because of saṃsāric habits, this is no easy task. Viewed from another perspective, it is like attempting to escape from, and break free of, the kingdom of Māra. It is like the effort made to escape Māra's kingdom after having been its subjects for an extremely long time. This is something that must be done with immense effort and exertion. If one embarks on this task thinking it to be easy, one will have to retreat very quickly. Therefore, one who hopes to realize Nibbāna, one who prepares to strive for Nibbāna, must first gain some understanding of the saṃsāric weaknesses in one's own mind, the deceptive states (*vañcaka dhamma*), and the obstacles of Māra that may present themselves. It is the Buddha who reveals this very fact to us. The greatest being, the noble friend who can advise us according to the occasion regarding the obstacles that may arise on this path to Nibbāna, is the Buddha. The two verses we have taken as our theme demonstrate the weaknesses, deceptive states, and forces of Māra that generally dominate the mind of a saṃsāric being. Just as these verses provide some understanding of these factors, they also contain guidance on how to conquer them and practical instructions to assist in that endeavor. The background story that led to the preaching of these verses is as follows:

On one occasion, the Buddha was residing at the Cālikā rock. At that time, a venerable monk named Meghiya was serving as His attendant. One day, Venerable Meghiya approached the Buddha and requested permission to go for alms to the nearby village of Jantu. The Buddha granted him permission. Venerable Meghiya then took his bowl and robes, went to the village for alms, and after his meal, walked up and down on the bank of the Kimikālā River. While doing so, he saw a highly delightful mango grove nearby. Seeing it, he thought: "Ah! This mango grove is ideal for a clansman who is prepared to strive for Nibbāna. This is the best place. I must get permission from the Blessed One and come here to meditate."

Then, in the evening, he went to see the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, when I went to Jantu village for alms today, I saw such a place, and it occurred to me that this is indeed sufficient for a clansman to arouse energy for Nibbāna. It is a good, delightful place. If the Blessed One permits me, I would like to go there to meditate." Then the Buddha replied: "Meghiya, I am currently alone. Wait a little until another monk arrives." But Venerable Meghiya did not comply. Once more he said to the Blessed One: "Venerable Sir, for the Blessed One there is nothing further to be done; everything is completed. There is nothing more to add to the state you have achieved. But for me, there is still much work ahead. To attain Nibbāna, I must add more to what I have done; there is much to be done by way of meditation. Therefore, if the Blessed One allows me, I shall go." For the second time, the Blessed One said: "Meghiya, I am alone at this moment. Wait until another monk arrives." Even then, he did not obey. A third time he pleaded, saying that there was nothing further for the Blessed One to do, but that he himself had

work to do. Therefore, if the Blessed One would allow him—and here the word *padhāna* is used, *padhāna* meaning intense striving—"If you allow me to apply *padhāna*-exertion for meditation, I shall go there." At that moment, the Buddha neutrally remarked: "Well, Meghiya, when you speak of applying *padhāna*-exertion, what can we say? Go, then, and do as you wish." Thus, the Buddha gave permission with a neutral attitude (*majjhatta*).

So, Venerable Meghiya, with great expectations and determination, set out for that mango grove. Having arrived, he prepared a seat in a good spot under a fine mango tree and sat down to meditate. But no sooner had he sat down for meditation than streams of thought (*vitakka*) began flowing into his mind. Unwholesome thoughts—thoughts of sensual desire (*kāma-vitakka*), thoughts of ill-will (*byāpāda-vitakka*), and thoughts of cruelty (*vihiṃsā-vitakka*). You all know that these are the opposites of Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) in the Noble Eightfold Path—namely, wrong intentions (*micchā-saṅkappa*): thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of ill-will, and thoughts of cruelty. These came flooding into his mind. He tried to meditate the entire evening, but he could not concentrate or unify his mind. Thereupon, a great sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) arose in him: "Alas! I ordained out of genuine faith. Is it not truly astonishing that thoughts like these should flood my mind in this manner?" Then, in the evening, he went back to the Buddha and declared: "Venerable Sir, I went and sat down for meditation. But from the moment I sat down, grand thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, thoughts of cruelty, and thoughts of sensual desire have been flooding my mind." At that moment, the Buddha delivered a profound and valuable discourse: "Meghiya, if one's concentration (*samādhi*) is not strong, not mature, there are five qualities, five factors, that help to bring that concentration to maturity. What are these five factors?"

What is the first factor? It is when a monk has a good noble friend, when he possesses the blessing of a noble friend. That is the first factor: the presence of a noble friend. What is the second factor? It is when a monk is fully accomplished in the moral virtue (*sīla*) appropriate to him. That is, he guards the disciplinary rules (*vinaya*), seeing danger in the slightest faults, strictly observing the precepts, training himself in accordance with them, and fulfilling moral virtue. This refers to being virtuous. What is the third factor? It is when a monk has the opportunity to hear Dhamma discussions concerning the "ten talk-topics" (*dasa-kathāvatthu*) which aid in, and inspire thoughts directed toward, Nibbāna. What are the ten talk-topics mentioned in the Dhamma? Here, too, the Buddha lists them one by one: talk on wanting-little (*appiccha-kathā*), talk on contentment (*santuṭṭhi-kathā*), talk on seclusion (*paviveka-kathā*), talk on aloofness from society (*asaṃsagga-kathā*), talk on arousing energy (*viriyārambha-kathā*), talk on moral virtue (*sīla-kathā*), talk on concentration (*samādhi-kathā*), talk on wisdom (*paññā-kathā*), talk on liberation (*vimutti-kathā*), and talk on the knowledge and vision of liberation (*vimutti-ñāṇadassana-kathā*). These are the ten talk-topics. If we understand them briefly: talk on wanting-little (*appiccha-kathā*) means talks concerning the reduction of desires. Pious devotees, "talks" here refer to matters heard during a Dhamma sermon or perhaps a Dhamma discussion. The monk gets the opportunity to hear a Dhamma discussion or sermon where his noble friends explain the benefits of having few desires—talk on wanting-little. Next, talk on contentment (*santuṭṭhi-kathā*) means talks about

being satisfied with what one receives. Talk on seclusion (*paviveka-kathā*) refers to talks regarding living in deep physical and mental solitude and its value—its benefits. Then, talk on aloofness (*asaṃsagga-kathā*) means separating oneself from groups, from the herd. You know that whether we look at wild buffaloes or other animals, they have a habit of moving in herds. Generally, human beings also have a habit of living in herds. Living without the herd, without a crowd, is a great torment for many. That is why we have talk on aloofness—the value of living while guarding one's mind from the herd and the currents that come with it. That is, the benefits of living without entanglement with crowds: talk on aloofness. Then, talk on arousing energy (*viriyārambha-kathā*) is about initiating effort—the talk on the benefits of exerting and initiating energy to burn away defilements, to draw near wholesome states, and to remove unwholesome states. The subsequent terms are self-explanatory. Talk on moral virtue (*sīla-kathā*) means talks on morality. Talk on concentration (*samādhi-kathā*) means talks on concentration. Talk on wisdom (*paññā-kathā*) is on wisdom. Talk on liberation (*vimutti-kathā*) is about Nibbāna. Talk on the knowledge and vision of liberation (*vimutti-ñāṇadassana-kathā*) is about the insights pertaining to Nibbāna. Thus, having the opportunity to hear matters regarding these ten talk-topics is a highly valuable gain for a monk—to prepare his mind. Then He says: utilizing these, what is the fourth factor? It is when a monk, with intense, unrelenting, and active energy, applies himself to the task of abandoning unwholesome thoughts and acquiring wholesome qualities. This is called aroused energy (*ārabdha-viriya*). That is the fourth factor. What is the fifth factor? It is when a monk is endowed with a penetrating wisdom that constantly sees rise and fall—which is called *udayabbaya*—giving him a deep understanding of the impermanent (*anicca*) nature of the world. He becomes one who possesses a penetrating wisdom that constantly perceives arising and passing away.

Thus, these five factors are extremely helpful for a person to prepare their mind before embarking on meditation. What are these five factors? Briefly stated, a monk—and though we say "monk," you may understand this to apply to any meditating practitioner (*yogāvacara*)—has a noble friend. You should know that "friend" here is not used in the common social sense. In the Dispensation (*Sāsana*), a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) is not someone who merely puts an arm around your shoulder. A social friend or companion is someone with whom one associates in good or bad times. That is not what "noble friend" refers to here. That is not why the word was used. When the Buddha speaks of a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), we can understand how profound a term this "friend" actually is. He is a teacher whom one must revere, worship, and from whom one must seek advice. Therefore, the first factor mentioned here is association with a teacher. The second factor is being virtuous in the moral virtue (*sīla*) appropriate to oneself. The third factor is the ten talk-topics in the manner described. Just as this was said regarding the monks, you too should have the opportunity to listen to Dhamma discussions, talks, and sermons concerning Nibbāna, and relevant to Nibbāna, to assist in your meditation. Then, the fourth factor is to apply effort—intense and unrelenting effort—in accordance with that. The fifth factor is one's power of wisdom—applying well-established mindfulness and wisdom to engage in that work. These five factors are foundational and primary for anyone embarking on the quest for Nibbāna with a deep purpose.

Having explained this, the Buddha then declared: "Meghiya, one who has brought his concentration to maturity by relying on these five qualities, these five factors, must next develop four meditations." What are they? He lists them as follows: One must develop the meditation on foulness (*asubha*) to abandon lust (*rāga*). You know that the meditation on foulness is practiced to free the mind from lust—which is a grave defilement carried throughout this long saṃsāric journey. Similarly, one must develop loving-kindness (*mettā*) to eliminate ill-will (*byāpāda*), which is hatred or anger. You see, then, that through these two, the Buddha prescribed the medicine for both attachment and aversion. Thirdly, He lists—as the third meditation—mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). One must develop mindfulness of breathing, which is establishing mindfulness on the in-breaths and out-breaths. What is its function, its primary purpose? It is the cutting off of thoughts (*vitakkupaccheda*)—the severing of conceptual thoughts. Directing the mind to one's breathing helps to cut off thoughts. Generally, when thoughts are flooding in, one does not even remember that one is breathing. Yet, when one, with effort, focuses the mind on this subtle process, no room is left for thoughts. That is why it was stated that mindfulness of breathing is especially helpful in cutting off thoughts. And what is the fourth meditation? The Buddha instructed to develop the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). Frequently maintain the perception of impermanence. This helps to eradicate the conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*). Underlying what the ordinary world calls pride, conceit, or arrogance, lies a very subtle aspect of conceit called the conceit of "existence" or "I am"—the conceit *asmi*. The perception of impermanence helps to eradicate this very conceit.

In this manner, the Buddha taught four meditations. Having declared this, He then showed Venerable Meghiya their profound connection and the reason for presenting them in this way. Although the perception of impermanence was given as the final meditation, He showed that one can proceed directly to Nibbāna through this very perception of impermanence: "Meghiya, in one who perceives impermanence, the perception of not-self (*anattā-saññā*) becomes established. One who perceives not-self eradicates the conceit 'I am'—the subtle conceit of 'existence'—and, in this very life, here and now, attains that Nibbāna which puts an end to saṃsāric suffering, reaching the noble state of Nibbāna." Thus He declared. Having declared this, He also uttered two verses of solemn utterance (*udāna*), expressions of joy, on that occasion. These are not the verses we took as our theme earlier, but are in addition to them. There, the Buddha spoke two verses demonstrating the pressure one experiences from thoughts, and His own freedom from them:

Khuddā vitakkā sukhumā vitakkā

Anuggatā manaso uppilāvā,

Ete avidvā manaso vitakke

Hurāhuraṃ dhāvati bhantacitto.

This means: trifling thoughts, subtle thoughts—*khuddā vitakkā, sukhumā vitakkā, anuggatā manaso uppilāvā*—thoughts that cause the mind to float or drift, arising from within the mind itself. An ignorant person (*aviddū*), not understanding these thoughts of the mind, becomes bewildered, confused, and dazed—just as it happened to Venerable Meghiya—and lets these thoughts run hither and thither within the mind. It is as if one is running here and there. You know that even if the physical body does not run around, when these thoughts arise in the mind, it is as though one is running hither and thither. A person with a distracted mind is like an ordinary animal that runs about in response to every passing thought. Describing how a person who cannot control their thoughts falls into such a state of restlessness, He then states in the next verse:

Ete ca vidvā manaso vitakke

Ātāpiyo saṃvarati satīmā

Anugate manaso uppilāve

Asesamete pajahāsi buddho

Thereupon, He spoke concerning Himself. Understanding this class or collection of thoughts—*ete ca vidvā manaso vitakke, ātāpiyo saṃvarati satimā*—what does the Buddha, or a wise person, do? Being *ātāpī*, which means possessing defilement-burning energy, and being mindful (*satimā*), he restrains these thoughts. He tames them. The solemn utterance expressed here is that an awakened one is entirely free from all such thoughts that arise in the mind.

What was the mistake made by Venerable Meghiya? We can understand that he went for a good purpose—for intense striving (*padhāna-viriya*). That is why the Buddha finally said, "Well, if you say so, what can we say? Go then." But he went before the right time had arrived. He was too hasty. This is what we must understand. Meditation is a noble aspiration, but Venerable Meghiya was overly hasty. Furthermore, he committed a serious error: disobeying the words of the Buddha. He made that request a third time. This is a serious action, akin to the offense of disparaging the Noble Ones (*ariyūpavāda*). The consequence of this action alone is sufficient to agitate the mind. It is that serious. Having come as an attendant, he forgot his duties, ignored his duties toward the Buddha, disregarded His advice, and went off to meditate in that manner. It was a grand idea, but he was not prepared for the task. His mind was not yet ready. Even when it comes to driving a vehicle, if one gets a new car but does not know how to drive, one must display the letter "L" and drive for some time with an experienced person seated beside them. Similarly, this venerable monk was someone who should have taken instructions from the Buddha and proceeded only when the time was right. Yet he was hasty, driven by pride and conceit. That is why he went so far as to say, "For the Buddha, the work is done, but for me it is not yet so." In response to that, the Buddha delivered those verses we took as our theme, which reveal the nature of the mind:

Phandanaṃ capalaṃ cittaṃ

Dūrakkhaṃ dunnivārayaṃ

Ujuṃ karoti medhāvī

Usukāro'va tejanaṃ.

This is taught with an excellent simile. You know that in these Dhammapada verses—this being a verse from the Citta Vagga—the Buddha employs extraordinary similes. Here He describes the nature of the mind: *phandanaṃ capalaṃ cittaṃ dūrakkhaṃ dunnivārayaṃ*. This mind—*phandanaṃ* means flickering or trembling. This is explained as the trembling nature of the mind in the ordinary saṃsāric being when confronted with objects such as forms and sounds. The mind trembles—*phandanaṃ*—and *capalaṃ*, it is fickle. Now, Venerable Meghiya went with the intention of realizing Nibbāna. Yet, the mind is fickle; in the end, he was overcome even by thoughts of sensual desire. Such is the nature of the mind. There is nothing strange about it; this is a state to be expected. Because a mind that has run on the circular track of saṃsāra for so long cannot be pulled out of it all at once. The saṃsāric momentum is still active. To counter this, a substantial inner momentum must arise. It is for this purpose that the five factors mentioned earlier, such as association with a teacher, are helpful. So—*phandanaṃ capalaṃ*—this mind is fickle. You all know what "fickle" means; it needs no further explanation. But here, "fickle" does not merely mean being untrustworthy in speech. We often apply "fickle" to words, but here "fickle" means that instead of doing what it set out to do, the mind does something else entirely. That is why it is said: *phandanaṃ capalaṃ cittaṃ*. *Dūrakkhaṃ* means difficult to guard. The simile given for this is like the difficulty of guarding a ripe paddy field from cattle. Similarly, it is difficult to guard the object of meditation, to maintain the mind on the object of meditation—*dūrakkhaṃ*. Simply put, this mind is difficult to guard. Likewise, *dunnivārayaṃ* means it is difficult to restrain the mind from wandering toward unwholesome objects. It is difficult to protect the mind. When it attempts to break free and crash through (one's restraint), preventing it is no easy task. Such is the condition of the mind. Declaring the truth as it really is is the characteristic feature of a Dhamma sermon by the Buddha. So, these weaknesses of the mind are to be expected. *Ujuṃ karoti medhāvī*—yet, what does the wise one (*medhāvī*) do? He straightens his crooked, warped, and fickle mind. How? Here the simile is given: *usukāro'va tejanaṃ*—just as a fletcher (arrow-maker) straightens his arrow. Straightening an arrow: let us say one brings from the forest a piece of wood with a good core, heats it over a fire, and if it is bent, straightens it using wedges or similar methods. Then, by applying oil, tempering it, and sharpening it well, an arrow is made. Once the arrow is fashioned, it is so strong and performs such a great task that a skilled archer can split a horsehair by the flash of lightning. Devotees, you have heard this simile: "To shoot a horsehair from afar in the dark, if the flash of lightning is missed, the shot fails." Thus it is said. Realizing Nibbāna is a similar feat. What is referred to here is developing the power of wisdom to realize Nibbāna. All of this is done through the mind, is it not? Just as a fletcher, through systematic effort, tempers, straightens, and sharpens an arrow, the wise person straightens his mind—even a mind with such weaknesses. Thus it was declared. Similarly, He next presents another simile:

Vārijo'va thale khitto

Okamokata ubbhato

Pariphandatidaṃ cittaṃ

Māradheyyaṃ pahātave.

Here too, a simile is given. The home of the fish is water. Just as a fish pulled out from its watery home and cast upon dry land struggles this way and that, when one attempts to escape from the familiar kingdom of Māra, this mind thrashes about like "a fish pulled from the water." Through these two verses, the Buddha revealed the true state of the mind.

Thus, this is a highly valuable discourse (*sutta-desanā*) for us in several ways. We can supplement our understanding by reflecting on the background story. Here we have presented the general meaning of the verses. Even when we reflect on the story, as mentioned before, a meditator's—a practitioner's—intention to realize Nibbāna is good. That desire is noble. However, the mind must be prepared in a suitable manner. For this, desire (*chanda*) is required—an intense desire is needed. First and foremost, the primary requirement is guidance from a teacher. That is why association with a noble friend is essential. Next is the intense desire, the strong yearning called *chanda*. A person must truly possess a powerful yearning. Now, Venerable Meghiya thought that simply because he ordained with the intention of realizing Nibbāna, or with great faith, these defilements would not flood his mind. Thinking thus, he was thrown into dismay (*saṃvega*). But this is a natural law (*dhammatā*). Let us reflect on this using the analogy of a vehicle. When a vehicle is parked in a garage, it does not meet with accidents. A vehicle in a garage never experiences anything called a road accident. It is only when it is taken onto the road that it must face hazards. Similarly, as long as a practitioner is merely thinking, "I must meditate," there is no danger. It is on the day he actually plunges into it and enters seclusion that the pressures of Māra arrive. That is the reality. It is something to be expected. The Buddha advises us to go prepared for this. As described, there must be association with a teacher. One must respectfully follow those instructions. Then, there must be intense desire. Next, one must be accomplished in moral virtue. If one is not virtuous, remorse arises. When one sits down to meditate, thoughts of remorse flood in: "Alas, I have done such and such things!"

You all know that anyone who meditates, who attempts to concentrate the mind, must be aware of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) that obstruct concentration—whether conceptually or practically. These are *kāmacchanda*, *byāpāda*, *thīna-middha*, *uddhacca-kukkucca*, and *vicikicchā*. In English, these correspond to sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry—restlessness being agitated thoughts about the future, and worry being remorse over past actions and words (these two are grouped together)—and finally, doubt or indecision: "Will this work or not?" It is by freeing the mind from these factors that one makes the mind tranquil. Concentration (*samādhi*) means tranquility.

The aforementioned factors help to eliminate these hindrances. Especially, if one's moral virtue is impure, worry and remorse (*kukkucca*) will arise in the manner described. Thoughts regarding one's past will come flooding in: "I have done such and such things." Therefore, one must be endowed with moral virtue. Furthermore, by hearing the ten talk-topics, one gains some understanding of Nibbāna and the path, and one must also train oneself accordingly, gaining an understanding of the virtues to be practiced, such as wanting-little and contentment. Next, aroused energy (*ārabdha-viriya*) means one must proceed with a firm, unwavering determination. Furthermore, one must be a person of wisdom—an intelligent, wise individual. Such are the requirements. Ignoring these matters, and especially disregarding one's duties to the Buddha as he did, one cannot succeed in meditation. When one turns one's back on the teacher's advice, no progress can be expected.

Thus, we can draw many valuable lessons from that story. Let us now consider the other matters—specifically, the four meditations mentioned. If we reflect on them, we can see that the sequence in which the Buddha presents these four meditations is systematic. Often—in fact, always—the best way to verify whether a discourse is indeed the Buddha's is to see how logically these factors fit together. They align in an extraordinary manner: the first leading to the second, the second to the third, the third to the fourth, and the fourth to the fifth, and so on.

Here, even when prescribing the meditations, He introduces the first one to counter the strongest saṃsāric habit within a being—as you all know, this strongest habit is lust (*rāga*), attachment. Whether subtle, gross, or intense, attachment is the very nature of saṃsāra; in another sense, craving (*taṇhā*) is nothing but this. Therefore, the remedy for it is the meditation on foulness (*asubha*). Particularly, this attachment arises due to the attachment one has toward one's own body. Developing the meditation on foulness lies in realizing the foul nature of the body. Whichever meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*) is used—whether one of the thirty-two impure parts of the body such as hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, and teeth, or a corpse in a state of bloatedness (*uddhumāthaka*)—frequently contemplating the foulness of this body is called the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*). This perception of foulness must be developed to abandon lust.

Then, just as there is attachment on one side, there is aversion (*paṭigha*) or friction on the other—often arising when attachment is not satisfied. Aversion is also a serious weakness of the mind. The remedy for it is the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*). You can understand this very easily.

Now, this discourse is about preparing the mind, straightening the mind. The mind becomes crooked, warped, and fickle primarily between these two poles (of attachment and aversion). But that is not all. Generally, we speak of the five cords of sensual pleasure (*pañca-kāmaguṇa*)—the objects that enter through the five external senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. The ordinary world believes that it is because of these that our minds are disturbed. Therefore, some think: "If I close my eyes, block my ears, shut down these senses as much as possible, and go to a secluded place, I will be able to realize Nibbāna." This is a misconception. Because all the sensory objects gathered

through these five senses accumulate in the mind. You see various recording devices appearing in this day and age; our consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is much like them. The vast array of saṃsāric habits acquired throughout the past round of rebirths are all stored in this consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—our attachments and aversions. Similarly, the objects experienced through the five senses are deposited in the mind in some manner. These five senses sit around and, like messengers, bring everything and deposit it in the mind. These accumulated deposits in the mind surface precisely when one goes into solitude and sits down alone. No form comes to the eye; no sound comes to the ear. One is protected from all of them. Yet, from within the mind, there arise various defiled thoughts (*vitakka*) from consciousness (*viññāṇa*), emerging according to one's saṃsāric character and kamma. It was to these that Venerable Meghiya succumbed. Such is the situation. It is as a remedy for this that the Buddha next prescribes mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*).

Mindfulness of breathing is a highly subtle meditation. To use an analogy: though there are many subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), mindfulness of breathing is the royal highway. We can call it the royal highway because every Buddha attained Buddhahood through mindfulness of breathing. If you reflect, you will realize that once the mind has been calmed by auxiliary meditations such as foulness or loving-kindness, one's mindfulness (*sati*) naturally establishes itself on the in-breath and out-breath. Mindfulness of breathing means mindfulness directed toward the inhalation and exhalation. Normally, people do not direct mindfulness to this. Most do not even remember that they are breathing; they think of this as a machine that runs perpetually. The ordinary world forgets that everything depends on this thread of life. But when those two heavy defilements, lust and ill-will, are subdued through the meditations on foulness and loving-kindness, mindfulness of breathing becomes very easy.

However, mindfulness of breathing is prescribed here to cut off thoughts. Some practitioners remark: "Even though the Buddha said this is to cut off thoughts, it is precisely when we sit down for mindfulness of breathing that thoughts come flooding in!" That is not surprising. Sometimes, an illness surfaces only when one begins to treat it. The illness is inside. Therefore, one must be prepared to face it; the appropriate medicine must be available. That is the situation with mindfulness of breathing. It is not that the illness was absent; rather, the existing illness surfaced. Some physicians do exactly this: before curing an illness, they administer a strong purgative to bring the illness to the surface, and only then do they give the curative medicine. Similarly, it purges the mind in that manner. Yet, underneath, the mass of thoughts emerges. How powerful this is can be seen from the experience of this venerable monk. He must have strived the entire evening, seated comfortably cross-legged under that beautiful, delightful mango tree—yet he could not concentrate his mind. Only when it became completely impossible did he leave. Such is the power of the momentum of thoughts. That is the astonishing thing. It is this mass of thoughts that overwhelms the world. They arise from within the mind according to one's kamma and temperament. Mindfulness of breathing helps to cut them off. Through mindfulness of breathing, one understands them at various levels. Only when the illness surfaces at its respective levels can the

remedy be applied. Thus, when the mind scatters through these inner thoughts, one eventually gains an understanding.

Now, let us consider the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). Let us understand why the Buddha taught the perception of impermanence as the fourth step. This is a profound concept. If you understand this—having applied the remedies for lust and ill-will, and having brought the illness (thoughts) to the surface through mindfulness of breathing—one realizes: "My battle now is with these thoughts." What are thoughts? Sensory objects gathered through the five senses throughout saṃsāra, and in this life—whether recently or in the distant past—remain stored in the mind. They surface and trouble the meditator. When they arise, the practitioner must battle them. That is why it was said: *ātāpiyo saṃvarati satimā* (the ardent, mindful one restrains them).

What the Buddha described in those earlier verses as "trifling thoughts, subtle thoughts, which followed, agitate the mind" (*khuddā vitakkā, sukhumā vitakkā, anuggatā manaso uppilāvā*) are very small things—not grand matters. Sometimes, it is a word spoken by someone years ago, giving rise to ill-will. Or a form barely seen somewhere years ago, on which thoughts arise. They break in with such force that they seem impossible to remove. A practitioner experiences such states. At those times, one sees what a grave obstacle thoughts are to meditation. One must be strong to cut them off. Thus, those minor, trifling thoughts arise from within the mind and cause it to drift. How does one restrain them? By being *ātāpī*—possessing the defilement-burning energy that allows no entry to them. The object of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) is what assists in this.

You know that when the paddy is ripening, one tethers an ox to prevent it from wandering into the crop. The ox tries its best to reach the crop, but failing to do so, it eventually returns and lies down by the post. Such is the value of binding the mind to a meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*). It is only in relation to a meditation object—when one has grasped a meditation object—that one can recognize when the mind has strayed. Some people think that by merely watching the mind wander, they can make it tranquil. That does not work. You can never tame a wild bull by running along with it. Instead, you must give it an anchor; you must tie it to a post. Once tethered, every time it pulls away, using defilement-burning energy and mindfulness—where mindfulness (*sati*) assists—and applying the qualities of mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), which are mindfulness and wisdom, one swiftly brings it back to the post, back to the meditation object, not letting the mind wander far. If you let the mind wander far, before you know it, you will lose all awareness of where you are. Such is the nature of thoughts.

This is why, as those who have a basic understanding of the mind know, when something makes contact (*phassa*), an impression is made. Based on that, a feeling (*vedanā*) arises. That feeling may be pleasant or painful. Neutral feeling is barely noticed, and regarding it, there is generally a state of ordinary, often ignorant, equanimity; mostly, it is pleasant or painful feeling. Based on these two, a perception is formed. One grasps a perception as good or bad. Upon that perception, thoughts (*vitakka*) are built. Once one is overcome by those thoughts, something else occurs, which can be called conceptual proliferation

(*papañca*). Conceptual proliferation means that due to these thoughts branching out, one eventually falls into an extraordinary, grave delusion. One wanders hither and thither within these thoughts, running to the past and the future, to the point of not knowing where one is. These stages are described in the Dhamma: "What one feels (*vedeti*), that one perceives (*sañjānāti*); what one perceives, that one thinks about (*vitakketi*); what one thinks about, that one conceptually proliferates (*papañceti*)." Subject to conceptual proliferation (*papañca*), one is overwhelmed by a tangled web of thoughts whose beginning or end cannot be found, eventually becoming enslaved by the very thoughts of one's own making, forgetting the very purpose of one's endeavor. In this way, the mind becomes utterly distracted.

Why does all this happen? It is due to improper attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). Here, the meaning of the word wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) taught by the Buddha becomes important. Everyone knows what attention or reflection (*manasikāra*) is. Our minds have the capacity to attend to things. We reflect on something, bringing it to mind. The ordinary world performs this attention improperly (*ayoniso*). In some old translations, this is rendered as "unwisely" or ignorantly. For our times, we can understand it as "inappropriate attention" or ignorant attention—a wrong way of reflecting that gives room to defilements. Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means reflecting with wisdom. If we consider it more deeply, *yoniso* means directing the mind to the very source where a thought arises—focusing the mind on the very cause of the illness. That is the kind of reflection a meditator must practice: wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). This is the case here as well: preventing the mind from wandering far. Once contact (*phassa*) occurs, if one immediately gives way to feeling (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*) follow. As soon as perceptions arise, one follows those signposts to construct thoughts (*vitakka*) in the mind. Becoming enslaved by those thoughts is what is called conceptual proliferation (*papañca*).

Such is the state of affairs in this world. The entirety of saṃsāra exists within this. It is within these thoughts, by the mind itself, that saṃsāra is created, and it is by the mind itself that one is liberated from saṃsāra. From this, we can understand the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) taught by the Buddha. Indeed, anyone in the ordinary world can conceptualize the perception of impermanence. We all observe impermanence in daily life: something that existed decays. That is the gross, coarse aspect of it. The deepest aspect of the perception of impermanence arises from seeing the impermanent nature of thoughts themselves. One gains an understanding—through that very discipline—of how these thoughts, which we grasp as "my thoughts," scatter, and how the mind scatters due to the influence of past defilements. That discipline is practiced to make the mind tranquil through concentration (*samādhi*). Yet, what a tranquil mind realizes—realizes in accordance with reality (*yathābhūta*)—is the very nature of the mind: there is no single mind here, nothing to be claimed as "I." Different thoughts arise at different moments; they are thoughts that exist for a mere moment. One realizes that it is because we grasp them tightly through grasping (*upādāna*) that this entire saṃsāric process is created and becoming (*bhava*) is maintained.

That is what the Buddha declared: in one who has the perception of impermanence, the perception of not-self (*anattā-saññā*) becomes established. One who has the perception of not-self, having eradicated the conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*)—the subtle conceit of "existence"—is comforted by the noble, deathless Nibbāna in this very life (*diṭṭha-dhamma*). Because, due to the distracted and scattering nature of the mind, one realizes that there is nothing here to be grasped as "I," no such thing as a self (*attā*). These thoughts arise, and even as they vanish on the spot, one understands that there is nothing to grasp as "I" or "mine." A thought grasped as "I" ends and vanishes in the next moment. This is realized only when mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*)—the combination of mindfulness and wisdom—are fully applied.

This, too, is indeed a form of concentration (*samādhi*). On one occasion, when describing four developments of concentration (*samādhi-bhāvanā*)—let us mention only the relevant one—the Buddha asked: "Monks, what is the development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension?" He explained: "Here, a monk knows feelings (*vedanā*) as they arise, knows them as they persist, and knows them as they pass away. He knows perceptions (*saññā*) as they arise, knows them as they persist, and knows them as they pass away. He knows thoughts (*vitakka*) as they arise, knows them as they persist, and knows them as they pass away." What is the principle (*dhammatā*) within this? It comes down to those three words: arising, persisting, and passing away; they arise, persist, and pass away. Briefly, there is only arising and passing away. But what we call "persisting" is actually that grasping (*upādāna*)—the act of holding on. In that moment of holding on, it "persists." Within that persistence, a "person" appears. Thus, that is all there is in the world: arising, persisting, and passing away.

This is realized most profoundly—for in the material world, the difference between arising and passing away is difficult for most to perceive. Their decay is not recognized by the ordinary world. It is only on the day an object is thrown away, discarded on a garbage heap as useless and finished, that its decay is acknowledged. Yet, the arising and passing away—the impermanence—of the material world is of a very gross, coarse level. This impermanence is perceived in its subtlest form precisely by observing these thoughts: seeing how they arise, persist, and pass away. A mind made tranquil through mindfulness of breathing begins to realize this.

In that meditation, the effort is to keep mindfulness anchored at the point of contact of the breath. Yet, in the meantime, those thoughts arise. Thoughts of the past or various other things come up, and one must subdue them. Through the understanding that this is the actual state of the mind, one eventually realizes that there is no self (*attā*) to be found even in consciousness (*viññāṇa*). We can generally comprehend the lack of a self in form (*rūpa*) easily when it decays. Feeling (*vedanā*)—as one feeling arises and another follows—can also be understood with some effort. Perception (*saññā*) is slightly more difficult, and the impermanence of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), which are volitions, is also somewhat difficult. But consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the great illusion, the grandest illusion of beings in this world. The Buddha Himself compared consciousness (*viññāṇa*)

to an illusion. This is something one must experience for oneself. The path to this is what the Buddha has shown here by presenting these meditation objects in a systematic sequence.

Therefore, reflecting on this, you too should understand that one who aspires to the life of a practitioner, who hopes to embark on this path, must not think of it as an easy task. If one assumes it is easy, one will soon become disillusioned. Knowing that it is a difficult task, preparing the mind, and arousing great energy, one must embark on this work. Otherwise, what happens? One either blames the teacher or blames the meditation. Does someone stop driving simply because road accidents occur? No. There can be many reasons for a road accident; sometimes it is the driver's own ignorance. In the same way, because some people experience mental tension and various difficulties through meditation, some in this era think that meditation is an easy path to distract the mind. This is a mistaken view. It is those who are hasty, like Venerable Meghiya, who act and think in this manner, and who fall into such states.

The wise person remembers those instructions given by the Buddha. We must embark on this work having prepared the mind. What assists in this, foremostly, is association with a teacher. The Buddha, as we stated earlier, is the world's incomparable noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). After the Buddha passed away, and indeed even while He was alive, the chief disciples like Venerable Sāriputta and other great Arahants were like parents to the community, helping disciples to reach the state of Arahantship. Next were the eighty great disciples, followed by other members of the Saṅgha according to their capacity. After they passed away, as long as this Dispensation (*Sāsana*) exists, whether lay or ordained, any person who has walked this path of meditation, achieved some progress, and possesses understanding of it, is indeed the noble friend, the teacher. One must be ready to take steps in accordance with the situation, obedient to their words. For this, humility is required.

The other factors are strengthening the mind through moral virtue, hearing the Dhamma, and so forth; generating an intense desire (*chanda*), a strong yearning; then exerting energy; and intelligently, wisely applying the mind—wisdom (*paññā*). These factors are supportive. The same applies to the prescribed path of meditation. Without mixing them up or entangling them, one must enter that path of meditation. What should be done first must not be done later, and what should be done later must not be done first. Some leap into mindfulness of breathing because it is a highly valued meditation, but they are not prepared for it. Consequently, they complain: "Although the Buddha said to practice mindfulness of breathing to cut off thoughts, for me, only thoughts arise when I try." Some even go so far as to blame the Buddha's teaching.

What is the reason for this? It is the coarse level mentioned earlier. You know how a carpenter uses a plane. Consider it: first, he uses the coarse plane to smooth out the rough parts. Having done that, by adjusting the blade or using another plane, he shaves the next layer, and then uses a finer plane. A similar process applies to the mind. The mind has coarse levels and subtle levels; coarse levels are eliminated only by a coarse remedy. That is helpful. Some people hesitate, claiming that the meditation on foulness

is not suitable for laypeople. Whether lay or ordained, if one seeks Nibbāna, this is helpful. Even if we reflect on this society and look at laypeople, how many crimes occur because of ignorance regarding these defilements of lust and so forth? If there were some restraint and discipline regarding them, even society would become far more peaceful. Even within a household, there would be discipline and restraint. The same applies to the other defilement, ill-will (*byāpāda*). Humans mostly live within these two—attachment and aversion. But once they are subdued, one must proceed further. That is where the simile of the fine plane applies. That is what must be taken up there. It is what the Buddha described as "trifling thoughts, subtle thoughts."

Venerable Meghiya went thinking: "Just because I have seen a delightful mango grove, if I go there and meditate, I can immediately realize Nibbāna; I can achieve in a single afternoon what the Buddha strived so hard to accomplish." Everything else was perfect: the mango grove was delightful, the shade was good, and the seat was fine. All was well, yet he could not tame his mind. Why? Because underneath arose those thoughts—all the debris, just like the debris swept away when a stream swells after a heavy rain. A practitioner striving for Nibbāna must face such situations.

At such times, one must not be discouraged. It is something to be expected. That debris must flow out somehow. You know what happens after taking a purgative—there is no need to describe that in detail. After taking a purgative, one thinks: "Alas! Is this the reality? Is this the nature of the body I claimed as mine? Is this the nature of food?" In such moments, this is clearly realized. Similarly, when one sits down for mindfulness of breathing after fulfilling the preliminary requirements, the stream of debris emerges from within the mind. Yet, through that, discipline is achieved, and through discipline, understanding arises. One realizes that this mind is difficult to tame. But why do we tame it? To sharpen this understanding. This is the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). A highly profound matter is present here. If taken to extremes, there is no progress. The solution to the problem of escaping saṃsāric existence—which no other teacher could resolve—was presented by the Buddha through the Middle Path. Initially, calming the mind is necessary; unifying the mind is necessary. Though we say "unifying" the mind, this mind is not a single entity. When it is unified, one perceives its scattering nature. It scatters moment by moment. Due to accumulated kamma, character, tendencies, and temperament, various thoughts (*vitakka*) arise. One is not discouraged by them. Instead, what does one ultimately do through them? One sees that there is nothing here to grasp. Where there is grasping (*upādāna*), there is Māra. Where there is grasping, there "I" exist. One then sees: "Grasping is the source of all trouble." One beholds the truth in accordance with reality (*yathābhūta*). All this is impermanent (*anicca*). What is impermanent is suffering (*dukkha*); because one grasps what is impermanent, one falls into suffering. Furthermore, one realizes: "Nothing can be claimed as 'I' or 'mine' or kept under my control."

When that realization arrives, when it arrives in its depth, it is then that one peels away the final scab called the conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*), as the Buddha declared. It is through this scab of "existence"—"I am"—that the entire world is measured. "I" is generally a gross, coarse notion; that is what is called the view of an existing group

(*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). Merely eliminating the view of "I" and "mine" does not complete the task. The subtlest level is "am-ness"—not even "I am," but simply "am"—which remains deposited in the mind at an extremely subtle level. This is seen clearly only when the scattering nature of the mind is thoroughly realized and grasping is abandoned. Where there is grasping—at the moment of contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*) arises through grasping. Grasping there turns it into perception (*saññā*). Perception turns into thought (*vitakka*). Grasping that thought leads to conceptual proliferation (*papañca*), beyond which the mind eventually turns into a virtual madhouse. To prevent this, one must abandon the wrong path of improper attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). The battle does not begin from the far end. It begins as the Buddha declared in the very first verse of the Dhammapada:

Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā

Manoseṭṭhā manomayā

The realization that everything arises from the mind itself emerges clearly at that deep stage of meditation.

Therefore, you must reflect on this. On this valuable Poya day, we must not arouse faith merely by thinking about the Buddha's physical life. One who truly recognizes the Buddha is one who has actually realized Nibbāna. Until then, we see only a physical form, or a Buddha conjured up by our thoughts. Thus, if we hope to see the Buddha, if we hope to recognize Him, we must walk the path to Nibbāna. We must realize this very truth. Only then will we truly see the Buddha. Only then will our faith in the Buddha be perfected.

Therefore, through this Dhamma listening on this valuable day, some matters pertaining to the ten talk-topics may have been conveyed to you. It is still possible to benefit from this Dispensation in this very life. Some consider this to be outdated. But the very same fires that burned during the Buddha's time are burning today—the fires of lust, hatred, and delusion. Nibbāna, then, is the extinguishing of these fires. It is nothing else; it is not some exotic world, nor is it some celestial realm as some believe. It is simply Nibbāna. In saṃsāra, there is burning. In its place, the Buddha presents Nibbāna. In saṃsāra, there is existence. Realizing that this existence is suffering (*dukkha*), bringing about its cessation is what we called escaping from the circular track of saṃsāra. Revolving on the circular track of saṃsāra is wandering (*saṃsaraṇa*). Escaping from it is deliverance (*nissaraṇa*). Viewed from the perspective of defilements, Nibbāna is liberation from the kingdom of Māra!

Taking this state as the ultimate goal of your life, during this rare human existence, during this rare period of a Buddha's appearance, and in the closing stages of this Dispensation—for in a few generations, it will become impossible to benefit from this Dhamma because association with teachers will be lost. Those who can advise on this path to Nibbāna, those who are engaged in these practices, will become impossible to find. One might find the rare "black cumin" (*kaḷu-nika*) more easily than them.

Therefore, keeping in mind the Buddha's advice on diligence (*appamāda*), you must make a firm determination to walk this path to Nibbāna without delay.

You should know that by listening to this Dhamma sermon, several highly important wholesome qualities have arisen within your minds even at this moment. Particularly, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are listed among the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). Functioning as both faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*)—faith is both a faculty and a power, a capability as well as a source of strength. Similarly, energy follows faith; through the energy applied to burn defilements and draw near wholesome states, mindfulness arises. Maintaining mindfulness for a long period is what becomes concentration. Eventually, mindfulness overflows and turns into concentration. To a concentrated mind, wisdom arises—seeing things as they really are (*yathābhūta*). These five—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—fully operate as faculties and powers precisely when one correctly embarks on meditation for Nibbāna. I hope this Dhamma sermon has helped you to arouse them, at least to some degree, in accordance with your capacity for meditation.

May the power of generating these qualities of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom through listening to such a sermon enable you, through your utmost efforts in this very life, to realize the stages of stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship, escaping from this entire mass of saṃsāric suffering and attaining the noble, deathless Nibbāna. Furthermore, may the store of merit gathered through this preaching and hearing of the Dhamma be shared with the guardian deities of the Dispensation, and all beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who await these merits—including your departed relatives. May they all rejoice in these merits, obtain the association of noble friends, and swiftly escape all saṃsāric suffering to find peace in the noble, deathless Nibbāna. With this aspiration, let us transfer merits by reciting these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #9

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Attanāva kataṃ pāpaṃ,

attajaṃ attasambhavaṃ;

Abhimatthati dummedhaṃ,

vajiraṃ vasmamayaṃ maṇiṃ.

From:

Verse 161 from the Attavagga (Chapter on the Self) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

When some people see a person who has lived a good life in society meet with death due to a sudden accident or an enemy's hostility, they might think, "Look at what happened to him despite living so well," and begin to doubt the value of a principled life. They weaken their faith in the fruits and results of wholesome and unwholesome actions (kamma). This kind of doubt arises because they do not have a proper understanding of the subtle workings of the wheel of kamma.

The Buddha declared that beings must themselves be held responsible for the wholesome and unwholesome kamma they perform out of ignorance and craving—shrouded by ignorance and bound by craving—actions performed selfishly with the conceit of "self". He declared that they must experience the fruits and results of these actions, and that sooner or later, they will have to face their consequences. Although the subtle workings of kamma were not visible to other religious teachers, they were clearly perceived by the Buddha. Therefore, on certain occasions when such erroneous views arose in society, he would recount the past story related to the present incident as an illustration—as empirical evidence—thereby presenting such direct proof to the world. In

doing so, he seized the opportunity to rescue people from the path of woeful states and guide them toward happy realms and Nibbāna.

The background story of the verse we have chosen as our theme today is of a similar nature. During the time when the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana monastery, there lived in the city of Sāvatthī a faithful stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) lay disciple named Mahākāla. He was accustomed to regularly observing the eight precepts. Eight days a month, he would come to the monastery, observe the precepts, and spend the entire night listening to Dhamma sermons. He was deeply devoted to this practice. One night, while this lay disciple was at the Jetavana monastery, a band of thieves broke into a nearby house. Hearing the noise as they were preparing to take the goods, the homeowners woke up and began chasing the thieves. The thieves started running, dropping the stolen goods here and there. One of the thieves fled along the path leading to the Jetavana monastery with the goods he had taken. By that time, in the early morning, the lay disciple Mahākāla had come to the pond to wash his face. What did this thief do? Seeing the lay disciple, he dropped the bundle of stolen goods right where the lay disciple was standing—likely in an attempt to deceive the pursuing crowd—and ran away. When the homeowners arrived, they saw the bundle of goods and found the lay disciple there. They grabbed him, shouting, "You broke into our house, and now you are standing here pretending to listen to Dhamma, posing as a pious lay disciple! You are a thief in disguise!" They beat him mercilessly, killed him, and left his body there.

In the morning, some novice monks came to the pond to fetch water. Seeing the lay disciple lying dead in this manner, they went and reported it to the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, that innocent lay disciple, the one who listened so well to the Dhamma sermons, has been beaten to death and cast aside."

The Buddha said, "Monks, although looking at his conduct in this life, it may seem that this lay disciple met with an undeserved death, yet, in terms of the evil kamma he performed in the past, this death is entirely fitting." Then, he related the story of the past.

In the past, at the entrance to a forest in a border village of the Kingdom of Benares, the king had stationed a royal guard, as travelers were frequently harassed by thieves lurking in that forest. What was the guard's duty? It was to provide security to those who traveled to and fro along that forest path. One day, a certain man arrived there in a carriage, accompanied by his beautiful wife. As soon as the guard saw her, he felt a lustful attachment and devised a scheme to detain them. Although there was plenty of time left to travel safely, he said, "It is too late in the evening now. Therefore, stay here today. I will provide lodging in my house, and you may leave tomorrow morning." But the man replied, "No, no, there is plenty of time. Please let us proceed." What did the royal guard do? He used his men to forcibly stop the carriage and provided lodging and food for both the man and his wife there. During the night, he employed a trick. He had his men hide a gem belonging to the household inside their carriage. Furthermore, he created a noise as if thieves had entered the house. The next morning, after the couple had departed, he ordered his men, "Go and search those who are leaving this village. A

gem in our house has gone missing; thieves have taken it." So, the guard's men went, stopped and searched the carriage, retrieved the gem they themselves had hidden, and brought the man before the village headman with a false accusation: "He has stolen the gem of the royal guard who gave him shelter." The village headman, unaware of the actual facts, ordered that the man be beaten and executed. The Buddha explained the consequences of that unwholesome act of taking life. As a result of that unwholesome kamma, the royal guard suffered for a long time in the Avīci hell, and as a residual effect, in the final portion of those consequences, he was beaten to death in a similar manner for a hundred lifetimes. The Buddha pointed out that what happened to Mahākāla on this occasion was indeed the very same consequence, and that this story was about him. Having explained this, the Buddha said, "Monks, if a person, being thus deluded, performs an evil kamma, it will bring results in this manner," and he uttered the aforementioned verse of Dhamma together with a simile.

Attanāva kataṁ pāpaṁ

attajaṁ attasambhavaṁ

abhimatthati dummedhaṁ

vajiraṁ vasamayaṁ maṇiṁ

"By oneself is evil done,

born of oneself, produced by oneself.

It crushes the foolish person,

just as a diamond crushes a gem born of rock."

The meaning of this verse is that evil kamma, which is born of oneself and produced from within oneself, destroys the foolish person, just as a diamond-jewel (vajra) born of stone cuts and destroys the very stone from which it arose.

Here, in this verse too, a gem is mentioned. There seems to be some subtle connection to the background story. However, there is a much deeper meaning here. When it is said "done by oneself," we see the sense of personal responsibility. In the past, that lay disciple, driven by selfishness and harboring the conceit of "self", committed that evil deed. The inevitable consequence of that false accusation—for indeed, it was a false accusation—is what he had to experience in this lifetime. Thus, although in the world we often see seemingly innocent people being killed, the Buddha-eye perceives their past connections. We can understand this through this story. Here we clearly see that when the lay disciple Mahākāla was a royal guard in the past, he violated the third precept and also the first precept by causing the taking of life of an innocent man. What he experienced now was the verdict of that false accusation. It was because of this that the thieves dropped the bundle of stolen goods right there. It was kamma that inclined the thieves' minds to drop it there. There is a wondrous karmic connection in these events. We can see that this reality underlies everything we hear about. Today, too, many such

incidents occur. Events similar to those described in this present and past story are still seen in the world today. We can understand from this that the law of kamma and its result is subtly hidden within all these occurrences.

Next, we must contemplate the deeper aspect of this matter. Now, this verse repeats several times phrases like "done by oneself", "born of oneself", "produced of oneself". Thus, "self" is emphasized. Indeed, this verse comes from the section called the *Atta Vagga* (Chapter on Self). Many translate this easily as "soul" or "self". But in this section of the Dhammapada, there is a discussion about oneself. Many interpret this as a permanent soul, but what is referred to here is not a permanent soul. Some debaters argue: "If this Dhamma is a teaching of Not-self (*Anattā*), how can one be held responsible for one's actions? How is responsibility demonstrated? After all, the one who experiences the result is not the same 'self'!" They try to escape through such arguments. But what is the meaning here? Shrouded by the veil of ignorance and bound by the fetters of craving (*taṇhā*), the world of living beings generates intentions. You have heard the phrase: "*Cetanāhaṁ bhikkhave kammaṁ vadāmi*"—"Intention, O monks, is what I call kamma." You must have heard this many times. The Buddha has shown that intention itself is kamma. Thus, through the ignorance that supports that intention—the feeling of "I" and "mine"—the concept of "self" arises. Having generated that conceit of "self" and acting with thoughts of one's own pleasure, protection, progress, and gain, the consequences of those actions must be experienced by oneself sooner or later. Why is this? Feeling (*vedanā*) is something that occurs with extreme rapidity. The activity of the mind is exceptionally swift. If it is directed in the wrong way, we can understand that it leads to great destruction. If a driver of a fast-moving vehicle, due to negligence or drowsiness regarding the controls operated by his hands and feet, lets the steering wheel slip even slightly, where will it end? The mind is just like that; it operates with extreme rapidity. It is something that changes so swiftly that nothing in the world can compare to it—hence it is described as *lahuparivattaṁ* (swiftly changing). Therefore, if such a mind, in accordance with the law explained by the Buddha, leans toward unrighteousness, unwholesomeness, and evil, then one has to suffer grave consequences for a very long time. Not just in one lifetime—depending on the strength of that intention—the Buddha has shown that the results of certain kammas are experienced in this very life as *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya*. The results of other kammas are experienced in future lifetimes as *aparāpariyavedanīya*. In this manner, the results of kamma are generally explained in various ways. Yet, when we contemplate deeply, the Buddha declares that the domain of kamma is unthinkable (*acinteyya*). The entanglement of kamma is that dangerous. The vast accumulation of kamma performed across various lifetimes gathers and deposits in consciousness (*viññāṇa*), only to resurface some day as fruit and result. This is the perilous nature of existence in this world that we can understand through this.

Furthermore, we must constantly reflect on the relationship between kamma and its result. For, as mentioned earlier, some might think, "Is it not someone else who experiences the result of the kamma I perform?" In the next life, one might not know that they committed this deed. But to use a simple analogy: if one pours poison into a

flowing stream at one point, and someone takes water further downstream, they can be harmed by that poison. The mind-stream (*citta-santāna*) is just like that. If an unwholesome quality—a defilement—is added to the mind-stream, it will resurface over a long period of time as ripening results to bring retribution to oneself.

Among our Buddhists, there is a saying regarding this ripening of kamma, known as *kamma-sarikkhatā* (the correspondence of action and result). As illustrated by these two stories, the connection between kamma and its result often shows a close similarity—a kind of parallelism. Moreover, even Western scholars who are waking up to this reality use a new analogy to describe the working of kamma—how actions return to the doer. The kamma performed by oneself returning to oneself is sometimes compared to a weapon used by certain indigenous tribes called a "boomerang." When the boomerang is thrown at an animal, it hits the target and returns right back to the hand of the thrower. Kamma has a similar returning nature. If kamma originates from a particular mind-stream, it returns to that very same mind-stream. Therefore, one cannot escape by saying there is no "self." For we know that *saṁsāra* is the uninterrupted continuity of the stream of aggregates—even though there is no permanent soul—comprising form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Within that stream of aggregates, sooner or later, in accordance with the law of kamma, the results will inevitably surface.

Since such a state of affairs exists in the world, we must be exceptionally mindful of it. In this era of terror and violence, many people's understanding, belief, and faith (*saddhā*) in kamma tend to disappear. It is often forgotten. Such is the perilous condition of the world.

Therefore, to constantly remind us of this law of kamma, there is a valuable discourse taught by the Buddha called the *Ṭhāna Sutta*. In that discourse, the Buddha points out five facts. We shall focus here particularly on the last point mentioned. To help one reflect on kamma, turn one's mind away from bad conduct, and direct it toward good conduct, the Buddha presents a certain formula to be constantly reflected upon (*abhiṇhaṁ paccavekkhitabbaṁ*). Whether lay or ordained, male or female, this is a matter that should be regularly reflected upon by everyone:

> "*Kammassakomhi kammadāyādo*
>
> *kammayoni kammabandhu kammapaṭisaraṇo.*
>
> *Yaṁ kammaṁ karissāmi kalyāṇaṁ vā pāpakaṁ vā*
>
> *tassa dāyādo bhavissāmīti*
>
> *abhiṇhaṁ paccavekkhitabbaṁ*."

This is how one should think. "*Kammassakomhi*" means—here too, if there is anything that can be taken as "self" or "mine", it is kamma alone. "*Kamma-sako*"—"*sako*" means "one's own". Thus, the general meaning is: "I am the owner of my kamma."

"*Kammadāyādo*": "I am the heir to my kamma." "*Kammayoni*": "Kamma is the womb from which I am born." My origin, my beginning, is from this kamma. What is called "I" is indeed intention itself, which is taken as "I". That is why it says "*kammayoni*"—kamma also arises from the conceit of "I" and "self". "*Kammabandhu*": "Kamma is my kinsman." The only relative one has as a support is kamma itself. "*Kammapaṭisaraṇo*": "Kamma is my refuge; kamma is my support." "*Yaṁ kammaṁ karissāmi kalyāṇaṁ vā pāpakaṁ vā tassa dāyādo bhavissāmi*": "Whatever kamma I shall do, whether good or evil, of that I shall be the heir." It is stated that this is what should be constantly reflected upon by everyone—lay or ordained, male or female.

The result or benefit of doing so is declared thus: in a person who reflects in this manner, bad bodily conduct, bad verbal conduct, and bad mental conduct—misdeeds done through body, speech, and mind—are either entirely eradicated or at least attenuated. This means that the best method to avoid bad conduct is to regularly apply this law of kamma to one's own mind. "Kamma is what is truly mine." When one thinks in this way, one realizes that the things one desperately grasps onto as "I" in moments of impulsiveness or haste in society are not what the Buddha pointed out. What remains with one in the end is the momentum of kamma generated within one's own mind. That is indeed what brings happiness or pain to oneself.

Accordingly, we should contemplate the terrifying nature of this entanglement of kamma, which the Buddha has illustrated on many occasions in this manner. That is to say, when experiencing the result of kamma, we generally do not realize that it is a karmic retribution, even though it is clearly seen by the Buddha-eye. Instead, we think it is something done to us by others. Perhaps even the lay disciple Mahākāla—though details are not given, and being a devout lay disciple he might have tried to compose his mind—nevertheless, when those homeowners came and beat him to death, he might have felt anger, thinking, "Alas, they are killing me, an innocent man." He too must have considered himself innocent. There was even room for such an unwholesome thought to arise. But if one contemplates deeply according to that formula, no matter what misfortune or enemy hostility befalls one, one should think: "This is something of my own making." Now, who was the executioner of the lay disciple Mahākāla? It was himself! If we contemplate in accordance with the Dhamma, according to the principles of the Dhamma, the ultimate cause of anyone's death is an unwholesome act of taking life committed by themselves in the past. That is how we must contemplate. The proximate cause of death, the reason for death—we are not referring here to the mind at the moment of death—the cause of death is an unwholesome act of taking life committed by oneself in the past. This is clearly illustrated here. The death of the lay disciple Mahākāla was brought about by a taking of life he himself committed. He himself was his own executioner. It was not anyone else; he was his own executioner.

If we accustom ourselves to contemplating in this manner, we can easily bring the mind to equanimity (*upekkhā*) in such situations, in accordance with the Buddha's word. It may not be directly perceived by us. Since we do not possess higher spiritual powers (*abhiññā*), we cannot see that "this particular kamma has caused this particular event to happen to me." However, if we practice reflecting on this as a universal law of nature—

knowing that the Buddha's word is true—we realize the Buddha has declared: "Kamma alone is my inheritance; kamma alone is my kinsman." It can be a relative or an enemy. In this regard, we should understand that wholesome kamma is one's true kinsman, while unwholesome kamma is one's enemy. The Buddha has pointed this out too, when speaking of kamma.

Caranti bālā dummedhā

amitteneva attanā

karontā pāpakaṁ kammaṁ

yaṁ hoti kaṭukapphalaṁ

Thus the Buddha has declared: "Foolish and ignorant people go about acting as enemies to themselves, performing evil kamma which yields bitter fruit." "*Amitteneva attanā*"—they behave as if they are enemies to themselves. Why? Because by "*karontā pāpakaṁ kammaṁ yaṁ hoti kaṭukapphalaṁ*"—by performing evil deeds that bring bitter consequences, these foolish individuals live as enemies to themselves. Thus, while it is said that kamma is one's kinsman (*kammabandhu*), if we consider unwholesome actions, they can turn out to be one's enemies.

Therefore, reflecting that this law of kamma—this natural law of kamma—is embedded in every single event that happens to us, often helps us, in accordance with the Buddha's words, to subdue impulsiveness, haste, and anger. This is something that must be constantly contemplated in a practical manner.

Furthermore, this story reveals to us another important matter: the significance of the five precepts (*pañcasīla*). The five precepts taught by the Buddha are no trivial matter. Within this virtue (*sīla*), all the situations in which a being's mind leans toward unwholesomeness in this long *saṁsāra* are briefly and simply contained. In general, any unwholesome kamma we perform falls under either the first precept—the unwholesome act of taking life—or under taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech, or taking intoxicants, as the primary categories. One could describe various branches and sub-branches of these, but these are the main ones. Thus, the consequences of the evil kamma related to the five sins we committed in that past *saṁsāra* are what we experience day by day in various ways. It is not only death, as mentioned before, but also illness, various disasters, loss of wealth and crops, and all such daily adversities—the cause of every single one of these is the terrible unwholesome kamma committed by oneself in the past. But that is not the only danger of kamma. As mentioned earlier, due to not knowing the true nature of kamma, one gets entangled in the ball of karmic thread. Indeed, the Buddha compares *saṁsāra* to a tangled ball of thread. How does it become a tangled ball of thread? We receive a certain result according to the kamma we have performed. When that result comes, we do not know how it happened. We tangle it further by generating more kamma in response to it. By harboring ill-will (*dosa*) toward those who instrumented that result—and not only that, but by succumbing to various defilements (*kilesa*) because of it—we entangle our kamma further and accumulate still

more kamma. Such is the perilous state of this entanglement of kamma. And it is not only oneself who gets caught in this entanglement. When a kamma is performed, and when its result is experienced, there are others who join in. There are others who rejoice in it. We know that after giving a gift (*dāna*) or performing some other valuable meritorious deed, we share those merits with others. On such occasions, there is an opportunity for others to rejoice in that merit, and instead of falling into woeful states, to generate wholesome qualities that lead to happy realms. That is the good side. The word "rejoicing" (*anumodanā*) is generally used in connection with wholesome deeds. But, meritorious devotees, we also see in society many instances where people rejoice in unwholesome deeds.

You know very well, especially in this era, that when one's friends or relatives gain some profit, even in an indirect or improper way, one rejoices over it. If that action was unwholesome, if that person accomplished it in a wrong way, then by rejoicing, we too are sharing in that unwholesome deed. Or, particularly if a friend has committed some serious wrong—such as wrong view, theft, or other corrupt activities—one either assists them through body and speech, or rejoices mentally, thinking, "Oh, how wonderful!" Nay, even when an enemy dies, there is a habit among beings to exclaim "Sādhu! Sādhu!" and thus rejoice in it. Such is their delusion. What does one do by this? One takes upon oneself something unrelated—something that does not belong to oneself—and binds oneself to that unwholesome kamma. Thus, although the word "*anumodanā*" is used in connection with wholesome deeds, we unwittingly participate in unwholesome deeds as well. This happens due to that very ignorance. That rejoicing too is kamma. Even if another person did the deed, when one rejoices in it mentally, one's own feeling (*vedanā*) becomes soiled by it. Through that, one accumulates unwholesome kamma for oneself. We must guard against such situations.

In the world, there are various political parties and factions. However, the Dhamma mentions two parties that exist eternally in the universe: the *devas* (gods) and the *asuras* (demons). There is a perpetual struggle between these two factions. The Buddha states that when Tathāgatas appear in the world, the party of the *devas*—that is, the deities—grows stronger, while the faction of the *asuras*—the demons and hungry ghosts—declines, grows weak, and decreases in number. What does this mean? When beings incline toward wholesomeness, more gods are born in the world. Conversely, as they incline more and more toward unwholesomeness, those born in the lower realms like demons (*yakkhas*) and hungry ghosts (*petas*) increase. This is the kind of competition that exists in the world. This can be designated as black and white. When considered in terms of the Dhamma, the conflict between the wholesome and the unwholesome can be seen as white and black—the white side being wholesome and the black side being unwholesome. These are the two parties that eternally exist in the world, not the political parties we think of. Therefore, we must consider which party we belong to, and which party we vote for—the black party or the white party? Voting for the white party is called *kusala-chanda* (desire for wholesomeness) in the Dhamma. It is voting for the wholesome. There is also a bad side to desire (*chanda*), known as *chanda-rāga* (lustful desire). That goes toward the unwholesome. If one develops an attachment that leans

toward that passion called *chanda-rāga*, it leads to ruin. *Kusala-chanda*, however, is a good thing because it is a valuable urgency or a desire for the Dhamma that culminates in Nibbāna. We must understand that these two forces exist in the world. If we do not shape our lives properly according to this Dhamma of the Buddha, we cannot tell into what abyss our journey will eventually end. Such is the situation.

Therefore, we must contemplate especially on the observance of virtue (*sīla*). Even on this occasion, you have observed virtue—whether it is the eight precepts with right livelihood (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*), the eight Uposatha precepts, or in some cases, the ten precepts. We must reflect on its value. How precious is this virtue (*sīla*) declared by the Buddha! In this path of Dhamma, virtue is only the first step. Yet, how valuable is that which is contained within it! The training of body and speech is also something that must be carried out systematically.

Sīla means "tame-ness" or "gentleness." If we translate it into Sinhala, sīla is *hīlākama* (tameness). We see the value of this tameness when we observe the behavior of a trained elephant. The mahout rides on the back of such a massive beast and makes it perform various tasks. Similarly, one rides a fast-running horse, taming it to do one's bidding. When even a wild beast, once systematically tamed, can perform such remarkable tasks and be of great use, how much more so with ourselves?

If we thus discipline our body and speech in accordance with this virtue (*sīla*) declared by the Buddha—then, what is contained within is not just body and speech. Our bodies are not machines. The mind is the forerunner that enables these bodily and verbal actions to operate, in accordance with the verse: *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā* (mind is the forerunner of all states). The primary cause is the mind. In truth, what is contained within this virtue is not a meaningless repetition of training rules—as the Sangha often points out, like the story of "how the village rustic observed the precepts" without understanding. It must be taken to heart. Even if we recite them in Pali for the sake of tradition and respect, we must understand their meaning. The precept regarding abstaining from killing living beings—*veramaṇī* means abstaining, and *virati* means abstinence—is what is difficult. Doing is easy; abstaining is difficult. When one says, "I undertake the precept of abstaining, the rule of self-discipline," it means one is voluntarily—not because someone else forced it, but out of one's own free will—observing it and depositing that determination in the mind. It is like issuing a command to one's own wisdom. In our activities, there are things done impulsively according to our whims, and things done through thoughtful reflection. There is a vast difference between the two. Within each of us, there is a certain capacity called "wisdom"—what is known as mindful understanding—the ability to do things thoughtfully. But this must be brought out with effort. Why? Because the nature of *saṁsāra* is to flow downward toward the unwholesome, like a stream. Therefore, this wisdom remains buried. We usually act according to our whims and our superficial minds, which are often inclined toward the unwholesome. Yet, there is a capacity of wisdom, a power of understanding (*paññā*) within us. That very idea is what is called reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*).

If we consider the word reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*) deeply—it is like a person going before a mirror to look at themselves. It is to contemplate something calmly. When preparing to go on a journey or attend a wedding, one dresses up and goes before a mirror to see if there are any flaws or if one's ornaments are placed correctly. Similarly, within our minds, there is a capacity to reconsider, a capacity to reflect back (*āvajjanā*). Specifically, we have the ability to pause and ponder, "Is this indeed so?" That is what is called reflection. Even the Buddha used the simile of the mirror to advise us to contemplate and examine how things are.

The Buddha briefly explained the nature of the wholesome and unwholesome to Ven. Rāhula: unwholesome actions are those performed through body, speech, or mind that lead to one's own harm, to the harm of others, or to the harm of both. When understood in this way, we see that what the Buddha points out is not a short-term perspective. One might think, "I am gaining a profit at this moment." However, when contemplating in terms of kamma, one must not take such a short-term view.

Now, someone might commit theft or a similar deed, thinking, "This will benefit me." But by doing so, harm is caused to others. Not only that, one's own mind becomes defiled. This is how one must contemplate with wisdom. We have the capacity to contemplate in this manner through reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*). We must bring it to the forefront. Together with that wisdom, depositing a certain power of determination in the mind, comes what is known as recollection (*āvajjanā*)—the recollection of virtue (*sīlāvajjanā*).

Recollection (*āvajjanā*) means reviewing one's virtue: "I have undertaken such a virtue; is my conduct in keeping with this virtue?" On this occasion, to remind themselves that they have undertaken precepts, some even change their attire. All of this serves to acknowledge that one is established in virtue. Then, bringing that to mind, one endeavors to live in conformity with that conduct. It is through this that one can discipline the mind. First, one disciplines body and speech. The Buddha has shown that through this alone, one experiences great happiness in daily life.

That is called the happiness of blamelessness (*anavajja-sukha*)—the peace of knowing that we live without doing wrong. How many people today spend their lives in regret? The benefit of virtue is to live daily in the comfort of the Dhamma, free from remorse (*avippaṭisāra*). Although the person who commits unwholesome deeds may not think of them during his daily activities, perhaps when he goes to sleep, he remembers: "Have I not done such things?" This is especially true in old age, or at the moment of death. At the moment of death, an unwholesome deed comes to mind. If a grave unwholesome deed comes to mind at the moment of death, one goes straight to woeful states. Such is the perilous condition of *saṁsāra*. This is why the Buddha ultimately exhorts us to escape from this entire mass of *saṁsāra*. To escape from *saṁsāra* means to completely untangle oneself from that aforementioned entanglement of kamma. One cannot escape from it by ordinary means. It is like a wondrously tangled ball of thread. It is precisely because untangling this kamma—or escaping from *saṁsāra*—is so difficult, that a Buddha is needed.

A Buddha is one who, having escaped himself, clarifies the Dhamma to help other beings escape as well. That method is supramundane liberation (*lokuttara-vimutti*). The supramundane liberation shown by the Buddhas is the crossing over from the world. It is through this alone that this entanglement of kamma can be resolved. The root cause of all this is shown to be Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). It is because of these Preparations that these things occur. Some of you may have heard that Preparations arise due to ignorance (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*). Thus, due to that aforementioned conceit of "self", taken as "I" and "mine", numerous fabrications occur within the mind. Briefly, these can be understood as intention. There is a stream of thoughts arising as intention, aspiration, and expectation—an activity of the mind. That activity carries us in *saṁsāra* into a state resembling a massive tangled ball of thread. It is the wholesome and unwholesome kamma we perform that keeps us alive in *saṁsāra* for a long period of time.

Therefore, to escape from this, the power of intention, this karmic energy—or the momentum of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—must be stilled. It must be calmed; it must be extinguished. That is what the Buddhas point to as supramundane liberation. Through the penetration of the paths and fruits, and through the path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) of the four stages—Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahatship—the Buddhas resolve this entire problem of *saṁsāra*, this entanglement of kamma. Briefly, it can be understood in this way:

You have all heard about a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). This means that based on virtue (*sīla*), having stilled the mind in concentration (*samādhi*), and through wisdom (*paññā*) regarding the Four Noble Truths—that existence in the world is suffering (*dukkha*), craving (*taṇhā*) is its cause, the stilling of craving is Nibbāna, and the Noble Eightfold Path is the way leading to it—one must realize these four facts to some degree. In other words, one must understand the three characteristics of all existence: impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). Having understood this, a sense of dispassion and turning away from *saṁsāric* existence must arise in the mind. As long as there is no turning away from it, one cannot escape from *saṁsāra*. In daily life, when various accidents and disasters occur, everyone momentarily feels in their heart: "Alas, there is no essence in this *saṁsāric* existence." Yet, because ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*) continue to operate in a dangerous manner, it is quickly forgotten. Such is the situation. Therefore, the Buddha declares that by systematically cultivating virtue, concentration, and wisdom in that manner, and developing wisdom through wise reflection (*yoniso manasikāra*), if at some point the mind reaches the state of Stream-entry, what happens through that path-knowledge? It limits further existence in *saṁsāra* to a maximum of seven lifetimes, and having left only that much, destroys all other karmic energies. In particular, one is freed from kamma leading to the planes of misery. That is why the Buddha declared that even the liberation obtained through the first path-knowledge, Stream-entry, is far superior to sole sovereignty over the earth. One must contemplate in this manner. That is the first stage.

Next, the second stage is the state of Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*). Once-returning means that at this second level of wisdom, having left only one more birth in a heavenly realm and one more birth in the human world, all other kammas are exhausted. Indeed, a Once-returner is one who returns to this world only once. There is opportunity for them to be born once in a heavenly world and then return to the human world. Next, in the mind of one who has attained the stage of Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), those fetters bound to becoming (*bhava-saṁyojana*) are severed, and they take birth in the Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsa*) of the Brahma realms, attaining final passing away (*parinibbāna*) right there. At that point, only the subtle kamma to be experienced in the Pure Abodes remains. Finally, in Arahatship, when one becomes an Arahat, only those kammas that ripen in this very life (*diṭṭhadhammavedanīya*) are left to take effect, while all other karmic forces are stilled. Through the power of wisdom, the mind is brought to a state where it can never undergo another rebirth. This is what is called the stilling of all Preparations—*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*. A name for Nibbāna itself is the calming of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Thus, terms such as calming, stilling, tranquilizing, and extinguishing demonstrate how the Buddhas resolved this problem of *saṁsāra*—through understanding, through wisdom, and through purification.

The Buddhas have pointed out the path of Dhamma in that manner. Accordingly, we must reflect on how we should spend this life. Today, you are preparing to step into a new year and a new century in a few days. We should contemplate a little on what this past century has been. Materially speaking, it was a century that progressed toward advancement through remarkable manufacturing and products. Yet, spiritually speaking, it was an era that faced a terrifying decline. The reason for this might be a wrong understanding of the value of that material progress. Through that material development itself, people have likely accumulated the conditions for their own spiritual decline. As you know, people today complain that they have no opportunity to practice Dhamma or meditation in their daily lives, saying they have no time during the day. We can understand the reason for this when we look at the situation in households. Thus, the very thing we call progress has become the cause of our decline.

Therefore, we must strive to gain a correct understanding of our spiritual values, which are the true treasures of life, by contemplating with wisdom and drawing lessons from Dhamma stories like this. This is not something confined to today or yesterday, nor is it relevant only to the past, nor did it happen only to the lay disciple Mahākāla; it can happen to any of us. Contemplating the law of nature embedded within these events in accordance with the Buddha's word, we must strive to cultivate the path of progress that helps us escape from this *saṁsāra*—the Noble Eightfold Path and the three-fold training—even amidst obstacles. For, this can only be done during the period when a Buddha’s dispensation is active. During a time when there is no Buddha, we would not even hear the word "Nibbāna" (Nibbāna). Even if we heard it, we would not understand it. Such is the wondrous nature of this era. Therefore, no matter how we think about a century, we actually live for only a single moment. We live only in this present moment. Everything we call life and existence lasts for only an extremely brief instant. As soon as that instant breaks, it is finished right there. Yet we bind ourselves to it through

ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*). This is the truth that one must realize through meditation. We must directly realize within our own minds this truth of impermanence declared by the Buddha. We must see this. Through that seeing alone, that binding is stopped. Grasping (*upādāna*) means holding on. The mind is always holding on to things with extreme rapidity. Like a monkey leaping from tree to tree in a forest, this mind goes on holding. Observing this activity of the mind is what is called reflection in insight meditation (*vipassanā*). We must train ourselves to see how the mind operates with a concentrated mind. We must bring under control our three doors of action—body, speech, and mind—with the help of the training rules declared by the Buddha. Next, we must also guard the six doors of the senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—for it is through these doors that unwholesome states flow in. Withdrawing the mind from these, and then, through a pure meditation subject, keeping the mind anchored on a wholesome object for a long time, one must experience the power of concentration—the strength of one's own mind. In this way, with a concentrated mind, one can see the true nature of one's five aggregates and the true nature of the world. That is indeed the supramundane liberation declared by the Buddha. In truth, escaping from this entanglement of kamma is possible through the Dhamma alone. The powerful force of this wheel of kamma can only be shattered by the Wheel of Dhamma.

Therefore, this meritorious gathering must reflect on this. We must make an effort to bring about a significant correction in our daily lifestyle. If one is thinking of making a fresh start, or if one believes that, according to worldly convention, we are entering a new century, then instead of focusing on futile things, we should reflect on the spiritual values of life and arrange our daily lifestyle accordingly. We must organize our daily routine. We must plan our timetable. Another crucial matter is right livelihood (*ājīva*). This is an era where livelihoods are alarmingly inclined toward unrighteousness, and where unrighteous livelihoods are permitted from all sides. But one must ask oneself: "Am I shortening my journey in *saṁsāra*, or am I prolonging it?" through this mass of suffering. If we dislike suffering, we must not perform actions that cause suffering. We do not knowingly drink poison. We do not knowingly throw poison into the well from which we drink water. If that is the case, we must take care not to become enemies to ourselves. We must raise ourselves up through the very path of Dhamma declared by the Buddha.

Today, we hear some people—certain debaters—arguing that even performing wholesome deeds increases becoming (*bhava*), and therefore, one should abstain from doing them as well. That is an erroneous view. What we have here is the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). We use the wholesome to abandon the unwholesome. The good conduct developed through the wholesome is what gives rise to concentration (*samādhi*). By removing remorse from the mind and through a certain joy and clarity, concentration is established. Therefore, according to the Middle Path, everything including giving (*dāna*) and meritorious deeds has its utility. However, we do not stop there. Once the mind is prepared, what do we do? We cultivate insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) which supports wisdom. That is the situation. Without getting confused about these

matters, and without grabbing the snake by its tail, we must use all of these as a raft to cross over, and strive to guide our minds toward Nibbāna.

Thus, if we are thinking about a next century or a next year, we must develop enough strength to guide, speak with, and teach the Dhamma we know to our children and others so that their lives may be shaped correctly, acting as good friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). We can develop that strength only by practicing the Dhamma ourselves. If we observe the precepts and practice meditation in this manner, then when someone faces a disaster or encounters a problem—similar to someone asking for urgent financial help—and is in grave danger, we will possess the verbal power to steer them away from it in accordance with the Dhamma. Such good friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) are sometimes found among those who have turned toward this path of Dhamma.

Therefore, we hope that this meritorious gathering, by walking on the path of Dhamma, will narrowly escape from this abyss—even in an era heading toward a terrifying precipice—and, turning to the path of Dhamma, will comprehend the dangerous nature of *saṁsāra* explained here. Based on this, no matter how busy you are with work and duties in your daily routine, you must make a start, even for a short time. Sometimes people complain that they have to spend their entire day on various tasks. Such people must find some extra time, even by waking up ten or fifteen minutes earlier. If you make such a start, then when the benefits of that wholesome desire (*kusala-chanda*) begin to flow, even from a brief meditation practice, your enthusiasm and urgency will grow. Furthermore, the association with good friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) is absolutely essential. According to the Buddha's declaration, this entire holy life (*sāsana*) consists of good friendship (*kalyāṇa-mittatā*). Therefore, while striving to be a good friend oneself, one must also seek the help of other good friends. Even with difficulty, one must meet them, obtain their advice, and strive to carry on these activities.

Now, if you contemplate in this manner and accustom yourselves to performing your daily activities and directing your stream of thoughts while meditating on the dangerous nature of kamma, it will help you avoid bad conduct and incline toward good conduct. Thinking in this way, today, on this valuable Poya day—which is the Poya day that ends the year—is an excellent opportunity to make some special determinations. Having observed a precious virtue (*sīla*) at this moment and disciplined your mind, body, and speech, you have listened to the Dhamma for this hour, directing your mind, body, and speech in a manner that arouses and develops the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). As the benefit of these, instead of postponing it to a distant future, you must determine to obtain the full fruits and benefits of these qualities in this very life and escape from this terrifying *saṁsāra*. You must make the aspiration: "May this mass of merit accumulated today through the disciplining of mind, body, and speech, and by listening to the Dhamma, indeed be a supportive condition for us to be liberated from the suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṁsāra*." Furthermore, we must share this mass of merit accumulated through listening to the Dhamma and preaching the Dhamma with all the protector deities of the Dispensation throughout the divine and

Brahma realms of this universe. May they all joyfully rejoice in this merit! May they receive the strength and power to develop their spiritual perfections (*pāramī*) and support the preservation of the Dispensation in the world! May they all realize the supreme and deathless Nibbāna through their aspired enlightenment (*bodhi*)! You must share this merit with the deities in this way. Likewise, may all departed relatives who have passed away in our names, as well as all living beings from the Avīci hell to the highest heaven of Akaniṭṭha, rejoice in this merit of listening to the Dhamma and preaching the Dhamma! May this merit lead to their liberation from the terrifying suffering of *saṁsāra*, comprising birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*), and to their finding peace in the supreme and deathless Nibbāna! Share the merit by reciting the verses in this manner:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #10

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Vācānurakkhī manasā susaṃvuto,

kāyena ca akusalaṃ na kayirā;

Ete tayo kammapathe visodhaye,

ārādhaye maggaṃ isippaveditaṃ.

From:

Verse 281 from the Maggavagga (Chapter on the Path) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

This Duruthu Full Moon Poya Day is significant to us Buddhists because it marks the historical event of the arrival of our Lord Buddha, the Leader of Peace and the Teacher of the Three Worlds, at Kelaniya. Nevertheless, for many who think according to the conventional global calendar, this particular Duruthu Poya may also be significant as the first Poya day of a new year—and indeed, of a new century.

This is a time when many people in this country, as well as around the world, look at this calendar—at the numbers on the calendar—expecting a new era, a new dawn. Expecting a new dawn from the calendar alone, without any regard for one's own philosophy of life, and without making an effort to rectify the shortcomings in one's way of living, is a great delusion. Indeed, if one truly expects a new dawn, a new era in one's life, one must examine one's philosophy of life, depart from the path of decline, and enter upon—tread upon—the Path of Dhamma traversed by the Buddhas, the Paccekabuddhas, and the Great Arahants. The stanza we have taken as our theme today presents that very Path of Dhamma in an extremely concise and simple manner. The background story (*nidāna-kathā*) of this stanza also illustrates the fate of a monk who, seeking a "new dawn" or a "new era," fell into an unrighteous path.

Once, when the Buddha was residing at the Veluvana Monastery in Rajagaha, the Venerable Maha Moggallana, who possessed great psychic power, and the Venerable Lakkhana were descending from Vulture's Peak (Gijjhakuta mountain). At one spot, Venerable Maha Moggallana smiled gently. Seeing this, Venerable Lakkhana asked him for the reason. Venerable Maha Moggallana replied, "Friend, I shall not reveal the reason here. You may ask me in the presence of the Buddha."

Thus, both of them went on their alms round in Rajagaha and thereafter approached the Buddha. Having arrived at the Veluvana Monastery, Venerable Lakkhana questioned him in the presence of the Buddha: "Friend, why did you smile in that manner?" At that point, Venerable Maha Moggallana explained, "At that moment, I saw a certain immense hungry ghost (*preta*) form. Its body was human-like, but its head was like a pig's head. Furthermore, in its mouth was a pig's tail, and worms were oozing from its mouth. Seeing this, I thought, 'What an extraordinary form! I have never seen such a form before,' and thus a smile arose in me." Hearing this, the Buddha expressed his approval, saying, "It is clear that my disciples dwell with eyes to see. I too beheld this. I saw this creature at the very site of the Bodhi tree when I attained Enlightenment. However, I did not declare it until now because, had people disbelieved my words and thought it to be a falsehood, many would have bound themselves to unwholesome karma and been reborn in hell. Now, since Moggallana has stated this matter and serves as a witness, I also confirm it. What Moggallana said is true."

Thereupon, the Sangha asked, "Venerable Sir, what was the past unwholesome karma committed by that person to acquire such a hungry ghost state?" It was at this moment that the Buddha related the story of the past.

During the era of Kassapa Buddha—when speaking of the era of Kassapa Buddha, you meritorious people should bear in mind that the maximum human lifespan was twenty thousand years. This is worth fixing in your minds first. It is mentioned in the Dhamma: epochs with lifespans of twenty thousand years. Not only that, but forty thousand, sixty thousand, and eighty thousand during the eras of certain Buddhas, and even longer periods. When reflecting on this, you meritorious people can realize how our lives—we who leap, dance, and make merry just because a century has passed—resemble the fleeting lives of ephemerids (mayflies) when compared to the lifespans of such long-lived humans. Be that as it may, it was to the era of Kassapa Buddha that the Buddha now directed the minds of the Sangha. During that time, two monks lived in a village monastery in perfect harmony. The senior monk had sixty rains-retreats (*vassa*) since higher ordination, while the junior monk had fifty-nine. Despite the difference of just one rains-retreat, the junior monk was extremely humble, carrying the senior monk's bowl and robes like a novice monk (*sāmaṇera*) and performing all the duties and services. They spent their time in deep harmony, like two children of the same mother—as if born from the same womb.

While they were living in this manner, a Dhamma-preaching monk arrived at that place. That day happened to be a sermon day. Since those monks were accustomed to listening

to the Dhamma, they invited this preaching monk to deliver a short sermon. When he preached the Dhamma, the two resident monks expressed great joy.

The following day, they went to the village for alms together with this monk. After the alms round, the senior monk invited the preaching monk to deliver a sermon to the laypeople. When he preached, the people were highly pleased and invited him for the next day as well. In this manner, this monk became very popular, going on alms rounds to the surrounding villages together with the two resident monks.

Meanwhile, an idea—an evil, unwholesome idea—occurred to this monk: "Alas, these are two superficial, foolish monks. I must find a way to expel them from here and take over this monastery." Thinking thus, he devised a scheme. What was the scheme? One day, he went to the senior monk—the elder thera—and, pretending to have a great secret to share, said, "Venerable Sir, there is something I must tell you." When the senior monk urged him, "What is it? Tell me, tell me," he sighed, "Oh, expressing this matter might lead to great harm," and refrained from saying it. Similarly, he went to the second monk, started with, "I have something to tell you," and then withdrew without saying it.

He repeated this on the second and third days until the curiosity and suspense of the two monks was heightened. Once it was sufficiently raised, the senior monk said one day, "Speak, speak, it does not matter." Then the schemer asked, "Venerable Sir, do you trust that second monk fully?" The elder replied, "Of course, we are highly harmonious like children born from the same womb. Up to now, I have not seen any fault in that venerable one." "Even so, Venerable Sir, ever since the day I arrived, that monk has been telling me to be cautious when associating with you, to watch out for you." Upon hearing this, the senior monk conceived great anger toward the second monk. An aversion (*dosa*) arose in him: "Alas, how could he say such things to a visiting monk?" Next, the visiting monk went to the second monk and uttered a similar slander—it was not just slander, it was an outright lie. Once this was said, that monk too was alienated and divided.

The next day, the two monks, who usually went on their alms round harmoniously together, departed separately. Having completed the alms round, the second monk arrived first at the refectory. Seeing the senior monk approaching, he hesitated whether to go forward to receive his bowl and robes as was his custom. Thinking, "No matter, I must perform my duty," he stepped forward. As he approached, the senior monk rebuked him: "Impolite monk, you are not worthy of holding my bowl and robes." Then the two started speaking. "Do you think I am trying to hold onto this monastery?" The other monk responded in kind—one can well imagine how their verbal clash transpired. Having argued in this manner, what was the result? One monk departed through the front door, while the other departed through the back door. They both left. Then, the cunning preaching monk came forward under false pretenses, saying, "No, no, do not go, do not go!" acting as if he wanted to settle the dispute. When the departing monks said, "You yourself stay here," he remained.

When the preaching monk went to the village for alms the next day, the people asked, "Where are our two monks?" When he replied, "Those two intimate monks of yours had

a dispute, quarreled, and departed," the foolish among the laypeople believed it to be true. However, the wise ones realized, "Most certainly, it is this monk who has schemed to make them leave." In any case, the two resident monks went separately to distant areas. Because of this incident, the defilements, such as anger, that arose in their minds were so intense that they were unable to concentrate their minds or practice meditation. Thus, a long period of time passed.

When we say "a long period of time," what is the next event described? The Buddha states that after one hundred years—one must understand this "one hundred years" in the context of the twenty-thousand-year lifespan of that era—by sheer coincidence, both of these monks arrived as visitors at a hermitage in a distant region. The resident monks of that monastery assigned the exact same dwelling to both of them. Thus, just as the senior elder entered first and sat on the bed in the dwelling, the second monk also arrived. This was a wondrous and extraordinary coincidence. Recognizing him upon his arrival, tears began to flow from the eyes of the senior monk. Filled with sorrow, the second monk's eyes also welled up with tears, and after hesitating to speak, he asked, "Venerable Sir, during all the time I associated with you, did you observe any fault in me, either in body or speech?" "No, no, I saw nothing of the sort." "Then why did you say such things to that newly arrived monk, telling him not to trust me?" "Alas, I said no such thing!" "I too was told a similar thing about you."

Then they realized that they had been divided because of the words of that cunning monk. Thereupon, the two reconciled, confessing their offenses (*āpatti*) to each other. They then decided, "We must now go and drive away that cunning monk." Arriving back at their former monastery, the preaching monk saw them from afar and came forward to receive their bowls and robes. The senior monk, perhaps empowered by the majesty of the Dhamma, snapped his fingers and said, "A person like you is not worthy of staying here," uttering words to banish him. Unable to endure it, that monk departed, abandoning the place. That is the story.

In connection with this, the Buddha declared that, due to that grave unwholesome karma, the preaching monk was boiled in the Avici hell for an immensely long time—for an entire interval between two Buddhas (*buddhantara*), from the time of Kassapa Buddha until the present Buddha's era. As a residual result—like the very tip of the tail of that unwholesome karma—he has now acquired this hungry ghost state. This, indeed, is the event.

Having declared this, and using this incident as a background and foundation, the Buddha delivered the aforementioned Dhamma stanza to the world as an admonition, showing the consequences of leaving the mind, body, and speech unrestrained and directing them in a sinful manner:

Vācānurakkhī manasā susaṃvuto

Kāyena ca akusalaṃ na kayirā

Ete tayo kammapathe visodhaye

Ārādhaye maggaṃ isippaveditaṃ

"Vācānurakkhī" means being guarded in speech. "Manasā susaṃvuto" means being thoroughly restrained in mind or thought. "Kāyena ca akusalaṃ na kayirā" means not committing any unwholesome deed with the body. This means guarding all three doors of action (mind, body, and speech). "Ete tayo kammapathe visodhaye" means, "Purify these three pathways of action. Various actions arise through these three doors; purify those pathways of action." By purifying them in this manner, "ārādhaye maggaṃ isippaveditaṃ"—"one accomplishes and abides by the path taught and declared by the Buddhas and other Seers." This is the admonition.

Now, let us first consider the lessons we can draw as guidance from this story related to the stanza. From this narrative, we see how two harmonious monks were alienated by combining lying and slandering, and how, driven by the burning desire to possess what was not theirs—which relates to stealing (*adinnādāna*)—the instigator devised such a verbal strategy and course of action, which resulted in his falling into that terrible state.

Let us particularly reflect on this "Sukara Preta" (Pig-faced Hungry Ghost)—so named because of his pig-like mouth. Even today, there is a great deal of interest among certain people in this "unseen world." A curiosity about spirits and hungry ghost states has emerged in modern times. This current event shows us that there indeed exist individuals with eyes capable of seeing this unseen world. Venerable Maha Moggallana saw it with his divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*). However, because Venerable Lakkhana could not see it, Moggallana refrained from speaking of it there, knowing that voicing it might lead Venerable Lakkhana to generate unwholesome thoughts (doubt or disbelief). Similarly, the Buddha, despite having seen it Himself, did not declare it until a witness was available. The eye that sees this unseen world is the divine eye. This divine eye has the power to see not only spirits and hungry ghost realms, but other worlds as well—hell, the demon (*asura*) realm, and even the deva and brahma worlds.

Thus, we must understand that such a power exists. The Dhamma mentions three kinds of eyes: the physical eye (*maṃsa-cakkhu*), the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), and the wisdom eye (*paññā-cakkhu*). In Sinhala, these are referred to as *masäsa*, *diväsa*, and *pänäsa*. *Pänäsa* refers to the eye of wisdom. Today, some rationalizers might argue, "We do not see such beings; therefore, no such things exist." In the Dhamma, it is stated that for those who cannot develop the divine eye to claim that no divine eye exists is like a blind person claiming that the sun, the moon, and the stars do not exist.

On the other hand, since there is an interest in this unseen world, we can also say something in that regard. Nowadays, many people, especially Western psychologists, use fancy terms like "extrasensory" or "parapsychological." They try to conduct investigations into these spirit realms and present their findings to the world. This is somewhat like children's play. For their parapsychological research, they often rely on techniques like hypnotism and mesmerism, trying to uncover details about these spirit worlds. However, from the perspective of the Dhamma, to truly realize this for oneself—since hearsay only leads to doubt for many—the divine eye is necessary. By cultivating

virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), and particularly by attaining the meditative absorptions (*jhāna-samāpatti*) and generating the special mental powers known as direct-knowledges (*abhiññā*), one can transcend the physical eye and bring forth the divine eye. Those who possess this divine eye can see such worlds. It was by utilizing this power that Venerable Maha Moggallana and the Buddha, on numerous occasions, demonstrated how beings in the world fare according to their karma.

If we reflect a little further on this hungry ghost state, we see that the physical body itself is often formed in direct correspondence to one's karma. Considering that monk, he had an immense body fitting the grand status he had desired. However, because of the impure words he had spoken, his head was like that of a pig. The cunning knot he tied to acquire the monastery manifested as the pig's tail protruding from his mouth, and worms oozed from his mouth. Such is the condition. Hungry ghost states with such grotesque forms, resulting from the use of bad words to sow discord and division among others, are frequently mentioned.

Not only this, but there are many other parallel suttas. In the section of the Dhamma known as the *Lakkhaṇa Saṃyutta*, many other visions beheld on Vulture's Peak are recorded as dialogues between Venerable Maha Moggallana and Venerable Lakkhana. To mention a few of these terrifying hungry ghost forms: on every occasion when Moggallana saw them, he later revealed the details in the presence of the Buddha, as mentioned earlier. At those times, the Buddha briefly explained the past history of each hungry ghost. There is an entire series of such suttas. Since they are similar, we shall mention them here. It is recorded that on one occasion, Moggallana saw a skeleton flying through the air. As it flew, crows, vultures, and hawks kept pecking and tearing at the flesh between its ribs, while the skeleton went wailing through the air. That form was once a cattle-butcher in Rajagaha. In another instance, a piece of meat was flying through the air, and vultures kept pecking at it while it screamed—this was a hungry ghost in the form of a lump of meat. The karma attributed to him was that of a bird-hunter in Rajagaha. Next is mentioned a flayed human form flying through the air, pecked at by birds in the same manner; this was a sheep-hunter. Then, Venerable Maha Moggallana saw another hungry ghost whose body hairs were like swords. These swords would fly up into the air and fall back, cutting up its own body; this was a pig-hunter of Rajagaha. Another state is described: a headless hungry ghost flying through the air, with its eyes and mouth on its chest, being pecked at by birds and wailing as it flew. The Buddha explained that this was a public executioner (*cora-ghātaka*) of Rajagaha. The Buddha even provided his name, "Hārika the executioner," who used to decapitate captured thieves. Furthermore, another hungry ghost is described as submerged up to his head in a cesspit; he was an adulterer. On another occasion, Venerable Maha Moggallana saw a flayed woman flying through the air—not by psychic power, but in a hungry ghost state—pecked at by birds; she was an adulteress.

There are many such states of existence. Furthermore, what is especially worth remembering in this day and age is that Venerable Maha Moggallana saw the form of a monk flying through the air—not by psychic power. The double-layered outer robe

(*saṅghāṭī*) of this monk-figure was ablaze, his waistband was ablaze, and his alms-bowl was ablaze. Burning and scorching, he flew through the air. He was an evil monk during the era of Kassapa Buddha. Similarly, an evil nun (*bhikkhunī*), an evil male novice (*sāmaṇera*), and an evil female novice (*sāmaṇerī*) were seen flying through the air, burning in flames. These are things we must keep in mind.

We perceive this as immense suffering (*dukkha*). In almost all these cases, the Buddha points out that these beings first paid the gravest part of their unwholesome karma in hell—being boiled in the great Avici hell—and that they acquired these hungry ghost states only as the residual portion of that unwholesome karma. Thus, there are numerous instances in the sutta discourses where the Buddha explains the results of karma in this manner.

In this light, even without my saying it, you meritorious people can understand how we can bring about a new era. Let us now reflect on the stanza again. Examining its words in more detail, "vācānurakkhī" means "guarding one's speech." Usually, you meritorious people have heard of the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*): killing, stealing (*adinnādāna*), and sexual misconduct—which are the three bodily offenses. Next are the verbal offenses: false speech, slanderous speech, harsh speech, and frivolous or empty talk—which, as mentioned in the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (eightfold virtue with right livelihood) that some have observed today, are the offenses committed through speech. The offenses of the mind are listed as *abhijjhā*, which is covetousness—not *avijjā* (ignorance)—meaning the intense greed to possess what belongs to others. Next is *vyāpāda*, which is ill-will or anger. Finally, *micchā-diṭṭhi*, which is wrong view. These are the unwholesome actions committed by the mind or intellect. Here we have "vācānurakkhī"—giving primary place to speech because this story centers on the unwholesomeness of speech. "Vācānurakkhī manasā susaṃvuto"—being well-restrained in mind means turning away from those mental offenses. "Kāyena ca akusalaṃ na kayirā" means abstaining from the three bodily offenses. Thus, guarding these three doors of action is what must be done if anyone born in this human world expects progress. As stated in the *Parābhava Sutta*, "He who loves Dhamma prospers, he who hates Dhamma declines"; indeed, the one who loves the Dhamma is the one who truly prospers in the world, whereas the one who hates the Dhamma falls into decline and ruin.

In the world, however, people often argue to the contrary. Some say there is "no place" for one who lives according to the Dhamma. "A place" is reserved for those who turn their backs on the Dhamma and live by wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*), employing various schemes and legal loopholes. If one uses some legal loophole to possess what belongs to another, that very loop can tighten around one's own mouth. Therein lies such a dangerous situation. According to the Buddha's word, what "place" is reserved for them can be understood from the facts discussed: hell, the animal realm, the hungry ghost world, and the demon (*asura*) realm. That is where it is. If anyone desires "such a place," they may shape their philosophy of life according to that kind of conduct.

From this, we can understand that if we wish to live in this highly rare human state we have attained without falling into such terrifying conditions, we must be mindful of this mind, body, and speech declared by the Buddha and other Seers. "Vācānurakkhī" means we must guard our speech. Sometimes, without our even realizing it, a lie slips out, or slander, harsh words, or various idle chatter. Thus, we must maintain a guard over our words. We must have restraint over our mind. Otherwise, without realizing it, we adopt wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*)—due to associating with bad friends we acquire erroneous views. Or we generate thoughts of anger, or intense greed. The monk mentioned here also possessed *abhijjhā*—the intense, corrupt greed to make what belonged to others his own. Slander, lying, and theft—all of these were present in that monk's course of action, and their consequences are what the story illustrates.

If we constantly guard ourselves in this manner in our daily lives, the result in this life itself, as declared by the Buddha—which you meritorious people may have heard of—is that if a layperson lives a highly virtuous life, they enjoy a precious happiness that others do not experience. This is called the "bliss of blamelessness" (*anavajja-sukha*). From the inner sense of "I have done no wrong," a great relief arises in a person. The opposite of this is remorse or regret. This is also stated in the Dhamma—the Buddha explains the difference between the fool (*bāla*) and the wise person (*paṇḍita*) in a certain sutta. The monk in this story might have thought, because he was a preacher of the Dhamma and because the resident monks behaved very simply, "I am the wise one." Yet, what he accomplished through that "wisdom" of his was that very painful result. The ordinary world thinks in the same way. If someone lives humbly according to the Dhamma, they are deemed a fool. Nowadays, wisdom is recognized by the letters after one's name or the titles before it. But that is not how the Buddha distinguished between the fool and the wise person.

The fool is defined thus: *dubbihita-cintī, dubbhāsita-bhāsī, dukkaṭa-kammakārī*—one who thinks bad thoughts, speaks bad words, and does bad deeds; that person is a fool. The wise person, on the other hand, is defined as: *suvihita-cintī, subhāsita-bhāsī, sukaṭa-kammakārī*—one who thinks good thoughts, speaks good words, and does good deeds; that person is a wise person. Drawing a distinction between the two, the Buddha demonstrates the inner suffering (*dukkha*) and remorse that the fool experiences due to his foolishness—no matter how prominent he might appear in society. This is why the Dhamma describes four kinds of fear (*bhaya*) experienced by a person who leads a wrong life: the fear of self-reproach (*attānuvāda-bhaya*), the fear of reproach by others (*parānuvāda-bhaya*), the fear of punishment (*daṇḍa-bhaya*), and the fear of an evil destination (*duggati-bhaya*). One's own mind blames oneself; one receives the blame of others—specifically of the wise, not just anyone; next, one gets caught in the clutches of the law and suffers punishment; and even if one escapes all of these, one ultimately goes to an evil destination.

Here, the Buddha further analyzes the "fear of self-reproach," which is the blaming of one's own mind, presenting it in three stages. First, when a fool who has committed those offenses—such as killing, stealing (*adinnādāna*), and sexual misconduct—walks

through the village or city, or stands in an assembly or at a crossroads, he hears others talking about those very sins. They may not be speaking about him specifically, but when they talk about killing or theft, his mind blames him from within: "Indeed, have I not done such things as well?" These thoughts come to his mind, and he is saddened: "These bad things discussed are present in me too." That is the first stage. In the second stage, he sees or hears that a king—as described in the context of those times—has caught and punished people who committed those offenses. Beholding or hearing of this, a great dread arises in his mind: "Alas, I too have done these things! If I am caught by the king, will I not have to undergo such torture?" Thus, he laments, suffers, and regrets. Thirdly, this very remorse is described as follows: when he is sitting on a chair, reclining on a bed, or lying on the ground, the shadow or reflection of his past deeds (*kamma-chāyā*) comes to his mind. The Buddha gave a simile to illustrate this: just as in the evening, the shadow of a great mountain gradually lengthens and hangs over, falls upon, and envelops the mountain, even so, the shadow of the past unwholesome deeds of that fool hangs over, oppresses, and clings to his mind.

Some, based on this simile, might think that unwholesome karma floats in the sky and that this is a simile for it. That is not what is meant here. As you meritorious people know, when describing wholesome and unwholesome states, the Dhamma uses the simile of a shadow. Likewise, what is spoken of here is this shadow. This shadow is a source of grief, not of joy. It is for one's remorse. When we speak of "evening," we know that as the sun sets, the shadow lengthens. Similarly, the unwholesome deeds committed in the past affect a person's mind. These must be experienced in this life itself—in the visible world. It is said that these consequences begin to flow from the very moment the unwholesome act is committed. If "result" (*vipāka*) means a ripening, it does not ripen all of a sudden. It is not that one suddenly falls into hell only after death; it "festers" within the mind. It ripens within the mind in the form of remorse, as described. Festering in this manner, as we often hear—not only during the Buddha's time but in the present day as well—certain people burn with regret at the moment of death.

You meritorious people may have heard of many such well-known incidents from the Buddha's time. For instance, Cunda the pig-butcher lived right behind the Veluvana Monastery. He was highly skilled at his trade—doing on his own what people today do with government aid. He caught pigs, slaughtered them, and earned his living. However, at the moment of death, he ran to and fro squealing like a pig, wailing in agony, and after undergoing immense suffering, he was reborn in the Avici hell. We will hear of similar events in the future as well. We might hear of even more such cases as our economy grows, built upon wrong livelihood. Thus, there is no great need to cite proofs only from books; a time is coming when these can be observed in daily life. The consequences of living life as human-pretas or human-demons (*yakshas*) are demonstrated in this very world. This is highly significant. In the future, those parapsychological researchers and Western scientists will have plenty of work to do, coming here to conduct research and earn degrees. Yet, many who follow them merely turn this into an intellectual exercise, constantly "studying" these matters, writing books, and obtaining degrees, rather than learning the lesson to refine their own lives and philosophy of life. It is not for such a

purpose that we have presented these illustrations. It is not for you meritorious people to write books and obtain degrees, but to reform your lives, so that the new century—the new year—may truly become a new dawn, a new era for you.

Therefore, we must reflect whether we want to be a fool or a wise person in this world, according to what was declared by the Buddha. To be a wise person, there is no need to pass examinations, according to the word of the Buddha. Today, the word "paṇḍita" (scholar/wise person) carries a meaning related strictly to academic learning. However, the Buddha gave it a different meaning. This is because wisdom depends on foresight. If one's path is short-sighted, then no matter how many degrees one possesses, that person is not a wise person. When reflecting on this, it becomes clear. The Buddha is called the "Knower of the Worlds" (*Lokavidū*)—the noble person who knew everything there is to know about this world. The Buddha needed no worldly degrees. The true value of the Buddha is contained in those nine supreme qualities.

The Buddha, knowing through His Sambuddha-wisdom, pointed out in a very simple manner how one becomes a wise person and how one becomes a fool in the world, along with the disadvantages and benefits thereof. Thus, we must realize that reforming our lives does not require much. We have these three doors of action, and they are open to society—to the external society. Therefore, we must open and close these three doors properly. Guarding the three doors means, for instance, if we face scarcity and our neighbor's bunch of bananas is hanging nearby, or hanging over our garden, or if there is some unattended property without an owner in sight, we do not take it with a thieving mind. Or, if we desire delicious food, we do not slaughter an animal. In this manner, our mind prompts us to do various things. If we open the door in that direction, harm is caused to others.

In the analysis of wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) actions in the Dhamma, if we truly examine the word *kusala*—even today, "kusalatā" means "skillfulness" or "dexterity"—if skillfulness is dexterity, then *kusala* actually means being skillful. However, the Buddha's explanation of being "skillful" or "unskillful" is different from modern definitions. Who is the truly skillful one? True wholesomeness is identified as non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). Let us first speak of the unwholesome. The roots of the unwholesome are defined as greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), which are the three defilement roots that have long existed in the minds of beings. The processes of action that arise through body, speech, and mind due to these three roots are defined as unwholesome—viewing it from one angle, taking them as roots. Next, the very thoughts that help one depart from that greed, hatred, and delusion—generating concepts of non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion, and the actions performed, words spoken, and thoughts conceived accordingly—can be defined as wholesome.

In another sense, humans do not live only with other humans. Considering the relationships described in this Dhamma, we may well regard other animals as our parents or children in previous lives; in this long saṃsāra, we have been born even in those animal states. Sometimes, one's deceased parents might be reborn as dogs or cats

in one's own home. When we reflect in this manner, the entire universe is a single society. It is toward this society that our three doors of action are open. Thus, if anyone, overcome by those unwholesome roots, commits those bodily offenses of killing, stealing (*adinnādāna*), and sexual misconduct; or uses words of falsehood, slander, harshness, and frivolous talk through the door of speech; or harbors intense, corrupt greed (*abhijjhā*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), and wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) in the mind—that person not only falls into that foolish state, but must also experience their painful results at that very moment. We must reflect in this way. That is what is called "unwholesome" or "unskillful." What is this unskillfulness? For what reason does the Buddha call it unskillful? This saṃsāric journey is highly perilous. If one does not travel carefully, one falls into trouble; one falls into great abysses. It is that very abyss which is indicated by these words: *"apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upapajjati"*—"one is reborn in the plane of misery, the bad destination, the lower world, hell."

"Apāya" means turning off the road while driving. Suppose a vehicle skids off the road. Next, *"duggati"* (bad destination) is like sliding along a ditch for some distance. *"Vinipāta"* (lower world) means falling down a steep precipice. Finally, *"niraya"* (hell) means being smashed to pieces. Think of it in this way. This might not be a textbook simile, but I share it because it helps to focus the mind. These four words are used: *"apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upapajjati."* These four words apply to the person who has committed sins. In that manner, he skids off the road onto the bad side, slides down the ditch, and finally falls down the precipice and is destroyed. That is how one falls into hell. Avoiding this is skillfulness—wholesomeness. While avoiding these bad places like hell, one also draws closer to Nibbāna. What is Nibbāna? Nowadays, we hear some people argue: "If you perform meritorious deeds, it prolongs saṃsāra; therefore, none of those are needed." On the other hand, there is an opinion that meditation is unnecessary. Regardless of how they argue, what we must understand is that the skillfulness shown by the Buddha consists of escaping the path to hell and drawing as close as possible to Nibbāna. What is Nibbāna? Nibbāna means the soothing peace of liberating the mind from greed, hatred, and delusion. It is the ultimate peace; it is coolness. If greed, hatred, and delusion are three fires, Nibbāna is the state of coolness (*sītibhāva*) established in one's mind upon extinguishing those three fires—an exceptionally wondrous, comforting peace. That is what is called Nibbāna—the ultimate peace. It is not something hanging in another world, nor is it something floating in the sky. Nowadays, even Buddhist thinkers who follow scientists have become accustomed to thinking of all these things as external to themselves. You meritorious people may often see in books that when they discuss karma and rebirth, they treat them as if they have nothing to do with themselves—as things to be known through worldly scientific research. Whether these affect you or not will be realized only at the moment of death, on one's deathbed.

Therefore, if one does not put this knowledge to use, it is utterly useless. In that case, there is no real knowledge; that person is a fool, a simpleton. If one is a wise person, then as mentioned, one must be *subhāsita-bhāsī, suvihita-cintī, sukaṭa-kammakarī*. One's thoughts, words, and courses of action must be aligned with the Dhamma. Turning away

from greed and drawing closer to non-greed is drawing closer to Nibbāna. Drawing closer to non-hatred is drawing closer to Nibbāna. Drawing closer to non-delusion is drawing closer to Nibbāna. This is because Nibbāna is defined as the culmination of the path of non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion. If we think of this as a journey for a moment—as you meritorious people have all heard—the saṃsāric journey is driven by greed, hatred, and delusion. If we think of a race or a journey, it goes from one place to another. Likewise, abandoning those three saṃsāric targets of greed, hatred, and delusion—turning our backs on them—and seeking the peace of Nibbāna, turning away from those three fires and traveling toward Nibbāna: this journey is what is called non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion. Every thought that aids in this is a support for Nibbāna, something that leads to Nibbāna. Thus, when performing acts of giving and merit, various wholesome intentions (*kusala-cetanā*) arise in one's mind. When giving alms, within that intention of generosity, the mental factor of non-greed (*alobha-cetasika*) is present, along with compassion and faith (*saddhā*). Furthermore, there are moments when the sense of "I" and "mine" vanishes—when one detaches from what is one's own and places it in the hands of another. How, then, can this not be a support for Nibbāna? Indeed, they support Nibbāna. What accumulates in this manner is what ultimately yields the fruit of Nibbāna in one's mind at some point—the fruit of Nibbāna. If one aspires for Nibbāna, it will yield that fruit. Additionally, by suppressing the unwholesome deeds that lead to hell as described, one is reborn in happy destinations—the deva and brahma worlds, which are the places of birth arising as the benefits of that wholesome side. These too are visible to the divine eye. Parapsychological research may not discover much about them; what those researchers are likely to find in abundance, now and in the future, are examples relating to the hungry ghost and spirit worlds, because the majority of people go in that direction.

Be that as it may, you meritorious people must reflect: if we are indeed commencing a new century as described, what is a century? When we consider the long-lived epochs of Kassapa Buddha, and even more so of Kakusandha, Konagamana, and other Buddhas, a single year to us is like the blink of an eye. Reflect on how time flies, meritorious people. When looking back at the moment we thought of as the beginning of last year, it feels like it was just yesterday. Yet, within this brief span, worldly people make merry on a grand scale. Meanwhile, what is happening? Our lives are slipping away; our lives are running out. What makes a life precious? It is having acquired a body free from physical disabilities during the era of a Buddha's appearance—a body that can be directed toward the Dhamma and live in accordance with the Dhamma. Those who have undergone those hungry ghost existences as described are the ones who, when they finally obtain a human birth, suffer the consequences by being born with various physical disabilities. It is only when you meritorious people are free from such physical disabilities and possess the intellectual capacity to comprehend the Dhamma that this lifespan becomes precious. Though short, it is extremely valuable; you must regard it as precious as a gem, for there are still things you must accomplish. This is a highly precious opportunity to bring this saṃsāric journey to an end. Therefore, what assists in this is the accumulation of virtuous qualities.

Thus, the proper guidance and purification of the mind, body, and speech mentioned briefly here can be explained in various ways. It can be categorized as giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*), which encompasses the three bases of meritorious activity (*puñña-kiriya-vatthu*). Viewed in another way, as direct supports for Nibbāna, it is virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Virtue is what has been emphasized here in particular. It is through virtue that one develops concentration. Some think of virtue as unnecessary. The Buddha declared that if someone has to perform heavy labor requiring physical strength, they must stand on a sufficiently firm ground to do so. One cannot lift a heavy load while standing in a mud pit. You meritorious people know this. Can you lift a heavy sack while standing in mud? You would only sink further. That is why you undertake virtue in the form of the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*), the eight precepts of right livelihood (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*), the eight Uposatha precepts, or the ten precepts. It is on the foundation of that virtue that one concentrates the mind. This is because it is difficult to concentrate the mind if those regrets—the remorse described in the story of the fool and the wise person—flood into the mind. To prevent such regrets from arising, one must first discipline the body and speech. That is what is called virtue. One may have committed countless sins in saṃsāra, but at this moment—as you meritorious people who have observed the precepts today can reflect, regardless of other days—today, I stand upon the principles of virtue. Standing upon those principles of virtue and relying on that strength, one can settle the mind and attain concentration.

Concentration (*samādhi*) means removing the mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) that obstruct mental one-pointedness—such as sensual thoughts, angry thoughts, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and skeptical doubt—and settling the mind on a wholesome object of meditation. Once settled, that concentrated mind is directed to comprehending reality as declared by the Buddhas—the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature of existence. It is insight (*vipassanā*) that assists in this comprehension. As insight, this is something that must be seen within one's own mind; it is not something that can be acquired from books, nor is it something that can be obtained by conducting "parapsychological research" in that outward manner. That research must be conducted internally. This is called the "noble quest" (*ariya-pariyesana*). What the Buddha conducted was also this noble quest. Therefore, on a precious day like today, you meritorious people too must resolve to conduct this noble quest. The beginning of that resolve, as declared here, is to make every effort to guard the three doors of mind, body, and speech. No matter what problems or difficulties arise in your daily life, if you do not guard these three doors, the consequences that await you have been declared by the Buddha. Stating that beings are "owners of their karma, heirs to their karma" (*kammassakā kamma-dāyādā*), He showed that what one truly takes along, what truly belongs to one, is the good or bad one has done. That, indeed, is one's inheritance in saṃsāra.

Bearing this in mind, on this precious Full Moon Day, you meritorious people listened to many points of the Dhamma taught by the Buddhas, which assist in cultivating a true philosophy of life and bringing about a genuine new dawn. Recalling the Buddha who

preached these teachings—not as something preached by me, for it is based on the Buddha's discourses that I have shared these matters—and generating faith and devotion toward the Triple Gem, you must firmly resolve to maintain your constant virtue (*nicca-sīla*), whether it be the five precepts or the eight precepts of right livelihood. Furthermore, to derive benefit from it, you must firmly resolve to spend this year dedicating yourselves to meditation.

During this time, having restrained your mind, body, and speech, and having observed virtue, you listened to the Dhamma in a manner that cultivates faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). We must share this great store of merit accumulated through your listening and our preaching of the Dhamma. No matter what dangers threaten our Dispensation (*Sāsana*), there exists an assembly of right-viewed guardian deities, including the devas and brahmas who associated with the Buddhas, to suppress this tide of decline. Whether you meritorious people see them or not—may they rejoice in these merits! May they continue to protect this Dispensation! Likewise, we must transfer these merits to our departed relatives. Directing our own lives toward the Dhamma of Nibbāna through this path of virtue, concentration, and wisdom, may we realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship. Wishing thus, let us now recite the stanzas to transfer merit:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #11

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Pathavyā ekarajjena,

saggassa gamanena vā;

Sabbalokādhipaccena,

sotāpattiphalaṃ varaṃ.

From:

Verse 178 from the Lokavagga (Chapter on the World) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

Despite the inclement weather on this full-moon Poya day of Vap, you have gathered here today to listen to a certain word of Dhamma—a section of the Dhamma—of the Buddha. What Buddhist devotees expect by listening to the Dhamma is to obtain some light for their lives, to shape their lives. The Buddha has introduced this human life we have obtained as something extremely rare. Human life is rare, and it is also a valuable life. However, the value of this humanity does not come automatically. The value or worthlessness of a life is determined, we must say, by the way of life we lead. Even if someone lives for a hundred years, if that person spent their life with worthless things, with substance-less things, then that life is entirely fruitless and empty.

Therefore, it is the duty of a Buddhist devotee to live understanding the true values, the true virtues—the real worth of a life. Generally, what are considered valuable in the world are money, gold, silver, pearls, and gems. However, the Buddha introduced far more noble things to the world through the Dhamma. The Poya day is a very valuable day to live by understanding those values introduced in accordance with the Dhamma—and to shape one's life accordingly. We learn from Dhamma stories that even during the time of the Buddha, great lay devotees used this Poya day to help their children

understand and realize the true worth of life. Now, particularly, the story and the background narrative that led to the preaching of the verse we have chosen as our theme today is very similar to this.

You have all heard of the great merchant Anāthapiṇḍika. During the time the Buddha lived in this Dispensation, the great merchant Anāthapiṇḍika was pre-eminent among lay disciples—worthy of being placed at the very forefront. He was rich not only with crores of wealth but also rich in Dhamma knowledge; he was a great lay disciple who had also realized the fruit of Stream-entry, which is considered a noble supramundane state. The mansion of Anāthapiṇḍika was entirely an alms hall. That is to say, it is mentioned in the Dhamma as a merchant's mansion where the Buddha and the great Saṅgha, or rather hundreds of monks, were regularly served with alms and other requisites daily.

Feeling that if his son "Kāla" (whose name means "time" or "black") spent his time in this manner, he would become a miserable, wretched person (*kālakaṇṇi*), the merchant Anāthapiṇḍika thought of a device—that he must introduce this child to the Triple Gem. One Poya day, Anāthapiṇḍika spoke to his son and said, "Son, if you go to the monastery, observe the precepts, listen to the Dhamma from the Buddha, and return, I will give you a hundred gold coins (*masuran*)." The child then made him promise three times, asking, "Will you really give it, father? Will you really give it, father? Will you really give it, father?" and having secured the agreement, went to the Jetavana monastery and observed the precepts. However, he had no interest in listening to the sermon. He slept in a corner, and when he returned to the mansion the next morning, the merchant instructed the servants, "My son has returned after observing the precepts; serve him food and drink well." But this child, just like some young children do, declared, "I will not eat until I am given the money promised to me," so the merchant had to give him the money first. It was only after taking that bag of gold coins in one hand that the child even took his food.

Next, when another Poya day arrived, Anāthapiṇḍika thought about it and, as an addition to this device, said, "Son, if you go to the monastery, observe the precepts, listen to the Dhamma from the Buddha, and learn a single verse of Dhamma and return, I will give you a thousand gold coins." Because of his desire for this money, the child went to the monastery, observed the precepts, went right to the front where the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma, and sat down. He prepared to listen to the sermon with the intention of somehow learning just one verse of Dhamma and running back to get the money.

The Buddha saw this child's mind. He must have also seen that, despite leading such a life, there was some spiritual potential (*puṇya-shaktiya*) within this child. In any case, the Buddha employed a certain device—a skillful, expedient device. What was it? He began to preach the Dhamma in such a way that the child could not grasp the verse. The child's expectation was to somehow learn a verse of Dhamma, go back, and obtain the money from his father. But the Buddha continued to preach the Dhamma, and the boy could not grasp even a single verse. Somehow, it kept slipping away. In this manner, the Buddha began to preach. The boy listened with great attentiveness. Why? Because of his

desire for the money; yet he could not grasp even a single verse. He missed the first verse. Then the next, and the next. Thus, he was forced to listen right until the end of the sermon. But the Buddha's Dhamma preaching was so wonderful that by the end of it, this child had attained that noble supramundane state called Stream-entry—he had attained the state of an Ariya (Noble One).

However, no one else knew about this. The next day, when the Buddha and the Saṅgha walked to the mansion of the merchant Anāthapiṇḍika for alms, the boy followed behind very calmly. Having reached the house, the great merchant Anāthapiṇḍika offered alms to the Buddha and the Saṅgha and prepared to serve food to this boy at a seat on the side. The merchant was surprised to see how calm the boy was. The child who previously declared, "I will not eat until I am given the money, the gold coins," was now eating very calmly. The boy too was thinking, "It would be better if my father does not mention this matter of money in front of the Buddha." He was that embarrassed. He felt embarrassed even about listening to the Dhamma out of greed for money. But the merchant did not know about this. Therefore, he prepared to bring and give the money. The child rejected it. He said he did not want it. Thereupon, the merchant said to the Buddha, "Exalted One, my son's behavior—his manner—today is very different. On the previous occasion, he would not eat until the promised money was given. Today, even after pleading, he refused to take the money." The Buddha then declared, "Merchant, today your son has received something far more valuable than this money—indeed, more valuable than the sovereignty of a Wheel-turning monarch over the entire earth, more valuable than going to heaven, more valuable than lordship over all the worlds. That is why he is not interested in that money." Having declared so, He uttered the verse we mentioned earlier:

> Sole sovereignty over the earth,
>
> or going to heaven,
>
> or lordship over all the world—
>
> better is the fruit of Stream-entry.

"Sole sovereignty over the earth"—more than ruling as a Wheel-turning monarch over this great earth; "or going to heaven"—more than going to the heavenly realms; "or lordship over all the world"—more than supreme lordship over all the worlds; "better is the fruit of Stream-entry"—the Buddha declared on that occasion that the fruit of Stream-entry, that supramundane state, is far superior.

Thus, according to this, we can understand that owing to the efforts of the merchant Anāthapiṇḍika, the child obtained that state of Stream-entry, which is considered one of the highest states in the world. This fruit of Stream-entry, this state, is a massive transformation that occurs in the mind. It is called attaining the state of an Ariya. The freedom one gains by attaining this state is so great that one will never again be reborn in the lower realms (*apāya*) of this *saṃsāra*. The mind never falls to a state low enough to lead to the lower realms. That is the most distinct power seen in attaining Stream-entry.

Furthermore, if one is to be reborn in *saṃsāra*, it is at most seven times. To attain the fruit of Stream-entry means to precisely and deeply realize the Four Noble Truths. It also means deeply understanding the Three Characteristics—the three marks of existence—known as *anicca* (Impermanent), *dukkha* (Suffering), and *anattā* (Not-self). The change that occurs within the mind through this realization is so profound that such a person will never again be born in the lower realms. Moreover, they will be reborn in *saṃsāra* at most seven times. Having been reborn thus, they will somehow, in one way or another, become an Arahant and attain final Nibbāna (*parinibbāna*). Such a wonderful transformation takes place in a person's mind through the state of Stream-entry. Therefore, such a vast transformation, a change, occurred in that child named Kāla due to listening to the Dhamma on that day.

Regarding the fruit of Stream-entry, the Buddha has declared its value—as expressed here. The position of a Wheel-turning monarch is a great thing that worldly people desire, yet why is Stream-entry said to be superior to all of these? Even if one rules over the great earth as a Wheel-turning monarch, there is still the possibility of falling into the lower realms due to past unwholesome kamma committed in *saṃsāra*. However, a Stream-enterer will never go to the lower realms. That is why the fruit of Stream-entry is declared to be superior to everything else. The Buddha has illustrated the value of the fruit of Stream-entry on many occasions. On one occasion, taking a little soil onto the tip of his fingernail, he asked the Saṅgha: "Is the soil on this fingernail greater, or is the soil of the great earth greater?" Then the monks replied: "Venerable Sir, Blessed One, the soil on your fingernail is very little. The soil of the great earth is much greater." Based on that simile, the Buddha declared: "Even so, monks, the amount of suffering (*dukkha*) from which a Stream-enterer has freed himself in *saṃsāra* is like the soil of the great earth. The remaining suffering yet to be endured, the suffering that remains to be exhausted, is extremely small, like the soil on the fingernail—very little indeed." A Stream-enterer experiences such immense freedom. The fruit of Stream-entry is the first of the supramundane states. In this Buddha's Dispensation, there are four paths and fruits: Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship. It is through these that Nibbāna is realized. Finally, it is through the state of Arahantship that one is completely appeased in the supreme Nibbāna and brings an end to the suffering of *saṃsāra*. Thus, the Buddha declared that even the fruit of Stream-entry is such a noble achievement.

Now, you might wonder: how did this young child achieve such a great thing? How did he attain such a noble supramundane state? This can indeed strike someone as astonishing. How did a child who had never served the Saṅgha in that manner, who stayed away from seeing the Buddha, achieve such a massive victory, such a high state, by listening to just one Dhamma sermon of the Buddha? This is a good opportunity for us to think deeply. Generally, such high states are achieved—as you lay disciples know—by practicing meditation (*bhāvanā*) extensively. How, then, did this child achieve it? Someone might ask: was it without meditation? But, friends, Nibbāna cannot be attained without meditation. So, let us examine what kind of meditation existed within this child.

Although this is not detailed in the story, we can infer from certain clues within it what the meditation in this child's mind was. Regarding everything in this world, regarding this life, the Buddha has declared three characteristics. Everything is *anicca* (Impermanent). Everything, when viewed ultimately, is *dukkha* (Suffering). Likewise, nothing can be taken as "I" or "mine"—it is *anattā* (Not-self). There is an extremely deep Dhamma present here. This is what is called the "Three Characteristics" (*Ti-lakkhaṇa*), the three marks found throughout the entire world. These three marks do not fall within ordinary understanding. They are not apparent to the ordinary worldling. This is understood only by deep insight (*vipassanā*)—by a wisdom that has penetrated deeply. How, then, did that child obtain this understanding? Generally, this is attained by meditating according to a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*). What, let us think, was Kāla's subject of meditation? Kāla's meditation subject was the merchant Anāthapiṇḍika's words: "Son, if you go and learn a verse of Dhamma and return, I will give you a thousand gold coins."

Thus, this child must have gone to the temple holding that bag of gold coins in his mind, with the thought, "I will somehow listen to a verse of Dhamma and get these gold coins." With a certain concentration of mind born from that, he prepared to listen to the sermon. But how did the Buddha purify this meditation subject, organize it, and bring it close to Nibbāna? Knowing this situation, the Buddha began to preach the Dhamma in such a way that the child could not grasp even a single verse. Then the child tried to grasp the first verse. To that boy, every verse of Dhamma uttered by the Buddha must have appeared as a bag of gold coins. Even for any of us, sometimes we see things we deeply desire as if in a dream, do we not? If there is a strong desire for something, that is what appears to the mind. In the same way, due to his desire for the bag of gold coins, as he sat in front of the Buddha listening to the Dhamma, every verse appeared to him as a bag of gold coins. So he tried to grasp that first bag of gold coins. Simultaneously, it somehow slipped away. He tried to grab the next one. "Ah, I missed that one," then he tried to grab the next. Thinking in this manner, the child listened to the Dhamma preached by the Buddha, verse by verse. At that moment, as he went on a little, with each bag of gold coins slipping away, he must have thought: "I can't grasp even one of these! They are all passing away. Everything here is *anicca* (Impermanent). Not a single one can be grasped. They come and go. The only thing present here is the preparation to grasp a verse."

Now, you occasionally see written on white cloths hung on the road in front of funeral houses, "Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā." Such a Dhamma phrase is written. What is the meaning of this? "Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā"—"All Preparations are *anicca* (Impermanent)"; "Aniccā vata saṅkhārā"—"Preparations are indeed *anicca* (Impermanent)." What is meant by these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)? In words we can easily understand, they are preparations, getting ready, or designing/constructing. Let us think about "preparation." If we consider "Aniccā vata saṅkhārā" in a way we can understand at a funeral, what did this person do while alive? Every single deed they did was a series of preparations. What this person did throughout their entire life was a massive pile of preparations and designs. If they performed meritorious or

demeritorious deeds, if they did various things through body, speech, and mind, all of those—when viewed from one perspective—were a vast multitude of preparations and getting ready. When we reflect on life, all the activities we do from morning till night, when examined, are just a series of preparations. It is like preparing to go on a journey. Even in-breathing and out-breathing, this respiration itself, is a whole series of preparations. Thus, the only thing that deceased person did throughout their entire life—without fail—was breathing. When this breathing too comes to an end, all the preparations and designs that this person made for living come to an end there. They are *anicca* (Impermanent); there is no permanent state. It is the same with everything.

Now, if we reflect on this child, he expected to grasp a Dhamma verse. But when looking later, there was only the preparation to grasp the verse. He prepares, but it does not work. He looks at the next one; there too is a preparation. In this way, the child must have realized: "This is what is called *saṅkhāra* (Preparations). Here there is only a mass of preparations. All of these are *anicca* (Impermanent)." These preparations, these constructions, are all *anicca* (Impermanent) because not a single verse of Dhamma can be grasped. It slips away. This was due to a certain device employed by the Buddha. Thereupon, this child looks within his own mind. What is happening inside this mind? Inside the mind, bags of gold coins are arising with great rapidity—thoughts like bags of gold coins. In that manner, the bag of gold coins comes and goes; it arises and ceases. When reflecting deeply on impermanence (*aniccata*), what is present here is just arising and ceasing, coming and going. Seeing this state, the child must have realized: "These are *saṅkhāra* (Preparations)—all of these are merely a pile of preparations, of getting ready. They come and go, come and go." Then, the effort made to grasp these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), which are by nature coming and going, is indeed the effort to grasp that Dhamma verse.

After a while, the child must have felt a sense of fatigue in this. The effort he was making was futile. Not a single one succeeded. Thus, after a short while, to the point of being fed up with it, to the point where the thought of the bag of gold coins vanished, this appeared as a great burden. He tries to "grasp" every verse, but none are caught. Going on like this, the child must have realized the second characteristic declared by the Buddha: "All of this is *dukkha* (Suffering)." All these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are *anicca* (Impermanent). Whatever is *anicca* (Impermanent) is *dukkha* (Suffering). *"Yadaniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ"*—"What is impermanent is suffering," the Buddha declared. Then, next, the Buddha declared another thing: *"Yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadanattā"*—"What is suffering is *anattā* (Not-self); it cannot be taken as 'I' or 'mine'." That part too, perhaps, the child understood. Now, minds like bags of gold coins arise and slip away. Not a single one stays. That nothing stays, that there is no essence or core in any of them, is what is meant by *anattā* (Not-self). There is nothing to take as "I" or "mine"—nothing to "grasp." There is no core. Thoughts all arise and are swept away. Next, this child reflects deeply on the nature of these thoughts. "This here is entirely a mass of thoughts. They arise and pass away. There is no core. There is nothing here to grasp as 'I' or 'mine', nothing to catch."

The simile given by the Buddha for this word "*saṅkhāra*" (Preparations) is a highly remarkable simile. We can easily understand it. The Buddha has declared: *"Saṅkhārā kadalūpamā"*—"Preparations are like a wild banana tree trunk." You all know what a banana trunk is. Now, the Buddha shows this like a good story. Suppose there is someone who has never seen a banana tree. Going into a forest, that person sees a banana tree for the first time. Looking at it, this banana trunk appears very straight. He assumes that there must be a heartwood inside. He cuts it at the top and bottom, shoulders it, and brings it home, thinking, "I can make a wardrobe or a chair from its heartwood." Having brought it, he peels off the first layer of this banana trunk—it is the Buddha who gives this simile, not us; we are only adding other details to explain it further—expecting to find heartwood. But when he looks, there is another sheath. There is yet another sheath. He peels off the sheaths one by one. Finally, he reaches the core of the banana tree. There is only a pile of sheaths. Looking at it in this way, that person realizes for the first time by himself that there is no heartwood at all in a banana tree.

That is the kind of simile the Buddha gives for the word "*saṅkhāra*" (Preparations). Now, so that we can understand this, we used Sinhala words like "a preparation," "getting ready," or "a construction." Thus, when we reflect on the things done throughout this entire life, every single one of them has that kind of nature: one thing is for the sake of another, and that for the sake of another. When we look at each of them, not one has any heartwood. They are all *anicca* (Impermanent). Because of this impermanent nature—now, in a small child's life, there are wishes and expectations. Whether those expectations are fulfilled or not, in a few days they become a youth. The youth too has various expectations—even before those are fulfilled, they are either destroyed, and then, without even realizing it, old age arrives. The old person too has various expectations. Before those can be fulfilled, perhaps, death arrives. In this manner, throughout the entire life, there is only a pile of preparations and designs.

In that manner, the child named Kāla too must have understood that there is no heartwood here, no heartwood, and that it cannot be maintained under one's control—through his own subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), his theme of meditation. What was the meditation? This bag of gold coins. Through that very bag of gold coins, the child must have understood: "Now, other things too are just like this." It is said that in this Dispensation, seven-year-old children became Arahants. This was not through reading books or possessing some great scholarly qualification or degree. What happens is the transformation that occurs within the mind. The child reflects. If there is spiritual potential (*puñña-shaktiya*), they realize a deep Dhamma through a small incident. This is what must have happened to Kāla too. Through this meditation on the bag of gold coins, because of the method and manner in which the Buddha preached the Dhamma, the factors relevant to meditation must have gradually emerged for this child through that bag of gold coins.

This Dhamma is something spoken of regarding meditators—that these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) must be contemplated as *anicca* (Impermanent), *dukkha* (Suffering), and *anattā* (Not-self). When speaking of these Preparations—though we have given various

names to all of these, a meditator considers them as *nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form). When we say *nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form), we can understand that here there is only a pile of names and a pile of forms. Though we have placed names in the world as "such-and-such things," when looking at them from within, in the way they appear to the mind, the Buddha has shown the phenomena present here in this manner. What is present here is: there is *vedanā* (Feeling); there is *saññā* (perception); there is *cetanā* (volition); there is *phassa* (Contact); and there is *manasikāra* which means attention. *Vedanā*, *saññā*, *cetanā*, *phassa*, *manasikāra*—these five phenomena are introduced as name-phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*). Now, in the world, we have given names like "table" or "chair" to various things. Now we speak of "gold coins." But it is not the gold coins that are actually felt by the mind; when reflecting deeply, that child too must have understood that although a name has been placed in the world, and though these are called "gold," what is present here inside this mind is only this much. There is a certain feeling (*vedanā*); because of the expectation to obtain this, there is a pleasant feeling (*sukha-vedanā*). Along with that, there is a certain perception (*saññā*) that gold, or gold coins, are something extremely valuable. There is a volition (*cetanā*) to obtain them—an expectation, that thought. When that Dhamma verse is heard, there is a certain impact, a contact (*phassa*) in the mind. Corresponding to that contact, there is attention (*manasikāra*)—a directing of the mind towards it. This is all that happens inside the mind. Thus, while the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma, the child realized, with every verse preached: "This is all that is happening in my mind. There is no gold coin received. There is nothing valuable or special here. This is all there is." That is the understanding of name-phenomena.

Next, what are called form-phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*) are: no matter how beautiful all the things existing in the world are, painted with various colors and having shapes and sizes, all of them are constructed and made of the four elements (*dhātu*) introduced in the Dhamma as *paṭhavi* (earth), *āpo* (water), *tejo* (fire), and *vāyo* (wind). Earth (*paṭhavi*) refers to the primary element of hardness found in the ground, trees, rocks, etc. Water (*āpo*) refers to—for instance, it is raining at this moment—this cohesive element. We recognize the water element through the ocean and reservoirs. Fire (*tejo*) is heat, and wind (*vāyo*) is motion or air. In this way, our physical body-shell and all other things are made up of earth, water, fire, and wind. This is all that is here. Even if one speaks of gold coins, whether it is heated gold, refined gold, or raw gold, in all of these there are only the four elements mentioned. When reflecting on everything in this manner, one recognizes that there is only a mass of feelings (*vedanā*), a mass of perceptions (*saññā*), a mass of volitions (*cetanā*)—a mass of thoughts and expectations—contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Next, for everything else in the world—valuable or worthless—there are no such stories at all; through that understanding that within everything there are only these four elements, one is able to attain the deep states of this Dhamma. This is what is called contemplating in terms of *nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form). Perhaps for Kāla too, in that manner, those warm expectations regarding the bag of gold coins vanished, and he thought: "This is a futile exercise. When I look at it next, what am I doing? While I am listening to the Buddha's Dhamma verse, I am thinking and thinking about these bags of gold coins." Thereupon, gradually, Kāla's desire for the

gold coins vanished. A sense of disillusionment arose regarding them. Indeed, disillusionment regarding *saṃsāra* helps in attaining these supramundane states. We read in the Dhamma about some who attained these noble states—like Paṭācārā, Kisāgōtamī, and others—when some terrible disaster occurred in their lives, they then reflected, "This is the nature of this world." Similarly, here too, because of this situation, Kāla understood that these are futile endeavors. Having realized this impermanence, the nature of suffering, and the nature of not-self, he abandoned his cravings for the bag of gold coins.

As he let go of that craving, the Dhamma verse preached by the Buddha began to be understood. Friends, there is a great miracle, a great wonder in this Dhamma of the Buddha. What is it? The more one tries to grasp this Dhamma, the more it slips away; the more one lets go, the more it is grasped. Now, this child looked to grasp the Dhamma; his expectation was to grasp a verse of Dhamma, go home, and get those gold coins. But when trying to "grasp" the Dhamma verse, the Dhamma slipped away. Now, as he let go of this—the more he let go of his craving for the gold coins—the Dhamma verse began to be grasped. Thus, from this, we can understand that what helps us comprehend this entire Dhamma is letting go. What is done through giving (*dāna*), observing the precepts (*sīla*), and all other things is letting go. The more you let go, the more the Dhamma is grasped. That is what, in the end, through such a great transformation in his mind, contributed to Kāla attaining that kind of supramundane state—the state of Stream-entry. He might also have been someone who had practiced meditation in past lives in *saṃsāra*. We can understand that although, due to some unfortunate circumstance, he lived in that manner during the early part of this life, through the Buddha's skillful means, those insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) emerged within this child, and he attained the noble fruit of Stream-entry.

Now, through this story, we can draw out several highly valuable points. First, when reflecting on the device employed by the merchant Anāthapiṇḍika, it serves as a great example for parents of today. On a Poya day, he used a certain device to bring his child closer to the Triple Gem. Indeed, the inheritance one should give to one's children is the inheritance of faith (*saddhā*) and the inheritance of Dhamma. In that way, the merchant Anāthapiṇḍika made an effort to bring his child closer to the Triple Gem, even by putting money at stake—by giving a promise of money. That too is a wonderful example.

Similarly, there is also an example we can take for our own lives here. What is it? We can bring forth Nibbāna from the very life problems we face. The problem that Kāla faced in his life was to somehow grasp a Dhamma verse and obtain those gold coins. Out of that very problem, the child brought forth Nibbāna. To do that, a certain transformation must take place within the mind. Life problems are something everyone—every single person—has. They face various disasters and difficulties. But the world does not know how to attain those noble states by utilizing them. For that, a certain special transformation must occur. First, a change must occur in the way we look at the world. This is called attitude (*ākalpaya*). The Buddha has shown that way of looking. How does the ordinary worldling look at the world? *"Anicce nicca-saññā"*—there is a nature in the

world of considering the impermanent as permanent, a perception of the impermanent as permanent. Similarly, *"Dukkhe sukha-saññā"*—there is an understanding, a feeling in the world that thinks what is painful is pleasurable. *"Asubhe subha-saññā"*—that is, although there is nothing that can be taken as beautiful, good, or pure, it appears as good. Likewise, *"Anattane atta-saññā"*—taking even what cannot be taken as self, as "I" or "mine," as "I" or "mine." The Buddha declared that there are four such wrong understandings in the world. They are called distortions (*vipallāsa-dhamma*), perverted views. Perverted views are entirely wrong ideas, just like turning things upside down. Therefore, instead, what Buddhists must do on every occasion is to make an effort to establish the correct attitude. What is that correct way? One must practice contemplating the impermanent (*anicca*) as impermanent. One must practice contemplating the foul (*asubha*) as foul. One must train the mind to think of the not-self (*anattā*)—that which cannot be taken as "I" or "mine"—as not belonging to oneself.

Now, that is exactly what happened within that child. While listening to the sermon, he first assumed this was a permanent thing, a pleasurable thing, and with such thoughts and a great desire and expectation for the bag of gold coins, he began to listen to the sermon. But later, due to the Buddha's skillful means, gradually that realization came: "There is nothing to be taken here. This is *anicca* (Impermanent), painful (*dukkha*), there is nothing beautiful (*subha*). There is nothing here to be taken as 'mine'." Thus, a change occurred in his way of looking at the world. Next, another similar thing—if we are to bring out the Dhamma from our life problems—is contemplation. We direct our mind to all these things and try to gain an understanding of them—contemplation. This contemplation, too, is often done in a wrong way in the world. The Buddha refers to this as *ayoniso manasikāra*. If we translate *ayoniso manasikāra* into simple, understandable English, it is unwise attention, "unwise"—or "improper," contemplating in a way that is not correct. An illustration of this is: here, when the Buddha was preaching, that child first began to contemplate the Dhamma verse with the bag of gold coins in mind. Deep down—at the back of his mind—was the thought of the bag of gold coins. When contemplating the Dhamma verse with the intention of obtaining the bag of gold coins in this manner, the Dhamma verse was not properly understood. That is wrong contemplation. Many people in the world, when contemplating various things, do so in a wrong way. But correct contemplation is called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Thinking of all these as things arising from within, realizing: "Here there is only a pile of feelings (*vedanā*), a pile of perceptions (*saññā*), a pile of expectations (*cetanā*), a pile of contacts (*phassa*), a pile of attentions (*manasikāra*)"—and that in this way, there are only these four elements called *paṭhavi*, *āpo*, *tejo*, and *vāyo*. In this manner, contemplating their true nature, the reality of things as they are. That is what needs to be developed. This contemplation, gradually developed, helps in realizing Nibbāna. We must abandon our wrong contemplation and practice contemplating in the correct manner.

Furthermore, there is another thing—something related to this very contemplation. Generally, when people in the world contemplate various things, they try to grasp them tightly—this is called *parāmarsa* (grasping). During the Buddha's time, there were some

people—those who believed they could attain Nibbāna or escape from *saṃsāra* by living like cattle, by observing such vows. This is called *parāmarsa*. But in this Dhamma, the correct way of directing the mind to things is shown as *sammarsa* (comprehending). In meditation, that contemplation is done by the mind—just like "touching with the hand," it is merely "touching with the mind." To understand this too, let us go back to the simile of the banana tree trunk. That person mentioned earlier—the one who saw the banana trunk for the first time—shouldered the banana tree and embraced it tightly, thinking, "There is heartwood inside this." This kind of embracing, grasping, is what is called *parāmarsa*. By doing so, one can never see Nibbāna. One cannot be freed from this suffering (*dukkha*). Instead, what is there to do? Just as with that banana trunk, after peeling off one sheath, it is only when you gently feel it that you find there is another sheath. You touch one sheath, and then gently feel further. As that sheath ends, there is another sheath; under that, another sheath. In that manner, you gently feel it. This is a comprehension (*sammarsa*). This is not physical touching; indeed, what the meditator does is touching with the mind, touching with thoughts. Regarding gold, silver, pearls, gems, trees, rocks, beds, chairs, tables, and all such things, the understanding first comes based on the names given to them in the world, according to the values assigned to them. "A very valuable thing, something every home must have." In this way, as craving grows in the world, one grasps it with the mind. But when reflecting gently, what is present here? The understanding comes that this is an empty thing, a hollow thing. In the end, the realization comes that it is only something constructed inside the mind, something embraced by the mind. Just as when gently feeling that banana trunk, peeling sheath after sheath, one ultimately understands that there is no heartwood, similarly, here there is only a mass of thoughts, a mass of thoughts. There is nothing to take as "I" or "mine." A multitude of thoughts arise and pass away.

It is when thinking and reflecting in that manner that the Dhamma is understood most deeply. The Buddha has declared as the Four Noble Truths—that this entire saṃsāric existence, the five aggregates called form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), are all *anicca* (Impermanent), *dukkha* (Suffering), and *anattā* (Not-self). Every single one of them is painful. This is the Truth of Suffering, the truth regarding suffering in the world. This suffering arises due to the craving (*taṇhā*) that the world has for them. It was because of the craving (*taṇhā*) that child had for that bag of gold coins that so much suffering arose for him when he went to listen to the Dhamma verse. Thus, then, the understanding of that suffering arose. Underneath that suffering lies craving (*taṇhā*). The state where this craving (*taṇhā*) is destroyed, where it is appeased, is called Nibbāna. When the child abandoned his desire for the bag of gold coins and next began to comprehend the Dhamma, Nibbāna was realized. What helps in that is what is called the Noble Eightfold Path: right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*)—that is, correct view; correct thoughts that follow correct view; correct action that follows correct thoughts; correct livelihood that follows correct action; correct effort—the endeavor made to purify the mind; the correct mindfulness—the *sati*—arising therefrom;

and correct concentration—the unification and composure of the mind—arising in association with that mindfulness. In this way, the Eightfold Path is that fourth truth. It is through the realization of these Four Noble Truths that anyone—whether great or small, whether a seven-year-old child or a person of sixty or seventy years—attains the paths and fruits. It is by deeply understanding such profound Dhamma. This is not something merely spoken in words, but a Dhamma to be realized entirely within. When reflecting accordingly on the benefits that can be derived from this Dhamma for life, if one understands them correctly, one can raise every one of them to meditative attention (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*) through one's very life problems in daily life, and integrate a multitude of virtuous qualities—a multitude of meditative wholesome states (*kusala-dhamma*)—into one's mental continuum (*citta-santāna*), which will assist in one's Nibbāna. Thus, this is the lesson to be taken as an example from the Dhamma story of the young child named Kāla.

In this world, no matter how many things appear black (or dark), they can be made white (or bright) by abandoning that wrong understanding of the Dhamma, by abandoning the wrong contemplation called unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), and by training oneself in correct contemplation called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). If one abandons that attitude of looking at the world in a wrong way and trains oneself to look at the world in the correct way, then that person can, perhaps even in this very life, in the midst of their daily activities, bring out meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from those very activities and attain the realization of the paths and fruits. Even during the Buddha's time, it is mentioned in various stories that some Elders (*Theras* and *Therīs*) and monks became Arahants upon seeing a lamp go out—when preparing to sleep, just as they went to lower and extinguish the lamp's flame, they became Arahants. Some, seeing a forest fire, and some, seeing a mass of foam floating on water; it is said that they realized Nibbāna by seeing various such things, in this very manner. Through every one of them, they gained a deep understanding of the world. Relying on one illustration found in the world, when the power to wisely think, "Other things too are just like this," arises, then that person is able to attain the realization of those supramundane paths and fruits. In this day and age, just as during the Buddha's time, and perhaps even more, we hear of various kinds of sufferings, disasters, and difficulties in this world and society. Through those very things, we can bring forth Nibbāna.

Similarly, the bag of gold coins mentioned in relation to Kāla—just like that bag of gold coins, nowadays on the streets we hear so much about "jackpots" (*jayamalu*) or "fortune bags" (*vāsanāmalu*). There may be thousands or lakhs of people who buy lottery tickets hoping for these jackpots and fortune bags. Not everyone wins these jackpots or fortune bags. It does not matter if they are not obtained. Through them, just as the child named Kāla did, one must try to draw closer to the Dhamma. What is present here? Whether this jackpot, this fortune bag, is obtained or not, this is the nature of life. Everything is *anicca* (Impermanent). All efforts made towards impermanent things are painful (*dukkha*). If the truth in the world is of this nature, there is nothing here to take as "I" or "mine." There is no essence, no heartwood. All of these must be abandoned at the moment of death. All those collections of wealth, relatives, and friends taken as "I" and

"mine" must be left behind. In the end, the relatives gather and hang a banner saying *"Aniccā vata saṅkhārā"* or *"Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā"*. By the time they hang those, that person has already died. There is no time then to make an effort towards those supramundane states. All of it—the entire life—is, as we said, a collection of designs, a collection of preparations. It is just like how some people who are preparing to go on a journey sometimes dream. It is as if they are preparing to go on a long journey, a pilgrimage or a pleasure trip. They prepare, but there is some deficiency. They run back to complete that too—concerning clothes and accessories. While doing so, suddenly they wake up, and they do not even get to go on the journey. That is the kind of thing done throughout the entire life. From a small child to an old person, the entire life is a series of designs, of preparations. But the painful nature within this is not understood. Just like the person who shouldered the banana trunk, the pile of sheaths is not seen. It is in order to see that pile of sheaths that we practice meditation. As the mind becomes composed, more and more composed, it is seen that what is present here are only these phenomena coming from within the mind: *vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā* (perception), *cetanā* (volition), *phassa* (Contact), and *manasikāra* (attention). What is present here in the external things of this world and in our bodies is only the four elements called *paṭhavi*, *āpo*, *tejo*, and *vāyo*, out of which everything is constructed. There is nothing beyond this. For an infinite time in *saṃsāra*, it is after these very things that we have run. The realization arises in oneself: "What is present here is only a running, only craving (*taṇhā*), only a thirst."

It is when that realization arises that one is able to attain that state of Stream-entry, which, as the Buddha declared, is nobler than Wheel-turning sovereignty, nobler than going to heaven, and nobler than lordship over all the worlds. If that state is attained, one will undergo birth (*jāti*) in *saṃsāra* at most seven more times. If one further develops the Noble Eightfold Path one has entered upon, and goes on meditating even more deeply, then that person is able to attain the second path and fruit called Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), leaving only one more return to this world, and free themselves from the rest of the suffering of *saṃsāra*. If one develops meditation even deeper beyond that, by turning once again that wheel of Dhamma one has set in motion, one reaches the state of Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and without returning to this world, realizes Nibbāna in the Brahma world itself. Striving even further beyond that, meditating deeply, one is able to completely eradicate these defilements (*kilesa*) and, being freed from the entire suffering of *saṃsāra* such as birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*), be appeased in the noble, supreme Nibbāna.

Thus, in reliance on this story of the merchant's son named Kāla, we were able to establish our minds on the path to Nibbāna. We can declare without any hesitation that if one goes very deep into even a single Dhamma verse preached by the Buddha, Nibbāna is present there. If we take a single drop from this Dhamma-ocean of the Buddha, the taste of liberation (*vimutti-rasa*), the taste of Nibbāna (*Nibbāna-rasa*), is present in every one of them. Just as wherever one takes a drop of water from the great ocean, there is the taste of salt, similarly, even if one takes a single short verse of Dhamma from the Dhamma-ocean, through it we can direct our mind all the way to Nibbāna. For someone

who has developed meditation subjects in *saṃsāra*, they can realize Nibbāna even at the moment of listening to the Dhamma. The Buddha has declared that the realization of the paths and fruits can be attained not only on the meditation seat, but at five occasions; these are called "stages of liberation" (*vimuttāyatana*). Liberation (*vimutti*) means freedom—freedom from *saṃsāra*. *Āyatana* means a place or basis where that freedom can be obtained. Five such bases have been shown. What are those five bases? One can attain it while listening to the Dhamma (*dhammaṃ suṇantassa*). It was while listening to the Dhamma that this child named Kāla realized Nibbāna. When listening to the Dhamma, when the mind is well focused on it and the moment of deep contemplation arrives, then that supramundane state can be attained. Another can attain it while teaching the Dhamma (*dhammaṃ desentassa*)—even while preaching the Dhamma, when keeping the mind on that Dhamma, to oneself—just as when food is prepared and served on a day when guests arrive, it can satisfy not only the guests but also others; in that same way, it is shown that some monks attained realization at the moment of preaching the Dhamma. Similarly, while reflecting on the Dhamma (*dhammaṃ manasikarontassa*)—when one withdraws to a side and reflects on a deep point of the Dhamma, suddenly a correct and deep realization arises, and Nibbāna can be realized through such path-and-fruit realization. For some others, while reciting the Dhamma (*dhammaṃ sajjhāyantassa*)—when reciting the Dhamma with a well-concentrated mind, then too, as the mind becomes composed and concentrated, a deep realization regarding it arises, and they are able to attain fruits such as Stream-entry. They can even become Arahants. Next, finally, it is shown through some meditation sign (*samādhi-nimittaṃ*)—which is what is generally considered as meditation in the world—that by systematically developing meditation based on a meditation sign, one can also succeed. In this way, if one engages in activities such as listening to the Dhamma, teaching the Dhamma, and reflecting on the Dhamma in daily life, those paths and fruits can be realized. Accordingly, in our daily lives as well, we must make an effort to draw the benefits that can be gained from this Dhamma for our own lives, in reliance on this story.

Today, therefore, this meritorious assembly has accumulated a vast amount of wholesome merit (*kusala*) on this occasion by listening to this Dhamma. Listening to the Dhamma is not merely a common custom; if one listens to the Dhamma directing the mind toward Nibbāna, it becomes a strong supportive condition (*upaniṣraya*) for Nibbāna. The reason we obtained this human rebirth, the reason we have an inclination and leaning toward the Dhamma, is because we have developed and practiced these over a long period. Thus, this listening to sermons supports us even in *saṃsāra*. On those occasions, if someone makes an effort, they can attain the noble realization of the paths and fruits through a Dhamma verse, just like the child named Kāla. Therefore, on this occasion, you have observed the precepts and listened to the Dhamma. You have generated a multitude of wholesome volitions (*kusala-cetanā*). You have performed a vast amount of merit. May you make the aspiration: "May these wholesome merits of listening to the Dhamma, this merit, these wholesome supportive conditions, enable us to realize the supreme bliss of Nibbāna through the progressive paths and fruits, beginning with Stream-entry, in this very life!"

Likewise, share this accumulated mass of merit, wishing: "May all beings, including the guardian deities of the Dispensation and any deities or spirits residing in this place, rejoice in this merit and be appeased in the noble, supreme Nibbāna, which is known as the deathless and decayless (*ajarāmara*)!"

In the same way, make the aspiration: "May any departed relatives and friends, and all beings throughout this world-system—from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven—who hope for Nibbāna, rejoice in this noble merit, and being freed from all saṃsāric suffering such as birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*), be appeased in the noble, supreme Nibbāna, which is known as the deathless and decayless (*ajarāmara*)!" Having made that aspiration, at this moment, recite these verses and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #12

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Atha pāpāni kammāni,

karaṃ bālo na bujjhati;

Sehi kammehi dummedho,

aggidaddhova tappati.

From:

Verse 136 from the Daṇḍavagga (Chapter on Punishment) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The Blessed One has pointed out on many occasions, with concrete evidence, how beings in this saṃsāra fall into ruin, burning and suffering due to their lack of understanding of the gravity of the results of kamma (*kamma-vipāka*), indeed, due to having no proper comprehension of it. In this Dispensation, the word used for an ignorant person is '*bāla*' (the fool). In common parlance, '*bāla*' refers to a young child. Even if it is a small child, if they attempt to grab a flame out of ignorance, they are bound to be burnt and suffer. What is the reason for that? The very nature of fire is to burn. Similarly, there is a law called the order of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*). It is a universal, natural law. There is a certain law in nature itself, called the order of kamma, which applies equally even to Buddhas and Arahants. According to this order of kamma, if someone commits an unwholesome kamma (evil deed), even if it was done out of ignorance, even if it was done without any faith or belief in the results of kamma, they will still have to suffer its severe consequences. The background story to the stanza we have chosen as our theme is also a story that reveals the terrifying nature of the results of kamma.

During the time when the Buddha was residing at the Veḷuvana monastery, one day, while the Venerable Mahā Moggallāna was descending from the Gijjhakūṭa (Vulture's

Peak) mountain together with the Venerable Lakkhaṇa, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna saw with his divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) a hungry ghost (*peta*) with the form of a python, about twenty-five leagues (*yojanas*) long. This was a hungry ghost named Ajagara. Flames of fire rose from the head of this hungry ghost and swept down to the end of his body. Then, flames rose from the tail end of his body and swept up to his head. Flames also burst from both sides of his body and met in the middle. Seeing this kind of sight, the Venerable Mahā Moggallāna smiled. Seeing this smile, Venerable Lakkhaṇa asked, "Venerable Sir, why did you smile?" Then Venerable Mahā Moggallāna replied, "I will not answer that question now. Ask this question in the presence of the Blessed One."

Later on, when Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, Venerable Lakkhaṇa, and the assembly of monks were seated in the Dhamma Hall, in the presence of the Buddha, Venerable Lakkhaṇa asked that same question to Venerable Mahā Moggallāna: "Why did you smile?" Venerable Mahā Moggallāna explained, "I saw such and such a sight. Such a massive hungry ghost body was engulfed in flames in this manner. Seeing this, I thought that I had never seen such a being before, and a smile arose in me due to the extraordinary nature of that sight." Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: "Monks, my disciples live with eyes, with knowledge. I too saw that very sight at the foot of the Bodhi tree, at the very moment of attaining Buddhahood. However, I did not declare it because, due to the extraordinary nature of this sight, ordinary people might not believe it, and by doubting me, they would accumulate demerit; they would generate unwholesome states (*akusala*). That is why I did not declare it. But now, since Moggallāna is here as a witness to this matter, I shall now declare it." Thus spoke the Blessed One.

At that moment, the bhikkhus asked, "Reverend Sir, Blessed One, what was the past evil kamma committed by this hungry ghost?" The Blessed One then brought forth the past account. During the time of the Buddha Kassapa, there was a very wealthy treasurer (*seṭṭhi*) named Sumangala. To construct a perfumed chamber (*gandhakuṭi*)—that is, a monastery dwelling place—for Buddha Kassapa, he paved the ground with golden bricks and built a dwelling over a large area at immense expense. Furthermore, he spent heavily on the offering ceremony of the monastery. Just as the treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika built the Jetavana monastery for our Buddha, this treasurer built this monastery. One day, while going early in the morning to see the Buddha, he noticed a certain man sleeping in a hall near the city gate. That man was a thief. Even though the thief was sleeping, he had wandered about all night, and his feet were covered in mud. Seeing this, the treasurer casually remarked to those with him, "This man must have wandered about all night and is now sleeping during the day." The thief overheard this. He was sleeping with his head covered in a yellow cloth. Uncovering his head, he looked up, recognized the treasurer, and conceived a deep hatred and anger, thinking, "Very well, I know what to do to you."

Thereafter, in revenge for those words, what did this thief do? He set fire to the treasurer's ripe crop field seven times. He also cut the hamstrings of the oxen in the treasurer's cattle-shed. Next, he set fire to the treasurer's mansion seven times. Even after doing all this, unable to quench his anger, the man befriended one of the treasurer’s

close servants and asked what the treasurer held most dear. The servant replied that there was nothing the treasurer loved more than the monastery—the perfumed chamber—he had built for the Buddha. Then the thief thought, "Very well, I will quench my anger by setting fire to the Buddha's perfumed chamber." While Buddha Kassapa was away on his alms-round, the thief smashed all the water vessels near the chamber and set fire to the dwelling. The treasurer heard that the chamber was on fire. By the time he arrived there, the chamber was completely burnt down. The treasurer did not feel any grief or sorrow over this. Instead, he clapped his hands joyfully. The people standing nearby asked, "Sir, why do you clap your hands in this manner when the chamber you built at such immense cost is burnt down?" The treasurer replied, "I have deposited my wealth in a place where it cannot be destroyed by fire, thieves, enemies, or water—that is, in the Sasana (Dispensation) of the Buddha. That is not lost. Now I have been given another opportunity to deposit an equal amount of wealth in the same manner—as a treasury of merit. It is because of that, out of that joy, that I clapped my hands."

Having declared so, just as he said, the treasurer spent another massive sum of money, paving with golden bricks, and built a monastery for the Buddha, for Buddha Kassapa. Having built it and spending immensely, as the dedication ceremony of the monastery, he offered alms for seven days to Buddha Kassapa and twenty thousand bhikkhus. Meanwhile, the thief thought, "Even though I have done so much, I have not been able to discourage this treasurer. Now there is nothing else to do. I must kill this treasurer." With a dagger concealed in his waist, he loitered around the monastery during those seven days, intending to kill the treasurer. However, he found no opportunity. On the seventh day, after offering alms to the Buddha and the Sangha, and while inviting the Buddha for the transfer of merit, the treasurer announced, "Venerable Sir, Blessed One, some person, harboring ill-will towards me, set fire to my field seven times in this manner. He also cut the hamstrings of my cattle seven times in the cattle-shed. He set fire to my house seven times. I believe it must have been this same person who set fire to the perfumed chamber of the Blessed One as well. Yet, I share the very first portion of the merit of this meritorious deed with that person." Thus, the treasurer declared.

Hearing this, the thief was struck with deep spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). "Alas! Did I bring such ruin upon a person like this? Such a wonderful, forgiving person! If I do not ask for forgiveness now, a thunderbolt might fall upon my head." Thinking so, he quickly ran and fell at the treasurer's feet, crying, "Forgive me, master!" The treasurer asked, "Why, what is this?" The thief replied, "It was I who caused so many destructions and damages to you." Hearing these things, the treasurer asked, "What was the reason for doing so much? I have never seen you before. Why did you harbor such hatred toward me?" The thief then reminded him: "On such and such a day, while I was sleeping in that hall, you said these words. I conceived intense anger over that." At that moment, the treasurer asked the thief for forgiveness, saying, "Forgive me for saying such a thing." The thief felt even greater spiritual urgency. Then the thief said, "Master, if you have indeed forgiven me, please take me along with my wife and children into your service as slaves." The treasurer replied, "Just because I said that one small word, you caused me

so much harm. If I keep you in my house now, how could I ever speak with you? I have no need for your slavery. Now, I have forgiven you. Rise and go your way."

Thus, in a truly remarkable manner, the thief received forgiveness from the treasurer. But though he received forgiveness from the treasurer, he did not receive forgiveness from kamma. Therefore, the Blessed One—our Buddha—declared: "That thief, after death, was reborn in the Avīci hell (*niraya*). Having burned and boiled there for an extremely long time, now, as the remaining portion of that kamma, he has been reborn as a hungry ghost with that kind of form, burning in flames." Having declared this matter, the Blessed One then declared: "This is how those foolish, ignorant people, fools, commit evil deeds and, as a result, burn as if in forest fires due to their lack of understanding." Saying this, he uttered the stanza we mentioned earlier:

Atha pāpāni kammāni – karaṃ bālo na bujjhati

Sehi kammehi dummedho – aggidaḍḍhova tappati

In the Dhamma, the term '*bāla*' (fool) is not used in the sense of a young child, as we mentioned earlier, but rather the character of the fool is defined as:

duccintitacintī, dubbhāsitabhāsī, dukkatakammakārī

This means his thoughts are very bad, his words are bad, and his deeds are bad. It is such a person who is called a fool. Thus, such a fool, while committing evil deeds, does not know the side of their consequences. He does not know the gravity of those results. The Buddha uttered this stanza expressing the idea that committing evil deeds in this way, one is tormented by one's own deeds, just like being burnt by fire. It is recorded that upon hearing this, many people realized the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*).

Now, based on this story, there are two aspects we can take and consider as exemplary lessons. When we reflect on the behavior of the thief in this story, one is astonished. Can anger and hatred go to such lengths? Even though it was not a remark that warranted such rage, hearing the words casually spoken by the treasurer, this thief developed such intense hatred, and then, to quench that hatred, he set fires. Like one trying to extinguish fire with fire, he set fire to the treasurer's field, to his house, and even to the perfumed chamber of the Blessed One. That is how the world tries to quench hatred. There are many such examples even in this day and age. They set fires to extinguish fires. And having set fires in that manner, the final retribution is exactly of the same nature.

The Blessed One has declared that often, the retribution of a kamma bears the very same form as the kamma itself. This order of kamma is a natural law operating in the world. The Blessed One often points to the law of seeds (*bīja-niyāma*) as an analogy:

Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ – tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ

Kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ – pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ

The Blessed One has declared that in whatever manner one sows a seed, in that very manner does one reap its fruit. Following that, the analysis of kamma is presented: "*kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ*"—the doer of good reaps good, receiving pleasant results; "*pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ*"—if one commits an unwholesome deed, one reaps bad results from it. Just as when a mango seed or grape seed is planted, it yields sweet fruit, whereas margosa (*kohomba*) or bitter-gourd (*karavila*) yields bitter fruit. There is such a natural order. Thus, just as he gave fire to others, the burning of fire was returned to him. In this way, one has to suffer grave retributions. There are countless such examples in the Dhamma.

This was just one sight seen by Venerable Mahā Moggallāna while descending the Gijjhakūṭa mountain. A number of such sights are recorded. For instance, in one place it is mentioned that as Venerable Mahā Moggallāna was descending the Gijjhakūṭa mountain, he saw a skeleton flying through the air. A hungry ghost in the form of a skeleton. Facing that flight, hawks, crows, and vultures pecked between its ribs. This skeleton was flying about wailing. The Blessed One explained that the cause for this was that in this very city of Rājagaha, this hungry ghost had been a cattle butcher—a person who slaughtered cattle. Similarly, another account is given of another hungry ghost body flying through the air. That body had hairs that were sharp like swords. While flying, those sword-like sharp hairs would fly up and fall back piercing its own body. Meanwhile, that hungry ghost wailed and screamed. In this manner, many extraordinary sights regarding those hungry ghost realms are shown. Yet, far more terrifying than that is the suffering (*dukkha*) in hells (*niraya*) such as Avīci. The Blessed One declared that they are so extreme that there is no analogy to describe them. Hell is a vast, terrifying ocean of suffering, impossible to describe even by a Buddha's mouth. Then there is the hungry ghost realm, and then the animal realm—the animal world we see. Regarding that too, the Blessed One declared that the sufferings (*dukkha*) in the animal world are beyond description. Furthermore, even after coming to this human world, beings still suffer the results of those kammas. Yet, they do not realize that these are the kammas committed in the past. Unaware of this, they commit more and more evil deeds. Such is the terrifying situation in the world regarding these kammas. Therefore, when reflecting on these results of kamma, we must take lessons from these accounts to shape our lives—not merely treating them as ordinary stories. The Blessed One has declared this natural law of kamma in its precise manner. Other teachers of that time saw it to some extent. However, the Blessed One understood kamma and its result (*kamma-vipāka*) with utmost depth. Moreover, the Blessed One pointed out the very path to escape from this saṃsāra where kamma operates. The Blessed One presented a certain passage as a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*):

Kammasakohamhi kamma-dāyādo

kamma-yoni kamma-bandhu kamma-paṭisaraṇo.

Yaṃ kammaṃ karissāmi,

kalyāṇaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā,

tassa dāyādo bhavissāmi.

The Blessed One presented this as a subject of meditation, advising that one should constantly contemplate this natural law of kamma. "*Abhiṇhaṃ paccavekkhitabbaṃ*"—it should be constantly reflected upon, constantly contemplated, as a subject of meditation. Its meaning is: "I am the owner of my kamma, kamma is my inheritance, kamma is my origin, kamma is my kinsman, kamma is my refuge. Whatever kamma I shall do, whether good or evil, of that I shall be the heir." Hearing this, one might think, when it says "kamma is my inheritance" or "kamma is mine," that one can do whatever one wants. But within this lies a terrifying, urgent truth. For this is not about doing whatever one pleases. Kamma has two aspects: good and bad. Because of ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), the saṃsāric being is inclined toward the bad side far more than the good. Therefore, there is a terrifying responsibility, a powerful responsibility regarding this kamma. When we say "kamma is mine," "kamma is my inheritance," it is the bad side we have to reflect upon more. No matter how much pleasant retribution (*sukha-vipāka*) can be obtained through these—by doing meritorious deeds—because beings are so terribly inclined towards evil, it is evil kamma that is accumulated more in saṃsāra. It is because of such a state of affairs that the Blessed One says that through constantly contemplating kamma in this manner, one can even develop a profound disenchantment toward saṃsāra. It is a terrifying responsibility to say "kamma is mine." I cannot do as I please. It is subject to that natural order, the natural law operating in the world.

Next, the Blessed One declares this regarding kamma in a deeper sense: "*Cetanāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kammaṃ vadāmi. Cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā.*" How do we identify this kamma? How one gets caught up in kamma can be a question for someone. Usually, the word kamma is also applied to action. Some call even mere physical activity 'kamma'. But in this Dispensation of the Buddha, the word kamma is applied precisely to intention (*cetanā*). "I say, monks, that intention is kamma." The Blessed One declared this. Therefore, one is bound by kamma according to this intention. "*Cetanāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kammaṃ vadāmi*"—Monks, I say intention is kamma. Why? "*Cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā*"—having intended, one performs kamma by body, speech, and mind, accumulating kamma. Otherwise, there is no responsibility for actions that occur involuntarily. And this responsibility exists because one takes responsibility for it. Here lies a very strange state of affairs. One takes responsibility for kamma. How does one take responsibility? Based on the feeling of 'I' and 'mine' out of ignorance (*avijjā*). That is why, when we consider the Dhamma deeply, everything is done out of ignorance. Ignorance means 'I' and 'mine'. Egoism, selfishness. 'I' and 'mine'. "Because he is angry with me, I will kill him." "Because I need to eat, I kill animals." "Because I lack wealth, I steal from others." "For my pleasure, I do other things." In this way, centering on the ego, beings are driven to these unwholesome deeds. Therefore, it is due to ignorance that those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) exist. Due to ignorance, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are accumulated. A part of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) is what we call kamma. Whether meritorious Preparations (*puññābhisaṅkhāra*), demeritorious Preparations (*apuññābhisaṅkhāra*), or

imperturbable Preparations (*āneñjābhisaṅkhāra*), these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are kamma itself. When contemplated deeply, it is the most subtle aspect of kamma itself.

In that manner, it is due to ignorance (*avijjā*) that kamma is also accumulated. Since one holds oneself responsible for it—if one is responsible for the kamma, one must also be responsible for its result. That is why, even if unwilling, one is forced to undergo the terrifying results of those evil deeds. Understanding those results, a wise person should refrain from such evil deeds. The term '*bāla*' is applied to an ignorant person. In the Dhamma, the term '*paṇḍita*' (the wise) is used for a wise person. A wise person develops faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha, establishes right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), distinguishes good from bad, understands merit and demerit, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*), and strives to live accordingly. The ordinary pseudo-intellectual, however, succumbs to intellectualism, doubting, "Can this be possible?" and sometimes resorts to evil deeds to satisfy daily needs. Such a person is referred to in the Dhamma as a '*bāla*', a fool, an ignorant person.

Therefore, the Blessed One next points out that to help one discern this kamma, there are causes for this kamma. They are called causes (*hetu*) or origins (*nidāna*). The causes for evil kamma are greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). There is no need to define this anew to humans, to saṃsāric beings. When saṃsāric beings look into their own minds, they can easily recognize these three defilements (*kilesa*) as a sort of triangle: greed, hatred, and delusion. Delusion is, as we mentioned earlier, ignorance (*avijjā*). That feeling of 'I' and 'mine'. "Even if a thunderbolt strikes the other, I must live"—selfishness, egoism, that intense sense of 'I' and 'mine' is delusion. Because of this, toward what I like, there is greed; toward what I oppose or dislike, there is hatred. When contemplated wisely in this manner, it is due to greed, hatred, and delusion that all the evil deeds in the world occur. Many other defilements can be added to this, but fundamentally they are greed, hatred, and delusion. Next, wholesome states are presented—the opposite of those unwholesome ones.

Then, what can be classified under the wholesome (*kusala*) side? They are designated as non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). Non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion mean that if one frees the mind from greed, even for a single moment, that moment is wholesome. That is a wholesome mind. If one detaches the mind from hatred even for a moment—now, we can see from the behavior of that treasurer that he possessed the wholesome roots of non-hatred (*adosa*) within him, whereas the thief had unwholesome roots. In this manner, we can understand it. If one detaches oneself, even for a moment, from delusion—from the feeling of 'I' and 'mine'—and thinks a thought, utters a word, or performs an action, those fall under the wholesome side. Reflecting in this manner, the Blessed One has deeply analyzed and presented this kamma to us, as well as the side of its consequences and the way to recognize it. Next, the Blessed One has pointed out several other special factors that assist in practicing this.

What is virtue (*sīla*)? When contemplating it wisely, these precepts—especially the five basic precepts in the Dhamma—are the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*). These Five Precepts

are just like road signs that you see when traveling on a road. In some places, it says 'drive slowly', 'dangerous curves ahead', 'steep descent ahead'—notifying the driver in this manner. What happens if the driver does not have these notifications? He will drive at the vehicle's maximum speed and plunge into a terrifying abyss. Such is this saṃsāric journey. The Blessed One has presented these Five Precepts as road signs for the being traveling on this saṃsāric journey. Why? Because among evil deeds, five are shown as extremely severe. The things that bring about terrifying consequences in saṃsāra are what are contained in the Five Precepts: killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants (*surā-meraya*). Through these, one falls into intense oppression, burning, and torment in saṃsāra. Therefore, the Blessed One first reminds all beings traveling on this saṃsāric journey of these Five Precepts.

Now, if one drives a vehicle ignoring those road signs, what happens? First, the vehicle veers off the road. Next, it goes into a ditch and falls down an abyss, getting shattered to pieces. In that very manner, a group of terms representing that state is mentioned in the Dhamma regarding hell: '*apāya, duggati, vinipāta, niraya*'. '*Apāya*' means falling away from the correct path. '*Duggati*' means taking the wrong path, like going down into a ditch. '*Vinipāta*' means falling headlong down an abyss. '*Niraya*' means being crushed to pieces, reaching a state where nothing is salvageable. One reaches such a state due to those evil deeds if one does not observe the Five Precepts. Virtue (*sīla*) means precepts (*sikkhāpada*). Why does one undertake and observe these precepts oneself? By recalling this daily, a person gives a certain advice to one's own mind: "Today, I must conduct myself within these Five Precepts." Just as a driver, upon seeing a road sign, reduces the speed of the vehicle if it is going too fast, or slows down if there are curves ahead. In that manner, these Five Precepts are presented as factors that help and support one in shaping one's way of life. Generally, some consider this to be a great hassle. Yet, those who think so do not say such things about the road signs on the street. If they are absent, they blame the government: "They should have placed a road sign there warning of a steep descent." But without considering such things in this saṃsāric journey, they blame the Buddhas, the Arahants, and the Sangha for telling them to observe these precepts. When they begin to burn and suffer from the consequences, only then do they realize the foolishness of what they did. That is why they are called '*bāla*', the ignorant person.

Therefore, one must contemplate deeply based on the evidence available to us. Along with the Five Precepts, there are other related things—belonging to the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*)—especially the factors concerning speech that were mentioned in the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (virtue with livelihood as the eighth). Regarding speech, we usually treat a lie as a trivial thing. Slander and such things are also treated as trivial. But they bring about grave retributions. That is why the Blessed One laid down precepts to abstain from lying, slander, harsh speech, and frivolous talk. Because of these, one ruins the gift of speech—a rare inheritance—that one has received. The same applies to wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). In this day and age, such things have come to the forefront through the economy—since this is an era that forgets righteousness. But falling into ruin through such wrong livelihood—as we mentioned about the cattle butcher—there are many others. It is not only during the Buddha's time that beings

existed in such hungry ghost states. In this era, because those possessing higher spiritual powers (*abhiññā*) are rare, there is no one to declare such matters. Even if there were, even the Buddha did not declare that matter until he had the witness of Venerable Mahā Moggallāna. Why did he not declare it? Lest they say, "The Buddha is lying to deceive us, creating these stories as if to fool small children," and by saying so, they would go to hell. That is why the Blessed One did not declare it. He did not declare it until the time came when Venerable Mahā Moggallāna stood as a witness to that matter. Today, it is just the same. In this era, even if someone rarely sees these things and speaks of them, they are not believed. Yet, the very people who do not believe these things, throwing away what is written in the Dhamma books as old stories, are ready to accept them with utmost reverence if a Western scientist declares something about them.

Although the word of the Buddha does not need any external support, in this day and age, even Western scientists have had their eyes opened regarding this kamma. You must be hearing about such matters regularly through various means. In some, a memory of past lives (*jātissara-ñāṇa*) arises during childhood. What are famous in the world as reincarnation stories are such occurrences. This is because, in childhood, some small children remember past lives—mostly how they lived in their previous life, how they died, and even the kammas they committed. Truly amazing information about them. Furthermore, through hypnosis, by putting someone into a hypnotic sleep and bringing up their past memories, Westerners have discovered ways to unearth where they lived in the past and what they did and said. These are somewhat like child's play compared to the knowledge of Buddhas and Arahants like Mahā Moggallāna. Yet, even such things are good evidence for someone in this day and age to believe with confidence. Also, about a century ago, in America—when speaking of America back then, they knew practically nothing about Buddhism, kamma, or the natural law of kamma. It was such an era of darkness. But in such a country, there was a Catholic gentleman named Edgar Cayce. That gentleman had not even heard the word kamma in his daily life. However, after entering a hypnotic trance, he gained the ability to describe his own past lives, the kammas that caused them, and the karmic retributions (*kamma-vipāka*) that caused the illnesses of the patients who came to him. The records of the illnesses of the patients who came to him are still stored in a separate library, and even professors conduct research on them and write books. To mention one or two examples, a man came with an eye condition that was close to blindness. On that occasion, Edgar Cayce declared the cause for it. He said that although medicine, social welfare activities, and meritorious deeds might alleviate the illness to a great extent, it could not be completely cured beyond that. Why? Because: "Thousands of years ago, you were born in a certain primitive tribe. What was your job? It was to blind the eyes of enemies captured by your tribe. Since you performed that duty of blinding eyes very well, your eyes cannot be cured beyond this. You cannot be freed from that blindness." Thus, Edgar Cayce determined.

According to that, we can realize that the results of kamma exist in the world not only during the Buddha's time but even in this era. What is rare is those who can see them and present the facts about them with reasons. That is the situation. Therefore, next, one must consider: how do we escape from this kamma? By avoiding these unwholesome

kammas, avoiding evil deeds, and traveling as much as possible on the path of Dhamma—now, most of the time, one resorts to these evil deeds because intention (*cetanā*) operates so rapidly in the mind. Now, everyone is capable of understanding whether one's intention is pure or impure, good or bad—when an intention arises, whether it is a good one or a bad one. Even if it is a bad one, some people, knowing that the bad intention is bad, continue to encourage it, acting and speaking in accordance with it. What is the cause of such an inclination? The lack of development of the mind. That is why the Blessed One declares that, without stopping at virtue (*sīla*) alone—without stopping at merely giving those road signs—the Blessed One next points out a more systematic, more beneficial, and superior path to escape from this terrifying nature of suffering (*dukkha*) in saṃsāra. The Blessed One brings forth a power for beings to escape completely from this order of kamma, from the results of kamma, and from kamma itself. What assists in this is concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). Having purified the mind with virtue, one then steadies the mind through concentration. One develops the power to keep the mind on a single object. For such a person, compared to the one mentioned earlier, when the intention moves toward the bad side, there arises a power through concentration to stop it immediately. And the power to escape even more deeply from these karmic forces arises through wisdom. Realizing the true nature of the world directly, there is nothing to be taken as 'I' and 'mine'. What is here is the state of not-self (*anattā*). This great existence of saṃsāra is itself suffering (*dukkha*), and its cause is craving (*taṇhā*). The cessation of this craving is Nibbāna. The path that helps this is the Noble Eightfold Path—this is the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths. That is what is called wisdom (*paññā*).

If someone develops that wisdom supramundanely—if that person, at the first stage, as a Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), has comprehended the Four Noble Truths—a distinct change occurs in that person's intentions. To what extent is that change? It is such that they no longer commit unwholesome deeds that lead to lower realms. Usually, a person can go to hell even due to a single, grave, evil thought arising in a split second. Such is the terrifying behavior of the mind. This mind operates at a speed so rapid that it cannot be compared to any vehicle or machine in the world. If this mind, operating at such a speed, turns to the bad side even for a single moment—if a wrong thought, a wrong word, or a wrong deed is directed toward a Buddha or an Arahant—that is enough to boil in hell for aeons. Many are delighted to see a very fast vehicle. But the driver of that vehicle bears a massive responsibility. If the machinery to stop that vehicle at will is not proper, or if there are various defects, a terrible accident will occur to their lives while traveling at high speed. In the same way, regarding this mind, the Blessed One points out that due to its very rapid nature, if it is directed toward the bad side, one has to suffer severe consequences. However, the Stream-enterer has stopped the mind to some extent. Due to the power of stopping that mind, due to that realization of truth—wisdom—the Stream-enterer limits the entire saṃsāric existence to a maximum of seven births and escapes from it. This means they are born only seven more times. Not only that, but the change that occurs in that mind is so great that the wrong notion of a self, the idea that there is a soul, called the view of existing group (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), is removed from that person. The Stream-enterer, who has attained the fruit of stream-entry, not only receives

the relief of being born only seven more times in saṃsāra, but they also cannot commit evil deeds that lead to hell. What is the reason? It is that change which occurs in the mind. Through the power of stopping the mind, and also through that wisdom, that person's attachment to deeds is reduced. The responsibility for those deeds is reduced. As we mentioned earlier, the responsibility one takes for performing a kamma is exactly the responsibility one must take for suffering its result. Therefore, while some have to suffer the consequences in hell and other places for a long time due to that view of tightly grasping 'I' and 'mine', that situation is reduced for the Stream-enterer due to that realization.

Similarly, when one becomes a Once-returner (*sakadāgāmī*) and a Non-returner (*anāgāmī*): the Once-returner comes to this world only once more. The Non-returner does not return to this world again. Reborn in the Brahma world, they attain final Nibbāna (*parinibbāna*) there itself. For the Arahant, there is no birth (*jāti*) after this. Yet, such is the influence of kamma that they still have to undergo some retribution in this very life as kamma to be experienced in the present life (*diṭṭhadhamma-vedanīya*). Due to past kammas or certain kammas committed in this very life, they must undergo those retributions that are to be experienced only in this present life. From this, we can see on one hand how powerful kamma is. Even Buddhas and Arahants had to undergo their retributions, as results of past kammas. You must have often heard of Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, a monk of such great psychic power, yet in the end, five hundred bandits crushed his bones, and he had to pass away into final Nibbāna. Why? Because in the very distant past, he had beaten and killed his parents. Accordingly, one can understand the terrifying nature of this kamma on one hand. On the other hand, what we must reflect upon is this wondrous path pointed out by the Blessed One to escape from that kamma. In this world, there are two wheels: the wheel of kamma and the wheel of Dhamma. It is this wheel of kamma that operates in the most terrifying manner in the world. No being caught in it has any escape from that law of kamma. In whatever manner they perform kamma, in that very manner they have to suffer terrifying retributions. But the Blessed One points out the wheel of Dhamma. As we explained earlier, by walking on this Noble Eightfold Path, avoiding unwholesome states and walking on the wholesome path, purifying body and speech with virtue, calming the mind with concentration, and then seeing the true nature of this world with insight-wisdom—if someone has comprehended the three characteristics of impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) at the first level of Stream-entry—that person escapes from those unwholesome kammas that lead to hell, and is born only seven more times. Then, going gradually in that manner, the Arahant finally puts an end to this entire saṃsāric existence and attains that supreme realization of Nibbāna.

Therefore, you devotees must contemplate accordingly. One must not think of this kamma as mere stories in old books, that they are lies or exaggerated fabrications. These are wondrous, yet true. For the natural laws operating in this universe, the things we see, sometimes appear very small. When we look at the sky, we see small stars—tiny specks of stars. Yet when scientists describe their actual size, we see stars in a different light. Such wondrous things exist all around us. When scientists describe the size of a star, the size

of this moon in the sky, the size of the sun, we believe them because they are scientists. Likewise, how massive are the things that appear small to us in reality? When one reflects on what the Blessed One declared regarding time and space, a great spiritual urgency arises. For such a long time, across such vast space, we have traveled in saṃsāra as beings, haven't we? The Blessed One has declared that no beginning can be seen to this saṃsāra. Covered by ignorance (*aviijjā*) and bound by craving (*taṇhā*) due to not knowing the Four Noble Truths, the duration of beings traveling in this saṃsāra cannot be fully described even by a Buddha. It is so endless that it cannot be fully told. The Blessed One brings to light such a wondrous state of affairs that arouses spiritual urgency in one. Even if we do not believe in these Dhamma matters, we proudly proclaim what scientists and astronomers say as great wonders. Sights far more wondrous have been declared by the Blessed One regarding this saṃsāra. In truth, the comprehension of those external things, what has been revealed about them, is mostly used by the world on the unwholesome side—inclining more and more toward fivefold sensual pleasures (*pañca-kāma*) to cultivate this world.

The Blessed One has declared, "*Na siyā lokavaḍḍhano*"—one should not be a world-cultivator. What needs to be done is not the cultivation of the world, but escaping from the world, escaping from this saṃsāra. It is that which helps to escape from saṃsāra that the Buddhas have declared in this Dhamma. That is what is called this wheel of Dhamma. The power of this wheel of kamma can be broken only by the wheel of Dhamma. Therefore, we must reflect, we must indeed question ourselves: are we going to keep spinning the wheel of kamma in this saṃsāra for an infinite time, or are we going to strive to turn the wheel of Dhamma, declared by the Blessed One, within our own minds? Turning the wheel of Dhamma means, as mentioned, to discipline body and speech to settle our minds, by undertaking as a starting point a certain virtue (*sīla*)—whether the Five Precepts, these Uposatha Eight Precepts, or the Ten Precepts—and striving to observe them properly day by day. Through the peace gained from calming body and speech, one then strives to anchor this wandering mind on a single thought through concentration (*samādhi*), using a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) such as thoughts of loving-kindness (*mettā*), mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) which directs the mind to the in-breaths and out-breaths, contemplation of foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*), or mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*). The concentration gained from this gives one an understanding of the entire power of the mind. "There is such immense power in my mind, isn't there? I did not understand this all this time; I was utilizing only a tiny fraction of it," such an understanding arises if one is somehow able to bring forth concentration.

And it does not stop there. Why do we steady this mind? It is to comprehend the true nature of this life of mine, of the world. It is to escape from this saṃsāra. The fundamental matter that helps in this has been pointed out by the Blessed One as the Four Noble Truths. This entire saṃsāra—including gods, deities, and Brahmas, and those beings said to be enjoying pleasure—is suffering (*dukkha*). Why is it suffering? Because all these things are impermanent (*anicca*). Nothing can be kept in a permanent state. Whatever is impermanent, because of that very quality, because of its unstable nature,

brings about suffering. It is suffering. In that nature of suffering, there is that changing thing which cannot be kept under one's control as 'I' and 'mine'; there is a state in the world that cannot be governed by oneself. Therefore, the Blessed One pointed out three characteristics: impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). When contemplating wisely, these characteristics can be seen in everything in the world. One must strive to develop the eye capable of seeing these characteristics. That eye is called the 'eye of insight' (*vipassanā-cakkhu*). Insight (*vipassanā*) means seeing through. To facilitate that seeing, various instruments have been invented in the world in this day and age. There are microscopes to see extremely small things magnified. Microscopes, and telescopes to see far. All of these are things done through external instruments. But this insight is the seeing of the true nature of the world, as pointed out by the Blessed One, by purifying one's own mind. What helps in that is constantly contemplating the arising and passing away of things in the world. Everyone can do this according to their own capacity: our in-breaths and out-breaths, the way parts of our body arise and pass away, the fate of the food and drink we consume, the fate of the expensive clothes we buy at various shops. In everything—the fate of our small children whom we cuddle so much. Then they grow up gradually, reach old age, walk with walking sticks, and finally, just like lifting a small child, when they reach old age as grandpas and grandmas, they have to be lifted.

Such a state of affairs exists in the world. One must contemplate them constantly. Through that, the true nature of this world becomes visible, bringing about a certain disenchantment (*nibbidā*) toward this saṃsāra—many do not like the word disenchantment—but to the extent that a certain disenchantment toward saṃsāra arises, to that extent all that insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*)—that wisdom—is developed. The power to escape from saṃsāra is sharpened within oneself. In that manner, practicing insight in the past, lay disciples, no matter how poor their livelihood or how uneducated they were, by thinking in accordance with the Dhamma, and developing virtue, concentration, and wisdom to the best of their ability, even attained supramundane path states—Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship—right in their own homes, as recorded in the Dhamma.

Therefore, why did you devotees listen so much about kamma? It is to escape from this kamma. Remembering that the Dhamma is what helps to escape from this kamma, today on this Poya day, this devout gathering has undertaken a valuable virtue, the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*, and has focused the mind on the Dhamma, listening to it for this long. The merit of listening to the Dhamma (*dhamma-savanamaya-kusala*) is a certain growth that occurs within our mind. If we describe this growth in terms of qualities, we can show that the mind grew in faith (*saddhā*). It is with great faith that you devotees came to this place to listen to the Dhamma. Next, according to that faith, for this long—a certain energy (*viriya*) that enabled you to sit on the ground like this—with the determination that "somehow I must listen to this Dhamma," you generated energy. That too is a state arisen in the mind. Faith, energy, and then while listening to the Dhamma, you applied mindfulness (*sati*) to pay attention to every single word. Next, when that mindfulness was applied for a long time, for about an hour, a certain degree of

concentration (*samādhi*), one-pointedness of mind, arose. Through that one-pointedness, deep understandings arise regarding the things you heard and read, even if heard repeatedly. That is what is called wisdom (*paññā*). In this manner, you should rejoice that you had the opportunity to deposit within your minds, in varying measures, the spiritual faculties and powers (*indriya* and *bala*)—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—which assist in attaining Nibbāna.

Therefore, today, this meritorious group, without postponing to the future the strength gained through turning to the Dhamma, must bring the Dhamma closer to daily life to sharpen it further within this very life. Although Western countries have highly developed other external economic matters and become prosperous, they have realized the value of the Dhamma. No matter how much wealth humans have accumulated in those foreign lands, having become mentally unstable, turning to drugs, and falling into various other terrifying disasters, they are now searching for the Dhamma. In contrast, the people of our country are throwing away this Dhamma of ours, chasing after all those conditions coming from the West, and heading toward the path of decline. In such an era, you wise devotees should rejoice, thinking that today you spent this hour to nourish your minds with the Dhamma, to escape from saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*), and to develop within yourselves the strength to realize the supreme Dhamma of Nibbāna.

Now, you must resolve, especially that through the blessings of listening to this Dhamma, may you have the strength and power to develop virtue, concentration, and wisdom, not in the future but in this very life, and realize as soon as possible the path and fruit realizations of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, thereby finding peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna. You should make that aspiration. Likewise, we now share with the world this store of merit accumulated through the preaching and listening of the Dhamma. There are those who know the value of these merits, even if our ordinary world does not. May the assembly of gods and Brahmas, the assembly of Sasana-protecting deities and Brahmas, and whatever deities reside over this place, share in this merit of preaching and listening to the Dhamma accumulated by us during this hour. Having shared in it, may they find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through whatever Bodhi (awakening) they have aspired for! We should also make the aspiration: "May they protect us and the Sasana!" Similarly, may all beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, including our departed relatives, share in this merit of our preaching and listening to the Dhamma, and if they are in any woeful states, may they be released from them, reach happy states, walk on the path of Dhamma, and through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, or through their aspired Bodhi, escape from this terrifying saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) and find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! Having made such an aspiration, now recite those stanzas and transfer the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #13

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā;

Manasā ce pasannena, bhāsati vā karoti vā;

Tato naṃ sukhamanveti, chāyāva anapāyinī.

From:

Verse 2 from the Yamakavagga (Chapter of Pairs) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The very appearance of a Buddha in the world is an event that demonstrates the miraculous power of the mind. We can see the ultimate limit of development, purity, and clarity of a mind through a Fully Enlightened Buddha, the Tathāgata. Likewise, when such a Buddha appears in the world and preaches the Dhamma, it is to guide us to develop, purify, and clarify our own minds. In this great program, this serious task of escaping from saṃsāra, which is called liberation from saṃsāra, and release from the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra, it is our mind that is primary. It is by utilizing this mind—and not by other scientific methods—that we can escape from saṃsāra. This mind of ours becomes narrow or broad, small or large; these changes occur according to the object the mind takes. The Buddha has demonstrated this with illustrations on many occasions. If our mind takes a small object, the mind becomes small; if it takes a large object, it becomes large. Now, from the background story of the verse we have taken as our theme, we can gain a good understanding of this functioning of the mind.

In Sāvatthī, there lived an extremely wealthy but highly miserly Brahmin. Since this Brahmin had never given anything to anyone, based on that behavior, society gave him the nickname "Adinnapubbaka" (One who has never given before). The Sinhala meaning of Adinnapubbaka is "never given before." He got this name—this Brahmin—perhaps because people in those days, just like now, were very clever at giving nicknames. This

Brahmin had an only son, who was very pleasant. He loved his son dearly because he was his only child. However, he loved his wealth even more. Therefore, when the time came for his son to have his ears pierced as per the custom of that society, this Brahmin thought: "If I summon a goldsmith for this task, my wealth will be ruined. Therefore, I must make the earrings myself." He hammered out two small pieces of gold and hung them on the child's ears. Consequently, the child was also given a nickname by society based on the ornament hanging from his ear: "Maṭṭakuṇḍalī." "Maṭṭa-koṇḍol"—earrings of flattened gold—meaning a stud or earring, because he hung such a thing on his ear.

Thus, in this way, perhaps because this child lived a very miserable life, by the time he was about sixteen years old, he contracted jaundice—a severe case of jaundice. His mother, the Brahmin woman, told the Brahmin to go and bring a physician. This Brahmin said, "Can't you see how my wealth will be destroyed if I bring a physician?" Having said that, instead of bringing one, he went to physicians and, in a roundabout, casual manner, tried to find out their remedies. He asked what medicines are given for such and such illnesses. Physicians, too, often give casual answers to such roundabout questions. And so, the physicians casually said that the bark of such and such trees is good for such illnesses. This Brahmin returned home, searched for these barks, and treated his son with this home-made, quack medicine. This quack medicine did not work. The child's illness became critical and aggravated, reaching an incurable state. At last, when there was no other choice, the Brahmin went and brought a physician. The physician, upon seeing him, immediately realized: "If I undertake to treat this patient, my reputation will be ruined." Therefore, he quietly slipped away, saying, "I have some other business, please call another physician."

Then the Brahmin realized that the child was now on the verge of death. Next, he thought, "When my son dies, those who come to the funeral house will see the wealth inside my home." Thinking so, he laid the dying child on the porch, out on the veranda. On this very day, the Buddha, as was His custom, emerged from the attainment of Great Compassion in the early dawn and surveyed the world, whereupon Maṭṭakuṇḍalī appeared in His Buddha-eye. That knowledge of the attainment of Great Compassion is a wondrous knowledge unique only to a Buddha. It is a wondrous kind of attainment that arises in a Buddha, backed by the wisdom and great compassion developed throughout the entirety of saṃsāra. When the Buddha emerges from this attainment and surveys the world, He mostly sees those who have performed various merits under past Buddhas, which have now matured. At any rate, Maṭṭakuṇḍalī, who was preparing to end his life in this miserable manner, appeared in the Buddha-eye of the Buddha.

Thus, out of great compassion, the Buddha, surrounded by the community of bhikkhus, walked for alms along the street where the Brahmin's house was located. When He reached the house, the Buddha saw that the child was lying down facing the inside of the house—that is, facing the wall. Seeing this, the Buddha, in order to draw his attention, projected a Buddha-ray, a single ray of Buddha-light, in that direction. When the light fell upon the wall, the child turned and looked. Upon seeing the physical form of the Buddha, a great clarity and faith arose in him, and he thought, "Alas, because of my

foolish father, I did not get the opportunity to see such a Buddha, to attend on Him, to listen to the Dhamma, or to offer alms." Then he tried to raise his two hands to place them on his forehead in worship. However, due to his weak state, he could only join his fingers. Then he thought, "All I can do now is to clarify my mind," and with his whole heart, without any doubt, dedicating his entire mind, he clarified his mind toward the Buddha. As he was looking at the Buddha, the Buddha thought, "This merit is enough for him," and He departed from there. Just as the Buddha walked out of sight—beyond the range of vision—the child Maṭṭakuṇḍalī passed away, dying with that very clarified mind, and was reborn in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven as a young deva adorned with golden ornaments in a golden mansion of thirty leagues.

Having been reborn there, he then looked to see how he obtained this celestial fortune. All such devas reflect in this manner: "How did I come to this state?" Then he saw the condition of his father, the Brahmin. After burning the corpse, the Brahmin went to the cemetery every day and wept, crying, "Where is my only son? Where is my only son?" The young deva saw this behavior of the Brahmin. Seeing this, Maṭṭakuṇḍalī Deva thought he should teach him a lesson. In the likeness of Maṭṭakuṇḍalī, but as a youth adorned with golden ornaments, he came near the cemetery and began to weep. The Brahmin, seeing this young deva—perhaps because he resembled his own child—felt a special affection and asked, "Why are you weeping?" Then the deva said, "I have obtained a golden carriage frame. Because I cannot find good wheels for it, I am planning to die of grief," implying he would commit suicide. Then the Brahmin said, "If you want, I will make wheels for you out of gold, silver, or brass, however you want." When he said this, the young deva replied, "I have no use for other wheels; I want the sun and the moon." Then the Brahmin said, "Why is this foolish child wishing for something he cannot obtain?" Then the young deva said, "I am wishing for the sun and the moon, which are visible. You are wishing for a deceased son, wishing for someone who cannot be seen. Who of us two is the greater fool?" Hearing this, wisdom dawned on the Brahmin. He also extinguished his grief. Having extinguished it, he thanked Maṭṭakuṇḍalī Deva and declared, "I have extinguished my grief." He then asked, "Who are you?" The deva replied, "I am your son. Having clarified my mind in my final moment, as the result of that wholesome thought, I obtained this rebirth." Then the Brahmin said, "I never saw you giving alms, observing virtue, or listening to the Dhamma. How did you obtain this state?" Then Maṭṭakuṇḍalī Deva declared, "When the Buddha came here, I clarified my mind. As a result of that bright, clarified mind, I obtained this state." Then he advised the Brahmin, "You too, go to the Triple Gem for refuge and undertake the five precepts. See the Buddha, give alms, listen to the Dhamma, and gather merit in that way." Having said this, Maṭṭakuṇḍalī Deva disappeared.

The Brahmin too went to see the Buddha, invited Him for alms, and prepared alms at his home. The Buddha and the community of bhikkhus arrived for the alms. Even a crowd of wrong-viewed people gathered at the Brahmin’s house. On this occasion, after offering the alms and after the meal was finished, the Brahmin questioned the Buddha: "Without giving alms, observing virtue, or listening to the Dhamma, is it possible to obtain

celestial fortunes merely by clarifying one's mind toward you?" Then the Buddha declared: "Why, Brahmin, did not your own son tell you this?" When the Buddha declared this, some in the crowd developed doubts. "How can one obtain such great fortune merely by clarifying the mind?" The Buddha then resolved that Maṭṭakuṇḍalī Deva should arrive there along with his celestial mansion. Accordingly, the young deva arrived at that spot with his mansion, descended from it, paid homage to the Buddha, and stood to one side. The Buddha, by questioning the young deva himself about the action he had performed, cleared the doubts of the crowd through a question-and-answer dialogue. The crowd then developed great confidence. "How wondrous is the quality of the Buddha! Merely by clarifying one's mind toward a Buddha, one can obtain such fortune!" They developed great joy and faith. To clarify this matter further, the Buddha, based on this event, gave a highly valuable Dhamma message to the world through the verse we mentioned earlier:

Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā – mano seṭṭhā manomayā

Manasā ce pasannena – bhāsati vā karoti vā

Tato naṁ sukhamanveti – chāyā'va anapāyinī

That is to say, "Mind precedes all mental states; mind is their chief, they are mind-made." Here, "dhamma" is generally explained as the mental states that arise in the mind, such as feeling (*vedanā*), perception, and volition. Mind precedes all of them; mind is supreme to them. They are formed and created by the mind. Because this is so, "If with a pleasant mind one speaks or acts, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never departs." The Buddha declared that the pleasant results of that action follow the person who performed it, just like one's own shadow. The meaning of this verse is so deep that, upon hearing it, not only Maṭṭakuṇḍalī Deva but also the Brahmin Adinnapubbaka attained the fruit of Stream-entry. That is to say, perhaps their past matured merits surfaced upon hearing this verse. Not only that, it is said that eighty-four thousand beings attained Dhamma-realization. Here, "thousands" includes devas as well. When we preach the Dhamma, it is not only the visible humans who listen, but various non-humans, devas, and spirits who wish to escape from the suffering of saṃsāra and have faith in the Triple Gem also listen. Especially when the Buddha preaches the Dhamma, everyone listens. That is why those who reaped the benefits are mentioned in thousands.

Therefore, we must reflect on this verse. We must also bring the lesson from the background story of this verse close to our lives. From every Dhamma sermon and every verse, we must gather some lesson, some Dhamma message for our life. Listening to the Dhamma is not something where merit is gathered merely by the act of hearing. Therefore, we can understand that this story is an excellent illustration of how the mind is primary to everything. When we look at the life led by Adinnapubbaka, this fact becomes clear to us. No matter how much wealth this Brahmin had, he was poor in mind. From this, we can see that being rich or poor is not something that happens through wealth alone. Even if one has great wealth, if that person is miserly, he is always

poor in mind. Due to his miserliness, he thinks, "This is not enough," or "I am still poor. I am not truly rich yet." Thus, despite having so much wealth, the Brahmin Adinnapubbaka was poor in mind—a very destitute person. Moreover, the darkness and narrowness of a miserly mind were visible in what the Brahmin said and did. From this, we can see that this mind is primary to everything. Furthermore, there is the darkening of the mind and its illumination. This is something that must be contemplated very deeply. The Buddha has declared that there is a class of dark qualities, and likewise, a class of bright, illuminating qualities.

"Abandoning dark qualities, let the wise person develop bright qualities," the Buddha declared. Dark qualities—meaning greed, hatred, and delusion—these are black/dark qualities. Non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion are bright qualities. These are illuminating qualities. They are called *sukka-dhamma*. In this way, we see that the Brahmin had darkened his mind due to dark qualities. On the other hand, when we reflect on it, the young child Maṭṭakuṇḍalī was not as rich as the Brahmin. At the moment of death, he was extremely poor and helpless, having only the two pieces of gold hanging from his ears. Yet, how did he obtain such a celestial state of existence? He became rich in mind. He enriched his mind. How did he enrich his mind? We must reflect on this well. He enriched his mind by taking the most sublime, supreme gem in the world as the object of his mind. Among all the gems in the world, the Buddha-gem is supreme and foremost, as the Buddha Himself declared. This is also mentioned in the Ratana Sutta:

'Yaṁ kiñci vittaṁ idhavā huraṁvā

Sagge su vā yaṁ ratanaṁ paṇītaṁ

Na no samaṁ atthi tathāgatena'.....

It is mentioned in this manner. If there is any wealth or gem in the world—in this world, or in another world, or in the celestial worlds—none of those gems is as valuable as the Buddha-gem, the Tathāgata. Moreover,

'Yaṁ kiñci ratanaṁ loke

Vijjati vividhā puthu

Ratanaṁ buddhasamaṁ natthi

Tasmā sotthi bhavantu te'

There are verses of blessing like this. Whatever diverse gems exist in the world, there is no gem equal to the Buddha-gem. Not only that, the Buddha Himself had to declare—since the world did not recognize the Tathāgata—that a Fully Enlightened Buddha is the supreme person in the world. In the Aggappasāda Sutta, the Buddha declared:

"Bhikkhus, to whatever extent there are beings—whether footless, two-footed, four-footed, multi-footed, with form or formless, percipient or non-percipient, or neither-

percipient-nor-non-percipient—the Tathāgata, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One, is declared supreme among them. Those who have confidence in the Buddha have confidence in the supreme. And for those who have confidence in the supreme, the result is supreme."

"Bhikkhus, to whatever extent there are beings... (gloss of the Sinhala text) among all these beings, the Tathāgata, the Worthy, Fully Enlightened One is supreme and foremost. Bhikkhus, those who clarify their minds toward the supreme Buddha, clarify their minds toward the foremost person in the world. The result of clarifying the mind toward the foremost person—toward the foremost object—is also supreme," the Buddha declared in the Aggappasāda Sutta. From this, we see how immensely fruitful it is to clarify the mind toward the Buddha. Sometimes we might think, "How can one obtain such fortune merely by clarifying the mind for a single moment?" Especially in this era, it is a time when the mind goes toward external things rather than the mind itself. The world talks a lot about their size, magnitude, and wondrous nature. They doubt the power of this unseen mind, the power that can be generated in a single moment. "How can one obtain such a great fortune by doing just this?" But we must reflect: the functioning of the mind is extremely rapid and swift. Within this swiftly functioning mind, a power that brings immense fruits can be generated in a single moment. Here, Maṭṭakuṇḍalī clarified his mind toward the Buddha for only a brief moment, a short time. Even that is not necessary. If, for a very brief moment, like the snapping of fingers, some clarity or opening occurs in the mind, through that, one can reap highly valuable and immense benefits. You know—let us think of a dark night. Like the rain-stormy nights we have these days, let us think of a night where the darkness is so thick it cannot be pierced. If lightning strikes for a single moment in such a night, in that very brief instant, everything around becomes clearly visible. In the same way, an opening is created in the mind according to the clear object one takes, according to the object toward which one clarifies the mind. In such a dark night, one can get a lot of work done from the light of lightning that appears for a brief moment. There are those in the past who worked in this way. There are stories of the past; just like the marksmen of today, the archers of those days demonstrated their skills (it is mentioned in this way): to show his skill and win prizes, or to set records, an archer stands ready with his arrow in the dark night. He waits for the lightning to strike. Far away, a very fine hair taken from a horse's tail is hung. Now, what is the feat to be performed? He must split this horsehair with his arrow. He stands ready for this. The moment the lightning strikes, he shoots. If he does this correctly, he is a skilled archer. This is given as a simile—he performed such a great feat within a split second. You have heard our Buddhist poets express this:

> "If the flash of lightning is missed
>
> When shooting a horsehair from afar in the dark, one misses.
>
> If one does not achieve the path and fruit of Nibbāna now
>
> When this lightning-like body is obtained, it will be missed in the future."

If one manages to shoot the horsehair in the dark at that precise moment, then one can reap the benefits. Many people talk about this "instant" (moment) nowadays. "We must work swiftly in this life." We are talking about the moments within this life. But the Buddha declares that our entire human existence is just a single moment, a brief instant. He declares this with reasons. To us, this seems like a long time. But when compared and contrasted with the life spans of the Brahma realms which last for aeons, this human life of less than a hundred years is like a single moment. This life, which we think of as so grand and in which we spend a few years in this long saṃsāra, is actually a single moment. Therefore, the Buddha refers to this entire human life as a single moment. The Buddha particularly demonstrates that the human existence obtained during the time of a Buddha's arising is not just a moment, but a consummation of the moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*). It is described as an extremely rare opportunity, a rare moment—a consummation of the moment. If one is born in a region where one can listen to the Dhamma, with the capacity for understanding and wisdom to practice the Dhamma during the time of a Buddha's arising, that is called *khaṇa-sampatti* (the consummation of the moment). It is an extremely valuable moment. That is the moment the poet illustrated. "When this lightning-like body is obtained" refers to this human existence. This human body exists for such a brief moment, just like a flash of lightning. Therefore, we must understand this moment, as Buddhists, looking at this entire human life as a single moment.

If we reflect in this way, generating wholesome thoughts and performing meritorious deeds is not something we should wait to do until our final moment, like Maṭṭakuṇḍalī did. We should not entertain the wrong view that we can go to heaven by doing this only at the moment of death. Sometimes, some people think this way nowadays. They gather wealth unlawfully and commit various crimes. At the final moment, they expect to summon a bhikkhu, listen to a little Dhamma, and go to heaven. Maṭṭakuṇḍalī was able to do that because he was someone who had fulfilled perfections and developed himself under past Buddhas; but things do not succeed for everyone just because of that. In truth, Maṭṭakuṇḍalī Deva obtained such a state due to a certain natural law (*dhammatā*), a deep principle concerning kamma. For, beings are born in various places according to their kamma. However, what is called *āsanna-kamma*—the kamma generated in accordance with the sign (*nimitta*) that appears at the moment of death—is extremely powerful. That is why the Buddha walked there to give Maṭṭakuṇḍalī an opportunity to purify his near-death mind and perform merit. But not everyone can perform that feat. Sometimes, due to the unwholesome deeds done during one's lifetime, another sign appears, and one is forced to take birth in a bad destination. The archer shot the horsehair in that manner only after putting in effort and training for a long time. It is not something that can be done all at once. What we have to understand here is that we must not wait until the near-death moment or old age. Thinking of our entire life as a single moment, we must always strive to generate this mind—this pleasant, clarified, pure, and bright mind—within ourselves. For, if those dark qualities present themselves, we will fall into darkness. If we bring forward bright qualities, we will be born in a good place.

Not only that, we can gradually draw closer to Nibbāna. Nibbāna means liberating the mind from these dark qualities of greed, hatred, and delusion.

From this, we can understand the value of this moment, and also that this is something that must be practiced and trained constantly. Just as the archer strives in this regard, a Buddhist must always keep watch over the mind. "Are the states arising in this mind things that lead to the mind's clarity, or are they things that agitate it?" Now, the word for clarity—here, "pasanna" means clarity. In the case of Maṭṭakuṇḍalī Deva, what is mentioned is the fruit of that clarified mind. We can understand the value of clarity: after a rain, when water flows with mud, looking very unpleasant, what is the state of our mind? Next, when we look at clear, pure water, our mind becomes clear. In the same way, when we collect a noble object, a supreme object like the Buddha into our mind, when we bring it close to our mind, our mind becomes clear. Therefore, the word that goes hand in hand with faith (*saddhā*) is *pasāda* (clarity/confidence). It is said, "saddhā-pasannena" (clarified with faith). Clarity goes together with faith. From this, we see that faith in the Triple Gem is an extremely important thing. A mind lacking faith in the Triple Gem is darkened by doubt, hesitation, and skepticism—just like troubled, muddy water. But if someone develops faith in the Buddha, a great clarity arises in the mind along with it. This is something that you can realize even in your day-to-day life.

That Maṭṭakuṇḍalī Deva clarified his mind by seeing the physical form, the body, of the Buddha. Although we do not get to see that physical body of the Buddha now, we can see His Dhamma-body. We can see the quality-body of the Buddha. Therefore, what we specifically have to understand here is the value of the 'recollection of the Buddha' (*buddhānussati*). Contemplating the qualities of the Buddha. Through the qualities of the Buddha, we can see the Buddha. If we contemplate the ninefold qualities of the Buddha, direct our mind toward those qualities like *Arahant*, bring forward some quality that suits our mind, and train ourselves to bring up some word like "Arahant, Arahant, Arahant" or "Buddho", "Sammā-sambuddho" constantly in our mind like a meditation, we can obtain great clarity and a light for our day-to-day activities. As stated in the verse, if someone speaks or acts with a pleasant mind, a clarified mind, the happy results follow him like his shadow. It is our mind that provides light to the words we use and the actions we perform. When this mind is clarified, a great light is created in the mind, like a flash of lightning on a pitch-black night.

Therefore, to constantly bring up clarity toward the Triple Gem in the mind, one must practice contemplating the qualities of the Buddha as the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). While traveling in a vehicle, while in a city—now there is no specific time. We must think that every moment is the near-death moment now. Especially when thinking about these times, some people think of the near-death moment as being eighty or ninety years old, surrounded by children and grandchildren. Now we must step out onto the road thinking we are in our near-death moment. Such is the state of affairs. Therefore, we must be much more mindful of the mind. If we pass away—if we die suddenly—at a bad time, when the mind is corrupted, darkened, or muddied, where will we go and be born? In a dark place. Either in hell, the ghost realm, or the demon realm. We said that there are two groups: dark qualities and bright qualities. There are two

factions in this mind. Whatever factions there may be in the world, we must be concerned about the factions in this mind, because we carry our mind wherever we go. Therefore, the dark faction in this mind consists of greed, hatred, and delusion. These three are the prominent figures of that dark faction: greed, hatred, and delusion. There are many other subsidiary qualities associated with them. Next, the bright qualities that support Nibbāna are non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred, and non-delusion. At first glance, there seems to be nothing there when we say "non-greed" (*alobha*). What is this non-greed? It is sometimes difficult to understand. This non-greed means turning away from greed. Turning away from greed may sometimes be thought of as a small thing. This is not a small thing. This is called a mental factor of abstinence (*virati-cetasika*)—the thought of abstaining.

This thought of turning away (abstaining) is a very powerful thing. Now, something that mainly supports this is virtue (*sīla*), the undertaking of virtue. Undertaking the precepts. On this occasion, for you to abstain from killing living beings—indeed, when undertaking the precepts, one must pronounce the word "veramaṇī" (abstinence) well. "Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi"—I undertake the precept of abstaining from destroying life, from killing living beings. This is a promise one makes to oneself, that "I accept this and put it into practice." Though one declares this in front of the Saṅgha, it is actually a promise to oneself. Or, one places it in one's mind: "I will spend this day in this manner, based on this practice." Then, for the person who has resolved thus, let us say an occasion arises—either for food, for pleasure, or to settle a grudge—where he feels like killing someone or an animal. The moment that thought arises, he can push it aside through non-hatred. He brings forward loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathy, and non-harming (*avihiṃsā*), recalls the virtue he has undertaken, and abstains from it. Taking this as an illustration, that moment is an extremely valuable moment—the power of the mind to turn away. That is what is called the mental factor of abstinence (*virati-cetasika*). It is called *sampatta-virati* (abstinence when confronted with an opportunity). That is, the opportunity to commit a sin arose, but one does not do it. One withdraws one's hand. Say, to commit a theft—he knows it is a valuable thing belonging to someone else. It is right in front of him, and no one is around. All he has to do is look around and quietly extend his hand. But at that moment, the mind says, "Do not do that." Why does it feel that way? It is because of undertaking that virtue: "Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi." Accordingly, we see that this undertaking of virtue is no small matter. It is not merely a custom—nowadays, at every meeting or festival, to show that one is a Buddhist, they repeat the undertaking of virtue. But when we reflect on its depth, how powerful and important a thing is it? It is the first step in our life. Thus, in this way—it is called "by way of substitution of opposites" (*tadaṅga-vasena*)—the mind distances itself from the defilements. For each such moment, by applying a wholesome thought, one distances the unwholesome thought. One must also accumulate wholesome thoughts within oneself for this. One must develop loving-kindness to overcome hatred. To overcome greed, one must develop giving, generosity, and the quality of sacrifice. To overcome delusion, one must utilize understanding, wisdom, reflection, wise reflection, and contemplating things as they really are. Therefore, the moment we say "non-greed, non-hatred, non-delusion," it

seems as if there is nothing there. But if we analyze and reflect on it, we are talking about a power here—called *virati* (abstinence)—that can subdue and drive away those unwholesome qualities that come from outside as visitors and enemies.

This is not a feat that can be done all at once. Therefore, we must constantly develop the mind by way of meditation. The Buddha mentions three words when declaring meditation: "āsevati, bhāveti, bahulīkaroti." One constantly associates with a wholesome object. If it is the recollection of the Buddha, one constantly associates with a word like "Arahant, Arahant, Arahant" or "Buddho," like one's companion at home, constantly bringing it up and living with it—*āsevati*. *Bhāveti* means one develops it. When one says it a second time, a greater power comes to the mind than the first time. Saying that word "Buddha" ten times, a thousand times, a million or a billion times, one's faith in the Triple Gem develops more and more. This is not merely reciting it as a mantra. The heart must function along with it. A clarity must arise in the heart. In the same way, if one develops loving-kindness, using the words "may they be well and happy," one must constantly associate with that meditation object according to what one has chosen. One must strive to develop the mind through that—this is meditation (*bhāvanā*).

Next, there is a word, *bahulī-kamma—bahulīkaroti*, making much of it. That means not just for a day or two, or for an hour or half-hour, but abundantly. One must strive oneself. No matter how many activities one has in day-to-day life, if one has understood the value of one's mind—we take so much trouble for this body. To nourish this body, to bathe it, wash it, adorn it, all of this. This "foul body that is left behind." How much do we attend to it? Yet, we do not think about the value of the mind even for a very brief moment of the day. It is this mind that helps us to escape from saṃsāra, and also to bring about a good destination (*sugati*). If one reflects in this way, one becomes keen about meditation. In the manner described by *āsevati, bhāveti, bahulīkaroti*, one must constantly bring up a wholesome object to the mind and live with it. Even if it seems difficult or troublesome at first, once it is practiced, one can do it effortlessly, as if naturally—almost automatically. When one puts on a pair of spectacles for the first time, it is a great nuisance. But after a few days, one can work very easily with those spectacles. After some time, one even looks for them while they are on one's face, asking, "Where are my spectacles?" Why is this? To that extent, the spectacles have become a part of one's body.

The meditation object is also like that. Then, to the person who has developed the recollection of the Buddha, when danger comes—nowadays, people sometimes scream, "Budu Amme!" (Oh Buddha, Mother!). According to past customs, the word "Budu" (Buddha) has been integrated into our society. But that is not a mechanical utterance when pain arises. It is from the whole heart—Maṭṭakuṇḍalī obtained that state by clarifying his mind with his whole heart, not by saying it merely as a custom or a mantra. One must reflect in that manner. One must reflect on the maximum benefit one can gain from every story and strive to reap it. One must reflect on the maximum benefit and strive to reap it. According to the matters stated in this verse, we see that our mind is primary to the words we use and the actions we perform. That is the uniqueness of the Buddha's Dhamma. Nowadays, there are various scientific methods of thinking. They are

often formulated according to wrong views. Because they give priority to physical and external things. Because they are clearly visible and possess colorful qualities, we are deceived by them. But the Buddha has pointed out the truth. In this long saṃsāric journey of ours, what is primary, what goes ahead—what helps our actions (*kamma*) to become good or bad—is this mind that arises in us.

"Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā – mano seṭṭhā manomayā"

Not only that, they are created by the mind itself. According to this story, it is very clearly shown. That celestial body of Maṭṭakuṇḍalī was created by the mind itself. It was visible to humans. Beings present at that time saw: "Alas, by merely clarifying his mind toward the Buddha at the final moment, the Brahmin's son obtained such a celestial state of existence with golden ornaments, didn't he?" That is why, through that very faith, the other necessary qualities gathered in his mind and he attained the realization of the paths and fruits. Therefore, very valuable and deep Dhamma is contained within this story which we might think of as simple.

Thus, creating an opening in the mind at each such moment is what is done through practicing virtue and other qualities. This is the purification or clarification of the mind by way of substitution of opposites (*tadaṅga-vasena*). There are three stages in this effort of development. They are mentioned in the Dhamma as *tadaṅga* (substitution of opposites), *vikkhambhana* (suppression), and *samuccheda* (eradication). What is done through virtue (*sīla*)—in observing the precepts—is that at each moment, one presents a wholesome thought and drives away the unwholesome. Next, a slightly more established and developed stage than that is concentration (*samādhi*). That too is like this: if one develops meditation through the recollection of the Buddha and the like, and controls the running mind—the mind that runs after various things and objects—through some good meditation subject, through the words "may they be well and happy" or through some meditation object like "Buddho" or "Arahant," after some time, the mind becomes calm. This calming is called concentration (*samādhi*). The qualities that darken the mind are referred to in the Dhamma as hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). Sensory desires, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt—all of these are suppressed, and just as the mud settles and the water in a pond becomes clear, an occasion comes when the mind is clarified. That is called concentration (*samādhi*). That is also a stage one can experience through a meditation subject—a very special state where the mind's clarity is greater than before.

Next, finally, the stage that goes even deeper is called eradication (*samuccheda*). There are those heavy defilements, the underlying tendencies (*anusaya*), which we have carried along throughout saṃsāra. They lie suppressed. To dry them up, to eliminate them, one must develop wisdom (*paññā*). By reflecting on this entire body, on this life, as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), and developing insight (*vipassanā*), at some point, the mind becomes illuminated. It becomes illuminated by wisdom. The qualities that support this are, as stated in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), developing mindfulness, and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). If one reflects in that manner and

develops meditation so that wisdom grows, and if one develops the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and not-self, then at the moment of realizing the paths and fruits, through insight-wisdom, one can generate the power within the mind to destroy the lower layers of those unwholesome deeds, or defilements, that we carry throughout saṃsāra.

Thus, virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—this is the Dispensation (*sāsana*); this is what belongs to us. Many people explain the Buddha's Dispensation in various ways. But the Buddha's Dispensation is actually the cultivation of virtue, concentration, and wisdom within one's own mind-stream (*citta-santāna*). What helps in this, the first necessary thing, is our understanding of the value of this mind of ours—that the mind precedes everything, that the mind is chief, and that these are made by the mind. Regarding those celestial states of existence, it is very well known how they are made by the mind itself. Leaving that aside, though we do not think about it day-to-day, let us say the potter who makes a vessel like a pot makes it with some mental picture or plan of that pot, and according to that, he takes a lump of clay and creates a pot. Likewise, if someone manufactured everything that is in front of us, the first perception (*saññā*) of that manufacturing occurred in the mind. A plan arose. Even when building a building, it is the same. So, where did this plan arise? In the mind. Later, using the four great elements—earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*)—when it appeared as a form (*rūpa*), then next, we are deceived by it. Humans think this is the great thing. But many people do not think about the plan that lies beneath this. What the Buddha did was to remind the world of this. It is through that alone that one can escape from saṃsāra. Therefore, one must reflect with wisdom. This is what is called right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) means giving priority to unsuitable, improper, or wrong things. Right view, correct vision, means bringing forward those qualities that help one escape from the suffering of saṃsāra, in the manner declared by the Buddha.

Therefore, according to this verse, we must reflect. We must reflect on our own lives—regardless of age limits. "How am I leading my life? Is it in the way the world says, in the way society goes, or in the way pointed out by the Buddha?" Reflecting thus, one must prepare a plan necessary for one's day-to-day life. In this plan, there must be a place for virtue (*sīla*). There must be a place for concentration (*samādhi*). There must be a place for wisdom (*paññā*). "A place" means understanding their values and leading one's day-to-day life in a way that brings them forward. On this occasion, you undertook virtue—the eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). Through this, you can liberate the mind by way of substitution of opposites (*tadaṅga-vasena*). Just like the archer shooting the horsehair by the light of lightning, in those minor moments when unwholesome thoughts present themselves—when a thought to do wrong arises—you present your virtue and drive it away. Next, if someone has developed the power of concentration, he can experience the mind's clarity, pleasantness, and light for a longer period. Next, through the realization of the paths and fruits—Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship—if someone has developed wisdom,

developed insight-knowledges, and obtained that liberation from saṃsāra, then he can experience the most valuable state in the world—the purest state of one's mind.

Therefore, you must reflect on utilizing this Dispensation of the Buddha, on utilizing the human existence we have obtained. This is an extremely rare thing. Even devas sometimes say that this human existence, this human world, is the best place to realize Nibbāna. Though it is a short, brief period, if utilized properly during this time, this human mind can be elevated to the highest state. That is why Buddhas are born only in the human world. That is why a Buddha arises and appears only in the world. Reflecting in that way, you must take advantage of the opportunity you have received. From every Dhamma sermon, you must gain some lesson for your life, reflect on the defilements that arise in the mind as dark, and to drive them away, you must develop those wholesome qualities called *sukka-dhamma* in your mind: generosity, loving-kindness, wisdom, and Dhamma-realization. On this occasion, even by listening to the Dhamma, you can clarify your mind. For, through the Dhamma, we see the Buddha. When listening to the Dhamma, the doubts, worries, and hesitations in one's mind are removed, and a clarity arises in the mind. Clarity of mind is extremely necessary. It is through that that the true nature of the world is seen. When the mind is darkened, darkened by delusion (*moha*), the true nature is not seen. Therefore, one's words go wrong, and both words and actions incline toward the unwholesome and sinful side. Therefore, this saṃsāra is generally a journey that inclines toward defilements, inclines toward darkness. To escape from this, one must generate a great power.

In truth, when we consider the meanings of the two words *kusala* and *akusala*, *kusala* means being skilled. *Akusala* means being unskilled. In this saṃsāric journey, inclining toward the plane of misery is being unskilled; inclining toward good destinations is being skilled. Next, having to continue in saṃsāra is being unskilled; bringing the suffering of saṃsāra to a swift end is being skilled. Reflecting in this way, what we call mundane and supramundane *kusala*—this *kusala* means being skilled, being skilled. This being skilled, like the archer, is not something that can be done all at once. This must be developed over a long time. Therefore, from today itself, you must strive at every moment—without thinking there is no time. In day-to-day life, people say there is no time. But everyone has time that is wasted. This can be well recognized; although you may not hear it in Dhamma sermons, there is a word often heard in society: "loitering" (wasting time/loitering). This wasting of time is a time when rust accumulates in the mind, a time when the mind is darkened. This wasting of time is often heard of in day-to-day life, especially in cities: "I went to such and such an office and wasted time there." Wasting time on the road. This occasion is an extremely good opportunity to bring forward your practiced meditation subject—let us think of the Buddha-gem; like taking a gem from one's pocket, looking at it, and rejoicing, on such occasions, if you bring forward the Buddha-gem—the supreme gem in the world mentioned here—in a way invisible to others, not because others would snatch it, as they might have no use for it anyway—but by bringing forward the Buddha-gem: "Buddho, Buddho, Buddho" or "Arahant, Arahant, Arahant," then he has made use of that wasted time. Or, "may they be well and happy," some meditation subject he has taken. Or, the in-breaths and out-breaths of one's body,

which is called mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). If one utilizes those wasted, spent times, then without even knowing it, he becomes a meditator. In the end, almost without knowing it—we say "without knowing it" because the behavior of the mind is so wondrous—if the mind has matured, at unexpected moments, one even obtains the realization of the paths and fruits almost without knowing it.

In the past, when the Buddha preached the Dhamma, the saying that someone became an Arahant or a Stream-enterer even while listening to a sermon is sometimes misunderstood by modern intellectual scholars. "We too can do it that way," they think. It was only to those minds that had practiced and trained in those qualities over a long period under past Buddhas or in past dispensations, and developed them to a high level, requiring only a tiny bit more, that the realization of the paths and fruits could be obtained so swiftly. One should not think that everyone is like that. But the lesson we have to take from it is: if someone wants to obtain such a state in such a short time, it must be practiced over a long period. It must be trained. One must strive to create opportunities for that within one's own life.

Thus, on this valuable Uposatha day, you undertook a valuable virtue—the eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). If this is not merely a custom, reflecting on each one—what is present here is a set of principles concerning the control of body and speech—this is virtue (*sīla*). To protect it, the mind must support it. The mind supports it through what was called the mental factor of abstinence (*virati-cetasika*)—that mind of turning away. One must bring forward the mind of turning away from these stated matters. Saying "do not do these things" is easier. That is why the Buddha has applied the word *veramaṇī* (abstinence) in these qualities of virtue. Scholars sometimes think there is nothing in this. It is in this that something exists. Therefore, this eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth—if one directs the mind well even when undertaking this virtue, that moment is also an occasion when a great opening is created in the mind. "I did these things before. From now on, I will not do them," one places a resolution in the mind. That is a great thing. If that resolution was taken in the morning, and if one was able to protect it throughout the day, a clarity, confidence, and happiness arise in one's mind in the evening. Such is virtue. Next, likewise, if one has practiced some meditation subject in day-to-day life—on those wasted times mentioned earlier—without saying it is difficult or there is no time, during whatever leisure moments or times one can be happy and rejoice, if one brings forward that meditation subject and develops the mind, then without even knowing it, one grows in concentration (*samādhi*). At some point, the mind can even fall into absorption (*jhāna*). Having worked hard and contemplated that meditation subject, when one lies down on the bed, one may obtain absorption even while on the bed.

It was by doing so that lay devotees of the past, like Nakulāmātā, Nakulapitā, Citta the Householder, and Anāthapiṇḍika, obtained such high states. Those were not lives spent being immersed in matters of money; such was not the way of Buddhist lay devotees, upasakas and upasikas, during the Buddha's time. Inclining toward the Dhamma, somehow finding time for the Dhamma, they were able to develop concentration in that way. Next, what is more valuable is finally utilizing that concentration to understand the

true nature of the world—its impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature—through the very events that happen in day-to-day life. In truth, every event that happens in the world can be placed within these three characteristics: impermanent, suffering, and not-self. This is a three-character sign. This sign can be seen everywhere. Wherever one looks. But for that, proper reflection must be present. There must be correct vision, which is called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). For the person with correct vision, insight can be developed through the streams, brooks, and rivers flowing in this world, the fruits and flowers falling from these trees, and through everything. The three characteristics of impermanent, suffering, and not-self can be seen. In that way, one must reflect well on how one can guide one's mind in day-to-day life. Without putting this off saying "I cannot," and thinking "I must clarify my mind only in old age or at the near-death moment to go to a heaven like Maṭṭakuṇḍalī," if one thinks so, then this Dhamma sermon has been understood in a wrong way. It has been understood in a perverted way. That is not how one should think. There is a saying in this world: "If it is this much for that, how much would it be for this?" In that way, if one can do such a great thing with the mind in a brief moment, what can one not do when it is well developed? One must reflect in that manner.

Reflecting thus, today, through the undertaking of virtue, and through listening to the Dhamma and clarifying the mind toward the Triple Gem, you made a beginning in traveling on the path of Dhamma declared in this verse. We must aspire: "May this store of merit generated through that, by cultivating and developing within our mind-stream the spiritual faculties and powers (*indriya* and *bala* qualities) that support Nibbāna—such as faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—enable us, if possible in this very life, through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, to realize this noble Dhamma of Nibbāna, and escaping from all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) such as birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*), to attain the peace of supreme Nibbāna."

Likewise, to whatever extent there is a host of right-viewed devas and brahmas protecting the Dispensation, and likewise, whatever devas and deities residing in this sacred place who wish for merit and wish for Nibbāna, may they all rejoice in this merit of our preaching and hearing of the Dhamma. Having rejoiced, may they all realize supreme Nibbāna through their aspired enlightenment (*bodhi*). Whatever relatives have passed away and departed to the world beyond, and not only that, whatever beings from Avīci hell up to the Akanitha heaven who wish for merit and wish for Nibbāna, may they all rejoice in our merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma. Having escaped from their miserable destinations and walking on the path of Dhamma, may they all attain the peace of supreme Nibbāna as quickly as possible. Now, let us share merit by reciting verses in this manner.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #14

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Susukhaṃ vata jīvāma, verinesu averino;

Verinesu manussesu, viharāma averino.

Susukhaṃ vata jīvāma, āturesu anāturā;

Āturesu manussesu, viharāma anāturā.

Susukhaṃ vata jīvāma, ussukesu anussukā;

Ussukesu manussesu, viharāma anussukā.

From:

Verses 197-199 from the Sukhavagga (Chapter on Happiness) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The desire for happiness is a common phenomenon shared by all living beings in the entire human world. The whole world is engaged in a journey of seeking happiness. However, this journey in search of happiness often ends in suffering (*dukkha*). The reason for this is that the ordinary worldling, whose eyes are covered by ignorance and bound by craving (*taṇhā*), seeks happiness through the wrong path. They have fallen into this state because they do not correctly know either true happiness or the path to it. Aspiring to fulfill the perfections (*pāramīs*) for four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand cosmic cycles, our Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, attained Supreme Enlightenment on a Vesak full-moon day like today, in order to introduce the true happiness and the path to true happiness to the beings of the world who are running around in search of it. The Buddha, utilizing His great wisdom and great compassion,

intervened on many occasions and delivered Dhamma discourses to steer the beings of the world away from seeking happiness through the wrong path and to introduce them to true happiness. Now, these three verses we have taken as our theme, along with their related story, demonstrate to us how the Buddha, relying on His quality of supreme guide of persons to be tamed (*anuttaro purisadamma sārathī*), employing skillful means out of great compassion, and clarifying the true nature of the Dhamma with great wisdom, brought peace and solace to the world.

A river named Rohini flows between the city of Kapilavastu, belonging to the Sakya clan, and the city of Koliya, belonging to the Koliya clan. Having built a dam across this river and utilizing its water, the farmers of both these cities—of both these kingdoms—cultivate their fields. During a certain drought, both groups realized that the water was depleting, saying, "Both of our groups cannot carry out this cultivation; this water is sufficient only for one group." Then, these two factions gathered and began to dispute and argue to claim the water for themselves. Having fallen into bickering, quarreling, and trading insults about their lineages, this commotion eventually reached the ears of the royal clans and the royal palaces of both factions. Ultimately, circumstances developed to the point of a major war. The kings of both sides, chanting battle slogans, set out for war. Precisely at dawn on that day, when the Buddha was surveying the world with His great compassion, He saw that if He did not visit the place, his own two relative royal clans would destroy each other, resulting in a great bloodbath. Seeing this, the Buddha traveled alone through the air and sat cross-legged in mid-air over the middle of the Rohini River.

As soon as the Buddha arrived there and they saw Him, the kings of both the Sakya and Koliya clans cast down their weapons and paid homage to Him. The Buddha asked, "Great kings, what is the cause of this dispute?" Those kings were unable to declare in one voice what the primary cause of this war was. Why? Because after they had insulted each other's lineages, it was actually the hatred (*dosa*) arising from those insults that had dragged them into war in this manner. Even the kings themselves did not know the underlying cause. Then they stated to the Buddha: "We do not know. Perhaps the commander-in-chief knows." When the commander-in-chief was summoned and questioned, he too said he did not know. He said, "Perhaps the viceroy (*yuvarāja*) knows." Questioning in this manner, it was finally revealed that the dispute initiated by the farmers was the cause that had set the stage for this war. Then the Buddha asked both factions, "Great kings, how much is this water worth?" "Water, Venerable Sir, is worth very little. Water is a thing of negligible value." "How much are these warrior-kings (*kṣatriya*) worth?" "That, indeed, is of priceless, inestimable value." "Then, great kings, why do you destroy precious human lives for the sake of something so worthless?" When the Buddha questioned thus, the kings had no answer to give. Thereafter, the Buddha preached the Dhamma through the verses we have themed. He uttered those verses declaring, "You are all keeping your minds in an extremely restless state through hatred, defilements, and the pursuit of fivefold sensual pleasures; but among such a world, I live experiencing true happiness in this manner."

"Ah, happily do we live, free from hatred among the hateful;

Among hateful men, we dwell free from hatred."

"Ah, happily do we live, free from hatred among the hateful"—among hateful human beings, among the hateful living beings of the world, we—"we" refers to the Buddha and those noble ones who have calmed their defilements—dwell free from hatred. "Ah, happily do we live" means very happily; *sukhaṃ* means happiness, and *susukhaṃ* means extreme happiness. Experiencing happiness of the very highest level, we dwell free from hatred among a hateful world. "Among hateful men, we dwell free from hatred." We dwell free from hatred among hateful beings. Similarly, "Ah, happily do we live, free from affliction among the afflicted"—among beings afflicted and diseased with defilements, we live very happily, free from affliction—without that affliction of defilements. "Among afflicted men, we dwell free from affliction"—among such beings afflicted by defilements, we dwell free from affliction. In the same way, "Ah, happily do we live, free from anxiety among the anxious"—among restless beings who are anxious and straining themselves in the pursuit of the fivefold sensual pleasures, we live happily, free from such searching. In that manner, the Buddha uttered these three verses based on the happiness of Nibbāna (*Nibbāna-sukha*) He had attained. Upon hearing this, many attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). Furthermore, the war ended right there.

Now, let us direct our thoughts toward this peaceful message of solace given by the Buddha. Particularly, with reference to this incident, we can understand the manner in which anger, rage, and hatred arise in the world. Whatever wars occur in the world, the beginning of every single one is the human mind. The hatred that arises as a seed in a human mind gradually matures. Once this becomes resentment, and ultimately deep-seated hatred, that defilement burns oneself while burning others, directing beings toward destruction for a long time. Furthermore, you have heard the past stories regarding the elder Devadatta. How many aeons (*kalpas*) into the future did that hatred Devadatta conceived against the Bodhisatta in the past extend? It is the impermanent (*anicca*) nature of such things in the world that we must contemplate first of all. Especially, this era is one in which the fire of hatred, the fire of anger, is spreading everywhere, both in this country and in the entire world. In such a context, what the worldling considers as happiness is fighting and gaining victory. There is a concept called "drinking the cup of victory"; many people, without recognizing the restlessness within themselves, expect peace and solace by subduing or putting to death their opponent and then celebrating victory. But the Buddha has declared:

"Victory breeds hatred; the defeated lies down in suffering (*dukkha*).

The peaceful one lies down happily, abandoning both victory and defeat."

If someone achieves victory, what arises from it is further hatred. The peaceful person, having abandoned both victory and defeat, dwells happily. Moreover, it is the word of the Buddha that hatred is never appeased by hatred. Thus, we understand how much destruction this thought of hatred causes throughout the world. If this is not properly treated at its very inception, it is just like a pathogen. Now, in a place where pathogens

spread, some form of vaccination or immunization is required. Where there is no immunization, pathogens multiply dangerously and make a person sick. It is the same with this hatred. In some people, when proper practices like loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*) are absent, these tendencies become character traits. There is a constant state of irritability, hatred, and overflowing anger. Such a person is described in the Dhamma as *arukūpamo puggala*, "a person comparable to an open sore." *Aruka* means a wound or sore. When a person with an open sore goes into a crowd, whenever the crowd jostles even slightly here and there, this person gets angry because his wound gets irritated. In that way, a person with intense hatred is compared to a wounded patient. Due to that hatred, a nature of constant collision arises. He collides everywhere—with people, and often with things. With every such collision, what is the transformation that occurs within this person's mind? Not only does that dangerous defilement of hatred manifest at that particular moment, but it also leads him to states like demons, hungry ghosts (*petas*), or hell (*niraya*) according to karma over a long period in *saṃsāra*, bringing him long-lasting suffering (*dukkha*). Moreover, once that thought grows, it expresses itself through the tongue as harsh speech. It does not end there. After bickering and quarreling, it manifests in action, leading one to dangerous unwholesome deeds such as the destruction of life. In this way, one must contemplate the disadvantageous side (*ādīnava*) of hatred beforehand.

Next, the Buddha has declared five methods to appease deep-seated hatred—which is called *āghāta*, harboring resentment or a grudge. First—there is no need to explain this anew—is loving-kindness (*mettā*) itself; practicing loving-kindness meditation. Second is compassion (*karuṇā*). In certain situations, compassion also helps to understand the weaknesses of one's opponent. Considering it as a saṃsāric weakness, as an illness, one should look at the person who has harbored resentment or hatred as a sick person, as a wounded patient. Then, by making compassion the path and the medium, one can appease the deep-seated hatred or intense resentment that has arisen within oneself. In other instances, equanimity (*upekkhā*) is used. Equanimity means impartial looking. Contemplating: "This person's body and my body are both made of these great elements—earth, water, fire, and wind (*pathavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*). Toward which part of this person am I directing hatred?" In this way, one endeavors to arouse equanimity. The Buddha has declared that equanimity is also something that aids in appeasing hatred. Also, there is "forgetting and non-attention" (*asati amanasikāra*—not remembering, not paying attention). Hatred grows because it is repeatedly brought to mind. To remove this tendency of its arising, one must try not to pay attention to it. One must direct the mind to ignore it. It is because of the intention of revenge for the wrong done to oneself that it keeps arising repeatedly. Instead, one must try to forget it. Also, another method is shown: contemplating in accordance with the Dhamma that all beings are owners of their karma (*kamma-dāyāda*). That is, thinking of the natural law (*dharmatā*) that according to karma, whoever does wrong will experience its fruits and results. Now, for many people, hatred arises—what they call "righteous anger"—in order to "teach others a lesson." Thinking in that way: "I must teach them a lesson." But one does not see the hatred within oneself. It remains hidden as a deceptive state (*vañcaka dhamma*). Therefore, one must think: "This is the natural law of the world. If someone commits a

wrong, they will have to suffer the consequences according to karma. We should not become the instruments for that. If we become the instruments to punish them, we too will have to experience the retributive results." In this manner, the Buddha has shown five ways to appease deep-seated hatred.

This is something one can experience and utilize for oneself in daily life. Furthermore, a monk highly renowned in this dispensation for virtues such as loving-kindness and compassion is the Chief Disciple, the Great Sariputta. On one occasion, he expounded five ways to the community of monks to appease this deep-seated hatred called *āghāta*. He presents incredibly wondrous similes. He demonstrates: suppose someone has conceived hatred or resentment toward another person. That person's physical conduct is impure—that is, his bodily behavior is very bad—but his verbal conduct is very pleasant and good. Or, there is no fault in his verbal behavior. Venerable Sariputta demonstrates with a simile how one should act when hatred arises toward such a person. Just as a monk who uses rag-robes (*paṃsukūla-cīvara*), while walking along a path or street, upon finding a piece of cloth, steps on one end with his left foot, tears off the clean portion with his right hand, takes it and goes his way; likewise, at that moment, one should not contemplate that person's bad physical conduct. Without thinking about his physical behavior, one contemplates only the good side. Bringing to the fore the fact that his verbal behavior is good, one appeases one's own hatred. This is the simile he gives. This is not to be taken as something unique only to those monks, but each individual must understand it through the help of this simile. This refers to a person who has both a good side and a bad side. Or let us say, the bad side is the physical conduct, and the good side is the verbal conduct. If we want to cultivate our hatred and resentment, we are inclined to think only of the bad side. Sometimes, the virtue of a person, which is as vast as a mountain, can be erased by a fault as small as a shred. One enjoys a certain misplaced pleasure, a misplaced delight, through that thought of hatred. But one does not benefit; one burns. That happens because of contemplating what should not be contemplated. Therefore, Venerable Sariputta declares, taking that simile to heart—monks who wear rag-robes do not just abandon a dirty piece of cloth when they find it. They take only the usable portion of it. In the same way, recollecting the good side of that person, one inclines one's mind toward loving-kindness. One inclines it toward compassion. Thus, one appeases that deep-seated hatred which yields dangerous results.

Similarly, in the next simile, there is a person whose physical conduct is pure, but verbal conduct is impure. That is, the actions done by body are good, but the things done by speech are bad. What is the simile Venerable Sariputta gives to appease the deep-seated hatred that arises toward such a person? Suppose someone, in a time of great drought, during the hot season, comes searching for water with a severe thirst. There is a pond, but its water is covered with algae. Since he needs to drink water, he somehow pushes aside the algae with both hands, drinks as much water as he needs, and goes his way. In that simile, the algae represents the shortcomings in that person's speech. What is shown is that without contemplating those, one should take only the good part. In that manner, according to the diversity of each individual, Venerable Sariputta has shown a way to discipline one’s feelings, a method of proper reflection.

Next, thirdly, it is shown: indeed, there can be a person whose physical conduct is very bad, and verbal conduct is also very bad, but occasionally, from time to time, a pure and clear state of mind arises, though very rarely. The simile Venerable Sariputta gives to appease hatred toward such a person is truly wonderful. Suppose in a time of drought, a person is searching for water, extremely thirsty. On his way, there is no water anywhere else. There is only a little water in a puddle formed by a cow's footprint. Seeing this, this person does not think, "Now I must bring a bucket and drink this water" or "I must put both hands in and drink it." Why? Because then the water will get muddied. That is something that cannot be done. Therefore, depending on the situation, what does that person do? He falls on all fours like a cow and laps up the water with his tongue. Why? Because of his thirst in the drought. What does Venerable Sariputta show through this simile? No matter how bad a side that person has—there is nothing of worth in his physical conduct, nothing of worth in his verbal conduct—yet occasionally, just like a brief flash of lightning in a pitch-black night, a tiny opening appears in his mind. That is enough for one to cultivate loving-kindness and arouse compassion. That is the lesson Venerable Sariputta teaches. Forgetting the unsuitable side and contemplating, "Oh, although he is so bad, is there not at least this little bit of good to be taken from this person?" one appeases one's hatred. All this is done for one's own sake. If that fire of hatred grows in one's mind, one will have to suffer grave consequences in *saṃsāra* as well. Not only that, but even in this life, because it grows and ultimately leads to brawls, murders, and so on. That is the third simile.

Next, Venerable Sariputta demonstrates: indeed, there can be a person whose physical conduct is very bad—nothing of worth. Verbal conduct—also nothing of worth. Furthermore, it is said that not even occasionally, like a flash of lightning, does any goodness arise in his mind, nor does any pleasant state arise. To put it briefly, he is a person of whom there is "absolutely nothing of worth." Yet, the attitude one must adopt even toward such a person is shown next. Suppose someone sees an extremely poor, sick, and helpless person traveling on a desert road. He has no food to carry, no water to drink, no guide to show the way, no food, and no medicine. In that manner, in an extremely miserable and helpless state, he travels along the path. How does a wise person who sees this contemplate? "Oh, if only someone would help this helpless person and show him the way! If only someone would give him some food, some medicine, so that he would not perish but somehow survive!" In this way, a thought of compassion is aroused. Generally, such thoughts arise in those who feel compassion when seeing such a person. Through this simile, we are to think that even if there is absolutely nothing of worth to be taken from the person who has done wrong to us, we must still show compassion to that person. What we show through all these similes is the application of one's mind to the simile, and thereby taking what is useful for one's own life. This concerns the fourth person.

Next, fifthly, it is shown: now, sometimes such things also happen in society. A person’s physical conduct is very good, and verbal conduct is very good. There seems to be absolutely no fault, yet for some reason, hatred arises, perhaps due to a personal matter. When such hatred arises, it is very easy to appease it. For this too, Venerable Sariputta

gives a simile. Suppose in a drought, a thirsty person searching for water finds a full lake or pond, with good shade, clean water, and shaded trees all around. Just as that person, without any trouble, drinks water, bathes to his heart's content, and remains peacefully and happily under a tree; likewise, contemplating the good side of that person, and thinking, "Even though hatred arose in me toward him, he is a person of such good virtues," and bathing in those virtues—bathing in that river of virtues—one must appease the fire of one's hatred. This is what Venerable Sariputta demonstrates.

In this manner, we must now contemplate. What do we see through this? Underlying the path of our life and every action we perform is the attitude we adopt toward something. "Attitude" means the way we look at something. We can change that; it is not a permanent thing. We are capable of changing it. The Buddha declares that this change must be done in accordance with the Dhamma. Now, in the Dhamma, there are two types of reflection: wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) and unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). All defilements (*kilesa*) arise from that improper way of reflecting on things related to them. Therefore, to be freed from them, one must train oneself in proper reflection, which is wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Here, Venerable Sariputta has demonstrated exactly this wise attention through these similes. The Buddha has explicitly permitted that if, in any manner, unwholesome states are subdued and wholesome states (*kusala*) arise, one must reflect in that manner. Utilizing any simile as an aid, or employing any method, one must contemplate in such a way that unwholesome states—namely, greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*)—are suppressed. One must reflect in a way that eliminates them, not in a way that increases them. For that, one has the right to guide one's mind by prioritizing any simile, mental image, or wholesome thought. It is by systematic cultivation in this manner that what we call an "attitude" is formed. Now, if we consider a person who does not even know what loving-kindness meditation or loving-kindness is, his perspective on the world—the way he looks at the world—is such that he collides everywhere. He makes his entire life a mess. He destroys himself and destroys others as well.

On the contrary, if someone starts at least gradually, and instills in their mind the statement we made at the beginning of this sermon—that is, the desire for happiness is a natural law in the entire world of living beings. Then, loving-kindness (*mettā*) means digesting this concept of the desire for happiness in the world into one's own mind. The reason why this mind is constantly scattered and does not rest on a single object is the arising of these defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion. Therefore, if we feed our mind a certain natural law common to the world—that everyone desires happiness—we can settle our mind within that. Thus, by condensing it into a single phrase like "may they be happy" and repeatedly bringing it to mind, bringing it to mind again and again, one’s attitude is transformed. Moreover, many other virtues, such as concentration (*samādhi*), are developed because of it.

The Buddha has shown countless benefits of these. You may have heard of the daily experienced benefits of loving-kindness meditation mentioned in the *Mettānisaṃsa Sutta*. If a person's mind is liberated through that loving-kindness meditation—what does it mean for the mind to be "liberated"? When we say "deep-seated hatred," right

there is a bond, a bondage; the mind is bound. Due to some repulsive sign, or due to the intention of revenge for a wrong done to oneself, the mind is in a state of friction both day and night. It is like a bondage. It is a grave bondage—the bondage of hatred. It is because of this that some people continue to take revenge on each other throughout *saṃsāra*. Therefore, instead of that, one brings forward the liberation of the mind. This is called the "mind-deliverance of loving-kindness" (*mettā-cetovimutti*). When loving-kindness meditation is well-digested into the mind, the state of having a pure mind of loving-kindness spread toward the entire world is shown as mind-deliverance—*mettā-cetovimutti*. The Buddha has shown eleven benefits, experienced even in daily life, of a mind that has reached such a state of mind-deliverance—the mind-deliverance of loving-kindness. One can obtain very peaceful sleep—peaceful sleep in daily life. Next, one can wake up refreshed. One does not see bad dreams. Next, one is dear to human beings. One is dear to non-human beings. Even the protection of devas is secured. Furthermore, from various dangers that may come to oneself—dangers from poison, weapons, etc.—one is often protected by the very power of that mind of loving-kindness. Also, the mind quickly becomes settled; it becomes concentrated. The color or radiance of the face increases. Moreover, at the time of death, one can pass away with clear mindfulness. If one has not attained any paths and fruits, if one has not realized Nibbāna, at the very least, one is reborn in the Brahma worlds. In this manner, the Buddha has declared numerous benefits for the person who develops loving-kindness meditation to the level of mind-deliverance.

Therefore, on such a noble Vesak full-moon day, we must make a resolution—not much is needed to steer our lives in the right direction. Only a very small change needs to be made. Now, we know that even to operate a massive machine, perhaps a machine that has stopped, only a small bolt is needed, or just correcting a small defect. In the same way, it is not a huge thing that helps to change one's attitude here. Sometimes, it is just a single word. One instills the concept, the word "may they be happy," into one's mind as meditation. Meditation (*bhāvanā*) is not something strange. It is a special power developed by repeatedly bringing a wholesome mind, a wholesome object, to one's mind. This power is called "repetition" (*āsevana*). That is, through repeated association, one can generate great power in one's mind. That is why when speaking of meditation, it is said: *āsevitā, bhāvitā, bahulīkatā*—associated with, developed, cultivated. Constantly associating with the thought of loving-kindness means repeatedly bringing it to mind.

In that way, there is a nature in that thought that liberates the mind. Why? Because the mind is narrow and enclosed. Within the fence of selfishness, the minds of the world's beings are narrow and enclosed. It is by freeing oneself from that selfishness that one is able to maintain the thought, "may others be happy." That making happy often begins with those around oneself, with one's relatives, parents, children, and so on. But one must not stop there. Next, neighbors, then neutral people, and finally even enemies—everyone. Conquering enemies in the true sense is not done through wars and such, as mentioned before. Conquering the enemy is done by appeasing that thought of hatred. The enemy is inside the mind, not the enemy outside. It is that same person; but once anger arises, he becomes the enemy. The difference between enemy and friend is nothing

other than the attitude one has toward that person. Therefore, the moment that attitude changes, that enemy becomes a friend. That is why Buddhist scholars have stated—as a simile—if we want to walk on this earth, and if we think of walking only after removing all the thorns on the earth, that will never be accomplished. Instead, when one wears shoes, one is not harmed by those thorns. In the same way, if one thinks, "I will sleep peacefully only after killing all the enemies in the world," that can never be completed. Killing enemies in the world and leaving only those whom one likes is never something that can succeed. Instead, what is to be done, as shown in the simile of wearing shoes, is to guard one's mind. When the enemy within one's mind is slain—for this enemy is born in one's mind—if that enemy is slain, it is as if all enemies have been slain. In this manner, Buddhist philosophers have presented various principles and hypotheses. It is through developing one's own mind in terms of meditation based on these that those benefits can be seen.

Thus, it is so regarding hatred. Regarding other defilements too, we must constantly contemplate according to the phenomena of wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) and unwise attention. It is these three defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion that carry us through *saṃsāra* for a long time. Now, greed is what the Buddha has shown there as "affliction." The world is constantly sick. Afflicted by defilements—to be freed from this affliction of defilements, one has to appease the defilements of craving (*taṇhā*), desire, and greed. Similarly, the world is in a state of anxiety, always restless. Because of that endless search, because of the intense greed for fivefold sensual pleasures, we see how much destruction or how much suffering (*dukkha*) the world accumulates due to its running in search of various fashions, trends, or useless things. Sometimes falling into debt, they accumulate a mass of suffering because they lack an understanding of true peace, the happiness of peace. Therefore, according to the Buddha's word, we must always contemplate, especially with loving-kindness. This era is one in which the entire world is being destroyed by hatred. Because of this, in daily life, one must consider some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) as one's "workplace." To carry on daily life, one does various industries and jobs. But all of these help only to maintain one's body—to maintain the body which one thinks experiences happiness. It is this mind that carries us throughout the entirety of *saṃsāra*. We leave the physical carcass here. But it is in the form of paying debts to the defilements developed in the mind, and to the karma performed, that beings travel in *saṃsāra* for a long time.

Therefore, much more special care must be given to this mind of ours than to this body. This mind can be soiled very easily. Various objects in the world flow in, and the mind is prone to be agitated either by hatred, by lust (*rāga*), or by delusion. To prevent this, some method must be applied to concentrate the mind. If a person instills the thought "may they be happy" into the mind at the very moment of waking up in the morning, and then, resolving for a few minutes, practices maintaining the mind within that thought, he gradually becomes able, as the Buddha declared, to bring up that thought from time to time in all four postures, even while performing other activities. Furthermore, he gains the power to emit that thought of loving-kindness—that stream of loving-kindness—to everyone who comes before him. The person who has developed such mind-deliverance

of loving-kindness is the one who experiences numerous benefits of loving-kindness, just as the Buddha declared.

Next, another thing that is helpful is compassion (*karuṇā*). Loving-kindness is generally toward beings who are similar to oneself. Compassion is mostly toward those who are in suffering (*dukkha*). "Being in suffering" means sometimes those who are not seen before us, or seeing someone who has got injured, we sometimes feel compassion. But like the Buddha's great compassion, we must think that all beings in this *saṃsāra* must be the objects of compassion. Every being fallen into the suffering of *saṃsāra* can be made the object of compassion. Thinking thus, we use compassion to help remove that thought of hatred.

Likewise, to dwell happily in daily life as the Buddha declared—to dwell happily in the manner of "Ah, happily"—the virtue called appreciative joy (*muditā*) is helpful. These are shown as the sublime abodes (*brahmavihāra*). Often, there is envy in society. If someone appears higher than oneself, or uses more luxurious things, there is envy toward that person. There too, there is a state of irritability, of intolerance. Instead, the entire world of beings desires happiness—every single one. One must think of their being happy as one's own being happy. This is what appreciative joy is. Even for oneself. Now, parents are happy when their children grow and develop. But those same parents, when their neighbors achieve some progress, conceive jealousy about it. There we see, then, that this happens due to a certain defect, a flaw, in the mind. Instead, one must think: just as one thinks of one's own children, especially the entire world of beings desires happiness. Thinking, "Every single person being happy is just like my being happy," one cultivates the virtue of appreciative joy. The virtue of appreciative joy is an extremely rare virtue in society. It is because of its lack that envy and the like spread excessively.

Next, it is the same with equanimity (*upekkhā*). There are many things in the world we cannot change; they are just as they are. Other than looking at them, looking at them with equanimity, if we go to collide with them, it will lead to our downfall. Why? Because each individual's lifespan and actions are things that came according to karma. If we can help that person to some extent through a wise course of action such as loving-kindness or compassion, that is what we have to do. If in any way we cannot, equanimity is what is brought forward—impartiality. "It is that person's karma; it is something that arose according to karma. There is nothing for me to worry about regarding it. There is no way to worry," thinking thus, one must develop equanimity.

In this manner, when those virtues of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity increase in society, one can experience that noble happiness called *susukhaṃ* declared by the Buddha. On the other hand, if we make no effort to shape our lives, our lives will be destroyed by being caught in the dangerous fire of hatred and fire of anger spreading in this society. Now, through various mass media, what is heard throughout the day are objects that lead to hatred, anger, and resentment. When one hears them and sees them, if one can develop a certain attitude, a strength of attitude, so that ignorance (*avijjā*) does not arise in the mind through them, then that person can live safely in society, like walking with shoes on in an area full of thorns. Therefore, what helps in all

of this is the development of our mind. If one thinks of being satisfied merely by engaging in his jobs, other worldly activities, and daily life, neglecting the mind and neglecting the power of the mind, his destruction is very near. A Buddha appears in the world to show the nobility of this human mind—to show to what a supreme state it can be elevated. In this dispensation, those who attained Arahantship and received worship and offerings even from devas and Brahmas were sometimes those who were marginalized in society, considered of extremely low caste, or sometimes those who lived as extremely violent bandits like Angulimala, or those who were engaged in various vices. All of them became recipients of the Buddha's great compassion, and by the power of that great compassion, as well as the skillful means—skillful means employed through wisdom—the defilements in their minds were removed, those temporarily covering defilements were discarded, and the power of training in *saṃsāra* emerged, enabling them to attain such states. A Buddha cannot give Nibbāna to someone who does not have it. It is by bringing out the power that person has developed throughout *saṃsāra*, training them, and bringing it to maturity that He elevates a person to noble states like Arahantship.

Therefore, every one of us must contemplate: there can be countless merits, good things we have done in this *saṃsāra*. They are covered up, like embers under ashes. They do not emerge on their own. The method of bringing them out is what is called meditation—accustoming the mind to a meditation practice. Therefore, on such a valuable full-moon day, we must make a resolution. It is not correct to regard these noble things, or things that many in the world search for and see, in a light manner. Some people think of meditation as something to be done after reaching old age, when thinking about the next world, saying, "We will be interested in these sermons and meditation then." That is a wrong idea. In a concentrated mind, one receives the strength to obtain solutions—solutions in a very short time—to numerous problems that arise in daily life. Particularly, in a mind prepared with the sublime abodes (*brahmavihāras*) of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity, the power of decision-making is extremely strong. Such a mind is not shaken when making a pure decision. Now, the cause of all these wars and brawls throughout the world is that very undeveloped mind. What the world means by "developing the mind" is directing this mind toward things like education, machinery, or science. Through them, a certain artificial transformation occurs in the mind. A real systematic development of the mind—a real "growth" called meditation—does not take place. Only one aspect of the mind, namely logic and reasoning (*tarka-vitarka*), is developed. This thing called the mind goes hand-in-hand with the heart. A mind does not arise devoid of the thoughts and feelings that occur in the heart. Therefore, some purification of the heart must be done through these meditation methods like loving-kindness. Otherwise, that person, succumbing to some intellectualism, succumbing to logic, succumbing to deceptive states (*vañcaka dhamma*), turns his mind into a beastly state instead of developing it. Through logic, they present even various unwholesome deeds and sins as good things.

Now, you are well aware of the various types of wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) that have come onto the stage of this society. Now, regarding livelihood, if we think about the

reasons why we cannot protect the precepts we undertook on this occasion, it is because the world has discarded righteous ways in various manners and exerts itself excessively regarding the economy. Because of those unwholesome thoughts, they forget the unwholesome side of sinful deeds and instead believe that happiness in daily life is the progress made from the economic side. Now, that is what has come to the fore in society. The Buddha has spoken of the "happiness of blamelessness" (*anavajja-sukha*)—the happiness a person receives from a blameless life in daily life—one's own mind does not blame oneself. The Buddha has pointed out four fears: fear of self-reproach (*attānuvāda-bhaya*), fear of others' reproach (*parānuvāda-bhaya*), fear of punishment (*daṇḍa-bhaya*), and fear of an evil destination (*duggati-bhaya*). "Fear" means danger—there are four dangers for the world. "Fear of self-reproach" means one's own mind blames oneself. No matter how secretly from the world one commits those sins, murders, thefts, etc., one's mind knows it. Such a person cannot sleep properly. If someone says "thief, thief," he turns around to look. Even if someone says "murderer," he turns around to look in terror. Why? Thinking it is said of him. To that extent, one's own mind blames oneself. Likewise, "fear of others' reproach" means, upon their finding out about it, having to hear insults, accusations, etc., from others. Likewise, if caught in the web of the law, one has to suffer punishment because of it. Even if one escapes all of these, in the end, one has to suffer the dangerous retributive results called evil destinations—being born in hell, etc., born in the four woeful states; the Buddha's word is indeed true. All of this happens due to neglecting the mind—the true value of the mind.

Therefore, contemplating these things, you, the virtuous devotees, must give a great place to the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) in daily life on this valuable Vesak full-moon day. As a start, for a short time in the morning, before going to your duties and work, thinking, "This is my real work," you must practice directing your mind, even for a short time, to some meditation subject—especially something like loving-kindness, because it mostly helps you when interacting with society—or recollecting the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) which increases your faith (*saddhā*), or foulness (*asubha*) which subdues those defilements, or mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*) which demonstrates the value of this spiritual life and trains you to act without delay; you must practice starting the day's activities by training the mind within such a meditation subject even for a short time. Likewise, at the end of the day, before you go to sleep—a time when the mind settles down—if you generate some meditative mind before falling asleep, that person will not have troubles like seeing bad dreams, as declared by the Buddha. One can reach sleep with great peace. Thus, for someone who places the mind in meditation at the start of the day and at the end of the day, gradually, while maintaining the four postures in daily life, when the mind is about to wander, the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) will come to mind almost effortlessly. Such a person, during his travels and daily activities, in those wasted moments called "loitering," will gain the ability to develop his mind through that meditation subject. What we mean by "developing" in this Dhamma of the Buddha is not using intellectualism today, learning and memorizing what is in books, and obtaining some worldly benefit like passing exams from them. As the Buddha declared, we must generate some effort through this meditative mind to

eradicate the three root defilements of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) that bring beings to suffering (*dukkha*) for a long time in this *saṃsāra*.

Therefore, approaching those who can give such meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*), receiving those instructions with respect, and guiding one's mind within them, one must endeavor to attain in this very life that supreme happiness called *susukhaṃ* declared by the Buddha. The Buddha declares that all the happiness obtained even by other devas is defeated by this nectar of Nibbāna (*Nibbāna-amata*), the happiness of Nibbāna (*Nibbāna-sukha*). The happiness of Nibbāna is not a happiness obtained in some strange world, or obtained from some strange drink. It is the happiness of peace in this mind, the solace, the cooling down (Nibbāna) that can be brought out from within the mind itself. The Buddha declared that the entire world, becoming (*bhava*) itself, is burning. *Sabbam ādittham*—the entire world is burning. The worldling does not understand this burning. When we see moths falling into a lamp, it appears to us that they are burning. But they do not understand it; those creatures do not understand it. In the same way, what the worldling always does is jump into these three fires of greed, hatred, and delusion. Because of the attractive nature of that fire, they do not understand that it is a fire. In the same way that the entire world is on fire in terms of greed, hatred, and delusion, the Buddha has demonstrated that everything associated with our senses, called the six sense bases, is burning. The eye is burning. Forms are burning. The ear is burning. Sounds are burning. In this manner, He has shown how every one of these senses, the entire world, is burning with the fires of greed, hatred, and delusion. Therefore, the place where those burnings are extinguished is what is called Nibbāna. It is cooling down. For that, then, by settling the mind through a meditation like loving-kindness and developing insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), understanding the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) of impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) which is the true nature of this world, one can realize the noble, supreme Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship.

Thus, Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Great Arahants appear in the world to introduce this very happiness of appeasement—the happiness of Nibbāna—to the world, having realized it themselves. That is the goal. That must be the goal of every Buddhist as well. With that goal, making good resolutions today, resolving, "I will live a meditative life from now on," you have listened to the Dhamma today, having established yourselves in such virtue—some of you having undertaken the noble precept of eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*) on this valuable full-moon day, and others having undertaken the eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). To listen to the Dhamma means directing your ear during this time with the faith (*saddhā*) you have generated toward the Triple Gem. It is by bringing forth energy (*viriya*) that followed that faith that you are engaged in this task. Faith, energy, and along with that, through energy, you generate a certain mindfulness—the virtue called *sati*—in your mind. By maintaining that very mindfulness for a considerable time, one can experience some concentration (*samādhi*). It is to that concentrated mind that deep understandings regarding the Dhamma come as wisdom (*paññā*). Therefore, we must rejoice, thinking: "Today, we

have utilized this occasion to cultivate those wholesome qualities shown in the Dhamma as faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*), which at times serve as spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and spiritual powers (*bala*) that aid in Nibbāna." May the mental strength generated from this mass of accumulated merit help us to realize Nibbāna through the noble penetration of the paths and fruits in this very life!

Likewise, may this mass of merit we have accumulated through both preaching the Dhamma and listening to the Dhamma be shared with all living beings from the Avici hell up to the Akanittha heaven, who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, including the guardian deities and Brahmas, and our relatives. Having rejoiced in these merits, may they be freed from this dangerous suffering of *saṃsāra*, and may they reach solace in the noble, supreme Nibbāna, freed from all saṃsāric suffering such as birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and all other sufferings. Making such an aspiration, now let us dedicate the merits by reciting these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #15

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve, dussīlo asamāhito;

Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo, sīlavato jhāyino.

From:

Verse 110 from the Sahassavagga (Chapter of Thousands) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

It does not require a long time for a complete transformation to occur in a human life. Sometimes, even a momentary mental revolution can bring about a massive transformation of life, entirely reshaping one's way of living. In this manner, some experience a mental revolution upon witnessing a miracle. Indeed, a miracle is an extraordinary event capable of inducing a special mental revolution in the mind of an individual or a group. The Buddha preached this verse, which we have chosen as our theme, regarding a monk who, through such an extraordinary event, transformed a band of thieves into virtuous people.

There was a monk named Koṇḍañña who had come to the Buddha and ordained. Having received meditation subjects from the Buddha, he went to a remote forest, meditated, and attained Arahantship. Having realized the truth, he was returning to see the Buddha to report his realization. On the way, due to the fatigue of the journey, he stepped aside from the path, sat on a flat rock near the road, and entered absorption (*jhāna*). That very evening, a band of five hundred thieves, who had plundered a village and were carrying their bundles of booty on their heads, came to that same rock to spend the night. The thieves saw this monk. However, in the darkness, the monk sitting there appeared like a stone pillar. Thinking it was a pillar, one thief placed his bundle of booty on the monk's head. Another thief leaned his bundle against the monk's body. Then, they all lay down and slept around the monk.

Waking up at dawn and searching for their bundles, they saw the monk and, terrified, thinking he was a demon (*yakṣa*), they all started to run. Seeing the monk sitting there with a bundle still on his head, they were terrified, cried out "It's a demon!" and began to run. The monk called out to them, saying, "Lay devotees, do not be afraid, I am an ordained monk." Due to this incident, a great mental revolution took place within this group. They begged for forgiveness, saying, "Venerable Sir, please forgive us, we thought you were a pillar." Subsequently, the leader of that band of thieves, due to the deep sense of spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) that arose in him, decided to ordain. He requested of the monk, "Please ordain me." Following their leader's decision, the rest of the gang also decided, "We too must ordain." All five hundred of them requested ordination from the monk. The monk then ordained them. Indeed, ordaining five hundred people is a grand task. Having ordained and trained them, the monk journeyed to see the Buddha. Along with this, a nickname was attached to this monk: "Khāṇu Koṇḍañña." He was originally named Koṇḍañña, and "Khāṇu" means a pillar, due to this incident concerning the pillar. Because of the news spreading about them mistaking him for a pillar, he was nicknamed Khāṇu Koṇḍañña. In this Dispensation, this monk is known by the name Khāṇu Koṇḍañña. This name "Khāṇu Koṇḍañña" is used to distinguish him from the more famous monk, Aññā Koṇḍañña.

After Khāṇu Koṇḍañña arrived, the Buddha asked him, "How is it, Koṇḍañña, that you have acquired a group of disciples?" Thereupon, the monk related the event. The Buddha then asked the group, "Monks, is this true?" The group replied, "We have never seen such psychic power and majesty in anyone before. Because of that, we felt the desire to ordain." It was on that occasion that the Buddha uttered the verse mentioned earlier:

> He who should live a hundred years,
>
> unwise and unconcentrated,
>
> yet better is a single day's life
>
> of one who is wise and meditative.

The Buddha told this group: "Abandoning the life you led previously—that foolish and sinful life devoid of wisdom—and turning to a good life of developing absorption (*jhāna*) endowed with wisdom, that is what is truly valuable." This is the meaning conveyed by this verse. The Buddha declared that even if one lives for a hundred years without wisdom and without concentration, a single day of life spent developing absorption (*jhāna*) with wisdom is far more valuable. It is recorded that upon hearing this verse and the sermon, all five hundred of them attained Arahantship.

Now, let us try to extract some points useful for our lives from this verse and the story. In this verse, the Buddha highlighted and compared spiritual values—or rather, Dhamma-conforming values—with worldly values. According to worldly values, living for a hundred years by any means, even unrighteously, without thinking about wisdom, knowledge, absorption (*jhāna*), or concentration, is considered a great thing by society. People say of such a person that they "enjoyed longevity." However, rather than enjoying

longevity in this worldly way, the Buddha declared that a single day spent in this Dispensation developing wisdom and absorption (*jhāna*) is more valuable. Rather than living a hundred years without wisdom and concentration, if one lives for just a single day with wisdom, developing absorption (*jhāna*), that one day of life is far more valuable. The Buddha declared this because, in the ordinary world, people often care only about their unrighteous livelihood. They think that as long as one survives somehow, that is all that is required. However, pious devotees, one must reflect with wise attention: when we speak of our human life in general, the greatest and most valuable privilege that is naturally received—received along with human status itself—is the human mind. The greatest work we can do with this human mind is to generate that wisdom which helps to put an end to the suffering of saṁsāra and realize Nibbāna, and to practice the meditation and absorption (*jhāna*) that support that wisdom. This human existence is especially one obtained during a Buddha-era (the period of a Buddha's appearance). A Buddha-era is a time when one gets to hear the Dhamma, has the opportunity to realize Nibbāna, and has the chance to end the suffering of saṁsāra. In a human existence obtained during such a time, we must use the human mind, our greatest privilege, in a way that develops wisdom, concentration, absorption (*jhāna*), and so forth. Yet, most people in the ordinary world spend their lives without any awareness of these things.

Thus, we can find a great example from this story in the course of action taken by this band of thieves. In fact, in this story, we can consider that there is not just one, but two miracles. One miracle is that of the monk, which, as the Buddha declared, was a miracle performed with wisdom and absorption (*jhāna*)—that is, sitting all night in concentration like a stone pillar. However, the next miracle is the one shown by the chief of the thieves. When there is a group, especially a group of five hundred, there are major challenges in deciding on a course of action and making a wise decision. Yet, what was the courageous decision made by this chief of thieves? He decided to break away from this wrong livelihood—this wrong way of living—which he had led for a long time, and to ordain in the Dispensation. Had there been something like a vote, it would have resulted in a massive entanglement. But this individual possessed a strong desire (*chanda*). When this is called a miracle (*iddhi*), the Dhamma mentions four factors that support the manifestation of miraculous power (*iddhipāda*): desire (*chanda*), energy (*viriya*), mind (*citta*), and investigation (*vīmaṁsā*). Desire (*chanda*) means the wish, the eagerness. Energy (*viriya*) is the effort applied in accordance with that eagerness and wish. Mind (*citta*) is the willpower and determination applied to complete and make that effort successful. Lastly, investigation (*vīmaṁsā*) is the analytical wisdom that helps in doing and succeeding in all of these. It is by relying on these four that one can perform miracles, such as psychic miracles and so forth. Indeed, the bases of power (*iddhipāda*)—power (*iddhi*) meaning success—are the four factors that support it. This chief of thieves possessed a firm determination. Accordingly, having fulfilled the necessary requirements, he was the first to step forward and say, "I must ordain." Consequently, the other followers also decided to change their way of life. This too can be considered a miracle by us.

In taking an example from this story today, that is precisely how one must act. One must bring forth those bases of power (*iddhipāda*) in accordance with the Dhamma and change one's way of life. Sometimes, due to various saṁsāric defects or karmic defects, certain individuals are inclined toward wrong livelihoods—wrong ways of living. Some have fallen into alcoholism as drunkards. People label them "drunkards." Some are known as violent murderers. Others are labeled "murderers," "thieves," or "criminals." To the extent that such names are attached to them, some have brought their lives to a corrupted state. However, no one should hesitate to change this way of life. If an opportunity arises, one must step forward fearlessly to do so. Sometimes, some people weaken their minds by thinking, "I will be subject to the contempt, insult, and ridicule of others in society who live just like me." Others might weaken their minds by thinking, "Having lived such a life, how can I ordain? Won't others say this and that about me? Won't they slander me?" However, a person with the determination to make use of the supreme privilege obtained through human status—this human mind—and who has wise intentions, does not hesitate at anything. Even if they suffer an economic loss because of it, they change their sinful or wrong courses of action and adapt to a righteous life.

Now, this Dispensation—the Buddha's Dispensation—is known as a Dispensation of Compassion. Due to the Buddha's great wisdom and great compassion, this Dispensation is known as a Dispensation of Compassion. Why is that? Because among those who ordained and attained Arahantship in this Dispensation, there are great murderers, notorious thieves, and women who led various kinds of bad lives. Many such individuals are found in the history of this Dispensation. It is said that having ordained under the Buddha, they attained the noble state of Arahantship and received worship and offerings even from devas and Brahmās. Therefore, especially the story of Angulimāla can instill great courage in someone who leads a wrong livelihood to reshape their way of life. Just like the story of the notorious thieves here, Angulimāla's story is highly renowned. He was a terrible murderer who killed thousands of people and was famous as such. After he ordained in this Buddha-Dispensation and became an Arahant as Venerable Angulimāla, many people, and sometimes even the monks, talked about it as a great marvel. On that occasion, the Buddha arrived there and expounded a verse—a verse capable of instilling great courage in anyone to reform their way of life:

> Whose evil deed is covered
>
> by a wholesome deed later,
>
> he illuminates this world,
>
> like the moon freed from a cloud.

The Buddha declared: "If the evil deed committed by someone is covered by the wholesome deeds done later, such a person illuminates and sheds light upon the entire world, just like the orb of the moon when freed from dark clouds." Now, when we look at the moon on a full-moon day, it is exceedingly splendid and beautiful. It is even more beautiful when the moon emerges from a dark cloud; it has a special splendor. In the same way, when those who spent their lives committing wrong, black deeds turn toward

the bright side, it stands out clearly to the world. It is exceedingly splendid. Just as a bright white dot stands out clearly when placed on a black velvet background, so too, when someone who led a bad life turns toward the good side, it serves as a great example to the world. It becomes an excellent proof demonstrating the power of this Dispensation—this Dispensation of Compassion—and the power of the Buddha's Dhamma. If a person who lived unrighteously, like the chief of thieves, brings about a transformation of life based on a firm determination, akin to a psychic miracle—

Then, we can see from all these individuals how they ordained and achieved noble states according to the Buddha's Dhamma; when we reflect on this, we cannot discard anyone. Ordinarily, we marginalize people in society, saying that so-and-so lacks education, or is an extremely poor, low-caste, or degraded person. However, if we reflect in the proper manner, saṁsāric intelligence cannot be measured by high or low social status, by being educated or uneducated, or by being rich or poor. Those whose saṁsāric intelligence has matured, who are close to the arising of wisdom, can sometimes be found even among very young children, seven-year-old children, and not only among adults. Likewise, they can be found among the uneducated, those who are illiterate, and among those who are extremely poor and belong to castes deemed low. They can exist among the poor and the outcastes (*caṇḍālas*). When we reflect in this way, good fortune is hidden within all of us. The Dhamma describes this as being like a lamp burning inside a clay pot. Wisdom—the light of wisdom—is not visible to the world. It must be brought out in the proper manner. It does not emerge on its own. One must make an effort oneself. There may be good wholesome karma lying underneath. One must make an effort oneself to bring them out. No matter how great or skilled a lion may be, if the lion just sleeps, animals will not enter its mouth on their own—some effort must be made. In the same way, it is only the energetic and effortful person who can bring about their hidden miracle of merit, their good fortune.

What is described as good fortune in this Dispensation, or what we should define as Dispensation-based fortune, is the bringing out of this supramundane Dhamma-wisdom, absorption (*jhāna*), and so forth. Attaining those noble supramundane states—Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship—is what we must consider as good fortune in this Dispensation. Today in society, people exert so much effort to achieve economic fortune. We constantly hear about opportunities to achieve this kind of fortune through loudspeakers. We often see people exhausting themselves to gain economic fortune. However, very few are interested in gaining righteous fortune. We can say that for those who wish to gain righteous fortune, the Poya day is an excellent day. Therefore, we can call it "Poya-day fortune." Very few are eager to acquire this "Poya-day fortune," unlike other worldly fortunes. Yet, if someone reflects on the Poya-day fortune and, on that day, commits themselves to observing the precepts, listening to sermons, and reshaping their life in accordance with the Dhamma, they can bring out that hidden light of wisdom within them. They can generate the mental strength to change their way of life. In this manner, we must be eager to shape our lives righteously.

We can gain a great example from this story to shape our lives and bring about a mental revolution. Even if we do not delve deeply into the Dhamma preached by the Buddha,

reflecting on its basic aspects can generate a great sense of spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding this saṁsāric state. Animals do not have the capacity to develop wisdom or absorption (*jhāna*) in this way. How miserable is the life led by animals! Furthermore, those who have fallen into the states of demons, hungry ghosts, and the like—sufferers of hell—the Buddha has described all this. This human existence has not been deeded to any of us as a freehold property. This is an extremely valuable opportunity obtained through some merit performed in the past. If we waste this, if we do not take advantage of it, we do not know where we will go next. If we do not free ourselves from the four planes of misery by attaining at least Stream-entry, no matter how luxurious, beautiful, and ostentatious a life we lead, if we engage in evil deeds and lean toward wrong livelihoods, the sins we commit will ultimately cause us to be reborn in the realms of demons, hungry ghosts, and the like. Subsequently, we will have to come back to our relatives and trouble them. Only then will we understand merit and demerit, wholesome and unwholesome deeds. Some adopt an intellectualist stance, engaging in various arguments and debates. They will understand only after they pass away. The true wealth of this world is measured by merit and demerit, wholesome and unwholesome actions. This is the unchanging currency. Other currencies and notes may be valid now, but it is according to this natural law (*dhammatā*) declared by the Buddha that the high or low status of one's saṁsāric life is measured. One goes to high states or low states based on this. Pious devotees who have understood this matter in advance must carefully examine their way of life. Here, we have undertaken the Eight Precepts with Righteous Livelihood (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). Wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) is defined here as trading in weapons, breeding animals for slaughter, trading in meat, trading in poisons, and trading in intoxicants. According to social standards, these are things that can make someone rich very quickly. However, because these activities defile the mind, the Buddha declared that we must abstain from these livelihoods and establish a good way of life. Wise devotees must reflect on this.

Next, what is this wisdom specifically mentioned in this verse? In the Dhamma, this wisdom is described as a gem. The Buddha declared, *"Paññā narānaṁ ratanaṁ"*—"Wisdom is the gem of human beings." Among gems, there is the diamond (*vajra-māṇikya*), which is an extremely powerful gem capable of cutting other gems. This wisdom is like that diamond. Why? Because this wisdom is described as *"nibbedhikā paññā"*—penetrative wisdom. Wherever we look in the world, things appear permanent to us. It is this wisdom that helps us see the impermanent nature of these seemingly permanent things. Everything appears as permanent due to the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*)—seeing things as solid wholes. However, these things change with extreme rapidity. Because this change is not seen, we form the misconception that they are permanent, and consequently, we develop intense craving (*taṇhā*) toward them, turn to various crimes and sinful actions, and travel in this saṁsāra for a long time. Therefore, to be able to realize Nibbāna, the impermanent nature of these things that we took to be permanent must be directly realized by ourselves. This direct realization does not come through charms, spells, or inference; it is realized through this wisdom—the light of wisdom. This is a penetrative light. It is an

understanding generated from deep within the mind. That understanding does not arise on its own; it is for this purpose that absorption (*jhāna*) and meditation assist us.

Now, what is done in that meditation as insight (*vipassanā*) which supports wisdom? One begins to observe the impermanent nature of this world—how everything arises and passes away. In the method of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, it is shown how this body, feelings (*vedanā*), the mind, and the thoughts that come to the mind, arise and pass away. These things arise, and then they pass away. For a person who constantly contemplates this arising and passing away, contemplating them frequently with well-established mindfulness and clear comprehension, extremely deep understandings arise. They are not deluded by that seemingly permanent nature visible externally. Someone seeing a banana trunk might think, "This is wood with a solid heartwood." However, one who has a correct understanding of of it knows that it is merely a pile of sheaths. In the same way, the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) regarding everything or all things is shattered and loosened.

If one constantly contemplates the arising and passing away of everything—concerning this body, our physical postures, our movements to and fro, and so on—it is stated in the Dhamma: *"samudayadhammānupassī vā, vayadhammānupassī vā, samudayavayadhammānupassī vā"* and so forth. That means one dwells contemplating the nature of arising, or one dwells contemplating the nature of passing away, or one dwells contemplating both the nature of arising and passing away. It is by dwelling in this manner, by developing this meditation, that the impermanent nature of these things gradually begins to be understood by oneself. Just as when sharpening a razor, one strokes the razor upward, then downward, and then rapidly upward and downward from both sides to make the razor extremely sharp; in the same way, when developing this insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), at times one contemplates the nature of arising, at times the nature of passing away, and then rapidly contemplates both arising and passing away together to refine and develop this vision. It is precisely by doing so that it becomes penetrative wisdom. A person who has developed this does not wait until things disappear to see impermanence; the moment they see something, it is apparent to them that whatever has arisen is of a nature to perish. They have a prior understanding of the impermanent nature of everything. This is what is called wisdom. It is only a person who sees in this manner who can abandon the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). By observing the arising and passing away of the body, feelings (*vedanā*), the mind, and thoughts, and gradually developing that wisdom, one realizes the Four Noble Truths—namely, suffering (*dukkha*), origin (*samudaya*), cessation (*nirodha*), and the path (*magga*). This entire existence is suffering (*dukkha*). Its cause is craving (*taṇhā*). One understands that it is due to this underlying craving (*taṇhā*) that we perceive things as permanent, with the perception of permanence. Next, when this craving (*taṇhā*) is ceased, that state of extinguishing the thirst of craving is peace—that is Nibbāna. It is the Noble Eightfold Path that supports this realization: Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). Following this

Noble Eightfold Path is how one can realize Nibbāna. The Buddha declared that this wisdom is a light.

On one occasion, the Buddha declared four kinds of light that exist in the world: the light of the moon, the light of the sun, the light of fire, and the light of wisdom. Among all lights, the light of wisdom is considered the supreme and foremost. Even in what is seen by moonlight, there are shadows. In sunlight, too, there are shadows. Things we think we see clearly through the light of lamps or electricity—we believe we see them perfectly—but indeed, true vision arises only through wisdom, through a certain understanding that comes from within. What is seen through that inner understanding is what can be taken as the truth. Even with sunlight and moonlight, one is sometimes unable to see things as they really are. So, that is regarding wisdom.

In the same manner, the Buddha spoke about absorption (*jhāna*). Absorption (*jhāna*) means the unification of the mind, making it concentrated. Normally, the mind is mostly scattered. There are five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*)—namely, sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will (*byāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikiccha*). The mind is disturbed either by sensual thoughts or by thoughts of ill-will. Through sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, or due to sleepiness and laziness, the mind is rendered inactive. Or else, due to restless states, worry, and the like, or due to doubts and hesitation, the concentrated nature of the mind is suppressed; the Buddha has declared these occasions.

On one occasion, the Buddha even expounded similes for removing the mind from those hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). The disturbance of the mind by sensual thoughts—the Buddha gave the simile of a bowl of water. If a bowl of water is mixed with yellow, red, or blue dye, one cannot see one's face clearly; one cannot see things as they really are. In the same way, if the mind is disturbed by sensual lust and so forth, such a person cannot see their own welfare, the welfare of others, or the welfare of both. Next, ill-will—the mind disturbed by ill-will. The Buddha compared this to a bowl of water that is boiling, bubbling over a fire; one cannot see one's face clearly in it. In the same way, when the mind is boiling with ill-will, one cannot understand things as they really are. Next, if the mind is rendered inactive and loses its functionality due to sleepiness and laziness, such a state is demonstrated by a bowl of water covered with moss and water plants; one cannot see one's face properly in a bowl of water covered with moss. Next, if restless states, worry, or regret over things done or left undone come to the mind—what is called restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*)—one cannot see things as they really are in those states either. The simile given for this is a bowl of water that is whipped by the wind, creating waves, or a bowl of water that is shaken and trembling; one cannot see one's face properly in that wavy, turbulent water. Finally, doubt (*vicikiccha*)—the state of hesitation—is also something that destroys the mind's ability to see things as they really are. When the mind is disturbed by doubt and hesitation, it is compared to looking at one's face in a bowl of water that is turbid and muddy.

According to these similes shown by the Buddha, we can understand those states that obstruct concentration. It is when they are removed that absorption (*jhāna*) and

concentration (*samādhi*) emerge. Therefore, devotees who try to develop mental strength must be eager to develop this wisdom and absorption (*jhāna*) in the manner declared by the Buddha. The Poya day is the occasion to make a good start in this. That is why we called it "Poya-day fortune." One must make an effort to bring about some reform in one's life. If one fails to do so, one will face great regret at the final moment. Therefore, one must form a firm determination to walk this path to Nibbāna shown by the Buddha. The practice that shapes this path of life to support that is the Noble Eightfold Path, as declared by the Buddha. Indeed, this is not merely something found in books, but a practice that must be generated within one's very heart.

Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) means correct vision. Before embarking on any journey, one must first have some understanding of where one is going. What we sometimes call "foresight"—understanding whether the place is full of thorns, or whether traveling on this road will bring about one's welfare—this is how Right View is introduced. It is to plant a certain level of understanding of the Four Noble Truths, the entire blueprint of this Dispensation, into one's mind. Right View defines this entire saṁsāric existence as suffering (*dukkha*). One may not have fully realized it yet, but this is where the target lies. As one travels along this path, one understands that the five aggregates themselves are of the nature of suffering—this is suffering (*dukkha*). Next, the cause of this is craving (*taṇhā*). When this craving is appeased at some point, the peace obtained therefrom is Nibbāna. Furthermore, the path that supports this is the Noble Eightfold Path. It begins with Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Therefore, one must acquire a correct vision, a basic understanding of the Buddha's Dhamma message—an understanding of that blueprint.

One must be able to experience that blueprint in daily life, through the events that happen to oneself. Let us say a friend of ours has passed away, or some property has been lost; on such occasions, one can think: "Ah, this is a part of that suffering (*dukkha*) declared by the Buddha that I am now experiencing. Indeed, this suffering has arisen for me because of the craving (*taṇhā*) within me. It is due to the craving toward this man, this woman, or these things that this suffering has arisen for me." Next, if we appease this craving even for this moment by reflecting in accordance with the Dhamma, a great peace comes to us. Now, one does not weep and lament over the death of one's neighbors, but why does one grieve when a close friend, a relative, or a beloved person passes away? We think we are crying for that person, but we are not crying for them; we are crying for ourselves who are now without them. We cry for ourselves, thinking, "This is me, left without so-and-so. I lived with them, and now I am the one without them." We do not realize this. Therefore, on such occasions, one must reflect on this with wise attention, realizing that what lies underneath is craving (*taṇhā*)—not because of that person's goodness, but due to the attachment one has toward them—and appease it. For that, one must implement the Four Noble Truths to a certain extent in daily life. It is by doing so and gradually developing through meditation that one is ultimately able to realize the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). Thus, Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) means correct vision.

If one has acquired such an understanding, the next systematic transformation that takes place within that person is Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*)—correct thoughts. It is according to the view (*diṭṭhi*) or the philosophy of life one has adopted that one's thoughts are shaped. For instance, a person who steals sees opportunities for theft wherever they look. A killer thinks only of killing. In this manner, thoughts arise in accordance with the view one has adopted. Therefore, the Buddha declared that *sammā-saṅkappa* means correct thoughts. Since Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) means correct vision, a person who has acquired the correct vision regarding the Four Noble Truths then becomes eager to cultivate Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), which means correct thoughts. The Buddha defines these as thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*), thoughts of non-ill-will (*abyāpāda-saṅkappa*), and thoughts of non-harming (*avihiṁsā-saṅkappa*). Thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*) mean leaving the household life, or rather, departing from the fivefold sensual pleasures, understanding that this is true peace—one must constantly bring forth this idea. Even if one cannot free oneself from them, when these thoughts arise in daily life—whether upon seeing monks, reading books, or listening to the Dhamma—and one thinks, "Oh, how wonderful it would be if I could lead such a life," the intention develops along with it. Thoughts of non-ill-will (*abyāpāda-saṅkappa*) mean thoughts of loving-kindness. One develops thoughts of loving-kindness that suppress ill-will. Thoughts of non-harming (*avihiṁsā-saṅkappa*) mean cultivating compassionate thoughts to abstain from harming. Such are good thoughts.

Next, the words one uses must also be shaped in accordance with these thoughts. It is through lying, slandering, harsh speech, and useless babble that one defiles speech. This gift of speech we have received is a rare privilege. How many are mute and unable to speak due to their karma? Therefore, we must reflect that this too is a strength we have received through our merit. Consequently, if we waste this capacity for speech on lying, slandering, harsh speech, and useless gossip that is "fruitless for both worlds," we will lose this privilege we have received. It is for this reason that the Buddha declared we should instead use truthful words, gentle and soft words, words that reconcile others, and Dhamma-conforming words—using good words in this manner.

A person who refines their speech in this manner also becomes eager to act in accordance with those words. That action means resolving to abstain from the wrong actions of killing living beings, stealing, and sexual misconduct. This is known as Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*). Next, another step from that is not merely living in this manner occasionally, but reflecting on one's occupation, on one's livelihood, and living more righteously. It is by abstaining from the trade of weapons, breeding animals for slaughter, the trade of meat, the trade of poisons, and the trade of intoxicants, as we mentioned earlier, and striving to live by a righteous livelihood. This is what is called Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*).

In the effort made for this, that which is called Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*)—a certain meditative strength generated within the mind—arises naturally. Right Effort means constantly striving, by carefully reflecting on the wholesome and unwholesome states

arising in one's mind, to abandon unwholesome states and increase and develop wholesome states. To prevent unarisen unwholesome states from flowing into the mind—those that are waiting to flow in—one has to apply a certain firm effort and energy. That is called the effort to prevent unarisen unwholesome states from arising. Next, to expel arisen unwholesome states—if there are wrong, unwholesome states within oneself, one must apply a firm effort to remove them. Similarly, to generate unarisen wholesome states, one must also apply a special effort. One must reflect and observe: "These good virtues are not yet present within me; I must develop them," and make a great effort for that. Likewise, if there are good wholesome states already present within oneself, one must make an effort to establish and increase them, not allowing them to decay.

So great is the value of this effort that the Buddha used a series of terms to describe it: *"chandaṁ janeti, vāyamati, vīriyaṁ ārabhati, cittaṁ paggaṇhāti, padahati"*. As we mentioned earlier, the word *chanda* in *"chandaṁ janeti"* does not have the meaning of a political "vote" used nowadays. It has a much deeper meaning. *Chanda* means the eagerness, the wish to do something, the desire generated toward wholesome states. One generates this *chanda*. Having generated this *chanda*, one *"vāyamati"*—makes an effort toward it. One does not stop the effort after doing a little. One transforms it into energy (*vīriyaṁ ārabhati*), carrying out that effort more and more firmly. Next, when various obstacles present themselves while carrying out that energy, one does not let the mind waver, but brings out a firm determination; this is called *"cittaṁ paggaṇhāti"*—one summons willpower. Lastly, the word *"padahati"* is used when, with a firm determination even at the risk of one's life, one performs that task, thinking, "I must do this somehow."

If one applies energy in these four ways within the mind, breaking away from one's wrong ways of living—let us say a person who drinks alcohol, kills animals, steals, or commits murder—if such a person separates themselves at least on the Poya day, reflecting on the "Poya-day fortune," they will think about this for themselves. They will contemplate how to do this, looking at the side of its benefits and the side of its dangers. Thinking not only of this life but of the entire saṁsāra in accordance with the Dhamma declared by the Buddha, they will reflect on its benefits and think: "If I waste the capacity to bring out this wisdom and absorption (*jhāna*)—the greatest privilege I have received through this human existence—will I not also fall to the level of an animal? Will I not fall to the state of a hungry ghost or a demon?" Reflecting thus, they direct their mind toward a complete transformation of their way of life. Through the effort applied in this manner to abandon unwholesome states and elevate wholesome states, they become a spiritual practitioner (*yogāvacara*) and a meditator without even realizing it. Such a person is a most valuable individual.

What is the next result of the effort made in this manner? Due to that effort, Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*)—correct mindfulness—is established within oneself. What is called the "Four Foundations of Mindfulness" (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is the establishment of mindfulness regarding this body—one's own body or another's body—regarding feelings

(*vedanā*), regarding the mind, and regarding the things that come to the mind. It is the person who has established this mindfulness who subsequently sees their arising, passing away, and so forth, and brings out wisdom. Thus, Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) leads toward these Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Next, a person who develops that mindfulness—that clear awareness—can, by maintaining this mindfulness for five minutes, ten minutes, an hour, or two hours on a wholesome object or meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), develop concentration (*samādhi*). Subsequently, the devotee who wishes to bring out the "Poya-day fortune" must turn their attention to meditation. For the purpose of meditation, the Buddha has presented various meditation subjects and themes. The Buddha has highlighted meditation subjects in a simple manner so that one can practice them in daily life and reap their benefits daily. These four meditation subjects are declared by the Buddha for both laypersons and ordained monks: recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), foulness (*asubha*), and recollection of death (*maraṇasati*). Recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) means maintaining the mind on the virtues of the Buddha. Selecting even one word from the text of the nine virtues, which are like a vast ocean, such as "Arahaṁ," "Arahaṁ," "Arahaṁ," one constantly contemplates the Buddha. Or using words like "Buddho" or "Bhagavā," one constantly recalls the Buddha with faith (*saddhā*); at that moment, the scattered nature of the mind disappears. Indeed, what is done through a meditation subject? Let us say there is water that is scattered, or flowing in various directions; if we build a dam, gather it together, and make a reservoir, we can make use of that water. In the same way, keeping this running mind anchored on a single wholesome object is what is called meditation. In the same manner, one can constantly bring up a short phrase of loving-kindness in the mind, such as "May all beings be well and happy," without needing to speak it to anyone. When the mind runs wild, running toward sinful and unwholesome states, one brings it back to this object. Thus, for the person who eagerly strives to tame this mind with the tether of mindfulness (*sati*), a great number of benefits are received in daily life. Through the benefits of loving-kindness meditation, one can suppress the mind of ill-will and obtain a great peace. Similarly, through foulness (*asubha*) meditation, one gains the strength to free the mind from the defilements that oppress it. Next, through the recollection of death (*maraṇasati*), one generates a sense of spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) and becomes eager to travel the path of Dhamma diligently, without delaying or putting it off. For the person who develops the recollection of death, impermanence is also understood in the same way.

If someone is eager about this meditation in this manner, even if they do not experience a miracle as great as that of the monk, they can experience for themselves the peace that can be obtained from within through the development of absorption (*jhāna*) and meditation. We must reflect on the lessons we can take for our lives from such a story—even from a single short verse of four lines—and be eager about these practices. Now, on this valuable Poya day, these devotees have undertaken the Eight Precepts with Righteous Livelihood (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*) and, by relying on this valuable Dhamma story—a valuable Dhamma story from which one can take an example—have listened to

several Dhamma points. At this moment, you must reflect on the transformation that has occurred within your own mind.

With faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem, you came to such a sacred place. Likewise, you sat down to listen to this Dhamma. The mind was purified with that faith; a certain joy arose in the mind. Next, in accordance with that faith, a certain energy (*viriya*) was applied during the time of listening to this sermon, to sit comfortably and pay attention to it; one has to apply a certain energy for that. Faith, then energy, and then, in accordance with that energy, being mindful—mindfulness (*sati*). Listening to this with good mindfulness. Next, when listening to it for a long time, a certain concentration (*samādhi*) is generated—as recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*), understanding the value of the Dhamma, and recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) when the Buddha is mentioned. In these various ways, one even gets an opportunity to generate a certain concentration. It is with that concentrated mind that wisdom (*paññā*)—or rather, those specific, deep understandings—arises. Those deep understandings of a penetrative nature, as mentioned earlier, arise. When reflecting in this manner, it is by developing the spiritual faculties (*indriya-dhamma*) of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*) that one can realize Nibbāna at some point. One must rejoice, reflecting that this occasion supported the development of those spiritual faculties declared in the Dispensation.

This life is passing away with extreme rapidity. Sometimes, seventy or eighty years, which we think is a long time, pass by without our even realizing it. Within that, when reflecting at the end as death approaches, what did one do in this life? An emptiness is seen at the end. Sometimes, having spent unrighteous lives, leading them in sinful and drunken ways, one ultimately gets to see, on their deathbed, a series of painful scenes like a movie. Therefore, before that happens, one must reflect on leading a life in accordance with the Dhamma. If someone can reflect with concentration and feel joy for even a single moment in their daily life, such a person is the wise person, the fortunate person.

Therefore, reflecting with wisdom, concerning this store of merit accumulated in your mind on this occasion today—this store of merit accumulated through listening to the Dhamma—we must now reflect on how we share this merit. Indeed, there are those in this universe who, having rejoiced in merit, strive to free themselves from their miserable states. Likewise, there are those in this universe who use merit to make their future aspirations successful. Reflecting thus, may the assembly of deities who protect the Dispensation, including the deities presiding over this place, rejoice in this store of merit gathered by both of us through preaching and listening to the Dhamma! May they realize the noble and supreme Nibbāna by their preferred path to enlightenment (*bodhi*)! Reflecting in this manner, one must share the merit with the deities. Likewise, may our deceased relatives, and whatever beings from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who desire merit, rejoice in this merit of preaching and listening to the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they find peace in the noble and supreme Nibbāna by their preferred path to enlightenment (*bodhi*)!

Likewise, by relying on this noble store of merit accumulated so far through undertaking the precepts, listening to the Dhamma, sharing merit, and so forth, may these devotees also, in this very life, as quickly as possible, through the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala-paṭivedha*)—namely, Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship—free themselves from this terrifying saṁsāric suffering, and obtain the strength and power to find peace in the noble and supreme Nibbāna! Praying in this manner, you may now transfer the merit by reciting the verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi*....."

Pahankanuwa Sermon #16

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti, sadā gotamasāvakā;

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, niccaṃ buddhagatā sati.

Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti, sadā gotamasāvakā;

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, niccaṃ dhammagatā sati.

Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti, sadā gotamasāvakā;

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, niccaṃ saṅghagatā sati.

Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti, sadā gotamasāvakā;

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, ahiṃsāya rato mano.

Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti, sadā gotamasāvakā;

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, bhāvanāya rato mano.

From:

Verses 296-301 from the Bhikkhuvagga (Chapter on the Monk) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

This Esala Full Moon Poya day reminds us of the correct vision of life, the Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*), which the Blessed Buddha placed before gods and humans. On that day, in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the first step of the Noble Eightfold Path—the Middle Path placed before the world by the Buddha—was Right View. Today, we have chosen as our theme a few verses that illustrate and express the relief, happiness, solace, and protection that one can obtain in daily life through principles of living illuminated by that Right View, followed in accordance with Right View.

These verses were preached by the Buddha while he was residing at the Veḷuvanārāma in Rājagaha. The origin story (*nidāna kathā*) that led to this is stated as follows:

In the city of Rājagaha, a child from a family of Right View and a child from a family of wrong view had started playing a game of marbles together regularly—*guḷa-krīḍā* refers to a certain kind of ball game played during that time. While playing this game, every time the child of Right View threw the ball, he would say, *"Namo Buddhassa"* (Homage to the Buddha). The child from the wrong-view family threw the ball saying, *"Namo arahantānaṃ"*. What was meant by that was paying homage to the heretics (*tīrthakas*). When they did this, the child of Right View kept winning, while the other lost.

The other child thought, "Now my friend is winning because he recollects the Buddha," and so he began to develop the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). While this boy was practicing the recollection of the Buddha, one day, his father took him, hitched the cart, and went to the forest to gather firewood. Having loaded the wood onto the cart in the morning, around noon, he unyoked the cart near a cemetery outside the city and had some food. In the meantime, the two oxen wandered into the city along with other cattle returning to the city. After finishing his meal, the carter looked around and found the oxen gone. Therefore, he entered the city to find them. By the time he found the two oxen and was returning, it was evening and the city gates were closed. Because of that, the man could not get back out. Thus, the little child slept under the cart for the night.

Since it was near the cemetery, there were many non-human beings (*amanusya*) around. Two *yakkhas*—one of Right View, meaning devoted to the Triple Gem, and the other of wrong view—saw this child. The *yakkha* of wrong view said, "Here is a good meal, let us eat." The other tried to prevent him. However, the wrong-view *yakkha* pulled the child by the leg. As soon as he pulled, the child cried, *"Namo Buddhassa"*. At once, the *yakkha* got frightened and stood frozen. Then the other *yakkha* said, "We have committed a great mistake. Therefore, we must undergo punishment for it." Joining together, they guarded the child throughout the night and provided protection. Moreover, the *yakkha* of wrong view went to the royal palace and brought back food in a golden platter. Disguising themselves as the child's parents, they fed him and kept watch over him. After the child ate, the *yakkha*, using his psychic power (*iddhi*), inscribed some letters on the platter: "May only the King see this"—concerning this matter of how this platter came to be there. Having done this and placed the platter in the cart, the *yakkhas* vanished.

The next morning, the palace officials, realizing that the platter was missing, searched around, inspected the city, came outside, and upon spotting the cart, inspected it and

found the golden platter. Seeing this, they arrested the child, thinking he was the thief. When they brought him before the king along with the platter, the king saw the inscribed letters and asked, “What is the meaning of this incident?” The child replied, “I do not know. Throughout the night, my mother and father came, gave me food, and protected me. That is all I know.” At that moment, the child's real parents also arrived. The king, together with the child and his parents, went to the Buddha and related this news. Then, he asked the Buddha whether protection is indeed obtained through the recollection of the Buddha alone, or if there are other things as well. It was on that occasion that the Buddha preached these six verses, showing that if one directs one's mind and maintains one's thoughts in these six ways in one's life, there is no need for external protections or mantras; this itself is a great protection. That is why he spoke these verses.

Let us next consider the general meaning of these verses.

“Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti — sadā gotamasāvakā

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca — niccaṃ buddhagatā sati”

“Ever well awake they awaken, the disciples of Gotama,

whose mindfulness is constantly directed, day and night, to the Buddha.”

This is the meaning of that verse.

The next verse follows the same pattern:

“Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti — ...

... — niccaṃ dhammagatā sati”

Those who develop the recollection of the Dhamma, who contemplate the Dhamma, likewise awaken in the morning well-awakened. The next verse is about the recollection of the Saṅgha. Those who develop the recollection of the Saṅgha also awaken well-awakened. Next is mentioned the meditation on mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*)—mindfulness directed to the body—those who practice this also awaken well-awakened in the morning. The next verse says:

“Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti — sadā gotamasāvakā

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca — ahiṃsāya rato mano”

“Ever well awake they awaken, the disciples of Gotama,

whose minds, day and night, delight in non-violence.”

If any disciples of Gotama delight in non-violence day and night, maintaining thoughts oriented toward non-harming, they awaken well-awakened.

Next, it says:

“Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti — sadā gotamasāvakā

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca — bhāvanāya rato mano”

“Ever well awake they awaken, the disciples of Gotama,

whose minds, day and night, delight in meditation.”

If any disciples of Gotama dwell delighting in meditation day and night, they awaken well-awakened.

There is a small point to be made here. In the commentaries, when explaining the last-mentioned verses, it is said that “delighting in non-violence” (*ahiṃsāya rato mano*) refers to the meditation on compassion (*karuṇā-bhāvanā*), and “delighting in meditation” (*bhāvanāya rato mano*) refers to the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*). In this way, they restrict the meaning. However, it seems more reasonable to understand *ahiṃsāya rato mano* as maintaining thoughts of non-violence, such as loving-kindness and compassion, rather than strictly as a distinct meditation on compassion. Next, we think that *bhāvanāya rato mano* can be more meaningful if taken as generally having a mind inclined toward meditation. This is because the standard order of mention is loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). It is difficult to think that compassion would be mentioned first and then loving-kindness here. Here, it can be understood more meaningfully and in a broader sense: *ahiṃsāya rato mano* means maintaining thoughts in accordance with non-violence, and *bhāvanāya rato mano* means spending one's daily life with a mind inclined toward meditation.

In any case, with these six verses, the Buddha placed before the world the way to awaken well, so as to spend the day in an excellent manner. What is illustrated by this story is the protection obtained from the recollection of the Buddha, and its great power. Every member of this pious audience knows that the Triple Gem—namely, the Buddha Gem, the Dhamma Gem, and the Saṅgha Gem—actually exists as a protective mantra for everyone. What is the reason for this? The quality of the Buddha Gem has permeated the universe. Through the power of the Buddha's perfections (*pāramitās*), the Buddha-quality has permeated the universe. Therefore, there is a natural law (*dhammatā*) where a certain protection is afforded by contemplating the mass of qualities (*guṇakkhandha*) of the Buddha. This is clearly visible to us in the Buddha’s own words. In the *Dhajagga Sutta*—now known as the *Dhajagga Paritta*—the Buddha directly declares: “Monks, when you have gone to forests, to the roots of trees, or to empty huts to practice meditation, if any fear, trepidation, or hair-standing-on-end should arise, on that occasion, recollect the Tathāgata, that is, me. Recollect me with this passage: *‘Iti pi so bhagavā arahaṃ sammāsambuddho…’* When you recollect me, whatever fear, trepidation, or hair-standing-on-end you had will disappear. If you do not recollect me, then recollect the Dhamma with the passage starting with *‘Svākkhāto…’* Then too, that fear will disappear. If not, then recollect the Saṅgha with *‘Supaṭipanno…’*” In this manner, the Buddha himself declares this in the *Dhajagga Paritta*.

All of you have heard that in the *Ratana Sutta*, based on the power of the Triple Gem, the three-fold fear, including the fear of non-humans in the city of Vesāli, was dispelled as a *paritta—paritrāṇa* means protection—by declaring the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha as an assertion of truth (*saccakiriya*). From this, we can clearly see that *buddhānussati*, *dhammānussati*, and *saṅghānussati* can be considered not only as meditations but also as *parittas*. As a *paritta*, they provide protection to oneself. This is also what is demonstrated by this story. Although he was a child of a wrong-view family, having seen the child of Right View obtain certain benefits by developing *buddhānussati*, he became accustomed to *buddhānussati*. From that point on, its benefits occurred almost automatically and naturally; there is a tendency to repeat the practiced meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) when a disaster strikes. Even in this day and age—we think—perhaps because of the Buddhist imprint embedded in this nation, when a disaster occurs, people say *"Budu Amme"* (Oh Mother Buddha). Usually, they do not just say *"Amme"* (Mother), but they say *"Budu Amme"*. The Buddha is remembered. Similarly, here, as soon as he recollected the Buddha saying *"Namo Buddhassa"*, that *yakkha* became frightened of the Buddha's quality—the Buddha's majesty. Thus, we can see the power within the recollection of the Buddha, its power as a protection. Furthermore, here the Buddha declares, with the phrase *suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti*, that it helps one to wake up well-awakened. That is, if one lives through the day with a mind well-directed toward the qualities of the Buddha, one receives great solace.

From this series of verses, we should mainly focus our attention on the recollection of the Buddha, which almost everyone knows and practices. There is something special to be said about it. We will also have to briefly mention the other matters depending on the time available. If we consider the meditation on the recollection of the Buddha, everyone knows the nine supreme qualities of the Buddha. *Buddhānussati* is developed based on the text of these nine qualities. Either the text of the nine qualities is recited in its entirety, or there is also a method of expressing each quality in detail, with explanations. Such a method of developing *buddhānussati* has existed for a long time. However, it occurs to us that sometimes when one goes to analyze each term in that manner, a state of mental distraction arises. Now, the nine qualities in the *kammaṭṭhāna* section for *buddhānussati* are presented as follows:

> *"Iti pi so bhagavā arahaṃ sammāsambuddho*
>
> *vijjācaraṇasampanno sugato lokavidū*
>
> *anuttaro purisadammasārathi*
>
> *satthā devamanussānaṃ buddho bhagavā"*

Nine qualities are mentioned here. There is a custom of taking each of these and explaining them in various scholarly ways. Some people even consider it a meditation to go on explaining them through their etymologies and reciting those details. However, one must consider that there should be a certain distinction between reading a book written about the Buddha's qualities and meditating on those qualities. There must be a

difference. If it is a book written on the Buddha's qualities, yes, you have the opportunity to develop a wholesome mind by reading it with detailed and beautiful passages. However, deep concentration (*samādhi*) is not obtained; the mind gets distracted in it. Instead, what is expected from *buddhānussati* is actually to plunge into each term and train oneself to see the Buddha through it. Now, scholars often analyze the word "Arahant" (*arahaṃ*) in a scholarly manner, linking it to numerous indirect meanings far removed from the primary meaning of the word, and present them to the meditator, telling him to recite them systematically. Through this, the mind actually gets distracted, and it is difficult to think that the mind becomes one-pointed. The mind does not become concentrated. The purpose of a meditation should be the concentration of the mind, its one-pointedness. For one-pointedness, those numerous words, numerous passages, and numerous praises are not so relevant.

Instead, what should be done is to consider the general meaning of each term and draw as close as possible to it with one's heart. Just as the young prince Rāhula approached the Buddha and said, "Ascetic, even your shadow is pleasant to me," one should train to see the Buddha through each of these terms, by plunging into that term. In that case, only a basic understanding is necessary regarding the meaning of those words. Now, to put it briefly, as the context demands, the primary meaning of the word *arahaṃ* is worthiness of receiving offerings. Due to the greatness of the Buddha's qualities, due to his being worthy of veneration, he is worthy of receiving offerings. If one wishes, it is sufficient to think of him as a supreme being worthy of being honored with both material offerings (*āmisa-pūjā*) and the offering of practice (*paṭipatti-pūjā*). Apart from that, other various meanings and extra commentaries are not relevant there.

The same applies to *sammāsambuddho*. Fully Self-Awakened means that he himself—referred to as self-sprung knowledge (*svayaṃbhū-ñāṇa*)—correctly unravelled the secret of saṃsāra, the secret of life, through the Four Noble Truths or that Buddha-knowledge. He himself thoroughly realized those Noble Truths, without the advice or guidance of another teacher, without any of that. It is that uniqueness that is contained in the word *sammāsambuddho*.

Next is *vijjācaraṇasampanno*. Similarly, within the two words *vijjā* and *caraṇa*, there are two aspects of the mass of the Buddha's qualities. *Vijjā* there refers to the knowledge portion consisting of insight (*vipassanā*) and other wisdoms—one side being knowledge and understanding in a person's life. Next, conduct (*caraṇa*) is the other side. Here, the Buddha is complete in both these factors. There are some in society who have great knowledge, but their conduct is worthless. Some conduct themselves well, but are weak in their power of understanding. Far from being like that, the Buddha is perfect in both. It is just like this: if *vijjā* represents the two eyes, and *caraṇa* (or *caraṇadhamma*) represents the two feet, he is complete in both these limbs, the eyes and the feet. He is complete in both the basic factors necessary to travel along this path of practice. Therefore, through the quality of *vijjācaraṇasampanno*, one can understand that the Buddha is endowed with both these aspects.

Next is *sugato*—this too is explained in various ways, such as having an excellent gait or having good qualities. However, we should understand *sugato* meaningfully as having travelled well on the path of practice that leads to Buddhahood, or rather, to Nibbāna. He completed that journey. He arrived at the end of that journey. Precisely because he was "endowed" (*sampanna*) with the two qualities of *vijjā* and *caraṇa* mentioned earlier, the Buddha arrived correctly at the end of that path of practice.

And having arrived there, that he understood everything that needs to be known about the world is what is shown by the quality of *lokavidū*. The quality of *lokavidū* can also be explained in various ways: he understood everything to be known about the world systems (*loka-dhātu*). But it can be understood best in this way: nowadays, many people understand the external world scientifically. However, the Buddha did not just understand the world in that way; he also understood the inner world of each individual. He understood the internal world of the individual. He also understood the external world that exists as the environment for the individual. Because the Buddha understood everything that needs to be known about it, he is called *lokavidū* (knower of the world).

"Anuttaro purisadammasārathī"—then, relying on that very quality of *lokavidū*, the Buddha was like a charioteer in taming men who can be tamed—beings who can be tamed. He was like an extremely skillful driver. The Buddha had the ability to discipline anyone through his wisdom and through the skillful means called compassion. This is that power of disciplining. To whom, where, in what manner, and by giving what kind of discourse he could discipline someone clearly registered in the Buddha's knowledge. Therefore, using that quality of *lokavidū*, the Buddha possessed the ability to tame those beings in the manner described as *anuttaro purisadammasārathī* (unexcelled trainer of tamable persons).

So too, *satthā devamanussānaṃ*—meaning teacher not only of humans but also of gods.

Next, *buddho* means, when considered generally, complete with all the aforementioned qualities of a Buddha. Just as he attained Buddhahood through self-sprung knowledge, he also has the power to make others understand.

The term *bhagavā* carries the meaning of "fortunate" or "blessed." Within it lies the fortunate quality, the blessing, the majesty of fortune, which is seen within the physical body of the Buddha acquired through the power of his perfections (*pāramitās*), as well as within the mass of his qualities and his wisdom.

When we have briefly considered the nine qualities of the Buddha in that way, what needs to be done next is to recite those nine qualities in sequence for a considerable amount of time: *'Iti pi so bhagavā… arahaṃ… sammāsambuddho… vijjācaraṇasampanno…'* and so on. While doing so, one can choose the term that appeals to one most, that suits one's liking. In making that selection—if one has chosen a certain term—one does not need to struggle to give reasons for it. Frankly speaking, if after directing one's mind to those nine qualities for a considerable time, leaving out one by one those that do not appeal to one so much, reducing the nine to eight, the eight to

seven, and so on, one selects a certain quality as the one that appeals to one's mind, one does not need to struggle to explain why it appeals. It is just like when, in a very natural way, someone develops an affection due to some past saṃsāric connection, and sometimes thinks, “Oh, I don't know why, but this is the person who appeals to me, this is how it is for me.” Even saying that is enough. If one can say, “I do not know, but out of these nine qualities, this is the one that appeals to me,” that indeed is the most natural selection. What is felt through that is some aspect of the Buddha-qualities deposited in one's mind during past saṃsāric associations, when seeing Buddhas, and when hearing the Dhamma. The selection is based on that. That is why we say it is natural. It is when one makes such a choice that it becomes like when prince Rāhula approached the Buddha and said, “Ascetic, even your shadow is pleasant to me.” “This word is enough for me.” If one can see the Buddha through this one word, there is no need to weave stories around it anymore. There is no need to keep repeating various beautiful words and passages in praise of it. What is done by that is only the distraction of the mind.

Just like anchoring a boat in a body of water so that it does not drift here and there, and does not rock this way and that, the mind must plunge into that quality. Having plunged into it, one must train oneself to see the Buddha through that quality. Once trained in this way, many words are not needed. If one has chosen *‘Bhagavā’*, as one repeats *‘Bhagavā, Bhagavā, Bhagavā’*, one can attain concentration (*samādhi*) through it. One does not need to think about it in detail. One sees the Buddha through that word. Now, that child said, “Namo Buddhassa.” That was an era when the Buddha was alive. Now, even though the Buddha is not alive, these lay devotees can see the mass of his qualities in their minds. A faithful person, a person with Right View, can see the Buddha in the mind. In that case, even a single word that helps one to see him in the mind is sufficient. Meditating continuously on that word, without letting the mind wander elsewhere, is indeed the meditation on the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*).

We spoke specifically about *buddhānussati* because many people practice and train in it. If there are any shortcomings in it, and if you think that what we have said here is correct, one can correct oneself accordingly.

Now, we will mention the other meditations very briefly, according to the time available. The recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*)—which you have also heard of many times, even if it is not as well-known as the other—has six qualities mentioned there:

> *“Svākkhāto bhagavā dhammo*
>
> *sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko*
>
> *opanayiko paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhīti”*

The quality of *svākkhāta* means that this Dhamma preached by the Buddha is well-preached. It is preached excellently. This “preached excellently” does not refer to the tone of the Buddha's voice, nor to the phonetic qualities of the words preached. What is meant here is that the Buddha's Dhamma was preached targeting a certain goal, a certain supreme purpose, and was preached with the beginning, middle, and end well-connected

in a way that leads to that purpose. This is not something useless. It is not something devoid of meaning. This Dhamma is something that yields results. *Svākkhāto* means "well-proclaimed." A result is obtained in accordance with the practice. The practice exists in accordance with the result. What is to be understood by the word *svākkhāta* is that it is well-preached, being good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end.

Next, *sandiṭṭhika* means that its results can be experienced by oneself in this very world, in this very life. Why? Because within this Dhamma of the Buddha lies the path to remove the defilements (*kilesas*) of greed, hatred, and delusion existing in our minds. When a certain portion of these is removed, one can experience it for oneself to that same extent in this very world. It is not something to be received in a future life. The path, fruit, and Nibbāna can be obtained in this very world. It is not an Nibbāna to be received in a next life. That is why it has the quality of *sandiṭṭhika* (visible here and now).

Akāliko means that it yields results without delay. This is also connected to the former. If someone has a certain degree of greed, hatred, or delusion, that person will experience a corresponding degree of heavy distress or mental defilement. If those are removed to some extent with the help of the Dhamma, there is immediate solace as soon as they are removed. That is *akāliko*. In a deeper sense, this is shown with regard to the supramundane path (*lokuttara-magga*)—when directly experiencing the Dhamma in its supramundane aspect. In that context, two things are mentioned: path (*magga*) and fruit (*phala*); the fruit follows immediately after the supramundane path. The supramundane path refers to a very subtle state of concentration (*samādhi*) obtained through insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). The fruit follows immediately upon it. That is the quality of *akāliko*—the characteristic of yielding results without delay.

Ehipassiko means "come and see." Within this "come and see" is the idea that "this Dhamma is something that invites one to put it into action." It demonstrates its practical nature. The Dhamma itself says, "Come and see—try putting me into practice." To such an extent, there is an amazing practical quality in the Dhamma. It is in this sense that it is called *ehipassiko*.

The word *opanayiko* is a somewhat deep word. What is to be understood there is that it leads one onwards, drawing one in, just as one is invited with "come and see." Such a quality exists in the Dhamma. In the Dhamma, there is a quality of leading one from one stage to another, as they are interconnected. For example, when one develops Right View, almost without knowing it, right intention (wholesome thought) arises. When that is developed, in accordance with it, wholesome words are spoken. In this way, if one lives in certain ways—lives in accordance with the Dhamma—it automatically leads one to those respective stages. That is what is meant by *opanayiko*. One is drawn in and led onward by the Dhamma. Such a quality exists in this Dhamma.

Paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhīti—this is a Dhamma that can be directly realized by the wise within their own minds. In the end, it is realized by oneself. This is the mass of qualities—the six qualities—that are presented as the qualities of the Dhamma.

Next, as the qualities of the Saṅgha—which you, lay devotees, have also heard often. There is a passage like this:

> *"Supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho,*
>
> *ujupaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho,*
>
> *ñāyapaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho,*
>
> *sāmīcipaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho,*
>
> *yadidaṃ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā,*
>
> *esa bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho,*
>
> *āhuneyyo, pāhuneyyo, dakkhiṇeyyo, añjalikaraṇīyo,*
>
> *anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassāti"*

Within this too, there are nine qualities. Here, mainly, *supaṭipanno* means that the Saṅgha of the eight Noble Persons has entered correctly and well upon the path leading to Nibbāna, and they are engaged in that practice. Next, to emphasize this and present it more strongly, it is called *ujupaṭipanno*. Straightforwardly—the Noble Eightfold Path is also a straight path. It means that they act by plunging straight, directly, and honestly into that path. Next, *ñāyapaṭipanno*—they entered upon that path of practice systematically, logically from one stage to another. Likewise, *sāmīcipaṭipanno*—they travel correctly, inclined toward Nibbāna. All of these refer to their practice.

Next: *"yadidaṃ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā esa bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho"*—that is, as eight individuals, this refers to the eight Noble Ones who have reached the four paths and the four fruits.

Due to that mass of qualities, the worthiness of worship of those monks is mentioned next. *Āhuneyyo* means being worthy of having requisites brought even from afar to be offered. *Pāhuneyyo*—if one has prepared food in one's home for relatives or guests, when they arrive on alms-round, they are worthy of being offered that as well, because of their mass of qualities. Likewise, *dakkhiṇeyyo* means being worthy of receiving special offerings—even special offerings made with faith in the fruit of kamma. *Añjalikaraṇīyo* means being worthy of being saluted with hands clasped together—palms placed on the forehead.

Next: *"anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa"*—they are like an unexcelled field of merit for the world, a field of merit capable of yielding the highest benefits to the lay donors because of that mass of qualities.

In that manner, many points are mentioned there as the qualities of the Saṅgha. Therefore, the Buddha shows that even contemplating the Saṅgha through any of those words, as the recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*), provides protection for one's life and, as stated in those verses, becomes a cause for awakening well. In short, one who contemplates the Triple Gem is able to spend the day in a well-awakened state from day to day.

The next thing mentioned there is mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*). Mindfulness of the body means contemplating the nature of this body of ours. This is also presented in three ways. You, lay devotees, have often heard about mindfulness of the body. The Buddha compares this bodily cage to a bag open at both ends, like a bag open at both ends, filled with grains. It contains thirty-two impure parts. What is meant here is contemplating those impure parts. Seeing the various parts of this body, from the hair of the head down to the soles of the feet, as impure and repulsive—in short, this is called *paṭikkūlamanasikāra* (contemplation of repulsiveness). Contemplating it as repulsive.

Next, something related to this, which is included within mindfulness of the body itself, is the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*). Ten kinds of foulness (*dasa-asubha*) are mentioned. As soon as consciousness (*viññāṇa*) leaves this body, as soon as it dies, according to the ancient Indian custom, it is taken and thrown into a charnel ground. After being thrown into the charnel ground, ten different stages of decay of that bodily cage are presented as subjects of meditation on foulness (*asubha-kammaṭṭhāna*). The stages of this body, from swelling up and turning blue within a day, then being infested with worms, filling with pus, and finally turning into a skeleton, are presented in ten stages as the “ten kinds of foulness.” Contemplating these is what is meant. What is expected from all of of this is disillusionment (*nibbidā*) regarding this body. The attachment—lust (*ragā*)—regarding this body, which exists strongly in saṃsāric beings, the attachment to one's own body and to the bodies of others, is what makes them go on and on in saṃsāra. As long as there is attachment to this bodily cage, even if this bird leaves from here, it willingly enters another cage again. It departs by creating a cage for itself in accordance with kamma. Not according to one's own wishes, but a cage is created in accordance with the kamma one has done. Then, after it is created, what follows along with birth (*jāti*) is aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) and disease. This is the nature of saṃsāra.

Therefore, the Buddha points out that without developing disillusionment toward this bodily cage, one cannot escape from this saṃsāra. One cannot realize Nibbāna while maintaining attachment to it. Therefore, even if we do not like it—whether we are laypeople or monks—one who hopes to realize Nibbāna must develop mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*) to some extent. Mindfulness of the body is nothing foreign; it is the real state of our body. We do not like to display the real state of our body externally. But we must contemplate it in the mind. Not only the things inside the body, but everything external as well, the Buddha has shown to be repulsive. Indeed, it has a repulsive nature. But we cover it up. The ordinary world has no understanding of these things due to defilements. The repulsive nature of this body endowed with consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is

what is contained in the aforementioned meditation on repulsiveness. Contemplating what is inside this living body like a bag open at both ends. Next, likewise, the state it enters after death—that is the future. Attributing and comparing it, thinking, "This body too is subject to that same law, this body too is just like that." Through this too, one becomes disillusioned with the body. The understanding arises that: "If this is something that is bound to reach such a state, it is foolish to maintain such high pride (*māna*) about it as we do." That is how the meditation on foulness is practiced.

In the same manner, another meditation that comes is called the "meditation on the elements" (*dhātu-kammaṭṭhāna*). This also helps in developing equanimity (*upekkhā*) toward this body—developing a certain equanimity free from attachment and aversion. That means thinking of this body as made up of the four elements (*dhātu*). When considered as elements, there is no difference between our body and the bodies of others. This bodily cage of ours—all of this—is constructed from what we usually take as examples: the earth, water, fire, and wind, which are called *paṭhavī*, *āpo*, *tejo*, and *vāyo*. The Buddha points out that contemplating in this way as elements helps the wise to quickly develop equanimity toward the body. In short, for the realization of Nibbāna, through this meditation on the elements, a disillusionment with all four elements must arise in the mind at some point. The mind must be freed from these four elements. Why? Because that aforementioned cage is created from these four elements. It is from the four elements—*paṭhavī*, *āpo*, *tejo*, and *vāyo*—that this bodily cage is constructed, like mixing clay to build a house. It is created because of the attachment toward them. We have a subtle form of attachment toward these four elements. The Buddha taught the meditation on the elements to remove that. There are two ways of doing this.

One considers this very living body oneself. Hard things like hair, body hair, nails, and teeth represent the earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*). The factors for the earth element exist in my body, as hair, body hair, nails, teeth, and so on. The water element (*āpo-dhātu*), things with a fluid nature, a watery nature—such as bile, phlegm, snot, blood, pus, urine, and so on—these too exist in my body, belonging to the water element. Likewise, the activity of the fire element (*tejo-dhātu*) is in this body. Through conditions such as getting a fever, the digestion of food in the body, body heat, warmth, and so on, the fire element also exists within. Similarly, what is called the wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*) is our in-breathing and out-breathing, and the air that travels here and there within the body. All of these belong to the wind element. These are the four elements.

Next, one contemplates that these four elements inside and the four elements outside are the same. Whether they exist inside or outside, when considered as elements, they are the same. Then, gradually, this also helps to remove the conceit (*māna*) of "I am" and "mine." Vain conceit and other such attitudes disappear when one contemplates, "Isn't it these same four elements that exist in everyone's body?" In this manner, the Buddha presents this mindfulness of the body. When this is contemplated, it brings great solace in daily life. The agitations arising from life's problems can be largely eliminated. What is done by this mindfulness of the body is seeing the reality of life. If one sees the reality of

life, one will not be inclined to commit suicide. One understands that one's life is short, according to the nature of this body. These are the benefits of mindfulness of the body.

Likewise, "delighting in non-violence" (*ahiṃsāya rato mano*) is shown as non-violence. The commentary explains this by limiting it only to the meditation on compassion (*karuṇā-bhāvanā*). However, we can understand that non-violence is spoken of directly here as an attitude. *"Ahiṃsāya rato mano"*—liking non-violence, being inclined toward non-violence, delighting in non-violence. The Buddha shows that delighting in non-violence is a very valuable thing. For the most part, what exists in the world is a delight in violence. The world always looks to satisfy its own needs and wants by harming others. If someone develops an attitude within that they will not harm anyone, both loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) are present there—not only compassion. Delighting in non-violence here means looking at the world with an attitude of loving-kindness and compassion. If someone practices this daily, they can awaken well-awakened. A power comes to awaken well-awakened without regrets, if one maintains thoughts of non-violence, loving-kindness, compassion, and so on, in daily life.

Next is mentioned: *"bhāvanāya rato mano"*. We took this generally as a liking for meditation. Liking meditation is also a valuable thing. What is called meditation? It is the proper development of the mind. In this day and age, various kinds of mental development are spoken of—certain developments through science and technology—and developments through education. But the development brought about by this meditation shown by the Buddha is something much more special than that. It is the path leading to Nibbāna. If there is any meditation that should be done to cross over this saṃsāra, it is being inclined toward that meditation. There, generally, meditation (*bhāvanā*) means development of the mind, having mental development as a preference. Understanding its value and spending the day giving priority to it is a valuable thing.

Thus, through that we can see that the Buddha has brought out six life-values in these six verses—recollection of the Buddha, recollection of the Dhamma, recollection of the Saṅgha, mindfulness of the body, non-violence, and next, generally, liking for meditation, delighting in meditation. That is the shaping of our lives. In short, we know that in this day and age especially, the majority of people in this society are those who fall asleep in anxiety, awaken in anxiety, and spend their lives in anxiety. That anxious state arises because they maintain their daily thoughts in a wrong way. Now, there is no need to tell you, lay devotees, how people who engage their minds through various media spend their daily lives, how they spend day and night, and especially how they spend the night. There is no need to tell you with what kind of things and with what kind of thoughts they spend it. You yourselves can find evidence as to whether one can actually awaken well-awakened through those things, or spend the day mindfully, well and happily. But if one selects one of these six channels—along these six themes, these six values shown by the Buddha—and maintains one's thoughts accordingly, then as the Buddha promises here: *"suppabuddhā"*, one can awaken in the morning extremely well-

awakened, spend the day well-awakened, and spend the day peacefully. Along with that, a development of the mind also occurs.

Therefore, in accordance with that, we can understand this multitude of values shown by the Buddha here. We must bring these closer to our lives. Increasingly, we head toward the mouth of ruin because we do not have a correct understanding of the real virtues and values of life. Why? Because the Buddha points out that this human mind we have received is extremely rare. In this mind, there is a capability, a power, to develop toward Buddhahood. But what do we do? In a very dangerous manner, tempted and drawn by the values presented through various modern artificial lifestyles and modern science, we destroy our lives through them. We spend our day through media that defiles our thoughts. Instead, the Buddha points out that, without any extra expense—without any expense at all—to shape one's life, to awaken well-awakened in that manner, and accordingly spend the entire day peacefully, one should make an effort to generate those series of thoughts in one's mind. Now, people usually think of meditation as something done only when sitting in the cross-legged posture. But here, the Buddha especially mentions *anussati*, which means recollection. Even from that story, it is clear that the child did not know anything about the quality of "Arahant" (*arahaṃ*) or other things as stated in depth in books. But he might have seen the Buddha. In any case, having formed a feeling, a faith, toward the Buddha, as soon as he said "Namo Buddhassa", that *yakkha* was frightened. We must think in that manner. We must draw close to this Buddha-quality just as prince Rāhula drew close. Not through a massive number of long words and passages in a scholarly manner based on erudition and learning. Even one is sufficient. What is the reason for that? We cannot develop it daily like reading a book in our everyday lives. Now here it is said: *"Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca — niccaṃ buddhagatā sati"*—that these disciples of Gotama develop the recollection of the Buddha constantly, day and night. So, to develop the recollection of the Buddha constantly, how can one develop it with such a large number of passages, alongside the duties of daily life? But if one considers these briefly—let us say, as mentioned, the quality of *'Arahaṃ'* is very dear to someone, or the quality of *'Bhagavā'* is very dear—if one has chosen it well after directing one's mind to it for a considerable time, and having directed the mind to the nine qualities… why do we call that a natural law (*dhammatā*)? For instance, if we take *"anuttaro purisadammasārathī"*, meaning "like an extremely skillful charioteer in taming beings." That term appears to be very long. But some people might like even that. Why? There could be a saṃsāric reason for that. It could be due to the faith arisen in the past, during the Buddha's time, upon seeing the display of Buddha-power on occasions such as the taming of Aṅgulimāla. In that way, if some quality naturally appeals to our mind, meditating on that quality briefly is what is called the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). If so, it is indeed possible to incline the mind to that Buddha-quality and develop the meditation subject one has trained in, not only while moving about in daily life and during leisure times, but even during wasted times, such as when one is just loitering.

It is the same regarding the recollection of the Dhamma. Consider the nature of this Dhamma briefly. If we do not praise it in detail, understanding just this general idea is

sufficient for a person. What is called *sati* here is mindfulness. Recollecting the Buddha, recollecting the Dhamma, recollecting the Saṅgha.

Similarly, there is mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*). This too is not something done specifically by sitting on a meditation seat. Let us say we spat, or vomited. Everyday functions associated with bodily activities occur. On those occasions, we should not let them go to waste. We should not just throw them away as "waste products." One must see a Dhamma in them. Some people throw these away as waste products without deriving any benefit from them. Today, we see in this modern scientific world that much use is made of waste products. Things we throw away are sometimes taken to foreign countries, made into special products, brought back, and sold at high prices.

Therefore, we must think in the same way. We must derive benefit even from the waste products discarded from our body, in accordance with the Dhamma. How do we derive benefit? We direct them toward mindfulness of the body. Spittle is directed to mindfulness of the body, feces and urine are directed to mindfulness of the body. At that moment too, our mind is developed. It develops through that meditation. Through that, one draws closer to Nibbāna. Attachment toward saṃsāra decreases. The attachment to build more and more bodily cages in this saṃsāra fades away. That is indeed why the Buddha declared this to be a Dhamma of dispassion (*virāga-dhamma*). What is contained within this Dhamma of the Four Noble Truths is departure from this saṃsāra. This is a journey toward that. Therefore, one cannot go on this journey while maintaining an attachment to it. Gradually, one must develop disillusionment (*nibbidā*) toward it. What is called *yathābhūta-ñāṇa* (knowledge of things as they are) is seeing truth as it is. The Buddha has pointed out that along with seeing truth as it is, disillusionment follows—inevitably. One cannot help but become disillusioned upon seeing truth as it is. If one sees truth as it is to some extent, to that extent one becomes disillusioned with saṃsāra, disillusioned with existence (*pavatti*). It is through that disillusionment that one can realize Nibbāna. The door of Nibbāna opens.

Therefore, one should not be afraid of these things. Whether lay or ordained, our ultimate goal is to escape from this dangerous saṃsāra as quickly as possible. Because of that, leaving aside those bonds of home and hearth, we must contemplate: we are born alone, and we die alone. We travel through this saṃsāra alone. Relationships with relatives are temporary. Therefore, our liberation belongs to us. The Buddha declares, "Not even I can liberate another; that is up to you." The Tathāgatas are only teachers. Since this belongs to us—this mind of ours—in this era of a Buddha's appearance, in this rare opportunity of a human life-state, that human mind must be applied to something highly productive. Generally, there may be many profitable occupations and jobs in the world. But it is not those. The maximum benefit to be derived from a human life-state is what the Buddha has shown here, presented as six virtues to be developed. Therefore, you, lay devotees, must consider this with wisdom. Within their lifestyles, most people have a daily routine. One must make an effort to add these to that daily routine. If not all six, at least a few of them. If one directs one's thoughts through these channels, one can awaken well-awakened. One can escape from those anxious states mentioned earlier.

One can draw close to Nibbāna much faster than one thinks, once these true preferences are developed. The Buddha has pointed out that this Dhamma has a quality of leading one onward. When one engages in the Dhamma, the Dhamma leads one further and further forward, because the Dhamma yields immediate benefits. When one sees the benefits of the Dhamma, one inclines more and more toward that path.

So, what remains for us to do is to identify the real virtues, generate a genuine interest, and enter upon that path. Through that, as promised by the Buddha, we can avoid the dangerous states of decline in our lives and achieve a certain solace. These cannot be done with money. The secret to this lies within ourselves. Contemplating that fact, on a valuable day like today—this Esala Full Moon Poya day is an occasion when the Buddha-quality, Dhamma-quality, and Saṅgha-quality radiated throughout the entire universe, with a Dhamma-force extending from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha. Therefore, while there is a Buddha-force, Dhamma-force, and Saṅgha-force spread throughout the universe, if we spend our lives dedicating them to worthless, insubstantial things, we alone will have to regret it.

Therefore, thinking wisely, this pious audience has observed some level of virtue (*sīla*) on this valuable day, drew close to the aforementioned path of practice, and disciplined body and speech. You spent this time calming the mind with some such meditation. Now, through hearing the Dhamma at this moment, we believe that the factors necessary to develop the spiritual faculties (*indriya-dhamma*) and powers (*bala-dhamma*)—namely, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—have been deposited in your minds. Furthermore, through this determination you have made, may you illuminate your lives even more, and through the association of admirable friends (*kalyāṇa-mittas*), may this accumulated mass of merit definitely be a supportive condition for realizing the supreme deathless Nibbāna in this very life through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahanthood!

Likewise, may whatever beings there are from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, including the guardian deities and Brahmās of the Sāsana, as well as our departed relatives, rejoice in this mass of merit accumulated through preaching and hearing the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they all as quickly as possible attain the solace of the supreme deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi they aspire to! Transfer the merit with these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #17

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Asāre sāramatino, sāre cāsāradassino;

Te sāraṃ nādhigacchanti, micchāsaṅkappagocarā.

Sārañca sārato ñatvā, asārañca asārato;

Te sāraṃ adhigacchanti, sammāsaṅkappagocarā.

From:

Verses 11-12 from the Yamakavagga (Chapter of Pairs) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

One can achieve true progress and development only if one has enough inner strength to abandon the essenceless and accept what is essential. The life of a person who has the wrong attitude of seeing the essenceless as essential and the essential as essenceless is a complete failure. It is because our ancient Sri Lankan ancestors possessed the noble principle of abandoning the essenceless the moment they saw the essential that the Dispensation of the Buddha (*Sambuddha Sāsana*), brought to this island of Lankā by the Great Arahant Mahinda on a Poson Full Moon Poya Day like today, took deep root in this country. The two verses we have taken as our theme today express this very valuable principle, which also serves the future of that Dispensation.

The occasion for preaching these two verses arose in connection with certain events in the lives of the chief disciples of this Dispensation, the Venerable Sāriputta and Moggallāna. After these two Venerables, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, entered this Buddha-Dispensation, joined the community of monks, and attained Arahantship, the Buddha gathered the Sangha and conferred upon them the titles of Chief Disciples. On that occasion, a certain critical discussion and whispering arose among the monks regarding the way the Buddha conferred these titles. They murmured that the Buddha had acted

with bias, like someone distributing alms based on personal favor. "If Chief Disciple positions were to be given, they should have been given to the group of five monks who ordained first. Otherwise, they should have been selected from the fifty-five monks headed by the clan-son Yasa. Or else from among the thirty of the *Bhaddavaggiya* group. Or perhaps from among the thousand monks led by Uruvela Kassapa." While the monks were engaged in such talk, expressing what was like an accusation against the Buddha, the Supreme Buddha asked, "What are you discussing, monks?" When they explained the matter, He replied, "No, monks, I do not confer titles out of favoritism. I confer titles according to each individual's past aspirations and the power of their perfections (*pāramīs*)." Then, in great detail, He explained the past meritorious deeds and the definite prophecies received by Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña, the clan-son Yasa, and others individually, and finally declared how the two, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, had received their definite prophecy to become Chief Disciples from the Buddha Anomadassī.

After all these accounts were related, the two Venerables, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, approached the Buddha, paid homage, and in front of the assembly, recounted how they had engaged in the search for truth before coming to the Buddha. To mention that story briefly, it is as follows. Many of you may have already heard the valuable life story of these two. There were two Brahmin villages named Upatissa and Kolita near Rajagaha. Two meritorious Brahmin youths were born into the leading families of these villages. They received the names Upatissa and Kolita. These families had been friends for generations. Similarly, these two became extremely close friends and began to do everything together. In their youth, after completing their education, they, like other young people, turned to recreational activities and made it a habit to attend a certain public festival called the *Giragga-samajja* (Mountain-top Festival) held annually in Rajagaha. It must have been something like the variety shows or musical nights of today—a festival held on a mountain peak.

Although this had been their custom, on one particular year, while watching the *Giragga-samajja* festival—perhaps because their wisdom accumulated over saṃsāra had matured and ripened by then—they did not laugh where they usually would have laughed. They did not show excitement or sorrow where others did. They did not distribute gifts as usual but looked on as if disillusioned. When they spoke to each other, they found they shared the same thoughts. What was the thought? "There is nothing of value here. There is no essence. This is essenceless. All these people who are dancing, playing music, and singing here will be dead before a hundred years pass. It is far more valuable for us to go in search of the path of liberation from this saṃsāra." Thus, they both agreed and discussed their next step. "If we expect liberation, we must receive ordination. From whom shall we receive ordination?" At that time in Rajagaha, there was a well-known wanderer (*paribbājaka*) named Sañjaya, who had a large following. They decided to go there and ordain. Sending back their carriages and royal retinues, they took ordination under the wanderer Sañjaya along with five hundred companions. Having ordained, because they possessed extremely sharp wisdom, within a few days they learned everything that the wanderer Sañjaya knew, and they asked their teacher, "Do you know anything beyond this?" When he replied, "No, this is all I know. I cannot

tell you anything beyond this," they realized that staying there was essenceless. They agreed, "We must search for the truth individually. Whichever of us finds the path of liberation, or Nibbāna first, must inform the other." They went to various places, met teachers, and began to hold discussions and ask questions. Not a single teacher was able to answer their questions. On the contrary, these two were able to answer the questions posed by those teachers.

As time went on, the Buddha, having accepted the Veluvana Monastery, was residing in Rajagaha. One day, Venerable Assaji, one of the first group of five monks, was walking for alms. On that day, the wanderer Upatissa—whom we now know as Venerable Sāriputta—having finished his meal, left his dwelling and was heading towards the wanderers' monastery when he saw this Venerable monk. He thought, "I have never seen such a person before. I have never seen anyone with such peaceful senses and such a composed posture. He must be either an Arahant or one who has entered the path to Arahantship. It is not appropriate to speak to him right now while he is walking for alms," he thought. So he followed him from behind. When the Venerable monk finished his alms-round and was preparing to eat his meal, Upatissa prepared a suitable seat for him, offered water from his own water vessel, and performed all the duties of an attendant. After the meal was finished and all service was complete, he asked the Venerable monk, "Friend, who is your teacher? What is the Dhamma you follow? Your faculties are so serene, and your complexion is exceptionally bright and radiant." He then requested, "Please tell me that Dhamma."

Then, Venerable Assaji very humbly replied, "I am but a novice, recently ordained. I cannot deliver a long discourse or explain the Dhamma in detail." Then the wanderer Upatissa said, "My name is Upatissa. It is enough if you tell me just a little. There is no need for many words. I only want the meaning—the core essence. If you speak just that much, I will understand." At that moment, Venerable Assaji recited a verse of immense depth—a precious verse that presents the entire essence and fundamental law of Dependent Arising (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*).

> *“Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā – tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha*
>
> *tesañca yo nirodho – evaṃ vādī mahāsamṇo”*
>
> "Of those phenomena that arise from a cause,
>
> the Tathāgata has declared the cause, and also their cessation.
>
> Such is the doctrine of the Great Ascetic."

This is the meaning of that verse.

So profound was this verse, and so sharp was the wisdom and meritorious potential of the wanderer Upatissa, that upon hearing just the first two lines of the verse, he attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*). The moment he heard, "Of those phenomena that arise from a cause, the Tathāgata has declared the cause," he had already entered

the stream. After the verse was completed, the wanderer Upatissa asked the Venerable monk, "Where does our Teacher reside?" When told it was Veluvana Monastery, he inquired about the path and said, "I have one more task. I have a friend to whom I made a promise that if I found the truth, the deathless, or Nibbāna, I would inform him. I will fulfill that promise and then come. Please go ahead." Sending Venerable Assaji ahead, the wanderer Upatissa returned to the wanderers' monastery. As he was arriving, his friend Kolita saw him from afar and thought, "Today my friend does not look his usual self. He has an exceptionally serene and joyful appearance. Surely, he must have attained Nibbāna." When Kolita asked for details, the wanderer Upatissa recounted the story of how he met the monk and recited the verse in full. Upon the completion of that verse, the wanderer Kolita also became established in the fruit of Stream-entry.

Then the wanderer Kolita said, "Let us now go to meet the Buddha." However, because Upatissa was someone who always respected his teachers, he thought of their former preceptor, the wanderer Sañjaya, and said, "Let us go and tell this new discovery to our teacher as well. Perhaps he will understand the Dhamma upon hearing this verse. Even if he cannot, he might at least go to see the Buddha." So they went to find their teacher.

Seeing them, the wanderer Sañjaya asked, "How is it, my children, have you found the truth?" When they related the news, he did not show much faith. After hearing everything, he said, "Then you two may go. As for me, I cannot go." When they asked, "Why?", he replied, "Having been a teacher for so long, I cannot now become a disciple, a pupil. To use a simile, it would be like having been a water-pot and then becoming a ladle or a spoon." You know that it is the water-pot that provides water to others, while a ladle or a spoon is used to take from it. That was the simile he used. "Having been like a water-pot before, how can I now become like a ladle or a spoon? It would demean me." Saying this, he refused to go. When they pleaded again, saying, "Do not say so, teacher. Such a supreme person, a Buddha, has arisen in the world. The Dhamma has arisen, the Sangha has arisen. This is a rare opportunity!"—he asked, "My children, are there more fools or wise people in this world?" Upatissa and Kolita replied, "Fools are in the majority." "Very well, then. Let the fools come to me, and let the wise go to the wise Ascetic Gotama." Thus he rejected their invitation.

As soon as the two of them departed after this conversation, a large portion of Sañjaya's disciples set out to go with them. Seeing this, it is recorded that the wanderer Sañjaya spat warm blood from his mouth due to intense grief. Such was his sorrow.

That is the account we wished to mention. Sāriputta and Moggallāna related this entire story to the Buddha in front of the Sangha on that occasion. Finally, they remarked, "Despite all our efforts, our teacher, the wanderer Sañjaya, did not come."

Upon hearing this, the Buddha declared, "Such is the nature of the world. Because of his wrong view and mistaken ideas, Sañjaya regarded the essenceless as essential and the essential as essenceless. But because of your wisdom and intelligence, you two understood the true essence and attained it." Praising them, He uttered the two verses we mentioned earlier:

“Asāre sāramatino – sāre cāsāradassino

te sāraṃ nādhigacchanti – micchāsaṅkappagocarā”

Those who conceive of the essenceless as essential, and who hold the view of the essential as essenceless, being governed by wrong thoughts, never arrive at the true essence. Having stated one side in this manner, He declared the other side:

“Sārañca sārato ñatvā – asārañca asārato

te sāraṃ adhigacchanti – sammāsaṅkappagocarā”

But those who understand the essential as essential, and the essenceless as essenceless, directing their thoughts in accordance with right thoughts, arrive at the true essence. This is the meaning of the verse.

These are two highly valuable verses containing very profound ideas. From both this narrative and the two verses, we can extract many lessons on a day like today regarding the Dispensation of the Buddha and our own lives. Now, if we look closely at the first verse, its best illustration is found within the very story we just recounted: the character of the wanderer Sañjaya. His character is depicted by that first verse. Why? Because *asāre sāramatino*—he took the essenceless to be essential, and consequently, took the essential to be essenceless. As a result, a precious opportunity slipped away. It is shown that he lacked the capacity even to see the Buddha because of falling prey to wrong thoughts. To explain further in the light of the meaning of this verse: what is meant by "essenceless" in the phrase *asāre sāramatino*? When we reflect on why the wanderer Sañjaya hesitated to go to the Buddha, we can see what those essenceless things were.

He had a large following, gains, offerings, fame, and praise. These were the things that the wanderer Sañjaya held in high esteem. Yet, all of these are completely essenceless. Thus, he took the essenceless to be essential. He thought, "I have a large following—even if they are fools, they are numerous. I have great strength of numbers." Furthermore, out of pride, he thought, "I am a teacher; I cannot now become a disciple." These are foolish thoughts. Accordingly, "wrong thoughts" (*micchā-saṅkappa*), in terms of the Noble Eightfold Path, refers to thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of ill-will, and thoughts of harmfulness, as you all must have read many times. Thoughts connected to sensual desires, hatred, and cruelty. Once one is overcome by such thoughts, one is continuously drawn in that direction.

Thus, that view, that perspective, and that attitude are expressed by the first verse. Sañjaya is an excellent example of this. Indeed, if we reflect on it, this is true not only of that time but also of today. The majority of people in the world are of that very type. Moreover, many people easily drift into wrong view. They easily succumb to wrong views. What is called "essenceless" basically falls under the side of wrong views. In fact, although we speak of wrong view, what is sometimes more dangerous than outright falsehood is what we call "half-truths." Devotees, "half-truths" are incomplete truths; at

first glance, they appear to be true, but upon looking inside, they are empty, false, and hollow, containing various flaws.

There is an ancient term used in this Dispensation for such half-truths: *muggasuppatā* (literally, mung-bean soup). It means being "like mung-bean soup." You can understand this: when you eat rice with mung-bean curry, you occasionally bite into half-cooked, hard wild beans. Sometimes, those hard, unboiled beans are in the majority. It is just like that. That is, it is only half-cooked. Such are these half-truths. These half-truths are just like that. And just like in those days, "mung-bean soup" is extremely popular today. A large crowd is drawn to this mung-bean soup. If you look at society, you will see it for yourselves. Such is the state of society.

Furthermore, when reflecting on wrong view, the Buddha declared that among all the faults in this world, the supreme or greatest fault—called *parama-vajja* (the ultimate fault)—is wrong view. Why is that? He states this with reasons. Someone might think, "Why? Surely we have freedom of thought. What does it matter to others if we adopt whatever view we want?" But the primary cause of a person's ruin in life is wrong view. The Buddha demonstrated the danger of wrong view to the Sangha with an excellent illustration and simile.

First, He declared the fact: "Monks, the bodily actions, verbal actions, and mental actions of a person with wrong view all conform to that very wrong view. Whatever intention he forms, whatever aspiration, whatever goal, whatever activity he undertakes—all of it conforms to that wrong view." "Then, what is their result, their disadvantage? Consequently, he has to experience severe unwholesome results, suffering (*dukkha*), and painful, undesirable consequences." Then comes the simile: "Just as, monks, when a seed of neem, or a bitter cucumber seed, or a bitter gourd seed is planted in moist soil, whatever soil-nutrients and moisture it draws in all work to produce a bitter fruit; it produces only a bitter fruit." "In the same way, the entire conduct of a person holding wrong view leads to bad, improper, and undesirable results."

Then He declared the opposite side: "Similarly, monks, all bodily, verbal, and mental actions of a person with right view are nurtured in accordance with that right view. Likewise, his intentions, aspirations, expectations, goals, and activities conform to that right view and ultimately yield good results and benefits. The simile for this can be understood in the same way. Just as, monks, when a grape seed, a grain of hill-paddy, or a sugar-cane seed is planted in moist soil, whatever soil-nutrients and moisture it draws in yield a sweet and delicious fruit; in the same way is right view." Thus He showed the difference between the two.

From this, we can understand that the majority of people in the world are drawn towards "mung-bean soup" and drift along the path of wrong views. Now, regarding the second verse: the best illustration for this—which you can easily understand even without my mentioning it—is the life of the two Venerables, Sāriputta and Moggallāna. Their lives demonstrate this clearly. Indeed, when we speak of the Chief Disciples of this Dispensation, we must all remember that, next to the Buddha Himself, it is from the

Chief Disciples that we should draw inspiration and example. Indeed, looking back at their exemplary past, we see that they possessed the strength of character to humbly cast aside the essenceless and accept what is essential. This was demonstrated on several occasions even during their lay life.

The first instance was mentioned in the story itself. In youth, variety shows and musical nights are the kind of entertainments that everyone frequents. But once the wisdom accumulated through saṃsāra matures, there comes a point when one becomes weary of them. As we have mentioned in previous Dhamma sermons: if we take the entire world as a school, there are three grades in it: gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*). The majority of the world remains in the class of gratification. Most people run after the five cords of sensual pleasure. Then, at some point, due to the maturation of intelligence and through experience, the danger—the defective aspect of these things—begins to appear. Once that is seen, one passes into the class of escape, through renunciation (*nekkhamma*) and ordination. Here too, when their wisdom matured, what these two had previously thought of as essential appeared to them as essenceless. There was no laughter or joy as before. They sat with solemn faces, filled with disillusionment. While everyone around them was dancing and enjoying themselves, because the wisdom of these two had matured, they saw it all as essenceless.

Consequently, the next step they took was to abandon all their wealth and go forth into ordination. Yet even that ordination was not in the right place; it was under the wanderer Sañjaya. Even there, they did not settle down, simply saying, "This is my teacher." Having learned whatever was to be learned, they realized there was no essence there either. They abandoned that too. Then they began to search for the truth. While searching, the best illustration of their natural inclination towards what is truly essential is seen in the moment they met Venerable Assaji and made that request: "I do not need many words. Tell me the true essence." When this was said, Venerable Assaji recited that highly valuable verse, which, though seemingly simple, contains the core meaning of the entire True Dhamma, the very essence of the deep doctrine of Dependent Arising (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*). Hearing just the first two lines of that verse, the wanderer Upatissa understood the truth, realizing the Noble Truths—and subsequently, the wanderer Kolita did the same upon hearing it. Here we must understand—even without a lengthy analysis of that verse—briefly, as the mature devotees among you must know, that there is this doctrine called Dependent Arising (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*). When many people take precepts, they often recite the twelve links: "With ignorance as condition, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*); with Preparations as condition, consciousness (*viññāṇa*)," and so on. But, devotees, this alone is not the core of Dependent Arising. The true core is what is stated in that verse. What is it? "Of those phenomena that arise from a cause, the Tathāgata has declared their arising and also their cessation." The fundamental doctrinal principle presented there, if we express it briefly, is mentioned elsewhere in the Dhamma:

> *"Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti*
>
> *imassuppādā idaṃ upajjati*

imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti

imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati”

When this exists, this is.

With the arising of this, this arises.

When this does not exist, this is not.

With the cessation of this, this ceases.

That is the fundamental principle, the axiom. Within it lies the essence of the entire doctrine of Dependent Arising. Regarding the things that the world considers as a soul, as eternal, as permanent, the wondrous law that the Buddhas bring to light—a law always present in the world but hidden from beings due to the darkness of ignorance—is the marvelous causal relationship between things called Dependent Arising. This is what is revealed by this verse. Therefore, because of the sharp wisdom of the wanderer Upatissa, upon hearing just the first two lines, he realized the fruit of Stream-entry through the path-knowledge of Stream-entry.

Here too, we see the appreciation of what is truly essential. Through this, we can see that no matter how many essenceless things there are in the world towards which people drift, our effort should be to gradually abandon the essenceless and acquire the essential, so that progress may develop within us. It is of no use to cling to the essenceless for however long. You must have heard a common saying in society about the "tradition of the bundle of hemp"—like the man who clung to the bundle of hemp. There is a long story behind it. Briefly, it is as follows. The story underlying this proverb is quite humorous. Two friends left their village and went from village to village in search of wealth. On their way, they first came to a village where hemp was abundant and easily obtained, even discarded. So, both of them tied up two large bundles of hemp. Carrying these, they went to the next village. There, they found plenty of hemp thread. The wise friend said to the other, "We are carrying this hemp to make thread. Now that hemp thread is available here, let us throw away the hemp and take the thread instead." The other replied, "No, no. I have tied this bundle of hemp very securely. I cannot throw it away. You do as you please." So, one friend took the hemp thread, while the other carried the old bundle of hemp. When they went to the next village, they found hemp cloth. Once again, the wise friend made the same suggestion: "We are carrying this thread for the sake of cloth. Let us throw away the thread and take the hemp cloth instead." "No, not even that. I will carry this bundle which I have brought with such difficulty." So he went on. Thus they went from village to village. To cut the story short, in the next village there was cotton cloth, in the next iron, then bronze, then silver, and in the next gold, in abundance—free to be taken. Out of the two, the wise friend eventually threw away his bundle of silver and tied up a bundle of gold. The other friend was still carrying his bundle of hemp. Having shouldered that bundle of hemp, he refused to let it go. Finally, they returned to their village. Upon their return, the family of the hemp-carrier was deeply disappointed and grieved, thinking, "Is this what he carried and brought back

after all this time?" Meanwhile, at the home of the one who brought the bundle of gold, his wife and children were filled with joy and delight.

That is the parabolic story. Since you enjoy hearing stories, I related this as well. The proverb itself is common in society, but some might not understand its background meaning, so it is good to know it. This is because most people lean in that direction. They grasp tightly to the essenceless, looking for some temporary comfort in it. Now, why did the wanderer Sañjaya follow those half-truths? Because the majority of people are drawn to them. He regarded having a large following—if one can gather a crowd and gain gifts and honors—as the ultimate achievement. He did not strive to achieve liberation, the escape from saṃsāra, which is the supreme essence, the fundamental purpose of life, of ordination, and of renunciation (*nekkhamma*).

Accordingly, we can understand that even when we think of the future of this Dispensation, if we are to preserve this Dispensation of the Buddha, we must understand its true essence, highlight that essence, and lead our lives accordingly. Indeed, the Buddha on one occasion declared to the Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa one of the reasons that leads to the decline of the Dispensation. Indeed, after the passing away of the Buddha, it was Venerable Mahā Kassapa who was most dedicated to preserving the Dispensation. Perhaps because of this, on one occasion, the Buddha declared to Venerable Kassapa: "Kassapa, this True Dhamma does not disappear until a counterfeit of the True Dhamma arises in the world—a counterfeit that looks like the True Dhamma." The simile given for this is as follows: When we say "gold," we use the word commonly. In ancient texts, there is a distinction made between processed gold and raw gold. Gold that is heated, refined, and fashioned is called processed gold, while raw gold is gold in its natural state, referred to as *jātarūpa*. Even that genuine gold disappears from the world not due to anything else, but because of the emergence of counterfeit gold. In modern terms, when "imitation" gold arises, genuine gold disappears from the market. People are deceived into thinking it is genuine gold. The Buddha declared that something similar happens to the True Dhamma.

Thus, it is not external religions of wrong view that can destroy this Dispensation—this Dhamma. It can be destroyed from within. Why? Because "counterfeit of the True Dhamma" (*saddhamma-patirūpaka*) means teachings that look like the True Dhamma. This too is just like that "mung-bean soup." Many are likely to be drawn to it. Buddhist devotees must be mindful of this when thinking about the future. You must understand the true essence of the True Dhamma. What is that essence? A Buddha arises in the world to provide a solution, through the path of liberation, to this riddle of saṃsāra which no other teacher has been able to solve. It is to reveal this liberation from saṃsāra. In short, Nibbāna is the ultimate goal and the essence. This is shown in the Dhamma, where the Buddha Himself, on one occasion, used the simile of a sal tree in the *Mahāsāropama Sutta*. Some people go away carrying the leaves, twigs, and branches of a sal tree, thinking they are what is valuable. Others take the bark, others the softwood. But it is only a rare person who takes its heartwood—the truly valuable part. Similarly, there is such a distinction between what is valuable and what is not in this Dispensation. Suppose someone ordains or commits to these practices. Next, gains and favors pour in.

These are like the leaves and branches. Next, virtue (*sīla*) is like the bark. That too is a great thing, far better than the former. But even that is not the heartwood. Beyond that lies concentration (*samādhi*), which is like the softwood. Passing through all of these, finally, there is the fruit of Arahantship, which is Nibbāna—the liberation achieved through the realization of the paths and fruits. That alone is the heartwood, the essence of this Dispensation.

Therefore, if a Dhamma sermon forgets about Nibbāna, sets it aside, and instead highlights mundane goals that offer only temporary relief—whereas in the past, Dhamma preachers culminated every single sermon with Nibbāna—today, sermons often end not with that, but with common, mundane aspirations. Many people prefer this, thinking, "If we can resolve the temporary problems of our daily lives, that is a great thing." But to be satisfied with such temporary relief is like regarding the essenceless as essential. It is like completely wasting this extremely rare human existence. Thus, in these Dhamma sermons as well, we must remember that whether one is a layperson or a monk, if one commits to this path of practice, one can attain liberation from saṃsāra through the realization of the paths and fruits.

A certain Brahmin once came and asked the Buddha, "Venerable Sir, is it the layperson or the monk who attains those supramundane states in this Dispensation?" The Buddha replied, "That question should not be asked in that way. It is a question that must be answered with a distinction. For, whether one is a layperson or a monk, if they walk on this path of practice, they can realize the paths and fruits." Thus He answered. Accordingly, we must understand that the essence to be derived from a Dhamma sermon is indeed to obtain a peace of a kind that has not been found in our lives throughout this long saṃsāra. For, in the Dhamma accounts we see, read, and hear the Buddha declaring that even the Bodhisatta, countless times and on incalculable occasions, by virtue of his meritorious power and the strength of his perfections, had attained the position of a Wheel-turning Monarch (*Cakkavatti*). The luxuries and pleasures of such a Wheel-turning Monarch are described in various suttas—and when one reads them, it is truly astonishing. They describe an almost endless, marvelous abundance of sensual pleasures. Yet, those sutta discourses culminate by showing even those to be essenceless. "All of these—all these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—are impermanent (*anicca*), monks. All of them, including that Wheel-turning Monarch and his kingdoms, are no more. They are now destroyed, subject to that law of impermanence." It is to show their essencelessness that the Buddha describes even things like the domain of a Wheel-turning Monarch. But, devotees, the common trend today is to take the physical progress of ordinary, daily life—which cannot even begin to compare to that of a Wheel-turning Monarch—magnify it, present it as the essence, and preach the Dhamma in a way that draws a large crowd toward it. This is like the approach of Sañjaya. Through this, the True Dhamma quickly disappears, and the Dispensation rapidly declines.

Therefore, on a day like today, we must reflect on these things, wise devotees. For there is always a tendency among crowds to run simply because others are running. When there is a large crowd, if one person runs, the others run too, without even knowing the reason. Later, they find there is nothing to be gained; it is empty, and they all turn back.

Then they see people running to another place, and they run there too. They run and run, spending all their resources to get there, only to find there is nothing there either. Thus, they spend their entire lives running here and there, as if chasing a mirage. You can find illustrations of these stories in what you see, hear, and read in daily life. What I am saying is just a general observation. From all of this, we must understand one thing: we must have firm confidence that we have the ability to bring out the essence of the Buddha's Dispensation and go a considerable distance in our daily lives. Whether lay or ordained, if one applies oneself, the results can be realized even today. But it is not something easily achieved; we must understand this. What is good and essential cannot be obtained easily. Cultivating grass is easy, but the yield is minimal. Farming, on the other hand, is difficult; it is done with great effort and sweat, but the harvest is abundant. Similarly, you must consider what you are planting in your own mind. Is it something like grass? Or is it the cultivation of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), which is done with great effort? The Buddha has pointed this out. He compared it to farming, advising us to quickly cultivate these qualities of virtue and so on, just as a farmer works quickly when the rain comes.

Why is this said? Because this is an extremely rare opportunity. That is why the Buddha presented the word "heedfulness" (*appamāda*) as the most valuable, primary word in the entire True Dhamma. Walk on this path of liberation with heedfulness, and secure your release from saṃsāra. For saṃsāra is dangerous. Saṃsāra is indeed perilous. If one has not achieved a state of assured destiny through at least the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*), even those who are now leading good lives—we cannot say when life will end—may, despite their present goodness, exhaust the meritorious power that granted them this human life. Then, a past unwholesome karma may surface, causing them to be reborn in the animal realm, the ghost realm (*peta*), or as a demon (*yakṣa*). Because saṃsāra holds such a terrifying nature, the Buddha urged us to regard this obtained human existence—which even the devas hold in high esteem—as something precious, and to strive to derive the maximum benefit from it.

Of course, in this Dhamma, those physical and mundane purposes are indeed mentioned to a certain extent. Some of you might think, "But isn't it stated in our *Maṅgala Sutta* that there are thirty-eight blessings? Doesn't it mention caring for one's wife and children, and all those other things?" But, devotees, all of those blessings culminate in the blessing of Nibbāna. The thirty-eighth blessing is the blessing of Nibbāna. That is probably why Nibbāna is declared at the end as the "supreme blessing" (*parama-maṅgala*). Indeed, that is the ultimate blessing. Therefore, if one's wisdom is to develop, one must not settle right there, clinging to the bundle of hemp, but must make true use of this human existence. Indeed, the human mind is a mind of wonder, possessing a power beyond comprehension in this entire universe. You can easily understand this today through the feats performed by scientists who have developed their intellect in the name of science. Yet, far more wondrous are the feats performed in the past by the Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Great Arahants who developed the power of their perfections. Perhaps because those are somewhat difficult, or because their results are not glaringly obvious to the ordinary world, people do not show much interest in them.

Nevertheless, one must contemplate the danger of saṃsāra. Therefore, in a Dhamma sermon, we must constantly remind ourselves of that word: heedfulness (*appamāda*). Furthermore, there are what are called the grounds for urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*). These are things that help arouse effort: the danger of saṃsāra, the perilous nature of life, birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), death (*maraṇa*), and the fear of lower realms. One must constantly contemplate such matters, including the mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*). When contemplating these, one's effort increases.

These are what we must take as the essence of this Dhamma. Through them, instead of falling into heedlessness, drifting along with saṃsāra, and holding onto mundane things as grand, we aim at the cessation of existence rather than its continuation. "We have run an essenceless race in this saṃsāra for so long. We have run after a mirage. At least now, we must bring an end to this." With this understanding, we must enter the path of practice that leads to the heartwood shown by the Buddha, namely: virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The true heartwood is that state of liberation which relinquishes everything, freed from the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). The Buddhas, entering the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*), experience that very supreme blessing, that state, and its true power. And the greatest relief obtained through that is release from saṃsāra. To reach that state, one must walk the path of virtue, concentration, and wisdom; one must engage in meditation (*bhāvanā*). Yet, commonly, some people think of meditation merely as something done to cure physical ailments, or as something done blindly because others do it. Today, it has almost become a fashion, a trend, to say, "We, too, meditate." But it is not something to be done merely for the sake of saying so. Meditation means the genuine development of the mind. It must be done systematically. It involves establishing a certain concentration through serenity (*samatha*), and then maintaining one's attention—insight attention (*vipassanā-manasikāra*)—in a way that realizes the three characteristics of the world: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*).

Through that, when the essence is recognized, the abandoning of the essenceless becomes natural. Indeed, this cannot be prevented. We know that when a tree grows, its withered and dry leaves fall off. As new buds sprout at the top, the old leaves drop from below. This cannot be stopped; it is natural. In the same way, as you develop through Dhamma-knowledge and meditation, the things you previously held in high regard—such as musical nights and variety shows—will appear as essenceless, as mere theatrical dramas (*nāḍagam*). But one should not worry, thinking, "If we go on like this, won't we lose our means of entertainment? Won't sources of income disappear? Won't the world become a joyless place?" Some might argue in this manner. It is to such people that we sometimes refer as "world-expanders" (*lokavaḍḍhana*). The Buddha declared: *Na siyā lokavaḍḍhano*—"One should not be a world-expander." For all this time, what we have done is expand the world and expand the cemetery. Now, in this rare era of a Buddha's appearance, what remains to be done is to escape from this world, to escape from the entirety of saṃsāra.

We possess the capacity within us to achieve that liberation. The power of our perfections may sometimes be hidden, but the human mind has the ability to bring it forth, even in a young child. When it is said in this Dispensation that a seven-year-old child can attain Arahantship, what a wondrous power of the mind is demonstrated! One must constantly reflect on the leading-out (*niyyānika*) quality of this Dispensation, and its timeless (*akālika*) quality, meaning that the fruit can be harvested right here on this earth, at this very moment. Thus, when contemplating the qualities of the Dhamma—such as *sandiṭṭhika* (to be seen for oneself), *akālika* (timeless), and *ehipassika* (inviting to come and see)—one develops a stronger desire to walk this path. For this is not a futile journey. To the extent that this Dhamma grows in one's mind, the results are present right there. Those benefits are immediate. As one reaps those benefits, one becomes increasingly motivated to walk this path.

At the same time, from the other side, through the grounds for urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*) and the happenings in society, one must draw lessons regarding the suffering nature of saṃsāra. Many of the sights we see—some of them are covered up in society. It is like a trap set by Māra. Things that would bring disillusionment with society and the world are covered up. There is even an attitude in the world that says, "Do not look at those things." But the Buddha brings them to light through practices such as the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*). At first, the things pointed out by the Buddha might seem unpleasant. Indeed, we sometimes compare them to a myrobalan fruit (*nelli*). When you first bite into a myrobalan, it is bitter, but later it leaves a sweet taste. That is why it is called *āmalaka*—the deathless. Similarly, there is an apparent bitterness to this Dhamma at first glance. But when one applies oneself to it, for the practitioner, it has a wondrous taste. One must reflect in this way. One should not judge by external polish, pomp, and appearance, just because the majority of people are drawn to them. No matter what, what Sañjaya said is true: there are only a few wise people in the world, and the majority are fools. But we should not simply accept that statement and settle down in one place. Even in a school, although there are different grades, everyone hopes to pass. Just because one is in a certain class or grade, one does not remain there forever. Why do we sit for exams? It is to pass to the next class. Once we get there, we do not settle down saying, "This is my class now." We sit for another exam and go to a higher class, and so on. It is the same here. There must be progress in this saṃsāra. Remaining stagnant in one place is what is called the "tradition of the bundle of hemp."

Therefore, contemplate these matters wisely on a valuable day like today. Preserving this Dispensation is not something done through external things like buildings and golden fences. Those, too, may be necessary to inspire faith in the Dispensation. But in truth, this is like a message that travels from heart to heart. Therefore, it is to the extent that the heart is purified. Suppose the parents' hearts are pure; they walk the path of the Dhamma, practicing generosity, virtue, and meditation—cultivating virtue, concentration, and wisdom. That message is received by the child. The child then passes it on to his or her child. In this way, the lay lineage continues. It is the same among the Sangha. When teachers and preceptors among the Sangha grow through these practices, the message is transmitted to their disciples. That is how a Dispensation endures.

Nowadays, when people speak of the Dispensation, they think of it as if it has been written off as the sole property of the Sangha. But the Buddha described it as something resting on four pillars: the fourfold assembly of monks (*bhikkhus*), nuns (*bhikkhunīs*), laymen (*upāsakas*), and laywomen (*upāsikās*). Therefore, from the side of the lay donors, it should not be thought: "Our task is simply to acquire wealth, by hook or by crook, righteously or unrighteously, offer a portion of it to the Sangha, and secure heavenly bliss." Rather, they must understand that they, too, must walk the path of the Dhamma. There is no need to expound on this at length now. When one examines the *Maṅgala Sutta* mentioned earlier, it becomes clear. The lay Buddhist, beginning life in a good environment, gradually associates with the Sangha, discusses the Dhamma, and ultimately goes towards Nibbāna. This sequence is contained even in the *Maṅgala Sutta*, which lay devotees recite so often. It shows us that our lives must be a gradual movement towards progress, not stagnation in one place.

I trust these points will suffice for this meritorious gathering. You should reflect on this and decide the course of action you should take. Indeed, in daily life today, what can be easily said of everyone, given the lifestyle and social conditions, is that this Dhamma journey is not an easy one. Finding time for Dhamma and meditation is difficult. Daily life passes through various daunting economic and social pressures. But, as we have said on previous occasions, we must use all of these as a support to escape from saṃsāra, to complete this task quickly. That is what is called a "blessing in disguise." Indeed, were it not for such challenges, some might be tempted by luxury, incline towards the unrighteous path, and end their lives without deriving any benefit from this Dhamma. But if someone understands the suffering (*dukkha*) of life, the suffering of saṃsāra, and realizes through the hardships of this life, "We must have suffered like this for an infinite time; therefore, we must find a solution to this"—then, even with difficulty, they will incline towards the practice of virtue, concentration, and wisdom taught by the Buddha. Once they incline in that direction, if they can find even a small opening to dedicate five or ten minutes a day to meditation, then as their interest, desire (*chanda*), and commitment gradually grow, they will realize for themselves that they actually have more time. In this way, a certain sacrifice must be made. By sacrifice, I do not mean material wealth, but time. Indeed, people today are extremely hesitant to sacrifice their time. They are that busy. There is that much work. There is also a tendency to want everything done easily, which is a result of modern science. What we used to do with great effort can now be done easily. It is true that we also occasionally benefit from this indirectly. With the turn of a small key, what was once done with great difficulty is completed effortlessly. But we should not assume that the Dhamma is the same. It was because they had fulfilled their perfections over an immensely long period that individuals like Venerable Sāriputta understood the Dhamma in a very short time, just by hearing a single verse. We should not conclude from this that the Dhamma requires no effort on our part. How long must Venerable Sāriputta and others have strived, fulfilling their perfections, to realize Stream-entry from just two lines of a verse?

Thinking in this way, we must realize that if we do not possess such meritorious power, we must build that meritorious power by engaging in these practices. That is why it is

called a sacrifice. That time and effort—which we spend on other things—must be spent on this Dhamma. For we will not always have the opportunity to do this. The path to Nibbāna is open only during the era of a Buddha's appearance. Reflecting thus, you must preserve the Dispensation within yourselves. It is the Dispensation preserved within oneself that we refer to when we say "the Dispensation has protected a nation." We can make such a statement only if the Dispensation grows within each individual in that manner. Otherwise, that Dispensation is merely something that attracts tourists, something existing only for show, to be visited here and there. That is not true progress. It is empty and hollow. Therefore, if everyone walks on the path of the Dhamma and becomes a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), then through that spiritual friendship, this Dispensation will grow. That is why the Buddha declared to Venerable Ānanda—when Ānanda once remarked, as we often remind you, that spiritual friendship constitutes half of this holy life—"Do not say so, Ānanda. This entire holy life is spiritual friendship." Therefore, everyone's aim should be to develop the collection of virtues associated with the blessing of spiritual friendship and, at one's own level, to serve one's children at home, relatives, friends, and colleagues at work with the Dhamma to the best of one's ability, explaining it as far as one knows—not wrong views, but if one truly knows "this is good," then one must explain it. By encouraging them in this way, it is through such a journey that the progress of the Dispensation is secured.

I trust that these few words have conveyed something that this meritorious gathering can remember and practice on a Poson Full Moon Poya Day like today. You have observed a certain level of virtue (*sīla*) according to your capacity. Virtue is something extremely necessary for this society—this discipline. Even if we look at it from the other side, we see a society where terrible, unvirtuous crimes are committed. Having observed valuable virtue and turned your minds towards meditation, you have listened to a Dhamma sermon for about an hour. If through this, a certain degree of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) has arisen in you, that itself will at some point become a spiritual faculty (*indriya*) and a spiritual power (*bala*), granting you the strength to realize the supramundane paths and fruits, and to find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna. Therefore, you should make the aspiration that through this listening to the Dhamma, this supportive condition (*upanissaya-sampatti*) may, not just in some distant future but in this very life, with the help of this power and through association with spiritual friends, grant you the strength and capacity to progress along the paths of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, all the way to Arahantship. Let us also aspire that the guardian deities and Brahmās who protect the Dispensation, and indeed any beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who wish to rejoice in these merits, including our departed relatives, may rejoice in the vast collection of merit accumulated today through this preaching and listening to the Dhamma, and by doing so, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through whatever form of awakening (*bodhi*) they have aspired for!

With that in mind, let us share merits by reciting the verses in this manner.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #18

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Sahassamapi ce gāthā, anatthapadasaṃhitā;

Ekaṃ gāthāpadaṃ seyyo, yaṃ sutvā upasammati.

From:

Verse 100 from the Sahassavagga (Chapter of Thousands) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

While the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana monastery, a certain large group of people set out on a voyage by ship from a remote region of India (Jambudīpa). The ship broke apart in the middle of the ocean, and almost all of them drowned. One person, a man named Bāhiya, managed to grab hold of a wooden plank and, swimming with great difficulty, finally washed ashore at the port of Suppāraka. At this moment, this man did not even have proper clothing. Gathering pieces of wood and joining them with tree bark, he made himself a garment. Then he went for alms in the villages around the Suppāraka port. Because of his strange attire, people, thinking he was an Arahant, paid him great respect and made offerings to him. In the course of time, he became known as Bāhiya Dārucīriya. He was called "Dārucīriya" because he wore a garment made of bark (*valkalā*)—or tree bark. Thus, he spent his time living as an ascetic. Since everyone called him an Arahant, he thought, "Perhaps I too am an Arahant." Together with this thought, a deity who had been a relative of his in a past life came forward and said, "Bāhiya, you are not an Arahant, nor have you entered the path to Arahantship." "Then who in this world is an Arahant?" he asked. The deity replied, "Indeed, in the northern direction, in the city of Sāvatthi, lives the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Blessed One. It is He who has attained this state."

At that very moment, a great faith (*saddhā*) and a strong urge arose in him to see the Buddha. It was a vast distance—a journey of many leagues (*yojanas*). Staying only one night at each place along the way, he traversed this long road to find the Buddha. One

morning, he arrived at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthi. At the time of his arrival, the bhikkhus were walking up and down in the open air. Running up to them, he asked, "Where is the Blessed, Worthy, Fully Enlightened One? I have come in great haste to see Him." Then the bhikkhus said, "Bāhiya, the Buddha has entered the city for alms." Bāhiya did not stop there. He immediately ran after Him. As soon as he saw the Buddha walking for alms in Sāvatthi, a great faith arose in him. Seeing the Buddha, who was extremely peaceful and of serene faculties, he fell at His feet and begged, "O Blessed One, please preach the Dhamma to me." For some reason, the Buddha said, "Bāhiya, this is not the time to preach the Dhamma; we are on our alms-round." When this was said, Bāhiya entreated Him again, "O Blessed One, I do not know when the Blessed One's life might end, or when my own life might end. Therefore, please, in some way, teach me at least a little Dhamma." Again the Buddha said, "No, Bāhiya, this is not the time to preach the Dhamma; we are on our alms-round." For the third time, he made the request, "O Blessed One, I do not know when the Blessed One's life might end, or when my own life might end. Therefore, please quickly preach at least a brief Dhamma." At that moment, the Buddha delivered a very brief discourse—seemingly simple, yet containing a very profound meaning. Its import is as follows:

"In that case, Bāhiya, you should train yourself like this. 'In that case' means—since you are now entreating me, He gave a teaching: 'Therefore, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus' (*Tasmātiha Bāhiya evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ*). In what way?

'In the seen, there will be only the seen (*diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati*),

In the heard, there will be only the heard (*sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati*),

In the sensed, there will be only the sensed (*mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati*),

In the cognized, there will be only the cognized (*viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati*).'

In the seen—'seen' refers to the object seen. In the seen, there will be only the seen. In the heard, there will be only the heard. 'In the sensed, there will be only the sensed.' *Muta* means what is sensed. Sensation is what is referred to here. The word *muta* is used for what is sensed by the nose, tongue, and body. It can be understood as sensory experience. The sensation felt by the nose, tongue, and body is a special kind of knowing, and it is called *muta*. Thus, in what is sensed, there will be only the state of being sensed. 'In the cognized, there will be only the cognized.' Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) means the mind, doesn't it? In what is known by consciousness, in what is cognized, or in what is thought—we can call it the cognized or the known—with regard to what is known, there will be only the cognized. 'Thus, Bāhiya, you should train yourself' (*Evaṃhi te Bāhiya sikkhitabbaṃ*). Bāhiya, this is how you should train yourself. Then He preaches:

"When for you, Bāhiya, in the seen there will be only the seen, in the heard only the heard, in the sensed only the sensed, in the cognized only the cognized;

then, Bāhiya, you will not be 'by it' (*na tena*).

When, Bāhiya, you are not 'by it', then, Bāhiya, you will not be 'therein' (*na tattha*).

When, Bāhiya, you are not 'therein', then, Bāhiya, you will be neither here (*na idha*), nor there (*na huraṃ*), nor in between the two (*na ubhayamantare*).

This itself is the end of suffering (*esevanto dukkhassa*)."

Now, previously, it was said to train in this manner. It seems like a very simple task. As described, in the seen, by way of the seen-only, there will be only the seen; in the heard, only the heard; in the sensed, only the sensed; in the known—or what is known to consciousness—only the cognized. After training in this manner, when, Bāhiya, for you, in the seen there is only the seen, in the heard only the heard, in the sensed only the sensed, in the cognized only the cognized, then, Bāhiya, you will not be 'by it.' We will try to explain this later. You do not take the seen or the heard as a "thing" and define yourself "by it." When you do not identify yourself "by it" in that manner, then you are not "therein." Not being "therein" means you do not slip inside it. You do not enter into it.

"When, Bāhiya, you are not 'by it', then you are not 'therein'. When you are not 'therein', then you are neither 'here', nor 'there', nor 'in between the two'. This itself is the end of suffering."

Looking at this, Nibbāna seems very easy to attain. This single passage is a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) leading all the way to Nibbāna, to Arahantship. It is a wonderful teaching. Even today, many scholars often bring up this sutta to show the essence of the Buddha's teaching. We do not know how many actually understand it. Be that as it may, a person with a meditative mind can understand these things even without much academic learning, though it may be difficult for ordinary scholars. At any rate, through this discourse, the Buddha gave Bāhiya a meditation subject (*kamaṭahana*) leading all the way to Nibbāna, to the fruit of Arahantship. How successful was it? It is mentioned in the sutta that immediately, as soon as the Buddha finished preaching this discourse, the ascetic Bāhiya, who was wearing bark-garments, attained Arahantship right there. What a wonder! Thus he attained Arahantship. By that, suffering (*dukkha*) came to an end right there. We will try to explain this slowly and gradually. However, the story does not end there. We will explain certain things using the story, as they are helpful and easy to bear in mind.

Next, the event is described as follows. Having preached this discourse, the Buddha went on His alms-round. Having walked for alms and eaten, as He was leaving the city with the bhikkhus, He saw—what did He see?—Bāhiya, who had attained Arahantship, had not gone very far when a fierce cow with a calf gored him to death. The ascetic Bāhiya—now Arahant Bāhiya—was lying dead there. Only the Buddha knew of his state. Seeing the body of this Arahant lying there, the Buddha said to the bhikkhus, "Bhikkhus, do you see this body of Bāhiya? Take it on a cot, cremate it, and build a stupa over his relics." The bhikkhus went to perform that task. They took the body, cremated it, built a stupa, and returning to the Buddha, reported what they had done. "Blessed One, as you

instructed, we have cremated the body of that ascetic. Where has he been reborn?" Then the Buddha declared, "Bhikkhus, Bāhiya was wise, highly intelligent, of great wisdom. He did not trouble me much; he did not even trouble me to explain this in detail. Bāhiya has attained Arahantship and attained final Nibbāna (*parinibbāna*)." This was indeed a miraculous event. Then the bhikkhus asked, "O Blessed One, when did he hear the Dhamma, and what did he hear, to attain Arahantship so quickly?" It was then, as shown in the Dhamma, that He specifically preached this verse. Although there are other relevant verses, this one can be taken as the simplest:

"Though a speech consists of a thousand verses, if they are useless,

Better is a single verse on hearing which one is stilled."

The meaning of this verse is that rather than a thousand verses composed of useless words, a single line of a verse upon hearing which one attains peace and tranquility is far superior. Let us think a little more about the story here. Furthermore, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that on various occasions, the Buddha appointed different bhikkhus to the foremost positions (*aggasṭhāna*) in various fields. Many of you may have heard of this. Venerable Sāriputta was foremost in wisdom (*mahā-paññā*), Venerable Moggallāna was foremost in psychic powers, and so on. In this way, the Buddha granted chief positions. Similarly, even though the ascetic Bāhiya passed away shortly after, the Buddha declared to the bhikkhus that he was their co-associate in the holy life (*sabrahmacārī*). The term *sabrahmacārī* is used for a member of the Sangha. Although he attained Arahantship in lay clothing, the Buddha referred to him as a *sabrahmacārī*. Furthermore, the Buddha declared here that in His dispensation, among those who can comprehend the Dhamma extremely rapidly—the *khippābhiññā* (those of swift direct knowledge)—Bāhiya Dārucīriya is the foremost.

A person with such a great store of merit met with such a fate due to some force of kamma—first, after the ship sank, he suffered greatly and had to swim. Then, shortly after attaining Arahantship, he had to pass away. However, there is a past story mentioned about why he was able to understand the Dhamma so quickly. This is particularly important for our times. What is it? This Bāhiya Dārucīriya was one of a group of seven bhikkhus during the time of Kassapa Buddha. When the dispensation of Kassapa Buddha was declining—we can think about our own era here too; it must have been an era like this, what is called the "declining age"—these seven bhikkhus, filled with great urgency (*saṃvega*), consulted among themselves: "Before this dispensation vanishes, let us sacrifice our lives and strive to realize Nibbāna." Having made this agreement, they paid their final respects to the golden shrine of Kassapa Buddha and entered the forest. There they saw a great mountain cliff. Before climbing this cliff, all seven said to one another, "If there is anyone who still has a desire for life, let him stop here. If there is anyone who is prepared to abandon the desire for life and strive for Nibbāna, let him join." They constructed a ladder, climbed that great cliff, and then threw the ladder down.

What was their situation now? Now these venerable ones were on top of the rock. What was left for them to do? There was only one thing to do: to meditate solely for liberation from saṃsāra. All their time—since there was no way to go anywhere else, and no ladder to go down—was spent in intense meditation. By the dawn of the next day, the senior monk, the chief elder, attained Arahantship with psychic powers (*abhiññā*). Having attained Arahantship, it is said that he used his psychic power to go on alms-round to Uttarakuru, obtained food, and returned. Perhaps out of custom, he invited the other monks to partake of this almsfood. The other monks said, "Venerable sir, did we make such an agreement—that when one of us attains Arahantship, we would eat the almsfood he brings?" "No, friends." "In that case, venerable sir, you may consume it. We will achieve what we can through our own strength." Saying so, they began to meditate with great determination. On the second day, the second monk attained the stage of Non-returner (*anāgāmī*). He too flew through the air, brought almsfood, and made a similar invitation to the others to eat. At that time, they said, "Venerable sir, did we make such an agreement—to reject the almsfood of the chief elder but eat the almsfood of the second monk, and then meditate?" "No, friends." "Then we do not need that either. Somehow, by our own strength, if we are able, we will go and obtain almsfood." Saying so, the five remaining monks continued their intense meditation. After seven days, with their bodies dried up and exhausted, meditating intensely unto death, they passed away on that rock as worldlings (*puthujjana*).

The Arahant among them attained final Nibbāna. The second monk, as a Non-returner, was reborn in the Brahma realm. One of the remaining five was this ascetic, Bāhiya Dārucīriya. The others are also mentioned in the Dhamma. By the power of their intense effort, their morality (*sīla*), and their meditation until their bodies withered away, they were reborn in the heavenly realms and eventually took birth in various places during this Buddha-dispensation. One was reborn as King Pukkusāti. Another as Kumāra Kassapa—who later became a great Arahant. Another as the wanderer Sabhiya. Another as Venerable Dabba Mallaputta—who attained Arahantship at the age of seven. In this way, they were born as outstanding individuals in this Buddha's dispensation. The fifth was Bāhiya Dārucīriya. Thus, the result of the life-sacrificing effort made by those five during the final days of Kassapa Buddha's dispensation was *khippābhiññā*—the ability to realize the Dhamma extremely rapidly in this dispensation.

In this way, from this past account, we get great encouragement to meditate without giving up our efforts even in these times, during the decline of this Buddha's dispensation, through the example of these venerable ones. We must ponder on this. Furthermore, regarding this verse, let us look at the path to Nibbāna preached by the Buddha. As we said at the very beginning, this is something related to the mind. Escape from saṃsāra is a wonderful state. Ultimately, liberation is attained by relying on wisdom (*paññā*). The Buddha's dispensation is the cultivation of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). We have stated on many occasions: morality is undertaken to discipline the body and speech. Having disciplined body and speech, the mind is then stilled through concentration. To the stilled mind, the true nature of the world becomes clear. The true nature of the world does not mean running

after what is seen by the eye and heard by the ear as if chasing a mirage, investigating everything scientifically. Ultimately, the root of all this is this mind—the thought. It is the understanding of the thought. The day one understands the thought, the bond of Māra is broken. For, the bond of Māra is itself the thought, even though we cannot do without it, whether for good or bad. We are forced to think. Thoughts exist. That is why we mentioned at the outset: the thought—it is through thought that we understand everything. But the question is, how do we understand the thought itself? It is to this that the Buddhas provide the answer through this Dhamma.

Let us now try to dissect and analyze this brief discourse, presenting it step-by-step, so that everyone can bring it to a level they can practice. Here it was said, "in the seen, only the seen." There is another point to consider here. Someone might wonder why the Buddha, who is so extremely compassionate, rejected the request of an ascetic who had come from such a great distance—leagues away—not just once, but twice, saying, "This is not the time to preach, it is the time for alms-round." We must realize that this was done with a very deep purpose. We can think of several reasons. First, after such an exhausting journey—when someone arrives panting and exhausted, they are not ready to listen to the Dhamma. Only when the exhaustion has subsided and they have calmed down can they focus the mind on something. Another reason we can think of is that the Buddha often uses skillful means (*upāya*). If the Buddha had said, "Very well, I will go on the alms-round later. Sit down comfortably. Take the five precepts," and started in that manner, the man's keenness—his intense desire to attain the Dhamma—would have diminished. Instead of that intense effort, he would have thought that this is a slow, gradual journey. To prevent both of these, the Buddha behaved as if He too was in a great hurry. Then, the person is prompted to think: "Please tell me just a little and go." "Just a little is enough for me. If you are on your alms-round, I do not need a long sermon. Tell me a fraction; I will understand it." It is with that attitude that one listens. Here we can see two sides. On one hand, the person's excessive excitement or fatigue was calmed. On the other hand, due to the Buddha's skillful means, this person was in a state to be satisfied with even a brief discourse. He was ready to derive the maximum benefit from it, directing his entire attention to it and listening. That must be why, through such a brief discourse, he understood the hint in the Buddha's Dhamma, as we mentioned earlier.

This Dhamma gives a hint to a person. Because understanding the nature of thought is something one must do for oneself. No one else can do it. Not even the Buddha. He only points the way. Giving skillful means, He directs one toward it. Other than that, there is nothing else to do. This is something that belongs to each of you. With such a background, let us think about this. *Diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati*—we say this in Pali, but there is no need to be worried about it. If we translate it into Sinhala, *diṭṭha* means "the seen." Why do we say "the seen"? Usually, we use the term "the seen thing." By referring to it as "the seen thing," we are already trapped. If we think of it as "the seen thing"—take the rainbow, for instance, when it is about to rain. There is a rainbow. Everyone likes it. Is this rainbow a "thing"? Think about it. Is a rainbow a "thing"? If it is a young child, seeing its beauty and colors, they might think, "There is a rainbow. Oh

mother, father, can you get that for me?" A child might think so. Is this a thing that can be obtained? How is a rainbow formed? When it is about to rain, in a certain place in the sky, moisture catches the light of the sun. The sun is on one side. The color composition of the sun's light is what is called a rainbow. How many things have come together to form this? Just as the rainbow appeared, it vanishes. The entire world is just like this rainbow. But we construct "things" out of these. Just as the rainbow is made into a "thing," we make past events into "things" too. That is why we say "the seen." Let us look at this in another way. Looking from here—or looking from one mountain to another—it is a beautiful view. A good view to photograph. But if someone thinks of seeing this view clearly and goes to that mountain, what do they see? The view that was there is no longer there. Now this side is seen clearly. A mirage. That is what is called a mirage. It is something like that. The mirage is also like that.

Therefore, the Buddha declared to stop at "in the seen, only the seen." It is not about chasing the rainbow in an airplane, or trying to catch it in some other way. It is to leave it right there as a kind of mirage that is to be seen. It is the same with a mirage. This is what is meant by *diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati*—in the seen, there will be only the state of being seen. Do not go beyond that. Do not go on thinking about it; that is the meaning here. Now, if we contemplate the simile of the mirage a bit more deeply: you have heard that during a drought, deer, seeing the shimmering nature rising from the ground, run toward it. Let us think for a moment. As the deer runs, the mirage recedes. Suppose the deer runs a certain distance and looks back. What then? The mirage is right where it started. So the deer has to run back—if it looks back—to the place it came from. Having run there, when it looks back again, it has to go back again. When you think about this simile, you might find it humorous. But this is exactly what we all do. Because the truth is hidden from the deer, it runs after the mirage. Having run, if it looks back, the mirage is now on this side. So it travels back the same distance it came. It goes there again. This simile will help us in a certain part of this discourse.

Very well, keeping that in mind, let us see. "In the seen, there will be only the seen." Similarly, *sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati*—this is the path of training the Buddha gives to Bāhiya. He says "you should train thus." A deep training is found here. "In the heard, there will be only the measure of the heard." Only the heard—Bāhiya, regarding what is heard by you, there will be only the state of being heard. It is just like the seen. If we think about hearing, even what is being spoken now is heard. Not only that; songs, hymns, and all such things are heard by you. All of these are heard by combining many rhythms to make music. It is not the musician who made the music; it is you. You weave it yourself. There is no need to go that far. Place a vessel where drops of water are dripping. What happens? Through the "tap-tap-tap," if the mind is inclined towards a song, you will hear a song. If you like songs, you will hear a song at that moment. If it is night, you might feel afraid. Who weaves songs out of this? We are all musicians. We weave songs. We weave rhythms. Where do these occur? In the eardrum. We are pleased by the sounds striking the eardrum—especially if they speak of our praise or virtues. If we think someone is scolding us, we get agitated. These are all sounds striking a drum. In

this light, one can understand the profound insight-meaning of the advice the Buddha gave to Bāhiya Dārucīriya: "In the heard, there will be only the heard."

Similarly, "in the sensed, there will be only the sensed." "Sensed," as we said, refers to what is experienced by the tongue, nose, and body. These are very subtle sensations. You know how dangerous the tongue is. The moment something touches the tongue, either the entire body is thrilled, or the face becomes sour or bitter. Such a thing happens on the tongue due to the sensitive power of the tongue. But here too, our mind collects these in an extremely subtle manner. Think about it. We say sugar is sweet like honey. What flavor is honey? It is sweet like sugar. This too is like the deer running after the mirage. We say sugar is sweet, comparing it to honey. Because we have eaten honey, we say it is sweet. Then, when we take honey, we have to say it is sweet like sugar. This is the trick played by the tongue. It is the same with the other senses. Let us think about contact (*phassa*). Our body comes into contact with something. Suppose on a dark night, while sitting down, something very soft brushes against our body. Thinking it is something very soft, we touch it. The moment we touch it—it is a cobra. The cobra bites. That is contact. Then, the feeling that arose earlier is not what follows when we see it and realize it is a dangerous thing. The Buddha is presenting the wonderful deception that occurs through our sense faculties. Therefore, if you want wisdom (*paññā*), if you want to be liberated from saṃsāra, if you want to break the bond of thoughts, if you want to escape the mirage—do this. If you want to live in the world, if you want to cultivate saṃsāra, if you want to go further in saṃsāra—none of this is necessary. Remain subject to the very same thoughts as before. That is all there is to the Dhamma.

Thus, what is "sensed" can be understood in the same way. *Viññāta* means what is cognized. Usually, let us think about the vast store of knowledge in the world—books in libraries, the forces of what is called the wonderful science in the world. Through all of these, with a certain pride, we think "I know" about various things, as knowledge, as cognizing. To distinguish one thing from another is the primary function of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). To know the difference between bitter and sweet is also called consciousness. To know the difference between pleasant, painful, and neutral feelings (*vedanā*) is also consciousness. Through consciousness, we distinguish and know. We separate one from another. We taste and distinguish: "Ah, this is bitter, this is sweet." Similarly, whether it is pleasant or painful. What is felt as pleasant is understood as painful after some time. The state where both are absent is distinguished as neutral. In this way, there is a very subtle dividing nature in our consciousness. It is by dividing and presenting that we understand: "This is this, this is one thing, the other is next to it, and that is another." Whichever it may be, what the Buddha says here is that if there is something known in that way, you should regard it merely as the cognized. Do not go beyond that. Do not build further upon it. This is what the Buddha says. Thus, *viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati*. Now let us come to the profound part that follows.

Thus, Bāhiya was first given the path of training: "train yourself in this way." For you, we mentioned something simpler—we started by giving only the *Ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (morality with livelihood as the eighth) to discipline body and speech. Look at what the

Buddha gives to Bāhiya Dārucīriya first: He gives this deep restraint of the sense faculties (*indriya-saṃvara-sīla*). Here lies the restraint of the sense faculties, not ordinary morality. Here is the deepest restraint of the faculties, which is helpful to anyone to attain Arahantship. If one has developed such restraint, control, and training regarding everything seen, heard, sensed, and thought, so that one stops at that limit and does not go beyond—then, the Buddha declares what happens next: "Then, Bāhiya, you will not be 'by it'." That is a deep concept. What is meant by "by it"? As said before, that is a "thing." Let us go back to the rainbow. The child who made it a rainbow, crying, might beg his mother, "I will not sleep until you give me that rainbow. Somehow give me that rainbow." That child thinks of it having made it a rainbow. It is not just a seen thing; it is something that exists, something that can be obtained. Then, that child lives within the rainbow, inside the rainbow. He will even see the rainbow in his dreams. This is a small illustration taken for the occasion. Through this, one can understand *na tena*—then, Bāhiya, when you are not "by it"—"by it" means by the seen, the heard, the sensed, the thought, or what is conceived. If you do not think of it in that way, then, Bāhiya, you are not "therein." You are not in the seen. If we want an illustration for this too, what does a person who has built a grand bungalow and is very proud of it do? He stands in front of it and gets a photographer to take a picture. Why? What is shown through that is the owner of the bungalow. When looking at that picture, this person is inside the picture.

In the same way, understand from this simile that if you do not arouse pride regarding it, if there is no craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), or views (*diṭṭhi*)—these words can be understood in relation to craving, conceit, and views—if you do not arouse defilements in that way, then you are not "therein." You are not inside that view. You are not inside that music. That delusion is not there. In the same way, you are not inside what is sensed. They are just as they are, in their respective places. What we expect from the Dhamma preached by the Buddha is the knowledge and vision of things as they really are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*). The Buddha shows what is, as it is. He does not show what is not, as what is. The Buddhas appear in the world to show what is not as what is not, and what is as what is. That is what is expressed here. In the seen, there will be only the seen; do not grow anything further on it. Do not allow its branches and leaves to develop. If allowed, due to defilements, it leads either to lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), or delusion (*moha*), and drags one into various other defilements. Therefore, the Buddha gives a strict training here. In the seen, there will be only the measure of the seen. What happens when it is so? Then, you are not "by it." When you are not "by it Converter," you are also not "therein." If you are not "therein"—here comes the deepest part—"When, Bāhiya, you are not 'therein', then you are neither 'here', nor 'there', nor 'in between the two'. This itself is the end of suffering." Therefore, Bāhiya, you are neither here, nor there, nor in between the two. This itself is the end of suffering. Nibbāna.

Now let us think—we have to bring in the story of the deer here too. When we reach the state of training in that way, how does the mind understand? "You are not here." The feeling that "I am here" also disappears. For, the premise, the idea of "self" and "other"—self and the world—which has been carried throughout saṃsāra, is erased by insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*). Then you are neither here, nor there, nor in between. Now,

regarding the deer, we said that having seen the mirage, it ran a long distance and looked back. Looking back, it saw the mirage was here. It ran back. When it looked back from here, it was over there. In this way, the deer falls exhausted by running after the mirage. We can say this in two ways: if it keeps going without looking back, it will eventually fall dead. If it goes this way, running back and forth between "here" and "there," it will fall dead from exhaustion.

Now, think about this. What is being done in this saṃsāra? Most of you perform meritorious deeds not only for this world, but for the next world. There are two: this world and the next world. You perform meritorious deeds to secure something for the next world. That is not bad; it is good. Through merits, through wholesome deeds, the mind is purified. But suppose we distribute one oil-cake (*kævum*) to the alms-round in a year, wishing: "May I receive a thousand oil-cakes like this." Well, suppose as a result, we receive ten thousand oil-cakes. After they are finished—or suppose by that merit, we are reborn in heaven. After that merit is exhausted, we have to come back to the human world, cook oil-cakes, and give them again. There too, it is like the work of that deer. There is no satisfaction, no contentment. Here, satisfaction, contentment, means what is needed to quench the deer's thirst. What is that? Water. That shimmering nature seen in the distance looks like water. Therefore, it goes in search of water. Water is not found. It has to come back, because water is seen here. Similarly, this saṃsāric being enjoys the five-fold sensory pleasures in this world as much as possible. Through the wealth obtained by past merit, they eat, drink, dance, and do everything. Yet, they are not satisfied. Therefore, what do they do? Somehow, they give even an oil-cake and wish for its fruits—not just enough, but unsatisfyingly up to ten million-fold. But whether that is received or not, they return right here. They run after the mirage.

So, someone might argue that this is a statement against performing meritorious deeds. But there is such a wonderful thing in this middle path, the Dhamma of the Buddha. That is why this Dhamma is called a diamond (*viduru-miṇa*). You know what a diamond is. A diamond (*vajra-māṇikya*) is a gem that can cut other gems. The Buddha's Dhamma is like that. It cuts through. Even the things we hold on to as "meritorious deeds," a point comes when they too have to be let go. That is what the Buddha profoundly declares: do not hold on to anything. But this is not something that can be done all at once. First, through virtues like morality, a level of tranquility is achieved. Then, by practicing concentration-meditation (*samādhi-bhāvanā*), the mind is stilled. One does not remain stuck in any of them. One is not satisfied with that. One is not satisfied thinking "Now I am a very moral person." One is not satisfied thinking "Now I have attained high concentration and jhānas, I can fly through the air." What is the ultimate thing? Liberation from saṃsāra lies in wisdom (*paññā*). Therefore, wisdom is compared to that diamond. It is a gem that cuts every other gem. It is wonderful. That means it penetrates.

Here too, what was done is a penetration. Why is it said to stop at "in the seen, only the seen"? Usually, what happens? One goes and gets entangled in the seen. You may have heard the story of a dog on a footbridge, or a jackal carrying a piece of meat. Crossing a footbridge, seeing its reflection in the water, thinking another jackal was carrying a piece

of meat, it let go of its own and jumped in to snatch it. In this way, how much does the saṃsāric being suffer by being deceived by the seen, by the object seen? Because of the wrong understanding and wrong path of thought generated through it, day and night, a person sacrifices their entire life, dedicating it to a seen vision, and falls into delusion. But they do not understand the true situation. Not to speak of this as a riddle: let us say a person, a man or a woman, sees the form of someone they love. In the thought generated through this, they kill themselves, then kill others, trying to obtain that man or woman, and finally fall into hell. Why does all of this happen? Because they did not stop at "in the seen, only the seen." They thought of it as a person. They thought of it as someone who could be with them forever. Now, the past Arahants like Bāhiya Dārucīriya sacrificed their lives for something else. But people in this era throw down ladders and do everything for the sake of saṃsāra. Therefore, from such matters, one must understand what is meant by stopping at "in the seen, only the seen." One establishes a state of mind that is not deceived by the mirage. For daily activities, we have to use the conventional term "things" regarding what we see. But we must penetrate it with wisdom.

You know what it is to penetrate something. When someone looks at something with a device that has the power to penetrate, and then removes it, it is seen as it is. Similarly, here it is said that a person gains liberation of mind (*ceto-vimutti*) through the power of wisdom. Therefore, the person who has attained insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) can see that true nature. But they do not end their life on that account. They carry out other activities. The experience gained through that wisdom is embedded within them, embedded within the mind. So much so that at the end, at the moment of final Nibbāna (*parinibbāna*), like Arahant Bāhiya Dārucīriya, they do not take birth again, being liberated from saṃsāra. Arahant Bāhiya Dārucīriya broke the bond of saṃsāric thoughts. That is why it is said he attained final Nibbāna. Arahants do not die. The word "die" can be used in the world. Along with the word "die" goes its counterpart, "is born." These go in pairs, as couples. Just as we said "there" and "here." There is a "there" and a "here." We have built fences and boundaries. Only when we have built them is there a middle. That is why it was said "you are not in between." Someone might ask: "If you are not here, and if you are not there, you must be in the middle." That is the logic of the world. Now you know there are factions in the world. Even if we think about them, it is the same: either you must be here, or you must be there, or you must be in the middle. Here is a wonderful thing: "Bāhiya, you are neither here, nor there, nor in between the two." Because even the usage of "is" and "is not" finally comes to an end. Ultimately, in the Buddha's Dhamma, this existence (*pavattiya*)—which every religious teacher in the world takes so seriously—is not a real existence, but only a conceit of existence. It is only an illusion, a delusion, a deception created by the mind. The world runs on this delusion—between there and here, between the next world and this world, between the human world and the heavenly world. In this running, there is no end. There is no end to those aspirations. This is what a Buddha introduces to the world. For this, the Buddhas fulfill the perfections (*pāramī*) for four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand cycles. It is not to teach some social or political philosophy. Although He mentioned those in passing, this is the core of the Buddha's teaching.

The secret of escaping from this entire saṃsāra is preached by the Buddha as a hint, according to each individual's character and capacity for understanding. If someone understood that hint at that moment, through a single verse, they realized Nibbāna. Therefore, you can understand that there is a very great depth in this discourse. It appears deep, in fact, to a person who has not developed the mind through meditation. Bāhiya Dārucīriya might not have had academic degrees. He was a person who lived a difficult life after his ship wrecked in the ocean. But relying on the power of the perfections (*pāramī*) he had acquired in the past, he attained Arahantship very instantly through such a brief discourse. Therefore, we must understand that knowledge is something that piles up in the world. Many people live their lives crushed by it—crushed by knowledge. Because of knowledge, they sometimes commit various kinds of cunning deeds and finally fall into hell. What is really needed is not knowledge, but wisdom (*paññā*). Wisdom is a capacity of understanding, something that penetrates, like that diamond. It cannot be obtained from books, money, or degrees. The path to it is what is called morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Now, on this valuable Poya day, I believe most of you have observed the precepts (*sīla*). Others too should make an effort. Meditation means cultivating the mind. This is not something that belongs only to the Sangha. This Bāhiya Dārucīriya—who was wearing bark-garments—did not even have a robe, yet he attained Arahantship. Similarly, you must consider: even if we live as laypersons, if we are Buddhists, what we must do is travel along this path of training. Therefore, based on morality, having disciplined body and speech, we must then still the mind. Chiefly, first a concentration (*samādhi*), some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). For that, perhaps big words are not needed. Stilling one's mind on a wholesome object by means of a single phrase like "may I be well" or "Arahant" is what is called concentration. If stilled in that way, the running of the mind is stopped to a great extent. But it is not finished. Going deeper than that is insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*).

So, the essence of that is what is contained in this sermon. In fact, the Buddha has presented the threefold training of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) in this discourse in a way that suited Bāhiya's capacity for understanding. We too must harvest from this at our own level, in a way that helps our lives. We must think of the entire saṃsāra as a dream, a kind of dream. Someone might feel afraid of that. But think about your own dreams. A dream is a real thing at the time of dreaming. Finally, when we wake up, the things that appeared as real in the dream are completely different. Sometimes, what we ate thinking it was good food was actually the pillow. It is the same with other things. Those are the dreams of the night. In fact, think about the entire past. When you think about your entire past from childhood—childhood, youth, those achievements—when these elderly gentlemen think about them, are they not a dream? The past is like the dream seen last night. Next, let us think about the future—the future for which great aspirations have been made. Think of a certain moment as the dream seen today, like the dream that will be seen tonight. Then, what is there to say about what is being done on this very day? The word to describe it might be something humorous. It is like a day-dream. This existence is something like that. That is why the

Buddha declared the entire saṃsāric existence to be a delusion, an illusion. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is compared to an illusion, to a magic trick where a magician shows what is not there as if it exists.

Therefore, according to this Bāhiya Sutta, why do we stop at "in the seen, only the seen"? There is no "thing" to be taken as "the seen." There is no "thing" to be taken as "the heard." Just as we said about the rainbow, the music, and the mirage. But we think so. There are many such concepts in the world. We cannot speak otherwise according to our convention. We cannot talk to others in that language, in our language of insight. Therefore, conventionally we have to say that a rainbow is appearing, or rain is falling. We must think whether the rain is separate from the falling. Now rain is falling. Rain is the thing that falls; the action is the falling. Can these two be separated? They cannot, can they? Similarly, there is a mass of mere activities here. Thus, they are a mass of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Out of this, we construct a world. Having constructed and created it, we divide it, build fences, saying "there" and "here," and this journey of saṃsāra is what we do as "the next world" and "this world." This entire saṃsāric existence is something that belongs neither to the next world nor to this world. That is why the Buddha preached cessation (*navatma*) instead of existence. Nibbāna means cessation, cooling down. This is not something pleasing to the ordinary world. The world likes burning and running. To the world that likes burning and running, the invitation to cooling down and cessation might be unpleasant. But the Buddhas say only this. This is what is called the Buddha's teaching. Therefore, stop, cool down—it is for this that the Buddha preached such discourses. Those who cooled down and stopped are called Arahants.

Thinking thus, on this valuable Poya day, you listened to a discourse that the ordinary world dismisses as deep, and thinks cannot be understood in this day and age. But we think that even though you are village folk, if you have directed your mind towards meditation, you have the capacity, at least to some extent, to understand even such discourses. In the future too, to develop that capacity, go to those who can give advice and, developing all those mental faculties by way of tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*), as quickly as possible—further developing the spiritual faculties and powers such as faith (*saddhā*), energy (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) aroused during this discourse—may you, in this very life, through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship, escape from this extremely terrifying saṃsāra, break the bond of thoughts, and find peace in the supreme and deathless Nibbāna.

Furthermore, may the merit we accumulated today by way of giving this Dhamma-teaching, and the merit accumulated by way of listening to the Dhamma, be shared particularly with the protective deities and Brahmas of the Sasana, and with all our relatives and others from Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who are able to rejoice in merit. May they all rejoice in this merit, and through it, attain the supreme and deathless

Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration. Having made this aspiration, recite the verses and share the merit:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #19

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Gabbhameke uppajjanti, nirayaṃ pāpakammino;

Saggaṃ sugatino yanti, parinibbanti anāsavā.

From:

Verse 126 from the Pāpavagga (Chapter on Evil) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

There exists a certain cyclical relationship between kamma and rebirth. A being who takes birth as a result of a certain period of fruition (*vipāka*) becomes subject to and yields to that very same kammic force when generating kamma anew, thereby dragging on this saṃsāric round of rebirth indefinitely. It is only by relying on the power of the Dhamma that one can appease this kammic energy and escape from saṃsāra. The Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, revealed to the world that no matter how powerful the wheel of kamma may be, ultimately, the wheel of Dhamma triumphs. Today, through the verse and the background story we have taken as our theme, you will have the opportunity to hear various factors related to this very matter.

An Arahant named Tissa, who resided at Jetavana, had been visiting the house of a certain jeweler for alms for twelve years. Both the jeweler and his wife treated this venerable monk as they would their own parents, attending to all his needs and offering him alms-food. One day, when the Thera arrived at the jeweler's house, the jeweler was cutting meat. At that very moment, while the Thera was standing there, a messenger arrived from King Kosala with a gemstone, saying, "The King has commanded to have this gem cleaned, perforated, and sent back." Still cutting meat, the jeweler took the gemstone with his blood-stained hand, placed it on a box, and went to wash his hands. There was a pet crane kept in the house. Attracted by the smell of blood, the bird mistook the gem for a piece of meat and swallowed it, right before the Thera's eyes. When the jeweler returned from inside and looked, the gem was missing. He asked his wife and children if they had taken it. When they denied taking it, he went inside and discussed

with his wife, saying, “Surely, it must be this monk who took it.” The wife pleaded, “Oh, do not say such a thing! For twelve long years, we have never seen any fault in this venerable sir.” But the jeweler would not listen. He came out and asked the Arahant, “Who took the gem that was here? Did you take it, venerable sir?” “No, lay follower, I did not take it,” the Thera replied. “There was no one else here. You must have taken it, venerable sir. Please return the gem to me,” the jeweler insisted.

The Thera was thus left helpless. The jeweler went inside again and discussed with his wife: “Surely, it must be this monk who took it. I must interrogate him, even by torturing him.” “Oh, please do not do that! We will be ruined if you do. It would be far better for our entire family to become royal slaves,” she pleaded. But the jeweler replied, “Even if we all become slaves, it will not pay for the value of this gem.” Stubbornly holding onto this view, he bound the Thera’s head with a rope and tightened it using a wooden stick as a tourniquet. Inflicting torture progressively, he demanded to know if the Thera had taken the gem. As the binding was tightened further, blood began to pour from the Thera's nose, ears, and mouth. Unable to bear the agony, the Thera collapsed to the floor. Attracted by the scent of blood, the crane came to drink it. Out of sheer anger towards the Thera, the jeweler shouted, “What are you doing here?” and kicked the crane. The bird died on the spot, falling on its back. The Thera saw this and said, “Lay follower, please loosen this binding slightly. Loosen it and see if that bird is dead.” “May you die just as it did!” the jeweler barked. Now realizing that the bird was indeed dead, the Thera said, “Lay follower, it was this bird that swallowed the gem. I did not disclose it because it would have resulted in the bird's death. Even if I were to die, I would not have spoken. But now that the bird is dead, I tell you this.”

When the jeweler slit open the bird's belly, there indeed was the gem. Immediately, a deep sense of remorse and urgency (*saṃvega*) overcame him. Falling at the Thera’s feet, he pleaded, “Venerable sir, please forgive me for what I have done out of ignorance.” The Thera replied, “Lay follower, this is neither your fault nor mine. This is a flaw of saṃsāra—a saṃsāric fault. Therefore, I forgive you.” The lay follower then said, “Venerable sir, if you truly forgive me, please come to our house for alms-food just as before.” The Thera responded, “No, lay follower. I now realize the danger (*ādīnava*) of this—of entering inside houses, of going under the roof of a household. It is because of this that such a thing occurred. Therefore, as long as there is strength in my legs, I shall wander for alms.” Right then and there, he undertook an ascetic practice (*dhutaṅga*), reciting a verse appropriate to it:

> *“Paccati munino bhattaṃ - thokaṃ thokaṃ kule kule*
>
> *Piṇḍikāya carissāmi, atthi jaṅghabalaṃ mama”*
>
> “For the silent sage, food is cooked little by little, household by household.
>
> I shall wander for alms, for there is still strength in my legs.”

Despite his resolve, the Thera did not live long; due to the physical trauma he suffered, he soon attained pariNibbāna (final Nibbāna). Later on, both the jeweler and his wife

also passed away. After their deaths, the bhikkhus questioned the Buddha about where the individuals involved in this event had been reborn. It was on that occasion that the Buddha uttered the verse we have chosen as our theme. It is mentioned that the crane—perhaps due to its familiarity with the household—was reborn in the womb of the jeweler's wife. The jeweler's wife, when she passed away, was reborn in a heavenly realm. The jeweler himself was born in hell because he had inflicted fatal torture upon an Arahant. The Thera attained pariNibbāna. The verse revealing this state of affairs is the one we placed as our theme:

"Gabbhameke uppajjanti - nirayaṃ pāpakammino

Saggaṃ sugatino yanti - parinibbanti anāsavā"

"Some are born in a womb;

evil-doers arise in hell;

those of good destiny go to heaven;

the taintless are completely extinguished."

This is the essence of what is stated in the verse. This is the narrative. What this verse illustrates, in truth, is how different individuals are reborn in accordance with their kamma. Now, as is our custom, let us extract the guidance, the Dhamma lessons, and the doctrinal principles that we can bring to light from this story and verse.

This story is indeed a deeply moving, remorseful one. From one perspective, it is the story of a jeweler who failed to recognize a true gem. From another perspective, it is the story of an Arahant who, for twelve years, visited the same household only to receive the fruition of a grave past kamma. This narrative concerns a monk who was highly intimate with the jeweler's household (the word *kulūpaga* is used here, referring to "Tissa, the family-associate of the jeweler"). He was such an intimate monk. Yet, due to a suspicion that arose in a brief moment, the jeweler subjected him to such severe torture that it led to the Arahant's death. We can reflect on something from this. At the time the Thera arrived, the jeweler was cutting meat. We can understand from this that transitioning from one blood-spilling activity to another is quite easy. He was driven to inflict such cruel torture because it did not seem to be a grave matter to him; the gem was far more important. He did not comprehend the gravity of saṃsāra. For twelve years, he failed to recognize the highly virtuous monk—the Arahant. The gem sent by the king was of far greater consequence to him. This is one aspect we can contemplate.

Furthermore, we can understand that there was a grave kamma waiting to bear fruit for this Thera. When we examine it, we see a dramatic series of events. Often, when one has to experience the fruition of kamma—even nowadays—we see a series of events aligning in a peculiar manner. Here, when the Thera arrived that day, the jeweler was cutting meat. Then arrived the king's message regarding the gem. Then the crane was also right there. All these factors fell into place, and in the end, the Arahant suffered a fatal injury—

or rather, was forced to attain pariNibbāna—due to his own past kamma. It was precisely because he understood this that, when the jeweler begged for forgiveness, the Thera, while forgiving him in a most virtuous manner, said, “This is neither your fault nor mine. It is a saṃsāric flaw.” To call it a saṃsāric flaw means that one must inevitably experience the results of the kamma one has committed; one must exhaust the fruits of kamma. This is the lesson we must draw from this. At the same time, the vast reservoir of this Thera’s noble virtues becomes clear. His only weakness, as mentioned, was his being a family-associate (*kulūpaga*). While intimacy with families is regarded as a good thing in the lay world, for the Sangha, such intimacy is considered a defect. It is for this reason that the Thera, realizing his error—the danger (*ādīnava*) of being a family-associate—resolved to go strictly on almsround, from house to house.

In any case, the Thera's great mass of noble virtues is clearly evident. Even when subjected to such fatal pain, he did not testify against the crane. This was not out of fear of anyone, but because his precept would be compromised. He would not give testimony that would knowingly cause the death of a living being. Sacrificing his own life, out of compassion for that animal at that moment, he withheld the truth. Therein lies a precious virtue. Likewise, he harbored no aversion (*dosa*) toward the jeweler who tortured him. Such a valuable store of virtues is illuminated by the life of this monk. Furthermore, if we reflect deeply, what we see through this is kamma and its fruition. This is precisely what the verse declares: “Some are born in a womb; others in hell.” Here, hell became the jeweler's destination. On the other hand, we see the difference between the couple: the wife, possessing deep faith, did not condone what her husband was doing. Out of her devotion to the Thera, she did not approve of his actions. It is said that due to her store of virtue and her acts of service, she was reborn in a heavenly world. As for the Arahant, we all know that his passing was pariNibbāna. Thereafter, there is no more birth (*jāti*). Thus, through this story, we see the relationship between kamma and its fruit—or rather, between kamma and rebirth.

This law of kamma—this natural order (*niyāma*) of action—is an incredibly powerful law of nature in this world, which not even Buddhas or Arahants can bypass. Therefore, a saṃsāric being must accept this reality and strive to live accordingly. Even during the time of the Buddha, there were various teachers who did not believe in kamma or the fruition of kamma. Even today, there may be those who hold similar views. Therefore, especially in these times, this is a point we must repeatedly remind people of in Dhamma sermons. There are various views in the world that discount this world and the next. However, according to the Buddha's Dhamma—if we reflect upon our actions—depending on the good or bad nature of the kamma we perform, we will attain a future becoming (*bhava*) and birth (*jāti*). The happiness or suffering we experience in that birth is determined solely by the wholesome or unwholesome nature of that kamma.

Therefore, we must reflect on this matter, and also consider under what circumstances the mind is inclined to perform an evil kamma. As we all know, there are three trainings in this Sasana: virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Let us contemplate what their ultimate purpose is. Whenever we have to perform an action, a kamma, that very present moment is of paramount importance. Because, as we said at

the very beginning, we carry certain saṃsāric habits. By performing the same kamma repeatedly, there are times when an evil-doer is compelled to yield to it and perform kamma in the same way. However, these can be overcome by being mindful of the present moment. In short, the Buddha said, "Bhikkhus, intention (*cetanā*) is what I call kamma." Why? Because it is in that brief moment of intention that we can do something about the operation of kamma. That moment of intention is extremely important. What was done in the past is done; its fruit will come. Even when that fruit comes, if at the moment it arrives, our stance, our determination, is inclined toward a good direction, then we can act with clear understanding and escape. We can act with responsibility. We can act in a way that directs our saṃsāric journey in a wholesome direction. Now, faced with the very same event, the jeweler acted in one way. The jeweler's wife acted in another way. The venerable monk, the Arahant, acted in yet another way—in a most noble, supreme manner. It was a difficult situation. But one can triumph over such situations only if one is established in a certain stance, only if one has cultivated a certain attitude beforehand. It is for this purpose, pious devotees, that there is such a thing as virtue (*sīla*).

Nowadays, some people claim that virtue (*sīla*) and meditation (*bhāvanā*) are unnecessary. When we reflect deeply, what is actually taking place here? In our day-to-day lives, various situations arise—sometimes situations that come to us in accordance with our kamma. At such times, we can make the right decision only if we have a firm determination, a wholesome stance like a commitment to virtue. A scattered mind easily drifts into the kamma of others. We must keep this in mind. A person with a scattered mind, who has no firm stance or wholesome attitude, easily gets dragged into the kamma of others and descends to hell and other lower realms. Why? Because this society, this world, is a place that operates according to the forces of kamma that each individual has brought along. When we look at it, this is, in one sense, like a puppet show. To a Buddha, to an Arahant, to those with direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), this appears just like a puppet show. Various things occur in accordance with past kamma and its results. But in the face of all this, if we control that brief moment called intention—the moment of intention—then we have won. Virtue is what helps us in this. Now, on this occasion, you all undertook a set of training precepts. What is accomplished by that? You have given a command to your mind, to your wisdom, to your intellect. You have made a determination: "I will protect this precept—this practice." Then, keeping that principle in mind, you can act with a firm principle. You have heard of "abstinence upon the arrival of the occasion" (*sampatta-virati*) as one of the benefits of virtue. When the opportunity to commit a wrong arises, the strength of your commitment to virtue gives you the power to refrain from it, thinking: "I have undertaken such a precept; to act in this way is not proper." Thus, on one hand, virtue helps us in such situations, preventing us from getting entangled in the kamma of others, and protecting us by placing our noble practice first. At an even higher level, it assists in concentration (*samādhi*). Concentration means the calming of the mind. Calming the mind means attaining a state of composure. It removes the scattered nature of the mind, known as the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), and makes it one-pointed. It is easy for a one-pointed mind to make a decision—a wholesome decision can be made. Furthermore, someone who has reached a

state of equanimity (*upekkhā*) in concentration can, at an even higher level, respond to the problems that arise in their life in a way that is in accordance with the Dhamma.

Next, the level higher than that is wisdom (*paññā*). Virtue, concentration, wisdom. Wisdom—this is what is demonstrated and polished in the life of that Arahant. That insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*)—or rather, the wisdom obtained through the path-knowledges (*magga-ñāṇa*)—gives a special power to protect oneself when these situations of kamma occur. There is an extremely high level of equanimity (*upekkhā*) there. Relying on the equanimity present in the fruition-mind (*phala-citta*) of the Arahants, they are able to triumph over such situations. This, then, is virtue, concentration, and wisdom. It is worth reminding those who present such false views that these are practically helpful in our day-to-day lives.

Now, to make this even more understandable in terms of practical daily life, let us say you bought a new car—a vehicle. Somehow or other, you managed to learn how to drive it, at least to some extent. Even though you learned, if you take it out onto the road and drive without considering other drivers, without considering the traffic laws, where will you end up? Even if your life is spared, you might end up in court and have to pay compensation for damaging other vehicles. You will have to face a host of such troubles. Therefore, you must observe the rules of the road. Next, you must drive this vehicle not with a scattered mind, but with good mindfulness and awareness, driving this vehicle with a kind of "concentration" (*samādhi*). Furthermore, in emergencies, such as when others are about to crash into your vehicle, you must develop a wisdom (*paññā*), an intellect, that can think quickly and act in an instant. Thus, even for an activity like driving a vehicle in daily life, a certain level of virtue, concentration, and wisdom is required. Do not misunderstand this. I am not over-simplifying this deep Dhamma. I mentioned this merely as a simple illustration. It is by being established in a certain virtue (*sīla*) in daily life that we step onto the road. One must know one's own side of the road. It is just like what was said about the bad destiny and the good destiny. If you drive your vehicle on the wrong side, that is the end of it. You will plunge down a precipice and ultimately be destroyed. Likewise, you might crash into other vehicles and cause various conflicts. Such is the situation in this world.

This is a society complicated by the diverse forces of kamma that each individual brings along. It is not the society we see on the surface. Each person behaves in ways we do not expect at any given moment. It is like the puppet show we mentioned. Now, that jeweler, who had attended to the Thera for twelve long years as though he were his own parent, because of a grave kamma he performed in a brief moment, ultimately bound himself to a heinous kamma with immediate retribution (*ānantarika-pāpa-kamma*) that blocked all his merits, and went straight to hell. From this, we can reflect that no matter how good we may be, how wholesome we are, if we do not possess these qualities of virtue, concentration, and wisdom within us, we—just like the jeweler—will have to reap terrible fruits from an unwholesome deed committed in one brief moment. That is the essence of the Dhamma taught by the Buddha. Virtue, concentration, and wisdom represent: first, the initial steps of disciplining body and speech; next, the calming of the mind; and finally, wisdom is the correct understanding of the world and life—correctly

comprehending the three characteristics of the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). By doing so, we appease all these forces of kamma at various levels, and ultimately, through the wheel of Dhamma, we break the wheel of kamma, conquer the wheel of kamma, and bring this saṃsāric journey to an end. This is what is called becoming an Arahant through wisdom—when viewed from the perspective of the paths and fruits.

Now, if we reflect further on this, the Buddha himself has presented a certain analysis of kamma. Since it is relevant to this story, let us present it on this occasion. The Buddha presented various analyses of kamma on different occasions. In one place, he states, "Bhikkhus, there are four types of kamma." Let us explain this in clear terms so it is easily understood:

There is dark kamma with dark results.

There is bright kamma with bright results.

There is dark-and-bright kamma with dark-and-bright results.

There is neither-dark-nor-bright kamma with neither-dark-nor-bright results.

In this way, he outlines four types of kamma. The Buddha explains each of these in the following manner. "Dark kamma with dark results" refers especially to the five immediately effective heinous kammas. You have heard of these—killing one's mother, killing one's father, killing an Arahant, with a hateful mind shedding the blood of a Tathāgata, and causing a schism in the Sangha. If one commits any of these five heinous kammas, one is definitely born in hell. Here, it is explained in this way: dark kamma means that a person, having performed bodily, verbal, and mental actions that are of an afflictive nature, takes birth in an afflictive place. Here, it specifically refers to hell. That is entirely painful. That is why it is dark. The kamma is dark; the fruition of kamma is dark. When born in such a place—as mentioned here—afflictive contacts touch that person. When we look at this, a wonderfully profound phrasing is used. All of this is executed by the mechanism of kamma. Furthermore, because of those afflictive contacts, that person becomes subject to a multitude of definitely painful feelings (*vedanā*). In this way, too, the Buddha demonstrates the statement "beings are heirs to their kamma" (*kammadāyādā sattā*). It shows that for every person, for every being, kamma is their inheritance. This means that if someone performs a dark kamma that brings dark results, they will take birth in places like hell that correspond to it. When they take birth, they will, in one way or another, have to experience contacts (*phassa*) that match it—afflictive contacts that bring painful feelings (*vedanā*). This is dark kamma.

Next, bright kamma that brings bright results. What is that? It is explained as the ten wholesome courses of action. It means abstaining from the ten unwholesome actions: killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; and also those verbal actions related to the precepts undertaken on this occasion—false speech, slandering, harsh speech, and idle chatter. Next, separating oneself from the unwholesome states of covetousness (*abhijjhā*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), and wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*)—meaning extreme greed,

anger, and wrong view—and generating wholesome states of mind; this is what is called bright kamma here. A person who has performed such bright kamma is born in the Subhakiṇha Brahma world, which is of an exclusively pleasant nature. This is stated at the highest level. Thus, by performing bright kamma, one takes birth in a place that brings bright results.

Next, what is declared as "dark-and-bright kamma" is a mixture of these—meaning performing those bad kammas, and at the same time, occasionally performing wholesome kammas. The places of rebirth for those who perform kamma in this mixed way are mentioned as the human world, certain heavenly worlds, and also certain lower realms. It is not entirely painful; there is also occasional pleasure. There are pleasant feelings (*vedanā*) that can be called happiness. In this way, the Buddha explains the third category. That is mixed: dark-and-bright kamma that gives dark-and-bright results.

Fourthly, he shows—and this is the deepest one—neither-dark-nor-bright kamma that brings neither-dark-nor-bright results. This is unique. These are described as those that assist in the destruction of all kamma. This kamma—neither-dark-nor-bright kamma—helps to conquer all kamma. This is explained as follows: if a person, in accordance with the Dhamma, generates an intention (*cetanā*) to destroy the dark kamma that brings dark results, and to destroy the bright kamma that brings bright results, and to destroy the dark-and-bright kamma that brings dark-and-bright results—in short, the intention generated to destroy all kamma is what is identified here as neither-dark-nor-bright kamma. In short, it is identified as the Noble Eightfold Path—the Middle Way. It is the middle path that leads to Nibbāna that the Buddha shows here. In another place, this is explained as the very same idea of the Noble Eightfold Path, as the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅga*). Whether one develops these factors of enlightenment, or develops the Noble Eightfold Path at the supramundane level, what ultimately happens? One is able to escape from this entire wheel of kamma, consisting of merit and demerit, wholesome and unwholesome, at four stages: Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship—as you all have heard. To break the power of the wheel of kamma, in short, is to destroy the cause of kamma. Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), as stated in the teaching of Dependent Arising, "with ignorance as condition, Preparations arise" (*avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā*)—it is because of ignorance that these Preparations arise. The very word "kamma" is expressed here in a subtle way as "Preparations" (*saṅkhāra*). Ignorance also means that based on the notion of "I" and "mine", all wholesome or unwholesome, merit or demerit, occurs. Therefore, if one wants to destroy them, one must destroy ignorance. What assists in this is the Middle Way—the Noble Eightfold Path. From another perspective, it is the development of the seven factors of enlightenment: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), joy (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). This is the unique message a Buddha gives to the world. Whether a Buddha arises or not, various views regarding kamma exist among different teachers in the world. Only a Buddha declares the path that can break this law of kamma. That is why this fourth category mentioned here is extremely important:

neither-dark-nor-bright kamma with neither-dark-nor-bright results, which conquers both the wholesome and the unwholesome.

Now, when this is said, some people might misunderstand it. They might think, “If so, merit and good deeds are not needed. We do not need to think about the wholesome and the unwholesome.” But one cannot escape in that way. This is a very subtle point. Many people get confused here. This is what the Buddha reminds us of when explaining the Dhamma, that some people grasp these wrong views like catching a snake by its tail. What is present here is a middle path. There is a place in a certain sutta discourse where the Buddha presents this middle path most beautifully. On one occasion, a certain deity came and asked the Buddha, “Noble Sir, how did you cross over the flood?” The “flood” referred to by the deity—you all might have heard of this, it is mentioned in Dhamma analyses as “ogha”. There are four floods that sweep away saṃsāric beings: the flood of sensuality (*kāma-ogha*), the flood of becoming (*bhava-ogha*), the flood of views (*diṭṭhi-ogha*), and the flood of ignorance (*avijjā-ogha*). Sensual thoughts—these flow like a great torrent, and beings are swept away by them. Next, the desire for the continuation of existence, craving (*taṇhā*) for becoming (*bhava*). Next, various views—getting caught in views and being swept away. Finally, ignorance—not knowing. All of these are shown as floods: the four floods that sweep away saṃsāric beings.

While being swept away by these four torrents, the deity asks the Buddha how he crossed over them. The Buddha gives a very brief answer: “Friend, I crossed over the flood without halting and without straining.” “Without halting and without straining, I crossed over the flood,” he answers. When asked to explain further, he says, “Friend, when I halted, I sank; when I strained, I was swept away. Therefore, without halting and without straining, I crossed over the flood.” That represents, pious devotees, the Middle Way—the middle path. Now consider a situation where one is about to be swept into a sluice gate, or caught in a whirlpool. If you just remain passive and do nothing, you will sink. Next, if you struggle violently without trying to escape in a proper manner, you will still be swept away. You will either go under or be swept away. Such is the situation regarding this kamma. That means, in the face of these questions regarding kamma, one must look at it in this way: those unwholesome actions—evil kammas—bring fruition to saṃsāric beings. We cannot deny their existence. Therefore, they must be conquered through wholesome actions. This is the middle path. One must develop the wholesome in place of the unwholesome. One must do merit instead of demerit. Having done so, one must arrive at a certain firm stance. A calm mind, in short, a concentrated mind, can be obtained only if one protects those virtues such as *sīla*. What is present in virtues like *sīla* is identifying and understanding the wholesome and unwholesome, identifying merit and demerit, and walking on that wholesome path. Therefore, you cannot throw these away. If you break and destroy the raft before crossing over, you will never reach the other shore.

Therefore, in this middle path, there is no halting, nor does it go to either extreme. If one goes to one extreme, it becomes the indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*), thinking, “We can live as we like, we can enjoy ourselves.” On

the other hand, if one goes to the opposite extreme, one begins to strain and struggle, just like the Nigaṇṭhas of old who, thinking all knots must be untied, went to the extreme of discarding even the knots of their clothing and wandering naked. These are the two extremes shown by the Buddha. Halting is the indulgence in sensual pleasures: disregarding these wholesome and unwholesome actions, virtues, and so on, and indulging in the five cords of sensual pleasure as one pleases. The other extreme is that rigid practice—as you all have heard of those in the past who, close to the Nigaṇṭha practice, lived like dogs or lived like cattle. Taking up various vows rigidly, believing that liberation is obtained through them. Those who live carrying various types of wrong views and dogmatic observances (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) represent that other extreme. Instead, the Buddha shows: relying on virtue (*sīla*), one develops concentration (*samādhi*). Without lingering there, relying on concentration, one then sees with wisdom those three characteristics of the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), thereby bringing forth wisdom (*paññā*). Bringing forth wisdom, pious devotees, means destroying that mentioned ignorance. If it is because of ignorance that all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), regarded as wholesome and unwholesome, arise in this mental continuum, then the path of calming those Preparations (*saṅkhāra-upasama*) is indeed the unique message that the Buddha introduced to the world. It is the path of appeasing these Preparations. That is what is called the supramundane path.

Now, there are two aspects to what is called “right view” (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Many people discuss this without a proper understanding. One aspect of this right view is the “right view of ownership of kamma” (*kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi*): being established in the position that kamma is one's own, and acting in a way that can face it. With a correct understanding of merit and demerit, wholesome and unwholesome, one must live with open eyes. Otherwise, one falls into those terrible bad destinies and saṃsāra is prolonged. One descends to states from which one cannot raise one's head again. That is called *kammassakatā*—the feeling that kamma is one's own. Why do we say kamma is one's own? One cannot escape by claiming “there is no self.” Why? Because it is precisely with the notion of “I” that those mentioned kammas are performed. Its fruition will definitely come. The period of fruition also arrives based on that very notion of “I”. It is like a “responsibility”—and responsibility is something one has taken upon oneself. It is by taking on the responsibility of “I” that a person engages in those evil kammas and so on. Correspondingly, the kamma flows back to that very person. That is why kamma is said to be “one's own”, “one's relative, one's kinsman”. One should not prematurely bring in not-self (*anattā*) there and misunderstand it. That is one level. In short, that is the side of origination (*samudaya*) of saṃsāric beings. Now, there are two sides: origination (*samudaya*) and cessation (*nirodha*). It is said that saṃsāric beings dwell entirely on the side of origination. “Origination” means arising. They are always trying to bring about, to acquire, to renew. The entire saṃsāric existence is an attempt to cultivate the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) in the world, in place of impermanence—by forgetting impermanence. To cultivate the feeling that the world is permanent, what must be done? Forgetting that these things are decaying and passing away, one must constantly renew them, bringing forth the feeling that “all of this is eternal”. The feeling of “I myself” also

runs upon that. Consequently, one has to experience the fruition of the kamma performed in accordance with that. This is inevitable.

So, the other side is the supramundane side. What lies on the supramundane side? On the supramundane side, one is facing cessation (*nirodha*). The noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) stands facing the side of cessation. The ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) stands facing the side of origination (*samudaya*). To put it another way, everyone lives as if thinking, "No matter how much suffering we experience today, tomorrow morning will be good." Even when this life is spent, they long for another life: "I could not fulfill my hopes in this life, but in the next life, I will." This journey driven by ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*) is what is called saṃsāra. That is living on the side of origination. The law of kamma applies to such a person. Therefore, one must accept it and try to live according to it. Otherwise, one will have to experience fruition in a far more terrible state than one's current state. Next, what is needed to escape from this, what helps us to escape, is not an extreme effort like that of the Nigaṇṭhas, inflicting various pains upon the body, thinking "I am exhausting past kamma through this pain, and I will not perform any more kamma," binding their mouths, or discarding their clothes.

The forces of kamma can be appeased—as shown by the Buddha—only through wisdom (*paññā*). Only by destroying ignorance. It cannot be done by other methods. One cannot exhaust and finish all kamma either. This destruction of kamma—as mentioned in the fourth category, neither-dark-nor-bright kamma—is said to destroy kamma. To destroy kamma—you all have heard that a Stream-entrant (*Sotāpanna*) is born seven times at most. How does that happen? Based on the power obtained through the path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) of Stream-entry, due to the cutting off of the defilements, the noble disciple who has become a Stream-entrant is incapable of performing kamma that can lead to the lower realms. One can perform kamma that leads to the lower realms only with a strong view of existing group (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). The view of existing group (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) is the most gross, coarse aspect of "I" and "mine". That layer of ignorance is shattered by path-knowledge; that is why that person cannot go to the lower realms. He is freed from the lower realms, in short. Next, as a direct result of the reduction of the sense of self, birth (*jāti*) is limited to at most seven more. This is how the Buddha solves this problem. This is the Middle Way. "Without halting and without straining" is why he said so. This problem is solved through wisdom (*paññā*), not by other artificial methods. Because the wheel of kamma in saṃsāra is so terrible. Even to Arahants, and to Buddhas, these kammas bring fruition. But that body they brought along—even those noble ones we call an Arahant or a Buddha appeared in this world through some force of kamma, and they have to experience those fruits correspondingly. But it ends there. After that, they do not take birth again. To solve that problem, the Buddha has shown these paths and fruits. At the state of Stream-entry, seven times; next, if Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), coming to this world only once more; next, if Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), being born in the Brahma world and after some time attaining Arahantship and pariNibbāna. Those Arahants, Buddhas, and Paccekabuddhas who attained final Nibbāna (*parinibbāna*) in this very world do not take birth again. To

say they do not take birth again means that they have exhausted that accumulated mass of kamma.

That, then, is the solution presented by the Buddha. We must reflect on these matters with wisdom and understand them. Otherwise, we might fall into those mentioned wrong views: "Since both merit and demerit expand saṃsāra—through both merit and demerit, or rather, through both wholesome and unwholesome, saṃsāra is prolonged—therefore, we do not need to concern ourselves with merit." As for demerit, that is out of the question; it happens easily anyway. But the difficult thing is performing merit—performing the wholesome. To say, "There is no need to exert ourselves for them; if we do, saṃsāra is prolonged," is to grasp the Dhamma wrongly. That is like grabbing a snake by its tail. The correct way to practice has been shown by the Buddha. As mentioned before, through virtue (*sīla*), at a practical level, one disciplines body and speech. What is the result obtained from that? It is blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*), the absence of remorse. Relying on that, one next develops concentration (*samādhi*). One does not linger in that concentration either, for that too is something that prolongs becoming (*bhava*). The Buddha does not hold onto that either. Instead, relying on concentration, with that calmed and unified mind, one penetrates and sees the three characteristics. The unique vision that a Buddha presents to the world is insight (*vipassanā*)—the three characteristics of the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). This, too, can be understood insightfully only if there is good concentration. It is at that level of insight, after insight has been sufficiently developed, that through the realization of the paths and fruits—through that penetration—one understands that in these five aggregates, there is no "I". There is nothing here to be taken as a self. Once that understanding arises, or rather, once the law of Dependent Arising is correctly understood, that person no longer performs the kind of unwholesome or wholesome actions that occur through the view of existing group (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). This is the solution shown by the Buddha.

We chose a verse that speaks briefly about this becoming (*bhava*) as our theme. But we must realize that saṃsāric beings obtain various states based on the distinction between the wholesome and the unwholesome, between merit and demerit. That is an eternal law. Moreover, one is easily inclined toward evil kammas. Because one is easily inclined, we must establish a certain stance; we must make a firm determination. Otherwise, one naturally drifts into them. One drifts into the kamma of others. Having drifted, one will have to suffer in terrible places like the lower realms. Therefore, a certain level of virtue (*sīla*) is necessary. Furthermore, virtue that has been practiced for a long time is stronger; virtue practiced for a brief period has less strength. That is why you all undertake precepts, or rather, protect the five precepts that are your own. Having undertaken them, you make a determination. Having made a determination, you reflect upon them. Reflecting thus, when the opportunity arises to take a wrong path, you bring forward the mental factor of abstinence (*virati-cetasika*) to abstain from the situation that has presented itself, practicing abstinence upon the arrival of the occasion (*sampatta-virati*). That mind of abstinence is extremely helpful in escaping from such

dangerous situations. Next, it is through the strength developed through virtue in this way that concentration (*samādhi*) can be established.

Reflecting in this manner, you will be able to understand the true meaning of the Middle Way shown by the Buddha. Next, through all of this, we must reflect on the nature of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). This existence created by the mind itself through these Preparations—the worlds exist in corresponding alignment. The Buddha has shown that in accordance with various kammas, sometimes separate worlds manifest. It is said that at the end of an eon (*kalpa*), separate Brahma mansions arise for certain individuals. From this, we can see how powerful the mind is—this accumulation of kamma performed by our mind. Underneath all this lies that mentioned ignorance. Like a deep darkness, because of the darkness of ignorance, cultivating the delusion of "I" and "mine", the beings of the world are driven to this kind of activity. To escape from this, we must gradually utilize these—without throwing away and without grasping onto virtue, concentration, and wisdom—using them from a middle stance. In some instances, this is compared to traveling by seven chariots. In those days, unlike today, if there was an urgent journey, several horse chariots were stationed at different points. One would travel in one chariot and mount the next when the horses became tired, and from that, mount another. In this way, changing between seven horse chariots, King Pasenadi Kosala went from Sāvatthi to Sāketa in an emergency; this simile has been shown. In that very way, the Buddha has shown each purification here. Relying on the purification of virtue (*sīla-visuddhi*), one develops the purification of mind (*citta-visuddhi*). Relying on the purification of mind, one develops the purification of view (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*). In this way, passing through the sequence of seven purifications, ultimately one is able to attain the paths and fruits.

From this, we can contemplate how wondrous the Middle Way shown by the Buddha truly is. The ordinary worldling cannot find a way to escape from this saṃsāra. For they either sink by remaining static, or they struggle and are swept away by this flood. Through every kamma we perform, there is a portion that sinks into the mental continuum. This portion that sinks into the mental continuum is identified in this Dhamma as the "underlying tendency" (*anusaya*). Like a heavy object sinking to the bottom, during our long journey in saṃsāra, there is a portion that comes to be deposited as an underlying tendency (*anusaya*) in our mental continuum. Likewise, there is that which is called "taints" (*āsava*). *Āsava* implies a flowing—there is the sense of an influx or taints. Then, there is another portion that sweeps one away, and that is what is called a "flood" (*ogha*), which we have referred to as torrents. What does that mean? It means saṃsāric habits. Through every kamma we perform, a habit is forged. That is why we previously referred to it as a wheel—the wheel of kamma. Indeed, the Dhamma sometimes outlines: the round of defilements (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*), the round of kamma (*kamma-vaṭṭa*), and the round of fruition (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*). This word *vaṭṭa* is often employed. *Vaṭṭa* means going in a circle, or a wheel. How does each of these turn into a wheel? They turn into habits. It is not easy to break those saṃsāric habits. They can be broken only through wisdom (*paññā*). Those habits accumulate. When one kamma is performed—as we said, because the jeweler was cutting meat, it was very easy for him to

transition to another blood-spilling kamma—in that very way, any kamma we perform assists another as a habit, by way of repetition (*āsevana*), whether good or bad. Thus progressing, the portion that sinks into the mental continuum is called the underlying tendency (*anusaya*). These cannot be easily removed. Likewise, the taints (*āsava*) represent the portion that flows in. Arahants, pious devotees, remove those underlying tendencies (*anusaya*), taints (*āsava*), and floods (*ogha*)—that portion which sinks. They also exhaust those influxes of sensuality, becoming (*bhava*), and views (*diṭṭhi*) that flow in. A mind that has acquired the strength to be freed from those torrents called floods is what is called an Arahant's mind, a Buddha's mind. It is for this state that a Buddhist practices all steps of the path. It is not for some minor goal as ordinary people think—not merely to protect some social ethics, nor just with the objective of maintaining society well. There is a far deeper purpose than that. One's saṃsāric liberation belongs to oneself. For one's inheritance of kamma—as expressed in "heirs to their kamma" (*kammadāyādā*)—one must be responsible for the mass of kamma one has brought along. One must also be responsible in this saṃsāra for the mass of kamma one performs. The way to escape from it was ultimately shown by the Buddha as that mentioned neither-dark-nor-bright kamma. That means developing the Noble Eightfold Path at the supramundane level.

Looking towards the side of origination (*samudaya*), performing actions based on a general understanding of good and bad is described as "accompanied by taints, siding with merit, ripening in acquisitions" (*sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā*). It is accompanied by taints (*sāsava*); that is acknowledged. Accompanied by taints, siding with merit, it accumulates acquisitions (*upadhi*) in saṃsāra—acquisitions meaning those things that yield various existences or worldly resources in saṃsāra. There is such a form of right view. On the other hand, what is the deep right view? It is the right view concerning the Four Noble Truths: that this entire existence is suffering (*dukkha*); its cause is craving (*taṇhā*); the calming of this craving is Nibbāna; and the path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path. The realization of these Four Noble Truths is what is called supramundane right view (*lokuttara-sammā-diṭṭhi*). Thus, in a mundane or saṃsāric sense, understanding the good and bad actions of beings is the lower level of right view. That is what is called the "right view of ownership of kamma" (*kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi*)—the understanding of merit and demerit, or good and bad. Not everything is accomplished by that alone. Standing upon that foundation, and having fulfilled those necessary requirements, ultimately—the final goal must be—to understand these Four Noble Truths deeply. To say that this entire existence is suffering (*dukkha*) means that there is no "soul" or "I" here. The path leading to that realization is what the Buddha has shown in the profound aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path. All eight factors arise simultaneously in a supramundane mind. Ordinary people, when developing the Noble Eightfold Path, take each factor individually and develop them "retail". But it is in a supramundane mind that the Noble Eightfold Path arises in a unified meditative state. It is said that all eight factors arise simultaneously in a single moment of mind. That means all eight factors have become aligned. If we imagine those eight factors were crooked—crooked in various ways—it is precisely when all eight factors, from right view to right concentration, become aligned at the same instant that the realization of the paths and

fruits occurs, when viewed in a deep sense. Therefore, there is a far greater depth in the supramundane state than the right view and right intention developed by ordinary people.

Therefore, through this, you all should reflect upon and bring to light a host of deeper matters regarding kamma and rebirth, drawing from this story and verse. On this valuable day, bringing the Dhamma knowledge you have gathered close to your lives, and without neglecting these virtues, may you establish concentration (*samādhi*) through the restraint you have developed, and through that concentration, obtain that insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) to resolve to escape from this extremely dangerous saṃsāra. May the store of merit we have gathered today through this Dhamma sermon and Dhamma listening, and also all the mental strengths of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) that you have developed through listening to the Dhamma, be a decisive support (*upanissaya*) for crossing over this saṃsāra—for crossing over this flood without halting and without straining.

Likewise, for this pious group, today our small hall has been expanded. For this too, these devout lay disciples must have assisted and contributed to some extent. Also, a seat has been offered as a Dhamma-seat. Although we do not expect much, out of respect for the Dhamma, a Dhamma-seat has been offered. Reflecting upon that merit, and also relying on the store of merit gathered today through this special Dhamma listening, may all this power of merit remove whatever states obstruct your journey to Nibbāna in this life! May supportive states approach you! Experiencing the peace of the Dhamma, appeasing those mentioned forces of kamma, ultimately through the power of Dhamma, may this power of merit definitely be a cause and support to conquer the entire wheel of kamma through the wheel of Dhamma! Thus make your aspiration. Likewise, may the Sasana-protecting deities and Brahmas, and also the relatives who have passed away in your names, and all beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, rejoice in this merit of Dhamma sermon and Dhamma listening! Having rejoiced, may they as quickly as possible find peace in the supreme Deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi! With this aspiration, recite these verses and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #20

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Pheṇūpamaṃ kāyamimaṃ viditvā, marīcidhammaṃ abhisambudhāno;

Chetvāna mārassa papupphakāni, adassanaṃ maccurājassa gacche.

From:

Verse 46 from the Pupphavagga (Chapter on Flowers) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The Nibbāna is the highest aspiration and ultimate goal of every Buddhist. This word 'Amata' (the Deathless) is pleasing to everyone's ears. Why does everyone show such fondness for this word 'Amata'? It is because they see and feel within this word 'Amata' a solution to the grave problem of death that every living being born in this world must face. This word 'Amata' is pleasing not only to humans but even to devas and brahmās. That is because, even if they live for aeons, someday they have to pass away from there; they have to die. Therefore, this word 'Amata' is a highly pleasing and desirable word.

Why, then, do we revere our Lord Buddha, the Supreme One? It is because the Lord Buddha presented the solution to this very question of death, which the world—including devas and humans—was looking forward to. That is what is called the Nibbāna.

We know that the Lord Buddha defeated Māra. What is the meaning of this defeat of Māra? The Lord Buddha discovered a place invisible to Māra, a place beyond the grasp of Māra. That is what is called the Nibbāna element, the Nibbāna. It is referred to by terms such as the Unconditioned (*Asaṅkhata*) element. Death is conquered by bringing the mind to a supramundane state that is invisible to Māra, a state that Māra cannot see. The Lord Buddha not only realized that Deathless state, the Nibbāna, but also presented in this Dhamma the helpful instructions for the world to reach that state, to defeat Māra

within their own mental continuums, and to realize that Deathless state. What is shown very briefly in the verse we have chosen as our theme today is also an instruction on insight (*vipassanā*) that helps in bringing the mind to this Deathless state.

This verse of the Dhamma was expounded to a certain monk who, having taken a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from the Lord Buddha, had gone to a remote forest to practice insight (*vipassanā*). Having obtained the meditation subject from the Lord Buddha and gone to such a forest, this venerable monk meditated with great effort, but was unable to attain Arahantship. Later, he thought, "I must meet the Lord Buddha again, clarify my meditation subject, and get special instructions." With this thought, while traveling a long distance, he saw a mirage. A mirage is something one can see during the summer—in dry seasons like this—appearing like vapor rising from the ground, looking like flowing water. Seeing this, the monk contemplated: "This state of existence of mine—this body—is also like a mirage." This mirage appears as if it exists in the distance, as if it is something real that can be grasped. But the nature of a mirage is such that when one goes near, it is not there. In the same way, just as the Lord Buddha had declared, it appeared to this monk as a mirage. What is seen of this body is not what is actually there. It is of the nature of arising and passing away. When one goes to look at the point of arising, it disappears from there. Next, coming along while thinking about the mirage, he arrived at the river Achiravatī. To relieve the fatigue and heat of his body, he bathed, and then sat down serenely under a tree where the river water was flowing very rapidly. He watched how frothy foam was repeatedly forming and dissolving in the swift current of the river. This also became a meditation subject for the monk. He contemplated: "This form (*rūpa*) of mine, this physical frame, this body, this state of existence, is also like a lump of foam." While he was contemplating this, the Lord Buddha—who usually observes with His Buddha-cognition the movements of thought and how the minds of the monks to whom He gave meditation subjects are working—saw that this monk's mind was now mature. At that moment, the Lord Buddha, seeing the thought that had arisen in this monk, appeared before him—while remaining in His own Perfumed Chamber (*Gandhakuṭī*)—and uttered the verse we mentioned earlier:

Pheṇūpamaṃ kāyamimaṃ viditvā - marīcidhammaṃ abhisambudhāno

Chetvāna māraṣṣa pappuphakāni - adassanaṃ maccurājassa gacche

Confirming the insight (*vipassanā*) that had arisen in that monk, validating his perception, and encouraging him further, the Lord Buddha said:

'*Pheṇūpamaṃ kāyamimaṃ viditvā*' - Knowing this body to be comparable to a lump of foam,

'*Marīcidhammaṃ abhisambudhāno*' - Wisely understanding the mirage-like nature of this body, comprehending it thoroughly,

'*Chetvāna māraṣṣa pappuphakāni*' - Cutting off the flower-arrows shot by the Māra of defilements (*kilesa-māra*), or the arrows with flower-tips,

'*Adassanaṃ maccurājassa gacche*' - Go to a place out of the sight of the King of Death.

Thus, the Lord Buddha gave this advice. It is mentioned that upon hearing this instruction, the monk's insight-knowledges matured, and he became an Arahant possessing the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*).

Now, on this basis—in connection with this verse—let us try to understand the Dhamma points contained herein.

Comparing this body to a lump of foam: The Lord Buddha compared form (*rūpa*) to a lump of foam. Let us contemplate how reasonable—how well-reasoned—this is. The Lord Buddha compared form (*rūpa*) to a lump of foam because the more one thinks about it, the deeper one reflects on it, the closer one gets to Nibbāna. Now, a lump of foam arises when something, say a log, gets stuck in a swiftly flowing stream, and as the debris collects, foam rises from the water as it gets swept along. From a distance, due to the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), that lump of foam appears as something solid, something permanent, something substantial. But when one looks closely, it is a substanceless thing, an empty thing. Moreover, this lump of foam exists only for a very short duration. If one looks at a lump of foam very closely, it is like a mass of bubbles rapidly arising and passing away. This body is also such a thing. Yet, when we look at it as form (*rūpa*), what we see is like the mirage we spoke of earlier. What is its mirage-like nature? From a distance, it appears as a highly pleasing, permanent thing. But this body is put together just like that lump of foam. We know that various things—food and drink—fall into this body. Milk, gruel, rice—these boil and foam in the kitchen before they enter this body. Once they enter the body, they boil and foam even further. By the boiling and overflowing of this foam, blood, flesh, bones, nerves, and so forth are formed. Once they are formed—in that manner, by the overflowing of this foam—we cherish the parts we like to keep in the body, and with great pride, thinking "this is mine" and "this is I," we groom, decorate, dress, feed, and nourish this body. The remaining part of that foam, the part that overflows outwards, such as feces, urine, and sweat, we wash away as waste and filth. Such is the situation regarding the lump of foam of this body when one contemplates it. As the Lord Buddha declared, the thirty-two impure parts of the body are brought together in just this way. By way of the primary elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*), due to the boiling nature within this body, this body grows over many years, constantly foaming. It is a lump of foam. Thus, having correctly understood the foam-like nature of this body—"*Pheṇūpamaṃ kāyamimaṃ viditvā*."

Similarly, its mirage-like nature means that from a distance, if one does not look with the eye of wisdom, it appears as a very pleasing thing. Whether we take a photograph or look in a mirror, to the ordinary physical eye—what we call the natural eye, our ordinary eye—when we look with that eye, it appears to us as a highly pleasing form (*rūpa*), both one's own form and the forms of others. Now, there are instruments in the world to see things that the physical eye cannot see, such as microscopes. What do they do? They magnify fine things to look at them. Magnifying fine things is a distortion. Yet, we are satisfied with it, thinking, "Look, I have seen a fine thing." But wisdom—insight (*vipassanā*)

wisdom—does not look in that way. It sees the fine thing as a fine thing itself. That is a direct realization. It is confirmed by directly realizing the fine thing as a fine thing. Otherwise, as long as the instrument is there, we see it; once the instrument is removed, it is gone. Such is the difference in the world regarding seeing—and insight (*vipassanā*) means a special kind of seeing—and the seeing of the practitioner of insight.

To understand form (*rūpa*) as a lump of foam in this manner, there is no need to make the effort to place parts of it under a microscope, nor is there any expense. By constantly contemplating some part of this form (*rūpa*)—even a single hair from among the hair of the head and body, or any of the thirty-two impure parts of the body such as hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, etc., which strikes one as most repulsive—as a meditation subject, in terms of tranquility (*samatha*), by anchoring the mind on it, and through one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), seeing it deeply, then one understands. Next, an opportunity arises to see the nature of the elements (*dhātu*) within this by way of insight (*vipassanā*). As the insight-knowledges mature, whether through the aspect of foulness (*asubha*) or by way of elements (*dhātu*), one can remove the attachment to this and comprehend its true nature. There is a word, "nibbedhikā paññā." Dear devotees, "*nibbedhikā paññā*" means penetrative wisdom. Wisdom is something penetrative. When we think about this body, we often use the term "body-cage." Indeed, it is a cage. Inside this body-cage, the mind is trapped. This cage is a cage built by Māra, a cage created by Māra. Within this body-cage created by Māra, the mind is trapped. Thus, a person strives, a wise person strives, to attain liberation of the mind, to realize Nibbāna. What is this realization of Nibbāna? It is the penetrative seeing of this cage. Through the penetrative seeing of this cage, the mind is liberated. It is that penetrative seeing which is accomplished by insight (*vipassanā*).

To show how great this wisdom is, it is compared to a diamond. A diamond (*vajra-māṇikya*) is something that can cut other gems. A diamond has the strength and sharpness to cut through other gems. This insight-knowledge is also like a diamond; it penetrates, it sees through. It sees through this—now, to say that one sees impermanence (*anicca*), there are two sides to impermanence, two petals: arising and passing away. It begins with contemplating the nature of arising and the nature of passing away. Going deeper into this, through that, one penetrates to the fact that there is nothing substantial here. As one goes deeper and deeper, one can see impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), not-self (*anattā*), and substanceless nature. This, then—the seeing of arising and passing away—is the initial stage of the operation of this 'diamond': insight (*vipassanā*) wisdom. It is by seeing in this way that one can understand this body as a lump of foam, not through some artificial instruments, not through other artificial things. However, we get the hint for this from Nature, by way of illustration. In the past, during the Buddha's time, it was the set of similes shown by the Lord Buddha that these monks took with them to the forest when going to meditate, not other books. They did not carry other books on their shoulders. Those similes alone were useful. Why? Because a simile contains many points that would fill a great book, but it is grasped—understood—only as one goes deeper and deeper. When one simply says "a lump of foam," it is something that can be seen anywhere when looking at a river. If one just

looks at it and turns away, it goes no further. But it is not just the simile, but the object of comparison (*upameya*). To what did the Lord Buddha compare this simile? To this body. At first glance, this might seem unacceptable. But one must apply the mind deeply to this, apply contemplation, and reflect on it. When one constantly directs the mind to this, then one realizes how true what the Lord Buddha declared is.

In this manner, therefore, one who hopes for insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) and wishes to go to that Deathless state—to that place invisible to Māra—must sharpen those insight-knowledges. "*Pheṇūpamaṃ kāyamimaṃ viditvā*." Furthermore, if we contemplate the mirage-like nature of this, we have already mentioned that characteristic of a mirage. The deer is deceived by it. The deer, being largely an ignorant animal, because it appears in the distance during summer like water, runs towards it. When it gets there, it is not there. But according to the view (*diṭṭhi*) it has taken, it appears even further away. So, it keeps running in the same way, and does not realize until it finally collapses from exhaustion. It is a similar situation. Now, it is the same regarding this form (*rūpa*). The world's attachment to this form (*rūpa*) is the work of Māra, the work of Māra of defilements (*kilesa-māra*). It is always shown as something beautiful (*subha*). That is why the Lord Buddha has pointed out that the world is trapped within four distorted views, called distortions (*vipallāsa*): regarding the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent (*nicca*), the foul (*asubha*) as beautiful (*subha*), the suffering (*dukkha*) as pleasant (*sukha*), and the not-self (*anattā*)—that which is not one's own—as self (*attā*). There exists such a distorted state, a state of distortion (*vipallāsa*), in the world. According to it, that lump of foam also appears as something permanent, something highly beautiful, something to be acquired, and something substantial. It is the same with the mirage. Thinking it is water, the thirsty deer, out of its need to drink that water, goes far. Because of the very thirst called craving (*taṇhā*), the animal often takes that distant sight as a view (*diṭṭhi*), thinking, "This is indeed water, nothing else." Due to that firmly grasped view, and next, due to the thoughts generated in accordance with it, that deer runs.

Thus, the Lord Buddha declared that these distorted ideas called distortions (*vipallāsa*) operate on three levels: distortion of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*), distortion of mind (*citta-vipallāsa*), and distortion of view (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*). Distortion of perception means recognition. The deer perceives the distant mirage as water. Then, based on that perception, it generates numerous thoughts: "If I go there, I will be able to drink some water." Because of those thoughts, expectations, and wishes, the deer runs. It forms a view based on what appears in the distance. "This is indeed water; even if it is not here, it is visible further away—when one goes further. Since it is visible, it can definitely be obtained." Now, this kind of mirage-like nature is the same regarding this body, and also regarding other luxury items that support the body. We know how these three factors operate in daily life. Perhaps one's neighbor brings a brand new luxury item to their house. Seeing this, one thinks, "Somehow I must get this too." This is indeed the mirage. One thinks, "The day I get this, I too will be somebody." Thinking so, one goes into debt for it. Borrowing and earning, one somehow obtains that luxury item, that object which was in the beautifully decorated room. By the time one gets it, the neighbor's item has

gone to the kitchen, and a different item has arrived, and then one tries to get that one. It is after such a mirage that the world runs. The world spends its entire life with such craving (*taṇhā*)—a grave craving—not only for this body, but also for the luxury goods that support this body. Such is the situation. This happens because of Māra. That is the part mentioned next in the verse.

"*Chetvāna māraṣṣa pappuphakāni*" – cutting off the flower-arrows of Māra, or the arrows with flower-tips. A deep meaning is expressed here. What are these arrows? Māra of defilements shoots these arrows at our six senses. What is shown here is the object of defilements (*kilesa*) coming to the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Because these defiled objects come in a pleasing guise, they are shown as flower-arrows. If one cannot cut off those flower-arrows properly—one looks at the arrow because there is a flower at its tip. But despite looking at the flower, it comes and pierces the eye. That is the kind of thing here. Now, what is used to cut off this nature of defilement? It is that same diamond we mentioned earlier, the very insight (*vipassanā*) wisdom. It is called 'insight attention' (*vipassanā-manasikāra*)—contemplating. It is through insight attention that one can cut off these defiled objects. Generally, through contemplation, if one contemplates like the ordinary world—that is, ignorantly—if one contemplates under the sway of defilements, then, based on that object, one grasps various other signs (*nimitta*). An object does not come alone; it brings signs. The defilements give various signs to the mind: "This is beautiful," "This is permanent," "This is pleasant," "This brings pleasure," "This is a good thing," "This is mine,"—giving such feelings.

Likewise, there is a pleasing appearance to it. Accordingly, these sense objects have a nature that fosters desire. It is with insight (*vipassanā*) wisdom that one can cut off this sticky nature, this nature of attachment, this nature of binding found in the object, and see through the objects. That is what is meant by cutting off these arrows of defilement—these defiled objects—shot by Māra. In that way, one contemplates this object very rapidly, not to yield to those signs, but to use these objects to see the three characteristics declared by the Lord Buddha: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). "Ah, there it came. Here it remained. There it went." The object came, remained, went. What does one understand through this? How true is the nature of impermanence (*anicca*) declared by the Lord Buddha! Next, one sees through that very thing that if one develops an attachment to this, along with it comes the grief, fear, and lamentation caused by separation from it.

Now, within those insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) declared by the Lord Buddha lies the entire mass of experiences we have gathered over an infinite time in this *saṃsāra*. It is by applying this mass of experience to a very brief moment, making it like a diamond that cuts through, that one can escape from this *saṃsāra*, that one can escape from becoming (*bhava*). What is the solution given by the Lord Buddha? It is not the solution the ordinary world thinks of.

The ordinary world sees in everything a craving (*taṇhā*), a clinging; they speak of craving and grasping (*upādāna*). They grasp with craving (*taṇhā*). It is through this grasping that the ordinary world expects security. We know that when a small child feels fear, they

cling to their mother. The mother sometimes clings to her husband. If a thief comes, or if someone comes to kill, they might cling to security guards. You, dear devotees, know very well at this time that none of these clingings or attachments are permanent. One can never conquer Māra or escape from death through this nature of grasping and clinging.

Instead, the Lord Buddha gives a highly wonderful solution, one that is inconceivable to a person. The Lord Buddha declares that to escape from Māra, when Māra pulls, you must let go; when Māra pulls, you must let go. Why? Because in the force with which Māra pulls, there is a mental state that brings grief, fear, lamentation, and despair. If someone firmly grasps or holds onto something, when that grasped object is pulled, it generates fear, lamentation, and grief. Let us say one clings to a thorny branch. When that thorny branch is pulled, that person's hand also gets wounded. Similarly, regarding grasping (*upādāna*) in this world, the Lord Buddha declared, "I do not see any single thing in this becoming (*bhava*) by grasping which one can escape." This is hard for a person to conceive. On various levels, one decides, "I will hold onto just this much." But the Lord Buddha declares that as long as one grasps, through everything one becomes prey to Māra. To what extent, dear devotees? The Lord Buddha has declared—as we as Buddhists have often heard—that what we call "I" and "mine" is just five heaps: form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The Lord Buddha has identified each of these heaps as Māra. Form is Māra, feeling is Māra, perception is Māra, Preparations are Māra, consciousness is Māra. All of these are shown as belonging to Māra. What, then, is that which does not belong to Māra? It is the very letting go of these. Therein lies the bliss of liberation. This is not something obtained by grasping.

Now, let us take a common analogy for this. Let us think of a tug-of-war. What happens in a tug-of-war? At the beginning, we know that the two teams on either side grasp this rope with all their might. If needed, they even wrap it around their bodies. With a firm determination not to let it move even a bit, they hang onto the rope. Then, let us assume one side, which can somehow win, pulls that side. When they pull, some of those who cling to it fall to the ground, get scraped, and suffer injuries if they remain hanging on. That is a fact well realized by us. But regarding that victory, there too is a mirage. Because of the perception of the mirage, they grasp it firmly. They think they have won. Amidst great panting, they express happiness. Such is the situation presented as the solution in the world. What the Lord Buddha shows is not that kind of thing. It is letting go when Māra pulls. If one lets go when the pull is made with all that force, what happens? There, the pressure is on Māra. The pressure is on Māra there. One is free. For oneself, there is no fear, grief, lamentation, or despair. Letting go. One can realize this in daily life. Within what we grasp, there is that which gives suffering (*dukkha*). Let us say we are very proud of our set of teeth. A tooth right in front starts aching. A toothache occurs. Now, we somehow bear the ache. If this tooth is lost, it would be a major blemish on our face. But the dentist says, "This is a decayed tooth; if this is not removed somehow, it will damage the others too." Then, on that day, discarding the desire for that tooth, one allows it to be extracted. Once it is extracted, there is relief. That is what one should know regarding the matter of the tooth. Such is the situation in the world.

Although we mention this as an ordinary example, it is not realized all at once in daily life. But those who have traveled on that path of the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha have realized this. They let go of things that seemed impossible to let go of. Why? Because they saw that each of these—like the subtle arrows of Māra—is an invitation from Māra. He gives it, saying, "Here, grasp this," and then pulls. The moment it is grasped, he pulls.

Through this grasping—let us try to uncover a deeper Dhamma through this very analogy. We spoke about grasping the rope. At the time of grasping a rope in a tug-of-war, how much effort, endeavor, energy, or strain is applied for its sake? How much struggle is exerted? To grasp this rope, to embrace it. In the same way, there exists within the beings of this world a nature of clinging tightly to everything by way of mind, speech, and body, in the form of intentions, aspirations, and expectations. Or, to put it another way, there are many 'preparatory leanings' (*ara-ændīm*). You, dear devotees, know this word 'preparatory leanings'. A preparation. A great preparation, a leaning, when we reflect on our entire life. Life is entirely a preparation, a leaning, a mass of preparatory leanings, made in order to live, to survive, not to die. Even before these leanings are finished, before these leanings are properly completed, Māra pulls it away. At that moment, then, as we mentioned earlier, amidst fear, lamentation, and despair, one undergoes suffering (*dukkha*). One thinks, "I have died." Thinking so, somehow, due to those defilements generated elsewhere in accordance with karma, due to Māra of defilements—one takes another birth (*jāti*) in accordance with karma. Next, one settles down there. One takes root there. Māra pulls towards the other world. The one who is about to die pulls towards this world. Finally, the Lord Buddha declared that this is a pulling that belongs to neither world. When this pulling is over, one goes and settles down there, taking root. Suppose one had a human form (*rūpa*), and next goes and is born in the womb of an animal. Then, due to ignorance (*avijjā*), one grasps that body-cage. One grasps the senses belonging to that body, thinking "this is I" and "this is mine." That is how it is. That is what is called the journey of *saṃsāra*. This journey is not one that can be measured in miles or meters. That journey of *saṃsāra* exists between these two: between 'that world' and 'this world', in the way one grasps. Or, as we say, between 'there' and 'here'. Now, in the case of the mirage, the deer runs from 'here' seeking the water visible 'there'. What is used to connect 'there' and 'here'? Conceit (*māna*). If we say craving (*taṇhā*), the deer, starting from 'here', generates a thought—according to craving (*taṇhā*), it generates the thought. The view (*diṭṭhi*) of what is visible in the distance assists it. It connects these two with conceit (*māna*): "If I go there, I can drink that water."

In this manner, according to the three defilements of craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and view (*diṭṭhi*), the beings of the world travel this long journey of *saṃsāra*. Although we call it long, it is like spinning in one place. It is a highly wonderful situation, like spinning in the very same place. Now, if it is a cycle of this nature, one cannot escape by running. That is why the Lord Buddha declared that within this fathom-long body, He points out the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to it. For this, as we mentioned earlier, one must see through this body-cage. One must see through each and every one of these. The Lord Buddha has shown only two

similes here. But in the Dhamma, similes are shown for the entire five aggregates. You, dear devotees, may have often heard that form (*rūpa*) is compared to a lump of foam, and feeling (*vedanā*) to water bubbles—like water bubbles rapidly arising and passing away when rain falls. Next, perception (*saññā*) is said to be a mirage. Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—we understood Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) as all those various intentions, aspirations, expectations, preparatory leanings, and preparations. We do this through mind, body, and speech—even in a tug-of-war, that word is used—body, speech, and mind. A great effort—numerous efforts—done through all of these is present in a tug-of-war. Numerous preparations and leanings. Similarly, this is a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). There is no substance in these; they are substanceless. Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are compared to a banana trunk. A person who sees a banana trunk for the first time, going to search for its heartwood, seeing the smooth nature of this banana trunk, thinks, "This is a wood with good heartwood." But as he peels it, peeling it very finely, lo and behold, it is just a sheath—what appeared so good was just a sheath, not heartwood. He discards it. "Now, here is the heartwood." That too is just a sheath. Next, he discards that too. "Ah, that too is just a sheath." Finally, he reaches the core. It is not there either. There is no substance there either. Within it too, there is only a multitude of sheaths.

In just this way, in this entire *saṃsāra*, dear devotees, we have only been peeling sheaths. We have not obtained any heartwood. Searching for the heartwood, we have gone on peeling sheaths. This is it. Regarding Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—the Lord Buddha declared, "*saṅkhārapāramā dukkhā*" (Preparations are the ultimate suffering). He said that the subtlest suffering (*dukkha*) in the world is the suffering of Preparations (*saṅkhāra-dukkha*). Generally, we say it is suffering (*dukkha*) when we lose a loved one, when we fall sick, when we are ill, or when we have nothing to eat or drink—these are what we call suffering (*dukkha*). But the Lord Buddha declared that the subtlest level of suffering (*dukkha*) is Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is understood only by the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*). Gradually, the suffering (*dukkha*) in this is understood. To cure a disease, what does a doctor do? First, they suppress the externally visible symptoms of the disease—if there is a fever or some pain—they suppress those. But the disease is not cured. One must treat the root cause, the origin of the disease. In the same way, the Lord Buddha also searched for the origin of the disease and removed that cause. That origin is craving (*taṇhā*). The Lord Buddha pointed out craving (*taṇhā*). It is due to this craving (*taṇhā*) that one grasps. Now, why do all these five heaps become suffering (*dukkha*)? It is because they are grasped—because one is grasping them. As long as they are grasped, it is suffering (*dukkha*). When they are let go, there is no suffering (*dukkha*) there. But the nature of the world is to grasp each one of these, saying, "This is I," "This is mine." To grasp means the unwillingness to let go. To keep grasping means the unwillingness to let go. This is revealed—the ordinary world takes views (*diṭṭhi*) regarding each of these. Regarding form (*rūpa*), they say, "Form is mine." If someone asks what the relation is between you and form (*rūpa*), they say, "This form is mine." If someone shows logically that it cannot be so, they say, "No, no, I made a slight mistake; I am one who possesses form." Or, "Form is in me." Or, "I am in form." In this way. What does that show? They do not want to let go of form (*rūpa*). They cling to it

somehow in those four ways. Clinging in such twenty ways is what is called the view of existing group (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), the view (*diṭṭhi*).

Now, why are Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) compared to a banana trunk in this way? If someone thinks, "The Lord Buddha has compared Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to a banana tree. There are many banana trees in our garden. Therefore, it is very easy for me to understand Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)," they are mistaken. One must reflect on this deeply. Such is the nature of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is something even subtler. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is compared to an illusion. An illusion, in modern terms, is a magic trick. Everyone goes eagerly to watch magic shows. Why do they go? To be deceived. Not just freely, but paying money to be deceived. But this deception—this trickery—is always happening in *saṃsāra*, even if we do not pay money for it. This deception is what is called consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Because the nature of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is to show something non-existent as existing. The Lord Buddha illustrated this with a simile of a magician performing a magic trick at a crossroads, conjuring up illusions. He shows non-existent things as existing. Those who are deluded look at it and rejoice, saying, "Ah! Yes! Bravo!" But there is nothing substantial there. It is substanceless. That very understanding—that there is no substance, no heartwood—is what the Lord Buddha ultimately points to as Nibbāna. The ordinary world thinks of this Nibbāna as some kind of strange world. That is the place invisible to Māra. What is called the place invisible to Māra is that state of mind. That is to say, if a person has attained in this life that supramundane state declared by the Lord Buddha through Arahantship, at the moment of that person's death, when Māra pulls, they do not pull back towards this side. Instead, if Māra pulls, they let go, as if saying, "If this is yours, take it." When they let go, there is no grief, lamentation, or despair whatsoever. Therein lies the secret of it. The Lord Buddha declared a highly wonderful solution: letting go when pulled.

One must first realize this letting go right in this world. The path to that realization is what is called the insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). It is seen through that impermanence (*anicca*). There is a great depth in the word impermanence (*anicca*). When we say impermanence (*anicca*), we think it exists for some time. Not a year, but a month. Not a month, but a day. In this way, when looking at the end, one has to penetrate this too. How is it brought to direct realization through the two, arising and passing away? For one who is observing those two, rather than the arisings, they see these things breaking down with greater speed. Now, why did that monk compare this body to a lump of foam upon seeing it? It appeared to him that this body breaks down with a speed even greater than its arising. To that extent, it is something that is constantly breaking down. This breaking-down nature is not visible to the ordinary physical eye. As we mentioned earlier, even if seen through microscopes, that is not direct knowledge (*paccakkha-ñāṇa*). Even if seen in a laboratory, one does not remember it after coming home. Therefore, for it to be a direct realization, it must be realized. This is visible only to a mind prepared with concentration (*samādhi*), equanimity (*upekkhā*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). That is what is meant by cutting off Māra's flower-arrows. Within those contemplations, there are these two:

equanimity and one-pointedness. One-pointedness is obtained through concentration (*samādhi*). Through that, the mind becomes strong, becomes sharp. Even a knife, if it is dull, cannot cut, can it? One must sharpen it well. Having sharpened it—next is equanimity. There is a way in equanimity of aiming it properly, keeping it there without shaking or dispersing. It is through these two that one brings forth that insight (*vipassanā*) wisdom.

With that wisdom, systematically, first those two, arising and passing away. Next, through that, one sees it breaking down, breaking down rapidly. As it repeatedly breaks down, one understands: "Why do I grasp this thing which is constantly breaking down?" If one grasps a breaking-down thing—say, a decayed fence—one falls along with the fence. Similarly, when one grasps a shaking thing, a vibrating thing, it is oneself who suffers the affliction from it. In the same way, the Lord Buddha declared that in each of these—form, feeling, perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—there are numerous vibrations. That which is called Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) can be regarded as vibrations. It is due to that multitude of grasped preparatory leanings, preparations, expectations, intentions, and aspirations that those vibrations and so forth occur. Escaping from that mental conflict is liberation (*vimutti*). That is why we say this Nibbāna is close to us. This is something to be realized through comprehension—through wisdom. This is not just ordinary wisdom. This is systematically realized through some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Suppose, now, to cultivate disillusionment regarding this body, one constantly applies one's meditation attention (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*) to some part, such as hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, etc., and thereby attains a level of concentration (*samādhi*); through that, those distorted ideas called distortions (*vipallāsa*) that we mentioned earlier are removed. The perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*) is removed. The attachment to it is lost. Instead, one begins to comprehend its true nature. In that way, one contemplates it as foul (*asubha*). Or, by way of elements (*dhātu*), we see some characteristic in all of these—things connected to this body-cage, as well as things around us—such as earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*) on this great earth, in water, in fire, and in air. These are also merely elemental natures. We recognize these just as a blind person learns by touching. We know whether this is the earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*) because it is hard. That too is felt by this body. It is through the body that we comprehend that this is a hard thing. Is this a flowing thing? Is this a hot, warming thing? Is this a moving, blowing thing? These four elements exist within our body. If we consider the parts in which the earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*) is predominant, they are hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, etc. One can bring forth the feeling of hardness through them. When touching them, there is hardness, hardness and softness, etc. Similarly, this flowing nature, the liquid nature: in saliva, phlegm, snot, urine, etc., we feel that the water element (*āpo-dhātu*) also exists within this body. Next, through hunger, fever, etc., we know the fire element (*tejo-dhātu*). Likewise, the air element (*vāyo-dhātu*) is known through this inhalation and exhalation. Thus, it is through these that the Lord Buddha pointed out the path to bring forth Nibbāna. There is nowhere else to go. Right within this body. The body, and next, these trees around us are also preaching. Although they do not preach dressed up like this, these trees, leaves, flowers, fruits—all of these are

preaching. But one does not listen to them. In the Buddha's time, they did listen to them. That is how, in the past, when monks went to a forest, during their leisure time they read the books that were there. There are Dhamma-books in the trees. There is Dhamma in the rivers. Those are what are shown here too. That monk read a Dhamma-book flowing in that river. In just this way, the Lord Buddha pointed out the true nature of this world. One finds the three characteristics—impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—abundantly visible. Bringing them forth from these belongs to insight (*vipassanā*) wisdom. For that, one must travel the path pointed out by the Lord Buddha.

Reflecting in this manner, all of these are Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). It is by removing the attachment to this body-cage, by seeing through it, that one can realize that noble, supreme, supramundane state shown as the place invisible to Māra—Nibbāna—that liberation. If the mind is brought to that liberated state right in this life, that person is said to be extinguished. That Nibbāna. Until then, there is a burning. Realizing that Nibbāna is the ultimate purpose of this Dhamma. Therefore, you, dear devotees, must contemplate in your daily lives, without putting this off, that these are right within this body-cage—this body-cage that we constantly carry around. Let alone anything else, if we reflect a little on this mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) meditation which helped every Buddha to attain Buddhahood, there lies the operation of the air element (*vāyo-dhātu*). If we reflect a little on this phenomenon of inhalation and exhalation, we can conceive this. These two, inhalation and exhalation, are like the panting caused by this futile, long running in *saṃsāra*. Indeed, dear devotees, mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) does not mean panting. Do not misunderstand. *Sati* means mindfulness. But inhalation and exhalation, called *ānāpāna*, is like something that indicates the momentum, the panting, generated within this running in *saṃsāra*. Within this is embedded the message regarding this suffering of *saṃsāra*. That is why they say one becomes a Buddha through this mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). Within this inhalation and exhalation, there is also the establishment of mindfulness of contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*), meaning observing the body. The capacity to comprehend feeling (*vedanā*), called contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*), is also present within this very inhalation and exhalation. The secret of comprehending the mind, the movement of the mind, how the mind behaves, is also within this *ānāpāna*—within the two, inhalation and exhalation. Next, the capacity to comprehend the objects that come to the mind, their true nature, called contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*), is also present.

Accordingly, when we contemplate, these two, inhalation and exhalation, are like the 'panting' of this momentum of *saṃsāra*. Allaying this 'panting'—stopping the running and sitting down in one place and applying the mind to this inhalation and exhalation, dear devotees, is how one resolves the 'panting' brought along with this *saṃsāric* momentum. One resolves this panting by making this inhalation and exhalation subtle. Not by forcing it. When one sits down calmly and applies the mind to it, it becomes agitated by thoughts (*vitakka*)—by thinking. The mind runs. The mind has a tendency to run to those defiled objects grasped earlier. For someone who has just sat down for mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) meditation, these networks of thoughts flow in

to the point of frustration. But systematically cultivating those four protective meditations (*caturārakkhā*) shown as supportive basic meditation subjects—recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), foulness (*asubha*), and recollection of death (*maraṇassati*)—systematically cultivating them, what does the person who sits down for *ānāpānasati* do gradually? By contemplating that inhalation and exhalation, by contemplating it subtly, or by establishing mindfulness (*sati*) on it, anchoring mindfulness (*sati*) within it, not allowing space for thoughts (*vitakka*), and cutting off the arrows of Māra, behold, they gradually tranquilize that inhalation and exhalation. Along with the tranquilizing, the understanding, the wisdom, becomes sharp. Next, like a diamond, like a precious gem, that insight (*vipassanā*) wisdom gradually increases by way of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*), dissolution (*bhaṅga*), and so forth. At some point, comprehending the true nature of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), the strain in taking this inhalation and exhalation, this preparation, this leaning, the subtle *saṃsāric* bond within it, through the penetration (*paṭivedha*) of the paths called Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship (*arahatta*), one becomes able to escape from this body-cage and bring forth that liberated mind.

If that liberated mind is brought forth, although that person spends the rest of their lifespan from then on according to the karmic momentum gathered in the past, at the moment of death, when Māra pulls, no agitation occurs. When mentioning the final passing away (*parinibbāna*) of the Lord Buddha, some might misunderstand that Māra came and invited Him, and therefore the Lord Buddha passed away. But at the moment He passed away, because His mind was completely liberated, He attained peace from it and passed away in a peaceful state. That peace is not found within the ordinary beings of the world. When an ordinary person dies, amidst many torments they wail, and carrying thoughts of their relatives, they die and are born again elsewhere according to karma. Thus, it goes on and on in this *saṃsāra*. That is what is shown in the Dhamma as the round of karma (*kamma-vaṭṭa*), the round of defilements (*kilesa-māra-vaṭṭa*), and the round of results (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*). Being caught by those arrows, those flower-tipped arrows shot by Māra, they accumulate various kinds of karma. As the results of that karma, next, body-cages arise. Those body-cages generated due to that very ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). Because of each arising body-cage, it is a great entertainment for Māra. Māra pulls. Next, when he pulls, they die wailing amidst grief, lamentation, fear, and terror. That is what is called suffering (*dukkha*). Why is this word 'Māra' used? It is in order to take that ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) embedded within this world—which they have not recognized—as objects in a way that is comprehensible to their minds, so they can carry out this journey to Nibbāna, that the Lord Buddha has used this word 'Māra' on many occasions. There is also a class of beings called Māra-devaputtas. But here, what is mostly meant and used as Māra—Māra of defilements (*kilesa-māra*)—is used in a way that is comprehensible to the mind, because if such a Dhamma object is not presented, one will not strive.

What is called the Middle Path (*majjhima paṭipadā*) is a middle way. Neither remaining passive nor struggling will do. On one occasion, a deva came and asked the Lord Buddha:

"O painless one, how did you cross over the flood?" The flood refers to this *saṃsāric* flood of defilements. "How did you cross over this flood?" The Lord Buddha declared: "By not halting and by not straining, I crossed over the flood." If one halts, when caught in a flood, thinking there is nothing to be done, if one suddenly halts, that too is death. If one struggles, that too is death. Instead, to escape from that flood, one makes a systematic and wise effort. Such is the path that the Lord Buddha pointed out as insight attention (*vipassanā-manasikāra*).

Therefore, on this valuable Poya day, you, dear devotees, have listened to an analysis and exposition based on a word of the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha, which helps in bringing to an end your *saṃsāric* suffering (*dukkha*). You must contemplate this. Instead of stopping at merely "hearing the sermon," you must put these into practice as much as possible in your daily lives, without putting it off. The Lord Buddha pointed these out in a way that they can be realized in daily life. It is mentioned in those Dhamma accounts that not only the monks, but also lay devotees—upāsakas and upāsikās—both during the Buddha's time and thereafter, leaned towards this path of Dhamma, systematically cultivated meditation, and sometimes realized these even before the monks. Therefore, we hope that you, dear devotees, will make an effort, not to store these Dhamma points presented today as a mere heap of knowledge, but to use them as an aid to sharpen that diamond of yours by way of insight (*vipassanā*)—to develop insight wisdom—reflecting on their practical value and making use of them.

Thus, on a day like today, you, dear devotees, listened to the Dhamma, even if for a short time. Within that, you were able to develop some sense of those parts of this Dhamma that can be realized by oneself—the valuable spiritual faculties (*indriya-dhamma*) and spiritual powers (*bala-dhamma*)—namely, faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem, the energy (*viriya*) that follows that faith, the mindfulness (*sati*) brought forth in accordance with that energy, the concentration (*samādhi*) established in accordance with that mindfulness, and the wisdom (*paññā*) if some understanding was generated through that concentration. Today, then, you must rejoice, for it is through this kind of effort that someday we will be able to escape from this dangerous *saṃsāra*, from all of these such as birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*), grief, and lamentation, and realize the Nibbāna. You must firmly resolve: "May the strength and power be mine to attain that peace right in this life without delay!" Furthermore, may the guardian deities and brahmās, including the divine and brahmā kings who daily—though invisible to us—lend a hand and support these Sasana activities, share in this merit of our Dhamma-desana and Dhamma-hearing! Having shared in it, providing protection to the Sasana and to us, may they realize the Nibbāna through their own aspired Bodhi! Likewise, from Avici up to Akanittha, whatever beings there may be, including our relatives, who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, may all of them share in this merit of Dhamma-desana and Dhamma-hearing, escape from this dangerous *saṃsāra*, and find peace in the Nibbāna! With this aspiration, recite these verses and transfer merit:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #21

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Ārogā paramā lābhā, santuṭṭhi paramaṃ dhanaṃ;

Vissāsaparamā ñātī, nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ.

From:

Verse 204 from the Sukhavagga (Chapter on Happiness) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

Every person strives throughout their entire life to attain happiness, relief, and peace. However, through the very efforts they make, it is frequently seen that they only acquire suffering (*dukkha*), unease, and ruin. This happens because of following wrong principles and courses of action. If one correctly understands the values highlighted by the Blessed One, one will be able to attain happiness, relief, and peace. Today, the stanza (*gāthā*) we have chosen as our theme mentions four such values. This stanza was preached to King Pasenadi of Kosala.

This King of Kosala was accustomed to eating a large quantity of food daily. A *droṇa* is said to be a large measure of grain used in those days. It is recorded that he consumed boiled rice prepared from a *droṇa* of raw rice for a single meal. One morning, having consumed such a vast amount of food, he came to the Blessed One, and being unable even to sit up straight, rolling from side to side, and nodding off in a stupor from a food-coma, he sat there. Then the Blessed One asked him, "Why, Great King? Did you not come after taking some rest?" The King replied, "Venerable Sir, I came immediately after having my meal. Ever since I took food, my body has felt very heavy." Then the Blessed One stated, "Yes, Great King, by consuming food beyond measure, suffering (*dukkha*) arises in this manner," and as a slightly humorous or sarcastic advice to the King, he uttered a certain stanza of Dhamma:

Yadā hotī mahagghaso niddāyitā

mahāvarāho va nivāpapuṭṭho,

punappunaṃ gabbhamupeti mando.

The meaning of that stanza is: The foolish person who eats excessively and sleeps, rolling from side to side in drowsiness, is just like a pig fattened on various foods for slaughter, returning again and again to a mother's womb. Having uttered this stanza, the Blessed One further stated, "Great King, food is something that must be eaten knowing the proper measure. Only when one eats knowing the proper measure does the body feel comfortable." Then, to help him remember this advice, He uttered another stanza:

Manujassa sadā satīmato,

mattaṃ jānato laddhabhojane;

tanu tassa bhavanti vedanā,

saṇikaṃ jīrati āyupālayaṃ.

The meaning of that stanza is: For a human who is always mindful, knowing the proper measure in the food obtained, his feelings (*vedanā*) become mild; he ages slowly, preserving his life-span. Thus, He declared the benefit of eating less food.

But even though this stanza was proclaimed, the King could not memorize it. He was that drowsy. So, the King said to the young man named Sudassana, his nephew who had accompanied him, "Memorize this on my behalf." The youth Sudassana memorized the stanza and asked the Blessed One, "Venerable Sir, what should be done with this stanza?" The Blessed One instructed him: "When this King is taking his meals, stand nearby, and just as he is about to put the very last morsel of rice into his mouth, recite this stanza. Then, considering the meaning of the stanza, the King will put that morsel of rice aside. The next day, prepare the meal by reducing the amount of raw rice by the number of rice grains in that discarded morsel. In this manner, gradually accustom the King to the practice of reducing his food intake."

So, the youth Sudassana acted in that very manner. Not only that, but whenever the stanza was recited, the King even gave a gift of a thousand coins to the youth Sudassana. As this went on for several days, the King reached a state where he could subsist on just one *nāḷi* (a much smaller measure) of food. Along with this, as a benefit of that practice, the King experienced great physical comfort, lightness, and strength.

Seeing these benefits, one day the King came to the Blessed One in great joy and declared: "Venerable Sir, now my body has so much strength that I can chase and catch a deer or a horse. My body is now very light, and that obesity I had earlier is gone. I feel very healthy. This has been a source of great happiness to me." At that moment, he also expressed several other matters that had brought him happiness: "In recent days, I had battles with my nephew, King Ajātasattu. Now, I have settled those battles by giving my daughter, Princess Vajirā, in marriage to that king. Furthermore, the battle had arisen over the ownership of the village of Kāsi. I have gifted that village of Kāsi to my daughter

as bath-powder money—which we could call a soap allowance in modern terms—this was a custom among kings. Since I handed over that village as a dowry to my daughter, the conflict has ceased, and that is also a source of great joy to me." He mentioned another reason for his joy: "Recently, a family heirloom gem in our palace was lost and could not be found. That too was suddenly recovered. That is also a cause of happiness for me." Then, fourthly, he presented another matter: "To make myself more trustworthy and pleasing to the Blessed One's disciples, and considering it a significant matter, I have taken a relative-daughter of the Blessed One in marriage"—here he was referring to Princess Vāsabhakhattiyā of the Sakyan clan. "I have wedded this relative-daughter. Thus, in these several ways, I now possess great happiness and joy." When the King declared this, it was in relation to these statements that the Blessed One uttered this stanza:

Indeed, Great King, among gains, health is the greatest gain. Among riches, contentment with what one has is the greatest wealth, the ultimate wealth. Among relatives, trust is the supreme relative. And when considering happiness, the ultimate happiness is Nibbāna. Giving this meaning, He uttered this stanza—the one we mentioned earlier:

Ārogāparamā lābhā, santuṭṭhiparamam dhanaṃ,

vissāsaparamā ñātī, nibbānaparamam sukham.

Now, this stanza, as well as the stories surrounding it, provide us with wonderful examples. The first point is clearly visible to us. Health was declared in relation to the King's situation, which was the issue of eating food. When we contemplate this, we see what a valuable Dhamma the Blessed One brought to light through the King's eating habits. First of all, let alone other things, even the simile used—the simile of the pig in that stanza—shows this. The Blessed One was not afraid to speak in a sarcastic manner even to a king. To that extent, the King also had immense respect for the Blessed One. Now, you all know that a pig is an animal with a mouth made for eating, a large mouth, and a large belly that drags along the ground. In houses, they feed it all kinds of waste at the back of the house, not out of love for the pig, nor to get milk from it—you know this very well. In the end, the fatter it gets, the quicker its death approaches. That was an excellent simile for the King to keep in mind.

Therefore, if we think of the result of over-eating in terms of the Dhamma, because of drowsiness, laziness, and physical inactivity, one's inclination toward the Dhamma decreases. Consequently, *saṃsāra* is prolonged further and further. That is to say, one falls prey to Māra and undergoes death again and again by consuming excessive food in that manner. Thus, in addition to that simile, the practical method the Blessed One gave to the King to reduce his food intake is of extraordinary practical value. What is it? It is the practice of knowing the proper measure in consuming food (*bhojane mattaññutā*). Whose measure is it? It is the measure of the person who eats. Therefore, only the person who eats knows their own measure; no one else can measure it for them. Thus, fittingly, the Blessed One next uttered a stanza that serves like a reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*) for the King. We have already explained its meaning.

When the youth Sudassana recited that stanza, the King remembered the beneficial aspect of eating less food: that feelings (*vedanā*) decrease when food is consumed in moderation. Just as the last morsel of rice was about to go in, he would discard it. By letting go in this manner, he gradually understood the precise amount necessary for his sustenance. The King, who used to eat a huge quantity of food amounting to a *droṇa*, was eventually able to be satisfied with a single *nāḷi*. Here too, we can see the wonderful quality of the Blessed One as the "incomparable leader of persons to be tamed" (*purisadamma sārathi*). He showed a method suited to taming a person.

Next, when we think generally, we see that this weakness regarding food is also present among lay devotees, who over-eat at banquets and feasts. In an era where food is often used as an ostentatious display of status and wealth on the dining table, it shows us that we must be careful with food. Just like lay devotees, the Saṅgha also has to be careful regarding this matter at *saṅghika dānas* (almsgivings to the community). Because if one does not eat in moderation, not only do various diseases arise, but the body also becomes sluggish. Drowsiness and laziness set in. Consequently, many disadvantages arise, and the body decays rapidly.

"Slowly he ages, preserving his life-span" (*saṇikaṃ jīrati āyupālayaṃ*). Why is it said that one ages slowly when food is reduced? It is because undigested food is often what hastens decay, speeds up old age, and multiplies diseases. Thus, this point is also worth remembering. This is actually in agreement with medical science. In medical science, too, there are two important principles regarding food: *hita-bhuk* (eating what is beneficial) and *mita-bhuk* (eating in moderation). *Hita-bhuk*, dear devotees, means eating wholesome food—nutritious food that is beneficial to one's health. Next, *mita-bhuk* means knowing the measure of that food.

If we express this in dispensation (*sāsana*) terms, this *hita-bhuk* principle itself is denoted by the words *sappāya* (suitable) and *asappāya* (unsuitable). *Sappāya* refers to consuming wholesome, nutritious food. By discarding what is unwholesome and knowing what is suitable for oneself, one removes the unsuitable and takes the suitable. Then, corresponding to *mita-bhuk* is "moderation in eating" (*bhojane mattaññutā*). The Blessed One has pointed out to the Saṅgha, and particularly to yogis—not only to monastics but also to lay practitioners—to eat knowing the proper measure. It is through this that one can successfully practice Dhamma and meditation. By removing drowsiness and laziness, it helps to keep the body and mind active and awake, without succumbing to craving (*taṇhā*) for taste.

For the Saṅgha, this principle regarding food is even stricter. That is what is called reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*). There is an old phrase, "consuming by reflecting" (*pasvikā vaḷandanavā*), used in reference to monastics. It does not carry the colloquial meaning used nowadays; "consuming by reflecting" means eating with wise consideration and reflection. The Blessed One has even laid down a specific passage for monastics to recite when eating, just as He gave that special stanza to King Kosala. It reminds them that this food is not taken for physical strength or beautification of the body like laypeople do. It is taken solely—and the word "solely" is specifically used—for the maintenance of this

body, for keeping it going, and for leading this noble holy life (*brahmacariya*). Furthermore, it is to appease the old feeling (*vedanā* of hunger) and to prevent new feeling (*vedanā* of over-eating) from arising, so that one can practice Dhamma and meditation in comfort. In this way, the Blessed One has prescribed that they consume food by turning the act itself into a meditation.

Thus, through this principle concerning food, whether lay or ordained, everyone can attain that health, the blessing of physical well-being. Indeed, why was health declared as the ultimate gain? Because no matter what other gains one has, no matter what wealth or grain one possesses, if one is sick, one cannot enjoy them. It is said of certain multi-millionaires in this world that sometimes they were in a state where they could not even subsist on a single slice of bread, perhaps due to diseases born of karma. Even today, lay devotees living urban lives, sometimes due to karma created in this very life—not some ancient karma—eat inappropriately at banquets just like King Kosala did in his early days, and in their final years, they are forced to subsist on a slice of bread, perhaps even stale bread. They fall into such a state. That becomes the cause of their illness. The Blessed One has stated that various diseases arise from over-eating.

Therefore, this is an extremely valuable message for the world. Not only for ordinary devotees living their day-to-day lives, but also for everyone practicing Dhamma and meditation, striving for Nibbāna. If this principle is broken, what happens is exactly what happened to that pig. Although they may look stout externally, they not only meet an early death but also pave the way for numerous deaths throughout *saṃsāra* due to greed for food and taste. Because of this, the Blessed One has presented the principle of food to the Saṅgha using most extraordinary similes, instructing them to consume food as if it were medicine for an illness. What is the illness? They are told to treat food as a medicine for this self-groaning disease of hunger that everyone has. Not as a form of entertainment, but in a way that sometimes evokes a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*), the Blessed One has described food to practitioners so that it directly aids in attaining Nibbāna.

Next, He gives another simile: just as oil is applied to the axle of a moving cart to make it run, so should food be regarded. Maintaining this body in the four postures is like driving this vehicle of the body. Food is like the lubricating oil that assists this. They are told to think in that manner. There are other even more striking, urgency-inducing (*saṃvega*) similes. You might even feel frightened upon hearing them. The Blessed One describes the consuming of food—which is unavoidable if one is to cross over the desert of *saṃsāra*—through a unique allegorical story.

Parents who set out with their only child to cross a desert ran out of food midway. Having no other alternative, they killed and ate their own child. However the child died—various details are given by different commentators—let us understand that it was done for nothing other than to keep themselves alive. When they ate that food, eating their own child's flesh, they did not do so for entertainment. Beating their breasts, crying, "Alas, our only child!", they ate it simply to cross over the desert. The Blessed One

presented such a perspective on food, urging one to view food in that heart-rending, urgency-evoking manner, so that it leads directly to Nibbāna.

Through these various similes, the Blessed One showed that food is indeed necessary for life. One cannot live without eating and drinking like the Niganṭhas. According to the Middle Path, it is something to be used as an aid for one's Dhamma practice, for maintaining this life, and for realizing Nibbāna. So, even from that perspective, this *mita-bhuk* principle regarding food—eating while knowing one's measure—is a highly valuable practice.

Next, if we contemplate the phrase "contentment is the greatest wealth" (*santuṭṭhiparamam dhanaṃ*), being content with what one has, we see that it is also an extremely valuable virtue in society. The reason is that no matter how much of a millionaire someone is, if they are miserly, envious, and not satisfied with what they have, they are always mentally poor. They are not rich in mind, but poor in mind. That is why contentment with what one has is considered the greatest wealth. "Contentment is the greatest wealth"—a person who lacks the virtue of being content with what they have is poor and destitute, no matter how much wealth they possess. To put it briefly, this also has a connection to the story of King Kosala. Why is that? We must relate the account of the battle with King Ajātasattu, which corresponds to the brief statement made by the King.

What was this issue regarding the village of Kāsi? These matters are shown by piecing together facts mentioned in various places in the Sutta discourses. First, it must be said that King Mahā Kosala—that is, the father of King Pasenadi of Kosala—gave his daughter in marriage to King Bimbisāra. That daughter was King Pasenadi's sister, and she was known as Queen Kosala Devī. Her son was Ajātasattu. Ajātasattu killed his father while still a prince and usurped the throne. After Bimbisāra was killed, King Pasenadi of Kosala, out of the grief he felt over this, decided that this patricide did not deserve a land belonging to their clan, and took back the village of Kāsi. In fact, that village of Kāsi had been given by King Mahā Kosala as a dowry—as mentioned, like a soap allowance—but King Kosala repossessed it. It was on this account that King Ajātasattu went to war with King Pasenadi of Kosala.

In that war, King Kosala was defeated the first time. The second time, King Kosala captured King Ajātasattu alive, caught him red-handed, and took possession of his fourfold army, taking them into custody. When the Blessed One came to know of this, He uttered a series of stanzas. Those stanzas did not convey praise for King Kosala. Rather, they showed how disadvantageous plunder is. The general idea of those stanzas is: some people plunder others at will, but they only understand when others come forward and plunder them in turn. Several other valuable, instructive points are mentioned in that series of stanzas:

"The slayer gets a slayer; the conqueror gets a conqueror; the abuser gets abused; the annoyer gets annoyed; the plunderer gets plundered."

This means that if someone kills, they too will meet death—either by that person or by someone else. You can understand the other points mentioned as well; they are the results of action. Once that karma rotates back to the plunderer, he himself becomes subject to having his own property plundered. Even though it was not said directly to King Kosala, he must have heard about this instructive stanza uttered by the Blessed One. Having heard it, King Kosala must have abandoned his earlier stance. Previously, when he captured King Ajātasattu, he had let him go simply out of familial consideration because he was his nephew, but he had confiscated his fourfold army. What did he do this time? He handed all of that back, gave his daughter in marriage to him, making him his son-in-law for the second time, and donated that village of Kāsi as bath-powder money. Thus, King Kosala adopted a very generous and valuable course of action there, instead of plundering. Within that lies "contentment is the greatest wealth" (*santuṭṭhiparamam dhanaṃ*)—not expanding one's wealth by grabbing other people's possessions. Based on this, we can understand that King Kosala had received some guidance from the Blessed One, and that this principle of contentment was connected to the King's life.

Next, let us come to the third line: "Trust is the supreme relative" (*vissāsaparamā ñātī*). When you first think about it, it might not be immediately clear. What does this mean? Even when we think of relatives, our parents are the first who come to mind. But if there is no trust, if there is distrust, then there is no real relationship. Conversely, even if there is no blood relationship or any other kinship, if there is trust in someone, if there is mutual trust, that person is the true relative. That is what the Blessed One highlights. This fits here as well. King Ajātasattu was already a relative, a nephew. But despite being a relative, because there was no mutual trust, they went to war. Furthermore, that trust would have been further eroded if King Kosala had kept the fourfold army in his custody. Instead, understanding this, King Kosala handed all of that back, gave his daughter in marriage, and established trust in the truest sense. That trust is the true relationship. This holds true from that perspective. Next, the King stated another additional point. Thinking of making himself more trustworthy to the Saṅgha—believing that the monastics would respect him even more—what did he do? He wedded Princess Vāsabhakhattiyā of the Sakyan clan. Now, looking at this realistically, it is not that the Blessed One approved of this; whether he married her or not, the truth is that mutual trust itself is the real relative, the greatest relative. We can understand that this is something applicable to the life of King Kosala as well as to the lives of every one of you, dear devotees.

So now, in this way, we have three points that are useful even for our daily lives—when people speak of "daily life," they mostly think of the worldly side. First is the valuable principle of health. The food we consume, which we take to live, should not be used to aid death. It should not be used to bring death closer. But nowadays in society, a person is often measured by the food they eat. Such a concept has developed. Or they are measured by the number of stars of the place where they eat. Due to such hollow values, people die untimely deaths. They bring diseases upon their bodies prematurely. Consuming food and drink without any regard for what is suitable (*sappāya*) or

unsuitable (*asappāya*), or for the beneficial or harmful quantity, they turn what should be a medicine into a poison. They make it a toxic poison. Such is the era we live in. Therefore, what the Blessed One presented through "health is the ultimate gain" is helpful not only to King Kosala but to us as well.

Next, if we briefly consider these few points, even the principle of being content with what one has applies to daily life. Looking around nowadays, we see a custom in society where people measure their wealth by looking at the appliances and items used by their neighbors. They do not follow the concept of "simple living and high thinking" that we frequently mention. Instead, they think, "If I do not have the latest luxury item that my neighbor uses, I am poor," and they fall into disastrous situations such as getting into debt to acquire it. Today's society is in such a plight.

Thus, everyone lives their daily lives mentally poor, no matter how many millions they possess in terms of money. This is because they lack contentment with what they have. On the other hand, there may be someone with little wealth, perhaps considered poor by society. If they possess this virtue of being content with what they have—and being content with what one has does not mean one stops earning and just remains satisfied with that—they live in a way that fits what they currently have. If one tries to live today according to a plan targeted for several years in the future, what happens? One gets into debt. One should live with the wealth one has today. When it increases slightly, one adjusts accordingly, but one must still practice saving and living within one's means. Even if we do not speak of these things, you, dear devotees, will contemplate them. You surely get to hear many sermons on these matters. However, what we have to say in connection with this is about those very values. Often, these are confused because of a wrong understanding of life values. If we remember this principle highlighted by the Blessed One, "contentment is the greatest wealth" (*santuṭṭhiparamam dhanaṃ*), in our daily households, then without sighing in regret like those people, we can live happily with our children, subsisting on what we have, thinking, "Let us subsist on what is available; this is enough for us." One can lean toward such a practice.

Similarly, regarding relatives—many people make various efforts to build connections and establish relationships with influential people in order to gain high status in society. No matter how many relationships they build, whether blood relations or any other connections, if that trust is absent, if there is no trust, if there are grievances such that they cannot even look at each other's faces, if there is distrust, suspicion, and envy, then there is no real relationship. Therefore, the true relationship is that trust. If one has a good friend, that person is the best relative; no other relationship is needed. This too is an extremely valuable principle for society.

Now we come to the deepest part of the Dhamma. Do not let the word "deepest" frighten you. Although we cannot do so to the extent of the Blessed One, we always try to present this Dhamma in simple ways so that you can approach that depth. Why is it said, "Extinguishment is the ultimate happiness" (*nibbānaparamam sukham*)? Why is Nibbāna called the greatest happiness? Let us consider that for a moment. Generally, we all associate happiness with pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). But the Blessed One declared

something very extraordinary: *yaṃ kiñci vedayitaṃ taṃ dukkhasmiṃ*—that is, "whatever is felt is in suffering (*dukkha*)." The Blessed One realized and declared that whatever can be taken as a feeling (*vedanā*) is all suffering (*dukkha*). When we speak of feelings (*vedanā*), there are three kinds of feelings, which you may have heard of: pleasant feeling, painful feeling, and neutral feeling. In the Dhamma, they are termed *sukha*, *dukkha*, and *adukkhamasukha*. If we translate them into Sinhala, painful feeling, pleasant feeling, and neutral feeling can be described as "neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling." "Neither-painful-nor-pleasant"—that is the dispensation term. It is neutral feeling (*vedanā*).

An ordinary person has no awareness of this neutral feeling (*vedanā*). In fact, the Blessed One states: What is the nature of a worldling (*puthujjana*) in this world? When afflicted by painful feeling, the worldling, hoping for pleasant feeling, inclines toward pleasant feeling, because the worldling knows no other way to escape painful feeling. As soon as painful feeling arises, the worldling grasps at pleasant feeling, because he has no clear understanding of neutral feeling. The teachers of old explain this through a simile. When a deer walks over a rocky mountain, the path by which the deer approached the mountain is visible, and the path by which it descended is also visible, but the footprints left on top of the rock are not visible. Similarly, an ordinary person generally does not perceive neutral feeling; it is a subtle thing. That subtle feeling (*vedanā*) is felt only by a meditative mind, by those who develop absorption (*jhāna*) meditation. Thus, here we have the "neither-painful-nor-pleasant" situated right between pain and pleasure.

If we direct our attention a bit more to this point, let us bring in a small simile. In villages, children play a small game called riding on coconut petioles. They sit on a coconut petiole and swing this way and that. For this same game, they sometimes construct a small plaything. They place a plank over a wooden log or some pivot, and two children sit on either end and swing up and down, back and forth. This is a small game called "seesaw, seesaw, seesaw." In fact, "seesaw" is the foreign name for this play equipment. This may also have come into common use now. They make a seesaw. Now, what happens on a seesaw is a continuous swinging. In truth, existence is also just like this. This *saṃsāric* existence is exactly like this. It is a swinging between suffering (*dukkha*) and pleasure. Like swinging on a swing, it is a kind of oscillation. It is between these two extremes that this entire *saṃsāric* existence lies. They go on swinging, saying "seesaw, seesaw." But the Blessed One saw the risk and danger inherent in this. This never comes to an end. Within this, one only falls into suffering (*dukkha*). Thinking of escaping painful feeling, one goes to pleasant feeling; but when one gets there and looks, it is not permanent (*anicca*). When it ends there, this side sinks down again. That is how it is.

That is precisely what the Blessed One points out regarding the three feelings (*vedanā*). The nature of painful feeling is that it is painful as long as it lasts, and pleasant when it changes. The nature of pleasant feeling is that it is pleasant while it lasts, and painful when it changes. But the neutral feeling—the feeling in the middle—is a subtle thing. It is painful as long as it is not understood; it is pleasant when it is understood. This is expressed as *aññāṇadukkhā, ñāṇasukhā*. *Aññāṇa* means not understanding. As long as

one does not understand neutral feeling, it is suffering (*dukkha*). But if at some point wisdom, understanding, and comprehension reach it, it can be turned into happiness. Based on this very Dhamma principle, even before the time of the Buddha, those who strived to escape this *saṃsāra* detached themselves from the five cords of sensual pleasure in which the ordinary worldlings are mired, developed absorption (*jhāna*) meditation, and gradually brought their minds to that third level—the neutral state.

If we look at this in terms of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), there is something in the Dhamma we must recollect: the Blessed One described Nibbāna as the stilling of all Preparations (*sabbasankhārasamatha*). Let us define Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) as "constructs" or "fabrications." This word *saṅkhāra* is an extremely deep term. It is stated: "all Preparations are impermanent" (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*). Throughout this entire *saṃsāric* existence, there is only an accumulation of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). But because of the impermanent (*anicca*) nature of these Preparations, the Blessed One declared that this entire *saṃsāra* is suffering (*dukkha*). That is why the Blessed One declared: "Preparations are the ultimate suffering" (*saṅkhārā paramā dukkhā*). Even if we eliminate and escape all those gross, coarse forms of suffering that we usually think of, in the end, this very nature of Preparations is suffering (*dukkha*). Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are the greatest suffering (*dukkha*).

There are three subtle levels of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). To a practitioner (*yogāvacara*) developing absorption, the out-breath becomes perceptible. The troubles and distresses of other external activities are indeed suffering (*dukkha*), but when viewed at the minimum level, even this in-breath and out-breath possess the nature of suffering (*dukkha*), though the ordinary world does not understand this. In short, this in-breath and out-breath are identified as bodily Preparations (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), the subtlest level of bodily Preparations. Next, verbal Preparations (*vacī-saṅkhāra*) are the Preparations of speech; at the minimum level, these fabrications of speech are described as *vitakka* (thought-conception) and *vicāra* (discursive thinking)—thoughts within the mind, various kinds of thoughts. When a problem arises, say, on a sleepless night, one can clearly understand what a suffering (*dukkha*) this *vitakka* and *vicāra* can be. One cannot sleep; thoughts keep coming, one after another, and one cannot escape them. It is like being dragged by both hands toward a pit of embers. That is *vitakka* and *vicāra*. As the mind becomes subtler and subtler, moving toward levels of absorption, one realizes that this verbal formation (*vacī-saṅkhāra*) is also suffering (*dukkha*). Then, beyond that, there is mental formation (*citta-saṅkhāra*).

That is directly connected to the mind itself. There, perception (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*) are indicated. Perception (*saññā*) means recognition. In our minds, there is a certain capacity—a capacity to recognize things, as well as a capacity to experience. This is what we started with when we spoke of pleasure and pain. These two, perception (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*), are extremely subtle Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). They are called mental Preparations (*citta-saṅkhāra*). It was to escape from this level of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that the yogis of old strived. By the time the Buddha appeared, they had reached the utmost limit of their efforts. One such person who had gone to that

limit was Uddaka Rāmaputta. You have heard that when the Blessed One went in search of teachers, He approached two teachers: Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. The teacher Āḷāra Kālāma had attained an extremely high state of absorption called the sphere of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*). Even higher than that, the teacher Uddaka Rāmaputta had attained the state known as the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*).

If we are to understand this sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, we must look at it like this: "perception is neither present nor absent." Now we return to our seesaw. In *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*, perception is neither absent nor present. Within it, there is a hesitation, a state of double-mindedness, a perturbation, like standing on top of a fence. The yogis of that era, when the Blessed One appeared, had reached such a state. Thus, Uddaka Rāmaputta was the final teacher He approached. When asked, "What do you teach?", he replied, "The sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception." Even before that teacher had finished speaking, the Blessed One had already attained it, having realized such states on countless occasions throughout past *saṃsāra*. However, the Blessed One was not satisfied with it. Why? Because there was still hesitation. Even if one stands at the center of the seesaw, it still oscillates. There is no true peace there. It is impermanent (*anicca*).

That is why the Blessed One declared that painful feeling (*vedanā*) needs no further explanation; it is like a thorn, a great suffering (*dukkha*). As for pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), while it is present, it is pleasant, but when it undergoes change (*vipariṇāma*), its painful nature is realized. Therefore, it too is suffering (*dukkha*). So, painful feeling (*vedanā*) needs no further explanation; it is entirely suffering (*dukkha*), like an embedded thorn. Pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) is suffering (*dukkha*) when it changes. Hence, a wise person knows beforehand: "Here comes a pleasant feeling, and along with its change, I will now have to face suffering (*dukkha*)." Next, there is neither-painful-nor-pleasant (*adukkhamasukha*), which we called the neutral middle ground. That is what those past teachers grasped onto as a great refuge. But the Blessed One pointed out that it too is impermanent (*anicca*). Why? Because even if one attains such absorption states and is reborn in the Brahma worlds, remaining there for eons, one still rotates back.

Such is the situation. That is why the Blessed One presented the stilling of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) as the greatest attainment. The Blessed One declared that whatever feelings (*vedanā*) exist, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, every feeling (*vedanā*) is suffering (*dukkha*). Thus, on one occasion, the Blessed One stated to the Venerable Ānanda that some ascetics of other sects might raise this debate: "This Ascetic Gotama speaks of a unique meditative state, a unique state of concentration called the 'cessation of perception and feeling' (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*). What is that? What kind of thing is it?" They would then say: "They declare this special absorption state, this state of attainment called 'cessation of perception and feeling' as happiness. How can it be happiness if there is no perception, feeling, or anything else present? How can there be happiness if there is no feeling (*vedanā*)?" Foreseeing that

they might raise this argument, the Blessed One told Venerable Ānanda beforehand: "To those who raise such arguments, explain it in this way: The Blessed One does not describe happiness solely in terms of pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). Wherever happiness is found, the Blessed One designates that very place as happiness." What this points to is not worldly happiness, but supramundane happiness. In supramundane happiness, one has escaped even from the level of feeling (*vedanā*). Because all levels of worldly happiness are impermanent (*anicca*). Painful feeling (*vedanā*) needs no further elaboration. Pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) is suffering (*dukkha*) when it changes. And neutral feeling (*vedanā*) is the subtlest form of suffering (*dukkha*) within Preparations (*saṅkhāra*).

If we analyze this further, another valuable concept is shown in the Dhamma. It is deep, but we will mention it briefly for you, wise devotees, to contemplate. The levels of suffering are presented in three modes: *dukkha-dukkhatā* (suffering as pain), *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā* (suffering due to change), and *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā* (suffering due to Preparations). *Dukkha-dukkhatā* refers to painful feeling (*vedanā*)—sheer suffering (*dukkha*) when viewed coarsely, which anyone can recognize. *Vipariṇāma-dukkhatā* refers to pleasant feelings (*vedanā*); because it leads to suffering (*dukkha*) when it changes, pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) is termed suffering due to change. And *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā* refers to that neutral state we mentioned. The mode of suffering due to Preparations (*saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*) is the last one shown. It is experienced only by those who have developed their minds in the manner described. Only they truly understand the danger of this *saṃsāra*—that not a single one of these feelings (*vedanā*) can be grasped, and that this seesaw-swinging must be brought to an end. It is that cessation of existence, rather than existence itself, which is needed. It is for this purpose—for this realization—that the Blessed One preached this supramundane Dhamma.

Thus, what we have here is this: beneath that "neither-painful-nor-pleasant" neutral feeling lies ignorance, lack of knowledge, and lack of comprehension. The moment it is turned into comprehension, there is happiness. That becomes a peaceful, exquisite happiness. That is precisely what the Blessed One ultimately presented as Nibbāna. This "cessation of perception and feeling" (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*) is a state where both perceptions and feelings are ceased. The Blessed One revealed this; no other teacher was able to do so. It is the highest state of concentration, a state of attainment, having freed oneself from both perception and feeling. Emerging from it, one stands in Nibbāna. That is to say, one has completely escaped from Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Escaping from Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) is indeed the highest happiness. That is supramundane happiness, which is designated as Nibbāna.

So, what did the Blessed One present as that realization? Let us return to our seesaw. What is the cause of this seesaw's swinging? It is that pivot placed in the middle, isn't it? It is over that pivot in the middle that the plank is placed. The Blessed One removed that very pivot. What is this pivot? In the Dhamma, it is called the conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*)—the conceit of "I am." Its coarse aspect is what you have heard of as the view of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), which thinks in terms of "I" and "mine."

Today, we hear everyone talking about the view of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*): "form is self, feeling is self"—that coarse concept of self. The subtlest level of that is "I am"—the conceit "I am." It exists at an extremely subtle level, remaining all the way up to the stage of the non-returner (*anāgāmī*). As long as it is present, that swinging continues; becoming (*bhava*) remains, existence remains. But the Buddha-eye saw that this is suffering (*dukkha*). Because, driven by the force of karma within that existence, one falls into various states of becoming (*bhava*), wandering in *saṃsāra* for a long time through miserable realms and happy realms. The only solution is to escape from this becoming (*bhava*). That is called the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), the stopping of that swinging. What is required for this is to realize the true nature of feelings (*vedanā*), and to see that underlying all these feelings is the conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*), which lies even deeper than the concepts of "I" and "mine." This is not something to be acquired merely through words; it can only be realized by walking this path of Dhamma.

That is what this is about. This is discussed in various ways, and we have illustrated it here using a small simile. Now, we must contemplate why it is said, "Extinguishment is the ultimate happiness" (*nibbānaparamam sukham*). We brought this up because it is relevant to our theme. Why is Nibbāna called the ultimate happiness? King Pasenadi of Kosala presented those four worldly matters as happiness. But the Blessed One did not stop there. He did not say, "Yes, yes, Great King, that is indeed the greatest happiness; and becoming related to us is also the greatest thing." He did not say, "Very well, we too are now relatives." He did not leave it at the worldly level. He took it all the way to Nibbāna. He gave a hint: "These are not the true happiness." Even health is not permanent (*anicca*). *Rogantaṃ hi ārogyaṃ*—health ends in illness. Therefore, although "health is the ultimate gain" (*ārogāparamā lābhā*) holds true as a gain, and health is the highest among gains, it is not the ultimate happiness. "Contentment is the greatest wealth" (*santuṭṭhiparamam dhanaṃ*), being content with what one has; or other kinds of wealth—they are indeed wealth, but ultimate happiness is not found there. "Trust is the supreme relative" (*vissāsaparamā ñātī*)—even if one establishes relationships and maintains trust among relatives, there is no true happiness in any of that. All of these are merely a pile of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Every single one of them is a formation (*saṅkhāra*). Therefore, escaping from Preparations—which is called the stilling of all Preparations (*sabbasankhārasamatha*)—is indeed the highest happiness. That is what the Blessed One highlighted here. Nibbāna is defined as *sabbasankhārasamatha*—the stilling of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*).

We have briefly mentioned what Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are. Indeed, the coarse part of Preparations exists as karma. You may have heard of this: if one performs unwholesome karma, as everyone knows, one has to suffer in the realms of misery. If one performs unwholesome deeds, one is first of all afraid of that. Then, because of that, we think, "Let us instead perform meritorious deeds and go to the heavenly worlds." But even if we go there, at the moment of passing away (*cuti*), there is great suffering (*dukkha*). After passing away from there, there is no telling where one will fall next. That is why the Blessed One declared that not only the heavenly worlds but even the Brahma worlds are

impermanent (*anicca*). It is said that when the Blessed One preached the Dhamma, even the Brahmas were shaken: "We too are impermanent! All this time we thought we were permanent, but now we see that we too are impermanent," and they became afraid. That is the Lion's Roar (*sīhanāda*). The Buddha roared his Lion's Roar. It is recorded that when He declared *sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*—"all Preparations are impermanent"—even the Brahmas were shaken. Such is the status of worldly things. Therefore, the Blessed One points out that one must escape from all of them, escaping from the state of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to attain Nibbāna, which is unformed (*visankhāra*). That is to say, since Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arise due to ignorance (*avijjā*), all merit and demerit that cause pleasure and pain are performed based on the ignorance of "I" and "mine." One cannot escape this merely by thinking about it. It must be realized by gradually developing meditation. However, as we have stated on previous occasions, one first turns away from unwholesome actions and sins, inclining the mind toward merit. Then, without stopping there, one gradually engages in meditation to transcend both merit and demerit, gradually practicing insight (*vipassanā*) to see things as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). Seeing the impermanent (*anicca*) nature of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), one develops disenchantment with *saṃsāra*, and only then can one escape this cycle. Only then can one directly realize that noble state of Nibbāna in this very life. That state is the end of that seesaw-swinging. In other words, the path leading to that is this entire Buddhist practice.

This is what we frequently remind you, dear devotees. What is the meaning of the practice by which a Buddhist tames himself—whether we look at it briefly as the Noble Eightfold Path or through various other frameworks like the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)? It is to bring the mind to that state. It is to remove that conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*)—even that underlying conceit of "I am"—so that one's life is lived just like the trees and plants around us. Since trees and plants do not possess consciousness (*viññāṇa*), there is no such thing as suffering (*dukkha*) for them. When a rubber tree is tapped, latex flows, but we do not think it experiences painful feeling (*vedanā*). Trees and plants do not have that kind of problem. But it is for a conscious being—one endowed with consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—that this suffering (*dukkha*) exists. Furthermore, existence does not end here. This was seen not only by the Blessed One, but also by others who could perceive the sequence of past aggregates. Before the Blessed One, there were yogis who could see hundreds of thousands of past births (*jāti*). They too saw this problem of *saṃsāra*. They saw the problem, but they could not find the answer. Only the Blessed One was able to find the true answer.

Thus, what we call accumulating karma is that very coarse level of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). We generate two types of karma: merit and demerit. We are responsible for them, because we perform merit and demerit based on the premise of "I" and "mine." We emphasize this because many people have confused these matters today. There is a concept called "the right view of ownership of karma" (*kammasakatā sammādiṭṭhi*). Based on that, we turn away from sinful, unwholesome actions and direct the mind toward wholesome karma. Then we perform wholesome actions, thereby securing good states of rebirth in happy realms. But even though that arrangement is made, one does

not stop there. When we look at it according to the Middle Path of the Blessed One, we do not grasp onto any of these; we use them all as aids. It is just as we said about food. Everything is used as an aid, even the states of absorption (*jhāna*).

Therefore, using merit and wholesome actions as aids, we can practice meditation. We obtain lives endowed with various blessings of birth (*upadhi-sampatti*) and strong intellectual capacities. But we do not stop there. If we remain satisfied with that, our past bad karma can surface, and without making any further progress, we can fall back into the realms of misery. Instead, we use those assets; having calmed and concentrated the mind through serenity (*samatha*) meditation, and based on that, we contemplate the three characteristics pointed out by the Blessed One: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). Taking up specific subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), we must practice meditation and see this within ourselves. Because the Blessed One pointed out that this Dhamma is to be directly realized by oneself. This is not something to be acquired externally from someone else's explanation; it must be seen within one's own five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*).

First, we must understand this aggregate of form (*rūpakkhandha*), this aggregate of feeling (*vedanākkhandha*)—this heap of form, heap of feelings, heap of perceptions, heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāras*), and heap of consciousnesses—as just heaps. Although we refer to them as the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), meaning "heaps," an ordinary person does not perceive them as heaps. There is a natural tendency to take them as a single, solid unit. It is only the meditating yogi who can see this. As the mind gradually becomes concentrated and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is directed toward this, one sees: "Here is a heap of form, here is a heap of feelings." If it is a heap, each component arises and passes away. What is present here is a vast heap of arisings and passings-away. In the end, as one looks closely, it is not even a heap of things arising and a heap of things passing away; it is simply a vast heap of passing away. In this manner, it begins to appear in a deep way. Then, one's attachment to this fades. "This is something that decays, something that breaks down. If I grasp onto this, will I not perish along with it?" It is then that the inclination to let go arises; letting go occurs. The primary sign of liberation through letting go appears.

Gradually letting go in this manner—now, what was the mistake made by Āḷāra Kālāma, Uddaka Rāmaputta, and others? As soon as they attained those states of absorption, they immersed themselves in that pleasure and grasped it as self. It was because they took it as self that they were unable to cross over. The Blessed One showed that this existence is something that arises due to a network of causes and conditions. When one correctly sees that network of causes and conditions, the perception of self—the feeling of "I" and "mine"—is gradually removed. The more one sees this, the deeper one sees it, and that is what the three characteristics are about. Whatever is impermanent (*anicca*) is suffering (*dukkha*), because one constantly has to keep constructing what is impermanent.

Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are a heap of fabrications. We frequently remind you of the simile of the wild banana trunk. Why did the Blessed One compare Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to a banana trunk? There is no core, no heartwood. What exists here is

merely a network of causes and conditions. A foolish person mistakes it for a tree trunk with a solid core of wood. In the same way, we take this aggregate of form (*rūpakkhandha*), give it a name, and take it as "I am so-and-so." The same applies to other things, and ultimately to the mind. That is extremely subtle. The mind grasps it as "I" and "mine." Those past yogis and wrong-view holders ultimately grasped this mind, this consciousness (*viññāṇa*), taking it as self. But the Blessed One pointed out that all of this is a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). It is upon a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that this mind called consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists. Therefore, to put it briefly, the Blessed One revealed all of this as suffering (*dukkha*). The five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) are entirely suffering (*dukkha*) as long as one remains in becoming (*bhava*). Contemplating this at the subtlest level, the entirety of becoming (*bhava*) is suffering (*dukkha*).

Now, this is difficult for someone to comprehend. That is why we illustrate it with the medical simile. When presenting the Blessed One as the incomparable physician, the true nature of the illness must be stated. If this illness is to be cured completely, one must escape from the entire heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). By gradually stilling those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) at their subtlest levels—moving from the in-breath and out-breath, to *vitakka* and *vicāra*, and then to perception and feeling—one ultimately escapes from all feelings (*vedanā*). That is why Nibbāna is called an unfelt happiness (*avedayita-sukha*). You may have heard that everything in this world is the happiness of experiencing (*vedayita-sukha*), whereas Nibbāna is the happiness of stilling (*upasama-sukha*). Everything else is the happiness of experiencing; Nibbāna is the happiness of stilling. Therefore, the journey toward that stilling, that tranquility, is this path to Nibbāna. It was in reference to this that the Blessed One declared: *nibbānaparamam sukham*—"Extinguishment is the ultimate happiness."

Therefore, we should consider that on this valuable day, this meritorious gathering of people, having contemplated from a worldly perspective on what we call daily worldly life, has received many Dhamma points that will help them live with more peace, happiness, relief, and comfort than before. Furthermore, without stopping there, they have gained some understanding through this short Dhamma sermon regarding Nibbāna, which assists in bringing to an end this entire *saṃsāric* existence—a task we have been unable to accomplish for so long. You should understand that this has been a wonderful opportunity to develop the spiritual faculties and powers of conviction (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samadhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) that aid in attaining Nibbāna. May you make the aspiration: "By developing these strengths, associating with noble friends (*kalyāṇamittas*), and without any other worldly aspirations, may we practice well within this Buddha's dispensation, developing virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), and by realizing the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahatship, may this meritorious acquisition of hearing the Dhamma surely lead us to escape all *saṃsāric* suffering (*dukkha*) and realize that happiness of stilling, the ultimate happiness!"

In the same way, may you share these merits by reciting stanzas, wishing that all living beings from the lowest hell (*Avīci*) to the highest heaven (*Akaniṭṭha*), including your own deceased relatives who desire merit and seek Nibbāna, may rejoice in this meritorious deed of delivering and hearing the Dhamma, and through one of the three forms of enlightenment they aspire to, may they bring this *saṃsāric* suffering (*dukkha*) to an end as quickly as possible, freeing themselves from all suffering (*dukkha*) such as birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness, and find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi*....."

Pahankanuwa Sermon #22

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yathāpi ruciraṃ pupphaṃ, vaṇṇavantaṃ agandhakaṃ;

Evaṃ subhāsitā vācā, aphalā hoti akubbato.

Yathāpi ruciraṃ pupphaṃ, vaṇṇavantaṃ sagandhakaṃ;

Evaṃ subhāsitā vācā, saphalā hoti pakkubbato.

From:

Verses 51-52 from the Pupphavagga (Chapter on Flowers) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

It was on a full-moon day of Esala, just like today, that our Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, having attained Supreme Enlightenment, delivered His first Dhamma sermon, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, to the world of devas and humans. Even today, we conduct these Dhamma sermons by the power and efficacy of that Wheel of Dhamma set in motion for the first time on that day. The True Dhamma, the word of the Buddha, is entirely "well-spoken" (*subhāsita*). Today, we have selected as our theme two stanzas which declare that this well-spoken word of the Buddha is as useless as a colorful but scentless flower to one who does not practice it, whereas it becomes a flower that is both colorful and fragrant to the one who puts it into practice.

These two stanzas were preached in connection with an incident concerning the lay disciple Chattapāni. In the texts, it is recorded as follows: There lived in Sāvatthī a lay disciple who was an *Anāgāmī* (Non-Returner) with a highly advanced knowledge of the Dhamma. One day, early in the morning, this lay disciple came to see the Buddha. While he was seated listening attentively to a Dhamma discussion, King Pasenadi of Kosala arrived there. Seeing this, the lay disciple thought: "Now, if I rise upon seeing the king according to normal custom, it would be a mark of disrespect to the Teacher. For it

would be like rising up upon seeing a regional ruler while in the presence of the Supreme King of Kings. I know that if I do not rise, the king will get angry with me. But that does not matter; let him be angry," he thought, and remained seated. Indeed, seeing this, the king felt some resentment and anger. Reading the king's mind, the Buddha began to praise the virtues of that lay disciple to the king. He did not explicitly state that Chattapāni Upāsaka was an *Anāgāmī*, but He gave the king the impression that he was a noble disciple (*Ariya*), a person of great value. Thus, the king's heart softened somewhat.

On a later day, while the king was on the upper terrace of his palace, he saw Chattapāni Upāsaka passing through the palace courtyard holding an umbrella and wearing sandals. Seeing him, the king sent a messenger to call him. As soon as he received the message, Chattapāni Upāsaka put aside his umbrella and sandals and came to see the king. When he arrived and stood to one side, the king asked: "Why did you put aside your umbrella and sandals?" Then the lay disciple replied: "I did so because I was told that Your Majesty had summoned me." "Did you only realize today that I am the king?" asked the king. "No, we have always known that Your Majesty is the king." "Then why did you not rise when you saw me that day?" At that, he replied: "Thinking that rising upon seeing a regional ruler in the presence of the Supreme King of Kings would be disrespectful to that Supreme Ruler, I did not rise out of respect for the Teacher."

Thereupon, the king reconciled his mind and said: "Very well, let that matter be. I have heard that you, lay devotee, are very learned in the Dhamma and know what is right and wrong. Therefore, could you not teach the Dhamma to the queens of our harem?" He replied that he could not do so. When asked why, he said that the royal household is a place fraught with complications, where right and wrong are difficult to navigate, and one could easily get entangled in serious accusations and faults. Then the king said: "Do not say so. Do not harbor any hesitation or apprehension thinking about how you did not rise upon seeing me that day." But the lay disciple replied: "It is not because of that. When a lay person engages in such a task, various issues and suspicions arise. Please arrange for an ordained monk, a member of the Sangha, to come for that purpose." The king agreed, saying, "Very well, you may go now, lay disciple," and thereafter went to see the Buddha and invited Him to come regularly with the Sangha to preach the Dhamma to the queens. For Queen Mallikā and Queen Vāsabhakhattiyā were constantly requesting and pleading to hear the Dhamma. The Buddha replied that Buddhas do not go to one and the same place continuously. "Then please assign one monk to us," the king requested. Thereupon, the Buddha entrusted this task to Ven. Ānanda.

Thus, Ven. Ānanda regularly went to the palace and taught and explained the Dhamma to Queen Mallikā and Queen Vāsabhakhattiyā. One day, the Buddha asked: "How is it, Ānanda, are the female lay disciples learning the Dhamma?" "Yes, Bhante." "Who is learning better?" "Queen Mallikā learns very well, but Vāsabhakhattiyā, the Blessed One's kinswoman, does not learn properly," he said. It was on that occasion that the Buddha preached the two stanzas we took as our theme. He uttered those two stanzas giving the idea that this Dhamma becomes truly meaningful only to the one who learns it properly, retains it, and puts it into practice. Let us look at their meaning.

Yathāpi ruciraṃ pupphaṃ, vaṇṇavantaṃ agandhakaṃ,

Evaṃ subhāsitā vācā, aphalā hoti akubbato.

"Just as a beautiful flower, colorful but scentless, so is a well-spoken word fruitless for one who does not act upon it."

Then the other stanza:

Yathāpi ruciraṃ pupphaṃ, vaṇṇavantaṃ sagandhakaṃ,

Evaṃ subhāsitā vācā, saphalā hoti pakkubbato.

"Just as a beautiful flower, colorful and full of scent, so is a well-spoken word fruitful for one who acts upon it."

In this manner, those two stanzas were delivered.

That is the background story of those stanzas. Now, before we delve into the meaning of the stanzas themselves, there are certain lessons we can take as examples from the background story we have related so far. Indeed, this lay disciple Chattapāni is a worthy character of that nature. Through the incident described, we can understand that he was someone who lived according to the values and virtues developed in accordance with the Buddha's teachings, like a fragrant flower—a person possessing the power of the Dhamma. His way of acting with a certain strength of Dhamma, giving precedence to respect for the Teacher over royal respect without being subservient to titles and positions, is evident in his remaining seated when he saw the king in the presence of the Buddha. That is indeed a great example for the people of today as well. For it is to the Dhamma that the primary place must be given. Cowering and being subservient before such worldly state power is an insult to the Dhamma.

Likewise is the other point. When the king, pleased with him, invited him to preach the Dhamma to the queens, an ordinary person would have seen it as a great opportunity to gain royal favor, wealth, and honor, thinking, "This is excellent, Your Majesty, I shall come tomorrow, or even today," and would have highly welcomed and accepted the task of preaching to the queens. But this lay disciple thought far-sightedly about the danger involved. Understanding that various complications could arise from this, his ability even at that moment to decline the king's request was a highly valuable quality. We must understand through this that, like a colorful and fragrant flower, a profound spiritual integrity lies behind the character of Chattapāni Upāsaka.

Now, the news about the queens is not so important there. The main point the Buddha showed us by using that incident as a basis is that this Dhamma is not something to be confined only to learning. Only when it is put into practice can the true power and benefit of this Dhamma be obtained. No matter how beautiful a flower is, if it has no scent, it is just like a paper flower. There is no real benefit in a paper flower. That is the point shown here. Therefore, in connection with this, let us now reflect on this True Dhamma.

When we speak of this True Dhamma, you can bring to mind the six qualities of the Dhamma. Everyone knows these six qualities: *Svākkhāta* (well-expounded), *Sandiṭṭhika* (directly visible), *Akālika* (immediate/timeless), *Ehipassika* (inviting one to come and see), *Opanayika* (leading inwards/progressive), and *Paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi* (to be personally realized by the wise). From the way these six qualities are explained, we can understand that this True Dhamma is indeed like a challenge for practice. In short, the Buddha explained the word *Svākkhāta* in this manner: "Monks, in a poorly-expounded (*durakkhāta*) Dhamma and Vinaya... Now, *Svākkhāta* means well-expounded, beautifully taught; whereas *Durakkhāta* means badly expounded, wrongly expounded." If you understand those two words in that way, then you can understand the passage declared by the Buddha: "Monks, in a poorly-expounded Dhamma and Vinaya, the lazy person (*kusīta*) dwells in comfort." That is to say, in a Dhamma that is taught wrongly or not properly, in that Dhamma-Vinaya—meaning in that dispensation—the lazy, indolent man lives comfortably and happily. "But in a well-expounded Dhamma and Vinaya, it is the energetic person (*vīriyavanta*) who dwells in comfort." In a dispensation of well-expounded Dhamma, it is the energetic one who lives happily. A very profound matter is expressed here. Why was it said that the lazy person lives in comfort in that Dhamma-Vinaya? Through that, we can also grasp the meaning of that word. We said that the term implies a wrongly or badly expounded Dhamma. What is the idea there? If a Dhamma sets forth a certain goal, but that goal cannot be achieved by practicing that Dhamma, then it is a poorly-expounded Dhamma-Vinaya (*durakkhāta*). A well-expounded Dhamma-Vinaya (*svākkhāta*) is one where whatever it promises to deliver is properly accomplished. Therefore, if one exerts effort in a poorly-expounded Dhamma-Vinaya, it is useless; it is a wasted effort. It is of no use. That is why it was said that the lazy person dwells in comfort. Since the well-expounded Dhamma-Vinaya is fruitful and fulfills the desired goal, in that dispensation, it is indeed the energetic one who achieves those results, rejoices, and dwells in comfort. That is the idea behind the term *Svākkhāta*.

Let us understand the other terms based on that as well. You all may have heard about them to some extent. Next, the specialty of this Dhamma lies there. A very profound idea is expressed there. This Dhamma is not something where you do it now and get the results only hereafter. It is *Sandiṭṭhika*—its results can be seen right here and now, before one's very eyes; that is its specialty. *Sandiṭṭhika* means, just like saying "sandiṭṭhiko dhammo", it can be experienced in this very world, in this very life. Next, *Akālika* (immediate/timeless) means without delay, meaning there is no gap of time between the effort made and the result. In short, there is no gap between the Path and its Fruit. If one is engaged in the path of practice, that path culminates immediately in the Fruit. Since there is no interval in between, it is *Akālika*—there is no time gap there. *Sandiṭṭhika, Akālika*. *Ehipassika* means that within this Dhamma itself, there is a challenging power that says, "Come and see!" That is to say, it is as if the Dhamma itself is crying out, saying: "Put this Dhamma into practice and see!" Next, *Opanayika* means: if it said "Come and see," the next step is leading, drawing close; *upanayati* means bringing close. Where does it lead? Not to any external place, but within, into the heart. That is *Opanayika*. Since the results of this practice must be experienced from within, this Dhamma must be brought right inside. Next, that is exactly why it is finally said:

Paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi—it is a Dhamma to be personally realized by the wise. It cannot be shown to another. It is a Dhamma that each individual must realize for themselves by walking along this path of practice.

Now, based on that, we can see that on one hand, this Dhamma is for the energetic—inviting them to put this Dhamma into practice and obtain its fruits. Thus, a very valuable idea is expressed there. Next, let us see: we mentioned at the very beginning that the Buddha commenced His Dhamma sermons with the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. In short, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* is presented as the very first sermon in our dispensation. Indeed, its core and essence is the question of the path of practice (*paṭipadā*). In that sermon, the Buddha showed the world a certain Middle Path, going between two extremes. What are the two extremes? One extreme is indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*). The other extreme is self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*), which was shown by various teachers of that time like the Nigaṇṭhas and other sectarians—the attempt to achieve liberation by severely tormenting the body. Rejecting both, the Buddha revealed an entirely new path of practice called the Middle Way. It is known in brief as the Noble Eightfold Path. You all have understood this to some extent. The path that is capable of bringing about a complete transformation of a person's life, consisting of eight steps or eight factors, is called the Noble Eightfold Path: Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. Thus, this Noble Eightfold Path is introduced as the Middle Path. That brings us next to the subject of this Middle Path.

What is present within this Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) is the very same energy (*vīriya*) we mentioned earlier. There is a way of applying this energy in a moderate measure; in other words, it is a path of practice that shows a certain balance of energy. So, in this regard, we should reflect as follows: The Buddha has pointed out "Right Effort" (*Sammā Vāyāma*) within this Noble Eightfold Path itself. *Sammā Vāyāma* means right effort. Correct exertion means the way energy must be applied in the proper manner. This is also called the Great Efforts (*Sammappadhāna*). This word *padhāna* also means supreme effort or exertion. The words *vāyāma*, *viriya*, and *padhāna* are largely synonymous. Thus, this energy, known as the Four Great Efforts (*Sammappadhāna*) or Right Effort (*Sammā Vāyāma*), has been shown by the Buddha in four ways. They are briefly known by these words: *saṃvara* (restraint), *pahāna* (abandoning), *bhāvanā* (developing), and *anurakkhaṇa* (protecting/maintaining). *Saṃvara* means closing or preventing, if we take its simple meaning. *Pahāna* means removing or discarding. *Bhāvanā* means developing or cultivating, and *anurakkhaṇa* means guarding or maintaining. Next, let us consider why this energy was shown in four ways. The Buddha has explained that this stream of consciousness (*citta-santāna*) is like a flowing river. Thus, the Buddha analyzed this mind as having the characteristic of movement—meaning in the sense of moving and flowing—or as something possessing a dynamic nature like a flowing river. Therefore, this energy is something that must be applied with great care, systematically. Indeed, it becomes fourfold.

As an analogy, you all know that if a dam is to be built across a swiftly flowing river, a fourfold effort is required. Before building the dam, the incoming unwanted water must be blocked; it must be closed off (*saṃvara*). Next, the unwanted water already remaining there must be removed (*pahāna*). Meanwhile, in the sense of *bhāvanā* (development), one must begin the preliminary work of building the dam, gathering the necessary materials, and starting to construct the dam. Then, in keeping with the word *anurakkhaṇa* (maintenance), one must engage in guarding it; it must be protected and reinforced so that it is not swept away again. Indeed, those four points are expressed in the Buddha's analysis of the Four Great Efforts (*Sammappadhāna*). Why do we explain this in such detail? Because nowadays, various people have opinions regarding the work of the mind, saying: "This is not something where energy, exertion, effort, or striving should be applied. One should just watch the mind as it goes of its own accord." In truth, because they do not understand the fundamental principles of the Middle Path which the Buddha presented as so supreme, many people these days have turned this practice into mere "doing nothing" (idleness). Following the views put forward by certain philosophers who have no correct understanding of this Dhamma, and lacking proper comprehension of the path of practice in this dispensation, they interpret it as just sitting idle. But if you just let the mind wander as it likes and simply watch it, the task will not be accomplished. One has to keep in mind the analogy of building the dam.

If we are to condense this Noble Eightfold Path, it consists of *Sīla* (Morality), *Samādhi* (Concentration), and *Paññā* (Wisdom). It is the Threefold Training of Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom that is contained within this Noble Eightfold Path. Morality (*Sīla*) means the restraint and discipline of body and speech. Concentration (*Samādhi*) means the one-pointedness of mind. Wisdom (*Paññā*) means seeing in terms of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self) through insight (*vipassanā*). There is a very ancient stanza that encapsulates this, which you all often use even as a protective chant (*paritta*):

Sabba pāpassa akaraṇaṃ, kusalassa upasampadā;

Sacitta pariyodapanaṃ, etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ.

We have translated it into Sinhala, and you may have heard it: "Refraining from all evil, the attainment of the wholesome, purifying one's own mind—this is the message of all Buddhas." This is an eternal truth. It is not just the advice of one Buddha, but *buddhānaṃ sāsanaṃ*—the message of all Buddhas. Within it are Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom. "Refraining from evil" is Morality (*Sīla*). "The attainment of the wholesome" (*kusalassa upasampadā*) refers to Concentration (*Samādhi*). It means entering and dwelling in the jhānas. When considered as one-pointedness of the wholesome mind, the concentrated mind is expressed within this attainment of the wholesome. Next, there is a Dhamma passage, a word of the Buddha: "One is purified through wisdom" (*paññāya parisujjhati*). Based on that, we can understand that ultimate purification is attained through Wisdom (*Paññā*). The purification of the mind at the highest level is accomplished by Wisdom. Therefore, to fulfill this Threefold Training, energy is required; exertion is required. It does not happen just like that. It

does not happen automatically. It does not happen by merely watching the mind. That energy must be applied carefully, systematically, and progressively. That is why the Buddha points out: "Just as the great ocean slopes gradually, deepens gradually, even so in my dispensation there is a gradual training." *Anupubbakiriya, anupubbapaṭipadā*—a gradual training, a gradual performance, and a gradual path of practice. It is through such a wonderful process, bound by an amazing relationship of causes and conditions, that this liberation can be attained.

And that becomes further clear to us through what is known as the Four Great Efforts (*Sammappadhāna*). It is an extremely profound matter, and at the same time, highly practical. For those rationalists—indeed, those who give primary place only to intellect—the true taste of this Dhamma cannot be enjoyed; its true fragrance cannot be obtained. But through this gradual path, it can be attained. Thus, the Four Great Efforts are described in this way. Although we state the Pali passages, we will apply the Sinhala explanation. Keep them in mind so that if any issues arise regarding these, they can be resolved; we shall state the Pali passage first. It is as follows: *Anuppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ anuppādāya chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati*. Once the meaning of this passage is explained, the others will be easy to understand. For the non-arising of unarisen unwholesome states: *chandaṃ janeti* means one generates desire, an earnest wish. *Vāyamati* means one makes an effort or exertion. *Viriyaṃ ārabhati* means one arouses or initiates energy. *Cittaṃ paggaṇhāti* means one upholds the mind, makes a firm determination. Next, *padahati* means applying the supreme effort—an outstanding exertion made even at the risk of one's life. Thus, this series of terms is applied to the Four Great Efforts.

The first one, as we said, is for the non-arising of unarisen unwholesome states. That is exactly what is meant by restraint (*saṃvara*). Next, for the discarding of arisen unwholesome states: *uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya*. For the abandoning of arisen unwholesome states, one must apply the same desire (*chanda*), etc., in the same manner. Next, what we mentioned as belonging to the aspect of development (*bhāvanā*) is: *Anuppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ uppādāya*—for the arising of unarisen wholesome states, one must make a similar effort. Next, finally it says: *uppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ ṭhitiyā asammosāya bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya bhāvanāya pāripūriyā chandaṃ janeti, vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati*. Strengthening that dam is no easy task either. That must be why so many words are used there. For the maintenance (*ṭhitiyā*) of arisen wholesome states, for their non-confusion (*asammosāya*), for their further growth (*bhiyyobhāvāya*), for their plenitude (*vepullāya*), and for their fulfillment by development (*bhāvanāya pāripūriyā*), one must similarly generate desire, make an effort, arouse energy, uphold the mind, and apply supreme exertion.

Look then, in what a wonderful manner the Buddha has shown these Four Great Efforts in accordance with the nature of this mind. A mind that flows like a river as mentioned before—constructing this dam is something that must be done with extreme care. Similarly, the person who aspires for liberation must apply those four types of energy

according to the occasion. Next, this goes even further. If we reflect further, why did the Buddha use so many words regarding energy? There, too, lies a wonderful ascending sequence. The Buddha has described in a few words the mental sequence through which our mind directs itself towards something and proceeds up to supreme energy. *Chandaṃ janeti* means generating an interest or intent. First, there must be an interest, a desire. That is the beginning, that is the direction. Next, one makes an effort (*vāyamati*). Within the word "effort" is a certain testing of "can I do this?"—a preliminary attempt, an exertion. Next, *viriyaṃ*—here, one truly gets down to the work, initiates the task. While proceeding in this way, obstacles arise. It is at that moment that one must firmly uphold the mind, as expressed by *cittaṃ paggaṇhāti*; one must bring forth the power of determination. Having established that power of determination, understanding that this task—which seemed impossible—is something that must absolutely be done, and putting one's life at stake, one accomplishes the task through supreme exertion. That is represented by the word *padahati*. In this series of terms applied to energy, the highest word is *padhāna*. This does not mean "chief" or "main" (*pradhāna*) as in our ordinary Sinhala language. In the Pali language, *padhāna* is used in the sense of supreme, ultimate energy. Thus, the matter regarding *chanda*, etc., has been briefly mentioned to you.

Next, among the *Bodhipakkhiya Dhammas* (Factors of Enlightenment) shown by the Buddha, some of you might have heard that, regarding energy, there is another matter just as important as the Four Great Efforts. For those who are keen on the path of practice, there is mention of the Four Bases of Success (*Iddhipāda*). *Iddhipāda*—when we say *iddhi* (psychic power/success), we immediately think of someone flying through the air. But, devotees, *iddhi* is a word that means accomplishment, fulfillment, or making something successful. Even in daily life, the things required to achieve success and accomplishment in any endeavor are called *Iddhipāda*. The word *pāda* (base/foot) is used there to mean the factors that help in achieving success. The Buddha highlights four such factors in this manner: *chanda* (desire/intention), *viriya* (energy), *citta* (mind/determination), and *vīmaṃsā* (investigation/wisdom). Indeed, these have been mentioned here in some way or another. The very essence of that energy which was expressed through words like *chandaṃ janeti*, *vāyamati*, etc., is what is presented here as the *Iddhipāda*. In fact, as shown by the Buddha, the practitioner, the yogi who engages in the Four Great Efforts in the manner described, reaches a point where they can understand the secret of success regarding their own endeavor, in accordance with their temperament. The secret of the success of one's energy can vary according to each individual's temperament. Some people achieve their aspirations by putting forward *chanda* (intention/desire). *Chanda* means interest or desire. Those are the temperaments of whom we hear in the world: "If I set my mind to something, or if I develop an interest in it, I will do it and will not look back." Next are the energetic (*viriya*) temperaments. It is through that very effort of *chandaṃ janeti*, *vāyamati*, etc., that they understand the secret of success within themselves. The second is energy (*viriya*). There are some who say: "If I put energy into something, I will see it through to the end. I will not back down." Next, there are others for whom *citta* (mind/determination) is the base of success: "If I make a determination regarding

something, I will abide by that determination. I will accomplish it somehow." For such a person, *citta* is the base of success. *Vīmaṃsā* means investigative wisdom. That was not directly mentioned earlier, but through it, we can understand Wisdom (*Paññā*). The one who relies on this base of success, *vīmaṃsā*, is of a wise temperament. That is, investigative wisdom: "I must do this and see how it works. I am curious to see if what is said is true." There are those who engage in this effort by bringing forward such an attitude.

To help an ordinary person, who may not have much interest in such doctrinal matters, understand this point, we can give a helpful analogy. Let us assume there is a boulder that is a nuisance to our work. We feel like pushing it aside. First, the interest, the desire, arises for it (*chanda*). Since the boulder does not budge merely because one has the desire, what does one do next? One makes a certain effort (*vāyāma*). One makes a small exertion to see: "Can I lift this or push it aside?" That exertion is, in fact, a testing of one's strength. Inserting something underneath it, like a crowbar, one tries to see if it can be moved—that is *vāyamati*. Thus, *chandaṃ janeti, vāyamati*. Next, *viriyaṃ ārabhati*. Once it is understood that it is possible, one arouses energy. Slowly, one begins to lift it. As one gets close to lifting it and pushing it over, one realizes that this is no easy task. Perhaps it might fall back on oneself. The mind might also start to waver. At that very moment, one makes a firm determination: "Even if I die, I will not abandon this task I have started," and pushes it all the way over. That is what is represented by the word *padahati*—the supreme energy (*padhāna viriya*). Next, through engaging in this very exertion, the power of wisdom arises naturally within oneself. From those experiences, investigative wisdom arises. Today, we say of such a person: "He is an experienced person." That is the wisdom, the investigative insight, gained from the wealth of experience acquired through such work. Thus, through this, we can understand the value of those *Iddhipādas*.

These days, these matters seem as if they are hidden within the Dhamma. But if we bring them to light, they are extremely important, especially for those devotees who wish to experience this Dhamma practically. Sometimes, the rationalists may not like these things very much. Now, there is a certain trend going on. You all must understand this. According to this intellectual and rationalist attitude, they expect instantaneous realization of the truth. There are indeed certain discourses where, as the Buddha preached to people of immense paramis like Bāhiya Dārucīriya, they attained Arahanthood almost instantly. Certain scholars who have studied those discourses twenty or thirty times imagine themselves to be wise, belonging to that special category, even though no internal transformation has taken place within them. They underestimate the fundamental virtues such as faith (*saddhā*) and morality (*sīla*). Showing no interest in them, they expect instantaneous liberation merely by listening to the Dhamma. That is entirely a delusion. For the Buddha has pointed out five "liberating occasions" (*vimuttāyatana*) that help in attaining Nibbāna—not just one. A person can attain realization of the Path and Fruits: while listening to the Dhamma, while teaching the Dhamma, while reciting the Dhamma, while reflecting on the Dhamma, and finally, it is shown, while systematically developing a certain theme of concentration (*samādhi-*

nimitta). Yet, out of those five, some people think that everything can be accomplished merely by listening. That is possible only for those highly exceptional individuals. It happens very rarely. Especially in this era, we can assume that it is extremely rare. It was in an era when beings of great merit lived, and when those possessing higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) like the Buddha—who could read the mental capacity of others—were present to guide them, that someone could realize Arahanthood instantly through a brief sermon. Therefore, one should not think that just because one holds a long list of academic degrees, one also belongs to that rare category.

Indeed, there is another similar analysis shown in the Dhamma. The Buddha points out a certain fourfold classification based on the capacity of individuals for realization: *Dukkhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā* (painful progress with slow realization), *Dukkhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā* (painful progress with swift realization), *Sukhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā* (pleasant progress with slow realization), and *Sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā* (pleasant progress with swift realization). If we put it in Sinhala, here *paṭipadā* refers to the course of action including the effort, etc., mentioned earlier. Thus, the first category is: progress is painful and realization is slow. Next, the second category: progress is painful but realization is swift. Then the third category: progress is pleasant but realization is slow. And the fourth is: progress is pleasant and realization is swift. It is to this fourth category that individuals like Bāhiya Dārucīriya, who possessed a highly supreme power of paramis, belong. So, that capacity is not present in everyone. One must understand this for oneself. The Dhamma mentions those suttas upon hearing which people attained Arahanthood instantly, or which caused Arahanthood. Certain scholars study them with great enthusiasm and keen interest. But they do not put them into practice. The attitude mostly prevalent today is that these stages of realization can be attained merely by studying the Dhamma. That is entirely wrong. If those virtues such as faith and morality are lacking—in short, if faith (*saddhā*) is absent… Faith is shown as the seed of all virtues in this dispensation. A heart without faith is a dry heart. No virtues can grow there. Therefore, if one studies the Dhamma with a rationalistic attitude, without faith, doubting, and subjecting it to constant criticism and speculation, even if one studies it, no Path or Fruit will be attained. Except, perhaps, for imagining that one has attained them. Thus, we must realize that no matter what we expect, this task is not that easy. If it were so easy, there would be no need for a Buddha for this task. A Buddha appears in the world to present a certain unique matter which no other teacher could discover, even by practicing those extremely difficult disciplines. The fundamental principle of that is the Middle Path, the Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). Within that Middle Way lies that very effort which must be applied with great care, as shown by the Buddha in His explanation of the fourfold energy. One cannot be in a hurry for this either. Just letting the mind wander as it likes and watching it is an extreme akin to indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*). That is, letting it drift as it pleases. That way will not work either. Nor can one do it by struggling and agitating.

In this connection, the Buddha has preached a valuable discourse that brings us closer to this point. It is known as the *Oghataraṇa Sutta*. That analogy will be highly useful to you in understanding this fundamental principle. On one occasion, a deva came and asked

the Buddha: "O sorrowless One, how did you cross over the flood?" Here, what was called the "flood" refers, in the doctrinal sense, to the four floods: sensual desire (*kāma*), Becoming / Existence (*bhava*), views (*diṭṭhi*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). You have heard of the flood of sensuality (*kāmogha*). The flood of sensuality means the torrent of sensual desire, which flows all over the world. The flood of sensual desire is flowing. This life is a matter of these four floods: sensual desire (*kāma*), Becoming / Existence (*bhava*), views (*diṭṭhi*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). All of these are like torrential floods. Thus, within this existence, existence is a dynamic, moving thing in that very manner. What the Buddha is showing here is a massive, flowing flood. How does one cross over this flood then? This is no easy task. There are four floods: the flood of sensuality (*kāmogha*), the flood of Becoming / Existence (*bhavogha*), the flood of views (*diṭṭhogha*), and the flood of ignorance (*avijjogha*). The deva is asking how He crossed over these. The Buddha's reply is: *appatiṭṭhaṃ anāyūhaṃ*—"Without halting, without straining/struggling." "Without standing still, and without struggling, did I cross over the flood." Here, standing still (*appatiṭṭhaṃ*) refers to indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*). Next, struggling (*anāyūhaṃ*) refers to self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). You can understand this with reference to the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Then the deva asks further details: "How did you do that?" To that, the Buddha replies: "Friend—*āvuso* means friend—friend, when I stood still, I sank; when I struggled, I was swept away by the flood." Those are the two extremes. It is by avoiding those two extremes that one must travel on this path of Dhamma. It is there that the Middle Way lies; it is there that the Middle Path is found.

Therefore, this is not something that happens of its own accord or merely by wishing, by completely abandoning energy and just watching the mind wander. Why are people inclined towards such an attitude? You all know the social environment of today. Due to the advancement of science and technology, in your daily lives at home as well as in your office work, you do things almost instantaneously. Everything is instant. Science and technology provide facilities to get everything done instantly. Now, many people expect to find that same instantaneous nature in this Dhamma and in the realization of the Dhamma as well. That is a mirage. That is a wrong idea. Because the environment in the past was one that truly supported spiritual development. But you can imagine how the environment of today is, judging by the way daily life is spent. How complex it has become due to this material progress! On one hand, it seems like a great advancement, but humans are deteriorating terribly, falling into animalistic states. These minds have fallen to the levels of demons, hell-beings, and hungry ghosts (*peta*). In such an era, it is difficult to find a proper, quiet environment—not only in noisy cities or villages but even in a forest, it is extremely difficult to find a secluded place. In such an age, you must think for yourselves: is this something that can be achieved by doing nothing, when it actually requires one to exert much greater effort, increasing one's energy hundreds and thousands of times? According to that, we should realize the value of the Middle Path shown by the Buddha.

To explain it a bit more deeply, we can speak about the extreme we mentioned. The difference between the practice followed by the Niganṭhas and the practice prescribed by

the Buddha for the Sangha helps us understand this. Let us bring this out briefly to suit the occasion. Now, you may have heard that what belongs to the monks is the four requisites (*cattāro paccayā*): robes (*cīvara*), almsfood (*piṇḍapāta*), lodging (*senāsana*), and medicinal requisites (*gilānapaccayabhaj̱ja*)—the things necessary to sustain life. The Buddha has pointed out the course of practice to be adopted when using them, which is to reflect upon them (*paccavekkhaṇa*). This reflection is briefly introduced as restraint by knowledge (*ñāṇa-saṃvara*), a restraint accomplished through wisdom and knowledge. First, let us take the practice of the Nigaṇṭhas. What was it? The Nigaṇṭhas saw that things like food and clothing are what draw worldly people towards sensuality. That is obvious even when one goes to a city. Due to fashions regarding these, worldly people are drawn to sensuality. Therefore, what was the extreme practice adopted by the Nigaṇṭhas? Discarding clothing entirely (practicing nudity), and regarding food, you might have heard that there were even those who ate excrement in those times. In that way, they turned that effort into an extreme distortion; they struggled.

But the Buddha showed a different path instead. These four requisites are things we can neither do with completely (in an attached way) nor do without. What is this Becoming / Existence (*bhava*)? It is a flowing stream. Now, you know that in a place where a strong current is flowing, if one wants to go from here to the opposite bank, one cannot go in a straight line as if drawing a straight line. After entering the water, one has to go to the opposite bank while yielding somewhat to the flowing current. Suppose you are caught in a current while swimming. What happens? You cannot just fight it head-on. Nor can you do nothing. One must escape and save oneself carefully, wisely, and gradually. That is the kind of path of practice the Buddha points out. Therefore, what is to be done is not the discarding of robes, nor resorting to distorted foods like excrement. Rather, the Buddha prescribed the manner of using them with restraint of knowledge (*ñāṇa-saṃvara*), with wisdom, turning it into a meditation, by way of reflection (*paccavekkhaṇa*).

If we mention briefly, taking just one or two examples—regarding almsfood, it is said: Let the monks reflect in this manner before consuming almsfood. That is indeed like a meditation: "I do not take this food for amusement, for intoxication, for physical beauty, or for brawn, as laymen do. But solely for the maintenance of this holy life (*brahmacariya*), for the realization of Nibbāna." First, that purpose is considered. Next, secondly, also related to it is the meditative attitude regarding food and this body. It is developed as meditation, and also as the repulsiveness of food. There is a meditation called the analysis of elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*): this food is made up of earth (*paṭhavī*), fire (*tejo*), wind (*vāyo*), and water (*āpo*) elements. Likewise is this body. Next, one reflects that this food, made of earth, water, fire, and wind elements, which was clean, becomes dirty, impure, unappealing, and repulsive once it enters this dirty, impure body of mine. See then how the Buddha solved the problem of food—which the Nigaṇṭhas feared and discarded—through the Middle Path. He made that very food an aid to Nibbāna. The purpose of this is: this body is maintained for Nibbāna, merely for sustenance. This is not like the fashion with which the ordinary people of today, who strive to remain in Becoming / Existence (*bhava*), treat food. It is not that running after food that is mentioned here. Merely, a certain control is exercised over it. Looking at

them from a balanced perspective, it is then turned into a meditation. That shows the Middle Way pointed out by the Buddha. Giving one example is sufficient. Thus, there are such passages of reflection regarding all four requisites.

Through these, we must understand that nowadays, large crowds are drawn to the idea that the task is easy. It appears easy, but through that, a serious wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) is spreading, which is contrary to this Middle Path. Doing nothing is indeed something pleasing to many. If all of this can be achieved by doing nothing, why exert oneself? Why keep precepts? Why meditate? Some even say that meditation is unnecessary. "There is no need to control the mind in the name of meditation. Let it go where it wants and just watch." If those people were to enter the water, and if they were to just watch while crossing a torrential flood, they would be seen acting contrary to their own words. To satisfy their material needs in daily life, they are compelled to act in a way that is close to those very *Sammappadhāna* and *Iddhipāda* mentioned earlier. This shows us that the Buddha has brought to light a wonderful natural law (*dhammatā*) regarding our stream of consciousness (*citta-santāna*). He saw this properly; He saw its true reality. Having seen that, He said that the human mind functions in these four ways. Likewise, the Buddha pointed out a balanced path of practice to be followed with great care. Therefore, we must highlight these points. Especially since this is an era when various wrong views are spreading, some people—especially those we call rationalists (not that we say this as an insult, but such an attitude is prevalent nowadays)—study the Dhamma and possess some understanding of it. Through that scholarship, from the knowledge they have gained, some believe they have complete comprehension of this dispensation. No, devotees, this dispensation is threefold: *Pariyatti* (learning), *Paṭipatti* (practice), and *Paṭivedha* (realization). If only learning (*pariyatti*) existed, then the view held by those scholars would be correct. But here, it is not limited to learning alone. It must be put into practice—*Paṭipatti*. Next, the culmination of practice is realization (*Paṭivedha*)—one must penetrate it with insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), in its supreme form through meditation. That is why the motto of the Buddhists in the past—which is rarely heard nowadays—was: *Suṇātha, dhāretha, carātha dhamme*—"Listen, retain, and practice the Dhamma." "Listen, retain, and walk in the Dhamma."

"Listen, retain, and practice the Dhamma; listen, retain, and walk in the Dhamma." This point is further clarified by the passages shown by the Buddha regarding the listening to the Dhamma, showing that this was preached for a practical purpose. Regarding the proper listening to the Dhamma, it is mentioned as follows: Or, regarding a person who has a correct understanding of the Dhamma, these words are mentioned. Such a person—let us say, in modern terms, such a scholar or such a disciple—has the Dhamma... and many words are used for this: *sutā, dhatā, vacasā paricitā, diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā*. That person has heard the Dhamma (*sutā*), and retains it (*dhatā*)—not having heard it through one ear and let it out through the other. Next, they have not stored it in computers and set it aside. In those devotees who have stored the Tipitaka in computers, the Dhamma may not be present within. That is just an action. They did not take it within. That is why in the past, they spoke of the lineage of reciters (*bhāṇaka*); in those times, there were individuals of single-minded listening (*ekasuta*). They retained

what they heard upon merely hearing it once. Next, *sutā, dhatā*—they retained the Dhamma. "There is a great book at home, but its name is not remembered"—our ancestors began to say this only after the custom of memorizing the Dhamma was lost. Nowadays, this is considered unnecessary, and sometimes even laughable. But the one who wishes to make use of it retains that Dhamma in the mind, like storing lion's fat in a golden casket. Having retained it through *sutā, dhatā*, they do not stop there. *Vacasā paricitā*—they must master it verbally. They must recall and memorize it from time to time. Next, it is not reciting it like a parrot. Those words—the things spoken of—must be turned over in the mind, investigated, and examined. Investigating in this manner, *diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā*—when examining it thus, one obtains the ability to penetrate it through right view. Through those words, then, it is shown that the Dhamma is a practical thing. Dhamma-listening must be done in that manner, with a practical purpose and attitude.

The same is shown in another way. The manner in which a noble disciple (*ariyasāvaka*) listens to the Dhamma is described as follows: It is shown how a noble disciple listens to the Dhamma, in short, in a way that leads to the realization of the Path and Fruits. A noble disciple listens in this manner: *aṭṭhikatvā manasikatvā sabbacetaso samannāharitvā ohitasoto dhammaṃ suṇāti*. At some point, a noble disciple, having paid attention (*aṭṭhikatvā*), listens with the primary thought: "This Dhamma is of benefit to me." Not with the purpose of analyzing this, writing a book about it, or obtaining a degree. He listens to the Dhamma with the thought: "This is of use to me. There is a benefit in this for me." Next, *manasikatvā*—reflecting upon what is heard, contemplating word by word at the very moment of listening. Without going into thoughts and speculations like: "I already know what is being said. What is there to explain about that?"—he contemplates it word by word. *Sabbacetaso*—not with half the mind here and the other half at home. *Sabbacetaso, samannāharitvā*—directing the entire mind to it, focusing attention, applying complete attention. *Ohitasoto dhammaṃ suṇāti*—he listens with inclined ears. This is an ancient expression: listening with inclined ears. We see certain animals inclining their ears. We cannot tell from the outside whether humans are inclining their ears or not. But listening with inclined ears means full attention. It means directing one's attention completely to it. Nowadays, since we have various scientific ears (recorders and devices) instead of our own ears, we leave them to listen, and when the Dhamma is preached, we step aside. This is just like saying, "There is a great book at home, but its name is not remembered." Those words can be applied today to modern machines like computers and cassette recorders. "There are many cassette tapes of the most talented monks in our house. But we have no time to listen." It is just like that.

Such is the attitude prevalent today. Nevertheless, there is that intellectual attitude: "If we can produce light whenever we want by pressing a button, why can't we produce the light of wisdom merely by listening to a short sermon?" Some people raise such arguments nowadays. "This is an extremely advanced era. In such an era, if they could achieve these in the past, in an era of bullock carts, why can't we do so now?" People who ask such questions have indeed come and questioned us. We have to remind them of the

difference between the environment of those times and that of today. The spiritual environment in those days was truly wonderful. Everyone was a seeker of truth. Among the brahmins as well as others, there was indeed a massive effort made for liberation. Even if they sometimes went astray. Today, in which direction are people running? Towards material progress. Everyone is running after that, caught up in that current, chasing a mirage. Among those who are running, even if you do turn towards the Dhamma, you have to operate amidst a massive array of obstacles. Devotees living in household life come and tell us: "We would like to meditate. But the children do such things all night... we don't need to describe it—they are in front of this or that machine. Or our lives are spent in the midst of a massive din." There is a great sense of frustration in them.

Through that, we can understand that in this day and age, that state can be achieved only by putting in double, triple, or even a hundredfold energy. Holding degrees and being learned alone will not bring about the Paths and Fruits. You do not belong to the category of swift realization (*khippābhiññā*) just because you think you do. That is a point we must retain well in our minds. Reflecting in this way, today this group of devotees, practicing a simple life, a large number of you have observed the eight precepts for this Uposatha day, and others have established themselves in higher virtues. That is the importance of morality (*sīla*). Without taking the first step properly, the final result alone cannot be achieved. These factors of Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom are interconnected. This is something bound by causal relationships. Just as we often remind you regarding *Sammā Diṭṭhi*, *Sammā Saṅkappa*, etc., there is a wonderful relationship of cause and effect between each and every step in the Dhamma. That is why it was said that there is a gradual sequence. That sequence cannot be broken. Therefore, one must start from the very alphabet. One must go down to zero. One must start with Morality (*Sīla*). One must start with Faith (*Saddhā*). Fundamentally, Faith. Faith is the seed in this dispensation. No virtues accumulate in a heart devoid of faith. It is with faith aroused that one next approaches a teacher. *Saddhājāto upasaṅkamati*—"One with faith approaches," as pointed out by the Buddha. Having approached, one listens to the Dhamma, retains it, and reflects on it in that manner. In that way, systematically embarking on the practice, generating great desire and energy, and getting down to the practice, one can accomplish this ultimate goal.

Thus, although the Buddha set the Wheel of Dhamma in motion on a day like today, the power of that Wheel of Dhamma seems to be fast fading away from this society due to the spread of such wrong views. Therefore, wise devotees must reflect. What must be done first cannot be put off for later. Nor can what must be done first be completely discarded. Therefore, those virtues of Faith (*Saddhā*) and Morality (*Sīla*) must be completed first. It is upon those virtues that the mind can next be composed in Concentration (*Samādhi*). It is to a concentrated mind that impermanence (*anicca*) and unsubstantiality (*anattā*) are understood by way of Wisdom (*Paññā*) and Insight (*vipassanā*). The supreme, peaceful, and sublime Deathless Nibbāna, which is free from all samsaric suffering such as aging (*jarā*), illness, and death (*maraṇa*) shown by the Buddha, can be attained through the realization of the Paths and Fruits of Sotāpanna,

Sakadāgāmī, Anāgāmī, and Arahant. Thus, you must understand that within this brief period of time, we have briefly touched upon many facts. This is for you to reflect upon further. These points were mentioned not merely for you to stop at reflecting, but to adjust your lives in accordance with their practical value.

Thus, in connection with this, you have established yourselves in morality, disciplined your body and speech, and listened to the Dhamma with focused attention for about an hour. Listening to the Dhamma is said to be a meritorious deed, a wholesome act (*kusala*), because it is something that aids your Nibbāna. That listening to the Dhamma is highly beneficial. It even provides the strong supportive condition (*upaniṣraya-sampatti*). By the blessings of that listening—if we look at these blessings in this very world, in a directly visible (*sandiṭṭhika*) and immediate (*akālika*) manner—let us resolve that we have used this brief time to develop within ourselves the faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) of Faith (*Saddhā*), Energy (*Viriya*), Mindfulness (*Sati*), Concentration (*Samādhi*), and Wisdom (*Paññā*). Through that Dhamma power, may you find the rare association of admirable friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), even with difficulty or by making your way through thick forests, and before this lamp of the dispensation is extinguished, may this serve as a strong supportive condition (*upaniṣraya-sampatti*) for you to escape this perilous saṃsāra and attain sublime Nibbāna through the realization of the Paths and Fruits of Sakadāgāmī, Anāgāmī, and Arahant. Likewise, make a wish that if there be any beings in this universe, from the lowest Avīci hell to the highest Akaniṭṭha heaven, who wish to rejoice in this wholesome deed of Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening, may they all rejoice in this merit and find peace in sublime, deathless Nibbāna through the Bodhi of their aspiration. With that aspiration in mind, recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #23

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Anikkasāvo kāsāvaṃ, yo vatthaṃ paridahissati;

Apeto damasaccena, na so kāsāvamarahati.

Yo ca vantakasāvassa, sīlesu susamāhito;

Upeto damasaccena, sa ve kāsāvamarahati.

From:

Verses 9-10 from the Yamakavagga (Chapter of Pairs) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The supreme inheritance that the world receives from a Fully Enlightened Buddha is the Dispensation of the Buddha (*Sambuddha Sāsana*). We consider that safeguarding this *Sambuddha Sāsana* for a long time for the welfare and happiness of gods and humans is the duty of every Buddhist. If we are to fulfill that duty properly, we must possess a correct understanding of its spiritual and dispensational values. That is why on this Vesak Full Moon Day, we chose these two verses as our theme.

The Buddha preached these two verses at the Jetavana monastery, focusing on a certain incident concerning Ven. Devadatta. On one occasion, the two chief disciples, Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Moggallāna, having obtained permission from the Buddha, journeyed from Sāvatthī to Rājagaha with their respective entourages of five hundred monks each. The residents of Rājagaha, coming together collectively—in groups of two or three, or fifteen—began to offer alms and engage in works of charity for the chief disciples and their retinues. One day, when Ven. Sāriputta was organizing a meritorious deed, he declared:

"O lay devotees, if someone gives alms himself but does not encourage others to establish themselves in the practice of giving—meaning, he does not inspire others to give alms—

such a person will obtain wealth and material resources in whatever future births (*jāti*) they are born, but will not obtain the wealth of having a retinue of followers. Another person does not give alms himself but encourages others to do so. In the future, that person will not receive wealth and material resources, but will only receive the wealth of a retinue of followers. Yet another person neither gives alms himself nor encourages others to do so. Such a person will obtain neither wealth nor a retinue in their future births (*jāti*). Fourthly, it is shown that another person gives alms himself and also encourages others to establish themselves in that practice of giving. (What we now call collecting donations is 'establishing others in practice'.) Such a person, in future births (*jāti*), will receive both wealth and a retinue," so he declared.

A certain wise man who was listening to this thought: "I must act in a way that I obtain both of these blessings." After the crowd departed, he approached Ven. Sāriputta and said, "Venerable Sir, I invite you and the Sangha to alms tomorrow." Ven. Sāriputta asked how many monks were in his retinue, and when he was told there were about a thousand, the man declared, "I hope to offer alms to all those thousand monks tomorrow." Ven. Sāriputta consented by silence.

Now, even though this man said this, he made the invitation without any prior preparation. Walking through the streets of the city, he rallied the people, crying out: "Mothers and fathers, I have invited a thousand monks for tomorrow. Bring whatever alms-materials you can, according to your means. Let us gather in one place and prepare the alms!" Thus he encouraged the people. Accordingly, a large number of people took responsibility for ten, twenty, or even a hundred monks, and brought alms-materials to the venue. A certain wealthy devotee brought a saffron robe worth a hundred thousand coins and gave it to the organizer of the alms—the lay devotee—saying, "If there is any shortage of alms-materials, sell this robe and settle the expenses. If there is no such shortage, offer this robe to any monk of your choice."

So, the alms-giving went very well the next day. There was no shortage of anything. This robe, this saffron robe, remained. The alms-organizer said to the gathering, "A certain person offered me this highly valuable robe. All the alms-giving activities are now finished. To whom shall we offer this robe?" Then someone said, "Let us offer it to Ven. Sāriputta, the Chief Disciple, the Arahant." Another group said, "This Ven. Sāriputta only comes and goes during the harvest season. But Ven. Devadatta is not like that. He is like the water kept in our homes. He is there for all our auspicious and inauspicious occasions. Therefore, let us give it to Ven. Devadatta." Since there were two factions, the alms-organizer held a small vote at the alms-hall. Here is the result of the vote: Ven. Devadatta won by a majority of four votes as the person worthy of receiving that robe worth a hundred thousand. The faction of the Chief Disciple Ven. Sāriputta, the General of the Dhamma, lost.

Somehow or other, they gave that robe to Ven. Devadatta. When Ven. Devadatta cut it, dyed it, and wore it, walking about in the city, the people felt a certain displeasure at his behavior. Perhaps he walked about in an arrogant manner, wandering here and there. People began to say, "This robe is suitable for Ven. Sāriputta, but certainly not for

Devadatta." Sometime after this incident, a certain monk came from Rājagaha to Sāvatthī to see the Buddha. When the Buddha was inquiring about the health and welfare of the two chief disciples from that monk, that monk related this incident. Then the Buddha said, "Monk, not only in this life, but in the past too, Devadatta wore a robe unsuitable for him and was reviled by others," and he related a certain Jātaka story.

In the past, there was an elephant hunter in Benares who killed elephants. He lived by going into the forests, killing elephants, and selling their tusks, claws, meat, and so on. In some forests, there were large herds of elephants. In one forest, the elephants had a custom: whenever they saw the Paccekabuddhas living in the forest, before going to find food, they would bow down at the knees of the Paccekabuddhas and then depart. One day, this elephant hunter saw this incident. He fell into reflection: "Why do these elephants bow down to these Paccekabuddhas? It must be because of the robe. If I too can get a robe, I can carry out this elephant hunting very well." Having thought thus, what did he do next? When a Paccekabuddha had entered a pond to bathe, the hunter stole the robe left on the bank. Wearing it, what was his next trick? Wrapping the robe from his head downwards, he hid his elephant-killing weapon, his tool.

Thinking it was a Paccekabuddha, the elephant herd would bow as they went past. After the herd had passed, the elephant hunter would strike and kill the very last elephant with his weapon, sell its tusks and so on, and throw the remaining flesh in the forest.

While this was going on for some time, the Bodhisatta became the leader of that elephant herd. The Bodhisatta realized that his herd was diminishing. Reflecting on the cause, he suspected, "This danger must be coming from that particular person." Letting the other elephants go ahead, he walked last, at the very end, one day. When the Bodhisatta, the elephant king, approached after the other elephants had gone, the elephant hunter cast aside the robe and struck with his weapon. Since the Bodhisatta elephant king was alert, he jumped back, avoided the weapon, and then leapt forward to catch the man, saying, "Was it not you who destroyed my herd?" What did the hunter do then? Shielding himself behind a tree, he held the robe out in front of him. When he held the robe in front, the Bodhisatta elephant king thought: "If I destroy this man who is now holding this robe, it would be an insult to hundreds of thousands of Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Arahants. It would mean erasing that respectful fear from my mind." Therefore, without killing him, he spared him, but admonished and condemned him: "You are wearing a garment suitable only for those who are free from passions!" and disgraced that man.

Having related that past event, the Buddha said to that monk: "That elephant hunter was indeed Devadatta. In the past, too, he did such a thing." And then he uttered those two verses we took as our theme:

"Whoever, not having cast out the stains of defilements, devoid of self-control and truthfulness, wears the saffron robe, is not worthy of the saffron robe."

"But whoever has cast out the stains of defilements, is well-established in moral virtue, endowed with self-control and truthfulness, is indeed worthy of the saffron robe." This is the meaning contained in those verses.

Now let us consider what lessons we can learn both from this primary incident and from the Jātaka story. When we think of the lighter side of this story, even the exemplary action of that alms-organizer can be taken as a lesson for us. Even in these times, regarding meritorious deeds such as alms-givings, there is a practice called *sammādam kirīma* (collecting donations). Indeed, this word *sammādam* is mentioned in the Dhamma as *samādāna* (encouraging or taking upon oneself). Now, you are very familiar with the term *sīla-samādāna* (undertaking moral virtue). You are not so familiar with the term *dāna-samādāna* (undertaking giving), but instead, there is the term *sammādam* for alms. That too expresses the same idea: making others accept the practice of giving. It was because they accepted it that those people contributed according to their ability. This is indeed in accordance with the Dhamma declared by the Buddha, which Ven. Sāriputta pointed out here. It is something that leads to obtaining the wealth of a retinue of followers. Why? When one encourages others in giving, acting as a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), that too is a wholesome act—inclining others toward the wholesome. So, to cultivate both these types of wealth, we see that the wise man organized that alms-giving with great honesty and fairness. He started without any prior preparation for a thousand monks. Not only did he complete everything in a single night and finish the alms-giving, but he also did not use the extra robe in an inappropriate way. According to the intention of the person who offered it, he held a vote and gave it to the one chosen by the vote, regardless of whether that person was truly suitable.

Next, we must also reflect a little on what was expressed there regarding Ven. Devadatta. Popularity is not a yardstick for virtue. In terms of popularity, the Chief Disciple Ven. Sāriputta lost to Ven. Devadatta. Yet, Devadatta did not practice in a manner suitable for that robe. It was because of this that he became the target of public blame. Moreover, Ven. Devadatta did not stop there. Having obtained a robe that even the Chief Disciples did not receive, he was driven further by the pride that arose within him. The Buddha has declared: "*Dāruṇo lābhasakkāro*"—"Gain, honor, and renown are dreadful, bitter, and harsh." Why? Because through them, some people use their popularity in a dangerous manner, attempting to live their lives in an unrighteous way. This is exactly what happened to Ven. Devadatta. What did Ven. Devadatta do next? He thought, "If I am to obtain gain, honor, fame, and praise, I must secure the royal patronage of some king." Thus, Prince Ajātasattu, who had a claim to the kingdom of Magadha, came to his mind. He used a certain tactic to win over Prince Ajātasattu. Ven. Devadatta possessed supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*) and the power to perform psychic wonders (*iddhi*). So, by psychic power, he manifested a body wrapped in terrifying snakes to frighten Prince Ajātasattu, appearing on his lap. After the prince was frightened, he transformed back to his normal form and won him over. Prince Ajātasattu was won over by those psychic powers. From then on, Prince Ajātasattu went to see Ven. Devadatta twice a day, morning and evening, with five hundred chariots. He also sent five hundred dishes of

highly delicious food to Ven. Devadatta. When the monks reported this matter to the Buddha, the Buddha declared: "Monks, do not be envious of the gain, honor, fame, and praise of Ven. Devadatta. The acquisition of these gains and honors will lead only to the decline and ruin of Ven. Devadatta. Just as when a fierce dog gets a sniff of bile on its nose, it becomes even more fierce and violent, so does Ven. Devadatta behave." Thus he made a prediction about the future.

Likewise, Ven. Devadatta then persuaded Prince Ajātasattu, telling him to kill his father, King Bimbisāra, and quickly become king, saying, "I will kill the Buddha and take over the empire of the Dhamma." Actually, the root cause for this was an earlier incident when Ven. Devadatta stood up while the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma to a gathering and requested, "Venerable Sir, the Blessed One is now old and advanced in years. Hand over the congregation of monks to me. Let the Blessed One retire and dwell in quiet ease." The Buddha censured him. "I would not hand over the leadership of the Sangha even to the Chief Disciples; how then should I hand it over to one like you?" he rebuked. Angered by this, Ven. Devadatta, with the assistance of Prince Ajātasattu, plotted to assassinate the Buddha. Prince Ajātasattu tortured his father to death in a horrific manner, committing a grave karma of immediate retribution (*ānantariya-kamma*). After securing the kingdom of Magadha, Devadatta came and said, "Now you have accomplished your task; now help me with mine." Then he devised schemes to assassinate the Buddha.

The first scheme he employed was sending archers when the Buddha was dwelling quietly in the forest. He assigned one archer to shoot the Buddha. To ensure this archer was killed on his return, he stationed two other archers on that path. To kill those two on their way back, he stationed four others on another path. To kill those four, eight others. To kill those eight, sixteen others. Ven. Devadatta planned this assassination of the Buddha through such an extraordinary, cunning, and conspiratorial plot to keep it an absolute secret. However, when the man who went to shoot the Buddha approached, his body became stiff due to the Buddha's spiritual majesty, and unable to do it, he confessed his mission. The Buddha preached the Dhamma to him and sent him back by another path. Likewise, through the power of the Dhamma, all those other men stationed on the path—in groups of two, four, eight, and sixteen—came to see the Buddha, listened to the Dhamma, became faithful, and did not carry out the intended task.

When Ven. Devadatta came to know of this, he thought, "Now I must kill the Buddha myself." He climbed the Gijjhakūṭa (Vulture Peak) mountain and, while the Buddha was walking up and down below, hurled down a massive boulder. While the boulder was falling, two other rocks emerged through the Buddha's spiritual majesty and stopped the boulder. However, a splinter of stone struck the sole of the Buddha's foot, causing a severe and painful wound. The physician Jīvaka had to treat it. By this act, Devadatta fell into the grave *ānantariya-kamma* of shedding the blood of a Buddha with malicious intent.

Since he still could not assassinate the Buddha, what did Ven. Devadatta do next? He bribed the elephant keepers and arranged to release the elephant Nālāgiri, having fed it

alcohol, onto the path where the Buddha and the Sangha were walking. As the elephant Nālāgiri came charging in a terrifying manner, kicking up dust, the Buddha directed a mind of loving-kindness (*mettā*) and subdued the elephant, making it kneel down. When all three attempts failed, a huge public protest arose among the citizens and residents of the city, saying that King Ajātasattu was helping such a sinful person. King Ajātasattu was forced to withdraw all the support he had been giving to Devadatta. At this point, Ven. Devadatta thought: "How can I regain gain and honor?" Then a sinful thought occurred to him: to create a schism in the Sangha (*saṅgha-bheda*)—to split the monks and take a group of the harmonious Sangha with him to start a separate dispensation. Along with the arising of this sinful thought, his previously held psychic powers vanished. Later, Ven. Ānanda informed the Buddha of this news. The Buddha declared: "Behold, then, Devadatta is going to bind himself to another extremely grave *ānantariya-kamma*." Paying no heed to any advice or admonition, Ven. Devadatta presented five special demands—the five precepts (*pañca-vara*)—to the Buddha, things that ordinary people would easily find appealing. When the Buddha rejected these five demands, he won over five hundred newly ordained monks to his faction and went to Gayāsīsa—the noble place we now call Bodh Gaya—and started a separate dispensation. Placing two disciples, Kokālika and Kaṭamorakatissa, on either side as his chief disciples, he started a dispensation with the demeanor of a Buddha. This continued for a short time. Meanwhile, on one occasion, the Buddha sent the two chief disciples, Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Moggallāna, to bring this group back. When they arrived, Ven. Devadatta was preaching the Dhamma in the manner of a Buddha. He was deceived into thinking that the two chief disciples had also joined his side. Having preached the Dhamma to some extent, he delegated the preaching of the Dhamma to them in his place and went to sleep. In the meantime, the two chief disciples presented the Dhamma correctly, turned the minds of all of Devadatta's followers back, and returned through the air with that group to see the Buddha.

Kokālika, Ven. Devadatta's chief disciple, woke Devadatta up—it is said he kicked him in the chest to wake him—and told him what had happened. Due to the intense shock and grief, Ven. Devadatta began to vomit blood. It is said he vomited warm blood. Because of that mental shock and vomiting of blood, Ven. Devadatta suffered terrible physical pain for nine months. In his final moments, hoping to see the Buddha, he told his followers, "Take me to Jetavana." When this news arrived, the monks told the Buddha, "Ven. Devadatta is coming." But the Buddha declared, "In this life, Devadatta will not get to see me again. In whatever manner he comes to Jetavana, he will not see me." Initially, his followers were reluctant to carry him, saying, "When you were healthy, you harbored such hatred toward the Buddha, and now you ask us to carry you?" Then Devadatta said, "Even so, the Blessed One has no hatred toward me." Somehow he persuaded them. So, the followers placed Ven. Devadatta on a litter and carried him near Jetavana. Placing the litter by the side of the pond near Jetavana, those who brought him went down to the pond to bathe. Meanwhile, Devadatta, sitting on the litter, put his feet on the ground. As his feet touched the ground, the earth split open, flames emerged from the Avīci hell, and it is recorded that he went down to the Avīci hell. It is said that at that final moment, Ven. Devadatta uttered a certain verse taking refuge in the Buddha.

So, that was the fate of Ven. Devadatta. In the beginning, the Buddha pointed out that the cause for this was gain and honor. Gain and honor are extremely dreadful things. It was because of the pride of obtaining the robe that should have rightfully gone to the Chief Disciple Ven. Sāriputta, as mentioned at the beginning of this story, that he went on to seek further popularity, gain, and honor, and got entangled in such a multitude of sinful deeds. Accordingly, we can understand that, as the Buddha also declared, gain and honor are extremely dangerous. The Buddha explained the misfortune that befell Ven. Devadatta to the monks through four similes: "Monks, a banana tree bears fruit only for its own destruction. So too does a bamboo tree; if it flowers, the bamboo tree is destroyed. If a reed flowers, the reed is destroyed. If a she-mule becomes pregnant, she dies because of that pregnancy. In the very same way, gain, honor, and renown have arisen only for the destruction of Devadatta." Thus he declared. Accordingly, we can understand that popularity, gain, and honor often lead human beings toward dangerous, unwholesome actions.

Furthermore, when we reflect on this Jātaka story, we can extract certain advices of contemporary relevance. In this Jātaka story, it was mentioned first of all: what did the elephant hunter use for his elephant hunting? A robe stolen from the Paccekabuddhas. Devout lay devotees, in our Dhamma books, this robe is described as the "banner of the Arahants" (*arahaddhaja*). What is meant by the "banner of Arahants"? Now, let us imagine a pageant (*perahera*) coming. We understand who is in the pageant by the flag carried at the front. Similarly, when one sees the robe, what is the thought that arises? It is the thought: "This is either an Arahant or a group of people practicing the path to Arahantship, striving for Arahantship." That is the thought that arises when a group of people wearing this robe approaches. That is why it is called the banner of Arahants. But if this banner of Arahants is put forward for other purposes, for other fronts, it is just like the elephant hunter using the robe stolen from the Buddha for elephant hunting.

Therefore, the most valuable thing is to protect the banner of Arahants as a banner that represents that journey toward Nibbāna, that aim, that objective, the journey toward Arahantship. We mentioned earlier about protecting a dispensation. We can draw that idea from this Jātaka story. Furthermore, in some other places, this robe is also referred to as a suit of armor. Now, King Dhammāsoka had a brother named Prince Tissa, who had obtained the position of sub-king. However, Prince Tissa, having developed a strong aspiration for Nibbāna, was ordained in the dispensation. He was so fond of solitude that in the Dhamma texts, he is referred to as Ven. Ekavihāriya. This royal prince became a monk who loved to live alone. After ordination, so strong was his aspiration for Nibbāna that he uttered a certain verse to reveal his hope for Nibbāna. The idea expressed in that verse is this: "I am entering the forest wearing this armor. I will not come out of the forest without ending the battle against defilements and becoming an Arahant." Thus, it is clear that armor—devout lay devotees, armor is a garment used in war, in battle, to protect against arrows. So, using the robe as armor for the battle against defilements, as a protection for the battle against defilements, is appropriate. But presenting the robe to escape the consequences of committing other wrongs and bad actions is not in accordance with the dispensation. It is not something aligned with the dispensation. It

would be just like the elephant hunter who, when punishment drew near for the crime of killing elephants, took off the robe and held it out in front of him. Thus, we can understand various matters and advices through the medium of this Jātaka story.

So, from all this, we see that dispensational values can be overshadowed by gain, honor, fame, and praise. That is why the Buddha constantly highlighted their danger. On certain occasions, the Buddha compared this to a dung beetle. When a dung beetle gets a pile of dung, a ball of dung, it rolls it along, full of pride. The Buddha gave this simile, saying that when a monk says very proudly, "I have invitations from such and such places; I have no shortage of the four requisites," if he speaks like this, he is just like that dung beetle. The Buddha has shown this in a way that conveys censure. Moreover, we now know that once caught in the wave of gain and honor, the valuable virtues that are considered the eternal values of the Sangha are lost. What are those virtues? Fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*), contentment (*santuṭṭhitā*), and ease of maintenance (*subharatā*). Fewness of wishes means having few desires, being satisfied with little. If one gets caught in the wave of luxury and extreme luxury coming from lay society, one is swept away. Just like a sandcastle on the beach being washed away and destroyed by wave after wave during the monsoon season, that virtue of fewness of wishes is destroyed by luxurious and extremely luxurious invitations. Everyone can understand something from this. Likewise, contentment—the virtue of being content with what one receives. That too belongs to the monks. Contentment with the four requisites. Contentment with the eight requisites (*aṭṭha-parikkhāra*). The monks who were content with the eight requisites. Eight requisites. Now, I do not know if we can even count how many they are. The things considered essential as requisites are increasing day by day. Similarly, ease of maintenance—meaning being easy to support. As monks gradually lean toward a luxurious life, the responsibility falling on the lay followers to support them becomes heavier and heavier.

Likewise, an important point is that the Buddha has shown that a true monk should not maintain improper relationships with laypeople. Now, at the alms-hall, the Devadatta faction praised Devadatta by saying, "Ven. Sāriputta only comes during the harvest season. But Ven. Devadatta helps us in all matters, weddings and funerals, just like a water vessel kept at home." Like a vessel of water: anything, anytime, you can take it, drink it, use it. If a monk falls to that level, there is a risk of him going down the path of Devadatta's objectives. Such a dangerous thing is popularity. As soon as popularity arises, next comes the expectation of office—gaining positions. Through that, without even realizing it, one is directed toward an undisciplined path contrary to the dispensation. Instead, what the Buddha points out is that monks should remove improper lay associations and lead their lives in a manner that accords with their ultimate goal, the path to Nibbāna. Leave alone other things, even treating laypeople in an improper way is called "corrupting families" (*kula-dūsana*). Why is the word *kula-dūsana*—corrupting families—used? Because it corrupts their faith. It is with great faith, deep faith, immense faith, that lay devotees offer the four requisites to the Sangha. Maintaining relationships with laypeople in an irregular, improper manner causes that faith to be corrupted. We see this from the actions of Ven. Devadatta.

Yet, in society generally, it is those with such attitudes who are respected, who become popular, and to whom most people give their votes. We must bear in mind that if the dispensation is to last for a long time, we must give our vote to the wholesome desire—to the wholesome side. To that side. Thus, we were able to extract a large number of such matters from this story.

The Buddhas introduce a Sambuddha Sāsana to this world having truly understood the nature of this saṃsāra (round of rebirths). The Buddha has declared in various sutta discourses that whatever one receives, whether it is kingship, the status of a treasurer, or the status of a wheel-turning monarch, all of it is impermanent (anicca). Sometimes, in these times, some people read with great desire the parts in those sutta discourses concerning the wealth of wheel-turning monarchs. But they ignore the ending of the suttas: "Monks, all this is impermanent (anicca). Those wheel-turning monarchs are no more, those queens are no more, those princes are no more. All that wealth is now destroyed. Therefore, be disillusioned with Preparations / preparations / volitional activity (saṅkhāras). All these Preparations / preparations / volitional activity (saṅkhāras) are impermanent (anicca)." It is in this manner that the Buddha brings forward past stories, stories of wheel-turning monarchs, and so on. Accordingly, what is shown is the nature of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (dukkha) in this saṃsāric life. It is true that by putting patches on these, lay life is maintained to a certain extent. But it is from among the lay devotees that a monk is born into the world at some point. In situations like this, whatever lifestyles you may have, whatever clothes and ornaments you may have at home, putting them aside, removing them, and turning to a simple life for this one day, you get an opportunity to reflect deeply on your life and the world, away from your homes. Through such a beginning, if someone reflects deeply on their life, on their saṃsāric becoming / existence (bhava), and at some point develops disillusionment—disillusionment with saṃsāra—it is at that moment that they enter the monastic life.

What, then, is the purpose of ordination? *Pabbajjā* means crossing over from this suffering (dukkha) of saṃsāra. A person enters ordination with the primary objective: *sabbadukkhaniassaraṇa nibbāna sacchikaraṇatthāya*—for the sake of release from all suffering (dukkha) and the realization of Nibbāna. Even today, when the monastic robe is tied around the neck, that phrase is recited. This ordination is for the sake of realizing Nibbāna, which is the departure from all suffering (dukkha). Then, what is meant by the preservation of the dispensation? When we think of the Sangha in the dispensation, you have heard the term "the Great Sangha of the Eight Noble Individuals" (*aṭṭha-purisa-puggala*). Why is this Great Sangha of the Eight Noble Individuals a special concept for the lay devotee? Because, when viewed from the perspective of lay life, Nibbāna is a very distant thing, a very remote path. But these Eight Noble Individuals are those who give us the understanding that people like us have also traveled this path on various occasions and have put an end to the suffering (dukkha) of saṃsāra. Those eight individuals who are walking on that path and who have reached the fruits of that path—namely, Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant—are like a lamp-post, a row of lamps on the path to Nibbāna. Through them, we receive a certain light, knowing: "We too can

walk on this path." That is the value within the Sangha Sāsana, the dispensation. As long as these monks practice on that path to Nibbāna, so long—as the Buddha also declared on his deathbed—as long as they fulfill those thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*), this world will not be empty of Arahants. Because, if one understands the practical aspect of the Dhamma shown by the Buddha and acts accordingly, practices accordingly, one can attain these even today. If we do not properly understand the values of such a salvific Sambuddha Sāsana, and instead use the robe merely as a flag or a suit of armor, the dispensation will decline rather than endure for a long time for the welfare and happiness of gods and humans.

This is indeed the lesson we can draw from this story. We must reflect: how do we enter this path? Through virtues such as moral virtue (*sīla*). The Buddha has shown that concentration (*samādhi*) is built on the foundation of moral virtue (*sīla*). It is based on that concentration (*samādhi*), which is one-pointedness of mind, that one can understand deeply the three characteristics—impermanent (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā)—according to reality (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*), whether one is a layperson or a monk. Therefore, taking the lives of the monks and Arahants as an example, today a large number of lay devotees have abandoned their luxurious lifestyles and, with the understanding of practicing like an Arahant for this one day, have undertaken the eight precepts of the Uposatha. Thus, the very practice of such a path shows that even within you, the lay devotees, there is a deep goal. We think: "Someday, we must escape all this saṃsāric suffering." Not only the trials and tribulations of this lay life, but if the word of the Buddha is true, we have suffered in this saṃsāra for a long time not only as humans, but also as animals, demons (*yakṣas*), hungry ghosts (*pretas*), and hell-beings. If a Buddha Sāsana has arisen, that Buddha Sāsana can be considered the greatest inheritance received from a Buddha only because of the Sangha who are dedicated to realizing the path to Nibbāna. As long as the Sambuddha Sāsana is protected, lay devotees can feel that even the practice they carry out, even the practice of moral virtue (*sīla*) they perform, is meaningful. If there is no such thing, if there is no goal, no lamp or light ahead, then lay devotees too will remain submerged in that very luxurious life, dragging the Sangha into that same life, and wandering in saṃsāra for another long period of time.

Therefore, we must always reflect upon and bring to light the Dhamma. That Nibbāna which the Buddhas have brought to light. Even though we consider it as just a word, Nibbāna is the cooling, the extinguishment, obtained by crossing over from the suffering (dukkha) of saṃsāra—or rather, that peace realized in this very life. This goal, then, is the objective of every Buddhist. Whatever meritorious deeds they perform, such as giving alms, or offering a flower or a lamp, these devotees pray: "By the merit and benefit of offering these flowers, may I attain Nibbāna." In every act, they make the aspiration: "*Nibbāna-paccayo hotu*"—may this be a condition for Nibbāna. Instead of keeping it merely as an aspiration, if we are to put it into practice, we must walk on the path of moral virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The values belonging to that path are those we mentioned: fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*), contentment (*santuṭṭhitā*), and ease of maintenance (*subharatā*). Those qualities.

Furthermore, you know that in the *Karaṇīyametta Sutta*, which is frequently used and recited with great devotion by both laity and clergy, it is mentioned: "*kulesu ananugiddho*"—not being greedily attached to families. That is how one practices the path to Nibbāna. As mentioned earlier, the brother of King Dhammāsoka was a sub-king. But after becoming a monk, he went into the forest as an *ekavihāriya* (solitary dweller) and, with strong determination, resolved not to lay down his armor until he became an Arahant. Why did he act with such firm resolve? Because he understood the dispensational values correctly. Why? Because it is only during the appearance of a Buddha (*buddhōtpāda*) that one gets the opportunity to escape from saṃsāra. Someone might say: "Even before a Buddha arises, Paccekabuddhas also arise and attain Nibbāna, do they not?" But what is the limitation of Paccekabuddhas? Although they are considered superior to Arahants, they cannot make others understand the path to Nibbāna. By their presence, one can collect great merit by offering alms and so on, but they cannot point out the path to Nibbāna. That can be done only by a Fully Enlightened Buddha (*Sammā Sambuddha*). Therefore, if such a path has been shown, and if such a Dhamma exists, living in accordance with that Dhamma is indeed what is meant by preserving the Sambuddha Sāsana.

Someone might say: "In the past, when the Dhamma was recorded in palm-leaf manuscripts, there was a risk of it being destroyed by mold and termites. But now we have various modern devices." (Referring to whatever names you call them by). We see that the words we speak are also being recorded somewhere. But will a dispensation recorded in such a way be preserved? We must consider that even if these are written in gold and preserved, if they are not deposited in our hearts, they are of no use. In the future, when people look at them, they will just be like illegible stone inscriptions—just a pile of incomprehensible words. That is the state it has reached today. This is why those great scholars, who are called learned, fall into trouble when they try to understand this Dhamma. They cannot understand it. Why? Because they do not practically walk on this path. It is only by walking on the path of moral virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) that this Dhamma can be understood.

What is even more important is this: now, to someone training on the path to Nibbāna, instructions related to completing their meditation activities on a daily basis can be given only by those who themselves practice them—only by those who have practically realized them. No matter how many carpentry tools are piled up, if there is no carpenter to teach how to use them, one cannot engage in that craft. Similarly, even if parts of this Dhamma are preserved in books and various other media, if there are no people walking on that path, or who have walked on that path, capable of giving advice on the problems that arise when practicing it, the dispensation can be said to end right there. Such a situation might indeed arise. If, instead of bringing this Dhamma close to our lives, we keep it at a distance, analyzing it, engaging in more and more conceptualization (*vitakka*), with the motive of earning money, then the dispensation will not be preserved. Instead, if one knows even a little and puts it into practice, training in moral virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), and can realize for oneself those states shown by the Buddha, it is through that that the dispensation is preserved.

Regarding the dispensation, a threefold dispensation is mentioned: learning (*pariyatti*), practice (*paṭipatti*), and penetration (*paṭivedha*). Learning (*pariyatti*) means studying and memorizing the Dhamma. No matter how much of that exists, if it is not put into practice, it is entirely a pile of words, a pile of mantras—just a pile of useless mantras. Next, penetration (*paṭivedha*) refers to the realization achieved by putting it into practice. Penetration (*paṭivedha*) means seeing through. At some point, one must see through the three characteristics—impermanent (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā)—with wisdom (paññā). One must realize it. As the Buddha has shown: "*paccattaṃ veditabbo*"—this Dhamma is "*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*"—to be realized by the wise, each for themselves. If we are to realize it, we must walk on that path we mentioned.

So, you have made a good start: this undertaking of moral virtue (*sīla*). Along with that, we can think that today you also got an opportunity to practice your meditation subjects to some extent according to the path of meditation. At the same time, if someone, reflecting deeply and from the perspective of insight (*vipassanā*), has deeply understood the impermanence (anicca) of this life, of this body, according to the principles shown by the Buddha, it is at that moment that wisdom (paññā) is said to have emerged through insight. This reality must be seen through within this very five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) at some point through meditation. Everything we think is permanent is impermanent (anicca). Everything we think is pleasant is suffering (dukkha). Everything we think is beautiful, or think of as "self" or "mine"—we must understand the true nature of these things which the world perceives in a perverted, distorted way (*vipallāsa*). The path leading to that understanding is the path of meditation.

Therefore, these wise lay devotees must reflect: on a Vesak day like today, we must protect these dispensational values, without any distinction between laity and clergy. If we are to protect them, we must understand them correctly. We must understand them according to the word of the Buddha. What do we have to protect? Is it those factors that help us practice this path of Nibbāna, which supports the dispensational survival shown by the Buddha? Or is it those various goals brought by the world from the West? If we shape our lives according to those competitive invitations coming from lay life, turning toward that lifestyle, then just as it becomes difficult to protect those virtues shown by the Buddha, such as fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*), contentment (*santuṭṭhitā*), and ease of maintenance (*subharatā*), the dispensation will become completely corrupted and degraded through improper lay relationships.

It becomes corrupted. Lay devotees develop a certain respect for the monks, thinking: "These monks are carrying out something that we cannot do in the lay life. Supporting them with the four requisites is our duty as good people." Thus, with great faith, even while depriving themselves of food and drink, they offer food, drink, clothing, and the four requisites to the monks. Therefore, a great responsibility lies on the monks: if they, walking on the path shown by the Buddha, realize that Dhamma of Nibbāna brought to light by the Buddha, the lay devotees will accumulate a vast mass of merit. It is with this intention that the Buddha declared: "*Anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa*"—they become

an incomparable field of merit for the world. But if one acts in that practice like Ven. Devadatta, merely fulfilling the wishes of the lay devotees who look upon them as a field of merit, regardless of popularity, it only paves the way for the decline of the dispensation.

We place these few points in your minds out of concern for the long endurance of this dispensation. So, today you have listened to the Dhamma for about an hour. Likewise, at your own level, you have undertaken a certain moral virtue (*sīla*) and disciplined your body and speech through virtues like moral virtue (*sīla*). Everyone should resolve: "Understanding the nature of this saṃsāra, whether as a layperson or a monk, walking on this path of meditation, and as quickly as possible through the association of spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), by penetrating the paths and fruits of Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant, may this listening to the Dhamma definitely be a supportive condition, a strong dependency, for escaping all this saṃsāric suffering and realizing the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna!" Likewise, may all beings, including our departed relatives from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, rejoice in this merit of listening to and teaching the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they realize the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi (Enlightenment)!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #24

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Asaṁsaṭṭhaṁ gahaṭṭhehi, anāgārehi cūbhayaṁ;

Anokasāriṁ appicchaṁ, tam ahaṁ brūmi brāhmaṇaṁ.

From:

Verses 404 from the Brāhmaṇavagga (Chapter on the Brahmin) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

Today is Poson Full Moon Poya Day, the day on which we commemorate the historic event of the establishment of the Buddha Sāsana in this country under the leadership of Arahat Mahinda Thero. Although this Buddha Sāsana has survived for many centuries amidst various timely calamities and social upheavals, many people nowadays are not clear even about what its signs of decline are and what its signs of progress are. Therefore, for today's sermon, we have selected a verse and a story that would help us understand this matter at least to some extent.

The Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, preached this verse at Jetavanarama in connection with a certain monk named Tissa. This Venerable Tissa, having obtained a meditation topic from the Buddha, entered a forest in search of a suitable place to meditate. As he was walking, he came across a cave situated on a mountain slope, and his mind became very calm and attained concentration (*samādhi*). That monk thought, “This cave is very suitable and congenial (*sappāya*) for me. Perhaps, dwelling here, I will be able to bring an end to the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of saṁsāra. He formed this thought. The deity who resided in that cave, seeing this monk approaching, first looked with divine eye at the monk's virtue (*sīla*). Upon looking, the deity saw that he was a monk who had kept his virtue extremely pure from the very day of his higher ordination (*upasampadā*). So the deity thought, “Now, with such a virtuous person, with a monk, I cannot live together. Deities cannot dwell on a higher level (above a virtuous monk), so

this will be troublesome. Yet, the deity thought, “Perhaps this monk will stay only for today and leave tomorrow. Thus, the deity left the cave.

Then on the second day, Venerable Tissa went to the village for alms. Seeing him, a certain lay woman (*upāsikā*) became very pleased and invited him, offering him almsfood at her house. She requested, “Venerable Sir, please reside here for these three months of the rainy season (*vassāna*); reside in that cave, and we will look after your needs.” The monk accepted this. Thus he returned to the cave. The deity waited for several days, thinking, “He will leave today, he will leave tomorrow.” After about two weeks, the deity realized that this monk had come indeed to spend the rainy season retreat. Then the deity thought, “Now, how can I arrange a way to make this monk leave this place?” Since the monk was pure, there was no way to make any false accusation against him. “However, through some strategy, I must create a blemish in this monk's virtue, create disrepute for him.” Thinking thus, the deity possessed the eldest son of that lay woman. Having possessed him, the deity twisted the child's head, made his eyes roll back, and made him fall down foaming at the mouth.

When the lay woman screamed in fear, the deity, speaking through the possessed child, said, “It is I who have possessed this child. I do not want any animal sacrifices or offerings. Go to that monk whom you look after, get a piece of a dry vine of wild ginger (*dambuväl*) and a wild beehive, boil some oil, and apply it as nasal drops (*nasya*) to this child; then he will be cured. I will then leave.” This lay woman replied, “Even if my child dies, I cannot do that (ask the monk to do medical work).” Then the deity said, “If you cannot do that, then tell that monk to put some asafoetida powder into this child's nose.” She said, “I cannot do that either.” “Well, if that too is impossible, sprinkle the water used to wash that monk's feet on this child's head.” “Ah, that indeed I can do,” said the lay woman. That day, when Venerable Tissa came for alms, after offering the almsfood, she made him wash his feet and asked, “Venerable Sir, is it wrong if we sprinkle this water on this child's head?” “Very well, it is alright,” he replied. As soon as that water was sprinkled, the deity left the possessed child and returned to the cave. The child was then cured.

The monk knew nothing of this detail. As usual, after finishing his almsmeal, reflecting on his meditation topic and remaining in meditation, he walked back to the cave. As he was arriving, the deity standing near the door of the cave said, “Great physician, do not enter here.” Then the monk asked, “Who is speaking?” “It is I, the deity residing in this cave,” the deity replied. Then the monk thought, “Have I practiced medicine? Have I practiced medicine for laypeople since the day of my higher ordination? I have not done so. My virtue (*sīla*) is extremely pure.” Seeing this, he asked the deity, “Why do you accuse me like this? Have I done such a thing?” Then the deity said, “Why talk about the past? Did you not do such a thing today itself? Did you not sprinkle water on the head of the child of such-and-such lay woman?” Then the monk realized, “This deity is making a baseless accusation.” At the same time, he thought, “Since the deity cannot find any defect in my virtue, he is making this false accusation.” Then he reflected on his own virtue. The joy and rapture (*pīti, pāmojja*) that arose within him through this reflection was so immense that, subduing it and establishing concentration (*samādhi*)—according

to the text, before he could even take another step forward—he attained the supreme fruit of Arahatship right there, having become concentrated through that. After becoming an Arahat, he told the deity, “It is not suitable for you to remain here after accusing a pure monk like me.” When he said this, the deity departed.

That monk resided there for those three months of the rainy season. Having lived in that cave, after the rainy season retreat, he went to see the Buddha. On that occasion, the other monks asked him, “Friend, did you fulfill your ultimate goal?” meaning, did you become an Arahat. He did not say it directly. Instead, the monk narrated the entire event that had occurred. Then those monks asked, “Venerable Sir, when the deity made that baseless accusation, did you not get angry? Did ill-will (*dosa*) not arise in you?” He replied, “No such change occurred in me.” Perceiving through this that he had indeed become an Arahat, those monks went and told the Buddha, “Venerable Sir, such-and-such monk says this. He claims to be an Arahat.” Then the Buddha, in a manner of endorsing it, said, “My son's virtue is like this, extremely pure. My son is such a person,” and expressing this idea, he uttered the verse we cited at the beginning:

“Asaṁsaṭṭhaṁ gahaṭṭhehi, anāgārehi cūbhayaṁ,

Anokasāriṁ appicchaṁ, tam ahaṁ brūmi brāhmaṇaṁ.”

“Not associating with householders and the homeless alike, wandering without a home, with few desires—him I call a Brahmin.”

In this dispensation, the term 'Brahmin'—meaning the noble Brahmin—is used for an Arahat. The Buddha praised such an Arahat in this manner. That is the story. Now, let us see if there is anything in this verse and story related to what we said about the Sāsana.

First of all, when speaking of the story, we get an excellent example from the lay side through the conduct of that lay woman. Because she was a lay woman who had some understanding of the disciplinary rules (*vinaya*) and virtues of the Sangha, she did not tempt the monk to practice medicine—which is considered a wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) for monks—even if her child's life was at stake. Through this, we can see that the lay devotees of that time had an understanding of what is allowable (*kappa*) and what is not allowable (*akappa*) for monks. Likewise, there was a nature in that society that supported the preservation of the virtues, such as *sīla*, of the Sangha. In truth, many people in this day and age have no understanding of the virtues, such as *sīla*, of the Sangha. Consequently, they conduct lay-monk relationships based on various other principles. There is a fourfold purification of virtue belonging to monks, known as *Catu-pārisiddhi-sīla*. This is a virtue of four parts. Briefly mentioned:

1. *Pātimokkha-saṁvara-sīla* (Virtue of restraint according to the Disciplinary Code)

2. *Indriya-saṁvara-sīla* (Virtue of restraint of the sense faculties)

3. *Ājīva-pārisiddhi-sīla* (Virtue of purification of livelihood)

4. *Paccaya-sannissita-sīla* (Virtue connected with the use of requisites)

Among these, first, the virtue of restraint (*saṁvara-sīla*) means training oneself in accordance with the code of disciplinary rules laid down by the Buddha for the Sangha. The virtue of restraint of the sense faculties (*indriya-saṁvara-sīla*) means guarding the six sense doors—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—against defilements (*kilesa*) that flow in, closing and restraining these doors. The virtue of purification of livelihood (*ājīva-pārisiddhi-sīla*) means the pure livelihood proper to monks, especially maintaining correct conduct without forming inappropriate, worldly relationships with lay devotees—it is the virtue regarding the purification of livelihood. Fourthly, the virtue connected with requisites (*paccaya-sannissita-sīla*) means, when using the four requisites—robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicine—reflecting on their true purpose, that is, for the sake of Nibbāna, for attaining Nibbāna, and not using them with greed, but rather turning them into meditation, such as meditating on them as elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*) or as foul (*asubha-manasikāra*).

It must be because the lay devotees of that time had some understanding of this fourfold pure virtue that, considering the livelihood (of monks) and having respect for the Sangha, she said, “Even if my child dies, I will not ask such a thing from the monk.” Now, in this day and age, this can sometimes be a problem. Why? Because the lay-monk relationship, its value, its suitability or unsuitability, is measured according to principles such as altruistic service, social service, and economics. However, the Buddha has shown that since the ultimate goal of monks is Nibbāna, and since their life is sustained by consuming food given in faith by laypeople, the Buddha allows only what is relevant to the purpose for which they went forth (ordained). Furthermore, practicing medicine for laypeople is a wrong livelihood, an incorrect livelihood, a corruption of families (*kula-dūsana*). That is, the Buddha has shown it as something that corrupts and soils the faith of laypeople. Why? Because being overly intimate leads to the decline of monks. On one hand, monks come forward to fulfill the mundane needs of laypeople, breaking disciplinary rules to please them, and are thus tempted to obtain the four requisites. On the other hand, lay devotees also look to use monks for everything to fulfill their own needs.

Now, these devotees know that lay life is very complex, lived amidst a great multitude of problems. Often laypeople have to “hit the nail according to the place” (improvise for convenience). When they have no other tool, they turn the monk into a tool. Making an intimate monk a tool, they fulfill their own needs. What happens through this is that the monk deviates from discipline, from the aforementioned purification of livelihood (*ājīva-pārisiddhi*), and not only falls away from his virtue but ultimately even disrobes from the saffron robe. Monks fall into such a state of great decline. They fall into ruin. Along with that, the respect that laypeople had for monks is also lost. You have heard the old saying in this country, “The comb of the cock seen morning and night looks white.” In the same way, they even forget the robe that the monk is wearing. The monk falls to the level of someone just wearing a white dress. The simile of the cock fits perfectly here. They forget that the monk is wearing a robe. Treating him as one of their own, they try to carry on their life by utilizing monks for all their weddings, functions, and every other activity. Although from the perspective of social service, altruism, etc., this might seem

like a good thing, because it does not agree with the true purpose of monks, the Buddha declared these to be wrong livelihoods. Thus, such a situation exists.

At the same time, another important matter is revealed to us by this story through the baseless accusation made by the deity. Hearing that baseless accusation, that monk did not get angry. Instead, what did he do? He reflected on his own virtue (*sīla*). How instantaneous was the result of that reflection! Why? Because he had arrived at that cave while reflecting on his meditation topic. Now, it is shown in the Dhamma that this reflection on one's virtue (*sīlānussati*) is extremely powerful. The rapture (*pāmojja*) that arises through reflecting on virtue is immense. Without shouting and boasting about that rapture to others, one calms it down and pacifies it, and through that joy (*pīti*), both mind and body are tranquilized. Through that tranquility, concentration (*samādhi*) arises. Such is the functioning of the mind. This monk experienced this instantly because he was an extremely virtuous monk who loved solitude. At the same time, drawing upon his past merit (*puñña-sakti*), he instantly attained the fruit of Arahatship. Through this, the benefit of keeping the virtue of purification of livelihood (*ājīva-pārisiddhi-sīla*) perfectly was realized right there by Venerable Tissa. This is a great example when we think of it from the side of the Sangha.

So, when we reflect on this lay-monk relationship on a day like today, let us turn our attention to the group that came to Mihintale to establish the Buddha Sāsana. History records that this group included Arahat Mahinda Thero, four higher-ordained Arahat monks named Itthiya, Uttiya, Sambala, and Bhaddasāla, the Arahat novice monk Sumana, and the non-returner lay disciple Bhanduka who had attained direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). When we think of how this group was composed, we can understand that this missionary group was sent in a manner perfectly suited to explain the lay-monk relationship to a new country and a new people. Why? Because, looking at it from one side, a minimum of five higher-ordained monks is required for the noble vinaya act of conferring higher ordination (*upasampadā*). Thus, there were at least five higher-ordained monks there. What did the novice monk and the lay disciple do? They must have explained the principles of the lay-monk relationship to this new population. They must have explained, “These are the things that are allowable for monks, and these are the things that are not allowable.” We can understand that this group was formed in a way that helped to coordinate and create awareness. This, too, was done with a deep purpose. It was not because there were no other Arahats or other monks. Bringing a lay disciple along was done so that the gradual transition in this dispensation from layperson to monk, as well as the principles of the lay-monk relationship, could be explained to a new people in an understandable manner.

However, in the course of time, as we mentioned earlier, while this Sāsana progressed amidst various timely calamities and social upheavals, these noble goals, ideas, and the purpose of going forth began to be forgotten by both monks and laypeople. What ultimately happened through this? The going forth (ordination), which should take place with a deep purpose, finally became a mere nominal going forth. That is, ordination is something that must happen with a deep understanding. Externally, the Buddha has declared that a person does not become a monk merely by wearing robes or shaving the

head. Many accept that while ordaining the body is easy, ordaining the mind is difficult. Thus, while ordaining the body can be done in a short time, it takes a considerable amount of time to ordain the mind. There have been rare instances where some people who had developed their perfections (*pāramī*) instantly became Arahats even in lay clothing. But one should not generalize based on that. In this dispensation, this practice (*paṭipadā*) is extremely difficult. The Buddha has declared: *"Dullabhā pabbajjā"* — going forth is rare. It is also difficult. Genuine going forth is a rare and difficult thing. However, in this way, when we gradually think about these social transitions and upheavals, it becomes a very common and very easy thing. That is the level to which it falls. Then, as methods of making this going forth easy develop in various ways, finally, this ordaining becomes a fashion. In this day and age, everything becomes a fashion. Devotees might see the final end of this fashion in the near future.

Just as these devotees observe the precepts and then relinquish them, going forth might be transformed into a mere "change of clothes" where one ordains in the morning reciting, *"Sabba-dukkha-nissaraṇa-nibbāna-sacchikaraṇatthāya"* (for the sake of release from all suffering and realizing Nibbāna) and removes the robe in the evening. Such things are possible.

Yet, the Buddha has shown through a wonderful and valuable code of practice how these external changes made during ordination—such as wearing the robe and shaving the head—can be taken deeper and deeper by considering their profound meaning, helping one even to attain Arahatship. This is found in a valuable discourse called the *Dasa Dhamma Sutta*. Although this *Dasa Dhamma Sutta* was preached especially for monks, these devotees' understanding of the ten matters included in this *Dasa Dhamma Sutta* will help establish a proper lay-monk relationship. Even if we cannot completely stop the aforementioned decline of the Sāsana, if lay devotees also become aware of this, it will help to at least arrest the speed of that decline to some extent. That is why we are attempting at this moment to briefly explain, within the available time, the ten matters mentioned in the *Dasa Dhamma Sutta*.

In that *Dasa Dhamma Sutta*, it is stated as follows: "Monks, there are ten dhammas (matters) that should be constantly, daily reflected upon by one who has gone forth." "Reflecting" (*paccavekkhaṇa*) means considering, or looking back to examine. It is looking to see: Is something good? Is it bad? Was it done correctly? Was it not? The Buddha once explained this word "reflection" to Rahula Thero using a beautiful simile, just like explaining to a small child. When a person is about to go somewhere, they look into a mirror to adjust their hair, face, and clothing. They look into the mirror to see what the defects are and to correct them. The word "reflection" (*paccavekkhaṇa*) is used for looking into that mirror. A mirror is used in a house for reflection. That is, looking back. You are ready to go, but you look back to see, "Are my adjustments and clothing proper?" A similar idea is present here. There are ten matters to reflect upon. When looked at, they are like ten mirrors. What is each of these? Let us try to understand them next.

First, monks must daily reflect on this: “I have entered upon a state of altered appearance (*vevaṇṇiyaṁ upagato*).” “I have entered upon a state of altered appearance.” Though mentioned briefly, if explained, it must be taken like this: First, let us think of the lay devotee. The nature of a layperson is not one of altered appearance (*vevaṇṇiya*). They do not like colorless or dull things. The lay devotee likes colorful and beautiful things. But the Buddha tells monks to enter upon a state of altered appearance (*vevaṇṇiya*). How does one enter upon a state of altered appearance? It is explained in two ways: *kāya-vevaṇṇiyaṁ* (altered appearance of the body) and *parikkhāra-vevaṇṇiyaṁ* (altered appearance of requisites). The altered appearance of the body is explained like this: Devotees in this society know how many fashions are made from time to time regarding hair and beard. The torture given to them! Young men and women, seeing how these change from time to time, lean towards that side, spending any amount of money to follow the new fashion. They do that. They strive to do that. But for those gone forth, there is no such problem. Why? Because at the very moment of ordination, hair and beard are shaved off. There is the altered appearance of the body. So, the altered appearance of the body should be understood in that way.

The altered appearance of requisites is: lay devotees have various colorful clothes. Even if these devotees appear in white clothes at this moment, when going out onto the streets, they might wear colorful clothes that make them unrecognizable. That is the normal nature of a layperson. But regarding monks, the Buddha has declared: wear a robe made of cut pieces, discolored and dyed with paste-dye. Use an almsbowl, a blackened almsbowl. Likewise, the other requisites are things that show fewness of desires (*appicchatā*). They are not luxury goods that are to be used, but what is suitable for fewness of desires. The Buddha has even told some monks, when they were using things suitable for pleasure-seeking laypeople, to break them and throw them away. That shows altered appearance. That is something that monks must constantly bear in mind. “Not colorfulness like a layperson, but altered appearance is what belongs to us.” That is the first one.

The meaning of the next one in Sinhala is: “My livelihood is bound up with others.” The word *parapaṭibaddhā* is mentioned there. That means, “My livelihood is dependent on others, connected with others. I do not live on my own money, from my own bank account.” They survive on the food offered with faith by lay devotees—going from house to house for alms if they wish—and on other requisites like robes offered by lay devotees. They reside in a hut built by lay devotees. Constantly reflect on that matter. Why reflect on it thus? Through that reflection, the purpose of going forth is automatically remembered. “Why, when I was such a millionaire, did I abandon all that? Why did I come to this poor state?” In truth, the basic meaning of the word *bhikkhu* is a mendicant who lives on alms, like a beggar when looked at. In terms of the word, it is like a beggar, but the difference is that they do not harass people like beggars do. They just go and stand in front of a house for a moment. Whether they receive something or not, it is the same. Furthermore, it is not given in the sense of giving to a beggar; these devotees, thinking of them as a field of merit (*puññakkhetta*) for their own merit on this path to Nibbāna, offer something to the Sangha with faith. Then, through that, the purpose of

going forth is remembered. Whenever a monk did wrong, the Buddha would always remind him, “Why, monk, do you not depend on the food given with faith by lay devotees?” Through that, we see the correct lay-monk relationship.

What is there, within that transaction, is the fulfillment of those virtues. But in this day and age, some people distort the word *parapaṭibaddhā* to an extraordinary degree and explain that for those gone forth, it means fulfilling transactions with lay devotees in a lay manner. That is not it. If one is truly to pay back that debt, one must attain what Venerable Tissa attained. It is through that that the offering becomes of great fruit and great benefit. Along with that Arahatship, how great a merit must have accrued to that lay woman! Otherwise, if that monk had taken up practicing medicine, the alms offered would have been of no use. Such is the situation. To understand this, to remember this, the Buddha has declared to monks: *“Parapaṭibaddhā me jīvikā”* — My livelihood is bound up with others. That, then, is the second one.

Next, the third one: “A different behavior/manner must be maintained by me.” This needs to be explained. In ordinary, understandable language: “I must deport my physical postures in a manner different from a layperson. My behavior must be different from a layperson.” What does that mean? The word “manner” (*ākalla*) used there refers especially to the way one deports postures like walking, standing, sitting, etc. Regarding the deportment of postures, there is a difference between the way monks deport their postures and the way laypeople do. What belongs to monks is performing activities like walking and going in a calm manner. In short, at the end of the disciplinary rules, the Buddha says: “Monks, you must behave for the clarity of the unclarified, and for the increase of the clarified (*appasannānaṁ vā prasādāya, pasannānaṁ vā bhiyyobhāvāya*).” It is in accordance with these purposes that the Buddha laid down various disciplinary rules and training precepts (*sikkhāpada*). Especially, there are many training rules called *Sekhiya* regarding how a monk should behave in a village: “One should behave in this manner. One should wrap the robe in this manner. One should walk calmly in this manner. One should eat in this manner.” All of these show that seeing this becomes a cause for the layperson's mind to become serene and pleased. That is why monks have a different deportment. If they keep doing what laypeople do, they can never develop that aforementioned calmness and restraint.

So, regarding the value of this, some might think, “What is the use of doing these things in this modern world?” Modern or not, if we turn our attention to history, the best example of the value of this deportment of postures (*ākappasampatti*) is found in history when we think of how a certain violent and ruthless king named Caṇḍāśoka was transformed. It is a historical story. Seeing the calm manner in which a seven-year-old small Arahat novice monk named Nigrodha was walking across the courtyard of King Caṇḍāśoka's palace, the king became serene, invited him in, listened to the Dhamma from Venerable Nigrodha, and became a changed man. Through this, we see the importance of that deportment of postures. Likewise, we know that according to the Buddha's teaching, this deportment of postures is shown with a beautiful simile. There is a simile expressed by the monks of the past according to the Buddha's teaching:

"Siniddhā tela dhārāva ahosi iriyāpatho"

A beautiful simile is given for the deportment of the postures of monks: like a smooth stream of oil. Try pouring ghee or coconut oil from a bottle. It does not pour out with a splashing sound like water does. In a wonderful pattern, it flows smoothly, softly, evenly, without turbulence. The Buddha has declared to monks that their postures should be deported in that manner. That is one characteristic of that deportment of postures—like a stream of oil. Thus, monks are told to constantly reflect on this deportment of postures. Just as a layperson looks into a mirror to see if their clothes and ornaments are in place, a monk must constantly reflect on their deportment of postures and correct any defects.

The fourth matter is regarding one's own virtue (*sīla*). "When reflecting on my virtue, when looking back and considering it, does my own mind blame me?" To explain "does my own mind blame me": Is there any blemish or defect in my virtue? That is what that monk did too. As soon as the deity accused him, he thought, reflected, and looked into this mirror of his own virtue to see if there was any defect in it. When he looked, there was none. It was through that that he ultimately became an Arahat. Thus, the Buddha has declared that if a person is to improve, they must have what we normally call self-respect in the world. Similarly, it is a cause for oneself to be happy: "I am keeping these virtues such as *sīla*," and one's mind does not blame oneself. "The mind does not blame" means there is no remorse. "No remorse" means the mind is unified, calm, concentrated, and not scattered. Through this, we see how these are integrated into the practice (*paṭipadā*).

The next matter—the fifth matter—is: "When my fellow monks (*sabrahmacārī*) whom I associate with, the wise monks, not foolish people, but the wise monks, examine my virtue, is there any cause for them to blame me?" One reflects on that too. In this regard, the Buddha points out a principle called *lokādhipateyya* (governed by the world). Just as one thinks of oneself and is happy, if there is a reasonable blame from the world, monks must behave in such a way that there is no room for it. Thus, they reflect whether there is any room for others to blame them regarding their virtue. Reflecting on this is how it became clear to Venerable Tissa that the deity had made a baseless accusation. No one else, no one at all, could accuse him; his virtue was extremely pure. He realized this through that reflection, the fifth reflection. It was because of this that he went and narrated the complete detail of his life in the cave to the monks without any fear. Let us think of the other side. If that monk had gone to those houses and started practicing medicine, could he have gone and spoken before the Buddha or the other monks? He would have been in a position where he could not speak. Instead, because Venerable Tissa was pure regarding this fifth matter, he spoke without fear, saying, "I spent the time in this and this manner."

Now, the sixth matter mentioned is: "There is separation, departure, and dissociation for me from all that is dear and appealing." We will have to separate from everything. Either by death or through other causes, we will have to separate from everything we consider dear and appealing. What this shows is what belongs to the monk. The verse also says there: *"Gahaṭṭhehi anāgārehi cūbhayaṁ"* — there is no clinging or attachment to

householders, nor is there any clinging or attachment to those gone forth. Why do they do this? Because of the Dhamma nature that we will have to separate from all of this. They reflect on this daily. “There is separation from things dear and appealing to me, from people dear and appealing to me; such is the nature of saṁsāra.” They instill this in their minds. That is the sixth matter.

Next, the seventh matter: they reflect on karma, the law of karma. “Karma is my own property.” If looked at in the true sense, karma is the only thing that belongs to us. Karma is my inheritance, my birthright. Karma is the cause of my birth. Karma is my true kinsman. Karma is my true refuge. Whatever karma I do, whether good or bad, I must expect its result. I am the heir to my karma. I must experience the result of my karma. Thus, they bring close to their lives that wonderful Dhamma nature existing in the world regarding karma, from which not even Buddhas or Arahats can escape. Looking through that mirror of karma, they understand: “This is the nature of our everything, of every single thing. There is nothing to be proud of in these. Our pleasure and pain are due to some past karma. All these good things we experience are due to some past good karma. These difficulties and sufferings are due to various unwholesome (*akusala*) karmas. It is the same for the future.” Living with this principle of karma is what is meant there.

Next, the eighth matter shown is somewhat unique. “How do my days and nights pass for me?” That is, “How do my nights and days pass? In what manner do my nights and days pass? While doing what?” What this indicates is that every moment of living the life of one gone forth, one must think: “Today I spent a day. Is this day I spent one that helps me fulfill the purpose of my going forth? Or is it one that causes its decline? In what manner do my nights and days pass?” The meaning of that statement is: “How do I spend my time? In a useless manner? Or in a successful manner?” One constantly reflects on this.

Next, the ninth matter: “Do I delight in empty places, empty houses suitable for meditation? Or do I have a delight in peaceful dwelling in them?” That is a difficult thing. A lay devotee, who lives with a crowd, cannot live alone and secluded in an empty house, a forest, or a cave like that. That is a special strength that helps towards Nibbāna. That is why the Buddha points this out here. What is asked here is about being devoted to meditation, loving solitude. Thus, a monk must ask himself: “Am I truly fond of solitude? Can I live in an empty house? Do I have the strength within me to step away from human society and go to an empty house for the sake of Dhamma and meditation?” They are told to think of this constantly. For one who lives closely associated with and surrounded by laypeople, let alone an empty house, even a forest is something that brings fear. They are afraid even to think of of it. “Alas, how can I live alone?” Such is the situation here. That is why the Buddha has shown this as the ninth matter, as a reflection relevant to meditation, to think and consider about oneself.

Now, next is the tenth one. It is for the sake of this tenth one that all of these exist. When the Buddha summarizes matters of Dhamma, the final thing is often the crowning point of the Dhamma. Likewise, one must think especially about this; these devotees must

instill this in their minds. What is the tenth one? A monk must reflect on this daily: “In my final moments, at the moment of death, if my fellow monks whom I associate with come and ask me: 'Venerable Sir, you have lived this life of one gone forth for so long; have you attained any superhuman state (*uttari-manussa-dhamma*), such as the jhānas, paths, and fruits?' when they ask thus, will I be free from embarrassment, not having to look down at the ground with a frowning face in regret? Have I attained any noble, spiritual state of the Sāsana so that I do not have to be in such a state?” If one has attained some noble state, when that question is asked, even if one is reluctant to say it directly due to fewness of desires (*appicchatā*), at least one can adorn one's face with a gentle smile at that moment of death. “Let them think I did not attain it.” In that way, at that moment of death, when looking back and reflecting on one's life without regret: “My going forth, the purpose of my going forth, has been fulfilled. I have no fear. I have no fear of the lower realms (*apāya*). If Arahatship is attained, there is no more *Jāti* (Birth) or *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, or death in saṁsāra. It is that peace, like a flame gone out Nibbāna.” That is the ultimate goal. The final goal of going forth, the ultimate consummation. Even the robe-belt is tied for this purpose, not for anything else. The robe-belt is not tied so that lay society can tie it and drag the monk along, like a cow is tied and dragged. It is bad to drag that robe-belt to fulfill the mundane needs of laypeople. Tying that robe-belt is a certain symbol. After removing the lay clothes, they put on the robes. What is the meaning of that? *“Sabba-dukkha-nissaraṇa-nibbāna-sacchikaraṇatthāya”* — for the sake of realizing Nibbāna, which brings an end to all suffering of saṁsāra.

Therefore, right from the beginning, it is connected to that ultimate goal. If these devotees think back on the deep meaning of each of these matters, they can understand from this final matter, even if more details are not said. In the final moments, at the moment of death, if one has attained that noble supramundane state through this rare going forth within this rare Buddha Sāsana—even amidst eating little or nothing, even amidst various illnesses and obstacles—then there is great peace at the final moment. Otherwise, crying out in fear of death, no matter what titles, honors, offices, or degrees one possessed, crying out in terrible lamentation at the final moment, the life of one gone forth ends right there. And then, there is no knowing where one will go. That is why the Buddha highlights this through the final matter of this *Dasa Dhamma Sutta*.

Now, sometimes someone might say these are outdated things nowadays. We have not yet heard of the *Dasa Dhamma Sutta* being made into a “Nava Dhamma Sutta” (Nine Dhamma Sutta). Monks still use it. What is told to us at the end of this is the consummation of the life of one gone forth, its ultimate purpose. It is that which crowns the life of one gone forth. This is not a common thing. This cannot be made common. Likewise, this is not easy. Now, the life of crows is very easy. The Buddha has shown that for a monk who does not keep the training rules such as the vinaya, it is very easy to live like a crow. But the Buddha has shown that for a genuine monk, life is difficult, hard. Sometimes they do not even receive almsfood properly. Yet, they do not try to please laypeople in inappropriate ways to obtain the four requisites through wrong livelihood. That is the practice. Why? Because that is a great betrayal. On one hand, it is a betrayal

of the Sāsana; on the other, it is a betrayal of the rarest purpose in this rare time—crossing over the suffering of saṁsāra, which has not been done before. Through that, the going forth becomes entirely useless. It does not bear fruit; it becomes useless and in vain.

Through this, we can understand the value of this *Dasa Dhamma Sutta*. In truth, this should not be thought of as something that monks keep hidden and use only for themselves. By lay devotees becoming aware of this, they can protect themselves. They can avoid misleading the intimate monks they associate with by making inappropriate requests. This decline of the Sāsana is an open secret nowadays. There are some things in society known as "open secrets." One should not be afraid to speak of them. Thus, the cause of this decline of the Sāsana, which exists as an open secret, is not only the negligence of monks. It is also because lay devotees use their positions and power to hold onto that robe-belt, as mentioned before, to fulfill their own needs, or to turn the monk into a tool to "hit the nail according to the place" (improvise for convenience). That is how this decline of the Sāsana occurs. Therefore, our lay devotees must be wise. They must be aware, like that lay woman of the past. In the past, when the Sāsana was shining, when many Arahats resided in this country, the cause of that state of the Sāsana was that lay devotees acted with some understanding of the fourfold pure virtue of the Sangha. Even if they lost their own lives, or the lives of their children, they did not go to have monks do inappropriate, worldly things for them. It is through such actions that the destruction of the Sāsana, the decline of the Sāsana, is brought about. Thus, several highly valuable matters have been revealed to these devotees through this.

We must reflect on what this Buddha Sāsana is. It is also explained in various ways, such as being threefold: *Pariyatti* (learning/scripture), *Paṭipatti* (practice), and *Paṭivedha* (penetration/realization). When speaking of the Buddha Sāsana, when we say "we have received the Buddha Sāsana," someone might recall: we received the Dhamma preached by the Buddha. Because Arahat Mahinda came, we received the Tipiṭaka. That is what is called *Pariyatti*. We received the portions of the Dhamma necessary for learning. Likewise, *Paṭipatti* means that this Dhamma in this Sāsana is something to be put into practice. These are not things to be limited to books. Every Dhamma is of a nature that says, "Come and see" (*ehipassiko*), challenging us: "Put me into practice and see." It is a Dhamma that takes one step by step. Therefore, whether lay or ordained, engaging in that practice is called the *Paṭipatti Sāsana* (the Sāsana of practice). Evidence that this *Paṭipatti Sāsana* shone in those early stages is that when Arahat Mahinda and his group arrived, they ordained even from royal families, even royal queens, entering a vast number of people into the Sāsana; establishing the Sāsana in the proper manner means entering into the practice.

Next, *Paṭivedha* (penetration/realization) means developing meditation through that practice, developing wisdom—insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*)—and through that, penetrating the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahatship. "Penetrating" means seeing through this true state, the Four Noble Truths, with the eye of wisdom. Through this, this state which is covered, covered by ignorance

(*avijjā*), must be realized by each person for themselves. That is how it can be seen. Another person cannot come and show it, no matter how many researches are done. Now, what is often heard in this day and age is that some might think the Sāsana nowadays is much more developed than during the Buddha's time, or even than in Sri Lanka in the recent past. Why? Because there are so many books. There are various methods regarding learning through different media. Now one can carry the entire Tipiṭaka in one's pocket. The entire Tipiṭaka in the pocket! In the past, they memorized these with great difficulty, chanted them, and bore them in mind. Through that, some change occurred in that person. To avoid forgetting, they chanted them constantly, and without even knowing it, they lived in accordance with the Dhamma. But now, because of all these modern scientific methods—please do not misunderstand our saying this; we have to point out both the benefits and the drawbacks of these—some people become proud. “I have the entire Tipiṭaka with me, in my pocket, in the newest way.” But that is not a genuine learning (*pariyatti*) of the Dhamma. Be that as it may, let us say there is a bit more *Pariyatti* now. However, the practice (*paṭipatti*) becomes weaker and weaker in that manner. Why? Because many people now think this Dhamma, like other things, is something to be understood through research done in various laboratories. Or, like various scientific researches done now, they treat internal things as external and conduct research. That is not the kind of research to be done here. This noble quest (*ariyapariyesana*) is not such a thing. It is only by cultivating virtues such as *sīla* within oneself that the truth of this Dhamma can be tested. Not by things done externally, not by such external research. For that, one must descend into the practice. Right from the beginning, one must descend into the practice, starting from the Five Precepts. So, that is what is called the *Paṭipatti Sāsana*. Looking at it from that perspective, the *Paṭipatti Sāsana* is very weak. Next, even weaker than that is the *Paṭivedha Sāsana* (the Sāsana of realization). Now, some people in this day and age say, “These things cannot be done nowadays. Supramundane states do not belong to this era. Nibbāna does not belong to this era. For those, we must wait until another Buddha comes. Otherwise, it does not suit today's society at all.” Thinking thus, there is a tendency to invalidate it entirely. But we must reflect that according to the Buddha's word, the Buddha has declared: “As long as these thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) are developed in one's mind, for so long the world will not be empty of Arahats.”

We must walk this path of the Dhamma having developed that perception of capability. We must strive to protect the Sāsana. Otherwise, only one-third of the Sāsana will be protected. Only the side regarding the aforementioned learning (*pariyatti*) will develop. There is no use in that developing alone. Books will lie moldering in libraries, but in society, people will ultimately end up tearing each other apart like wild beasts—such a state of criminality. On the other hand, regarding the Sāsana of monks too, such a state of decline is likely to occur if the other factors, namely *paṭipatti* and *paṭivedha*, are neglected. In this Buddha Sāsana, the deepest thing, the most noble thing we expect from a Buddha, is bringing an end to the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of saṁsāra. Only a Fully Enlightened One (*Sammā Sambuddha*) can show the Dhamma necessary to end this suffering of saṁsāra. Not even a Silent Buddha (*Paccekabuddha*) can do that. Although they realize Nibbāna, they cannot explain it to others. Thus, the Buddha declares when

preaching deep Dhammas like dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*): “Monks, I have well divided, analyzed, dissected, and brought this Dhamma down to a level where anyone can understand it, and I have laid it open for you to 'see'.” There is an ancient saying, an ancient usage, about “the teacher's closed fist” (*ācariya-mutthi*). That is, some jealous teachers in the past did not give everything to their disciples; they hid a little. The Buddha declares that there is no such thing with Him. “I have not hidden a portion in that manner. Whatever there is relevant to Nibbāna—not to other things, but whatever there is relevant to Nibbāna—within my Buddha-knowledge, I have taught all of it to you.” Therefore, if this Dhamma is put into practice, it is not impossible for someone to realize it. It is in this way that the Fully Enlightened Sāsana can be uplifted, and in this era of decline of the Sāsana, the speed of decline can at least be reduced.

That is why we directed today's sermon in this direction. In truth, this was not directed at any single individual. There must be proper coordination and awareness within both parties—lay and ordained—about what this true lay-monk relationship is. Nowadays, signs of decline are often highlighted and shown as signs of progress. There is such a tendency. Signs of decline are brought forward as signs of progress. Why? Because the world runs along the economic principles coming from the West. They run along those goals such as altruistic services and social services. It is according to those that they observe and make decisions about the values of this Fully Enlightened Sāsana. That is wrong. We must bring out the values shown in discourses such as this *Dasa Dhamma Sutta* declared by the Buddha. It is according to those that the lay-monk relationship has to be fashioned.

So, this pious gathering must take these few matters to heart on this valuable day. We all commemorate Poson Poya Day in various ways. We respect Arahat Mahinda Thero as the “Anubuddha” (the Deputy Buddha). The greatest respect we can pay him is to preserve for a long time the Buddha Sāsana he established, by maintaining that aforementioned threefold Sāsana—*pariyatti*, *paṭipatti*, and *paṭivedha*. Learning (*pariyatti*) exists for the sake of practice (*paṭipatti*), and practice exists for the sake of realization (*paṭivedha*). They cannot be separated. True learning is bringing that Noble Dhamma properly into one's own mind, and living in accordance with it. Next, finally, the Buddha has declared: *“Paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi”* — this Dhamma is to be personally realized by the wise. It is in that manner that realization (*paṭivedha*) can be achieved. Realizing those supramundane states, one can be released from all the suffering of saṁsāra and realize the supreme deathless Nibbāna.

Therefore, today, these pious devotees must reflect: stepping away from your homes and leaning towards a certain level of practice of virtues such as *sīla*, you must have practiced some meditation to the extent you could today. It is in that manner, in our own small way, that we must protect this threefold Sāsana. We must think that in accordance with that memorable occasion, we have paid our tribute to Arahat Mahinda Thero. Likewise, through that, bringing close to our lives the purpose of deriving the true benefit of this Fully Enlightened Sāsana, striving individually, cultivating virtues such as *sīla* and meditation, and obtaining proper guidance through association with good friends

(*kalyāṇa-mitta*), let us strive as quickly as possible in this very life—since the time of a Buddha's arising is rare, and the Buddha Sāsana is also declining. According to the speed of this decline, we might not get another opportunity to protect these virtues if we are born again. Therefore, in this very life, if possible, through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahatship, may this mass of merit accumulated today be a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for realizing the supreme, deathless Nibbāna.

Likewise, if any living beings—including one's own relatives—from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, wish to rejoice in this wholesome deed of hearing and sharing the Dhamma, through that rejoicing, may they be released from states of misery and reach states of happiness. And through association with good friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), may they as quickly as possible be released from all the suffering of saṁsāra such as *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, and death, and realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through a noble path of awakening they aspire to. Aspiring thus, recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #25

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Ādīnavaṁ loke disvā, dhammaṁ ñatvā nirūpadhiṁ;

Na ramati pāpe, pāpe na ramatī sucī.

From:

Verses 412 from the Brāhmaṇavagga (Chapter on the Brahmin) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

It is only to the extent that one's understanding of the aspect of danger (*ādīnava*) in the world deepens that one's thoughts and concepts come to maturity. It is in proportion to the maturity of one's thoughts that the ultimate goal of the monastic life can be realized. If the difference between lay pleasure and monastic happiness is not understood correctly, monastic life is liable to become monotonous or tasteless. It is because of this that the ancient teachers employed various skillful means to strengthen the mind of an aspirant for ordination. An illustration of this will also be found in the story we hope to present today.

At the time when the Great Arahant Mahā Kaccāna was residing in the region of Kuraraghara in the Avanti country, there was a lay disciple named Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa who served as his attendant. This lay disciple Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa was the son of a very wealthy and faithful female lay disciple named Kālī in that Kuraraghara area. One day, while this lay disciple Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa was engaged in meditation in seclusion, the following thought occurred to him: "As the Venerable Mahā Kaccāna preaches the Dhamma, it is difficult to lead this pure holy life (*brahmacariya*) while living in the household. It is extremely hard. Therefore, I should shave off my hair and beard, don the saffron robes, and go forth from the home life into homelessness." After having this thought, he went to the Venerable Kaccāna, expressed that such an idea had occurred to him, and requested, "Venerable Sir, please ordain me." Then the Venerable Mahā Kaccāna said: "Soṇa, it is difficult to protect the holy life in this Dispensation for life, subsisting on a single meal a

day and sleeping on a solitary bed. It is hard. Therefore, remaining in that very lay life, practice that method of the holy life, that practice, by occasionally keeping the eight-fold Uposatha precepts as taught by the Buddha, subsisting on a single meal a day and sleeping on a solitary bed." After hearing this, the lay disciple Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa's enthusiasm for ordination subsided. Having gone back, while meditating once again, the thought came strongly to his mind once more: "It is difficult to practice the pure holy life in this lay life; I must ordain." He went back to Venerable Mahā Kaccāna and requested permission just as before. Venerable Mahā Kaccāna again reiterated that this task is difficult. "Therefore, remaining in that lay life, strive to observe the holy life periodically, not lifelong, in that manner." On that occasion too, that thought subsided, and he returned. But when this thought arose very strongly for the third time during meditation, he came and requested Venerable Mahā Kaccāna once again. It was on that occasion that Venerable Mahā Kaccāna ordained the lay disciple Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa.

Three years after ordaining him, with great difficulty, they managed to gather ten bhikkhus from here and there for his higher ordination (*upasampadā*). The reason was that monks were very scarce in the Avanti country. Therefore, it was with great difficulty that they found ten bhikkhus to fulfill the quorum of the Sangha for higher ordination, and thus conferred higher ordination. Now, after Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa had received higher ordination and spent the rains retreat (*vassa*), the following thought occurred to him: "I have only heard of the Blessed One, the Buddha, but I have not yet been able to see Him with my own eyes. It would be a great thing for me if I could get to see the Blessed One. Therefore, if my preceptor (*upajjhāya*) permits, I should go on a journey to see the Blessed One." Thereupon, Venerable Kuṭikaṇṇa went to Venerable Mahā Kaccāna, mentioned his intention, and requested permission. Then the Venerable Mahā Kaccāna expressed great joy, saying, "Sādhu, sādhu!" and said, "Go, Soṇa. Go and see the Blessed One, who is inspiring in appearance and possesses an exceptionally peaceful and tamed mind. Having seen Him, pay homage on my behalf and inquire after His health. Tell Him: 'My preceptor bows at the feet of the Blessed One.' " In this manner, he approved of it with his blessings.

So, Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa, having paid homage to his teacher and circumambulated him, packed away his lodgings, took his bowl and robes, and set out on the long journey from Avanti country towards Jētavanārāma. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived at Jētavanārāma. Having seen the Buddha, he paid homage to Him exactly as his teacher had instructed. The Blessed One also engaged in the usual friendly conversation that is customary when a visiting monk arrives: "How was your journey? Did you obtain alms-food easily? Did you arrive safely without any trouble?" When he replied, "Yes, Venerable Sir," the Blessed One said to Venerable Ānanda, "Ānanda, prepare a lodging for this visiting monk." Venerable Ānanda, who knew the thoughts and wishes of the Blessed One very well, understood: "The Blessed One must be giving this special instruction to prepare a lodging because He wishes this monk to spend the night in His own fragrant chamber (*gandhakuṭi*)." Understanding this, he prepared a lodging for Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa in the Blessed One's fragrant chamber itself.

That night, the Blessed One spent most of the time meditating in the open air, and then, having washed His feet, entered the chamber. Venerable Soṇa too spent most of the night meditating in the open air and then entered his lodging. Next, we hear that the Blessed One, having awoken in the early hours of the morning, said to Venerable Soṇa, "Bhikkhu, may you be inspired to preach the Dhamma!" Thereupon, Venerable Soṇa recited from memory, in a very beautiful voice and with a suitable, appropriate tone, all sixteen deep and meaningful verses of the *Aṭṭhaka Vagga* (Octet Chapter), which are included in the collection of discourses known as the *Sutta Nipāta*. Having heard this, the Blessed One expressed great delight: "Very good, bhikkhu! You have recited these discourses in an excellent voice that is very clear, flawless, fluent, and illuminating the meaning." Then the Buddha asked, "Monk, how many rains (*vassa*) do you have?" Then Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa said, "Venerable Sir, I have one rains retreat." The age of monastics is counted according to the number of rains retreats they have spent. So he said, "I have only one rains"—one rains since higher ordination. Then the Buddha asked, "Monk, what have you been doing all this time? What were you doing all this time?" Then Venerable Soṇa replied, "Venerable Sir, I did indeed see the aspect of danger in sensual pleasures. Yet, due to the various chores, troubles, and duties of household life, my ordination was delayed in this manner." It was on that occasion that the Buddha uttered the verse we mentioned as our theme. That verse is actually recorded in the Pali texts (specifically the Udāna). In that book, it is presented as an utterance of joy (*udāna*). The verse uttered by the Buddha as a statement of joy is what we recited at the beginning:

> *"Ādīnavaṃ loke disvā, dhammaṃ ñatvā nirūpadhiṃ,*
>
> *na ramati pāpe, pāpe na ramatī suci."*

"Having seen the danger in the world, and knowing the Dhamma free from acquisitions (*nirūpadhi*)—which is Nibbāna: consisting in the relinquishment of all acquisitions—the noble person, the pure one, does not delight in evil; the pure one does not delight in evil." That is the brief meaning there.

Accounts regarding Venerable Soṇa are found in many other places in the Sutta Piṭaka and the Vinaya Piṭaka. Here, since we have prioritized this utterance of joy, this portion is discussed. Taking this as our primary subject and integrating other relevant details as appropriate, let us now attempt to make some commentary on this. Our aim in this is to bring out the valuable ideas contained within this story and the verse. First, as we direct our minds to this, since there are matters here that might raise doubts in your minds, let us look at them one by one to clarify them.

Now, this Venerable Mahā Kaccāna was no ordinary person. He was one who received the distinguished title of "foremost" (*etadagga*) as an honor from the Buddha in this Dispensation. Meritorious people, this title of "foremost" refers to a custom of the Buddha—indeed, a custom of all Buddhas—to declare to the Sangha those who possess exceptional abilities in various fields among the fourfold assembly of bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, laymen, and laywomen, using the phrase: *"Etadaggaṃ mama*

sāvakānaṃ..." "Among my disciples, this person (he or she) is chief, preeminent," and then that specific quality is mentioned. In that manner, Venerable Mahā Kaccāna received the chief, foremost position among those bhikkhus who are capable of explaining in detail what was preached in brief by the Buddha. That special capability was found in Venerable Mahā Kaccāna—that is, the analytical exposition of a brief statement uttered by the Buddha, explaining it at length. He was indeed such a valuable monk.

Furthermore, it was mentioned in this story that the Sangha of bhikkhus in the Avanti country was extremely scarce. In such a situation, a doubt might arise in our minds: why did Venerable Mahā Kaccāna refuse the lay disciple Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa twice when he requested ordination? We might expect that he should have said something like this: "Our region is very short of Sangha strength. It is excellent, get ordained quickly! If possible, bring another ten or fifteen people with you. We can find requisites, and we can hold a grand ordination ceremony." Instead of encouraging him in that way, he pointed out the difficulty of ordination. The words with which he expressed that difficulty are also very significant. We bring up this matter because it is timely and relevant. There, Venerable Mahā Kaccāna showed the difficulty of ordination in this way:

The word "lifelong" (*yāvajīvaṃ*) is mentioned. The meaning of this ordination is to observe the holy life (*brahmacariya*) for life, lifelong, subsisting on a single meal a day, and sleeping on a solitary bed. It is a difficult thing. From this, we can see that in those days, ordination was not a "temporary" concept but a "lifelong" concept, regarded as something highly serious. It is not something to be taken lightly. Ordination is a decisive step regarding one's life, taken with firm determination. Great renunciation is not something done casually. It is not like going away on a holiday for a week or two and coming back. What we see from this is that in the Buddha's time, ordination was a decisive step that had to be taken with deep understanding and a profound concept of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). That is why Venerable Mahā Kaccāna refused him twice, knowing that the lay disciple did not yet possess the suitability or sufficient maturity for it. However, at the same time, he showed an alternative course of action instead. What should be done then? If one does not have the strength to take that step with such a lifelong, intense commitment as ordination, what one should do is to remain in lay life and strive periodically (*kālayuttaṃ*) toward the holy life by occasionally giving up a meal for the day, relinquishing lay pleasures, and safeguarding the holy life. Venerable Mahā Kaccāna pointed out that alternative path as well.

Through this, we can gain some insight into ordination in the past. Thus, they did not ordain an aspirant just because he came or requested it, with a desire to increase numbers. The progress of the Dispensation cannot be measured by counting heads. Therefore, even if they are few, it is only when they are prepared to fulfill the requirements of monastic life with a genuine, deep understanding and with the aforementioned commitment—only at that mature stage—that permission is granted. That is why it was only on the third request that Venerable Mahā Kaccāna gave his permission. This shows that he allowed the thought of renunciation (*nekkhamma*) to

mature within his mind. Even today, as a general custom, ordination is requested three times. However, it is repeated one after another in rapid succession. But what is the deep meaning behind this? When requested the first time, if perchance the mind changed, it would stop there. Today, of course, it has turned into a mere ritual. But here, we can clearly see: he came and requested the first time, and was sent back. He requested the second time, and was sent back again. When he requested the third time, realizing that he was requesting for the third time with a deep intention, permission was granted. From this, we can see that the teachers of the past trained their aspirants for ordination in a manner that preserved the dignity of ordination. Likewise, it might have been difficult for Venerable Soṇa to keep those practices because he was a lay disciple from a very wealthy family, and probably had various business affairs and other such engagements. It was due to all of this that Venerable Mahā Kaccāna did not grant permission initially, but did so later, once that intention had matured in his mind.

That is how that matter stands. Next, let us look at another aspect. After Venerable Soṇa arrived to see the Buddha, the Buddha granted him a special privilege. What was this privilege? He was permitted to spend the night in the Buddha's own chamber. For an ordinary disciple, to get to spend a night in the Buddha's fragrant chamber (*gandhakuṭi*) is a very rare privilege. We must also consider what the reason for this was. This Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa was also no ordinary person. Just as Venerable Mahā Kaccāna attained that status—the chief position (*etadagga*) we mentioned—because he had received a definite declaration from the Buddha Padumuttara that he would receive the foremost position among those bhikkhus who analyze and expound in detail what was preached in brief in the Dispensation of the Gautama Buddha. Similarly, it is recorded that Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa had also received a definite declaration from the Buddha Padumuttara regarding a certain special quality. What was that? It is mentioned there as *kalyāṇavākkaraṇānaṃ*. *Kalyāṇavākkaraṇa* means having a beautiful or pleasant voice. Venerable Kuṭikaṇṇa received the foremost position among the bhikkhus who could preach the Dhamma with a beautiful voice. Although it is not detailed in this short story, it is mentioned in places like the Vinaya Piṭaka that the Buddha not only approved and expressed appreciation for Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa's recital, but specifically praised his *sarabhañña* recital. *Sarabhañña* recital refers to the skill of chanting the Dhamma in a well-attuned, melodious tone, in a flawless and fluent manner that makes the meaning clear. Therefore, the Buddha bestowed on Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa the foremost position, that honor, among the bhikkhus who possess a beautiful voice (*kalyāṇavākkaraṇa*). From this, we can understand that the special privilege was given because the Buddha wished to hear a recital from this pupil. It was only after listening to his recital properly in the morning that He conferred the honor. Thus, we can understand that the Buddha allowed the visiting monk, Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa, to spend the night there in order to facilitate this opportunity.

Moreover, we can see that this accommodation was not provided so that He could chat with the monk about worldly affairs. This is clear from the fact that the Blessed One spent most of the night meditating in the open air. The visiting monk, Venerable Soṇa, also spent most of the night meditating in the open air, and it was only in the middle

watch of the night that they went to sleep. This shows that the Blessed One did not grant this privilege to this visiting monk just to talk about local news, but to hear his recital upon waking up in the morning and to give due recognition to one who deserved it. We can understand this point in that way.

Along with this, it must be mentioned how Venerable Soṇa's beautiful manner of speaking is described in the discourse. The primary word *kalyāṇiyā* (beautiful) is mentioned there. Beautiful words. The words *vissaṭṭhāya, anelagalāya, atthassa viññāpaniyā* are used. This means speaking with very clear words—words that flow clearly and flawlessly, and in a manner that conveys, clarifies, and reveals the meaning. In the Dhamma, this method of chanting is called *sarabhañña*—the *sarabhañña* method of recital. However, it must be noted that the Buddha has stated in the Vinaya Piṭaka that preaching the Dhamma in a singing voice (*gītassara*) is an offense, a mistake. The Buddha established a disciplinary rule stating that the Dhamma should not be preached in a drawn-out, singing manner, and pointed out its dangers (*ādīnava*)—the undesirable consequences. What are these undesirable consequences? They are listed as five: "Monks, there are these five dangers in preaching the Dhamma in a drawn-out, singing voice. What is the first danger? One is himself attached to his own voice—the preacher becomes attached to his own singing voice. Others, too, become attached to that singing voice; those who listen get attached to that singing voice. What is the third undesirable consequence? Lay people criticize, saying: 'Just like we hold musical performances and sing songs, these Sakyaputtian ascetics are also singing songs.' The fourth point is that by paying more attention to the rhythm of the music or song, and by being attached to it, concentration (*samādhi*) is broken; whatever concentration one had developed is shattered because the mind wanders to the singing voice. The fifth point is that future generations—for which the term *pascimā janatā* is used, those who come later—will take a wrong example from this, and based on what they see, they will follow and imitate it, thinking: 'This is the correct way.' Thus, it sets a bad example for future generations." Because of these reasons, the Buddha declared that the Dhamma should not be preached in a singing voice.

Indeed, the discourses in the *Aṭṭhaka Vagga* that we mentioned are verse discourses. Yet, even though they were verse discourses, Venerable Soṇa did not recite them as music. He chanted them by pronouncing each word very clearly, in a melodious way, and in a manner suited to them. Now, we know that if the meaning is to be preserved correctly—as it is said, *sātthaṃ sabyañjanaṃ* (with meaning and with phrasing)—the Buddha's Dhamma can only be maintained if attention is paid to both the aspect of meaning (*attha*) and the aspect of phrasing/letters (*byañjana*). You know that meaning refers to the sense. Phrasing/letters (*byañjana*) refers to the letters/syllables. In any discourse, there is an aspect called meaning, and then there are the letters—the arrangement of syllables and words appropriate to it. The Buddha pointed out that if letters are used incorrectly, the meaning also becomes distorted. Therefore, for instance, as grammarians often point out in the Sinhala language, if instead of saying "a cobra in the hole" (*benēka nayek*), one says "a blind one in the hole" (*benē kanayek*), it gives two completely different meanings. If one errs in the division of words and terms, the

meaning becomes distorted. Thus, to preserve the Buddha's word over thousands of years, it is absolutely essential to protect both the aspect of meaning and the aspect of letters/phrasing. If one allows that singing voice, what happens? The meaning gets erased. The meaning gets erased and only the music remains. Ultimately, only the tones remain. In the end, the entire Dhamma would be reduced to a collection of tones or a set of pleasant rhythms. But in the past, with those verse teachings—now, here we have a collection of deep verse discourses—we can imagine that Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa must have pronounced them very well, dividing those words correctly. In the Pali language, there is a distinction between unaspirated (*appaprāṇa*) and aspirated (*mahāprāṇa*) sounds. If one pronounces an aspirated word as unaspirated, it can convey a different meaning. He must have divided the words properly, without confusing them in that manner. Thus, without giving way to a singing voice, *sarabhañña* means chanting in a way that preserves the meaning, highlights the meaning, and brings out the meaning. Now, we know there is a difference between prose and verse. There is indeed a difference between prose and verse. But what is the purpose of verse? The rhythm and meter found there are used to highlight the meaning, to make the meaning more manifest, and to impress it more deeply on the mind—not to erase the meaning. However, if music is allowed, over time, one would not even know what is being said. One gets attached to the sound, and the listener also gets attached to it. In the end, only the sensory pleasure of sound, which is common to animals, remains.

So, this is how it is regarding the Dhamma. You discuss the Gem of the Dhamma—the Gem of the Buddha, the Gem of the Dhamma, the Gem of the Sangha. You pay homage to the book of Dhamma, and you give a high seat to the Dhamma preacher. Why is all of this done? Because we must protect the Dhamma. This is what the Buddha Himself respected. After attaining Buddhahood, He contemplated, "Whom shall I respect?" He found, "There is no one in this world worthy of receiving respect from Me." He looked at the custom of past Buddhas to see what they did. Every Tathāgata spent His life respecting and honoring the Dhamma itself. Therefore, it is said in this Dispensation that respect for the Dhamma is greater than respect for individuals. If respect for the Dhamma is so valuable, then this matter is also important for the preservation of the Dhamma. Today, in an era where books are abundant, when writing a book to preserve the Dhamma, we have to proofread the drafts several times. But in the era when this was preserved orally by lineages of reciters (*bhāṇaka*), they had to preserve it in the aforementioned manner, protecting both the meaning and the phrasing (*sabyañjanaṃ*)—safeguarding both *attha* and *byañjana*—to carry this Dhamma forward.

Thus, here it has aligned perfectly in a wonderful way. When we think of the perfection (*pāramī*) qualities, we can understand: Venerable Mahā Kaccāna, who received his definite declaration from the Buddha Padumuttara, was the most skilled expert in expounding in detail the Dhamma that the Buddha preached in brief. Then, Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa was a pupil of that very teacher. He, too, had received a definite declaration from the Buddha Padumuttara to pronounce that Dhamma correctly and present it with a beautiful voice. These two fit together perfectly. Thus, what we possess

is a Dhamma that has been preserved and brought down through such lineages. There may be some shortcomings even in those. But we must try to preserve at least this much, in the aforementioned manner, by utilizing the *sarabhañña* method without giving prominence to a singing voice. That may be a bit difficult to understand. However, its characteristics are that the words must flow very clearly, flawlessly, and in a way that makes the meaning clear. Sometimes, during the recital of protective discourses (*paritta suttas*) and chanting, some people do not even know what is being said. A nice rhythm is maintained, and in the end, only that rhythm remains as the *paritta*. But those *parittas* have deep meanings. What we call *paritta* recitals are also the Buddha's word, the Dhamma. Just because it is included in the book of protective discourses, or just because it is chanted, it does not become a song. Within it lies a deep Dhamma. If you think about the *Karaṇīyametta Sutta*, the *Ratana Sutta*, or the *Mahāmangala Sutta*, there is a profound meaning in every single verse, in every single word. But if, without considering the meaning of those words, we turn it into music just because it is being chanted, then that becomes something of an insult to the Gem of the Dhamma. Therefore, we are compelled to remind you of these matters in a timely manner.

Next, let us direct our attention to the matter mentioned in the verse. What did the Buddha point out through the verse? The aspect of danger (*ādīnava*) in this world. Now we are coming to a somewhat deeper part. After Venerable Soṇa had recited the Dhamma in that *sarabhañña* style, the Buddha, after praising him, asked a question: "How many rains do you have?" After he stated the number of rains, the Buddha asked another question. That question is one that is valuable enough for each of you to ask yourselves. What is that question? "What were you doing all this time? What have you been doing all this time?" What is the meaning of that? "Despite seeing so much danger in this lay life, why did you not ordain? Why did you not take this step?" On that occasion, Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa did not blame his teacher. He did not say, "I asked for ordination, but he did not give it to me." He did not say such things. He stated his own inability: "Blessed One, I did see the danger in these sensual pleasures. Yet, because of the mass of work in this household life, this was delayed for me." Perhaps you too might have to say the same thing. In any case, what we will bring up next are several points that the Buddha preached in various places regarding the danger of sensual pleasures.

One should not think of this as strange. Some might think that telling lay people about the danger of sensual pleasures is inappropriate, and that it should only be told to the Sangha. But the Sangha are not people who fell from the sky. It was only after being like the lay disciple Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa that he eventually became the great Elder Kuṭikaṇṇa. Therefore, this can be helpful to you as well. What we have to say is that when discussing this aspect of danger, you may have heard of the valuable similes the Buddha gave to householders. This is mentioned in a section of the Dhamma called the *Potaliya Sutta*. At one time, the householder Potaliya, having handed over all his wealth to his children and relinquished all his chores and business affairs, came to see the Buddha. When he came to the tree where the Buddha was sitting in seclusion, the Buddha addressed this householder as "Householder." He felt offended by this. He expected that since he had

renounced these things, the Buddha would address him with a more esteemed term, and felt that he was not being respected as a layperson. But the Buddha had addressed him as "Householder." After he became angry and displeased at this, the Buddha showed him that if one truly wishes to detach the mind from the entanglements of lay life, one must direct the mind to these very matters. Among those are these seven similes. Let us take them one by one. These are the similes shown by the Buddha to express the aspect of danger, the undesirable consequences, of sensual pleasures.

The first simile is the simile of the skeleton/bone fragment (*aṭṭhikankaḷūpama*). You may have heard this story in brief. The Buddha describes it in this way: "Householder, suppose a dog, extremely hungry, weak and afflicted, is waiting near a slaughterhouse. A butcher or his apprentice throws a bone fragment to that dog—a bone that has been scraped clean of all meat, with just a smear of blood. The dog chews and chews on it. What do you think, householder? Would that dog's hunger be appeased by that?" "No, Venerable Sir, in the end, it only experiences fatigue." "In the same way, remember, householder, sensual pleasures have been compared by the Blessed One to a skeleton—to a fleshless bone fragment smeared with just a trace of blood, involving much Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*), much despair, and great danger." The Buddha uttered that simile there.

The next simile: "In the same way, householder, suppose a vulture, a crow, or a hawk takes a piece of meat and flies up into the sky. Seeing this, other vultures, crows, or hawks pursue that bird, clawing and pecking at it. Now, householder, if that vulture, crow, or hawk does not let go of that piece of meat, what would happen to it? Because of those birds pecking at it, it would either meet with death or experience suffering equal to death." In that manner, the Buddha showed that sensual pleasures are compared to a piece of meat (*maṃsapesūpama*), illustrating the point through that simile.

Next, he presents the third simile: "Suppose, householder, a man walks against the wind holding a blazing grass torch. If he does not quickly let go of that blazing grass torch, that fire would burn his hand, his arm, or some other part of his body, and he would either meet with death or experience suffering equal to death." In that way, the Blessed One compared sensual pleasures to a grass torch (*tiṇukkūpama*) as the third simile.

The fourth simile: "Suppose there is a pit of glowing coals (*aṅgārakāsūpama*), deeper than a man's height, filled with smokeless, glowing embers. Then a man comes along who wants to live, who does not want to die, who loves pleasure and recoils from pain. Two strong men grab him by both arms and drag him towards that pit of glowing coals. What would that poor man do? He would struggle and twist this way and that." Then Potaliya says, "Blessed One, that man knows that if he falls into it, he will experience death or suffering equal to death." "In the same way, householder, understand that sensual pleasures have been compared by the Blessed One to a pit of glowing coals."

Next, he gives the fifth simile: "Suppose a man in his sleep dreams of beautiful parks, beautiful forests, beautiful ponds, and beautiful fields. But when he wakes up, he sees nothing of them. In the same way, remember, householder, sensual pleasures have been

compared by the Blessed One to a dream (*supinakūpama*)." He told this to the householder Potaliya.

Then the next simile: "Suppose a man who needs to attend a special event, like a wedding, wants to dress up specially. What does he do? He borrows garments on loan—clothes, ornaments, and even vehicles. He borrows them saying, 'We have such an event on this day; can you lend us this dress, this pair of shoes, or this vehicle?' Having borrowed them, he dresses up in all of them, wearing the borrowed jewelry and clothes, and drives elegantly in the borrowed carriage through the bazaar street. People in the town, seeing him, say: 'This must be an exceptionally wealthy man! This is how rich people display their wealth. This is excellent!' While people are expressing admiration, the owners of those borrowed items come and say: 'We have an urgent matter. Please return those items—return the shoes, and we need this carriage.' They take them back right there. What happens to that man then? Even though he appeared to be very wealthy, all of it is lost to him on the spot." Having given that simile, the Buddha said: "In the same way, householder, understand that sensual pleasures are like borrowed goods (*yācitakūpama*)." That is the simile.

What is the next simile? "Suppose there is a tree in a dense forest near a village, laden with ripe fruit—let us say a mango tree. There is plenty of fruit, but none has fallen to the ground. A man comes along looking for fruit, searching for mangoes. He sees the mangoes on the tree, and though none is on the ground, he knows how to climb. So he climbs the tree, eats mangoes there, and fills his lap with them. While he is doing this, another man arrives, also searching for mangoes. In his hand, he holds a sharp axe. No fruit has fallen, and this second man does not know how to climb. He thinks: 'There are mangoes on this tree, and I have an axe, but I cannot climb. So what I must do is cut down the tree, take as much fruit as I want, fill his lap, and go.' He begins to chop down the tree. Now, householder, what do you think? If the first man who climbed the tree does not climb down quickly, what will happen to him? When the tree falls, he will fall with it, and break a hand or a foot, or even lose his life." When asked, "Is that not so?" the householder Potaliya replied, "Yes, Venerable Sir." That is how the householder replied.

In this manner, the Buddha pointed out seven similes. The deep meaning of each of these similes is such that in the news we hear in daily life—about serious crimes, murders, suicides—the underlying principle is found in these similes. If we briefly consider each simile: first, we mentioned the simile of the skeleton/bone fragment. There, as the dog chews on the thrown bone because it is smeared with a little blood, it unwittingly drinks the blood coming from its own gums, taking it as food. That is how the nature of sensual pleasures is illustrated there. The Buddha has declared: *"Appassādā bahudukkhā kāmā"*—"Sensual pleasures provide little gratification and much Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*)." It is not that they have no gratification (*assāda*). Gratification refers to enjoying the pleasure of taste. If we say there is no gratification at all, some might find fault and say the Buddha could not have said that. But the Buddha did declare that there is an aspect of gratification, but it is little, while the aspect of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) is much. The

gratification is little, and the suffering is much. Thus, the dog licked the trace of blood on that bloody bone fragment. But it did not stop there; what follows is a mountain of suffering. That is the simile.

Next, the same applies to the simile of the piece of meat. When we think about it, sensual pleasures refer to what is desired. How many others desire what you desire? Consequently, when trying to possess what you desire, how many others who desire the same thing must you fight with? These are occurrences you have seen endlessly in daily life, whether regarding wealth or regarding people. That piece of meat is carried to the sky by a single vulture. How many others follow and peck at it? This principle can be understood in relation to wealth and other things.

Similarly, there is the simile of the grass torch. Unknowingly, one's hand gets burned. It shows the peril, the hazardous nature of sensual pleasures. Then, too, the simile of the pit of glowing coals. One goes toward it in a strange way. One knows that one will fall into disaster—one is aware of it—yet one is drawn to it, just as one is dragged into a pit of embers. Next, the dreamlike nature. This shows the emptiness and worthlessness of sensual pleasures. In a dream, one sees various beautiful sights. But upon waking up, not a single one is there. Not a single one remains; there is only darkness around—only the darkness of the night. In the same way are sensual pleasures: their worthlessness, emptiness, voidness, and deceptive nature are all expressed through this.

Next, regarding borrowed or loaned goods. This is also something you can actually observe in daily life. When a wedding or a similar event comes up, how many people do they have to beg to obtain the necessary items when they lack the funds themselves? And having borrowed those things, they are filled with fear: "At what moment will they ask for these back? If these get damaged slightly, I will have to pay for them, won't I? I will have to pay compensation." Thus, they use them very carefully, somehow, just until the photographs are taken. If the owners come to claim them before that, then that is the end of it. That is how it is with weddings and such events today.

Through all of this, we can see—no more illustrations are needed—you can imagine how fitting those similes given by the Buddha are. Sensual pleasures are like something borrowed from others, something taken on loan. Next, the simile of the tree. There, it actually speaks of the fruits on the tree. The fruits are on the tree, but they are sought after in two different ways. One person climbs in the proper way and tries to enjoy the fruits. While he is enjoying them, another person seeks to obtain the fruits by cutting down the tree in an improper way. The conflict between these two is what is shown there.

When one directs one's mind to these similes given by the Buddha regarding the danger of sensual pleasures, reflecting on them in the light of the events one sees, hears, and experiences in daily life, a great and deep disillusionment with saṃsāra arises. In the Dhamma, the word used for this disillusionment is *nibbidā* (disenchantment / disillusionment). Here, we mentioned *ādīnava* (danger / disadvantage). *Ādīnava* refers to the undesirable nature, the undesirable consequences, of the fivefold sensual pleasures. When one sees these, it is natural for disillusionment to arise. It is not

something to be feared. The Buddha has declared that if one sees the reality of the world as it is, through that very seeing, one becomes disenchanted with the world. To prevent that, just as when a young child grows, they do not cut off parts of their body to fit into their childhood clothes, but rather discard those clothes and wear garments suited to them; in the same way, the transition from lay life to monastic life is such a process. Therefore, no one can find fault with this and say, "It is not good to talk to lay people about the danger. They should not think about it. They should only think about the pleasures of lay life." To say so is incorrect; the Dhamma of the Buddha is open.

Therefore, when reflecting on these, you can see through them the Three Characteristics of Impermanent / Inconstant (*anicca*), Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*), and Not-self / Non-self / Unsubstantial (*anattā*). Insight (*vipassanā*) is something one experiences directly. We know that insight is a seeing, not a mere saying. Therefore, to achieve that seeing, one must contemplate how true the Buddha's word is, based on one's own experiences and the examples visible around. It is when contemplating in this way that one realizes internally: "Was not what I did all this time a foolishness?" That is where the question asked by the Buddha fits in—the question we mentioned: "What were you doing all this time? What have you been doing all this time?" What you did all this time was precisely expanding saṃsāra. That is what we have referred to on other occasions as walking on the path of expanding the world and expanding the cemeteries. That is why we say: "Do not be an expander of the world; do not be an expander of cemeteries." What was done until now was expanding worlds, expanding cemeteries, and expanding skeletons. But what the Buddha points out is to depart from that practice of expanding the world and expanding cemeteries, and to cross over from the world. This is Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*). And that is what is expressed next in the verse.

The verse is very simple, yet a great many deep meanings are expressed there. *Disvā ādīnavaṃ loke*—having seen the danger in the world. *Dhammaṃ nirūpadhiṃ*—here, that term is used for Nibbāna:. It is a somewhat deep word. To explain it at an understandable level, *upadhi* (acquisitions / assets / substrate) refers to those things on which one's sense of "I-ness" or "my-ness" relies. In daily life, the Buddha explained *upadhi* in this way: let us say a person who has children is proud of and delighted by their children. On one occasion, Māra came and presented a challenge before the Buddha: "One with children delights in children. One with cattle delights in cattle." He spoke thus. Those aforementioned things like acquisitions, assets, deposits—to use a modern term, deposits or assets—all of these are known as *upadhi*. Thus, that entire collection of animate or inanimate possessions is regarded as *upadhi*. Māra claimed that one who does not have them cannot be happy. But the Buddha turned that very statement around on that occasion and declared: *"Socati puttehi puttima"*—"One with children sorrows because of children." Ultimately, they fall into suffering. When children do not care for them, or when children die untimely, then they fall into sorrow. Similarly, with a herd of cattle: when trouble or destruction befalls the herd, they grieve over it. In that manner, the herd of cattle represents that collection of assets, deposits. So the Buddha points out all of this as Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*).

Therefore, "Acquisitions are indeed a man's sorrowing; he does not sorrow who is free from acquisitions (*nirūpadhi*)." The one who is free from acquisitions is the one who does not sorrow.

It is according to that concept of *upadhi* mentioned there that we can understand why the Buddha called Nibbāna: *nirūpadhi* (free from acquisitions). *Nirūpadhi* means, in the final analysis, that what we have done in this saṃsāra is pile up acquisitions (*upadhi*)—pile up deposits. When we contemplate deeply, it is not just these properties, lands, wealth, and grains, but the acquisitions we have gathered are rūpa (form), Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*), saññā (perception), and Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), which we call the five aggregates of Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādāna*). There is the word Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādāna*). *Upādāna* means seizing, clinging. Clinging to something, or holding onto something. *Upadhi* means standing on something. Often, these two can be almost the same thing. It is looking at the matter from two sides. One clings to something seeking security; one relies on something seeking security. Thus, because of Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) for rūpa, Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*), etc., they cling to them, and in that sense they are called the five aggregates of Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādāna*)—five bundles of grasping. These themselves can serve as *upadhi*. Because when one projects a sense of self-identity saying "this is my form," "this is my feeling," etc., and develops an attachment to them, then that becomes *upadhi*. The state of being freed from these is *sabbūpadhipaṭinissagga* (the relinquishment of all acquisitions). The phrase *sabbūpadhipaṭinissagga* is applied to Nibbāna:. The relinquishment of all acquisitions. When we say the relinquishment of all acquisitions, one does not become *nirūpadhi* (free from acquisitions) merely by handing over one's properties to children and retiring from industries and businesses, as that householder did. One has to let go of this very five aggregates—rūpa (form), Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*), saññā (perception), Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—piled up in saṃsāra thus far. And that letting go happens at the aforementioned stage of the Path and Fruit (*magga-phala*). Gradually developing insight, realizing the characteristics of Impermanent / Inconstant (*anicca*) and Not-self / Non-self / Unsubstantial (*anattā*), and through that, when one directly realizes for oneself the impermanence, the Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) nature, the Not-self / Non-self / Unsubstantial (*anattā*) nature, the voidness, and the emptiness of this rūpa, Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*), etc., they slip away naturally. A deep aversion, a revulsion, arises, and there comes a moment when this is cast off like a carcass suddenly hung around one's neck. It is at that moment that the realization of the Path and Fruit is attained; that is what is called Nibbāna:. That indeed is what is called the greatest peace. "Laying down the burden" refers to this—laying down the burden of the five aggregates.

It is this journey toward Nibbāna: that you are undertaking today through observing the precepts, listening to the Dhamma, and so on. Therefore, you should reflect that although this Dhamma sermon—which is relevant to the Buddha's teaching—began in a simple manner, it has gradually become deeper. Reflecting on all of this and aligning these preached points with your ultimate purpose, drawing them close to your lives, may

you quickly be released from all the saṃsāra suffering of Birth / Arising (*jāti*), Decay and Death / Aging and Death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and so forth. Freeing yourselves from the aforementioned path of expanding the world and expanding cemeteries, may this virtue observed today, this meditation practiced, and this Dhamma heard serve as a supportive condition, a source of merit, for ending the world, crossing over from the world, and attaining that supreme ambrosial Nibbāna: taught by the Buddha—attaining that noble, acquisition-free state of Nibbāna: through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahanthood. Aspire thus!

Now, with the aspiration that all this mass of merit accumulated by preaching and listening to the Dhamma may be shared by whatever departed relatives of yours who have passed away, and likewise by the righteous devas and deities, including the kings of the devas and Brahmas, and indeed by all living beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha; and that all may rejoice in it and quickly attain the great deathless Nibbāna: through whichever of the three Bodhis they aspire for—with this aspiration, please recite this verse:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #26

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yo vadataṁ pavaro manujesu,

Sakyamunī bhagavā katakicco

pāragato balavīriyasamaṅgī;

Taṁ sugataṁ saraṇamupemi.

Rāgavirāgamanejamasokaṁ,

dhammamasaṅkhatamappaṭikūlaṁ

madhuramimaṁ paguṇaṁ suvibhattaṁ;

Dhammamimaṁ saraṇamupemi.

Yañca dinnaṁ mahapphalamāhu,

catūsu sucīsu purisayugesu;

Puggaladhammadassā te,

saṅghamimaṁ saraṇamupemi.

From:

Ratana-style Refuge Verses preserved in the Khuddaka tradition (non-Dhammapada source)

Dear Listeners,

Taking refuge in the Triple Gem and undertaking the precepts are merely the initial steps in this Dispensation (*Sāsana*). Nevertheless, the fact that even this mere act of taking refuge can yield such marvelous benefits is a testament to the powerful and majestic nature of the Triple Gem. There are numerous accounts in Buddhist literature of devotees who attained rebirth in happy realms (*sugati*) simply by virtue of taking refuge and observing the precepts. The story of Chatta Mānavaka is one such example.

During the time when the Buddha was residing in Sāvatthī, a young Brahmin named Chatta—a Brahmin youth from the city of Setavyā—went to the Brahmin teacher named Pokkharasāti in the city of Ukkaṭṭhā to complete his education. Having finished his studies, he returned to Setavyā to see his parents, and then set out again to meet his teacher, carrying a thousand gold coins (*kahāpaṇa*) as a teacher's fee. On that morning, as the Buddha surveyed the world with his mind of Great Compassion, the youth Chatta appeared in his vision. Knowing this, the Buddha walked to a tree along that path and sat down. When Chatta Mānavaka saw the Buddha, he approached him with great devotion and clarity of mind, took refuge in the Triple Gem, listened to the Dhamma, and prepared to depart. Before his departure, the Buddha taught Chatta Mānavaka three verses extolling the virtues of the Triple Gem to be recited when taking refuge. It was while contemplating these verses that Chatta Mānavaka set out on his journey. Those three verses are the ones we recited at the beginning of this sermon.

The first verse says: *"Yo vadataṁ pavaro manujesu"*—He who is the noblest or supreme among speakers of truth, *"Sakyamunī"*—the Sakyan Sage, *"bhagavā"*—the Blessed One, *"katakicco"*—one who has completed all that needs to be done for liberation, *"pāragato balavīriyasamaṅgī"*—who has crossed over the wilderness of Saṁsāra, crossed the ocean of existence—meaning he who has realized Nibbāna and is endowed with physical strength and the power of effort and energy—*"taṁ sugataṁ saraṇamupemi"*—in that Sugata (Well-Gone One), I take refuge, I seek shelter. That is the meaning of the first verse.

The second verse says: *"Rāgavirāgamanejamasokaṁ"*—that which dispels lust and passion (*rāga*), is free from the agitation of craving and thirst (*taṇhā*), and is free from sorrow (*asoka*); *"dhammamasaṅkhatamappaṭikūlaṁ"*—the unrepulsive, Unprepared (*asaṅkhata*) Dhamma, which is Nibbāna; *"madhuramimaṁ paguṇaṁ suvibhattaṁ"*—this sweet, well-mastered, and excellently analyzed scriptural Dhamma; *"dhammamimaṁ saraṇamupemi"*—in this Dhamma, I seek refuge.

The final verse means: *"Yañca dinnaṁ mahapphalamāhu"*—in whichever Noble Saṅgha it is said that gifts given yield great fruit; *"catūsu sucīsu purisayugesu"*—composed of the four pairs of pure men; *"puggala-dhammadasā te"*—those eight individuals who have directly realized the Dhamma of Nibbāna; *"saṅghamimaṁ saraṇamupemi"*—in this Saṅgha, I take refuge, I seek their shelter. This is the meaning of the final verse.

Thus, while reciting these three verses and taking step after step forward, thieves—perceiving that this youth possessed wealth—shot him with an arrow and killed him. Immediately upon his death, Chatta Mānavaka, by virtue of his refuge in the Triple Gem, his undertaking of the five precepts, and the wholesome thoughts generated by listening to the Dhamma, was spontaneously reborn in the Tāvatiṁsa heaven, in a celestial mansion spanning thirty leagues. Later, when his parents and the citizens of Setavyā gathered to perform his funeral rites upon hearing of his death, the Buddha arrived at the location.

When the Buddha arrived, Chatta—now a deity—descended from the heavenly realm together with his celestial mansion. In order to reveal this to the gathered crowd, the Buddha questioned the deity: "Who are you that have come from the heavenly world with a mansion shining brighter than the sun and moon? What kind of merit did you perform to achieve this state?" The Buddha allowed the deity Chatta to speak for himself. He said, "Blessed One, I am that young Brahmin whom you met today when you sat under the tree out of compassion for me. The Blessed One asked me, 'Do you know how to take refuge in the Triple Gem?' and I said 'No.' The Blessed One then taught me how. I took refuge as taught. You then asked if I knew the five precepts. I said I did not. You taught me those as well. You instructed me: 'Abandon the killing of living beings, which is impure; it is not the practice of the wise. Similarly, taking what is not given, committing sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants are not praised by the wise; these are impure practices.' After you said this, I firmly resolved to observe the precepts. As I went on my way, thieves shot and killed me. The other deities in the heavenly world, seeing my splendor, wonder how I obtained such a state." Thus, Chatta the deity declared his story.

Through this brief story, we can see how immensely beneficial taking refuge in the Triple Gem and undertaking the five precepts can be. We must particularly contemplate the undertaking of precepts. As you all know, before undertaking the precepts, we first take refuge. Taking refuge in the Triple Gem is no small matter. Through it, one's faith (*saddhā*) is brought to the fore. It is upon faith that morality (*sīla*) is put into action. To the extent that one's faith is strong, to that extent one is motivated to protect the training rules of morality and becomes established in morality. As Chatta Mānavaka walked along reciting those verses, he was contemplating the virtues of the Triple Gem. He went while practicing recollection of the Buddha, recollection of the Dhamma, and recollection of the Saṅgha. It was because he passed away with that mind—that proximate mind (*āsanna-citta*)—that he achieved that state in the heavenly world. We have heard in the Dhamma that when a person's next birth (*jāti*) is determined, unless there is a weighty karma (*garuka-kamma*) such as the five heinous crimes (killing mother, killing father, killing an Arahant, shedding the blood of a Buddha, or causing a schism in the Saṅgha) or certain fixed wrong views, a person's next birth is decided by a karma performed at the final moment, or a past karma recalled at the final moment. This is called proximate karma (*āsanna-kamma*). When there is no weighty karma, proximate karma determines it. If that is also absent, then habitual karma (*āciṇṇa-kamma*), which is practiced continuously, comes forward. In the absence of that too, some other karma that was

previously performed, known as stored karma (*kaṭattā-kamma*), will somehow condition the next birth. Here, we clearly see the operation of proximate karma. Indeed, the Buddha did not go there to save him from death. Through his knowledge of the attainment of Great Compassion, the Buddha saw that Chatta Mānavaka possessed the capacity to generate deep faith. Thus, the Buddha went there to prepare his final mind-state. Accordingly, Chatta Mānavaka took a refuge he had never even heard of or taken before, and undertook a training in morality he had never heard of before. It was through the wholesome volition (*kusala-cetanā*) generated during that brief moment that he received such heavenly splendor.

Therefore, we must reflect upon this. Indeed, our undertaking of precepts is established upon faith. If a person can say, *"Natthi me saraṇaṁ aññaṁ, Buddho me saraṇaṁ varaṁ"* ("I have no other refuge, the Buddha is my supreme refuge; the Dhamma is my refuge; the Saṅgha is my refuge"), if there is such strong faith, that person truly takes refuge. Taking refuge means seeking shelter. That shelter must be sought through morality, concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The Buddha cannot save anyone directly, but taking refuge is the beginning of cultivating morality, concentration, and wisdom. That is why, even in this day and age, before undertaking the precepts, we recite three times, *"Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi"*, and so forth. This is no ordinary thing. Chatta Mānavaka lost his life suddenly due to a fatal danger and hazard that existed during the Buddha's time. You all know how many hazards and dangers exist on the roads today for young boys, girls, and children, even more so than during the Buddha's time. Before a young child can cross from one side of the road to the other, high-speed massive vehicles run down every street. Similarly, there are swindlers, thugs, and murderers at every junction waiting to rob us of our hard-earned wealth, character, and lives. In recent times, Buddhist leaders have introduced a practice for school children to recollect and recite these three verses when leaving school or returning home after school. Today, there is hardly anyone to explain the meaning of these verses. Some even distort them and turn them into a joke. But these are three extremely powerful verses. Since dangers are more abundant now than in the Buddha's time, we must say that one should recollect these verses not only when leaving school, but even when leaving home to go to school. If possible, one should leave with these three verses in mind, or at the very least, leave with a proximate mind reciting *"Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi, Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi, Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi"*. At the very least, if an accident were to occur, leaving home with the recollection of the Triple Gem ensures rebirth in a good destination (*sugati*). Such is the current situation.

Similarly, we see that along with faith in the Triple Gem and taking refuge, the undertaking of precepts is incredibly powerful. The five precepts are no small matter; they constitute the permanent morality (*nicca-sīla*) of a layperson. Chatta Mānavaka must have undertaken that morality and formed a strong determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*) within that brief moment: "For the rest of my life, I will not kill any living being, I will not steal, I will not commit sexual misconduct, I will not lie, and I will not drink intoxicants." He did not observe this determination for a long time, but through the power generated within that single split second, he received such heavenly wealth. Even

more meritorious, as you have heard, is the eight-precept Uposatha morality (*uposatha-aṭṭhaṅga-sīla*). Many of you have undertaken the eight-precept Uposatha morality today. There are Dhamma stories illustrating the benefits of the eight precepts as well. In the Dhamma literature, there is a remarkable story about the benefits of strictly observing even a single precept for just half a day. There is a story of a certain poor man who strictly observed the precept of abstaining from untimely eating (*vikāla-bhojana*)—which is often not taken very seriously nowadays—with a firm resolve and even at the risk of his life, and as a result, was reborn as a tree-deity (*rukkha-devatā*). The story goes as follows.

There was a group of five hundred ascetics who came from the Himalayas to the city every year. They came to the city of Kosambī. At that time, three wealthy merchants named Ghosita, Kukkuṭa, and Pāvāriya had invited these ascetics, saying, "Please come and receive our support during the four months of the rainy season every year." Acting on this invitation, the ascetics were traveling when, at one point, they stopped to rest for a moment under a massive banyan tree at the edge of the forest. The chief ascetic thought: "The deity residing in this banyan tree cannot be an ordinary being; he must be highly powerful." He casually thought, "If this deity could provide us with drinking water through his power, it would be of great value to our group." Instantly, water appeared there for everyone. Then he thought, "It would be wonderful if we could get water to bathe." That too appeared immediately. Next, he thought, "It would be great if we could get some food." Food was likewise provided for all five hundred ascetics. Then the ascetic thought, "If only we could see this deity who has the power to grant whatever we think of!" Thereupon, from among the roots of the banyan tree, the deity appeared in a majestic form. The ascetic asked him, "What kind of meritorious deed did you perform to achieve this state?" The deity felt ashamed to speak, as his merit was very small. He hesitated, but upon repeated requests, he began to tell his story. The complete account is given in the Dhamma.

In the city of Sāvatthī, it was the custom in the household of Anāthapiṇḍika the merchant that everyone observed the Uposatha precepts on every Uposatha day. It was observed so strictly that even infants who were still breastfeeding had their mouths washed, and at sunset, their mouths were rinsed and *catumadhura* (a sweet fourfold medicine) was placed in their mouths, training them from a very young age to observe the precept of abstaining from untimely eating. Everyone in the household strictly observed the Uposatha precepts. One day, a very poor man came to the house seeking daily-wage work. He had not been there long when, on the Uposatha day, the merchant returned from the monastery and asked the household members, "Did anyone inform the daily-wage worker that today is the Uposatha day?" They replied, "We forgot to tell him." The merchant said, "Then prepare some food for him separately for the evening," and while he was provided food, the others adhered to the practice, even the young children abstaining from food. Meanwhile, the man returned in the evening, extremely exhausted from his labor. When he was given the food, he fell into reflection. Despite his hunger, he did not eat immediately but thought: "Usually, in this house, there is so much noise with children asking for rice and curries. Today, there is absolute silence." He then asked,

“Have these people already eaten?” They replied, “No.” When he asked why, they explained, “On Uposatha days, it is our custom. The merchant has everyone, even the small children, observe the training rule regarding untimely eating.” Hearing this, the man asked, “Can I also observe the Uposatha precepts now?” They replied, “We do not know; you must ask the merchant.” He went to ask, and the merchant said, “Yes, you can still observe the Uposatha for half a day. Tell him to wash his mouth and make the determination.”

The man did exactly that, taking the Uposatha precept centering on the abstention from untimely eating. As night fell, due to his hunger and exhaustion, unbearable sensations (*vedanā*) of pain arose. What did he do? He tied a rope to something in the room and, holding onto the end of it, began to roll around on the floor, unable to bear the pain. When the servants informed the merchant, he came with *catumadhura* and pleaded with him, “Why this distress?” The man said, “A wind-ailment has arisen due to my exhaustion.” The merchant said, “Then take this *catumadhura*.” The man asked, “Do you also take it, master?” The merchant replied, “No, I have no discomfort.” The man then said, “Please allow me, master. I could not observe this Uposatha for the whole day; let me at least keep this half-day pure,” and he rejected the *catumadhura*. Thus, he remained completely starving. Consequently, unable to endure the pain, the man passed away at dawn and was reborn as the tree-deity in that banyan tree. This was his story. The tree-deity added, “The merchant was a devotee of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. It was through my association with him that I obtained this celestial fortune as a tree-deity.” Upon hearing this, the ascetics—who did not even know at that time that a Buddha had appeared, as Kosambī was far away—stood up and asked three times, “Did you say ‘Buddha’? Is it true that a Buddha has arisen?” After learning the news of the Buddha’s arising, those ascetics informed the three merchants, went to Sāvatthī, listened to the Dhamma from the Buddha, and attained Arahantship.

Thus, through that story, we see that the Uposatha morality observed for just half a day yielded such great benefits. In modern times, our logicians often argue, especially about the precept of abstaining from untimely eating, saying, “Eating food does not harm anyone. Who ever went to hell just for eating rice?” There are indeed people who ask such questions. Here, the issue is not about eating or not eating rice. By strictly observing the undertaken precepts with a firm determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*), he purified his mind. He straightened his mind. Through faith in the Triple Gem, undertaking the precepts, and honesty, he made his mind upright. It was the fruit of this that the poor man received. Therefore, we must reflect that even the training rule of abstaining from untimely eating is not something to be taken lightly. Whatever training rule (*sikkhāpada*) it may be, if it is observed correctly within the Buddha Sāsana, it yields great benefits; this is clearly illustrated here.

Furthermore, there are many other Dhamma stories related to this. Regarding the virtues of morality (*sīla*), another highly valuable discourse must be mentioned. During the time of the Buddha, there lived a Brahmin named Kūṭadanta. He was extremely wealthy and wished to perform a grand sacrifice (*yāga*). For this sacrifice, he had prepared seven hundred bulls, seven hundred calves, seven hundred goats, and seven

hundred rams, tying them to posts. Then, he heard that the ascetic Gautama knew a method of performing sacrifices that was highly fruitful and of great benefit. He went to the Buddha and initiated a discussion on how to conduct a sacrifice of great fruit and benefit.

The Buddha recounted a past story where, in a previous birth, he was born as a royal advisor to King Mahāvijita. The king possessed vast wealth and, involving the entire country, conducted a grand sacrifice. In that sacrifice, no animal was harmed. No force was used against the people involved, and the grand sacrifice was conducted in an extremely righteous manner. The Buddha explained this in detail. At that moment, the Brahmin crowd uttered *Sādhu* in approval. The Brahmin Kūṭadanta, pleased with the explanation, first asked, "I feel that the chaplain described by the Blessed One must have been the Blessed One himself." The Buddha confirmed this. Next, the Brahmin asked, "Is there another sacrifice that requires less preparation and effort, yet is of greater benefit?" The Buddha replied, "Yes, Brahmin, there is. If one regularly offers alms to virtuous, gone-forth ones, that sacrifice is nobler than the grand sacrifice of King Mahāvijita." He then asked, "Is there a sacrifice that requires even less preparation, yet yields greater benefits?" The Buddha answered, "Yes. Building a monastery (*vihāra*) for the Saṅgha arriving from the four directions is even more beneficial, and can be done with less physical exertion."

Then he asked, "Is there an even easier sacrifice with greater benefits?" At that point, the Buddha declared, "If a person, with a pure mind, takes refuge in the Buddha, takes refuge in the Dhamma, and takes refuge in the Saṅgha, that sacrifice is far superior to all the aforementioned sacrifices—superior to the grand sacrifice of King Mahāvijita, superior to regular alms given to virtuous families, and superior to the offering of a monastery." He did not stop there. The Brahmin asked, "Is there an even more valuable sacrifice of great fruit and benefit?" The Buddha then declared, "Yes. If a person abstains from the killing of living beings, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from taking intoxicants, that sacrifice is of even greater benefit." The next question was, "Is there a sacrifice of even greater benefit than this?" In response, the Buddha expounded the entire path of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) leading all the way to Arahantship for one who ordains in this Dispensation.

Having heard this entire sermon, the Brahmin Kūṭadanta took refuge in the Triple Gem and became a lay disciple (*upāsaka*). He granted freedom (the gift of fearlessness) to all the 700 bulls, calves, cows, and other animals that were tied to the posts to be slaughtered. He released them, wishing, "Let them eat grass freely and drink cool water," and granted them their lives.

From this story too, we see how this Dispensation leads from the material (*āmisa*) to the spiritual (*nirāmisa*). In the ordinary world, material giving is considered great. But the Buddha showed the world entirely new values that are spiritual, closer to the mind and volition, such as taking refuge in the Triple Gem and undertaking the precepts. The benefits of keeping the precepts are illustrated in various stories in the Dhamma.

Generally, for laypersons who observe the five precepts, five immediate benefits in this life are described. If a person is virtuous, due to their diligence (*appamāda*)—and here, "diligence" means avoiding unwholesome actions. If someone commits the wrongs related to the five precepts, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants, whether at a business or personal level, it is classified as negligence (*pramāda*). They have fallen into negligence. Indeed, not only through alcohol, but through any of these actions, a person eventually becomes like a madman whenever those impulses arise in the mind. They become agitated. This is a cause of negligence. Because of this negligence, even if they appear to prosper in the eyes of the ordinary world or according to the understanding of common people, at some point, they suffer a major downfall. In contrast, the Buddha states that if a person is virtuous and protects the five precepts properly, they can accumulate great wealth by virtue of their diligent practice. In modern times, people are prone to think that a person who keeps the five precepts and lives righteously has no place in society and cannot acquire wealth. But the Buddha pointed out that it is precisely the person who keeps the five precepts who can accumulate wealth.

Sometimes, wealth means the stability of one's possessions. Even if one earns a lot, if one drinks and engages in other vices, that wealth is quickly squandered and lost. The virtuous person is not like that. The Buddha used the similes of bees building a honeycomb and termites building a mound—earning wealth through hard work and righteousness ensures that it is stable and secure. In that sense, the first benefit described is that they obtain the wealth (*bhogakkhandha*) that laypeople desire. The second benefit is that a good reputation (*kīrti-rāva*) spreads about the virtuous person. A good reputation, a noble fame among the wise, spreads gently. That is the second benefit, which is highly valuable for someone living in society. Thirdly, when such a virtuous person enters any assembly—whether it is an assembly of kings, Brahmins, householders, or ascetics—they enter with confidence (*visārada*), without mental hesitation.

Mental hesitation means hanging one's head down, looking down in shame and hiding one's face. Because their virtue is pure, they can enter any assembly with head held high, without fear, and speak with confidence. That is the third benefit. The fourth benefit is passing away with mindfulness and clear comprehension at the moment of death, without confusion. You may have heard in other stories about Cunda the pork-butcher, who slaughtered pigs. At his final moment, having lost his human consciousness, he ran around squealing like a pig, suffered immensely, and fell into the lower realms. The virtuous person, however, recollects their good deeds, rejoices, spends their final moments with clear mindfulness, and—as described in the texts—passes away as if falling asleep and waking up, to be reborn in the heavenly world. The fifth benefit is indeed the ability to go to a happy destination. If a virtuous person protects their precepts properly, like Chatta Mānavaka or that poor man, they will be reborn in a happy destination. This is the fifth benefit.

On another occasion, Venerable Ānanda asked the Buddha: "Blessed One, there are three types of fragrance in the world: the fragrance of roots, the fragrance of heartwood, and

the fragrance of flowers. These three kinds of fragrance only travel with the wind, not against it. Blessed One, is there a fragrance in the world that travels both with the wind and against the wind—a fragrance that goes in both directions?" The Buddha replied: "If in any village, town, or city, there is a woman or man who has taken refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, who abstains from the five vices of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants, who keeps these precepts and is generous, the fragrance of their virtue spreads among humans, deities, and ascetics and Brahmins alike." The fragrance of their virtue spreads; this is how the benefits of morality are sometimes illustrated. Thus, even in this life, the virtuous person can live peacefully. You have also heard that those who observe virtue and other qualities can constantly live with great joy, free from the remorse (*vippaṭisāra*) mentioned in ancient books. They can experience spiritual joy. This is called the blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*). The thought "I have done no wrong, I am blameless" brings great joy. Through this, one can generate happiness.

Thus, that very joy is the initial benefit of morality in this life. Among the qualities of this Dispensation, as we all know, morality is the foundation for cultivating all spiritual qualities. In the path to ending the suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṁsāra, three aspects are described: morality, concentration, and wisdom. Established on morality, one develops concentration; supported by concentration, one develops wisdom. That is why they are presented as the threefold training: morality, concentration, and wisdom.

Morality is diverse. You know that the five precepts serve as the permanent lay morality. If possible, there is also the eightfold morality with right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*), which involves guarding one's speech as some of you have undertaken today. In short, morality means restraint of body and speech. This is done with the assistance of the mind, led by the power of determination in the mind. Therefore, the most valuable aspect of undertaking precepts is determination. Through this determination, one establishes a certain stability. Without that stability, concentration cannot be built. Just as a pagoda cannot be built without a proper foundation, the mind cannot be established in concentration without at least the minimum level of the five precepts. This simile can be used to understand this, even if it is not directly from the texts.

We have spent infinite time in this Saṁsāra experiencing various kinds of lives. Mostly, we have been reborn as demons, hungry ghosts, and hell-beings, and only occasionally as Brahmas or humans. Thus, stored in our consciousness (*viññāṇa*), in our minds, there is a vast accumulation of good and bad. Mostly, the bad side is dominant. These arise constantly in our minds as karmic results. Just as when a pot is boiling on the hearth, different things bubble up to the surface from time to time, so do karmas rise to the surface. It is the determination of morality (*sīla-adhiṭṭhāna*) that helps to suppress these and bring the mind to a stable level. If at any moment a person who has been killing animals—whether as a livelihood or for recreation—makes a firm determination: "From this moment on, I will not harm any living being," through that very power of determination, the past karmic forces related to that action are largely suppressed. The

mind does not allow them to surface when they arise. This is the natural law. It is the same with stealing. For some, stealing is an ingrained habit from birth, reflecting past character traits. But if one determines firmly, placing that taking of refuge—taking refuge in the Triple Gem—at the forefront of that determination, that determination becomes powerful, whether regarding stealing or other vices. In short, the five precepts address the very wrongs we have committed throughout infinite time in Saṁsāra when we did not encounter the Dhamma. The Buddha grouped and presented these as the five precepts.

Therefore, if we are looking towards Nibbāna, we must, as a starting step, observe at least these five as our permanent morality (*nicca-sīla*). That is the value of the five precepts; it is no small matter. They must be observed not casually, but with firm determination. Beyond that, there are Uposatha eight precepts and so on. Furthermore, the morality of a monk is even broader. If the foundation is strong, as you know in the case of building high-rise structures, they do not just build the upper part. Before that, as engineers well know, how much effort goes into laying the foundation? If built on a heap of sand, it will collapse. That is why, for the monks who work with higher targets, wishing to realize Nibbāna, the Buddha expounded an even more subtle and vast restraint of the Pātimokkha.

For the monks, the morality of fourfold purification is described: Pātimokkha restraint (*pātimokkha-saṁvara-sīla*), restraint of senses, purification of livelihood, and morality concerning the use of requisites. In this way, there is a gradually developing morality in this Sāsana. We must understand that Saṁsāra is entirely a muddy swamp. If we are to sit for meditation on this muddy swamp, we must build a platform. We have to construct a small platform. That platform can be built by erecting five pillars, representing the five precepts. It can also be built with eight pillars, representing the Uposatha precepts, or ten pillars for the ten precepts. That is how we must understand it. That is why the Buddha instructs us to develop concentration while established in morality. The mind can be maintained in an unshakeable state on an object only if we generate a state free from remorse. What supports this is the morality observed over a specific period of time. Morality kept over a long period is indeed strong, but even at a minimum level, one should make a determination at some point: “From today, from this moment, I am a different person. This is the foundation stone for a complete transformation of my character and life.” If, like Chatta Mānavaka, one determines such morality, then from that day on, that blameless happiness, that spiritual joy, will arise. That joy is obtained by reflecting upon it.

In morality, there are two aspects: determination and reflection. Determination is naturally present within the undertaking of the precept. It is not out of fear of someone else's words, but by saying “I undertake,” one accepts it with all one's heart and resolves upon that practice. Then, by resolving and keeping it, when one looks back—reflecting means reviewing—when one reviews the morality resolved upon in the morning and sees that it has been kept perfectly, despite various troubles in daily life, one feels great joy. If one reviews after a week and sees that it has been kept continuously, the joy is even greater. After a month, after a year, if a training rule has been kept perfectly for twenty or

thirty years, it generates immense mental strength and joy. That very joy is what supports concentration, as described in the Dhamma. A virtuous person does not need to make a deliberate effort wishing, “Let joy arise in me, let happiness arise in me.” Because the virtuous person has no remorse, joy arises naturally. When joy (*pāmojja*) arises, it turns into rapture (*pīti*). Through that rapture, the mind becomes tranquil, and through physical and mental happiness (*sukha*), concentration arises according to the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) chosen. This is the natural law. Such is the value of morality.

Similarly, established on that morality, next comes concentration. Concentration means the unification of the mind. The states of a unified mind are described as meditative absorptions (*jhāna-samāpatti*). Supported by these, one gains the strength to understand the deepest teachings expounded by the Buddha—the reality of life, the truth of character and the mind.

All of this is done by first establishing oneself in the refuge. We must think about what this Triple Gem is. Why are they called Gems (*ratna*)? It is mentioned in the Dhamma:

> *Yassa kiñci ratanaṁ loke vijjati vividhā puthu,*
>
> *Ratanaṁ Buddha-samaṁ natthi, tasmā sotthī bhavantu te…*
>
> *Ratanaṁ Dhamma-samaṁ natthi…*
>
> *Ratanaṁ Saṅgha-samaṁ natthi…*

Thus it is mentioned in blessing verses. Whatever gems exist in the world, in all their variety, there is no gem equal to the Buddha Gem, the Dhamma Gem, or the Saṅgha Gem. This is how the simile of gems has come down from the past. “Gem” here means that a person's value arises because of these three Gems deposited in their heart. Whatever one’s past life status may be, these three things—Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha—which appear rarest in the world, are called Gems. They are compared to gems. However, in recent times, due to various social changes, some Buddhist lay disciples defile their taking of refuge. A concept of “two gems” is spreading in the country, where one of the Gems is not given its due place. This is a defilement of one’s refuge. There is no taking of refuge in two gems in this Sāsana; it is only in the Triple Gem. Therefore, we must constantly generate the perception of the Gem in the eightfold Noble Saṅgha. It is upon this perception of the Gem that we observe morality. This is clear from the story of Chatta Mānavaka. The value we give to it corresponds to the Buddha as our Teacher, his Dhamma as the practice, and the Saṅgha as those who reflect the success of that practice. This is beautifully described in suttas like the *Aggappasāda Sutta*, in a way that is highly meaningful to the faithful. Among whatever beings there are—whether footless, two-footed, four-footed, many-footed, with form, formless, percipient, non-percipient, or neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient—the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Fully Enlightened One is supreme. Those who have faith in the supreme Buddha have faith in the supreme. For those who have faith in the supreme, the result is supreme. This is what is said of the Buddha Gem.

Similarly, it is said: “Among whatever conditioned states there are, the Noble Eightfold Path is the supreme. If one has faith in this Dhamma, the benefit of that faith is likewise supreme.” Then it is said: “Among whatever conditioned or unconditioned states there are, the Unprepared (*asaṅkhata*) which is Nibbāna, unarisen from causes and conditions, is the supreme. If one has faith in this Dhamma of Nibbāna, its benefits are likewise supreme.” Next, it is said: “Among whatever communities or groups there are in the world, the Saṅgha of the Tathāgata, the eightfold Noble Saṅgha Gem, is supreme. Therefore, if one has faith in the Saṅgha, the benefits are likewise supreme.” In this way, the Buddha has introduced the value of taking refuge and the perception of the Gem to the world on many occasions. We must constantly reflect on this. The value of all our actions arises from the strength generated through faith (*saddhā*) within our hearts. That is why it is said, *“Saddhāya tarati oghaṁ”*— “Through faith, one crosses the flood.”

In this formidable ocean of Saṁsāra—and Saṁsāra consists of four terrible floods: the flood of sensual desire, the flood of existence (*bhava*), the flood of views, and the flood of ignorance—one cannot even think of crossing over to the other side. Crossing over these four terrible floods, in which we have been submerged and swept away for infinite time, is what is meant by crossing over Saṁsāra. To face this task, we must possess sufficient strength of faith. We generate faith in the Enlightenment of the Tathāgata, believing that the Teacher does not speak falsehood: *“Saddahati Tathāgatassa bodhiṁ”*—accepting that the Tathāgata is the Fully Enlightened One, that his practice leads out of suffering, and that there is a community of people who have proven the efficacy of this liberating path. It is through this faith that one crosses the flood, as said in *“Saddhāya tarati oghaṁ”*. You have also heard in many places that if we compare the spiritual qualities of this Sāsana to agriculture, faith is the seed: *“Saddhā bījaṁ”*. Wherever spiritual qualities are described, faith is highlighted first, either as a seed or as a power (*bala*). To direct the physical and mental energy within a being towards a certain goal requires a major commitment. That commitment is what lies within this taking of refuge. Some cannot understand this today. We have to explain it to some scholars. What is this taking of refuge? Some cannot even comprehend why we take refuge in the Buddha or Saṅgha when it is said, “Self is indeed the refuge of self.” They completely misunderstand this. We must cross over. The Buddha cannot carry each person from this shore to the other shore. But we take refuge because there is Someone who points out the correct path, saying: “If you do it this way, it is correct; if you act this way, it is correct.” Taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha is not like in some other religions where another being drags you along. Here, it is to bring forth the energy (*vīriya*) within oneself. That is why, alongside faith, come energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Energy follows faith.

“Saddhāya tarati oghaṁ, appamādena aṇṇavaṁ, vīriyena… paññāya…”—thus it is sometimes stated. One crosses the flood through faith, and crosses the ocean of Saṁsāra through diligence. Next, through energy—energy is brought forth based on faith. Therefore, the degree to which faith becomes firm depends on the value we place on those three objects. If we equate any of these to something lesser than these Gems, we must consider whether we can generate the strength within us to cross over. A certain

person asked the Buddha: “How does one become a lay disciple (*upāsaka*) in this Sāsana?” The Buddha replied: “By taking refuge in the Buddha, taking refuge in the Dhamma, and taking refuge in the Saṅgha, one becomes a lay disciple.” Look how easy it seems. One does not need to fill out application forms, pay fees, or anything. It seems very simple. But to be a true lay disciple, one must take refuge to the point of being able to make a truth-assertion: *“Natthi me saraṇaṁ aññaṁ, Buddho me saraṇaṁ varaṁ, etena sacca-vajjena hotu me jayamaṅgalam”*— “I have no other refuge, the Buddha is my supreme refuge; by this truth, may there be victory and blessing!” That is the level. Taking refuge helps us to generate that state. Thus, when we reflect upon this, taking refuge in the Triple Gem is not something to be taken lightly. It is repeated three times to engrave it deeply in one’s mind.

The wholesome energy generated through this refuge does not merely yield heavenly rebirth. Based on this, one fulfills morality. Based on morality, one develops concentration. Established on concentration, and supported by past wholesome forces, one eventually realizes the supreme Dhamma of Nibbāna through the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship (*Arahatta*). Therefore, we must reflect on our own lives. Especially, like what we said about children, not only children but even adults must spend their days with the recollection of the Triple Gem. It is not that merely recollecting the Triple Gem will save us from all physical dangers or grant us eternal life without death. But if we live with that proximate mind, if death should occur at any moment, we can avoid the lower realms and secure a good state. In short, our next birth (*jāti*) is a photocopy of our own mind. If we shake when a photo is being taken, how will the picture turn out? Similarly, if our mind is defiled at the moment of death, we will be reborn as hungry ghosts, demons, or animals. If, on the other hand, we achieve rebirth in a happy realm, especially like that deity we mentioned, when we look back and see how such a small thing, which the world thought lightly of, brought such great benefits, we should train ourselves to think: “If we were to complete this path of Dhamma, what kind of benefits would there be?”

Therefore, looking at today’s topic, it is the initial step in the Sāsana. But if we do not understand it correctly, it becomes difficult to fulfill the spiritual qualities in this Dispensation. If we grab onto deep and complex things without understanding the basic principles, they will not penetrate our hearts. Thus, if we have understood the value of the Triple Gem in this Sāsana through stories like that of Chatta Mānavaka, it is with that support that we can fulfill our other practices. Therefore, you must reflect that no matter how busy your daily lives are, you should use the Uposatha day as a pause, and during this time, review and correct the shortcomings in your life. To cross over this Saṁsāra, reflect quietly on what you must do, establish yourself in morality on this Uposatha day, listen to the Dhamma, meditate, and thereby end the suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṁsāra within this very Buddha Sāsana. Therefore, reflect: “May this accumulation of merit gathered through keeping the precepts, meditating, and listening to the Dhamma, serve as a strong support to strive as much as possible in this very life to end the saṁsāric sufferings of birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and so forth, through

the realization of the path and fruit of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship!"

Similarly, may all beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, including the guardian deities and Brahma kings, as well as our departed relatives, rejoice in this merit of Dhamma-preaching and realize the supreme deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi! With this aspiration, please recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #27

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Appamādarato bhikkhu, pamāde bhayadassivā;

Abhabbo parihānāya, nibbānasseva santike.

From:

Verse 32 from the Appamādavagga (Chapter on Heedfulness) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

By attaining supreme enlightenment on a Vesak Full Moon Poya day such as today, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Enlightened Buddha, discovered the path to cross over from *Bhava* (Becoming). This discovery made through a noble quest (*ariya pariyesana*) is indeed the most sublime discovery in the world—the discovery of the path to cross over from *Bhava* (Becoming). The Blessed Buddha obtained on that day the realization that helps the beings of the world, who have been bound to *Saṁsāra* for an infinite period of time, to understand what those fetters binding them to this *saṁsāric Bhava* (Becoming) are, and to attain liberation by cutting those fetters.

The stanza we have taken as our theme today, as well as the story related to it, speaks precisely of those *saṁyojanas* (fetters)—the story of those bonds.

This stanza was preached concerning a certain monk who went to a deep forest to meditate after obtaining a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from the Buddha. Having obtained the meditation subject and gone to the forest, he meditated but, unable to achieve any higher attainment, he thought: "There must be some shortcoming in my meditation subject. I must go and clarify my meditation subject by meeting the Blessed One again." Thinking thus, he set out with the hope of coming to Jetavana monastery. On his way, he saw a forest fire. As the forest fire was spreading, this monk quickly climbed a high rock nearby and escaped from the fire. However, he kept watching how this forest fire was spreading. While watching it, with a deep sense of urgency

(*saṁvega*), he thought: "Just as this fire goes on burning up all the *Upādāna* (Grasping)—which means the firewood or whatever else it catches—similarly, in the effort to cross over from the world through the knowledge of the path of Arahatship (*arahatta-magga-ñāṇa*) that I aspire to, will not the *vipassanā* (insight) knowledges that must be aroused also burn up those bonds that bind one to the world with the fire of that knowledge?" In this manner, a certain thought arose in that monk's mind.

The Buddha, staying at Jetavana, saw this monk's train of thoughts and, in order to direct it toward Nibbāna, uttered this stanza—which is referred to in the commentaries as an *obhāsa gāthā* (a stanza uttered through sending forth light). Such incidents are mentioned on many occasions. The Buddha, through psychic power, made himself appear as if standing before that monk, and uttered this stanza so that it could be heard by him:

"Appamādarato bhikkhu, pamāde bhayadassivā;

aṇuṁ thūlaṁ dahan, aggīva gacchati."

The monk who delights in heedfulness and sees danger in heedlessness moves forward like a fire, burning all fetters, large and small. In this way, He uttered a stanza that leads to and encourages those insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). Approving the thought-movement of that monk, the Buddha declared through this stanza, "Yes, monk, just so, like that fire burning, insight knowledges go on burning away those *saṁyojanas* (fetters)." Hearing this, it is said that the monk attained Arahatship right there, and came to see the Buddha to declare his liberation.

When we reflect on this story, for that monk, the forest fire was not merely a sight—a mere spectacle. For us, a forest fire is only a sight. But for him, it became an object of *vipassanā* (insight). A forest fire—perhaps not everyone has heard of this word—often occurs in forests naturally. During a severe drought, when all the trees are dried up, when a storm comes, two trees rub against each other. Rubbing, rubbing, rubbing against each other, they catch fire. Having caught fire, those two trees themselves are burnt down. Next, catching all the surrounding trees, leaves, and vegetation, it gradually spreads in a terrifying manner, consuming everything it encounters. Now, that is a deeply moving sight. It is by directing that sight toward Nibbāna that the monk aroused insight knowledges in that manner.

Now, if we reflect a little, to the Buddha, the entire world appeared as a place on fire. There are certain sutta discourses, highly wondrous discourses. There are suttas of a nature that arouse a sense of urgency, like the *Ādittapariyāya Sutta*. Some of them are truly marvelous. There is a discourse preached by the Buddha at Gayāsīsa, near Buddhagaya, to a thousand monks; the discourse is very short, but it ends stating that all those thousand monks attained Arahatship. It is an extremely powerful discourse. It begins: *"Ādittaṁ"*—"All is burning, monks." Everything is on fire and burning. Next, the Buddha analyzes: "And what, monks, is that 'all'?" There, 'all'—which is called *sabbaṁ*—is analyzed: the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and

tastes, the body and *Phassa* (Contact), the mind and mind-objects (*dhamma*, the word used there for what comes to the mind). All these are on fire. They are on fire and burning. With what are they burning, monks? Next, He says—and you may have heard of this—about the eleven fires: with the fires of greed (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Not only those three. Next, He speaks of a multitude of fires of *Dukkha* (Suffering) such as *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. It is with these fires that the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, and finally, the mind and mind-objects, and everything else, are burning. There is a great fire within the worldly being. The Buddha saw everything as having caught fire.

So, the statement that this entire *Bhava* (Becoming) is a fire might sometimes be difficult for someone to understand. Next, if we reflect a little on this fire, according to our day-to-day understanding, we use the word 'firewood-fire' (*gindara*). The fire catches the wood. The wood burns. Thus, within that word 'fire' both are present. If we think about it a little, for this wood, the word used in the Pali language is *Upādāna* (Grasping). In those analyses of the Dhamma, we can say that the word *Upādāna* is used in two senses. There is the sense of 'grasping/holding' and there is the sense of 'the thing grasped' (fuel). Grasping/holding is the primary meaning. Then, the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) are groups of *Upādāna*. It is these groups that we call "I" and "mine," according to the Buddha's description. A group of form is called the form aggregate of grasping (*rūpupādānakkhandha*). A group of *Vedanā* (Feeling)... all these are designated by the name *Upādāna*. Thus, when we say *Upādāna*, just as it means 'grasping/holding', it also means 'the thing grasped'. In the sense of 'the thing grasped', it is firewood, or some kind of fuel. So, a fire has caught hold of its *Upādāna* (fuel). After catching hold of it, what happens? In the end, there is no distinction between the fire and the firewood.

The story of this being burning with those fires of *Dukkha* (Suffering) has been shown in a simple poem that we can understand, by the great Thera of Vīdāgama in the past, in the *Lowäda Saňgarāva*. In a very simple poem:

> *When a heap of firewood has caught fire constantly,*
>
> *It is called 'fire', and the name 'firewood' no longer applies;*
>
> *In the same manner, joining them together, the Sage declared:*
>
> *It is but Dukkha, and the name 'body' no longer applies.*

After a heap of firewood catches fire, it is only called 'fire' and the name 'firewood' is no longer suitable; it "does not apply." In the same way, the Buddha brought together the fire and the firewood that is caught by the fire, and declared: "It is but *Dukkha* (Suffering), and the name 'body' no longer applies." It is not fitting to call this a "body."

Now, that eye, ear, nose, etc., are in this body, aren't they? What are mentioned in the Dhamma as *āyatanas* (sense-bases)—all those six *āyatanas* are within this body. So, saying that all these six *āyatanas* are on fire means precisely that. The entire body is on

fire. That is why we all talk about the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha. We say, "*Dukkha-sacca*, *Dukkha-sacca*" (the truth of suffering), and some say, "I have already understood it." But *Dukkha* (Suffering) is not fully understood. It is at the moment *Dukkha-sacca* is understood that those two, the firewood and the fire, come together. Once one realizes that what was set apart as a "heap of firewood" is burning completely, there is only fire there. One cannot call it "firewood." However, seeing various troubles in this world, some people say, "I have understood *Dukkha*." But when full realization comes, it is to such an extent that it cannot be separated; it is pure *Dukkha*. Pure *Dukkha*. The Buddha refers to this as the "entire mass of suffering" (*kevala-dukkhakkhandha*) when analyzing this *Dukkha*. In brief, the entire five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)—these five grasped groups—are called *Dukkha* according to that very vision.

Once the fire catches the firewood, a point comes where the firewood cannot be separated. There is only a pure heap of fire. So, that is it. The path leading there is the path of *vipassanā* (insight). Then, how does one gain this understanding regarding this? What is the path leading to this realization? For that too, we find guidance in other suttas shown by the Buddha Himself. He speaks concerning those six *āyatanas* (sense-bases).

A certain monk asks the Blessed One, requesting a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) on how to destroy this *Dukkha* (Suffering)—how to bring an end to this *saṁsāric Dukkha*. Then the Buddha declares: "One must understand this *Anicca* (Impermanent)." The eye is *Anicca*, and forms are *Anicca*. The ear is *Anicca*, and sounds are *Anicca*. Everything is *Anicca*. But the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) is not present in the ordinary worldling. Instead, what is present is the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). They separate the eye and separate forms, treating them as things that actually exist. According to the Buddha's vision, all these change moment by moment. That word is used in various ways: it fluctuates (*calaṁ*), it decays (*vayaṁ*), it passes away. Everything fluctuates, decays, trembles. It is changing into another state, rapidly. But the worldling does not perceive it. Therefore, they separate them.

Separating them as eye and forms, ear and sounds—it is within that, indeed, that the bondage arises. Now, regarding this bondage, a very good simile-story comes. It is a dialogue between the chief disciple Ven. Sāriputta Maha Thera and Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita Maha Thera. Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita asks Ven. Sāriputta: "Is the form a bond for the eye, or is the eye a bond for the form? Is the sound a bond for the ear, or is the ear a bond for the sound?" There is talk about a bond, a *saṁyojana* (fetter), isn't there? So, what is the *saṁyojana* here? Does the form become a bond to the eye, or does the eye become a bond? Does the sound become a bond to the ear, or does the ear become a bond to the sound? In this manner, he asks about all six. Finally, "Is the mind-object a bond to the mind, or is the mind a bond to the mind-objects?" Then Ven. Sāriputta declares: "No, friend Koṭṭhita. The form is not a bond to the eye, nor is the eye a bond to forms. The sound is not a bond to the ear, nor is the ear a bond to sounds. Rather, the desire-and-lust (*chandarāga*)—the attachment following desire—that arises in-between, conditioned and supported by those two, is the bond here." So, we usually consider the

form seen by the eye to be the bond. But here it is shown that the desire-and-lust (*chandarāga*)—the attachment following desire—arising due to those two, is the bond. To illustrate this, a very good simile is given:

"Friend Koṭṭhita, if a black ox and a white ox are bound together by a single strap or chain, like a yoke, and if someone were to say that the white ox is the bond for the black ox, or that the black ox is the bond for the white ox—would that assertion be correct?" Then Ven. Koṭṭhita says: "No, friend. Why? The white ox is not the bond for the black ox, nor is the black ox the bond for the white ox. Rather, the strap or the bond by which the two are bound together is the real bond there."

"Just so, the form is not the bond for the eye, nor is the eye the bond for forms. The desire-and-lust (*chandarāga*)—the attachment, the *Taṇhā* (Craving)—that arises because of those two is the bond there. That is why the Buddha declared that to bring an end to *Dukkha* (Suffering), one must destroy *Taṇhā*, destroy *chandarāga*. Although we might think of this as very deep, some meditators get insights through this. Why? The understanding to cross over from the entire world is gained precisely from this world of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*) which we have so far taken to be 'the world'. The Buddha defines 'the world' as these six sense-bases—called the *saḷāyatana*. The six sense-bases we have are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Now, the word *āyatana* might have various meanings these days. But in truth, what we have to do is the management of these six sense-bases. However, what is mostly done is mismanagement. That is why we are bound to *Saṁsāra*. What is the management? It is understanding the *Anicca* (Impermanent) nature of these sense-bases, according to the word of the Buddha. The eye is *Anicca*. It changes moment by moment. It changes into another state. Forms too are like that—gaining that deep understanding, through the application of mindfulness on this body. Those meritorious friends who meditate know this; by applying mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), they gradually understand deeply that all these change moment by moment. It is through that, indeed, that *Taṇhā*, or *chandarāga*, gradually loosens. If that *Anicca* nature is established in the mind to some extent, if it is realized by the mind, to that extent the understanding arises that there is nothing here to cling to or to clash with. *Chandarāga* means the attachment created according to desire."

So, such is the situation. There are numerous Dhamma discourses by the Buddha regarding these six sense-bases. Even in this day and age, if practicing yogis apply wisdom, if they manage these sense-bases correctly, and if they make an effort to understand the reality of the objects that come as prey to these sense-bases, then they will understand their fluctuating nature. Now, even in motion pictures, what is done is that by sending a film strip rapidly, a certain illusion (hypnosis) is created. A perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) is created toward those scenes, toward those images. Sometimes, due to a mechanical fault or a delay, one suddenly realizes, "Here, what is passing is only a collection of images." That illusion which creates the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) is deposited in this *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness). That is a

magical nature. That is why the Buddha points out on some occasions: "The eye is *Anicca* (Impermanent), forms too are *Anicca*."

"Next, the eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*)—which is the consciousness regarding the eye, arising because of those two—is also *Anicca*. A person does not see merely because there is an eye. He does not see merely because there are forms. At the moment when the eye and forms come together through attention, a consciousness regarding the eye (*Viññāṇa*) arises. The Buddha declares that this eye-consciousness too is *Anicca*. Next, after the eye-consciousness arises, through that, *Phassa* (Contact) emerges. A certain impingement occurs. That too is *Anicca*. Next, due to that impingement (*Phassa*), a certain *Vedanā* (Feeling) arises. That too is likewise *Anicca*. In this very manner, the Buddha reminds us. Within that very process that takes place—within the process arising from the impingement of the eye and forms—there is only *Anicca* (Impermanent). It is fluctuating, changing, turning into another state, and undergoing reverse change. Then, how can those things that arise because of them be permanent? Finally, the Buddha declares: for example, the consciousness (*Viññāṇa*) arising from the impingement of the eye and forms is *Anicca*. The contacts (*Phassa*) arising because of that consciousness are *Anicca*. How can the *Vedanā* (Feeling) and so forth that arise based on that contact be permanent? Whether it is a pleasant, painful, or neutral feeling, every single one of them has that same nature of changing. It is when that understanding comes, indeed, that in the end, that (grasping) slips away."

In books, generally, the *saṁyojanas* (fetters) are explained very simply. It is said that if one wants to realize Nibbāna, one must break ten *saṁyojanas*, and one can list those ten at once. What are the ten? Perhaps you have heard of them. On the path leading to Nibbāna, there are ten bonds binding us to *Saṁsāra* that must be broken.

They are shown as *saṁyojanas* (fetters) as follows:

1. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body)

2. *Vicikicchā* (Skeptical doubt)

3. *Sīlabbata-parāmāsa* (Adherence to rules and rituals)

4. *Kāmarāga* (Sensual lust)

5. *Vyāpāda* (Ill-will)

6. *Rūparāga* (Lust for form-existence)

7. *Arūparāga* (Lust for formless-existence)

8. *Māna* (Conceit)

9. *Uddhacca* (Restlessness)

10. *Avijjā* (Ignorance)

Sakkāya-diṭṭhi means taking the five aggregates—namely, form (*rūpa*), *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception (*saññā*), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness)—as a self. Each of them is considered as a self in four ways. There too, what is present is that perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*).

Likewise, *vicikicchā* (skeptical doubt). One holds tightly to the notion of "I". Thinking that there is someone called "I" based on this body, one rolls over and over in a heap of doubts and hesitations, such as: "Did I exist in the past? Will I exist in the future?" and so forth. One conjures up (notions) through that. That too is a bond binding one to *Saṁsāra*. Next, *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* (adherence to rules and rituals) means, as some people think, that through difficult vows and practices—like some brahmins immersing themselves in cold water, or Jain ascetics undergoing various forms of self-mortification—by holding tightly to these, liberation is attained. In the end, that too is a bond.

Next, everyone knows that *kāmarāga* (sensual lust) is a force that pulls one downwards, to that *Bhava* (Becoming) we mentioned. Likewise, *vyāpāda* (ill-will) means anger—the two: attraction and repulsion (clinging and clashing). Next, what are mentioned as *rūparāga* and *arūparāga* are indeed more subtle forms of that very *Taṇhā* (Craving). Due to spending a long time in *Saṁsāra*, beings have a power in their minds to create various mind-born images. In the end, they grasp onto these, even if they have let go of external things. That is why, even if they have attained high states of jhāna, they still have certain desires that come from deep within—a kind of subtle desire. It is in correspondence to those that Brahma worlds and so forth are created.

Such is the highly dangerous situation present within this *Bhava* (Becoming). One cannot easily escape. Some go and get trapped there—in those subtle cravings such as *rūparāga* and so on. Next, as a result of all that, there are *māna* (conceit) and *uddhacca* (restlessness). *Māna* arises from taking things as "two", like separating the firewood and the fire. Because of that very thing, *uddhacca* (restlessness/unquietness) arises. Finally, *avijjā* (ignorance). Within that itself is found the ultimate end of the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) that starts with *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body). It is only when that perception of permanence is completely removed that the emptiness of the world is understood.

So, if we speak of those ten in that manner, they are shown as things that are destroyed through path-knowledges (*magga-ñāṇa*). However, if we take this as something that is more directly and practically helpful to the practicing yogi in meditation, it is, as the Buddha said, the bond that exists between these two in these suttas:

the eye and forms,

the ear and sounds,

the nose and smells,

the tongue and tastes,

the body and *Phassa* (Contact),

the mind and mind-objects (*dhamma*).

On another occasion, the Buddha, addressing the Saṅgha, declared:

"Monks, I will teach you a dyad (two things)." When it is said, "I will teach you two," one might think of various things. But here too, the Buddha presents the teaching in this way: "Monks, I will teach you a dyad. What is the dyad? The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and contacts, the mind and mind-objects." He does not stop there. "Monks, if anyone were to say there is another dyad apart from this, that talk of his would be completely empty. He would not be able to provide any proof either." What is shown by this is that the Buddha's real dyad is just this. If one takes "two" as a duality, it is precisely this division into two:

The eye—separated from forms;

The ear—separated from sounds;

The nose—separated from smells.

Taking each of them as "things". This notion of "things"—no matter what the level of education of these meritorious friends may be, while the story of the ten *saṁyojanas* (fetters) might be understood by those who have read books, this talk is for everyone, since everyone is a manager of these *āyatanas* (sense-bases), aren't they? So, to abandon that mismanagement and to manage them properly, try to realize this very understanding. That is to say, the Buddha declares that as long as we separate the eye and forms, and separate the ear and sounds, so long will that bond, so long will that idea of impingement (clashing) remain. That is why it was called "a dyad" (two). If there are "two" in the world, it is precisely this kind of division into two. It is within that division, indeed, that the forest fire we mentioned earlier arises—from the friction of two dry trees. Rubbing, rubbing, rubbing against each other, at some point, a fire is produced.

It is in that very same way that the Buddha declared concerning this *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness). There is no such thing as consciousness on its own. There is no separate consciousness apart from this. It must either be eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*), which is consciousness regarding the eye; or it must be ear-consciousness (*sota-viññāṇa*), which is consciousness regarding the ear; or it must be nose-consciousness (*ghāṇa-viññāṇa*), which is consciousness regarding the nose; or it must be tongue-consciousness (*jivhā-viññāṇa*), which is consciousness regarding the tongue; or it must be body-consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*), which is consciousness regarding the body; or it must be mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*).

There are six such types of consciousness (*Viññāṇa*). There is no consciousness on its own. This too is shown on one occasion through a simile. Now, there is no such thing as just "fire", is there? We can either call it a paper fire, or a wood fire. In that manner, if a fire arises dependent on a certain *Upādāna* (Grasping), dependent on some fuel like

wood, it is designated by that name. There there is no such thing as a mere "fire" in the world. Even when a matchstick catches fire, it has to be called a "matchstick fire" thereafter. Such is the situation. It is in that very same way that *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) is explained.

Within it, there is this nature of separating. It is through that separating, indeed, that impingement (clashing) exists next. Thus, if one understands at some point—after those two trees rubbed together and caught fire, those two trees themselves are gone, and whatever the fire catches, it moves forward burning and burning it. It goes on burning up everything. What remains then is a pure sheet of flame. There might have been very beautiful flowering trees and good fruits in that forest. But in the end, they are all just firewood. Before the fire, they are all just firewood. In that way, it goes on burning, burning them up.

It must have been on seeing this that the monk then thought: "Just like this fire, so too are these insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). They go on burning and burning up all *saṅkhāras* (Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity) that they encounter. They go on burning and burning whatever they meet ahead." With what do they burn them? With that very perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). Through the perception of impermanence. It is extremely powerful. At the moment when it is thoroughly impressed upon our minds that "every single one of these is *Anicca*, *Anicca*", then, without taking them as "two", here there is completely a heap of fire. Just as it was said in that poem:

> *When a heap of firewood has caught fire constantly,*
>
> *It is called 'fire', and the name 'firewood' no longer applies;*
>
> *In the same manner, joining them together, the Sage declared...*

This is understood as pure *Dukkha* (Suffering). As long as those two are separated, next, dividing them as agreeable and disagreeable, one creates attachment or repulsion in various ways. It is as a direct result of this, indeed, that whether it be wholesome or unwholesome (*kusala* or *akusala*), merit or demerit, created over a long period in *Saṁsāra*, through them, conjuring up world after world, this being goes on in *Saṁsāra* for an infinite time.

Out of those ten, the first five are called the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya-saṁyojana*). They are all forces that pull downwards. There is a group of fetters that pull one down to the planes of misery (*apāyas*), to such lower realms of *Bhava* (Becoming). There is also a kind of fine thread that pulls one upwards, to the Brahma worlds. Thus, pulled by these, the being spends a long time in *Saṁsāra*.

The Buddha taught this vision regarding the fire. Now, the ordinary worldling is frightened by this vision of fire. But that monk did not merely rejoice in having escaped from the forest fire. Climbing up that rock, he did not just satisfy himself thinking, "Now I am safe from the forest fire." He reflected on the purpose for which he had come. To derive benefit from it, he turned that sight (*dassana*) into insight (*vipassanā*). Just as

this fire goes on burning and burning everything it encounters, so indeed, as one goes deeper and deeper into the understanding that every part of *saṅkhāras* (Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity) caught by the insight knowledge is *Anicca* (Impermanent), subject to change, subject to fluctuation, subject to turning into another state—then, that very momentum is lost. That bond is destroyed.

So, what is the path of meditation that helps in this understanding? Next, the question is that there are various paths of meditation. Some people think: "When we just watch the mind as it goes, we can understand the state of this mind." They let the mind run as it runs. Letting it run, they think, "Someday it will be understood by us." That is not the correct method. For that too, the Buddha has shown a simile, an extremely valuable simile. In fact, the more one thinks about it, the deeper it gets. The Buddha gives a simile as follows:

"Monks, suppose a certain man binds a snake with a very strong rope. He binds the snake tightly with a rope. Next, he binds a crocodile. Similarly, next, he binds a bird with a rope. He binds a dog with a similar rope. He binds a jackal with a similar rope. Next, he binds a monkey with a similar rope. Having bound those six, he joins those six ropes together and ties a knot. Tying a knot in the middle, he just lets them go. After letting them go, what happens? Those six pull in six different directions."

"The snake pulls toward its anthill,

the crocodile pulls toward the water,

the bird pulls toward the sky,

the dog pulls toward the village,

the jackal pulls toward the cemetery,

the monkey pulls toward the forest.

They pull in six different directions. Now, imagine for a moment these six bound by these six ropes pulling. Next, the Buddha says: having pulled and pulled, getting exhausted—indeed, they would be pulling in each direction—after getting exhausted, whichever of these six animals is the strongest, all the others are pulled along according to that animal. Suppose all are overcome by the strength of the crocodile. Lo, the crocodile drags all of them into the water. Such is the simile given here. Next, just so, it is said there that those six animals have their own separate feeding grounds (*visaya*). Their feeding grounds are different. Whether they are feeding grounds or habitats, they are different. Therefore, they pull toward those sides. What is this simile given for? This is said about those six *āyatanas* (sense-bases). The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These are given as the similes for them. But the simile does not end there. That is what happens when they are dragged along."

In short, that simile is shown to demonstrate the difference between the lack of sense restraint (*indriya-asaṁvara*) and sense restraint (*indriya-saṁvara*). That simile

mentioned above is about the lack of sense restraint. If they are just let go, bound by a knot in the middle, in the end, pulling this way and that, someone wins. They are dragged along that path. If one just watches the mind, that is exactly what happens. Next, the Buddha says there, that is the state of one who has not developed mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*). If someone has not developed *kāyagatāsati*, the functioning of those six *āyatanas* of that person is shown by that simile.

Next, He shows the simile regarding the restraint developed through that by one who has developed mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*). That too carries forward that same simile to some extent. Suppose someone binds a snake with a rope in the same way. A crocodile, a bird, a dog, a jackal, and a monkey. Instead of tying a knot in the middle of those six ropes, what does he do? He binds them to a very strong post. He binds them to a very strong post. Then, those six pull and pull and pull. They pull until they are exhausted. Having pulled, what do they do? All six come and lie down, leaning against the post. A few beautiful words are used there. That is, having come to the post and leaning against it, all six lie down exhausted. Now, imagine the difference. What is spoken of there is indeed sense restraint (*indriya-saṁvara*).

Thus, the Buddha shows: according to that second simile, such is the state of the person who has developed mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*). Whichever way those senses pull, in the end, they come and stop near the post of the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

That is why, meritorious friends, the method of letting the mind go in the manner mentioned earlier, giving room to whatever thoughts that arise, and thinking "someday an understanding will come to us"—that is the method I mentioned at the beginning. Instead of that, what the Buddha points out is this *kāyagatāsati*. In short, there are numerous meditations that fall under *kāyagatāsati*. Generally, we speak of the thirty-two impure parts of the body. Apart from that, in some places, even the ten kinds of foulness (*asubha*) showing the nature of the body can be included in *kāyagatāsati*. Whichever it may be, there must be a certain stability. Consider the difference here. There must be a certain stability.

To restrain this scattering mind, the mind that tends to scatter through the senses, some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) is necessary. Even the word *kammaṭṭhāna*—since the meaning of old words is not well understood these days, we have sometimes translated it into modern Sinhala. If *kamma* means 'work', and *ṭhāna* means 'place' or 'ground', then *kammaṭṭhāna* means a workplace, a spiritual workplace. A person who has no workplace, no work, no job, is a vagrant, isn't he? In contrast, the person who has a workplace thinks about the workplace, focuses his mind on the workplace, and goes to the workplace. Just so, the workplace belonging to the practicing yogi working for Nibbāna is the *kammaṭṭhāna*, *kāyagatāsati*. Thus, for the one who has developed *kāyagatāsati*, the ability to establish that very sense restraint we spoke of is what the Buddha shows here through this profound simile. I called it profound because its meaning is deep, but on examination, it is simple. What is shown by the simile of those six animals is the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Many people talk about the five

senses these days. Some try to limit it to five to make it easy. In some countries, ordinary people take "senses" to mean only these five senses—the five sense-faculties. The unique feature of Buddhist philosophy is the teaching of six senses—not five, but six. Therefore, the mind cannot be left out. It is in the mind, indeed, that everything is deposited. To what extent? There too, on one occasion, the Buddha gives a simile, a fitting simile:

"The five sense-faculties, namely the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, consume what is corresponding to them.

The eye consumes forms,

the ear consumes sounds.

The eye does not consume sounds, does it? Each has its own distinct feeding grounds. The nose consumes smells. But all that is consumed is brought and deposited in the mind-faculty (*manindriya*) in the middle. Everything comes and gathers in the mind. Then, if we have spent an infinite period of time in this *Saṁsāra*, the perceptions (*saññā*), the subtle perceptions of all those experiences—that which is indicated by various subtle words like *āsava* (cankers) and *Anusaya* (Underlying tendency)—are embedded within our *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness). They are embedded in our mind; they are embedded in our intellect. So, that indeed is the most subtle bond. It revolves between the mind and mind-objects, between thought and thoughts. Thus, when looking at them as faculties, or as bases (*āyatanas*), there are six here according to Buddhist philosophy. Therefore, this problem cannot be solved by limiting it to five. Some try to take only those five existing in the world and escape through them. It is not that easy. The most subtle is this mind. What has been received from the others over an infinite time, having consumed those respective preys, all the levels of perceptions obtained from them—the *anusayas* (Latency / Underlying tendencies), etc.—have come and deposited in the mind. The mind, in that respect, is extremely subtle. That is why the mind is said to be the forerunner of all things: 'Manopubbaṅgamā...'"

Finally, there is a wondrous revolution among those thoughts. To understand all this, one must bring that very perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) here in the manner mentioned regarding the body. Instead of the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) held so far regarding the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, and everything else, one must direct one's attention (*manasikāra*) so that the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) is developed. It is through that mismanagement, indeed, that lack of restraint arises. If proper management is done regarding these sense-bases (*āyatanas*), then gradually—when speaking of those insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), and you may have heard of this—if we explain this *Anicca* (Impermanent) in more detail, it means arising and passing away. It is called *udayabbaya* (arising and passing away). A multitude of arisings and passings away. In the entire world, there is only arising and passing away. It is not visible due to that perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*). The perception of compactness means the perception of permanence. To the deluded person covered in ignorance, who looks at the world believing everything is permanent, the feeling comes that all these things exist. He says even this bodily cage exists. Form exists,

sound exists. He has that feeling. But by applying mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) deeply, and reflecting on each of them with concentration (*samādhi*), at some point, one realizes that there is only a multitude of fluctuations here. Just as we said about the motion picture, a multitude of fluctuations. Subtle fluctuations—there is nothing in this to be taken as permanent anywhere. Inside, there is a multitude of fluctuations; outside, there is also a multitude of fluctuations. It is because of our ignorance (*avijjā*) that we separate them as "eye" and "form". Every single one of them changes moment by moment. That is why the Buddha gives various similes like a mirage. Every single one of them changes moment by moment. But due to ignorance—due to the ignorance bound over a long period—beings of the world hold tightly to all of them with the perception of compactness. Through that, indeed, as a result, they start to rub together and catch fire in that manner. When this understanding comes, lo, one understands in some way that there is only a pure heap of fire here, and nothing to be separated.

So, the path leading to that is what we called the *kammaṭṭhāna* (meditation subject). A means to settle the mind. It is like the post we mentioned earlier. When an ox is tied to a post near a field or a meadow, no matter how much the ox pulls, it cannot pull away to the other field, can it? It comes back and lies down right there. That is what is written in the books about the *kammaṭṭhāna*. The *kammaṭṭhāna* is sometimes shown as a post. That post helps as a stable point to tame that running mind. When a wild bull runs, if one hangs onto its tail without any foothold (leverage), one has to face a great disaster. Some foothold (leverage/momentum) is necessary. That foothold is indeed concentration (*samādhi*). One must make an effort to concentrate the mind. A certain *kammaṭṭhāna* helps in that.

Be it some part of that body—hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, and so forth—or else a state of foulness (*asubha*) like a bloated corpse, one must try to bring the mind to it as a *kammaṭṭhāna* (meditation subject) whenever it runs away. It is only then, in the manner mentioned in that second simile, that those six animals run this way and that, and having run and run and got exhausted, in the end, they somehow come right to the foot of the post, lie down, and settle. Otherwise, what happens is that, as in the first case, if they are let go with just a knot tied, running this way and that, the strongest one—if the eye is the strongest—will in the end go toward that. When there is a multitude of such temptations, a person, falling under some temptation according to his temperament, in the end destroys his own spiritual practice. Instead of that, the Buddha declares: "This is the method. For concentration (*samādhi*), a certain *kammaṭṭhāna* is necessary." Therefore, practically, we must understand through this talk we have made, that according to the Buddha's vision, there is nothing permanent here. There is nothing to be taken as permanent. The perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) exists in the worldling only because of ignorance (*avijjā*). In a highly dangerous manner in this world, because of being limited for so long, worldlings have separated things in this way as "two" (dyad).

But when looking at this from all sides, even looking from within, what are present are only the four elements (*dhātus*). Not only the Buddha, but also Ven. Sāriputta Maha Thera points out that what is inside is also the earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*). What is present in things like the eye, ear, and nose is also the earth element. What is present in the external world is also the earth element. This body is something constructed from the four elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). Similarly, what is present externally is also those four. But through this, because of that ignorance (*aviijjā*), because of that *Taṇhā* (Craving)—which is why it is called craving and *Upādāna* (Grasping)—it is the momentum taken through *Taṇhā* that is present here. Due to the force of craving developed in this *Saṁsāra* over an infinite time, the being takes a certain momentum. That is why one grasped tightly (*upādāna*) to this body that is inside, spiritually speaking. It is to keep this body alive, indeed, that we use all these things to assist us.

Now, when looking at the lives of animals, every animal goes in search of prey. That prey, even alive, is put inside—inside the body. Now, that is not limited only to animals; we can say it is the same even for human beings. Even alive, they put it inside. Why? Because of the attachment to this body which has been tightly grasped (*upādinna*). It is this that we carry through *Saṁsāra* for a long period of time. So, the Buddha points out that this is precisely what has to be broken: this momentum taken through *Taṇhā* (Craving). It is as a result of that momentum, indeed, that each *Bhava* (Becoming) is created for us. This is what is meant by creating a *Bhava* through our thoughts.

Now, we spoke of *Dukkha-sacca* (the truth of suffering) by comparing it to a pure fire. Then it becomes clear to us that what lies beneath it is *Taṇhā* (Craving). It is to that very *Taṇhā* that the term *chandarāga* was used—the attachment following desire. To put it in another word, it is *Taṇhā*. Then, as long as that *Taṇhā* exists, due to that strong *Upādāna* (Grasping), the worldly being holds tightly to some portion of those four elements. Now, we treat our human body as a great thing, casting it in this way, renovating it, piecing together parts, and trying to keep it alive for a long time—trying to keep it from dying. Similarly, other living beings prey on others to maintain their tightly-held bodies. But due to the multitude of mental impulses generated through that, as a result, more and more *Bhava* (Becoming) are created. That is the nature of *Saṁsāra*.

So, the only way to escape from this dangerous *Bhava* is to burn down, with the insight knowledge itself, those two trees that assisted that fire. It was because of the friction of those two trees, indeed, that all this happened. They rubbed together because of holding to the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). For that, in *vipassanā* (insight), the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) is dismantled. What should be present next in the practicing yogi is the perception of a heap (*rāsi-saññā*). What is called "the perception of compactness" is like taking a heap of mud, gluing it together with the sap of *Taṇhā* (Craving), and making a lump or ball out of it. The perception of a heap (*rāsi-saññā*) is, let us say, like the situation in a desert. Now, with a heap of mud, we can take a lump of mud in our hand and make something like a ball. But in a desert, if the sand of the desert is completely dry—as it is said in ancient books: "A handful of sand grasped in

the fist does not remain." If one takes a handful of sand, it does not remain in the fist. It just flows away. Why? That is a heap (*rāsi*). It exists there as a collection. But in the world, because of that *Taṇhā*, we roll everything together in that manner and take it as "one", as "compact". That is what is called the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*). The perception of a heap (*rāsi-saññā*) means that the insight meditator begins to understand everything he looks at in a subtle manner.

A "mat"—we take it as one thing. The mind gets bound to its pattern. But to the insight meditator, a unique understanding comes: "This is not a mat; here is something that deceives through a pattern." It makes one take it as one, but in truth, if looking at it from one level, here is only a heap of rushes running this way and that. There is only a heap of rushes here—a heap (*rāsi*). When we make this heap according to some form, according to a pattern, we take it to be "a mat". Not only do we take it as a mat, but if that mat is stolen, because of that, because of its loss, one even generates anger through *Taṇhā* (Craving). Because of taking it as one, one generates strong craving. To the insight meditator, it begins to be understood that there is no "one" here. Here is a heap. Just as was said about that mat, so indeed is one's own interior—the interior is exactly the same. Let alone other things, it is shown there that because that continuity (*santati*) is seen as a group, sometimes the object taken is seen as one. Even that process is seen as one. The worldling takes every single one of them as "one"—"going," "coming," every single one. But keeping mindfulness according to mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), one gradually realizes that, let alone other things, even in what we take as "in-breathing"—which we take as two—in-breathing is also a great process. A process is what is present there. A heap of breath-ripples. A heap of breath-ripples goes up; a heap of breath-ripples goes down. Now, when an old person lifts something heavy, he does it trembling, doesn't he? There is a multitude of fluctuations there, isn't there? Imagine it like that. Then, just so, in our process too, such a perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) operates. "I went," "I came"—we take every single one of them as "one".

But to the insight meditator, it is gradually understood that within every single one of these, what are present are *saṅkhāras* (Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity). That indeed is what is called *saṅkhāras*. A heap of *saṅkhāras*. A heap of preparations. It is indeed through a heap of preparations that even a motion picture is produced, isn't it? Through a heap of preparations. The person who is deluded on seeing that motion picture has no understanding of this. Here are the beautiful dances of actors and actresses. Our minds are tempted by them. But in the end, when we look, what is done by that machine is the creation of a certain illusion (hypnosis). It creates a certain illusion by running a multitude of pictures rapidly. Lo, if one takes the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) there too, within that process... in that same way, in our actions too, we have a habit of taking things that become our objects as compact. Because of *Taṇhā* (Craving), because of desire, this appears and is understood by us as "one". Just as that deer took that shimmering mirage to be water.

That is why the Buddha declared every single one of these to be a mirage. Be it the perception (*saññā*) seen by the eye! Or the perception taken by the ear—sound, music.

What we take as "music"—sometimes it could be extremely sweet music. If, due to some fault in that machine, or else as there are new methods now, if that tape is run slowly, even the most delightful music of the most talented singer in the world in the end becomes a wailing, a crying. That is why the Buddha called singing a wailing. In truth, that is what is present there. Similarly with dancing. Even dancing, even drama, is a madness. It is said to be like jumping about in madness. Here, there is a multitude of fluctuations in everything. But to the person who sees, who watches these with lust (*rāga*) or hatred (*dosa*), these become "one", "a thing". So, he conjures up in his mind: "That is a dance." It is because of the delusion (*moha*) arising in the mind that every single one of these appears as "one". Then, gradually going toward that very understanding is what the Buddha points out here.

If at any point that perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) goes deep, everything is finished there. Sensual lust (*kāmarāga*) is finished; lust for existence (*bhavarāga*) is finished; ignorance (*avijjā*) is finished. In this manner, the Buddha has pointed out the value of the perception of impermanence in an extremely powerful way: "Monks, in one who has developed the perception of impermanence deeply, when developed, it uproots all sensual lust, then lust for existence, and finally, completely destroys ignorance." In that manner, the Buddha has declared regarding the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). Then, it is according to that perception of impermanence that perception arises: *"Yadaniccaṁ taṁ dukkhaṁ"*—whatever is *Anicca* (Impermanent) is *Dukkha* (Suffering). If this is a heap of *saṅkhāras* (Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity), a heap of preparations, if it is something that must be repaired constantly, when reflecting on this bodily cage, that indeed is what the practicing yogi feels. As the mind is applied more and more to the effort taken to look after this, every single thing—the fate of the food consumed, the fate of the water drunk—how every single one of them goes on decaying, that very fluctuating, decaying manner begins to become manifest. He sees that same state even regarding those things in the external world that he is attached to. It is then, indeed, just as was said, "When a heap of firewood has caught fire," that the understanding comes: "This is purely a heap of *Dukkha*." It is right there that the First Truth of the Four Noble Truths is correctly understood.

At the stage when insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) mature, starting from arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*), then dissolution (*bhaṅga*), fear (*bhaya*), and disadvantage (*ādīnava*) are shown as a system of insight knowledges. In that manner, after seeing a multitude of arisings and passings away, next, dissolution is seen. It is seen clearly. It is called the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*)—seeing everything dissolving everywhere. It goes on breaking down. Because of that, a fear arises—a wondrous kind of fear (*bhaya-tuppaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*). "In all of this, there is nothing to hold onto. Everything breaks down right where it is grasped." Because of that fear, next, the disadvantage is understood. "What is this? This is an extremely dangerous place—this *Saṁsāra*." It is called the knowledge of disadvantage (*ādīnavānupassanā-ñāṇa*). Next, because of the disadvantage, a weariness toward *Saṁsāra* called *nibbidā* (disenchantment/revulsion) arises. "I must escape from this somehow." These arise very rapidly. Because of that disenchantment, next, one looks: "Where do I escape? Which

way do I escape?" (*muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*). Lo, next, what helps in that is developing even more deeply those perceptions of impermanence (*Anicca*) and non-self (*Anattā*) given by the Buddha. Thus, indeed, through a system of insight knowledges that gradually advance, one gains the ability to cross over from *Bhava* (Becoming) which we mentioned at the beginning. So, this is the story from the beginning to the end.

What are called *saṁyojanas*—the ten *saṁyojanas* (fetters) mentioned—are broken later on, as a result of that. However, what we have to do fundamentally is, regarding those sense-bases (*āyatanas*) we mentioned, to understand those *saṁyojanas* related to our six sense-bases, and with the help of those similes we mentioned, using sense restraint and so forth to support us, and using the *kammaṭṭhāna* (meditation subject) to support us, if we develop our meditation, then that message of crossing over from *Bhava* (Becoming) given by the Buddha on a Vesak Poya day like this can indeed be understood.

Usually, on a Vesak day, we are accustomed to hearing mostly sermons that speak only of the biography of the Buddha, developing only devotion (*saddhā*). But we thought on this occasion, now, more and more, Nibbāna is being hidden. The deepest part of this Buddha Sasana is slipping away more and more. Therefore, on this valuable Poya day, we give this message of crossing over from *Bhava* (Becoming)—which the Buddha brought forth through His knowledge of supreme enlightenment—to these meritorious friends on this occasion in these few words.

Therefore, may the mass of merit accumulated by these meritorious friends through listening to the Dhamma so far, and likewise by establishing themselves in high virtue (*sīla*) and practicing meditation, serve as a support (*upanissaya*) to further develop those insight (*vipassanā*) powers developed by them throughout *Saṁsāra*, and to realize the supreme, deathless Great Nibbāna as quickly as possible through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahat.

Similarly, may whatever beings there are, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha Brahma realm—including the departed relatives of these meritorious friends—who expect to share in the merit of listening to the Dhamma or of this Dhamma preaching, by sharing in this merit, realize the supreme, deathless Great Nibbāna as quickly as possible, in accordance with their aspirations. May you aspire thus. Now, let us share the merit by reciting the stanzas in this manner.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #28

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yo appaduṭṭhassa narassa dussati, suddhassa posassa anaṅgaṇassa;

Tameva bālaṁ pacceti pāpaṁ, sukhumo rajo paṭivātaṁva khitto.

From:

Verse 125 from the Pāpavagga (Chapter on Evil) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

For you, devotees, who have begun a new year according to the calendar system of the modern world, this Duruthu Poya day can also be made an opportunity to renew your minds. Due to wonderful scientific products, we see the environment around us being renewed day by day. We are granted the opportunity to use newer and newer consumer goods and items. Even though, in terms of material development, a modern era seems to be dawning day by day, on the other hand, when you look at this country and the world with the eye of wisdom, you may see that we are reverting very rapidly towards a barbaric age. This is an era in which human slaughter and animal slaughter, committed in the most cruel manner, are treated as minor things. For such an era, as a fitting Dhamma sermon, both the stanza we have taken as our theme today and its background story demonstrate the perilous aspect of that course of action.

The Buddha preached this thematic stanza at the Jetavana monastery due to an incident involving a hunter-with-dogs named Koka. One morning, this hunter named Koka set out into the forest for hunting with a pack of dogs. On his way, he met a member of the Saṅgha, a Bhikkhu, walking for alms. This hunter thought, "I have seen an unlucky wretch; now, today, I will not catch any game," and entering the forest, conceived anger and ill-will in his mind. Later, when that monk, having collected his alms and consumed his meal, was returning to the monastery, this hunter, having roamed all over the forest without getting any game, was coming out. On the way, he met this monk once again. Enraged, he thought, "I met this person in the morning. Because of that, I got nothing

today. Now I have met him again. I must have him eaten by the dogs," and prepared to set the dogs on him. The Bhikkhu said, "Lay devotee, do not do that." But despite his saying so, this man said, "I met you when setting out today. I meet you now as well. Because of this bad luck, because of an unlucky wretch like you, I got nothing today. I will have you eaten by these dogs," and he set the dogs upon him.

This monk climbed a nearby tree. Even though he climbed it, according to a disciplinary rule of the Buddha, it is preached that climbing trees is not suitable for monks, being designated as an offense (*āpatti*). However, when chased by wild beasts, permission is given to climb a tree to the height of a man. Accordingly, this monk, without climbing to the very top of the tree, climbed to the height of a man. While he was sitting on a branch, that hunter-with-dogs came and said, "You will not get away like that," surrounded by his dogs. This man pricked the sole of the monk's foot with his arrow. When the monk pulled that leg up and lowered the other leg, he pricked that one too. In this manner, he began to prick his feet. The monk felt unspeakable feeling (*vedanā*) of pain, and because of this, without his realizing it, his robe slipped off and fell. The robe fell right on top of the hunter, covering his head. These dogs, thinking "This monk has fallen down," crawled inside the robe and ate up their own master. Having eaten him and leaving only the bones, as the dogs were coming out, that Bhikkhu broke a dry twig from the tree and threw it towards the dogs. When the dogs looked up, there was the monk. So they realized, "It is our own master we have eaten," and ran off into the forest.

A doubt arose in this monk: "Was it not because of the falling of my robe that this person lost his life? Did my virtue (*sīla*) become stained? Is my monkhood still intact?" Having thus developed a disciplinary doubt, the monk went to the Buddha and related the incident from the very beginning. "Was my virtue stained by this? Was it not because of my robe that this harm befell this man?" The Blessed One declared, "No, monk, nothing happened to your virtue. Your monkhood is also pure. That man, by harboring hatred towards someone who was free from hatred, experienced the result (*vipāka*) of it. Not only now, but in the past too, a similar incident happened to this person." Thus, drawing upon a story of the past, the Buddha spoke.

In the past, this person was a certain physician. Having been born as a physician, he went from village to village to cure patients if there were any, and to earn something by curing them. On one such day, not a single patient came forward. So, as this man was leaving the village hungry without any business, he saw some children playing near the village entrance. In the hollow of a nearby tree, a snake was sticking its head out. This man thought—this physician thought—"Now, the only small job I can do is to make this snake bite one of these children, and then by treating it, earn some money." So he said to those children, "Children, look, there is a common myna chick in this tree hollow. Catch it!" One of those children went and grabbed the snake by its neck, and upon realizing it was a snake, ran back and threw it right onto the physician's body. That snake bit him, and the physician met his death. That is the story. The Buddha declared that in the past too, this man got into trouble by trying to harm innocent people in that manner. Then, he uttered the thematic stanza:

Yo appaduṭṭhassa narassa dussati...

If anyone harbors hatred towards a person, a human being, who has no hatred, is pure and defilement-free—or in other words, is innocent—that evil recoils upon that very person. How? Just like fine dust thrown against the wind comes back to oneself. Just as throwing dust against the wind strikes one's own eyes, the fruit/result (*vipāka*) of the evil deed one committed comes back to oneself. With this simile, the Buddha briefly revealed the perilous side of evil actions on that occasion. It is recorded that upon hearing this Dhamma sermon, that monk also attained Arahantship.

This is the story. Even from this short narrative, we can extract certain points. Now, to that hunter-with-dogs, the sight of a monk walking for alms (*piṇḍapāta*) appeared as the sight of an unlucky wretch. This must be because of his living such a barbaric life. But not only in those days, even today there is a wrong view among some Buddhists that seeing a monk in the morning is an inauspicious sight. And so, because that hunter had conceived hatred, the second time, as if seeking revenge, he set the dogs to bite that innocent monk. Subsequently, in exact accordance with the simile declared by the Buddha, he himself was eaten up by the dogs he had set on. That incident shows us, in a somewhat dramatic manner, how this karma (*kamma*) recoils. The result (*vipāka*) of some cruel deeds recoils in a wonderfully dramatic way. Something of that nature happened here as well. In the end, he was eaten up by the very dogs he had set on. Such is the story of the hunter.

Turning to the other side and looking at the tree, we see the noble conduct of this monk—even in the face of danger, he did not violate the disciplinary rule according to the word of the Buddha. He did not climb to the very top of the tree. Likewise, he harbored no hatred towards the man who was piercing the soles of his feet. Had he conceived such hatred, when disaster befell that man, he might have rejoiced—as some people do nowadays—saying, "Serves him right! What you do to others comes back to you." Instead, this monk developed a remorseful doubt: "Alas, was it not because of my robe that this harm befell this man through me? Therefore, perhaps my virtue (*sīla*) too has become stained." This is a wonderful example for us in this day and age. This robe, which the Buddha has designated as the banner of Arahantship, is a symbol of non-violence. It is not a flag of violence. Thus we see from this story that the monk, in safeguarding those virtuous qualities, lived with a mind of loving-kindness (*mettā*), wishing that no harm should come to anyone even by his robe that had slipped and fallen. And so, it must be due to that rich store of virtue, and perhaps by understanding the nature of *saṃsāra* through the pain (*vedanā*) he experienced, that he is said to have attained Arahantship by the end of that sermon. In everything, when examined with wisdom, there is contained the story of this suffering of *saṃsāra* (*saṃsāra-dukkha*).

Just as we extracted those points from the story, let us next look at the concept of karma (*kamma*) that the Buddha indeed conveys through the stanza. Why is this era, as we mentioned earlier, reverting back to a barbaric age? A primary reason is the lack of a proper understanding of the natural law of karma (*kamma*) even among Buddhists. A lack of conviction in it, a lack of faith (*saddhā*). Even foreigners, Westerners—that is,

even those who speak of a world created by God, which is called theistic creationism—are awakening to the doctrine of karma based on various psychological factors, yet at such a time, our own Buddhists have made it a fashion to disbelieve this. Doubting this, asking: "How do these results (*vipāka*) come back to oneself?" and so forth. However, the Buddha has analyzed this on various occasions, specifically, the fruit of karma (*kamma-vipāka*). In this context, it is called "experienced in this very life" (*diṭṭhadhammavedanīya*). In other words, it had to be experienced in this world itself. Even in these times, though unpublicized, we occasionally hear of such incidents—that those who commit murder or slaughter in the most cruel manner receive, for some reason, wondrous results (*vipāka*) in a dramatic fashion. But it does not end there. It stretches far. For many births (*jāti*), many lifetimes, those results (*vipāka*) have to be experienced.

As the general natural law concerning this, the Buddha has briefly shown how this karma (*kamma*) yields results over time. You devotees also may have heard that karma ripens over time in three ways: as *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* (to be experienced in this very life), *upapajjavedanīya* (to be experienced on rebirth), and *aparāpariyavedanīya* (to be experienced in subsequent lifetimes). When we speak of a karma and its result (*vipāka*), the word *vipāka* carries the meaning of ripening. Karma ripens with time, just like a tree matures and bears fruit. Such a ripening occurs. The basic principles regarding this have been briefly pointed out. Here, *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* means that certain karmas yield results in this very life. There are other karmas that yield results in the next life, or in other words, bring about rebirth/reconnection (*paṭisandhi*) in the next existence. And there are still other karmas that yield results not in the next existence, but in any existence thereafter, across a multitude of future lifetimes. Thus, the Buddha has briefly indicated the ways in which they ripen and must be experienced as *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya*, *upapajjavedanīya*, and *aparāpariyavedanīya*.

There are Sutta discourses in various places through which one can gain a more subtle or deeper understanding of this. On one occasion, the Buddha delivered a discourse to the monks conveying the idea that this karma (*kamma*) is not a form of determinism (*niyati-vāda*). "Monks, if anyone were to say: 'In whatever way a man performs a karma, in that very same way must he experience its result (*vipāka*),' if one were to say so absolutely, then this path of practice for Nibbāna, this holy life (*brahmacariya*), could never be successfully lived, and there would be no ending of suffering (*dukkha*)." That means we have committed so many evil deeds in *saṃsāra*. If we were to think of attaining Nibbāna only after paying back the results (*vipāka*) for each and every one of them in the exact same way, it would be something that could never be done. That is what the Buddha points out here. While an unwholesome act (*akusala*) is said to be a karma leading to states of deprivation, one cannot say with absolute certainty that everyone who performs an unwholesome act will go to hell. There is a subtle dynamic in this.

The Buddha reveals that fact in this manner. First, the Buddha presents it like a riddle. In this world, a certain person commits a minor evil deed, a trifling evil deed, and goes to

hell. Another person commits a trifling evil deed of the very same measure, but experiences its result (*vipāka*) mildly in this very life and gets away with it. That evil deed goes no further. The Buddha himself then explains why this happens. Regarding the first person mentioned—that is, the one who commits a minor evil deed and goes to hell—his life is described thus: that person does not develop virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), or wisdom (*paññā*). He does not develop his mind; he does not cultivate wisdom. Furthermore, that person's mind is very narrow. He is described as one of "small self" (*appātumo*); his life is one nourished by extremely narrow views. Because of this, even if he commits a minor evil deed, he has to go to hell. Regarding the person who gets away by experiencing the minor evil deed triflingly in this very life, it is said that he is a person of great stature (*mahātma*) who develops virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). For such a person, that force of karma does not affect him severely. It is then that the Buddha presents the simile. It is a valuable simile, easy for anyone to remember.

He asks it in order to get an answer from the monks: "If someone were to dissolve a lump of salt in a small cup or bowl of water, would that water become salty? To the extent that it is undrinkable?" The monks reply, "Yes, Venerable Sir. What is the reason for that? The water in that small vessel is very little." Then: "If that very same lump of salt were dissolved in the River Ganges, and one tasted that water, would there be a salty taste?" "No, Venerable Sir. What is the reason for that? The water in that river is abundant; the volume of water is vast." That simile is shown: just as mentioned before, a person who commits a minor evil deed, but whose mind is undeveloped, who has a narrow mind, and who does not cultivate virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), has to experience the result (*vipāka*) of that evil deed severely in hell. But a person of great stature (*mahātma*) who leads a good life and develops virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) can experience that same evil deed mildly in this very life and put an end to it there. So there is a distinction of persons here. There is a difference in how the result (*vipāka*) is experienced. Therefore, the Buddha declares that there is no rule saying that when you commit karma in a certain way, it must be experienced in that exact same way. There is a certain specific natural law regarding the manner of experiencing them, regarding the experience itself. It can vary depending on the individuals and due to other different causes.

Now, to put it briefly, if we take the example of a tree: when a certain seed is planted, a tree grows. But if you fertilize it well before the tree bears fruit, behold, the yield will be abundant. If you reduce the fertilizer, or arrange it so that it cannot bear fruit, the yield decreases. Its yield increases if fertilizer is added, and decreases if fertilizer is reduced. Similarly here, even though one has committed that evil deed, because one leads a good life, the results (*vipāka*) of the evil deed are worn away. Through this, the Buddha highlights a certain relief, a relief for the world regarding escape from this karma. Furthermore, he did not stop there. The Buddha gives two more similes to make this point even more convincing.

Now, when fined a small amount, even half a Kahāpaṇa, a Kahāpaṇa, or a hundred Kahāpaṇas, a certain person, being unable to pay that Kahāpaṇa or hundred Kahāpaṇas,

has to suffer imprisonment and go to jail because he cannot pay that small fine. But another person, when fined in that manner, does not go to jail; he gets away with it. The Buddha points out the reason for this: the first person mentioned is poor and has no assets, so when he is fined, he goes to jail because he cannot pay it. But the wealthy person can escape the jail. It is just like that there too. That is the second simile. He gives a third simile as well.

A certain person steals a sheep belonging to a sheep-owner. Sometimes, that sheep-owner can beat up, insult, and snatch it back from the thief, or even kill him. But when some other person steals, the owner cannot adopt such a harsh approach and recover the sheep. The reason shown there is: if the person who stole the sheep is a poor man, an ordinary person, the owner can beat him, abuse him, sue him, or have him sent to prison, and thereby recover his lost sheep. But if the thief is a wealthy person like a king or a royal minister, the owner has to clasp his hands in worship and entreat him, saying, "Alas, please give me this sheep or its value." There too, what is shown is that state of great power (*mahesakka*). For the person of lesser power (*alpesakka*)—and we do not use this term *alpesakka* in a mundane sense, or in the sense understood by ordinary worldly people. Rather, for a person who is of "lesser power" (*alpesakka*) in terms of meritorious deeds, virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), the results (*vipāka*) of evil deeds have to be suffered severely. But for the person of "great power" (*mahesakka*), the true person of great stature (*mahātma*)—nowadays, we call everyone "gentleman" (*mahattayā*), but the Buddha used the term *mahattā* for the one who develops virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The word *mahattā* is applied there. That is what we called *mahātmaya*. Therefore, to be a true gentleman, one must cultivate virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). It is for such gentlemen that the evil deed is worn away mildly, because it is like "the water of the River Ganges."

What is the message given to the world through this? This karma is not a form of determinism (*niyati-vāda*). In the interval between karma and its result (*vipāka*), one can do something to escape from it. That is why there is an escape from this *saṃsāra*. This is an extremely valuable fact. Why does the Buddha point this out? In those days, there were certain teachers who proclaimed such deterministic views. Likewise, some firmly declared that if someone commits an evil deed, he must definitely pay it back in that exact same way. The Buddha points out the reason for their saying so. Sometimes, those teachers would see a person who had spent his life badly being reborn in a heavenly world. And they would see a person who had led a good life being reborn in hell. That teacher sees this. When someone develops the divine eye—that is, one who has attained direct knowledge (*abhiññā*)—he can see such an occurrence. A certain person spends this life badly, yet goes to a heavenly world. What is meant by "badly" is a person who lives in a bad way, committing the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*): killing living beings, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech, gossip/frivolous talk, and furthermore, covetousness (*abhijjhā*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*) which means hatred, and wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). Yet, he goes and is reborn in a good place. The Buddha presents this as a kind of riddle. Some

people who lead a bad life in that manner go to hell, while others go to heaven. Next, there are also two sides to the one who led a good life. A certain person leads a good life; as far as the world can see, he led a good life. Yet, he is reborn in hell. Even nowadays, many people present this as an argument, saying: "We lead good lives; why does this happen to us?"

Then, the Buddha shows that the Buddha-knowledge penetrated the depth of this. It understood its subtle aspect. The Buddha points out that, regardless of how some people argue, why is it that someone who was committing the ten unwholesome deeds (*dasa-akusala*) goes and is reborn in a heavenly world in the next life? He shows the reason: either prior to that he had performed wholesome karmas (*kusala-kamma*), or subsequently he performed wholesome karmas, or at the near-death moment. Now, let us think: the one who lived badly had performed wholesome deeds either before, or performs wholesome deeds afterwards. Or, at the moment of death, he aligns his mind in accordance with right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). It is because of that difference that even though his daily life was spent in that manner, particularly due to that difference at the near-death moment, he goes and is reborn in a happy destination (*sugati*). But nevertheless, someday the results (*vipāka*) of those unwholesome actions will have to be experienced, either in this life, in the next life, or in some future life. Greatly analyzed, the Buddha points it out in that way. It is not suitable to draw an absolute conclusion just by seeing a single such incident. The underlying natural law within it is visible only to the Buddha-eye. He also points out the other side of it. Why is it that someone who leads a good life—that is, who lives abstaining from the ten unwholesome actions (*dasa-akusala*)—even after leading such a life, goes to hell? That person might have done bad things prior to that. Or, he might commit unwholesome deeds afterwards. Or else, at that final moment, he falls into wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). It is due to such causes that things different from the general pattern occur regarding karma.

Through this, we have to realize that we are living in an ocean of karma. These are karmas gathered throughout *saṃsāra* over a vast period of time. It is impossible to finish paying back all of these. Instead, the Buddha points out the methods to suppress/neutralize the results (*vipāka*) of these karmas. That is what is called virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). It is precisely there that this matter becomes extremely important to us. Devotees, this karma is deposited in our consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These are karmas we have performed over a long period of time. They emerge from time to time through this consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is what is called "karmic attraction." Even in these times, there are certain occurrences. A certain person feels inclined to go to a place where an accident is about to occur; the mind inclines, the mind tells him to go, and drives him there. There is a certain karmic attraction. These are done through this consciousness (*viññāṇa*); these emerge. This is not revealed only in such incidents. In every moment of our daily lives—in short—karmas emerge in our consciousness (*viññāṇa*) moment by moment. Then, when these karmas emerge, because the ordinary person—the worldling (*puthujjana*)—has that view of self, that view of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), firmly in place as "I" and "mine", he accumulates more and more karma through that very event. He entangles the ball of

thread. That is why the Buddha declared that this *saṃsāra* is like an entangled ball of thread. The ordinary person does not know that this is a certain karma performed in the past. Let us say, for instance, it is the unwholesome deed of killing. Sometimes, the very person one killed comes forward in this life and tries to kill oneself. We do not think of that. Instead, thinking of it as something entirely new, we clash with that person and accumulate even more karma. So, it is in order to prevent such instances that the Buddha has introduced this virtue (*sīla*) here.

Within this virtue (*sīla*), there are certain resolutions made voluntarily and of one's own free will beforehand: "I shall not kill living beings, I shall not steal, I shall not engage in sexual misconduct, I shall not tell lies, I shall not consume intoxicants," and so on. And so, the forces of karma (*kammāvega*) related to these emerge through our consciousness (*viññāṇa*). For example, one who was engaged in them is inclined towards them as habitual tendencies of *saṃsāra*. The mind tells him to do it. A person accustomed to stealing—the reason some are drawn to stealing even from childhood—is a past habit, a habitual tendency of *saṃsāra*. But the Buddha tells us not to submit to it. The Buddha defines karma as intention (*cetanā*). We have pointed this out on many occasions. "Monks, intention is what I call karma" (*cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*) is a fact known to everyone. "Having intended, one performs karma through body, speech, and mind" (*cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā*). The Buddha considers it as karma because it is according to intention (*cetanā*) that one subsequently directs the body, speech, and mind. It is through the three doors of body, speech, and mind that we accumulate karma. In the accumulation of those new karmas, past forces of karma (*kammāvega*) underlie and assist. They emerge as habitual tendencies of *saṃsāra* in everyone. For, even our birth (*jāti*) was brought about by a karma. Therefore, in short, like an ocean of karma, these bubble up and emerge. Due to the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), that person thinks of these emerging things as brand new events, saying, "This is my adversary," or "Here, I have found something to steal," and acts accordingly. That thought arose. Next, speech was employed in accordance with that thought. Then, action was performed in the same way. Through that, there occurs a further accumulation of karma—a new addition to that karma. Having accumulated, those too sink down into consciousness (*viññāṇa*). That is why no end is seen to this *saṃsāra*. The ordinary person entangles this ball of thread—the karmic ball of thread.

Then, the solution the Buddha gives for that is indeed those precepts of virtue (*sīla-sikkhāpada*). If one resolutely determines: "Under no circumstance shall I kill a living being; under no circumstance shall I steal," one makes such a resolution. One does not see that these forces of karma (*kammāvega*) lie underneath. Yet, one knows this. According to the word of the Buddha, one guards this practice. But nowadays, it is chosen merely as something done thinking only of society. But there is a greater depth here, in this undertaking of virtue (*sīla-samādāna*). This "society" is something to which one also belongs. Therefore, the natural law pointed out here by the Buddha goes much deeper. This is not just for the sake of society; the reason we have led uneven lives throughout this entire *saṃsāra* is due to the neglect of these five precepts of virtue (*pañca-sīla*). The Buddha brings this out particularly to give us the strength to control

our own minds on occasions when such forces of karma (*kammāvega*) arise. Through that resolution, by placing wisdom in command, one can conquer it at the level of virtue (*sīla*). At the level of virtue, one can become of great power (*mahesakka*). One can become rich. The person who lacks that is indeed the "poor man" mentioned earlier. The similes mentioned earlier can now be brought close to this context. Or, the lump of salt can be brought close to this. It is the meaning of those similes given by the Buddha that we point out through these Dhamma analyses.

So, it can be conquered in that way at the level of virtue (*sīla*). Going even higher than that, if one frees oneself—even temporarily—from incoming objects by way of concentration (*samādhi*), and then concentrates the mind and remains in a state of concentration, not allowing it to run to defilements, at that moment, behold, the forces of karma are largely controlled. Even though they keep emerging, one does not submit to them. One does not yield to them, by virtue of that power of concentration (*samādhi-sakti*). It is like keeping them suppressed. What is pointed out even more deeply is indeed "wisdom" (*paññā*). The method of conquering these by seeing their true nature as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) through the realization of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*), and reflecting upon them, is what the Buddha ultimately points out—as both the path to Nibbāna and the path to the destruction of all karma. Reflecting on those thoughts exactly where they arise as impermanent (*anicca*), one lets them go. To put it briefly, one brings the mind to equanimity (*upekkhā*). Controlling those arising matters by bringing them to equanimity; that belongs to the side of insight (*vipassanā*). That is why it was said that the wealthy person, that "noble one" (*mahātma*), that "gentleman" (*mahattayā*) mentioned before, develops virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). That gentleman does not yield to those forces of karma (*kammāvega*). So, one can understand that aspect through this. Next, from another angle, the Buddha analyzes this in an extremely subtle manner. To state the analysis briefly: we said that a vast number of karmas are embedded in our mental continuum, in our consciousness (*viññāṇa*). In yielding their results (*vipāka*), these karmas influence one another in various ways. Sometimes they support, sometimes they obstruct, and sometimes one strength is broken by another karma. There are terms that express these facts.

In short, first of all, the karma that yields birth (*jāti*) to a person is called *janaka-kamma* (productive karma). In these karmas, there is a force that brings about rebirth/reconnection (*paṭisandhi*) or birth (*jāti*). To bring about rebirth or birth for someone, sometimes even a wholesome thought (*kusala-citta*) which we consider minor might be the cause for gaining a human existence. Through that, it is granted. But although that birth has been granted, other relevant karmas—let us say another karma comes and joins as a support. That is called *upatthambhaka-kamma* (supportive karma). To support (*upasthambhana*) means to assist or help another thing. This exists on both sides, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*)—that is, a category of karma that assists either a wholesome karma or an unwholesome karma. To illustrate with an example: by a certain productive karma (*janaka-kamma*) which brings about rebirth, a person might deserve to be born in a lower hell. But if another karma comes

and joins it, giving it support, he will have to be born in a hell of even greater suffering (*dukkha*). Conversely, in the case of a wholesome karma, if another karma comes and joins as a support (*upatthambhaka*) to a productive karma (*janaka-kamma*) that allows birth in a lower heaven, he may be born in a higher heavenly world. Likewise, even after gaining that birth (*jāti*), that supportive karma can make a difference in the pleasure or pain (*vedanā*) experienced during the existence of those born aggregates (*khandha*). Let us say another karma comes: behold, now a person is born in a poor family due to some unwholesome deed. But events that bring pleasant results (*vipāka*) occur because another karma joins in, yielding pleasant results. If an animal gains an animal birth (*jāti*), it has to undergo suffering (*dukkha*). Yet, if a supportive karma (*upatthambhaka-kamma*) joins with it, it assists in yielding pleasant results in various ways. In this way, the supportive karma is described. Through this, it is shown that there are certain mutual relationships even among those karmas.

Next, there is another category of karma called *upapīḷaka-kamma* (obstructive/weakening karma), which weakens or reduces the strength of those karmas that yield birth. In that regard, one has to understand: if, for instance, one is born in a royal family, when that obstructive karma (*upapīḷaka-kamma*) arises, even in that royal clan he has to suffer painful results due to various oppressions, enemy threats, and so on. Likewise, looking at the opposite side, if another karma that weakens that strength arises for someone destined to be born in a hell of immense suffering, he may be born in a hell of lesser suffering. In any case, one has to understand that there are certain karmas that assist other karmas, others that obstruct them, and still other karmas that completely cut off the productive karma of birth at its very root. There are karmas that completely cut off the strength of that productive karma (*janaka-kamma*) which yields birth. This is called *upaghātaka-kamma* (destructive/destructive-cutting karma). It is shown... indeed, what is called "untimely death" (*akāla-maraṇa*) is precisely the instance where that destructive karma (*upaghātaka-kamma*) comes forward and completely cuts off a person's life. Now, when anyone dies at a young age, we call it an untimely death. Untimely death refers to those instances where a karma comes forward and cuts off life right from the point where birth was granted. This is not within the range of an ordinary person. It is those who have attained direct knowledge (*abhiññā*) who see its true nature. But such a state of affairs exists regarding these karmas. What we must understand is that knowing this supportive nature of karmas, as well as their obstructive or hindering nature, we must live in our existence (*bhava*) in such a way that the painful resulting strength of unwholesome karmas is broken. That is what we have to learn from this.

Some people, because they committed a certain unwholesome deed, spend their entire lives grieving over it. That is not what should be done. So that the result (*vipāka*) of that evil deed is diluted, one must strengthen oneself through virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) as mentioned before. One must strive to become a person of great stature (*mahātma*). That is what the Buddha highlights for us through this doctrine of karma (*kamma-vāda*). Through the teachings on this, a certain relief is brought to light. Some treat this as a form of determinism (*niyati-vāda*), thinking that if someone kills an animal, he must absolutely go to hell. The Buddha does not say so

either. The Buddha makes a middle statement. Killing living beings is indeed an unwholesome deed leading to states of deprivation, but if someone says that everyone who kills living beings must necessarily and inevitably go to hell, the Buddha does not accept that, because of the aforementioned reason. For, sometimes other karmas come and break the strength of that karma. Do not misunderstand this because of my saying so. Now, one might think: "Therefore, it does not matter how much we sin; let us try to escape from it by giving alms (*dāna*) occasionally." Do not mistake this. But what the Buddha is highlighting here is a certain natural law. Karmas performed over infinite time in this *saṃsāra* are embedded in our consciousness (*viññāṇa*). They emerge. So, the methods of reducing their resulting aspect are what the Buddha highlights here through those several similes. Based on this Dhamma analysis as well, what we must realize is that karmas operate mutually. In short, the doctrine of karma (*kamma-vāda*) is something that pertains to the law of cause and effect (*hetu-phala-dhamma*). This is not determinism (*niyati-vāda*). Precisely because of that, there is an escape from this for us.

In the past, the Nigaṇṭhas (Jains) of that time thought: "In order to escape from all these karmas, we must inflict pain on the body, thinking that karmas that cause pain and suffering (*dukkha*) are present in our consciousness (*viññāṇa*)." So, by inflicting endless pain and suffering, they tried to wear away those karmas. And having worn them away, they would remain without accumulating new karma. They thought that through such a way of living, they could escape from this *saṃsāra* and realize Nibbāna. The Buddha pointed out that it is a futile effort. If they were summoned and asked: "Through that physical torture you performed, by sleeping on thorns and various other torments inflicted on the body, how much of your karmas, your past karmas, have been worn away?" they cannot give a calculation, a census of it; they cannot give an answer. "How much has been worn away?" Then: "How much more karma is there left to be worn away?" They cannot answer that either. "After wearing away how much will you be freed from this?" They cannot answer that either. The Buddha declared to the Nigaṇṭhas on one occasion that if they cannot provide such accounts and calculations, then trying to wear away karma by inflicting pain on one's body in that manner is a futile effort.

Therefore, what we must understand is that the Buddha showed the way to escape from this wheel of karma through this wonderful path of Dhamma consisting of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Now, through virtue (*sīla*), at one level, without letting that emerging karmic impulse go to body and speech, one turns it into equanimity within the mind itself and escapes from there. Or else, without letting it go to the body and speech, one conquers it there through the concept of abstinence (*virati*)—the resolution of detachment. For, if body and speech are involved, it becomes a new karma. Let alone that, even in the mind, if it goes on operating for a long time, that too becomes a karma. Therefore, when such a situation arises, one recalls that training rule (*sikkhāpada*) and abstains from it by not engaging the body and speech. Next, in concentration (*samādhi*), it is an even higher level. When it comes to wisdom (*paññā*), finally, seeing their true nature: "Here is only a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Here is no such thing as an 'I'. It is not something done by an 'I'." Seeing it as a heap of

preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and thereby developing equanimity (*upekkhā*), an attitude of neutrality in the mind, is how one escapes from that entanglement of karma.

It is in this manner that the Buddha has presented the analysis of this karma. We must understand these properly. In daily life, since a society has dawning where at least the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) are not bowed to or respected—which is why we referred to it as a "barbaric age"—we must reflect with wisdom. We must be responsible for these. Some say: "Everything is not-self (*anattā*). Now, after being born in the next birth (*jāti*), do I know that 'it is indeed for the karmas I performed that I am suffering this'?" Whether one knows it or not, at the moment of experiencing those results (*vipāka*), one falls into grief, saying, "Alas, who is the one who did this?" In that case, we sometimes give the simile: when one unwittingly drinks poison, or consumes food, once it enters the body, one does not know that there might have been poison taken along with that food. It is only the physician who knows it, yet one has to suffer for it. Similarly, if poison is put into a well from which one drinks, when one drinks from it, one has to suffer the pain oneself. We must realize that our mental continuum is also like that. There is a resulting aspect to the things put into our mental continuum. Having ripened, it recoils. This is designated as the "round of results" (*vipāka-vāra*). The rounds of results (*vipāka-vāra*) spin round and round in this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in a wondrous way over a long period in *saṃsāra*. As recorded in some Dhamma stories, sometimes those results have been yielded in the exact same manner for a hundred times, five hundred times. There are such incidents, depending on the powerful force of that karma. As for certain karmas, if that intention (*cetanā*) was intensely directed towards that evil deed, it drags one straight to hell. If it was less intensely directed, on those respective occasions, in the manner mentioned before, it ripens mildly in that very life or in a subsequent life and is worn away. Whatever the case may be, the Buddha has pointed out that there is a way to control the resulting aspect of these karmas in accordance with the Dhamma. That is why we said that the wheel of karma (*kamma-cakka*) can be broken by the wheel of Dhamma (*Dhamma-cakka*). It is only Buddhas who point that out. Until then, the world remains trapped in this very wheel of karma, and being unable to escape from it, wanders in *saṃsāra* for infinite time.

The nature of these karmas is that once they enter consciousness (*viññāṇa*), they emerge again and again. What is called the life-process of this being, what is called existence (*bhava*), is an existence spent with the world. In interacting with that world, those karmas emerge again and again through the five sense faculties, and subsequently, by submitting to them, one mostly accumulates unwholesome deeds (*akusala*). Through accumulating either wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*) deeds, one is born (*jāti*) again and again. There is no end to those lives, no matter what kind of birth (*jāti*) one gains. Next, it is the deep essence of that Dhamma that the Buddha points out. Due to the entanglement of those karmas, and also due to the defiled nature within the being—due to greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*)—this karmic entanglement mostly gravitates towards the unwholesome side. One has to suffer for infinite time in states of deprivation (*apāya*), the animal world, and the realm of hungry ghosts. Next, even if we look at the wholesome side, there too, in those heavenly worlds,

Brahma worlds, etc., one has to experience the results of those karmas for aeons. It is a Buddha who shows that this existence in *saṃsāra*—not only in states of deprivation etc., but even in heavenly worlds and Brahma worlds—is suffering (*dukkha*).

Why does it become suffering (*dukkha*)? Precisely because of the impermanence (*aniccatā*) of those preparations (*saṅkhāra*). In none of those existences is there any stable, permanent, or pleasant (*sukha*) nature. There is no eternal state. There is no peace or satisfaction. That is why the Buddha pointed out this entire existence as suffering (*dukkha*). What we take as an existence—the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*): form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—the Buddha declared that suffering (*dukkha*) is embedded in every single one of them due to their impermanent (*anicca*) nature. If something is impermanent (*anicca*), for that very reason, it must be constantly repaired/reconstructed; it wears away. One expects to keep this in the same way forever. When it wears away, when it breaks down, along with that, suffering (*dukkha*), grief, and torment arise in one's mind. Consequently, that effort becomes futile. Therefore, it does not fit that concept of "I" and "mine". Even though one holds onto them as "I" and "mine", without one's even knowing, they wear away and go to destruction. This is why the Buddha pointed out this entire *saṃsāra*—comprising heavenly worlds, hells, etc., which bring pleasure and pain—as suffering (*dukkha*).

If so, if that is understood, what helps to understand it deeply is indeed insight (*vipassanā*). By directing the mind—stilled by guarding virtuous qualities like virtue (*sīla*), in that manner—towards insight (*vipassanā*) and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), one understands the true nature of the preparations (*saṅkhāra*) operating within this existence. That every single one of them is something that arises, exists, and ceases. The dispassion (*virāga*) and non-attachment developed through that help to detach the mind from this *saṃsāra*. This is not done by wearing away all the karmas in the mind. Rather, the wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) that perform these karmas and cause them to occur—specifically the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), which is taking the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) such as form (*rūpa*) and feeling (*vedanā*) as "I" and "mine"—are removed first. Going even deeper than that, in the end, it is by removing even the conceit of "I am" (*asmi-māna*) within the entirety of existence that the seed of accumulating karma is finally destroyed. The seed of accumulating karma is the feeling of "I" and "mine", the notion of "maintaining it according to my wishes". Through that, the world mostly wanders on the unrighteous path, committing evil deeds and getting bound further in the entanglement of karma. The Buddha demonstrates this, then. First, at the level of virtue (*sīla*), one restrains body and speech. Next, at the level of concentration (*samādhi*), one reduces—even temporarily—the tendency to get bound along with those forces of karma (*kammāvega*). Looking at it most deeply, by penetrating this, by penetrating its true nature, and developing equanimity (*upekkhā*), one detaches the mind. Such is the path of Dhamma pointed out by the Buddha.

Therefore, we must realize that this is also what is contained within the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*) pointed out by the Buddha. We may have reminded you

on some occasions that the Buddha declares wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) to be the greatest mistake in the world. In a person of wrong view, whatever thoughts (*saṅkappa*) arise, whatever thoughts and ideas arise, they too are wrong; they also go to the wrong side. The speech used in accordance with those thoughts also goes to that very side, as does action (*kammanta*) and livelihood (*ājīva*). The effort (*vāyāma*) made, the application of mind to it, and if there is any stilling or unification of the mind called concentration (*samādhi*), all of them go to the wrong side. The simile given for this is: if a seed of neem or bitter gourd is planted, the soil nutrients and moisture it draws in all yield only a bitter fruit. Similarly, the journey started with wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) leads to a wrong concentration called wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*). What we call wrong concentration is: nowadays when someone aims a firearm, a certain kind of concentration is required for that too. So those too are indeed wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*). In that manner, the other side is demonstrated. If a person of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) has gained the correct vision, his thoughts and wishes go to the right side. Likewise, his speech, action, livelihood, effort, and next mindfulness (*sati*), and the concentration developed therefrom—every single one of these goes to the right (*sammā*) side. The simile given for that is: if a mango seed or sugarcane seed is planted, the moisture it draws in yields only a sweet fruit. Through various such similes, the Buddha expressed that very relationship between karma and its fruit (*phala*), between karma and its result (*vipāka*). The very point shown briefly here with the lump of salt is what is demonstrated through various Dhamma analyses. The Buddha highlights for us the way to cross over this ocean of karma, or in other words, this ocean of *saṃsāra*. One cannot wear these away by getting entangled among them and mixed up with them, or by inflicting pain on the body to wear them away. One must realize the true state of things. What helps with that is indeed what is called the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*). First of all, if one has gained right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), through that right view one can bring forth correct thoughts and wishes. In that way, step by step, one's way of thinking is transformed. Now, all three—virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—are indeed included in this Noble Eightfold Path. Developing virtue, concentration, and wisdom is itself, from one perspective, what is called developing the Noble Eightfold Path. Those qualities are interconnected. Through that, a complete transformation of that person takes place.

Next, if that right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) has been reached, from that point on, what that person does is direct it to his five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) and see their true nature as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). The result of that seeing—if one sees something as it really is (*yathābhūta*)—it naturally turns into disenchantment—disenchantment with *saṃsāra*. One cannot escape from *saṃsāra* while holding onto wishes for *saṃsāra*. It is the path of disenchantment with *saṃsāra* that the Buddha has pointed out. It cannot be hidden. It cannot be made a secret. Whether lay or ordained, if someone hopes to escape from *saṃsāra*, he must bring his mind to a level where he can see those three characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) pointed out by the Buddha: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). Indeed, when looked at deeply, it is for this that virtuous qualities like virtue (*sīla*) are supportive. It is not merely for keeping society well-functioning forever. In

truth, this becomes a middle path (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*) because those virtuous qualities like virtue are beneficial to both parties, oneself and others. The division between oneself and others is pacified by this wonderful middle path pointed out by the Buddha. Killing living beings is harmful to both oneself and others. There is no need to speak separately of its being harmful to others. That it is harmful to oneself is now evident from this story; at least, it is clear from the narrative we took as the basis of this sermon. Such evidence is not often found. But in these times, we occasionally hear of unpublicized incidents—that for those who commit cruel human murders or animal slaughter, it recoils upon them unexpectedly, just like fine dust thrown against the wind. That is exactly what happened here too: the very dogs he had set on came and ate him up. So, from this, it is seen how the unwholesome deed of killing yields results (*vipāka*) right then and there. Even if it does not yield results in that manner, whether it yields results in the next life, or in a subsequent life, whether those results are visible or invisible, the Buddha declares that such is the nature of *saṃsāra*. Because every single one of them was visible to the Buddha-eye.

To the various kinds of psychologists of modern times, only an extremely limited area of these is visible. It is by raising various arguments based on that limited view that some Buddhists go astray. But we have the word of the Buddha (*Buddha-vacana*), for those who read and examine it. In an extremely subtle manner, in a way invisible to any other teacher of that time, the Buddha not only revealed this deep natural law of karma, but also brought to light the path of escape from this entire wheel of karma (*kamma-cakka*). Therefore, we must understand from this that this wheel of karma affects everyone. Hence, what is contained within these five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) pointed out by the Buddha is what is beneficial to both parties—oneself and others. Now, a certain person might say: "Be that as it may, what about intoxicants? When we drink alcohol and go to sleep without harming anyone, what is wrong with that? Who is harmed?" But even if its harmful nature is not felt in this very life through diseases and ailments, in the next life, one may be born with mental weaknesses. One is born in various other bad places. It is not just that "harm" we speak of that is present there. It is not only harm to others (*para-hiṃsā*). It is self-harm (*atta-hiṃsā*), self-torture. That is present within each of these training rules. Reflecting on that, the Buddha looked upon the world with great compassion (*mahā-karuṇā*), and this great compassion of the Buddha transcended all those concepts of "self" and "others" present in society. It is with thought for all living beings that he pointed out those qualities of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Therefore, we should not think: "Here, this 'society' is something separate, and I am someone separate." When reflecting from the other side, you too belong to society. In any case, it is by first training the body and speech, and thereby stilling the mind, that we are able to see this truth. It is precisely for this that we need these virtuous qualities like virtue (*sīla*).

And so, on this valuable day, you devotees have gradually made an effort to guard higher training rules in addition to the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) you guard daily. Likewise, you engaged in Dhamma discussions, meditation, and so forth. What is the target of all this? It is to enter the path of escape from this *saṃsāra* characterized by birth (*jāti*), decay

(*jarā*), disease (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*) pointed out by the Buddha—to enter the practice. Ultimately, this journey in *saṃsāra* is ended by gradually reducing the number of lifetimes in which those forces of karma (*kamma-vega*) operate. It is brought down to seven births by attaining Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*). Next, that karmic force is broken to the extent of returning to this world only once, by becoming a Once-returner (*Sakadāgāmī*). By becoming a Non-returner (*Anāgāmī*), those remaining karmas are dealt with. Even so, one spends aeons in the Brahma worlds, in the Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsa*). But if one becomes an Arahant, one can free oneself from all karmas in this very life and reach a state where no further birth (*jāti*) is gained. That is the highest state pointed out by the Buddha, that is Arahantship.

Then, we must realize that our target—whether as a Buddhist layperson or an ordained monk—what everyone hopes for is escape from suffering (*dukkha*). So, in analyzing "suffering" (*dukkha*), it cannot be stopped at that social level mentioned. The Buddha points out that everyone is experiencing great suffering (*dukkha*) within. Consequently, no matter what kind of life one leads, one has to face those sufferings (*dukkha*) of birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), disease, and death (*maraṇa*). That is why we have to think about crossing over *saṃsāra*. Therefore, this pious gathering must think: on a valuable day like today, you were able to deposit in your minds those similes given by the Buddha, which help to develop a good understanding within yourselves regarding that karma (*kamma*) which supports virtuous qualities like virtue (*sīla*). Likewise, you made an effort to guard these virtuous qualities like virtue. Likewise, while hearing the Dhamma and meditating, practicing insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), strive particularly to reach that state of paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) mentioned.

Therefore, in this new year that has dawning, instead of your mundane goals, you must give a higher place to supramundane (*lokuttara*) goals. For, this Dispensation of the Buddha (*Buddha-sāsana*) is moving towards an era of decline. Perhaps in the next life, in a few generations, people might ask, "Is Nibbāna something you eat?" To that extent, this Nibbāna can become hidden. Such an attitude is gradually spreading in this country. Therefore, having reflected on this, making a firm resolution to develop these virtuous qualities like virtue (*sīla*) even more, through the wholesome power generated from hearing the Dhamma, etc., which you devotees have accumulated so far, and through the development of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), and by cultivating faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), may you make the aspiration: "May this wholesome power be a supportive condition (*hetu-vāsanā*) for escaping from this extremely terrifying *saṃsāra* as quickly as possible, by penetrating the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmī*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmī*), and Arahantship, and thereby finding peace in the supreme, deathless Great Nibbāna!" Likewise, having aspired: "May my departed relatives who have passed away in my name, as well as the assembly of Devas and Brahmas, by rejoicing in this merit (*kusala*) of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, realize the supreme, deathless Great Nibbāna through whatever type of Awakening (*bodhi*) they have aspired to!"—share the merits by reciting the stanzas in this manner.

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #29

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Uṭṭhānakālamhi anutthahāno, yuvā balī ālasiyaṁ upeto;

Saṃsannasaṅkappamano kusīto, paññāya maggaṁ alaso na vindati.

From:

Verse 280 from the Maggavagga (Chapter on the Path) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

Our Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Blessed One, constantly reminds us that energetic striving (*uṭṭhāna-viriya*) is essential to make a life successful. Whether lay or ordained, He often censured a life spent lazily and sluggishly. He praised the value of ridding the mind of laziness, raising it up, and acting with wakefulness. Today, the verse we have taken as our theme, along with its corresponding story, highlights the danger of laziness as well as the value of energetic striving (*uṭṭhāna*).

This Dhamma verse was delivered by the Buddha at Jetavana monastery concerning a certain monk named Tissa. Five hundred clansmen of Sāvatthī, having heard the Dhamma from the Buddha and gaining confidence, ordained in the Dispensation. Having ordained and completed the basic duties necessary for monks—since their main goal of ordination was the goal of Nibbāna—and in order to fulfill this, they took meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from the Buddha and departed to a remote forest area to meditate. While on the way, one monk thought, "This forest life is full of trouble. I should stay close to the Buddha," and turned back.

Meanwhile, the other four hundred and ninety-nine monks went to a remote forest, meditated with great diligence throughout the rainy season, attained Arahantship, and returned to Jetavana monastery to declare their attainment to the Buddha. On their way, while walking for alms in a village about a league (*yojana*) away, a certain lay devotee

offered alms to the group of monks. Having heard the sermon of appreciation, he became pleased and invited them, saying, "Venerables, please visit here tomorrow as well."

So, these monks arrived at Jetavana in the evening. When they went to see and pay respects to the Buddha, the Buddha conversed with them very warmly in friendly welcome. This was seen by that lazy monk who had turned back. Seeing this, a feeling akin to jealousy arose in the lazy monk's mind: "Do you see? The Buddha converses with them without end. Since I do not possess any path-fruition (*magga-phala*), He does not even talk to me. Today itself, I will become an Arahant and act in such a way that the Buddha will converse with me in friendly welcome."

Those monks also informed the Buddha, "We received such an invitation on our way. May we have permission to go for alms to that village tomorrow?" Having obtained permission, they departed to their dwellings. Thereupon, the aforementioned monk Tissa, intending to meditate intensely throughout the night, went to the walking path (*caṅkamana*). But as he was doing an unfamiliar task, in his sleepiness, he fell over a rock on the path and broke his thigh bone. As he wailed and screamed, those monks had to come, attend to this monk, and give him first aid. While doing so, dawn broke. The sun rose. Then these monks thought, "It is now too late to go for alms to that distant village," and thus canceled their journey.

Later, when they went to pay respects to the Buddha, the Buddha asked, "Why, monks? Did you not say yesterday that you would go for alms? Why did you not go?" Then the monks explained, "We had such a complication. Our Venerable brother so-and-so went to meditate throughout the night, fell, and injured himself. While we were attending to him, dawn broke, and because of that, we could not go." Thereupon, the Buddha declared, "Indeed, monks, it is not only now; in the past too, because of this same individual, this group lost a certain benefit and opportunity that was to be received." And He related the relevant Jātaka story.

In the past, the Bodhisatta was a world-renowned teacher (*Disāpāmokkha Ācariya*) in the city of Takkasilā. He had a group of five hundred pupils. One day, this group of pupils went to the forest to gather firewood. Among them was a certain lazy young man. Seeing a *Varuṇa* (garlic pear) tree at the entrance of the forest, he thought: "Why should I enter this forest? I have already found a firewood tree right here, haven't I? I can sleep for a while until this group goes into the forest, gathers wood, and returns." So, spreading his upper robe under the tree, he fell asleep. When the other four hundred and ninety-nine students returned with their bundles of firewood, that young man was snoring away in deep sleep. So, waking him up, the other young men went ahead to the hermitage.

Thereupon, rubbing his eyes in a hurry, the young man climbed the *Varuṇa* tree, and as he was breaking a branch, it struck his eye, injuring it. Covering his injured eye, he gathered those green, wet *Varuṇa* sticks, carried them like a bundle of firewood, and threw them on top of the firewood pile brought by the others in the kitchen. Meanwhile, the world-renowned teacher said to his pupils: "Today I received an invitation from such-and-such village. People from a somewhat distant village are coming to have a

protective ritual performed and hope to give a donation. Therefore, go there early tomorrow morning and bring my share back as well." (By 'share' he meant the requisites, etc., received). Since it was difficult to set out on an empty stomach in the morning, he told them to cook some gruel, eat, and then depart.

Early in the morning, these pupils woke up the maidservant and asked her to cook gruel for them. The maidservant took the *Varuṇa* wood, which was at the very top of the woodpile, put it in the hearth, and blew and blew. But the hearth would not light (since the wood was wet). In this manner, time passed until finally dawn broke. Thus, thinking, "Now it is too late," they canceled the planned journey. When they went to the teacher, and he asked, "Why? Did you not go?" they explained the matter. "Our friend, this young man, went to gather firewood, and due to his laziness, made such a mess. Ultimately, as a result of that, we could not go," they told the story. At that point, the Bodhisatta, who was the world-renowned teacher, recited a verse:

Yo pubbe karaṇīyāni,

pacchā so kātum icchati;

varuṇakaṭṭhabhañjo va,

sa pi pacchā manutappati.

(He who wishes to do later what should have been done beforehand, repents later, just like the youth who broke the *Varuṇa* wood.)

"If someone wishes to do later what should be done beforehand, that person will experience regret, just like this young man who went to break *Varuṇa* branches."

Having related this account, the Buddha declared: "At that time, I was the teacher. Those five hundred monks were that group of pupils. And Tissa Bhikkhu was the very young man who slept under the *Varuṇa* tree." Having related this story, He then recited the verse we mentioned earlier, applying it to the present situation:

Uṭṭhānakālamhi anutthahāno, yuvā balī ālasyaṃ upeto;

saṃsannasaṅkappamano kusīto, paññāya maggaṃ alaso na vindati.

"The meaning of that verse is: One who does not exert himself when it is time to rise, who, though young and strong, is full of sloth, whose thoughts are depressed, who is lazy and sluggish—such a person does not find the path of wisdom (*paññā*)."

We have now told two stories. Let us now convey the essence of these stories in a way that the little lay devotees here can understand.

There was a Hare and a Tortoise who were friends. One day, the Hare says to the Tortoise, "Friend, let's run a race." The Tortoise also said, "Alright." So, they said, "That

Ahala (golden shower tree) post visible in the distance is the winning post. Let's start from near this tree. Ready? One... two... three..." The Tortoise set off in a scramble. Without even looking back, he ran and ran with great effort on his short, little legs. Having run all the way to the *Ahala* post, when he turned back and looked, the Hare was fast asleep. Why? The Hare had thought, "By the time that Tortoise gets there, I can reach it in a bound or two." So the Hare slept. There are stories like that as well.

From this, we can reflect: what was the primary purpose of ordination for those four hundred and ninety-nine monks out of the group? They ordained to put an end to all *Dukkha* (Suffering), didn't they? To realize Nibbāna, didn't they? Giving priority to that, they departed to the forest for meditation, difficult though it was. For the Buddha has declared: "Monks, newly ordained novice monks in this Dispensation should be directed to practice the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). They should be instructed in this." In this manner, the Buddha declared on one occasion.

According to this, it is clear that the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is the training that should be given to newly ordained monks. Thus, taking a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) directly related to the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) from the Buddha, those monks set off to develop those very four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Yet, perhaps Tissa Bhikkhu thought: "There is no point in entering the forest like this group. The Buddha is right here. I can become an Arahant whenever I feel like it." Thinking thus, attempting to achieve in a single night what those other monks accomplished in three months, he fell and broke his hip bone. That is what happened there.

It is the same with the other story, the Jātaka tale. The lazy youth thought: "There is no need to exhaust myself by going into the forest to chop wood. I have found a firewood tree right here. When they return, I can wake up. Then I can climb the tree and get my work done." Thinking so, he slept. And that was the consequence of his actions.

Thus, we can understand that when one abandons energetic striving (*uṭṭhāna-viriya*) and gives way to sluggishness and laziness... there is a saying, isn't there, "the lazy person has divine eyes" (meaning they make excuses or project things)? Procrastination... negligence (*pamāda*). These are the traits of a lazy person. "It is raining today; I can't. It is too hot today; I can't." That is the nature of a lazy person. Indeed, there is an excuse for everything. If one presents some excuse and gives pride of place to laziness, all three stories show us that one will only end up in regret. Therefore, let us now reflect a bit more on the important words found in this verse.

We spoke about energetic striving (*uṭṭhāna-viriya*). Now, this verse mentions a time. When we speak of the "time to rise" (*uṭṭhānakāla*), and when we consider a day, what is that time? What is the waking hour? In ancient times, that waking hour was known as the *Brahma-muhūrta*—waking at the "sublime hour." Before dawn, at the break of day. Now, monks are instructed to wake up even before dawn. Waking up in the early hours of the morning should be a valuable principle in one's life. For since ancient times, it has been said that tasks undertaken by rising at the *Brahma-muhūrta*, the sublime hour,

become successful. Things studied and memorized are well-retained. Therefore, it is a precious opportunity, like an auspicious moment. In contrast, the Buddha described *ussūraseyyā*—sleeping until the sun rises. That is an extremely lazy practice. The Buddha has pointed out its dangers on many occasions. One must wake up before dawn.

Whether lay or ordained... Now, you lay devotees have often heard about the lay life. An occasion where the Buddha pointed out various factors for securing well-being and happiness in this life for a layperson is in the *Vyagghapajja Sutta* to Dīghajāṇu, the son of the Koliyans. What is the first of those factors? Accomplishment in energetic striving (*uṭṭhāna-sampadā*). That means performing one's livelihood skillfully, diligently, and on time, without procrastinating. That is regarding the lay life. Next, not only that, it is also mentioned in the *Parābhava Sutta*, which outlines the causes of ruin, the causes of decline. One who is fond of sleep (*niddāsīlī*), one who does not rise at the proper time (*anuṭṭhātā*), the lazy one (*alaso*)—it is expressed through such words that such a person meets with ruin. In this way, the Buddha has pointed out the dangers of laziness and sloth in many places.

It has been laid down especially for the monks. Now, lay devotees might sometimes think: "We are the ones who have work. As for the monks, they just consume the alms they receive and spend the day lazily in solitude." That is the common conception. However, the Buddha has instructed the monks that they must rise even before laypeople do—even before dawn. Not only that, there is a special discourse called the *Uṭṭhāna Sutta*. When one recites this sutta, even a sleeping person gains the energy to wake up. When reading it, one imagines the Buddha taking a torch of that era, going up to the sleeping monks, and saying: "Arise!"

Uṭṭhahatha nisīdatha,

ko attho supitena vo;

āturānañhi kā niddā,

sallaviddhāna ruppataṃ.

It is spoken in this manner: "Arise, sit up! What need have you of sleep? For those who are afflicted, pierced by the dart of *Taṇhā* (Craving) and suffering, what sleep can there be?" In this way, the Buddha rouses the monks. There are several such verses, and they are highly energetic.

They are spoken to awaken the monks. For to practicing monks (*yogāvacara*), sleep is a major obstacle. In *saṃsāra* (the round of rebirths), what we have done most is sleep. Dogs, donkeys, cattle, sleep for most of the day. In the animal realm, the general habit is to sleep most of the time. That habit manifests in us even in this human life. To break that habit, on many occasions, the Buddha pointed out the dangers of sluggishness, showed its causes, and constantly urged us to make an effort to overcome them.

In one place, the causes that lead to laziness and sleep—or let us say, the causes for the reduction of energetic striving (*uṭṭhāna-viriya*)—are shown:

Middhaṃ tandi vijambhika,

arati bhattasammado;

etehi na ppakāsati,

maggo ariyo ihāṇinaṃ.

This means that beings cannot fulfill the Noble Path, which conduces to wisdom, because of these very factors: sloth (*middha*), laziness (*tandi*), stretching and yawning (*vijambhikā*)... Next, *arati* means discontent or lack of delight in the practice of the Dispensation, and *bhattasammada* means food-torpor ("rice-drunk"). Food-torpor means that if one eats excessively, one has to lie down and sleep like a pig.

You lay devotees must have heard the story of King Kosala. Whether lay or ordained, consuming food beyond moderation can cause laziness. Especially for the monks, the Buddha has advised that no matter how much almsfood is available, and no matter how much the donors wish to serve, they should stop eating when there are still four or five mouthfuls of rice left, and fill the remaining space with water. That is a specific practice laid down for meditators (*yogāvacara*). Its meaning is to eat with moderation—not to eat excessively up to the limit of one's throat, but to stop a few mouthfuls short and drink water for the rest. In this way, the Buddha has shown a method to eliminate the food-torpor called *bhattasammada* for those who wish to sustain energetic striving.

The dangers of laziness are shown in many other instances as well. In one simile, the Buddha even shows the danger of associating with lazy people. In that simile, it is as follows: suppose a person falls into the great ocean. Hoping to be saved, this person clings to a small plank of wood, a tiny piece of wood. Just as that small piece of wood sinks in the great ocean along with the man clinging to it, so is the association with a lazy person. In the same way, one also sinks along with them. Therefore, do not associate with the lazy; avoid them. Instead, associate only with those who possess initiated energy (*āraddha-viriya*), with virtuous friends (*sappurisa*). It is shown in this manner too.

The Buddha highlights mindfulness (*sati*) and diligence (*appamāda*) in various ways during this rare human life and opportunity. As the saying goes, *khaṇakicco loko*—the world is bound by duties tied to the moment. This world is a place where tasks must be done on time. While laypeople think of "doing things on time" only in terms of lay affairs, when we think of the Dispensation, if we do not act in a timely manner, we will have to regret it. Since ancient times, it has been said that we have obtained this opportunity of the moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*) which is free from the eight unfortunate states. This is said in various ways. Everyone has heard this, but in addition to that, what we have to say now is to consider this as the "very last drop of oil" in the lamp of the Dispensation. I must tell you devotees that only the last drop of oil remains in this lamp of the Dispensation. If we do not make use of this last drop of oil, what lies ahead is an era of

great upheaval and great darkness. A dark age is coming. If we do not make use of that final drop of oil before that, we will have to regret, just like Tissa Bhikkhu, like that young man, and like that hare.

It is so. The truth of the matter is that sleepiness affects everyone. To what extent? It presented itself as a powerful obstacle even to the Great Arahant Moggallāna. His past karma was powerful. You have heard, haven't you, that there were past deeds like killing parents, etc.? It was with great difficulty, not as easily as Ven. Sāriputta, that he attained the goal. Yet, so highly developed was his strength of perfections (*pāramī*) that the Buddha constantly monitored Ven. Moggallāna. He monitored him from afar. Why? Because he was one to be entrusted with a grave responsibility in the Dispensation. According to his aspiration (*patthanā*), he was to become a chief disciple. Not only that, he was worthy of the foremost position among those of psychic power. Therefore, in accordance with those qualifications, the Buddha trained this disciple, monitoring him from afar.

Such an occasion is mentioned as follows: Ven. Moggallāna was meditating in a forest in a certain village of the Magadha country. The Buddha, staying in the Bhesakalā forest of the Bhangga country, was observing with His divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) how this disciple was meditating. Ven. Moggallāna was nodding in sleep. The moment He saw this, just as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm or bend his outstretched arm, the Buddha, by psychic power, appeared right there. When Ven. Moggallāna prepared a seat and the Buddha sat upon it, the Buddha asked: "Moggallāna, are you nodding?" "Yes, Venerable Sir," he replied.

"Well then, Moggallāna, I will tell you some remedies. Try these out." Now, you devotees often hear about sleeping pills. These are not sleeping pills; these are "waking pills." The Buddha here gives Ven. Moggallāna seven waking pills. Listen to them one by one. Try to remember them, especially the meditating devotees (*yogāvacara*). Even for others, by trying out at least a few of these steps practically, you can understand the value of the Buddha's cognitive vision. The Buddha shows seven marvelous steps, such that even modern psychiatrists can study them and think deeply about them.

The first step is this: "If, at the time sleepiness approaches, there was a certain thought or a certain perception (*saññā*), do not direct your mind to that perception. Do not think much about that perception." That is the first step. What is demonstrated there is the application of mindfulness and clear comprehension, the application of attention. "What am I thinking about? It is because of this very thought that sleepiness came upon me." Thus, one removes it. When one does so, sleepiness might go away. Sleepiness might go away, but sometimes it might not. If the sleepiness is so powerful, then comes the second step. Just as doctors say, "If this doesn't work, take the next pill," in the same way, He gives the second pill. What is it?

"In that case, Moggallāna, direct your mind to the Dhamma you have learned and heard. Maintain your mind upon it in the form of thought-conception (*vitakka*)." Why? You can engage the mind. When thoughts flow, they break through the sleepiness. Therefore,

direct your mind to a certain portion of the Dhamma. Thereby, sleepiness might go away. It might go away, or it might not. If it does not go, He gives the third pill. What is the third pill?

Recite that portion of the Dhamma aloud. What is the idea there? Reciting means saying it out loud. The ears also wake up. When listening to one's own voice, the mind awakens. Here is the third psychological method to awaken the mind. Even if you are in a forest, it does not matter. Recite aloud a portion of a verse or something. Recite it. Then sleepiness might go away, or it might not. If it does not go away, then the fourth step is given. As for this step, since children nowadays do not receive it in school, they must try to do it themselves. What is it?

"In that case, Moggallāna, pull both earlobes with your hands." In the past, when the teacher pulled the earlobe until it became warm, the answer to the math problem would come, wouldn't it? Nowadays, teachers cannot do those things. Therefore, children must pull their own ears. Then they wake up, and the ears become warm. This is not said in jest. There is a deep meaning here. Two actions are shown there: "Pull both ears, Moggallāna, and rub your limbs and body with your palms." That means warming up the body. When pulling the ears, that part also gets warm. Next, one rubs the body with the palms. Thereupon, sleepiness might go away. It might go away, or it might not. If sleepiness does not go away even with that, then He gives the fifth pill. What does He say?

"In that case, Moggallāna, rise from your seat, go and splash some water on your face." Next, along with that, there are a few more instructions. Splash water on the face. Now, one tries to awaken the eyes to make the sleepiness go away. Everyone knows about splashing water on the face. In addition, it is stated: "If it is daytime, look into the distance. Look towards a distant direction." This is an exercise for the eyes. Open wide the eyes that are closing due to sleepiness, and look into the distance. If it is nighttime, look at the stars in the sky. Through this, one gives an exercise to the eyes. Then sleepiness will go away. If sleepiness still does not go away, He next says—He states something special there, like a meditation:

"In that case, Moggallāna, attend to the perception of light (*āloka-saññā*)." Most people probably have not even heard of this "perception of light." It is a certain technique shown by the Buddha to make the mind alert. Let us say during the daytime, when there is bright sunlight, one looks out of a window or an opening for a short while and takes the perception of light into the mind. "At such-and-such time, I was looking like this." Then, that perception of light—whether round or square—impresses itself well upon the mind. At night, one can take this perception even from a lamp. Having deposited this perception of light in the mind, one recalls it at that moment. When sleepiness comes, by directing the mind to that perception of light, the mind becomes alert. It is an extremely subtle method.

This perception of light is so deep that in some places it is described as a concentration meditation (*samādhi-bhāvanā*) that helps bring about knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-*

dassana). If one develops that perception of light in the correct manner, it is described thus:

Yathā divā tathā rattiṃ,

yathā rattiṃ tathā divā.

The night becomes just like the day, and the day is like the night. It is as if one can see through the darkness of night. Although it is completely dark, to the practicing meditator (*yogāvacara*), it is as if seeing with open eyes; there is no sleepiness... not even a trace of sleepiness in the vicinity. It is alert to that extent. How alert? To the extent of seeing through the darkness. This is a very powerful wakefulness. It is stated there: "Just as the day is, so is the night; just as the night is, so is the day." To that, further words are applied:

Vivaṭena cetasā apariyonaddhena sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ bhāveti.

"With an open mind... a mind that is open and free from clutter, a luminous mind. That word is extremely valuable: *sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ*—'Develop a luminous mind, Moggallāna.'" That is the sixth step. If, even after doing so, sleepiness still persists, then He gives the seventh step:

"In that case, Moggallāna, go to the walking path." Here, He gives permission to change postures. "Go to the walking path." And what is to be done upon going to the walking path? That too is explained in a few marvelous words. Some explain this in various ways today. Let us state how we understand it. Having gone to the walking path, the words *pacchāpure-saññī* are used. Make a determination to walk with the "perception of behind and before." Although the "perception of behind and before" is explained in various ways, as it occurs to us: in walking, there are two feet—the front foot and the back foot. That "perception of behind and before" means directing the mind to the foot that is behind and to the foot that one intends to place in front. That is all the mind is directed to. In that way, the mind is well-maintained without letting it wander outside. Not only that, further words are used: *antogatehi indriyehi*—"with the senses turned inward." This does not mean looking around, looking at animals, just because one has gone to the walking path. It means turning the senses inward, walking with full attention. *Abahigatena mānasena*—"without letting the mind go outside, without it being scattered externally."

"Walk with the perception of behind and before, with the senses turned inward, and with a mind that has not gone outside."

So, that is the seventh step. In this way, seven steps were given. Seven pills were given. Let us assume that even after giving these seven pills, sleepiness still comes intensely. The Buddha gave a remedy even for that:

"In that case, Moggallāna, mindful and clearly comprehending (*sati-sampajañña*), lie down in the lion's posture (*sīha-seyyā*)." This does not mean just going and collapsing

on one's side. You devotees know what the lion's posture is. When you look at a reclining statue of the Buddha, you can see how He lies down: the head rests on the right palm, and the left foot is placed over the right foot. It is an extremely calm posture. That is what is prescribed for the monks, for the meditators (*yogāvacara*): to lie down on the right side in the lion's posture. Thus, the Buddha says to Ven. Moggallāna: "In that case, Moggallāna, if these pills do not work, I give you permission to sleep." Yet, even that must be done in a specific way. There are many rules for that as well: lying down with mindfulness and clear comprehension in the lion's posture, with one foot over the other, but not just mindlessly. *Uṭṭhānasaññaṃ manasikaritvā*—"having established the perception of rising in the mind."

Nowadays, people sleep after setting an alarm clock. But when it rings, they turn it off without even realizing it. In those days, there were no such things. By some method, they would impress upon the mind: "I will rise before dawn," or "I will rise when the rooster crows"—there must have been some such perception in those days as well. In any case, go to sleep keeping the perception of rising as the very last thought. Next, the result of that is shown. It does not stop there. "Moggallāna, after rising..." Within what we call "rising," two things occur. We easily say "waking up in the morning." But it is the meditators (*yogāvacara*) who experience it truly. First, the mind awakens. It is only after the mind awakens that the eyes open. Now, what was placed in the mind last? The thought: "As soon as the mind awakens, I must rise." That is the value of lying down with the perception of rising (*uṭṭhānasaññā*).

Thus, as soon as the mind awakens, He next says: "Moggallāna, as soon as you awaken, do not remain rolling around in bed." The words *seyyāsukhaṃ middhasukhaṃ*—the pleasure of lying down, the pleasure of torpor—are used. Without clinging to the side or to the contact of the bed, without rolling this way and that, without groaning in sleepiness and turning from side to side, one must rise immediately. One must rise immediately. It was with so many factors and with such a specific set of instructions that the Buddha gave permission even for sleep. It was by following that observation and practicing those instructions that Ven. Moggallāna ultimately stood before us as a chief disciple. To that extent is sleepiness, which is called *thīna-middha* (sloth and torpor).

Now, regarding this, you devotees must have heard that there are five hindering dhammas called *nīvaraṇa* (hindrances) which obstruct both our concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). *Nīvaraṇa* means a nature that covers or blocks. There are five factors that act as obstacles both to our mind's one-pointedness and to the vision of wisdom (*paññā*). They are identified by the Pāli words: *kāmacchanda*, *vyāpāda*, *thīna-middha*, *uddhacca-kukkucca*, and *vicikicchā*. They are: sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, sleepiness, laziness—which constitute *thīna-middha*. Here is our theme: through the body, the body shrinks back and is not eager to work. The mind is the same: there is inactivity of the mind; the mind is highly sluggish, inclined to sleep. These two are what is called *thīna-middha*. Those two go together: the inactivity of both body and mind. The others are: *uddhacca-kukkucca*, which is restlessness and remorse, and *vicikicchā*, which is doubt. These are the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*).

Our discourse is about the third one. This hindrance of *thīna-middha* is an obstacle especially for monks and those devoted to meditation. It is to conquer this that the Buddha has shown various techniques, just as He did here for Ven. Moggallāna, to break through sleepiness. For if one succumbs to sleepiness as soon as it arrives, that opportunity is lost. If one goes and collapses on one's side the moment the eyes begin to close, one can never realize Nibbāna. That is why the Buddha, having utilized all seven "pills," gave permission to lie down only when they failed. So marvelous is this Dispensation!

If the life of monks is conceived of as consuming alms, eating even beyond moderation, and rolling around in sleep—which is what some think lazy monks do—the true monk's life is the one disciplined according to that very battle cry of the Buddha in the *Uṭṭhāna Sutta*: "Arise! Sit up!" That is the valuable life. It is by doing so that one can escape from *saṃsāra*. It is how one can take advantage of the opportunity of the moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*). If one does not do so, what happens? The opportunity slips away, and like the aforementioned Monk Tissa, like that young man, and like that hare, one has to regret not doing what should have been done at the proper time. So it is, clearly. Thus, conquering the hindrance of *thīna-middha* helps everyone, whether lay or ordained, to elevate themselves and live.

Next, let us now consider: just like this hindrance of *thīna-middha*, as we declared at the very beginning regarding the task of ordination, even according to the formula of ordination, the goal is to bring an end to this *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *saṃsāra*. For that task, He instructed us to engage in the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Not only that, at the time of His passing (*parinibbāna*), the Buddha showed the way to protect this Dispensation. Just like the discussion today on "How do we protect this Dispensation?" we hear that there are various kinds of dangers. So, everyone's talk now is about protecting this Dispensation.

The Buddha also had reflected on this. At the time of His *parinibbāna*, He reflected and declared in this manner:

"Monks, what are those dhammas that I have declared having known them with direct knowledge? What are those dhammas? The four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), the four right endeavors (*sammappadhāna*), the four bases of psychic power (*iddhipāda*), the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*), the five spiritual powers (*bala*), the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), and the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*)."

"It is in these thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*), monks, that you must engage. They must be practiced, they must be developed frequently. For what purpose? For the long-lasting existence of this Buddha-Dispensation." Therefore, for the long-lasting existence of the Buddha-Dispensation, the method shown by the Buddha is the training in these thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*).

Although this is said, perhaps no one will accept it. However, because the Dispensation intended by the Buddha is a Dispensation of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), it is not something that exists externally elsewhere to be exhibited, shown to foreigners, or shouted about with pride. It is this group of qualities to be developed within one's own mind. If at any moment this is lost, the Buddha-Dispensation is not there.

Think of a relic casket. Thinking that the wood of the existing casket is not good enough, one might place it in a sandalwood casket. Over that casket, another might place a silver casket. Yet another might place a gold casket. Another might encrust it with gems. Having done all this, let us assume that a relic exhibition is held, and when a large crowd gathers and the casket is opened on that day, the relics are not there. They have disappeared. They have disappeared. Yet that casket remains beautiful. Thereupon, people will say, "Alas, there are no relics in the casket!" and walk away. A similar thing can happen to this Dispensation if we do not develop within our minds those very qualities that the Buddha, at the time of His passing, knew with His Buddha-wisdom.

Thus, no matter how much noise we make, if we expect the long-lasting existence of the Dispensation—the very word *ciratthitiya* is used—one must develop those mentioned qualities. And that must be done in a timely manner. That is why we said that the very last drop of oil in the lamp of the Dispensation is burning now. If you do not make your lives successful by the light of that drop of oil, you must understand that next, you will have to face an age of great darkness.

So now, you lay devotees must reflect: the mind can become weak. It is while carrying all these duties, children's affairs, lawsuits, and illnesses that many of you came here today and observed the precepts. It is extremely difficult. This journey leading to Nibbāna is a difficult task. Yet, yet, like that tortoise, one must tread this path without looking back. In the end, in that race, even if no one else follows, one's peace depends entirely on how close one gets to the winning post.

Otherwise, no matter what wealth, titles, power, degrees, or honors one has accumulated, when Māra (Death) comes and knocks on the door, one's eyes close to the world with absolute zero. "Alas, is all this empty? I did all this, but I did not do what was truly to be done! During this extremely rare period of a Buddha's appearance, having obtained a highly precious human birth, I did not benefit from the opportunity to put an end to the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *saṃsāra*, did I? I procrastinated, didn't I? I had that young and strong energy in the body. I had the strength, I was young. Yet, during that time, I was busy doing other things. I postponed it, thinking: 'I can do this whenever I want. I know everything. I even know the entire Tripitaka.' If one remains procrastinating in this way, one falls into that very regret of not doing what was to be done at the proper time.

Khaṇakicco loko—as for laypeople, they think of the 'world' as lay life and lay work, and the world is a place where things must be done on time. It is so in this country as well. Especially in those countries called "developed," you devotees must have heard—if you

do not board a vehicle on time, that opportunity is lost. Thus, running and running, there are even people to push you inside the vehicle. To such an extent is the concept of "time" in lay life that they are terrified of missing the time. One must arrive at the workplace on time. There is such a huge pile of duties. If the time is missed, everything is ruined. Such is the layperson's concept.

In the ordained life, that concept is often weak. One sleeps like the hare. 'We can do this someday. By the time that tortoise crawls here, we can easily do it.' We postpone. And there are excuses to postpone. Yet, whatever those excuses may be, when Māra comes and knocks on the door, one realizes, just like Monk Tissa: "We did not do what was to be done on time, did we? Such a valuable opportunity, a journey started with such a valuable noble purpose—has it become empty?"

Therefore, whether anyone else comes or not, without looking back, you devotees must try to get closer to the winning post, even if by that tortoise-pace. If we miss this moment too, we have nothing to say about the dark age that follows. How it will be, or where it will end—the world situation is that dangerous.

Now, of help to this very effort are the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*), of which we just mentioned only the names. Today, many do not even know what they are. When asked, "What is the Buddha-Dhamma? What did the Buddha preach?" they immediately start listing a long string of book names from the bookshelves—the Nikāya texts, this and that. They recite a list. But they do not know what the Dhamma actually preached by the Buddha is.

Yet the Buddha Himself, at the time of His passing (*parinibbāna*), declared: "I have preached only this much. I have preached only these thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*)." Therefore, that is what we must bring to the fore. They are not things merely to be spoken about. They are practical things. What is called the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is something to be practiced. What is called the four right endeavors (*sammappadhāna*) is something to be developed within oneself. It is so with every one of them. They must be directly experienced. No matter how many carpentry tools there are, if there is no one who knows carpentry to teach, or if there is no one with practical experience, that carpenter's workshop is of no use. It is the same with these mentioned dhammas. If one does not develop them, one cannot provide the association of a virtuous friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) to another. One will not have the strength to say, "This must be done at this moment." The Dispensation consisting of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) ends right there.

So, to put it briefly, the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is indeed the primary training. In fact, if we call the battle against defilements (*kilesa*) a battle against Māra, or if we call the effort made for Nibbāna in this Dispensation a war against Māra, there is nothing wrong in thinking that the practicing soldier (*yogāvacara*) receives his basic training on the battleground of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).

Within that lies mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), which means mindfulness and proper wisdom, or awareness. With mindfulness and awareness regarding the body—one's own body and the bodies of others—regarding feelings and sensations (*vedanā*), regarding the mind, and regarding the thoughts that arise in the mind—that is what is meant by the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Thus, as one observes them just as they arise, applying mindfulness and wisdom, one sees both their arising and passing away. It becomes directly realized that there is no self (*attā*) here. No matter how much one shouts, saying, "This is *Anattā* (Not-self), this is *anattā*," that mere saying is not insight (*vipassanā*). As we have said on a previous occasion, insight (*vipassanā*) is a seeing, not a saying. If it is a seeing, one must engage in it. When engaging in it, one sees: "Alas, is form (*rūpa*) such a thing? Is feeling (*vedanā*) such a thing? Is this form like a lump of foam? Is feeling (*vedanā*) like a water bubble? Is perception (*saññā*) like a mirage? Are Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) like a banana trunk? Is consciousness (*viññāṇa*) like an illusion?" These similes beautifully spoken by the Buddha are not poetic metaphors. These are true things understood by the meditator (*yogāvacara*). They come as direct realizations. These are not just beautiful similes told by the Buddha. Every single one of them is highly meaningful.

The Buddha also said that the more deeply one reflects on them, the more this True Dhamma (*saddhamma*) is realized. This form is a lump of foam; feeling (*vedanā*) is a water bubble. This is understood when one observes that body and those feelings with a concentrated mind (*samādhi*), applying the aforementioned mindfulness and clear comprehension. What was previously grasped through the solid perception (*ghana-saññā*) as 'I' and 'mine' begins to be seen as a series of arisings and passings away. It is through these arisings and passings away that this insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) matures. Along with that, concentration (*samādhi*) also grows.

It is when one carries this out that it is called the right endeavors (*sammappadhāna*). Since we have analyzed these in detail on many occasions, we cannot say everything in this brief moment. To put it briefly, on the battleground of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), the meditator (*yogāvacara*) enters with his weapon. Having made his meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) his weapon, it is through that weapon that he receives this training. Through wielding that weapon, next come the four right endeavors (*sammappadhāna*):

> For the non-arising of unarisen defilements,
>
> For the discarding of arisen defilements,
>
> For the bringing forth of unarisen wholesome states,
>
> For the preservation of arisen wholesome states.

This is what is called the four right endeavors (*sammappadhāna*).

While this is being done, there are the four bases of psychic power (*iddhipāda*) present within oneself: *chanda* (desire/zeal), *viriya* (energy), *citta* (mind/determination), and

vīmaṃsā (investigation). Do not misunderstand this word *chanda*. This is not the contemporary meaning (like political votes); in the Dispensation, it refers to wholesome desire (*kusala-chanda*) used to realize Nibbāna—this must be specifically mentioned. So: *chanda*, *citta*, *viriya*, and *vīmaṃsā*. That *chanda* is the powerful desire within oneself to escape from this *saṃsāra*. That is the desire (*chanda*) here. Next, the energy (*viriya*) applied in accordance with that. Next, *citta* is the power of determination for it. *Vīmaṃsā* is the wisdom, the investigating intellect, required for it. One gains an understanding of these four bases of psychic power (*iddhipāda*).

Through these, next, five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) of a unique kind, which were not present within oneself before, emerge: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The meditator (*yogāvacara*), shutting out those five external physical senses, brings forth these five spiritual faculties (*indriya*). In *saṃsāra*, we have often looked at and tasted those things that seek prey through the five physical senses. It is these five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) that he now tries to develop: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). If one wishes, one may call them spiritual faculties. Thus, as one develops those faculties (*indriya*), by utilizing them, one gains the strength to conquer whatever obstacles arise. That is why those five are also presented as powers (*bala*): the power of faith (*saddhā-bala*), the power of energy (*viriya-bala*), the power of mindfulness (*sati-bala*), the power of concentration (*samādhi-bala*), and the power of wisdom (*paññā-bala*).

Thus, as one develops these powers, the next stage of alignment is the factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*). *Bodhi*, devotees, means "awakening"; it also carries the meaning of "realization." Principally, it means awakening. Why? In *saṃsāra*, there is a sleep. We slept for so long in *saṃsāra* under the deep darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*). Therefore, we must awaken through the light of wisdom (*paññā*). We must bring forth that perception of light. This effort is to bring forth that light of wisdom (*paññā*). That is also why they are called the factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*).

Therefore, the "side" (*pakkha*) to which a Buddhist belongs is this side of enlightenment (*bodhi*). One must direct the mind towards the dhammas belonging to the side of enlightenment. There are thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). Thus, you devotees must constantly reflect on these factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). Among them, there are seven special factors of enlightenment (*sambojjhaṅga*). They are: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), rapture (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Gradually, starting from mindfulness in one's mind, a systematic alignment occurs. A highly awakened state of the mind arises. Once that awakened state comes, the final alignment—just like a soldier who has passed all tests and steps out fully equipped—is the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*). It is through this that everything is culminated.

Having completed the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), the right endeavors (*sammappadhāna*), the spiritual faculties (*indriya*), powers (*bala*), and

factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), this ultimately culminates in a state where all eight factors arise simultaneously in a single supramundane (*lokuttara*) mind-moment. Through an extremely powerful noble concentration (*samādhi*), a marvelous concentration that cannot be compared to any other concentration in the world or any mundane concentration, one breaks through the levels of defilements (*kilesa*). Through the penetration of the path and fruit (*magga-phala*) of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship—attainments for which we all hope, and for which people chant "Sādhu" when they are merely spoken of as words—one is able to directly realize Nibbāna, the escape from *saṃsāra*, which is the ultimate goal of ordination or of a lay Buddhist life, and for which we always aspire.

Therefore, devotees, even without further elaboration, you must reflect from this on what you ought to do, what must be done at this moment. According to the principle *khaṇakicco loko*—if the Dispensation is such a thing, something to be developed within our own minds, and not something to be exhibited to the world by counting heads, then we must understand that as long as there is even a handful of people practicing these principles in this country, the Buddha-Dispensation will endure. That is how we must understand it. If there are no such practices and it is only an empty mass, then no matter how much one shouts with external show that the Dispensation exists, there is no Dispensation there. That is why we gave that simile of the relic exhibition. On the day the relic casket is opened, one sees that the relics are not there. Similarly, if those thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) declared by the Buddha at the time of His passing are not present within our minds, there is no Dispensation there.

Therefore, having well-retained these points, if you devotees proceed with this tortoise-pace despite many difficulties and troubles, your peace at the final moment will depend entirely on how close you have got to the winning post. Therefore, as usual, a large number of you, having observed a higher virtue (*sīla*) than the virtue of your daily lives, and established in the practice of virtue on this valuable day amidst various difficulties and troubles, have developed your concentration power (*samādhi*) and cultivated thoughts related to wisdom (*paññā*) and insight (*vipassanā*), or your respective meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

Now, we always preach this sermon not for any other purpose—not to develop *saṃsāra*, but to escape from *saṃsāra*. Thus, through listening to this sermon, those things that support the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) like faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) have also been developed in your minds. May you aspire that this indeed becomes a decisive supportive condition (*upanissaya-sampatti*) for directly realizing the noble Dhamma of Nibbāna in this very life, as quickly as possible, before this lamp of the Dispensation goes out, through the penetration of the path and fruit (*magga-phala*) of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship for which you hope.

Likewise, may all beings, from the lowest hell (*Avīci*) to the highest heaven (*Akaniṭṭha*), including your own departed relatives, who are able to share in the wholesome merit of listening to this Dhamma, share in this merit and realize the supreme goals they hope

for! May we, and everyone else, receive the strength and power to benefit from this Buddha-Dispensation! With this aspiration, please recite these verses and share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #30

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Pāṇḍupalāsova dānisi, yamapurisāpi ca te upaṭṭhitā;

Uyyogamukhe ca tiṭṭhasi, pātheyyampi ca te na vijjati.

So karohi dīpamattano, khippaṁ vāyama paṇḍito bhava;

Niddhantamalo anaṅgaṇo, dibbaṁ ariyabhūmimehisi.

From:

Verses 235-236 from the Malavagga (Chapter on Impurity) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

It is the Wheel of Dhamma (*Dhamma-cakka*) that helps to break the power of the Wheel of Kamma (*Kamma-cakka*) which operates within the cycle of Samsāra. Liberation dawned upon the worldly beings, who are subject to the Wheel of Kamma and go from suffering to suffering (*Dukkha* to *Dukkha*), through the Wheel of Dhamma brought to light by the Blessed One. By contemplating the danger of the results of kamma, one can arouse the spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) necessary to enter the path of Dhamma. Today, the background story (*nidāna kathā*) relevant to the verses chosen as our theme also illustrates how severe results of kamma ripen in this very life, and how one has to undergo those consequences.

In Sāvatthī, there lived a cattle-butcher. For over fifty years, he made a living by slaughtering cattle, having the best portions of the meat of the slaughtered cows cooked to eat with his wife and children, and selling the rest. One day, after selling the beef, this man got ready to go and bathe. He told his wife, "Keep that good piece of meat for me," handed it to her, and left. Now, while he was away bathing, a friend of this man came and said to the wife, "Someone has arrived at our house, is it possible to buy some meat?" She replied, "Your friend finished selling the meat and went to bathe. There is no

meat left to sell now." When he asked, "Is there not even a little bit?" she said, "Only this piece of meat kept aside for cooking is left." This man, thinking that the butcher would never willingly give up this piece of meat, took it by force and went away. Later, when the cattle-butcher returned and sat down to eat, his wife placed before him a plate of rice with leafy greens. The man asked, "Where is the meat?" She replied that there was no meat. "Why? Didn't I give you a piece of meat?" Then the wife told him the story: "A friend of yours came and asked for meat, and though I refused, he took it by force." The butcher declared, "I cannot eat this rice!" She said, "No, no, there is nothing else to be done now. Please eat what is there."

Then, pushing the rice away in great anger, this man took a knife, went to the back of the house, reached his hand into the mouth of a bull tethered there, pulled its tongue out, and cut it off from the root. He brought it inside, roasted it over the embers of the fire, and got ready to eat it. No sooner had he taken a mouthful of rice and placed the roasted piece of tongue in his mouth, than his own tongue—by the immediate retribution of his kamma—was severed and fell into his plate of rice. Thus, with blood dripping, the man began running up and down the house on all fours like an animal. Seeing this, his wife said to the son who was nearby, "Son, do you see this result of kamma? This may fall upon you too. Therefore, without even looking for me, save your life and flee!" So the boy bowed down to his mother and departed from the house. In the meantime, the bull also died. That man, screaming in agony and behaving like a bull, died and was reborn in hell (*niraya*).

With that, the story of the cattle-butcher ends. From there onwards is the account of the cattle-butcher's son. Now, this youth went to Taxila and, as the story goes, trained under a goldsmith master. Having trained well, one day, the master goldsmith had to go to his village and entrusted this youth with making a certain ornament. When the master returned, he saw that the youth had crafted it exceptionally well. Pleased, and thinking, "Now he can earn his own livelihood," he followed a custom of the world-renowned teachers (*disāpāmokkha*) of that era—similar to conferring a degree, they would give their daughter in marriage to the best pupil. So, he gave his daughter to him. The goldsmith, who was the cattle-butcher's son, led a "successful life," as we would say today, with children. In the course of time, this man's sons went to Sāvatthī and settled there, but the father remained in Taxila.

The children of the butcher's son who had gone to Sāvatthī, having heard the Dhamma from the Buddha and having become deeply faithful, thought: "Our father is now very old. He lives without performing any meritorious deeds. We must perform some merit on his behalf." Thus, they invited their father to their home and prepared to offer an alms-giving (*dāna*) to the Saṅgha led by the Buddha. When the Buddha and the Saṅgha arrived, they offered the alms-giving in a grand manner. These days, you, meritorious friends, often hear about the "death-alms" (*mataka-bhatta*), which is given after parents or relatives have passed away. But what is described here is a special kind of alms-giving. It is called *jīva-bhatta*. This alms-giving is offered on behalf of one’s living father. So, we can imagine that when the elderly man was present, they had him touch the offerings or

used some other method to instill in his mind the awareness that this was his own alms-giving, and they offered the alms to the Saṅgha led by the Buddha.

After the alms-giving, they invited the Blessed One, saying, "We offered this alms-giving on behalf of our father; please deliver an appreciation of merit (*anumodanā*) for our father." At that moment, the Buddha delivered a sermon. Perhaps the Buddha saw that there was some wholesome potential (*kusala-saktiya*) in this son of the cattle-butcher. Aiming at that, He delivered a sermon. At the end of that sermon, we can understand that He uttered two verses summarizing the essence of the teaching, which we have chosen as the theme of today's sermon.

Let us look at the general meaning of those verses. *Paṇḍupalāsova dānisi—paṇḍupalāsa* means, now, when leaves of trees are close to falling, they turn a pale yellow color, don't they? They turn a brownish, pale yellow color. So, the Buddha gives that very simile to this elderly lay devotee. "You are now like a pale, withered leaf ready to fall from a tree." Next, *yamapurisā pi ca te upaṭṭhitā*—"the messengers of death (*yamapurisa*) stand ready to receive you." *Uyyogamukhe ca—uyyogamukha* means like standing at the doorway, ready to depart on a journey; "you have now arrived at the point of readiness to depart for the next world." *Pātheyyampi ca te na vijjati*—"you have no provisions for the road, no journey-meal." *Pātheyya* means road provisions or a journey-meal, or a packet of rice. There is no packet of rice. Thus, the first verse was spoken in a way that would arouse a sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) in that old man.

Then the next verse: *So karohi dīpamattano*—"Therefore, make an island for yourself. Establish a refuge." *Khippaṃ vāyama paṇḍito bhava*—"Strive quickly, become wise." *Niddhantamalo anaṅgaṇo*—"Having removed your rust/impurities, become free from defilements." Having become defilement-free, *dibbaṃ ariyabhūmimehisi*—"go to the divine Ariya-realm." The books explain "the divine Ariya-realm" (*dibbaṃ ariyabhūmi*) not as a mere heaven world, but as those Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsa*), the Brahma-worlds where Non-returners (*Anāgāmis*) are reborn. It is mentioned that He uttered the verse in this manner, urging him to go to those worlds.

It is said that upon hearing this verse, this elderly man—the son of the cattle-butcher—attained Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*). However, the story continues further. On a subsequent day, the children invited the Buddha again for alms on behalf of their father. On the second day too, they offered alms to the Saṅgha led by the Buddha in the same manner, and invited the Buddha to give a sermon. On that occasion, the two verses delivered by the Buddha were somewhat similar to the earlier verses. As a specific difference, we have to note that although not the entire verse was different, the second verse ended with "you will not come again to birth and decay" (*na puna jāti-jaraṃ upehisi*), whereas the first one said, "you will go to the divine Ariya-realm" (*dibbaṃ ariyabhūmimehisi*). "If you strive in this way and quickly become wise, you will not come again to Birth / Arising (*Jāti*) and Decay." That verse was deeper and more heart-touching. Having heard the sermon with those verses—we must understand that it was not just those two verses, even though they are mentioned, but according to the Buddha's style of preaching, He usually delivered a gradual instruction (*ānupubbī-kathā*) in such

instances, starting with talk on giving (*dāna-kathā*), morality (*sīla-kathā*), and heaven (*sagga-kathā*). It is said that after hearing that sermon, the man attained the stage of a Non-returner (*Anāgāmi*). This refers to the cattle-butcher's son.

There are the two sides of the story. We started by speaking of the Wheel of Kamma (*Kamma-cakka*) and the Wheel of Dhamma (*Dhamma-cakka*), didn't we? If the Wheel of Kamma alone had been allowed to operate, the cattle-butcher's son would have gone to hell. But now, having taken refuge in the Buddha's Wheel of Dhamma, he finally became a Non-returner (*Anāgāmi*). Therein lies the difference. Within this too, there is a profound meaning. Now, from here on, let us analyze this story step by step. From the beginning of this story, it is very clear that the cattle-butcher, in an extremely cruel manner, cut the tongue of that bull just to satisfy his own tongue, because his meal lacked the taste of meat. How cruel is that? Because of that, the result (*vipāka*) of that action was received right there. Such results are frequently mentioned in many Dhamma stories. Even nowadays, you might hear of such things. This is called "kamma-equivalent result" (*kamma-sarikkha-vipāka*)—a result that corresponds exactly to the action. Behind the house, the bull was running here and there without a tongue; inside the house, the cattle-butcher was running here and there without a tongue, bellowing like a bull. How about that for kamma? It matches perfectly, doesn't it? And after that, ultimately, hell (*niraya*). Thus, he showed a preview, a rehearsal, a demonstration of the suffering of hell to his wife and son.

It was because of the spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) aroused by that demonstration that the son bowed down to his mother and left forever. He went straight to the city of Taxila. How much pain and urgency (*saṃvega*) must he have felt to abandon his own mother? Anyway, that is visible on that side. Based on this, you can contemplate a great deal. You might be reminded that even more cruel killings occur in present times. Even though such immediate results do not happen for every single one of them, we have to understand that sometimes, due to the sheer strength of the kamma-force that granted them this human existence, they are still able to withstand those evil deeds. But when the fall comes, it falls. They fall into hell, or else they have to undergo the results in animal births (*tiracchāna-yoni*) and so on. We all know these things through Dhamma stories, don't we? So, that is what we have to take from the first part of the story.

How dangerous is this state, like that of the cattle-butcher, of being greedy for the taste of meat? We can see its drawback (*ādīnava*). The two go together. Cattle are slaughtered for meat. Is it because he did not have enough of it that the cattle-butcher reached a state where he could not eat a meal of rice without the taste of meat, and went on to cut the bull's tongue? Meat is not something that one can ever eat enough of to be fully satisfied. If so, the cattle-butcher should have been the first to be disgusted by it. You can contemplate these matters in connection with this story. Let us stop there and proceed to the next part of the story, as there are certain things we can extract from it in the brief time we have.

Now let us see: the son eventually became a goldsmith. Though there are no extensive details, he must have been a highly skilled, certified goldsmith. Next, when we think

about his children—though it is not explicitly mentioned—we can understand their virtuous nature from the very meritorious deed they performed on behalf of their father. How valuable that is! Nowadays, indeed, there is a custom of offering alms-giving (*dāna*) with the intention of sharing merits through an appreciation sermon (*anumodanā-bhaṇa*) for many years after parents have passed away, even though they might have been well looked after while alive. Some people, perhaps, never look after their parents while they are alive, go abroad to enjoy luxury as they please, and then, upon hearing of their parents' death, return and hold alms-givings just to show off to the world. But a much rarer concept—and the highest form of service one can perform for living parents—has been taught by the Blessed One. You must have heard those teachings on many previous occasions.

The Blessed One once declared that there are two people in the world whom it is not easy to repay, to serve and finish serving. That is to say, there are two people in the world whom one can never fully repay or settle one's debt of gratitude to. Who are they? One's mother and father. Next, the Blessed One explains this in detail in a very wonderful way. If a son, even if he had a lifespan of a hundred years, were to carry his mother on one shoulder and his father on the other shoulder, and attend to all their needs, even cleansing their excrement and urine while carrying them, even then, he would not have repaid his debt to his mother and father. Likewise, if a son were to establish his mother and father in supreme sovereignty, as rulers over this great earth filled with the seven treasures, even then, he would not have repaid his debt. But, if a son establishes faithless parents in faith (*saddhā*); if he establishes unvirtuous parents in virtue (*sīla*); if he establishes stingy parents in generosity (*cāga*); if he establishes ignorant parents in wisdom (*paññā*); then that son has not only helped his parents, he has not only helped them sufficiently, he has helped them more than enough—so teaches the Blessed One.

In truth, this refers to a son like the Ven. Sāriputta Maha Thera, who, having entered the monastic life and become accomplished in those virtues, helps his mother and father in that manner; that is the highest level. Now, what did these children do here? They recognized the Buddha. Thus, they must have developed a deep concept of faith (*saddhā*) as well as a profound sense of gratitude regarding parent-care. Bearing this in mind out of gratitude, they invited their father and offered a *jīva-bhatta* (alms offered while alive), not a *mataka-bhatta* (death-alms). They did not wait until he died. They offered it as a *jīva-bhatta*. As a result of this, the faithless son of the cattle-butcher grew in faith (*saddhā*). He who lacked virtue (*sīla*) grew in virtue. He who lacked generosity (*cāga*) grew in generosity. And the culmination of his accomplishment in wisdom (*paññā*) was his attainment of Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*).

So we can understand the value of the operation of the Wheel of Dhamma (*Dhamma-cakka*) and the children's care of their parents. Next, let us contemplate the depth of these verses, as far as we can see. We cannot directly express things that lie within the domain of the Buddha's knowledge (*Buddha-ñāṇa*). The Buddha must have seen some supporting condition (*upanissaya-sampatti*) and kamma-force within this butcher's son, even though he grew up in such a harsh environment. We can only comment on what is visible to us through these verses. Indeed, it appears that the Buddha preached two pairs

of verses within those two days. What was the first line of the verse preached on the first day? That simile is an extremely deep one. Addressing this elderly lay devotee, He says, "You are now like a pale, withered leaf." Now, when a leaf turns yellow and is about to fall from the tree, it detaches and falls at the slightest breeze, doesn't it? So, by means of that, He explained his old age. Next, what happens after falling? Or rather, to remind him of where he is heading, He spoke the second line: *yamapurisā pi ca te upaṭṭhitā*—"the messengers of death (*yamapurisa*) stand ready to receive you." Thus, He gave an indication of his destination. We have to think that, willingly or unwillingly, the butcher's son must have assisted in his father's trade. He must have spent his life eating beef in the same manner. If his life had ended in that way, that would have been his destination. The messengers of death (*Yama-dūta*) are now ready to receive you.

Likewise, *uyyogamukhe ca tiṭṭhasi*—"you are standing at the threshold of departure, as if you have stepped out of the doorway to begin a journey; now the time of departure has come. You are standing fully prepared." Next, *pātheyyampi ca te na vijjati*—"you have no provisions for the road." Even though you are ready to depart, what of it? With that first verse, the Buddha aroused spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). Spiritual urgency (*Dhamma-saṃvega*) was aroused regarding himself. He reminded him of the absence of wholesome deeds within himself. At the same time, the cattle-butcher's son must have remembered his past. The moment he fled from home in terror, the livelihood his father did—all of that must have been recalled through this story of the messengers of death (*yamapurisa*). Thus, a certain spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) was aroused. It is through spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) that one gets inclined towards the Dhamma.

Then the second verse: *So karohi dīpamattano*. With the second verse, He energized him. Through the first verse, He showed him his state and aroused spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). Through the second verse, He inspired effort. *So karohi dīpamattano*—"Therefore, make an island for yourself." The boat of your life is about to capsize; find an island. Find a refuge. *Khippaṃ vāyama paṇḍito bhava*—"Strive quickly, become wise." Next, *niddhantamalo anaṅgaṇo*—"Having removed your rust, become free from defilements." Now, this elderly man was a wise man of sorts, a master goldsmith who had graduated. So, making use of that cleverness, what was he to do next? *Niddhantamalo anaṅgaṇo*—as a goldsmith, this man possessed the skill to remove rust and impurities to shape gold. Now, it was not that which had to be done. He had to remove the rust of the mind and become free of defilements. Next, *dibbaṃ ariyabhūmimehisi*—"If you do so, you will go to the divine Ariya-realm." The Buddha brought this to light. Hearing this, and directing his mind towards it, that man must have attained Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*); that is how we have to understand it.

And then, the second occasion. We do not know how he spent that day. That man, practicing diligently in accordance with the Buddha's teaching, thinking, "Now I must fashion my mind," must have applied that skill with which he once made gold ornaments to the satisfaction of his teacher. Indeed, in certain suttas that speak of training the mind, the Buddha uses this very simile of the goldsmith. Just as a goldsmith kindles a fire—those who know the goldsmith's craft would have seen how he holds a piece of raw

gold over the fire, blows on it, heats it, and from time to time moistens it with water, and from time to time lets it cool down; in this way, through systematic effort, he crafts gold ornaments. Similarly, using that simile, the Buddha states that if one is to fashion the mind for Nibbāna, if one is to direct the mind towards insight meditation (*vipassanā*) and other meditative practices, what is required are concentration (*samādhi*), energy (*viriya*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). As shown in those factors, one does not continuously develop concentration alone. Just as the goldsmith heats the gold from time to time, moistens it with water from time to time, and lets it cool for a while from time to time, so should one systematically develop concentration, systematically develop energy, and systematically develop equanimity from time to time. We mentioned this as an additional point, but through this, we can understand that the wise son of the cattle-butcher, the goldsmith, had now developed spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) and had entered the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna-phala*). We do not know how he spent the rest of that day, but it is said that after hearing the sermon on the second day, he became a Non-returner (*Anāgāmi*).

Thus, based on this, what we have to understand is that when we contemplate the Wheel of Dhamma (*Dhamma-cakka*), there is something unique about it. When we reflect on the virtues of this Dhamma, there are six terms that are regularly used, which you, meritorious friends, recite almost daily: *svākkhāto*, *sandiṭṭhiko*, *akāliko*, *ehipassiko*, *opanayiko*, *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*. These are the wonderful qualities of this Dhamma. While the Wheel of Kamma (*Kamma-cakka*) rolls on in that manner, the Wheel of Dhamma rolled by the Buddha is so powerful that, as you know from many Dhamma stories, there are instances where the Buddha gave just a brief piece of advice, uttered a single verse, and people attained not only Stream-entry but even Arahantship.

That is the wonder of the Wheel of Dhamma. For, when it comes directly from the mouth of the Buddha, the Dhamma is perfectly well-proclaimed (*svākkhāta*). There is no lack or shortcoming. Through his direct realization (*pratyakṣa-jñāna*), He knows the inclinations and Latency / Underlying tendency (*Anusaya*) of each individual. When the Buddha directs his Buddha-knowledge (*Buddha-ñāṇa*), the past histories of all those individuals are fully seen. The past momentum of kamma, the kamma-forces, the good and the bad, are all fully seen—this is the knowledge of inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*). Likewise, if they had practiced meditation in various past births, the Buddha even sees the meditation objects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) they used to support that practice. It is with that understanding that the Buddha preaches a word of Dhamma to someone. That is the quality of His teaching.

Because it is well-proclaimed (*svākkhāta*), the Dhamma preached by the Buddha as well-proclaimed can be seen in this very life, right before one's eyes, as *sandiṭṭhika* (directly visible). This is a wonderful thing about this Dhamma. Likewise, it is *akālika* (timeless), yielding results right then and there without delay. There is no need to wait and see in the next world; it is right here. Thus, it is *akālika*. *Ehipassiko* (inviting trial/investigation) means that this Dhamma has an "invite to come and see" quality. As soon as one puts the Dhamma into practice, one can experience its results for oneself.

Opanayiko (leading onwards) means that the Dhamma has a quality of pushing one forward, stage by stage. One factor connects to and leads to the next. When one fulfills one virtue, it leads and connects to the next. We have often spoken to you at length about these matters, such as the wonderful connection between Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and Right Thought/Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) in the Noble Eightfold Path. There is no need for someone else to come and push. Once you place yourself at one point, it proceeds naturally. Just as a person climbing a flight of stairs, when they lift one foot and place it down, the other foot is already raised; similarly, as one proceeds rightly, one is prepared for Right Thought, and as one goes into that, Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*) follows. In this way, from whichever point you take it, the Dhamma has an *opanayika* quality. It has a quality that leads onward. *Sandiṭṭhiko, akāliko, ehipassiko, opanayiko*. And because of these, *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*—if one is a wise person (*viññū*), even if one does not have much academic learning—for instance, this man was a certified goldsmith, but even without such qualifications, even if one is an ordinary farmer—if, through the power of past merits, one has practiced insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) in the past, then to such a wise person, the truth of the Dhamma is *paccattaṃ veditabbo*—directly knowable and realizable by oneself.

It must be due to that quality that this man, who was bound for hell, became a Non-returner (*Anāgāmi*). Instead of going to hell, he became a Non-returner. Thus, one can understand something from this. This is one aspect of the story—the value of the Dhamma. When we generally speak of "the cattle-butcher's son," we think of someone branded by society, someone marginalized. But there is a wonderful impartiality in this story. Even though this cattle-butcher's son had not engaged with the Dhamma before like his children who offered the alms-giving did, yet, due to his past wholesome potential and because the Buddha's sermon was directed precisely at him, he attained such a state. Therefore, we must not brand such a person. There is always room for someone to reform. Once the Buddha aroused spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) in him, that man recalled the traumatic event of his past, how he had abandoned his mother and left his home. He must have remembered what had been forgotten through this vision, which brought about such deep spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). Along with that, the fear of hell arose. Once spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) was combined with that, he understood what had to be done. Now, he did not know whether death would come tomorrow or even today. With great spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), that man must have applied his mind to the Dhamma principle brought to light by the Buddha. Whichever way it was, he attained that state.

Now let us return to the beginning of the story. We all know that his story involves wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). Trading in meat is a wrong livelihood, just like trading in poison or weapons, because it leads to violence and harm. It leads to the killing of living beings. That is one aspect. From the perspective of livelihood (*ājīva*), that cattle-butcher was directly headed on the path to hell. In addition to that, it is worth contemplating the attachment to the taste of meat that arose in him. Why? Various arguments are put forward, and those arguments are also presented by the tongue. But let us think a little about this tongue. This tongue is a very sensitive organ, the most sensitive organ in our

body. Now, when we speak of delicious food, even if the food is not actually present, what happens to the tip of the tongue? Saliva starts to flow, doesn't it? It is that kind of thing. Thus, such a sensitive organ is hidden within this tongue. In the course of endless Saṃsāra, we have been animals of various kinds, demons and monsters, and the kamma-momentum of having eaten meat with relish is accumulated within these. A good opportunity to awaken those is the addition of meat to this.

There is another companion that goes along with the taste of meat: intoxicating liquor. If those two go together, they can go a long way. It might even be a shortcut to the world of the gods. When the taste of meat and the taste of liquor go together, there is no lack of anything. Here, even without the taste of liquor, the cattle-butcher, after taking a good bath and when his mind was quite calm, committed such a cruel deed. When the taste of liquor is also added to that, what is it that cannot be done? You have heard of many such occurrences in this society. Now they have become common events. Behind five-star hotels and entertainment complexes, there are yards. At any time, an animal can be brought, prepared as requested, and served to the table with or without seasoning—but certainly with spoons and forks—to be consumed. In this way, a lifestyle is now developing that takes us back to a primitive, savage era.

Likewise, when thinking about livelihood (*ājīva*), the easiest farming is today scientifically demonstrated as sowing seeds and harvesting a good yield within a few days. Through such livelihoods, one can become wealthy very quickly. Support is received from everywhere, and everyone is heard talking about such people. Some are amazed, saying they are progressing rapidly. That might be so in terms of money. But we must consider where they will end up falling.

Indeed, for all of that, encouragement for such livelihoods is received from our tongue. Because of that greed for the taste of meat, one is tempted to commit such cruel things. Likewise, the inability to eat without meat. Because we cannot eat without that putrid taste, we extend our support to the cattle-butcher or the meat merchant. That is what is taught in the Dhamma. If the precept of refraining from taking life (*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*) is kept properly:

> *Pāṇaṃ na hane na ca ghātayeyya,*
>
> *navānujāññā hanataṃ paresaṃ.*

"One should not kill a living being, nor cause others to kill, nor approve of others killing." Whether knowingly or unknowingly, we cannot say—but in whatever way, we want meat for our food.

So, we must obtain it from somewhere, and it must be supplied from somewhere. That is all. But indeed, it is because of this desire for meat that we have to understand that wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) has received such support. Then, one must contemplate particularly about cattle-slaughter. The Blessed One has declared: *"Tayo rogā pure āsuṃ"* (Formerly there were three diseases). It is mentioned that in the very ancient past, there was such a time. The Dhamma mentions wonderful things about this world-system

(*loka-dhātu*) during times when humans had long lifespans. As the Buddha's word, we have to accept them. In the ancient past, humans had only three diseases: desire, hunger, and Decay.

That was all. There were desires, there was hunger, and they fell into Decay—those were the only illnesses. But these became ninety-eight after they began killing cattle. Slaughtering cattle is particularly significant; indeed, among the brahmins in India, and not only according to the environment of India but even if we think about human life today, the cow is the foster-mother. Sometimes there is no milk to drink from the mother in modern times. From the very beginning, they drink cow's milk. So, she is the foster-mother. It is not surprising that people are cruel enough to kill the foster-mother, perhaps because they even kill other mothers in this day and age.

One must think about how severe the consequences of these actions are. Moreover, the cow is a very innocent animal. All of this has been mentioned by the Blessed One in the Dhamma. Cattle-slaughter is particularly distinct. It is also mentioned in the Dhamma that killing animals with highly developed minds, such as elephants or cattle, is extremely dangerous. One should not think that eating fish is fine because of this. Some people do not eat meat but eat fish. They do not realize that fish is also flesh. They think fish is a different kind of creature altogether. Meat is the flesh of large animals like cows, not fish—so they eat fish. However that may be, the root of that concept lies in the tongue. It is that very tongue that presents various arguments. Such is the situation. We must consider where we are going. No matter how much this world is puffed up with great progress, suddenly, even sea water comes and sweeps it all away. After all that prosperity is beautifully shown, that is the nature of Māra. It is like throwing one up only to smash them down.

So, a millionaire, within a matter of days, finally dies either from some terrible accident, a fatal accident, or from an accident from the outside. If not, from some severe painful disease from within—diseases that are karmically correspondential (*kamma-sarikkha*). We hear of many such accounts. Even in modern times, those who brutally slaughtered cattle, killed animals, or slaughtered chickens, fall victim to painful diseases that remind them or force them to recall the cruel tortures they inflicted, and they go to ruin. Sometimes, efforts are made to hide these as secrets, in order to encourage this wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). But this is the eternal truth of kamma:

> *Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ,*
>
> *Kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ.*

This is the farming that the Blessed One presents: the farming of kamma. In whatever way one sows, in that way must one harvest. *Kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ*—if one sows good, one can harvest good; one can reap a good harvest. *Pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ*—by sowing evil seeds, one can never obtain good results, even if it might temporarily seem so. That is the word of the Buddha. The danger of the Wheel of Kamma (*Kamma-cakka*) is visible to us through this. Shaping our life and shaping our livelihood (*ājīva*) is something that

belongs to us. Livelihood (*ājīva*) does not just happen on its own. One must make a great effort for it. Applying the mind to Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) helps to bring forth that Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*). Right Livelihood means a correct living. Indeed, the biggest problem for everyone, once they leave the protection of their parents and enter society, is the question of employment. Once parental protection is gone, one must earn a living. What is easy for that? People choose whatever can make them wealthy quickly and easily. They present it, saying, "Why, this can be done in a matter of days." But that is the point: one must be prepared to harvest exactly what one sows.

So, one must contemplate in this way with wisdom, looking at society. That very cruelty, the cruelty shown towards animals, is what people now show towards one another. Sometimes, people suddenly discover that the food they have been relishing in some restaurant for so long was actually human flesh. Then, even vomiting is not enough to make amends. But after some time, these things become normal, and that savage nature of killing and eating one another in the past might re-emerge. If there is a population problem, the easiest way to solve it is by killing and eating one another. That is what happened in the past. In the past, many did not have that population problem. The minds of humans are drawn to such cruelty from these small things. Now, that man could not eat a single meal of rice without the taste of meat. Even having eaten it every day, it was still not enough. Once that craving (*taṇhā*) for taste has arisen, somehow or other, it does not matter how, it must be obtained.

It is through that, then, that one is tempted into other evils. Even if we do not do it ourselves, we get someone else to do it, and arguing that there is nothing wrong with it, we enjoy and relish it. But through this, there is a progressive decline of virtues in this society. Likewise, this current wave regarding the economy. One must contemplate with wisdom, no matter how much aid is given. Aid is even given to these things from areas where it should not be given. But we do not need those. We make our own honest, Dhamma-conforming refuge, and the determination to live according to the word of the Buddha—that itself is why it is said that an effort, a special energy (*viriya*), is required to protect that livelihood (*ājīva*). There are various things that cause defilements to arise in the mind. One must not give way to them. Otherwise, one could trade in weapons. One could trade in poison. One can earn a great deal from those too. The Blessed One has shown those too as wrong livelihoods (*micchā-ājīva*), because they lead to harm and violence towards living beings.

According to this, we must contemplate through all of this: no matter how much we talk about the Dhamma of the Buddha, if we do not live accordingly, we can never obtain the expected results. Therefore, the responsibility of shaping one's daily lifestyle lies with oneself. Just as with livelihood (*ājīva*), the greed for the taste of meat must be abandoned through a firm determination. If one observes a certain principle, that principle becomes a strength and help to observe another principle. When a person addicted to liquor abandons that desire for liquor, they can develop a great strength in their mind. Taking refuge in that, they can proceed forward on the path of Dhamma. It is the same with this matter.

So we see from these Dhamma stories where these actions lead. The Blessed One has shown the consequences of the unwholesome deed of taking life (*pāṇātipāta*). Regarding that unwholesome deed of taking life, He speaks directly of *lohitapāṇi*—hands wet with blood. The person who lives by slaughtering animals in a very brutal manner goes to one of the four states: hell (*niraya*), the animal realm (*tiracchāna-yoni*), the hungry ghost realm (*peta-yoni*), or the demon realm (*asura-yoni*). Next, even if they somehow obtain a human birth, it is said that they will be short-lived. Many proofs of this are received not only from the Blessed One but also from the Ven. Mahā Moggallāna Maha Thera. We have mentioned a very good incident regarding this matter of the cattle-butcher on previous occasions.

On one occasion, Ven. Moggallāna Maha Thera and Ven. Lakkhaṇa Maha Thera were residing on the Vulture's Peak (*Gijjhakūṭa*). One day, Ven. Moggallāna Maha Thera said to Ven. Lakkhaṇa, "Let us go to Rājagaha for alms." Next, as they were descending the Vulture's Peak, at one spot, Ven. Moggallāna Maha Thera smiled slightly. The smiles of these Arahants are highly meaningful. Ven. Lakkhaṇa asked, "Why did you smile?" He replied, "Ask this in the presence of the Blessed One. I will not say it now." Next, after collecting alms and finishing their meal, they went to the presence of the Blessed One. There, Ven. Lakkhaṇa asked Ven. Moggallāna Maha Thera, as agreed, "Why did you smile slightly earlier during the day?" Then, in front of the Blessed One and the Saṅgha, Ven. Moggallāna Maha Thera revealed the matter:

"As I was descending the Vulture's Peak, I saw a skeleton flying through the air. Vultures, crows, and hawks were pecking at it between its ribs. That skeleton was flying along, screaming and crying out in pain. I smiled at that moment, thinking, 'How amazing that such forms of existence (*ātma-bhāva*) actually exist!'" Hearing this, the Blessed One declared before the Saṅgha: "Monks, I too saw that extraordinary being with my divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*). However, I did not declare it because if I had said so, people might have said, 'Why can't we see it?' and if they had corrupted their minds towards Me, it would have turned out badly for them. They might even have gone to hell (*niraya*), thinking that the Blessed One speaks untruths. That is why I did not say it. Now, I have a witness." The Blessed One began by saying, "My disciples live with eyes open, they live with wisdom. Such things are visible not only to Me, but also to My disciples."

Then, the Blessed One, with this witness, explained that the one who went like a skeleton was a cattle-butcher. A cattle-butcher who had lived in this very city of Rājagaha. As a result of carrying out that cattle-slaughtering kamma, he had boiled in hell (*niraya*) for many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years, many hundreds of thousands of years, and had now obtained this form of existence (*ātma-bhāva*). Thus, having scraped off the meat of those cows, the skeleton is often seen in those butcher shops. This man was now like that skeleton. Yet, when those birds and other creatures pecked at him, that form of existence (*ātma-bhāva*) screamed in agony. There are extraordinary, living forms of existence (*ātma-bhāva*) in this world that are not visible to the ordinary physical eye. They are visible only to those with the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*).

Another story of the same kind occurs right alongside that. A piece of meat was flying through the air. Vultures and crows were pecking at it too. That piece of meat was flying through the air, crying out. What was this piece of meat? That too was a certain form of existence (*ātma-bhāva*). In the past, he was a cattle-butcher. In this manner, many accounts regarding bird-slaughterers and others are mentioned alongside this, as consequences of killing animals. So, those hungry ghost existences (*peta-ātma*) and demon existences (*yakkha-ātma*) in this world are obtained as the residual results, the tail-end of that committed kamma. The actual result is experienced in hell (*niraya*). Having suffered the pain of hell for aeons, hundreds of thousands of years, they obtain those hungry ghost existences (*peta-ātma-bhāva*) which are visible only to those with the divine eye. Coming even closer to this side, they obtain human births, and we occasionally hear of children born like demons, deformed individuals without hands or feet. Furthermore, wonderful illnesses occur according to past kamma-forces, according to dangerous kamma-forces. We must understand that underneath those lie such kammas.

Therefore, the unwholesome deed of taking life (*pāṇātipāta*) is an extremely serious matter. That is why it is presented as the first precept. Something that supports that is violence towards animals. The root of all of that is the nature of the animal world, where one devours another. An animal does not wait until the other dies. We can see certain animals where the final lament of the animal is heard from inside the stomach of the other animal—such as when water monitors swallow a creature, sometimes frogs. The final sound is heard from the stomach. Such is the habit of swallowing alive. That is why the Blessed One has declared that once one falls into the animal world, it is extremely difficult to come back up. What is the reason? The Blessed One describes the nature of hell and the animal world as: *"aññamaññabhādikā vattati dubbalabhādikā"*—in the animal world, it is mostly not animals like cattle, but meat-eating animals devouring one another. Likewise, *dubbalabhādikā*—the weak are devoured. Especially regarding creatures in the ocean. This is called the law of the fish (*matsya-nyāya*)—one preys upon another. So, if a human behaves in this way, it does not conform to humanity.

In truth, this is now becoming a pattern. There is not much desire for a dead animal. It is the same with wild animals. It is the habit of wild animals to prey upon the living along with their warm blood. Now, this is very modern. Before an animal draws its last breath, we must take the meat that can be taken from that animal to satisfy our tongue. That is the newest method. In those hotels, they do not wait until they die. People do these things themselves. When those forks and spoons and other external things are removed, what is actually present here is a return to a savage era. So, we must contemplate these things with wisdom. We grasp large, deep matters, but we do not make an effort to reform these weaknesses that appear ordinary in daily life but go a very long way. Instead, we present various arguments and try to "save our own skin." Even if you save your skin, meritorious friends, you cannot save your mind. The body too will eventually be joined with terrible actions at some point.

Therefore, contemplating these things, you, meritorious friends, have observed a certain virtue (*sīla*) on this valuable day. Virtue (*sīla*) means gentleness/taming. To that

gentleness, all of what has been mentioned belongs. Abstaining from killing animals. Abstaining from stealing. Such abstinences—we must constantly remind ourselves of the word *veramaṇī*. The most valuable word in a training precept (*sikkhāpada*) is this. *Veramaṇī* means abstinence/refraining. Thus, doing is easy, refraining is difficult. It is through doing the difficult thing—it is that training (*sikkhana*) that helps us to shape our lives. Only then does one become tamed. That is how an elephant or a horse is tamed. How much effort does an elephant-trainer or a horse-trainer make to tame that animal? A wild animal. So, we too must tame ourselves, not just because someone else told us to. What helps in that is faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem.

The Blessed One did not tell us this to give us pain. As mentioned, the Blessed One brought this Wheel of Dhamma to light for us to put an end to suffering, with the help of the Wheel of Dhamma which rescues those suffering. It is in accordance with that that these precepts, such as virtue (*sīla*), are given. Not as a burden, but for our own well-being. When we say "our own well-being," it is not only well-being in this life. Life does not end here. If life ended here, it would not matter how we lived. But not only the Blessed One, even the yogis of the past have shown that we go on for an endless time in Saṃsāra, being born and dying in various forms of existence. The Blessed One has declared:

> *Na taṃ kammaṃ kataṃ sādhu, yaṃ katvā anutappati,*
>
> *Yassa assumukho rodaṃ, vipākaṃ paṭisevati.*

"That deed is not well done which, having done, one repents, and the result of which one undergoes weeping with a tearful face."

Thus, some might say, "Even if we commit this kamma now, we will not know it later. We won't be there. It won't be 'us.' We won't remember." One cannot escape in that way. At the moment of experiencing it, one cries, "Oh, how did this happen?" not knowing why. Within that experiencing, suffering (*Dukkha*) belongs to oneself. This is because of having done it knowingly. Even if one does not know, or does not know that so-and-so did it, one still has to undergo the experience. That is what the Blessed One has declared. Only after going to a skilled doctor do we realize that we ate something unwholesome in our childhood without knowing it. That ultimately comes out, perhaps in modern times, as a disease like cancer. Only then do we remember, "Oh, we took that delicious food!" and later this doctor says, "This is the cause."

Similarly, the Buddha points out to the world: though you now appear healthy and well, there is a certain toxic seed in the mind that is required for this disease. Until that is removed, you cannot be healthy. One must contemplate in that way. So, one cannot escape through those various arguments, saying, "Upon being reborn, that is not us." As the result of kamma, one has to take that responsibility at some point. Contemplating in that way, one must set one's life right. That elderly son of the cattle-butcher was a true wise man (*paṇḍito*) at his final moments. Nowadays, "wise" (*paṇḍita*) is used to describe academic learning. Here, "wise" does not refer to academic learning. It is not academic

learning that the Blessed One urged him to do quickly. He told him to quickly purify the mind—that is wisdom. That is true wisdom.

Therefore, everyone is invited to become that kind of wise person. It is worth making that phrase, *khippaṃ vāyama paṇḍito bhava*, a guiding motto for one's life in accordance with these verses. Now, if this Dhamma sermon—which helps you to shape your lives, your daily living, and shows the wonderful nature of this Wheel of Dhamma—has served to bring forth faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), which are the Dhamma-forces, the spiritual faculties (*bala-dhamma*) that aid in the realization of Nibbāna, may all of that, supported by the association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), definitely serve as a supporting condition (*upanissaya*) to quickly escape from all the suffering of Saṃsāra, such as Birth / Arising (*Jāti*), Decay, sickness, and death, and to realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna—the fruit of the path through the realization of the stages of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship. Likewise, if there are any beings, from the lowest Avīci hell to the highest Akaniṭṭha heaven, who expect to share in the merit of this Dhamma-preaching and Dhamma-hearing, may all of them, by sharing in this merit, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! Praying thus, let us recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #31

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Imesu kira sajjanti, eke samaṇabrāhmaṇā;

Viggayha naṁ vivadanti, janā ekāṅgadassino.

From:

Sutta Nipāta, Aṭṭhakavagga

Dear Listeners,

It was on a Vesak Full Moon Poya day such as this that our Tathāgata, the Fully Self-Enlightened One, awakened the Eye of Wisdom. The understanding of the world, which is the domain of that Eye of Wisdom, is enshrined within the virtue of *Lokavidū* (Knower of the Worlds) among the nine supreme qualities of the Buddha. Based on the verse we have chosen as our theme today and its corresponding origin story (*nidāna-kathā*), we will be able to bring to light certain aspects of this very virtue.

At one time, while the Buddha was residing at Jeta's Grove in Sāvatthī, various ascetics, brahmins, and wanderers holding different views came to dwell in Sāvatthī. They were engaged in disputes and debates regarding their respective views in this manner:

Some said: "The world is eternal; only this is true, everything else is false."

Another group said: "The world is not eternal; only this is true, everything else is false."

Another group said: "The world is finite; only this is true, everything else is false."

Another group said: "The world is infinite; only this is true, everything else is false."

Another group said: "The soul and the body are one and the same (here 'jīva' refers to the self/soul); the soul and the body are identical. Only this is true, everything else is false."

Another group said: "The soul is one thing, the body is another. Only this is true, everything else is false."

Those who held these views also put forward their speculations there: "The Tathāgata exists after death." (Here, "Tathāgata" refers not only to our Buddha, but in those various schools and systems of belief, the person who had reached the ultimate state was known as the "Tathāgata"). Thus, some said: "The Tathāgata, the liberated person, the one who has reached the highest state, exists after death. Only this is true, everything else is false."

Another group said: "The Tathāgata does not exist after death. Only this is true, everything else is false."

Yet another group said: "The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death." Combining both, "exists and does not exist"—in one sense he exists, in another sense he does not. "Only this is true, everything else is false."

And another group said: "The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist." Rejecting both. "Only this is true, everything else is false."

In this way, bound to their respective views, they ended up quarreling and disputing, wounding one another with sharp tongues. Then, one day during that time, a group of monks, having gone into Sāvatthī for alms, heard these quarrels and disputes, and went to the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, various ascetics, brahmins, and wanderers holding different views are disputing and wounding each other with sharp tongues."

When this was reported to the Buddha, he said: "Indeed, monks, those ascetics and brahmins of other sects are blind; they have no eyes." The Buddha described them with the words "blind" (*andhā*) and "eyeless" (*acakkhukā*). They do not know what is beneficial; that is, they do not know what is good, they do not know what is bad, they do not know what is Dhamma, they do not know what is non-Dhamma. Remaining thus, they argue and dispute in this manner. Having stated this, the Buddha presented a story of the past as a parable.

"Monks, in the past, in this very city of Sāvatthī, there was a king. One day, the king summoned a royal officer and said: 'Go, gather all the men in this city who are blind from birth.' 'Blind from birth' (*jātyandha*) means those who are born blind. 'Gather all the men in Sāvatthī who are born blind and bring them here.' So, the royal officer went, gathered those men, brought them, and said: 'Your Majesty, I have brought them.'"

"'Then show an elephant to these blind men,' the king said. So, the royal officer went and showed an elephant to the blind men. How did he show it? He had some of the blind men feel the elephant's head. He had another group feel its ear. Another group feel its tusk. Another feel its trunk. Another feel the elephant's belly. Another feel the elephant's foot. Another feel its thigh. Another feel its tail, and another feel the tuft of its tail. The tuft and the tail are shown as two different parts there."

"Having shown them thus, he returned to the king and said: 'I have shown the elephant to the blind men.' The king went out to the courtyard where the blind men were and asked: 'Blind men, have you seen the elephant?' They replied: 'Yes, Your Majesty.' 'What

is the elephant like?' he asked. Then, those blind men who had felt the elephant's head said: 'An elephant is just like a water jar.' Those who had felt its ear said: 'An elephant is just like a winnowing basket.' Those who had felt its tusk said: 'An elephant is just like a plowshare.' Those who had felt the trunk said: 'An elephant is just like a plow-pole.' Those who had felt its body said: 'An elephant is just like a storehouse.' Those who had felt its foot said: 'An elephant is just like a pillar.' Those who had felt its thigh said: 'An elephant is just like a mortar.' Those who had felt the tuft of its tail said: 'An elephant is just like a pestle.' Those who had felt its tail said: 'An elephant is just like a broom.' Saying so, they argued with each other, shouting, 'An elephant is like this, it is not like that!' and they came to blows, striking each other with fists and feet. The king looked on and was amused."

"That is the story presented by the Buddha. Having told this, the Buddha said: 'Just so, monks, those ascetics and brahmins are blind; they have no eyes. They do not know what is beneficial, they do not know what is harmful; they do not know Dhamma, they do not know non-Dhamma. That is why they quarrel and dispute.' And then he uttered this verse:"

Imesu kira sajjanti,

eke samaṇabrāhmaṇā;

Viggayha naṁ vivadanti,

janā ekāṅgadassino.

"Some ascetics and brahmins cling to these views. They are attached to these views. 'These blind people, seeing only one part, grasp onto it and engage in fierce quarrels and disputes.' This is the meaning."

So, from this story and verse, we can understand that the Buddha regarded all those who held such views as blind, as having no eyes. Why did he regard them so? There we have a question. In fact, these ten questions are frequently encountered in the Sutta discourses of the Dhamma by those devoted readers. Often, these ten questions are presented as a challenge to the Buddha, demanding a direct answer. But instead of giving a direct answer, the Buddha set aside their explanation. He rejected those questions. This is a very puzzling issue for scholars as well: why did the Buddha, possessing such an immense treasury of knowledge, not answer questions of this nature? However, here we have a point that reveals the secret. The Buddha declared here that those who held those views are blind, eyeless. We can understand why he said so.

We began by speaking of the Buddha's Eye of Wisdom. The Buddha declared that there are three types of eyes in the world: the physical eye, the divine eye, and the Eye of Wisdom. The Eye of Wisdom is the *prajñā*-eye. It is on the basis of the physical eye that one develops the divine eye. The one who has a physical eye is able to obtain the divine eye. Those two are connected. But the Eye of Wisdom is unique. It was the Buddha who introduced the Eye of Wisdom to the world. Therefore, it is far superior to the knowledge

gained through the physical eye and the divine eye. The Eye of Wisdom surpasses them all.

Furthermore, the Buddha explains in the Dhamma the reason for not answering those questions in this way: "Monks, when it comes to answering or explaining, there are four types of questions: *ekaṁsa-vyākaraṇīya* (to be answered categorically), *vibhajja-vyākaraṇīya* (to be answered analytically), *paṭipucchā-vyākaraṇīya* (to be answered with a counter-question), and *ṭhapanīya* (to be set aside)." *Ekaṁsa-vyākaraṇīya* refers to questions that can be answered directly as "yes" or "no". There are certain questions that can be answered directly by saying "yes" or "no".

There are other questions that are *vibhajja-vyākaraṇīya*. Analytical questions are those that must be answered by dividing, analyzing, and impartially dissecting the question, rather than saying "yes" or "no" straightaway. *Paṭipucchā-vyākaraṇīya* refers to those where one must ask questions back to the questioner to clarify the root of the question. There are such questions as well.

Then there is the fourth category, *ṭhapanīya*—questions to be set aside. Why are they set aside? Because their foundation is wrong. Since they are formulated upon a false hypothesis, a wrong premise, they are set aside and rejected. One cannot say "yes" or "no" to them. It is to trap the one who answers that they present questions in the form of dilemmas or tetralemmas (two-pronged or four-pronged). They try to persuade the answerer to give an answer somehow. Yet, the Buddha did not answer even one of them. This is something that scholars sometimes fail to comprehend.

But here, in relation to the Buddha's quality of *Lokavidū*, we bring to light what the Eye of Wisdom actually is. Wherever it is mentioned that "the Eye of Dhamma arose", it is stated: "Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease" (*yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*). It was that very law—the law of arising and ceasing—that was visible only to the Buddha's eye. Until then, the world was harbored in the view of a self, harboring in the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), with the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), feeling that the world is permanent, that there is something eternal. They see that various things in the world decay, yet there was a feeling within the world that there is some indestructible core. That is what is called the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). Only the Buddha brought to light the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), thereby breaking that wrong view. That is why this Eye of Wisdom is far more powerful and supreme than the physical eye and the divine eye.

So, next, it was first mentioned here whether the world is eternal or not. Some said it is eternal; others said it is not eternal. Why did the Buddha not accept either of these? In that case, the Buddha had to redefine the word "world". It is not the "world" that worldly people think of. Regarding this, we find a certain Venerable monk named Samiddhi asking the Buddha directly: "Venerable Sir, it is said, 'the world, the world.' To what extent is there a world?" Then the Buddha declares: "Samiddhi, wherever there is the eye, there are forms, there is eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and there are things

cognizable by eye-consciousness—there a world exists. Likewise, where there is the ear, there are sounds, there is consciousness (*viññāṇa*) associated with it, and there are things cognizable by that consciousness—to that extent a world exists." In this manner, a world exists in relation to the six sense bases, including the mind.

Now, you lay devotees know that there are six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). In this Dhamma, "six sense bases" refers to the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These are also known as "bases" (*āyatana*). Why? Because it is through contact with these that a world is recognized. Having shown the world in this manner, the Buddha next says—not pointing to a specific geographical location, but directly: "Wherever there is no eye, no forms, no eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and no things cognizable by eye-consciousness—there is no world." Going on in this manner, "Wherever there is no mind, no mind-objects (dhamma), no mind-consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and no things cognizable by mind-consciousness—there is no world." This demonstrates that there is an arising of the world and a cessation of the world.

The world is not an eternal thing as others think. It is something connected to and relative to these six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). This thing called the world is bound up with the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). It is on their account that the designation of a "world" arises. This is something that generally escapes physical science. There is a deep matter here. This was presented to the world for the first time by the Buddha through the doctrine of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).

The Buddha expressed this on one occasion in a very brief verse:

> *Chasu loko samuppanno,*
>
> *chasu kubbati santhavaṁ;*
>
> *Channameva upādāya,*
>
> *chasu loko vihaññati.*

Here, *cha* means "six" in the Pali language. *Chasu loko samuppanno*—the world has arisen in the six. The world is in the six. It is in these six sense bases that the world is born. How wonderful is this way of explaining! *Chasu kubbati santhavaṁ*—it is within these six that all connections, all relations of the world are made. Think about it for a moment, devotees, regarding all modern gadgets. Every single one of them is designed to connect with these six. Then, *channameva upādāya chasu loko vihaññati*—grasping (*upādāna*) onto these very six, the world is afflicted within the six. This is the story of the six presented by the Buddha. Thus, the world is born in the six, the world conducts all its relations within the six, and by grasping (*upādāna*) these six, the world meets with affliction within the six. Such is the account the Buddha presents to the world.

Therefore, in direct relation to this, we must next consider: if the world is such a thing, something existing on account of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), then the Buddha shows that there is a cessation for it. It can be ceased. The next question is: where does it

cease? Before we discuss that, let us look at the etymological definitions given to the word "world".

On one occasion, Venerable Ānanda asked the Buddha a similar question: "It is said, 'world, world.' In what sense is it called 'world'?" The Buddha says: "Ānanda, whatever is of a crumbling nature..."—here he uses the Pali term *paloka-dhammaṁ*. Whatever is of a disintegrating, crumbling nature is called the world. In the term *paloka-dhammaṁ*, the word *loka* is contained, but there it refers to the nature of disintegrating. Asking "what disintegrates?", the Buddha says: "The eye disintegrates, forms disintegrate, the eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that arises due to both also disintegrates. The feelings (*vedanā*)—whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant—that arise as a result also disintegrate." Disintegrating means crumbling away, moment by moment. Thus, this is something that is constantly crumbling and breaking apart.

If the world is such a thing, think about it for a moment: we try to draw water from a large vessel using a ladle. If that ladle is full of holes, can you measure water with it? When you lift it up, the water leaks out of that ladle. In the same way, the entire world is disintegrating and crumbling moment by moment—the Buddha declared that it disintegrates at a speed invisible to the physical eye. That is why: "Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease" (*yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*).

This Dhamma-nature applies even to what is called the atom in modern times. It applies from the atom up to the entire world system (*loka-dhātu*). Until the early part of the last century, scientists thought the atom was something indivisible. But now, even that is an "atom" only in name. They have understood to some small extent that it too is something that disintegrates. Likewise, the world system also crumbles. The Buddha has given wonderful descriptions of the beginning and destruction of aeons (*kalpa*) in the Sutta discourses. Thus, the world, from the atom to the world system, changes moment by moment. One cannot say whether something that changes moment by moment is eternal or not eternal. Just as it arises, it ceases in another place. Such is the process taking place in the world. That is why the Buddha set aside the questions of whether the world is eternal or not eternal.

What was the next pair of questions? "Is the world finite or infinite?" Some said: "The world has an end; only this is true." Others said: "The world has no end; only this is true." The Buddha did not answer either of these. He cast those questions aside entirely as wrong views, treating them as incorrect questions, like those asked by a feverish patient. He showed that the premise, the underlying hypothesis, was faulty. There is an excellent illustrative story about this in the Dhamma.

While the Buddha was residing at Jeta’s Grove, a young deva named Rohitassa came during the night and asked the Buddha—devas have a particular way of addressing the Buddha, often rendered in Sinhala as "nidukāṇeni" (O Painless One). He asked: "Venerable Sir, is it possible, by traveling, to reach the end of the world where one is not born (*jāti*), does not age (*jarā*), does not die (*maraṇa*), and is not reborn?" Then the

Buddha replied: "No, friend, I say it is not possible to reach the end of the world by traveling in that manner."

Then Rohitassa the deva said: "It is wonderful, Venerable Sir, it is marvelous! I have realized this very fact myself. How? In a past life, I was a great sage named Rohitassa. I had the psychic power to travel through the air. The speed of that travel is described as being like the speed of an arrow flying through the air. Moreover, I could place one foot on the eastern shore and the other foot on the western shore; I had the strength to take such giant strides across the ocean. Traveling at such a speed for a hundred years, I died without ever seeing the end of the world. What the Buddha says is absolutely true," Rohitassa the deva declared.

Then the Buddha, agreeing with him, said: "Indeed, I say that one cannot reach the end of the world by traveling. Yet, without reaching the end of the world, there is no making an end of suffering (*dukkha*)." Next, he declares where the end of the world actually lies. He makes this amazing statement: "I declare that within this very fathom-long body, endowed with perception and mind, lies the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." From this too, we see that the Buddha analyzed the "world" in terms of these six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). If we can bring our mind to a state where these six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*) cease, then we have escaped the world. We have found the end of the world. That story of eternity ends right there.

This matter becomes even clearer to us: it is not just the views present in the world, but all possible views that can arise are encompassed in the net cast in the Brahmajāla Sutta, the great Brahma Net. There is a highly profound discourse called the Brahmajāla Sutta, which categorizes all worldly views into sixty-two. All views are included within these sixty-two. How are these views rejected? The Buddha, summarizing the various views, declares that every single one of them has arisen due to contact (*phassa*).

Now think about the contact (*phassa*) of that elephant. In that story, it was said that the elephant was "shown" to the blind men. But even when shown, can blind men see the elephant? Instead, what they did was feel the elephant, and through that contact (*phassa*), they identified the elephant. Similarly, understand that the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) tries to understand the world just like those blind men feeling the elephant. They try to grasp it through these six. They grasp through the eye; there is the world seen by the eye. You lay devotees know: the world seen by the eye, the world heard by the ear, the world smelled by the nose, the world tasted by the tongue, the world felt by the body, and finally, the world cognized by the mind—there is no other world than this.

Worldly people grasp onto these and carry out their reasoning and arguments, even science itself. Now, among the sixty-two views mentioned, some are views held by those with higher psychic knowledges (*abhiññā*). These are views of yogis who, having developed jhana-powers and obtained the divine eye, saw hundreds of thousands of past births (*jāti*). Yet, the Buddha rejects them all, saying that all of them are things constructed by contact (*phassa*) through these six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*).

Then, what is the correct view? The correct vision? Apart from those, what is the true view? There a question arises. That is indeed the Eye of Wisdom. The Buddha explains in that very Brahmajāla Sutta how this Eye of Wisdom arises. If a monk fully understands these five aspects of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*): their arising, their passing away, their gratification, their danger, and the escape from them—if he understands these five aspects correctly, then that monk transcends that entire net of views and attains a supreme vision. From this, we can see that the cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*) is itself Nibbāna.

Worldly people, ordinary worldlings (*puthujjana*), trapped within these six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), go in search of the end of the world. Now, the great psychic sage Rohitassa traveled at the speed mentioned earlier, flying through the sky, without any financial cost. The only cost was time. He said: "Except for the time spent eating and sleeping, even after traveling for a hundred years, I could not see the end of the world"—without any special expense, using his psychic power. Yet, our modern-day Rohitassas, who possess no such higher knowledge (*abhiññā*) or psychic powers whatsoever, spend billions to run around searching for the end of the world. In this lifespan of less than a hundred years, they run like this, get exhausted, and die. In the end, they go to places like the lower realms. We must reflect wisely on this state of affairs. This is because we live in an era where many people talk and think about the quality of *Lokavidū*. That is why we are saying this: to explain how the word *Lokavidū* should be understood.

The Buddha shows minutely, in terms of the minor world-systems (*cūḷanikā loka-dhātu*), the great thousandfold world-systems (*mahāsahassī loka-dhātu*), and so forth, a highly marvelous universe. He has declared world systems beyond what we think, beyond what the eye can see, and even beyond what modern astronomers with their instruments and telescopes can conceive. The Eye of Wisdom surpasses all of that. Why? Because every single one of them disintegrates. A thing that is constantly disintegrating and breaking apart cannot be measured in that way. Is it eternal? Then, the question of its end. All of these. That is what the Buddha points out.

Even more important is that this world we speak of is constructed by the mind itself. It is based on this eye, through eye-contact (*phassa*). In understanding this, the simile of the elephant is of great help. Just as those blind men grasped onto individual parts and declared, "This is the elephant," so too the world seen by the eye, the world heard by the ear—these are what the world takes to be "the world". But the Buddha shows that all of these are ultimately empty, void.

Furthermore, the Buddha declares the way to escape from this. That is why it was said that when a monk sees both the arising and the passing away of these six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*)—*samudayatthangama* or *samudaya-vaya* (arising and ceasing)—he sees a process occurring instantly. He sees their arising and ceasing. Likewise, he sees their gratification. He sees their danger. And next, he sees the escape from them, which is Nibbāna. Thus, it was when the Buddha realized that very cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*) that the Eye arose.

Now, you lay devotees know that there are classes or grades—various words like that are used. The body of knowledge required for a certain grade is completed only when one passes that class, isn't it? What does "passing" mean? It means going beyond, doesn't it? To pass exams means to go beyond them. In the same way, it is only when one has gone beyond the world that one can understand the world. Only when one has gone beyond the world does one gain a complete picture of the world. Until then, there is no real understanding. There is only that incomplete knowledge, just like grasping a part of the elephant and imagining. This is what we must understand.

Therefore, from this, consider: on what should those devotees who wish to make use of their lives focus their attention? Should it be on this Dhamma regarding the Eye of Wisdom presented by the Buddha? Or on that running around in the modern world? Spending billions to go in search of the end of the world, only to die halfway like Rohitassa. So, that is the story regarding the end of the world.

There are two other questions, aren't there? Some said that the soul (*jīva*) and the body are one and the same. Others said that the soul (*jīva*) is one thing and the body is another. Here, "soul" (*jīva*)—you should understand—is just another name for the self. To put it in familiar terms, one group said the self and the body are one. Others say the self is one thing, the body is another. Now, how could the Buddha answer either of these? If he answered, he would be trapped, wouldn't he? This is a self/soul that the Buddha does not accept. The Buddha declares it to be *kevala-paripūro bāladhammo*—completely filled with foolish notions. This concept of a "self" is entirely a wrong view of ordinary worldlings. The dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) is a wrong concept firmly rooted within worldly beings through ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*). Therefore, relating an actually non-existent self to the body, and saying either that the two are one or that the two are different—both are wrong.

You lay devotees know the kind of questions asked in courts, don't you? If a clever lawyer asks a person who has never drunk alcohol in his life, demanding a "yes" or "no" without wasting the court's time: "Has the gentleman now stopped drinking alcohol?"—whether he says "yes" or "no", he gets trapped. It is for this reason that the Buddha set those questions aside. Their premise, their core assumption, is wrong. Thus, it can be easily understood; that is, why the Buddha did not answer can be easily understood.

Because we know, everyone accepts, that this is a Dhamma of not-self (*anattā*). To some extent, impermanence (*anicca*) was seen not only by the sages of the past but even by ordinary people. They also knew to some extent that what is impermanent (*anicca*) is suffering (*dukkha*). But it was the Buddha who brought to light the nature of not-self (*anattā*)—that there is nothing that can be taken as "I" or "mine", no core or essence. When speaking of these eyes, ears, nose, and so on: "The eye cannot be taken as self, forms cannot be taken as self." Nowhere is there a self. There is no essence; it is unsubstantial. That is why those two questions were also set aside.

Next, it is the same with the final set of questions. They are extremely profound. It concerns the word "Tathāgata". We began today's sermon by speaking of the Tathāgata,

the Fully Self-Enlightened One. However, the ascetics and brahmins of other sects used the word "Tathāgata" to refer to the one who had reached the highest state in their respective teachings, described as the supreme man (*uttamapurisa*), the ultimate man (*paramapurisa*), who has attained the highest attainment (*paramapattipatta*). In short, it was used to refer to the liberated individual. There is an instance where this matter becomes very clear.

The wanderer Vacchagotta asked the Buddha these ten questions. In fact, it was not only the wanderer Vacchagotta; the Suttas mention that various people—sometimes even kings, and sometimes even monks of the Sangha—asked the Buddha: "Why does the Buddha not answer these questions?" We think that if there is a question, it must surely be answered. This is why we mentioned earlier that the Buddha pointed out four types of questions. The Buddha set these questions aside for a specific reason. These four questions are formulated in such a way that one cannot escape them.

The Tathāgata—let us understand "Tathāgata" here as the liberated individual. Does the liberated individual of a certain teaching exist after death? Does he not exist after death? Does he both exist and not exist after death? Fourthly, does he neither exist nor not exist after death? In this way, they make it four-cornered to corner the one who answers. They put four corners to the question so that the answerer cannot escape. Whichever one he asserts, he gets trapped. But the Buddha did not get trapped by this. Without answering even one of them, he dismissed them, calling it a wilderness of views, a joke, and declared that such questions do not even arise for a noble person. The Buddha stated that it is only the one lacking that understanding who troubles himself over why these questions were not taken seriously and answered.

Now let us try to understand "Tathāgata" in relation to our Dispensation. The term "Tathāgata" is actually applied in the Sutta discourses not only to the Buddha but in some places to Arahants as well. In short, it refers to the liberated person. The wanderer Vacchagotta did not present his questions to the Buddha using the word "Tathāgata". He asked whether a liberated person of this Dispensation, a monk of liberated mind, is reborn (*jāti*) after death. The Buddha said: "That question does not apply."

He asked: "Is he not reborn after death?" "That question also does not apply." Next he asked: "Is he both reborn and not reborn?" "That question also does not apply." Then he asked: "Is he neither reborn nor not reborn?" "That question also does not apply." In this way, the Buddha gave short answers. Thereupon Vacchagotta said: "Whatever faith I had in you, Master Gotama, is now gone." Then the Buddha said: "Very well, Vacchagotta, let me ask you a question in return."

"Suppose a fire were burning before you. Would you know that there is a fire before you?" "Yes, Master Gotama, I would know." "If someone were to ask you: 'On account of what does this fire burn?' what would you say?" "I would say: 'This fire burns on account of grass and wood as fuel. It burns by grasping (*upādāna*) onto them, using them as fuel.'" "Very well, suppose that fire before you were to go out. If someone were to ask

you: 'Where has this extinguished fire gone? To the east? To the west? To the north? To the south?' what would you say?"

"The question does not apply, Master Gotama." He too was forced to say that the question does not apply. Why? He is then told the reason. To ask where the fire went after it went out—which had burned on account of grass and wood—is an absurd question. He did not say "foolish", but that it is not a fitting way of speaking. Instead, the only word to say is *nibbuta*—"extinguished". That is the only answer. A fire that burned by grasping (*upādāna*) onto various fuel materials has gone out due to the absence and exhaustion of that grasping (*upādāna*)/fuel. That is all. That is the whole story. So, the word used for that is *nibbuta* (extinguished).

So now, you devotees have to think about that word Nibbāna. This is where we have arrived: at this question of Nibbāna. Everyone in this Dispensation knows that there are said to be five heaps (aggregates) that we hold onto because of craving (*taṇhā*). You devotees often hear them mentioned: the aggregate of form, the aggregate of feeling (*vedanā*), the aggregate of perception, the aggregate of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). We are holding onto these five heaps. At the very least, a Buddhist has this basic understanding. Non-Buddhists take them as a self. Even among Buddhists, it is only when the view is purified—that is, when a Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) purifies his view—that this is truly seen.

Thus, the Buddha declares that we hold onto these five heaps in twenty ways as the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). Either one says form is the self, or that the self possesses form, or that form is in the self, or that the self is in form. In this way, there are four ways for each of the five. One says feeling (*vedanā*) is the self, or that the self possesses feeling, or that feeling is in the self, or that the self is in feeling. In this manner, there is a wrong view, a false grasping, regarding all five aggregates.

Even if they can comprehend the other aggregates, when they come to the deepest, most illusory part—which is consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—most people get stuck. Even if other things are seen as not-self (*anattā*), they think: "This consciousness (*viññāṇa*), or mind, has some kind of essence." The Buddha declares that even this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is not-self (*anattā*), that there is nothing there to be taken as a self. It is instantaneous, and even faster than the others—you devotees may have heard the term *lahuparivattaṁ* (swiftly changing)—this mind spins extremely fast. This consciousness (*viññāṇa*) revolves with immense speed. The Buddha declares that there is not even an adequate simile for it. Even with modern scientific instruments, one cannot measure it. To such a wonderful extent, this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) spins rapidly.

Philosophers of the past gave the simile of the *alāta-cakka* (whirling firebrand). When you whirl a firebrand, it appears like a circle of fire. They present the simile of the whirling firebrand. The mind moves with such speed. Because of this, the world develops a wrong understanding and takes it to be a self. That is where most people get stuck. Even those who have attained higher psychic knowledges (*abhiññā*) ultimately get stuck there.

However, the Buddha understood this consciousness (*viññāṇa*). That was when the Eye of Wisdom arose. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) also arises and ceases moment by moment. If consciousness (*viññāṇa*) also arises and ceases, then those six types of consciousness—eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, and mind-consciousness—all arise due to causes and conditions, and when those causes and conditions are removed, they cease.

Thus, it is in dependence on this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that we construct the concept of a "world". The concept of the world is a worldly designation. The "world" is a designation we have constructed. And we are trapped within it. Now think about it for a moment: is the world seen by humans the same as that seen by other animals who have eyes different from ours? No matter how much scientific power we possess, can we understand the world of an ant? We cannot understand the ant's world, no matter how much scientific exploration and research we conduct.

A small illustration of this, which you devotees probably know better than we do, is how during the recent tsunami, animals surpassed human instruments. The instinct of those animals, whom we consider inferior—human beings cannot even conceive how that animal instinct works. That is how they escaped. While humans were waiting for warning signals, those animals sensed the tsunami. That is a good example. From that, we can see what the world of those animals is like, but we cannot comprehend it. That is why the Buddha declared that the world exists relative to the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). If the world exists relative to the six sense bases, then the cessation of the world can be brought about by the cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*).

The Buddha stated that all of these questions are like those asked by a feverish patient. When a feverish patient asks for water, it is not proper to just give him water; one must give him medicine. Likewise, the Buddha did not give "water", but gave "medicine". That medicine is the Dhamma. So, that Dhamma is what exists. When that is realized: "Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease" (*yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*).

This applies to the atom as well. It also applies to the world system. There are indeed hundreds of thousands of such world systems, galaxies. It is true that living beings exist in them. But we must contemplate this to arouse urgency (*saṁvega*): for so long, we have been born and dying in this long saṁsāra. That is what the Buddha declared. Because of contact (*phassa*) through the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), feeling (*vedanā*) arises. Because of feeling, craving (*taṇhā*) arises. Because of craving, grasping (*upādāna*) arises. Because of grasping, becoming (*bhava*) arises. Because of becoming, those who cling to all sixty-two views do not escape from birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*).

Among those who held these sixty-two views were those who had attained higher psychic knowledges (*abhiññā*). There were those with marvelous mental powers, surpassing modern scientists, who could see past births. Yet, even of them, the Buddha declared that

they too are blind because they lack the Eye of Wisdom. He said they do not have the true eye, calling them *acakkhukā* (eyeless). We must understand this in that light.

Thus, we have received this Dhamma. Where do we begin it? Right here. With these six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). Within this fathom-long body itself. That is why the Buddha made that marvelous statement: "Within this very fathom-long body, endowed with perception and mind, I point out the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to its cessation."

Therefore, what we are doing at this moment is, in particular, developing virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Developing the Noble Eightfold Path means developing virtue, concentration, and wisdom. This is done through this body endowed with perception and mind. Having done this, at some point, by seeing the arising and ceasing of these things through insight (*vipassanā*), one traverses the path that the Buddha pointed out as the stages of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship. Therein lies the effort to eliminate ignorance.

The dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) born of ignorance, and craving (*taṇhā*) which reinforces it—in fact, it is due to grasping (*upādāna*) driven by this craving (*taṇhā*) that worldly beings remain trapped within becoming (*bhava*), seizing everything. Grasping onto this, they cry: "Save me!" Grasping onto something, they say: "Oh, save me!" But the Buddha says: "Let go." Without letting go, how can one be saved? The moment you let go, you are saved. That is the secret. But it is difficult to understand. That is why the Buddha shows it to us.

How then do we let go of these? Not by physically grabbing and throwing them away. It is seen through the Eye of Wisdom, with the Eye of Wisdom itself. That is what is called insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). Insight (*vipassanā*) means a special kind of seeing. That special seeing is not done with the physical eye. As the practitioner (*yogāvacara*) develops virtue, concentration, and wisdom, at some point, things that are invisible to the ordinary worldling become visible.

To one who took a candle flame as a single entity, its flow of arising and ceasing sometimes becomes visible. Looking at a waterfall, at some point, that same nature is seen. Going even further, when one removes the attachment to these things—as the Buddha declared, by removing and removing it—the cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*) occurs. That is what is meant by the escape from the six sense bases. Departing from the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*) means removing the perception of a self regarding them, and gradually walking the path of insight (*vipassanā*).

Thus, because of not understanding that the eye crumbles in this world, and not understanding that forms crumble, we bring the two together, create a contact (*phassa*), and construct a world. The cinema worlds, music worlds—all these worlds we create are things manufactured within our own minds. Think about it for a moment: highly sweet music, the most beautiful music of the most talented musician of our time. If you slow it down using modern equipment, it sounds like wailing. It is like crying. That is what the

Buddha declared: *Ruṇṇamidaṁ, bhikkhave, ariyassa vinaye yadidaṁ gītaṁ*—"Singing is, in the discipline of the Noble Ones, a form of wailing." Thus, one can realize it directly in that manner.

The same applies to the world seen by the eye. All of those—you devotees know about cinema and related things, modern things. When we look at what is shown to us, what falls onto that screen is a mass of forms, a succession of forms. We seize them with perception, submit to them, and are deluded. But at some point, if that Eye of Wisdom is developed, the attachment to them gradually fades away.

Along with the fading of attachment—these two go together—just as attachment fades, light arrives. To the extent that darkness is dispelled, light comes in. To the extent that light enters, darkness is removed. Therefore, what we must do is depart from that path of darkness and walk along this path of light.

Therefore, you devotees must understand that the Buddha pointed out this Noble Eightfold Path within this very body. The first step in our effort to develop the mind is virtue (*sīla*). You devotees, at this moment, have received the basic discipline of restraining body and speech through observing the precepts (*sīla*). The Buddha points out various stages of virtue (*sīla*). Why do we do this? Because while traveling through this saṁsāra for a long time, various wholesome and unwholesome kamma have been stored in our consciousness (*viññāṇa*). They are also recorded as memories. These memories flood into our minds. Because of this, it becomes difficult to concentrate our minds.

But if someone sets certain boundaries and restrains his body and speech, he can arouse joy instead of remorse. One can think: "For so long I drank alcohol, killed animals, stole, and did various things. But now I have turned away from those things and established myself in this good practice." By directing the mind there, gladdening the mind, one can build up concentration (*samādhi*). That is why we sometimes say that this saṁsāra is a muddy swamp. We have come sinking and sinking in this muddy swamp. If we are to sit down to meditate, we must construct a small foundation. We must think of the training precepts (*sikkhāpada*) as planting five, eight, or ten pillars. It is with such a valuable virtue (*sīla*) that you devotees are now endowed.

Where do we go from there? As you devotees know, there are two aspects to meditation: calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). To some extent, one must develop calm by removing the hindrances. One must concentrate the mind by bringing up a wholesome object. By anchoring the scattered mind on a wholesome object, we can test the strength of the mind. Those who have attained states like absorption (*jhāna*) understand how small a fraction of our mental strength we utilize in our day-to-day lives. A scattered reservoir of water has no power. But when that water is collected and channeled through pipes to spin the turbine to generate hydroelectric power, with what great speed does that water travel!

In the same way, there is an immense power in our mind. Having unified and collected that power through obtaining concentration (*samādhi*) like absorption (*jhāna*), next we must spin that iron wheel. That spinning is what is called wisdom (*paññā*), insight (*vipassanā*). We must then apply that stilled mind not to anywhere else, but to this very body. The Dhamma-nature of this body and other bodies is the same. Just as this body is, so is that body; just as that body is, so is this body. The aggregate of form in that body is just like the aggregate of form in this body. Whether you look at it from that side or this side, ultimately we arrive at these six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*) and the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*).

As one gradually understands this deeply through insight, what is the ultimate result? The entire sum of knowledge is contained within this Dhamma-nature of arising and passing away—*samudaya-vaya*. Within both arising and passing away. But as this knowledge of arising and ceasing goes deeper and deeper, the aspect of ceasing begins to show itself far more than the aspect of arising. It crumbles away. That is why the Buddha said *lujjati palujjati* (it crumbles and disintegrates). The "world" is that which crumbles away. It is something constantly crumbling and breaking apart. Thus, when one directs the mind to the five aggregates—form, feeling (*vedanā*), and so forth—and contemplates them with a concentrated mind at some point, this is understood.

The disenchantment (*nibbidā*) arising through that—that disenchantment, as it goes deeper, helps one to let go of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) and even to escape from those bases through the cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*).

What is meant by escaping from the sense bases? We grasp onto this eye, ear, nose, and so forth, taking them as a self. We think of them as places inhabited by a self. Thus, "my eye, my ear, my nose"—there is that sense of ownership. Along with that, it is as if someone is residing inside them. But at some point, one understands that these things we took to be "mine" crumble right here, on the spot. The eye crumbles, forms crumble, the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that arises due to both crumbles, contact (*phassa*) crumbles as a result of that consciousness, and feelings (*vedanā*) that arise due to that contact all crumble away. It is to this very truth that the Buddha ultimately directs our mind.

Through that, having seen the arising and ceasing of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), and having understood their gratification, and even more so their danger, that escape from them at some point—that state of escape is what we call Nibbāna in this very life. It is said, "He saw Nibbāna in this very life" (*diṭṭheva dhamme*). He realized Nibbāna, he went to the other shore.

When we speak of Nibbāna, and when we speak of the Buddhas, we use the term "supramundane" (*lokuttara*). Why do we use the word "supramundane"? Some might think that the Buddha became supramundane only after his final passing away (*parinibbāna*). Perhaps they think so. Why? Because he lived in the world. He was in the world, and after his final passing, he crossed over the world. Some might indeed think that way. But the Buddha was supramundane while alive, because he had crossed over

that world. He crossed over that world—he crossed over the world of the five aggregates, he crossed over the world of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*).

Thus, the galaxies and so forth that we speak of are based on this world. Those questions are like the questions of a feverish patient. Because once one has crossed over the world, those questions do not exist. Those questions are asked by one who stands within the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). The things taken as "the world" are constructed in dependence on forms contacted (*phassa*) by the eye, sounds contacted (*phassa*) by the ear, and so on. Bringing to mind the story of the elephant once more, the world obtained by contacting (*phassa*) through these sense bases is exactly equivalent to the world of the blind men who gained an understanding of the elephant.

It is deficient; it is not complete knowledge. But the Eye of Wisdom encounters all of those aspects we mentioned. It sees how these six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*) arise, and it also sees how they instantly cease. If there is any gratification in them, it sees that, and it sees the danger, and next the escape from them—it is through the ending of attachment to them that at some point, the cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇa-nirodha*), the cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*), and the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) occur. Now, the term "cessation of becoming" (*bhava-nirodha*) is constantly mentioned as Nibbāna itself. It is frequently stated in the Dhamma: *Bhava-nirodho nibbānaṁ, bhava-nirodho nibbānaṁ* (The cessation of becoming is Nibbāna).

The cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) does not mean departing from the physical world we think of. It is not that final event of the Buddha's passing away which we think of as Parinibbāna. Rather, it is obtaining that supramundane state while still alive. It was obtained at the moment the Eye of Wisdom arose. There is a state where all forms hitherto seen, all sounds heard through the darkness of ignorance, entirely cease. It was by realizing that cessation directly that the Buddha gained the understanding that the world can be ceased right here. That was the state of mind the Buddha ultimately arrived at.

Sometimes we think that after his final passing, or after five thousand years, the Buddha will return. But what we must remember there is that word *nibbuto* (extinguished). Once a fire has gone out, where is it? Does it go to the east? To the west? To the north? To the south? Does the fire return? No. The fire existed on account of that wood. Likewise, whether we say "Tathāgata", "liberated monk", or "Arahant", that concept was created only because of attachment to those five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*).

That is why, on one occasion, the Venerable Rādha asked the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, it is said, 'a being, a being' (*satto, satto*). According to this Dispensation, what is called 'a being'?" Until then, the past schools had defined "being" as an eternal entity. But the Buddha gave a unique etymological definition to it, in the sense of being stuck or attached to form, feeling (*vedanā*), and so forth: "*Rūpe kho, Rādha, yo chando yo rāgo yā nandī yā taṇhā, tatra satto, tatra visatto, tasmā satto'ti vuccati*"—"Rādha, in the sense of being attached, specially attached to form, one is called 'a being'." Thus, just as

the world was defined as that which crumbles, even the word "being" was defined by the Buddha in the sense of being attached to something.

Therefore, as long as one is attached to form, feeling (*vedanā*), and so forth, one exists. The moment one is liberated from them, there is no "being". It ends right there. But the world usually thinks of a "being" in association with the perception of a self. The world regards a "being" as a self. They think there is some unchanging core, an essence, here. The idea that there is some unchanging element either in form, in feeling (*vedanā*), or ultimately in consciousness (*viññāṇa*), is held by those of wrong views, who hold onto the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). The Buddha demonstrated that there is no such thing even in consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

What is there is only a grasping (*upādāna*) created through ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*). As long as that grasping (*upādāna*) exists, as long as that grasping (*upādāna*) is present, that person is entitled to that designation of "being" as a conventional reality. That person claims ownership, because there is a responsibility in it. That is why one goes on and on in saṁsāra. Because of grasping (*upādāna*), becoming (*bhava*) exists, just like a spreading fire. Then, if all the wood that spreads the fire is exhausted, if the oil in the lamp is exhausted, if the wick is also exhausted, what happens?

Khīṇaṁ purāṇaṁ navaṁ natthi sambhavaṁ,

virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṁ;

Te khīṇabījā avirūḷhicchandā,

nibbanti dhīrā yathāyaṁ padīpo.

That very story is found in this verse. *Khīṇaṁ purāṇaṁ*—the past is finished. *Navaṁ natthi sambhavaṁ*—nothing new arises. *Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṁ*—there is no longer any attachment or desire for future becoming (*bhava*). *Te khīṇabījā avirūḷhicchandā*—that seed of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is destroyed, and therefore desire (*chanda*) does not spring up. Growth does not arise. *Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyaṁ padīpo*—like this lamp, those wise ones are extinguished.

So, that is how we understood the word *Lokavidū*. In these times, it can be understood and explained in various ways. But we had to present this specific aspect because we give a special place to this Eye of Wisdom.

Therefore, you devotees must consider: what is there for us to do? You must decide for yourselves whether you will become like Rohitassa, or whether you will walk this path pointed out by the Buddha.

On this valuable Vesak Poya day, this pious gathering has taken leave from their daily routines, and at least temporarily observed such a valuable virtue (*sīla*) and engaged in meditation. At this moment, you have listened to a Dhamma sermon that supports insight (*vipassanā*) and meditation. Therefore, relying on this store of merit

accumulated so far, supported by your meditation practice, and through the association with noble friends, may you have the strength and power to realize the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship as soon as possible before the lamp of this Dispensation goes out, making an end to the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra and reaching the supreme end of the world! You should make the aspiration: "May the merit of listening to the Dhamma be a strong support for this!"

Likewise, may all beings, from Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, who wish to rejoice in the merit of this giving and hearing of the Dhamma, by rejoicing in it, quickly make an end to the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra through their preferred state of Awakening! Having made this aspiration, please recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #32

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Ayoghanahatasseva, jalato jātavedaso;

Anupubbūpasantassa, yathā na ñāyate gati.

Evaṁ sammā vimuttānaṁ, kāmabandhoghatārinaṁ;

Pattānaṁ acalaṁ sukhaṁ, gati na paññāyatīti.

From:

Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

That liberation from saṃsāra, which was discovered by the world-transcending Sammā Sambuddha, is known to all of us by the name of Nibbāna. On certain occasions, the Buddha made a special effort to explain to the world what kind of thing this liberation from saṃsāra is. The parinibbāna of the great Arahant Dabba Mallaputta is one such occasion. The two highly extraordinary verses uttered by the Buddha on that occasion are what we have chosen as our topic today.

The great Arahant Dabba Mallaputta is indeed a wonderful and miraculous monk in this Dispensation. The beginning of his life was extraordinary, and its end was also extraordinary. He was born after his mother passed away. That is to say, while he was in his mother's womb, his mother died suddenly of some illness. Or perhaps her life force had ceased. For whatever reason, when the relatives took the pregnant mother's body, placed it on a funeral pyre, and lit the fire, the heat hit the abdominal wall, causing it to rupture, and the baby was flung out and fell onto a wooden log. The relatives took this child and handed him over to his grandmother. It is said that the child was named 'Dabba' because his life was saved by falling onto that log. The word 'Dabba' refers to timber, wood, or material objects. So this Dabba Mallaputta—'Malla' means he belonged to the Malla dynasty, in the Malla country. When this young boy was seven years old, the

Buddha visited the Malla country. He arrived and resided in the Anupiya Mango Grove. At that time, this child saw the Buddha, gained faith in him, and obtained permission to ordain. At the time of ordination, as a matter of custom just like today, his preceptor gave him the meditation on the five skin-tactile parts (*taca-pañcaka kammaṭṭhāna*). This meditation topic (*kammaṭṭhāna*) consists of reflecting on the five impure parts of the body: hair of the head (*kesā*), hair of the body (*lomā*), nails (*nakhā*), teeth (*dantā*), and skin (*taco*). It is recorded that as soon as they began shaving his head, he attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), and by the time they finished shaving his head, while still in the shaving-house, he attained Arahantship. Thus, he had already become an Arahant at the very moment of his ordination. The work of ordination was complete by the time his head was fully shaved.

Consequently, when he was in seclusion, a thought occurred to him: "The ultimate goal for which I ordained has already been realized. It would be good if I could perform some service for the Saṅgha." Thinking thus, he pondered: "I should request from the Buddha the duty of assigning lodgings (*Senāsana-paññāpaka*) and the duty of designating meal invitations (*Bhattuddesaka*) from the laity, selecting and appointing monks individually." When he expressed this wish to the Buddha, the Buddha praised him saying, "Sādhu! Sādhu!", gathered the Saṅgha, and by formal act of the Saṅgha (*Saṅgha-sammuti*), appointed him to those two positions. That is to say, assigning lodgings to visiting monks, and systematically sending monks to various places in response to meal invitations from the laity. He discharged these two duties exceptionally well. In particular, it is mentioned that regarding the assignment of lodgings, he was extremely attentive. It is stated that he assigned lodgings to the visiting monks who came to see the Buddha in a manner fitting their inclinations and temperaments. When monks who were Suttantikas—who preserved the Suttas by reciting and guarding them—arrived, he assigned them lodgings in the same place, thinking, "Let these Venerable Ones spend the night reciting the Suttas." When Vinayadharas (monks versed in the Vinaya) arrived, he assigned them lodgings in another separate place, thinking, "Let these Venerable Ones spend the night discussing questions of discipline." When Dhamma-preachers (*Dhammakathika* monks) arrived, he assigned them seats in yet another distinct place, thinking, "Let these spend the night discussing the Dhamma." When visiting monks arrived who had ordained merely for a livelihood and engaged in lowly talk (*tiracchāna-kathā*), he assigned them another separate place, thinking, "Let these people indulge in the gossip and lowly talk they are accustomed to." In this manner, not only did he assign lodgings in accordance with the nature of each individual, but when they arrived at untimely hours, late at night, even though there was no electric light like today, he would enter into the attainment of the fire-element (*tejo-dhātu samāpatti*) through the power of his meditative attainments to light the way and assign those lodgings. Thus, some monks would travel from afar just to witness the psychic power of this young Arahant, Dabba Mallaputta. They would deliberately arrive late at night. Having arrived, they would say, "Venerable Dabba, please assign us lodgings." Then he would ask, "Which lodging do you prefer?" They would name far-off lodgings: "Assign us lodgings on Vulture's Peak (*Gijjhakūṭa*), on Isigili, on Mount Vebhāra, in the Maddakucchi Deer Park, in Jīvaka's Mango Grove—assign us lodgings in those places," they would request.

And how did this Venerable One lead that group there? By a single finger! Entering the fire-element attainment, he would extend his index finger forward and walk before them. Guiding the group by that light to those lodgings, he would point out: "Here are the beds, here are the chairs, here is the drinking water," and so forth, and then return to Veluvana Monastery. Because he assigned lodgings so skillfully in this manner, the Buddha placed him in the position of foremost eminence (*Etadagga*). The Buddha declared Arahant Dabba Mallaputta to be the foremost among the monks who were skillful in assigning lodgings.

Although he was such a noble monk, due to certain karmic causes, he did not live long. At a very young age, the time arrived for his parinibbāna. At that time, the Buddha was residing in the Veluvana Monastery in Rājagaha. He went to the Buddha and said, "O Sugata, the time has come for my parinibbāna." The Buddha said, "Dabba, if the time has come for something, do what must be done." As soon as this was said, the great Arahant Dabba Mallaputta rose from his seat, paid homage to the Buddha, circumambulated him, rose into the air, sat cross-legged, entered into the fire-element attainment, and emerging from it, attained parinibbāna. Through the power of that fire-element attainment, he cremated his own body. Thus, the cremation took place right in the sky. When it was over, there was neither ash nor soot. Indeed, no ash was left, nor was any soot left behind. He did not even leave behind bodily relics (*dhātu*) for us to worship.

Because this was an extremely special event, the Buddha uttered an inspired utterance (*udāna*), a declaration of joy, at that moment. Today, if such a thing happens, people express grief. But the Buddha uttered a statement of joy. What was it?

Abhedi kāyo, nirodhi saññā,

vedanā sītibhaviṁsu sabbā,

vūpasamiṁsu saṅkhārā,

viññāṇaṁ atthaṅgamā.

"The body broke up, perception ceased, all feelings (*vedanā*) cooled, preparations (*saṅkhāra*) became stilled, and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) went out (came to an end)."

"Abhedi kāyo"—the body broke up. "Nirodhi saññā"—perception ceased. "Vedanā sītibhaviṁsu sabbā"—all feelings became cool. Even though consumed by fire, they did not get hot; they cooled. "Vūpasamiṁsu saṅkhārā"—preparations became stilled. "Viññāṇaṁ atthaṅgamā"—consciousness went out, came to an end.

Not only was that inspired utterance (*udāna*) declared there, but that event was so exceptional that when the Buddha later visited Jetavana Monastery in Sāvatthī, he recalled that incident and said to the monks: "Monks, our Dabba has attained parinibbāna in this manner. At that time, when his body cremated, neither ashes remained, nor did any soot." Having explained this matter to the Saṅgha, he uttered the two highly extraordinary verses we have taken as our topic today:

Ayoghana-hatasseva,

jalato jātavedaso,

anupubbūpasantassa,

yathā na ñāyate gati.

"Ayoghana-hatasseva"—the commentators point out that this word is difficult to understand. As far as we can understand, what is meant here is a fire blazing like a glowing mass of iron. When one sees a flame, it appears thick and dense like a mass of iron when it is blazing. "Ayoghana-hatasseva jalato jātavedaso"—"Jātaveda" means fire. Therefore, it refers to a fire blazing intensely as a solid mass, like a glowing lump of iron. "Anupubbūpasantassa"—after it has gradually gone out, "yathā na ñāyate gati"—just as the destination to which that flame went cannot be known,

Evaṁ sammā vimuttānaṁ,

kāmabandhoghatārinaṁ,

pattānaṁ acalaṁ sukhaṁ,

gati na paññāpayatīti.

"Evaṁ sammā vimuttānaṁ"—even so, of those who are rightly liberated, "kāmabandhoghatārinaṁ"—who have crossed over the flood of the bonds of sensuality, "pattānaṁ acalaṁ sukhaṁ"—and who have attained unshakable happiness, there is no designating of their destination. That one cannot point out a path, saying they went by such-and-such a path—this is the point the Buddha expressed in the second verse.

Now, what we have before us is this question of parinibbāna. The parinibbāna of the great Arahant Dabba Mallaputta is, in a way, an exemplary parinibbāna. Why? Because he left nothing behind. There was no indication that he had kept anything for himself to take away, for form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) had all come to an end. He left nothing behind for us either—nothing to cremate, no relics to enshrine in a stupa. It was a complete parinibbāna. That is probably why the Buddha uttered these inspired utterances, these joyful statements, on two occasions regarding this event.

Now, when this is said, some people might feel afraid. Because we know, we often see announcements of death, saying: "May the deceased Upāsaka Siyadoris attain the bliss of Nibbāna." As we generally think, it is only after passing away to the next world that one receives the Nibbāna that was not attained in this world. Not only us, but to put it briefly, more than ninety-five percent of the people today who think, reflect, preach, speak, and argue about Nibbāna prioritize that very kind of "Appuhamy's Nibbāna." They believe that for the Buddhas and Arahants, or indeed anyone who has realized Nibbāna, the great city of the Deathless Nibbāna is a place one goes to after death. Do not ask where

this great city of the Deathless Nibbāna is! But it exists after death, and everyone must go there. This is the story that remains.

Now we have to examine to what extent this is acceptable. Now, it is clear from these verses that the Buddha used the phrase "ayoghana-hatasseva jalato jātavedaso" here, which contains the word "ghana" (solid/dense). Actually, the reason for this delusion is that the world possesses a dogma of existence (*bhava-diṭṭhi*). There is a dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). They take all these things, such as feeling (*vedanā*) and so on, as a self. Especially, they take consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which is unseen, as the self. Consequently, we want to end the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra, but we also want to remain in existence (*bhava*) in some form. We want to do both. It is like wanting to keep one's beard and drink porridge at the same time. To satisfy that, we try to present a great city of Deathless Nibbāna through logic. But here, the Buddha has spoken about the extinguished fire using the phrase "ayoghana-hatasseva"—indeed, when a flame blazes like a solid iron ball. An ordinary person would think that a solid ball of iron is blazing. In that, the view of the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) is shown. But once even a flame is extinguished in that manner, one cannot point to its path—where it went. It is through this very question—"Where did the fire go after it was extinguished?"—that the Buddha answered the questions asked by various people, such as heretics, Niganṭhas, and debaters, regarding the state of an Arahant after death. To put it briefly, most people forget that Nibbāna means extinguishing/cooling.

In this extinguishing/cooling, as the Buddha shows, this becoming (*bhava*) is entirely distorted; it is like a fire. It is like a fire that burns because of grasping (*upādāna*). The place where this fire is extinguished is what is called Nibbāna. Even though we say "the place where it extinguished," it is the extinguishing itself. Therefore, what is spoken of here is not an extinguishment after death. It is not a Nibbāna that one goes to after death. To put it briefly, the Buddha has roared his lion's roar in the Sīhanāda Sutta:

> *So bhagavā bodhāya dhammaṁ deseti danto*
>
> *so bhagavā damathāya dhammaṁ deseti santo*
>
> *so bhagavā samathāya dhammaṁ deseti tiṇṇo*
>
> *so bhagavā taraṇāya dhammaṁ deseti parinibbuto*
>
> *so bhagavā parinibbānāya dhammaṁ deseti*

If we take "Buddha" to mean "awakened," the awakened Blessed One teaches the Dhamma for awakening. The tamed Blessed One teaches the Dhamma for taming. The stilled Blessed One, who has stilled the defilements and so forth, teaches the Dhamma for stilling. The Blessed One who has crossed over teaches the Dhamma for crossing over. But then there is: "parinibbuto so bhagavā parinibbānāya dhammaṁ deseti"—the Blessed One, having attained parinibbāna, teaches the Dhamma for parinibbāna. This is a great problem. If we take parinibbāna to be a state after death, how could he teach the

Dhamma after attaining parinibbāna? From this, we can see that the state of parinibbāna is something to be realized in this very life.

Even if we think of the Arahant Dabba Mallaputta whom we mentioned, when it is said that he entered the fire-element attainment, generated that power, and attained parinibbāna, it means he brought his mind to that liberated state. He separated his mind. It was like setting fire to a piece of clothing that had been removed from the body; that was how he set fire to his body. Instead of heat, what is expressed there is a cooling of sensations (*vedanā*). That cooling and so forth occurred through that parinibbāna. That is the state of parinibbāna.

Yet many people point out in such contexts that Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Arahants who attain parinibbāna go and gather in some place. As evidence for this, there is a certain sutta that many people bring up, called the Pahārāda Sutta. It is a discussion that the lord of Asuras, Pahārāda, had with the Buddha. There, it is first stated, in response to a question by the Buddha, that the Asuras find delight and satisfaction in the great ocean because they see eight wonderful and marvelous qualities in it. We will not discuss all eight qualities here, but only the fifth quality, as it is relevant to our topic. The lord of Asuras says that just as all the rivers in the world flow into the ocean and rain falls from the sky, yet the great ocean does not show any fullness or depletion (does not overflow). Because of this fact, the Asuras delight in the great ocean. In comparison, the Buddha then shows that just like the eight wonderful and marvelous qualities of the great ocean, there are eight wonderful and marvelous qualities in this Dhamma and Vinaya. Among them, the fifth quality is presented thus: just as the ocean does not become full despite all the rivers flowing into it, even so, though many monks attain parinibbāna in the Nibbāna-element without residue (*anupādisesa nibbāna-dhātu*), no decrease or increase is seen in the Nibbāna-element. No decrease or increase is seen. Based on this passage, many people imagine that Arahants go and gather in a place called "Anupādisesa parinibbāna," and no matter how many go there, it never becomes full. But that this reasoning is incorrect is clear from the very description of the eighth wonderful and marvelous quality.

Describing the eighth quality, the lord of Asuras says that in this great ocean, there are beings of immense bodies. In those days, instead of large animals like whales, it mentions beings with giant bodies like the Timiṅgala, Timira, Piṅgala, Asuras, Nāgas, and Gandhabbas dwelling in the great ocean. This too is a wonderful and marvelous quality in which the Asuras delight. Drawing a parallel, the Buddha says that in this Dhamma and Vinaya, too, there are beings of great stature. Who are they? Those beings are designated as the Saṅgha of the eight noble individuals (*aṭṭha-ariya-puggalā*). The one who has attained the fruit of Stream-entry, the one practicing for that path, and likewise the Sakadāgāmī, the one on the path to Sakadāgāmī, up to the Arahant and the one on the path to Arahantship—as you devotees know. These are the eight noble individuals. It is these eight who are here. The Arahants who have attained parinibbāna are not included here. Now, this is a good opportunity to ask: when describing the great beings dwelling in the ocean, why is there no mention here of the Arahants who have attained parinibbāna? Then how are we to understand the first point mentioned?

Now, we must reflect: sometimes there are whirlpools in the ocean. Suppose those whirlpools exist, and at some point, they cease to exist. Then, there is neither decrease nor increase in the water of the ocean. Indeed, there is a very deep concept in this Dhamma. The Buddha shows that this active existence (becoming) is a distorted state. What we generally think of as the true state of affairs is false to the Buddhas. What the world calls truth is untruth to the Noble Ones, and what the Noble Ones call truth is untruth to the world. The Buddha declared this on one occasion. Here too, although the world makes a great deal of existence, the Buddha points to it as a distorted state. The Buddha explains that every concept of birth, death, and existence in this world is like a whirlpool swirling around consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The Buddha calls this *vaṭṭa* (the round). "Vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati, vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati paññāpanāya"—a whirlpool revolves in order to designate a certain place. So, one can point to "there" or "here" in the great ocean only when there are whirlpools. But this whirlpool is a distorted state. When a certain current tries to flow against the main body of water, and fails to do so, it spins in a circle, becomes compressed, gets thrown back, and finally hollows out an abyss. That is how a whirlpool is formed.

Similarly, forgetting the true nature of things in this world, due to ignorance (*avijjā*), and due to ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*), the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) of beings becomes active, searching for a permanent nature in an impermanent (*anicca*) world. Searching for what is beautiful in a loathsome world. Searching for pleasure in a world of suffering (*dukkha*). Searching for a self where there is only non-self (*anattā*). These are presented in the Dhamma as the four distortions (*vipallāsa*): regarding the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent; regarding the foul as beautiful; regarding suffering (*dukkha*) as pleasure; regarding non-self (*anattā*) as self. Upon this distorted state, that whirlpool is formed. Everyone who is called an "individual" or a "being" is a whirlpool. Even if we speak of the Buddha, that too was a whirlpool that had spun for a long period of time. Even if we speak of a Paccekabuddha, that too is a whirlpool. In this manner, these whirlpools exist. The Arahants too, prior to attaining Arahantship, were whirlpools. In the final moment, they understand through wisdom this futile circling. Having understood the fruitlessness of this circling between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) (and name-and-form), seeing them as void, the moment the mind is liberated from them—that is when the whirlpool ceases to exist. At that point, no matter how many whirlpools disappear, there is neither decrease nor increase in the water of the ocean. Therefore, it is through this analogy of the whirlpool that we must understand what happens to the Arahants.

It is just like saying that the fire has gone out. The feeling that the fire went somewhere after being extinguished is a foolish view, a foolish statement. If someone asks whether the fire, after going out, went to the east, west, north, south, up, or down, that is a foolish notion. Similarly, if something existed due to causes and conditions, the place where those causes and conditions are removed is cessation (*nirodha*). That is what the Buddha points to by saying, "bhava-nirodho nibbānaṁ"—the cessation of becoming (*bhava*) is itself Nibbāna. The cessation of becoming is itself Nibbāna. Other than that, there is no other strange Nibbāna. The Buddha shows that this Nibbāna is realized in this very life.

That is why it is stated in the Ratana Sutta, which you all chant so often:

Khayaṁ virāgaṁ amataṁ paṇītaṁ,

Sakyamunī samāhito;

Na tena dhammena samatthi kiñci.

In this verse, "khayaṁ" refers to the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*), "virāgaṁ" to dispassion, and "amataṁ" to the Deathless. These are all names for Nibbāna. "Amataṁ"—there is the Deathless. Therefore, the Deathless is attained in this very life. "Amataṁ paṇītaṁ"—that sublime Deathless, "sakyamunī samāhito"—the Sage of the Sakyas realized through concentration (*samādhī*). It is because of this that Arahants are said to experience the Deathless. It is not a Deathless that comes after death. Now, it was by directing the mind toward that Deathless that the Arahant Dabba Mallaputta did not experience the pain of death. The pain of death arises because of grasping (*upādāna*). Because of clinging. Because of attachment to the aggregates of form, feeling (*vedanā*), and so forth. Where these are removed, there is extinguishing/cooling. There, only extinguishing remains. It is due to grasping (*upādāna*) that follows the fire of craving (*taṇhā*) that a future birth arises, a future becoming (*bhava*) arises. Therefore, that becoming (*bhava*) exists because of grasping (*upādāna*). According to the Buddha's word, where grasping (*upādāna*) is absent, there is total extinguishment (parinibbāna). That is what is called "Anupādā-parinibbāna" (extinguishment without grasping). So, that is the situation. Therefore, we must understand this parinibbāna—this complete cooling.

As we mentioned earlier, it was said: "The Blessed One, having attained parinibbāna, teaches the Dhamma for parinibbāna." But today, when we speak of parinibbāna, we immediately think of the state of an Arahant after death. In reality, the mind that arises at the final moment of an Arahant is the fruit-mind (*phala-citta*). This is called the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*Arahattaphala-samāpatti*). This is a state already attained earlier. It presents itself at the moment of death as well. It is by bringing this forward that Māra is conquered. This matter is mentioned not only in that verse but in other places too. It is mentioned in the Ratana Sutta:

Yam buddhaseṭṭho parivaṇṇayī suciṁ,

Samādhimānantarikaññamāhu;

Samādhinā tena samo na vijjati.

"That pure concentration which the supreme Buddha praised, and which the wise call 'immediate' (*ānantarika*), there is no concentration equal to that concentration." "Samādhinā tena samo na vijjati"—no mundane concentration can be compared to that concentration. There is no concentration that can surpass it. Such is the wonderful supramundane concentration spoken of there. "Idam pi dhamme ratanaṁ paṇītaṁ"—this is the sublime gem in the Dhamma.

Now, something must be said about what this "ānantarika-samādhī" (immediate concentration) is. Before arriving at the fruit of Arahantship—what is called the path-mind (*magga-citta*)—one develops insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), and at their peak, immediately after that, one falls into the fruit. That is why it is called "ānantarika-samādhī." The concentration which is immediately followed by the realization of the fruit is called the "immediate concentration." That is path-concentration, which is the supramundane path-concentration. To put it briefly, there is a moment when all eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path—such as Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and so forth, which you often mention—arise powerfully in a single mind-moment. It is through this that one cuts through the defilements and crosses over from the world. This is what is known as supramundane concentration. That concentration is something highly extraordinary.

There is another valuable sutta that reveals this. At one time, a monk named Bhaddaji came to visit Ven. Ānanda while he was residing at the Ghositārāma in Kosambī. Ven. Ānanda asked Ven. Bhaddaji five questions: "Venerable Bhaddaji, what is the foremost of sights? What is the foremost of sounds (hearings)? What is the foremost of pleasures? What is the foremost of perceptions? What is the foremost of becomings (*bhava*)?"

When these five questions were asked, Ven. Bhaddaji answered as follows: "There is a Great Brahmā named Vasavatti. To see that Great Brahmā is the foremost of sights. Next, the foremost of hearings is explained as follows: there is a realm of devas called Ābhassara. The Ābhassara Brahmās are those who feed on joy in the Brahma world. These Ābhassara devas occasionally utter: 'Aho sukhaṁ! Aho sukhaṁ!' (Oh, what bliss! Oh, what bliss!). If someone hears that inspired utterance of the Ābhassara devas, that is the foremost of hearings. Next, the foremost of pleasures is: there is a realm of devas called Subhakiṇṇa. Those Subhakiṇṇa devas experience a wonderful bliss. The bliss they experience is the foremost among pleasures. Next, the foremost of perceptions is: there is the formless attainment of the sphere of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*), developed based on the object 'there is nothing.' The perception of those Ākiñcaññāyatana Brahmās is the foremost of perceptions. Next, the foremost of becomings, or the peak of existence, is: there are devas or Brahmās who have attained the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*), which is the highest state. Their state of Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana is the peak of becoming." When this was explained, Ven. Ānanda said: "Venerable Bhaddaji's explanation is indeed what most people have accepted. This explanation fits the views of the majority." Then Ven. Bhaddaji understood that this was not the true answer.

Thereupon, he invited Ven. Ānanda: "Venerable Ānanda is highly learned. May the correct answers to these questions occur to Venerable Ānanda himself." Thus he invited him to give the true answer. Then Ven. Ānanda said, "Then, Bhaddaji, listen carefully. I shall speak." The explanation given by Ven. Ānanda is this:

"How is the foremost of sights explained? If, while seeing in a certain way, there is immediately the destruction of the taints (*āsavas*)," as it is stated, 'yathā passato anantarā āsavānaṁ khayo hoti' (seeing in such a way that the destruction of taints

immediately follows)—that is the foremost of sights. If, while hearing in a certain way, there is immediately the destruction of the taints—that is the foremost of hearings. If, immediately following a certain pleasant abiding, there is the destruction of the taints—that is the foremost of pleasures. Next, if, upon a certain perception, there is immediately the destruction of the taints—that is the foremost of perceptions. If, from a certain state, there is immediately the destruction of the taints—that is the peak of becoming (*bhava*), the highest point of existence."

Thus, from this last statement, we can reflect deeply. What was meant here by the "peak of becoming"? We know that according to the Buddha's analysis, "bhava-nirodho nibbānaṁ"—the cessation of becoming is itself Nibbāna. But this cessation of becoming is a direct realization. The aid that helps one fall into that direct realization is that very immediate concentration (*ānantarika-samādhī*) we mentioned. Then, immediately after that immediate concentration, one falls into Nibbāna, which is the cessation of becoming. This is a direct realization. Therefore, the state of the cessation of becoming itself is Nibbāna. It is a Nibbāna experienced in this very life. It is not that Nibbāna of Siyadoris in the next world. It is not "Siyadoris's Nibbāna." It is a total parinibbāna experienced completely in this very life. It helps at the final moment of death. Because it helps, as in a verse that you devotees also know from the Ratana Sutta:

Khīṇaṁ purāṇaṁ navaṁ natthi sambhavaṁ,

Virattacittā'yatike bhavasmiṁ;

Te khīṇabījā avirūḷhicchandā,

Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyaṁ padīpo.

"Khīṇaṁ purāṇaṁ"—whatever past kamma-forces existed have been completely destroyed. "Navaṁ natthi sambhavaṁ"—there is nothing to generate a new becoming (*bhava*). "Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṁ"—the mind is detached from any future becoming or rebirth. "Te khīṇabījā"—the consciousness-seed (*viññāṇa-bīja*) of those Arahants has been destroyed. If it were not destroyed, that consciousness-seed would sprout. The consciousness-seed of an ordinary person sprouts in the field of kamma as soon as it receives the water or moisture of craving (*taṇhā*). That is why the Buddha's word says: "Kammaṁ khettaṁ, viññāṇaṁ bījaṁ, taṇhā sineho" (Kamma is the field, consciousness is the seed, craving is the moisture). That undestroyed consciousness in the field of kamma is indeed that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that is accompanied by name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*). Therefore, "te khīṇabījā"—the consciousness-seed of the Arahants has been destroyed. Because of this, there is no room for craving (*taṇhā*) to arise again. That seed has no power to grow again. Because of that, what happens next is stated: "nibbanti dhīrā yathāyaṁ padīpo"—those steadfast, wise ones go out just like this lamp. This too goes out just like the fire that is extinguished. The question of where the lamp goes after it goes out is also a foolish question. The oil is finished, the wick is finished, the lamp went out. That is all. So, this cannot be found again. And there is nothing to fear about this. For it is the end of the suffering of saṃsāra, is it not?

The soul-theorist Brahmins often accused the Buddha of being an annihilationist (*ucchedavādī*). Today, it is not only soul-theorist Brahmins, but even Buddhists themselves accuse people of having such views. But what is the answer the Buddha gave to this? "They accuse me falsely of saying something I do not say. In the past as well as today, I declare only this: suffering (*dukkha*) and the cessation of suffering." "Pubbe cāhaṁ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṁ"—in the past as well as today, this is all I show: suffering (*dukkha*) and the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*). The teaching of the Four Noble Truths is a very wonderful teaching. It declares that the entire five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) are suffering (*dukkha*); there is nothing to be salvaged or left over from this. Therefore, these aggregates of grasping (*upādāna*)—that is what was called that distorted state. The whirlpool is like a distorted state arising in the great ocean. From the day the whirlpool is formed, if at any point this distorted state occurs, from then on, between that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*), "vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati" (the round revolves). As it is said there, "ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati" (thus far does the round revolve). Wherever dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is shown and analyzed, it is pointed out that there is a round (*vaṭṭa*) between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*). It is upon the spinning of this saṃsāric round that the five aggregates of grasping (*upādāna*) are built up. Now, when a whirlpool spins, we know that at first, it tries to go forward. When it cannot do so, it spins backward, forming a circle or a wheel, and digs down into an abyss. Meanwhile, it draws into itself everything around it through that force of attraction. Our body is just like that. From the day of conception in the mother's womb, it draws in the essence of the womb, the essence of the food taken by the mother, through the umbilical cord. As if that drawing-in were not enough, after coming out, this whirlpool draws in the essence of the entire world to build up these five aggregates of grasping (*upādāna*). Not only food, but other things too—neighbors' lands, wealth, all of these are drawn in by that whirlpool. So, it is this very personal whirlpool that is called an "individual." Including Bodhisattas. These are whirlpools that have come down the great ocean of time for so long. Even the Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Arahants must be understood by us in this way. Despite our great reverence for them, they too traveled for a long time in saṃsāra as these whirlpools, until at some point, they attained liberation through the realization of wisdom.

How did they attain liberation? They understood that instead of taking this name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*) as a self, it is a relationship of cause and condition—that if there is consciousness (*viññāṇa*), because of consciousness there is name-and-form, and not a single one of these arises on its own. The simile given by the Arahant Sāriputta for this is of two sheaves of reeds leaning against each other: if one is pulled away, the other falls; if the other is pulled away, the first falls. Such is their mutual conditionality (*aññamañña-paccayatā*). Only a Buddha introduces this mutual conditionality to the world. Until then, those yogis and others take something or other as a self. At the very least, they take even the attainment of Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana as a self. Only the Buddha pointed out that there is nothing here to be taken as a single unit. Even if we speak of a sense-base (*āyatana*), in all of them there is only a great friction, a turmoil. That itself is suffering (*dukkha*). Therefore, when this turmoil between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and name-

and-form (*nāmarūpa*) is stilled at some point, then there is only the great ocean. To the great ocean, there was neither decrease nor increase. That is where the analogy of the great ocean fits. It is not some mystical, indescribable, hidden place where Arahants go and gather.

Now, this matter is made clearer by what we said earlier: that the consciousness-seed (*viññāṇa-bīja*) has been destroyed. The undestroyed consciousness-seed lies latent; it clings tightly to name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*) as a self. There is a term in the Dhamma for the destroyed/ceased consciousness: "anidassana-viññāṇa" (non-manifestative consciousness). In that consciousness, there is nothing; there is nothing to be pointed out. That very state was introduced by the Buddha to the world on certain occasions as a unique sphere (*āyatana*). The world knows only the six sense-bases (*āyatana*). These sense-bases, as you devotees have heard, are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These become sense-bases when they function together with their respective objects. There is a constant activity between the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, and so forth. It is within this sixfold sense-base (*saḷāyatana*), which functions like that whirlpool, that the entire world exists, as he declared. No matter what modern physics says, the Buddha shows that the world is something that arises within these very six sense-bases and ceases within these very six sense-bases.

That is why the Buddha declared that within this very fathom-long body, endowed with perception and mind, he points out the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world. On certain occasions, the Buddha pointed to a state where these six sense-bases are ceased. He also described that as a sphere (*āyatana*) on certain occasions. The cessation of the six sense-bases, the cessation of the sense-bases, is something that can be directly realized. Pointing to that cessation, the Buddha says: "Monks, there is that sphere; what kind of sphere is it?" In that sphere, there is nothing related to the material elements we make much of, namely earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*); nor are there any of the formless attainments. Neither the sphere of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*) nor the sphere of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*) is there. Neither this world nor the next world is there; neither sun nor moon. There is no coming, no going, no standing, no passing away (*cuti*), and no birth (*jāti*). To put it briefly, the Buddha finally describes that state as "appatiṭṭhaṁ appavattaṁ anārammaṇaṁ"—without support, without occurrence, and without object. Meaning, there is no establishing, no continuation, and no object. What is shown by this list of negations? These are all bonds. All those bonds that existed in saṃsāra have been broken. Things that had been constructed as saṃsāric things. Now, we have created those things called material forms through grasping (*upādāna*) those four elements. Therefore, what is shown here is the removal of that grasping (*upādāna*). Indeed, this highly wonderful state of non-manifestative consciousness (*anidassana-viññāṇa*) is itself the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship experienced by the Arahants.

If we take a good illustration of this from the Buddha's life itself, which you devotees may have heard of, on one occasion in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, the Buddha relates a

certain experience of his to the monks: "Monks, once when I was resting in a threshing-house at Ātumā, there was a great torrential downpour of rain. At that moment, two farming brothers and four oxen were killed by a lightning strike. Consequently, a large crowd of people gathered there. I came out of the threshing-house and asked someone in the crowd, 'Why is such a large crowd gathered here?' Then the person said, 'A great rain came, lightning struck, and two men and four oxen were killed. But, Blessed One, where were you?' 'I was right here.' 'But were you asleep, Blessed One?' 'No, I was awake.' 'Did you not hear it?' 'I did not hear it.' 'Did you not see it?' 'I did not see it.'" When the Buddha spoke thus, that person remarked, "This is truly wonderful! So, while awake and conscious, you did not see any of this?" "Yes," the Buddha replied. It was in that very state that he had been. At times when the mind is separated from the world, none of those sights and sounds of the world are felt by the Buddha.

Although many instances of Arahants abiding in the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship are mentioned in the Dhamma, those who hold that "Siyadoris view" turn it into a world. That place they point to is a mystical, strange, indescribable world. They believe that is where the Arahants go. It is within this very notion that many Buddhists are trapped. We have to remind you that this is something related to that Brahminical view which nurtures the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) and the craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*).

To resolve this, we must understand that this active existence (becoming) is a distorted thing according to the Buddha's word. The ordinary world makes a big deal out of existence. The Buddha says it is a distorted state. It is like a current trying to do the impossible in the great ocean. Though that current tries to go forward, it is forced to turn back. When it cannot go forward due to constant friction, it digs down and creates an abyss. But we can see one thing there: we can point to the place where there is a whirlpool. In the great ocean, there is nothing to point one's finger at. But if there is a whirlpool, one can say "there it is," or "here it is." One can say "this person" or "that person." Or, in the case of the Saṅgha, one can say "that place" or "this place." One is able to say so only because a whirlpool exists. But just because one can say so, it does not mean there is a self-nature there. What is there is only a great friction; it is not a single unit. The Buddha pointed out this fact to the world—that active existence is nothing but suffering (*dukkha*). No other non-Buddhist teacher or founder of a religion can accept this. Why can they not accept it? Because they are trapped within that dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), grasping tightly to a view of self. The Buddha pointed this out through the teaching of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Because of ignorance (*avijjā*), many preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are constructed. A part of all those constructions is the division between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*). And having divided these two, it is like playing a game of draughts on a board. If we want to play draughts, no matter how close two friends are, we must divide into two opposing sides. You devotees know that when there is a match or a competition nowadays, even friends must divide into two sides to compete.

This active existence is exactly like that. There is a constant game going on between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*). It is a circular movement. It will never come to an end. The Buddha saw this state as a friction, as suffering (*dukkha*). This is exactly what is active within our own body as well. Having taken an breath in, can we just stop there? We are forced to breathe out. Having breathed out, can we stop? We are forced to breathe in again. We took food this morning; can we keep it as it is? Is there an end to it? Such is this body, the place we have taken as "myself." If we designate a "here," a "there" is also created. If we designate a "there," a "here" is also created. If we designate "this person," "that person" is created. If we designate "that person," "this person" is created. In this manner, the world is trapped within a duality. That is why the Buddha declared: "Monks, I speak to you of dyads. What is the dyad? The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors... other than this dyad, there is no other dyad in the world." In that manner, within this entire body and within our active existence, such a transaction is constantly taking place. This transaction is never one that can be resolved. Therefore, the Buddha shows that the entirety of active existence is suffering (*dukkha*). Nothing but the sheer five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupānakkhandha*). Now, when many people explain the truth of suffering (*dukkha-sacca*), they go on repeating: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, death is suffering, and so forth. But in the end, the Buddha shows that, in brief, the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*)—the five heaps of grasping—themselves are suffering (*dukkha*).

Now, next we have, as we mentioned earlier, that perception of solidity (*ghana-saññā*). There is a designation here that helps in insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). The ordinary world abides within the perception of solidity. That is why they take the flame as a single unit. Even a small child, when seeing a flame, might try to touch it as if it were a solid wall. Thus, the world remains stuck in the perception of solidity. But when the meditator, with a concentrated mind, arouses radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) as shown by the Buddha, arouses mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), and understands the phenomena of name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*), what appeared as a single unit is seen as a mere heap. What is there is the "perception of a heap" (*rāsi-saññā*). It is by bringing out this perception of a heap that one gradually enters the path of insight. By entering that, what follows next is disenchantment (*nibbidā*). When one sees things as they really are, disenchantment arises naturally. Seeing things as they really are through the knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*), one cannot help but become disenchanted. One cannot remain without disenchantment. Together with the knowledge and vision of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*), disenchantment arises. Through that disenchantment, next comes relinquishment/dispassion (*virāga*). It is when there is relinquishment (letting go) that that parinibbāna occurs. That letting go includes those very elements we make much of in the world: earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*).

Nowadays, as you devotees know, is an era in which views grow very strong. When speaking of this materialist view, we can once again recall the great Arahant Dabba Mallaputta. "Dabba," as we said, means matter or material object. "Dabba" means

material object—not only wood, but what is referred to as "matter" today as well. Yet, because of the power of his merit, the fire on the funeral pyre could not burn the great Arahant Dabba Mallaputta's body even after his mother had died. Nevertheless, through his own power of determination and the attainment of the fire-kasiṇa (*tejo-kasiṇa samāpatti*), he cremated his own body in the final moment so that neither ashes nor soot remained. In that too, he threw a challenge to physical matter. That is why the Buddha declared that statement of joy so specially here. For within the Buddha's Dhamma, as you devotees all know: let us imagine this entire sublime Dhamma to be a library. This library opens in the Dhammapada with the two verses:

Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā,

manoseṭṭhā manomayā.

In both verses, that fact is mentioned. It is a natural law. What is shown there is "mano-pubbaṅgamā dhammā"—this Dhamma, the Buddha's Dhamma, is mind-led. It is not matter-led. Mind precedes all things. Mind is foremost. "Manomayā"—all these are made of mind, when one looks at it ultimately.

When viewed in accordance with that mind-led philosophy, the Buddha shows that even those things taken as "matter" do not hold sway due to that supramundane concentration. It is as if they do not exist. There are none of the elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), or air (*vāyo*). The concepts that arise in association with them—coming, going, standing, birth (*jāti*), passing away—none of them are registered in that consciousness (*viññāṇa*). That is why that consciousness was called "khīṇa-bīja" (with seeds destroyed). It does not grow again in a mother's womb. It has been destroyed. That seed—the consciousness-seed of the Arahants—has been destroyed.

That is why, at the final moment, that incident of the Buddha at Ātumā which we mentioned is also exactly similar. If we take the Buddha's life itself as our exemplar, it is mentioned that on one occasion, when Devadatta rolled down a rock, even though the rock did not fall on the Buddha due to his Buddha-power, a splinter struck him, causing a serious injury to the Buddha's foot. A painful sensation (*vedanā*) also arose. In fact, Jīvaka the physician even had to treat it. But it is stated in the Dhamma that on one occasion, he overcame even that intense pain through the power of the fruit (*phala-shaktiya*). By directing his mind to that fruit-power. In that manner, the Arahants possessed a certain power. Whatever the case at other times, they bring this forward at the final moment, and it is through this that the Arahant sets fire to his own body, just like someone taking off and burning a worn-out piece of clothing.

Therefore, we can understand that this parinibbāna—this Nibbāna—is something right here. If one thinks of it as something that exists after death, one will never be motivated to make the effort required for it. There is nothing wrong with wishing: "May the merit performed by Siyadoris Appuhamy in this life, and the merit we share, be a supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for Nibbāna some day." But if one wishes: "May he be born in a strange world of Nibbāna after death," that is incorrect. It is the same regarding the

Arahants and the Buddha. No matter how respectfully we speak of them, we must understand that they too were whirlpools that had spun in saṃsāra for a long time. Having understood those whirlpools as suffering (*dukkha*), it was said: "the cessation of suffering is Nibbāna." That is why the Buddha declared in the face of the Brahmins' accusations: "I do not say anything else. The world cries out about suffering (*dukkha*). It is the solution to that which I present here." "In the past as well as today, I declare only suffering (*dukkha*) and the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*)." That is why, as you devotees know, the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*) is shown to be Nibbāna in the Four Noble Truths. Yet, that many scholars bring up some strange thing in addition to this is because they have succumbed to that dogma of existence (*bhava-diṭṭhi*). They want to keep something back. But there is no such state in the Dhamma. This is a highly wonderful Dhamma.

This very state is what is mentioned in that passage shown as the reflection on peace (*upasamanussati*):

"Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṁ."

"This is peaceful, this is sublime, namely, the stilling of all preparations (*saṅkhāra*), the relinquishing of all assets (*upadhi*), the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*), dispassion (*virāga*), cessation (*nirodha*), extinguishing (Nibbāna."

Now, you devotees must reflect: if the target you aim at is wrong, your shooting will not be successful. Correcting the target, which is Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)—one must straighten one's view. If one holds a wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) under the name of Right View, one will not arrive at Nibbāna. Therefore, we wish that this Dhamma sermon delivered today may help you purify that view.

Thus, having undertaken some virtue (*sīla*) on this valuable day, practicing a meditation you are accustomed to, and using this sermon as an aid, may you complete your study of the Dhamma and meditation before the decline of the Buddha's Dispensation, and as quickly as possible, bring an end to this whirlpool of the terrifying saṃsāric journey, and find peace in the supreme, great Deathless Nibbāna! May you understand that this supreme, great Deathless Nibbāna is something right here! That is what we hope for. Wishing that whatever living beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha wish to receive merit may, through sharing in the merit of this Dhamma teaching and Dhamma hearing, as quickly as possible attain the supreme, great Deathless Nibbāna through whichever of the three Bodhi states they aspire to, please recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #33

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Passa cittakataṁ bimbaṁ, arukāyaṁ samussitaṁ;

Āturaṁ bahusaṅkappaṁ, yassa natthi dhuvaṁ ṭhiti.

From:

Verse 147 from the Jarāvagga (Chapter on Old Age) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha realized that the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*) regarding this bodily cage is a powerful bond that binds beings to *saṃsāra*. He taught the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*) to shatter this perception of beauty which nurtures defilements like lust, because the disillusionment with *saṃsāra* generated through it assists in liberation.

From today's thematic verse and the relevant story, we will be able to bring to light many facts that align with this matter. This verse of Dhamma was preached by the Buddha while residing at the Veḷuvana monastery in Rājagaha. This sermon was delivered concerning Sirimā, the famous courtesan of that city. This Sirimā of Rājagaha was the younger sister of the physician Jīvaka. She, who was a highly renowned courtesan of supreme beauty, on one occasion listened to the Dhamma from the Buddha and attained a fruit of the path (the fruit of Stream-entry). The very next day, she offered a grand alms-giving to the Saṅgha led by the Buddha and obtained permission to offer ration-meals (*salāka-bhatta*) daily to eight monks in her home. There was a system of ration alms called *salāka-bhatta* in those days. Daily, eight monks were selected by the ration system, the lottery-rice system, and they would journey there. This woman, with great faith, offered the alms-food in an extremely exquisite manner. She offered alms-food sufficient for three or four monks to just one monk.

One day, a certain monk who partook of the alms-food at Sirimā's house went to a temple several leagues (*yojanas*) away. In the evening, when the Saṅgha assembled, the monks asked this monk, "Where did you partake of alms-food today?" So he replied, "I came after consuming the eight portion-meals of Sirimā." They asked, "How is it? Does she give alms well?" "Oh, it is beyond description! She offers alms in an extremely delicious manner, enough for two or three monks. However, her physical beauty is far more exquisite than the alms-food," he said. He even went on to describe her physical beauty in detail. Hearing this, a young monk who was present there conceived a thought: "Somehow, I must see this woman." Setting out that very day, by the time dawn broke the next morning, he arrived in that area and obtained the turn for the ration meal (*salāka-bhatta*).

Meanwhile, a certain event took place at Sirimā's house. Almost immediately after the monks had departed having consumed alms the previous day, Sirimā fell seriously ill; she removed her ornaments and lay down on her side. By the time the monk arrived for his turn of the ration-meal (*salāka-bhatta*) the next day, she was so weak she could not even get up. When informed that the monks had arrived, she told her maidservants, "Then you all prepare and offer the alms-food." After the alms-food was offered, Sirimā finally approached the monks with the help of those maidservants. Being supported and trembling all over, she came and paid homage to the monks. Due to some agitation (*saṃvega*) caused by this, that young monk did not even eat the alms-food there. Taking his bowl, he returned to the monastery, placed the bowl aside without eating, and lay down. Though other monks urged him to eat, he took no food. In this manner, three days passed.

Meanwhile, on the evening of that very day, Sirimā passed away due to that illness. The King sent a message to the Buddha: "Sirimā, the sister of physician Jīvaka, has passed away." The Buddha sent a message back to the King: "Do not cremate Sirimā's body. Keep it protected in the cemetery so that dogs and jackals cannot get close to it." After three days had passed in this manner, by the fourth day, that body, like a burst pot of cooked rice, like a nest of worms, began to ooze worms from its nine openings.

And then, in accordance with the Buddha's skillful means (*upāya-kusala*), the King had the drum beaten: "Everyone in this city, except for the children left to guard the houses, must come to the charnel ground. Anyone who does not come will be fined eight *Kahāpaṇas*." He also invited the Buddha and the Saṅgha of monks. When the Buddha and the Saṅgha were preparing to set out, the other monks near the young monk said, "Look, the Teacher is going to see Sirimā." As soon as the word "Sirimā" was heard, this monk scrambled up and asked, "What did you say?" They replied, "The Buddha is going to see Sirimā. Are you coming?" He said, "Oh, indeed I must go!" and got up, discarded the rice which had gone stale by then, washed his alms-bowl which had rusted, hung it over his shoulder, and set out.

By that time, the fourfold assembly had gathered there. The Buddha asked the King, "Whose body is this?" The King replied, "This is the body of that Sirimā." "Then, beat the drum in the city and auction this Sirimā," the Buddha said. To speak in terms of those

times, the auction bid started at a thousand *Kahāpaṇas*, which was the amount Sirimā charged for a day. They beat the drum announcing: "Anyone who wishes to pay a thousand *Kahāpaṇas* and take this body of Sirimā, let him take it." There was not a sound from anyone. "Then reduce the price," the Buddha said. Five hundred *Kahāpaṇas*, one hundred, fifty, ten, one *Kahāpaṇa*, and at least a *kākaṇika*—an extremely small coin in those days. Even when that was said, no one was ready to take her. Then, he said to take her even for free. Yet, no one was ready to take her.

Then the Buddha declared: "Monks, do you see? The body of Sirimā, for whose companionship they used to pay a thousand *Kahāpaṇas* a day, no one is ready to take now even for free. This is the nature of the body." It was on that occasion that he uttered this valuable verse:

Passa cittakataṃ bimbaṃ, arukāyaṃ samussitaṃ;

Āturaṃ bahusaṅkappaṃ, yassa natthi dhuvaṃ ṭhiti.

Every single word is extremely profound. *'Passa cittakataṃ bimbaṃ - arukāyaṃ samussitaṃ'* — look at this image (*bimbaṃ*), this statue-like body which is beautifully adorned and held upright, filled with sores. *'Āturaṃ bahusaṅkappaṃ - yassa natthi dhuvaṃ ṭhiti'* — in this diseased body which awakens many prolific thoughts, there is no changelessness, permanence, or stable duration (*ṭhiti*). This is what is conveyed by the verse.

It is recorded that after listening to this sermon, that monk attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*). It is also mentioned that a large crowd of people attained realization of the Dhamma. From this story, we can reflect on how, according to the Buddha's skillful wisdom, he held a certain auction to demonstrate the reality of that body. It did not yield even as much income as a flower-basket auction held nowadays. Yet, as a priceless income, supramundane paths and fruits were attained due to that auction. So, it was to reveal the actual state of the body that the Buddha used every single word in this verse.

'Passa cittakataṃ bimbaṃ' — though adorned with various sorts of grooming and fashions, this image (*bimba*), as it is called, is like a statue. This statue, held upright and supported by bones and sinews, is diseased (*ātura*). Even if we do not consider the illnesses mentioned in the *Girimānanda Sutta*, there are at least six basic illnesses inherent to the body, namely: cold (*sīta*), heat (*uṇha*), hunger (*jighacchā*), thirst (*pipāsā*), defecation (*uccāra*), and urination (*passāva*).

One feels cold, one feels heat, one feels hunger, one feels thirst, and one is compelled to defecate and urinate—this is the reality of this body. Another indicator of this diseased state is that the body cannot be kept in a single posture. Like a sick person, one is constantly forced to change the postures of the body. Such is the nature of the body. Yet, it is *bahusaṅkappaṃ*—it is an image that awakens the poetic imaginations of the world, of artists, painters, and poets. *'Āturaṃ bahusaṅkappaṃ'*; but in this, *'yassa natthi*

dhuvaṃ ṭhiti', there is no stability, which is what the Buddha declared. Thus, by listening to this verse and the sermon, and by realizing the true nature of the body, a vast crowd attained Dhamma-realization on that occasion.

Even if we reflect on that monk, we can extract a certain lesson. Sometimes even a small child blows soap bubbles. Having blown a soap bubble, when it looks beautiful, they chase after it. In the end, when it bursts, what state is it reduced to? Something similar happened to that young monk. He came from far away to see the beauty of Sirimā. But by then, she was a sick Sirimā, ill and trembling, being supported by others. Then, three or four days later, as soon as he heard that name, he rose and came, thinking that today at least he could behold her beauty. But in the end, it was a corpse like a nest of worms. That alone was sufficient for the picture of the body he had hitherto imagined to shatter, and through that, to see the danger (*ādīnava*). In this *saṃsāra*, there are three lessons to be learned.

There are three stages known as gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*). The side of gratification refers to the gratification, the sensory enjoyment, derived from forms in relation to the five-fold cords of sensual pleasure. The Buddha does not deny that it exists. The Buddha says that if there were no such gratification, the world would not run after gratification. That is acknowledged. But far greater is the aspect of danger (*ādīnava*). It is because of this danger that those who once ran after gratification eventually see its danger and become disillusioned. If, at the moment of disillusionment, the Dhamma is properly understood, one then reaches the state described as the third stage. That is escape (*nissaraṇa*). Escape means departing from it, detaching from it, being liberated. What assists in this escape is the Buddha's teaching on the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*): impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). That escape is what we have in this world to lead us towards Nibbāna.

It is this very matter that the Buddha brought to light through this story and the verse. This is a very systematic aspect found in the Dhamma. There is a highly famous and valuable sutta in the Majjhima Nikāya called the *Mahā-dukkhakkhandha Sutta*. It shows how the Buddha, in a most marvelous manner through dialogue with the monks, using a question-and-answer method, tried to drive home these points. On one occasion, he asks the monks:

"Monks, suppose there is a maiden of the Khattiya class—she is described as a maiden there—or of the Brāhmaṇa class, or of the householder class, who is about fifteen or sixteen years of age, neither too tall nor too short, neither too thin nor too fat, neither too dark nor too fair, possessing exquisite beauty of complexion. What do you think, monks? Is her beauty at that time supreme? Does she possess supreme physical beauty?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"Well, monks, whatever pleasure and joy arise in dependence on beauty—that is the gratification (*assāda*) of beauty."

Thus, the Buddha declared the gratification of forms (*rūpa*) there, and the monks agreed. Whatever happiness and joy arise while she is in that beautiful state, that is the aspect of gratification. Next, the Buddha begins:

"Now monks, on a later occasion, when that same sister has reached eighty, ninety, or a hundred years of age, decrepit, bent like a crooked rafter, with broken teeth, grey hair, bald-headed, wrinkled skin, and blotched body—what do you think, monks? Has her former beauty vanished, and has the danger (*ādīnava*) appeared?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"Furthermore, monks, on a later occasion, that same sister is seen afflicted, severely ill, lying in her own excrement and urine, lifted up by others and put to bed by others. What do you think, monks? Has her former beauty vanished, and has the danger appeared?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

The Buddha confirms that this too is a danger of forms. Next, he says:

"Furthermore, monks, on a later occasion, that same sister is seen discarded in a charnel ground, dead for one, two, or three days, bloated, livid, and oozing purulent matter. What do you think, monks? Has her former beauty vanished, and has the danger appeared?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"This too is a danger of forms."

"Furthermore, monks, on a later occasion, that same sister is seen being devoured by crows, by vultures, by hawks, by dogs, by jackals, or by various other creatures, reduced to a worm-infested carcass. What do you think, monks? Has her former beauty vanished, and has the danger appeared?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"This too, monks, is a danger of forms."

"Furthermore, monks, on a later occasion, that same sister is seen discarded in the charnel ground as a skeleton held together by sinews, with flesh and blood adhering to it. What do you think, monks? Has her former beauty vanished, and has the danger appeared?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"This too, monks, is a danger of forms."

"Furthermore, monks, on a later occasion, that same sister is seen discarded in the charnel ground as a skeleton held together by sinews, fleshless, smeared with blood.

What do you think, monks? Has her former beauty vanished, and has the danger appeared?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"This too, monks, is a danger of forms."

"Furthermore, monks, on a later occasion, that same sister is seen discarded in the charnel ground as a skeleton held together by sinews, without flesh and blood. What do you think, monks? Has her former beauty vanished at that moment, and has the danger appeared?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"This too is a danger of forms."

"Furthermore, monks, on a later occasion, that same sister is seen with her bones disconnected and scattered in all directions—here a hand-bone, there a foot-bone, here a shin-bone, there a thigh-bone, here a hip-bone, there a back-bone, here a skull. At that moment, what do you think, monks? Has her former beauty vanished, and has the danger appeared?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"This too is a danger of forms."

"Furthermore, monks, on a later occasion, that same sister is seen with her bones turned white, of the color of a conch-shell, after more than a year has passed, piled up in a heap. And then, after still more time has passed, those bones are seen rotted and crumbled into dust. What do you think, monks? Has the beauty she possessed when she was fifteen or sixteen years of age vanished, and has the danger appeared?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"This, monks, is the danger of forms."

"And what, monks, is the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from forms?"

The Buddha declares the escape as well:

"Monks, the removal of desire and lust (*chanda-rāga-vinaya*) for forms, the subsiding of desire and lust, the abandoning of desire and lust—that is, the freeing of attachment, craving, and passion towards them—this is the escape from forms, the departure from forms."

In this manner, a scenario where the Blessed One presented and illustrated the stages of gratification, danger, and escape step-by-step to convince the monks is recorded in that *Mahā-dukkhakkhandha Sutta*.

We must realize from this why the Buddha did all this: it was for the abandoning of desire and lust (*chanda-rāga-pahāṇa*). Liberation from forms means managing one's thoughts in a way that eradicates the attachment to forms. It is to bring to the fore disillusionment, disillusionment with *saṃsāra* (*saṃsāra-nibbidā*).

The Buddha has expressed this matter on another occasion in a valuable verse:

> *Na te kāmā yāni citrāni loke,*
>
> *Saṅkapparāgo purisassa kāmo;*
>
> *Tiṭṭhanti citrāni tatheva loke,*
>
> *Athettha dhīrā vinayanti chandaṃ.*

'Na te kāmā yāni citrāni loke' — the beautiful things in the world are not themselves sensual pleasures. *'Saṅkapparāgo purisassa kāmo'* — the lust of conceptualized intentions, the attachment to one's own thoughts and desires, is what is truly designated as sensual pleasure; this is what is sensual pleasure for a man. *'Tiṭṭhanti citrāni tatheva loke'* — diverse beautiful things exist in abundance in the world. However, *'Athettha dhīrā vinayanti chandaṃ'* — the wise rid themselves of the desire (*chanda*), the wish, the attachment towards them.

This, then, is the goal of the Dhamma. If, by understanding their aspect of danger (*ādīnava*), the attachment to them is at some point removed from the mind, at that moment, one gains the strength to liberate the mind. It is at that moment that a train of deep thoughts based on impermanence (*anicca*) arises in the mind as insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), leading to the realization of Nibbāna as the state of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*).

So, in order for us to proceed to this step, the Buddha declared the diverse things in the world and their aspects: *'Appassādā'* — their aspect of gratification (*assāda*) is little, *'Ādīnavā ettha bhiyyo'* — the aspect of danger (*ādīnava*) is much. It is through the understanding that danger is much, and by paying closer attention to danger, that at some point disillusionment (*nibbidā*), the weariness with *saṃsāra*, arises. It is shown as a natural law of Dhamma: *'nibbidā-virāga-vimutti'*. Disillusionment (*nibbidā*) means weariness, that is, disillusionment with *saṃsāra*. Through that disillusionment, faded lust or dispassion (*virāga*), which is non-attachment, arises. It is from that non-attachment that the liberation of mind (*citta-vimutti*) occurs. These are the points of Dhamma that we can bring to light from this story.

Devout friends who read the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* know this very matter; the stages presented as the nine charnel-ground contemplations (*nava-sīvathika*) are what the Buddha highlighted in that great discourse. They represent the true nature of the body relevant to the contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*). Indeed, it is through knowledge and vision of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*)—which means understanding the actual facts about the body, understanding the actual facts about both

the body and the world—that disillusionment (*nibbidā*) with *saṃsāra* arises. Having developed the knowledge of things as they are, one cannot remain without being disillusioned with *saṃsāra*. This is a law of Dhamma. Simultaneously with the arising of the knowledge of things as they are, disillusionment with *saṃsāra* occurs naturally. This is because the knowledge of things as they are encompasses those aforementioned states: gratification is little, danger is abundant. Moreover, everything is subject to the three characteristics: impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). Turning the mind away from them is what is called the abandoning of desire (*chanda-pahāṇa*).

This state is shown in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Not only the establishment of mindfulness, but there is also a system of thought leading to extremely deep insight (*vipassanā*)—referred to as *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation—within the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. On this occasion, the Buddha gave a certain mental picture to the minds of the monks. First, in the *Mahā-dukkhakkhandha Sutta*, the picture of the beautiful complexion of a fifteen or sixteen-year-old maiden was presented like a soap bubble. Only after that did he show how it bursts. Similarly, here too, and in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, having systematically shown the true state of the body, and not limiting it to another's body, there is a method in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of applying it to one's own body. There is a specific word used to describe that: *'upasaṃharati'*. *'Upasaṃharati'* means one applies it to one's own body; one directs it towards one's own body.

Now, in the passages of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* that illustrate the nine charnel-ground contemplations, they begin with the simile *'seyyathāpi'*, meaning "just as one would see such and such a form." It starts with: "just as one would see a body of this sort thrown into a charnel ground..." But it ends with: *'so imameve kāyaṃ upasaṃharati'* — "he applies this very vision to himself." He directs it toward himself and understands: *'Ayampi kho kāyo evaṃ dhammo evaṃ bhāvī etaṃ anatīto'ti'* — "This body too is of such a nature, it will become like this, it is not exempt from this fate." Thus, one applies it to oneself, realizing "my body is not something that has transcended this state."

This matter is systematically shown in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as a teaching that leads to a deep insight (*vipassanā*) of this sort, through both the aspect of "internally" (*ajjhatta*) and "externally" (*bahiddhā*), and then considering them together as "internally and externally" (*ajjhatta-bahiddhā*). To describe this matter with a simile: when a knife is sharpened on a whetstone or a leather strop, sometimes one strokes it upward. At other times, one strokes it downward. At yet other times, one strokes it rapidly both upward and downward. Why is that? Not only must the two sides be sharpened, but the cutting edge itself must be honed. The cutting edge is properly sharpened precisely in that third stage. Stroking upward, upward, upward; downward, downward, downward; and then upward and downward, upward and downward, upward and downward—that is how the cutting edge is properly formed. Tempering is given to the dull knife.

Something similar happens in this insight (*vipassanā*) too. A person indeed uses another's body as an aid in the manner described. One cannot do it to oneself after one dies! So, one visualizes the corpse of someone who has died, or imagines it. Nowadays,

there are various ways to even see such things. In those days too, they were easily seen in charnel grounds. In modern times, one can see them at least as images. But extracting the meaning therefrom is the primary thing. "Just as one would see"—based on what has been seen, or by imagining it in the mind, one then applies that state to oneself. When cultivating this as a meditation, at the moment of its culmination, there is a state where it is subtly applied to one's own body, like the simultaneous upward-and-downward strokes mentioned earlier. It is precisely there that the knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*) emerges. It is precisely there that the knowledge of things as they are emerges.

Therefore, teachers of old say that, according to temperament, some start from their own body and understand: "just like this body, so is that other body." Another person starts from another's body and culminates their insight (*vipassanā*) by applying it to their own body. Regarding various individuals, for those who possessed conceit regarding physical beauty like Khemā and Rūpanandā, the Buddha created and showed another body, demonstrating how it decays. "Am I not just like that? Will this not happen to me too?"—he made them think thus. Now here too, that monk who had thought so highly of Sirimā's body must have finally realized: "Is not this very state the fate of this body too?" It was through that realization that his insight (*vipassanā*) was perfected.

So, that distinction between inside and outside, called "external" (*bahiddhā*), is an artificial distinction we have created. Inside, there are the four elements; outside too, there are the four elements. Such is the state of the bodies inside; such is the state of the bodies outside. Yet, due to our ignorance (*avijjā*) and delusion (*moha*), we separate these and create attachment and aversion towards them. The Buddha brings to light that he who first reflects on the internal must, at some point, also reflect on the external body. Finally, the state where the two merge is what exists as "internally and externally" (*ajjhatta-bahiddhā*). It is at that moment that insight (*vipassanā*) culminates in a marvelous way. Some practitioners of insight may have even had the direct experience, while reflecting on a skeleton, of realizing: "Oh, is not my body this very thing?" Sometimes, just like a modern X-ray, one's own body and external bodies might be seen in some instances. This is natural. Natural, that is, for insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). It is understood by the eye of insight, though invisible to the ordinary eye.

We have heard in stories of the past the account concerning Venerable Tissa, who, upon seeing a set of teeth, saw a skeleton walking down the road. We can see from this: a monk who had intensely developed the perception of bones (*aṭṭhika-saññā*), while walking for alms, saw a certain woman who, having quarreled with her husband, was traveling along a forest path. That woman laughed aloud lustfully. Hearing the sound, the monk looked. When he looked, only her teeth were visible. Because of restraint, he did not look further. Utilizing the teeth, his meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*) emerged. Later, when the husband who came searching for the woman asked if a woman had passed by, the monk replied: "Whether it was a woman or a man, I do not know. But a skeleton did go by." He did not speak a falsehood. What he expressed at that moment was precisely what appeared to his insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), to his eye of

insight. Such things, or a bloated corpse (*uddhumātaka*) or similar meditation objects, when cultivated by a devout practitioner, can be realized directly. So that is the moment when the dull knife rubbed on the whetstone becomes thoroughly sharp. Through that arises the knowledge of things as they are. There is no difference between these two.

This is mentioned in the Dhamma literature as the Buddha's word; in the Sutta Nipāta, there is a valuable discourse known as the *Vijaya Sutta*, which contains verses on relinquishing desire for the body (*kāya-vicchandanika gāthā*), functioning like a complete meditation guide. It states this natural law in brief:

Yathā idaṃ tathā etaṃ, yathā etaṃ tathā idaṃ;

Ajjhattañca bahiddhāca, kāye chandaṃ virājaye.

'Yathā idaṃ tathā etaṃ' — as this body is, so is that body. *'Yathā etaṃ tathā idaṃ'* — as that body is, so is this body. *'Bahiddhā ca'* — inside and outside, *'kāye chandaṃ virājaye'* — one should fade out desire (*chanda*), wish, and attachment for the body. That is the natural law demonstrated by this. What a marvelous Dhamma is contained within this! When observing by way of contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), while practicing the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*) or any other meditation object, at the moment insight (*vipassanā*) culminates, the distinction between inside and outside fades away.

Moreover, there is another aspect which sometimes becomes a problem for some devout friends who contemplate the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Just as "internally" (*ajjhatta*) and "externally" (*bahiddhā*) are mentioned separately and then combined as "internally and externally" (*ajjhatta-bahiddhā*), there are other riddle-like passages mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*:

Samudayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati,

Vayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati,

Samudayavayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati.

Its meaning is that at each step, when describing the various parts of the body in the section of contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), one abides seeing their nature of arising, observing the side of arising (*samudaya*). Likewise, contemplating the nature of vanishing (*vayadhammānupassī*), one abides observing how it wears away. From time to time, one contemplates how the body arises, how the body is sustained through food, etc. Similarly, one observes how this wears away. Next, combining the two, just like sharpening that knife, *'samudaya-vayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati'* — it is said that one abides seeing both arising and vanishing at once. This too must be understood in that manner. It is even deeper than the previous one. The sharpest honing regarding impermanence (*anicca*) occurs when arising (*samudaya*) and vanishing (*vaya*) are seen simultaneously. That moment is called "penetrative wisdom" (*nibbedhika-paññā*). It is a penetration, a piercing through. To which side does a highly

sharp cutting edge belong? To which of the two sides does it belong? It is a subtle state that is hard to conceive. Just like that, what was previously divided into two as "arising" and "vanishing", when eventually merged, at the last moment, emptiness (*suññatā*) and voidness are deeply understood. Right there is Nibbāna.

Now, just as we mentioned *samudayadhammānupassī* and *vayadhammānupassī*, what is to be said about that external distinction is that it applies to both the conscious (*saviññāṇaka*) and the unconscious (*aviññāṇaka*). The conscious body is also foul (*asubha*). It is within the conscious body that one carries out the meditation on the thirty-two repulsive parts of the body—on the impurities contained in this body. There too, what is often presented as the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*) or foulness meditation (*asubha-bhāvanā*) is the section concerning this conscious body. On the other hand, looking by way of the nine charnel-ground contemplations, it is the unconscious body—the body devoid of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). In both of these, the state of foulness is present. Thus, by reflecting on this according to the division of "one's own" and "another's", one develops disillusionment through that perception of foulness. Furthermore, for the practitioner (*yogāvacara*) who observes their nature of arising and nature of vanishing, there comes a point where these two gradually merge and are understood deeply. Therein lies the most profound part of the Dhamma. It is from here that one proceeds to a highly profound part of the Dhamma. One must not be afraid of it.

We all have heard, when speaking of Nibbāna, a word called *saṅkhata* (prepared / Preparations / Preparations). The meaning of the word *saṅkhata* is "prepared" or "put together." "Prepared" means, in modern terms, an artificial thing, a fabricated thing, something constructed by the mind. Next, when speaking of Nibbāna, for which many express approval, Nibbāna itself is called the *asaṅkhata-dhātu* (The Unprepared / Unconditioned / Uncompounded). Something called *asaṅkhata* is also mentioned in the Dhamma. Thus, *saṅkhata* is on one side, and *asaṅkhata* is on the other. It is from here that we proceed to the analytical exposition of the Dhamma. The Buddha has declared:

"Tīṇimāni, bhikkhave, saṅkhatassa saṅkhatalakkhaṇāni."

— "Monks, there are three characteristics of the prepared (*saṅkhata*)." What are these characteristics?

"Uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati."

In everything that is prepared (*saṅkhata*), meaning put together, an arising, a birth, is observed. A wearing away, a vanishing, is observed. Between those two, *'ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati'* occurs; even within that part described as "standing" or "existing," there is a process of changing into something else (*aññathābhāva*). *'Ṭhiti'*, meaning stability or existing, refers to that which persists, that which is present. But even in that "present" state, there is constant change. Right there is a profound matter. As we said earlier regarding sharpening on a whetstone or a strop: upward, upward, upward; downward, downward, downward; and finally, upward and downward, upward and downward, upward and downward. Now, therefore, there is that *uppāda* (arising).

Now, *saṅkhata* (the prepared) refers to something constructed, demarcated by the mind. Within that demarcated thing, we see an arising. That is on one side. On the other side, we see it wearing away. But in the middle, there is *ṭhiti*—an existence, a persistence, that we ourselves have fabricated. The Buddha points out that this *ṭhiti* or stability, this state we imagined as "existing," is in truth merely a rolling-over from beginning to end. Existence, meritorious friends, is in reality a rolling-over. Thus, we call a rolling-over, a turning thing, "existence." There is not even a single moment when it does not roll over. We imagine that it does not turn. Regarding this body, we sometimes say, "Now having been beautifully young, it has started to decay. Now old age has appeared." But the Buddha says that from beginning to end, it is decay. From birth itself, there is decay. From the hair that is born, everything decays. Yet, we establish a convention: "Now the body exists. Look, only now has it started to decay." This is an illusion, a conceptualization of the mind. Thus, at the moment when this is realized, just as when both *samudaya* and *vaya* merged, it is at that point that *'ṭhitassa aññathatta'* is understood—there is a moment when it is realized that even the state assumed to be "stable, existing, remaining" is constantly undergoing change. It is then that there is no place to grasp. There remains nothing to grasp.

It is because of grasping (*upādāna*) that there is a stable duration (*ṭhiti*). That is the secret. It is because of grasping that there is stability. Where there is grasping—as it is said, *"upādāna-paccayā bhavo"* (dependent on grasping is existence)—where there is grasping, there is becoming (*bhava*). Where there is letting go, there is cessation. Where there is letting go, there is the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*). This is the secret that the Buddha brought to light as the natural law of this universe, which no one else was able to solve.

Thus, in the ordinary world, we speak as if one escapes from the prepared (*saṅkhata*) and, in the unprepared (*asaṅkhata*) element, which is the eternal element of Nibbāna, becomes cooled, comforted, and resides eternally. That is entirely an illusion. Here lies this natural law. Within that impermanence (*anicca*) are the three characteristics of the prepared (*saṅkhata*): arising, vanishing, and the alteration of that precarious existence in between. That stability (*ṭhiti*), this existence we assumed as "duration," is a precarious state trapped between arising and vanishing. The precarious nature of that state is realized only when that insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) becomes sharp. It is not uniform even for a single moment. Therefore, within that itself lies letting go. It is solely due to grasping (*upādāna*) that the state of "stability" (*ṭhiti*) exists.

Next, the Buddha declares the characteristics of the unprepared (*asaṅkhata*):

> *"Na uppādo paññāyati, na vayo paññāyati, na ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati."*

There is no issue regarding the unprepared (*asaṅkhata*). In the unprepared (*asaṅkhata*), there is no arising, there is no vanishing, and there is no such thing as the alteration of something existing. Thus, we can understand through this that the Buddha demonstrates how, through grasping (*upādāna*), through holding on, one conceptualizes what is

actually impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent (*nicca*). One imagines it so. Then, that assumed "stability" is merely a mental fabrication, just an imagination. A mental fabrication means just an imagination; it is not a real thing.

Therefore, at the moment when that is understood, simultaneously with that understanding, one realizes: "this is a grasping (*upādāna*) generated due to craving (*taṇhā*)." That young monk blew that soap bubble based on the name "Sirimā," imagining in his mind the exquisite beauty of that courtesan. He came with that mental picture. In the end, what did he see? It was a state imagined by the mind. It was not in accordance with reality. At the moment when that is realized, it is through letting go that the unprepared (*asaṅkhata*) element is said to be realized. It is not some other world. Precisely because that grasping had existed in the mind, when the alteration of what was assumed to be "stability" is understood, automatically one sees: "this is a dangerous thing; wherever it is grasped, it shatters." In that deep insight (*vipassanā*), there is a moment when the practitioners realize this. There is nothing to grasp anywhere in preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*).

What is meant by "Preparations" (*saṅkhāra*)? What is meant by seeing the impermanence (*anicca*) of Preparations? A heap of preparations. What does it mean to say that all these preparations shatter? It is precisely because they are prepared that they shatter. For, in everything that is prepared, there is that arising and vanishing, and in between, a stability we have projected upon it. That is what is meant by *'ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ'*. Within the state of stability (*ṭhiti*), constant change is always operating.

This matter is mentioned in the Udāna Pāḷi in a highly marvelous verse. There is a most marvelous, profound verse declared by the Buddha after attaining supreme enlightenment on the banks of the Nerañjarā River, having abided for seven days in the bliss of liberation. It is a highly marvelous, deep sutta that some devout friends constantly recollect. The relevant parts of that sutta read as follows:

> *"Ayaṃ loko santāpajāto phassapareto rogaṃ vadati attato,*
>
> *Yena yena hi maññati, tato taṃ hoti aññathā;*
>
> *Bhavasatto loko bhavapareto bhavamevābhinandati,*
>
> *Yadabhinandati taṃ bhayaṃ, yassa bhāyati taṃ dukkhaṃ;*
>
> *Bhavavippahānāya kho panidaṃ brahmacariyaṃ vussati."*

There is great depth in these words that came from his sacred mouth. *'Ayaṃ loko santāpajāto phassapareto'* — "this world" means the people of the world. *'Santāpajāto'* — afflicted, *'phassapareto'* — plagued by contact (*phassa*). *'Ayaṃ loko rogaṃ vadati attato'* — this world speaks of a disease as self, speaks of an illness as self. They designate a heap of illnesses as self. *'Yena yena hi maññati, tato taṃ hoti aññathā'* — in whatever way they think, in whatever way they conceptualize by mental fabrication, through that very thing it becomes otherwise. It was said to become otherwise in order to shatter that

fencing in, that thinking "I exist within this portion." It is because of that very thing that its alteration becomes manifest. That is why they fear that aforementioned shattering.

Then, he explains it further: *'Aññathābhāvī bhavasatto loko bhavapareto bhavamevābhinandati'*. The world, which is bound to becoming (*bhava*), plagued by becoming, delights only in becoming, even though its very nature is to alter into something else. The nature of the world is to roll over constantly, without stopping even for a single moment, without remaining even for a single moment. Yet, they do not know this. Because of this, the beings of the world attach to it. *'Bhavasatto loko bhavapareto'* — not only do they attach, but they also become enslaved; they are overwhelmed by craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). *'Bhavamevābhinandati'* — they delight only in becoming (existence).

Next, the Buddha declares: *'Yadabhinandati taṃ bhayaṃ'* — whatever they delight in is a source of fear. "Fear" means danger. It is a danger, a hazardous thing. What do they delight in? In becoming (*bhava*). Becoming, however, is something constantly subject to alteration. By delighting in it, fear arises; they fall into danger. That is *'yadabhinandati taṃ bhayaṃ'*. *'Yassa bhāyati taṃ dukkhaṃ'* — what they fear is suffering (*dukkha*). What do they fear? They fear that very alteration. They grasp a world that is subject to alteration, yet they do not like alteration. That is why *'yassa bhāyati taṃ dukkhaṃ'*. What do they fear? They fear its changing, its alteration. That itself is suffering (*dukkha*). *'Bhava-vippahānāya kho panidaṃ brahmacariyaṃ vussati'* — it is for the abandoning of that state of becoming (*bhava*), that state imagined as "existence," for its letting go, that this holy life is lived.

Thus, the Buddha expressed the essence of his Dhamma on that day through those few short lines of Udāna verses. It is those very points we brought to light through the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Next, at the end of that Udāna verse, the Buddha further declares that whatever ascetics and brahmins there had been in the world attempting to solve this saṃsāric riddle, or to solve the problem of liberation, they went to two extremes. The Buddha states there that whatever ascetics and brahmins tried to solve the problem of becoming through becoming—that is, by way of eternity—tried to solve this saṃsāric riddle through an eternal existence, they too have not escaped saṃsāra. They too are not liberated. This is the view of becoming (*bhava-diṭṭhi*), the eternity view (*sassata-diṭṭhi*). Next, the other extreme is called the view of non-becoming (*vibhava-diṭṭhi*), which is the annihilation view (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*).

Devout friends have heard, and those who have an understanding of the Dhamma know, that there are those two extremes. The middle path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) is what is found in our Dhamma. On the two sides lie that eternity view and the annihilation view. This second one mentioned is the view of non-becoming (*vibhava-diṭṭhi*). There was another group of ascetics and brahmins who, adopting the annihilation view, tried to escape from *saṃsāra* through it. They too misunderstood. They too did not comprehend the matter properly. Saying "once this bodily cage is destroyed, it is all over" does not offer escape. As long as ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) remain, this saṃsāric

stream of phenomena—that stream of the prepared (*saṅkhata*) and Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—continues. That is why the Buddha did not go to either of those extremes.

Instead, the Buddha declares where liberation lies. At whatever moment, by the destruction of all grasping (*sabbupādānakkhayā*), by letting go of all grasping, and by the relinquishment of all acquisitions (*sabbūpadhipatinissaggā*)—grasping (*upādāna*) means holding on. Acquisitions (*upadhi*) mean that which has been grasped and accumulated. Now, devout friends constantly exert themselves to grasp wealth and various other things, heaps of material possessions. Thinking about them, they generate grasping (*upādāna*). Once those are obtained, they accumulate them as savings, deposit them as treasures, and try to protect them as acquisitions (*upadhi*). But the Buddha demonstrates that all this is a source of fear. These are things subject to alteration. Therefore, it is through grasping them that the aforementioned suffering (*dukkha*) and fear arise.

Therefore, the solution provided by the Buddha is neither an eternal existence nor thinking "life ends here" and indulging in pleasures as one pleases, nor seeking liberation through various other rites and rituals. It is the understanding of this very situation. Here, when that grasping (*upādāna*) done through ignorance (*avijjā*), through that lack of understanding, is let go, what is let go along with grasping is precisely what is called acquisitions (*upadhi*)—which are held by grasping to confirm one's sense of "I-ness." When looked at ultimately, these are none other than the five aggregates of grasping (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*) that we have accumulated.

It is just like hanging onto something. Relying upon something. If that onto which one hangs is let go at some point, there is a fall. If one relies upon something, when that bottom layer decays, there too is a fall. Thus, this is what is contained within the two words: grasping (*upādāna*) and acquisitions (*upadhi*). That very grasping ultimately leads to acquisitions (*upadhi*) for one's existence (*bhava*). Devout friends may have heard that word *upadhi*. The Buddha declares, to consider it in brief: money, vehicles, wife and children, lands, and everything one regards as one's assets.

It is in those things that one seeks security, safety, and protection. Yet, even as one looks on, they shatter and crumble to dust. To whatever extent the grasping of them is firm, to that same extent there is suffering (*dukkha*). If they were let go in the mind beforehand, in the manner of the abandoning of desire and lust (*chanda-rāga-pahāṇa*), at that moment, there is nothing there. A state arises where one can say, "there is nothing in it." Right there is Nibbāna.

Thus, Nibbāna means—do not misunderstand this when said—Nibbāna means "there is nothing." If there is "a thing," then all these problems arise. That is what is contained within the two words: the prepared (*saṅkhata*) and the unprepared (*asaṅkhata*). Within these natural phenomena which are empty, impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*), the being conceptualizes "a thing" as a mental fabrication. That which was taken as "a thing"—that itself is what goes on and on in *saṃsāra*; it is that very stream of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That mental energy generated through

ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), creating more and more forms, is what we carry along in this *saṃsāra*. In short, if at some point, through insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), having seen that state, one understands the true nature of those wrong concepts that caused acquisitions (*upadhi*) and grasping (*upādāna*), and beholds the emptiness, the voidness of the world, it is at that moment that liberation exists.

That is why the Buddha declared to the young Brahmin Mogharāja, who possessed highly profound understanding:

> *Suññato lokaṃ avekkhassu, Mogharāja sadā sato;*
>
> *Attānudiṭṭhiṃ ūhacca, evaṃ maccutaro siyā;*
>
> *Evaṃ lokaṃ avekkhantaṃ, maccurāja na passati.*

"Mogharāja, look upon the world as empty. *'Suññato lokaṃ avekkhassu, Mogharāja sadā sato'* — always mindful, look upon the world as empty. *'Attānudiṭṭhiṃ ūhacca'* — the view of self (*attānu-diṭṭhi*) refers to the conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*), the deepest sense of "I-ness." Uprooting that, *'evaṃ maccutaro siyā'* — thus one overcomes death, crosses over the bondage of Māra. *'Evaṃ lokaṃ avekkhantaṃ, maccurāja na passati'* — one who looks upon the world in that manner as empty is not caught by Māra. He is not seen by Māra. That is why on many occasions, when Māra came to trouble him, the Buddha said: "You cannot grasp me." Why he cannot be grasped is because of having let go of everything. The portion that Māra can catch is the prepared (*saṅkhata*), that which is grasped. Māra is precisely there. So that is why the Buddha declared:

> *"Yaṃ yaṃ hi loke upādiyanti, teneva māro anveti."*

— whatever things in the world we grasp, Māra follows after through that very thing. Māra possesses himself of that grasped thing, and through it, repeatedly inflicts suffering (*dukkha*) upon us in *saṃsāra*.

Therefore, it is for that noble Nibbāna, which is the letting go of those grasping, the graspings of acquisitions (*upadhi*), that this devout group on this valuable day observed virtue (*sīla*), in accordance with the gradual training (*anupubba-sikkhā*), gradual action (*anupubba-kiriyā*), and gradual practice (*anupubba-paṭipadā*) declared by the Buddha as the middle path. Next, established in that virtue, you cultivated meditation by way of tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Their supreme fruit is the deathless Nibbāna that we all aspire to. It is not an eternal state as mentioned, but the liberation of mind (*citta-vimutti*) itself. That is a state realizable in this very life. After that, there is no problem. May you gain the strength to reach a state where you can say, "there is nothing," just like the Buddha.

Although we express this in words, when this comes as a direct experience, if the necessary deep work for it has not been done in previous lives, one must prepare to do it in this life. If one thinks "this is all there is to be done," there is no question of when it will be finished. With the thought "this is all there is to be done," may the power of merit

generated today, the virtue observed, and the meditation practiced, certainly be a supportive condition for the fulfillment of the noble Dhamma aspirations of these devout friends, to escape from all saṃsāric suffering such as birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*), and to find peace in the supreme deathless Nibbāna.

Likewise, may all beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, including the relatives of these devout friends, if they hope for saṃsāric liberation, realize that supreme deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi they have aspired to, by the merits of listening to this Dhamma. Having aspired thus, recite these verses and share the merits:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #34

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Dānañca peyyavajjañca, atthacariyā ca yā idha;

Samānattatā ca dhammesu, tattha tattha yathāraham̀.

Ete kho saṅgahā loke, rathassāṇīva yāyato.

Ete ca saṅgahā nāssu, na mātā puttakāraṇā,

labhetha mānam̀ pūjam̀ vā, pitā vā puttakāraṇā.

Yasmā ca saṅgahā ete, samavekkhati paṇḍitā;

Tasmā mahattam̀ papponti, pāsam̀sā ca bhavanti te.

From:

Aṅguttara Nikāya 4.32, Saṅgaha Sutta

Dear Listeners,

The Duruthu Poya day is the first full-moon day of the year according to the civil calendar. At the beginning of a year, almost everyone directs their mind toward their future prosperity, progress, and forward journey. Our Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Blessed Buddha, expounded several verses showing four valuable factors that lead to the forward journey and progress of both the individual and society, which we have chosen as our theme today. Just as a linchpin is helpful to a moving chariot, the Buddha presents four factors of the Dhamma through these verses that assist in the progress of society:

> *Dānañca peyyavajjañca atthacariyā ca yā idha*
>
> *Samānattatā ca dhammesu tattha tattha yathāraham̀*

Everyone knows *dāna* (giving/almsgiving). *Peyyavajja* means pleasant speech. Therefore, giving, pleasant speech, and then *atthacariyā* (purposeful activity). Purposeful activity means acting for the welfare of others; in modern times, the term "altruistic activity" is used for this. *"Samānattatā ca dhammesu tattha tattha yathāraham"*—there it is expressed in a somewhat unique way: impartiality or equality (*samānattatā*) fittingly in each situation and place. That is the fourth factor.

Next, the Buddha states: *"Ete kho saṅgahā loke rathassāṇīva yāyato."* This means these four bases of sympathy assist the world just as the linchpin assists a moving chariot. Then he declared: *"Ete ca saṅgahā nāssu..."* If these bases of sympathy do not exist, *"na mātā puttakāraṇā labhetha mānaṁ pūjaṁ vā, pitā vā puttakāraṇā"*—a mother would not receive honor or respect because of her son, nor would a father receive honor, respect, or offerings from his son. It is further stated: *"Yasmā ca saṅgahā ete samavekkhanti paṇḍitā"*—since the wise reflect upon and understand these bases of sympathy with wisdom, *"tasmā mahattaṁ papponti"*—therefore, because of that, they reach greatness, abundance, and nobility. *"Pāsaṁsā ca bhavanti te"*—they become praiseworthy. This, indeed, is the meaning of these verses.

Now, some of the points mentioned here are well known to most people. The word *dāna* (giving) is very familiar to our ears. We all know that within the act of giving, there are two sides. Generally, when we talk about *dāna* or giving, it feels like a mere transfer of an object from hand to hand. However, beneath the act of giving, there is a certain shift in attitude. How does this giving occur? Sometimes, out of necessity, a person comes asking for something due to their hardships. At that moment, satisfying that need, even in a small way, is a great relief to that person. In such a situation, one must give to the person who expects it. At other times, what a person expects is not a gift, but a pleasant word. There are some in society who say that even if someone gives nothing, a single kind word is worth gold. Everyone knows what pleasant speech is. Just as *pharusa vācā* (harsh speech) is unpleasant to everyone, pleasant speech is sweet to the ear. The Buddha described pleasant speech as: *"Yā sā vācā nelā kaṇṇasukhā pemaniyā hadayaṅgamā porī bahujanakantā bahujanamānāpā"* and so on. If there is speech that is *nelā* (faultless), *kaṇṇasukhā* (pleasing to the ear), *pemanīya* (endearing), *hadayaṅgamā* (heart-penetrating), *porī* (polite and civil), *bahujanakantā* (beloved by many), and *bahujanamānāpā* (agreeable to many)—such words, spoken in due season, are pleasant words. Sometimes, it is nothing more than words like "mother", "father", "brother", "sister" used in society, along with the pleasant feelings that accompany them. Some people expect such pleasant words.

Next is *atthacariyā* (purposeful activity). Another person, according to the situation, does not merely expect a gift or a pleasant word, but rather advice that leads to their progress. Nowadays, there is something called "counseling" or guidance, and there are many counselors. Giving advice for one's economic or spiritual progress in this manner is *atthacariyā* (purposeful activity); it conveys the meaning of altruistic activity.

Next, *samānattatā* (equality/impartiality) is mentioned. In this society, there are various caste and class divisions. Because of this, some people experience marginalization due to

pride. Yet, most people hope, when the occasion arises, to sit together, eat together, and share joys and sorrows. Many people have a yearning for this kind of equality. One who fosters this becomes beloved and pleasing. Impartiality or equality is something to be practiced according to the situation. Forgetting divisions, cultivating a certain equanimity (*upekkhā*) in the mind, and remembering human brotherhood, one acts with equality according to the circumstance.

Now, in expressing these matters, the Buddha's mention of parents here is extremely important. Why? We have all heard that in the Dhamma, parents are described as *"Brahmā ti mātāpitaro"* (parents are called Brahmas). They are called Brahmas because they practice the four *Brahma-vihāras* (sublime states). We are more accustomed to considering parents as those who develop the four *Brahma-vihāras* towards their children. However, it is stated here that if a mother or a father does not practice these teachings of giving, pleasant speech, purposeful activity, and equality, they will not receive honor and respect from their children. From this, we can understand that underlying these four Dhammas, as an attitude, lie the virtues of loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*), even if they are not explicitly mentioned here. In short, these qualities of giving, pleasant speech, purposeful activity, and equality are a resonance of the four *Brahma-vihāras*.

Let us try to understand this. If we think about what a mother or a father, especially a mother, does after a child is born into this world, that giving (*dāna*) begins with the well-known act of turning her blood into milk to feed the child. The giving for the child begins with that breast milk. Next, both mother and father raise the child by spending their time, wealth, and labor, directing their love toward them. This is what is mentioned in the Dhamma as the Buddha's word regarding parents: *"Āpādakā posakā lokassa dassetāro"*—parents are the caretakers, the nourishers, and those who show this world to the child. If we look at it as giving, it is the sacrifice of time, wealth, and labor made by parents to raise a child.

Pleasant speech—everyone knows the affection parents have for their children. When we look at lullabies, with what great love do they soothe a crying child? As the child grows a bit more, during the mischievous stage, a parent may sometimes use harsh words. But we must consider that they use them out of compassion. That very affection turns into compassion. Although those compassionate words may seem harsh on the surface, inside them lies the protection of the child. Therefore, that compassion is pleasant speech. Pleasant speech is not merely the pleasant form we usually think of. Depending on the situation, even a harsh word becomes a pleasant word when used for the welfare of the child. Therefore, we must consider not only the lullabies of early childhood but also the words used to discipline during the mischievous stage as pleasant speech.

Next, *atthacariyā* (purposeful activity) means teaching arts and sciences and explaining good and bad for the welfare of the children, as everyone knows. This is why they are called *pubbācariya* (the first teachers). In this way, parents provide wonderful help to their children so they can stand on their own feet in society. That is *atthacariyā*—wishing and working for their welfare.

Similarly, the final factor, *samānattatā* (equality/impartiality), can sometimes be difficult to understand. If we parallel these qualities, we can connect loving-kindness (*mettā*) to giving (*dāna*), compassion (*karuṇā*) to pleasant speech (*peyyavajja*), and sympathetic joy (*muditā*) to purposeful activity (*atthacariyā*). In purposeful activity, parents feel great joy in the growth and development of their child. While there might sometimes be envy regarding the growth and development of neighbors, there is sympathetic joy (*muditā*) regarding their own children; there is happiness, thinking, "Oh, it is good, it is wonderful if they succeed."

Now, next, for equality (*samānattatā*), we have to add equanimity (*upekkhā*). How does equanimity emerge? We can understand that generally, after children reach adulthood, parents hand over their inheritance and responsibilities. If it is an enterprise, there comes a time when the owners hand it over. They also distribute their lands and properties. Furthermore, if we think about it, just as children look after their parents, parents also attend to their children with equanimity and equality when they are sick or helpless. That is equality, something to be done according to the situation. Accordingly, we can understand that the four *Brahma-vihāras* underlie these four *saṅgaha-vatthu* (bases of sympathy).

That was about family relationships. But we know that in discourses like the *Sīgālovāda Sutta*, it is mentioned that friends in the northern direction treat one another with these four bases of sympathy—giving, pleasant speech, purposeful activity, and equality. In the *Sīgālovāda Sutta*, where six directions are mentioned, one's friends are the northern direction. Just like worshipping the northern direction, supporting that direction is done through the four bases of sympathy.

Next, the Buddha has clearly shown in one place how this directly affects society. In the Dhamma, there is a section called the *Etadagga Vagga* (Chapter on the Chiefs). According to the unique strengths and abilities of lay and ordained disciples, the title of *etadagga* (chief) is given, declaring, "He is chief in this particular field." In such a place, it is mentioned: "Among my lay disciples who minister to a group with the four bases of sympathy, Hatthaka Āḷavaka is chief," declares the Buddha. A certain event is also mentioned in the Dhamma. On one occasion, while the Buddha was residing at the Āgāḷava Shrine in Āḷavī, Hatthaka Āḷavaka—who was an *Anāgāmī* (non-returner) lay disciple, a lay disciple of the Buddha's time who had realized the fruits of the path and reached the state of a non-returner—came to see the Buddha with a retinue of five hundred people. After arriving, bowing to the Buddha, and sitting to one side, the Buddha remarked, "Āḷavaka, your retinue is indeed very large. How do you minister to such a large assembly?"

Then, the lay disciple Hatthaka Āḷavaka replied, "Venerable Sir, the Blessed One has declared four bases of sympathy, and it is through those bases of sympathy that I minister to this assembly. If someone in this assembly needs *dāna* (giving), needs something to be given (let us say, perhaps regarding employment, tools needed for farming, or money, giving various things according to their needs), I give *dāna* to that person who expects it. Likewise, if someone expects pleasant speech, having considered

it with wisdom, I minister to them with pleasant speech. When one speaks with pleasant speech within an assembly in terms of 'mother', 'father', and so on, their hearts become soft; there is gentleness. That must be done with genuine sincerity."

Next, he states: "If someone expects advice regarding their progress, I give that too. That is *atthacariyā* (purposeful activity). Likewise, according to the situation, I practice *samānattatā* (equality)—eating together and practicing equality in various such situations." Then the Buddha declared: "Sādhu! Sādhu! Very good, Āḷavaka. In this very way, if anyone in the past ministered to an assembly, it was through these selfsame bases of sympathy. If anyone in the future ministers to an assembly, it will be through these selfsame bases of sympathy. In the present too, one must minister to an assembly through these four bases of sympathy."

After the lay disciple Āḷavaka stood up and left with his retinue, the Buddha expressed a special statement of praise to the Sangha: "Monks, consider this lay disciple Hatthaka Āḷavaka as one endowed with eight wonderful and marvelous qualities." What are the eight? Seven of these are well-known to everyone as the noble treasures (*ariya-dhana*): *saddhā* (faith), *sīla* (virtue), *hiri* (shame of wrongdoing), *ottappa* (fear of wrongdoing). *Saddhā* and *sīla* are known to all. *Hiri* means shame of sin, and *ottappa* means fear of sin, fear of wrongdoing. Next is *suta* (learning)—Āḷavaka is highly learned (*bahussuta*). Next is *cāga* (generosity)—he is generous. Next is *paññā*—wisdom; as an individual, he possesses wisdom. Finally, he is stated to be of few wishes (*appiccha*). Hatthaka Āḷavaka has few wishes. Connected to having few wishes is that equality (*samānattatā*). Forgetting his own greatness at that moment, he practiced equality according to the situation. Thus, this account of ministering to an assembly is recorded in the Dhamma.

Similarly, in another important and deep discourse—deep to a certain extent—the Buddha has shown these same four bases of sympathy directed toward Nibbāna. How is that? On one occasion, the Buddha declared: "Monks, there are four powers in the world. What are the four powers? The power of wisdom (*paññā-balaṁ*), the power of energy (*viriya-balaṁ*), the power of blamelessness (*anavajja-balaṁ*), and the power of sympathy (*saṅgaha-balaṁ*)." The power of wisdom, the power of energy, the power of blamelessness (faultlessness, which is also a strength), and the power of sympathy. The power of sympathy refers to those very bases of sympathy.

Now, each is analyzed. What is the power of wisdom (*paññā-balaṁ*)? To put it briefly, according to the Buddha's teaching, one identifies: "These things are wholesome (*kusala*), these things are unwholesome (*akusala*), these things are blameworthy (*sāvajja*), these things are blameless (*anavajja*), these things are dark dhammas (*kaṇha-dhamma*), these things are bright dhammas (*sukka-dhamma*)." Just as one distinguishes dark from bright, one correctly distinguishes good from bad. That is the power of wisdom. This is indispensable for a noble disciple.

The power of energy (*viriya-balaṁ*) means: if one has identified those dhammas, if one has distinguished good things from bad things separately, what is left to do? Removing the bad things and bringing the good things close. The energy applied for that is what is

called the power of energy here. There too, it is briefly stated as the fourfold supreme effort (*sammappadhāna*) that we have all heard of. To abandon the unwholesome, faulty, and dark dhammas seen through wisdom, there is the frequently encountered passage: *"chandaṁ janeti vāyamati viriyaṁ ārabhati cittaṁ paggaṇhāti padahati"* (he generates desire, endeavors, rouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives). One develops a keen interest, makes an effort, rouses energy, firmly establishes the mind, and strives. In this way, one makes a strong effort to eliminate bad and unwholesome things. Similarly, one exerts energy to acquire and achieve good and wholesome things. That is the power of energy. It too is a power, a strength, a capability—to expel bad things and bring good things close. That is shown as the power of energy.

Next, "the power of blamelessness" (*anavajja-balaṁ*) briefly indicates faultlessness. As a result of that aforementioned effort, a person can properly direct their bodily, verbal, and mental actions. Then, the power of blamelessness means a faultless life, the strength of a faultless life—directing the mind, body, and speech along the correct path.

Now, next is "the power of sympathy" (*saṅgaha-balaṁ*). It is analyzed there in a somewhat unique way. By the power of sympathy, the Buddha points to those selfsame four bases of sympathy. However, the explanation is given in a unique manner. There, the Buddha shows these four in their highest sense: *"Etadaggaṁ, bhikkhave, dānānaṁ yadidaṁ dhammadānaṁ"*—"Monks, this is the chief among gifts, namely, the gift of Dhamma (*dhamma-dāna*)." Next, regarding pleasant speech: *"Etadaggaṁ, bhikkhave, peyyavajjānaṁ yadidaṁ atthikassa ohitasotassa punappunaṁ dhammaṁ deseti"*—what is pleasant speech? It is not merely the sweet words we think of. It is not saying "mother" or "father". Here it is shown more deeply. *"Ohitasotassa"* means to those who wish to hear the Dhamma, who bend their ears to listen, preaching the Dhamma to them again and again (*"punappunaṁ"*) is shown here as pleasant speech. Why is that? Everyone knows there is nothing as tasteful as the Dhamma. Well, one cannot say "everyone" knows; those who have correctly recognized the Dhamma know. There is nothing as tasteful as the Dhamma. That is why it is said: *"Sabbadānaṁ dhammadānaṁ jināti, sabbaṁ rasaṁ dhammaraso jināti"*—the gift of Dhamma excels all gifts, the taste of Dhamma excels all tastes. It is also said that there is nothing so healing and pleasing to the ear. Therefore, that is true pleasant speech—preaching the Dhamma again and again to those who wish to hear it. That is ministering through pleasant speech.

Now, next is *atthacariyā* (purposeful activity). It too is shown in a unique way. What is *atthacariyā*? It is not giving advice to develop businesses. It is not that kind of counseling. What is shown here is: establishing a faithless person in faith, inspiring them with faith—using words like *"niveseti patiṭṭhāpeti"* (settles and establishes). One creates faith in a faithless person, making a special effort to establish them in the Triple Gem. Next, establishing an immoral person in virtue (*sīla*); that is *atthacariyā*. Establishing a stingy person in generosity (*cāga*), directing that person toward sacrifice. Next, establishing an unwise person in wisdom (*paññā*). Thus, we see that it is shown at a higher level, in a manner that assists Nibbāna.

In a manner perfectly fitting this, how is *samānattatā* (equality/impartiality) shown? There too, it is shown in a unique way. A Stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*) is equal to a Stream-enterer. A Once-returner (*Sakadāgāmī*) is equal to a Once-returner. A Non-returner (*Anāgāmī*) is equal to a Non-returner. An Arahant is equal to an Arahant. How do we understand this? Once we take it to the level of the fruits of the path, whether one is an extremely poor person, a great scholar, a high-caste noble, or a king—if they have reached the state of a Stream-enterer, they are equal in their Stream-entry. If they have reached the state of a Once-returner, they are equal in their Once-returner-ship. This is how we must understand it. We all know that there is no caste division within the dispensation of the Buddha. That is why, from whichever caste one is ordained, they are called *Samaṇa Sakyaputta* (ascetics, sons of the Sakyan). They reach the state of a Sakyan ascetic. Similarly, here too, equality is shown according to the fruits of the path, in a deep sense. Thus, the Buddha demonstrates that these selfsame four bases of sympathy assist a person all the way to Nibbāna.

Next, there are other valuable suttas that we can connect to this. Based on this, we can understand that starting from the four *Brahma-vihāras* as an attitude, this social service we perform not only helps in leading daily life but also helps in inclining toward Nibbāna, as is seen from this analysis of the four bases of sympathy.

In modern times, we all know that a subject becoming popular in the field of education is "counseling". We do not know through what kinds of courses this counseling is being taught. When we consider the four bases of sympathy presented by the Buddha, and the four *Brahma-vihāras* underlying them, they help us to be a true counselor and to recognize what true counseling is. Why? Because it is the inner desire of a person to work for another's welfare—or rather, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. It is that very quality. Everyone knows what is mentioned in the *Karaṇīyametta Sutta* where loving-kindness is declared: *"Mātā yathā niyaṁ puttaṁ āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe; evampi sabbabhūtesu mānasaṁ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṁ"*—just as a mother would protect her only son even at the risk of her own life, or just as the loving-kindness of a mother toward her child, *"aparimāṇaṁ"*—one should radiate it boundlessly to all living beings. Based on this, we can understand that loving-kindness, as well as compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, are all described as *appamaññā* (boundless states). It is by radiating them boundlessly that the entire society is embraced, and the whole society can be won over.

Society is what was referred to here as "a group". However, it may differ from various modern social philosophies. This is the kind of thing the Buddha points out. Also, we generally consider some things in the world to be selfish. What is spoken of here is altruism (*paratthacariyā*). In fact, the Buddha shows both sides, just as he shows the Middle Path elsewhere in the Dhamma: *attahita parahita*—one's own welfare and the welfare of others. Even in the analysis of wholesome and unwholesome, the Buddha has shown that why something is unwholesome is because it leads to one's own ruin and also to the ruin of others; it leads to the ruin of both parties. Those are called unwholesome—

things that arise as greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), and so on. On the other hand, things that bring welfare to both sides are called wholesome.

There is a place where the Buddha made this statement directly to a monk. A certain monk—whose name is not mentioned—came and asked the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, who is fit to be called *paṇḍito mahāpañño* (wise and of great wisdom)? Who is called 'a wise person of great wisdom'?" The Buddha declared: "If someone does not think of their own harm or ruin, nor of the ruin of others, but instead thinks of their own well-being and the well-being of others..."—*"attahitaṁ parahitaṁ ubhayahitaṁ sabbalokahitameva cinteti"* (one thinks of one's own welfare, the welfare of others, the welfare of both, indeed the welfare of the entire world). There lies a valuable statement. Some might think that a Buddhist is an isolated, selfish person. But the Buddha shows both sides in this manner: *"attahitaṁ parahitaṁ ubhayahitaṁ sabbalokahitameva cinteti"*. This is how the Buddha describes the wise person of great wisdom: as one who thinks of their own welfare, the welfare of others, the welfare of both, and the welfare of the entire world.

This is made even clearer in another valuable sutta, where a unique analysis is presented by dividing people into four categories. Now, *hita* means welfare. If we have understood that, next it is said that there is one person—the first person—who works neither for their own welfare nor for the welfare of others: *"neva attahitaṁ na parahitaṁ"*. The Buddha describes him in this way: "Just as, monks, a firebrand from a funeral pyre, smeared with excrement, cannot be used as firewood in the village, nor can it be used as firewood in the forest. In the same way, I describe that person." He has neither *attahita* nor *parahita*; he does not care for his own welfare, nor does he care for the welfare of others. There is nothing useful in him. That is the first person.

Then comes the second person. Who is the second person? *"Parahitāya paṭipanno no attahitāya"*—one who practices for the welfare of others, but not for their own welfare. Mentioning this, the Buddha states: "Between these two, the second is considered superior and excellent." That is understandable. Between a completely useless person and a person who considers the welfare of others but not their own, we can accept that the second is superior.

Now comes a good point to reflect upon. Who is the third person? One who does not consider the welfare of others, but considers their own welfare; they work for their own welfare. Stating this, the Buddha declares: "Among these three, the superior person is not the second, but the third." That can be a challenge to some according to modern thinking. So, who is the second? One who does not consider their own welfare, but considers only the welfare of others. Who is the third? One who does not consider the welfare of others, but considers only their own welfare. The Buddha declares this person to be the most excellent among these three. We shall try to understand this later.

Now, fourthly, it is shown—and there is no debate about this—the fourth person considers both the welfare of others and their own welfare. That person is the most excellent among the four. Thus, the Buddha has given an extraordinary analysis here.

One was stated directly. Once two were introduced, the superior of the two was shown. Once three were introduced, the superior of the three was shown. Once four were introduced, the fourth is the most supreme. Here, a doubt might arise: why was the superior status given to the one who thinks of their own progress without thinking of others? There is a verse in the *Dhammapada* that helps us understand this:

Attadatthaṁ paratthena, bahunāpi na hāpaye;

Attadatthambhññāya, sadatthapasuto siyā.

That is, "For the sake of another's benefit, however great, one should not neglect one's own benefit. Having clearly understood one's own benefit, one should be intent on one's true goal." It means: do not sacrifice your own welfare, your own progress—your spiritual progress in this long saṁsāra—even for the sake of a great deal of service to others. *"Attadatthaṁ paratthena bahunāpi na hāpaye"*—even for the sake of much service to others, do not destroy your own well-being—for you only have yourself. *"Attadatthambhññāya... siyā"*—having properly understood your own benefit and welfare, engage in it.

What does this mean? Standing in a mud pit, how can one pull another out of the mud pit? If we ourselves are in bad practices—let us say we commit the five sins to help others. To support society, we commit destruction of life, theft, lying, and other sins. But in the end, because of a bad example, society deteriorates spiritually. We too deteriorate along with it. But to the outside, it appears as altruism. That is why the true foundation of altruism is self-interest itself. By "self-interest", we do not mean that kind of narrow, selfish idea, but inner spiritual progress. That is how we must understand it.

Seeing this verse, *"attadatthaṁ paratthena"* in the *Dhammapada*, someone might raise a question: "Why, hasn't the Buddha preached a kind of extreme selfishness?" We must understand this in its context; it means committing sins under the guise of working for the world while neglecting one's own spiritual progress. As the Buddha himself declared, according to the analysis of wholesome and unwholesome, only what is beneficial to both sides is wholesome, not just to one side. Once this is correctly understood, the Buddha's analysis of the wise person of great wisdom reveals the true target. That is exactly what a Buddha does—the true target is both *attahita* and *parahita* at their respective levels.

At whatever level it is done, it must be in accordance with the Dhamma. To be in accordance with the Dhamma, we must think of those four powers. Why did we speak of "the power of wisdom" (*paññā-balaṁ*)? Now, if someone wants to do social service, shouldn't they have some kind of power and capability? We think that many people want to do social service. Here is the power and capability according to the Dhamma. Wisdom must be there to understand good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome, duties and non-duties, what should be done and what should not be done. Assisted by that power, assisted by that capability, when a problem arises, one does "counseling". That power of wisdom belongs to the counselor.

Next, the power of energy (*viriya-balaṁ*)—if that counselor has no interest at all in removing what is bad, makes no effort, and makes no effort to bring close what is good, what kind of counseling do they do? That lazy person who lacks the power of energy, that kind of lazy person cannot minister to others; they cannot engage in altruistic activity. Next, similarly, "the power of blamelessness" (*anavajja-balaṁ*)—one who has a blameless course of action is fit for this. If one's own character goes astray, that person cannot perform true service. Next, similarly, they cannot come anywhere near "the power of sympathy" (*saṅgaha-balaṁ*) in accordance with the Dhamma.

At the same time, in that very sutta, the Buddha shows how the noble disciple who possesses these four powers—the power of wisdom (*paññā-balaṁ*), the power of energy (*viriya-balaṁ*), the power of blamelessness (*anavajja-balaṁ*), and the power of sympathy (*saṅgaha-balaṁ*)—thinks. He shows that such a person can be free from four fears. What are the four fears? By "fear" we mean dangers, things that an ordinary person fears. What are the four fears? There are four fears that come to a person living in ordinary society: first, the fear concerning livelihood (*ājīvika-bhaya*). The fear concerning livelihood means fear regarding one's living, the fear of losing one's job—this is what the Buddha speaks of.

Next, what is the second fear? *Asiloka-bhaya* (fear of ill-repute). *Siloka* means praise. Thus, the fear of blame, insult, and censure. This too exists for a social being. What is the third fear? *Parisasārajja-bhaya* (fear of assemblies/stage fright). The fear of going into an assembly. One can understand why. Fear of going into the midst of a group. This too is a fear for a social being. What is the fourth fear? The fear of death (*maraṇa-bhaya*). What is the fifth fear? The fear of an evil destination (*duggati-bhaya*). Thus, it is mentioned regarding the noble disciple that the noble disciple transcends and overcomes these five fears.

Nay, the Buddha even shows how that person thinks. He thinks like this: "I have no fear concerning this livelihood. Why should I have fear concerning my livelihood? I have the power of wisdom, I have the power of energy, I have the power of blamelessness, I have the power of sympathy." According to how that person thinks: "It is the one who lacks wisdom who should fear concerning livelihood, fearing that they will lose their living. It is the lazy person who should have fear concerning livelihood. It is the one with wrong bodily and verbal actions who should have fear concerning livelihood. It is the one who does not minister to the group who should have fear concerning livelihood."

Likewise, it is said regarding the other fears: "I have no fear regarding blame or insult. Why should I fear censure and insult? I have the power of wisdom, the power of energy, the power of blamelessness, the power of sympathy. It is the one who lacks wisdom who should fear censures and insults. It is the lazy person who should fear in that way. It is the one with wrong bodily and verbal actions who should fear censure in that way. It is the one who does not minister to others who should fear in that way."

In the same manner, it is mentioned regarding going into the midst of an assembly. How that person thinks: "I have no fear of going into the midst of an assembly. Why? Because

I have the aforementioned power of wisdom, power of energy, power of blamelessness, power of sympathy." There too, it is declared: "It is the man who lacks wisdom who should fear going into the midst of an assembly. It is the lazy person who should fear in that way. It is the one with wrong bodily and verbal actions who should fear. It is the one who does not minister to others who should fear!"

In the same manner, it is mentioned regarding the fear of death. Based on this, we can understand. There too, it is said: "Why should I fear death? It is the man without wisdom who fears death. The man without energy, the one with wrong courses of action, and the one who does not minister to others are the ones who fear death." Next, regarding the evil destination too, it is the same way.

Now, this might sometimes be a bit confusing. It might be difficult for this audience to understand. It has to be understood in this way: if there are deficiencies in those aforementioned bodily and verbal actions—indeed, according to this era, there is a saying in society that "there is no place for the good man". Everyone knows how the country is going. Now, most people just support whatever is trending. They do not consider Dhamma or non-Dhamma; they support the wrong path because it is the easy thing to do, selfishly. But the Buddha has pointed that out. Such people cannot remain in those positions for long anyway.

So, be that as it may, if one lacks those aforementioned qualifications, the fear of livelihood might sometimes result in a sudden big gain. In these times, there are various things like bribery and corruption. They live in great fear, wondering at what moment this will be caught, and they will lose their post and have to step out onto the street. There is no such fear for the honest person—the person established in those aforementioned virtues has no fear. Even if they lose it there, they go elsewhere. Such a person does not need extra certificates. It is only a matter of inquiring, "What kind of person is he?" Many people expect certificates from others. For the one who lives a good life, certificates are not necessary. It is like that when one investigates a bit.

Now, on one hand, we said that there is no place for the good man in society. On the other hand, we hear in society that there is no man for a job. Even with such a large population, why is there no man for a job? There is no honest man. In these times, one can place trust in a machine, in iron machines, but one cannot place trust in humans—they have fallen to a very degraded state due to the lack of Dhamma. Therefore, we can understand that the Buddha's word is true even today. That is why it was said that that person has no fear concerning livelihood. There is always a place in society for such individuals.

So, it is the same regarding blame and insult. In these times, we hear of bribery, corruption, and so on. Regarding people who flourish, who flourish at the very top, suddenly a news item appears in big letters. After that, no one knows where that person is. Then, from that, it is seen that it is precisely due to the weakness of character strength that a person cannot go into the midst of an assembly. That is what is called the "fear of assemblies" (*parisasārajja-bhaya*).

Now, we can understand why the Buddha presented the thoughts and words of that noble disciple as a model for the world. That person thinks without fear: "I have no fear of those things. Why should I fear?" A strength of character arises in that person, the noble disciple, enabling them to say so. Then, there is no fear concerning livelihood, no fear concerning blame and insult, no fear of going into the midst of assemblies, no fear of death, and no fear of the evil destination. This is what we have to understand.

At the same time, let us consider. Now, this is about social service, or rather altruism. Nowadays, words like "social service" are used. Although we all talk about these things, the greatest parasite in society is envy. The opposite virtue of that is what is spoken of here as sympathetic joy (*muditā*). The sympathetic joy that parents develop regarding raising a child. Even the word *muditā* is not clear to many. Sympathetic joy (*muditā*) means generating happiness over the happiness of others. Or rather, seeing others in happiness, feeling happy in one's mind as if one has reached happiness oneself. This virtue is lacking in most people.

Therefore, they sometimes perform "altruistic service", but like puppeteers, they expect to keep that person under their control. They do not allow that person to rise on their own. It turns into envy: "The one who grew up eating and drinking from us—how can I give him an equal seat?" That question arises. The talk of equality (*samānattatā*) goes hand-in-hand with this. As long as envy exists, as long as that vice exists, that concept of altruism is not fulfilled.

Indeed, a counselor should possess—then we see—the four *Brahma-vihāras*, this power of sympathy (*saṅgaha-bala*), the bases of sympathy (*saṅgaha-vatthu*), and their implementation. Underlying that is the matter of the mind. Now, when we speak of the four *Brahma-vihāras*, we often show these at the family level. Now, the family is a unit of society. That is why the Buddha pointed out: *"Mātā yathā niyaṁ puttaṁ āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe; evampi sabbabhūtesu mānasaṁ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṁ"*. That is only an example. Just as a mother would protect her child at the risk of her life, radiate loving-kindness boundlessly to all living beings—boundlessly.

Then we can understand that a social worker develops the loving-kindness of the four *Brahma-vihāras* boundlessly. The virtue that was limited to a family is developed for the entire society. Why? Because to the Buddha, although we enclose ourselves by nation or tribe, to the Buddha's eye of wisdom, it appeared like a group of people being swept away into the ocean. These are all beings in the ocean of saṁsāra. Therefore, in whatever way, that wise noble disciple, having removed those vices like envy, thinks of the welfare of everyone. Within that, one's own spiritual progress is accomplished; that is why they are called *appamaññā* (boundless states) and exist as high states of jhāna. These are not merely words. If one makes an effort, they can be put into practice.

Everyone has heard of loving-kindness (*mettā*). How to develop the meditation on loving-kindness has also been shown by us in many ways, through various methods in these sermons and so on. So, in brief, if one considers that everyone desires happiness and dislikes suffering, after grasping that concept in the mind, the meditation that begins

with a word like "may they be well" is not limited to just one person. That is what is called "radiation" in the Dhamma. In developing the mind to the boundless state called *appamaññā*, it is described in the Dhamma regarding the meditation on loving-kindness as: *"ekaṁ disaṁ dutiyaṁ disaṁ tatiyaṁ disaṁ catutthaṁ disaṁ, uddhaṁ adho"*—one direction, the second direction, the third direction, the fourth direction, upward, downward, and so on, radiating the feeling "may they be happy" to the entire universe without any limit. Sometimes it is called the "dissolving of boundaries" (*sīmā-sambheda*), without any boundary, in a way that fences and hurdles are removed.

Just as this is stated regarding loving-kindness, it is also said regarding compassion—to develop it to a boundless state. It is the same for sympathetic joy (*muditā*). Then there is no room for envy. Envy is a social parasite. If a parasite grows on a tree, the tree is destroyed. Similarly, as everyone knows, there is competitiveness everywhere. Indeed, we consider examinations, competitions, and sports events as tools to measure skill, efficiency, and wholesome talent. There are competitions even in Dhamma schools. However, one must be careful of the envy that arises very subtly through these. One protects oneself through virtues like sympathetic joy (*muditā*). Then, it seems as though we cannot do without competition to measure talent. But what the talented person receives is not praise, but the hatred and envy of those who competed with them. Because of this, sometimes untimely death occurs. You are well aware that this has come down to the school level.

What was at the employment level—we do not need to speak of other things, of higher levels—what was at various levels of society has also entered the field of education. The one who scored more marks is sometimes killed by their own close associates. That kind of situation. Why? Although competitiveness is a necessity to test talent in the world, within that competition, instead of treating the winner as one who gave a new target to the world, as one who set a new record, and bending to praise them and give them a gift—instead of that virtue of sympathetic joy (*muditā*)—what exists in the world is pulling them down, destroying them, and reaching that place by wiping them out.

So then we must think of this concept of altruism shown by the Buddha. These indeed help the counselors of modern times. Counseling is not a livelihood to be exploited. It is by putting forward the inner wholesome energy, and at the same time, in a way that assists one's own spiritual progress. In an era where everything, every job, is subjugated to money, some do counseling but do not develop the true attitude within it. How can a blind person show the way to another?

Now, you have heard that when the Buddha speaks about the world, he describes the blind person, the one-eyed person, and the person with both eyes (*andha*, *eka-cakkhu*, *dvi-clakkhu*). The blind person has no understanding of welfare in this world, nor of welfare in the next world. They do not know their own welfare, nor do they know the welfare of others. In that way. But the one-eyed person, shortsightedly, with short-term plans only for the welfare of this world, achieves their own economic progress through devious means. One cannot support another with the squinted vision of a one-eyed person.

Having understood the good and bad of both this world and the next, the Buddha declared that when we think of this journey of saṁsāra, although people are born in various castes, nations, and places, they are engaged in this same journey of saṁsāra. Sometimes, they are people who were relatives and siblings to one another in saṁsāra, living together. If one has gained that kind of understanding, that person understands that pulling another down to reach that place leads to one's own ruin. The blind person cannot do it anyway. One cannot counsel another with the squinted vision of a one-eyed person either.

Accordingly, we must act in a way that brings welfare to both sides in both worlds—not only in both worlds but also in a way that brings Nibbāna. Now, here, the Buddha has analyzed these four bases of sympathy in this way: in a manner that brings prosperity in this world and Nibbāna at the end. From the perspective of showing equality according to the fruits of the path in the power of sympathy.

Accordingly, we must reflect. Therefore, these four bases of sympathy are an extremely valuable Dhamma in this dispensation. Many people might sometimes become indifferent to our sermons, thinking that we always speak about Nibbāna. But we must understand that the path to Nibbāna lies through these very courses of action. This cannot be separated from the Dhamma. Therefore, these four bases of sympathy and the four *Brahma-vihāras* lead to one's own spiritual progress as well as the progress of society.

Society is not something separate from the individual. The family is not something separated from the nation or society. Although it may be considered a unit, it is fine. It is the very deficiency here that affects society. It is the very progress here that affects society. Therefore, as individuals, the four *Brahma-vihāras* we learned from our parents, the four bases of sympathy we recognized through our parents, we must bring close to our lives. Before giving that aforementioned counseling to others, if one strengthens oneself with the power of sympathy, then indeed, one can rise from the mud pit and raise others from that state as well.

We must reflect that the Buddha did not preach this Dhamma to make everyone attain Nibbāna in a single day. People are at various levels. That is why the Buddha began with the talk on giving (*dāna-kathā*). Beginning with the talk on giving, he spoke of the graduated discourse (*anupubbi-kathā*): talk on giving (*dāna-kathā*), talk on virtue (*sīla-kathā*), talk on heaven (*sagga-kathā*). Telling the one who cannot do anything else to at least do that—to give *dāna*. To keep that virtue (*sīla*) at least when giving *dāna*. Next, having shown the benefits of giving and virtue, the "talk on heaven". Next, the danger of sensual pleasures (*kāmānaṁ ādīnava*). Gradually, just as one removes children from toys and lifts them higher, the Buddha lifted the world from that mundane level, showed the Four Noble Truths, and led them toward Nibbāna.

In the same way, at the beginning of this year, we too must think: may this journey starting with these four bases of sympathy, this journey starting with the four *Brahma-vihāras*, lead to the realization of Nibbāna at some point. If the benefits of hearing this

sermon help you in your reflections, meditations, and in calming the mind, utilizing those wholesome energies, making an effort in this very life, and through the association of spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), succeeding in Dhamma practice and meditation, may this Dhamma sermon assist in realizing the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the fruits of the path: Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returner (*Sakadāgāmī*), Non-returner (*Anāgāmī*), and Arahantship!

While wishing so, may whatever living beings there are in the universe—from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven—who expect the benefits of hearing the Dhamma and preaching the Dhamma, by rejoicing in this, be pacified by the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi! With this wish, recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #35

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Uṭṭhānenappamādena, saññamena damena ca;

Dīpaṁ kayirātha medhāvī, yaṁ ogho nābhikīrati.

From:

Verse 25 from the Appamādavagga (Chapter on Heedfulness) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

At times there can be a vast difference between a person's socially accepted level of intelligence and their samsaric level of intelligence. Even within an individual who is marginalized according to conventional social examinations and tests, deep understandings and special mental strengths developed through samsara may lie hidden. If such a person receives the proper association of a good spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) and strives with unyielding, unremitting effort, they can unearth wondrous abilities from within themselves. A fine illustration of this is revealed in the background story of the verse we have chosen as our theme today.

In the city of Rājagaha, the young daughter of a certain wealthy merchant family was kept by her parents on the seventh floor of a mansion for her protection. However, she developed an intimate relationship with her own male servant and ran away from the merchant's mansion. They went to live in another province, living in disguise. While living like this, when she was close to giving birth to her first child, the merchant's daughter said to her husband, "Giving birth in a place where there are no relatives is very troublesome. Let us go to my parents." But this husband was afraid to go, thinking, "If I go, they will kill me." Yet, he did not voice this. Instead, he kept putting it off, saying, "Let us go tomorrow, let us go tomorrow." The merchant's daughter understood this. Therefore, when her husband was away, she informed the neighbors, tidied up the house, and departed. After the husband returned home, he learned of this from the neighbors and went in pursuit of her. He met her along the way, and she gave birth to the

child right there on the road. Thereafter, the two of them decided, "Now let us go back to our home." Because the child was born on the road (*pantha*), they named him "Panthaka."

While they were living back at home, when the time came for her to have her second child, the merchant's daughter again thought that she must go to meet her parents. Since her husband would not allow it, she set off alone. The husband pursued her as before and met her. It is mentioned that on this occasion, too, the child was born right on the road. Since both were born on the road, both had to be named "Panthaka." Therefore, the first-born child was called "Mahāpanthaka" (Panthaka the Elder), and the second child was called "Cūḷapanthaka" (Panthaka the Younger). While the two children, thus named, were growing up, Mahāpanthaka, while playing with his friends, heard them talk about their grandfathers, uncles, and relatives. He came and asked his mother, "Do we not have relatives? Do we not have grandfathers?" Then the mother said, "We have them in the city of Rājagaha." When she explained that the merchant and his wife of that merchant clan were their relatives, he asked, "Why do we not go there?" She could not answer that question. However, the child kept asking repeatedly, "Why do we not go there?" Finally, unable to avoid it, the merchant's daughter told her husband, "I cannot escape these children because of this question; let us take the two of them. After all, my parents are not going to eat us alive, are they?" They discussed it in this way. The husband said, "I cannot go, but I will devise some means." Then, the two of them set off with the two children. They went and stayed at a rest house for travelers near the gate of the city of Rājagaha, and sent a message to the merchant's mansion, saying that their daughter had arrived with the two children. But the merchant thought, "There is no one in this samsara who has not been our child. Yet, these two have brought great disgrace upon us. Therefore, they need not come to us. Send only the two children to us." He sent a message, along with wealth, saying, "Take this wealth, as much as you need, and live wherever you wish. Send only the two children here." In this manner, the two children were sent to the merchant.

Now, this merchant used to go regularly to see the Blessed One and listen to the Dhamma. The child Mahāpanthaka also went with him. As he listened to the Dhamma repeatedly, this child felt the desire to ordain. So, he said to his grandfather, "Please! If you would give me permission, I would like to ordain." "Oh! I would prefer your ordaining over everyone else in the entire world ordaining!" said the grandfather, and took him to the Blessed One. "This grandson of mine wishes to ordain," he told the Blessed One. The Blessed One also assigned a certain monk to ordain the boy Mahāpanthaka. Thus, he ordained, received higher ordination, learned the Dhamma, practiced meditation, and attained Arahantship. Having attained Arahantship, he thought, "Ah! How wonderful it would be if I could also give the bliss of ordination, the bliss of absorption (*jhāna*), and the bliss of fruition (*phala*) to my younger brother, Cūḷapanthaka." One day, he went to the merchant's mansion and said, "O Merchant, if you permit, I shall ordain Cūḷapanthaka." "Oh, very well. I have no objection at all," said the grandfather, granting permission. Thus, he took Cūḷapanthaka and ordained him.

Next, he assigned a verse to the young monk Cūḷapanthaka to memorize and recite. The verse was highly beautiful, of a kind suited for young children. Indeed, it pertained to the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), carrying a meaning that inspires faith (*saddhā*) in the Blessed One:

Padumaṃ yathā kokanadaṃ sugandhaṃ

pāto siyā aṅgīrasaṃ passa virocamānaṃ

tapantamādityamivantalikkhe

Even when judged by its rhythm, it seems easy to memorize. Yet, for some reason, the young monk Cūḷapanthaka could not memorize it; he simply could not commit this verse to memory. When he memorized the first line and moved on to the second, he would forget the first line. In this manner, he tried to memorize it for four whole months, but failed. The reason for this is given as a past karma. In the past, during the time of Kassapa Buddha, this young monk Cūḷapanthaka had been a highly intelligent monk. On an occasion when an incompetent monk in the group was reciting his lessons, he had mocked and humiliated him for his inability to memorize. Consequently, that monk eventually gave up reciting and studying altogether. It is shown that due to that unwholesome karma, in this life, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka was unable to memorize even such a small verse for four whole months. Therefore, Ven. Mahāpanthaka thought, "Now, if he cannot memorize even this single verse, what is the use?" He called Ven. Cūḷapanthaka and said, "Cūḷapanthaka, if you cannot memorize this small verse in four months, how will you complete your monkhood? How will you become an Arahant? It is better for you to go home now." He made him cry. However, by that time, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka had developed a great love for the monastic life. He did not wish to go home; he was deeply attached to the life of a monk.

Now, while things were in this state, it is mentioned—though most of these events usually took place at the Veḷuvana monastery—that on this occasion, the Blessed One was residing in the Mango Grove of the physician Jīvaka. Thus, one day—perhaps on this very day—physician Jīvaka, having visited the Blessed One and listened to the Dhamma, approached Ven. Mahāpanthaka. Why? Because by then, Ven. Mahāpanthaka held a certain office among the Sangha. What was that office? It is called the *bhattuddesaka* (distributor of meals). What is the meaning of that office? When there is a large number of monks and lay devotees come requesting fifty or a hundred monks for an alms-giving, it is this monk who selects and sends the monks according to their turn. Ven. Mahāpanthaka held this office. Ven. Mahāpanthaka asked physician Jīvaka how many monks were needed. Jīvaka replied that he invited the entire Sangha, led by the Buddha. He asked how many monks were residing there. When told there were five hundred monks, physician Jīvaka said, "I invite them all." At that, Ven. Mahāpanthaka said, "This young monk Cūḷapanthaka has no skill in learning. Setting him aside, I give permission to invite the rest." The young monk overheard this. Thinking, "It seems Ven. Mahāpanthaka has given up on me. I am forced to go home. I must go home and at least

make merit by giving alms," the young monk prepared to return home the following morning and set off.

That morning, when the Blessed One entered the attainment of great compassion (*mahā-karuṇā-samāpatti*) and surveyed the world, he saw Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. What did the Blessed One do then? He was walking up and down near the gate on the path Cūḷapanthaka was taking. When Ven. Cūḷapanthaka saw the Blessed One, paid homage, and stood to one side, the Blessed One asked, "What is it, Cūḷapanthaka, at this hour? Where are you going?" He replied, "My elder brother, Ven. Mahāpanthaka, is expelling me from the monastery, saying I am incompetent. Therefore, I am going home." Then the Blessed One said, "Cūḷapanthaka, does your ordination not belong to me? When your elder brother told you to leave, why did you not come to me? Come to me." Saying this, he stroked his head, took him along, and had him sit near the Blessed One's Fragrant Chamber (*gandha-kuṭi*). Having had him sit down, it is said he created a piece of cloth through psychic power. In any case, placing a clean white piece of cloth in his hand, he said, "Cūḷapanthaka, face the rising sun and rub this piece of cloth while repeating: '*Rajo haraṇaṃ, rajo haraṇaṃ*' (removal of dirt, removal of dirt)." He assigned him this task, telling him to rub this white cloth while repeating "removal of dirt, removal of dirt."

By that time, the group arriving to conduct them to the alms-giving arrived. Thus, the Blessed One and the entire Sangha proceeded to the house of physician Jīvaka for the alms meal. What happened next is recounted. Physician Jīvaka poured the water of dedication over the Blessed One's hands and prepared to offer the alms food. However, the Blessed One covered his bowl with his hand. When he covered his bowl with his hand, physician Jīvaka inquired about the reason. The Blessed One said, "Are there not still monks left at the monastery?" Ven. Mahāpanthaka replied, "There are no monks left, Venerable Sir." When the Blessed One repeated that there were, physician Jīvaka sent a servant to go and see.

By the time the servant went, what had occurred? In the meantime, another event had taken place. As Ven. Cūḷapanthaka was rubbing and rubbing that cloth, he noticed that it was becoming dirty. He was rubbing it with the thought, "I am removing the dirt," yet it was becoming soiled. Then he began to contemplate: "This cloth became soiled because of the impurity of my own body. Alas! *Aniccā vata saṅkhārā*—impermanent / inconstant indeed are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity!" Reflecting on the nature of preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*) in this way, his mind turned towards insight (*vipassanā*). At that very moment, the Blessed One, while seated at the house of the alms-giving, projected his aura and admonished Ven. Cūḷapanthaka with a verse. He declared: "Cūḷapanthaka, it is not merely the dirt on your body; within the mind, too, there are impurities called lust, hatred, and delusion. Abandon those!"—proclaiming these verses as if through psychic power. Relying on this, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka developed insight (*vipassanā*) and became a great Arahant possessing the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*).

Thus, as mentioned before, when the Blessed One covered his bowl with his hand, Ven. Mahāpanthaka insisted, "There are no monks at the monastery." But the Blessed One

asserted that there were. It was to resolve this that physician Jīvaka sent a servant. When the servant arrived, the monastery was filled with monks. Some monks were sewing robes, some were dyeing robes, some were reciting texts—there resided a thousand monks, each having a different appearance. What was the reason for this? Ven. Cūḷapanthaka was observing everything that was happening. By now, he possessed direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). He saw with his divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) that Ven. Mahāpanthaka was saying there were no monks, while the Blessed One was saying there were. Thinking, "I shall show that I am here," he created them—he created those thousand monks. The servant could not understand it. He returned and said, "There are about a thousand monks." The Blessed One then said, "Go back and say, 'The Teacher summons Ven. Cūḷapanthaka.'" When the servant went back a second time and said this, all those thousand monks created through psychic power declared, "I am Cūḷapanthaka, I am Cūḷapanthaka!" Unable to resolve this, the servant returned and reported it. Then the Blessed One said, "In that case, hold the hand of the monk who first says 'I am Cūḷapanthaka.' The others will then vanish." The messenger went back and did exactly as told. Thereupon, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka accompanied the messenger back. After arriving, when the alms meal was finished, the Buddha assigned the delivery of the appreciation of the meal (*anumodanā*) to Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. Ven. Cūḷapanthaka, now a great Arahant possessing direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), delivered that sermon in an exceptionally eloquent manner.

This event was so wondrous that the monks, on several occasions, discussed the natural principle (*dhammatā*) within it. That is to say, Ven. Mahāpanthaka had deemed him incompetent and treated him as an unsuitable person (*abhavya*) in this Dispensation—to put it bluntly, like an unfortunate wretch. Indeed, if one cannot memorize a single verse in four months, does it not seem like an unfortunate wretch? For this reason, regarding him as unsuitable and as someone who could achieve nothing in this Dispensation, Ven. Mahāpanthaka had prepared to send him home. It is mentioned that the Sangha spoke several times in the Dhamma assembly about this wondrous fact: how such a person, through the great compassion and marvellous skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*) of the Buddha, became an Arahant endowed with the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) within a single morning. On certain occasions, the Buddha demonstrated through Jātaka stories that in the past, too, he had assisted Cūḷapanthaka in various instances.

What is particularly important regarding this Dhamma is that on one occasion, while the monks were discussing this very topic, they remarked that it was because the young monk Cūḷapanthaka did not abandon his efforts and acted with energetic strive, that he obtained the help of the Blessed One and attained such a state so rapidly within a single morning. Upon hearing this conversation, the Blessed One declared, "So it is, monks. If anyone in this Dispensation acts without negligence (*appamāda*) and with energetic strive (*uṭṭhāna-vīriya*), they are capable of attaining their own Nibbāna." He then uttered the Dhamma verse we chose as our theme earlier:

Uṭṭhānen'appamādena

saññamena damena ca

dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī

yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati

"By energetic strive (*uṭṭhāna*), by diligence (*appamāda*)"—with unyielding energy and the practice of diligence—"and by restraint and self-control (*saññamena damena ca*)"—with the restraint developed through virtues like morality, and with sensory control—the wise person (*medhāvī*) builds an island that cannot be swept away by those sweeping floods. Here, "island" refers to Nibbāna. "Floods" (*ogha*) mean the sweeping currents. These refer to the mental defilement floods of sensual desire (*kāmoghā*), becoming / existence (*bhavoghā*), views (*diṭṭhoghā*), and ignorance (*avijjoghā*). The island is Nibbāna—a place where one does not get caught in these defilement floods that sweep beings along in samsara, and where one can remain safe from them. The reason "island" is a name for Nibbāna is that it represents the extinguishment enjoyed in the state of the concentration of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*). The Buddha expounded this Dhamma verse containing this deep meaning: that one attains that very state.

Briefly, that is the summary of the story. Next, let us try to bring out the Dhamma points we can extract from this, which can also help us in our own lives.

Now, as we said, one's samsaric level of intelligence cannot be measured by conventional social examinations, tests, and so forth. Certain strengths may exist, and if one receives the association of a good spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) when the opportunity arises, those strengths can be brought out. A perfect example of this is how Ven. Cūḷapanthaka—whom Ven. Mahāpanthaka had failed in this "examination of Nibbāna," deemed unsuitable, and prepared to send home—attained the supreme state in a very short time, within a single morning, due to the help of the Buddha as his good spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) and his great compassion. From this, we see that whatever intelligence tests, interviews, examinations, and so forth we devise in this world cannot reveal a person's true worth. Highly valuable strengths can lie embedded within.

Furthermore, this story reveals that after the young monk Ven. Cūḷapanthaka attained that state, he played a little joke on his elder brother. He made a certain playful tease toward Ven. Mahāpanthaka. What was this joke? We can say that this joke was a way of teaching a certain lesson. Now, we know that in this society too, there are many—especially some scholars nowadays—who bring forward the concept of triple-root rebirth (*tihetuka-paṭisandhi*) to discourage many faithful people who are striving for Nibbāna. It is as if they are failing them in the exam beforehand and sending them home. Many seem to be doing exactly that kind of thing. Something similar to that happened here from Ven. Mahāpanthaka as well. In response, Cūḷapanthaka taught Ven. Mahāpanthaka a lesson by showing him a monastery filled with a thousand monks. This means that one cannot marginalize someone so abruptly. Valuable strengths can exist within a person.

Thus, we can describe this as a kind of "playfulness within the Dispensation" (*sāsanika huratalayak*).

Next, alongside that, a highly valuable point revealed by this story is the Buddha's quality of great compassion (*mahā-karuṇā*). Along with this quality of great compassion, the Buddha himself declares on certain occasions, "Monks, I have compassion (*anukampā*) for you." "There is compassion in me for you." We know, and we have heard, that the Buddha had attained a state, Nibbāna, that is unshakable by the eight worldly conditions. However, due to the power of the perfections (*pāramī*) the Buddha fulfilled over a long period, any perturbation or tremor in the thoughts and feelings of those in the world who deserve compassion and mercy is registered in the Buddha's mind. The special occasion when this is felt is indeed that attainment of great compassion (*mahā-karuṇā-samāpatti*). Today, you devotees might think of various modern instruments—even though these are not perfect analogies or equivalents. In whatever manner, when the Buddha enters the attainment of great compassion, the tremor of those trembling hearts that deserve compassion is captured by the Buddha's mind.

Similarly, when reflecting on that event, what goes hand-in-hand with the Buddha's great compassion, with that very sympathy, is the skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*) developed through wisdom. He devises a certain method. The quality known as *purisa-damma-sārathī* (charioteer of tameable men) is a special attribute of the Blessed One; he possesses a unique power to discipline various individuals and direct them to Nibbāna. The Buddha applies whichever method is required according to the situation. Here, too, let us think a little about Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. Now, when a young child in a home is driven out without even being given food, what great grief and helplessness would arise in that child's heart? A similar thing happened to Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. It was Ven. Mahāpanthaka who had ordained him—his own elder brother. After bringing him from home and ordaining him, he finally failed him, deemed him unsuitable, and on top of that, excluded him from the invitation to the alms-giving. What immense pain must have arisen in Ven. Cūḷapanthaka's young heart?

Now, we know how a mother would act in such a situation. Just as a mother would stroke her child's head and console him, saying, "Even if your elder brother drove you away, my son, why did you not come to me? Why did you not come and tell me?", the Buddha too, on that occasion, stroked Ven. Cūḷapanthaka's head and comforted the young monk, saying, "Come, come to my Fragrant Chamber. After all, does your ordination not belong to me? It does not belong to Mahāpanthaka, does it?" In this instance, we clearly see that quality of great compassion as well as the knowledge of skillful means (*upāya-kosalla-ñāṇa*). Had there been even a slight delay, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka would have returned home. However, when the Buddha came to the gate before that, questioned him, and consoled him, what great courage must have filled that young head upon being touched by his sacred hand? There is a certain natural principle (*dhammatā*) in this as well. It is not generally mentioned that the Buddha stroked heads like that. He did not even stroke the head of young Ven. Rāhula. Prince Rāhula followed him, hanging on to him, yet he did not stroke his head even though he followed him so.

But on this occasion, he stroked his head. There is a deep natural principle (*dhammatā*) within this. This will be revealed further as we proceed. So, he acted exactly like a mother on that occasion. We can understand the courage derived from that. Out of his sheer faith (*saddhā*) and reverence, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka might have previously thought of the Buddha as someone so exalted that one could not even go near him, let alone approach him closely. Ven. Cūḷapanthaka must have thought, "The Blessed One is no ordinary person; he is someone we cannot even approach." Yet, when the Buddha came right up to him, stroked his head, and said, "Come to my chamber," what immense courage must have arisen in that young monk?

Next, in the manner described, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka, relying on that courage, obediently kept rubbing that cloth just as the Buddha had instructed. All the other monks had gone to the house of the alms-giving. Ven. Cūḷapanthaka did not even have an alms meal. Even without food, he engaged in that meditation diligently, with energetic strive (*uṭṭhāna-vīriya*), with unremitting effort, and with restraint and self-control, exactly as the Buddha had directed.

When considering that meditation, there is a certain natural principle (*dhammatā*) in it as well. Devotees, in certain Dhamma stories, there is a wondrous depth in the combination and fitting together of events. Usually, when we narrate a story, we just recount the sequence of events without tending to analyze them. However, when we reflect calmly, we see a wondrous connection within every single event.

Two karmic results (*kamma-vipāka*) are mentioned regarding Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. One is a bad karma. What was that bad karma? During the time of Kassapa Buddha, he had mocked and made fun of a monk who was incompetent in learning. Because of that, he was unable to memorize that verse. Next, there is also a good side. It is explained like this: How did he attain Arahantship so quickly through the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) of that piece of cloth? In the past, when he was a king, while touring the city—we can assume he was on elephant-back—which means he must have traveled around the city during the daytime to inspect it—while making this tour, due to the intense heat of the sun, sweat poured from his forehead. He wiped his forehead with a clean white cloth, something like a handkerchief, that was nearby. After wiping his forehead, when he looked at it, he saw that the piece of cloth had become soiled. Even though he was a king, perhaps riding on an elephant, his mind turned toward insight (*vipassanā*): "*Aniccā vata saṅkhārā*—impermanent / inconstant indeed are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity! Every preparation / formation / volitional activity is impermanent / inconstant in this way. No matter what state one is in, this is the nature of the body." Thus, his mind turned toward insight (*vipassanā*). It was to connect with that mind which had turned toward insight (*vipassanā*) that the Blessed One, as mentioned, gave him a clean white cloth and told him to face the sun and repeat "*rajo haraṇaṃ, rajo haraṇaṃ*."

Nowadays, if we think about it, some people say that lay devotees should only be given sermons necessary to develop their businesses and so forth, and that it is not worthwhile to speak to them about insight (*vipassanā*). They claim that insight (*vipassanā*) is

something meant only for monks meditating alone in the forests, and that lay devotees do not need it. Now, here is an excellent example. In the past, even though Cūḷapanthaka lived as a king—no matter that he was a king, sweat still poured, for the natural principle (*dhammatā*) is just the same—he did not let that sweat go to waste. Nowadays, perhaps when sweat flows, we merely wipe it with a handkerchief and put it in our pocket. However, in the past, that king directed that sweat toward insight (*vipassanā*); he credited it to insight (*vipassanā*); he deposited it into insight (*vipassanā*). It was that very thought of insight (*vipassanā*) credited to his account that ultimately helped him attain Arahantship. There is a good lesson there too. Through this, we see that we should make even the saliva we spit out in our daily lives support our attainment of Nibbāna. How do we make the flowing sweat support Nibbāna? By contemplating that the nature of preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*) is such, in accordance with the Three Characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) taught by the Buddha. If even for a single moment a tremor, a shock, or a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding the true state of the world arises, it accumulates automatically. If at some point one hopes for Nibbāna, that experience might even present itself as a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). A wondrous natural principle (*dhammatā*) of this kind is seen here.

Thus, we can gather the factors that helped Ven. Cūḷapanthaka attain Arahantship from this. This meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) is, in truth, the dirt on a white cloth. When one gazes at a white cloth for a long time, absorption (*jhāna*) can arise through it, such as in the form of a *kasiṇa* (meditative device). Then, using that absorption as a basis, the insight (*vipassanā*) is developed precisely on that dirt we mentioned. While looking at the white piece of cloth and repeating "*rajo haraṇaṃ, rajo haraṇaṃ*," a wondrous thing occurred within a single mealtime. If we try to understand how a young monk who could not memorize a verse, without any other instruction, passed all stages of absorption (*jhāna*), obtained the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), and reached the highest peak of insight (*vipassanā*) to become an Arahant, we see that it may lie within the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) given by the Buddha itself. He developed insight (*vipassanā*) based on tranquility (*samatha*), or based on absorption (*jhāna*). That white color supported tranquility (*samatha*), but it was that moment of soiling which served as the cause for insight (*vipassanā*).

If we dive deeper into this, another factor that supported this was, for whatever reason, the verse Ven. Mahāpanthaka had given him to memorize. Even if you, devotees, cannot memorize it, we mentioned that it is a highly beautiful verse. There is a certain natural principle (*dhammatā*) in that verse as well. For one thing, what is expressed in that verse inspires a wondrous faith (*saddhā*) in the Blessed One. It is a truly beautiful verse:

Padumaṃ yathā kokanadaṃ sugandhaṃ

pāto siyā aṅgīrasaṃ passa virocamānaṃ

tapantamādityamivantalikkhe

"Just as there is a fragrant red lotus blossomed in the morning, even so..." This is a simile applied to the Buddha. He is like a fragrant red lotus blossomed in the morning. Next, what is the other simile? "*Tapantamādityamivantalikkhe*"—like the sun shining in the sky. Look at the Blessed One, Aṅgīrasa, who is of such characteristics, who is so exceedingly magnificent: "*Aṅgīrasaṃ passa virocamānaṃ*"—"Behold the radiant Aṅgīrasa Buddha!" "Behold the radiant Aṅgīrasa Buddha, who is like a fragrant red lotus fully blossomed in the morning, and who shines like the sun glowing in the sky." This is the very verse given to the young monk Cūḷapanthaka to memorize. Although he could not memorize it, the meaning must have struck his heart. Through that, recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) and faith (*saddhā*) in the Blessed One must have grown. So, that too did not go to waste. On that very background, through that very attraction, the Buddha established him.

Next, if we reflect a little, there is something more there. When the Blessed One handed him the cloth and told him to meditate facing the sun, normally a person would not like that. Even nowadays, those who meditate look for highly comfortable places. But here, as the sun rises, sweat flows. This is a difficult thing. Yet, as expressed in the verse, indeed, even for a lotus to blossom, it needs sunlight; it blossoms by looking toward the sunlight. Similarly, due to the young monk Cūḷapanthaka's faith (*saddhā*) in the Blessed One—where the Blessed One is compared to the sun, like the shining sun—and just as the lotus blossoms by looking at the shining sun, so did his mind open. Perhaps no one interprets it in this way. Yet, when we contemplate a bit more deeply, it comes to light like this. In whatever manner, that verse too must have helped to complete that meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

With unremitting effort and strive, obedient to the Buddha's word, he rubbed the cloth while facing the sun. Through this, his past experience from his life as a king became connected to it. If there was any deficiency in it, the Buddha stroked his head to complete it. When the touch of the Buddha's sacred hand met his forehead, that too was completed. Every element necessary for that thought of insight (*vipassanā*) that arose in the past was present here to assist Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. They came together in one way or another. Although he could not memorize that verse for four months, its meaning must have struck his heart: the Buddha is like the sun, and the sun's light is necessary for a lotus to blossom. Thus, along with the other factors—the cloth and the dirt—all these came together, and it was through this combination that Cūḷapanthaka attained Nibbāna so quickly. We must think that it is the same for anyone. In this long samsara, as said before, if we credit even a bit of spat-out saliva to Nibbāna, if we credit the sweat that flows away to Nibbāna, we will receive its ultimate benefit some day. Thus, a profound depth is seen even within the events of this story.

Next, it is the same with the Buddha's quality of great compassion and his knowledge of skillful means. It is specifically mentioned that the Blessed One possesses a wondrous wisdom of a kind not shared by other disciples. A knowledge regarding the past karmas of various beings. This is called the knowledge of the inclinations and underlying tendencies of beings (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*). "Inclination" (*āsaya*), generally speaking, is

the place where an animal lies down. "Underlying tendency" (*anusaya*) refers to certain specific mental states that lie latent deep within the mind. All of these are captured by the Buddha, by his Buddha-knowledge. Thus, understanding that "in the past, this person was in such-and-such states and did such-and-such things, and through those, these kinds of mental energies lie embedded within the mind," the Buddha acts in that manner. The ordinary world cannot comprehend this. Ordinarily, one might think: why did the Blessed One stroke Ven. Cūḷapanthaka's head? Why, when there was so much work to do, did he come out to the path and walk up and down? Yet, all of these fit together in a wondrous way. These were not given by the Blessed One; they are connected to both the good and bad deeds done by Ven. Cūḷapanthaka in samsara. It was due to the bad karma that he had to go home, and that such great grief arose. His brother, by failing him, had caused him to return home, missing the alms-giving.

Next, the skillful method the Blessed One applied was intended to draw the attention of the monks to this wondrous event. Everyone must have been waiting to eat the alms meal, but the eating was delayed. A servant was sent several times to check whether Ven. Cūḷapanthaka was there or not before eating. Through this, a highly valuable natural principle (*dhammatā*) was revealed to us. That is the most wondrous thing. Precisely because it was a wondrous matter, as we see from the books, the monks spoke about it repeatedly. In this day and age too, we must indeed think about such things repeatedly, because, as mentioned, some people possess the attitude of completely failing others based on conventional examinations and tests, and trying to send them home. Otherwise, as mentioned, the view is spread that because one lacks a triple-root rebirth (*tihetuka-paṭisandhi*) one is unsuitable (*abhavya*) and should not strive in insight (*vipassanā*) and so forth; such opinions spread due to this very kind of weakness. Therefore, as far as stories go, this is an excellent story to inspire courage in everyone.

Next, there is the verse the Buddha preached at the end. In truth, there are numerous points related to the Dhamma in it:

Uṭṭhānen'appamādena

saññamena damena ca

dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī

yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati

Most often, in the Dhammapada verses, not a single word can be cast aside. It is truly wondrous; if one goes deep into each and every word, there is enough material to write a massive book. Thus, several points are mentioned here. We already stated the meaning earlier: the factors mentioned here are those that assist in the attainment of Nibbāna:

"*Uṭṭhānen'appamādena damena ca*"

Uṭṭhāna means unremitting effort. One must rise up every time one falls. That is how success is achieved; that is the path to success. Here too, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka's mind had

fallen. He was about to leave, thinking, "Now I must go home and at least make merit by giving alms." But the Buddha inspired his effort; he encouraged him. So much so, that the touch of that sacred hand might have been a blessing that exhausted his karmic momentum. In whatever manner, encouraged by it and obedient to the Buddha's word, he meditated in that way. Everyone else had gone to the house of the alms-giving. In the empty monastery, in the Mango Grove, this young monk Cūḷapanthaka meditated. It is precisely to that that "unyielding effort" refers. "*Appamādena*"—diligently, he meditated, disregarding even food. Next, "*damena ca*"—and by self-control; restraint, being obedient to the Buddha's word. It was precisely because he was attached to virtues like morality (*sīla*) that he did not wish to go home. Usually, some young monks are constantly waiting for the moment to go home; there are those who think to that extent, their minds always on home. But this young monk did not wish to go home. It was only when there was absolutely no other choice that he prepared to leave. From this, we see that he had already developed those virtues of restraint and self-control (*sañyama, dama*) to some degree by then. It was particularly because he practiced them obediently in a way that supported Nibbāna that we have "*uṭṭhānen'appamādena saññamena damena ca*."

Next, "*medhāvī*" means the person who is wise from the perspective of Nibbāna. Nowadays, there are various words to describe a wise person. Not only words, but various other things exist too. You, devotees, know that there are letters (academic titles) used to identify an educated person or a scholar. There is also a socially accepted method of appearing as a scholar through degrees obtained by passing examinations at the mundane level. However, the word "*medhāvī*" is special. In the Dhamma, *medhā* is defined as "*dhammoja-paññā*"—wisdom containing the essence/nutriment of the Dhamma. Wisdom containing the essence/nutriment that is the Dhamma. "Essence/nutriment" (*oja*) means wetness or moisture. If we state its opposite, it is dry, arid. The wisdom of most other people is a dry wisdom; virtues like faith (*saddhā*) are not present there. "*Dhammoja*" means wisdom having the essence/nutriment that is the Dhamma. It is such a person who is called "*medhāvī*." Most of the educated people of today are not fit to attain that state. Yet, here Ven. Cūḷapanthaka was called "*medhāvī*," even though he could not properly memorize a single verse despite studying it for four months. Nowadays, if one is to pass an exam, one must indeed memorize. Although he was unable to do so, the Buddha described him as "*medhāvī*." So, what does such a wise person do?

Dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī

yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati

The meaning is that he makes an island that is not overwhelmed by the fierce torrents, that is not swept away by the fierce torrents.

When the word "island" is used, there are those who take it upside down as well. Giving Nibbāna the name "island," "cave," and various other names have been shown regarding Nibbāna. Merely by that, some people think that Nibbāna is some hidden place, a

mystical place we would like to call a place, within this very becoming (*bhava*). Some people think so. To that extent, the lust for becoming (*bhava-rāga*) is strong within beings. They want to end the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra, but they also want to remain in saṁsāra. This kind of thing is present here. That is how many scholars explain this Nibbāna. They use even this word "island" to support such explanations. There is a concept regarding Nibbāna that the Buddha has said to leave the ocean of saṁsāra, go to the island called Nibbāna, and remain eternally in an eternal, deathless (*ajara-mara*), permanent, festive, supremely beautiful place. But we should not misunderstand. Here, this "island" is a state of this mind that is not swept away by saṁsāric beings. What is meant here is a liberation of the mind (*ceto-vimutti*). It is the liberation of the fruit of Arahantship. That is to say, every being in saṁsāra is swept away by the fierce torrent of sensuality (*kāmogha*). Next, they cling to becoming (*bhava*), to existence. Whatever kind of existence it may be. Now, if you ask a patient in a hospital if they want to die, they say no. Even if there are worms crawling in their eyes, they prefer existence. In that manner, a wonderful desire for existence exists within this world. So, they are pulled towards it. Next, views (*diṭṭhi*). They hold various views, various wrong views. They create wrong feelings and philosophies of life. Next, ignorance (*avijjā*). Ignorance is said to be not knowing. Briefly considered, ignorance is normally explained in books as not knowing the Four Noble Truths. They do not know that saṁsāra is suffering (*dukkha*). They do not know that the cause of that suffering is craving (*taṇhā*). They do not know that the calming of craving is Nibbāna. They do not know that the path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path.

But we can understand it in another way too. Not knowing means the tendency of forgetting this nature of saṁsāric suffering. It is very easily forgotten by beings. Even if one suffers extremely severe suffering in a life in this saṁsāra, being crushed and dying in fires in a highly terrifying and horrifying manner, because of the desire for becoming (*bhava*), that suffering, those experiences, are quickly forgotten. Next, just as that suffering is forgotten, the fact that craving (*taṇhā*) is the cause of that suffering is also forgotten. Next, the fact that the place where that craving is absent is the greatest solace is also forgotten. Next, the fact that to obtain this solace, a complete transformation of our personality must take place within our minds in eight steps—through the eight steps of the Noble Eightfold Path—is also forgotten. Not only Ven. Cūla Panthaka, but all of us in this saṁsāra forget these four lines. It is because we have been unable to memorize these four lines that we have traveled in saṁsāra for this long. If a person memorizes these four lines in exact order, that person attains the paths and fruits.

Then, this saṁsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*), the cause of this is craving (*taṇhā*), the calming of this craving is the happiness in the world, and to do this, a complete transformation of life must occur through the Noble Eightfold Path, starting with right view and ending with right concentration, as a process of development and cultivation within us—in the form of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration—a complete transformation of the behavior of mind, body, and speech must occur. It is due to forgetting these four lines that we have traveled in saṁsāra for this long. Therefore, what

happens in attaining the paths and fruits is that through the powerful concentration of all eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path arising in a single mind-moment—through the path-concentration—all four facts become clear at once. It is exactly like memorizing the stanza. Why is that? Now, we know that when a lamp is lit, several things happen simultaneously. At every moment of lighting, the wick burns. To some extent, the oil is consumed. Light spreads. Darkness is destroyed. In the same way is this truth. The moment of realizing the Four Noble Truths is described by a similar simile. It is said that when one obtains that path-mind (*magga-citta*) and realizes the Four Noble Truths, all four are grasped together. Why? Because to realize that this entire existence is suffering, one must indeed see the craving underlying it completely. On one hand, suffering ceases. craving is also worn away. Through that, Arahantship, Nibbāna, which is the light, spreads. A certain development must take place within for this. The Noble Eightfold Path. Only if the lamp is lit does that light spread and darkness vanish. This is what is meant by saying that the Four Noble Truths are directly realized by someone.

Direct realization is not something like learning from books. At that moment, at the moment of attaining the paths and fruits, at the moment of becoming an Arahant, the word of the Buddha is directly realized. This entire saṁsāric existence, or the five aggregates—the five aggregates called form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations(*saṅkhāra*), and *consciousness* (*viññāṇa*)—is indeed suffering. The fact that it is suffering is understood by realizing the conditioned nature of these Preparations. Here, there is nothing to be taken as "I" or "mine". What is here is a heap of Preparations, a heap of things that arise and cease. A heap of Preparationsis the feeling. Similarly, what cultivates these, what urges them to increase, is craving—the desire that is never satisfied, the desire for pleasure, the desire for existence/becoming, and so forth. In that manner, realization is completed when all eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are fulfilled and that path arises directly and uprightly in a single mind. At that moment. That is called the path-mind (*magga-citta*). That is an extremely powerful concentration. It is through that powerful concentration that the levels of defilements are cut off, and if there is any mental energy, any force, in our mental continuities that carries on the saṁsāric existence as shown in the Dhamma, they are worn away through that powerful concentration. Through that realization. That is why it is said that upon attaining Stream-entry, it is limited to seven births; upon attaining Once-returning, one comes to this world only once more; upon attaining Non-returning, one ends suffering in the Brahma world itself without returning to this world; and upon attaining Arahantship, the nature that gives rise to rebirth is destroyed, and birth (*jāti*) is ended completely. If there are any levels of defilements in this mental continuity that support another birth, things that lie dormant as *underlying tendencies* (*anusaya*), they are all dried up—that is the meaning. The moment when the Four Noble Truths are properly understood and directly realized. That state is what is called the "island" here. That is the liberation of the mind.

Now, the moment of entering the attainment of fruit (*phala-samāpatti*) is like the moment of standing on the island that the Arahants have obtained, found, and built. Detached from the world. That state is indeed the supreme state that cannot be

compared to anything in the world. It is precisely because of finding this that we pay homages, offerings, and respects to the Buddha in a way we do not do for anyone else in the world. It is not because He preached about the development of the world, about worldly growth. Although He preached according to the capabilities of each individual, through all of those, the Buddha tried to make them understand that this saṁsāra is suffering, and to ferry them across this saṁsāra. Ferrying across saṁsāra is a state of the mind. It is not ferrying across saṁsāra and landing on another island to live there. Therefore, we must contemplate that due to various influences of defilements, many people misunderstand and distort even the Buddha's Dhamma. If the view is wrong, if the vision is wrong, if one goes in the wrong direction, how can one realize Nibbāna?

Therefore, we must contemplate the deep meaning of this stanza and stories of this kind. Now, the impermanence mentioned here is the impermanence of Preparations. Even though he had been a king in the past—even though he was a king in the past, Ven. Cūla Panthaka must have had thoughts and wishes inclined towards the Dhamma for an infinite time in this saṁsāra. In the same way, we must think about ourselves. No matter what level we are in our lay lives now, there can be certain strengths within us that help to attain Nibbāna. They do not just appear. We must strive to bring them out. That is why we said not to let them go to waste, but to credit them to Nibbāna. Doing so, gradually, the impermanence of Preparations, becomes well-digested in one's mind, and step by step, that insight is understood. Insight is not like seeing something through other machines and instruments of the world. One can obtain a direct, penetrating vision. That method of penetrating vision is described in the books as emerging as insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) regarding the realization of the paths and fruits. Even if we do not discuss it at length as a general academic subject, we must contemplate: what is the Dhamma principle there? We all know that to realize Nibbāna, simply and briefly put, we must realize the three characteristics—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). We all know that. Even to the extent of saying, "Alas, it is impermanent!" We know the word *anicca*. But if we contemplate it deeply, when it emerges as insight-knowledge, it splits into two. That is why we say that like the first two leaves emerging from the seed of impermanence, they are arising and ceasing. Arising and ceasing are also seen if one contemplates a bit deeply. Impermanence means this arising and ceasing. Arising, existing, and ceasing. Although we mentally create a state called "existing", actually there is only arising and ceasing. Something arises. There is a moment we think of as existing. Then it ceases. When this is understood rapidly, next it is seen that it ceases even faster than it arises. Along with that, disenchantment (*nibbidā*) comes. As disenchantment increases, understanding also increases. Because the nature of craving (*taṇhā*) is to arise again and again. When craving decreases, then the impermanent nature is seen. Not one of these remains. They are a heap of Preparationsin terms of arising and ceasing, which, as described by various similes, cease very rapidly like sesame seeds popping in a frying pan, starting to be seen by the eye of insight.

Next, gradually, due to the very ceasing, destruction called "*bhaṅga*" (dissolution) is seen. Not only other things, when thinking about the mind, even that thought is seen to

break away. When it is seen to break away so deeply, a fear also arises. What is this? There is nothing to be taken as "I" here. Here is a heap of arising and ceasing. There is nothing for me to grasp. All are decayed fences. It is thought in this manner. Thinking of this state, a fear arises through it. Because of that fear, next, a disenchantment arises regarding the five aggregates. Gradually, a disenchantment arises from within. It is not like a disenchantment of committing suicide. It is that "I must see the end of this saṁsāric existence." Next, the feeling that "I must be liberated from this" arises. "I must be liberated from this state that keeps breaking away." But it is difficult to let go all at once. Because the feeling of "this is mine" is there.

Then, when contemplating even more deeply, these are understood as Preparations(*saṅkhāra*). A heap of Preparations. There is nothing to be taken as mine. These only arise and cease. Sometimes, a simile is given in a way that ordinary people can understand. Now, if someone's beloved wife is talking with another man, sometimes anger arises. If at some point that woman is divorced, it does not affect the mind. In the same way, when it is thought that these things which were thought of as "I" and "mine" are only a heap of Preparations, the mind is prepared to be liberated from this. Next, equanimity (*upekkhā*) arises regarding them. Next, cultivating deeply the three characteristics of impermanent, suffering, and not-self, in that manner, finally, the mind is liberated completely from the five aggregates. That liberated mind is what was called the "island". Because that liberated mind, as the final mind of the Arahant, does not lean towards another grasping (*upādāna*), there is no existence/becoming (*bhava*). That is the Dhamma principle.

So, we do not need to tire ourselves with how they are explained at length in books. This was a general hint regarding that "island." Many people think of the island only in terms of becoming (*bhava*); some do not even believe that this is a cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), an end of the existence of becoming. This deep portion was spoken of in connection with this stanza.

On this valuable day, all of us, this group of devotees, must contemplate that if we are Buddhists, our journey is a journey towards Nibbāna. It is not a journey to turn back and cultivate becoming (*bhava*). Therefore, we must strive, keeping this target of Nibbāna in mind, and having done everything, we must wish, "May we attain Nibbāna through this, may we gain the ability to be liberated from this saṁsāra." What help in this are what we call meditation objects (*kammaṭṭhāna*). A meditation object is not some strange, mystical thing. When the opportunity comes to contemplate the nature of one's own body—the sweat, saliva, and so forth mentioned earlier—one must take full advantage of them, either through one's own body or through another's body. That insight thought of arising and ceasing is recorded somewhere. That will help ultimately for Nibbāna.

Thus, in this manner, through today's Dhamma sermon, we saw that "monastic playfulness" of young Ven. Cūla Panthaka. We saw the wonderful great compassion, mercy, and the mass of virtues of the Buddha as *buddhānussati*. Similarly, through this, we learned about Nibbāna, which must be our target. Nibbāna is not a non-existent thing; it exists. If we strive, having abandoned the perception of unsuitability and

generated the perception of suitability, thinking "we can directly realize this today itself," we can attain it in this very life. An opportunity was provided to generate many such pure thoughts and intentions. Also, we know that all of these begin with virtues like morality (*sīla*). So, the eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīvaka-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*) were observed. Many of you are observing a virtue even more valuable than that. Thus, restraining body and speech through virtues like morality, associating with noble friends, obtaining meditation objects, and developing the mind through meditation, someday we can develop insight-knowledges within ourselves in the manner described, obtain those path-knowledges (*magga-ñāṇa*) that help to be liberated from this saṁsāra, and end this saṁsāric suffering through the penetration of the paths and fruits called Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, thereby finding peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna.

Therefore, if we, this group of devotees, have generated any merit through listening to this Dhamma and through delivering this Dhamma sermon, let us dedicate all that merit. If there are any deities and Brahmas in this universe, including our relatives, who wish to rejoice in such merit, may this merit be shared with all of them! May all of them realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi. May this merit of listening to the Dhamma serve as a supportive condition for us too, to act as quickly as possible, to become more and more interested in the Dhamma and meditation, and even though the dispensation is declining rapidly, to strive and establish these virtues within ourselves in this very life, during this period of a Buddha's appearance, and to realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship. Wishing thus, let us share merit by reciting the stanzas.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #36

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.119)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Anekajātisaṁsāraṁ, sandhāvissaṁ anibbisaṁ;

Gahakārakaṁ gavesanto, dukkhā jāti punappunaṁ.

Gahakāraka diṭṭhosi, puna gehaṁ na kāhasi;

Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā, gahakūṭaṁ visaṅkhataṁ;

Visaṅkhāragataṁ cittaṁ, taṇhānaṁ khayamajjhagā.

From:

Dhammapada Verses 153-154, spoken by the Buddha at Enlightenment

Dear Listeners,

The Tathāgata, the Fully Enlightened One, attained supreme Enlightenment (*sambodhi-ñāṇa*) after practicing severe austerities for six long years. Out of matchless, heroic effort, a wondrous, joyful utterance (*udāna*)—two verses expressing the supreme liberation from *saṃsāra* that he had personally realized—gushed forth from his sacred lips. Today, on this noble Vesak Full Moon Day, which marks two thousand five hundred and fifty years since the *Parinibbāna* of the Fully Enlightened One, I have chosen this profoundly deep Dhamma as the theme for our sermon. According to the texts, the Buddha related the background of these two inspired verses (*udāna gāthā*) in response to a question raised by his personal attendant, Venerable Ānanda.

We can find many highly important facts about the life of the Buddha in the form of discourses directly from his sacred lips in various suttas. The Buddha once described to the Saṅgha in the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* the Great Renunciation made by Prince Siddhartha in quest of supreme Enlightenment as a "Noble Quest" (*ariya pariyesana*).

The Blessed One describes how that decisive thought and determination matured and took shape within him in this manner:

"Monks, before my Enlightenment, while I was still an unenlightened Bodhisatta, being myself subject to birth (*jāti*), I sought what was also subject to birth. Being myself subject to decay, I sought what was also subject to decay. Being myself subject to sickness, I sought what was also subject to sickness. Being myself subject to death (*jarāmaraṇa*), I sought what was also subject to death. Being myself subject to sorrow, I sought what was also subject to sorrow. Being myself subject to defilement, I sought what was also subject to defilement. But then, this thought occurred to me: 'Why, being myself subject to birth, do I seek what is subject to birth? Why, being myself subject to decay, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, do I seek what is subject to decay, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement? What if, being myself subject to birth, understanding the danger (*ādīnava*) in what is subject to birth, I were to seek the unborn, supreme security from bondage, which is Nibbāna? What if, being myself subject to decay, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, understanding the danger in them, I were to seek the undecaying, the un-ailing, the deathless, the sorrowless, the undefiled, supreme security from bondage, which is Nibbāna?'"

The Buddha declared that a mental revolution of this nature occurred within Prince Siddhartha at that crucial moment.

Now, those among you who are well-acquainted with the life of the Buddha can understand why Prince Siddhartha, upon receiving the news of the birth of a son—whom people nowadays would call a 'precious son'—uttered: "*Rāhulaṃ jātaṃ, bandhanaṃ jātaṃ*" ("An impediment/bond is born, a fetter has arisen"). Based on our previous explanation, you can easily comprehend why the typical affection, joy, and delight that arise in a father's heart when a child is born in a home did not arise in Prince Siddhartha. Indeed, as you well know, the meaning of the word *Rāhula* is related to the astronomical Rahu that seizes the moon or the sun. In ancient lore, that which covers or obscures the light and splendor of the sun and moon was regarded as Rahu. Thus, let us consider: if Prince Siddhartha had not made that Great Renunciation on that day due to his affection and attachment for his son Rāhula, would the Buddha-sun, which illuminates the three worlds, have arisen today? Would a Vesak moon have shone for us today? From this, you can appreciate the value of the Noble Quest (*ariya pariyesana*). Through this very explanation, you can also understand what is meant by the "Ignoble Quest" (*anariya pariyesana*).

What is the Ignoble Quest? The Buddha explained this at the very beginning of that discourse:

"Someone, being himself subject to birth, seeks what is subject to birth. Being subject to decay, he seeks what is subject to decay. Being subject to sickness, he seeks what is subject to sickness. Being subject to death, he seeks what is subject to death. Being subject to sorrow, he seeks what is subject to sorrow. Being subject to defilement, he seeks what is subject to defilement." This is the Ignoble Quest.

Therefore, according to those words of the Buddha, we are compelled to say that many of the researches and investigations considered supreme in the modern world actually fall under the category of this Ignoble Quest. This world, overwhelmed by the craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*), is not prepared to accept even the Buddha's statement that "birth is suffering (*dukkha*)." Yet, we know that when describing the Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-ariya-sacca*), the Buddha declared: "*jātipi dukkhā*"—"birth itself is suffering (*dukkha*)." Why? Because along with birth (*jāti*), decay, sickness, death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sorrow, and defilement follow hand in hand. Usually, when a child is born in a family, we think it is an occasion to celebrate. However, my pious friends, the parents of that child, who comes crying out of the mother's womb, are not ready to realize that First Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha*). Instead, they rejoice. They harbor joyful expectations in the manner described before. Thus, this verse begins with this very question of birth (*jāti*).

But before presenting and explaining the verse, I wish to bring to light a few other background factors. We mentioned that the Bodhisatta practiced severe austerities for six years. On one occasion, in the *Mahāsīhanāda Sutta*, the Buddha roared a great lion's roar to the Saṅgha, led by the chief disciple Venerable Sāriputta, detailing how wondrous and extreme his six years of austerities were. He declared that his practice during those years of severe self-mortification was so intense that no other ascetic in the world who practiced severe penances could even come close to it. That is why it is called the "Great Lion's Roar" (*Mahāsīhanāda*). So marvelous and wondrous was that discourse that Venerable Nāgasamāla, who was fanning the Buddha at the time, exclaimed: "Venerable Sir, it is wonderful! Venerable Sir, it is marvelous! Hearing this Dhamma discourse, my hair has stood on end!"

Having practiced such incredibly severe self-mortification for six long years without any result, he finally adopted the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*), as we have all heard, and sat at the foot of the Bodhi Tree—on what we call the "Unconquered Seat" (*aparājita pallaṅka*)—on that memorable Vesak Full Moon Day. However, he sat there having resolved upon the highest form of effort known as "effort of four factors" (*caturanga-samannāgata-vīriya*). This four-factored effort is described thus: "Let only my skin, sinews, and bones remain! Let my flesh and blood dry up! What can be achieved by human strength, human energy, and human valor shall be achieved, and there shall be no relaxing of my effort until that state is reached." He resolved upon this great, foremost effort. It was when this effort bore fruit, after tasting the nectar of Nibbāna and experiencing its bliss, that the two verses we took as our theme gushed forth from his lips. An *udāna* refers to an inspired utterance—a sigh of relief. It contains the sigh of relief and the joyful exclamation that naturally escape someone who has successfully accomplished a momentous task. We should understand these two inspired verses (*udāna gāthā*) in this light.

Now let us try to understand the meaning of these verses. Let us first recall the two verses once more:

Anekajātisāraṃ sandhāvissaṃ anibbisaṃ

Gahakārakaṃ gavesanto dukkhā jāti punappunaṃ

Gahakāraka diṭṭhosi puna gehaṃ na kāhasi

Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā gahakūṭaṃ visaṅkhitaṃ

Visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ taṇhānaṃ khayamajjhagā

Now, if we try to render this into a poetic form (*gī*) according to the old linguistic style, it can be expressed as follows. (These words might be somewhat difficult to comprehend, but we shall explain them. This Sinhala rendering has been done with the intention of keeping it as close as possible to the poetic style of the *udāna* verses uttered by the Buddha):

Through many a birth in the cycle of existence, alas, I ran seeking,

Without finding the builder of this house.

Painful indeed is birth (*jāti*) again and again.

Oh, builder! I have seen you!

You shall not build this house again.

All your rafters have been broken by me,

Shattered is the ridgepole.

The mind has reached the state where preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are stilled,

I have seen the end of cravings (*taṇhā*).

To explain the meaning of these two verses more clearly: "*Anekajātisāraṃ sandhāvissaṃ anibbisaṃ*"—the Buddha declares that he wandered through this *saṃsāra* undergoing various births and existences. How? "*Gahakārakaṃ gavesanto*"—seeking the builder who constructed this house. But unable to find him, he was born in this *saṃsāra* for so long. "*Dukkhā jāti punappunaṃ*"—"repeated birth (*jāti*) is suffering (*dukkha*)." Then it says: "*Gahakāraka diṭṭhosi*"—"O house-builder, I have seen you." "*Puna gehaṃ na kāhasi*"—"You cannot build a house again. You shall not construct a house anymore." "*Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā*"—"I have broken all your rafters." "*Gahakūṭaṃ visaṅkhitaṃ*"—"The ridgepole, the roof-peak, or the main dome of the house has been shattered." "*Visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ*"—"My mind has reached the Unprepared state (*visaṅkhāra*), free from all preparations (*saṅkhāra*); it has attained Nibbāna." "*Taṇhānaṃ khayamajjhagā*"—"I have realized, directly experienced, the destruction and exhaustion of all cravings (*taṇhā*)." This is the meaning of those verses.

Now, consider this: here, the Buddha first highlighted the suffering of birth (*jāti-dukkha*). Why did he wander for so long seeking the house-builder? Because he wanted to tear down this house. To break it down. But he did not find him. "*Dukkhā jāti punappunaṃ*"—"repeated birth is suffering." What does the house-builder do? He builds houses again and again. And those houses that are built decay and collapse, as mentioned earlier. This is a great suffering (*dukkha*).

A Buddhist poet has presented this matter in the form of a riddle-like quaternary verse (*daham gæṭa sivupada*). Some of the elders here might have heard it:

Kandē gedara naidēṭayi kiyannē

Dirana gewal numba kumaṭada tanannē

Geyak hæra geyak notanā indinnē

Gen giyadā geṭa ginilā tæwennē

O craftsman of the house on the hill,

Why do you build these decaying houses?

Why do you not remain without building house after house?

When you leave the house, you burn it and suffer.

Looking at the poem, it seems easy to understand. But I do not think its true meaning is fully grasped. It is doubtful if you have correctly understood even what "the house on the hill" (*kandē gedara*) means. Who is this craftsman (*naidē*) of the house on the hill? Who is this craftsman of the house on the hill who builds these decaying houses?

Before understanding that craftsman (*naidē*), we must understand "the house on the hill" (*kandē gedara*). My pious friends, "the house on the hill" refers to the house of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha* - a play on the word *kandha*, which means both aggregate and hill/mountain). This house closest to us is indeed the house of aggregates. Who is the craftsman (*naidē*) of this house? The master and leader of this house of aggregates is consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Although we say this, the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*), in explaining these verses, identify the house-builder (*gahakāraka*) as craving (*taṇhā*). Most of you have probably heard it explained that way. However, to our understanding, identifying it as craving is not quite appropriate here. Why? Because if that were the case, there would be no reason to mention "the destruction of cravings" (*taṇhānaṃ khayaṃ*) in the plural in the very last line. For this and several other reasons, it appears to us that the craftsman of the house on the hill, or the house-builder, is consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Let us try to present this with more reasoned evidence. You may have heard that the Buddha gave several profound similes to illustrate the five aggregates: form (*rūpa*) is

compared to a lump of foam; feeling (*vedanā*) to a water bubble; perception (*saññā*) to a mirage; preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to a banana trunk; and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to an illusion or magic trick (*māyā*). Thus, it is due to the illusory nature of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that it acts as the house-building craftsman. Indeed, it is consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that has built this house. What is the "house" here? It is what we call this individual existence (*ātmabhāva*), or the five aggregates themselves. In other words, it is this cage of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Therefore, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the primary aid in constructing this physical cage. That is why consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is called the house-building craftsman.

To further substantiate this point, let us use the words of the Buddha himself. On one occasion, the Buddha preached to the monks about the four kinds of nutriment (*āhāra*). There are four nutriments for the maintenance of beings that have already come to be, and for the support and assistance of those seeking birth (*jāti*). What are these four nutriments, monks? Physical food, gross or subtle, which is taken into the mouth—this is physical nutriment (*kabaḷīkārāhāra*). This is what we normally consider as food. Secondly, contact (*phassa*) is shown there as a nutriment. Thirdly, mental volition (*manosañcetanā*)—the volitions active within the mind—is shown. Fourthly, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is shown as a nutriment.

Elsewhere, the Buddha mentions—a monk named Moliya Phagguna asked: "Venerable Sir, who consumes the nutriment of consciousness (*viññāṇāhāra*)?" He asked this thinking of a person who consumes food. The Buddha replied that the question itself was incorrect. There is no person who consumes the nutriment of consciousness. The correct way to ask is: "For what is it a nutriment? For what is it a condition (*paccaya*)?" That is how one should ask. If asked thus, the answer is: consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the nutriment, the condition, for the arising of future becoming (*āyatiṃ punabbhava*). From this, it is clear that it is not craving (*taṇhā*) but consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that actually conditions future birth (*jāti*).

The Buddha has expressed this even more deeply in various suttas. On one occasion, he explained this to Venerable Ānanda. Today, many people are trapped in stories about intermediate states (*antarābhava*) and the like. Great philosophers have grasped these and created complications. Now, another term that goes hand-in-hand with consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Let us clarify this first. You may have heard about this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to some extent, but if we contemplate its background—let us state that first.

In the Dhamma of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), it is said: "*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṃ*" (with ignorance as condition, preparations arise; with preparations as condition, consciousness arises), and so forth. Thus, conditioned by ignorance, preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arise; conditioned by preparations, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arises. So it is said. Conditioned by consciousness (*viññāṇa*), Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) arises. It is this Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that we actually take as "the house," "the self-identity" (*ātmabhāva*), as "me" and "mine." There

is nothing wrong with calling this physical cage Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Why? Because it is said that Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) descends into the mother's womb, taking birth as an individual, as a self-identity, only if consciousness (*viññāṇa*) descends into it.

That is to say, it is stated that a child is born only when consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) grow together and become complete in the mother's womb. If, at any stage, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) departs from the mother's womb, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) will not come to growth as a living being; it remains merely a lump of flesh. From this, we can understand something. Similarly, the Buddha states that if the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) of a young boy or girl were to be cut off or cease during childhood, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) would not grow. Let us call this Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) the physical cage that we refer to as "me" and "mine"—that is more appropriate. What we identify as a person is merely a nominal form. Based on the four great elements—earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*)—this is a "form" (*rūpa*) existing only as a perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*). These four elements cannot be separated from one another. It is a form merely in name. Feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), and attention (*manasikāra*) are shown as mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*). There, too, there is nothing to be grasped as a substantial entity. It is this Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that we regard as our self-identity (*ātmabhāva*). And the Buddha declares that this Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) arises due to consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Next, let us contemplate the story about illusion (*māyā*). It is not easy to understand the true nature of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The Buddha illustrates this with another simile, presenting the previously mentioned comparison as a story. The Buddha says to the monks: "Monks, suppose a magician—in modern terms, a conjurer or illusionist—performs a magic show at a crossroads. A person sees it and is deluded. But in the end, if one looks at the reality, the magician was merely showing what is non-existent as if it existed. It is a deception. Yet, the world, failing to understand this nature of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), gets deceived by it. That is why they wander long in *saṃsāra*." This is the understanding that the Buddha reveals through Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). The darkness of ignorance—what is ignorance? In the language of magic, ignorance is not knowing the "trick" behind the magic; it is not knowing the magician's secret. Do not try to interpret it too literally; we explained it in this manner according to the context of Dhamma analysis. It is like darkness—the darkness of delusion (*moha*). It is within this darkness of delusion that one derives pleasure from a magic show. If, at some point, one sneaks behind the stage and discovers the magician's secrets, the magic disappears for him. Such is the nature of a magic show. The very same thing that is done in a magic show is found nowadays in various things like motion pictures, teledramas, etc., in the world. Within all of these, the very same delusion (*moha*) is active. Particularly in cinema, we know how the darkness of ignorance operates. No one who is enjoying a movie thinks at that moment: "It is the darkness of ignorance that allows me to enjoy this." At that moment, it does not occur to them: "It is because of this darkness that these things appear so beautiful on the cinema screen." Immersed in that darkness,

they enjoy it through that very delusion (*moha*). That is ignorance (*avijjā*). Unless a Buddha discovers it, an ordinary person cannot find it.

Thus, it is through the preparations (*saṅkhāra*) active within that ignorance that one derives pleasure. Those preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are what operate within that person's mind, speech, and body upon seeing the movie—all of which occur within that delusion. That is what is called preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is preparation (*saṅkharaṇa*). Kamma is accumulated through this preparation.

It is due to these preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that we exist in this long *saṃsāra*. When we contemplate *saṃsāra*, it is through the kamma-force of these preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—the kamma-force created by thinking of "me" and "mine"—that a future birth occurs. That kamma will inevitably yield results; it goes on giving results. Because of this, forms are projected. Accordingly, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) and the like arise in the mother's womb. As said before, if consciousness (*viññāṇa*) departs from the mother's womb at any point, it takes birth elsewhere, like an echo. Such is the situation. If we take this both in relation to this life and in a deeper sense, as a natural law (*dhammatā*), the deceptive or illusory nature of a magic show, a movie, or hypnotism occurs due to darkness. Based on that darkness, preparations/constructions (*saṅkhāra*) occur in the mind, or the physical organs are decorated for the purpose of deception. Actually, in the past, the word *saṅkhāra* was used for the make-up and dressing-up of actors and actresses. All those decorations are deceptions. It is due to ignorance (*avijjā*), due to darkness, that one is deluded by these deceptions. At some point—as you know, when one is enjoying a movie, if the lights are fully turned on suddenly—the cinema screen vanishes. It becomes blank. Something similar happens when the light of wisdom (*paññā-āloka*) arises. When the light of wisdom arose in the Buddha, all preparations (*saṅkhāra*) were stilled. That is why he said: "*visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ*" (the mind has attained the Unprepared).

Right there, we can understand the rest of it. If we regard the magician as consciousness (*viññāṇa*), we can understand this verse in a much more meaningful way. "*Visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ*"—preparations become de-prepared (*visaṅkhāra*). If preparations (*saṅkhāra*) perform a deception, when that deception is removed, they become "un-preparations" (*visaṅkhāra*). They are preparations (*saṅkhāra*) only in name. Such is the state of that mind. The liberated mind of the Buddha is free from the pressure of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is what the Buddha declares to be the highest happiness in the world: "*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*"—the stilling of all preparations (*saṅkhāra*) occurs when the darkness of ignorance is removed. Thus, one ran in *saṃsāra* because of the darkness of ignorance. If we regard the preparations accumulated due to that darkness of ignorance as kamma, they cause repeated birth (*jāti*). Through the ripening of those accumulated kamma-forces, more and more houses are built, giving an opportunity to Māra (the death-agent). That is what we call Māra. He builds and kills. Houses are built and broken. This is exactly what the illusion of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) shows us. In this manner, we can understand that the "house-builder" (*gahakāraka*) in this verse is consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Next, "O house-builder, you are seen! You shall not build the house again." This can be understood in the same way we described how a child's life in the mother's womb can slip away. For a house to be built again, for a future becoming (*āyati punabbhava*) to occur, it is consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that assists. The Buddha declared that there is a mutual relationship between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). There is a wonderful thing there. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) supports the existence of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). The moment it is gone, there is no Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) in the mother's womb. As you know, what is conventionally called the embryonic form (*kaḷala-rūpa*) arises in the mother's womb. It is like a photograph. At the moment of death, through the kamma-force grasped by the final thought-process, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) goes and establishes itself, first as a shadow-like image. This is what grows over nine months and finally comes out crying as a child—a "golden son" or a "golden daughter." This, my pious friends, is the reality, and there are valuable discourses of the Buddha to further clarify this if evidence is needed.

On another occasion, when describing birth, the Buddha declared: "*kammaṃ khettaṃ, viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ, taṇhā sineho*"—"Kamma is the field, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the seed, and craving (*taṇhā*) is the moisture." Thus, the seed of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) falls into the field of kamma and grows, aided by the moisture of craving (*taṇhā*).

There is another discourse that expresses this point even more meaningfully, concerning the Arahant Nun Selā. A verse uttered by Māra, who came to challenge the Arahant Nun Selā, is mentioned in the Dhamma. Since reciting too much Pali might be an obstacle for you, I will only give the meaning. What is the question asked by Māra? He uses a unique word there: "*bimba*" (image/reflection). *Pratibimba* means reflection. The word *bimba* is also used for a statue, a model, a likeness, or an image. Thus, the word *bimba* is used here for the physical cage. Māra asks: "Who created this image (*bimba*)? By whom was it created? Who is its creator?" Māra presents the concept of a creator. "Who is the creator who made this physical cage? Where did it arise? Where does it cease?" Māra asks several such questions.

In her reply, Sister Selā says: "This image (*bimba*), this reflection, this model, is not self-made, nor is it made by another. But due to a cause, due to a certain cause, it has arisen. With the breaking up of that cause, it ceases." Next comes the most important part of the verse, which we can connect to the words of the Buddha we discussed earlier. Sister Selā gives a simile: "Just as a seed planted in a field grows when aided by the soil's nutrients and moisture, so too this arises due to causes and conditions, and with the destruction of those causes and conditions, it ceases." This is all Sister Selā says. But if we add the Buddha's words we mentioned earlier as a commentary here, we can understand that what the Nun meant here is that the seed of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in the field of kamma grows like a seed, aided by the nutrients and moisture, and thus this image (*bimba*)—this physical cage—manifests in the world.

In truth, we are briefly presenting many Dhamma points that would require hours to explain, so that you may understand them at your respective levels—at least through the help of similes. From this, too, we can understand that the magician, or the house-

builder, is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The light of wisdom (*paññā-āloka*) is what helps us to see the true nature of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). When the light of wisdom arises, it is seen that consciousness (*viññāṇa*), too, arises due to causes and conditions. The cause and condition is Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Conditioned by Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists. Their mutual support is conditioned by the background factors of the darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*) and the preparations (*saṅkhāra*). This house is constructed through some preparation. That preparation consists of kamma performed through mind, speech, and body: bodily preparations (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), verbal preparations (*vacī-saṅkhāra*), and mental preparations (*mano-saṅkhāra*). As you know, it is said that if one does bad kamma, one goes to hell; if one does good kamma, one goes to heaven. Whichever it is, a preparation takes place. We usually say that the cause for this preparation is ignorance (*avijjā*). What is ignorance (*avijjā*)? It is the feeling of "me" and "mine." This feeling of "me" and "mine" is contrary to the understanding of causes and conditions. The Buddhas describe this as a sequence of causes and conditions. But the ordinary worldling, who has fallen into the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), thinks: "I am doing it, I am doing it." If "I" am doing it, then "I" must also take responsibility. Those two go hand-in-hand. That is what kamma and its result (*vipāka*) mean. There, one cannot escape by saying "it was not I who did it." Therefore, if a kamma is done with a sense of "me" and "mine," the result of that kamma inevitably follows. That is a natural law (*dhammatā*). This aspect can be understood well through that. That is what was said about the house-builder (*gahakāraka*).

Next, there are other parts of this verse that need to be explained. "O house-builder, you are seen! You shall not build the house again." This has been understood from what was said. The Buddha cannot have a house built again because he saw the true state. Because of that sight, kamma was exhausted; the kamma-force was destroyed. Just as someone who has discovered the trick behind a magic show will not go back to the magician to watch his magic, the Buddha understood this in every way. This is something that arises due to causes and conditions; it is devoid of substance. That is why, in the end, after giving the simile of the magic show and the magician, the Buddha asked the monks: "Monks, what substance is there in a magic show?" The answer is that it is devoid of substance. Yet, the entire world thinks there is some core or substance in it. Other religionists ultimately grasp and hold onto consciousness (*viññāṇa*). They regard it as something with a core, a substance, as something real and permanent. But the Buddha strikes at that very point. It is merely a false show. It is because we do not know the secret that we are deceived by it. The moment the secret is known, that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ceases. The magic becomes non-magic. Something of that nature happens. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ceases. Thus: "You shall not build the house again."

Now, it was said here: "*sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā*" (all your rafters are broken). This, too, needs to be explained. The Buddha next addresses the house-building craftsman: "Oh, builder! I have seen you! You shall not build the house again. I have broken all your rafters (*gonæs*)." We used this old word (*gonæs*) in consideration of this verse. The word *gonæs* is not in common usage today. My pious friends, *gonæs* refers to rafters. In the

sense that they support the roof, they are called *gonæs*. However, the commentaries explain these rafters in another way. The commentaries explain rafters as "the remaining defilements" (*avasesa kilesā*). Why did they say so? Because craving, too, is a defilement (*kilesa*). Thus, the builder is craving, and the remaining defilements are the rafters. However, to our understanding, there is a deeper meaning here. These rafters represent the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). Some of you may not know what the sense-bases (*āyatana*) are. They are the six bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These are called the internal sense-bases (*ajjhattika-āyatana*). The objects that range within them, as you know, are forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and thoughts (*dhamma*). *Dhamma* here means mental objects, things that become objects of the mind. Thus, there is a base between the two—between the eye and forms is the eye-base (*cakkhāyatana*), between the ear and sounds is the ear-base (*sotāyatana*), and going on in this manner, there is also a base between the mind and thoughts, between the mind and ideas. We can think of this as the two ends of a rafter. Therefore, we have to explain this simile of the rafters through the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). Why? Because after Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is born, these very sense-bases become active. The eye runs after forms, just as a deer runs after a mirage. The ear runs after sounds, after sweet voices. In this manner, this running occurs between the two. That is why the six sense-bases are the rafters. Indeed, is it not these six that support the entire roof of defilements? These six rafters support all defilements. It is not appropriate to show them separately as defilements. To prove this further, let us say: "*sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā*"—those rafters are also broken. Why? Because once the secret of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is seen, the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*) that arise due to Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) do not function anymore. If the deer recognized—if it understood: "What appears here is a mirage, this is not water, but some natural weather phenomenon"—the deer would not run after it. The deer would then abandon that perception of water. Something similar is meant by the cessation of the sense-bases (*āyatana-nirodha*). We can understand that according to the Buddha's cessation of ignorance (*avijjā-nirodha*), all other cessations occurred: preparations (*saṅkhāra*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), and the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). To put it another way, these sense-bases are factories of defilements. We have six factories of defilements. Thus, these sense-bases become deactivated once wisdom arises. It is through these that kamma is accumulated. Therefore, "*sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā*" (all your rafters are broken).

Next, it says: "*gahakūṭaṃ*". *Gahakūṭa* means the ridgepole, the roof-peak of a house. That has been shattered. Here, the commentaries say that *gahakūṭa* refers to ignorance (*aviijjā*). We, too, accept that it is ignorance (*aviijjā*). Indeed, it is from ignorance (*aviijjā*) that all of this arises. It comes starting from "*aviijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*". This ignorance (*aviijjā*) is indeed the ridgepole. For this gabled house, the six rafters are those we mentioned: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These operate through ignorance (*aviijjā*). It is through ignorance (*aviijjā*) that objects are presented to them—defiled objects. Following them, ignorance (*aviijjā*) is indeed the ridgepole of this house-builder. Therefore, if at any point this gabled house, this roof, is completely shattered, it cannot be built again. That is why: "*gahakūṭaṃ visaṅkhitaṃ*". In the word *visaṅkhita*, the word

saṅkhāra is present. The builder had made some preparation so that this ignorance remained unseen. But now, that has been entirely deactivated and shattered.

"*Visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ*". Therefore, my mind—the Buddha declares: "My mind has attained the Unprepared state (*visaṅkhāra*)." In other words, it is the stilling of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Where preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are stilled, there is no place for preparations (*saṅkhāra*). To put it another way, once the light is turned on in a cinema hall, no matter what colorful things are projected onto the screen, there is nothing for the viewer to grasp. The movie has stopped for him. Similarly, here too, preparations (*saṅkhāra*) have become de-prepared (*visaṅkhāra*). "*Visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ*". Through that itself, when the deceptive nature of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) is destroyed, craving (*taṇhā*) ends right there. If it is a movie, at that moment, one cannot enjoy or relish it. Likewise, the end of cravings (*taṇhā*) is right there.

This is a very profound verse. However, within the limited time, we have made an effort to explain it to some extent. What we must further contemplate within this is, as stated before, this repeated birth (*jāti*) that we grasp as happiness in this life—in other words, the craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*). Deep within beings lies this craving for existence. There is never an end to this craving (*taṇhā*). Craving (*taṇhā*) is a thirst. As explained through the simile of the mirage, when this thirst within beings cannot be quenched in this life, if they have not realized the state of Nibbāna as their final thought, some sign (*nimitta*) appears to that mind. You may have heard about this in relation to kamma, described in the books as the sign of kamma (*kamma-nimitta*) or the sign of destination (*gati-nimitta*). Some sign appears. Why? Because this illusion is taken as real. Thus, they ran after the mirages of the world. They ran all their lives. They ran after the mirages seen by the eye, the mirages heard by the ear, and all other mirages. They ran and ran, yet there was no satisfaction. No satisfaction. By the time they reach there—suppose we find something we most desire to see with the eye, and we buy it for a large sum of money. After a few days, we get tired of it. We look for "something better." In this luxury-oriented world, you yourselves know this. At great expense, we acquire the most valuable thing our neighbor has. After a few days, it becomes outdated. We go in search of the next thing. Beings run after such a wondrous mirage. It is the same with songs. They become outdated. Then we look for another. It goes on like this. Finally, at the moment of death, because there is no satisfaction, those signs appear to the mind.

Many people who come to us say: "I do not want to be born again. I really do not like to be born again." Although they say so, they are not ready to make the necessary sacrifice for it. If birth could be avoided merely by saying so! One cannot end the suffering of birth (*jāti-dukkha*) in that way. It is for this that the Buddha, in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, preaches: "*yam p'iccham na labhati tam pi dukkham*" (not to get what one wants is suffering). In the analysis of the Noble Truths in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha explains: "*yam p'iccham na labhati tam pi dukkham*." When it is said that "not to get what one wants is suffering," an ordinary person might think: "I want to buy a car. If I cannot get it, that is suffering—that is what the Buddha is saying." But that is not what the Buddha is teaching. In that analysis, it is explained thus:

"In beings subject to birth (*jāti*), monks, such a wish arises: 'Oh, if only we were not subject to birth...' But this cannot be attained merely by wishing." That is the meaning of "*yam p'icchaṃ na labhati tam pi dukkhaṃ*." What the Buddha meant by "not getting what one wants is suffering" is not about failing to acquire those worldly things. It is about these supramundane matters of escaping from *saṃsāra*. Similarly, it is shown: "in beings subject to decay, such a wish arises: 'Oh, if only we were not subject to decay.'" Even if one thinks so, this is not something that can be achieved merely by wishing and praying. It is only by walking on the path that must be trodden, by walking on that path, that decay is brought to an end—by ending birth (*jāti*). Therefore, keeping birth (*jāti*) while trying to eliminate decay is a foolish task. An ignorant task. We can never attain an eternal, permanent life. I hear that in wealthy countries nowadays, they perform various surgeries to hide decay. Furthermore, they use various methods to preserve beauty. No matter how much they do, decay cannot be prevented. Along with it, sickness also comes, hand in hand with decay. Then comes death (*jarāmaraṇa*). This is the nature of *saṃsāra*. One cannot escape from this merely through wishes. That is what the Buddha reminds us in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

What is the path to this? It is understanding. It is wisdom. Because it is due to lack of understanding, due to delusion (*moha*), that all this occurs. We are running after an illusion. The path to eliminating that delusion (*moha*) is what the Buddha realized on that Vesak Day. That is what we call Nibbāna—cooling down / extinguishing. Many people do not even understand that Nibbāna means extinguishment. The Buddha shows this as a bliss of stilling that the world cannot understand. In another way, it is shown as a bliss that is not felt (*avedayita-sukha*). No. Happiness lies where feelings (*vedanā*) are stilled. The world thinks that painful feelings are our trouble, and grasps pleasant feelings as happiness. But the Buddha declares that whether it is pleasant feeling or painful feeling, or even neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, which is the neutral middle feeling—all of them are suffering (*dukkha*). Why did he declare them all as suffering? A pleasant feeling is felt as pleasant only as long as it lasts. When it changes, it is suffering (*dukkha*). A painful feeling is felt as painful while it lasts; when it changes, it is felt as pleasant. Yet, my pious friends, because of that, none of us should wish for suffering. It seems this has now been turned into an argument to raise questions about the law of impermanence (*aniccatā-dhamma*). The nature of painful feeling is that it changes. Simply because it changes, it comes back again and again. Therefore, no one welcomes suffering, in expectation of the happiness that arises from its stilling. The neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling that lies between pleasure and pain was regarded highly by the ancient yogis and sages—it is peaceful. But that, too, is not permanent. That, too, changes. It is when all of these are abandoned, when all preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are stilled, and feeling (*vedanā*) is also removed, that we have what is called Nibbāna.

During the Buddha's time, some people, such as a certain wanderer (*paribbājaka*), even asked the Venerable Mahā Sāriputta: "How can this be happiness when there is no feeling? What happiness can there be where there is no feeling?" Then the Venerable Mahā Sāriputta replied: "The very absence of feeling is itself happiness." "*Yaṃ kiñci vedayitaṃ taṃ dukkhasmiṃ*"—whatever is felt, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-

painful-nor-pleasant, was seen by the Buddha as suffering (*dukkha*). Thus, the stilling of all preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*) includes everything. Feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*)—all of these ultimately rest on consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which we regard so highly—which we take as a core—is in truth merely an illusion. According to Buddhist teachings, the fact that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is an illusion is not found in any other doctrine. Elsewhere, it is regarded as something with a core. But the Buddha points out that through ignorance (*avijjā*), through not knowing—what is ignorance? It is a lack of knowledge due to which one initiates a course of action that ends in suffering (*dukkha*). When explaining ignorance, it is defined as not knowing the Four Noble Truths. It is due to not knowing these truths that one initiates a process that causes suffering (*dukkha*). Thus, due to ignorance, a certain process is initiated. Its final result is suffering (*dukkha*). If, at some point, one understands this correctly as merely a combination of causes and conditions, without a sense of "me" or "mine"—at that moment, through the "dissolution of causes" (*hetu-bhaṅgā*), when the cause is eliminated, the effect ceases. Then, a wondrous thing happens between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*): when Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) ceases, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ceases; when consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ceases, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) ceases. It is just like two sheaves of reeds leaning against each other: if one is pulled away, both fall. The Buddha has shown in the Dhamma, in the form of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), that this entire existence depends on a relationship of causes and conditions, on mutual conditioning.

But the world stands on the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). It is to the being who stands on this perception of permanence that, at the final moment, some sign grasped by him presents itself as a sign of kamma (*kamma-nimitta*) or a sign of destination (*gati-nimitta*), as mentioned before. Then, inevitably, that sign goes and, as the embryonic form (*kaḷala-rūpa*), a field is prepared in some mother's womb according to kamma. If one is to be born blind, it is prepared accordingly; if deaf, accordingly. It may be an illness or a deformity that the mother and father do not have. Yet, that sign falls into the embryonic form, takes root, is nourished in the mother's womb, and finally comes out crying as a blind, deaf, mute, or crippled child. This is the force of kamma. It is the sign that was grasped. This is the terrifying nature of this *saṃsāra*. It happens in a way we did not expect. If we have not shattered the roof-peak of this house, if we have not broken the rafters, if we have not deactivated them through the realization of the paths and fruits and the realization of Nibbāna, then, according to the sign grasped, a future birth occurs. Along with it, one brings all of those things: decay, sickness, death—all of them.

Thus, if at any point—if we contemplate more deeply—what is done by the mind of an Arahant? One trains oneself to see what the world has hitherto regarded as permanent as impermanent (*anicca*). Now, we come to the Three Characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) that we have all heard of. Why did the Buddha show these Three Characteristics in brief? Because through the meditation on these Three Characteristics, that sign is gradually worn away. The delusive power of the sign is gradually worn away. The more we see it as

impermanent (*anicca*), its ultimate end is described as the "signless deliverance of mind" (*animitta-cetovimutti*). The three gateways to Nibbāna are shown as the signless (*animitta*), the undirected (*appaṇihita*), and the void (*suññata*). The signless (*animitta*) means that by developing the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), as one approaches the realization of the paths and fruits, at that final gateway, no sign of anything presents itself to the mind. At that moment, a wondrous peace and bliss are felt. It is when these signs are present that the perception of permanence operates: "Will these decay? Will these break? I must protect them." All of this occurs. Therefore, if no sign presents itself to the mind, that is a great peace. Similarly, it is due to these signs that desire arises. What we call *praṇidhi* (aspiration/direction) is desire or the target. Thus, *appaṇihita* (the undirected) means that desires disappear. When the sign slips away, the desires, wishes, and expectations that rested on that sign are stilled right there. This is the undirected (*appaṇihita*). When this happens—why do we harbor desires? It is because of that sense of self, is it not? It is based on the perception of self within that "me, me." According to the Dhamma, the culmination of the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) is called the "signless liberation" (*animitta-vimokkha*). One approaches the signless gateway by understanding the danger in signs.

Next, if someone contemplates the characteristic of suffering (*dukkha-lakkhaṇa*), for some, the characteristic of suffering is understood more deeply. Wherever they look, they see: "This is a great suffering, a great trouble." For the one who understands thus, the desire called *praṇidhi* gradually thins out, and they arrive at the gateway of the undirected (*appaṇihita*), where desires have thinned out, reaching a state of peace as they approach the gateway to Nibbāna. Next, as not-self (*anattā*)—particularly for wise people, when they contemplate with wisdom, they see that in none of this is there anything to be taken as "me." As they go on understanding it as a heap of causes and conditions, at some point they realize: "This is void (*suññata*), empty." If one sheaf of reeds is leaning against another, neither can stand alone. This is the primary principle of the conditioning of causes and conditions—Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). That is the natural law (*dhammatā*). Nothing stands alone. There must be at least two supporting each other. That is why: "*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṃ*"—it goes on and on, everything proceeding conditioned by something else. Therefore, there is no substance in this. There is no core of a self. For the person who can see thus—for the person who has developed the vision of not-self (*anattā*)—the final gateway that opens is the void (*suññata*).

What we have expressed now—you have all heard about developing the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). To put it simply, the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) exists in the world. The perception of pleasure (*sukha-saññā*) exists in the world. The perception of self (*atta-saññā*) exists in the world. Contrary to these, the Buddha has declared: develop the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*); develop the perception of suffering (*dukkha-saññā*); develop the perception of not-self (*anattā-saññā*). When these reach their culmination, as one approaches Nibbāna, the one who has approached these three gateways of Nibbāna—the signless (*animitta*), the undirected (*appaṇihita*), and the void (*suññata*)—finally attains that light. Through the realization

of the paths and fruits—Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant—he reaches the state where all preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are stilled, and is liberated from all the suffering of birth (*jāti*) and the like in this *saṃsāra*.

Therefore, on this valuable day, we have presented some ideas to you according to the occasion, regarding a profound verse that would normally require many hours to analyze. What is expected is not to argue and debate using these ideas. One must be eager to realize these through the very path of Dhamma trodden by the Buddha—the path of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). May this hearing of the Dhamma be a strong support and a source of merit for you to achieve the height of your meditation and realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna, liberating yourselves from all the suffering of birth (*jāti*) and the like in this *saṃsāra*, by virtue of the many wholesome thoughts you have accumulated on this precious day through morality, meditation, and listening to the Dhamma. Likewise, may all deities from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, along with our departed relatives and everyone who has listened to this Dhamma sermon, be empowered by the merit of hearing this Dhamma to attain the peace of the noble, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi. Let us share the merits by reciting these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #37

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.146)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yadā buddho abhiññāya, dhammacakkaṁ pavattayī;

Sadevakassa lokassa, satthā appaṭipuggalo.

Sakkāyañca nirodhañca, sakkāyassa ca sambhavaṁ;

Ariyañcaṭṭhaṅgikaṁ maggaṁ, dukkhūpasamagāminaṁ.

Ye pi dīghāyukā devā, vaṇṇavanto yasassino;

Bhītā santāsamāpāduṁ, sīhassev'itare migā.

Avītivattā sakkāyaṁ, aniccā kira bho mayaṁ;

Arahato vacanaṁ sutvā, vippamuttassa tādino.

From:

Saṁyutta Nikāya, Dhammacakkappavattana tradition verses

Dear Listeners,

In contemplating the virtues of the Buddha, through the phrase *"satthā devamanussānaṃ"* (Teacher of gods and humans), we accept that the Blessed One is indeed the Teacher of gods and humans. It was on a full-moon day of Āsāḷha that the appearance of such a supreme Teacher became manifest to the world including the devas. We have all heard the wonderful news that on such a noble day, the sermon of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, which joined the atmosphere of the Isipatana Migadāya in Benares, was instantly broadcast from deva-world to deva-world, and from brahma-world to brahma-world. We have taken as our theme today a few verses that reveal the majestic nature of that supreme Buddhist sermon.

Before presenting these verses, the Buddha, at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthi, declared a certain simile as an introduction to present a matter.

"Monks, the lion, the king of beasts, emerges from his lair in the evening. Emerging from his lair, he stretches his body and yawns. Having stretched his body, he roars the lion's roar three times. Having roared the lion's roar three times, he sets out in search of prey. Monks, whatever wild beasts in the forest hear that lion's roar, they all fall into fear, terror, and dismay. Creatures dwelling in holes enter their holes. Creatures dwelling in water enter the water. Birds fly into the sky. Let alone others, even royal elephants, even festive state elephants, bound with strong leather straps in villages, towns, and capitals, upon hearing that lion's roar, break and sever those straps and flee in all directions, evacuating their bowels. Monks, that lion, the king of beasts, possesses such great psychic power, such great majesty, such great influence among the wild beasts."

"In the same way, monks, when a Tathāgata, a Worthy One, a Fully Self-Awakened One, perfect in knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed, appears in the world; and when He teaches the Dhamma in this manner: 'Such is Form (*rūpa*), such is the arising of Form, such is the passing away of Form; such is Feeling (*vedanā*), such is the arising of Feeling, such is the passing away of Feeling; such is perception (*saññā*), such is the arising of perception, such is the passing away of perception; such are preparations (*saṅkhāra*), such is the arising of preparations, such is the passing away of preparations; such is Consciousness (*viññāṇa*), such is the arising of Consciousness, such is the passing away of Consciousness.' When He delivers such a Dhamma discourse, then even those devas who are long-lived, beautiful, possessing abundant retinue, who have resided for a long time in high celestial mansions, fall into fear, terror, and dismay. 'While being impermanent (*anicca*), we thought ourselves to be permanent. Not being eternal, we thought ourselves to be eternal. It seems we too are impermanent! We too are unstable! It seems we are not eternal! It seems we are caught up in the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)!' In that manner, those devas fall into fear, terror, and dismay. Monks, in the world with its devas, the Tathāgata is one of such great psychic power, such great majesty, such great influence." Having declared this, that is the very matter the Buddha summarized in the verses we mentioned earlier, as stated in that Sutta.

Yadā buddho abhiññāya dhammacakkaṃ pavattayī — "When the Buddha, having directly known, set rolling the Wheel of Dhamma." What is contained in that Wheel of Dhamma is found in the next verse:

> *Sakkāyañca nirodhañca sakkāyassa ca sambhavaṃ*
>
> *Ariyañcaṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ dukkhūpasamagāminaṃ*

Here, venerable friends, *sakkāya* (the existing group) means none other than the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). It is those very five aggregates of grasping that are called suffering (*dukkha*). So, what is presented here is the Four Noble Truths. When He teaches the Four Noble Truths—namely, the suffering of those five

aggregates of grasping called the existing group (*sakkāya*), its cessation (*nirodha*), its origin (*sambhava*), and the Noble Eightfold Path which is the way that leads to the calming of that suffering—having heard it,

Ye pi dīghāyukā devā vaṇṇavanto yasassino

Bhītā santāsamāpāduṃ sīhassev'itare migā

Having heard that sermon, even those devas who are long-lived, beautiful, and possessing abundant retinue, fall into fear, terror, and dismay—just like wild beasts before a lion.

Avītivattā sakkāyaṃ aniccā kira, bho, mayaṃ

Arahato vacanaṃ sutvā vippamuttassa tādino'ti

Hearing the words of the Buddha—who is worthy (Arahant), well-released, and of steadfast virtue (the Such, *tādī*)—they declare: "We are those who have not transcended this existing group (*sakkāya*), this dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). We are indeed impermanent (*anicca*)." Thus, those devas fall into religious urgency (*saṃvega*). That is the meaning of these verses.

Now, venerable friends, what we have presented is the essence of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the Four Noble Truths. Everyone knows that when asked what the Buddha taught, one immediately says the Four Noble Truths, which we know as suffering (*dukkha*), origin (*samudaya*), cessation (*nirodha*), and path (*magga*). The Buddha has analyzed this in various ways—sometimes in brief, sometimes in detail. In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* itself, as you may know, the Noble Truth of Suffering was analyzed: birth (*jāti*) is suffering, decay/aging (*jarā*) is suffering, disease is suffering, death (*maraṇa*) is suffering, association with the disliked is suffering, separation from the liked is suffering, not getting what one wishes for is suffering. Having listed these, He finally says: "In brief, the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) are suffering." Venerable friends, the five aggregates of grasping refers to these five which we hold onto and grasp (*upādāna*) as "I" and "mine"—namely, Form (*rūpa*), Feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). On certain occasions, those five are also given the name *sakkāya* (the existing group). On certain occasions, the Buddha begins by saying, "Monks, I will teach you suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering," and declares that suffering is none other than the five aggregates of grasping. There is no need to repeat the earlier list. It is when one clings to those five that birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, sorrow, lamentation, and so forth, all arise. That is how it is.

Next, that itself is what is called the existing group (*sakkāya*). The meaning of the word *sakkāya* might sometimes not be clear. *'Sat'* means 'existing' or 'being'. *'Kāya'* means a group, a collective noun. So when we say "this form is mine," we are catching hold of a group of forms. We grasp (*upādāna*) it; we seize it with the perception of compactness

(*ghana-saññā*) as "this is mine," without regarding its nature of breaking up, its impermanent (*anicca*) nature. Feeling (*vedanā*) is also like that; perception (*saññā*) is like that; preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are like that. This is what you have often heard presented through the similes of the lump of foam, the water bubble, the mirage, the banana trunk, and the magic illusion. Due to not knowing their true nature, one grasps them, and that itself becomes the cause of suffering.

Then why does one grasp them? If grasping (*upādāna*) means holding on, the cause for that holding on is indeed that craving (*taṇhā*). Thus, it is declared as the cause of suffering, as the origin of suffering. That craving is shown in a threefold way: craving for sensuality (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*), and craving for non-becoming (*vibhava-taṇhā*). It is that craving that causes a person's repeated birth (*jāti*).

It is said: *"taṇhā janeti purisaṃ"* (craving gives birth to a person). *"Nandīrāgasahagatā tatratatrābhinandinī"* — accompanied by delight and lust, finding delight here and there. Then, the state when that craving is ceased—that cessation is shown as cessation (*nirodha*), as Nibbāna. Next is the Noble Eightfold Path, which you have all heard of: right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). That is the Noble Eightfold Path. So, that is the Four Noble Truths.

So, this Four Noble Truths is the core of the Buddha's teaching. This is especially misunderstood because of the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) that exists in the world. It is upon hearing this sermon that those devas are shaken, particularly the long-lived devas and Brahma kings, who generate conceit (*māna*) thinking they are permanent. Such accounts are mentioned in the Dhamma. On certain occasions, the Buddha stepped forward and broke the conceit of the Brahmas, as mentioned in the Dhamma. It is told of Baka Brahma that because he had lived for a very long period—nearly an aeon—he forgot his past. He forgot that he had come to that place. He thought, "This is permanent, this is stable, there is no birth or death or anything here." When such conceit arose, the Buddha perceived it while at Jetavana and, with the speed described as "just as a strong man might stretch his bent arm," the Buddha went to that Brahma world by psychic power. The Brahma king then invited the Buddha, "Ah! Noble One, come, come! This is permanent, this is stable, this is eternal!" Then the Buddha told the Brahma, "You are overcome by ignorance (*avijjā*)." He tried to remove that wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). But the Brahma king said, "Many beings in this world, many humans, strive greatly to attain my status, to attain this Brahma status." When he would not let go, the Buddha then showed him, "What you think is a long time is actually seen to be a short time; your past is limitless," pointing it out with examples. He showed the Brahma king, "It was because of the wholesome deeds you performed as an ascetic who had attained direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) in the past that you received this status." After that past account was revealed, it is mentioned that Baka Brahma abandoned his conceit.

From that, we can understand that perception of permanence. So, we can understand how conceit arose due to the perception of permanence in those Brahmas who lived for

aeons in the past. But for us, who do not live even a hundred years, if we reflect on how the conceit called the 'intoxication of life' (*jīvita-mada*) arises within us, how much ignorance (*avijjā*) must there be in us?

But in order to shatter that ignorance, to shatter the perception of permanence, the Buddha presents the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). This meditation on the perception of impermanence is something the Buddha praised in the highest terms. To what extent? The Buddha declares: "Monks, if the perception of impermanence is properly developed, if it is made much of, through that perception of impermanence, all lust for sensuality (*kāma-rāga*) is completely abandoned. Lust for form (*rūpa-rāga*) is completely abandoned. Lust for becoming (*bhava-rāga*) is completely abandoned. All ignorance (*avijjā*) is completely abandoned. The conceit 'I am' (*asmi-māna*) is completely destroyed and uprooted. So powerful is this perception of impermanence." Thus, the Buddha praised this insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) of the perception of impermanence in the highest terms. He did not stop there. Next, he gave several similes. One simile is: "Monks, just as in the autumn season, when a farmer plows with a great plow, he completely uproots all the creeping roots in that field, in the very same way, if this perception of impermanence is developed and made much of, it completely uproots all the aforementioned lust for sensuality, lust for form, lust for becoming, ignorance, and the conceit 'I am'."

Next, He gives another simile: just as when the stalk of a bunch of mangoes is cut, all the mangoes connected to the stalk are detached, in the same way, through the perception of impermanence, all the aforementioned lust for sensuality, lust for becoming, and so forth, are destroyed.

Then He shows another simile: just as in the autumn season, the sun, rising into a cloudless sky, dispels all darkness, in the same way, if the perception of impermanence is properly developed and practiced abundantly, it uproots all defilements (*kilesa*)—namely, lust for sensuality, lust for form, lust for becoming, ignorance, and the conceit 'I am'—and completely destroys them.

So, the perception of impermanence has been praised in that manner. Then, how is this perception of impermanence to be developed? The Buddha also declared that. How is the perception of impermanence developed? It is shown in brief, but we must understand... we must reflect and understand how to bring it practically close to our lives. It is stated in this way: "Such is Form, such is the arising of Form, such is the passing away of Form; such is Feeling, such is the arising of Feeling, such is the passing away of Feeling; such is perception, such is the arising of perception, such is the passing away of perception; such are preparations, such is the arising of preparations, such is the passing away of preparations; such is Consciousness, such is the arising of Consciousness, such is the passing away of Consciousness." The Buddha shows it there as a truth to be confirmed by constantly engaging the mind in wise attention / radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) in a direct, experiential way.

Next, you have all heard of this perception of impermanence. Just as was said about the Four Noble Truths, if one asks what the Buddha taught, there are three characteristics by which it can be recognized. What are the three characteristics? They are the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). These three characteristics are interconnected. Sometimes nowadays people ask about this. According to the Buddha's word: *"yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ tad anattā"* — "what is impermanent is suffering; what is suffering is not-self." It is stated in brief like that. So, let us try to understand, with reference to the Buddha's teachings, how this impermanent thing is suffering, and how that which is suffering is not-self.

Why does this impermanence become suffering? It is because we grasp (*upādāna*) these impermanent things. The Buddha has given a good simile for that—the simile of the river (*nadī upamā*). On one occasion, the Buddha declared: "Monks, on both banks of a swift-flowing river coming down from a mountain and traveling a long distance, there grow rushes, wild oats, grasses, and other trees. All of them are leaning over the river. A man being swept away by the rapid current of this river catches hold of those rushes, wild oats, and grasses, or catches hold of the branches. Every single thing he catches hold of breaks and tears away. Consequently, that man falls into ruin and suffering." What we have to understand from this simile is that by grasping as permanent this flow of life, disregarding its impermanent (*anicca*) nature, we fall into various anxieties. Now we know, especially if we catch hold of a blade of kusa grass, before that grass slips away, it might even cut our hand. It was declared that one can fall into such ruin.

The Buddha also declared the manner of this grasping, and how one grasps. One regards Form as self; one regards self as possessing Form; one regards Form as in self; one regards self as in Form. In these four ways, one grasps. In the same way, four ways of grasping (*upādāna*) have been shown for Feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). What is shown by this is the unwillingness to let go. One takes Form as self. When there is no room for that, (one thinks) "No, no, my self is something possessing Form." When there is no room for that either, "No, Form is within self." When there is no room for that either, "Self is within Form." In this manner, one is unwilling to let go of Form which has been grasped—the aggregate of Form-grasping (*rūpupādānakkhandha*). Those four ways, when multiplied by the five aggregates, become the twenty (views). So, this is what is called the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). Now, the dogma of self-illusion means the twenty views built up by grasping "this is my self" as a self. He who transcends this is the one who has reached the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*), the person who has experientially understood that impermanence.

So, next, just as we spoke about impermanence, because one falls into suffering and ruin by grasping (*upādāna*) those impermanent things, the Buddha declared: *"yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ"* (what is impermanent is suffering). Next, how that which is suffering is not-self (*anattā*), that characteristic of not-self—you have often heard that the group of five monks attained Arahantship by listening to the sermon on the characteristic of not-self, the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*. It is true that at Isipatana Migadāya, having heard the

Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, Ven. Aññā Koṇḍañña reached the fruit (of Stream-entry). However, the other venerable monks, as well as all five of them in the end, reached the fruit of Arahantship by listening to the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* taught by the Buddha.

Not only that, it was there that the Buddha, for the first time, declared this state of not-self (*anattā*) to the Saṅgha, and thereby to the world. It begins in this way: "Monks, Form is not-self." First, He declared that. Then He says the opposite side: "Monks, if Form were self, it would not lead to affliction—Form would not bring us illness, to put it briefly. If Form were self, if Form were mine, it would not bring us illness. Furthermore, we should be able to exercise control over Form, to keep it under our power: 'Let my Form be thus, let my Form not be thus.' But, monks, because Form is not-self, one cannot exercise control or power over Form, saying, 'Let my Form be thus, let my Form not be thus.' And Form also brings us illness." In the same way, the Buddha convinced the group of five monks about the not-self nature of Feeling, perception, preparations, and Consciousness.

Next, that changing, impermanent nature, alteration (*vipariṇāma*)—it changes, turning from what it was to another side. Because of that, the Buddha then brings out the three characteristics: "Monks, is Form permanent or impermanent?" When they reply, "Impermanent, venerable sir," He asks, "That which is impermanent, is it ease or suffering?" They have to accept that it is suffering, based on what was said earlier. Next, if something is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change—then, leaving room for their own capacity of understanding, He asks, "Is it fit to regard it as: 'This is mine,' 'This am I,' 'This is my self'?" That regarding as 'I' and 'mine' is shown in three ways: *etaṃ mama*, *eso ham asmi*, *eso me attā*. *Etaṃ mama* means 'this is mine'—grasping it through craving (*taṇhā*). *Eso ham asmi* means 'this I am'—grasping it through conceit (*māna*). *Eso me attā* means 'this is my self'—grasping it through view/dogma (*diṭṭhi*). One does not know what 'self' is, but grasps it through view as 'this is my self'. Thus, there is a threefold grasping through craving, conceit, and view. It was in this manner that the Buddha presented the characteristic of not-self. Then those monks had to answer that it is not fit. If something is impermanent, if all five aggregates of grasping are impermanent, if they cause suffering, if one cannot keep them under one's control, then one must let them go. It is mentioned in the Dhamma that by the end of that discourse, they all attained Arahantship.

So now it becomes clear to us that the three characteristics expressed in *"yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ tad anattā"* are indeed correct. If something is impermanent, it leads to suffering. If it leads to suffering, and if we cannot keep it under our control—since we expect happiness—how can we keep it under our control? We would keep it in such a way that happiness comes to us. Since that cannot be done, taking them as self is entirely wrong; that is what the Buddha shows. At some point, we must let go of those views. We cannot go forward while holding onto those views. That is why this dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) is said to be extremely powerful. Having

carried this self-illusion for a long time in Saṃsāra, we cling to it in four ways due to our unwillingness to let it go.

So, how do we let them go? Next, the Buddha declares that lust for sensuality, lust for form, lust for becoming, the conceit 'I am', and ignorance are all destroyed through the perception of impermanence. Therefore, we must practice seeing things as impermanent. In seeing them as impermanent, the Buddha explains this impermanence in various other ways. Now, these—Form, Feeling, perception, preparations, and Consciousness—arise due to causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*). By considering them according to causes and conditions, we can understand their impermanent nature. Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) means 'arisen on account of'. *Paṭicca* means 'on account of'. Nothing arises without a cause. Everything arises only on account of causes and conditions. Not a single thing has the strength to stand alone. Such is the nature of this becoming (*bhava*). This is why there is no place for the view of self. When we consider with wisdom, when we subject it to attention, under everything there lie causes and conditions. Nothing arises apart from causes and conditions.

In that regard, the cause for Form is shown. The cause and condition for Form is shown as the four great elements (*cattāro mahābhūtā*). As you know: earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). When we say 'earth', we usually think of something like a rock or a mountain. When we say 'water', the idea of water arises—like a well or an ocean. When we say 'fire', a great fire. When we say 'wind', a storm. Although we say so, the Buddha shows that these are four great elemental things that do not exist individually and are unrecognizable. They exist together. It is according to their relative abundance that we have given them names like 'earth', 'water', and so forth. There is an occasion when this becomes directly experienced. Just as when explaining Form to a small child, we use forms, but as understanding comes, those forms become unnecessary. When these are directly experienced, when they are understood, then those great elements are understood as existing in an unrecognizable, subtle manner. To give an analogy for those great elements: when water is frozen into an ice cube, because it is solid, one might think it is something like a stone. But when it melts, it is water; when heated further, it becomes vapor. In this way, there is a constantly changing nature in everything. Forgetting this, we grasp this Form tightly. Our body also decays without our even being aware of it. But we, saying "my Form, my Form," not only take photographs on various occasions but also grasp them as "I" and "mine" and try hard to reinforce that sense of self (*mamatva*). So, that is Form. The others are also like that.

The Buddha shows that what is shown by the similes mentioned earlier is the way things appear from afar—which is called 'view' (*diṭṭhi*). Grasping a lump of foam according to the way it appears from afar. One did not look closely. If one looks closely, what appeared like a white stone is in the end not such a thing. Sensation/feeling (*vedanā*) is like a water bubble, and so on. In these similes, when one gets closer and looks inside, it is something else. Magic illusion (*māyā*) in that respect is the highest, a wonderful thing that can deceive a person. Magic, trickery, is something meant solely to deceive a person. That is Consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

In this way, the Buddha has said here that the cause and condition for Form is the four great elements. As the cause and condition for Feeling (*vedanā*), He points to Contact (*phassa*). Contact—without reflecting on this Contact, one grasps Feeling tightly. But beneath Feeling lies Contact. Through each subtle Contact, this Feeling changes rapidly. But that is not caught in the attention of an ordinary person. One grasps it as a single thing, saying "this is my Feeling." But when one looks with wisdom and a concentrated mind, each Feeling arises because of each Contact. When that Contact ceases, that Feeling ceases. Therefore, the condition for Feeling is shown as Contact.

For perception (*saññā*) too, the cause and condition shown is also Contact (*phassa*). Now, a mirage seen from afar—without understanding that the mirage is seen due to the Contact made from that particular spot, the deer runs after it. Not only does the deer run, but we must understand that all the visions/perceptions that the ordinary world takes are, according to the Buddha's word, a mirage.

Next, preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are also like that. For them too, the cause and condition shown is Contact (*phassa*) itself. Preparations—these are the mental fabrications we make through volition (*cetanā*) and so forth. They also occur according to whatever Contact comes to the mind. So, that too is grasped. One takes it as something like a banana trunk. But there is only a heap of layers there. When we look at volition and so forth, there is only a heap of layers.

Next, the most wonderful thing of all, and that is where most people get stuck: as the cause and condition for Consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the Buddha has pointed to Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Name-and-Form—now, regarding this matter, many people hold a wrong view. Even if not all, some of you know that there are twelve links in the teaching of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Starting from ignorance (*avijjā*) up to suffering (*dukkha*), there are twelve links. Among these links, there is a conditional relationship with Consciousness. The Buddha shows: *"viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ, nāmarūpapaccayā viññāṇaṃ"* — "with Consciousness as condition, Name-and-Form; with Name-and-Form as condition, Consciousness." In the analysis of Dependent Arising, it is clearly there as a mutual condition. But some people, in analyzing the five aggregates of grasping, confuse this with Name-and-Form. Now, many scholars say that to understand Name-and-Form, it is the five aggregates of grasping. They put all the other four—Feeling, perception, preparations, and Consciousness—as 'Name' (*nāma*). But that is a confusion. It is by confusing the analysis of the five aggregates of grasping with Dependent Arising that one thinks in that way.

Because, in the Buddha's teaching, it is clearly stated that it is Name-and-Form that is the condition. That is the deepest part. According to the Dhamma of Dependent Arising—it is through Name-and-Form that it next branches out into the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana*). Venerable friends, the six sense-spheres are shown in the Dhamma, in short, as six consciousnesses. There is no such thing as a mere consciousness. There are six consciousnesses: eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*), ear-consciousness (*sota-viññāṇa*), nose-consciousness (*ghāṇa-viññāṇa*), tongue-consciousness (*jivhā-viññāṇa*), body-consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*), and mind-

consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*). Consciousness is not deposited in those which we take as sense organs—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The Buddha shows, according to the Dhamma of Dependent Arising, that it arises from causes and conditions. *"Aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavo"* — "apart from conditions, there is no arising of Consciousness." That is the deepest thing. Likewise, the Buddha declares: *"dvayaṃ, bhikkhave, paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhoti"* — "monks, dependent on a dyad, Consciousness comes into being." What is the dyad? The eye and Form. Dependent on the eye and Form, eye-consciousness arises. Dependent on the ear and sound, ear-consciousness arises. Now, if one is listening to these words, if at that moment sound is not heard, there is no ear-consciousness at that moment. But we think that because the ear exists, ear-consciousness exists. That is a wrong idea. It is like thinking that fire exists inside a matchbox. Fire comes only after the match is struck, doesn't it? It is true that this is a conscious body—a body with Consciousness. But Consciousness arises in six ways only when the conditions for it come together. Understand it in that way. So, it is dependent on the eye and Form. That is where many people go wrong. Eye-consciousness is dependent on the eye and Form. Ear-consciousness is dependent on the ear and sound. In that way, the very last is mind-consciousness, which arises where the mind (*manas*) and the mind-objects (*dhamma*)—the things that become objects to the mind—come together. This is a very deep matter.

So, this very dyad is what is meant by 'with Consciousness as condition, Name-and-Form; with Name-and-Form as condition, Consciousness.' Now, the practitioner of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā-yogī*) regards every object that comes to the mind as Name-and-Form. Whether it is a form coming to the eye or a sound coming to the ear, what is there is Name-and-Form. What is this Name-and-Form? Then one tries to understand. 'Name' (*nāma*) is a word we all use. But here, it is not a conventional name. Here it says: "What, monks, is Name? Feeling, perception, volition, Contact, and attention—these are name-factors (*nāma-dhamma*)." Then, Form (*rūpa*) is shown as the perception one creates by catching hold of and grasping (*upādāna*) the four great elements together. So, Name-and-Form means a kind of artificial nature, a deceptive nature, right there. It points to the deceptive nature of the object that comes to Consciousness. Name does not stand alone. Supported by Name, Form exists. Supported by Form, Name exists. Here too, a relationship of cause and condition is mentioned. We recognize something through Feeling, perception, the volition that arises regarding it, and then Contact (*phassa*) and attention (*manasikāra*) which is directed towards it. It is on account of those factors that we recognize even form-factors (*rūpa-dhamma*). We recognize their hardness, roughness, softness, heat, cold, and so forth, with the support of the aforementioned name-factors: Feeling, perception, volition, Contact, and attention. Then, through that recognition, we take it as 'a form'. It is just like a blind man bumping into something and taking that bumped thing as an object. The ordinary world, through the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), takes this as a 'thing'. But the Buddha shows that what is here is only a shadow. We have shown this in so many ways.

The Buddha, Ven. Puṇṇa Mantāniputta, and Ven. Ānanda have also declared that it is only when looking in a mirror that one can say "this is I." In the same way, it is by

grasping Form that the conceit 'I am' (*asmi*) arises. Likewise, Feeling—it is by grasping something. That is why it is called grasping (*upādāna*). Within that grasping, there is the feeling of a dyad. Then, that is perceived by the mind through that grasping. When it is let go, it is not there. But one does not wish to let go. So, through that grasping, the idea 'I am' arises. That is the biggest problem for the world. That is why the simile of the dog on the footbridge is shown on some occasions. When a dog walks on a footbridge, it is deceived by its own reflection. It growls, thinking it is another dog, or it wags its tail, or it looks at it again and again. This is because it does not know the reflective nature of water. Similarly, Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) also has a reflective nature, known as reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*). Because of not knowing this, the world thinks that the things they see exist just as they are. But to the insight meditator, it gradually becomes clear that within those things there is only a group of name-factors and a group of form-factors. So, that is the matter regarding those Name-and-Form factors.

Next, the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana*). Let us reflect. We said earlier that the analysis of the five aggregates of grasping is one thing, and the analysis of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is another. Now, how do we connect them? We started this sermon with the statement where, at the end of listing 'birth is suffering, decay is suffering,' and so forth, the Buddha says: "In brief, the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) are suffering." That is where we have to go. Dependent Arising means arising from causes and conditions. The end of this arising due to causes and conditions is the five aggregates of grasping. The final result is divided into these five. Now, at this moment, during the time you are listening to this Dhamma, or when you are at home, the aggregates of grasping may accumulate in a different way. Now, after going back home, when you think about how this moment was spent, the forms related to this moment are grasped as 'my heap of forms'. The feelings related to this are taken as 'my feelings'. The perceptions related to this are taken as 'my perceptions'. The consciousness related to this is taken as 'my consciousness'. So, this was produced through the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana*). That is where it is important. It is within these six sense-spheres that it is produced. We use this word ('produced') to drive home a meaning; it is not an ancient word. But, in short, it is within the six sense-spheres that these five aggregates of grasping are produced. That is where we come to next.

So, how does that happen? As was said earlier—Consciousness—before that, someone might ask why we did not think about ignorance (*avijjā*) and preparations (*saṅkhāra*). All of this happens in the background of ignorance, because of not knowing. Just like the dog, because of not knowing, grasped its reflection, wagged its tail, and stayed there. In the person bound by the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)—that is why the Buddha has declared:

"Avijjānīvaraṇassa, bhikkhave, bālassa taṇhāya sampayuttassa evaṃ ayaṃ kāyo samudāgato" — "Monks, for the foolish person obstructed by ignorance and associated with craving, this body has thus come into being."

"Iti ayaṃ ceva kāyo bahiddhā ca nāmarūpaṃ" — "Thus there is this body and externally there is Name-and-Form."

“It’etaṃ dvayaṃ” — "because of this dyad, Contact and the six sense-spheres arise," as the Buddha declared. What does this mean? For the being who is obstructed by ignorance and bound by craving, this body is received. In this body, that Consciousness emerges as soon as Contact and the aforementioned conditions arrive. Then, along with that, it branches out as the six sense-spheres. These six sense-spheres—what we said just now—what you call sense organs become sense-spheres (*āyatana*) only where there is activity. The place where there is activity is called a sense-sphere (*āyatana*). The faculty exists—the eye exists, but it does not see. The ear exists, but it does not hear. But when those conditions come and become active, that is what we call a sense-sphere (*āyatana*). Although the eye-faculty (*cakkhundriya*) exists, the eye-sphere (*cakkhāyatana*) is not there. The sense-sphere arises only where it connects with causes and conditions. Fire springs up only where the match strikes the matchbox. If you do not understand, that is the point to understand. It must be understood in that way. So, it divides into the six sense-spheres. Then, within the magic illusion of Consciousness, that Name-and-Form branches out.

Because of the craving (*taṇhā*) that clung to this body in the past, we want to see, we want to hear, we want to taste, we want to experience. Because of that unappeased craving, this body is received by the uninstructed worldling. To this body, Name-and-Form is added. From that Name-and-Form, the six sense-spheres are built up. So, it leads into Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). With the six sense-spheres as condition, Contact (*phassa*). With Contact as condition, Feeling (*vedanā*). With Feeling as condition, craving (*taṇhā*). With craving as condition, grasping (*upādāna*). Finally, the five aggregates of grasping are built up. That is why we said, when we think about this moment, we can say that this moment of today in my life was spent because a certain Form was present at that moment, such a Feeling, such a perception—all of those are finally sorted and deposited as the five aggregates of grasping.

But how this is made was also declared by the Buddha. That is a very deep discourse. In the discourse named *Mahāsaḷāyatanika Sutta*, the Buddha shows how these five aggregates of grasping are built up, and how they are unraveled and worn away. The two words used for that are accumulation (*upacaya*) and wearing away (*apacaya*). *Upacaya* means accumulation. *Apacaya* means wearing away. Then, how the five aggregates of grasping are worn away is presented by the Buddha in that Sutta through the term 'knowledge of things as they are' (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*). Knowledge of things as they are means understanding the truth as it is. Now we have understood that the knowledge of things as they are is the vision of impermanence (*aniccata-dassana*). Seeing the truth as it is means the vision of impermanence. That is why the Buddha gave those kinds of similes. So here, the Buddha shows how a person builds up these five aggregates of grasping when the six sense-spheres are active: as you know, the things related to that are the eye, Form, the Consciousness related to the eye, then Contact where the eye, Form, and Consciousness meet, and then the sensations (*vedayita*) that come because of Contact. Because one does not know the impermanent nature of every single one of these factors in terms of things as they are, they become an aggregate of grasping, as the

Buddha declared. For the person who stays with the understanding of the impermanence of this, moment by moment, they do not accumulate.

So, the vision of impermanence helps the wearing away of the five aggregates of grasping. Without the vision of impermanence, the vision of things as they are, when one acts with the perception of permanence as 'I' and 'mine', the five aggregates of grasping are built up. When one constantly remains with the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), those things end right then and there. They end right then and there. They do not get built up or accumulated. That is what is declared there.

Then, there is a deepest Sutta that makes this matter even clearer. It is called the *Aniccatā Sutta*. The Buddha declares this Sutta in a wonderful way. It is said that upon hearing it, one even falls into the concentration of impermanence (*aniccata-samādhi*). "Monks, the eye is impermanent, subject to change, subject to becoming otherwise. Form is impermanent, (subject to change), subject to becoming otherwise. Then, both of these are thus impermanent. Next, the eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*) that arises due to them—when the eye and Form meet, whatever eye-consciousness arises, that too is impermanent, subject to change, subject to becoming otherwise." Then the Buddha declares to the monks: "The cause and condition owing to which Consciousness arises is also impermanent. Then how could Consciousness be permanent? If the cause and condition from which something arose is impermanent, how could Consciousness be permanent?" Why does He ask this? Because people take Consciousness to be permanent. So, the eye is also impermanent—meaning it is constantly shaking, constantly breaking up. Form is also like that. But where they meet, we grasp it as 'consciousness'—as permanent—as eye-consciousness and so forth. But if one sees the impermanence of the eye right then and there, and sees the impermanence of forms right then and there, if our mind is established in wisdom, there is no Consciousness there. How could Consciousness be permanent?

Next, the meeting of those three is what the Buddha declares as Contact (*phassa*). But the Buddha declares that eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*) is also impermanent—it shakes, it changes constantly. Then He asks: if the causes due to which Contact arose are impermanent, how could the eye-contact arising from them be permanent? Next, it is because of eye-contact that sensation (*vedayita*) arises. That too is impermanent, subject to change. It is also shaking. But the world regards that sensation, that Feeling, as permanent. In this way, step by step, the Buddha tries to convince us that every step in this factory of the six sense-spheres is shaking, subject to change, subject to becoming otherwise. But the person obstructed by ignorance and bound by craving, failing to see that impermanence, grasps them with the perception of permanence and the perception of compactness.

That is indeed what is called the perception of a mass (*rāsi-saññā*) when speaking of the insight meditator. There is a time when this compactness is broken. What helps to break it is the understanding of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). By the understanding of Name-and-Form—now, if that dog sitting on the footbridge wagging its tail in that manner thought even for a moment, "This is my own reflection," it would stop that work and

walk away, wouldn't it? In the same way, as the understanding of this Name-and-Form goes deeper and deeper, the Buddha declares that if Name-and-Form is fully understood, Consciousness is ceased right there. That is what was meant.

Next, we will speak of what helps this: preparations (*saṅkhāra*). This is one of the deepest terms in this Dhamma—*saṅkhāra*. All of us use the word *saṅkhāra*. Even in funeral announcements, we say 'all preparations are impermanent' (*aniccā vata saṅkhārā*). But we do not even know what preparations are. So, the general meaning of preparations we can understand as things that help to project/create an illusion, things of a deceptive nature. Like in plays—and not only in plays, but now it is done on the highway too—various kinds of deceptions to deceive a person; what a magician or an illusionist does is that kind of thing. What an actor does is also that kind of thing. Before a dancer comes onto the stage, with how many decorations/make-up is she sent? From ancient times, those have been called 'bodily preparations' (*aṅga-saṅkhāra*). Painting colors and various things—that is what is in the word *saṅkhāra*. Artificial deceptions. That is why you can connect it: because of ignorance, because of not knowing, we bring about preparations.

Because of that, how much is one deluded in the dark! When walking past a cemetery on a pitch-black night, what kind of thoughts come? In the end, when light comes, one understands: "This is false, this is entirely a delusion/illusion that I created myself. There is nothing real here." In the same way, the world dwelling in the dense darkness of ignorance creates a certain set of creations through the mind. That is the meaning of the word *saṅkhāra* in the context of Dependent Arising as shown by the Buddha. What are preparations? They are shown in three ways; there are three kinds of preparations: bodily preparations (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), verbal preparations (*vacī-saṅkhāra*), and mental preparations (*citta-saṅkhāra*). These fabrications are made by body, by speech, and by mind. Making them by mind means building them up through Feeling, perception, and so forth—molding them through Feeling and perception. Preparations made by body, preparations made by speech, preparations made by mind.

Now, think about it for a moment: when a magic show takes place, what that man does is a deception on the stage. But those who watch it look with open mouths because they are deceived by those deceptions. Those are preparations made by body. Or the dances and so forth done by a dancer, plays and so forth—through those, they create things in the mind. They take the words associated with them as true. They wrongly grasp the feelings and perceptions regarding them. Those are the preparations.

So, this existence (*pavätma*) is a kind of performance nourished by these preparations, like a competition between two sides. That is what exists between Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). To put it another way, it is like a whirlpool. How is a whirlpool formed? For some reason, a current of water separates from the flowing river and tries to go forward. When it cannot go forward, it is forced to turn back. When it spins in a circle, gradually a wheel-like thing is formed, a circle. It has two halves. Now you can understand: the half of Consciousness, and the half of Name-and-Form that turns back. That is indeed the very reflection we mentioned. So, those two

halves finally become a wheel, a whirlpool, and then we give it a name as a person, as an individual. Everything we regard according to this becoming (*bhava*) exists between Consciousness and Name-and-Form. That is the Buddha's word. 'Monks, with Consciousness as condition, Name-and-Form; with Name-and-Form as condition, Consciousness.' The Buddha declared that it is between these two that birth (*jāti*), death (*maraṇa*), decay/aging, rebirth, and all these concepts, thoughts, and so forth, exist.

So, as a final result of that spinning between this Consciousness and Name-and-Form, it branches out through the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana*). The sense-spheres also occur within ignorance. Because of not seeing its impermanence, one takes the eye to be permanent, and one takes Form to be permanent. The consciousness that arises when those two meet, one takes that to be permanent too. The Contact that occurs within that, one takes to be permanent. The Feeling that arises because of that Contact, one takes to be permanent. When taken in that way, in the end, as a result, this is sorted and sorted, and the five aggregates of grasping are formed, thinking: 'this is my heap of forms,' 'this is my heap of feelings,' 'this is my heap of perceptions,' 'this is my heap of preparations,' 'this is my heap of consciousness.'

So, then it can be understood that the five aggregates of grasping cannot be put inside in that manner. Rather, it is as a result of the competition between them—according to the analysis of Dependent Arising carried out between Consciousness and Name-and-Form—that we finally build up the five aggregates of grasping. The Buddha showed then that when the true nature of these Name-and-Form factors is understood through the understanding of causes and conditions, and through the attention, the constant reflection that helps it, Consciousness is ceased right there—the magic illusion called Consciousness. When the inside of the magic illusion is seen, there is no magic illusion there. In the same way, if Consciousness is a magic illusion, if it is not a real thing, when it is exposed by the light of true wisdom, it ceases. But that is what the world is afraid of. That is what they fear. That is what is taken as 'the stopping'. That is it. But that is exactly what the Buddha points to as Nibbāna. If birth (*jāti*) is suffering, where birth is ceased, that is no longer a world. Birth is ceased right here. What is taken as birth is indeed because of the wrong whirlpool of those two. So, where that stops is what we call Nibbāna. That is the final result. Generally, when the Buddha says 'the five aggregates of grasping,' this is entirely suffering. When He said 'this existence is suffering,' its result—the clash of those two—is suffering. So, that is calmed through understanding. It is the path leading to that understanding that the Buddha presented to the world on a day like today through the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.

Then, the reason why even the devas and Brahmas who were attached to becoming (*bhava*) trembled, just like the other wild beasts trembled at the sound of the king of beasts, is because of the craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*) that exists within the world. It was not out of greed or stinginess that the Buddha hesitated to teach the Dhamma, but thinking, "How will the world understand this?"

You must make an effort to understand this deep Dhamma on a day like today. You must strive, if you hope to be released from this Saṃsāra. If you wish to remain in becoming (*bhava*), none of this is necessary. That is all there is to say.

Therefore, if you have gained some understanding from this Dhamma sermon presented so far, using it as a help for your own Dhamma practice and meditation—this period of the arising of a Buddha (*buddhotpāda-kāla*) is a rare opportunity. I hope you will be eager to take this opportunity to be released from Saṃsāra. May this power of merit—the virtue (*sīla*) kept so far, the meditation (*bhāvanā*) practiced, the Dhamma heard—be a support for realizing the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship within this very life. Likewise, may all beings existing in this becoming (*bhava*), including devas and Brahmas, rejoice in this merit of sharing and hearing the Dhamma, and through that rejoicing, may they all be stilled in the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna. Recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #38

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.113)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Pakkodano duddhakhīrohamasmi (iti Dhaniyo gopo);

Anutīre mahiyā samānavāso;

Channā kuṭi āhito gini;

Atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.

Akkodhano vigatakhīlohamasmi (iti Bhagavā);

Anutīre mahiyekarattivāso;

Vivaṭā kuṭi nibbuto gini;

Atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.

From:

Dhaniya Sutta (Sn 1.2) from the Uragavagga of the Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

The pride that arises due to wealth is introduced in the Dhamma by the name *bhoga-mada* (the intoxication of wealth). When one is intoxicated by the intoxication of wealth, the world appears to him as a secure place. One even tends towards an optimistic view that any adversity can be overcome through wealth. The Dhaniya Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta, a Dhamma text, mentions how the Blessed One dealt through the Dhamma with a very wealthy herdsman, a cattle-owner, who held such a view. We have set the first two stanzas of that Dhaniya Sutta as our sermon topic today.

A very wealthy herdsman, a cattle-owner named Dhaniya, lived in the country of Videha during the Buddha's time, owning a herd of about thirty thousand cattle. A cattle-owner cannot live in the same place all year round due to the problem of fodder. Usually, cattle-

owners with such large herds spend the rainy season in a highland area near rivers, building cattle pens and other structures. During the other eight months, they live along riverbanks or any other suitable area. So, this herdsman Dhaniya also lived by making his dwelling on a small island near where the great river Mahī flows into the sea. He spent eight months of the year there. Then, when the rainy season approached and its signs appeared, Dhaniya went to high ground near that very riverbank with his cattle, built cattle pens, prepared a dwelling, and got ready for the rainy season. By the time all these tasks were finished, rain clouds gathered from all sides. So, Dhaniya, with a very joyful mind since food for his people, fodder for the cattle, firewood, fire, and everything else were ready, lay down on his bed and uttered this joyful stanza, a stanza of exultation:

Pakkodano duddhakhirohamasmi,

anutīre mahiyā samānavāso,

channā kuṭi āhito gini,

atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.

If we try to put this stanza into Sinhala verse, we can express it in this manner:

"The rice is cooked, the milk is milked, I dwell along the banks of the river Mahī surrounded by my people; the house has a roof, the fire has been blown and kindled; if it rains, let it rain, my work is done, let it rain."

"The rice is cooked, the milk is milked, I dwell along the banks of the river Mahī surrounded by my people; the house has a roof, the fire has been blown and kindled; if it rains, let it rain, my work is done, let it rain." That is to say, '*pakkodano*' means the food, the rice, is already cooked. '*Duddhakhiro*' means the milk of the cows has been milked. Next, '*anutīre mahiyā samānavāso*' means I dwell with my companions of like-mind. '*Channā*' means my house, my hut, is well thatched; there is no fear of rain. '*Āhito gini*' means the fire is also kindled. Unlike in these times, in those days it was with great difficulty that a fire was kindled—by rubbing two pieces of wood. A fire kindled in such a way is preserved by constantly blowing on it. So, the fire is also kindled. All this is said with a joyful heart. '*Āhito gini*', therefore, '*atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva*': rain! If you wish to rain, rain. In this manner, he kept on reciting a stanza of challenge over and over again—a challenge to the rain.

When the Blessed One was in the Fragrant Chamber (*Gandhakuṭī*) of Jetavana monastery, He heard this stanza with His divine ear. Upon investigating the reason for this, He saw that Dhaniya and his wife possessed the necessary supportive conditions to ordain and attain Arahatship in this Dispensation, and that if He did not go and preach the Dhamma, they would both be swept away by a great flood on the following day and meet their death. Seeing this, the Blessed One travelled through the air and, sitting in space above the house of Dhaniya the herdsman in that distant country of Videha many leagues away, uttered a reply stanza that matched Dhaniya's stanza.

That is the second stanza we presented:

Akkodhano vigatakhīlohamasmi

Anutīre mahiyekarattivāso

Vivaṭā kuṭi nibbuto gini

Atha ce pavassa deva.

"I have no anger, my stubborness is gone, on the banks of the river Mahī I dwell for only one single night, my house is open, my fire is extinguished, if it rains, let it rain, my work is done, let it rain." '*Akkodhano*' means there is no anger within me. '*Vigatakhīlo*'—*khīla* means a peg or stake. The idea represented here is that when anger or ill-will is present in someone's mind, it is like a driven-in stake. What is expressed there is the absence of hatred. I have no anger within me, no hatred. Next, '*akkodhano vigatakhīlohamasmi anutīre mahiyekarattivāso*': I spend only one single night along the banks of the river Mahī. I only dwell there for one night. Next, '*vivaṭā*': Dhaniya said his house was thatched. The Blessed One declares: "My house is open, unfolded, there is no roof on my house." '*Nibbuto*': "My fire is extinguished." '*Atha ce pavassa*': "Rain if you wish, if there is work, rain." In this way, the Blessed One also made a challenge to the rain.

But there is a deep meaning here. Since Dhaniya was intelligent, it was expressed in a way that Dhaniya could understand. Now, these kinds of stanzas also have a certain literary value. It is difficult to convey it completely even when translated into Sinhala. An aspect of the Blessed One's style of teaching is that, when preaching the Dhamma to intelligent people, He sometimes expresses the same word with two meanings, or uses words that sound alike. Pay attention to that. This is called alliterative resonance (*prāsa rasaya*). There is alliterative resonance in these stanzas. To Dhaniya's statement '*pakkodano duddhakhiro*', the Blessed One responded with '*akkodhano vigatakhīlo*'. It goes on in that manner. There is a series of stanzas, and they possess this characteristic. Here, what is expressed by saying "that hut is open" is that defilements are compared to a roof. One is covered by defilements, isn't that so? So, the roof of defilements has been removed. "My hut is open." Dhaniya says without fear that his hut is closed and thatched. The Blessed One says, "My hut is open." Likewise, Dhaniya says he has kindled the fire and is maintaining it by blowing on it. The Blessed One also says, "I have extinguished all my fires." "My fire is extinguished." Therefore, "If it rains, let it rain, if there is work," the Blessed One challenges the rain. He challenged not only the rain but Dhaniya as well. We must understand that the Blessed One replied to Dhaniya's optimistic stanza with a Dhamma-imbued stanza. But it did not end there.

Next, Dhaniya the herdsman uttered another stanza. To that, too, the Blessed One replied with a similar Dhamma-aligned stanza. In this manner, five more stanzas are shown in that Sutta. However, we do not intend to deliver a poetic sermon at this moment. We only intend to express the meaning of those stanzas to these meritorious friends and, as usual, provide some Dhamma exposition.

If we take only the general meaning of those other stanzas: in the second stanza, Dhaniya declares the security of his herd of cattle in this way: "There are no gadflies or mosquitoes in this region. My cattle roam in the meadows and lowlands where the grass grows tall and lush. They can withstand even a heavy rain; they are cattle that can endure it. So, if you wish to rain, rain." That is the meaning of the second stanza.

The reply given by the Blessed One to that is as follows: "My raft has been well constructed and bound together. I have crossed over this raging flood and reached the further shore. Now I have no use even for the raft. If you wish to rain, rain." There, too, we have to decipher the meaning. That "raft" refers to the Noble Eightfold Path. It is mentioned in the Dhamma. The Noble Eightfold Path is compared to a raft. Similarly, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that this Noble Eightfold Path is solely for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping: "*nittaraṇatthāya no gahaṇatthāya*" (for crossing over, not for holding onto). That is why the Buddha declared here: "Now I have crossed over by the raft. I have no more use for the raft." It is meant only for crossing over. Such is the deep meaning. The replies given by the Blessed One always contain Dhamma-aligned thoughts. So, that is the second stanza.

Then, next, Dhaniya the herdsman boasts about his domestic environment: "My herd-wife, my wife, is very obedient to me. She does not have bad conduct such as longing for other men. We have lived together in a pleasing way for a very long time. I have never heard of any fault or sin regarding her. Therefore, if you wish to rain, rain."

Next, what is in the reply stanza uttered by the Buddha? "My mind is completely under my control. It is obedient to me. My mind is freed from defilements. It is well-tamed. I have cultivated my mind for a very long time, by way of meditation (*bhāvanā*)."

Then, in the next stanza, Dhaniya says: "I do not live by performing service for anyone. I live on my own earnings. Moreover, my sons, my children, are healthy and well just like me. If you wish to rain, rain."

Thereupon, the Blessed One declares: "I too do not live by performing service for anyone. I have finished my task. I do not expect a wage from anyone. Free from servitude, without expecting any wage, I wander throughout the entire world. I have no use for wages." These meritorious friends can understand this. Because the Blessed One has eradicated all defilements, it is mentioned in many places: "I wander debtless." If there is any debt to the world by consuming food and utilizing the four requisites with defilements, He has freed Himself from that debt. So, the Blessed One does not need a special wage anymore. That is why He said He has no concern with wages.

Then, next, Dhaniya describes his cattle wealth: "I have young bulls. I have milk-drinking calves. I have pregnant cows. I have heifers capable of breeding to carry on the herd. I have the lordly bulls (*gavampati*), the leaders of the herd, to control my herd. So, if you wish to rain, rain."

Now let us see the reply given by the Blessed One to that. What is the reply? "I have no young bulls, I have no milk-drinking calves, I have no pregnant cows, I have no breeding

heifers, I have no lordly bulls (*gavampati*). If you wish to rain, rain." What must be understood from this is that the wealth of a layman is shown in the Dhamma as "pleasure" based on "having, having, having"—this is the layman's pride. The things from which they derive pride: "I have this and that." But for the monk who enjoys the taste of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), the "not-having" is indeed happiness. That is why the Blessed One exulted saying "I have not, I have not," while Dhaniya exulted saying "I have, I have." Now you can understand the difference. So, that is that stanza.

Then, next, Dhaniya says once again, also regarding a matter connected to the cattle: "The stakes for binding the cattle are driven in very firmly. The cattle are bound with new ropes made of *muñja* grass, which is a soft grass. Even the milk-drinking calves cannot pull and break them. If you wish to rain, rain."

To that, the Blessed One declares: "Like a bull that has broken all its bonds, I have broken through the fetters of this round of rebirth (*saṃsāra*). I have shattered *Bhava* (Becoming)." He also gives another simile: "Like a great lordly elephant that has broken a rotten creeper, I have broken all these bonds and remain liberated. I have attained Nibbāna." He expressed it in that manner.

Having heard all these stanzas, it is mentioned next that the Blessed One revealed Himself. Then, Dhaniya and his family must have seen the Blessed One. Immediately, at that very moment, a rain with great thunderclaps poured down. Dhaniya then expressed his faith in the Blessed One: "It is a great gain for us to see the Blessed One. May the Blessed One be our Teacher! We go to the Blessed One for refuge. My wife and I will practice the holy life under the Blessed One's Dispensation and cross over the suffering of *saṃsāra* such as *jāti* (birth / arising) and *jarāmaraṇa* (decay and death / aging and death)." Thus, they made their pledge. So, that series of stanzas ends there.

Next, as concluding stanzas, two stanzas are mentioned in that Sutta which are also found in other places. In fact, we have to assume that to this series of stanzas presented in a dramatic way, two stanzas have been extracted from elsewhere and appended as concluding or final summary stanzas.

The meaning of those stanzas—we have mentioned this on many previous occasions. Those stanzas were a challenge made by Māra to the Blessed One on one occasion. There, too, in short, it is the story about that "positive (wealth-oriented) thinking." What is said there is—

> *Nandati puttehi puttimā — gomiko gohi tatheva nandati*
>
> *Upadhīhi narassa nandanā — na hi so nandati yo nirūpadhi*

It is Dhaniya's philosophy that is shown in that stanza. "The one with sons rejoices because of sons. The cattle-owner likewise rejoices in cattle." What is referred to as "cattle" is indeed that collection of material objects used to reinforce one's egoism. In the Dhamma, the word *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel) is used for this. Wife and children, money and wealth, land and property—all these are known by the name *upadhi*. Having

upadhi is a cause of joy for a human being. "He who has no *upadhi* does not rejoice." This challenge was presented by Māra to the Blessed One on one occasion. On that occasion, the Blessed One declared:

Socati puttehi puttimā — gomiko gohi tatheva socati

Upadhīhi narassa socanā — na hi so socati yo nirūpadhi

"The one with sons sorrows because of sons. The cattle-owner likewise sorrows because of cattle," he falls into sorrow. *Upadhi*—all those possessed material assets become a cause of sorrow for a person. "He who has no *upadhi* does not sorrow." The Blessed One declared that he who has abandoned all those *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel) and attained the state of Nibbāna, which is called *nirūpadhi* (without acquisitions), does not sorrow. This stanza was also placed at the end of this Sutta.

In fact, this goes much deeper than just lands, properties, and grains. The five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) that we have accumulated throughout this long *saṃsāra*—the five accumulated aggregates of grasping: *rūpa* (form), *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā* (perception), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness)—these indeed are *upadhi*. The Blessed One declared that the one who has abandoned all of them and attained Nibbāna does not sorrow.

So, next, this story ends as follows: it is said that the Blessed One returned to Jetavana monastery through the air, and those two actually ordained in the Dispensation, attained Arahatship, and entered final Nibbāna. Next, it is mentioned in the books that the herdsman community built a monastery called Gokulaṅka Vihāra at that site, which existed in India for several centuries.

Now let us look at the lesson we can learn from this. If we look at this as an exposition, the first thing we have to say by way of revealing the facts is that in the ancient past, when considering wealth, the cow was the measure—the measure of money. That is why it is mentioned in the Dhamma: '*gosamitaṃ dhanaṃ*' (there is no wealth equal to cattle). In the pastoral era of the ancient past, cattle were considered as currency. Since cattle-wealth was such a major thing, he exulted in that manner. He boasted: "I have thirty thousand cattle, I am the boss." He had no fear whatsoever and even challenged the rain to fall because of this.

Next, what is spoken of here as grain, wealth, and assets—in terms of those times—such as cattle and so forth, are all *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel). In terms of the present era, as everyone knows, *upadhi* refers to money, lands, and various other things like bank accounts, savings, securities, insurance, etc., expressed in diverse words; all of these represent *upadhi*. The world holds the view that these provide security to oneself. But when we look at this series of stanzas, we can see that it is like a dramatic debate between the two sides of *upadhi* and *nirūpadhi* (the state without acquisitions). Every time Dhaniya praised the value of *upadhi*, the Blessed One declared the advantages of *nirūpadhi*—renunciation (*nekkhamma*) and Nibbāna. This is highly relevant to the present day. Because we know that even in such a disastrous era, many people lean

towards "positive thinking" and are tempted to look at the world optimistically based on that.

In fact, they even try to distort and explain away the Three Characteristics—*Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self). But we know the reality of suffering declared by the Blessed One. If one forgets that, one will have to fall into suffering (*dukkha*) someday. Instead of facing reality, viewing everything in a positive/favorable light following capitalism—this ultimately ends in delusion, madness, and various mental aberrations. Meritorious friends know good examples of this. When the future dream-world that Paṭācārā built with her beloved shattered, she became insane and ran naked on the highway. Similarly, when the world Kisāgotamī had built out of maternal love shattered, she went from house to house looking for medicine while clutching her dead child. The Buddha helped both of them by reminding them of reality.

Therefore, we must reflect on this. Day by day, we hear of destructions occurring in the world due to floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, cyclones, etc. In the midst of these, we must decide whether to continue spinning on this *saṃsāra* merry-go-round or to get off it. The period of a Buddha's appearance is indeed a great opportunity to escape from *saṃsāra*, a good opportunity to leap out. This merry-go-round spins on top of *jāti* (birth / arising), *jarā* (decay), *vyādhi* (sickness), and *maraṇa* (death). Clutching onto an optimistic view, people keep spinning and enjoying themselves amidst the sound of the fivefold musical instruments. But through that, Nibbāna is distanced. Therefore, we must contemplate that the lesson to be learned from these stanzas is that no protection whatsoever can be obtained from such *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel).

As a reply to Māra's challenging stanzas, the Buddha preached a powerful stanza on another occasion in this manner:

> *Nabhaṃ phaleyya paṭhaviṃ caleyya*
>
> *Sabbepi pāṇā idha santaseyyuṃ*
>
> *Sallampi ve urasi pakampayeyyuṃ*
>
> *Upadhīsu tāṇaṃ na karonti*
>
> — Māra Saṃyutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya.

Even if the sky should split, and the earth should shake, and all living beings here should tremble, even if a spear were driven into their chest, the Buddhas do not seek protection in *upadhi*. They do not expect help from *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel). What is shown there as a challenge to Māra is the value of *nirūpadhi* (being free from acquisitions).

Accordingly, we must contemplate—and shape our lives according to the vision of things as they are presented by the Buddha. For the Buddha has shown these as distorted views. Perceiving the impermanent as permanent (*anicce nicca-saññā*) is a distorted view. It is

not just a view; distortions (*vipallāsa*) are shown in three ways: distortion of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*), distortion of mind (*citta-vipallāsa*), and distortion of view (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*). The perception that takes the *Anicca* (Impermanent) as permanent is distorted. The thought that thinks of the impermanent as permanent is also distorted. The view that considers the impermanent as permanent is distorted. In this manner, taking the impermanent as permanent in all three ways is shown by the Buddha as a distortion, a perversity.

Similarly, perceiving the foul as beautiful (*asubhe subha-saññā*), taking what is foul as beautiful. No matter how much one tries to hide the foulness of this body, it becomes exposed. Yet, the world possesses the view of beauty. Even when it stinks, when it falls ill, in ways that are repulsive to oneself, the world tries to present it as beautiful. They keep thinking of it as beautiful. They maintain a distorted perception, a distorted mind, and a distorted view. But there lies the reality: taking the foul as beautiful is prevalent in the world.

In the same way, taking what is painful as pleasant (*dukkhe sukha-saññā*). In reality, this entire body is to be regarded as a heap of feelings (*Vedanā* (Feeling)). We cannot remain in a single posture. By changing the posture, we conceal the *Dukkha* (Suffering) inherent in the body. So, the world takes what is painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant. They try to enjoy pleasure through this. That, too, is a distorted perception, a distorted mind, and a distorted view. Next is this perception of self (*atta-saññā*). Taking this as a self, as "I", "mine", and "myself". Dhaniya also spoke of his possessions with pride, with the idea that they would not change. He invited the rain. It is through rain that floods and everything else come. Yet, he invited it without fear. Without considering the disastrous nature of it, he grasped everything through the perception of self as "I" and "mine". "All this belongs to me. I have calves, milk-drinking calves, I have cows," and so he went on listing those who belong to him. The more possessions he has, the greater he considers himself to be. But the Blessed One, instead, declared the value of the *nirūpadhi* state. We can reflect on that too. That, too, is that distorted, perverse condition. The place where the distorted view, the distorted mind, and the distorted perception are removed is indeed Nibbāna.

The world runs entirely along that optimistic view. They have started white-washing this Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*). In the Four Noble Truths, the Blessed One declares that, in short, this entire five aggregates of grasping—*rūpa*, *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā*, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness)—are entirely *Dukkha* (Suffering). It is presented in the Dhamma as a simple equation. But many people try to say, "This Truth of Suffering is too dark; we need to beautify it a bit, we need to white-wash it," and they make such attempts optimistically. This is an extremely foolish effort. Through that, because of their ignorance, what do many people do next? They get lost in a luxurious, pleasure-seeking lifestyle. At the same time, if we contemplate the danger aspect of it, selfishness, competitiveness, jealousy, wrong livelihood, and wrong ways of living find space through that positive philosophy. Through looking at the world in this capitalistic, optimistic way, they run after wealth in a way that makes their egoism stand out, even by defeating or killing the other person.

But the Dhamma presents a different concept of wealth. It is the concept of wealth shown in the Dhamma that belongs to Buddhists. That is called "Noble Wealth" (*ariya-dhana*). In some places, it is shown as seven types of wealth: *saddhā-dhanaṃ* (the wealth of faith), *sīla-dhanaṃ* (the wealth of virtue), *hiri-ottappiyaṃ dhanaṃ* (the wealth of shame and fear of wrongdoing), *suta-dhanañca* (the wealth of learning), *cāgo* (generosity), and *paññā ca sattamaṃ dhanaṃ* (wisdom as the seventh wealth)—thus shown as the Seven Noble Wealths. In another place, it is shown as five Noble Wealths. These meritorious friends hear about them constantly: faith, virtue, shame and fear towards sin which help in protecting virtue, learning or Dhamma knowledge, the quality of sacrifice or letting go, and next, wisdom—these are the real wealth. We must bring forth this wealth. We must incline towards our Noble positive thinking, not towards the worldly-accepted capitalism. We must develop the perception of "possibility" to bring this wealth closer.

For it is said about faith: "*saddhīdha vittaṃ purisassa seṭṭhaṃ*" (faith is a man's best wealth here). In the Āḷavaka Sutta, even a yakkha accepted—the yakkha named Āḷavaka accepted: what? That faith is the greatest wealth for a person. Now, many people fail to accept the truth that even a yakkha accepted. Faith is indeed the most valuable asset in the world. Because where there is faith, all other virtuous qualities connected to Nibbāna gather there.

Similarly, on the other hand, if we look at the ultimate end: "*paññā narānaṃ ratanaṃ*" (wisdom is the jewel of human beings). The greatest jewel, the most valuable gem that humans possess is wisdom. Therefore, the path that leads to wisdom, to the supreme insight wisdom that brings about one's liberation from *saṃsāra*—that is the Dhamma-aligned way of thinking we must bring forth instead of this worldly way of thinking. Recalling this concept of wealth, we must reflect that various wrong views arise in society from time to time to conceal the truth. This could be due to various selfish motives. Many people get dragged into them.

At a time when the world is clearly going to ruin day by day, we must consider this as a final opportunity—how rare indeed is a human birth, and equally rare is a human birth during the period of a Buddha's appearance. Even an animal lives some sort of life. But animals do not have something called the Dhamma. The animal's life consists of food, sleep, fear, and copulation—as even the sages of the past pointed out: food, sleep, fear, and sexual indulgence are common to both humans and animals. But the Dhamma is unique to humans. It is the Dhamma that is the distinguishing characteristic of humans.

Therefore, from the perspective of Dhamma-aligned thinking, we have received an extremely rare opportunity in this long *saṃsāra* to end the suffering of *saṃsāra*. Instead of saying "it is impossible," we must bring forth the perception of "possibility." Now, in these times, many people think, considering the decline of the Dispensation: "Now is not the time for Nibbāna. We should just keep doing other things. The time for Nibbāna has now passed." Thinking in that way is a wrong idea.

Now, let us illustrate this with a small simile. Sometimes, when there is a special exhibition or a special event, large crowds queue up to see it. Sometimes, they have to stay in queues miles long, day and night. At that time, if someone gets discouraged because the queue is long and abandons their place in the queue, they can never get back in. That is to say, on the first day, space is made available for a certain number of people. On the next day too, many people remain there regardless of the sun or rain. It is to those people that the opportunity is provided. He who arrives first is the one who, despite the suffering, remained in line. We must think in the same way.

During this period of a Buddha's appearance, if one thinks "now this Nibbāna is invalid/unobtainable" and does not practice the virtues relevant to Nibbāna, that person will always have the philosophy of "tomorrow, tomorrow." Instead, we must think: while this True Dhamma is present, we must exert ourselves to the best of our ability, bring forth those Buddhist core values in accordance with that noble Dhamma, and live according to those Buddhist core values. We must not abandon the essence and grasp the non-essential. Then, if we cultivate those core values with effort, even if we fail in this life due to some reason or because our merits have not matured, according to that simile of the queue, when the next Buddha comes, we will be at the front of the queue. It is not those who just keep talking, but those who engage in the practice who are at the front of the queue. There are good examples of this; it is not said in vain. Meritorious friends have heard of Bāhiya Dārucīriya, Pukkusāti, and others.

That ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya, along with Pukkusāti and others—actually seven monks, as mentioned there—during the time of Kassapa Buddha, when the Dispensation was in decline. When the Dispensation was degenerating in a very dangerous manner, they climbed onto a great rock, threw away the ladder, and making a life-sacrificing effort, rejecting food, put forth great energy and strove. It is said that through that effort, one monk became an Arahat. One became a Non-Returner. The other five monks, without food, withered and died. But they did not die in vain. Those five who meditated with life-sacrificing effort were the ones who understood the Dhamma most quickly in this Dispensation. Everyone now knows Bāhiya Dārucīriya. The Bāhiya Sutta is a Sutta that almost everyone considers highly sublime. Nibbāna was not gained by the ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya through just those few words without effort; he had acquired the qualification for it. That is what we must understand from this. It was the same with Ven. Pukkusāti. Pukkusāti attained the stage of Non-Returner immediately upon hearing a certain deep discourse.

They realized the Paths and Fruits very quickly in this Dispensation. It is said that they possessed the capacity for swift realization. If we cultivate the strength for swift realization, we will not just keep saying, "I will become an Arahat next time, next time," but like in that past Buddha Sasana, we will apply the maximum possible effort. That is what we must understand from this. Therefore, we must not be lazy in this Buddha Dispensation. If we think: "Now the Dispensation is in decline. Let us abandon these things and run along that positive thinking. Let us applaud material progress"—if we think like that, we will never escape from *saṃsāra*, keeping on saying "tomorrow,

tomorrow, in the next Buddha's Dispensation, in the next Buddha's Dispensation." That is the state of affairs.

Therefore, we must reflect wisely. This Dhaniya Sutta is a good opportunity, a great topic, to renew our understanding of our values. Indeed, even by name, he is "Dhaniya" (the wealthy one). So, he developed a great pride because of this wealth, possessing such a huge herd of cattle. Because of that herd of cattle, and that flood we spoke of—indeed, if the Blessed One had not gone and helped him in some way, they might have been destroyed the very next day. In the same way, regarding the events happening in these times, these meritorious friends have heard well, there is nothing new to say. About a year ago, after the tsunami disaster occurred—now that has become an historical event. Many people try to remove such things from the minds of these meritorious friends. But in fact, those are the very things we must bring forth if we are to cultivate a sense of urgency. When the giant multi-story buildings were being destroyed by that tsunami, and vehicles, cars were being washed away into the sea, the Buddha statues that remained unharmed, sitting in concentration (*samādhi*), presented a demonstration of this very concept of *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel) and *nirūpadhi*. While all those *upadhi* were washed away, those statues sitting in concentration taught a lesson to the world. It was like the challenge the Blessed One made to Dhaniya. No matter how many tsunamis came, those Buddha statues, which reflect those core values, have given us a demonstration at least through their reflection/image. We must not forget that.

Recalling that too, in this disastrous time, there is something we often express—even though it is not a Buddhist concept, it is a Western saying: "a blessing in disguise." Practically, that is an important thing for many people. Because what helped Paṭācārā to attain Arahatship was the bursting of her inflated balloon. As soon as that balloon of the future burst, Paṭācārā first lost her mind. That, too, is mentioned in the Dhamma. This principle is shown in the Dhamma in this way: there are two results of suffering (*Dukkha* (Suffering)). When suffering is presented, it works in two ways. That is: "*sammoha-vepakkāhaṃ, bhikkhave, dukkhaṃ vadāmi, pariyesana-vepakkaṃ vā*" (Monks, I say suffering has delusion as its result, or searching as its result). Here, "result" is not like the result of karma, but the consequence of suffering. Delusion, falling into confusion, or searching, going in search. So, when suffering is presented, one person falls into delusion—becomes mad, insane. Another person goes in search. That is present in both of the stories we mentioned. Paṭācārā, too, at first fell into madness and started running. Then how did she turn to searching? When Paṭācārā came naked before the Blessed One, He declared: "Regain your mindfulness, sister." As soon as she regained her mindfulness, she immediately realized that she was naked. From there onwards, regaining her composure, ultimately that word of the Buddha, "Regain your mindfulness, sister," helped Paṭācārā to attain the foremost position among the bhikkhunīs who were experts in the Vinaya in this Dispensation.

It is the same with Kisāgotamī. There is nothing new to say, these are stories these meritorious friends have heard hundreds of thousands of times. Yet, perhaps they have not learned the lesson they ought to take from them. In her case too, it was a similar

thing. At first, she fell into delusion. That her child could die was something unthinkable to her. That future dream-world she had constructed around her infant child—she must have thought: "Because of this child, everything will help my future and my life ahead," and in various other ways. So, she did not want to let go of those. She could not believe that the child had died. The Blessed One directed Kisāgotamī, who had fallen into madness and went from house to house searching for medicine, towards searching. He guided her to search. How did He guide her to search? Everyone knows He asked her to bring a handful of mustard seeds from a house where no one had died. There, she began to search. Through that searching, wisdom arose. So, we too must reflect, taking these as blessings in disguise, and extract the true lesson from them. Instead, if we white-wash them, forget the Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*), and cling to that distorted philosophy, we will remain in *saṃsāra* forever. In this very manner, we have wandered in *saṃsāra* for a long period, hundreds of thousands of times.

As declared by the Blessed One, covered by ignorance (*avijjā*) and bound by craving (*Taṇhā* (Craving)). Because of being covered by that veil of ignorance, we did not realize the truth. True, we did not realize it. It is a darkness, a great thick darkness. It is in a thick darkness that the world wanders. Next, bound by the fetter called *taṇhā*, unable to break that bond, we have run in this *saṃsāra* for a long period.

So, if we are to break this, we must realize the Three Characteristics—*Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self)—as shown by the Buddha. These meritorious friends have heard of the very first step of the path of insight leading to that. Now, to the person who cultivates the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), what is first realized is that there is something called "arising" in everything in this world. And the aspect of "ceasing", which was previously unseen by us, begins to appear. Out of the two—arising and ceasing—the world always highlights "arising." After throwing one's worn-out clothes and other things into the dustbin, one does not even remember them. One keeps searching for new things. One performs a preparation/formation. *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). One keeps performing endless formatting. The Buddha showed this itself as *Dukkha* (Suffering). '*Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*' (all Preparations are impermanent) is true not only in a deep sense but even in an everyday, worldly sense. None of these preparations we make are permanent. Because of those preparations, we sometimes fall into suffering. All *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) are *anicca*. But because we have no understanding of their ceasing aspect, we keep preparing the same things over and over again, rather than thinking of the stilling of preparations. The Buddha has declared the stilling of preparations as happiness. We perform these *saṅkhāra* because of ignorance.

So, after seeing those two—arising and ceasing—next, a word used for this Nibbāna is *nirodha* (cessation). The state where that ceasing aspect is more clearly realized by the mind is called cessation. Out of arising and ceasing, how this breaks down must be understood more and more subtly. That is what is called dissolution (*bhaṅga*). Breaking down. When looking at the world with an inquiring eye, with insight wisdom, and strengthening one's concentration (*samādhi*), it appears in a subtle way that everything

is a stream of arising and ceasing. That this is breaking apart, dissolving. Through that dissolving, what dissolves is not just things in the external world. Thoughts also dissolve. It is the thought that is grasped in the end. One sees that this thought also dissolves very rapidly.

Within that, a great fear and sense of urgency arise. "Am I not grasping this very thought in everything? That grasped thought also passes away, dissolves." The stream of insight-consciousness that starts from this gradually leads to that weariness (*nibbidā*), which is disenchantment with *saṃsāra*. This word *nibbidā* is indeed a valuable word in the Dispensation. Weariness/disenchantment with *saṃsāra*. To many, it is an unpleasant word. Now they attach new words to it and think along an optimistic philosophy. Now, something called a "depressed" state is prevalent among the younger generation. They say there are depressive symptoms, a depressive nature. Actually, what causes those is indeed that very optimistic philosophy. Because of limitless craving (*Taṇhā* (Craving)) and limitless expectations, young people run after various targets, become exhausted, and when the expected target is lost, they fall into a state of depression.

So, the Buddha has given the medicine pill for that. What is the medicine pill? It is the realization of reality. If one has some understanding of the Three Characteristics—*Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self)—they will not become despondent when they face such a situation. They will accept it as, "Here, I have learned a lesson," treating it as a blessing in disguise as mentioned, and will incline towards the path of the Dhamma. Instead, calling it a depressive symptom, some kind of abnormal condition, many try to feed it through modern philosophies. But we must reflect: there is no one who can even come close to the Blessed One in terms of science, is there? We must realize that we can never attain true peace by closing our eyes to reality. That is what the Buddha has brought forth for us.

That is also what is in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*)—to one who looks closely at the body, what is seen in the body? Is it that beautiful nature we spoke of? As one applies the mind to the body, when washing one's face and cleaning one's limbs, what is the reality? What is shown in the mirror—is that what is inside? When looking with the eye of insight, it is not the condition seen in the mirror. In that way, the weariness that leads to disenchantment with the body is a disenchantment that comes according to reality. It is not a depression caused by the shattering of targets set through one's own foolishness. That might be depression. But this is *nibbidā*—disenchantment, a valuable word in the Dispensation. It is when the insight knowledges are maturing and drawing close to Nibbāna that this true weariness with *saṃsāra* emerges.

Through that alone comes fading of lust (*virāga*), which is non-attachment—letting go. One cannot escape from this *saṃsāra* while maintaining attachment to it. One cannot say, "Let me let go," while holding onto it. "Oh, I am holding on while trying to let go!" It is not to be done in that way. Through realization, a moment comes when those things held onto so far are let go without one even knowing it. It is not that "one lets go," but

"they get let go." They slip away. They slip away. Such a state arises in the mind. Until then, one must cultivate that special vision we spoke of.

So, on this occasion, these meritorious friends have indeed undertaken a valuable virtue—this large crowd undertook the appropriate virtue on this Full Moon day. Why does everyone, as Buddhists, become virtuous at various levels of virtue? Going to heaven is indeed a result of it too. But if we look at the true meaning, virtue is cultivated for the sake of concentration (*samādhi*)—for the purification of mind. Establishing ourselves on virtue, training our body and speech, we next develop one-pointedness of mind, concentration, which is called purification of mind. This is not to see how the moon and the sun behave in the physical world, or what lies beneath the earth. This concentration was developed to see the reality, the nature as-it-is, of this five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). To the person who dwells in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness with that concentration, the insight knowledges emerge.

So, then, using virtue as a support, concentration is attained. Next, the concentrated mind is applied to insight, to contemplation. Through that contemplation, one gradually draws closer to true realization. When one draws close to that realization, one sees that the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*), which were hitherto considered as "I" and "mine" as *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel), and the houses, lands, and vehicles we build in this long *saṃsāra* are all breaking down. As they break down, we acquire new things. But there is one thing we do not let go of in this long *saṃsāra*: being deluded by this five aggregates of *rūpa*, *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā*, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness), we have worked to grow them rather than working towards their passing away, their cessation. That is why we have wandered for such a long time in this *saṃsāra*. Within that itself lies suffering. In short, the Buddha has declared the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) as entirely *Dukkha* (Suffering).

In truth, this world is like a (disease). The Blessed One is called the supreme surgeon, the physician-healer, because the Buddha gave the method—the medicine—to cross over this bound suffering of *saṃsāra*. That medicine is contained within the Four Noble Truths. The Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-ariya-sacca*). Craving (*Taṇhā* (Craving)) is shown as its cause. Due to limitless craving, the people of this world are stuck and immersed in *Bhava* (Becoming). They are holding onto various things. So, these virtues such as virtue are cultivated to gradually thin out that craving.

Then, when that is removed at some point, along with the stilling of the thirst of craving and the stilling of preparations (*Saṅkhāra* (Preparations)), the attainment of Nibbāna is achieved. That is extinguishment. The Buddha declared: "My house is open, my fire is extinguished." Those fires He spoke of are indeed the fires of lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Now, Dhaniya was pleased saying: "The fire is kindled, the fire is in the house." The Blessed One was pleased (by saying the fire is extinguished). Therefore, we must follow the Blessed One and not Dhaniya. We must reflect that as Buddhists, the great endeavor, the great task we have to do, is this work of extinguishing the three fires. That is what we must engage in.

For that purpose, these meritorious friends have undertaken virtue to some extent today. Through listening to this Dhamma, these meritorious friends also draw close to the Noble Wealths (*ariya-dhana*) we spoke of. The wealth of faith (*saddhā-dhana*), the wealth of virtue (*sīla-dhana*), the shame and fear that assist virtue itself, next, Dhamma knowledge—that also helps. That too is a valuable wealth. A person without Dhamma knowledge destroys his own life and also destroys society. Next, that letting go, the power of generosity. That is a great strength. A person without the strength of letting go falls into disaster in that manner when a misfortune or loss occurs. Finally, wisdom. The realization of the true nature of the world—wisdom—it is when that is brought forth that liberation from *saṃsāra* occurs.

May the store of merit gathered today by these meritorious friends through the virtue kept and the Dhamma heard, serve as a supportive cause to develop and mature the spiritual faculties and powers of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom which assist in the realization of Nibbāna. Establishing oneself on those, and with the help of association with noble friends, may this power of merit definitely be a supportive cause for the realization of the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahatship within this very Buddha Dispensation! May you make this aspiration. Likewise, if there is any being from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha in this universe who wishes to rejoice in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, may they all, through that rejoicing, realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna in accordance with their aspirations. Now, let us recite these stanzas.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #39

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.80)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Alaṅkato cepi samaṃ careyya, santo danto niyato brahmacārī;

Sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍaṃ, so brāhmaṇo so samaṇo sa bhikkhu.

From:

Verse 142 from the Daṇḍavagga (Chapter on Punishment) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The Blessed One declared that due to various kinds of intoxication, worldly beings fall into heedlessness in this saṁsāra. In addition to natural intoxications such as the intoxication of youth (*yobbana-mada*), the intoxication of health (*ārogya-mada*), the intoxication of life (*jīvita-mada*), and the intoxication of wealth (*bhoga-mada*), the Dhamma indicates that the most well-known intoxication in society—the intoxication of liquor—is also a cause for heedlessness. What helps one to escape from all these intoxications is *saṁvega* (spiritual urgency). The background story for the stanza we have chosen as our theme today reveals how *saṁvega*, arising out of the sorrowful situations in life, can help a person conquer all these intoxications and draw closer to Nibbāna.

The Lord Buddha preached this stanza concerning King Pasenadi Kosala's minister named Santati. When this prime minister, Santati, returned after suppressing a rebellion on the borders of King Kosala's kingdom, the king, as a special privilege, granted him royal luxury for seven days. This does not mean he gave him the kingdom itself; it was more like an honorary title. He arranged for him to enjoy pleasures equal to royal luxury—the fivefold sensual pleasures (*pañca-kāma*). So much so, that a female dancer skilled in dancing and singing was handed over to him for his entertainment. Thus, this minister Santati spent seven days enjoying liquor, watching those dances, and listening to songs. On the seventh day, he set out to go to the bathing ford, riding on an elephant

with his retinue. On the way, seeing the Buddha walking for alms, he bowed his head in respect to the Buddha and went on. At that moment, the Buddha showed a gentle smile. Since there is a special significance to such a smile, Venerable Ānanda usually asks, "Exalted One, what is the reason for showing that smile?" When asked thus, the Buddha declared, "Even though this minister goes on like this now, today itself, adorned in all his garments and jewelry, he will come to me, listen to a stanza, and attain final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*) today." Among the crowd who heard this, those with wrong views thought, "This recluse Gotama says whatever comes to his mouth; today we must be prepared to expose his falsehood and disgrace him." That group prepared themselves in that manner. Those with right views and faith were eager, thinking, "We must witness this miraculous event."

Meanwhile, during the daytime, Minister Santati engaged in water sports and then went to the drinking hall in the park. There, the dancer went onto the stage and began to perform her dance. In order to display her dancing grace to the best of her ability, this woman had not eaten properly for all seven days. At this moment, due to hunger and exhaustion, a severe ailment suddenly arose, and she fell down dead right there, with her eyes and mouth wide open. When the minister asked to have her examined, the people said, "Now her life has ceased." As soon as he heard this, a great *saṁvega* (spiritual urgency) and grief arose in this minister. So much so, that due to the *saṁvega* that arose, his seven days of intoxication subsided right there. He thought, "To whom should I go to subside this grief of mine? I must go to the Buddha." In the evening, he came to the Buddha, along with his retinue, adorned in his garments and jewelry in that very manner. When he related this story to the Buddha, the Buddha said, "Santati, not only in this life, but in this long saṁsāra, the tears you have shed due to this woman dying in this very manner are greater than the waters of the four great oceans." Thus instilling the fear of saṁsāra, He preached a short stanza of deep meaning:

Yaṁ pubbe taṁ visosehi,

pacchā te māhu kiñcanaṁ;

majjhe ce no gahessasi,

upasanto carissasi.

When looked at in terms of meaning, in terms of literal meaning, it has to be translated like this: '*Yaṁ pubbe taṁ visosehi*' — whatever there was before, dry it up; '*pacchā te māhu kiñcanaṁ*' — let there be nothing for you afterwards; '*majjhe ce no gahessasi*' — if you do not grasp anything in the middle either; '*upasanto carissasi*' — you will wander completely at peace.

It is said that by deeply considering this brief advice, the sorrow-stricken Minister Santati attained Arahantship at that very moment. Along with this, some texts mention that if a person has cultivated meditative absorptions (*jhāna*) in the past, they surface. Now, here, it is said that he obtained not only the state of *jhāna*, but even direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). For next, it is said that the Arahat Santati, after attaining

Arahantship, examined his life-Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to see how long his life would last. Knowing that he would have to pass away (attain *parinibbāna*), he asked permission from the Buddha, saying, "Please give me permission to attain *parinibbāna*." The Buddha said, "Very well, but before that, declare to this assembly the past kamma that helped you to become an Arahat. And do this not sitting on the ground, but rising into the air." At that moment, it is mentioned here that the Arahat Santati declared his past history in this manner:

"Ninety-one aeons (*kalpas*) ago, during the time of Vipassī Buddha, I was born in the kingdom of Bandhumatī and wondered what would be a good livelihood to pursue. When I thought about what occupation would not cause harm or injury to others, I felt that the activity of a Dhamma announcer (*Dhamma-ghosaka*) was the best occupation. The activity of a Dhamma announcer means wandering about proclaiming to people, encouraging them to perform meritorious deeds like giving alms, to observe the precept days, to listen to the Dhamma, and to be devoted to the Triple Gem. So, I started to behave in this way in society as a profession. King Bandhumatī, who was the Buddha's father, came to know about this, summoned me, and asked, 'What are you doing and how are you doing it?' When I told him, 'I am practicing the profession of a Dhamma announcer,' he said, 'Very good. But you are doing this by walking on foot, aren't you? For this work, you should travel on horseback,' and he gave me a horse. He told me to perform this duty riding on a horse while wearing a garland of flowers. After I had done this for some time, the king summoned me again and said, 'A horse is not sufficient; do this work traveling in a chariot drawn by four horses.' Then, for the third time, he summoned me again and assigned me to perform this work of a Dhamma announcer adorned in garments and jewelry, riding on an elephant, having also given me various forms of wealth, possessions, and resources. In those days, the lifespan of human beings was extremely long. During the time of Vipassī Buddha, I performed this task of a Dhamma announcer for eighty thousand years." Declaring, "It is as a result of this that I obtained this state," Minister Santati entered into the fire-element attainment (*tejo-dhātu-samāpatti*) right there in the air and kindled fire in his own body. The blood and flesh of his body were consumed. At that time, the Buddha had a cloth spread out to collect the burnt bone relics and had a stupa built there at the four-way junction, wishing, "May people worship this stupa and accumulate merit."

After this event, after this miraculous event, a discussion arose among the monks: "This minister Santati attained Arahantship while adorned in his garments and jewelry. Do we call this person an ascetic (*samaṇa*), a monk (*bhikkhu*), or a Brahmin (*brāhmaṇa*)?" A discussion of this nature arose. Having heard this, the Buddha uttered the stanza on that occasion, which is presented as follows:

Alankato cepi samaṁ careyya

santo danto niyato brahmacārī

sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍaṁ

so brāhmaṇo so samaṇo sa bhikkhu

The meaning of it is: "Even if someone is adorned in garments and jewelry, if they are peaceful, tamed, established in celibacy, having laid aside cudgels and weapons towards all beings, having a practice of non-violence, discarding uneven conduct and practicing even conduct—to such a person, whichever word is used, whether ascetic, Brahmin, or monk, there is no wrong. This is the idea conveyed by that stanza."

That is the story. What we have to extract from this story and event is—indeed, one might wonder how a layperson, having been intoxicated for seven days in that manner, could attain Arahantship. One should not misunderstand this. However, it is connected to past kamma. Only to someone who has the power of past perfections (*pāramī*) does the Buddha preach the Dhamma, looking at the right moment. This Dhamma is of such a timeless nature (*akālika*) that, though short, if it is deeply understood, that person can escape from saṁsāra at that very moment. There are many such highly miraculous things in Dhamma stories. In this day and age, someone might even question them.

Now, if we analyze this, what we have to say is that even if we think about this story, at first glance there is only one drama. But there is no wrong in thinking that there are two dramas. Because within this entire saṁsāra existence, there are three stages: gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*). Gratification means enjoyment. Worldly beings are tempted to enjoy sensations based on the fivefold sensual pleasures (*pañca-kāma*). Especially animal beings. Even human beings—ordinary persons—live in the fivefold sensual pleasures. That is where they are. What we call "stages" is also one such stage. Next, when experiencing this, at a certain point, danger arises from within it itself—gratification and danger. At that moment, worldly beings are tempted to think. They wonder, "Why does this happen to us? Why do we get such sorrowful results?" and fall into contemplation. Next, they begin to search. A way to get out of this, to be free. That is what is called "escape" (*nissaraṇa*). Escape means leaping out of this circular wheel of saṁsāra—the stage of escape. For that, if one meets a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), a Buddha, at the right time, one can attain the escape called Nibbāna. Those are the three stages. All of these are contained within the short seven-day experience of Minister Santati. That royal luxury of seven days was a false royal luxury. It was perhaps the liquor that helped him forget its falsity and impermanence (*aniccatā*). He was intoxicated for all seven days. From this sleep—instead of sleepiness, it was intoxication—he awoke from this sleep, this dream of life, when he saw the tragic drama of that actress's dance. It became a drama. When we think a little about that, it is rare to see that final scene of an actor's or actress's life on a stage. That is the final scene of the dance of all of our lives. But we can contemplate that in a deeply moving way (*saṁvegī*). That woman must have danced because she could not avoid dancing. Because it was her profession. But at that moment, the dancing was done in madness. A certain passage in the Buddha's Dhamma is clarified to us by this. The Buddha described this drama—now, in these times, artists who enjoy aesthetic pleasure might feel some displeasure toward the Buddha about such things—but the Buddha compared drama to madness: *"Ummattakamidaṁ, bhikkhave, ariyassa vinaye naccaṁ"* — "Monks, in the

discipline of the Noble Ones, dancing is madness." So, this fits perfectly here. Indeed, she danced unable to bear the pain of hunger. That is exactly what we say on some occasions: if someone is made to stand on a heated iron stage, the effort they make to shift their feet will appear to those looking as a dance. To a foreigner, it might even be a dance worth filming. Thus, according to the Buddha's word, it is clear that this dancing is like madness. Now, this fits perfectly. In the end, it was a struggling due to the pain of hunger. She struggled and fell, with both her eyes and mouth open. That is the final dance. We do not say this in mockery of dancing; these are natural occurrences. But the world forgets this, due to various intoxications such as the aforementioned intoxication of liquor. This reality (*yathābhūta*) became manifest to Minister Santati. Through that, a deep weariness (*nibbidā*) arose. Indeed, to cross over from saṁsāra, weariness—which is called *nibbidā*—is essential. It arises in each individual at their own level. In daily life, we experience the suffering (*dukkha*) of separation from loved ones. But it does not go that deep. Here, it was immediate. Through that *saṁvega*, his intoxication subsided right there. That is why the Buddha declared it in that stanza. "Peaceful, tamed..." — indeed, during that short time, through the weariness (*nibbidā*) that arose from it, a certain restraint must have developed in that person. Time is not the issue here. A great transformation had occurred in him by the time he came to see the Buddha, due to that *saṁvega*. He was no longer the same minister as before.

So, somehow, through the drama we see that the minister saw gratification, and then danger (*ādīnava*) due to the sudden death of the actress. Next, he came to the Buddha seeking escape (*nissaraṇa*). To help with that escape, although the Buddha's sermon was a short stanza, we know it was wonderful. It is something beyond our imagination. The Buddha sees the dispositions and latencies (*anusaya*) of characters, and the strengths they have brought from the past. If they have practiced meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*), He sees that too. It is according to those that the Buddha utters a stanza.

Now, this stanza is a deep stanza. In the past, through the merit of being a Dhamma announcer (*Dhamma-ghosaka*)—encouraging others towards the Dhamma is a great merit. The greatest thing one can do in the world is to establish others in the Dhamma. If he did this for his entire life, there must have been a vast mass of merit, a strength of perfections (*pāramī*), within that person. It surfaced, ripened, and matured through that short stanza uttered by the Buddha. That stanza is like a riddle to an ordinary person. What does it say? "*Yaṁ pubbe taṁ visosehi*" — if there was something before, dry it up. What is this thing that was there before? Past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). The Buddha told Minister Santati, "The tears you have shed in this long saṁsāra due to this very woman dying in this very manner are greater than the four great oceans." Thus, such life stories are mentioned in the Dhamma—some people come together as husbands and wives five hundred times, or even more. They come together as parents and children, and in various other ways in this long saṁsāra due to the power of attraction they have for one another. What we have to understand here is that Minister Santati must have had some saṁsāric connection with that actress. Be that as it may, with that saṁsāric background, Minister Santati understood the side of danger (*ādīnava*)—that he had shed an ocean of

tears over a long period in saṁsāra for this very woman. Now, here, it is as if the Buddha declared, "Dry up that ocean!" and what is contained within that are past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Let us analyze this term *saṅkhāra* a little.

The term *saṅkhāra* is used in many contexts. But to truly understand this deeply, it must be understood through meditation. Briefly, it can be explained in relation to drama. In ancient India, the word *saṅkhāra* was often used in connection with drama. Before an actress comes onto the stage, how much makeup and dressing up does she do? Even today you know, don't you? There are various kinds—we don't need to specify—indeed, nowadays we see actresses even on the high road. Why? Because they are not in their natural state. They come onto the stage having made a change by applying various colors. These are called makeup Preparations (*anga-saṅkhāra*). They make many artificial, deceptive modifications to suit the scene presented in the drama. That is basically the meaning of the word *saṅkhāra*. Therefore, it is in accordance with this deep meaning that the Buddha designates everything we do in our entire life as Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). In the very effort we make to live, within the good or bad kamma, when considered deeply, what exists is our making a personality, grasping it as "I" and "mine".

It is deeply shown in the Dhamma that in one place, an untaught worldling regards form as self. *"Rūpaṁ attato samanupassati"* — he regards form as self. *"Yā kho pana samanupassanā — saṅkhāro so"* — that very regarding as self is a formation (*saṅkhāra*). Because the Buddha has shown that what is called the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)—whereby an ordinary worldling thinks that there is a self, grasping it as "I" and "mine"—is a falsely assumed thing. Or rather, it is something made up. How is it projected? One has a body. One either thinks, "This is my self," or that "the self possesses a body," or thinks "my self is within form," or "form is within the self." In this manner, looking at each of the aggregates in four ways has been shown by the Buddha as a formation (*saṅkhāra*). One regards form as self; one regards self as possessing form; one thinks that form is within self; one thinks that self is within form. What this indicates is the inability to let go of form. It is like seeing one's photograph and saying, "Ah, this is me! This is my childhood; this is my youth." Thus, one has taken form as "I". In the same manner is feeling (*vedanā*). In the same manner is perception (*saññā*)—recognition. In the same manner are Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Making Preparations is taken in that way. Now, when that actress comes onto the stage, she is not the same person who was behind the stage. At that moment she thinks, "I must perform this character." It is not like being at home. Thus, there too, we see the deceptive nature of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is why Preparations are compared to a banana trunk. A banana trunk has no essence, no heartwood; it is substanceless. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is this thinking of "I" and "mine", it is to that mind. In this way, when considering each of these, right there are Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). This is a small clue given to understand Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). The Buddha shows this as something occurring due to ignorance (*avijjā*). What is ignorance? It is not knowing that this entire saṁsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*). Because of not knowing it as suffering (*dukkha*), we perform a great deal of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in this life. The Buddha says that, in the end, suffering (*dukkha*) is received within that. Since we do not understand this, we go

on and on in saṁsāra accumulating Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is what is contained in this brief story—the Dhamma of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), in short. Thus, somehow, those Preparations are past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). In the past, Minister Santati understood that all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) associated with that woman were impermanent (*anicca*). "*Yaṁ pubbe taṁ visosehi*" — he dried up those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). He dried up that grief.

Next, "*pacchā te māhu kiñcanaṁ*". Those devotees who practice insight meditation (*vipassanā*) know that what is called investigation of Preparations (*saṅkhāra-sammasana*) means contemplating Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Now, in the Dhamma, in insight meditation, it is said that what we take as kamma in the world are these very things. These are all our Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Indeed, when it is said "all Preparations are impermanent" (*"sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā"*), it refers to these thoughts of ours, the thoughts (*vitakka*) that arise in the mind within this existence. Indeed, the past is something grasped by the mind, isn't it? There, too, are Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). The Buddha declares that every single one of those past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) is impermanent (*anicca*). Likewise, they are substanceless; there is no essence to be grasped as "I" or "mine". Next, because those past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are no longer there, it becomes easy for us. We can contemplate it like waking up from a dream and realizing that the dream was false. Therefore, it is easy for an insight meditator (*vipassanā-yogī*) to understand the impermanence (*aniccatā*) of past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). It is the same regarding future Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). According to that same principle, one can understand that if one generates Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in the future, they will likewise perish.

But the most difficult thing is the present. The present is the middle: "*majjhe ce no*". The ordinary person grasps the Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) of this present—called *paccuppanna* (the present)—tightly. Otherwise, there is no existence either, is there? What is past, one can easily understand, "what is gone is gone." What comes in the future has not arrived yet; even if it comes, one can think, "it is just that much." But the form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) of this very moment are held onto tightly. Now, here, the feat performed by Minister Santati was seeing this with wisdom through that *saṁvega* that arose, through the weariness (*nibbidā*) towards saṁsāra. That is how the realization of the Paths and Fruits (*magga-phala*) occurs. The insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) arising out of impermanence (*aniccatā*) mature, and through the breaking of that, weariness (*nibbidā*) towards saṁsāra arises. Through weariness (*nibbidā*), the desire to be liberated from saṁsāra arises. Through that, by deeply seeing the three characteristics, as a result of a highly rapid and subtle transformation occurring in the mind, one obtains the realization of the Paths and Fruits. Thus, what is fundamental to this is the weariness (*nibbidā*) towards saṁsāra, against the background of this event. That is why the Buddha, like 'hitting the nail right on the head,' waited exactly until the time of that person's arrival. That is why the Buddha showed a gentle smile. The Buddha sees the moment when this person can be helped. Otherwise, when Minister Santati bowed his head and was leaving, He could have said, "Wait a moment, listen to this sermon and then go," couldn't He?

No, He waited until he had gone through all of that and returned humbled. Only after his intoxication had subsided, and when the time had arrived, did He deliver that short sermon. Santati understood it most deeply. "*Majjhe ce no gahessasi*" — if you do not grasp the middle, the present Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) either, "*upasanto carissasi*" — you will wander completely at peace, which refers to Arahantship.

That is what we have to extract from this story. Many such events are mentioned in the Dhamma. In this day and age, someone might question this. Likewise, on the other hand, we must say that taking this as a general rule, some people might think that just by hearing a short stanza, anyone can obtain this state. We should not think in that way generally. This is an extraordinary occurrence. It is not an ordinary thing; highly extraordinary events are recorded in this Dhamma. One must understand their background properly.

Then, next, what we need to bring out here is what causes weariness towards saṁsāra. We also started with this life—now, here, it was not only the intoxication of liquor; within this, what must have helped Minister Santati perform such a heroic deed were also the intoxication of youth (*yobbana-mada*), the intoxication of health (*ārogya-mada*), and so forth. It was with their support. Next, the intoxication of life (*jīvita-mada*)—he conquered others and returned. Next, the intoxication of wealth (*bhoga-mada*)—royal luxury was given. It was on that very intoxication born of wealth that he began to enjoy royal luxury for the entire seven days. If we think about it, this "middle" is indeed those seven days. He understood the emptiness of the royal luxury enjoyed during those seven days. Then, it is easy to let go of it. If it was understood in that way, the grief caused by this event subsided right there. One was able to conquer that grief. Next, the danger of this saṁsāra is understood even more deeply: "Have we not spent such a long time in saṁsāra in this manner, is it not an ocean of tears?" So, this aspect—this aspect of the Dhamma—is not brought out by most people in this day and age. We have mentioned on many occasions that now the trend is, both for protecting our Dispensation (*Sāsana*) and for carrying this Dhamma forward, what is mostly brought out is the side of worldly development. Developing the world. The Buddha has said: *"Na siyā lokavaḍḍhano"* — "Do not be a developer of the world," or "Do not be a developer of cemeteries." Developing this saṁsāra is a practice of worldly development and cemetery development—the weariness towards saṁsāra does not fit with that. Therefore, much attention is not paid to such things in this day and age. However, during the Buddha's time, on many occasions, to the monks and laypeople who listened to the Buddha's Dhamma, and to those who came to ask questions, He constantly reminded them of sermons that created a wonderful, powerful sense of urgency (*saṁvega*) and weariness towards saṁsāra.

These are called the *Anamatagga* (Suttas). In the *Anamatagga Saṁyutta*, several such Dhamma sections are mentioned. Why are they called the *Anamatagga* Suttas? The Buddha repeatedly reminds us that this saṁsāra is something whose beginning and end are not visible. The beginning of this cannot be found; to illustrate this, there are similes—it is said that upon hearing those discourses, monks attained Arahantship right

then and there. Now, here, we started by speaking about the ocean of tears. That discourse is mentioned in more detail in the Dhamma. The Buddha asks, "Monks, what do you think, which is greater? The tears you have shed over this long saṁsāra—while wandering for a long time covered by ignorance and bound by craving—due to associating with the disagreeable and separating from the agreeable, or the water in the four great oceans?" When that question is asked, the monks humbly declare, "Exalted One, if we have properly understood the Dhamma preached by you, the tears we have shed in this long saṁsāra due to associating with the disagreeable and separating from the agreeable in such situations are indeed greater, and the water in the four great oceans is less." "Sadhu! Sadhu! So it is, monks," the Buddha declares. Because this saṁsāra is something whose beginning and end are not visible. A starting point cannot be declared. For those running in saṁsāra for a long time, it cannot be said, "Here is the beginning." Preaching in this manner that the first beginning is not visible, He then says in that discourse to become weary (*nibbidā*) towards all those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*).

Thus, next He says, "Monks, if you collect the tears you have shed in this long saṁsāra solely for your mothers, those tears are greater than the four great oceans." Just as a teacher in a school repeatedly brings up a certain point to make the children understand it deeply, the Buddha also asks, "What do you think, monks? Are the tears shed for your mothers greater, or is the water in the four great oceans greater?" Next, He asks the same about fathers, daughters, and so on—due to the loss of relatives, the loss of wealth, and the calamity of disease—asking, "Are the tears shed due to these greater, or is the water in the four great oceans greater?" The answer given to that is that the water in the four great oceans is less, and the tears are greater. In this way, there are many discourses in various places regarding the ocean of tears.

Similarly, next there are other discourses about an "ocean of mother's milk." There, too, the same is asked: "Monks, what do you think? Is the mother's milk you drank while running in this saṁsāra—covered by ignorance and bound by craving—greater, or is the water in the four great oceans greater?" There, too, the monks reply, "If we have properly understood the Exalted One's Dhamma, that mother's milk is indeed greater, and the water in the four great oceans is less." Thus, by that too, the length of this saṁsāra and the fact that we have traveled in this saṁsāra for such a long time is shown.

Likewise, there is another discourse that is even more stirringly urgent (*saṁvegajanaka*): about the "ocean of blood." It is a highly famous discourse. This was preached to thirty monks who came from the city of Pāvā, who were earnest practitioners of ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*). When those thirty monks came to the Buddha, they had not obtained any of the Paths and Fruits. But the Buddha began the discourse: "Monks, what do you think, which is greater? The blood that has flowed when you had your heads cut off in this long saṁsāra, or the water in the four great oceans?" the monks replied, "If we have properly understood the Buddha's Dhamma, that blood is indeed greater." He does not stop there. Next, the Buddha asks, "Is the blood shed by you solely while being cows, solely while being buffaloes, while being sheep, while being goats, while being pigs, while being chickens, greater, or is the water in the four great oceans greater?" These

devotees know that even when thinking about the present times, this is not an exaggeration. When we think about the quantity of animals being killed, some of them might even be one's relatives. The Buddha never utters an exaggeration. An exaggeration is a falsehood. Therefore, this is not a falsehood. It is said that there is not even a simile for this.

In this manner, there are other highly wonderful discourses. From various perspectives, the Buddha points out the danger of this saṁsāra. Indeed, we spoke of the objects of urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*), didn't we? Decay, illness, death, and so forth are well-known. There is another: the suffering (*dukkha*) experienced in the past saṁsāra, and the suffering (*dukkha*) to be experienced in the future—if one does not become an Arahat. These, too, are objects of urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*). In this day and age, not much consideration is given to them. However, to a faithful person, these suttas are highly meaningful if they sink in deeply. To put it briefly, it is mentioned that upon hearing this discourse, the thirty monks who came from Pāvā destroyed all defilements (*āsava*) and obtained supreme Arahantship.

From this, we see that without generating *saṁvega* regarding this saṁsāra, without generating weariness towards saṁsāra, one cannot attain these high states. Without being weary of the world, one cannot attain supramundane states (*lokuttara-dhamma*). One must become weary at various levels. Some people might be afraid, thinking, "If we do that, we cannot carry on our lay life." There are different levels. If, at that moment, the mind is directed to that supramundane state, what the Buddha preaches is nothing strange. It is the necessity of understanding the Four Noble Truths. This is what the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) in the Four Noble Truths is. Nowadays, the Truth of Suffering is explained as applying only to those who are sick in hospitals, to the poor who have nothing to eat and drink, or to those who expect various positions in the world—not getting what one wants is suffering (*dukkha*). If those things are provided, it is happiness. Ideas about the Buddha's Sasana are moving within such a narrow vision. But indeed, if someone hopes for Nibbāna, and if a great *saṁvega* arises in them, thinking, "Have we not traveled in saṁsāra for such a long time in this manner?"—it is through that that one becomes weary of existence (*bhava*). Without being weary of existence—what the Buddha has pointed out as the lust for existence (*bhava-rāga*) is the subtlest attachment within worldly beings, the attachment to existence, to continuity. To break that, one must constantly contemplate the terrifying nature of saṁsāra, and the length of saṁsāra.

There are other discourses of that very kind. In one discourse, the Buddha declares one's maternal lineage. That too is a good simile. The Buddha presents that too like a story: "Monks, if you cut all the trees, leaves, branches, and twigs in this entire land of Jambudīpa into four-inch pieces, and taking each piece, say: 'This is my mother,' and taking the next piece, say: 'This is my mother's mother,' and taking the next piece, say: 'This is my mother's mother's mother'—if you go on counting the past maternal lineage in this way, the wooden pieces will run out, but the maternal lineage will not be

exhausted." He presents even that simile, which shows that we have traveled in saṁsāra for such a long time in this manner. Next, He points out the same regarding fathers.

The Buddha declares that if you make the entire earth into a heap of clay and make small clay balls, and discard one clay ball saying, "This is my father," "This is my father's father," "This is my father's father's father"—even by counting in this manner, the number of past fathers cannot be exhausted.

There are discourses of that kind. In another place, there is a discourse about the length of an aeon (*kalpa*). There too, a monk comes and asks the Buddha, "Exalted One, how long is this aeon?" "Monk, this aeon cannot be measured and completed in terms of years, hundreds of years, thousands of years, or hundreds of thousands of years." "In that case, Exalted One, can you give a simile?" "What is the simile? Suppose there is a great mountain, one league (*yojana*) high, one league wide, and one league long. It is a solid mountain with no crevices in the middle. Once every hundred years, a man comes with a cloth of Kāsī silk and wipes that mountain, then goes away. By such wiping with the Kāsī cloth, wiping once every hundred years, that mountain of one league in height, width, and length would wear away, but the aeon would not wear away. So long is an aeon."

Another simile is presented: Suppose there is a city with iron walls, one league in length, width, and height, filled with mustard seeds. Once every hundred years, a person comes and removes one mustard seed. Those mustard seeds would run out, but the aeon would not wear away.

In another place, it is mentioned: A Brahmin comes and asks, "Exalted One, how many aeons have there been in the past? How many past aeons?" Then, when the Buddha said that a number cannot be given and a simile was requested, He said, "Brahmin, if there is a quantity of sand from where the river Ganges begins to where it flows into the sea, and if each grain of sand could be counted, the number of aeons one has spent in the past is even greater than those grains of sand." It is pointed out in this manner.

Another person asks—though it was not in response to a question—on an occasion when the Buddha delivered a special sermon about the size of that aeon. When the Buddha came near the Vepulla Mountain, the Vepulla Mountain in India: "Monk, if the skeletons discarded by a single living being within a single aeon were collected together, and if those collected skeletons did not perish, they would be larger than this Vepulla Mountain," the Buddha declared. What this shows is how long a person goes on being born and dying, discarding skeletons in this manner, within a single aeon. There are many such discourses in the Dhamma.

Through each of these, we can understand that what the Buddha brought out based on those *Anamatagga* Suttas was the terrifying nature of this saṁsāra. Because, we know the uniqueness of the Buddha's Dhamma. The Buddha is not outstanding because He gave some novel social philosophy to the world. True, those things are also there. However, the most important thing—which also helps in the long-term survival of the

Buddha's Sasana—is declaring the path to the problem faced by worldly beings when searching for a way to cross over from this saṁsāra over a long period of time. Then, only the person who understands the terrifying nature of saṁsāra feels like crossing over from it. Therefore, indeed, one must constantly direct the mind to these things: the suffering (*dukkha*) experienced in past saṁsāra. It was to help with that that the Buddha explained the length of saṁsāra in various ways. When thinking about these similes, one is filled with great wonder. They might seem like exaggerations. However, through each of them, we must contemplate that for such a long time, living beings have traveled covered by ignorance and bound by craving (*taṇhā*). One must contemplate: "We have swum in such an ocean (of tears), we have swum in an ocean of mother's milk, we have swum in an ocean of blood."

Even if we think about the lineages of parents, we are highly proud of various relationships. Next, the Buddha declares, "Monks, we have traveled for such a long time in this saṁsāra that it is almost impossible to find anyone in this world who has not been one's mother. It is difficult to find someone who has not been one's mother, who has not been one's father, who has not been one's son, who has not been one's daughter." Then, one might think about this distinction of male and female. One must understand that even that does not belong to oneself. Due to various demeritorious deeds (*kamma*), there can be changes in the distinction of male and female. Looking at it from that perspective, according to the Buddha's word, we can understand: "Those who are near us are our mothers, our fathers, our children." It is precisely because of not knowing this that it is called a drama. That is why the entire existence is a drama. The ordinary world does not understand this deep reality. The ordinary world sees only the lifespan starting from the mother's womb and ending at the cemetery. To scientists and everyone else, only that much is visible to the physical eye. Only that much is visible to the physical eye. To those with direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), a greater extent is visible. To us, only the animal world is visible. The ghost realm (*peta-loka*) can also be known by some to a certain extent by inference. But those divine realms (*deva-loka*) and Brahma realms (*brahma-loka*) are deeply visible only to those with direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). Other than that, ordinary persons, like blind people saying there is no sun or moon, say, "Where are they? There is only this world. So, as long as we are in this world, we should eat and drink well. It is enough if we find the necessary economy etc. and live well." Such is their view. But that is not it. We pay homage to the Buddha because He discovered liberation from this saṁsāra, which no other teacher could discover. The Buddha has shown a highly wonderful Dhamma—a path of escape (*nissaraṇa-magga*). Indeed, to enter upon this, one must understand gratification and danger (*ādīnava*). If someone is prompted to think about this, using the very danger (*ādīnava*) that arises within gratification as a footing, and if they are assisted by a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*)—if the Dhamma falls into place at the right time—even if that person cannot perform it as rapidly as Minister Santati did that escape (*nissaraṇa*), they can obtain those aforementioned states even today by engaging in meditation.

We must then contemplate: this is the real essence, the heartwood of this Dhamma. This is the practice leading to Nibbāna. We must do what is relevant to that. Indeed, what is

called the three characteristics—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—that is the essence of the Buddha's Dhamma. The impermanent nature, the suffering nature, and the not-self nature of this entire existence. When we say suffering (*dukkha*), it is generally not just painful feeling (*vedanā*). Now let us look at that separation from the loved ones. In lay life, coming together with loved ones is inevitably regarded as a grand festive occasion. That is called auspicious (*maṅgala*). Then, when a situation arises like the one experienced by Minister Santati, the word *'ava'* (un-) is prefixed to it. Next, it ends in an inauspicious event (*avamaṅgala*). That is the life story. Therefore, according to that, let us contemplate that every union ends in separation. It is said, *"saṁyogā viyogantā"* — "all unions end in separation."

That is why the Buddha points out that holding onto this entire fivefold aggregate is itself suffering (*dukkha*). Whether one holds onto form, feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), or consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—within all of them, the drama created through grasping (*upādāna*), the drama of thinking "it is I," breaks down. Now, a photograph taken during youth, or when one was good-looking, is completely distorted after several years. So, one cannot say it is oneself. Indeed, why? Because this form is not self. The nature of form is to change constantly. Yet, we take only the good part as form. It is the same with other things. Every single one of them changes. It is due to that impermanence (*aniccatā*). Due to that very impermanence (*aniccatā*), one has to constantly repair it. Within repair, too, there is what is called formation (*saṅkhāra*). It is like a breaking-down vehicle—the number plate is there in the same way—but after fitting parts together, we do not regard it as a new vehicle, do we? It runs with parts falling off. Now, indeed, our life is also like that. Think about it.

Through medical discoveries, although we say "this is I, this is mine," when we return from a hospital, other people's blood, other people's organs have been grafted into us. Even the few teeth in our mouth do not belong to us. Even the spectacles on our eyes. Although we say, "I can see," we see thanks to the spectacles. Wearing such artificial things, this entire life of ours is a drama. That is why all these things are called Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is why when someone dies, they put up notices saying *"sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā"* (all Preparations are impermanent). If only one could understand even by that little bit that this entire saṁsāra existence is a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). The Buddha understood this most deeply. The background to that is that long saṁsāra existence. Now, sometimes, this has been revealed through various empirical facts; it has been revealed through discoveries made using various modern methods regarding rebirth. Sometimes, the person who was one's mother in this life goes and is born as one's own child. There is a dramatic nature of this kind in this saṁsāric existence. That is why the Buddha declared that in this long (saṁsāra), there is no one who has not been one's mother, one's son, or one's daughter. So, if this entire saṁsāra existence is a performance of this kind, escaping from this is indeed happiness.

What is called the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) is the fact that when we look deeply into everything from birth to the end, there is the nature of suffering (*dukkha*). Due to impermanence (*aniccatā*), we have to go on repairing and preparing these things. That

preparing itself is suffering (*dukkha*). It is something with no essence or heartwood to be called "I" or "mine". It is only by properly understanding this that one can be liberated from saṁsāra. Therefore, the person traveling on the path of insight (*vipassanā*) must start by observing arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*) to the extent they understand it in daily life, and make an effort to understand it deeply: how the parts of the body wear out, about painful feelings, and so forth. It is because we cannot remain in one posture that we turn to the other side. That is why it is deeply pointed out that we conceal the nature of suffering (*dukkha*) in this body by changing postures. Sometimes, the teacher advises the practitioner (*yogāvacara*) to remain in the same posture, experiencing the pain, and to contemplate in order to understand the painful feeling (*vedanā*). That is to understand the suffering (*dukkha*) contained in it, even for a short while. Yet, we always like to change postures and conceal that suffering (*dukkha*). That is where ignorance (*avijjā*) lies. It is the same with other things. However, the Buddha brings this out to open our eyes: "We solved this same equation over a long period, but the correct answer did not come."

Therefore, in this era of a Buddha's appearance, we must contemplate by regarding what is valuable as valuable, without narrow objectives such as meditating merely to cure minor illnesses and small ailments. We must engage in Dhamma practice and meditation with the determination: "This entire saṁsāra is like a hospital, and I must obtain complete cure and leave it." If we do so, only then can we utilize this Buddha's Dispensation properly. Only then can we help others to utilize it as well.

The essence of the Buddha's Dhamma lies within the Four Noble Truths. What is called the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*)—form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—every single one of these that is held onto is pointed out by the Buddha as suffering (*dukkha*). *"Saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā"* — in brief, the Buddha declares that the five aggregates of grasping are themselves suffering (*dukkha*). That is the essence of the Truth of Suffering. Next, the Buddha declares: "Why does this state of suffering (*dukkha*) exist? It is due to craving (*taṇhā*)." Due to the unquenchable thirst of craving (*taṇhā*), living beings run in this saṁsāra for a long time. They draw their last breath with the hope of obtaining in the next life at least the wishes they could not obtain in this life. They do not understand their substancelessness.

Therefore, according to the accumulated kamma, one is born in those various places. It is not as one wishes. According to the kamma performed by oneself over a long period, the wheel of kamma turns on one side in this manner. Subjugated to that, living beings swim in an ocean of tears and an ocean of blood over a long period of time. So, indeed, when we think in that manner, we must contemplate: if we are to protect the Buddha's Sasana, if we are to protect the Dhamma, we must enter upon this deep aspect. We must go from danger (*ādīnava*) to escape (*nissaraṇa*), without remaining in danger (*ādīnava*) forever. For that, one must think with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) about one's own life. Now, some people say various things about the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*), and so forth. However, if someone wishes to be liberated from saṁsāra, this

impermanent (*anicca*) nature—the aforementioned beauty of form fades away, the strength of the body fades away, and the state of old age arrives. Instead of one's two legs, one has to depend on the four legs of the bed. Thinking about those lives, and next, thinking about other things—even the possessions one considers one's own—every single thing is subject to impermanence (*aniccatā*). These are things the Buddha reminds us of. Why does He remind us of every single one of these? Because the weariness (*nibbidā*) towards saṁsāra is essential for escaping from saṁsāra. Sometimes, a special event can bring that out from within such sorrowful situations. That can be brought out only if a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) or the necessary Dhamma instruction falls into place at the right time. Otherwise, one falls back to sleep. One falls back to sleep again and again. That is the situation in this long saṁsāra. Ignorance (*avijjā*) means neglecting, forgetting; it is very easy. That is why this is called a dream of life. Therefore, to escape, one must remain awake, both regarding one's own life and the nature of the world. One must practice seeing in accordance with what was pointed out by the Buddha. Instead of the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*), one must generate the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). That is why the mind must be brought to a level where one can look at the world without those perversions (*vipallāsa*)—without distorted views and distorted states. The distorted views are: regarding what is impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, regarding what is foul as beautiful, regarding what is subject to suffering (*dukkha*) as happiness, and regarding what is not-self (*anattā*) as self. That is the view of perversion (*vipallāsa*) existing within worldly beings. To conquer that, if one constantly trains the mind to see impermanence (*aniccatā*), from then on, one sees this gradually breaking down. Seeing it break down, fear arises: "Oh, is it not a breaking thing? Is it not a rotting fence that I am holding onto?" Many people think their lives are highly secure. They have bank deposits, they have children who have obtained high positions. In the end, when looking at the final period, the banks also collapse, and the children do not look after them. In the end, all those rotting fences that were held onto fall down. What remains for oneself is only the four legs of the bed. At that moment, what helps is indeed the Dhamma. If one has obtained some (Dhamma) in the past, that is the consolation at that moment. One must contemplate in that manner.

We brought out various Dhamma points through this short story. We do not always say these things merely for the aesthetic interest of the story. Through each of these, certain Dhamma principles can be brought out to help our lives. In the Buddha's time, those who lived with that Dhamma—sometimes a Brahmin comes and asks the Buddha, "How long is this aeon?" Due to the faith (*saddhā*) generated through that, in the end, he becomes a Buddhist. But nowadays, there is a way of thinking that treats this as something not belonging to oneself, discussing this world and space. That does not help one's life. They use them as means of obtaining various degrees. However, those must be brought close to one's life. The Buddha has already declared the essence of all these things. Whether we spend millions of money to go to strange worlds or not, when we die, we travel according to kamma. No vehicle is needed for that; no strange satellite is needed. Instead, at the moment of death, automatically along with that mind, in some instances, one goes to the Brahma realms. It is through that aforementioned strength of wholesome actions, not through other artificial strengths. Therefore, because of the

nature of this existence (*bhava*), we must bring out these Dhamma values. We must bring them out because they are now fading away rapidly. There is a tendency to bring out other things through that aforementioned practice of worldly development and cemetery development. If this Dispensation is to survive for a long period, we must bring out the path to Nibbāna pointed out by the Buddha to the world, Nibbāna, and we must direct our minds to the things that help towards it. We must teach them to others.

Thinking in that manner, now, on this valuable day, these devotees, having established themselves in a virtue (*sīla*) that helps in traveling the path of Dhamma according to their respective measures—at this moment, they have observed the livelihood-as-eighth virtue (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*), and the eight virtue-rules of the precept day (*upoṣatha-aṭṭha-sīla*). In that manner, there are also those who have observed the ten virtue-rules (*dasa-sīla*) that help in meditation. Having established oneself in virtue of that kind, and having directed the mind to meditation, and having brought this mind—which was scattered by globalization and other things—to this place at this moment and directed it to the Dhamma, you have brought out the power of a concentrated mind through a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Next, you must utilize a Dhamma sermon of this kind: if the three characteristics of impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), which help in overcoming the fear of saṁsāra, are developed more and more to some extent in daily life, they will become perfections (*pāramī*). Even if they are not obtained in this life, they can be obtained at some point. However, we must be energetic and, without delaying heedlessly, resolve to realize it in this very life. Before the Buddha's Sasana ends, through this path of meditation and with the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), by practicing this Dhamma and meditation, we must obtain—at the minimum, if nothing greater—the path-knowledge of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*), which is the greatest and most valuable power of escaping from the four planes of misery. If possible, may we be completely liberated from the entire saṁsāra and cross over from this ocean of tears and ocean of blood to obtain the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna of Arahantship, through this strength of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla-samādhi-paññā*) fulfilled today! You must wish: "May this be obtained through listening to this Dhamma sermon!" Now, may all those who wish for the merit of Nibbāna—from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, including our relatives—rejoice in this mass of merit we have accumulated so far through this Dhamma sermon! Having rejoiced, with the aspiration to escape from all saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness, and to find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna, recite these stanzas and share the merit:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #40

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.176)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Atītaṃ nānvāgameyya, nappaṭikaṅkhe anāgataṃ;

Yadatītaṃ pahīnaṃ taṃ, appattañca anāgataṃ.

Paccuppannañca yo dhammaṃ, tattha tattha vipassati;

Asaṃhīraṃ asaṅkuppaṃ, taṃ vidvā manubrūhaye.

Ajjeva kiccamātappaṃ, ko jaññā maraṇaṃ suve;

Na hi no saṅgaraṃ tena, mahāsenena maccunā.

Evaṃ vihārimātāpiṃ, ahorattamatanditaṃ;

Taṃ ve bhaddekarattoti, santo ācikkhate muni.

From:

Bhaddekaratta Sutta (MN 131) from the Majjhima Nikāya

Dear Listeners,

The sole Teacher of the world, the Supreme Fully Self-Enlightened Buddha, clearly explained to the world the significance of this present moment. The world mostly lives in a dead past. Or else, in an unborn future. Without one's knowledge, the present moment slips away. It is these four verses expressing the importance of the present moment that we have chosen as our topic today. These four verses are found in the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. Indeed, four consecutive suttas under the name *Bhaddekaratta* can be found in the *Majjhima Nikāya*: the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta*, the *Ānanda Sutta*, the *Mahākaccāna Sutta*, and the *Lomasakaṅgiya Bhaddekaratta Sutta*. In all four of these suttas, these same four verses are found as the theme or the main topic. From this, one can appreciate how important and meaningful these verses are.

Furthermore, detailed expositions of these verses are found in all four suttas. In truth, every single one of these expositions is directly relevant to insight meditation (*vipassanā*). That is why we have specifically brought up this sutta discourse.

Now, the introductory story (*nidāna*) of this *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* is briefly given as follows: While the Buddha was residing at the Jeta Grove monastery in Sāvatthī, he directly addressed the Saṅgha and declared, "Monks, I shall expound to you the summary (*uddesa*) and the exposition (*vibhaṅga*) of 'one who has an auspicious day' (*bhaddekaratta*). Listen and pay close attention."

You may not be familiar with these two words, *uddesa* (summary) and *vibhaṅga* (exposition). They represent a distinctive feature of the Buddha's teaching style. On certain occasions, before presenting a lengthy explanation, the Buddha would first present a summary of what he intended to declare as a thematic passage. This is called the *uddesa*. Then, the *uddesa* is subsequently analyzed and explained in detail as the *vibhaṅga*. This is characteristic of the Buddha's method of teaching. In this sutta as well, the Buddha said, "Monks, I shall declare this summary and exposition to you," and the four verses he first presented as the summary (*uddesa*) are what we have taken as our topic today.

Now let us try to understand the general meaning of these four verses.

"Do not run after the past" (*atītaṃ nāvagameyya*); "do not long for the future" (*nappaṭikaṅkhe anāgataṃ*). "What is past is left behind" (*yad atītaṃ pahīnaṃ taṃ*); "and the future is yet unreached" (*appattañca anāgataṃ*)—the future has not yet arrived. "And whoever with insight sees each present state as it arises, right there, right there" (*paccuppannañca yo dhammaṃ tattha tattha vipassati*); "unconquerable, immovable, knowing that, the wise one should cultivate it" (*asaṃhīraṃ asaṅkuppaṃ taṃ vidvā manubrūhaye*). Unentangled by and unprovoked by that present state, indeed, that is what the wise person should cultivate.

Next: "Today itself the effort should be made, who knows if death will come tomorrow?" (*ajjeva kiccaṃ ātappaṃ, ko jaññā maraṇaṃ suve*). The duty to be done must be striven for today itself. "Who knows if death will come tomorrow?" "For there is no bargaining with Death and his great army" (*na hi no saṅgaraṃ tena mahāsenena maccunā*). There is indeed no agreement or contract for us with the King of Death who has such a mighty army, is there? "One who dwells thus ardently" (*evaṃ vihārīmātāpiṃ*)—one who acts and dwells in this manner, with such understanding and realization, cultivating ardent energy, "tireless day and night" (*ahorattamatanditaṃ*), cultivating energy day and night without laziness, "him indeed, the peaceful sage calls one who has an auspicious day" (*taṃ ve bhaddekarattoti santo ācikkhate munī*). The peaceful sage—meaning the Buddha Himself—declares him to be a *Bhaddekaratta*.

Thus, I have given the general meaning. To make this resonate more deeply in the heart, we have rendered it into Sinhala verse in this way:

Do not run after what has gone,

Do not stand yearning for what is to come.

Take what is past exactly as past,

See the future as yet unreached.

Subjecting the presently arisen things as they come,

To the wisdom of insight,

The wise one cultivates in this manner,

The unattached, unprovoked insight.

Do today itself what must be done,

For death may indeed come tomorrow.

There is surely no bargaining possible,

With Death who has such a great army.

Dwelling thus day and night without laziness,

Living in a way that burns up the defilements,

The Sage declares that such a monk

Is delighted in the supreme solitude.

Even though we translated it in that manner, the word *bhaddekaratta* has been a puzzle for scholars since ancient times. Both the commentators and Western scholars have offered various interpretations, particularly concerning what is meant by the word *eka* (one/sole) in *bhaddekaratta*.

Now, in an exposition written by us about forty years ago on this very sutta discourse, we presented an interpretation for this word *bhaddekaratta*. In short, it is based on that interpretation that we referred to "supreme solitude" here. We understood it in this way: we took the word *eka*—and demonstrated with supporting evidence—that the word *eka* signifies solitude or seclusion. Thus, *bhadra* means auspicious or good, and *ratta* means attached or delighted. Therefore, the meaning we presented was: one who is delighted in the auspicious, or rather, the most noble seclusion or solitude.

We drew support for that meaning from a certain short sutta discourse found in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. It reads as follows: When the Buddha was residing at the Bamboo Grove (*Veḷuvana*) in Rājagaha, there was a certain monk who lived completely alone amidst the community of monks. The other monks referred to this bhikkhu as "Thera"—by the name "Thera"—though we do not know for what reason. Thus, the sutta featuring

that monk named Thera is called the *Theranāmako Sutta*. The unique characteristic of this bhikkhu named Thera was that he was an *ekavihārī*—meaning he behaved in accordance with solitary dwelling, was a solitary dweller, engaged in solitary living, and also spoke in praise of the virtues of solitary dwelling. Let us highlight here a few words that describe his conduct, as they will assist in this explanation. His daily routine is recorded in this way: *So eko gāmaṃ piṇḍāya pavisati, eko paṭikkamati, eko raho nisīdati, eko caṅkamaṃ adhiṭṭhāti*. The word *eko* (alone) was repeated several times. What does it mean regarding his daily routine? He enters the village for alms alone, departs from the village alone, sits in meditation in private (*raho*) alone, and walks on the ambulatory (*caṅkama*) alone.

Then, some other monks went and reported the uniqueness of his behavior to the Buddha, saying: "There is this bhikkhu named Thera who lives as an *ekavihārī* (solitary dweller) and keeps speaking in praise of the virtues of being an *ekavihārī*." The Buddha sent word, saying: "The Teacher is calling you, tell him to come here." When that bhikkhu arrived, the Buddha asked him: "How is it, Thera, that you dwell as an *ekavihārī* and speak in praise of the virtues of being an *ekavihārī*?" Thereupon, he declared his aforementioned daily routine: "Venerable Sir, Blessed One, I enter the village for alms alone, depart from it alone, sit in meditation alone, and walk on the ambulatory alone. That is how my dwelling as an *ekavihārī* is."

Then the Buddha said: "Thera, there is indeed that kind of solitary dwelling (*ekavihāra*). I do not say it is not so. However, I shall tell you at this moment how this solitary dwelling—this solitude—becomes perfected in every sense, and how it is detailed and made truly meaningful. Listen well." Thereupon, the Buddha declared the following words, which we have taken as our supporting evidence, as they are very closely related terms: "Thera"—this is said regarding a certain bhikkhu—"what is past is abandoned" (*yaṃ atītaṃ taṃ pahīnaṃ*); he has abandoned past things, treating them as gone. "What is future is relinquished" (*yaṃ anāgataṃ taṃ paṭinissaṭṭhaṃ*); he has let go of future things. "And desire and lust (*chandarāgo*) for currently acquired forms of existence (*paccuppannesu ca attabhāvapaṭilābhesu*)—meaning whatever presents itself in the present—is thoroughly subdued" (*suppaṭivinīto*). "It is in this way, Thera, that this solitary dwelling (*ekavihārī*) is fully completed and perfected in every sense," so the Buddha declared.

Thus, from this discourse we can see, firstly, that the meaning of the word *eka* is the state of being an *ekavihārī*—solitude. We have demonstrated this by citing other passages showing that the word *eka* was used in ancient times as a specific term denoting solitude. Secondly, as shown by the Buddha, this state of being an *ekavihārī* is not merely remaining physically apart from the conventionally accepted crowd. Now, those of you who have studied this Dhamma would know that three types of seclusion (*viveka*) are presented in this Dhamma. Seclusion is shown in three senses: physical seclusion (*kāya-viveka*), mental seclusion (*citta-viveka*), and seclusion from assets/defilements (*upadhi-viveka*). Physical seclusion (*kāya-viveka*) is what everyone knows. One thinks, "I will leave all this behind and go to the forest. By going to the forest and staying alone,

everything will be solved." That, too, is helpful for meditation, of course. Yet, it is the lowest level of being an *ekavihārī*.

The second level is mental seclusion (*citta-viveka*). Aided by that seclusion, if one suppresses the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and attains concentration—attaining states of meditative absorption (*jhāna*) in the manner of "secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states" (*vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi*)—that is mental seclusion. The sages of the past who attained *jhānas* reached that point.

Behold, seclusion from assets (*upadhi-viveka*) is the deepest seclusion shown in this Dhamma. Seclusion from assets is Nibbāna. To help you understand this term "seclusion from assets" (*upadhi-viveka*), one must first understand the meaning of the word *upadhi* (assets/acquisitions/fuel). This word *upadhi* is mentioned in the Dhamma in two senses. In the mundane sense, *upadhi* means gold, silver, pearls, gems, houses, land, wife, and children—things regarded as one's possessions, wherein the sense of "mine-ness" dwells. In the mundane sense, these are *upadhi*. In the deeper sense, *upadhi* refers to our samsaric assets. What is that? It is a term you have heard of: the five groups of grasping (*pañca-upādānakkhandha*). The five groups of grasping (*upādāna*) are the five heaps we hold on to and cling to. Anyone would have heard these five words: the heap of form, the heap of feeling (*vedanā*), the heap of perception (*saññā*), the heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and the heap of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Thus, in the sense of holding on and clinging to them, they are grasping (*upādāna*). However, if one stands established upon them as though they were assets—at the moment one regards them as things upon which one's self-identity rests—those very graspings (*upādāna*) are regarded as assets (*upadhi*). So, depending on the perspective from which we look, if we take these five heaps as things clung to at a given moment, they are five heaps of grasping (*upādāna*). If we consider them in the sense of relying upon them, or as things gathered and piled up, behold, they are assets (*upadhi*).

Next, along with that, let us say that the word "heap" (or group) might be a problem for many. Why is this called the "heap of form", "heap of feeling"? The word is *khandha*. Indeed, the word *khandha* is the word used when saying "five aggregates" (*pañcakkhandha*). *Khandha* means heap, aggregate, or mass. What is this heap? The Buddha has explained this as well. This heap is eleven-fold. It is shown elsewhere as: *atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ, ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā, oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā, hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā, yaṃ dūre santike vā*—making eleven aspects. The three periods of time mentioned here are shown first: past heap of form, future heap of form, present heap of form; then internal (*ajjhatta*) or external (*bahiddhā*), which is two-fold; then gross (*oḷārika*) or subtle (*sukhuma*); then inferior (*hīna*) or superior (*paṇīta*); then far (*dūre*) or near (*santike*). Behold, each aggregate is divided in this eleven-fold manner. So, these are indeed what we are holding on to as assets. The moment when every single such asset (*upadhi*) is relinquished is what is called Nibbāna. That is why a term used to describe Nibbāna is *sabbūpadhipatinissaggo*—the relinquishment of all assets. That state of relinquishing all assets is indeed the aforementioned seclusion from assets (*upadhi-viveka*). That means Arahantship. That is the highest seclusion.

Now, the advice given by the Buddha to that bhikkhu named Thera is actually concluded with a certain verse—a verse that depicts an Arahant:

Sabbābhibhuṃ sabbaviduṃ sumedhaṃ,

Sabbesu dhammesu anūpalittaṃ.

Sabbañjahaṃ taṇhakkhaye vimuttaṃ,

Tamahaṃ naraṃ ekavihārīti brūmi.

Behold, that solitary dwelling (*ekavihārī*) is in truth found only within an Arahant; this is declared to that bhikkhu through this verse. "*Sabbābhibhuṃ*"—conquering all; "*sabbaviduṃ*"—knowing all; that wise person; "*sabbesu dhammesu anūpalittaṃ*"—having an unstained nature toward any thing, or rather toward all things; "*sabbañjahaṃ*"—having abandoned everything; "*taṇhakkhaye vimuttaṃ*"—liberated through the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*); "*tamahaṃ naraṃ*"—to that person, to that human being, to that Arahant, I say "solitary dweller" (*ekavihārī*). Thus did the Buddha conclude his advice to the Thera. From this, we can contemplate and understand: behold, seclusion from assets (*upadhi-viveka*) is indeed the highest, consummate seclusion. To make it resonate more deeply, we called it "supreme solitude"—the ultimate seclusion. Thus, *bhaddekaratta* refers to that monk who is delighted in that supreme solitude. It was to demonstrate this that we presented that supportive sutta.

Next, let us say that what we discussed so far were just the verses. The Buddha presented those verses as the summary (*uddesa*), as the synopsis. Along with that, the Buddha presented the exposition (*vibhaṅga*) to the Saṅgha in this manner: "And how, monks, does one run after the past?" Having previously said "do not run after the past," he now questions and explains how one chases after the past. Herein, a certain bhikkhu thinks thus: *Evaṃrūpo*—"I was of such a form in the past." He brings up that thought, thinks about the past, and generates a delight called *nandi—nandi* being another name for craving (*taṇhā*)—toward that past form. It is through generating that delight that one goes into the past. Therefore, it is not by the mere remembering of the past. Rather, one generates attachment, craving (*taṇhā*), for the past form. The same applies to feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). That is how one runs after the past.

Next, he shows: "And how, monks, does one not run after the past?" Here, it is shown that if one does not generate that delight called *nandi* toward the past form, feeling, etc., behold, one is freed from that. One is freed from running after the past. The same is said regarding the future. If one generates craving (*taṇhā*)—namely *nandi*—toward a form expected in the future that has not yet arisen, thinking, "May I have such a form in the future!" behold, that is yearning for the future. Understand the other aggregates in the same way.

Next, he speaks of the present. Regarding the present (*paccuppanna*): "And how, monks, is one drawn into presently arisen states?" A peculiar word is mentioned there, which

also appeared in the verse: *saṃhīrati*—how is one drawn or swept away by present things? There, the Buddha shows—and some of you might already know this—that the thought pattern of the uninstructed worldling is shaped according to the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). The dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) means imagining a self in four ways regarding each of these aggregates. Thinking, "This is my form." This is shown in four ways: one regards form as self; or one regards self as possessing form; or one thinks form is in self; or one thinks self is in form. In this way, being drawn to that form through a concept of self is what is meant by being drawn into presently arisen states—being drawn into present phenomena. Understand the same for feeling and so on. Such is the thought pattern of the uninstructed worldling—the ordinary person who does not know the Dhamma—being drawn into the present. It is precisely because of being drawn in that there is also the provocation (*saṅkuppati*) or conflict.

Next, he shows how one is not drawn into them. There he speaks of the well-instructed noble disciple—the noble disciple who has heard the Dhamma, who thinks in a way that frees them from the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). How does such a person think? They do not grasp this form as "mine." They do not think in those four ways we mentioned—that form is mine, self possesses form, form is in self, or self is in form. Instead, they add a "not" (*na*) to it. They do not think of form as self; they do not think form is self. That is all. That means the noble disciple trains themselves to look at the present moment according to the vision of non-self (*anattā*), just as the Buddha explained. Thus, in that manner, if we take it briefly, the Buddha shows through the five groups of grasping (*pañca-upādānakkhandha*) how one runs after the past and how one does not; how one yearns for the future and how one does not; and how, without being caught by present phenomena, one practices insight meditation (*vipassanā*) right there at each point.

So, since there is still much to cover, I have said that much about that sutta. Now, we mentioned earlier that the verses in this *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* are also found in three other suttas.

Next, we shall take up the *Ānanda Sutta* which is right next to it. It is mostly similar. Let us point out the differences. The background story (*nidāna*) of the *Ānanda Sutta* is as follows: It was a time when the Buddha was residing at the Jeta Grove monastery in Sāvatthī. Ven. Ānanda was giving a Dhamma talk to the bhikkhus in the assembly hall, inspiring them with a Dhamma talk. While inspiring them, he also declared its detailed exposition to the Saṅgha. Ven. Ānanda preached the Dhamma. After he had finished explaining, the Buddha, having arisen from his evening meditation, came to the assembly hall and asked the Saṅgha: "Monks, who was it in the assembly hall that inspired the Saṅgha with a Dhamma talk, declaring the summary (*uddesa*) and the exposition (*vibhaṅga*)?" The bhikkhus replied: "It was the Venerable Ānanda." Then the Buddha asked Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, how did you explain this to the Saṅgha?" Thereupon, Ven. Ānanda once again presented the very same analysis he had declared earlier, right in front of the Buddha. The Buddha said, "Sadhu! Sadhu!" and approved of it. That is the *Ānanda Sutta*.

Next, we come to the *Mahākaccāna Bhaddekaratta Sutta*. At that time, the Buddha was residing at the Tapodārāma in Rājagaha. While he was residing at the Tapodārāma, Ven. Samiddhi got up early in the morning—now, *tapoda*, friends, refers to the hot water springs in India. There was a hot water pool near the Tapodārāma where the Buddha resided. Having gone to that Tapoda pool, Ven. Samiddhi bathed at the crack of dawn, and stood wearing only his under-robe, waiting for his body to dry. At that moment, illuminating the Tapoda pool, a certain deity approached Ven. Samiddhi and asked: "Monk, do you know, do you remember, this exposition (*vibhaṅga*)?" Ven. Samiddhi replied: "No, friend, I do not know. Do you know?" The deity said: "I, too, do not know." Next, the deity asked: "Do you at least know these verses?" "I do not know. Do you know?" "I, too, do not know," said the deity. However, the deity then said: "Even so, monk, this summary (*uddesa*) and exposition (*vibhaṅga*) are extremely necessary for a monk's life. They are highly valuable. Learn them."

Because of this, after daybreak, Ven. Samiddhi went to the Buddha and said: "While I was bathing in the morning, a deity came and spoke to me thus. Venerable Sir, please kindly explain to me the summary (*uddesa*) and the exposition (*vibhaṅga*) of 'one who has an auspicious day' (*bhaddekaratta*)." "Very well, monk, listen," said the Buddha, and then preached those four verses to the group, including Ven. Samiddhi. Having preached them, what did he do? He rose from his seat and went into his dwelling (*vihāra*). That was a clever device of a teacher employed by the Buddha. He did that to train them to get Ven. Kaccāna to give an exposition on this. Once the Buddha had gone into his dwelling, the community of monks, including Ven. Samiddhi, contemplated: "Now, the Blessed One has preached this in brief and departed. We do not know its meaning. How are we to know the detailed explanation? While there is an exposition (*vibhaṅga*), the Buddha preached only the summary (*uddesa*) and retired to his dwelling." So, as they were talking, these monks said: "Now, is not Ven. Mahākaccāna highly praised by the Buddha? He is wise, and is capable of explaining in detail what has been taught in brief. Let us go to Kaccāna." So saying, this group went and invited Ven. Kaccāna, requesting him to explain to them the meaning of what the Buddha had preached in brief.

Then, as is usual in such situations, Ven. Kaccāna said: "You could have asked him right then. Your coming to me, Venerable Sirs, is just like someone looking for heartwood among the branches and leaves while bypassing the heartwood of the standing tree itself." When he spoke so humbly, the monks pleaded again: "No, no, that is alright. If it is no trouble, please kindly explain it to us. That time has passed—the time to ask the Buddha." "In that case, listen. I shall analyze it. Go later and ask the Buddha whether what I say is correct." Thereupon, what was the exposition given by Ven. Kaccāna? Ven. Mahākaccāna presented that very same matter by way of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). That is important. This is how he explained it there: "Behold, friends, this is how I have understood it: running after the past is explained as: 'In the past, my eye was such, forms were such.' One generates desire and lust (*chandarāgo*) toward them in consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Because of that desiring, which is desire and lust (*chandarāgo*), a delight called *nandi* arises—which is another name for craving (*taṇhā*). By generating that, behold, the bhikkhu is said to be running after the past." Instead of

form, feeling, and so on, here he speaks of the eye and the others. When you consider the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), what are the six? Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, together with their corresponding forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and ideas (*dhamma*). Therefore, regarding those six, including the mind, if one thinks about those things that existed in the past and generates an attachment in that manner, one has run after the past. One who does not generate such attachment does not run after the past. The fault does not lie in the mere remembering of the past. In the same way, he explained regarding the future: one makes a resolution or a wish concerning the future, thinking, 'May I be one possessing an eye in the future!' 'May I be a seer of such forms!' and so on. That is the future. He explains the present too in terms of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). Generating desire and lust (*chandarāgo*) and craving (*taṇhā*) in that same manner toward the present eye and its objects. Thus, Ven. Mahākaccāna clarifies this matter by way of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*).

The monks listened to that, went to the Buddha, and reported: "Venerable Sir, Ven. Mahākaccāna explained it to us in this way." The Buddha said, "Sadhu! Sadhu!" and approved of it, saying, "If you had asked me, I too would have explained it in this very same way." From this, we can see that this teaching on the *Bhaddekaratta* can be understood not only by way of the five groups of grasping (*pañca-upādānakkhandha*) but also by way of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). As we mentioned, because it is an aid to insight meditation (*vipassanā*), one can cultivate insight by utilizing the five groups of grasping (*pañca-upādānakkhandha*). That also leads to Nibbāna. Insight meditation can also be cultivated by way of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*)—which is very helpful for many people. This teaching helps in that too. So, that is what is found in the *Mahākaccāna Bhaddekaratta Sutta*.

Next, let us come to the *Lomasakaṅgiya Sutta*. It is somewhat unique. In this, the Buddha is indeed residing in Sāvatthī, but the event itself takes place at the Nigrodhārāma in Kapilavatthu of the Sakyans. A certain bhikkhu named Lomasakaṅgiya was residing in this Nigrodhārāma. At that time, it is described as follows: While the bhikkhu named Lomasakaṅgiya was residing in that Nigrodhārāma, late at night—there is usually a time when deities visit, isn't there?—a deity named Candana arrived. Appearing before Ven. Lomasakaṅgiya, he asked in the same manner: "Monk, do you know the summary (*uddesa*) and the exposition (*vibhaṅga*)? Do you remember it?" "No, friend." "Do you know it?" "I, too, do not know." Then, the deity asked: "Monk, do you know the *Bhaddekaratta* verses?" "I do not know, do you know?" Thereupon, the young deity Candana said: "I know." Behold, what is shown there is extremely special.

This young deity Candana said: "On one occasion, the Blessed One was seated on the Paṇḍukambala stone seat at the foot of the Parasatu tree in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven, preaching this *Bhaddekaratta* and its exposition (*vibhaṅga*) to the Tāvatiṃsa deities..." Candana recited those verses. He did not stop after reciting those verses. The deity said to Ven. Lomasakaṅgiya: "Monk, you must learn the exposition (*vibhaṅga*) of this sutta as well. It is highly necessary for a monk's life." Having said so, he vanished.

So what did Lomasakaṅgiya do? The very next day, he put his lodging in order, took his bowl and robes, departed from the Nigrodhārāma, and wandered by stages toward Sāvatthī. Why? To hear the summary (*uddesa*) and the exposition (*vibhaṅga*). Having arrived, when he met the Buddha at the Jeta Grove, Ven. Lomasakaṅgiya related the entire account concerning the deity who had visited him. And then—behold, there is a peculiarity here too—the Buddha asked: "Do you know who that deity was?" "No, Venerable Sir." "That was the young deity Candana. When I was preaching this, the young deity Candana was listening and paying close attention." Having said so, the Buddha said, "Behold, monk, I shall explain it to you," and presented the same exposition found in the earlier suttas. Thus, we have given you a general explanation of the matters concerning the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* in those four suttas of the Middle Length Collection (*Majjhima Nikāya*).

By now, you must have realized their importance. If there is anything to say in the remaining time, it is how this serves as an aid to insight meditation (*vipassanā*). How did we begin? Usually, the world stays in a dead past; it lives in a dead past, or in an unborn future. However, liberation from *saṃsāra* is found within this very moment. How did the Buddha bring this out? What is the reason why the ordinary worldling does not perceive the present moment? It is because of that aforementioned dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)—the view of self. One who grasps the present moment cannot elevate it to insight meditation (*vipassanā*). However, the meditator of insight looks at it not as a self, but as preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is what is important there.

We know that one investigates them as preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Saying "impermanent indeed are preparations, subject to arising and passing away" (*aniccā vata saṅkhārā uppādavayadhammino*) does not refer only to the moment of dying. What is the nature of preparations (*saṅkhāra*)? They arise and pass away. They pass away. If they arise and pass away, and if they cannot be kept under one's control—if that is the reality—behold, then a gap opens up. The present. That is why it was said: *tattha tattha vipassati*—one must see right there at each and every point in the present.

As stated in the verses: *paccuppannañca yo dhammaṃ (tattha tattha) vipassati*. Seeing present states right there at each point in an extremely subtle manner—as the insight meditator goes deeper and deeper, this 'present moment' becomes clear to them. Through reflecting with the wisdom called radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), one sees that what happens moment by moment—what happened in the past, what will happen in the future, and what is happening in the present—is just the arising and passing away of those aforementioned preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is precisely what is called the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*). Arising and passing away. Thus, insight meditation (*vipassanā*) begins there: "arising, passing away; arising, passing away."

So that is why it was said: one does not grasp it as a self. If one grasps it, right there a conflict arises, doesn't it? There is none of that. Instead, insight at each point means seeing them as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*)—as preparations (*saṅkhāra*). To clarify this further, there are similes we have mentioned on

many occasions—indeed, not us, but the Buddha has brought them up even more. You have often heard the simile given for preparations (*saṅkhāra*): the banana tree trunk.

We have made great use of this banana tree. Even though it has no heartwood, the banana tree helps us understand the Dhamma. Yet we do not value it; we even dismissively say "like a banana flower" (or 'worthless'). But there is nothing as valuable as the banana tree, because it represents the nature of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). You must have heard the Buddha's word; it was the Buddha Himself who presented the simile of the banana tree trunk when speaking of preparations (*saṅkhāra*).

Behold, a man who has never seen a banana tree goes into the forest and sees one for the first time. He thinks, "This looks like wood with a solid heartwood, so I will cut the top and the bottom and carry it on my shoulder," intending to go home and make a wardrobe or a chair.

Thus, carrying that banana trunk on the shoulder is what we pointed out using a term: *parāmarsa*—grasping or holding on. We used that word because in the Dhamma there is its opposite: *sammasana*—investigation, which means reflecting with radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). The Pali word for reflecting is *sammasana*. If we present investigation (*sammasana*) as the opposite of grasping (*parāmarsa*)—if grasping is "clinging tightly," then investigation is like "gently feeling and examining."

Now, regarding that banana trunk, that man just carried it off without even looking. But what does the insight meditator do? He cuts the top and bottom, feels the banana trunk, and peels away its sheaths. When one sheath is finished, behold, there is another sheath; under that, another sheath; under that, another sheath. That is exactly how it is perceived during the investigation of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). As reflection becomes subtler and subtler, even what we finally take to be the "core" of the banana trunk is found to be just sheaths—there is no core in that either. It is just like that in the investigation of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), because that aforementioned view is abandoned.

Now, there are two other terms used in insight meditation (*vipassanā*) that we have often mentioned to you, which are found in meditation manuals: the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) and the perception of a group/heap (*rāsi-saññā*).

The perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) belongs to the one who clings. He regards it as compact: "This is a single, solid object." For him, indeed, there is no insight meditation. Behold, to the insight meditator, as he goes deeper into insight, this is perceived as a heap (*rāsi*). It is perceived as a heap. Why is it perceived so? The reason it was perceived as "one" is the glue of craving (*taṇhā*). It is stuck together by the glue of craving, and covered in the darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*). Because of that, the world takes this present as "self," as "I" and "mine"—and likewise with the past and the future.

In truth, it is easy for us to understand the past as impermanent (*anicca*). Since it is already gone, it is somewhat easy. Since the future has not yet arrived, after dreaming future dreams and waking up after a short while, it is also easy to realize "it is not there"

and understand it. But the present is what is difficult. In truth, intense insight meditation (*vipassanā*) occurs in the present moment. If the meditator reflects on the impermanence (*anicca*) of past preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and through the momentum thus generated understands that the Buddha's word is true to that extent, then by that same principle, if any preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are to arise in the future, they wisely contemplate that those future preparations (*saṅkhāra*) will also be impermanent (*anicca*). Yet, right at each point, whether regarding the five groups of grasping (*pañca-upādānakkhandha*) or the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*)—as we just discussed regarding the eye and form—the meditator practices insight by utilizing the clue given by the Buddha: the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*).

The Buddha showed what the world regards as permanent to be impermanent (*anicca*). He showed what the world regards as pleasure to be suffering (*dukkha*). He showed what the world takes as self to be non-self (*anattā*). Now, the word that helps to do that little bit is something we have highlighted on many occasions using various similes. To all that, the Buddha adds just a single letter: *na* (not). Just a "not". A massive task is accomplished by this "not". We have shown this through various similes.

Behold, the concepts and thought pattern of the ordinary world who cling to that view of self are shown in the Dhamma in this way. When something presents itself, they think: *Etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā*—meaning they conceptualize it through craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and view (*diṭṭhi*): "This is mine, this I am, this is my self."

Let us imagine. To use a simile easily understood by you, let us say someone buys a highly valuable vehicle, one that nobody else has. He bought the most valuable vehicle, perhaps even by going into debt. Having bought it, it is indeed not anyone else's, is it? It is "mine." The car is mine, the petrol is mine, the driver is mine. "It is mine."

Furthermore, not only did he buy that car, but must he not also show it off to the world? Standing in front of it, he takes a photograph, a photo, saying: "I am the owner of this car." Indeed, many people measure status by the vehicle, don't they? If someone arrives in a big car, he is a "big person"—no doubt about it. Behold, when coming: *esohamasmi, etaṃ mama, esohamasmi* ("this I am, this is mine, this I am"). Thereafter, to what extent does his thinking go? It becomes a view, and in the end, the car becomes a self. Whatever the car may be, it is like his self. It becomes unshakeable. It is when it reaches the level of view that it is called *attā* (self).

Now, instead of that thought pattern, to cross over from it, the Buddha knew that the ordinary worldling cannot reach there all at once. The insight meditator is one who is still training. Therefore, as an aid for that, the Buddha presented just a single letter: *na* (not). Instead of saying *etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā*, the Buddha said to think thus: *n'etaṃ mama, n'esohamasmi, na m'eso attā* ("This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self"). We spoke this loudly so that you may remember it.

Let us repeat a simile we gave on another occasion to help you understand this. Carpenters do not use them anymore; they are outdated now. There is something called a

hand-plane (*yatukæṭaya*), isn't there? To shave off the rough, swollen parts of the wood with that hand-plane, one taps and inserts a blade. Having adjusted the blade to the required depth, only then is the planing done.

Thus, in a sermon on that topic, we said on one occasion: how does this "carpenter-practitioner" (*yogāvacara*) plane down this heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that has swollen with craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and view (*diṭṭhi*)? I told you to listen to that. In the manner described, *n'etaṃ mama, n'esohamasmi, na m'eso attā*—that letter *na* is just like the blade of that hand-plane. Without even understanding that this was given for a practical purpose, modern scholars turn it into views and construct various opinions. Yet, the Buddha's Dhamma is highly practical. This *na* was not given to be turned into a view, but to shape one's thought pattern in daily life, to bring about a correction in it.

According to the world's view, the ordinary worldling thinks, "This is indeed mine. This is mine." But, recalling the Buddha's word even slightly: "Though I say it is mine, it is not mine. It is otherwise." Behold, one uses the *na* to help. The *na* is placed there for a practical purpose. That is why we said it is like the blade of the hand-plane. Those swollen parts are indeed craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and view (*diṭṭhi*). It is to shave them off. That is what it is for. It is within that pattern of thought that the practitioner (*yogāvacara*) subsequently conducts themselves.

As it becomes thinner and thinner, as that glue of craving (*taṇhā*) gets removed, gradually, just like the sheaths of the banana tree, preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are detected one under another, one under another, layer upon layer emerging as if one within another. How do they emerge? What helps with that is something we have spoken about before. I cannot say everything at this moment. Thereafter, that person looks at them—looks at the objects that come to him—as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), according to the concept of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Every single one of these incoming objects is merely Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). On one side, it is Name, on the other, it is a form that is merely a designation (name-matter). In that way, relying on these mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*) of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*), we recognize the great elements (*mahābhūta*) of earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*) which we cannot otherwise directly identify. Based on the qualities of hardness, fluidity, and heat, we think "this is earth, this is water," and so on. It is then that the observer recognizes it as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). It is the root of a delusion that we are exposing here. The world lives inside this Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). They do not know it. This is a form in name only—a mere designation. The ordinary world does not know this fact. The insight meditator, however, understands it. It is through the understanding of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that the comprehension of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) becomes deeper and deeper.

Every incoming object, as it comes, is understood as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). The insight meditator recognizes each incoming object: "This object turned toward my mind, toward my attention, because of a corresponding feeling (*vedanā*). Because of a

perception (*saññā*) that arose through feeling. Because of an intention (*cetanā*) caused by perception. Because of intention—precisely because of intention, there is a point where attention is directed," which is contact (*phassa*). That is why the Buddha declared: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). We mentioned on one occasion that some put "contact" (*phassa*) at the front. In truth, contact (*phassa*) must come at the back. Feeling (*vedanā*) is what is primary. It is through feeling (*vedanā*) that one awakens. It is through feeling (*vedanā*) that even the perception of self is awakened. Through feeling (*vedanā*), one takes up a perception (*saññā*). Through perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*) arises. When we become active based on that intention, attention is directed to that point of contact (*phassa*). These five states alone are present here, if we look at them as Name (*nāma*).

Form (*rūpa*) too is not some permanent, eternal thing. It is merely a designated form (name-matter) that we have constructed out of those great elements (*mahābhūta*) so that they become accessible to our senses—accessible to the sense faculties. It is through that very understanding that one comprehends this illusion of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Thus, the Buddha has brought out a clue to it.

Now, this sutta is so important, and those summary (*uddesa*) verses are so important, that we might think this was preached only for the Saṅgha. Or that it was preached only for this human world. Think about it a little: if that account is true, as the young deity Candana said, the Buddha preached this *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* to the deities of the Tāvatiṃsa heaven while seated on the Paṇḍukambala stone seat. He must have spoken those verses, which we just mentioned:

> Do today itself what must be done,
>
> For death may indeed come tomorrow.
>
> There is surely no bargaining possible,
>
> With Death who has such a great army.

Think about it a little. This was spoken to the deities of the Tāvatiṃsa heaven! You have heard of their day—as we mentioned in a previous sermon, a hundred years of this human world is just one day and night to them, and their lifespan is a thousand years. Even in that Tāvatiṃsa heaven, the Buddha spoke in a way that generates urgency (*saṃvega*):

> Do today itself what must be done,
>
> For death may indeed come tomorrow.
>
> There is surely no bargaining possible,
>
> With Death who has such a great army.

Thus, it is a hundred thousand times more fitting for the human world. That is why that deity—perhaps because their pleasures are so vast, they somehow forgot these things—nonetheless brought it up and reminded the bhikkhus, the people of this world.

Therefore, this is a wonderful opportunity for you. We hear so much about external dangers. Similarly, we do not know when they will arise within our physical body. Both from within and from without, this aforementioned Death is at work. The understanding comes that there is no time to lose—tomorrow is too late. It is to remind you of this that we have brought out this sutta. You must strive according to your own level.

Now we know this is no secret. Although these were preached to the Saṅgha in the past, noble lay devotees like the noble householder Citta attained extraordinary fruits of the path (*maggaphala*), possessing such direct, experiential realization of those fruits that they could hold Dhamma discussions with the monks. Furthermore, even on his deathbed, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder made a special request: "Please preach these kinds of insight-oriented discourses to laypeople as well in the future." That is why we have spoken to you as well.

Now, it is no secret—we are not boasting about ourselves—but for many lay devotees, the time has heated up now; it is a critical hour. So, in whatever way, even if you cannot wear a robe, if you practice just this much while remaining in the household, liberation is right there. Liberation is right there. Because we have said so many times, liberation is found within this very moment. One cannot go searching for the past, nor is it in the future. One must understand the present moment correctly. That is true insight meditation (*vipassanā*).

Now, to say a little more about insight meditation (*vipassanā*): we said at the beginning that it is the arising and passing away of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that the meditator sees first. As that reflection (*manasikāra*) becomes subtler and subtler, those arisings and passings away begin to appear with greater and greater rapidity. Not in the way the ordinary worldling thinks, but with extreme speed through direct experience. Finally, when one reaches the stage of the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*), one sees things passing away faster than they arise. Dissolution is seen. Why is it seen so? At the stage of the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*), just as the object coming to the meditator's mind passes away, the very mind that took up the object is also seen to pass away. Just as the object passes away, the mind that took up the object is also seen to pass away. It is then that a great sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) arises.

Think about it for a moment. To give a simile: there is a footpath barely wide enough to walk along, between two massive precipices on either side of a great mountain peak. There is also a handrail to help those who walk on that path. Now, as the meditator goes a little distance holding on to this handrail, he finds that every part of the rail he grabs is decayed. If the handrail itself is decayed, what kind of urgency (*saṃvega*) arises? Falling to this side is destruction; falling to that side is also destruction. Behold, a great fear arises. That is why "fear" is placed right after the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). Seeing the speed at which those preparations (*saṅkhāra*) break apart, one sees

there is nothing to hold on to, no place to grasp. All are crumbling preparations (*saṅkhāra*). It is from that point onward that true insight meditation (*vipassanā*) proceeds. That is why the knowledge of dissolution is intense insight meditation. Next is fear, and through that very fear, the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) is seen. If this existence (*bhava*) is a holding on, and if there is nothing to hold on to, what kind of existence (*bhava*) is there? If the very thing one holds on to crumbles right then and there, what kind of existence (*bhava*) is there? Behold, that is indeed the knowledge of disadvantage (*ādīnava-ñāṇa*).

Next, through that very thing, there is revulsion (*nibbidā*) toward existence (*bhava*). It is the same here; it is the same in the deva worlds; it is the same in the brahma worlds. According to the Buddha's word, everywhere is just a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). What existed in the past, and what will exist in the future, is just this very same thing—just this very present portion that is seen now. Instead of peeling the sheaths of the banana tree, we gave a simile on another occasion: a wise person does not need to keep peeling the sheaths; once the banana tree is cut, they can understand from its internal structure that it has no core. Behold, the meditator understands that. They understand it through the present preparations (*saṅkhāra*). There is no need to peel this again. At that moment, they understand that there is no core in this. Because of that, they understand the disadvantage (*ādīnava*).

Next comes revulsion (*nibbidā*). There is no word more distasteful to humans than "revulsion"—especially to those of modern times who possess craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*). Yet, the most valuable word in the Sasana is revulsion: *nibbidā*. Because it is through that indeed that the door to Nibbāna opens. That is why we compared it on some occasions to a gooseberry (*nelli*): someone bites into it a little and throws it away, saying, "This is bitter." But if one chews it thoroughly and drinks some cold water, there is a strange, sweet, ambrosial taste. It is just like that: through *nibbidā*, the door to Nibbāna opens.

When that knowledge of revulsion (*nibbidā-ñāṇa*) has arisen, if one strives further and cultivates those three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), as that practitioner (*yogāvacara*) goes forward, behold, a stage arrives where, instead of the fear that existed earlier, it is now seen—previously fear arose thinking, "I am being destroyed," didn't it? "I am being destroyed." As the understanding of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) becomes purified, one understands: there is no "I" to be destroyed, is there? There is no "I" to be destroyed. Then what? Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) just come and go. That is what is called the knowledge of equanimity toward preparations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*). That is a state very close to Nibbāna. At that stage, preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are seen to just pass by. They do not enter inside.

We mentioned a simile for that—a simple simile; do not grasp tightly to every simile we give. Let us imagine someone is traveling on a train. While traveling, that express train stopped at a certain station. At that moment, out of idle curiosity, he looks around. There are beautiful flowers, people passing by, those folks and these folks. He keeps looking at those things. Behold, the train begins to move. It begins to move. Once it starts moving

and goes a little distance, even if we want to, we cannot look at them. Coconut trees fly by, people pass by. We cannot take them inside, even if we think to. Behold, that stage arrives just like that. Those preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arise and pass away. They do not strike the mind.

The simile given for that stage—the simile given by the Buddha—is very much like the simile given for the mind of an Arahant: the water drop on a lotus leaf. If a drop of water falls on a lotus leaf, it does not smear it. At that stage, there is no obstruction from preparations (*saṅkhāra*). They fall, and roll off to the other side. They fall, and roll off to the other side. That stage is as if very close to Nibbāna. It is an extraordinary kind of equanimity. That is what is called equanimity toward preparations (*saṅkhārupekkhā*).

However, going even beyond that, by cultivating the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) to the point where the taints (*āsava*) and latencies (*anusaya*) are severed—by cultivating the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), and when a certain characteristic, whether impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), or non-self (*anattā*), according to one's temperament, is cultivated to the required degree—behold, at a certain moment, one directly experiences that aforementioned supreme solitude. Complete mental liberation is right there.

Thus, we have summarized a long story and told it within an hour. May you try to understand it in even greater detail. Now, today, when we think of this era, lay devotees are all living with a great sense of urgency (*saṃvega*). At any moment, dying is actually easier. But everyone has the fear: "Where will I go after death? Where will I go?"

It is precisely for that little bit. If our mind is liberated, if the mind is liberated, there is no birth (*jāti*) again. There is no problem again. It is because of this that we specifically preached this insight-oriented Dhamma sermon today, at a time when many of you have observed the precepts today, keeping your minds tranquil, and are practicing a noble virtue (*sīla*).

We make the aspiration: utilizing this Dhamma sermon as an aid, and bringing your own Dhamma meditation to its culmination, may this power of merit also serve as a strong support (*upanissaya*) for you to realize the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna through the penetration of the path and fruits (*maggaphala*) of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship within this very Buddha Sasana.

And also, we aspire that whatever beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha in existence (*bhava*) are able to rejoice in this merit of sharing and listening to the Dhamma, may they, through that rejoicing, find peace in the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna through their aspired Enlightenment. Aspiring thus, please recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #41

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.155)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Kismiṃ loko samuppanno, kismiṃ kubbati santhavaṃ;

Kissa loko upādāya, kismiṃ loko vihaññati?

Chasu loko samuppanno, chasu kubbati santhavaṃ;

Channam-eva upādāya, chasu loko vihaññati.

From:

Hemavata Sutta, Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

The day of Vesak is a triple-blessed day for us Buddhists. The *Jāti* (Birth) of the Buddha is a blessing, the Supreme Enlightenment is a blessing, and the Great Passing Away (Mahāparinibbāna) is a blessing. The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Blessed One, declared that in this era, He is the very first chick to break open the eggshell of ignorance and emerge into the light. Today, on a day like this, the knowledge of Supreme Enlightenment He attained contains the answers to the problems of all worldly beings who remain trapped inside that eggshell of ignorance. The two verses we have placed before us on this valuable day serve as an excellent illustration of this.

These two verses are found in the Hemavata Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta. According to the explanations in the commentaries (*Aṭṭhakathā*) related to this sutta, Sātāgira and Hemavata were two Yakkha generals. In the past, during the time of Kassapa Buddha, they had ordained as monks and practiced the monastic life well. However, at some point, due to partiality when resolving a disciplinary dispute (a *vinaya* question), a mistake was committed by these two bhikkhus. It is said that due to the remorse arising from this, instead of being reborn in the celestial realms after death, they took rebirth as long-lived Yakkhas. Among the two, the elder monk became a Yakkha general named Hemavata on Mt. Hemavata in the Himalayas. The other monk became a Yakkha general

named Sātāgira on Mt. Sāta in the Middle Country of India. These two had a custom of meeting from time to time at the annual Yakkha assemblies, similar to the meetings in the assembly of devas. Having met at such a Yakkha assembly, and remembering their past acquaintance, they made an agreement with each other: if any wonderful or miraculous event occurred in either the Himalayan region or the Middle Country, they would inform each other.

It was during such a period that the Buddha delivered the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. At that moment, the Yakkha Sātāgira came with his Yakkha retinue and listened to the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, but it is mentioned that he was unable to concentrate his mind. Remembering his friendship, he looked to see if the Yakkha Hemavata was also present. Since he was not there, after the sermon, the Yakkha Sātāgira flew through the sky with his retinue to find the Yakkha Hemavata. Meanwhile, the Yakkha Hemavata, having witnessed the miraculous events that occurred in the Himalayas at the time of the preaching of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, set out through the sky with his retinue toward the Middle Country to inform his friend. According to the commentary story, the two groups met in the sky above the city of Rājagaha, and the dialogue they held concerning the virtues of the Buddha is what is contained in this sutta.

Of these two Yakkha generals, the Yakkha Sātāgira initiates the sutta by announcing the news of the Buddha's appearance. He invites the Yakkha Hemavata to go and see the Buddha: "Today is the full-moon *uposatha* day. This is a beautiful night; shall we go to see the Teacher, Gautama of incomparable name?" Then, to further confirm that this is indeed a Buddha, Hemavata asks: "I think He keeps His mind well-established, possessing a mind of equanimity toward all living beings, and that He controls His thoughts regarding agreeable and disagreeable objects." Then Sātāgira says that it is exactly so. Although we do not repeat the entire verse, yes, the Teacher Gautama has His mind well-established, is endowed with the quality of suchness (*tādī*) toward all beings, and remains neutral toward agreeable and disagreeable objects.

Again, Hemavata asks: "I think He abstains from unwholesome deeds such as killing living beings and taking what is not given, is free from negligence, and is constantly engaged in meditation." Sātāgira says: "Yes, He is detached from bodily unwholesome deeds, free from negligence, and is constantly in meditation." Again, Hemavata asks: "I think He is free from false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech, and frivolous talk." To this too, Sātāgira replies: "Yes, He is free from unwholesome verbal deeds." Again, Hemavata asks: "I think He is free from sensual thoughts, has removed them, and is constantly endowed with wisdom regarding all phenomena." To this also, Sātāgira replies in the same manner.

Again, Hemavata says: "I think He is endowed with knowledge and conduct (*vijjācaraṇasampanna*), has destroyed the taints (*āsava*), and has no future *Bhava* (Becoming)." Sātāgira declares that it is indeed so. Now, what follows from there is: "Come, let us go! Let us go to see the Buddha of few wishes, who meditates in the forest. Let us go to see that Teacher. Having met Him, who is like a lion king in the forest, let us

ask how to be released from the snare of Māra." From this point on, the narrative in the sutta is presented in a dramatic dialogue form. Then, having approached and addressed the Blessed One, the Yakkha Hemavata asks: "Blessed One, please answer these questions for us." This question is the first of the two verses we have placed as our theme.

He asks the Buddha:

Kismiṁ loko samuppanno, kismiṁ kubbati santhavaṁ

Kissa loko upādāya, kismiṁ loko vihaññati.

Where is the world born? Where does the world maintain its intimacy—its association? Grasping what does the world get vexed, and where is it vexed? Here are several questions. Then, the answer given by the Buddha is recorded:

Chasu loko samuppanno, chasu kubbati santhavaṁ

Channam-eva upādāya, chasu loko vihaññati.

The world is born in the six; its association and maintenance are in the six. Grasping those very six, the world is vexed in the six. To help you remember this story of the six, if we present it as a verse:

Born within the six,

In the six it seeks intimacy,

Taking the six as its *Upādāna* (Grasping),

In the six itself, the world suffers vexation.

This is the idea presented by the Buddha. Next, the dialogue continues with questions and answers to clarify the meaning of this verse. The Yakkha Hemavata specifically asks what this *Upādāna* (Grasping) is. Grasping something, the world is vexed. The Buddha's answer to this is:

Kāmaguṇā loke mano chaṭṭhā paveditā

This means the five cords of sensual pleasure, the fivefold sensual enjoyment, with the mind declared as the sixth. Thus, it is caught within the sixfold sense sphere (*saḷāyatana*). Often, we only talk about the five sensual pleasures. But along with the five cords of sensual pleasure, there is also the mind. That is why it says, "*Kāmaguṇā loke mano paveditā*". It is there, indeed, that the five cords of sensual pleasure and the mind exist—this is the *Upādāna*.

Next, he asks about release from this: "How does one cross over this world, how is one released from this *Dukkha* (Suffering)?" The Yakkha general asks this. The answer given is that by removing desire (*chanda*) and *Taṇhā* (Craving) for these six sense bases,

Dukkha is ended, and this is called the end of the world—one crosses over the world by this means, as the Buddha declares.

To clarify this dialogue even further, the path (*paṭipadā*) is given as the answer: through the development of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla-samādhi-paññā*), by developing mindfulness (*sati*) and the like, and by abandoning the desire for *Bhava* (Becoming), one can cross over the world. In this way, after clarifying the primary question through the subsequent verses, these two Yakkha generals are highly pleased and express their joy like songs of praise: "Today is a wonderful morning, a beautiful awakening, a wonderful vision we have received in seeing this Teacher." Then they say: "We shall go from village to village, from mountain to mountain, singing the virtues of the Buddha and the virtues of the Dhamma." This is how the sutta ends.

So, on one hand, the story of these two Yakkha generals contained in the Hemavata Sutta is inspiring enough to generate faith (*saddhā*). The manner in which even Yakkha generals express their faith in the Triple Gem is an excellent example for those who lack faith. Next, let us come directly to the deep meaning of these verses. What is meant by this "six"? "*Chasu loko samuppanno*"—it became clear that these are the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). What are called sense bases are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These are the six bases of *Phassa* (Contact).

In many instances when explaining this Dhamma, the analysis is carried out in terms of the five aggregates of *Upādāna* (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*). When discussing Nibbāna or meditation, in other instances, they are shown as the six sense bases: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, which, when taken together with their corresponding objects, constitute the six bases of *Phassa*. Thus, what is said here is that the world has arisen in these six bases of *Phassa*. This might be difficult for someone to understand all at once—that the world is born in these six. Next, all the intimacies, associations, and relationships in the world exist within these six. Furthermore, it is by grasping these very six that the world is vexed. This is the story of the six. To impress this question of the six even deeper into our minds, let us try to understand it by bringing forward relevant suttas from various places.

On many occasions, disciple bhikkhus asked the Buddha, "Venerable Sir, 'the world, the world' it is said. What is this world?" They asked this because it is indeed a problem. For someone who has an understanding of this Dhamma, such a question arises. Perhaps they ask this because they are not satisfied with the conventional concept of the world. There are many such suttas.

Let us take, for instance, Ven. Ānanda, the personal attendant of the Buddha. He himself asks on one occasion, "Venerable Sir, 'the world, the world' it is said. To what extent does the world exist?" Then, the answer given by the Buddha, Ānanda, employs a term: "*paloka-dhammaṁ*" (subject to crumbling). The meaning of the word *paloka-dhammaṁ* is "having the nature of crumbling or disintegrating". The word *paludu* (damaged/broken) is used in Sinhala; when something is damaged, it is said to be *paludu*. In Pali, both *lujjati* and *palujjati* are used. *Lujjati* means to crumble. *Ludu-*

venavā is not a common usage in standard Sinhala. I do not know if *paludu-venavā* is used in certain regions in that sense. *Paludu-venavā* means to break or disintegrate. What is the etymology given by the Buddha? "Whatever is subject to crumbling, that is the world." This is a unique etymology.

Then He asks Ven. Ānanda: "And what, Ānanda, is subject to crumbling? The eye is subject to crumbling, forms are subject to crumbling, eye-*Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) is subject to crumbling, *Phassa* associated with the eye is subject to crumbling, and any *Vedanā* (Feeling)—whether pleasant, painful, or neutral—arising because of that *Phassa* is also subject to crumbling. Because each and every one of these is subject to crumbling, it is called the world." From this too, we see that this discussion is about the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). Saying so, He concludes with a specific phrase used in this training. This is a unique analysis of this Dhamma.

The unique analyses given by the Buddha are introduced with the text: "In the discipline of the Noble One" (*ariyassa vinaye*). According to the Noble usage or the Noble discipline, this is what is called the world. If anything is subject to crumbling, what crumbles are the eye, ear, nose, and so on, and their corresponding objects. Every single one of them crumbles. It is in the sense of crumbling (*paloka*) that it is called "the world".

Now, the problem with us is that scholars often pay little attention to this phrase "in the discipline of the Noble One" (*ariyassa vinaye*) and return once again to conventional definitions. In truth, because there was a problem, those Venerable Ones asked the Buddha what the world is. If the Buddha wanted to, He could have replied, "Is that even a question? Just look around you and see." Instead of saying that, He gave such a deep answer because of this Dhamma-conforming analysis. Since the explanation is given as "in the discipline of the Noble One", that is where our attention should be directed. The depth of the Dhamma lies precisely there.

He did not stop there. There are other suttas related to this. To be brief, on another occasion, a Venerable monk named Samiddhi also asks the Buddha, "Venerable Sir, 'the world, the world' it is said. To what extent is there a world or a designation of the world?" Here too, the Buddha declares: "Samiddhi, where there is the eye, where there are forms, where there is eye-*Viññāṇa*, and where there are things to be known by eye-*Viññāṇa*—there is the world, and there is the designation of the world." You can understand it in the same way for the ear, though we do not repeat it.

Finally, regarding the mind, we state it specifically because of its unique nature: "Where there is the mind, Samiddhi, where there are mind-objects, where there is mind-*Viññāṇa*, and where there are things to be known by mind-*Viññāṇa*—there is the world."

The Buddha did not stop there; He also showed where the world is not. This is where we reach the deepest point. The Buddha declares: "Samiddhi, where there is no eye, where there are no forms, where there is no eye-*Viññāṇa*, and where there are no things to be

known by eye-*Viññāṇa*—there, there is neither a world nor a designation of the world." Understand the rest in the same way, leaving room for you to reflect.

Finally, concerning the mind: "Where there is no mind, where there are no mind-objects—that is, *dhammā*, the objects that come to the mind just as forms come to the eye are called *dhammā*—where there is no mind, where there are no mind-objects, where there is no mind-*Viññāṇa* arising from those two, and where there are no things thought to be known through mind-*Viññāṇa*—there, there is neither a world nor a designation of the world." Here too, He presents an analysis according to the Noble usage.

Thus, we can see that the world we conventionally take to exist is shown by the Buddha to be something relative to the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). Not only that, He also showed how the world ceases through the discourse delivered to Ven. Samiddhi. As long as the eye, ear, and so on exist, there is a world. Where they are not, there is no world. What is this place where they are not? This is the problem—this is the problem that many people have. Can there be a state where the eye and so on are not? Can there be a state where the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, and their corresponding objects are not? That is what is called the cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*). The cessation of the six sense bases means escaping from this sixfold sense sphere which we have taken to be the world. Therefore, what is called the eggshell of ignorance is this very sixfold sense sphere. The cessation of the six sense bases is indeed the transcending of the world (*lokuttara*). This is what is meant by breaking open the eggshell and coming out.

When the Buddha declared Himself to be the first chick, some of you might think it was said to disparage the Buddha. It is not His birth as a Bodhisatta that is referred to here. It was at the moment of Supreme Enlightenment (*sambodhi*) that the Buddha, like a chick, broke that eggshell of ignorance. He broke the eggshell of the six sense bases and emerged. Although many peripheral stories are told, this too is a valuable sutta. Let us state it briefly. This is recorded as the word of the Buddha in the Verañja Sutta.

On one occasion, a brahmin named Verañja, having conceived a dislike for the Buddha and believing that He disparaged brahmins, approached and used many disparaging words against the Buddha. He called Him an annihilationist (*ucchedavāda*), childless/barren (*apagabbha*), and used various other bad words current at that time. The Buddha took each term and explained it in accordance with the Dhamma: "Yes, I am indeed so, but in this particular sense." Ultimately, He inspired faith in the brahmin and brought him to take refuge in the Buddha.

On that occasion, the Buddha declared: "Brahmin, you are well-aware of this matter—especially those who know about chickens—a hen might sit on eight, ten, or twelve eggs. Having incubated them, if a certain chick, using its claws or its beak, breaks open the eggshell and safely emerges first, what, Brahmin, do they call that chick? Is it not called the eldest, the foremost, the best?" "Yes, indeed, Venerable Sir, that is what they call it." "In the same way, Brahmin, among the world of beings trapped inside the eggshell of ignorance, I am the first to break open the eggshell and emerge."

Thus, the eggshell was broken at the moment of Supreme Enlightenment (*sambodhi*). Therefore, Nibbāna is the direct realization of the six sense bases. It is a realization attained in this very life (*diṭṭheva dhamme*).

If the world exists within the six sense bases, if everything is within the six sense bases, then all the scientific instruments you use to point here and there—every single telescope, microscope, and device—has an eye at one end. Some instruments have an ear at one end. In this way, every device is merely an extension of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). They are trapped within it. Science too is trapped within it. There are many who are trapped inside this eggshell. If we can present this truth to the world, especially to the Western world, as a profound aspect of the Dhamma—the depth of the Dhamma concerning Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and Nibbāna—then at least some of those brilliant minds trapped within these shells might make an effort to break the eggshell and come out.

How does one break the eggshell? To put it briefly, they might say it is the Noble Eightfold Path. In another way, it is virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*). Looking even deeper, it is the cultivation of the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*): *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self).

The Buddha has powerfully described the insight (*vipassanā*) used to transcend these six sense bases in various suttas. By taking this eye as permanent and thereby developing desire for it—desire arises from taking things as permanent—having desire is what keeps one trapped inside. Desire (*chanda*) is *Taṇhā* (Craving). Freedom is found at the moment desire is eliminated. What aids this is the cultivation of the Three Characteristics. Removing the sign of permanence, one strives to see them as *Anicca* through *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). That is what must be taken as the beak of the chick.

One constantly scrutinizes them as *Anicca*: if something is subject to breaking, if it changes, if it is subject to crumbling (*paloka-dhammaṁ*), then maintaining it is a great trouble—it is *Dukkha*. Next, if it cannot be kept under one's control, how can one say "This is mine, this is my self" (*Anattā*)? This is the Three Characteristics brought to light by the Buddha. If we align ourselves there, it is through the cultivation of the Three Characteristics, when developed intensely, that one can emerge from this eggshell through those insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). This is the teaching found within the Buddha's dispensation.

However, many are afraid to eliminate *Dukkha*. The Buddha has said that *Dukkha* itself is the world. Just like two panels of a door closing together, the world exists within *Dukkha*, and *Dukkha* exists within the world. Or rather, it is a completely simple equation: the world equals *Dukkha*. This is the word of the Buddha. Even if we are not prepared to accept it, "*saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*" means exactly that. In brief, *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death)—all of these are indeed *Dukkha*, but ultimately, the five aggregates of grasping are *Dukkha*.

The world exists because of the sense bases, the objects present within the daily experienced six sense bases, the attachment to them, and the *Papañca* (Conceptual proliferation / Prolific conceptualization) built upon them. Even if one reaches the far limits of science, that is where the world remains. From suttas such as the Samiddhi Sutta, we see that the Buddha points out the wearing-away nature of these six sense bases. For one who constantly reflects on this, there gradually arises disenchantment (*nibbidā*) and dispassion (*virāga*)—which is also called non-attachment—and these are shown as the gateways that aid one's exit. They are also called liberations (*vimokkha*).

You, especially those who meditate, have heard that the ultimate end of seeing the sign of permanence as *Anicca* is that no "sign" (*nimitta*) arises in the mind. The impermanence is seen so intensely, its crumbling nature is seen so acutely, that the mind cannot grasp a sign. At that moment, the mind cannot take a sign—this is the signless (*animitta*). When one does not take a sign, one cannot dwell there. *Paṇidhi* means establishing an aspiration or expectation; there is no place to establish an expectation—this is the desireless (*appaṇihita*).

The end of cultivating *Anicca* is signless liberation (*animitta-vimokkha*). Cultivating the perception of *Dukkha* ends in the desireless (*appaṇihita-vimokkha*); there is no aspiration, no *Taṇhā*—there is only a sense of detachment. Next, if the wise understand this as *Anattā*, realizing there is nothing to be taken as "I" or "mine", the final stage of that cultivation is the void (*suññata*)—they see it as void, realizing there is nothing to take as "I" or "mine". Thus, it is through the cultivation of the Three Characteristics that one transcends this world of the six sense bases.

This story of the cessation of the world has been analyzed by the Buddha in various other suttas. Furthermore, the manner in which the Buddha presented Himself as a Teacher, as a Guide, is magnificent. Even modern teachers have things to learn from it—the way He presented deep matters, the way He presented Dhamma concepts.

On one occasion, He was delivering a discourse in the midst of the Sangha. This was not in response to a question asked by anyone. He said: "Bhikkhus, I declare that the end of the world cannot be reached by traveling. At the same time, I say that without reaching the end of the world, there is no making an end of *Dukkha*." This is a contradictory statement. First, remember what was said: "I declare that the end of the world cannot be reached by traveling." Next: "Without reaching the end of the world, there is no making an end of *Dukkha*." Having said this, the Buddha did not go on to analyze it. He stood up and entered His dwelling.

So, what was to be done? The bhikkhus, not knowing what to do, looked around and saw Ven. Ānanda. The Buddha had constantly praised Ven. Ānanda, and the other bhikkhus also respected him greatly because of his close association with the Buddha. They said, "Let us go and ask Ven. Ānanda." Without troubling the Buddha again, they approached Ven. Ānanda and asked what the meaning of this brief statement of the Buddha was.

Ven. Ānanda, showing some hesitation, said, "Why did you not ask Him at that very moment? Why do you come to someone like me?" and then gave the answer: "Friends, that by which one has a perception of the world (*loka-saññā*), that by which one has a conceit of the world (*loka-māna*), that is what is called the world in this Noble discipline." According to the Noble usage, according to the unique dispensation definition, that is the world. Next, by what does one measure the world? By the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Other than these, there is nothing to measure it with. Thus, that which measures is the world—this was the explanation he gave. And the Buddha later approved this explanation.

Thus, we can understand that what the Buddha pointed out was that this world, and the story of crossing over the world, are entirely connected with the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). The connection between the world and the six sense bases becomes even clearer to you through a very special sutta which many of you may have read, known as the Rohitassa Sutta, which even scholars consider a unique word of the Buddha. It is a wonderful discourse.

There too, speaking about the world, the Buddha declares: "Within this very fathom-long carcass, endowed with perception and mind, I declare the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." "Within this fathom-long body itself, endowed with perception and mind"—the phrase "body-carcass" is used. If we remove those, it is indeed a corpse, a dead body; but here it is "endowed with perception and mind". That is the unique part. It is within this living body, endowed with perception and mind, that the world exists, the arising of the world exists, the cessation of the world exists, and the path to the cessation of the world exists. Not in another world, not in another place.

This discourse is indeed the best opportunity for those in this era who have become trapped in science to understand the Buddha's word. Many of you may have heard from those who speak from the side of science that many brilliant minds in the Western world are today trapped in physics, specifically in modern quantum physics. Yet, all of them ultimately come to understand that there is no world independent of a point of view. This is where we arrive. But they are not ready to accept that there is no world independent of a point of view, so they search further. However, their research—their search for the ultimate particle—becomes futile. Because this word of the Buddha was already spoken before.

The world arises relative to some point of view. It is when the conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*) is taken—that is what is called the conceit "I am"—the moment "I am" is assumed, and where there is a concept of a living being, it is from the six sense bases relative to that being that a world arises.

Now, what has happened to us is that, being humans, we pay no attention to other worlds. We do not consider the animal world. Some think of animals merely as things to assist our lives. But there is a world relative to each animal. We cannot understand the world of an ant. We cannot understand the worlds of other animals. There is a world

relative to each animal. Even if we were to be born there, we would exist in a completely different world. Those scientists who conduct great research on science, if after death they go to some unwholesome state due to some unwholesome karma—let us say they become a dog or a chicken—then there is no quantum physics there. Then they will have to eat rubbish.

The world exists within the six sense bases—the forms that come to the eye, the sounds that come to the ear, and we can understand this from their reactions. Pigs do not eat the food we eat. What we perceive as a bad smell is a fragrance to them. It is fragrant to pigs, but bad-smelling to us. That is how we must understand it. However, there exists within worldly beings what we may call "human pride" (*mānavābhimāna*); they develop a certain conceit and claim the world as their own. This is the law of the world. We must seek the end of this. For this, they spend billions of dollars, using various space vehicles. Yet, they remain inside the eggshell. Thinking that one has traversed outer space is not a crossing of *Bhava* (Becoming). They will merely crash somewhere inside the eggshell and fall back.

Even if one goes to the end of the universe, this eggshell of ignorance, to put it briefly, is the very six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). Thus, all problems exist within the six sense bases. Getting vexed within it means grasping the six sense bases, taking the six sense bases to be substantial. But if we understand according to the Buddha's word, there is no way for a perception of permanence to exist here. If the eye is also *Anicca*, constantly crumbling—we have shown such a sutta on previous occasions as the Buddha's word. In terms of meditation, the Buddha describes these as *calaṁ* (unstable/shaking), *vayaṁ* (decaying), and *vipariṇāma-dhammaṁ* (subject to change). These are constantly shaking, changing, and undergoing alteration (*aññathābhāva*).

They are only unseen because of the delusion we hold, our wrong perception, our perception of a self, and our *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body). *Sakkāya* means taking this group as existing together. Because of this, one is ignorant of those facts and thinks this is the end. But it is only when the eggshell is broken that one understands. Breaking the eggshell means that if all of those are *Dukkha* and a vexation, then liberation is found there. It is not a different world.

When someone dies, the word you use for it is a funeral (*avamaṅgula*—an inauspicious event). Why did the Buddha's Parinibbāna become a blessing (*maṅgula*)? We said that you use the term "the Triple-Blessed Day". Coming out of the mother's womb is *Jāti*. Supreme Enlightenment (*sambodhi*) means coming out of that eggshell of ignorance and realizing it as a direct experience in this very life (*diṭṭheva dhamme*); after that, there is no doubt. From then on, the story is very beautiful.

The Buddhas and Arahants "live in the world, unsullied by the world" (*loke ṭhito lokena anupalitto*). They live in the world possessing that direct realization; that is what becomes manifest at the moment of Parinibbāna. If they experienced the deathless state while still living, when Arahants are in the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samāpatti*), they are temporarily detached from the sufferings and

troubles of this world, enjoying the direct realization of the cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*). To show this, Nibbāna is described by words such as an island, a cave, a refuge, and a shelter. It is not something existing in a different world. It is the experience of that realization right here.

The Buddha and other Arahants, during the attainment of the fruit (*phala-samāpatti*), detached themselves from the world—that is the state of liberation where they abandoned the five aggregates of grasping (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*). This is done through wisdom (*paññā*). The primary factor for that wisdom exists within every living being: attention (*manasikāra*). It is by applying that attention as *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) that one can proceed toward liberation.

We have had to mention on several occasions, according to the theme taken, the relationship between *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) and *Nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form). Everyone is trapped within the illusion of *Viññāṇa*. Why is it called an illusion? Because *Viññāṇa* stands between *Nāma* (Name) and *Rūpa* (Form). We have spoken about the word *Nāmarūpa* on previous occasions. "Name" (*nāma*) does not mean a mere bending. According to the Dhamma, in the Buddha's own words, it is *Vedanā* (Feeling), *Saññā* (Perception), Volition (*cetanā*), *Phassa* (Contact), and Attention (*manasikāra*). *Vedanā*, the perception that follows *Vedanā*, the volition formed in accordance with it, the *Phassa* that is the object of volition, and finally, the attention paid to it. It is through these mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) that one recognizes something in the world.

Because we need to exchange ideas generally, we use words. But whenever we use words, the other person does not get the exact same feeling as ourselves. Let us take an illustration: if someone fell into a river and barely escaped, when the word "river" is spoken to him, what comes to his mind is that past memory of the river, and perhaps even fear. In that way, we cannot convey the complete idea to someone through a word. Then, how do we recognize things? It is through *Vedanā*, *Saññā*, Volition (*cetanā*), *Phassa*, and Attention (*manasikāra*). That is the most personal and unique recognition. General recognition is a convention (*sammuti*) used to exchange ideas within regions or between countries.

Now, what has happened is that worldly beings get trapped within the convention they have created, and they forget the ultimate truth. The Buddha brought to light the ultimate truth through the concept of *Nāmarūpa*. Between this *Viññāṇa* and *Nāmarūpa*, there is a constant, wonderful delusion of the world. We have given many illustrations of this. To remind you, we have often told the story of the dog on the plank bridge (*edaṇḍa*). What the dog sees is the reflective nature of the water. Therefore, the dog walking on the plank bridge sees what appears to be another dog. Thinking it is another dog, it reacts to it.

Similarly, *Viññāṇa* also has a deceptive nature because it stands in the middle, between *Nāma* and *Rūpa*. The dog thinks it sees because it looks. But in truth, it is because it looks that it sees. When we say "it is because it looks that it sees", we arrive at the story of attention (*manasikāra*). "*Manasikāra-sambhavā sabbe dhammā*"—the Buddha's

word says that all phenomena have their origin in attention. "*Chanda-mūlakā sabbe dhammā*"—all phenomena are rooted in desire.

Now, why do those scientists, amidst so many troubles, search further and further? Sometimes, as we said on a previous occasion, modern physics is like someone who, when unable to solve a math problem, finally throws in a random symbol because they have nothing else to do, lacking the word of the Buddha. The Buddha has pointed out something that can never be completed by searching: that there is no world independent of a point of view. Yet, these people are driven to search for a world independent of a point of view. Consequently, they cannot recognize those phenomena as they truly are.

That is what is contained within the term *Nāmarūpa*. *Rūpa* (Form) is a form for a name; *Nāma* (Name) is a mental representation of form—it is not the actual convention, but something like a personal name, a mental representation of form. That is what was analyzed as *Vedanā*, *Saññā*, Volition, and so on. Why did He call it a name-matter form? When the Buddha speaks about *Rūpa*, He constantly reminds us that there are four great elements (*mahābhūta*): earth, water, fire, and wind, which are interwoven. Depending on their dominance in a mixture, we experience them as hardness, heat, and so on. Yet, we recognize them only through mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*).

Therefore, the perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*) that we form regarding the great elements recognized through mental phenomena cannot go beyond them. One cannot recognize form in isolation. Thus, what comes as the object of *Viññāṇa* is once again *Nāmarūpa* itself. Other than that, form cannot be recognized in isolation. That is what we explained through the story of Narcissus. Just as the youth Narcissus, seeing his own face, thought it was a water nymph, so too the ordinary world, seeing the world around them, develops the perception of a self. The Buddha preaches that the perception held by worldly beings is a complete delusion—taking things as "I" and "mine" is a complete delusion, which is the *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (Dogma of self-illusion). That is where ignorance lies. Because of this, they form a perception of permanence, due to grasping it.

In describing worldly beings, the Buddha gives a wonderful simile. This is a simile that not only you, but even an animal can understand. Just as a dog bound to a post with a chain walks around that post, sits right by the post, stands right by the post, walks close to the post, and lies down right by the post—because it cannot go beyond the post—similarly is the *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*. One who has grasped the *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* carries these five aggregates of grasping wherever they go. They carry them and go everywhere with them.

In truth, although they are called five aggregates, when they emerge through reflection, it is seen that they are five groups constructed by the mind itself. At any given moment, what arises are only phenomena (*dhammā*). But just as the dog thinks the reflection is there even when it is not looking, the world, due to the *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, cannot understand this. If we say this, they might ask, "If I don't look, does that thing disappear?" But what did he see? He saw only "the seen". We think we saw a "thing"—a "substance". But the Buddha says it is not a thing that was seen; only "the seen" was

there. Then, what was heard? It was not the song that was "heard". The same applies to the others. What is said about the sensed? Only "the sensed" was there. What was thought of thoughts? Only "the thought" was there. Therefore, according to the Buddha's word, in truth, there is only the seen, the heard, the sensed, and the thought. Going beyond that is *Papañca* (Conceptual proliferation). This is the deepest aspect.

Although we state this in words, to directly realize it, one must apply attention (*manasikāra*). Through those very mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*), the Buddha reveals the things that aid one's liberation at some point. Remaining inside the eggshell, one applies the tip of the beak to break that eggshell through *Yoniso manasikāra* in accordance with the Three Characteristics of *Anicca*, *Dukkha*, and *Anattā*.

Attention (*manasikāra*) is something that belongs to *Nāmarūpa*. That attention can be unwise (*ayoniso*) or radical (*yoniso*). Generally, worldly beings possess unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). Unwise attention means taking the *Anicca* as permanent, taking what is associated with *Dukkha* as happiness, taking the foul as beautiful, and taking what is *Anattā* as self. Instead of that wrong grasping—instead of "clinging" (*parāmāsa*) or *Upādāna*—the Buddha points out something called "scrutinizing" (*sammasana*).

You have often heard the simile given for this. *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) are compared to a banana trunk. A man, thinking there is heartwood in a banana trunk and intending to make a cupboard or a chair, cuts it at the top and the bottom and carries it on his shoulder, embracing it. But to find out if there is actually any heartwood in it, what does he do? He peels off a layer of bark. Peeling off one layer and gently touching it, behold, there is another layer. And another layer. To know this, one must touch it gently. "Scrutinizing" (*sammasana*) means such an action—a touching with the mind. For this, the term "noting" (*salakkhaṇa*) is used; those who practice insight meditation have heard this. *Salakkhaṇa* means observing, examining with wisdom. The insight meditator, therefore, does not grasp these. Following the instructions given by the Buddha, they carefully reflect on this gently, not giving room to the perception of permanence. The word "reflecting" is often used, but we must understand it not in a superficial way, but as *Yoniso manasikāra*—reflecting with wisdom.

The insight meditator, by making that reflection increasingly subtle and rapid, understands that what exists here is a pile of *Saṅkhāra*—a pile of fabrications, one inside the other. But there is no core here, no heartwood. When that understanding becomes sharp, there is the effortless seeing of things as they are. That is what is called the knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*). Wordly beings remain within delusion. With unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), no one can see this state as it truly is.

Instead, the Buddha shows that if one raises insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) and reflects properly, at that moment, the five aggregates of grasping (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*) are gradually seen. The first step for this is the breaking of the *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (Dogma of self-illusion) at the moment of stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). This *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* is the post to which one was bound. It goes even further when we speak

of the conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*). But primarily, through that wrong grasping—taking all forms, whether past forms that are gone, present forms seen now, or future forms to be seen, as "I" and "mine"—those aggregates of grasping are accumulated. One carries this burden.

But for one who practices insight, they understand that this exists only as often as it is reflected upon, as often as it arises. Only as often as it arises. When we reflect on the past, without our knowing it, we live in the past. If we recognize it at that very moment as "this is the past", it ends right there. When reflecting on the future, we go on making various plans about it. But if even for a moment we understand that "this is only the future", we do not make it into the present.

Next, looking at the present, even this present is relative to our grasping, relative to our holding. "Now" is an indefinable word; it is understood only according to the context. What is meant by "now"? The meditator, ultimately, through very subtle and gentle scrutinizing, understands that at the root of what we take to be a "thing" is desire (*chanda*). Next, its arising occurs through reflection. The place where it emerges is *Phassa*. That is why they are called the bases of *Phassa*—the entire world is formed there, based on the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, and their corresponding objects.

Next, without stopping at those points, one goes further and further into *Papañca* along the path of delusion. The Buddha points out their true nature: how they cease right there, and at some point, disenchantment arises toward them. It is through that disenchantment that, understanding them as *Saṅkhāra* through insight, one removes wrong views. Next, the conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*) remains like the final trump card; ordinary worldly beings have the notion "I am". Every being has the conceit "I am".

The Buddha points out that this measuring exists relative to a certain center. When that center itself is uprooted—at the moment *Taṇhā* and ignorance (*avijjā*) are destroyed—that is final liberation. If the world seeks liberation, everyone talks about liberation. There are liberations attained while remaining inside the world. These are not only those accepted by society; even the great meditators like Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, who had attained high meditative absorptions (*jhāna*) before the appearance of the Buddha, thought they had attained liberation. But when the Buddha realized that even they remained within a certain delusion, they left Him. Later, the Buddha knew that if this Dhamma were properly presented to them, they would be able to abandon that delusion and attain Arahantship.

Thus, even those who had attained meditative absorptions were ultimately trapped in a self. Those who sought liberation through tranquility (*samatha*) alone, even though they temporarily enjoyed the bliss of those absorptions and lived for aeons in the Brahma worlds according to the force of their kamma, would still return to the round of rebirth (*saṁsāra*). The Buddha alone showed them that the path of the round of rebirth exists within this. Every one of them is trapped within the *Phassa* of the six sense bases.

The cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*) is ultimately Nibbāna itself. The Buddha has pointed out the path to be taken for this: having developed a certain strength of concentration through tranquility, one must proceed to insight (*vipassanā*). Insight becomes sharp—insight means subtle seeing. For that, the mind must be strong, it must be concentrated. With a strong, concentrated mind, as one directs the mind in accordance with the Three Characteristics as instructed by the Buddha, one ultimately sees the impermanence—not as an imposition of impermanence, but the impermanence that was hitherto unseen is finally seen.

When that is seen, as these things crumble, disenchantment naturally arises. What is described as the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*) and so on is this crumbling nature. It is not a disease, but a sign of recovery. Next, having seen that, disenchantment arises, and ultimately, through that detachment, the grasping that was hitherto held as "I" and "mine" is abandoned. When that grasping is gone, it is at that moment that one emerges from the eggshell, when ignorance and craving are destroyed.

This cessation of the six sense bases, which is detached from the world—what the Buddha declares about the world is that the cessation of the world is realized right here, within this very body. The Buddha did not go to another world at His Parinibbāna. The realization He obtained at the moment of Supreme Enlightenment, the realization obtained through that living body, remained as long as His life-faculty existed; hence, various sensations relative to the body and to the eight worldly conditions occurred in accordance with kamma.

But on certain occasions, the Buddha directed His mind to the cessation of the six sense bases and the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship, which is why it is described as a cave, a refuge, and an island. He experienced that transcendental peace. That is what is called experiencing the deathless nectar of Nibbāna—the nectar enjoyed by the Buddha and the Arahants. At the final moment, this naturally manifest state arises, and what happens? The four elements of this body return to the four elements. But why is this not annihilationism (*ucchedavāda*)? Because there is nothing here to be destroyed. But for many, they want to be free from *Dukkha*, yet they also want to remain within *Bhava*. Both cannot be done. The cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) is indeed the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*). The cessation of the world is indeed the cessation of suffering. This is an equation.

If we have understood that matter, on a Vesak day like today, when so many brilliant minds are lost, if we can explain this Dhamma to them deeply in terms of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and the like, then as said before, at least a few more chicks might try to break the eggshell and come out. Today, on this valuable day, we have presented a deep sermon. Within this, there is both faith (*saddhā*) and wisdom (*paññā*). In truth, some scholars lack faith, which is why they do not become active and no effort arises. But faith is also necessary. That is why we said faith is required. With the help of that faith, there follow faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—wisdom comes at the end. This is not something obtained through mere book-learning or

scholarship. It is through the effort generated by faith, the mindfulness developed, and the concentration developed, that wisdom can be obtained.

Therefore, we hope this sermon will help you look at the Dhamma in a balanced way. On this valuable day, you have dedicated yourselves to this, and many have undertaken the noble precepts. In the meantime, you have practiced meditation and Dhamma-contemplation. Now, at this moment, you have listened to a sermon that aids insight (*vipassanā*). Utilizing all of this, in this rare era of a Buddha's appearance—this highly difficult-to-encounter era of a Buddha's appearance—everyone should strive as much as possible to break the eggshell of ignorance. We wish that this sermon may support you in that endeavor.

By the delivery of this sermon and by the listening to this sermon, if any beings from the lowest hell (Avīci) to the highest heaven (Akaniṭṭha) expect to share in these merits, may they, through sharing in these merits, realize the supreme goals they aspire to. Recite these verses and dedicate the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #42

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.169)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Ayaṃ loko paro loko, jānatā suppakāsito;

Mārena sappattaṃ appattaṃ yañca maccunā.

Sabbaṃ lokaṃ abhiññāya, sambuddhena pajānatā;

Vivaṭaṃ amatadvāraṃ, khemaṃ nibbānapattiyā.

Chinnaṃ pāpimato sotaṃ, viddhastaṃ vinālīkataṃ;

Pāmojjabahulā hotha, khemaṃ nibbānapattiyā.

From:

Cūḷagopālaka Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya

Dear Listeners,

The Noble Eightfold Path, placed before the world by the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Self-Awakened One, on an Esala Full Moon Poya day like today, is the only transcendental path to cross over from this shore to the other shore, parting the fierce flood of this terrifying saṃsāra. It is the salvific path that leads to the further shore of Nibbāna, escaping the realm of Māra and remaining beyond his grasp. Just as a skilled cowherd safely guides his herd of cattle across a river from this bank to the other during the rainy season, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Self-Awakened One, revealed the Middle Path to lead worldly beings across the fierce flood of saṃsāra to the other shore.

In the *Cūḷagopālaka Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha illustrated His peerless, supreme enlightenment through the simile of a cowherd. The three verses that come at the very end to culminate this Sutta discourse are what we have taken as our topic today. According to the Sutta, the background story is as follows: On one occasion, the Blessed

One was staying among a group of monks on the banks of the River Ganges near the town of Ukkācelā in the Vajjian country. As it appears to us, this was not due to some unusual problem or event. It may be that the Buddha wished to deliver a heart-touching sermon to the Sangha, drawing inspiration from a common sight frequently witnessed on the River Ganges. In any case, He began the discourse in this manner. In the Pali language, there is a word, *bhūtapubbaṃ*. Its meaning is a true event—indeed, such an event actually occurred. It begins with that word: "Monks, once upon a time, such an event occurred. What was it? A foolish cowherd of Magadha, in the last month of the rainy season, during the autumn, tried to drive his herd of cattle across the River Ganges to the Videhan country on the opposite bank, without properly examining this bank, without properly examining the further bank, and at a place that was not a ford (*anotitithena*)." As you merit-seeking devotees know, a ford is the shallowest place in a river, where it is easy to cross. He tried to cross his herd not at a proper ford, but at a non-ford. "But monks, that herd of cattle got caught in the current in the middle of the river and met with destruction." What was the reason? That cowherd of Magadha was unwise. Furthermore, before undertaking that task, he did not properly examine this bank, nor did he properly examine the further bank. And he tried to cross the cattle at a non-ford. That is why it was not successful. "In the same way, monks, if any ascetics and brahmins are unskilled regarding this world"—the word used there is *akusalā*—"unskilled regarding the next world, without comprehension, unskilled regarding the realm of Māra, unskilled regarding what is not the realm of Māra, unskilled regarding the region subject to death (Maccu); if anyone decides to place faith in such ascetics and brahmins, and decides to listen to them, that will lead to their harm, suffering (dukkha), and misfortune for a long time." Thus, the Buddha declared.

In line with that simile, the Buddha next presents another factual event: "Monks, such an event also occurred. A skilled, wise cowherd of Magadha, in the very same way, in the last month of the rainy season during autumn, properly examined this bank of the river, properly examined the further bank, and crossed his herd of cattle at the proper ford." The Buddha beautifully describes the manner in which they were crossed. First, that cowherd took the bulls who were the leaders of the herd (*gopitaro gopariṇāyakā*), the chief cattle, and they cut across the river's current, went forward, and crossed over safely. Secondly, the strong cattle and cows of the herd similarly cut across the river's currents, went forward, and crossed over. Thirdly, the grown heifers and young bulls likewise cut across the river's current, went forward, and crossed over safely. Fourthly, the weak calves of the herd were also taken across, cutting through the current, going forward, and crossing over safely. Then the Buddha declares something further, something very special: "Monks, such a thing also occurred on that occasion. There was a newborn calf in that herd, born that very day, who, being urged on by its mother's lowing"—there is a unique phrase mentioned there, which scholars interpret in various ways: *mātugoravena vuyhamāno*. As you merit-seeking devotees know, after a cow gives birth to a calf, she makes a special protective sound, like "hum, hum." Urging the calf forward with that sound, or searching for it when lost; encouraged by that lowing sound of the mother, the newborn calf also went forward safely through the water parted by its mother’s chest and crossed over.

Then the Buddha explains according to that simile: "What was the reason? That cowherd was wise. He properly examined this bank, he properly examined the further bank, and he crossed the cattle at the proper ford. That is why it was successful. In the same way, monks, if any ascetics and brahmins are skilled regarding this world, skilled regarding the next world, skilled regarding the realm of Māra, skilled regarding what is not the realm of Māra, skilled regarding the region subject to death, and skilled regarding the region free from death; if anyone thinks it fit to listen to such ascetics and brahmins and thinks it fit to place faith in them, that will lead to their benefit and happiness for a long time." Having declared this, using the actions of the skilled cowherd as a simile, the Buddha next explains the corresponding reality regarding the individuals in this Dispensation (*Sāsana*): "Just as, monks, that cowherd first crossed the bulls, the leaders of the herd, so too, monks, the Arahants in this Dispensation, having severed the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*) that bind one to saṃsāra, and having destroyed the taints (*āsava*)"—many other terms describing Arahants are mentioned there—"the Arahants in this Dispensation cross over safely to the further shore of Nibbāna, having cut all ten fetters." Thus, that is the simile for them. The Arahants, having destroyed all defilements and become pure, cross over safely.

Secondly, showing the second point, just as the strong cattle and cows of the herd crossed over safely next, in this Dispensation, what is spoken of next—as you merit-seeking devotees know—is about the Non-Returner (*Anāgāmī*) noble individuals. Now let us define the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*) for those who do not know. Fetters are described as the bonds that tie one to saṃsāra. They are: dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), adherence to rules and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), sensual lust (*kāmarāga*), ill-will (*paṭigha*), craving for fine-material existence (*rūparāga*), craving for immaterial existence (*arūparāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). These ten are known in the Dhamma as the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*). The ten fetters are divided in the Dhamma, dear devotees, into the lower fetters (*oramabhāgiya*) and the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*). The lower fetters belong to this side—when we look from this side, the five fetters on this side. The higher fetters belong to the upper side. So, regarding the Non-Returner (*Anāgāmī*), it is mentioned that they have severed those five lower fetters, and as you may have heard, they are reborn spontaneously (*opapātika*), without parents, in the Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsa*). They take birth in the Pure Abodes of the Brahma world: Aviha, Atappa, Sudassa, Sudassī, and Akaniṭṭha. Moreover, the meaning of the word *Anāgāmī* is "one who does not return here." The Non-Returner does not come back to this world. Another phrase is used in the Dhamma for this: *anāvattidhammo tasmā lokā*—not returning from that world. They do not turn back from the Brahma world. The Non-Returner who has attained that state is compared to the second category of cattle. Thus, regarding those individuals, the Buddha declares that while the Arahants have crossed over, these individuals "will cross over." It is stated in the future tense; they will definitely cross over, with certainty. The Buddha affirms this decisively regarding Non-Returners. Now you can understand that second point.

Thirdly, just as the grown heifers and young bulls were crossed over, in this Dispensation, we next have the Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmī*). You have probably heard the meaning of the word *Sakadāgāmī*: one who comes to this world only once more. Regarding Once-Returners (*Sakadāgāmī*), this is how it is described in the Dhamma, and in this Sutta too, it is said that they have severed the first three fetters—the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), and adherence to rules and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*)—and in addition, they have thinned out the defilements of lust, hatred, and delusion. So, they have severed three fetters and thinned out lust, hatred, and delusion. To cut through the river's current, the Buddha here compares it to cutting through Māra's stream: *Mārassa sotaṃ chetvā*—having cut Māra's stream. Māra's stream is craving (*taṇhā*). Cutting through the stream of craving (*taṇhā*), this third group will also cross over. They will definitely go. It is something that happens in the future. They return only once, but they will definitely realize Nibbāna. That is the third category.

In the fourth category are the weak calves. That simile is shown regarding the Stream-Enterer (*Sotāpanna*). Regarding those who have severed only the first three fetters—dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), and adherence to rules and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*)—the Buddha often mentions *sambodhiparāyaṇo* (bound for awakening) and *avinipātadhammo* (not subject to ruin/rebirth in lower worlds). They do not go to the hells anymore; they do not go to states of misery. Special things are mentioned about the Stream-Enterer too. Just as Arahants are spoken of from that end, if we look from this end at the level of ordinary people, the Stream-Enterer is indeed a noble being. Yet, here they are compared to the weak calves. Why is that? "Calves" because they have severed only three out of the ten fetters. This is not said to disparage them, but this much is certain. It is mentioned in other places regarding them—even if not in this Sutta, you merit-seeking devotees have heard it—the Stream-Enterer is described as *sattakkhattuparama*, meaning they take birth at most seven more times. Within seven lifetimes, they will somehow bring an end to saṃsāric suffering (dukkha). There are the words *niyato sambodhiparāyaṇo*—destined with certainty for awakening. "Awakening" (*sambodhi*) means Nibbāna, or Arhatship. They will attain Arhatship. That reassurance exists for the Stream-Enterer too. Moreover, *avinipātadhammo* means they are free from rebirth in the hells and states of misery. Thus, they are compared to the weak calves.

Now comes a deeper part. For the next, fifth category, the Buddha shows words that most of you have probably not heard: "Just as, monks, that newborn calf, born that very day, crossed over urged by its mother's lowing and with her assistance, so too in this Dispensation there are two groups of individuals: those called *Dhammānusārī* (Dhamma-followers) and *Saddhānusārī* (Faith-followers)." These two groups are even below the level of Stream-Entry (*Sotāpanna*). Yet the Buddha declares even of these two groups that, like the newborn calf, these two tender ones will also definitely cross over. This is a source of great consolation in this Dispensation. It shows that it does not end only with the Stream-Enterer; there is still room for others. This means that the Buddha has revealed a Middle Path by which even those newborn calves can cut through Māra's

stream and cross over. So, those two categories of individuals, the *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī*, cross over in that manner. We shall speak of them to you devotees in due course. Let us first finish this story. In brief, this is all that is said here. Compared to that calf are the noble individuals in this Dispensation named *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī*. Those two groups, who are mentioned in places describing virtuous people (*sappurisa*), will also, just like the others, definitely cross over someday.

Having said this, the Buddha explains the reason for it by making a declaration akin to a lion's roar: "Monks, why is this so? Because, monks, I am skilled regarding this world"—the word used is *kusalo* (skilled)—"I am skilled regarding the next world, skilled regarding the realm of Māra, skilled regarding the region subject to death, and skilled regarding the region free from death. Therefore, monks, if any deem it fit to listen to me, and deem it fit to arouse faith in me, that will lead to their benefit and happiness for a long time." Having declared this, He uttered the three verses we have taken as our topic, which culminate that discourse.

Ayaṃ loko paro loko jānatā suppakāsito... The meaning of this verse is: This world and the world beyond have been well declared by the One with deep understanding—it is understood here that it refers to the Buddha, the Fully Self-Awakened One. Next, it says: *yañca mārena sampattaṃ*—that which can be reached by Māra; *appattaṃ yañca maccunā*—and that which cannot be reached by Death. Both of these have been declared by the Fully Self-Awakened One.

Sabbaṃ lokaṃ abhiññāya sambuddhena pajānatā, vivaṭaṃ amatadvāraṃ khemaṃ nibbānapattiyā. Having known the entire world through direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), with supreme wisdom, the Fully Self-Awakened One who understands, has opened the door to the Deathless (*amatadvāraṃ*), the secure door to the Deathless, for the attainment of Nibbāna.

The next verse says: *Chinnaṃ pāpimato sotaṃ viddhastaṃ vinalīkataṃ, pāmojjabahulā hotha, khemaṃ... bhikkhavo*. That victory is then declared by the Buddha in the next verse: *chinnaṃ pāpimato sotaṃ*—the stream of the Evil One, that stream which was mentioned, has been severed. *viddhastaṃ*—it has been destroyed; *vinalīkataṃ*—the pride of Māra has been rendered useless. Therefore, *pāmojjabahulā hotha*—be full of joy and happiness, O monks. "Seek the secure..." Here, it means to aspire for Nibbāna. So, we have discussed almost the entirety of that Sutta.

Now, what remains is for us to say something by way of commentary. Especially from the points mentioned in the Sutta, through the comparison of the simile and the reality, you merit-seeking devotees can understand this. Even though more details are not given, everyone has heard at this point the descriptions of the Stream-Enterer, Once-Returner, Non-Returner, and Arahant. Something unique mentioned here, however, is the *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī*. It is on this that we will make a special commentary. These two groups are only briefly mentioned in this Sutta. However, in certain places in several Suttas, the Buddha describes these two generally unrevealed/uncommon individuals in this manner. Specifically, in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, it is mentioned that

the *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī* are indeed destined with certainty for awakening (*sambodhiparāyaṇo*), bound for Nibbāna or Arhatship in this Dispensation.

Their qualifications are mentioned next in the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, where they are presented more clearly at the end of a list of seven types of individuals. Regarding the *Dhammānusārī* individual, it is mentioned in the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* as follows: that *Dhammānusārī* individual has, to a certain extent, reflected upon and scrutinized with wisdom the teachings declared by the Tathāgata, and has gained a conviction in them. The Pali phrase used for this is also deep: *mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*. To a certain degree or measure, *nijjhānaṃ khamanti* means we can say they have become convinced. Having thought and reflected, they have reached a certain conclusion: "Ah, this is indeed so." That is on their part. Next, the special thing is that within this *Dhammānusārī* individual, there are established—as you merit-seeking devotees have also heard among the thirty-seven aids to awakening—the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*): faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Thus, the five spiritual faculties—the faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*), energy (*viriyindriya*), mindfulness (*satindriya*), concentration (*samāhindriya*), and wisdom (*paññindriya*)—are established within this *Dhammānusārī* individual. That is why an ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) does not possess them. Even if they think they do, in no way whatsoever—*sabbena sabbaṃ sabbathā sabbaṃ*—are these five faculties established in an ordinary worldling. Faith may be present, and the other qualities may be present, but they have not reached the status of a spiritual faculty (*indriya*). Thus, at the very least, that status has been attained by this *Dhammānusārī* individual. So, why is the word *Dhammānusārī* used? There is a deep meaning for the reason here. Among those five faculties, some have developed a particular one strongly in saṃsāra. For some, the faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*) is strong. Now, in this *Dhammānusārī* individual, the faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*) is strong. While all five are established, the faculty of wisdom is particularly strong, enabling them to proceed with their practice. Further details are mentioned about this. If we speak systematically, that is what is described in the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta*.

Similarly, next, regarding the *Saddhānusārī* individual, they differ from the *Dhammānusārī* in that while the former walks this path in accordance with the Dhamma, the *Saddhānusārī* individual crosses over in accordance with faith, utilizing faith as their support. Therefore, regarding that person, the Buddha does not speak of a conviction in the Dhamma, but something special is said there: *yassa saddhāmattaṃ hoti pemamattaṃ*—"who has a mere degree of faith, a mere degree of love" toward the Tathāgata. They have faith and love toward the Tathāgata. Now we can think of cases like Ven. Vakkali, whom you have heard of. Due to a highly developed faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*), perhaps from associating with Buddhas in past saṃsāric lives, they have without any doubt a deep faith and love toward the Tathāgata. That is why they are called *Saddhānusārī*. Thus, the *Dhammānusārī* individual has the Dhamma convinced to some extent. The *Saddhānusārī* individual does not even have that, but they have faith and love toward the Tathāgata. In addition to that, just like the former individual,

they also have the five faculties established: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). They possess that qualification as well. Now you merit-seeking devotees have some understanding of these two.

Next, if anyone wishes to find a good Sutta to learn more about these two, there is a section of teachings in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* called the *Okkantika Saṃyutta*—a word of the Buddha, a Buddha-discourse. *Okkantika* is a word that carries the meaning of "entering into" or "descending into." Indeed, it is in that *Okkantika Saṃyutta* that these two are specifically spoken of. In that *Okkantika Saṃyutta*, the Buddha declares as follows: "Monks, the eye is impermanent (inconstant), subject to change, subject to becoming otherwise." The words used are *aniccaṃ*, *vipariṇāmi*, and *aññathābhāvi*. Just like the eye, all six—including the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind (*mano*)—are impermanent (inconstant), subject to change, subject to becoming otherwise. Regarding these declared facts, a person has, to a certain extent, gained a conviction. That is, the *Dhammānusārī* individual has not yet realized them through direct knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana*). Yet, by directing the mind to them, they have become convinced to a certain degree: "This is indeed so." *Paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*—they have accepted it through wisdom to a certain measure. Thus, something is declared there regarding that *Dhammānusārī* individual. Along with that, several other details are mentioned to identify that individual. Regarding that person, the words *okkanto sammatta-niyāmaṃ* are used. Then the Buddha declares that, in addition to the aforementioned qualification, this person:

The meaning of *okkanto sammatta-niyāmaṃ*, dear devotees, is: *sammatta* means correctness or rightness. You devotees know the word *sammā*. *Sammatta* means the state of being correct or right. Therefore, they have entered the path of certainty, which is correctness. When the mind has entered this certainty of correctness, it does not turn back to the wrong side again. There are two states: *micchatta* and *sammatta*. *Micchatta* is the state of wrongness, while *sammatta* is the state of rightness. Thus, this *Dhammānusārī* individual has entered into the certainty called *sammatta*, having arrived at the correct path, the right way. Alongside that, it is said: *sappurisabhūmiṃ okkanto*—the *Dhammānusārī* individual has entered the plane of the virtuous (*sappurisa*). Devotees, the terms *sappurisa* (virtuous) and *asappurisa* (non-virtuous) are not used in the Dhamma merely in their worldly social meanings. The word *sappurisa* is applied to individuals. In the *Sappurisa Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* and other texts, it is applied to the noble (*ariya*) individual. The true *sappurisa* is that person—the noble individual. Therefore, *sappurisabhūmiṃ okkanto* means that this *Dhammānusārī* individual has also entered the plane of the noble ones. Next, another qualification is mentioned: *vītivatto puthujjanabhūmiṃ*—they have transcended the plane of the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*), going beyond the worldling's plane. Next, another thing is said: *abhabbo taṃ kammaṃ kātuṃ yaṃ kammaṃ karitvā nirayaṃ vā tiracchānayoniṃ vā pettivisayaṃ vā*... That means this *Dhammānusārī* individual is incapable of performing any unwholesome karma (*kamma*) that would cause rebirth in hell, the animal realm, or the ghost realm. They cannot do it. That is what *abhabba* (incapable) means. This too is a massive qualification. Now, we cannot say this about any

one of you devotees—that you are incapable of doing so. This is the Buddha's word. The word *abhabba* is a special word. It means they can never do it again. And finally, the most special point is shown: that *Dhammānusārī* individual will not pass away without realizing the fruit of Stream-Entry (*sotāpattiphala*). They will not die without realizing the fruit of Stream-Entry. Therefore, if by any chance the *Dhammānusārī* individual fails to become a Stream-Enterer beforehand, at the very last moment, before death, they will definitely become a Stream-Enterer. This is the word of the Buddha. That is why you merit-seeking devotees have now understood something about the *Dhammānusārī* individual.

Explaining the *Saddhānusārī* individual is easy now, because in addition to the other points, it is also mentioned here. The *Saddhānusārī* individual does not have those insights regarding impermanence (inconstancy) to that extent; they have not even gained a slight conviction in that way. But they possess faith and love. Now, whatever we mentioned as the special qualifications of the *Dhammānusārī* individual, all of those are possessed by the *Saddhānusārī* individual as well. What are they? Having entered the certainty of correctness, having entered the plane of the virtuous, having transcended the plane of the ordinary worldling, they are incapable of performing any karma that would lead to rebirth in states of misery such as hell, the animal realm, or the ghost realm. Next, they will definitely attain the fruit of Stream-Entry before death. Thus, for you devotees who previously knew only of the four types of noble disciples, there is this kind of refuge in the Dispensation. Therefore, it is not just those four. Indeed, if one walks the path of the Dhamma correctly as introduced by the Buddha with genuine faith, then at the very least, like that newborn calf crossing over under its mother's protection, they too can cross over. The special thing is that before death, according to the Buddha's word, even when facing the death-sensation (moraṇa vedanāva / pain of death), they will practice insight (*vipassanā*) and become Stream-Enterers. That is what is declared there.

From there, let us proceed. You devotees have heard that on a day like today, in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the Buddha introduced this Noble Eightfold Path as the Middle Path. I believe you all know this. If we briefly consider at this moment what the Middle Path is: you devotees have heard of the two extremes that existed in the world, namely *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* (devotion to sensual pleasure) and *attakilamathānuyoga* (devotion to self-mortification). Devotion to sensual pleasure can be understood as living a loose life, eating and drinking and enjoying the fivefold sensual pleasures without any belief in a next world, and without a correct understanding of this world. Devotion to self-mortification means needlessly torturing the body in order to save the soul, believing that Nibbāna can be realized through that alone—thus having no understanding of the further shore. Both of those groups continue endlessly in saṃsāra. That is why the Middle Path discovered by the Buddha—which He identified as the Middle Path—is indeed the Noble Eightfold Path itself, which is secure. Such is the declaration.

Even if we do not discuss that Sutta at length: to convey the meaning, among whatever beings there are—footless, two-footed, four-footed, many-footed, with form, formless, percipient, non-percipient, neither percipient nor non-percipient—the Tathāgata is

declared supreme. If anyone places faith in the Tathāgata, they have placed faith in the supreme being in the world. Next, it says finally: *ye buddhe pasannā, agge te pasannā; agge kho pana pasannānaṃ, aggo vipāko hoti*—"Those who have confidence in the Buddha have confidence in the supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result." If someone has aroused faith in the Tathāgata Fully Self-Awakened One, they have aroused it toward the supreme being in the world. Therefore, that speaks of its benefits. They do not go to those extremes mentioned.

So, to speak further, first we must now discuss some deeper matters regarding the Noble Eightfold Path. You devotees might have heard of a Sutta called the *Aggappasāda Sutta*. The Buddha has preached the *Aggappasāda Sutta* in a way that deeply touches a faithful person, speaking about Himself. Since we are speaking of faith here, we have mentioned this on certain occasions. This discourse is such a powerful declaration: *Yāvatā sattā apadā vā dvipadā vā catuppadā vā, bahuppadā vā, rūpino vā, arūpino vā, saññino vā, asaññino vā, nevasaññināsaññino vā, tathāgato tesaṃ aggamakkhāyati, arahaṃ sammāsambuddho*... "To whatever extent there are beings—footless, two-footed, four-footed, many-footed, with form, formless, percipient, non-percipient, neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient—the Tathāgata is declared supreme among them, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Awakened One." The benefits of gaining faith in the supreme person are likewise supreme. In the same way, the Sutta speaks of the Dhamma. Let us bring out the portion regarding the Dhamma here, as a deep point is mentioned: *Yāvatā, bhikkhave, dhammā saṅkhatā*... "Monks, to whatever extent there are Preparations (saṅkhāra)..." Dear devotees, *saṅkhata* (prepared/conditioned) means things that are constructed out of causes and conditions. Everything in the world is like that—something constructed out of causes and conditions. *Asaṅkhata* (the Unprepared/Unconditioned (asaṅkhata)) refers to Nibbāna, in the sense of not being constructed out of causes and conditions. There are these two: *saṅkhata* and *asaṅkhata*. Among all conditioned things (*saṅkhata*): *yāvatā, bhikkhave, dhammā saṅkhatā, ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo tesaṃ aggamakkhāyati*—of all conditioned things, the Noble Eightfold Path is declared supreme. Having said that, it continues in the same way: *Ye kho pana ariye magge pasannā, agge te pasannā; agge kho pana pasannānaṃ, aggo vipāko hoti*... Therefore, if one establishes confidence in the Noble Eightfold Path, that confidence yields the supreme result and benefit.

Why do we highlight this here? Because the Noble Eightfold Path is conditioned (*saṅkhata*). This is a great wonder: through something conditioned (*saṅkhata*), one proceeds toward the Unconditioned (asaṅkhata). A logician of today might argue: "How can one go from the conditioned to the Unconditioned?" That is precisely where the genius of the Buddha lies! Utilizing the conditioned, the Middle Path—just as that cowherd understood this bank and the further bank, and crossed over one group first with wisdom at the proper ford, and then through the faith generated by that, crossed the second group with a specific examination, finally crossing the entire herd down to the newborn calf born that very day. In the same way, we must understand that the Buddha crossed beings over through this Noble Eightfold Path.

Next, let us turn to another aspect. You devotees have heard so much about the Noble Eightfold Path and its eight factors. But many have not even reflected on why it is called a single unit, the "Noble Path" (*ariyo maggo*). All these eight factors form a single unit. *Maggo*—the path is actually the Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) that comes at the end. Right Concentration is the actual path. To explain this, we must point out that the Eightfold Path has both a mundane (*lokiya*) and a supramundane (*lokuttara*) aspect. There is a profound Sutta discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya* that reveals this, named the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*. Drawing from that *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*, let us proceed forward from there. In this *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*, the Buddha declares: "Monks, I shall expound to you Noble Right Concentration (*ariya sammā-samādhi*) with its vital conditions (*saupanisaṃ*) and its requisites (*saparihāraṃ*)." You devotees know what *parikkhāra* (requisites) means—requisites offered to the Sangha are things that support life, things relevant to it. In the same way, the Buddha delivered this discourse saying, "I shall expound to you Noble Right Concentration with its supporting conditions (*saupanisaṃ*) and its requisites (*saparihāraṃ*)." Through this, the Buddha directly shows that the first seven factors stand as requisites for Right Concentration. The seven factors—Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), and Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*)—are required for establishing Right Concentration. This is a very deep matter. Given the time we have, let us mention this at least to generate interest, as it is highly relevant and important, especially since this aspect is barely considered in this day and age.

Thus, in speaking of Noble Right Concentration, the Buddha repeatedly utters a highly astonishing sentence that highlights the importance of Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*): "Monks, therein Right View comes first (*tatra, bhikkhave, sammā-diṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā*)." He constantly reminds us: Right View comes first, Right View comes first. Many people raise the question of why it is placed at the front. Right View comes first. What is the reason for this? Now, consider this: even to acquire Right View, a form of Right View is required! Sometimes we have to state things that seem like riddles: even to develop Right View, one needs Right View. What is the reason? The Buddha explains it in this way: Right View is the forerunner because, before acquiring Right View, one must recognize Wrong View (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) as Wrong View. For that too, Right View is required! Thus, in defining Right View, that is how the Buddha shows why Right View is the forerunner: one understands Wrong View as Wrong View, and one understands Right View as Right View.

Then, He shows something further—from here onward, the path becomes extraordinary. At this point, the Buddha declares Right View in a manner not found in other places: "Monks, I say Right View is twofold (*sammā-diṭṭhiṃ pahaṃ, bhikkhave, dvayaṃ vadāmi*)." What is this twofold nature? He shows the two types next: "Monks, there is a Right View that is accompanied by taints (*sāsavā*), siding with merit (*puññabhāgiyā*), ripening in the acquisitions (*upadhivepakkā*)." "Acquisitions" (*upadhi*) refers to worldly resources and possessions that support one in saṃsāra. There is a Right View that yields these; that is mundane Right View. "And there is, monks, a Right View that is Noble

(*ariyā*), taintless (*anāsavā*), supramundane (*lokuttarā*), which has become a factor of the supramundane path." Those are the two.

Out of these two, many people only know or have heard of the ten-point Right View. Perhaps you devotees have heard the opposite—the ten claims made by those with Wrong View about the world. In brief, they say: "There is no giving, no sacrifice, no offering; there is no fruit or result of good and bad actions; there is no this world, no next world; there is no mother, no father; there are no spontaneously born beings; there are no ascetics and brahmins who have correctly understood this world." This ten-point doctrine of "there is not" is called Wrong View. To all ten, the Buddha says "there is." That is mundane Right View: there are benefits and results of giving; there are results of wholesome and unwholesome actions; there are results of supporting parents; there are spontaneously born beings in this world; and there are ascetics and brahmins who explain this world and the next. This "is" perception replaces the "is-not" perception—asserting "there is" for what the others denied. That is the Middle Path. Those who make the "is-not" claims go to hell. If they say "there are no such things, let us eat, drink, and perish," they go to hell. At that level, the Buddha expounded this mundane Right View, which helps one avoid misery and attain happy states. Yet, one does not cross over from saṃsāra through this alone. That crossing over is achieved through the second type of Right View.

The Buddha accepts the former as *sāsavā*—that Right View is accompanied by taints, yet it is *puññabhāgiyā* (siding with merit). It leans toward merit. Unlike the other group that leans toward demerit with Wrong View, this leans toward merit, toward the side of goodness. It also yields acquisitions as results (*upadhivepakkā*) in saṃsāra, bringing good rebirths. That much is there, and it is good for that purpose. But one must also be liberated from saṃsāra, must one not?

Now, that is achieved through supramundane Right View. What is described there is an extraordinary thing. That Noble, taintless (*ariyā anāsavā*) Right View arises in that supramundane path-moment. Within an extremely brief moment, an incredibly wondrous thing occurs: at a certain point, all eight factors align and arise simultaneously in a single mind-moment to cross over. It is a highly wondrous event, about which various controversies exist. In that moment, Right View is described not through the ten mundane items, but as wisdom (*paññā*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), and so forth, relevant to that state. In that moment, Right View manifests in the form of investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), wisdom (*paññā*), and the faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*). That is supramundane Right View.

Similarly, we may not be able to describe each factor in detail due to time constraints. But keep this in mind: the Buddha shows that while you devotees may have heard to some extent about Right View, Right Intention, and so on—and can read about them in books—here, in the supramundane path, each of these is defined in a unique way. In that path-moment, they manifest in an extraordinary form. Right Intention does not manifest merely as ordinary thoughts (*vitakka*). It is not like how people think in the world. Even in terms of Wrong Intention (*micchā-saṅkappa*), Right View is required to recognize

Wrong Intention as wrong, and Right Intention as right. First, Right View must lead. Next, while in the ordinary world, the three intentions—intention of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), non-ill will (*avyāpāda*), and non-cruelty (*avihiṃsā*)—are called Right Intention, in the supramundane state, it is the application and directing of the mind (*takko vitakko*) toward concentration; that mental power of directing is what is called Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*).

Furthermore, what must be specifically noted is that Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), and Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) do not manifest in the supramundane path-moment as they do in ordinary situations. One has already abstained from those wrong behaviors beforehand. When that moment arises, the abstinence is already complete. Therefore, they manifest as abstinences (*virati*). There is no special effort to abstain in that moment; the abstinence is already established. Thus, one is detached from those three.

In this manner, next, He reveals something highly wondrous. In the supramundane state, protection is provided to that mind in three ways by the three factors: Right View, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness. In that supramundane state—that is, when path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) arises—they perform a special function, a special task. The words the Buddha uses for their action toward that mind are *anuparidhāvanti* and *anuparivattanti*. *Anuparidhāvanti* means they run along in association with it; *anuparivattanti* means they revolve in association with it. Thus, this supramundane path-moment—the journey of using the conditioned (*saṅkhata*) to reach the Unconditioned (asaṅkhata)—is a highly wondrous and miraculous event. In it, protection is provided to that mind. Right View leads, Right Effort supports from behind by giving a push and providing security, and Right Mindfulness remains close at hand to assist.

Even if it is not an orthodox simile from the texts, we have on some occasion expressed this in a way that touches your hearts. Today, when prominent politicians or VIPs travel, there is no need to explain—one group of security personnel moves ahead, another group follows behind to protect them from danger, and another group stays right next to them. It is exactly like that. Just as the great figures of the world travel with such security, the two beautiful words *anuparidhāvanti* and *anuparivattanti* appear there to describe the retinue that accompanies Noble Right Concentration as it performs its immense, powerful task. These three factors—Right View, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness—provide security during the supramundane path-moment. Similarly, with the other three factors we mentioned earlier, in daily life one constantly makes an effort to abandon Wrong Speech and practice Right Speech. In that way, it is merely a training (*sikkhā*). That training is practiced over a long time. When that training is perfected, in that moment it is described as *ārati* (avoiding), *virati* (abstinence), and *pativirati* (refraining)—that person has distanced themselves far from it. This abstinence (*virati*) itself becomes a protection for Noble Right Concentration.

The internal, inner nature of these eight factors is truly wondrous and miraculous. We simply go on repeating "eight," but through these eight, on one hand, a being is prevented from falling into states of misery and is directed toward happy realms by that

mundane Right View accompanied by taints (*sāsava*). Supramundane Right View performs an even more powerful task: transcending this worldliness in the state of path and fruit. To put it briefly, let us consider it this way: while practicing a concentration such as mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) as shown by the Buddha, if one also develops insight (*vipassanā*) into the Three Characteristics (anicca, dukkha, anattā), then by the time the factors of awakening—specifically, the thirty-seven aids to awakening (of which those five we mentioned are the spiritual faculties)—are perfected, it happens almost effortlessly. It occurs naturally, and at that point, there is a powerful disenchantment (*nibbidā*) toward the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). Through that disenchantment, one attains the supramundane state. One lets go of this bank and leaps to the other bank. In that moment, protection is provided to that Right Concentration. Devotees, it is about that Right Concentration that you have all heard in the *Ratana Sutta*:

Yaṃ buddhaseṭṭho parivaṇṇayī suciṃ,

samādhimānantarikaññamāhu,

samādhinā tena samo na vijjati...

"The pure concentration which the supreme Buddha praised, and which they call the 'immediate concentration' (concentration with immediate result)—no equal to that concentration is found." It is that immediate concentration (*ānantarika-samādhi*) that is spoken of there. The *ānantarika-samādhi* highly praised by the Buddha is indeed path-concentration (*magga-samādhi*). Immediately following that path-concentration, one realizes the fruit (*phala*). That is why it is called "immediate" (*ānantarika*).

It is mentioned in the commentaries that scholars of the past had various controversies regarding this. But to be brief due to time constraints: you devotees have heard of the eight noble individuals. If asked, you might immediately answer, "The one on the path of Stream-Entry, the one in its fruit," and so on. That is how people answer: the four paths and the four fruits. But, devotees, this is how it is mentioned in the Dhamma. The eight noble individuals are mentioned in several places, not just one, as follows: *sotāpanno*, *sotāpattiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno* (one practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-Entry), *sakadāgāmī*, *sakadāgāmiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*, *anāgāmī*, *anāgāmiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*, and so on. That is how the eight are spoken of. Thus, what must be specially noted here is that although we use the words *magga* (path) and *paṭipadā* (practice/way) as synonyms, there is a certain difference between them. One enters the path by fulfilling a course of practice (*paṭipadā*); it is within that course of practice. Now this aligns. We began this sermon, or rather highlighted as a special point, the two individuals: *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī*. It is often said of these two that they are "on the path of Stream-Entry" (*sotāpatti-magga*). What we must say is that they are those who are in the course of practice (*paṭipadā*) leading to that supramundane path. It was mentioned, was it not: *sotāpanno, sotāpattiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*. If it could be said briefly, the Buddha would have said directly "those on the path of Stream-Entry." Since the path of Stream-Entry is momentary, how

can it apply to all eight? If the mind-moment is just one flash, how can gifts be given to all eight? Now here, we showed that those two individuals, the *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī*, are in the category of *sotāpattiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno* (practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-Entry). It is clearly visible, is it not? The Buddha declared that before death, these two will somehow reach the fruit of Stream-Entry. Therefore, they too are noble (*ariya*) individuals. They have entered the plane of the virtuous, having transcended the state of the ordinary worldling. The problem lies right there. Therefore, in accordance with the Dhamma and the Suttas, we must apply this to the course of practice (*paṭipadā*). Those who have entered the practice that leads to entering the path of Stream-Entry are called *paṭipanna* (practitioners). Those who have entered that practice are the *Saddhānusārī* and *Dhammānusārī*. It is not the path of Stream-Entry itself—if the path of Stream-Entry arises, the fruit follows directly, immediately. That is what "immediate" (*ānantarika*) means. Thus, the supramundane path is different. What is spoken of here is the course of practice (*paṭipadā*). Hence, there is a verse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* that makes this very clear:

paṭipannā cattāro ca, phale ṭhitā...

esa saṅgho ujubhūto, paññā-sīla-samāhito

"Four practicing and four established in the fruit, this is the upright Sangha, composed of wisdom, virtue, and concentration." *Paṭipannā*—it could have said *maggaṭṭhā* (established in the path) there. But it does not. You devotees have heard the word *maggastha* (on the path). There is no mention of *maggastha* here; it is *paṭipanna*. "Four practicing (*paṭipannā*) and four established in the fruit (*phale ṭhitā*)"—there are the eight. The four who have entered the practice (*paṭipadā*) and the four established in the fruit. "This is the upright Sangha" (*esa saṅgho ujubhūto*). These are described as the eight upright noble individuals, "endowed with wisdom, virtue, and concentration" (*paññā-sīla-samāhito*). The eight shown in this verse are what we specifically mentioned. Although we generally treat "path" (*magga*) and "practice" (*paṭipadā*) as synonymous, there is a distinction here. Therefore, in identifying and introducing noble individuals, we must be careful: it is not "established in the path" (*maggaṭṭha*) that is meant, but rather having entered the practice (*paṭipadā*) for realizing the fruit of Stream-Entry. This would need to be explained in more detail; it is not simple.

Who are the eight? The Stream-Enterer; the individual who has entered the practice for realizing the fruit of Stream-Entry; the Once-Returner; the individual who has entered the practice for realizing the fruit of Once-Return. We spoke specifically of the one who has attained the fruit of Stream-Entry. You devotees can deduce the rest. Suppose someone has attained the fruit of Stream-Entry. If they do not fall into negligence as a negligent disciple (*sekha*), but continue to work further, walking that path of knowledge, then from that point on, the practice they undertake from being a Stream-Enterer until they become a Once-Returner is called *sakadāgāmiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*—striving to reach the fruit of Once-Return. One can understand it in that way, up to the

last one: the Arahant, and *arahattāya paṭipanno*—the Arahant, and the individual practicing for the realization of Arhatship.

Thus, what we have expounded to you devotees is deep. If deep Dhamma is unnecessarily simplified and presented as shallow, it would lead to the destruction of the Dhamma. Without simplifying it in that manner, but presenting the Dhamma as Dhamma, we have explained this Middle Path as set forth by the Buddha to some extent within one hour to you devotees on this valuable day. This aspect of the Dispensation is now largely forgotten. Therefore, you devotees have kept virtue (*sīla*) today on this valuable day to the best of your ability. Many lay devotees who come to us now say: "I do not want to be born in saṃsāra anymore. I must go somewhere and attain the paths and fruits as quickly as possible. I want to go somewhere and ordain." Everyone speaks in this way. Thus, we presented this to help those people, so that they may reflect. Even if one cannot attain the fruit of Stream-Entry, this is a great consolation. Let us at least strive to be like that calf urged on by its mother's protective lowing. That is what we have to say to you devotees.

Thus, through the virtue kept today, the meditation practiced, and this insight-oriented Dhamma sermon heard, may you devotees be able to bring your learning and meditation to fruition as quickly as possible, realize those noble states mentioned, and cross over the entire wilderness of saṃsāra, facilitating this crossing from this shore to the other shore. In the past, "going from this shore to the other shore" did not mean traveling abroad; it meant crossing over this ocean of saṃsāra. May you devotees receive the necessary strength, power, and massive energy for that purpose. May your learning and meditation quickly bear fruit, and may you gain the ability to reach that peace of Nibbāna. From the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, if there be any who wish to rejoice in the merits of this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma hearing, may they, through that rejoicing, realize the supreme, great, deathless Nibbāna by means of their aspired-for enlightenment (*bodhi*). May you devotees also receive the strength and power to realize that supreme, great, deathless Nibbāna very soon. With that aspiration, let us recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #43

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.206)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Cattāro ca paṭipannā, cattāro ca phale ṭhitā;

Esa saṅgho ujubhūto, paññāsīlasamāhito.

Yajamānānaṃ manussānaṃ, puññapekhāna pāṇinaṃ;

Karotaṃ opadhikaṃ puññaṃ, saṅghe dinnaṃ mahapphalaṃ.

From:

Aṭṭhapuggala Sutta (AN 8 tradition)

Dear Listeners,

It was on an Esala full-moon poya day like today that the Tathāgata, the Blessed One, the Fully Enlightened Samma Sambuddha, after attaining supreme enlightenment, delivered his first Dhamma sermon, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, to the group of five monks—Kondañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma, and Assaji—at the Deer Park in Isipatana, Benares. Upon hearing that sermon, Ven. Koṇḍañña realized the noble fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*), marking the very first appearance of the Noble (*Ariya*) Saṅgha in the world. It is indeed this Noble Saṅgha that is referred to in the virtues of the Saṅgha (*Saṅghaguṇa*) which you, meritorious friends, frequently recite. In that recitation of the Saṅgha's virtues, mention is made of eight individuals belonging to the Blessed One's disciple-community (*Sāvaka Saṅgha*). Today, we have chosen as our theme two verses from the *Aṭṭhapuggala Sutta* in the Book of Eights (*Aṭṭhaka Nipāta*) of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, which speak about these eight individuals.

"Cattāro ca paṭipannā cattāro ca phale thitā" — The four who have entered the path of practice and the four established in the fruit.

"Esa saṅgho ujubhūto paññā-sīla-samāhito" — This is the upright Saṅgha, endowed with the virtues of wisdom, ethical conduct, and concentration.

"Yajamānānaṃ manussānaṃ puññapekhāna pāṇinaṃ" — For those humans who make offerings, for living beings seeking merit,

"Karotaṃ opadhikaṃ puññaṃ saṅghe dinnaṃ mahapphalaṃ" — for those performing merit that leads to rebirth-assets, what is given to the Saṅgha yields great fruit.

This same quality of yielding great fruit is what is found in the passage on the virtues of the Saṅgha that you often chant:

Supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho, ujupaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho, ñāyapaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho, sāmīcipaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho, yadidaṃ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā, esa bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho, āhuṇeyyo pāhuṇeyyo dakkhiṇeyyo añjalikaraṇīyo anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa.

Since you recite this passage frequently, many of you likely know its meaning as well.

"Supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho": The community of the Blessed One's disciples has entered the path of good practice.

"Ujupaṭipanno": They have entered the path of upright practice.

"Ñāyapaṭipanno": They have entered the path of practice in accordance with the law/method (*ñāya*).

"Sāmīcipaṭipanno": They have entered the path of proper practice.

"Yadidaṃ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā": That is, the four pairs of persons, the eight individual persons.

"Esa bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho": This is the Blessed One's community of disciples. After declaring their virtues, their qualifications to receive offerings are then shown:

Āhuṇeyyo: They are worthy of gifts brought from afar.

Pāhuṇeyyo: They are worthy of hospitality.

Dakkhiṇeyyo: They are worthy of offerings given with the next world in view.

Añjalikaraṇīyo: They are worthy of reverential salutation with hands joined above the head.

Anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa: They are the incomparable field of merit for the world.

Now, let us first present the analysis and exposition of this passage found in the Commentaries. In the *Visuddhimagga*, in the section on recollections (*Anussati Niddesa*), Ven. Buddhaghosa explains these main terms. Someone might ask, "What is this 'pair' (*yugala*)? Who are the eight individual persons?" To this, the commentators

present the meaning as follows. The four pairs of persons are shown as: *"Cattāri purisayugānīti paṭhama-maggatho phalaṭṭho"*—one who is on the first path and one who is established in its fruit. That is, one on the path of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-magga*) and one established in the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*). In the same manner, one on the path of Once-returning and one established in the fruit of Once-returning, and so on, up to one on the path of Arahantship and one established in the fruit of Arahantship. The Commentary applies the exposition of "one on the path" (*maggaṭṭha*) and "one established in the fruit" (*phalaṭṭha*). It is according to this that the popular usage of "the four paths and the four fruits" (*satara-maṅga satara-phala*) has come about today.

However, a certain problem arises from this. What is it? It is mentioned in the Dhamma, when speaking of the unmediated concentration (*ānantarika-samādhi*), that the realization of the fruit occurs immediately after the supramundane path. Let alone other places, this is mentioned even in the *Ratana Sutta*, which you know so well:

Yaṃ buddhaseṭṭho parivaṇṇayī suciṃ, samādhimānantarikaññamāhu, samādhinā tena samo na vijjati...

It is stated that the pure concentration praised continuously by the Buddha is called "unmediated" (*ānantarika*), and there is no concentration equal to that concentration. The meaning of this word *ānantarika* is that immediately after the path-concentration, one falls into the fruit. Therefore, if one enters the fruit immediately after the path-concentration, how can we distinguish the four on the path from the four established in the fruit? This very question has been discussed among the Saṅgha since ancient times. Many people have presented this question to us too, in person. Although I have given various answers, I thought at this moment that if I deliver a sermon on this, it will be easier in the future to just tell people to listen to this discourse in order to express my view on the matter. That is why I am specially delivering this sermon.

When speaking of this discussion on *maggaṭṭha* and *phalaṭṭha*, it is found in the *Ratana Sutta* itself, which you know very well, at the point of declaring the virtues of the Saṅgha:

Ye puggalā aṭṭha sataṃ pasatthā, cattāri etāni yugāni honti, te sugatassa sāvakā dakkhiṇeyyā, etesu dinnāni mahapphalāni, idampi ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ, etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

There too, it is told to us: *"Ye puggalā aṭṭha sataṃ pasatthā"*—which means, meritorious friends, "the eight individuals praised by the virtuous (*sato/sataṃ*)." *"Cattāri etāni yugāni honti"*—there are four pairs here. *"Te sugatassa sāvakā"*—those disciples of the Sugata are worthy of offerings; that is how it is mentioned here.

However, when trying to explain this, our Commentator Ven. Buddhaghosa begins with the first line of the verse we quoted: *"Cattāro ca paṭipannā cattāro ca phale thitā"*. But when explaining it, he only uses the two words *maggaṭṭha* and *phalaṭṭha*. Not only that; it is a very surprising thing. We can clearly point out an instance of distortion of meaning

even during the Commentarial period. Because, in analyzing this verse, those who know the Pali language understand that *"ye puggalā aṭṭha sataṃ pasatthā"* refers to eight individuals praised by the virtuous. But someone who is incompetent and does not know Pali might mispronounce this verse and say *"Ye puggalā aṭṭhasatā"* (pronouncing it as *aṭṭhasataṃ*, meaning one hundred and eight). Even the pronunciation there is wrong; it distorts the meaning. Yet, even to this, the Commentator says as follows: after first stating the correct meaning, "praised by the virtuous," he then says, "or else..." (*athavā*) and makes it one hundred and eight by adding and multiplying. That is why even today, preachers often talk about "one hundred and eight persons," having with great effort constructed a list of one hundred and eight. This does not fit at all. It does not fit at all. Here, it is not talking about one hundred and eight. If we look at the word of the Buddha, *"ye puggalā aṭṭha sataṃ"*, this word *sataṃ* can be understood even by those who do not know Pali if we give an example. In the *Dhammapada* it is said: *"Sataṃ hiso priyo hoti, asataṃ hoti appriyo"* ("He is dear to the virtuous, and disliked by the unvirtuous"). Therefore, *sataṃ* refers to virtuous people, not the number one hundred. Thus, it appears that even the Commentator has left room for that incompetent exposition. Well, let us take that as an incidental matter.

But the main point is that, in explaining this, although the verse says *"cattāro ca paṭipannā cattāro ca phale thitā"*, they have not seen—or they have not accepted—as important that there is a difference in meaning between "path" (*magga*) and "practice" (*paṭipadā/paṭipanna*). We said that the supramundane path is instantaneous. Immediate to it, the fruit is received. Yet, the Buddha uses the word *paṭipanna*—one who has entered the practice. So, understand the difference between the path (*magga*) and the practice (*paṭipadā*) in this way: the path may exist, but the training in accordance with the path, or the practicing of that way, is what is indicated by the word *paṭipanna*. If the Buddha wanted to, he could have stated this verse as: *"cattāro ca maggaṭṭhā cattāro ca phale thitā"*, couldn't he? Think about it. He could have said *maggaṭṭha* and *phalaṭṭha*, just as the commentators say. But how was it used here? *"Cattāro ca paṭipannā cattāro ca"*. Not only that. Now we will introduce to you the context, as we have quoted the first two verses of this discourse. Prior to these two verses, the Buddha begins that discourse in the Book of Eights of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* as follows: *"Aṭṭhime bhikkhave puggalā āhuṇeyyā pāhuṇeyyā dakkhiṇeyyā añjalikaraṇīyā anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa."* "Monks, there are these eight persons..." endowed with those virtues of being worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, etc. Even if I do not recite it in full, try to understand it. Next, those eight are identified in this way: the Buddha lists them as *sotāpanno, sotāpattiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno; sakadāgāmī, sakadāgāmiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno; anāgāmī, anāgāmiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno; arahā, arahattāya paṭipanno* (one who is practicing for the realization of Arahantship). Why did the Buddha use this long phrase? For ease, he could have just said *maggaṭṭha*, couldn't he? See indeed, the word *magga* is not even used there! Instead, remember that in *supaṭipanno, ujupaṭipanno*, and in every other place in the passage on the Saṅgha's virtues, it does not speak of *magga* (path); it speaks of *paṭipanna* (practice). This is an extremely important point. For all this time, people have not paid attention to this.

Supaṭipanno, ujupaṭipanno—the practice is something that goes on over a certain duration of time. However, with the supramundane path, one immediately falls into the fruit. Therefore, you cannot divide them and give alms separately to eight distinct individuals.

Yet, the commentators present another almost humorous reason for this. Our Ven. Buddhaghosa himself raises the question: "How can we not give to these eight?" and presents this as an illustration: Supposedly, a monk who has begun insight meditation—an *āraddha-vipassaka* monk—goes near a house, stands in front of it (while still meditating), and hands his bowl to the household. While they are offering alms into the bowl, this monk enters the path. This is how they explain it! That is a highly unnatural explanation. There is no such trouble once we bring the word *paṭipadā* (practice) forward. That is what is in the word of the Buddha. Why was it stated in this long form: "practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-entry"? There is no mention of "path" (*magga*) at all. "Practicing for the realization of the fruit of Once-returning..." Therein lies a deep matter. Keep in mind that this is the Buddha's own word. We give priority to the word of the Buddha over the commentators, and over the words of Buddhaghosa. That is why I say this. I am reminding you of this because for a long time, a wrong idea and to some extent a distortion of this Dhamma has existed. Because of that, a problem has arisen. But if we take the word *paṭipadā*, there is no problem; we can perfectly give alms to eight distinct individuals.

Next, one may ask: "Who are those included in this category of 'practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-entry' (*sotāpattiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*)? Who are the ones practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-entry?" It is there that we must bring to light several discourses on this matter. In relation to this point, we have previously delivered a sermon based on the *Cūḷagopālaka Sutta*. But to put it briefly here, there are two types of special individuals who belong to this category: the "Dhamma-follower" (*dhammānusārī*) and the "Faith-follower" (*saddhānusārī*). They have not yet become stream-enterers, but they are two highly special individuals. Why? As we go further into the sutta, you will see. So much so that it is said in the Buddha's own words that those individuals belonging to the category of Faith-follower and Dhamma-follower will not pass away without realizing Stream-entry. Therefore, those two are certainly training in the path of Stream-entry—they are training in that practice.

Indeed, let us quote from those discourses themselves. The *Alagaddūpama Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* is a discourse that wonderfully emphasizes the well-expounded (*svākkhāta*) nature of the Buddha's teaching. That discourse concludes as follows: "In this well-expounded Dhamma, whoever is a Dhamma-follower or a Faith-follower is bound for enlightenment (*sambodhiparāyaṇā*)." Generally, the term "bound for enlightenment" (*sambodhiparāyaṇā*) is used for those established in Stream-entry. Yet, the Buddha uses the term "bound for enlightenment" even for these two who are on this side of Stream-entry. See, that is how it was said there.

Let us go further. Next, there is a better explanation in the *Cūḷagopālaka Sutta*, along with a very beautiful simile. The Buddha preached the *Gopālaka Sutta* in the city of

Ukkācelā on the banks of the Ganges in the Vajjian country, addressing the monks with a profound simile. "Monks, in the last month of the rainy season, a foolish herdsman of Magadha, of very little wisdom, tried to cross his herd of cattle in this way: Without properly examining this shore, and without properly examining the opposite shore, he tried to cross his cattle at a non-crossing place (not the correct ford), and the herd was swept away by the current and met with destruction. But a certain wise herdsman of Magadha, having well examined this shore and well examined the opposite shore, crossed his herd of cattle at the correct ford." The Buddha beautifully presents the manner of crossing: "First, the bull-leaders and the guides of the herd crossed over first. Next, behind them, went the strong bulls and the steer to be tamed (*balavagāvo dammagāvo*). Then, behind them, went the heifers and the young bulls. After them, went the weak calves." And then, a wonderful thing is said: so great was the skill of this herdsman that finally, even the calf born that very day crossed over, drawn by the lowing of its mother (*mātugāviyā rāvena*—the mother cow lowing to urge the calf). Encouraged by the sound of its mother, even the newborn calf crossed over. This is not just an ordinary simile. To put it briefly, that unskilled herdsman represents the ascetics and brahmins of other sects. That herdsman knows neither this shore nor the other shore. Trying to cross at the wrong ford, they lead to destruction. But the Tathāgata, the Fully Enlightened One, (referring to himself), like the wise herdsman, crosses them over at the correct ford, systematically and after careful examination. It is this last category that should receive our attention. Who is this calf born that very day? In that context, the Buddha identifies them as the "Dhamma-follower" (*dhammānusārī*) and the "Faith-follower" (*saddhānusārī*). Thus, the Dhamma-follower and Faith-follower represent the entry-level or minimum stage. Yet, even those two ultimately cross over. That is why they are called "bound for enlightenment." That is the *Cūḷagopālaka Sutta*. There is much to say, but that is why I am explaining it briefly.

Next, there is another discourse where we find more details about these two, in the *Okkantika Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. More details are mentioned there. There, addressing the monks, the Buddha says: "Monks, the eye is impermanent (*anicca*), subject to change, subject to becoming otherwise." In the same way, he speaks of the six senses: ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. "If anyone accepts this fact with faith and applies themselves to the practice, that person is a Faith-follower (*saddhānusārī*)." "Next, if anyone accepts this fact to a certain extent with wisdom and trains accordingly, that person is a Dhamma-follower (*dhammānusārī*)." This means that among our faculties (*indriya*), the person in whom the faith-faculty (*saddhindriya*) is dominant goes toward the side of the Faith-follower, while the person in whom the wisdom-faculty (*paññindriya*) is dominant becomes a Dhamma-follower. These two are indeed special individuals. Next, the Buddha says something very unusual about them here, showing that they are not ordinary or insignificant persons.

In the *Okkantika Saṃyutta*, the Buddha declares concerning those two that they have "entered the path of rightness" (*sammatta-niyāmaṃ okkanto*)—there is an unusual term there. Meritorious friends, we can describe *sammatta-niyāma* as: both of them have fallen into the natural law of correctness. To put it even more clearly, they have entered

the plane of the virtuous (*sappurisa-bhūmi*). The word *sappurisa* is often applied to the Nobles (*Ariya*). Next, it is said that those two have entered the plane of the virtuous, having transcended the state of a worldling (*puthujjana*). Then a special thing is said: these two individuals, the Faith-follower and the Dhamma-follower, do not commit any evil deed that would lead them to hell, the animal realm, or the ghost realm. Next, it is said that these two will not pass away without realizing Stream-entry. The word *abhavya* (incapable / impossible) is used there. *"Abhabbo"*—there is the Buddha's word that they are incapable of passing away without realizing Stream-entry. Now, we get further details about these two who possess such distinguished qualities from the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta*. In the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta*, the Buddha states that both of them possess the five spiritual faculties—faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—which are unique to the Nobles and not possessed by ordinary worldlings. Anyone might say, "We have them too." But the faculties are not established in them. Yet, in these two, they are indeed established. So, there is some deficiency, and it is that deficiency which must be filled. But we have to understand that this deficiency will somehow be filled within this very life.

However, unfortunately—though we should perhaps not say this, and some might criticize us—yet, in the *Puggalapaññatti* treatise, when attempting to explain the "incapability" (*abhavyatā*) declared by the Buddha regarding these two, the Faith-follower and the Dhamma-follower, they provide a somewhat unfitting explanation. There, these two are referred to as *ṭhitakappī*. *Ṭhitakappī* supposedly means that these two can arrest or halt the eon (*kappa*). They say that these two can stop the running and destroying of the eon. How do they stop it? In this manner: Now, imagine for a moment that the eon has life. Now is the time the eon is running/ending. While running, the eon looks around and sees that there are a Faith-follower and a Dhamma-follower who have not yet attained Stream-entry. So, the eon supposedly stops—without running further—until those two attain Stream-entry! To us, this seems like putting the cart before the horse. If we reflect deeply on the Buddha's word, we must understand that a person's most precious moment is the moment of death. We have heard that some have attained Arahantship at the moment of death. Although it is a disputed story, we have told you about three monks who attained Arahantship even as their throats were being cut. That is to say, the moment of death is the occasion to decide between death and deathlessness. If there was a slight deficiency in this life, there is no need for any external talk about the eon. In that very context, the Buddha's word "incapable" (*abhabba*) meant that if the Faith-follower and the Dhamma-follower do not realize the fruit of that path during this lifetime, they will realize it at least at the moment of death. It is enough to state just that. But preachers still use that kind of story and the term *ṭhitakappī* today. They say *ṭhitakappī* means these two can stop the running of the eon. We have to say that this is somewhat unfitting.

Well, that is the story of the eight persons; keep it in mind. The Buddha does not just say *maggaṭṭha* and *phalaṭṭha*. He uses a long phrase: "practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-entry," and so on. He had to speak in that way because of that reason: the supramundane path is instantaneous. It is instantaneous. You cannot isolate it to give

alms to it. But you can do so for someone training in the practice. See in our recitation of the Saṅgha's virtues: *supaṭipanno, ujupaṭipanno*—it is the word *paṭipanna*. There is no talk of *magga* (path) in it. It is *paṭipanna*, *paṭipanna*. Merely by training in the practice, they are worthy of receiving alms and offerings. I mentioned this specifically because someone might ask about the path and fruit of Stream-entry. You can infer the rest, meritorious friends. Let us assume someone has become a Once-returner. They do not just remain inactive from that point. There, the word *sekha* (learner/trainee) is used. *Sekha* means a training person. They train all the way up to Arahantship. Their work is not yet finished. Some, due to various reasons, fall into negligence. They are called *pamāda-sekha* (negligent trainees). Visākhā, Anāthapiṇḍika, and others could not go beyond that level due to various worldly reasons. That is a different matter. But the general rule is that after becoming a Stream-enterer, one enters the next path of insight (*vipassanā-vīthi*).

Now we have finished talking about the eight persons. Next, we bring forward the story of nine persons. What is that? In the Book of Nines (*Navaka Nipāta*) of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, there is a discourse like this: *"Nava ime bhikkhave puggalā āhuṇeyyā pāhuṇeyyā... añjalikaraṇīyā anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa."* "Monks, there are these nine persons in the world who are worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality... an incomparable field of merit for the world." How did the "eight persons" we mentioned become "nine persons" here? I am mentioning this because it is also a disputed point. Now, everyone knows the eight persons. In addition to those eight, there is the word *gotrabhū* (one of the lineage / change-of-lineage). This word *gotrabhū* is indeed a word that is also used when describing the cognitive series of insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa-vīthi*). It is the brief, instantaneous moment that exists between being a worldling (*puthujjana*) and receiving the path-fruit. If I illustrate this with a simile from the *Visuddhimagga*, it will be easy for you, meritorious friends, to understand this. This entire activity of insight, this practice, exists by depending on some aid. What is used as an aid for insight? The investigation of Preparations (*saṅkhāra-sammasana*). Having investigated Preparations, at the end, one lets go of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) as well. This is illustrated with a good simile, which is an acceptable simile: During the rainy season, when trying to cross a stream, if there is no bridge, what do you do? A strong man, thinking wisely, grabs a hanging creeper from a tree and swings. Having swung and swung, as soon as he gets close to the opposite bank, he lets go of the creeper. If he keeps holding on, he will swing back to this side, won't he? So, in that brief moment, he lets go of the creeper and lands on the opposite side. That momentary, suspended time of letting go of the creeper is called *gotrabhū*. Understand it in that way. It is an extremely subtle moment, an extremely subtle stage in the cognitive series of insight, until one falls into the fruit. So, how can one catch that moment to give alms? That is why they said that when standing in front of a house, while alms are being served into the bowl, the monk practices insight! That is the kind of artificial explanation they give. None of that is necessary. As we said, these people also explain the word solely on the basis of insight meditation. That is wrong. Why? The *gotrabhū* stage is already included in "practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-entry." Keep in mind that "persons practicing for

the realization of the fruit of Stream-entry" is a broad stage. You cannot isolate *gotrabhū* as a separate category in that way.

Then, how do we explain this word *gotrabhū*? That is the question. To find the answer to this, we must go to the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta*. The *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* is highly popular among Dhamma preachers. You, meritorious friends, must have heard it frequently at almsgivings during the sharing of merits (*bhattānumodanā*). The introductory story of that discourse is extremely special when we discuss the virtues of the Saṅgha. It is shown as follows: When the Buddha was residing at the Nigrodhārāma in Kapilavatthu, the city of the Sakyans, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī (the Buddha's foster-mother), brought a pair of new cloths she had spun and woven with her own hands, and offered them to the Buddha. "May the Blessed One, out of compassion for me, accept this." What did the Buddha say? A very surprising thing was said on that occasion: *"Saṅghe, gotami, dehi; saṅghe dinne ahañceva pūjito bhavissāmi..."*—"Gotamī, give it to the Saṅgha. When it is offered to the Saṅgha, I too will be honored." A second time and a third time, Pajāpatī Gotamī made her request. In addition, Ven. Ānanda joined in and said, "O Blessed One, please accept this. When the Blessed One lost his mother, it was this foster-mother who nursed him. She is the one who raised you." When that was said, the Buddha addressed Ven. Ānanda and delivered a sermon. That sermon presents a wonderful analysis regarding almsgiving. To put it briefly, it begins like this: "individual offerings" (*pāṭipuggalikā dakkhiṇā*). Fourteen such individual offerings are shown. Let us consider them briefly. First is an offering given to the Tathāgata, the Samma Sambuddha, personally. This is the kind of offering Pajāpatī's was, because it was a personal thing. It was his foster-mother, offering it to her child; a personal gift. See, what a wonderful quality of the Buddha: he redirected even a personally offered gift to the Saṅgha. Right there, the world has a great lesson to learn. He offered it to the Saṅgha because he himself is included in the Saṅgha. Next, he mentions a personal offering given to a Paccekabuddha. Next are the eight persons mentioned earlier: to an Arahant, then to one practicing for the realization of Arahantship, then to a Non-returner (*Anāgāmī*), to one practicing for the realization of the fruit of Non-returning, and so on—the eight persons mentioned. Thus, if we take those eight and the first two, understand them as ten. Now, about the eleventh: the eleventh is "one who is free from lust regarding sensual pleasures among outsiders" (*bāhiresu kāmesu vītarāgo*)—there could be outside ascetics or rishis. They come at the next level, the eleventh. This is in terms of the order of respect. Next is shown the virtuous worldling (*sīlavanto puthujjano*). As the thirteenth, the unvirtuous worldling (*dussīlo puthujjano*). As the fourteenth, an animal. In that instance, the Buddha described these fourteen in descending order.

But when explaining the benefits of giving (*dānāniśaṃsa*), the Buddha explains it in ascending order. In these times, someone might call it exaggeration, or say these were added later. However, this is how the Buddha explains it: Giving an offering to an animal—one can expect a hundredfold benefit. Giving to an unvirtuous worldling, a thousandfold. Giving to a virtuous worldling, a hundred thousandfold. Giving to an outsider ascetic free from sensual lust, a hundred thousand times ten million fold. Next,

giving to one practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-entry—such as the Faith-follower or Dhamma-follower—the Buddha says it is incalculable (*asaṅkheyyaṃ*), immeasurable (*appameyyaṃ*); it cannot be counted, it cannot be measured. From that point upward, he says something wonderful. If it is already incalculable and immeasurable, you cannot increase it further, can you? Therefore, from that point upward, the Buddha uses the exact same phrase. *"Ko pana vādo"*—which means, meritorious friends, "What then to speak of...?" In old books, they translate this as "what need is there to speak of...?" Thus, by offering alms to that person practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-entry, the benefit is incalculable and immeasurable; and for those higher than that, he continues to say: *"ko pana vādo"*—what need to speak of it? What need to speak of it? This demonstrates the power of the benefit. You can understand this, meritorious friends. It is shown in ascending order, starting from the animal and going upward. Next, he says that these are the individual offerings (*pāṭipuggalikā dakkhiṇā*).

Next, the Buddha shows seven kinds of offerings made to the Saṅgha (*saṅghagatā dakkhiṇā*). He shows them as follows: In the terms we use today: an offering to the dual Saṅgha (both communities) headed by the Buddha. During the Buddha's lifetime, lay disciples like Anāthapiṇḍika offered such alms to both the bhikkhu and bhikkhunī communities with the Buddha at the head. This is of the greatest fruit and benefit. After the dual Saṅgha headed by the Buddha, next is an offering to the dual Saṅgha of bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs after the parinibbāna of the Tathāgata. That is the second. The third is an offering to the bhikkhu Saṅgha after the parinibbāna of the Tathāgata. The fourth is an offering to the bhikkhunī Saṅgha. The fifth is shown in a different way: A donor requests from the Saṅgha: "Please give us a certain number of bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs on behalf of the Saṅgha." That is the fifth offering. The sixth is shown as requesting only bhikkhus: "Please give us only bhikkhus." The seventh is requesting only bhikkhunīs and giving to them. Those are the seven offerings to the Saṅgha.

After that, the Buddha mentions an unusual thing. "Monks, in the future there will be unvirtuous, evil-natured monks, with yellow robes around their necks, who are regarded as *gotrabhū*." Those unvirtuous, evil-natured ones who wear the robe hanging around their neck are called *gotrabhū*. The word *gotrabhū* in this context should be understood not in the sense of insight (*vipassanā*). According to the donor's understanding and the person's appearance, this individual represents the Saṅgha—by the mere fragment of the robe hanging around their neck. That is to say, it is merely an indication of the Noble lineage (*ariya-gotra*). It is in that sense that we explain this word. Next, the Buddha says that even if one makes an offering to such individuals on behalf of the Saṅgha, that offering too is incalculable and immeasurable. This has been a subject of controversy. Western critics, in particular, reject this discourse because of this. Those people say that this is a discourse fabricated by monks during the decline of the dispensation in order to secure alms. This is a very profound discourse. Not a single word can be removed. But the way it is understood is wrong. So, this point is indeed highly controversial—this matter of unvirtuous monks with robes around their necks. Yet, the donor offers alms to them by keeping in mind the Saṅgha.

To beautifully answer any question that might arise regarding this, the Buddha states a certain point. He shows four kinds of purification of an offering (*dakkhiṇā-visuddhi*). Meritorious friends, "purification of an offering" refers to the ways in which an offering made to the Saṅgha is purified. The first purification is shown as: *dāyakato visujjhati no paṭiggāhakato*—purified on the part of the giver, but not on the part of the recipient. The next one is purified on the part of the recipient, but not on the part of the giver. Then, purified neither on the part of the giver nor on the part of the recipient. The last one is purified both on the part of the giver and on the part of the recipient. Consider this division of pure and impure briefly: The giver being pure means they are virtuous and of good character (*sīlavā kalyāṇadhammo*). The recipients being impure means they are unvirtuous and of evil character (*dussīla pāpadhamma*). So, here too, the Buddha has shown a certain hint. This *kāsāvakaṇṭha gotrabhū* individual reminds that faithful giver of the Noble Saṅgha-treasure (*Ariya Saṅgha-ratana*). This is something you know very well: one can go to a heavenly world by giving alms. But think about it, can one go to a heavenly world merely by consuming alms? So, what happens is that the giver, seeing the robe hanging from the neck of the unvirtuous one, arouses faith through that, offers the alms, and goes to heaven. While that evil monk, by consuming those alms, goes to hell. There is no contradiction in the Buddha's word, is there? Why do we say this? Because this discourse is indeed magnificent. Yet, for some reason, some people use this discourse as a way to beckon the decline of the dispensation. You know this, meritorious friends. They say: "This is not a time when Noble Ones and Arahants exist. Now, what lies ahead is the era of the robe-wearers-in-name-only. There is nothing wrong with giving to them." The fact may be true, but that is the secret. The meritorious person who gives the alms goes to heaven; the monk who consumes the alms goes to hell. Thus, there is no contradiction in the Buddha's word. It is like a double-edged weapon.

Let me give a small simile for this. My similes are rustic ones, of course. Suppose you bring a sack of paddy to your house—a sack of seed paddy. Having emptied the sack of paddy and transferred it into some box, you take the empty sack to the backyard of the house and shake it. A single grain of paddy that was stuck to the sack falls onto a heap of mud. Without you even knowing, a fine cluster of paddy grows behind the house because the ground is fertile. In the same way, this Noble Saṅgha is called a field of merit. It is not just anything; it is a fertile field of merit. In this field of merit, even a grain of paddy that falls stray sprouts. Think of it in that way. So, that *gotrabhū kāsāvakaṇṭha* monk gives that perception (*saññā*) to the world. He symbolizes it. He indeed helps the giver to remember. But that alone is not enough for him to escape hell. Let us think about it. The world exists within perception (*saññā*). Even if I mention this as a small illustration, meritorious friends, do not take it too seriously. Think for a moment: if King Duṭugämuṇu had placed those relics in a small casket at the site of the Ruwanweliseya, would the hearts of humans have been inspired in this way for centuries? That is the "perception of a stupa" (*cetiya-saññā*). Within the perception of a stupa, the world is drawn. That robe—it is not only today; it is found even in the Jātaka stories. You must have heard Jātaka stories showing the wonderful power of the robe even during times when no Buddha had appeared. According to that Jātaka story, the Bodhisatta was an elephant king. He had a large herd of elephants. Devadatta was an elephant hunter.

What does he do? He wraps himself in the robe of a Paccekabuddha and sits down. While he sits there, all the elephants salute him as they pass. He must have had some weapon hidden—perhaps a boomerang, we do not know. He throws it, and throws it to kill the elephant that goes last. Killing elephants in this way to take their tusks, eventually the Bodhisatta thought, "Why is our herd diminishing?" Thinking thus, the Bodhisatta elephant walked at the very rear. When the elephant hunter threw his weapon, the elephant turned around, blocked it, and spared the man's life without killing him—all because of that robe! Because of the robe! Therefore, we must reflect on this. Indeed, although the Buddha used this story of *gotrabhū* to illustrate the supremacy of the offering and the value of this field of merit, we must not start interpreting it from the wrong end. If we start from the other end, it is an invitation to the decline of the dispensation.

We must think of the reality. Why? Because you apply the perception of "treasure" (*ratana*) to all three: the Buddha-treasure, the Dhamma-treasure, and the Saṅgha-treasure. On the Vesak full-moon poya day, the Buddha-treasure appeared in the world. On the Esala full-moon poya day, both the Dhamma-treasure and the Saṅgha-treasure appeared in the world. Because, with the teaching of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, at the conclusion of that sermon, the Saṅgha-treasure appeared through Ven. Koṇḍañña who realized it. That is the Triple Gem. During the times of Paccekabuddhas, there is no such thing; there is no Saṅgha-treasure either. That is precisely why, in the *Aggappasāda Sutta* which you have heard, the Buddha states:

"Yāvatā bhikkhave gaṇā vā saṅghā vā, tathāgatasāvakasaṅgho tesaṃ aggamakkhāyati, yadidaṃ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā, esa bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho... anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa."

Having said so, he continues: *"Ye saṅghe prasannā agge te prasannā, agge kho pana prasannānaṃ aggo vipāko hoti."*

In that *Aggappasāda Sutta*, after speaking of the Buddha-treasure and the Dhamma-treasure, when finally speaking of the Saṅgha-treasure, he shows it in this manner. Everyone knows the explanation mentioned at the beginning. There is no need to repeat it. As far as there are groups or assemblies in the world, the disciple-community of the Tathāgata is supreme among them, according to the details mentioned. Next, he says that whoever has confidence in the Saṅgha has confidence in the supreme; and for those who have confidence in the supreme, the result is supreme.

Thus, one must understand that here, the Buddha demonstrates the supremacy of the Saṅgha-treasure by redirecting that personal offering. How hard that Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, that nun, must have labored to weave that robe! She did so with the same thoughts as when she nursed him as a small child. Having woven that cloth with her own hands with great effort, she was impatient until she could offer it. See what the Buddha said when she finally offered it! It was not out of unkindness. At the same time, when Ven. Ānanda spoke, the Buddha acknowledged that Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī had been of great help to him, and also stated that he too had been of help to Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī.

What did the Buddha do? By redirecting this, to use a modern expression, he "paid the milk bill." He paid the milk bill at the highest level. He could have accepted it himself. But in order to make it of greater fruit and benefit, and at the same time to introduce the value of the Saṅgha-treasure to the world, he redirected it and said: "If you give, give to the Saṅgha. Then I too will be offered to." See, what a valuable example! He turned that personally intended offering into a communal offering. Therefore, one must reflect on the value of the Saṅgha. Many know that in the disciplinary acts of the monks, the word *Saṅgha* is an extremely powerful word. *Saṅgha*—when that word is used, there is a great power within it. A group of more than four is known as the Saṅgha. A smaller group is known as a chapter (*gaṇa*). This is a dispensation usage. *Saṅghaṃ uddissa*—"on behalf of the Saṅgha"—there is a deep meaning in this phrase.

Not only that. Unfortunately, there are shortcomings in certain places in the commentaries. We have pointed them out. Ven. Buddhaghosa, in trying to explain the word *supaṭipanno*, explains it like this: *atītaṃ paṭipadaṃ nissāya supaṭipanno*—he is "of good practice" by depending on his past practice. That is to say, the terms *supaṭipanno, ujupaṭipanno*, etc., are applied because of their past practice, to show that they arrived through that practice. It is not so, meritorious friends! It is because they are training in the present. It is not past practice, but present practice. See, in that very *Ratana Sutta* it is said:

Ye suppayuttā manasā daḷhena, nikkāmino gotamasāsanamhi, te pattipattā amataṃ vigayha, laddhā mudhā nibbutiṃ bhuñjamānā.

"Those who, with a firm mind, well-applied, are free from desire in Gotama's dispensation..."—if anyone trains regardless of body and life, that quality is what was taken for the act of truth there, and not that story of path and fruit. But because this has come down for a long time, for convenience, when asked "who are the eight persons?", we say "the four paths and four fruits, the four paths and four fruits." This is a usage that arose during the Commentarial period. Yet, the Buddha used the word *paṭipanna*. He gave prominence to the practice, in that *supaṭipanno* verse. In this story of nine persons, starting with "practicing for the realization of...", this can indeed become a subject of controversy. I know that Westerners sometimes ridicule this: "How can one receive benefits by giving alms to those who just have a robe hanging around their neck?" That is why we said it is like a double-edged weapon. But the truth is this: by that alone, they benefit the giver. *Dāyakato visujjhati no paṭiggāhakato*—it was with a certain reason that the Buddha, after mentioning that *kāsāvakaṇṭha* story, spoke of the purification of the offering. This seems to be a good explanation. So, among those four ways, what is the first way? The offering is purified from the side of the giver, but impure from the side of the recipient. Yet, it is endowed with great benefit. It is incalculable, immeasurable, and cannot be counted. Saying *"ko pana vādo"* shows that this is no small matter.

Meritorious friends, we do not declare these things as a "pulling hook"—not to tell you to give more. We express this on a day like today in order to bring the Buddha's word to light. It is not like what some say: "Now, the time of Arahants and Noble individuals is

over. Now we are looking at that *kāsāvakaṇṭha* era, so give without fear." That is not what is here. Remember the simile of the sack of paddy. So supreme are the virtues of the Saṅgha—"an incomparable field of merit for the world"—and so great is the power of this supreme field of merit, that the robe which reminds one of that Saṅgha is used to assist in this. That is why we have the eight requisites (*aṭṭha-parikkhāra*). If we believe those stories, they say that Ghatīkāra the Brahma king brought and offered them to the Buddha. In fact, during times when no Buddha has arisen, there are only the requisites of ascetics, like water-pitchers. It was only the Buddha who prescribed the eight requisites as the minimum requisites for the monks. Therein lies that value. In later times—one should perhaps not say this—they began to describe the various benefits of offering the eight requisites with great exaggeration. But the real reason is that these eight requisites are the basic support for ordination (*pabbajjā*). That is why when someone comes and asks for ordination, they are asked: "Are your bowl and robes complete?" So, they have to find those items somehow. This demonstrates the value of the eight requisites. When you, meritorious friends, offer the eight requisites, you should think: "I am offering these eight requisites as an aid for someone to enter ordination, to join this dispensation, and to join this community of monks." Even if we do not describe its benefits separately, you should understand it in that way.

Thus, it is during the era of a Buddha's appearance that the Saṅgha-treasure arises. What sustains the minimum existence of the Saṅgha-treasure is called the eight requisites. The great Arahants of the past, especially the Arahants who observed the dhutanga (ascetic) practices, were content with just those eight requisites. Within them, all needs are met if one travels the true path of Dhamma. As additional worldly things increased, the eight requisites have become not "eight" but "sixty" requisites today! You know better than we do what those young novice monks ask for. When we look at it, the "eight requisites" (*aṭa-pirikara*) have become "sixty requisites" (*häṭa-pirikara*). Things have increased to that extent. But we should at least maintain the concept. We must offer the eight requisites properly. If we do do it carelessly, saying "it is the decline of the dispensation anyway," then that is a failure on the part of the giver. We say this because today, these things are done based on various indirect or worldly motives. In doing so, that symbol, the symbol of the robe, might gradually disappear; and if one day, by some means, a lay dress is offered as the "eight requisites," you can consider the dispensation finished on that day. If we can at least see that symbol, and if that symbol is presented correctly, then within it, the Noble Saṅgha-treasure is remembered. That symbolic power—see, even during times when no Buddha had appeared, that elephant king could have killed that man, but did not kill him because his head was covered with the robe.

In this day and age, we do not need to speak of such things. It has fallen to the lowest state of decline. But we must not use that as an excuse. We must not generate unwholesome states (*akusala*) because of it. Instead, what the wise, meritorious person does upon seeing the robe is that they do not go investigating it. In a Dhamma sermon we delivered earlier, we mentioned one of the outstanding qualities of the lay disciple Ugga Gahapati of Hatthigāma (do not use this in a bad way, as mentioned before), but in that previous sermon, we spoke of that great quality. Ugga Gahapati was a Non-returner

(*Anāgāmī*), a highly capable lay disciple. The night before the almsgivings, deities would come and tell him: "Among the monks you intend to invite, such-and-such a monk is an Arahant, such-and-such is a Non-returner," and going down the list, they would even say, "such-and-such a monk is unvirtuous." But as a distinguished quality, that lay disciple says: "Even though I heard that, when I served the alms, I made no distinction. I made no distinction when serving the alms." He does not think about those things. On the part of the giver, that is how it is. If you go investigating these things, there is no end to it. How can you know about the monks? It is up to the Saṅgha to protect the purity of the Saṅgha. But for the lay devotee, the Buddha has taught that way; if we try to dissect it, we will end up going to extremes. Therefore, *dāyakato visujjhati*—the giver offers the alms with a pure mind, recollecting the Noble Saṅgha-treasure. That is why we said this cuts both ways. The giver, having given alms, goes to a happy destination; while the unvirtuous *gotrabhū kāsāvakaṇṭha* monk, having consumed the alms, goes to hell. There, the Buddha's word is correct on both sides. Nowhere is there any contradiction. What was declared there is the reality. Therefore, you must reflect on this, meritorious friends.

So, we say these things on a day like today because everyone is talking about the decline of the dispensation. They say it cannot be restored now, even by a team of elephants. But we know that when we fall ill, even if doctors say we cannot be kept alive for long, what an effort we make! What energy we exert! We take the patient to the doctor, and if that fails, to traditional physicians. We do various things. Why? Just to keep this body alive for one more day. For what? To enjoy the five cords of sensual pleasure, nothing else. We spend hundreds of thousands on bypass operations and such to join pieces back together, just to preserve this body and life. Then, if such an effort is made to preserve life, why don't we think in the same way about the dispensation? Do we just abandon it, saying "it is impermanent (*anicca*)"? Meritorious friends, that is the point you must understand. We must not use impermanence (*aniccatā*) as an excuse. Even if it is impermanent, if we just allow it to go... Instead, what we must do is, to the best of our ability, the lay givers from their side, and the monks from their side, must bring out those virtues of the Saṅgha shown by the Buddha—*supaṭipanno, ujupaṭipanno*, etc.—along with their qualities of being worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, etc. Even if one is not "established on the path" (*maggaṭṭha*), merely training in the practice (*paṭipadā*) is enough. It is quite enough. If one trains properly in the practice, realizing the fruit within it is an absolute certainty.

On a day like today, you, meritorious friends, must reflect on the value of the passage on the Saṅgha's virtues. The Triple Gem—the Buddha-treasure, the Dhamma-treasure, and the Saṅgha-treasure—cannot be separated from one another. We have stated on certain occasions that the eight Noble individuals of the Saṅgha-treasure can be compared to eight lamp-posts on a street. Imagine the Noble Eightfold Path as a street. The question arises: "How do we travel on this?" When the Dhamma is preached, the question of how to realize the fruit comes to everyone. That is when—these Arahants and Non-returners of the past, especially during the Buddha's time—served as lamp-posts for traveling on that path. That is why we said so. That is precisely why the Buddha has declared that

even a Paccekabuddha cannot preach the Dhamma that helps one escape from Saṃsāra. It is such a profound Dhamma, as we have shown in our sermons on Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). It is not because of any selfishness on their part. A Paccekabuddha cannot point out this path to the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna in a way that the world can understand. It is such a wonderfully profound Dhamma. But the Tathāgata, the Fully Enlightened Samma Sambuddha, through his wonderfully great power of wisdom, preached the Dhamma to the world. And the proof that this Dhamma was practiced is the Saṅgha. That is what is called the Saṅgha-treasure.

Those three treasures are interconnected. Because of the Buddha-treasure, the Dhamma-treasure appeared; because of the Dhamma-treasure, the Saṅgha-treasure appeared. It is the practical aspect that is demonstrated by the Saṅgha-treasure. That is the Triple Gem. You, meritorious friends, often declare the great, powerful nature of the *Ratana Sutta*. We hear everywhere that even by mere chanting, some power and some benefit can be obtained, capable of doing powerful things—even by the very words used in them. That is why we spoke even of the misuse of words—not that we are merely finding fault with the commentators. See that verse; in the word of the Buddha, it is: *ye puggalā aṭṭha sataṃ pasatthā*. But those who do not know the language turn it into: *ye puggalā aṭṭhasataṃ*. If the commentators validate this, it is a great mistake, isn't it? That is what we are saying. This rich meaning is "with meaning and with phrasing" (*sātthaṃ sabyañjanaṃ*). This Dhamma must be understood both in terms of meaning (*attha*) and phrasing (*byañjana*). If we recite these verses with such understanding, what powerful benefits we can obtain! But now, as we said, it is only for the sound. Paritta recitations, even suttas like the *Ratana Sutta*, become like music, because there is no understanding of the meaning of those words; they are just recited anyway. Even so, there may be some power in that sound. But if recited with right understanding—with understanding of the virtues of the Buddha-treasure and the Saṅgha-treasure—then we too have to say that it is incalculable and immeasurable; there are limitless benefits. That is why it was said: *agge kho pana prasannānaṃ aggo vipāko hoti*.

On a valuable day like today, we mentioned these facts to you because everyone asks us about them, and we must give an answer. Even though we point out the shortcomings of the commentators in our writings and sermons, we accept that they were extremely great individuals. If those reciting monks (*bhāṇaka*) had not preserved these, we would have no power to say even this much. But for some reason, because of traditionalism (*ācariyakappa*), because past teachers said so, some people accept these without questioning, showing a tendency to accept even highly weak points. When the monks say something, the laity accept it too. That is natural. It is to correct those points that we mentioned these various things—not in a critical spirit to disparage them. While accepting their greatness, certain shortcomings must be pointed out.

Today, as usual, you, meritorious friends, must have observed your respective precepts and engaged in Dhamma discussions and meditation. If there is anything to be taken from this sermon for your future progress, for training in the practice, and for realizing the fruit, take those things and do so as quickly as possible—as we always say, "before the

lamp of the dispensation is extinguished." We have to say this because it appears to us that it is moving in that direction. Therefore, we speak these words for the sake of diligence (*appamāda*). It is not with the wish that it should be extinguished, but because we actually see those signs. Therefore, it is up to you, meritorious friends, to make use of it. Wishing that this sermon may be a source of strength and power for you to reach those noble goals you hope for as quickly as possible; and wishing that whatever living beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha wish to rejoice in the merits of this preaching and hearing of the Dhamma, may they by doing so find peace in the supreme, deathless Extinction (Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration—please recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #44

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.142)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Idaṃ hi taṃ Jetavanaṃ, isisaṅghanisevitaṃ;

Āvutthaṃ dhammarājena, pītisañjananaṃ mama.

Kammaṃ vijjā ca dhammo ca, sīlaṃ jīvitamuttamaṃ;

Etena maccā sujjhanti, na gottena dhanena vā.

Tasmā hi paṇḍito poso, sampassaṃ atthamattano;

Yoniso vicine dhammaṃ, evaṃ tattha visujjhati.

Sāriputtova paññāya, sīlena upasamena ca;

Yo hi pāragato bhikkhu, etāva paramo siyā.

From:

Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya

Dear Listeners,

Among the circle of lay disciples of the Buddha, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika is a noble person who attained the foremost (*etadagga*) position. He is a person so worthy as to be like the letter "A" in the list of lay disciples during the time of the Buddha. The verses we have chosen today as our theme are those uttered by this householder Anāthapiṇḍika, who, after passing away and being reborn in the Tusita heaven, returned at midnight to Jetavana monastery to see the Blessed One.

These verses are found in the *Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta* of the Majjhima Nikāya. That sutta describes the last moments of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika. The sermon he heard in his final moments is his near-death sermon, his final sermon. This event is

shown in this manner. In that sutta, while the Blessed One was residing at Jetavana monastery, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika became gravely ill and diseased. He told his servant to go and pay homage to the Blessed One: "Go and bow down at the feet of the Blessed One on my behalf, saying that the householder Anāthapiṇḍika is gravely ill." Next, he asked him to go to Venerable Sāriputta as well, pay homage in his name, and say, "Out of compassion, please come to the home of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika."

When that man went and delivered the message to Venerable Sāriputta, Venerable Sāriputta took Venerable Ānanda as his attendant monk and came to the mansion of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika. Having arrived, in accordance with the usual manner of inquiring after one's health, as is frequently seen in the sutta discourses, Venerable Sāriputta asked the householder Anāthapiṇḍika: "Householder, are your painful sensations (*vedanā*) abating? Are you in a tolerable condition? Can you get by?" and so on.

The householder Anāthapiṇḍika described the severity of his illness: "Venerable Sāriputta, my painful sensations (*vedanā*) are not abating, they are increasing. They are getting worse and worse. My condition is not tolerable, nor can I get by. There is a state of severe pain," thus expressing the painful (*dukkha*) nature of his sensations (*vedanā*). "Just as if a strong man were splitting my head with a sharp sword, such is the extreme pain in my head. Just as if a strong man were binding my head with a leather strap, such are the painful wind-sensations in my head. Next, just as a skilled butcher would slash my belly with a sharp carving knife, such is the painful sensation (*vedanā*) I feel. Then, just as if two strong men were to grab a weak man by his two arms and roast him over a pit of hot coals, such is the burning sensation (*vedanā*) in my body," he expressed in this manner.

To this, Venerable Sāriputta did not administer a physical medicine, but a medicine of the Dhamma. "In that case, householder, you should train yourself in this way," and Venerable Sāriputta presented the Dhamma-medicine in this manner: "In that case, householder, you should apply your mind to the Dhamma in this way: 'I will not grasp (*upādāna*) the eye.' To say 'I will not grasp (*upādāna*)' means 'I will not tightly hold onto the eye with craving (*taṇhā*).' 'My consciousness (*viññāṇa*) will not be dependent on the eye.' That training means one does not hold onto the eye through grasping (*upādāna*), and my consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—my mind—will not hold onto and be dependent on the eye. One should train oneself in that way."

Next, as you all know, regarding these six internal sense-spheres—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—Venerable Sāriputta spoke about each of them one by one: "Householder, do not seize the ear through grasping (*upādāna*). Train yourself thus: 'I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) dependent on the ear.' Moving on in this way, he also spoke about the mind: 'I will not hold onto the mind through grasping (*upādāna*). I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) dependent on the mind.' Having spoken in this manner about the six internal sense-spheres, he spoke likewise about the objects of the external sense-spheres: 'I will not grasp (*upādāna*) form. My consciousness (*viññāṇa*)

will not be dependent on form. I will not grasp (*upādāna*) sound. My consciousness (*viññāṇa*) will not be dependent on sound.' He asked him to train in this way."

Finally, he spoke of the objects that come to the mind, which in the Dhamma are shown by the name *dhammā*. *Dhammā* means things, thoughts that come to the mind. "I will not firmly grasp the objects that come to the mind. I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) dependent on the objects that come to the mind." Having spoken in this way about the internal and external sense-spheres, Venerable Sāriputta next showed how one should train.

"I will not grasp (*upādāna*) eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*). My mind will not be dependent on eye-consciousness." In the very same way, he spoke about the six kinds of consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—ear-consciousness (*sota-viññāṇa*), nose-consciousness (*ghāṇa-viññāṇa*), tongue-consciousness (*jivhā-viññāṇa*), body-consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*), and mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*). Next, after speaking about consciousness (*viññāṇa*), comes contact (*phassa*). He spoke about that contact (*phassa*) too: "I will not firmly grasp eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*). I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) dependent on eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*). I will not grasp eye-contact. I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) relying on eye-contact." Just as he spoke about eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*), next he does not hold onto eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*). In that way, just as with contact (*phassa*), he speaks about the feeling (*vedanā*) born of that contact (*phassa*): "I will not seize through grasping (*upādāna*) the feeling (*vedanā*) born of eye-contact. I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) dependent on the feeling (*vedanā*) born of eye-contact."

Continuing in this manner, finally: "I will not grasp the feeling (*vedanā*) born of mind-contact (*mano-samphassa*)—the contact (*phassa*) that arises when thoughts strike the mind. I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) dependent on that feeling (*vedanā*)." Thus, having spoken by way of the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana*), he does not stop there. This is the medicine that Venerable Sāriputta gave to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, who had complained of having so much painful sensation (*vedanā*).

Next, he declared how one should train, step by step, regarding the six elements (*dhātu*) mentioned in the Dhamma—perhaps some of you have not even heard of them—earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), air (*vāyo*), space (*ākāsa*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Many have heard of four elements, but in certain places the Blessed One declares that what is called "person" or "individual" is just these six elements. Which six elements? Earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is these six elements that we designate as a person. Venerable Sāriputta spoke about those six elements in the same manner: "I will not seize the earth element through grasping (*upādāna*). I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) dependent on the earth element. I will not seize the water element through grasping (*upādāna*). I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) dependent on the water element." Having spoken in this way, he spoke about the earth, water, fire, air, and space elements: "I will not grasp (*upādāna*) the space element. My consciousness (*viññāṇa*) will not be dependent on the

space element." Then, finally, which is difficult to understand: "I will not seize the consciousness element (*viññāṇa-dhātu*) through grasping (*upādāna*). I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) dependent on the consciousness element." This is the moment of death, and this is spoken as a way to prepare for death. The word is used there to remove grasping (*upādāna*) even in regard to the six elements. It has the meaning of "dependent on." The two words, grasping (*upādāna*) and reliance/dependence (*nissaya*), are two very important words in this Dhamma. We will explain them in due course.

Next, he spoke in the same way about the aggregates (*khandha*). "I will not grasp form. My mind, my consciousness (*viññāṇa*), will not be dependent on the aggregate of form subject to grasping (*rūpupādānakkhandha*)." Likewise, regarding the five aggregates subject to grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)—form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—Venerable Sāriputta taught a very deep meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) on how to develop a state that is free from grasping (*anupādāna*) and free from dependence (*anissita*).

He did not stop there. Next, he spoke about the formless absorptions (*arūpa-jhāna*): "I will not hold onto the formless absorption called the sphere of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*) through grasping (*upādāna*). My mind…" and likewise, "I will not take the formless states of the sphere of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*) and the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*) through grasping (*upādāna*)." Finally, whatever there is that one can hold onto with the mind, Venerable Sāriputta brought all of it in and gave the final medicine: "I will not hold onto this world. My consciousness (*viññāṇa*) will not be dependent on this world. I will not hold onto the next world through grasping (*upādāna*). My mind will not be dependent on the next world." Therefore, there is neither this world nor the next.

Next, he declared, using the Pali words: *diṭṭha, suta, muta, viññāta*. These Pali words exist in the Dhamma to condense the objects perceived through the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana*) into four. Sometimes, *diṭṭha* means the seen, *suta* means the heard, *muta* means what is sensed by the nose, tongue, and body—taking those three as one—and *viññāta* means thoughts in the mind. Thus: the seen, heard, sensed, cognized (*diṭṭha, suta, muta, viññāta*); and not only that, "what is attained, sought after, and pondered over by the mind" (*pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvacaritaṃ manasā*). Whatever objects can be grasped by the mind, "I will not hold onto any of them through grasping (*upādāna*). I will not have a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that makes any of those things its object." This points directly to Nibbāna. Neither this world nor the next. The advice Venerable Sāriputta is giving here is: do not take any of those thoughts that come to the mind through grasping (*upādāna*) at this moment of death, and do not maintain a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that relies on them. To put it briefly, this is like the potent medicine (*sinduram*) that some physicians give at critical moments; Venerable Sāriputta is giving the deepest Dhamma here.

When this discourse was finished, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika began to weep. He began to shed tears. Venerable Ānanda thought he was weeping out of fear of death.

"Why, householder, are you sinking down?"—there is a word used there, "sinking down"—"Are you holding back at the moment of death, and is that why you are weeping?" Then, he replied: "No, no, Venerable Sir, I have associated with the Teacher and the Sangha, who help develop the mind, for so long. Yet, I have never heard a Dhamma discourse like this before." When he expressed this, Venerable Sāriputta explained the reason why such discourses are not usually taught: "Householder, such discourses are not clear to laypeople who wear white garments. That is to say, when we look at the life lived by white-clad laypeople, we do not think of delivering such discourses to them. We think of delivering this kind of discourse to the monastics, who are dedicated solely to this."

When Venerable Sāriputta said that, the householder made a special invitation. He made an invitation on behalf of laypeople, just like the Brahma's invitation (*Brahmā-ārādhanā*). What was that invitation? "In that case, Venerable Sāriputta, let such Dhamma discourses be made clear to laypeople as well! There may be laypeople among the devout laity who have little dust of defilements in their eyes. If they do not get to hear such Dhamma discourses, they will decline." Thus, he made an invitation. He made a final request of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika: to preach such deep discourses to laypeople from now on.

Then, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Ānanda departed. Not long after they left, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika passed away and was reborn in the Tusita heaven. Having been reborn, that very night, he came to see the Blessed One. Now, as you devout people have often heard in protective chanting (*paritta*) discourses, it is first mentioned that a deity came to Jetavana monastery, stood there, and spoke to the Blessed One in this way. Now, who is this that comes? It is the young deva Anāthapiṇḍika. Having arrived with such a radiant light and paid homage to the Buddha, he uttered those verses, which we have preached to you devout people at this time as our theme.

Now let us look at their meaning. *Idaṃ hi taṃ Jetavanaṃ isisaṅghani sevitaṃ āvutthaṃ dhammarājena pītisañjananaṃ mama*. This Jetavana, *isisaṅghani sevitaṃ*—meaning this Jetavana frequented by the community of sages—*āvutthaṃ dhammarājena*—inhabited by the King of Dhamma, the Blessed One—*pītisañjananaṃ mama*—inspires joy in me.

Having declared that, next he says: *Kammaṃ vijjā ca dhammo ca sīlaṃ jīvitamuttamaṃ etena maccā sujjhanti na gottena dhanena vā*. Here, "action" (*kamma*) is to be understood as wholesome action (*kusala-kamma*). Since it is expressed very briefly in this verse, various meanings can emerge. We should understand it as wholesome action (*kusala-kamma*). *Vijjā* means understanding, knowledge, which includes right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). And *dhamma*... knowledge and Dhamma... *sīlaṃ jīvitamuttamaṃ*: a life led in accordance with virtue (*sīla*)—these are the supreme things. *Etena maccā sujjhanti*: by these, mortals are purified. *Na gottena dhanena vā*: not by lineage, nor by wealth.

Tasmā hi paṇḍito poso sampassaṃ atthamattano: therefore, the wise man, seeing his own good, *yoniso vicine dhammaṃ*: investigates the Dhamma with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). *Yoniso vicine dhammaṃ* relates to the investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), meaning that he scrutinizes and investigates Dhamma with wisdom. This is precisely what Venerable Sāriputta expressed concerning the Dhamma in that final sermon. Thus, the young deva Anāthapiṇḍika says here that a person analyzes and investigates Dhamma-matters with wisdom. *Evaṃ tattha visujjhati*: in this way, one is purified.

Next is a praise of Venerable Sāriputta: *Sāriputtova paññāya sīlena upasamena ca yo hi pāragato bhikkhu etāva paramo siyā'ti*. If any monk goes to the further shore, Venerable Sāriputta is supreme in these qualities mentioned. It means one cannot go higher than that state. "Only Sāriputta, by wisdom, virtue (*sīla*), and peacefulness..." Venerable Sāriputta is supreme among those monks who have gone to the further shore in terms of wisdom, virtue, and peacefulness—this is what is declared by that verse. The Blessed One approved of it. Next, having uttered these verses, the young deva Anāthapiṇḍika paid homage to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, and disappeared.

The next morning, the Blessed One addressed the monks, saying, "Monks, last night a certain young deva"—he said "a certain"—"paid homage to me in this way, uttered these verses, and departed." Then Venerable Ānanda said, "Surely, that must have been the young deva Anāthapiṇḍika. Because the householder Anāthapiṇḍika had a very special devotion toward Venerable Sāriputta." The Blessed One confirmed that it was so. With that, the sutta discourse ends.

Now, when you devout people hear of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, stories of giving (*dāna*) immediately come to mind. But now you can understand what kind of a person he was. The householder Anāthapiṇḍika was a great, noble person. Indeed, the concept among laypeople in this era, especially those living a lay life, is that they sometimes neglect insight (*vipassanā*) sermons and meditation. However, it is because of the invitation made by the householder Anāthapiṇḍika that we have these insight (*vipassanā*) sermons. If you devout people gain something from this sermon, it is fitting to share those merits with the young deva Anāthapiṇḍika in the Tusita heaven. We can understand why Venerable Sāriputta delivered such a deep discourse to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika at his final hour. If we bring to light a hidden aspect of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika's life, we can understand the reason why Venerable Sāriputta presented such a deep discourse.

You devout people have often heard how the householder Anāthapiṇḍika purchased this Jetavana monastery. When Prince Jeta declared, "I will not give it unless you cover it with gold coins (*kahāpaṇa*)," the householder Anāthapiṇḍika said, "In that case, it is bought." At that very moment, there were no second thoughts. You all know how he brought gold coins in carts, spread them out, and covered the entire ground of Jetavana monastery to purchase it. What a power of letting go must have existed within the householder Anāthapiṇḍika! Furthermore, he did not give Jetavana monastery his own

name. In common parlance it came to be called *Anāthapiṇḍikassa* (Anāthapiṇḍika's park), but the name remains Jetavana. Prince Jeta, in the end, having witnessed his faith (*saddhā*), requested a portion of it back. But by that time, the ground of Jetavana monastery had already been covered with gold coins. That is one aspect.

In the same way, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika used to offer daily alms in his home to hundreds of monastics, with the Buddha at the head. In the end, he did not pursue his debtors or those from whom he was due income. Somehow, gradually, his wealth declined. Finally, on one occasion, the Blessed One asked the householder Anāthapiṇḍika: "How is it, householder, are alms still being given in your home?" "Yes, Venerable Sir, sour gruel broth and coarse broken rice. Sour gruel broth and coarse broken rice." Even when reduced to that level, he still gave alms. What a wonderful equanimity! What a wonderful generosity! What a power of letting go! Right there, the vision of non-self (*anattā*) is present within that; there is no such thing as "I" or "mine." He let go of everything for the sake of the Triple Gem—that very action.

In addition to that aspect, a certain account revealing the intellectual capacity of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika is found in a sutta of the Upāli Vagga in the Book of Tens of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, if you wish to look it up. One day, at midday, this householder Anāthapiṇḍika set out to see the Blessed One. Having gone a short distance, he thought, "This is not a good time; the Blessed One is resting, and the monks are resting, engaged in meditation. I should go a bit later." Thinking, "I should go later," he went to a nearby monastery of other sectarians (*aññatitthika*). It is often mentioned there that, seeing from afar that a disciple of the Buddha was coming, those sectarians silenced their group. After the householder Anāthapiṇḍika went and exchanged pleasantries, one of those sectarians asked: "Householder, tell us, what is the view (*diṭṭhi*) of the ascetic Gotama?" Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika replied: "Venerable Sirs,"—he addressed them as "Venerable Sirs" since these sectarians were ascetics of a sort—"Venerable Sirs, I do not know all the views (*diṭṭhi*) of the Blessed One. I do not know them entirely." "Well, then, you do not know the view of the ascetic Gotama. Tell us, then, what is the view of the monks, the bhikkhus?" Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika said, "Venerable Sirs, I do not know the views of all the bhikkhus either." "Well, then, householder, you do not know the view of the ascetic Gotama, nor do you know the views of those bhikkhus. Tell us, then, what is your view?"

Thereupon, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika said: "It is not difficult for me to declare what my view (*diṭṭhi*) is. But first, please declare your own views." And he invited them to do so. Then, those wanderers (*paribbājaka*) declared their respective views one by one. These are frequently mentioned in the Dhamma as the ten undeclared points (*dasa avyākata vatthu*). They are presented as follows. One says: "This is my view: the world is eternal. Eternal means everlasting. Only this is true, everything else is false; that is my view." Next, a second one says: "My view is that the world is not eternal. That is my view, and everything else is false." In this manner: the world is finite; the world is infinite; the soul (*atta*) and the body are the same; the soul is one thing and the body is another. I am stating briefly what is contained in these ten points. The next four are: the Tathāgata—

the person who has attained the supreme state in a dispensation—exists after death; another says "my view is that he does not exist after death"; another says "he both exists and does not exist after death"; and the last one says "he neither exists nor does not exist after death." These views (*diṭṭhi*), which are frequently mentioned in the Dhamma, were often presented to the Blessed One as well. Here, those who held these views expressed them.

Thereupon, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika said: "You have presented your views (*diṭṭhi*). Whichever of you said, 'The world is eternal; only this is true, everything else is false,' that view (*diṭṭhi*) has arisen from your own unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*)—wrong reflection. Or, it is a view formed by listening to someone else—heard from others (*paratoghosa*). Every single one of them is impermanent (*anicca*), conditioned (*saṅkhata*), mentally concocted—volitional (*cetayita*). It is merely a concept concocted by the mind, dependently co-arisen (*paṭiccasamuppanna*). All of them are impermanent (*anicca*). You are holding onto such a view (*diṭṭhi*) which is impermanent (*anicca*) and constructed. You are holding onto something that is painful (*dukkha*)." In this manner, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika rejected the views (*diṭṭhi*) of all ten of them, showing that every single one is conditioned (*saṅkhata*), impermanent (*anicca*), dependently co-arisen (*paṭiccasamuppanna*), and painful (*dukkha*).

When he had spoken thus, those wanderers (*paribbājaka*) said: "In that case, householder, tell us: what is your view (*diṭṭhi*)?" Then came the householder Anāthapiṇḍika's turn. The householder Anāthapiṇḍika declared: "Whatever there is in the world that has arisen from causes and conditions, volitional (*cetayita*), conditioned (*saṅkhata*)—by conditioned (*saṅkhata*) is meant whatever is prepared by Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—all of that is impermanent (*anicca*). All of that is painful (*dukkha*). I see all of that as non-self (*anattā*). I do not hold onto any of it as 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self' (*etaṃ mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attā*). I do not hold onto even one of these as 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'."

When he said that, they said, "Well then, householder, is this your view? Is what you just said your view?" He clarified a bit further: "That is not my view either. I have realized through right wisdom (*sammā-paññā*) that everything—everything that is conditioned (*saṅkhata*), everything that is dependently co-arisen (*paṭiccasamuppanna*)—is impermanent (*anicca*), subject to passing away. I have realized this. And I have experienced an even higher liberation, an escape, which is Nibbāna." This means he was answering as a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), established in right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), not in the aforementioned wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*); he was established in right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). After he gave that answer, it is mentioned there that those wanderers were left speechless. In that state, looking down, they remained completely silent and quiet, accepting their defeat.

The householder Anāthapiṇḍika then departed and reported this event to the Blessed One, saying: "The wanderers asked me such questions, and I answered in this way." Then the Blessed One declared: "Sadhu, sadhu, very well, householder! Those foolish

men (*mogha-purisa*) should be refuted in this manner from time to time," and he praised the householder. After the householder paid homage and departed, the Blessed One addressed the monks, saying: "Monks, even a monk of a hundred years' standing since his higher ordination (*upasampadā*)—that is, a monk of a hundred Rains retreats—should answer those sectarians in the very same way the householder Anāthapiṇḍika answered." What a feat! At that moment, the Blessed One described the householder Anāthapiṇḍika—whom we usually regard merely as a generous donor—as someone who could present the Dhamma in such a Dhamma-conforming way as to silence those wanderers, showing a skill equal to that of a monk of a hundred years in the Dispensation.

We can understand that although the householder Anāthapiṇḍika had only attained the state of stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), his vision of non-self (*anattā*)—as expressed here also: "This is mine, this I am, this is my self" (*etaṃ mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attā*) is not my vision. My vision—meaning the insight (*vipassanā*) understanding referred to here—what the ordinary world takes as self, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika saw as non-self (*anattā*). It is in perfect alignment with that very vision of non-self (*anattā*) that Venerable Sāriputta presented this final sermon. Because when a person is about to die, what do they hold onto? It is precisely these things. In the words of the Blessed One:

Chasu loko samuppanno, chasu kubbati santhavaṃ,

channaṃ eva upādāya, chasu loko vihaññati.

"In the six (sense-spheres) the world has arisen; in the six it makes familiarity; grasping (*upādāna*) these six indeed, in the six the world is vexed."

The six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana*) are shown on various occasions. It is the method of relinquishing grasping (*upādāna*) in regard to this that Venerable Sāriputta reminded the householder Anāthapiṇḍika of in his final moments. In the Dhamma, there are two words used to describe Nibbāna: *anissito anupādāno*. *Nissita* means leaning on something, being dependent on or relying on something. *Upādāna* means grasping or holding onto. The place freed from these two is called Nibbāna: *anissito anupādāno*. It is for this very purpose that the mind was prepared in Venerable Sāriputta's sermon. Look: "I will not seize the eye through grasping (*upādāna*). My mind will not proceed being dependent on the eye." There is that word *nissita*. This is a deep aspect of insight (*vipassanā*) revolving around these two words, grasping (*upādāna*) and dependence (*nissaya*). It is this very portion that the ordinary world seizes and holds onto in the final moments. It is this holding on that creates another state of becoming (*bhava*). As you devout people have heard: "With grasping (*upādāna*) as condition, becoming (*bhava*); with becoming (*bhava*) as condition, birth (*jāti*)"—as shown in dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Due to holding onto, existence/becoming (*bhava*) arises. Due to that existence, birth (*jāti*) occurs; and where birth (*jāti*) has arisen, there is decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) and all the rest. Therefore, if one holds onto something with the mind at the moment of death, one takes birth (*jāti*) according to that object.

Not only ordinary objects, but Venerable Sāriputta also showed extremely subtle objects, even in the formless worlds. "Do not hold onto any of those. Do not hold onto this world, and do not hold onto the next world," he said at last. What this indicates is that he said not to direct the mind to anything other than Nibbāna. When we say Nibbāna, we can understand it in that very sense. Venerable Sāriputta's instruction was: at the very least, do not hold onto the thoughts that come to the mind, or anything that the mind has searched out and seized, through grasping (*upādāna*); do not take them as a reliance (*nissaya*).

From this we can understand that in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* too—as those who have studied that sutta must have seen—at the end of each section there is a portion related to insight (*vipassanā*) meditation, called *satipaṭṭhāna*. That too ends with the words reliance (*nissaya*) and grasping (*upādāna*): *anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*—he dwells independent, and does not grasp (*upādāna*) anything in the world. He does not lean on anything, he does not rely on anything, and he does not hold onto anything in the world. Thus, even for the devout person practicing *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, the Blessed One has shown what the purpose of practicing *satipaṭṭhāna* is. That too is stated in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* itself. As you devout people know, in developing *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, there are four objects: body, feeling (*vedanā*), mind, and Dhamma—*dhamma* meaning the objects that come to the mind. The householder Anāthapiṇḍika complained through a state of severe pain (*vedanā*): "I have such severe painful sensations." Yet, Venerable Sāriputta did not give him a painkiller. It was not a painkiller as the ordinary world thinks. It is the way to conquer painful sensation (*vedanā*) through that very nectar of Nibbāna. It is within grasping (*upādāna*) that this painful sensation (*vedanā*) holds sway.

That is why in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* too it is said: *Atthi kāyo'ti vā panassa sati hoti, yāvadeva ñāṇamattāya patissatimattāya*. Even to the devout person developing mindfulness of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, what does the Blessed One say in the end? To think "there is a body" is not for any other purpose, but merely *ñāṇamattāya*—for the sake of developing one's knowledge—and *patissatimattāya*—for the sake of developing one's mindfulness. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, it is mentioned, "I go forward, I go backward," in this manner. It mentions "I" in reference to one's body, but in the end, it says that to think "there is a body" is merely for the sake of developing one's knowledge and mindfulness. Finally, it says: *anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*. He does not hold onto even that. He does not take even that through grasping (*upādāna*). The same applies to feeling (*vedanā*) and other factors. The Blessed One has shown not to firmly seize any of those objects. That very point is shown in this discourse of Venerable Sāriputta.

Especially at the approach of death, if we consider the state of affairs in the world today, this is the final sermon of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika. Every Buddhist devout person thinks deeply about their final moment. No matter what they have been doing, some think that if they can bring in a few monks at the last moment and somehow compose their mind at that time, everything will be fine. But in this perilous era, what we must

think of is that indeed we must remain with a near-death mind at all times. Now, some of you devout people, well-dressed, might be traveling in a vehicle for a wedding or some important journey. Suddenly, a loud crashing sound is heard. When consciousness returns, you are in a hospital—it is the time to hear the near-death sermon. In such a situation, this sermon preached by Venerable Sāriputta to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika can be of help, for at that moment there is no opportunity to bring in the Sangha. That is what needs to be said. If we grasp (*upādāna*) something at the moment of death, and if our kamma aligns with it, our birth (*jāti*) occurs accordingly.

Now, there may be some devout people who take the life of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika to some extent as an exemplar, or try to emulate him by making large financial donations. However, in making those donations, sometimes the purpose might be different. Sometimes, they perform large acts of giving (*dāna*) and meritorious deeds expecting positions, titles, and status. But at the final moment, they cannot compose their mind. Unable to compose their mind, in the end, they might be born right in their own homes, coming to the front door as a dog. Or they might go under the cupboard as a frog or a rat-snake. That is precisely because of grasping (*upādāna*). Because of that holding onto. What is needed there is to free the mind. At the moment of death, one must free the mind from grasping (*upādāna*). The mind that is in a place of reliance (*nissaya*)—relying on things—must be broken away from it. That is what is required.

When we say that in this insight (*vipassanā*) sermon, at the moment of death, everything else is let go—in the end, that letting go is not a physical letting go. We hold onto things with the mind. Having seen that holding onto with the mind through wisdom, seeing their impermanent (*anicca*) nature and non-self (*anattā*) nature, the Blessed One highlights what causes this holding onto. Venerable Sāriputta also spoke about eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*). He spoke about the contact (*phassa*) arising because of that consciousness (*viññāṇa*). He spoke about the feeling (*vedanā*) arising because of contact (*phassa*). Looking at the mind in that way—these are the places of attachment. That is what is called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Even in that verse, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika declared: *yoniso vicine dhammaṃ evaṃ tattha visujjhati*. One must investigate wisely with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Or else, by directing the mind to the place where they arise.

The Blessed One shows perception (*saññā*) as a mirage. All perceptions (*saññā*) taken from the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—the Blessed One shows them all as a mirage. If it is a mirage, why be deceived by it? If so, one must consider that internally: this eye, and because of form, this arising consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and the contact (*phassa*) arising therefrom—if one holds onto these, for the one who holds onto them at that moment, these are not external things. One can understand that these are generated by oneself. In that way, one goes on being born again and again in becoming (*bhava*) according to the objects taken by the mind. That is what is mentioned in the Dhamma.

Regarding these, Nibbāna is mentioned as *appaṭiṭṭhaṃ, appavattaṃ, anārammaṇaṃ*—the supportless, non-occurring, objectless state, where no object at all is taken. This is a

state where no object of the next world or anything else is taken. The object that is taken is what emerges as a new birth (*jāti*). This is mentioned in the Dhamma itself:

Yañca ceteti yañca pakappeti yañca anuseti, ārammaṇametaṃ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti.

"If one wills (*ceteti*), if one plans (*pakappeti*), or if one has a lingering underlying tendency (*anusaya*) toward something, that becomes an object for the stationing of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). When there is an object, there is a support for consciousness (*viññāṇa*)."

At the moment of death, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) goes and lands somewhere along that object. That becomes a support (*patiṭṭhā*) for consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Therefore, the state where consciousness (*viññāṇa*) does not obtain a support is called *appaṭiṭṭhaṃ*. It is a term for Nibbāna. The mind does not establish itself on any object; it does not take an object. Because it does not take an object, there is no establishing. Because there is no establishing, there is no continuation (*pavatta*). That is why the words *appaṭiṭṭhaṃ, appavattaṃ, anārammaṇaṃ* are mentioned.

The same is said in another way through the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*). As you devout people may have heard, when the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) is developed to the end—we use something in front of us to help develop the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). But as we go deeper, in the end, the sign (*nimitta*) disappears. We begin to develop the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) based on some sign (*nimitta*). But in the end, the final result is that one arrives at a state of not taking a sign (*animitta*). Likewise, the Blessed One has declared that whatever is impermanent (*anicca*) is painful (*dukkha*). For the one who has developed that perception to the highest degree, after the desire for perception (*saññā*) is gone, the mind's *paṇidhi*—meaning aspirations—disappears. That is why *appaṇihita* (the desireless) is also a name for Nibbāna; there is no aspiration, no desire. No desire at all. Next, for the one who has deeply developed the vision of non-self (*anattā*), in the end, it is realized as empty (*suñña*)—this is empty, a vacant thing. There is nothing to be taken here. Empty of any essence (*sāra*), a vacant thing, nothing to be taken. It is according to what is held by the mind as having essence (*sāra*) that one takes birth (*jāti*) again and again. Nibbāna is described by these three, as you devout people may have heard: *animitta, appaṇihita, suññata* (the signless, the desireless, the empty).

Now, what helps bring one to that state is the relinquishing of grasping (*upādāna*) which causes further birth (*jāti*). To relinquish grasping (*upādāna*), one must thin out craving (*taṇhā*). In the life of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, there was a power to let go of that craving (*taṇhā*) very instantly. Moreover, because his mind was developed according to that Dhamma-knowledge, although he was reborn due to not having attained the other paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) in his final moments, it must have been a help to him. We too must think about our own lives, whether lay or ordained. If we do not understand the depth of this Dhamma at some point, and if we do not conduct our thoughts accordingly, we will have to wander further and further in saṃsāra. Some people, having

no place to ordain, unable to break free, come seeking us with a great desire to ordain at least in the mind. For such people, even while staying in their own homes, managing to save themselves somehow, in a friendly manner—since often various complications can arise in lay life because of this—discussing it wisely, mindfully, and amicably, those who try to arouse their fear of saṃsāra through the Dhamma and make use of it, they are not afraid of this kind of sermon. This insight (*vipassanā*) sermon, because some day we must put an end to this repeated birth (*jāti*) in saṃsāra. Even if we stay together, where will we end up being born? No matter how much we pray. Therefore, staying together is not what is important. In this rare opportunity, having encountered the Buddha's Dispensation, having had the opportunity to hear the Dhamma, if one makes an effort, as the householder Anāthapiṇḍika said, there might be those among the devout laity who can understand the deep Dhamma and practice accordingly. It is because they would otherwise decline by not hearing the Dhamma that the householder made an invitation like the Brahmā's invitation on behalf of lay disciples.

Therefore, you devout people should consider it in this way. As a preparation for that, even if one does not go far into the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, nowadays many laypeople think of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as something to be recited at a funeral house. Thus, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* has been relegated to the same fate as the pumpkin in the old story at funeral houses. That is not the case; there is something much deeper here. Why is the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* recalled at funeral houses? Because at that moment of grief (*saṃvega*), one can gain true understanding, even if one usually lives in a daily self-created world. However, many people think it is just something to be chanted. Or, even some educated people think of this *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as something inauspicious, to be said only at funeral houses. Yet, whether lay or ordained, it is this *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* that we must bring close to our lives. Laypeople of old during the Buddha's time, like Isidatta, declared to the Blessed One himself: "Whenever we directed our minds to *satipaṭṭhāna*, we felt a great sense of relief even while living the lay life."

Therefore, you too must reflect: this saṃsāra is terrifying, and these dangers can arise to someone through grasping (*upādāna*). Sometimes, even if one has lived as a generous donor, if those weaknesses exist and one has been holding onto these with the mind, one cannot tell what the final thought at the last moment will be. If one has developed various attachments, whether out of affection for the people one associated with in one's home, or due to one's wealth and belongings, accordingly, one might be born not only in the realm of departed spirits (*peta*) or as an animal, but sometimes even as a demon (*yakkha*) or a monster (*rakkhasa*) to guard them. If we have understood the value of this precious human life, that is why the householder Anāthapiṇḍika said: *etena maccā sujjhanti na gottena dhanena vā*—by this are mortals purified, not by lineage or by wealth. It is by living in accordance with what was mentioned—action (*kamma*), Dhamma, and knowledge (*vijjā*). *Vijjā* means understanding. *Yoniso vicine dhammaṃ* refers to the investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*).

Wise devout people, having reviewed your lives in this manner: even if everyone else leaves us at the moment of death, in the end, what we have to let go of is this very body

with its perception (*saññā*) and mind. That is where we must direct our attention, not to external things. That is what is meant by the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana*). The Blessed One declared that the world exists within the six internal sense-spheres and the six external sense-spheres. And within that world lies the secret to Nibbāna. If we hold onto that world in that manner, the mind takes birth (*jāti*) in some place according to that holding onto. There, a state of becoming (*bhava*) is prepared. "With grasping (*upādāna*) as condition, becoming (*bhava*); with the cessation of grasping (*anupādā*), Parinibbāna." Becoming (*bhava*) arises due to grasping (*upādāna*). The cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) occurs in non-grasping (*anupādāna*)—in letting go. The devout person who practices this moment by moment is gradually able to free the mind. The Blessed One has given hints as to how that freeing is possible: the impermanent (*anicca*) nature of all these things. If something is impermanent (*anicca*), one has to keep maintaining and repairing it. That is a painful (*dukkha*) thing. Within that itself lies the fact that it cannot be kept under one's control. That is what is meant by the vision of non-self (*anattā*)—it cannot be kept under one's control.

The Blessed One often asks many people, sometimes even brahmins—he asks because it is such an obvious fact—"What do you think, brahmin, is form permanent or impermanent (*anicca*)?" "Impermanent (*anicca*)," comes the reply. "If something is impermanent (*anicca*), is it easeful or painful (*dukkha*)?" "Painful (*dukkha*)," they declare. If it is impermanent (*anicca*), subject to change (*vipariṇāma*) and alterity (*aññathābhāva*), if everything is of a nature to become otherwise, and if it cannot be kept under one's control, is it fit to regard it as "This is mine, this I am, this is my self" (*etaṃ mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attā*)? He questions the person themselves. He leaves it to the inquirer himself to reflect whether it is fit to take it as "This is mine, this I am, this is my self"—to take it by way of craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and view (*diṭṭhi*).

In that very way we must reflect. The Blessed One has declared that even this body is not one's own. That is why it cannot be kept under one's control. The same applies to the others. Because not even one of these—feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—can be kept under one's control, and because they are impermanent (*anicca*), devoid of any essence, core, or substance, the Blessed One has given the similes that you devout people have heard: form is like a lump of foam; feeling (*vedanā*) is like a water bubble; perception (*saññā*) is like a mirage; Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are like a heap of banana plantain trunks—a banana trunk; and finally, when speaking of consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—and here, Venerable Sāriputta constantly referred to consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—he declared that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is an illusion. There is a nature in this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to show what is not there as if it exists. What, then, does one hold onto? In accordance with the Dhamma, one holds onto it as an object. That is what the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) takes as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). What is held onto is Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). And the Blessed One declares that Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is merely a shadow cast on consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

A small illustrative story somewhat relevant to this is found not in ancient Buddhist literature, but in ancient Greek literature. There was a certain Greek youth named Narcissus. This Greek youth Narcissus was very handsome, but he had never seen his own face. He had never looked into a mirror. One day, he went into the forest and bent down over a pond to wash his face. For the first time, he saw his own face, and was deceived, thinking it was a water-nymph. A goddess living in the water. Confused by love, he tried to embrace her. The moment he put his hands in, the water rippled. He looked again and again, but failed. He returned the next day, and the day after that. He could not embrace the water-nymph. In the end, out of grief of separation, or rather due to his inability to grasp her, he wasted away and died right there, and the flower that grew in that spot was called "Narcissus." This is a Greek myth. But within this story lies the tale of being deceived by one's own reflection. If we speak in Dhamma terms, it is self-love (*ātma-sneha*). That is precisely what the Blessed One has highlighted. There is a verse in the *Magga Vagga* of the *Dhammapada*:

Ucchinda sinehamattano, kumudaṃ sāradikaṃ va pāṇinā,

santimaggameva brūhaya, nibbānaṃ sugatena desitaṃ.

The Blessed One also gives a similar simile. A simile of a flower: pluck out your self-love (*ātma-sneha*)—affection for oneself—just as one would pluck an autumn lily (*kumuda*) with one's hand. "Pluck out affection for oneself... cultivate the very path of peace, Nibbāna, as taught by the Well-Gone One (*Sugata*)," which is the Noble Eightfold Path.

Thus, what this simile indicates to us is that it is the attachment to Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that we are asked to let go of. This is not annihilationism (*uccheda-vāda*). Many people think that this talk of the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) and Nibbāna in the Dhamma—even what we write and say—might appear to some as annihilationism. However, the Blessed One showed only one side of the illusion of consciousness (*viññāṇa-māyā*). What is cast as a shadow by the illusion of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is shown in the Dhamma as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). It is form in name only; looked at from the other side, it is the appearance of form. It is neither a real name nor a real form. It is not a name, nor is it a form. Form in name only, the appearance of form—that is what is called Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). "Name" (*nāma*) refers to mental factors: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). "Form" (*rūpa*) refers to the great primary elements (*mahābhūta*), which cannot be understood in their true nature or identified individually, but are the perception of form derived from earth, water, fire, and air. That is what is called Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*).

It is within this reflection of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that anything the world holds onto entirely exists. Only Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), attention (*manasikāra*), and on the other hand, the perception of form derived from the four elements. It is through that very understanding that the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) gradually goes forward, with the help of the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) introduced by the Blessed One—

impermanent (*anicca*), painful (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*)—and by understanding the perverted perceptions (*vipallāsa*) existing in the world regarding all these things: seeing the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, the painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant, the non-self (*anattā*) as self, and the foul as beautiful. If one understands the true nature of that perverted vision and treads the path of insight (*vipassanā*) with the help of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, even while living a lay life, among the white-clad laypeople, there can be those who attain Dhamma-realization.

Therefore, let us make use of this opportunity. Indeed, you devout people should share merits with the young deva Anāthapiṇḍika. It is our wish that this sermon preached for so long, in the manner described, may be of assistance to you devout people at some moment—even if we wish it not to be so—in a sudden crisis, or when gaining consciousness in a hospital.

Making as much use as possible of this insight-oriented Dhamma sermon heard by you devout people so far, we wish that you may gain the strength and power to realize the noble deathless Nibbāna in this very life through the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship. At the same time, we wish that whatever living beings there are from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha in this universe, including the young deva Anāthapiṇḍika, who are able to rejoice in the merits of such a Dhamma sermon and Dhamma hearing, may, by rejoicing therein, find peace in the supreme deathless Nibbāna through the Bodhi of their aspiration. Let us share merits by reciting these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #45

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.209)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Kiṃ pattinamāhu bhikkhunaṃ, sorataṃ kena dantamāhu;

Buddhoti kathaṃ pavuccati, puṭṭho me bhagavā vyākarohi.

Pajjena katena attanā, parinibbānagato vitiṇṇakaṅkho;

Vibhavañca bhavañca vippahāya, vusitavā khīṇapunabbhavo sa bhikkhu.

Sabbadhi upekkhako satimā, na so hiṃsati kañci sabbaloke;

Tiṇṇo samaṇo anāvilo, ussadā yassa na santi sorato so.

Yassindriyāni bhāvitāni, ajjhattaṃ bahiddhā ca sabbaloke;

Imañca parañca lokaṃ viditvā, kālaṃ kaṅkhati bhāvito sa danto.

Kappāni viceyya kevalāni, saṃsāraṃ ubhayaṃ cutūpapātaṃ;

Vigatarajamanaṅgaṇaṃ visuddhaṃ, pattaṃ jātikkhayaṃ tamāhu buddhan'ti.

From:

Sabhiya Sutta (Sn 3.6) from the Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

During the time when the Buddha appeared, there was a group of people in India (Dambadiva) who made the search for truth the supreme goal of their lives, known in society by the name 'Paribrājaka' (wanderers). The general meaning of that word 'Paribrājaka' is 'one who walks everywhere.' They did not walk everywhere in vain; they

were searching for the truth. In their search for truth, they mostly made use of the question-and-answer method. When they met a teacher who proclaimed a certain philosophy, they would present a list of questions. If they received appropriate answers, they often had the humility and love of truth to become a disciple of that teacher. A good example of this is found in the *Sabhiya Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, in the account of Sabhiya the wanderer. There are several past stories about Sabhiya the wanderer mentioned in the commentaries with slight variations. In addition to the background story given in the *Sutta Nipāta*, according to those accounts, in the past, during the time of Kassapa Buddha, Sabhiya the wanderer was a monk who had ordained in that Dispensation (Sāsana). Seven monks, seeing how the Sāsana of Kassapa Buddha was falling into decline, became deeply moved by emotion (*saṁvega*), entered a forest, climbed a mountain cliff with the help of a ladder, threw the ladder down, and began to meditate with intense effort, with the thought, "We will realize Nibbāna somehow." Among those seven monks, one monk attained Arahantship with higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) in a single night. Although he went for alms-round by air the next morning and brought that food to offer to the other six, those six did not accept it. On the second day, the second monk attained the state of a Non-returner (*Anāgāmī*) with higher knowledges, and he too went for alms-round in the same way and offered it to the remaining five. It is said that they did not accept it, considering it a conceptual proliferation / prolific conceptualization (*papañca*) or a delay, and meditated without food. That Arahant monk passed away into Parinibbāna. The Anāgāmī monk was reborn in the Suddhāvāsa Brahma world. The other five monks, meditating with life-sacrificing effort without food, passed away on the rock itself. Having passed away, according to those books, they wandered in the heavenly worlds, etc., for an entire interval between Buddhas (*buddhantara*), and were reborn in different places during the time of our Buddha. They are recognized in the Dhamma in this manner: Pukkusāti, Kumāra Kassapa, Bāhiya Dārucīriya, Dabba Mallaputta, and Sabhiya Paribrājaka. These five are found in the Sāsana in later times.

Regarding Sabhiya the wanderer, it is also mentioned that he was born as the son of a female wanderer (*paribrājikā*), gained a good understanding of the Vedas and other sciences, and established a hermitage. One night, the aforementioned Suddhāvāsa Brahma-king, with the intention of making Sabhiya the wanderer meet the Buddha, came during the night, addressed him as "Sabhiya," and taught him twenty questions. He advised him that if any recluse or brahmin could answer these twenty questions, he should ordain under that teacher and practice the holy life. Accordingly, Sabhiya the wanderer went to meet the famous teachers of that time—as you may have heard: Pūraṇa Kassapa, Ajita Kesakambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta—and asked them these questions. Instead of answering these questions, they became angry and agitated. They even asked Sabhiya the wanderer himself for their meaning. He too was unable to answer. Then, his disillusionment was such that Sabhiya the wanderer thought it would be better to return to lay life and enjoy the fivefold sensual pleasures. Then he remembered that although the ascetic Gotama was very young in age, perhaps he might know the answers to these questions. Having thought so, he traveled a long distance to Rajagaha. He went and met the Buddha at Veḷuvanārāma. Having met him, he addressed

him in verse, saying that he had come with such doubts and hesitation, and requested the Buddha to answer these questions. When he invited the Buddha, the Buddha very gently and reassuringly said: "Very well, I shall answer the questions you ask. Ask them in sequence." It was indeed a long series of questions, twenty questions in total. Sabhiya the wanderer presented those twenty questions in five verses, four questions per verse. However, the Buddha answered each question individually with twenty verses, one verse for each question. The first four questions asked are what we have taken as our topic today:

> By what attainment is one called a monk (bhikkhu)?
>
> By what is one called gentle (sorata)? How is one called tamed (danta)?
>
> How is one called a Buddha?
>
> O Blessed One, being questioned by me, please explain this.

This was his request.

Now, the Buddha answers them:

> *Pajjena katena attanā*

Through the path cultivated by himself,

> *Parinibbāṇagato vitiṇṇakaṅkho*

Having reached Parinibbāna (ultimate extinguishment) and crossed over doubts,

> *Vibhavañca bhavañca vippahāya*

(Vibhava means the annihilationist view, bhava means the eternalist view) Having abandoned those views and becoming / existence (*bhava*),

> *Vusitavā khīṇapunabbhavo sa bhikkhu*

Having lived the holy life in the Sāsana and destroyed rebirth (renewed existence), he is indeed a monk (bhikkhu).

In the next verse, the word *sorata* (gentle/mild) is explained:

> *Sabbadhi upekkhako satimā*

Mindful and equanimous everywhere,

> *Na so hiṁsati kañci sabbaloke*

He does not harm anyone in the entire world,

> *Tiṇṇo samaṇo anāvilo*

A recluse who has crossed over, unperturbed,

Ussadā yassa na santi sorato so

In whom there are no swellings/prominences (such as craving, conceit, and views), he is called *sorata*.

Next, in the other verse, the word *danta* (tamed) is explained:

Yassindriyāni bhāvitāni bahiddhā ca sabbaloke

Whose faculties (*indriyas*) are developed, both internally and externally, in regard to the entire world,

Imañca parañca lokaṁ nibbidha

Having penetrated this world and the next,

Kālaṁ kaṅkhati bhāvito sa danto

With a developed mind, awaiting his time (death), he is indeed *danta*.

And finally, it is said:

Kappāni viceyya kevalāni, saṁsāraṁ ubhayaṁ cutūpapātaṁ,

vigata rajamanaṅgaṇaṁ, visuddhaṁ pattaṁ jātikkhayaṁ tamāhu buddhaṁ.

Kappāni viceyya kevalāni

Having scrutinized with wisdom all constructs (*kappas* - things fashioned by the mind through craving and views),

Saṁsāraṁ ubhayaṁ cutūpapātaṁ

Likewise, having investigated with wisdom the entire saṁsāra with its dual aspects of passing away and arising,

Vigata rajaṁ

Free from defilement,

Anaṅgaṇaṁ

Free from blemish,

Visuddhaṁ

Pure (referring to the Buddha),

Pattaṁ jātikkhayaṁ tamāhu buddhaṁ

Having attained the destruction of birth / arising (*jāti*), him they call 'Buddha'.

So, the Buddha answered the four questions asked by Sabhiya the wanderer in a single verse, using four verses. Sabhiya the wanderer was highly pleased and went on to ask many other questions. We will not detail them individually. But before that, something must be said about the nature of these questions. Based on the basic structure of these questions, they seem to revolve around twenty key terms related to the spiritual life that were in common social usage at that time. As already mentioned: *bhikkhu*, *sorata*, *danta*, *buddha*, etc. Further on, there are words like *brāhmaṇa*, *nahātaka*, *samaṇa*, *vedagū*, etc., which were accepted terms in society at that time, and their true meaning is what is being asked.

In this regard, we can observe something special. The Buddha's fourfold analytical knowledge (*catu-paṭisambhidā*) shines throughout this sutta. So much so, that after being answered with these twenty verses, Sabhiya the wanderer was satisfied and ordained in the Sāsana. This word we use, 'Sivu-pilisimbiyā' (four analytical knowledges), is *Catu-paṭisambhidā*. Since the four *paṭisambhidā* are explained very briefly in books, many people often come and ask us about them. In the Dhamma, they are shown as: *Attha*, *Dhamma*, *Nirutti*, and *Paṭibhāna*. *Attha* (meaning/effect) is explained as the matter/result before us—the cause and effect that stands before us. *Dhamma* (cause/text) is the underlying cause. *Nirutti* (language/linguistic expression) is the understanding of the words and language used to describe them. *Paṭibhāna* (ready wit/intellective response) is the analytical comprehension of illumination, which everyone knows as the wisdom of understanding. The uniqueness here is that when a certain question or word is presented, the Buddha has the ability to see the distinctions of meaning within it—many distinctions of meaning within a single word. This is called *atthanānatta* (diversity of meanings). He has the ability to see these distinctions, express them, make them clear, and convince others. Next, he has the strength to bring out the underlying Dhamma behind those meanings—the *dhamma-pabheda* (distinctions of natural laws/principles). Next, those with this *paṭisambhidā* have great power in using the appropriate *nirutti* (linguistic expression/etymology) to present them, in mastering language and penetrating words. Finally, *paṭibhāna* is, as you all know, specific insights such as similes, metaphors, etc. Similes and metaphors that help to clarify and convince others of those aforementioned points. This special understanding is what is contained within this analytical knowledge (*paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*).

Let us give only a few examples of this. This is a long sutta. Apart from what was just said, the next question the wanderer asks is: "Who is a Brahmin?" In the definition given by the Buddha, it is said: *Sabbapāpaṁ bāhita*—one who has warded off all evil. This means he has discarded all sins. In that sense, he becomes a *brāhmaṇa*. In the Sāsana, the word *brāhmaṇa* refers to the Arahant monk. Next, *kevalī*. *Kevalī* means "one who has attained unity." Among brahmins, it refers to union with Brahma. But here it is not used in that sense, but in the sense of *saṁsāraṁ aticca kevalī*—one who has transcended saṁsāra. In this manner, there are many meanings in this verse, especially regarding *nirutti* (etymology). Similarly, the word *samaṇa* (recluse) is explained in the sense of

samitāvī—one who has quieted both merit and demerit. Both merit and evil have been quieted. Through this, the aspect of quietening of all preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*) is shown. In the Buddha's Sāsana, a *samaṇa* is one who has quieted both merit and demerit. Next is the word *nahātaka* (one who has bathed/cleansed). This is frequently used among brahmins. As you have heard, it was the custom of brahmins to go down into the water three times a day to wash away their sins. Instead of this, the Buddha says here: *Ninhāya sabbapāpakāni ajjhattaṁ bahiddhā ca sabbaloke*—having washed away those evil states (*pāpaka dhamma*) regarding the entire world, both internally and externally. Not that kind of external cleansing. In that sense, this refers to the Arahant monk.

Next, regarding the word *nāga*, he asks, "How does one become a *nāga*?" For this, the Buddha uses an etymology (*nirutti*): *āguṁ na karoti kiñci*—since he does no wrong (*āgu* means wrong/sin). In the sense of doing no wrong whatsoever in the world, he is called *nāga*. Observe how the etymology is applied. Then, having broken all bonds, with the power of a bull elephant (*nāga*), it is shown in the Dhamma as being liberated from all fetters (*saṁyojana*). Next is the term *khettajina* (conqueror of fields). This is also a word with a deep meaning. The ordinary meaning of *khettajina* is "one who has won fields." The Buddha explains it as: *khettāni viceyya kevalāni dibbaṁ mānusakañca brahmakhettaṁ*—having understood all fields: divine, human, and brahma fields; *sabbakhettamūlabandhanā pamutto*—liberated from the root-bond of all fields. Here, we can understand what "fields" means. As you may know, it is said in the Dhamma: *kammaṁ khettaṁ viññāṇaṁ bījaṁ taṇhā sineho*—karma is the field, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the seed, craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) is the moisture. Thus, cutting the root of the field means being liberated from all wholesome and unwholesome karma. The same meaning is used to explain the next word, *kusala* (skilful/wholesome): *kosāni viceyya kevalāni dibbaṁ mānusakañca brahmakosaṁ*—the person who has the true meaning of *kusala* is one who has dismantled the tendency to enter into "sheaths" (*kosa*) such as divine, brahma, etc. *sabbakosamūlabandhanā pamutto*—in the sense of having cut the root-bond that leads to those sheaths, he is called *kusala*. Similarly, the word *vedagū* (one attained to knowledge) is explained. Everyone knows *vedagū* as one who has mastered the three Vedas. But the Buddha explains it in a novel way: *vedāni viceyya kevalāni*—understanding all those "vedas" concerning brahmins and recluses. But next, he says: *sabbavedanāsu vītarāgo*—passionless towards all feelings / sensations (*vedanā*). Based on that word (*veda*), the Buddha brings out feeling / sensation (*vedanā*) itself. Bringing out the fact of feeling / sensation (*vedanā*) that everyone has, he states: *sabbaṁ vedaṁ aticca vedagū so*—in the sense of transcending all feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), he is called *vedagū* in this Sāsana. In this manner, many other points are shown. Next, the meaning of the word *anuvidita* (fully understood). *Anuvidita* means having understood something thoroughly. There too, the Buddha presents a deep Dhamma principle:

> *anuvicca papañca nāmarūpaṁ, bahiddhā ca rogamūlaṁ,*
>
> *sabbatogamūlabandhanā pamutto, anuvidito tādi pavuccate tathattā.*

Having thoroughly understood Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) created by the world through this conceptual proliferation / prolific conceptualization (*papañca*). That indeed is *bahiddhā ca rogamūlaṁ*—the root of all disease, both internally and externally. The one liberated from the bond of the root of all disease is called an *anuvidita* (fully understood) person, the "such-like" (*tādi*).

Finally, even if we do not speak of everything in detail, what is particularly visible is the word *paribbājaka* (wanderer). At the beginning, we mentioned the ordinary meaning of *paribbājaka*—wandering from place to place. Or, if one prefers, wandering in search of truth. But the Buddha, according to the etymology and phonetic resonance of the word *paribbājaka*, shows that it means the complete avoiding (*parivajjana*) of all evil deeds, and having avoided them, *pariññācārī*—faring with full understanding. Next, in the sense of being external to them. Then it says: *pariyantaṁ akāsi nāmarūpaṁ*—*pariyanta* means the end/limit. In the sense of having seen the end of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), he is called a *paribbājaka*. All the remaining terms were presented by the Buddha after enriching them with further aspects. Hearing this, Sabhiya the wanderer was highly pleased and then uttered seven verses of praise to the Buddha. This is a very long sutta. The faith (*saddhā*) that arose in Sabhiya the wanderer was such that he immediately rose from his seat and thought: "I was unable to obtain anything from those other teachers. Let alone answering, they did not even listen to them. In contrast, the Buddha explained them so well in this manner." With this thought, he thanked the Buddha with seven verses of praise. We will mention only the first verse because of its special meaning.

In the first verse, it is said:

> *Yāni ca tīṇi yāni ca saṭṭhi, samaṇappavādasitāni bhūripaññā,*
>
> *saññānisitāni osaraṇāni, vineyya oghantamagā.*

This is a verse that is somewhat difficult to understand. We will analyze it as time permits. There is a very deep meaning in it. *Yāni ca tīṇi yāni ca saṭṭhi samaṇappavādasitāni bhūripaññā*—"O One of vast wisdom, whatever sixty-three assertions of recluses (*samaṇa-ppavāda*) there are..." The nature of those assertions of recluses is *saññā-nisitāni*—resting on perception and words/letters. Regarding those sixty-three assertions of recluses, having understood each of them, they are next described as *osaraṇāni*—things that have the nature of pulling inwards (resorts). *vineyya oghantamagā*—having removed them, he went to the end of the flood (*ogha*). The Dhamma speaks of a fourfold flood—the swift-flowing currents that sweep the world away. He reached the end of the swift-flowing currents. Having declared this, he says a series of verses in praise. The final verse of that series is also of special value:

> *Puṇḍarīkaṁ yathā vaggu, toyena na upalippati,*
>
> *evaṁ puññe ca pāpe ca, ubhaye tvaṁ na lippasi,*
>
> *pāde vīra pasārehi, sabhiyo vandati saññuno.*

The verse concludes in this manner:

Puṇḍarīkaṁ yathā vaggu toyena na upalippati—Just as a beautiful white lotus, a white lily, is not smeared or defiled by water,

evaṁ puññe ca pāpe ca ubhaye tvaṁ na lippasi—in the same way, you are not smeared by both merit and demerit.

pāde vīra pasārehi sabhiyo vandati saññuno—"O Hero, stretch out your feet; Sabhiya bows down to the Wise One."

Having declared this, and in addition, as in the usual suttas, expressing his faith by saying, "Magnificent, Lord! Magnificent, Lord!" and stating that he has taken refuge in the Triple Gem, he then asks permission from the Buddha to receive ordination and higher ordination (*upasampadā*). "May the Blessed One ordain me, may he give me higher ordination." Then the Buddha states: "Sabhiya, there is a practice in this Sāsana of mine: if someone who was previously a sectarian (*titthiya*) wishes to ordain in this Sāsana, he must undergo a four-month probationary period (*parivāsa*). After that probationary period, only if the monks give their approval and are willing, is he ordained. However, I can show favor by considering the difference in persons (*puggala-vemattatā*)." Then Sabhiya, showing great faith, says: "O Blessed One, if there is such a rule in the Sāsana, I am willing to undergo the probationary period not just for four months, but even for four years. Thereafter, if the Bhikkhus are willing, let them ordain me." Even though he said so, the Buddha gave ordination and higher ordination to Sabhiya the wanderer immediately. Then, as mentioned in many places, having gone into seclusion and strived diligently, not long after, Venerable Sabhiya attained Arahantship.

Thus, according to this story of Sabhiya, on one hand, this sutta is important for gaining an understanding of the four analytical knowledges (*catu-paṭisambhidā*). We have only briefly highlighted it. We understand that the Buddha used key terms to convey entirely new meanings, as seen in the way he explained words like *brāhmaṇa*, *nahātaka*, etc. He gave a new, deeper meaning to the words existing in society. That indeed is the power to penetrate language. Next, the skill to handle it, to explain it in a way that is comprehensible and fitting, using similes, etc. That is one aspect. Next, as we mentioned, for some reason, the first of the verses presented by Sabhiya the wanderer: *Yāni ca tīṇi yāni ca saṭṭhi samaṇappavādasitāni bhūripaññā*—here, sixty-three assertions of recluses (*samaṇappavāda*) are mentioned. This often becomes a problem for scholars. We are familiar with the sixty-two views of the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. The commentaries explain how the sixty-three are formed by adding the dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) to the sixty-two views mentioned in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. However, as we can see, this is not very acceptable, because we find evidence for this. In the Sutta Piṭaka itself, in the Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta of the Saṁyutta Nikāya, in a question asked by Citta the Householder and answered by Venerable Isidatta, we can see that this commentarial view is unacceptable. The question is as follows: Citta the Householder asks Venerable Isidatta: "Venerable sir, in the presence of what do the sixty-two views in the Brahmajāla arise? In the absence of what do they not

arise?" Then the answer given by Venerable Isidatta is: "When the dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) is present, the sixty-two views arise. When the dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) is absent, those views do not arise." Therefore, we can see that if those sixty-two views arise due to the dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), it is difficult to accept the dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) as the sixty-third view.

Then the next question arises: "What is it then?" In this regard, we have a valuable sutta in the Gahapati Vagga of the Dasaka Nipāta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, which gives us a clue. We think of Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder as the chief supporter of the Buddha, at most an Upāsaka who is a Stream-enterer. That the Householder was no ordinary person is seen from the way he answered the questions asked by several wanderers of other sects. The incident is described as follows: One day, while Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder was on his way to Jetavana to see the Buddha, he thought it was too early to see the Buddha and the Saṅgha, and turned aside into a certain monastery of another sect. When he entered and sat down, those sectarians asked Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder: "Householder, what is the view of the recluse ascetic Gotama?" Then Anāthapiṇḍika says: "Venerable sirs, I do not know fully what the view of the Buddha is." Then they say: "So, you do not know the view of the Buddha. Tell us then, householder, what is the view of the monks?" Anāthapiṇḍika says: "I do not know the view of the monks fully either." Then they say: "Well, then you do not know the view of the recluse ascetic Gotama, nor the view of the monks. Tell us, householder, what is your view?" Then Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder answers: "That is not difficult for me to say. But before that, please tell me your views."

When he said so, one of the wanderers said: "The world is eternal. This alone is the truth, everything else is false. This is my view." Another wanderer says: "The world is not eternal. This alone is the truth, everything else is false. This is my view." A third says: "The world is finite. This is the truth, everything else is false." "Loko sassato, loko asassato, loko antavā..." and so on. These are the ten undeclared (*avyākata*) questions. Next, a fourth comes forward and says: "The world is infinite—this is my view." Consider this briefly in this manner. Next, a fifth comes forward and says: "The soul and the body are the same (*taṁ jīvaṁ taṁ sarīraṁ*)." Here, *jīva* is used in the sense of a self/soul. Another says: "The soul is one thing, the body is another." After these six had spoken, four more come forward. One says: "The Tathāgata exists after death." In those days, *Tathāgata* meant the supreme person, who had attained the highest state in any teaching (*uttama-puriso parama-puriso paramapattipatto*). "He exists after death—this is my view." The next one says: "The Tathāgata does not exist after death"—that is the eighth. The ninth says: "The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death—this is my view." The tenth says: "The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death." These are the ten undeclared questions to which the Buddha did not give answers, which we have introduced in previous suttas.

Having said so, these wanderers then ask: "Well, now we have stated our views. Householder, now you tell us, what is your view?" From this point onwards, listen very carefully. That Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder was no ordinary person can be understood from the answer he gives. "Now, if any venerable sir said: 'The world is eternal, all else is false,' that view arose through unwise attention (the opposite of *yoniso manasikāra*)." This means that all these views were created through unwise attention / lack of radical attention / wise attention. "They are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhata*), volitionally thought out (*cetayita*), and dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuppanna*)." Then, a sectarian says: "Ah, well then, tell us what your view is. Is your view that what is volitionally thought out (*cetayita*), prepared (*saṅkhata*), is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), and that this is your view? Are you not attached to that view?" Then Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder says (expressing it in a unique way): "Whatever exists in that manner as volitionally thought out (*cetayita*), prepared (*saṅkhata*), and dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuppanna*), that is *sudiṭṭhaṁ*—I have seen it well with wisdom. I have seen it with wisdom as impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*). But I do not grasp even that. Along with that, I have seen the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from those views, the departure from them." Try to understand this. There is a very deep point here. Since Anāthapiṇḍika says this as a householder, it should not be impossible for you to understand this as well. If we look at this from the perspective of insight (*vipassanā*), Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder does not grasp even the view: "All preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhata*) are impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*)." Why? Because he says: "I know the escape (*nissaraṇa*) beyond that." Remember that word. "I have seen the escape from those views. Therefore, I do not grasp anything."

After he said this, the sutta continues as follows: Having said this, those sectarians and wanderers, unable to give an answer, sat down in silence, downcast. Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder departed and told this incident to the Buddha. "I went to the monastery of the wanderers and they asked me these words, and I answered them in this manner." Then the Buddha said: "Sadhu, sadhu, householder! Very well, very well, householder! In this way, from time to time, you should refute those foolish men. You have presented such an argument." Having said so, after Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder departed, the Buddha addressed the Bhikkhus and said: "Bhikkhus, even a monk of a hundred rains (*vassa*) should answer sectarians in the very same way Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder did." This is something extraordinary. Although Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder understood it, you might not fully understand the point here. Let us relate that point to the verse. The verse says:

> *Yāni ca tīṇi yāni ca saṭṭhi, samaṇappavādasitāni bhūripaññā,*
>
> *saññānisitāni osaraṇāni, vineyya oghantamagā.*

That is, *samaṇappavāda* means the assertions among recluses. It speaks of sixty-three assertions. Regarding them, it says *saññā-akkara-saññā-nisitāni*—resting on

perceptions and letters, as we briefly mentioned earlier. Next, *osaraṇāni*—they pull inwards. If *nissaraṇa* means escape, departure, then *osaraṇa* (resort/inflow) means pulling towards this side. *Osaraṇa* is an extraordinary word. Sabhiya Paribrājaka uses it to mean things that drag one down into the world, not things that lead to escape. Therefore, *osaraṇāni vineyya oghantamagā*—having abandoned all those sixty-three, he went to the end of the flood (*ogha-anta*). We mentioned the fourfold flood—crossing over the swift currents of saṁsāra means crossing over the four currents of sensual desire (*kāma*), becoming / existence (*bhava*), views (*diṭṭhi*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). Through that crossing over, the Buddha transcended all sixty-three assertions of recluses. To clarify this point further, in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, the Buddha, after explaining the sixty-two views, does not grasp even that analysis of the sixty-two. Why? Because *anupādā vimutto tathāgato*—the Tathāgata, without grasping / holding / fuel (*upādāna*), saw the nature of those views with wisdom, but does not grasp them. He does not grasp even that vision, even that understanding. Instead, *anupādā vimutto*—he is liberated through non-grasping. Similarly, in another place, Vacchagotta Paribrājaka asks the Buddha: "Master Gotama, do you have any standpoints of views (diṭṭhigata)?" The Buddha answers: "Standpoint of views (diṭṭhigata), Vaccha, is something that the Tathāgata has put away (*apanītaṁ etaṁ tathāgata-ssa*)." For what reason? Because the Tathāgata has seen with wisdom. What has he seen? A process (practical path): "Such is form, such the arising of form, such its passing away; such is feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), such the arising of feeling / sensation, such its passing away; such are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), such the arising of preparations / Preparations / volitional activity, such their passing away; such is consciousness (*viññāṇa*), such the arising of consciousness, such its passing away." "I have seen with wisdom the arising and passing away of the five aggregates of grasping / holding / fuel (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). But I do not grasp even that vision. I do not cling to it. Instead, having seen it with wisdom, having abandoned all those *sabba-maññita-mathita*—all those fabrications of the mind, *anupādā vimutto*—I am liberated through non-grasping."

This matter might raise a question for someone: "Do we have to abandon even Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)?" That is where the question lies. We are holding onto Right View as something great. If the sixty-third view, as we said, is Right View, then even that must be abandoned. If it is abandoned, what happens? If even that is abandoned, our 'Buddhism' is gone. This is where we must recall the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (The Simile of the Snake Sutta). You may know from our sermons and books that the uniqueness of that sutta lies in the simile of the raft (*kulla*) and the simile of the water-snake (*alagadda*). There are two special similes. Regarding the simile of the raft, the Buddha declared, not only in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* but also afterwards, reminding the Bhikkhus: "I have taught this Dhamma for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping."

Let us dismantle the raft in that story of the raft. What is there when you dismantle it? There may be branches of trees on this shore, creepers, etc. These are gathered to make the raft. For what was this made? To hold onto? To decorate? No, isn't it? It is solely for crossing over. How does one cross over? Why was a raft mentioned instead of a ship?

hatthehi ca pādehi ca vāyamamāno—using the raft as support, one must make an effort with hands and feet to cross over with this raft. After crossing over, one does not carry the raft on one's shoulders. Why? Because the raft has no value once one has crossed over. What does this show us? Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is solely, solely for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping. If, like other things, we grasp even that, what are we grasping? Those very perceptions and letters. We too are doing exactly what those others did. It is very difficult to understand this. Now, the opposite has happened. Whichever it may be, through our grasping, we say, "This alone is the truth (*idam eva saccaṁ*)." We can show another reason for this.

We have mentioned in some of our sermons a term that appears in several places: *dvayatatā* (duality). A term that has been suppressed/forgotten in our tradition—the talk about duality. The Buddha is one who has transcended this duality. That is why the Buddha says here: *puññapāpa-pahīna*—one who has abandoned both merit and demerit. It is said in many other places in this manner. There is a Dhammapada verse: *Yassa pāraṁ apāraṁ vā, pārāpāraṁ na vijjati*—speaking of Arahants and Buddhas: "For whom there is neither the far shore nor the near shore, nor both the far and the near shore." This is the state of being freed from duality. This is a very deep matter. Because through crossing over, in the end, one does not grasp even the knowledge that helped one to cross over: *anupādā vimutto*. That is why a distinction is shown here. Here, the term used is *samaṇappavāda* (assertions of recluses), not even the word *diṭṭhi* (view). That is why we say to make Right View straight/upright. Right View actually arises in a person at the stage of the Path (*magga*). Until then, there is only a vocabulary. True, it has a practical value. It is made of words and letters in common usage, just as the raft was made of trees and branches. One must use Right View like the raft, solely for crossing over, not for grasping. This is the idea. At the same time, we have the word used by Sabhiya the wanderer: *osaraṇāni*—if we grasp them, we will be dragged back to this side. Escape and departure lie in abandoning (*nissaraṇa*). In this, a wonderful aspect of the Dhamma is revealed. That is why we said Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder was no ordinary person. From one perspective, it might seem like a small thing. The true vision of the Path of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*). As you say: *diṭṭhiñca anupagamma, sīlavā dassanena sampanno*—"not clinging to views, but endowed with vision." That is why Anāthapiṇḍika spoke without fear. Look at what a wonderful praise the Buddha gave to Anāthapiṇḍika! Why can't you think of going in that direction? Look at how wise his way of answering was. He told the others to state their views. After they stated them, he analyzed them. All of them are generated by unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). They are conditioned/prepared (*saṅkhata*) things made by the mind. Every one of them is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*). If you grasp them, you are grasping what is impermanent. If it is impermanent, it is suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). If it is suffering, and you grasp it, you cannot go beyond. That is the deep meaning spoken of there. Instead, Anāthapiṇḍika said in the end: "I see an escape (*nissaraṇa*) beyond that." That escape is the escape that comes after crossing the flood (*ogha-taraṇa*) shown by the Buddha. There are many words related to that escape (*nissaraṇa*) in the Dhammapada, etc., which people are sometimes unable to understand, showing liberation from duality.

Someone might doubt: "How can we abandon both merit and demerit?" Here, this does not mean dismantling the raft while still on this shore. Such dismantling is what is described in the second simile of the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, the simile of the water-snake. If you grasp a water-snake by its tail, the snake will bite you. Theorizers grasp it in that way. "The Buddha has said to abandon merit and demerit; saṁsāra grows through performing merit and demerit." That is going to the other extreme. A stage comes when these must be abandoned. In this regard, we have often used a simile from the *Visuddhimagga*. While a stream is flowing rapidly, a person who wishes to cross it has a method. He grasps a creeper hanging from a tree on this side and swings. Having swung back and forth, as soon as he reaches the other side, he lets go of the creeper. If he does not let go of the creeper, he will swing back to this side, won't he? That creeper is what is called preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). The practitioner (*yogāvacara*) looks at all these as preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). Preparations / Preparations / volitional activity are impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*). If they are impermanent, they are suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). If they are suffering, they are not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*). Isn't that what the Buddha declares? He tells Vacchagotta Paribrājaka when explaining the five aggregates of grasping / holding / fuel (*pañcupādānakkhandha*): "I have seen with wisdom: *n'etaṁ mama, n'eso ham asmi, na me so attā*—'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'" But I do not grasp even that view, because I have crossed over using it as support. He says he has reached the state of non-grasping (*anupādā vimutto*). If one at least directs the mind to the fact that there are two extremes. Those who do not train in this path at all, without even expecting them, take the word of the Buddha wrongly and go to the other extreme. Like grasping the snake by its tail. They try to dismantle the raft and finish the job even before crossing over. But on the other hand, there are those who carry the raft on their shoulders. Now, most of the people among us are of this kind. They carry the raft back and forth on this very shore. They do not even have the hope of crossing over. And that raft is now very large, getting larger and larger. They carry it back and forth. That is why it is said in the Dhammapada:

Appakā te manussesu, ye janā pāragāmino,

athāyaṁ itarā pajā, tīram evānudhāvati.

"Few are those among men who go to the far shore; the rest of mankind only run up and down this shore."

Such is the case here. Therefore, we say all this not to make you take it as a view (*diṭṭhi*), but to awaken you. To keep you awake. What is our practice for? As we always say, learning (*pariyatti*) is for practice (*paṭipatti*). Practice (*paṭipatti*) is for penetration (*paṭivedha*). Next, even if we look at the sequence of purification, in the *Rathavinīta Sutta* etc., which we showed on a previous occasion, this entire True Dhamma is encompassed.

A successful sermon—it may not be successful, but a rich sermon can be delivered by presenting a single word. What is that word? *yāvadeva*—the meaning of this word,

friends, is "solely/merely/just for." Now, I do not know if that word is used in common parlance. The word *yāvadeva* means "solely for this purpose." That is what we showed in the *Rathavinīta Sutta*, etc., through various similes of the relay chariot. In the end, when you look at it, there is no winner. One is for the sake of another, one is for the sake of another. King Kosala, in his urgent journey from Sāvatthi to Sāketa, had chariots prepared; because the horses were tired, after running one stage, he would leave that chariot and mount another. Leaving that, he would mount the third. Going on in this manner, after reaching Sāketa, if someone asked: "Great King, how did you come?" he would have to tell the whole story. Not by the first, nor by the second, nor by the third. But using them as support, and not without them either. Such a wonderful state exists in this Dhamma. That indeed is the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). Because the world exists in the dual views of "it is" (*atthi*) and "it is not" (*natthi*). All views exist within these two. Therefore, one must purify one's view. One purifies it not by going down into the river like the brahmins, but by engaging in this. Through that engagement, when at some stage a practitioner (*yogāvacara*) uses that Buddha-teaching on the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) and reaches the destined state, it becomes a direct vision (*dassana*), through the *opanayika* (leading-onwards) quality of the Dhamma; on such occasions, they see through an inner light, or rather, through penetration. That is what is called the Dhamma-eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*).

Anāthapiṇḍika the Householder was one in whom that Dhamma-eye had arisen. That is why he spoke without fear. "I do not take even this as a view. I do not take even the understanding of *n'etaṁ mama, n'eso ham asmi, na me so attā* as a view. I know the escape (*nissaraṇa*) beyond that," he said. That is the crossing over the fourfold flood. How beautifully this was presented to Sabhiya the wanderer for the first time will be understood if the entire sutta is read carefully. By means of the four analytical knowledges (*catu-paṭisambhidā*), the Buddha wonderfully used each word existing in that society as a vehicle to present his Dhamma. Using its meaning (*attha*), text/nature (*dhamma*), linguistic expression (*nirutti*), and the analytical response (*paṭibhāna*) that followed. According to this, we must reflect. When we say Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), many people think of something connected with books, or rather, that word. They are not unnecessary. They are helpful to the one who is striving to cross over with them. For others, it is like grasping the snake by its tail. They reject them at the very beginning, dismantle the raft, and meet with disaster. One must understand this Middle Path well. Today's sermon will help in that. Since this is a long sutta, we cannot translate each and every part. We have only briefly highlighted them. In this light, one must understand that the four analytical knowledges (*catu-paṭisambhidā*)—just as for a Buddha, Venerable Sāriputta says that the four analytical knowledges arose in him two weeks after his higher ordination. It is mentioned in the Dhamma in this manner. Those who have the ability to penetrate language and explain things in a convincing manner through the four analytical knowledges. It is mentioned that those with such ability attain that state in no long time. For all this, what helps is not reciting the Dhamma like parrots. Reflecting on them by means of such deep suttas, and trying to understand them by applying the insight (*vipassanā*) gained through the power of tranquility (*samatha*), a stage comes when even the raft can be abandoned—that indeed is the deepest part of this

Dhamma. This is wonderfully shown in various places in the *Sutta Nipāta*. Just as abandoning both the far shore and the near shore, abandon both merit and demerit. Abandon both black and white. That talk is meant to bring out this point. A wonderful thing that is not found in any other philosophy is found here within the sixty-third assertion of recluses. Not for the purpose of grasping / holding / fuel (*upādāna*), but for the purpose of crossing over.

I believe you understand these to some extent. In this light, we must reflect on the noble conduct and the noble character of Sabhiya the wanderer, and the depth of the verses spoken by the Buddha in reply. In our life as practitioners (*yogāvacara*), whether lay or ordained, we must not merely memorize the theoretical side (*pariyatti*). We must understand them. Penetrating it deeply and comparing it with our own direct experience in daily life. This is nothing foreign. Within this very fathom-long body, endowed with perception (*saññā*) and mind, lie the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world, as the Buddha has declared. Therefore, one does not need to go far. Search for these. Having scrutinized them with wisdom within one's own five aggregates, seeing their impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature: if something is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), it is suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*); if it is suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), there is nothing to be taken as "mine"—it is through this line of thought, by cultivating insight (*vipassanā*), that it becomes a direct vision (*dassana*). Therefore, by means of these few words, may you shape your lives as practitioners (*yogāvacara*), and may you be able to end this suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra as quickly as possible and cross over to the noble, deathless Nibbāna. Furthermore, from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, whatever beings wish to rejoice in this merit of sharing and hearing the Dhamma, through that rejoicing, may they be comforted by the noble, deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration. With these aspirations, recite these verses.

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #46

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.155)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Duppabbajjaṃ me duradhivāsā gehā;

Dhammo duradhigamo, bhogā kicchā vutti;

No itarītareneva yuttaṃ, cintetuṃ satatamaniccan'ti.

From:

heragāthā (Khuddaka Nikāya) of the Pali Canon, specifically from the verses of Elder Jenta (Jentattheragāthā, Thag 1.111).

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha has praised the perception of the impermanent (*anicca-saññā*) as a meditation capable of uprooting all defilements. Developing the perception of the impermanent paves the way to understanding the Three Characteristics of existence: the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self/non-self (*anattā*). Today, we have chosen as our theme a joyful utterance (*udāna*) of a certain Arahant who attained Arahantship by constantly developing the perception of the impermanent. During the time of the Buddha, Jenta, the son of a regional king in the Magadha country, was inclined toward the going-forth even in his youth due to the power of his past merit; however, a doubt (*vicikicchā*) arose in his mind. The going-forth is extremely difficult. Dwelling in the household life is equally arduous. Realizing this Nibbāna is also a very deep matter; the Dhamma is profound. On the other hand, earning wealth while living in the household life is also difficult. Spending some time in hesitation, wondering what he should do, he eventually came to meet the Buddha, listened to the Dhamma, developed a certain degree of faith (*saddhā*), and went forth. Although he went forth, it appears that for a certain period of time, such hesitant thoughts (*vitakka*) continued to dominate his mind. Nevertheless, putting forth great effort, he developed the perception of the impermanent as his meditation, and through that meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), he attained Arahantship. After becoming an Arahant, remembering the hesitation that

had been in his mind, he joyfully made this utterance of joy with great delight. That verse is the one we have presented as our theme.

"Duppabbajjaṁ me duradhivāsā gehā" — Going-forth is extremely difficult for me, and dwelling in the household life is equally arduous. *"Dhammo (gambhīro) duradhigamo"* — the Dhamma is profound and difficult to penetrate. Acquiring wealth and material resources is also difficult. *"Kicchā vutti no itarītareneva"* — after going forth, one has to utilize the four requisites in the spirit of contentment with whatever is received (*yathālābhasantosa*). When going on almsround (*piṇḍapāta*), on some days one receives little, and on other days one receives much. On some days it is coarse; on other days it is delicious. It is one of the two. This is how the going-forth is. Therefore, *"kicchā vutti no itarītareneva"* — our livelihood in this going-forth is also very difficult. But conquering all those thoughts, in the end, that Venerable One states: *"Yuttaṁ cintetuṁ satatam-aniccataṁ"* — "It is indeed proper to constantly contemplate this impermanence (*aniccata*)." Because he saw its benefits, this is briefly what is narrated in this story.

With this as our starting point, let us try to bring out some Dhamma points that the Buddha declared concerning the Dhamma of impermanence (*aniccata*). Indeed, there is a certain passage wherein the Buddha addressed the Saṅgha on one occasion, declaring the powerful strength of this perception of the impermanent. If we express it in Sinhala: "Monks, the perception of the impermanent, when developed and cultivated frequently, brings to an end all sensual lust (*kāmarāga*). It brings to an end all lust for form (*rūparāga*). It brings to an end all lust for existence (*bhavarāga*). It brings to an end all ignorance (*avijjā*). It brings to an end and uproots all conceit of 'I am' (*asmi-māna*)." Having declared the strength and benefits of the perception of the impermanent in this manner on that occasion, he addressed the Saṅgha and further explained how the perception of the impermanent is to be developed to yield such great benefits. Generally, where the meditation on the perception of the impermanent is shown, you devotees might have seen, especially in discourses like the *Girimānanda Sutta*, where ten perceptions are mentioned. When listing those ten meditation subjects in the *Girimānanda Sutta*, the perception of the impermanent is placed right at the beginning. So here too, the Buddha declared that the Saṅgha could attain these benefits by developing the contemplation of the impermanent regarding the five aggregates of grasping/holding (*pañcupādānakkhandha*).

These five heaps—form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations/volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—are what you devotees have heard of as the five aggregates of grasping/holding (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). *Upādāna* means grasping or holding on. What the Buddha has shown is the constant contemplation of the impermanence of these five heaps that are held onto. The manner of this contemplation is also shown in some places in this way. Here too, he declares to the monks: *"Iti rūpaṁ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthangamo"*—"such is form, such the arising of form, such the passing away of form." In the same way, "such is feeling (*vedanā*), such the arising of feeling, such the passing

away of feeling," and likewise for perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The Buddha declared that a practitioner (*yogāvacara*) must constantly contemplate impermanence in whatever way these arise in the mind. These five heaps are indeed the five heaps that we embrace, which we declare as 'I' and 'mine'.

Why these are called "heaps" (or aggregates) is also analyzed. It is declared in the Buddha's own words. They are analyzed in eleven ways. Each of these heaps can be past, future, or present—there are three right there. It could be a past form that comes to mind, a future form, or a present form. Likewise, internal (*ajjhatta*) or external (*bahiddhā*)—it could be a form regarding oneself, or a form regarding another. Sometimes, a form regarding oneself is compared with a form regarding another: "I am more beautiful than them," or "uglier," and so on. These too are things grasped. Thus: past, future, present; internal, external; further, gross or subtle; inferior or superior; and finally, far or near. This completes the eleven-fold classification. Past, future, present, internal, external, gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far, and near—this is the eleven-fold way the Buddha's word analyzes them. Thus, regarding form, feeling, and so on, these are the heaps. We live with these heaps, we carry them on our shoulders, they constantly flow into our minds—either as past things, past forms, future forms, and so on. Now, all these five heaps are described in the Dhamma as the prepared/conditioned (*saṅkhata*)—as things that have been prepared or constructed.

What is the nature of these prepared/constructed things? They appear to us as permanent (*nicca*); through that very preparation, we try to establish ourselves in them as something stable. This is why they are called *saṅkhata*. Though they are preparations (*saṅkhāra*), they are prepared (*saṅkhata*). *Saṅkhata* means prepared or constructed things. Now, the Buddha points out three characteristics of the prepared. "Monks, there are three characteristics of the prepared. What are the three characteristics? In every prepared thing, an arising is discerned: *'uppādo paññāyati'*. Likewise, a passing away is discerned: *'vayo paññāyati'*. An arising is discerned, a passing away is discerned. Thirdly, it is said: *'ṭhitassa aññathattaṁ paññāyati'*. Even regarding that which we assumed to be stable or static (*ṭhiti*), an alteration—a change into something other—is discerned." So the Buddha is pointing out the actual state of arising and passing away.

But within the prepared (*saṅkhata*), we construct a state called "existence" or "stability" (*ṭhiti*). We construct a "present moment". What is now being shown is that this present moment is constantly changing. Thus, in true insight (*vipassanā*), rather than past or future preparations (*saṅkhāra*), it is the present preparations that are taken as the object in intense insight. The Buddha declared on one occasion: "Monks, past forms and future forms are impermanent (*anicca*). What need is there to speak of present forms?" He reminds us that even this "present" which we think of as so significant is likewise impermanent. It also changes, being subject to alteration (*aññathābhāvī*). Yet, it is this very nature of alteration that the world grasps onto as existence (*bhava*) and grasping/holding (*upādāna*), trying to establish an existence there. It is within that mental state that various kinds of sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), suffering (*dukkha*), and despair (*domanassa*) arise due to these five aggregates. Why? Because

when that foundation we constructed decays, cracks, and collapses—forgetting that it collapses without our knowledge—when we stand upon it, we fall down with its collapse. Those are the characteristics of the prepared (*saṅkhata*). Some people present *uppāda*, *ṭhiti*, and *bhaṅga* (arising, static phase, dissolution) as equivalent. But the important point the Buddha brings out here is that even that which we assumed to be static (*ṭhiti*) is constantly changing. Because of this,

In discourses like the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta*, it is shown that generally, worldly beings have a longing for the past. "Ah, if only that past thing were still there, how good it would be!" They also look forward to the future. Thus, the Buddha declared: *"Yad-atītaṁ pahīnaṁ"*—the past is abandoned, what is gone is gone; *"Appattañ-ca anāgataṁ"*—the future has not yet arrived. Therefore, longing for the past is futile. Since future things have not yet arrived, taking delight in them is also futile. Next, *"Paccuppannañ-ca yo dhammaṁ tattha tattha vipassati"*—one should see the present phenomenon right there, in each place. One should see it right there through insight (*vipassanā*). To see it right there through insight means to see those preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that construct the prepared (*saṅkhata*). The things that help to construct a prepared thing (*saṅkhata*) are called preparations (*saṅkhāra*). No matter how often we hear these words, their meaning is sometimes not clear. These *saṅkhāra* mean preparations or constructions. It is through these preparations that a prepared/constructed thing is made.

But what lies at the root of these preparations/constructions? Ignorance (*avijjā*). You devotees have heard the phrase *"avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā"* (dependent on ignorance, preparations arise) in discourses on Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). The most fundamental preparation pointed out by the Buddha is this body we grasp onto, which is prepared/constructed through in-breathing and out-breathing (*assāsa-passāsa*). It was because they could not understand even its impermanence (*aniccata*) that ancient Hindu yogis took this breath as a "life-force" (*prāṇa*) or soul (*ātman*). What a foolish thing to do! This life-force, which is in-breathing and out-breathing, is constantly changing; even within a single breath, the insight-practitioner perceives it in waves, realizing that there is a vast amount within a single inhalation. Yet, the ordinary world grasps tightly onto those preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Thus, the body is prepared/constructed by this in-breathing and out-breathing. This is the primary preparation. Of course, food, drink, and so forth also play a part. Similarly, speech—the words we speak—we take very seriously, as we must in ordinary life. But its true nature is shown to be prepared/constructed by thought-conception and discursive thinking (*vitakka-vicāra*), which is a stream of thoughts within the mind. That too is constantly changing. It is from those preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that speech is prepared. Next is this mind which we think of as so colorful and complex, which we take so seriously. It is prepared/constructed by perception (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*). Because of this, perception and feeling are called mental preparations (*citta-saṅkhāra*). Thus, what do these preparations—bodily preparation (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), verbal preparation (*vacī-saṅkhāra*), and mental preparation (*citta-saṅkhāra*)—do through these constructive processes? What they do is what comes next in Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*): consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*).

The Buddha has pointed out this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as an illusion (*māyā*). This consciousness always co-exists with Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Consciousness grasps an object, and the Buddha presents that grasped object as Name-and-Form. Regarding this Name-and-Form, no matter how much we think about it, we cannot understand form on its own in that way. Name (*nāma*) also assists in it. The mind cannot grasp a form in isolation; Name and Form always go together. Therefore, the object that comes to the mind is designated as 'Name-and-Form'; otherwise, the Buddha could have called it 'mind-form' (*citta-rūpa*). Now, the ordinary world thinks that 'mind' and 'form' exist as two separate things. Physical scientists also think that form exists separately on its own. If so, the Buddha could have called it 'mind-form' (*citta-rūpa*) or 'mental-form' (*mano-rūpa*). Why did he call it 'Name-and-Form' instead? It is because form can only be recognized through the naming (*nāma*) that is given to it. And it is through the resistance or impingement (*paṭigha*) presented by form that the concept of impingement comes to the Name (*nāma*). This relationship is shown by a well-known simile accepted in Buddhist thought since ancient times, which you devotees may have heard—the journey of a blind man who can walk and a lame man who can see. The lame man climbs onto the back of the blind man and shows the way. Similarly, Name can see but cannot walk, while Form can walk but is blind. Everyone knows these two as Name-and-Form. Insight-practitioners identify the object that comes to the mind as Name-and-Form. Thus, contemplating these preparations (*saṅkhāra*) of Name-and-Form is what belongs to the insight-practitioner. Through this, the capacity to quickly see that widely assumed impermanence (*aniccata*) right there, is present within those very phenomena (*dhamma*) of Name-and-Form.

What is analyzed as Name-and-Form phenomena—specifically Name-phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*)—are the five phenomena: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention/volition (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). You can think of them like the five fingers of a hand: feeling, perception, volition, contact, attention. Many people, not only in modern times but since the distant past, have tried to alter this classification of Name-phenomena. Some suggest putting contact (*phassa*) at the beginning. But the Buddha's word says: feeling, perception, volition, contact, and attention. Feeling is the first. Next are perception, volition, contact, and attention in that order. However, logically speaking, it is true that contact (*phassa*) occurs before feeling. But one should not move contact to the front. That is what we have to say. Contact must remain in its place. Feeling, perception, volition, contact, attention. What is the reason? Think about it for a moment. Our hand touches a hot object. After touching it, we do not think about the contact (*phassa*) first. We think first of the feeling (*vedanā*). Activity arises through feeling, and it is through feeling that those physical phenomena are identified. Primarily, although we describe it, this does not take a long time. In a split second, as soon as the hand touches the hot object, it is instantly withdrawn. Within that, there is the entire group of Name-phenomena just mentioned. Through feeling (*vedanā*), there arises the perception (*saññā*) that the hand is burning. Through perception, there arises the volition (*cetanā*) that the hand must be withdrawn. Next, attention (*manasikāra*) is directed to the burnt spot. Thus, it is through the Name-phenomena of

feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*) that form is identified.

Next, as for things belonging to Form—what is called Form (*rūpa*)—you devotees have heard of the great primary elements (*mahābhūta-dhamma*), namely earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). They are called "great primaries" because they cannot be identified individually; they always exist in a mixed state. But we identify them according to their characteristics. Those characteristics are what are called Name-phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*). That is why we said form is recognized through those Name-phenomena. What gives Name-phenomena the concept of resistance, the concept of contact, are the physical phenomena. This point is shown very deeply in this Dhamma. The Buddha divides the word contact (*phassa*) into two parts: designation-contact (*adhivacana-samphassa*) and resistance-contact (*paṭigha-samphassa*). "Designation" (*adhivacana*) refers to Name (*nāma*). Thus, within this contact, there is both a naming and an impingement/resistance, and they are mutually supportive. From that simile, you devotees can understand why all these points are shown in the Dhamma: it is on the day we understand the true nature of this illusion of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that weariness (*nibbidā*) toward preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arises. As long as weariness toward preparations does not arise, and as long as there is attachment to preparations, the prepared (*saṅkhata*) continues to be constructed.

The Buddha shows this next: where is this prepared/constructed (*saṅkhata*) manufactured? This prepared is manufactured within the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). In modern times, one may understand "bases" as spheres of experience, and that is fine if it helps. It is within these six sense-bases that the five aggregates of grasping/holding (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) are prepared, created, and produced. What are the six? Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. They are called the base of eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassāyatana*), the base of ear-contact (*sota-samphassāyatana*), and finally, the base of mind-contact (*mano-samphassāyatana*). Why are they called bases (*āyatana*)? They belong to two sides; to be a base, there must be two. The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, and so on, going down to the mind and thoughts/ideas (*manodhamma*) that come to the mind. Although we do not list them all, you devotees can infer all six. The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, and so on. Now, the deepest point is the sixth: the mind. The objects that come to the mind are called *dhamma* (phenomena/ideas). We are frequently reminded of the Dhammapada verse: *"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā"*. According to this verse spoken by the Buddha, regarding these *dhamma* or "things"—we in the world think that things exist separately on their own. But what is the actual state of affairs? The mind precedes these "things". Furthermore, between the two, the mind is supreme. Finally, it says *manomayā*—these things are made of the mind. That is what is difficult for the world to accept. It is a very difficult state to accept: that these things in front of us are prepared/constructed by the mind. It is a very profound matter.

So to clarify this point and the impermanence (*aniccata*) in it, the Buddha impresses this perception of the impermanent (*anicca-saññā*) upon the minds of the Saṅgha in a very

powerful discourse, the *Dvaya Sutta*. He presents it in a wonderful way. The theme of that discourse is *Dvayaṁ*—meaning 'dyad' or 'pair', concerning 'two'. "Monks, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arises dependent on a dyad." We think that consciousness exists independently on its own. But consciousness arises dependent on a dyad. What is the dyad? The eye and form; thus, eye-consciousness arises dependent on the eye and form. Ear-consciousness arises dependent on the ear and sound. Infer in this way. Finally, mind-consciousness arises dependent on the mind and mind-objects (*dhamma*). Apart from this, there is no such thing as consciousness (*viññāṇa*) on its own. Thus, in accordance with the Dhamma, there are six types of consciousness. As we mentioned earlier, there is a rapid, reciprocal conditioning (*aññamañña-paccayatā*) or mutual causal relationship between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Thus, what is called consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is those six. Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. How does the Buddha demonstrate the impermanence (*aniccata*) of each of those types of consciousness? Consciousness arises dependent on a dyad, such as the eye and form. Then he tells the Saṅgha: "Monks, the eye is impermanent (*anicca*), subject to change, subject to alteration. Form is also like that; impermanent, subject to change, subject to alteration." In all of these, the word *cala* (unstable/moving) is used. Even in modern times, we speak of movement/oscillation (*calanaya*). The eye, form, and everything are in constant motion. They are constantly moving. They are constantly wearing away. *"Calā ca eva vayā ca, aniccā vipariṇāmino"*—they undergo change/transformation, and they undergo alteration (*aññathābhāvī*). This is said to impress it upon the mind. Thus, the eye is impermanent (*anicca*), constantly trembling and changing. Forms are also like that. Next, he says that the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that arises from the coming together of the eye and form is also impermanent and subject to change.

Then the Buddha asks the Saṅgha a question: "Monks, how could consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which arises from the coming together of two impermanent things, be permanent?" He asks this. Thus, that eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*) is also impermanent. But he does not stop there. Next, the Buddha declares that the coming together of the eye, form, and eye-consciousness is contact (*phassa*). The meeting of these three—the eye, form, and the eye-consciousness arising from them—is the moment of contact. That eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*) is also impermanent. It also changes. It also undergoes alteration. There too, the Buddha asks: if eye-contact arose dependent on certain causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*), those causes and conditions are also impermanent and subject to change. Then he asks, how can that which depends on changing causes and conditions be permanent? In this manner, the Buddha attempts to impress upon minds the impermanence of every single aspect of these six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). Thus, the insight-practitioner realizes this truth of impermanence through constant perception of the impermanent (*anicca-saññā*) and by applying attention (*manasikāra*) to those Name-phenomena. When contemplation is applied more and more subtly, that "foundation"—that state of stability (*ṭhiti*) we assumed—becomes narrower and narrower. Indeed, the "present" is not something that can be measured. It is a squeezed state between the past and the future. If someone is asked, "What is 'now'?", can they answer? What is 'now'? One has to answer according to the context.

'Now' could sometimes refer to a long period. Sometimes, depending on the situation, it could be very narrow. Thus, for the insight-practitioner, 'now' becomes narrower and narrower as attention becomes subtler, as attention becomes stronger. Through this insight-attention—this radical attention/wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) which sees things right there—that perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) wears away. When the perception of permanence wears away, a prepared/constructed thing (*saṅkhata*) is not built up there. Within these few words, you devotees can understand many points relevant to insight (*vipassanā*).

Next, the Buddha points to the common term applied to these words about impermanence: "knowledge of things as they are" (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*). On one occasion, the Buddha declares how Nibbāna emerges through these six sense-bases. Or rather, how instead of the five aggregates growing, they wear away. First, he shows how they are built up. If someone does not know the eye as it really is (*yathābhūta*), and does not know forms as they really are. By "as they really are," one must understand: they do not know their impermanence (*aniccata*). Not knowing their impermanence, disregarding their impermanence, disregarding the impermanence of the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that arises dependent on the eye and form, disregarding the impermanence of the contact (*phassa*) that arises therefrom, disregarding the impermanence of the felt experience, feeling (*vedanā*), and so forth arising from that contact—if one does not know them as they really are, that person develops attachment toward them, develops craving (*taṇhā*), and through that arising of craving, they are built up. That anchors itself. Let us think of the form components present in that moment—say, a moment one is pleased with. Those relevant aspects of form come together and build up one's aggregate of grasping/holding for form (*rūpa-upādānakkhandha*). The feelings relevant to that compile together, and "I experienced such feeling on such a day, in such a situation"—thus feelings are built up. "I was one who had such a form," "I was one who had such feeling," and so on, and regarding the other aggregates too, in this way, the five aggregates of grasping/holding (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) are separated and constructed, flowing out from those six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). This happens by taking the six sense-bases as permanent, taking each part of the six sense-bases as permanent, due to the lack of knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*). Next, the Buddha shows the other side of this: going toward Nibbāna. So that is how the prepared (*saṅkhata*) is made, that is how it is built up.

He also shows how they wear away. How is that? If an insight-practitioner sees right at each point: "the eye is impermanent (*anicca*), it changes, it undergoes alteration, it undergoes *aññathābhāva*," and lives constantly with this understanding, then in that moment, those experiences wear away right then and there; they do not go and pile up. They do not pile up as grasping/holding (*upādāna*) or as the prepared (*saṅkhata*). When this becomes powerful, it is then that one can realize even that noble Nibbāna called the cessation of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*). The cessation of the six sense-bases is the state of the cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*). This is what is called Nibbāna. That is why the Buddha declared: "Within this very fathom-long body, I declare the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the

cessation of the world." The Buddha points this out based on these very six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). The culmination of impermanence (*aniccata*) is the signless (*animitta*). Three things are shown as aids to Nibbāna: the signless (*animitta*), the desireless/uncommitted (*appaṇihita*), and the void/empty (*suññatā*). The signless (*animitta*) refers to the culmination of the perception of the impermanent. When the perception of the impermanent is developed to its utmost, no sign (*nimitta*) comes to the mind. A state arises where the mind cannot take up any sign. It is then signless (*animitta*). This is itself a name for Nibbāna. For that very reason, if something is impermanent,

...it is of the nature of suffering (*dukkha*). Where there is the nature of suffering, there is no desire. *Paṇidhi* means desire or aspiration. Thus, it is called the desireless/uncommitted (*appaṇihita*). Why did we say that by developing the perception of the impermanent (*anicca-saññā*), all Three Characteristics are developed? It is because it is stated in the Dhamma: *"Yad-aniccaṁ taṁ dukkhaṁ, yaṁ dukkhaṁ tad-anattā"*—a passage frequently mentioned in the Dhamma. Whatever is impermanent (*anicca*) is suffering (*dukkha*). If it is suffering, it cannot be a self (*attā*); it cannot be maintained as 'I' and 'mine'. Thus, when these Three Characteristics are developed to the highest level, when impermanence is developed to the highest, the mind goes to the signless (*animitta*). It is like the gateway to Nibbāna. Next, the desire called aspiration (*paṇidhi*) disappears because of that nature of suffering. That is called the desireless/uncommitted (*appaṇihita*). Next, if there is no state of self (*attā*), it is void/empty (*suññata*). Where there is a self, one grasps a "thing". Where there is no state of self, it is void. This indeed approaches the subject of voidness (*suññatā*).

In the past, when the Buddha preached this Dhamma, he brought up and compared various teachings and views (*diṭṭhi*) of the teachers of that time, polishing and highlighting this Dhamma. Today, we are compelled to speak in the same way in this Dhamma. Why is that? In this era, physical science is something that many people talk about, and to which many minds are drawn. Even nuclear physicists themselves have now realized the shortcomings in some of the fundamental hypotheses of physical science. What was the mistake they made? Instead of what we mentioned earlier from the Dhammapada verse, *"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā"*, those people thought that there was some separate thing, distinct from the mind and undetected by the mind, existing on its own. This is not just their delusion; it is an idea coming down from the past. The view that there is some truly existing substance, a reality existing permanently, has existed since ancient times. Next, that there is an "atom" as something real, some truth independent of the mind. But now, they have come to understand the Buddha's word to such an extent that those nuclear physicists themselves—even the leading ones of this recent era—say that as long as something is not measured, one cannot attribute qualities or characteristics to it as "such-and-such a thing".

Furthermore, let alone anything else, one cannot even say that something exists as long as it is not measured. What this demonstrates is—as you devotees may have heard in our

previous sermons—that Nibbāna is described as "the crushing of the conceit 'I am'" (*asmi-māna-samugghāta*). It is according to this viewpoint of 'I am' (*asmi*) that these five aggregates operate. When one assumes 'I am', one measures accordingly. There is a valuable discourse in the Buddha's own words that declares this measuring. On one occasion, Ven. Ānanda explains to the Saṅgha something declared by the Buddha: a definition of the word "world" (*loka*). What is the "world"? "That by which one gains a perception of the world, that by which one does a measuring of the world, that is called the 'world' in this Noble Discipline." That by which one identifies the world, that by which one does a measuring of the world, is what is called the "world" in this Dispensation, according to this Noble Discipline (*ariya-vinaya*). With what does one measure? Here are the things with which one measures: with the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and finally, with the mind—with these six sense-bases. It is stated that without these measurings, there is no world. So this is the very story that these people have had to accept. Without a measurement, where there is no measuring, one cannot attribute anything to a thing; one cannot even say that it exists. Likewise, one cannot speak of any characteristic of that existing thing.

To what extent—those devotees who do science may have heard—this is called quantum physics. This is the latest branch of physical science considered the most advanced in recent times. Even the philosophers presenting quantum theory have now had to accept that where there is no observation, one cannot say that something exists. As long as there is no observation, one cannot say that something exists; that is to say, without observation, one cannot say that something exists separately on its own. One cannot say that there is a separate world independent of the mind. To what extent—some of those leading nuclear physicists say that when their observations become contradictory, when with every observation their premise that 'there is a separate thing on its own' is disproved, having nothing else to do, in the end they say: "If I had known earlier that one could not escape this quantum leap after seeing the results of these observations, I would not have laid my hands on this." Those scientists say this. Having nothing they can do, they have become perplexed. They started from the wrong end: assuming that things exist independent of the mind. They still continue to look with that idea, assuming that such a thing exists. But in the end they realize, and they are forced to say, especially regarding whether electrons exist: "If by the mere act of our looking, that electron is disturbed, how can we know its true state?" Thus, if it changes even by the mere extent of our directing the mind to it, how can we say what it is? They have had to face such a dilemma. What is the reason for this? Now, let us state the corresponding part in our Buddha-Dhamma. The Buddha has preached a discourse—since we have declared this discourse on previous occasions, it is nothing new to those devotees who have heard our sermons.

On one occasion, the Buddha said to the Saṅgha: "Monks, if other sectarians (*aññatitthiyā*) come and ask you such questions, what answers would you give them?" This shows that the Buddha had prepared the minds of the Saṅgha to answer when such questions arose. The Buddha says: "Other sectarians might come and ask you questions like this: 'What is the root of all things? What is the arising of all things? Where do all

things originate? Toward what are all things directed?'" There are many such questions. We will shorten them according to the situation in a way relevant to this topic. Then the monks say: "We do not have the ability to answer these. May the Blessed One himself explain." Thereupon, the Buddha delivers that discourse: "If they ask so, monks, say this:

"Chandamūlakā, āvuso, sabbe dhammā"—'Friends, all things are rooted in desire/interest (*chanda*).' *Chanda* means desire or interest. Our mind is directed toward something first of all because of the desire for it. Let us take *chanda* as a lighter shade of craving (*taṇhā*). Thus, it is within a sense of purpose or need that even those scientists engage in research—it is because of *chanda*. They expect to analyze the atom or its components; they have a great interest in it. That *chanda*—all things are rooted in desire (*chanda*). Next, it says: *"Manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā"*—all things originate in attention (*manasikāra*). To express *sambhava* in Sinhala, it means the arising of all things; everything is met by us when our attention, our contemplation, is directed to it. That is the very point about "observation" mentioned earlier. If by our very act of observing, the thing we subject to observation changes, how can we know its true state? That is the question they ask. This demonstrates that there is nothing apart from the mind. This is *manomayā*! If those scientists had correctly understood these three phrases—*"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā"*—they would not have fallen into this. They started from the wrong side, saying that "things" exist.

Next, there is another aspect: *"Phassasamudayā sabbe dhammā"*—all things arise from contact (*phassa*). What is called contact? Just now we spoke of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). Each of these bases is called the base of eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*), the base of ear-contact (*sota-samphassa*), the base of nose-contact (*ghāna-samphassa*), and so forth. Both words *phassa* and *samphassa* are used. Thus, it is through these bases that contact arises, and it is from contact that a thing originates. It is by mental contacting that those things are constructed. Regarding *"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā"*, it is when there is mind-contact (*mano-samphassa*) that the thing taken as its object emerges: contact (*phassa*). Furthermore, the Buddha used this word contact (*phassa*) in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* to dismantle all speculative views (*diṭṭhi*). How did the Buddha reject even those views established by the ancient sages who, far exceeding the achievements of modern scientists, developed the mind, developed all five supernormal knowledges (*pañca-abhiṅña*) to the extent of seeing past births, and stood upon that direct experience? "That too is dependent on contact." "That too is dependent on contact." He dismantles them by that very fact. What does it mean to say that it arises dependent on contact? It is connected to the mind. It is not something correct, not the ultimate reality. That is the point. Now, to clarify these points further, later two illustrations are given, which have been frequently shown to you devotees. But before that, let us mention another thing stated by those nuclear physicists, which was referred to earlier: "If by the mere directing of our mind to something—by the mere directing of our mind toward what we intend to observe—it is disturbed, how can we know its true state?"

The best answer to that question is found in two points we previously presented as similes when explaining the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). One is the dog walking across a footbridge, who is deceived by his own reflection. Thinking it is another dog, if he is angry, he growls, or if he is pleased, he wags his tail. Otherwise, he keeps looking to see who is there. But that problem is resolved in this way: as we briefly mentioned, the dog thinks: "I look because it is visible." But "it is visible because I look." What happened to this dog is what happens to most people. That dog on the footbridge, going to the middle of the bridge, looks at the reflection cast in the water and thinks: "I look because it is visible." But it is visible because he looks. That "looking" is what is called observation. Now, connect those words. Through this, one can understand that regarding this Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), even scientists are already caught up in the Name-phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) within that act of looking. A separate reality cannot be seen on its own. *"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā."*

Another simile for this was presented recently when explaining Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) phenomena, and it seems this simile has become popular with many for various reasons. What is it? We illustrated it using an ancient Greek myth. Briefly, there is an ancient myth about Narcissus, a beautiful Greek youth who had never seen his own face. While walking in the forest, as he bent down over a pond to wash his face, he mistook his own reflection for a water nymph dwelling in the water and tried to embrace her. He tried all day, and for many days, and in the end, he sacrificed his life. When Narcissus reached his hands into the water to embrace the nymph, each time he did so, the water was disturbed and rippled. Now, consider that it is through our very attention (*manasikāra*), through our very attempt to know what it is, that it is disturbed—this is the kind of disturbance meant. What, then, is being looked at here? It is Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Although it is taken as a separate thing, what is constantly the object of our mind and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is Name-and-Form. This is a form merely in name. It is not real form. It is not the reality (*yathā*). As we said, form is recognized through name because of that naming. And the concept of impingement/resistance is given to name through form. Why is it said that one cannot attribute qualities or characteristics to either of them? This too has been shown very well by the Buddha in a very profound discourse named the *Mahānidāna Sutta*.

A discourse showing a very profound aspect of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), a very profound aspect concerning the word contact (*phassa*), was preached step by step by the Buddha to Ven. Ānanda. We have also shown this on various occasions. Briefly, he demonstrates contact through the relationship between Name and Form, stating that without those modes, signs, and characteristics by which the group belonging to Name is designated, no concept of designation regarding physical form would be manifest. That is to say, without those Name-phenomena of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*), no identification of physical form can be made. Next, without those physical impingements/resistances arising from earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*) which belong to Form, no talk of sensory contact, impingement, or experiencing regarding Name-phenomena would be manifest. These two aspects are shown. There too, those characteristics can be attributed

only after the mind is applied to it. Apart from that, there is no such thing as characteristics inherent or intrinsic to them on their own. It has to be accepted that they are attributed by the mind. Regarding this point, there is a valuable discourse in the text *Sutta Nipāta* named the *Mahāviyūha Sutta*. In those days, intense debates and disputes existed in India, even more than today. The Buddha has delivered an extraordinary sermon that pacifies those debates and disputes. In it, a valuable verse is shown:

Passaṁ naro dakkhati nāmarūpaṁ,

Disvāna vā ñassati tānimeva;

Kāmaṁ bahuṁ passatu appakaṁ vā,

Na hi tena suddhiṁ kusalā vadanti.

This verse is specifically cited here because it is also relevant to the problem of those nuclear physicists mentioned earlier.

"Passaṁ naro dakkhati nāmarūpaṁ"—"A man seeing, sees only Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*)." There is nothing apart from Name-and-Form. *"Disvāna vā ñassati tānimeva"*—"having seen, what he knows is just that." It is nothing apart from it. *"Kāmaṁ bahuṁ passatu appakaṁ vā"*—"Let him see much or little, it is of no use." *"Na hi tena suddhiṁ kusalā vadanti"*—"the wise do not say that purity comes by that, nor do they say it is complete." That is the story. Thus, the Buddha rejected all sixty-two speculative views (*diṭṭhi*) in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*—all views concerning both the past and the future—showing that they are dismantled through this teaching, and the Buddha concluded the *Brahmajāla Sutta* with an extraordinary simile.

I hope to bring that simile to the minds of you devotees on this occasion. In it, the Buddha shows why this should be called *Brahmajāla* (the Net of Brahma / the Supreme Net). The Buddha presents the story of this Supreme Net in this way: "Monks, suppose a skilled fisherman or a fisherman's apprentice casts a very finely woven net, with very fine mesh, over a small pond. After covering the pond containing the fish with that fine net, that fisherman knows very well that whatever fish are in it, whenever they rise to the surface, they are caught within that net. They cannot rise above the mesh; they remain trapped in the net. That is what is meant by saying any speculative view (*diṭṭhi*) is caught in this net." What, then, is this mesh of the net? The mesh of the net is indeed contact (*phassa*). That is why every speculative view in that discourse is dismantled. The Buddha dismantles all sixty-two views saying: *"Tad-api phassa-paccayā, tad-api phassa-paccayā, tad-api phassa-paccayā"*—"that too is dependent on contact, that too is dependent on contact, that too is dependent on contact." This is the very same story we have to say here regarding the problem of those scientists. They must realize one day that they cannot see this apart from the thing they observe. What they see is that very Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). They think they are seeing an independently existing thing there. That is why it is said: "If by the mere act of our looking to see if this electron exists, it is disturbed, how can we know its true state?" It is from the very degree of mental application—through attention (*manasikāra*)—that these arise. They originate from

contact (*phassa*). That point of origin is what the Buddha brought out in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. All those speculative views contact again and again through the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*): *"phussa phussa paṭisaṁvedenti"*. Contacting through those six sense-bases, they experience feeling (*vedanā*) through them. Through that, they develop perceptions and cravings (*taṇhā*). Developing perception and craving, they rotate again in existence (*bhava*)—in this way, those speculative views are dismantled. Apart from contacting through the six sense-bases, they cannot know. What they see is not ultimate reality; that is what the *Brahmajāla Sutta* points out.

What, then, is the truth? What is the truth discovered by the Buddha? It is the very thing we mentioned earlier: the ultimate culmination of the view of not-self/non-self (*anattā*) is voidness (*suññatā*). Voidness is the truth. Worldly beings are trapped within things measured by that wedge they have driven in, called 'I am' (*asmi*), assuming "they exist, they exist." The Buddha showed that when that wedge of 'I am' (*asmi*) is pulled out, nothing remains. He declared this: *"Sassato-r-iva khāyati, passato natthi kiñcanaṁ"*—in an inspired verse on one occasion, the Buddha declared: "It appears as if eternal, but to one who sees (*passato*), there is nothing." It appears as if eternal. He points this out on another occasion: *"Jānato passato natthi kiñcanaṁ"*—"to one who knows and sees, there is nothing in the world." That is also a realization; there is a moment when it is directly experienced. That is exactly what the Buddha meant when he said that the cessation of the world is also right here. The arising of the world is due to craving (*taṇhā*); *"taṇhā ponobhavikā"*—it is by craving that existence (*bhava*) is prepared. The Buddha has declared this in various ways: the hindrance of ignorance (*avijjā-nīvaraṇa*) covers up the impermanence (*aniccata*) of these things. The glue of craving sticks them together. Within that, in the present, one assumes that "a thing exists", assuming a state of stability (*ṭhiti*). In that darkness of ignorance, with that force of craving called thirst, it is also described as the glue of craving. It is by gluing with that glue of craving that this existence (*bhava*) is constructed. It is within that constructed world that one travels further and further in this *saṁsāra*.

Thus, to escape from *saṁsāra*, the Buddha points to that true state of affairs (*yathā-tatta*). What is true realization? *"Jānato passato natthi kiñcanaṁ"*. As for those names for Nibbāna we mentioned—the signless (*animitta*), the desireless/uncommitted (*appaṇihita*), and the void (*suññata*)—there is a place where signs disappear, desires disappear, and there is no stable self assumed as 'I' and 'mine'. That is what is called the cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*), experienced in this very life. Therefore, the liberation that humans seek—the Buddha has pointed out that speculative views (*diṭṭhi*) are like a headache. Regarding what those nuclear physicists declared, one nuclear physicist stated at one point: "If we had known that we could not escape this wretched quantum leap, we would not have laid our hands on this quantum theory." They say so when they are helpless. Why did he call it wretched? Because in the end, what is done in this observation is merely the expansion of *saṁsāra*, not the realization of reality. In reality, the Buddha points out that voidness (*suññatā*) comes at the end. Because each of these worlds is constructed through one's own six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). Our world is not the dog's world. Other animals construct their worlds through their six sense-

bases. It is that very world that the Buddha described as suffering (*dukkha*); there is no satisfaction in it. There are the sufferings of birth (*jāti*), decay and death/aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death. If one hopes to escape from it, one has to start from that very impermanence (*aniccata*). If something is impermanent, one understands that it is suffering (*dukkha*). All these reconstructions—these preparations/constructions (*saṅkhāra*)—are:

Aniccā vata saṅkhārā,

Uppādavayadhammino;

Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti,

Tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho.

This is frequently heard in houses of mourning; you devotees might think of it as something inauspicious. But within it lies the entire truth. *"Aniccā vata saṅkhārā"*—preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are indeed impermanent. *"Uppādavayadhammino"*—they are of the nature of arising and passing away. They arise only to be destroyed. *"Tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho"*—the calming/stilling of those preparations is bliss. This is why you devotees have heard that Nibbāna is described as *"sabbasaṅkhārasamatha"*—the stilling of all preparations. When preparations are stilled, a prepared/constructed thing (*saṅkhata*) does not arise. When a prepared thing is not constructed, those graspings/holdings (*upādāna*) called the five aggregates of grasping/holding are not built up. The Buddha declared that this state can be realized in this very life. This is what is called "extinguishment without grasping/holding" (*anupādā-parinibbāna*). When all that is let go, the mind is liberated; it is not some strange thing, not something to be grasped—that mind. If within this grasping/holding (*upādāna*), there are birth (*jāti*), decay and death/aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death, and they are responsible for them, then the moment of letting go of this is the bliss of liberation. The understanding within that is indeed *"Jānato passato natthi kiñcanaṁ"*—to one who sees, there is actually nothing here. When that knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana*) is developed to the highest level, that conjuring of a existence (*bhava*) by craving (*taṇhā*)—the Buddha has on some occasions compared craving to a seamstress (*sibbānī*). Think of how a stitch is made, how a sewing machine makes a stitch. Each time the needle goes down, a thread passes underneath and forms a knot. That is *"taṇhā-paccayā upādānaṁ"*—dependent on craving, grasping/holding arises; because of grasping/holding, a existence (*bhava*) is woven. The Buddha has shown this in a verse:

Yo ubhantena viditvā,

Majjhe mantā na lippati;

Taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti,

So'dha sibbanimaccagā.

The Buddha declares an extraordinary verse: "He who, having understood both ends, does not cling to the middle with wisdom (*mantā*)—him I call a Great Man; he has escaped from that seamstress (sewing work) here."

The Buddha declares an extraordinary verse. One who, having correctly understood both ends (*ubhante*), does not cling to the middle with wisdom (*mantā*)—*"taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti"*—"him I call a Great Man." *"So'dha sibbanimaccagā"*—that person has escaped from that seamstress (sewing work) here. He went beyond the seamstress; he was not caught by the seamstress. Now, the Buddha shows how the ordinary world is caught by the seamstress. What are these two ends, and what is the middle? One end is contact (*phassa*). The second end is the arising of contact (*phassa-samudaya*). In the middle is the cessation of contact (*phassa-nirodha*). What, then, does this seamstress do? Gluing with the glue of craving (*taṇhā*), she glues together, disregarding the cessation (*nirodha*) in the middle. With every contact, there is a cessation. But because of craving, forgetting that cessation, we collect those contacts together and construct a "thing". Regarding this, there is a passage about the insight-practitioner making attention subtle: *"phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ, evaṁ virajjati". "Phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ"* means seeing the passing away of contact with each and every contact, and in this way, one becomes dispassionate, developing non-attachment. As long as one does not see cessation, gluing with that glue of craving, one weaves a existence (*bhava*). That is the stitch of becoming (*bhava-sibbanī*). What, then, does that Great Man do? He sees cessation (*nirodha*). That is why the Buddha declares that both the beings in the form realms and the beings in the formless realms return to existence again and again because they do not know cessation (*nirodha*). You devotees may have heard that craving is described as *"taṇhā ponobhavikā"*—it creates renewed existence. It links existence to existence. Forgetting cessation, through craving, one brings out contact and the arising of contact, generating another contact, while disregarding the cessation of that contact. In this very way, what the Buddha does is to bring out that cessation which the world had forgotten. That cessation is itself called Nibbāna. That noble state, ending in the cessation of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*), is what the Buddha brought out. This is not only for those times. This is not only for the recluses and brahmins of that day. Even today's philosophers and scientists can learn something from it. Therefore, you devotees must take this matter of the perception of the impermanent (*anicca-saññā*) deeply to heart. Although we preach this much about meditation, some minds are drawn to that scientific physical philosophy, taking it as the latest and most modern philosophy. Those who have got lost within it as a philosophy are not ordinary people; the purpose of saying these words was to show that nuclear physicists are among them. According to these most modern concepts and discoveries, we ultimately return once again to that very Dhammapada passage declared by the Buddha: *"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā"*.

Therefore, today, I hope you devotees have gathered at least some small fragment regarding that powerful perception of the impermanent (*anicca-saññā*) which, as mentioned earlier, is capable of destroying the entire mass of defilements, and which supports insight (*vipassanā*). May the virtue practiced, the meditation cultivated, and

this Dhamma sermon heard by you devotees today support you to escape from this world situated within this fathom-long body—from this entire existence (*bhava*) which brings the suffering of birth (*jāti*), decay and death/aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and so forth—and may this Dhamma sermon support you to realize that noble state of Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship. Let us aspire that whatever beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha wish to rejoice in the merit of this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma hearing, may they realize those highest goals expected through that rejoicing. May everyone, through the power of this merit, attain the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna. Let us share the merit by reciting these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #47

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.159)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Ubayeneva sampanno, Rāhulo Bhaddoti maṃ vidū;

Yañcāmhi putto Buddhassa, yañca dhammesu cakkhumā.

Yañca me āsavā khīṇā, yañca natthi punabbhavo;

Arahā dakkhiṇeyyomhi, tevijjo amataddaso.

Kāmandhā jālapacchannā, taṇhāchadanachāditā;

Pamattabandhunā baddhā, macchāva kumināmukhe.

Taṃ kāmaṃ chetvā Mārassa bandhanaṃ samūlaṃ taṇhamabbuyha;

Sītibhūto'smi nibbuto'ti.

From:

Theragāthā, Rāhulattheragāthā

Dear Listeners,

In this Dispensation, Ven. Rāhula, who attained the foremost position among the monks who love the training, was known among the Sangha by the name "Rāhula Bhadra" (Rāhula the Fortunate / Rāhula the Good). That epithet "Bhadra"—meaning "good" or "fortunate"—indicates that he was extremely dear and pleasing to the Sangha. He was not so dear and pleasing to the Sangha merely because he was the son of the Buddha, but also due to his good qualities, his obedient, humble, and disciplined behavior. Indeed, the character of Rāhula is a supreme ideal of obedience. He was a son of the Buddha in the truest sense of the word. The verses from the Theragāthā Pāli that we have taken as our theme today are accepted as the joyous utterances (*udāna*) expressed by Ven. Rāhula

after he attained Arahantship. In these verses too, it is mentioned that he was known by this name, "Rāhula Bhadra."

"Ubayen'eva sampanno, Rāhulo Bhaddo'ti maṃ vidū" — "Endowed with both, they know me as Rāhula Bhadra." Because of two reasons, they know me by the name Rāhula Bhadra:

"Yañca'mhi putto Buddhassa, yañca dhammesu cakkhumā" — "In that I am the son of the Buddha, and that I have the eye (of wisdom) regarding the Dhammas." One reason is that I am the son of the Buddha. The other reason is that I possess the Dhamma-eye, which has the power of understanding the Dhammas.

"Yañca me āsavā khīṇā, yañca natthi punabbhavo" — "And that my taints (*āsavas*) are destroyed, and that there is no more renewed existence (*punabbhava*)." Because my taints are destroyed, and because there is no renewed becoming (*bhava*) for me,

"Arahā dakkhiṇeyyo'mhi, tevijjo amataddaso" — "I am an Arahant, worthy of offerings, possessed of the Threefold Knowledge, and a beholder of the Deathless." I am an Arahant, worthy of receiving gifts called offerings (*dakkhiṇeyyo*), possessed of the Threefold Knowledge (*tevijja*), and a beholder of the Deathless (*amata-dassa*), which is Nibbāna.

"Kāmandhā jālapacchannā, taṇhāchadanachāditā; Pamattabandhunā baddhā, macchāva kumināmukhe" — "Blinded by sensual pleasures, covered by the net, shrouded by the canopy of craving, bound by the kinsman of the negligent, like fish in the mouth of a funnel-net." Beings who are blinded by sensual pleasures, entangled in the net of sensuality, and covered by the shroud of craving (*taṇhā*), are bound in the net of Māra (the kinsman of the negligent) like fish caught in the mouth of a wicker-trap (funnel-net).

This is what is declared regarding those beings. Next, he speaks about himself:

"Taṃ kāmaṃ chetvā Mārassa, bandhanaṃ samūlaṃ taṇhamabbuyha, sītibhūto'smi nibbuto'ti" — "Having cut off those sensual pleasures, having severed the bonds of Māra, and having uprooted craving (*taṇhā*) completely, I have become cool, extinguished (*nibbuto*)." Thus, these are the verses declared by Ven. Rāhula after attaining Arahantship.

You all must have heard that the immediate cause for Prince Siddhartha's Great Renunciation was the news that a son had been born. Prince Siddhartha received the happy news of a son's birth with the reaction, "A Rāhula (a bond/fetter) is born." Not only that, on that very night, without informing anyone, suppressing his paternal affection, he made the Great Renunciation for the sake of us all. Thus, Prince Rāhula, who did not receive paternal affection, got to see his father for the first time only when the Buddha visited the city of Kapilavatthu about a year after His Enlightenment. Having arrived at Kapilavatthu, while residing in the Sakyan monastery named Nigrodhārāma, one day the Buddha visited the palace of King Suddhodana. Having arrived, He sat on

the prepared seat. Rāhula's mother, Princess Yasodharā, said to Prince Rāhula: "There, Rāhula, is your father. Go and ask for your inheritance." So, Prince Rāhula went before the Buddha and began to speak endearing words, saying, "Ascetic, even your shadow and your shelter are pleasant to me." When the Buddha started to return to Nigrodhārāma, Prince Rāhula followed closely behind Him, repeatedly saying, "Ascetic, give me my inheritance! Ascetic, give me my inheritance!"

Once the Buddha returned to Nigrodhārāma, He said to Ven. Sāriputta, "Well then, Sāriputta, ordain Prince Rāhula." At that time, there was no established monastic procedure regarding the ordination of novices (*sāmaṇeras*). Therefore, Ven. Sāriputta asked, "Venerable Sir, how shall I ordain Prince Rāhula?" At that moment, the Buddha laid down a Vinaya rule, having assembled the monks and delivered a Dhamma talk: "I allow you to ordain novices by the threefold recitation of the going-for-refuge (*saraṇāgamana*)." In this manner, Ven. Sāriputta ordained Prince Rāhula.

Upon hearing the news of this ordination, King Suddhodana came to the Buddha, paid homage, and sitting to one side, said, "Venerable Sir, I would like to ask for one boon." The Buddha addressed His royal father as "Gautama": "Gautama, the Tathāgatas are beyond the custom of granting boons." "No, Venerable Sir, what I ask is something allowable and blameless." "Then speak, Gautama." Then King Suddhodana said, "When the Blessed One went forth, it caused me great pain. Likewise, when Prince Nanda went forth. And when Prince Rāhula went forth, it was even more painful, Venerable Sir. Paternal love cuts through the outer skin; having cut the outer skin, it cuts the inner skin; having cut the inner skin, it cuts the flesh; having cut the flesh, it cuts the sinews; having cut the sinews, it cuts the bones; having cut the bones, it strikes and remains in the marrow. Therefore, Venerable Sir, it would be well if the Noble Ones do not ordain a son who has not been permitted by his parents." Thereupon, the Buddha, having delivered a Dhamma talk, consoled King Suddhodana and sent him away, assembled the monks, and laid down a Vinaya rule: "A child, a son, who has not been permitted by his parents should not be ordained. If a monk ordains such a person, he commits an offense of wrong-doing (*dukkaṭa*)." In this manner, the way the Buddha ordained Prince Rāhula and gave him his heritage in the Dispensation—the heritage of the Dhamma—is mentioned in many discourses.

In Dhamma portions such as the *Ambalaṭṭhikā-rāhulovāda Sutta*, *Mahā-rāhulovāda Sutta*, *Cūḷa-rāhulovāda Sutta*, *Rāhula Sutta*, and the *Rāhula Saṃyutta*, it is next mentioned how the Buddha systematically, step-by-step, revealed the heritage of the Dhamma to Ven. Rāhula. The discourse that is most widely known is the *Ambalaṭṭhikā-rāhulovāda Sutta*. While the Buddha was residing at the Veḷuvanārāma monastery in Rājagaha, Ven. Rāhula was staying in a hut at a nearby place called Ambalaṭṭhikā. In the evening, the Buddha arose from His meditation and walked to see Ven. Rāhula. Seeing Him coming from afar, Ven. Rāhula prepared a seat and placed a vessel of water for washing the feet. After the Buddha had finished washing His feet, leaving a little water in the vessel, He asked Ven. Rāhula, "Rāhula, do you see this little bit of water left in this vessel?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." "Rāhula, for anyone who has no shame in telling a

deliberate lie, their monkhood is just as little as this water left in the vessel." Next, the Buddha threw away that little bit of water. Having thrown it away, He asked Ven. Rāhula, "Rāhula, did you see how that little bit of water was thrown away?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." Then the Buddha said, "For anyone who has no shame in telling a deliberate lie, their monkhood is cast aside just like that water thrown away"—declaring that their monkhood has been discarded and cast out.

Next, the Buddha turned the water vessel upside down. Having turned it upside down, He asked Ven. Rāhula, "Rāhula, do you see this water vessel turned upside down, inverted?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." "For anyone who has no shame in telling a deliberate lie, their monkhood is turned upside down just like this," He declared in that manner. Next, the Buddha declared another simile to Ven. Rāhula: "Rāhula, a state war-elephant taken into battle fights with its forelegs, fights with its hindlegs, fights with its head, fights with its tusks, but keeps its trunk curled back. Then the elephant-trainer thinks, 'This elephant has not yet sacrificed its life.' But when that elephant begins to fight even with its trunk, the trainer thinks, 'Now this elephant has sacrificed its life. There is nothing that this elephant cannot do now.' In the same way, Rāhula, for anyone who has no shame in telling a deliberate lie, there is no evil that they cannot do. Therefore, Rāhula, you should train yourself thus: 'I will not tell a lie, even in jest.'" Behold, the Buddha gave that fundamental advice and instruction to the young novice on that occasion. Likewise, how Ven. Rāhula was shaped under the constant instructions of the Buddha and the guidance and mentorship of Ven. Sāriputta as his preceptor (*upajjhāya*) is mentioned in many places throughout Dhamma literature.

One such incident is the sand play of young Ven. Rāhula. What was it? It is mentioned that upon waking up in the morning, he would take a handful of sand, throw it up in the air, and say: "May I receive as many words of advice and instruction from the Buddha and my fellow companions in the holy life as there are grains of sand here." Hearing the monks talking about his love for advice, the Buddha preached Jātaka stories such as the *Tipallattha-miga Jātaka* and the *Tittira Jātaka*, as is recorded in the Jātaka Book itself. Likewise, another such incident is mentioned in the Vinaya Piṭaka, demonstrating the humility of Ven. Rāhula. On one occasion, the Buddha laid down a Vinaya rule that a fully ordained monk (*upasampanna*) should not sleep under the same roof with an unordained person (*anupasampanna*), which means novices and so forth. After this Vinaya rule was laid down, while the Buddha was residing at Badarikārāma in Kosambī, the monks told the young Ven. Rāhula, "The Blessed One has laid down such a Vinaya rule. Therefore, find a place for yourself to sleep." Ven. Rāhula looked around, but there was no place. It is mentioned that, in the end, he spent that night in the Buddha's toilet-chamber. As the Buddha approached the toilet-chamber at dawn, He cleared His throat—which is a custom and Vinaya rule to make one's presence known. When the Buddha cleared His throat, Ven. Rāhula, who was inside, also cleared his throat. "Who is inside there?" He asked. "It is I, Rāhula, Venerable Sir, I, Rāhula." "Why are you staying here?" He asked. Once Ven. Rāhula explained the situation, the Buddha assembled the monks, delivered a Dhamma talk, and relaxed that Vinaya rule, allowing an unordained person to reside with a fully ordained monk for two or three nights. Thus, numerous

such incidents are recorded concerning Ven. Rāhula and his virtuous qualities. In present times, some young children, harboring pride over their parents' positions or power, have a habit of saying the moment they cross paths with someone, "Just wait, I'll tell my father and teach you a good lesson!" But this Ven. Rāhula turned even the cold-shouldering and shortcomings of others into a lesson for himself, and nowhere in Dhamma literature is it seen that he ever went to tale-bear or complain to the Buddha.

Next, the systematic way in which the Buddha disciplined him is especially revealed in the *Mahā-rāhulovāda Sutta*. This is an extremely important discourse, even for meditating yogi monks. On one occasion, while the Buddha was residing at Jetavanārāma in Sāvatthī, He took His bowl and robes in the morning and set out for alms. Ven. Rāhula was also walking for alms, right behind the Buddha. The Buddha turned around, looked at Ven. Rāhula, and said, "Rāhula, whatever form (*rūpa*) there is..."—and there it is shown in eleven ways: whether past, future, or present; internal or external; coarse or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near—whatever form-aggregate, whatever form there is: "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." Thus it should be seen with wisdom as it really is (*yathābhūta*). Then Ven. Rāhula asked, "Blessed One, Fortunate One, is it only form?" "No, Rāhula," the Buddha declared, "Just like form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—indeed, the entire five aggregates should be viewed in that same manner as not-self (*anattā*)." Thereupon, while the Buddha continued on His alms-round, Ven. Rāhula thought, "Who, having met the Blessed One and received such a meditation subject directly, would go into the village for alms?" Rejecting the alms-round, he sat down straight under a tree for meditation. He sat down and began to meditate. Just then, Ven. Sāriputta, who came behind him, saw Ven. Rāhula and gave him a brief piece of advice: "Rāhula, develop mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). Mindfulness of breathing, when well-developed and practiced frequently, is of great fruit and great benefit."

Then, Ven. Rāhula meditated the entire afternoon, and in the evening, he visited the Buddha and asked Him, "Venerable Sir, in what way is mindfulness of breathing developed so that it is of great fruit and great benefit?" Thereupon, the Buddha mentioned a host of meditation methods that must be practiced as a preliminary phase to mindfulness of breathing. This is a very good lesson for meditators (*yogāvacaras*), because some people who start directly with mindfulness of breathing go and get stuck. On that occasion, the Buddha first spoke about the four elements present in one's body. He gave a meditation subject on the attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*): "Rāhula, whatever is coarse, rough, and solid in this body, such as hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth..."—showing nineteen such solid parts up to feces. In the sutta text, thirty-one parts are recorded. Later on, the brain in the head was added to make it twenty parts. All those nineteen are the internal earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*). Next, there is no need to speak separately about the external earth element—the solid substances outside. Whatever internal earth element there is, whatever earth element belonging to oneself, and whatever external earth element, it is simply the earth element.

"This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self"—thus it should be seen with wisdom. This was the first instruction He gave.

Next, you may understand the other elements in the same way as the earth element. Since we have spoken in detail about these matters regarding the attention to elements, (we can summarize): concerning the water element (*āpo-dhātu*), the liquid parts of the body such as bile, phlegm, saliva, urine, and so forth are shown as the internal water element; and considering both the internal and external water elements as one, it is simply the water element: "These are not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." In the same way, the fire element (*tejo-dhātu*)—the parts related to the heat in the body and the external fire, etc.—and then the wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*)—the winds that go upward and downward in the body, inhalation and exhalation, and the external wind element. Next, there is additionally the space element (*ākāsa-dhātu*); what is shown as the space element in the body are the cavities of the ears and nose, the hollow space within the intestines where food is stored, and so forth. Those are the internal space element. The external space element can be easily understood in the same way. One should contemplate it in that very manner: "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." Thus, in this way, He showed how to elevate the attention to elements, including the space element, into meditation.

Next, the Buddha declared another unique meditation: "Rāhula, develop a meditation like the earth (*paṭhavī-sama bhāvanā*)." "Meditation like the earth" means equating oneself to the earth. It is a unique meditation. This is also mentioned in the discourses of Ven. Sāriputta. It means to contemplate in this way: the earth does not make a distinction regarding clean and unclean things thrown upon it. Even if someone throws feces, urine, saliva, phlegm, or snot on the earth, the earth does not feel disgusted or repulsed by it. In the exact same way, in accordance with the nature of the earth, you too should establish equanimity like the earth. Then, the mind will not be troubled by agreeable and disagreeable contact (*phassa*), and it will not grasp them tightly. That is the meditation like the earth. Likewise, there is the meditation like water (*āpo-sama bhāvanā*). Just as water does not show any aversion whether it washes away clean things or unclean things, so too should you contemplate yourself as water. Here, "like the earth" means contemplating that one is the earth. Why? Because as mentioned earlier, both the earth element inside oneself and the earth element outside are simply the earth element. This can also be understood logically. Thereafter, one contemplates without any distinction between internal and external. Then, one takes as an exemplar the external, insentient earth element, the insentient water element, the insentient fire element, the insentient wind element, and the insentient space element. The Buddha is telling us to behave in that manner. That is to say, it is a method to bring the mind to equanimity. Just like the earth and so forth. Next, fire burns anything without discriminating between clean and unclean; wind blows on everything, whether foul-smelling or fragrant. In this way, you may briefly consider all four. The space element is spoken of in a special way because it is unique: just as space does not rest anywhere, so too you do not cling to anything anywhere. Thus, this is shown there as a meditation to eliminate craving

(*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) regarding one's body. So, that is the second step.

The Buddha showed a third step as well: "Rāhula, develop loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*) to eliminate ill-will. Develop compassion (*karuṇā-bhāvanā*) to eliminate cruelty. Develop appreciative joy (*muditā-bhāvanā*) to eliminate boredom or discontent (*arati*) towards monastic practice. Develop equanimity (*upekkhā-bhāvanā*) to cease the friction of repeated aversion (*paṭigha*) towards things, bringing the mind to equanimity. Next, develop the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*) to eliminate lust. Develop the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) to eradicate the conceit 'I am' (*asmi-māna*)." Behold, He spoke of that step too.

It was only after that, at the very end, that the Buddha declared the meditation of mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). At that point, the Buddha finally declared all sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing. From this we can see that it is by practicing mindfulness of breathing with such accompanying practices that it becomes of great fruit and great benefit. The Buddha concluded that discourse by stating that for one who has developed mindfulness of breathing in this manner, even their final breath, their last inhalation and exhalation, fades away with full awareness, and even the final breath can be let go of mindfully. We will not detail the sixteen steps on this occasion, as we have spoken about these things previously. In this manner, the Buddha explained in detail to Ven. Rāhula how to make the meditation of mindfulness of breathing of great fruit and great benefit.

Furthermore, a series of verses with which the Buddha constantly advised and admonished Ven. Rāhula is also mentioned in the text called Sutta Nipāta, under the name *Rāhula Sutta*. According to that *Rāhula Sutta*, the Buddha first asks Ven. Rāhula, "I hope that, due to constant association, you do not disregard or show disrespect to your preceptor." In that context, the Buddha refers to Ven. Sāriputta as *"ukkādhāro manussānaṃ"*—meaning, one who holds up a torch for mankind, one who gives light through wisdom. That was how the Buddha described Ven. Sāriputta on that occasion. Ven. Rāhula also replies, "Yes, Venerable Sir, I do not disrespect my preceptor. I always respect him."

Next, with another set of verses, the Buddha further shows how Ven. Rāhula should train himself: "Rāhula, having abandoned the five sensual pleasures which have an attractive appearance, and having gone forth out of faith, bring to the forefront your ultimate goal of ending suffering (*dukkha*). Next, associate with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mittas*). Reside in secluded, quiet lodgings. Eat food with moderation. Likewise, eliminate craving (*taṇhā*) for the four requisites—robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicinal requisites. Avoid beautiful themes (*subha-nimittas*) that fuel lust and are connected to lust. Unify the mind and attain concentration through the meditation on foulness. Next, develop the signless concentration (*animitta-samādhi*). 'Signless concentration' means that by deeply contemplating impermanence (*aniccatā*), the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) is erased and the 'signless' (*animitta*)—the state devoid of signs—emerges. Develop this signless concentration. By developing the signless concentration, eliminate

conceit (*māna*). Eliminate the conceit 'I am' (*asmi-māna*). By eliminating the conceit 'I am', in the end, you will become one who makes an end of suffering (*dukkha*)."

It is recorded in the texts that the Buddha constantly advised Ven. Rāhula through those few verses. This is known as "constant advice" (*abhiṇhaso avavāda*). *"Abhiṇha"* means advice given continuously. Thus, on one hand, Ven. Sāriputta gave instructions as his preceptor. At the same time, the Buddha also witnessed His son's tender maturation in the Dispensation. Through the giving of these instructions, it is clearly shown to us how the Buddha was constantly keeping watch over Ven. Rāhula's inner progress.

The final discourse shown in this regard is the *Cūḷa-rāhulovāda Sutta*. In the *Cūḷa-rāhulovāda Sutta*, it is recorded as follows: On one occasion, the Buddha, having walked for alms and finished His meal, said to Ven. Rāhula in the afternoon, "Rāhula, take your sitting cloth (*nisīdana*). Let us go to the Andhavana forest for the day's abiding (*divāvihāra*)." Lay disciples, "day's abiding" refers to a custom of the Sangha in the past, where after taking their meal, they would spend the hot afternoon meditating, often in the open under a tree. That is what is called the day's abiding. "Let us go to the Andhavana forest for the day's abiding," said the Buddha, and Ven. Rāhula followed behind Him. At that time, as recorded in the texts, many thousands of deities, hearing the news that "Today the Blessed One will give Ven. Rāhula meditation subjects leading to Arahantship," also followed behind the Buddha. So, the Buddha went to the Andhavana forest and sat under a tree on a prepared seat. Ven. Rāhula sat nearby and paid homage to Him. Thereupon, the Buddha gave the Dhamma instruction on that occasion in this manner:

"Rāhula, is the eye permanent or impermanent (*anicca*)?" This discourse is delivered here in a question-and-answer format. "Impermanent (*anicca*), Venerable Sir." "Is that which is impermanent (*anicca*) pleasant or painful (*dukkha*)?" "Painful (*dukkha*), Venerable Sir." "Is it fit to regard that which is impermanent (*anicca*), painful (*dukkha*), and subject to change, as: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?" "No, indeed, Venerable Sir." Next, He asks in the same way about forms—the objects that are the range of the eye: "Are forms permanent or impermanent (*anicca*)?" "Impermanent (*anicca*), Venerable Sir." "Is that which is impermanent (*anicca*) pleasant or painful (*dukkha*)?" "Painful (*dukkha*), Venerable Sir." "Is it fit to regard that which is painful (*dukkha*) and subject to change, as: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?" "No, Venerable Sir."

In this manner, you can understand how He questioned him about the eye, about forms, about eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arising dependent on the eye and forms, and about eye-contact (*phassa / cakkhu-samphassa*) arising in dependence on eye-consciousness. Next, concerning whatever feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that arise due to eye-contact—expressed as *"vedanā-gataṃ, saññā-gataṃ, saṅkhāra-gataṃ, viññāṇa-gataṃ"*—if any of these arise from the impingement of the eye and forms, one grows weary of them too. Now, this is where we arrive at deep insight (*vipassanā*). The cessation of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*) is what is called Nibbāna. Realizing the cessation of these six

sense-bases is true Nibbāna. The Buddha delivers this discourse, this instruction, by putting the six sense-bases at the forefront. First, He made Ven. Rāhula realize the impermanent (*anicca*) nature, the changing nature, and the not-self (*anattā*) nature of the eye. Next, concerning forms: it is dependent on the eye and forms that eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arises. This consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is not something stored up somewhere. Right there is the deep part of this Dhamma—it is dependent on the eye and forms (that consciousness arises). That is why it is called dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppanna*). Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. Next, at the point where these three factors meet, a person separates the eye through that consciousness, and separates the form. From that point onward, there is the talk on contact (*phassa / cakkhu-samphassa*). The idea of the form impinged on the eye occurs. The Buddha makes Ven. Rāhula realize that eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*) too is impermanent (*anicca*), painful (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). Next, whatever feelings (*vedanā*), whatever perceptions (*saññā*), whatever preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and whatever consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arise through that eye-contact, they ultimately group together and fall into the five aggregates.

This is a somewhat deep matter. Those lay disciples who know something about these meditations might understand it at once. For others, it might be difficult. It is an extremely deep section, because this is connected to dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). The mode of thinking here is not how the ordinary world thinks; it is something completely unique. Thus, due to the lack of real understanding (*yathā-anavabodha*) regarding the eye and forms, by ignoring their impermanence (*aniccatā*) and taking them as permanent, a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arises. Dependent on the eye and forms, consciousness arises. What is called consciousness (*viññāṇa*) separates those two. Forgetting that separation, taking the eye, forms, and consciousness—all three together—as one, is contact (*phassa*). That is contact. From there on, because of contact, there is feeling (*vedanā*). Next, through the effort to identify the feeling, there is perception (*saññā*). Next, through perception, the internal active nature, which is performed as if personally, is the active nature. It is at this stage that karma is accumulated in the form of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Next, what is called consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is taken as "this is my mind" once all of these are deposited. That gets added to those five heaps called the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). The products made through these six sense-bases go, accumulate, filter down, and it is through them that we construct what is called the five aggregates of grasping in saṃsāra. That is an extremely deep matter. This very same Dhamma-principle (*dhammatā*) applies to each and every sense-base. Forgetting their impermanent nature, driving a peg where the eye is, driving another peg where the form is, and taking this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arising therefrom as a self, and from that point, experiencing a contact, having a feeling of "I contact"—in that manner, through contact, one generates feelings (*vedanā*) as painful, pleasant, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant. Through identifying those feelings, one creates various perceptions (*saññā*) and signs (*nimittas*). Next, by acting in accordance with those signs of perception, through that delusion, one accumulates preparations (*saṅkhāra*). All those preparations are then in the illusory consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and one thinks they are stored up. One stores them up as "this is mine, this I

am." Thus, this is how these five grabbed heaps, or five heaps of grabbing, are called the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*).

Just as the Buddha spoke here about the eye, about forms, about eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*), about eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*), and about feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*) arising dependent on eye-contact, He spoke in the same way about the other sense-bases: the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile objects, and finally, the mind (*mana*) and mind-objects (*dhamma*). This is the deepest place. When the word "dhamma" is used here, you might think it refers to our True Dhamma (*Saddhamma*). But, lay disciples, in these sutta discourses and in Buddhist philosophy, this word "dhamma" is used in many senses. Just as form (*rūpa*) is to the eye, mind-objects (*dhamma*) are to the mind. The objects that come to the mind are known by the name "dhamma". Finally, the Buddha asks Ven. Rāhula: "Is the mind permanent or impermanent (*anicca*)?" "Impermanent (*anicca*), Venerable Sir." "Is that which is impermanent (*anicca*) pleasant or painful (*dukkha*)?" "Painful (*dukkha*), Venerable Sir." "Is it fit to regard that which is impermanent (*anicca*), painful (*dukkha*), and subject to change, as: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self', Rāhula?" Then Ven. Rāhula says, "No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

Just as He spoke about the mind, so too regarding those mind-objects (*dhamma*)—which must be understood here as the objects that come to the mind: "Are mind-objects permanent or impermanent (*anicca*)?" "Impermanent (*anicca*), Venerable Sir." "Is that which is impermanent (*anicca*) pleasant or painful (*dukkha*)?" "Painful (*dukkha*), Venerable Sir." "Is it fit to regard that which is impermanent (*anicca*), painful (*dukkha*), and subject to change, as mine, as 'I am', or as my self?" "No," Ven. Rāhula replies there too. That is precisely where the deepest part comes. Why? Because regarding these objects that come to the mind, the ordinary world thinks that objects exist separately, and we merely think about them. But the deepest part of the Dhamma is what is declared at the very beginning of the Dhammapada verses. We have probably mentioned this on many occasions in connection with the themes of our sermons. That Dhammapada verse is both the beginning and the end of this Dhamma literature. That is to say, it is through the principle declared in the first two verses of the Dhammapada, *"manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā"*, that the most profound part of this dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) shown by the Buddha emerges. *Manopubbaṅgamā*—mind precedes.

But consider the attitude of the world—even you yourselves, lay disciples. We think about something because a "thing" exists, don't we? We first take a grasp, a hold, thinking that a thing exists. Only after that do we think about it. Not only do we think about it, we engage in thoughts (*vitarka*) about it. Those thoughts turn into conceptual proliferation (*papañca*). Having turned into conceptual proliferation (*papañca*), in the end, we fall into delusion. This can often be observed when some people get lost in the past; sometimes you have to shake their bodies and ask, "Where are you?" The mind is in the past. Only then do they wake up. In that manner, what remains when one goes into the past is that sign (*nimitta*) grabbed from the past. One does not know that the sign

grabbed from the past is something of the past. Getting deluded about it, one turns it into a "thing". It was there, and it is gone. Yet, we turn it into a thing and then get trapped within it. It is the same with the future; with various plans of ours, we fall into thinking about a future sign, resting our chin on our hand in a different world. There too, we think that the thing which has not yet arrived in the future exists. This is the illusion, the gravest illusion in the world. Thus, the world thinks that mind-objects (*dhamma*) exist beforehand, and the mind comes later to understand them. But the Buddha turns that upside down: *"manopubbaṅgamā dhammā"*—the mind is what precedes mind-objects. It is not the mind-object that precedes; the mind is what precedes. Next, there is: *"manoseṭṭhā"*—of the two, the mind is supreme. Why is the mind said to be supreme? *"Manomayā"*—those mind-objects (*dhamma*). Here, "dhamma" must be understood in the sense mentioned earlier. Many people explain these terms differently nowadays. But here, "dhamma" must be understood in the sense of the objects that come to the mind. It is not other kinds of dhamma. It is not wholesome or unwholesome dhammas and so forth; it means the objects coming to the mind. They can be wholesome, or they can be unwholesome. That is a different, incidental matter. But the fundamental principle, as anyone who knows something about the Dhamma is aware, is that *"manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā"* is found in both of the opening verses. It is as a result of this that one gets bound to wholesome and unwholesome karmas. The mind precedes, and the mind is supreme between them. Thirdly, it says: *"manomayā"*—which means those mind-objects, those objects thought up by the mind, where did they arise from? From the mind itself. They are created by the mind itself. This is exactly where we are trapped—by not knowing that these are things created by the mind itself. We think of them as a "thing," get lost there, and wander on and on in saṃsāra. This is what a Buddha reveals: *"manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā"*.

Why is this not understood? It is because of that perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) held by the world—through the perception of permanence that takes both the mind as permanent and mind-objects as permanent. Yet, a thought arises and passes away. But regarding that, what we call a memory trace or similar, we take such a thing as real; and based on that bit created by the mind itself, we spend the rest of our entire lives. This is how we accumulate preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in saṃsāra, and this is how we go on and on in saṃsāra. Thus, the Buddha shows that the mind is what precedes. It is from the mind itself that the object is created. But by neglecting and not knowing that the grabbed object is something created by the mind, through the delusion concerning it, we separate the mind as one thing and the mind-object as another. That moment of separation is what is called the arising of mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*). Otherwise, this is not stored. Mind-consciousness is not stored. The greatest delusion in the world is the belief that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is stored within the mind. To express it with a simple simile, as we have had to state on some occasions, it is like believing that fire is stored inside a matchbox. Fire only comes after you strike a matchstick against the matchbox. Yet, we conventionally call it a "matchbox". Similarly, we think that within this body connected to the mind, a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is stored up inside. But the Buddha shows that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is constantly dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppanna*). Apart from causes and conditions, no consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arises.

Thus, it is from the impingement of the mind and mind-objects that mind-consciousness arises. But after mind-consciousness has arisen, forgetting that this mind-consciousness was born due to those two, one then begins to separate those two; and the acrobatics that start from there go on as thoughts (*vitarka*), conceptual proliferation (*papañca*), and so forth. What happens if this is understood? If this is understood, right there, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) subsides. Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are no longer constructed. Right there is Nibbāna—something a person cannot even conceive. In fact, Nibbāna is described as an awakening that is like falling asleep. An awakening like falling asleep. To say "falling asleep," if viewed from the world's perspective, it is like falling asleep. Why? Because what is called waking life—what the world calls waking life—is actually a dream. As we said before, the past is a kind of dream. The future built inside the mind is also a dream. And the stream of thoughts that constructs the present, as long as one does not understand its impermanent (*anicca*) and dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppanna*) nature, is also like a dream. That moment of waking up from that dream is indeed this: the understanding that this is dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppanna*); and along with that realization, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) subsides. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) can no longer function.

Simultaneously with the arising of the realization that this mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*) occurred due to the impingement of both the mind and the mind-object coming to the mind, mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*) can no longer function. It cannot go beyond that. That is precisely what is called "the cessation of consciousness" (*viññāṇa-nirodha*). The cessation of consciousness is described as peaceful and sublime, and this is what is called the stilled calming of preparations (*saṅkhāra-samatha*). So, this is Nibbāna: *"etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho"*—all preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are calmed at that moment. The acrobatics performed by taking the mind and the object as two separate things cease at the moment when one directly realizes that this consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which aids in performing those acrobatics, is itself something that arises due to those very two. It can only be understood through contemplating this. If at any moment that truth is understood, right there, Nibbāna is realized.

But how does this discourse end? Next, the Buddha speaks about each of these and brings out weariness (*nibbidā*) and dispassion (*virāga*) regarding them. Once they are understood properly, one grows weary of the eye, weary of forms, weary of eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and weary of eye-contact (*phassa*). Through that weariness, the mind steps back. *"Nibbidā"* means the weariness arising through this real understanding (*yathā-avabodha*). It is through not knowing the reality as it is, and through the perception of permanence, that the world grasps these and holds on to them as grasping (*upādāna*). By understanding that these are impermanent (*anicca*) and born of causes and conditions, there automatically arises *"nibbidā"*—a valuable word of the past, though people do not bring it out much these days. We use the term "weariness with saṃsāra" in a casual way; when someone is sulking, we say, "Oh, why are you weary of saṃsāra?" But that is the door to Nibbāna shown by the Buddha. If it arises properly, it is not something that leads to suicide. If this reality is properly understood as it is,

"nibbidā" (weariness) will inevitably arise. *"Nibbidā"* is also referred to as disenchantment or *"nirveda"* (transcendence of feelings). In present times, using the word *"nirveda"* is quite risky, because some people confuse it with artificial numbness. The word *"nirveda"* and the word *"nibbidā"* are used together. That *"nirveda"* is not an artificially induced numbness. Here, the realization comes that there is nothing to be felt (*vedanā*). That is also why preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are no longer accumulated. What arises through that weariness (*nibbidā*)? Dispassion (*virāga*)—non-clinging. Through that dispassion, the mind is liberated. That is what is called the liberation of mind (*citta-vimutti*).

Simultaneously with the conclusion of the Dhamma analysis and the question-and-answer explanation based on the Three Characteristics of existence regarding the six sense-bases in this *Cūḷa-rāhulovāda Sutta*, Ven. Rāhula's mind was liberated from all taints (*āsavas*), and he realized supreme Arahantship. Not only that, it is mentioned at the same time that the Dhamma-eye arose in the thousands of deities who were listening: *"yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ"*—"Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation." That fundamental principle of dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) arose in those deities. In many places, the attainment of the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*) is designated by this brief passage. The deepest realization a person can attain can be summarized in this short phrase: "Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation." For someone listening to that Dhamma sermon with their mind fully applied, contemplating with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), step-by-step as Ven. Rāhula was answering the Buddha's questions, this realization is directly experienced. He did not answer by imagining things in his mind. They must have been directly experienced by him. When asked whether the eye is permanent or impermanent, and if impermanent, whether it is fit to be regarded as self, he did not say it merely because the Buddha asked. Because Ven. Rāhula had deeply developed all those previously mentioned meditations like mindfulness of breathing, the Buddha understood at that moment that Rāhula's spiritual merits had matured—or as we say, his conditions for liberation (*vimutti-paripāka*) had ripened, and the dhammas helpful for liberation had matured. It was at that moment that the Buddha delivered this discourse. From this, we can see that if we are to summarize everything, the cessation of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*) is indeed Nibbāna; it was because he directly realized the ceasing nature, the ceased state of these sense-bases, that Ven. Rāhula realized Arahantship as that discourse concluded.

Therefore, this systematic group of meditation subjects given to Ven. Rāhula can be helpful to some extent to any meditating lay disciple (*yogāvacara*). As we said earlier, it is incorrect to think that the meditation of mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) is merely applying the mind to inhalation and exhalation. Although that helps to go up to a certain point, in order to complete mindfulness of breathing through tranquility and insight (*samatha-vipassanā*), prior to those sixteen steps, one must practice to some extent those meditations shown by the Buddha, such as the attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*), the meditation like water, like fire, etc., along with loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity, foulness, and the perception of

impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). If even Ven. Rāhula, who followed the Buddha for such a long time in saṃsāra, needed all of this to become an Arahant, what need is there to speak of people like us? Therefore, instead of clinging to a single meditation subject, thinking "I will attain it through this alone," it is good if one contemplates and applies the mind to those other mentioned meditation subjects as well.

Nowadays, some people have created various disputes over these, as if they were separate sects. But based on the instructions the Buddha gave us, we can understand something practically. It is to such a matured insight (*vipassanā*) that discourses of that nature become applicable. Otherwise, someone in this day and age might think that a person can become an Arahant at any time simply by reading these sutta discourses. But in the past, how did they listen to those discourses? Just as it is said: *"atthikatvā manasikatvā sabbacetaso samannāharitvā ohitasoto dhammaṃ suṇāti"*—thinking, "there is benefit in this," contemplating, paying close attention, and with the entire mind directed to it, they listened to the Dhamma. Thus, because his conditions had matured in that manner, Ven. Rāhula was able to answer the questions asked by the Buddha regarding the Three Characteristics of existence without any hesitation. Finally, as that discourse concluded, Ven. Rāhula directly realized that the six sense-bases themselves are impermanent (*anicca*), painful (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). It was through that realization that he attained his goal. Therefore, from the character of Rāhula, we must understand both his tender maturation in the Dispensation and the way the Buddha gave him his Dhamma heritage. Through this, what a valuable example was given to the world by the virtuous qualities of the young Ven. Rāhula! Retaining all of this in our minds and bringing it close to our own lives, you, lay disciples, must strive to use this sermon to make your own Dhamma-contemplation and meditation successful. By using it thus, without treating them as extraneous, and by practicing all those various mentioned meditation subjects in a way that helps your own Nibbāna, may this be a supportive condition for you to put an end to all suffering (*dukkha*) such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), disease, and so forth, and to attain the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits starting from Stream-entry. I wish you all that supportive fortune.

Likewise, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, if there be any beings who wish to rejoice in the merits of this preaching of the Dhamma and hearing of the Dhamma, may they, by rejoicing, realize the deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration. Praying thus, please recite these verses and share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #48

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.181)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Jīvite vāpi sappañño, api vittaparikkhayo;

Paññāya ca alābhena, vitto vāpi na jīvati.

Sabbaṃ suṇāti sotena, sabbaṃ passati cakkhunā;

Na ca diṭṭhaṃ sutaṃ dhīro, sabbaṃ pariccajituṃ arahati.

Cakkhumāssa yathā andho, sotavā badhiro yathā;

Paññavāssa yathā mūgo, balavā dubbaloriva;

Atha atthe samuppanne, sayetha matasāyikaṃ.

From:

Nālaka Sutta tradition from the Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

Today is an exceptionally precious day for Buddhist devotees, being the anniversary of the day the Tathāgata, the King of Dhamma, the Fully Self-Awakened One, set the Wheel of Dhamma rolling up to the Akaniṭṭha Brahma world. On that day, in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the entire Sublime Dhamma was encapsulated within the Four Noble Truths presented by the Blessed One to the world. The Blessed One also nurtured a community of disciples who were capable of explaining that deep Dhamma as occasion demanded. Among those disciples skilled in analyzing and explaining in detail and depth the meaning of a Dhamma passage preached in brief, the position of *etadagga*—the foremost—was received by the Great Arhat Mahā Kaccāyana. The three verses he uttered on one occasion are what we have selected as our theme today.

If we look at the background story as presented in the Commentaries and other texts, it is explained that with regard to Ven. Kaccāyana, he fulfilled his perfections (*pāramīs*)

over a long period during the dispensations of past Buddhas for this aforesaid position of eminence. Next, in this present Buddha-dispensation era, Ven. Kaccāyana was born in the Avanti country as the son of the Brahmin chaplain of King Caṇḍappajjota. Since his body was golden in color, his mother gave him the name 'Kañcana' (Golden). Having learned the three Vedas and other sciences, this young man succeeded his father in the position of royal chaplain upon the latter's passing. He was known by his clan name, Kaccāyana. King Caṇḍappajjota came to hear that a Buddha had appeared in the world. He commissioned this Brahmin chaplain to go and invite the Buddha to visit the country of Avanti. Accordingly, the chaplain Brahmin Kaccāyana went with seven others to see the Blessed One. Having traveled a great distance and met the Blessed One, it is mentioned in the texts that through the very first Dhamma sermon they heard from the Blessed One, all eight attained Arhatship with the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*) and received ordination through the 'Ehi Bhikkhu' formula. Subsequently, Ven. Kaccāyana conveyed the King's invitation to the Blessed One. However, the Blessed One said, "Kaccāyana, there is no need for me to go. Even if you go, the King will gain confidence." Accordingly, Arhat Kaccāyana and the other seven returned to the Avanti country. Residing in the King's park for a certain period, Ven. Kaccāyana established the Buddha's dispensation in the Avanti country, inspiring confidence in the King as well. It is mentioned that later he traveled to see the Blessed One again. He also visited the Avanti country from time to time as the occasion demanded.

Now, a series of advisory verses uttered by him on one occasion is found in the *Theragāthā Pāli*. We have taken three of those verses as our theme. The meaning of those verses needs to be explained in some detail.

Jīvite vāpi sappañño api vittaparikkhayo — "Even if wealth and possessions are ruined, the wise person still lives."

Paññāya ca alābhena vitto vāpi na jīvati — "On the other hand, if wisdom is not attained, even if one has wealth, one does not truly live."

Sabbaṃ suṇāti sotena sabbaṃ passati cakkhunā — "He hears everything with the ear; he sees everything with the eye."

The wise person should not completely discard everything he has seen and heard; discarding is not appropriate. Now, here is a special verse:

Cakkhumāssa yathā andho — "Though possessed of eyes, let him be as one blind."

Sotavā badhiro yathā — "Though possessed of hearing, let him be as one deaf."

Paññavāssa yathā mūgo — "Though possessed of wisdom, let him act as if dumb."

Balavā dubbaloriva — "Though strong, let him act as if weak."

Atha atthe samuppanne sayetha matasāyikaṃ — "Then, when the need arises, let him lie down like a dead man." (That is, like someone lying on their deathbed). We need to analyze these a little.

"Even if wealth is exhausted, the wise person still lives." This was said with the following meaning: even if a wise person's wealth is lost, by being content with what is received, through wise courses of action, and without falling into corruption, they live through righteous means. Therefore, that is a true life. On the other hand, *paññāya ca alābhena*—the foolish person without wisdom, no matter how much wealth they have, falls into vice, ruins both this world and the next, and destroys their life. From this, we can see that during the Buddha's time, unlike today, wise thinking was valued over positive (wealth-oriented) thinking. Why? We can find many supporting facts in the Suttas.

When a deity asked, "What is the best treasure of humans?" (*kiṃsu narānaṃ ratanaṃ...*), the answer was *paññā narānaṃ ratanaṃ*—"Wisdom is the treasure of humans." Likewise, in response to the verse asked by Ālavaka the Yakkha, when asked, "Whose life is said to be the best?" (*kathaṃ jīviṃ jīvitamāhu seṭṭhaṃ*), the Blessed One declared, *paññā jīviṃ jīvitamāhu seṭṭhaṃ*—"Living by wisdom is said to be the best." From this, we can see that according to the values of that time, wisdom was appreciated more than wealth. That is why it was said that the wise person lives even without wealth, while the wealthy person without wisdom is like the dead, not truly living.

Some important points are mentioned here. *Sabbaṃ suṇāti sotena*—one gets to hear many things with one's ears. Likewise, *sabbaṃ passati cakkhunā*—one gets to see everything with one's eyes. *Na ca diṭṭhaṃ sutaṃ dhīro sabbaṃ*—the wise person does not completely discard all that is seen and heard. However, now he states what should be abandoned (or how to behave): *cakkhumāssa yathā andho*—though possessed of eyes, he behaves as if blind according to the occasion. On certain occasions, one has to act as if one has not seen. If defilements arise within oneself through seeing, or if various complications arise, one must remain as if one has not seen. *Cakkhumāssa yathā andho*—one must act like that as the situation demands. Likewise, *sotavā badhiro yathā*—even if heard, one must remain like a deaf person. One has to live as if one has not heard, as if one is blind and deaf to those things. Similarly, *paññavāssa yathā mūgo*—though possessing wisdom, one should act like a mute. If one tries to speak with all one's wisdom at the wrong time, one will get into trouble. *Balavā dubbaloriva*—though possessing strength, one must act as if weak. *Atha atthe samuppanne sayetha matasāyikaṃ*—furthermore, as the occasion demands, if a certain course of action would hinder one's progress in this world or the next, one must remain inactive, like a dead man. This is the advice given by Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana through those verses.

Just as he received that *etadagga* position, it is mentioned in many Sutta discourses that lay and ordained disciples inquired from Ven. Kaccāyana about the meaning of certain Dhamma portions preached in brief by the Blessed One. Although we cannot recount all of them, on one occasion it is mentioned as follows. While Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana was residing in the town of Kuraraghara in the Avanti country, the householder Hāliddakāni

came to him, sat on one side, and asked this: "Venerable Sir, in the *Māgandhiya Pañha* of the *Aṭṭhaka Vagga*, the Blessed One has uttered this short verse, a brief Dhamma point. I will recite that verse:

Okaṃ pahāya aniketasārī,

Gāme akubbaṃ muni santhavaṃ,

Kāmehi ritto apurekkharāno,

Kathaṃ na viggayha janena kayirā.

This is the Buddha's word. Realizing that there is a deep meaning here, this householder must have asked. He inquired from Ven. Kaccāyana about the meaning of this Dhamma portion preached in brief. It is only when listening to this exposition that one understands that there is a depth in these Dhamma portions far beyond the ordinary meaning we usually grasp. Ven. Kaccāyana explains it like this. If we summarize it according to the occasion, its general essence is: *okaṃ pahāya*—the word *oka* is used in the Pali language for a home or house. *Okaṃ pahāya*—leaving home and going forth into homelessness (*anokaṃ āgamma*). But Ven. Kaccāyana explains this in a very deep manner. He explains that the form element (*rūpa-dhātu*), which we conventionally refer to as ourselves, is a home/abode for consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Furthermore, the form element is where consciousness (*viññāṇa*) becomes established; that is why it is called a home. It is with the idea that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) becomes established in the elements of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that they are called *oka* (home). But the Tathāgata has abandoned that home—meaning, not a physical house, but those homes where consciousness (*viññāṇa*) becomes established: the form element, the feeling element, the perception element, the Preparations element, and the consciousness element—having abandoned lust, affection, craving (*taṇhā*), thirst, etc., towards them. It is in this sense that *okaṃ pahāya* (abandoning the home) was said. Next, *aniketasārī* (wandering shelterless)—*niketa* means a residence or dwelling. Therefore, *niketasārī* means one who wanders among homes. But *aniketasārī* is explained here as follows:

You have heard many times about forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and ideas (*rūpa, sadda, gandha, rasa, phoṭṭhabba, dhamma*) which are the objects of these six sense bases. These are the signs (*nimitta*) within the range of the senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. It is these signs that have been designated as *niketa* (abodes). With the meaning of "not being drawn along those signs," he is called *aniketasārī*. Since the Tathāgata has removed attraction, affection, lust, and craving (*taṇhā*) toward the objects of those sense bases, he is not drawn along by them; hence *aniketasārī*. Thus, *okaṃ pahāya aniketasārī*.

Next, the second line: *gāme akubbaṃ muni santhavaṃ*—the sage (i.e., the monk) does not make intimacy/connections in the village. *Santhava* means keeping company/intimacy. "Not having friendly intimacy in the village" means avoiding

inappropriate relationships with householders, the lack of association with laypeople. This is often mentioned in the Dhamma as follows. Regarding a monk who associates with laypeople, it is said: *sahananandī, sahasokī, sukhitesu sukhito, dukkhitesu dukkhito* etc.—rejoicing when laypeople rejoice, grieving when laypeople grieve, sharing the happiness and suffering of laypeople. Not only that, but in their duties and tasks (*kicca-karaṇīyesu*), he takes part (*yogaṃ āpajjati*) and joins them in doing those things. That is what intimacy is. The sage does not do that.

Next, *kāmehi ritto—ritta* means empty. *Kāmehi ritto* means the Tathāgata is empty of sensual pleasures; empty of the five cords of sensual pleasure. By removing desire, affection, lust, etc., towards them, he is free from the five cords of sensual pleasure, hence *kāmehi ritto*. Next, *apurekkharāno* (not looking forward) has a deep meaning. It is shown like this: forming future aspirations regarding the five aggregates of grasping, such as "May I have such a form, such a feeling, such a perception in the future!" is what is meant by *purekkharāno* (looking forward/preferring/putting in front). It puts becoming (*bhava*) in front. It aspires: "May I have such and such in the future." That is wishing for becoming (*bhava*). *Apurekkharāno* means not putting it in front in that manner. If someone does not put it in front, it is considered an excellent practice. Then one becomes *kāmehi ritto apurekkharāno* (empty of sensual pleasures, not looking forward).

Next, it says: *kathaṃ na viggayha janena kayirā*—he does not engage in disputatious speech with people. It is explained like this: at that time, there was a custom among other ascetics and Brahmins. They would gather in assembly halls and argue, challenging one another. There are several phrases of disputation mentioned here: "You do not know this Dhamma and Discipline; I know this Dhamma and Discipline," "You are practicing wrongly; I am practicing rightly," "You say last what should be said first, and first what should be said second." There is a whole set of such verbal challenges used in those debates. *Kathaṃ na viggayha janena kayirā* means that when speaking with people, he does not enter into such disputations. He does not engage in debates and challenges. Thus, Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana explains the aforementioned verse in depth. There are many other such instances; let us discuss them according to the occasion.

Among the expositions given by Ven. Kaccāyana, the most outstanding, deepest, and most highly valued exposition of that time is found in the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. We hope to speak a little about that, right from its introductory section. On one occasion, the Blessed One was residing at the Nigrodhārāma in Kapilavastu. One day, after consuming his almsfood, he entered the Great Forest for his afternoon abiding (*divāvihāra*—daytime rest) and sat at the foot of a Bel tree. At that moment, the Sākyan named Daṇḍapāṇi—the name Daṇḍapāṇi was given because wherever this Sākyan went, he carried a walking stick or a staff—while walking for exercise, came up to the Bel tree where the Blessed One was sitting. He did not pay respects, but after exchanging pleasantries, he asked a question: *kiṃvādī samaṇo kimakkhāyīti*—"What is your doctrine, ascetic, and what do you proclaim?"

Then the Blessed One gave a unique answer. He gave an answer that this Sākyan could not grasp. Let us try to state it in English. It is a long passage. He addressed this Sākyan as "friend" (*āvuso*). "Friend, I declare such a doctrine whereby one does not dispute with anyone in this world, with its deities, Māras, and Brahmās, in this generation with its ascetics and Brahmins, its devas and humans; and furthermore, whereby concepts do not lie latent as underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) in that Brahmin who dwells detached from sensual pleasures, free from doubts, and liberated from craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). I present such a doctrine." The Blessed One gave this unique answer. Unable to understand this, the Sākyan shook his head, wagged his tongue, wrinkled his forehead, and departed.

Afterwards, the story goes like this: having spent the evening, the Blessed One arose from his meditation, returned to Nigrodhārāma, and addressed the Sangha, recounting the question asked by Daṇḍapāṇi Sākyan and the answer given by the Buddha. At that moment, a certain monk questioned the Buddha about the meaning of that answer. Thereupon, the Blessed One laid down a brief exposition before the monks. It is as follows:

"Monks, if, owing to whatever cause, concepts, reckonings, or designations characterized by the prolific tendency of concepts (*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*) beset a man, and if there is nothing therein to be delighted in, welcomed, or grasped, then this is the end of all underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) of lust, the end of the underlying tendencies of aversion (*paṭigha*), the end of the underlying tendencies of views (*diṭṭhi*), the end of the underlying tendencies of doubt (*vicikicchā*), the end of the underlying tendencies of conceit (*māna*), the end of the underlying tendencies of craving for becoming (*bhava-rāga*), and the end of the underlying tendencies of ignorance (*avijjā*). This itself is the end of taking up rods and weapons, quarrels, disputes, recriminations, and other evil, unwholesome states." The Blessed One delivered this unique discourse, leaving a certain puzzle unsolved. It was not clear what those *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā* actually were. In short, the Blessed One declared that if, owing to whatever cause, a man is beset by *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*, and if one does not delight in, welcome, or cling to that cause, this itself is the end of the sevenfold defilements of underlying tendencies (*anusaya*), as well as quarrels, disputes, etc. Having declared this, he rose from his seat and entered his dwelling. Then, this became a puzzle for the monks. The Blessed One had not given the complete explanation. The monks then pondered, "How can we understand the meaning of this Dhamma taught in brief by the Blessed One?" While they were talking, they recalled that the venerable Mahā Kaccāyana had been highly praised and commended by the Blessed One, and was deeply respected by his companions in the holy life. "Perhaps Ven. Kaccāyana can explain this for us." This group went and invited Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana: "The Blessed One has declared such a thing, please be compassionate enough to explain this to us."

Then, as was his usual custom, Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana said: "Indeed, Venerable Sirs, your action is like that of a man who, seeking the heartwood of a tree, bypasses its root and trunk and searches for the heartwood among its leaves. While the Blessed One is present,

you come to me to find its meaning; that is what your action is like. Go and ask the Blessed One himself." Then those monks said: "The Blessed One has entered his dwelling, and our time is passing. If it is no trouble, please clarify its meaning for us." When they repeatedly requested and invited Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana, it was on that occasion, through an extremely deep passage that has captured the minds of many, that Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana analyzed that utterance of the Buddha. Some parts of it are explained in Pali. The exposition given by Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana to explain the Buddha's passage is extremely deep. In any case, he says this:

"Friends!" addressing those monks, he took one of the six sense bases—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—and explained, and the devotees should apply it to the other sense bases as well. It begins like this:

Cakkhuñca āvuso paṭicca rūpe uppajjati cakkhu-viññāṇaṃ—"Friends, dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arises." You can understand that much. Next, he says: *tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso*—the coming together of these three is contact (*phassa*). Those three mean the eye, forms, and the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that arises dependent on them. The moment of their coming together, the moment they meet, is designated as contact (*phassa*). Next: *phassa-paccayā vedanā*—dependent on contact (*phassa*) as condition, feeling (*vedanā*). Now, he expounds the next part in a unique way: *yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti*—what one feels, that one perceives. *Yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi*—what one perceives, about that one thinks. *Yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti*—what one thinks about, that one conceptually proliferates (*papañceti*). I will explain these words later. For now, understand it as "conceptually proliferates." *Yaṃ papañceti*—what one conceptually proliferates...

Now, next he says: *tato nidānaṃ purisaṃ papañca-saññā-saṅkhā samudācaranti*—owing to that cause, those aforesaid *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā* (concepts, reckonings, or designations characterized by the prolific tendency of concepts), whatever they may be, beset and overwhelm that man who set those Dhamma processes in motion. Regarding what? *Atītānāgatapaccuppannesu cakkhuviññeyyesu rūpesu*—the man is overwhelmed by the *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā* built up regarding forms cognizable by the eye in the past, future, and present. This was the answer given by Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana.

He adds a bit more to the end. Although there is no opportunity to explain all of it, to make it complete, it must be said in brief. Next, he states: "When there is the eye, forms, and eye-consciousness, it is possible to point out a designation (*paññatti*) of contact (*phassa*). When there is the designation of contact (*phassa*), there is room for a designation of feeling (*vedanā*). When there is the designation of feeling (*vedanā*), there is room for a designation of perception (*saññā*). When there is the designation of perception (*saññā*), there is room for a designation of applied thought (*vitakka*). When there is the designation of applied thought (*vitakka*), there is the onset of *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*." He also states the reverse:

"Where there is no eye, no forms, and no eye-consciousness, there is no way to designate contact (*phassa*). In the absence of that, one cannot designate feeling (*vedanā*); there is

no perception (*saññā*), no applied thought (*vitakka*), and no *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*." Ven. Kaccāyana stated this as well. Having finished this exposition, Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana said to the monks: "Friends, this is how I understand it. Go to the Blessed One and ask about the meaning of this brief sermon, and in whatever way he explains it, preserve it accordingly."

Then, these monks—it may not have been at that very moment, but on a later occasion when they found the Blessed One at leisure—went and presented the entire account. After the Buddha arrived, they explained: "We invited Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana, and he analyzed it for us in this manner," presenting the exposition in full. The Blessed One declared: "Monks, Mahā Kaccāyana is wise. Even if you had asked me, I would have explained it in this very same way. Therefore, this indeed is its meaning. Preserve it thus." The Blessed One approved it entirely. At that moment, Ven. Ānanda, who was standing nearby, made a unique comment. He used a simile: "Venerable Sir, just as a man oppressed by hunger might find a ball of honey (*madhupiṇḍika*), a honeycomb, and from whatever side he tastes it, licks it, or sucks it, sweet honey flows out endlessly; even so, Venerable Sir, if a wise monk examines the meaning of this Dhamma portion with wisdom, endless sweet meaning flows out." Expressing his joy, Ven. Ānanda asked: "Blessed One, what name should be given to this Dhamma portion?" He asked with a hint. "Then, Ānanda, call this Dhamma discourse the *Madhupiṇḍika* (The Ball of Honey) Sutta." From this, we see that Ven. Ānanda too realized that this discourse contained immense meaning. That is why he gave the simile of the ball of honey.

So, it is this very ball of honey that I am trying to offer you to suck, according to my ability. Try to suck this honey. There is extremely deep Dhamma here. Indeed, this is the section that has drawn the attention of most scholars today. First, let us try to understand the word *papañca*.

In everyday usage, even as it is used today, if someone gives a long-winded, roundabout explanation instead of directly answering a question, we say, "Speak without *papañca*." So, unnecessary circumlocutions and wordiness are also called *papañca*. But here, it refers to a *papañca* of the mind (conceptual proliferation). I will explain the other words as the occasion demands. The uniqueness of the exposition given by Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana is that he first shows that what is called consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is dependently co-arisen (*paṭicca-samuppanna*). It is something that arises from causes and conditions. An ordinary untaught person, lacking Dhamma knowledge, takes this consciousness (*viññāṇa*), this mind, as the self. That is exactly what all other religions firmly grasp as the soul or self. But here, it is clearly shown that dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arises: *cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu-viññāṇaṃ*. Consciousness is neither in the eye nor in the forms. If these two come together at some point, through the direction of attention (*manasikāra*), something called consciousness arises at that moment: eye-consciousness. Just as fire does not arise without friction, the Blessed One declared that consciousness does not arise without a cause.

Eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, etc., are all born of causes and conditions. *Aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavo*—"Apart from conditions, there is no origination of consciousness." This is shown as the most important point in this Dhamma. Here, it is clearly shown that dependent on the eye and forms, consciousness arises. In that consciousness, both the eye and forms are reflected. Then there is the eye, there are forms, and there is consciousness. These three are taken together. The moment they are taken together is called contact (*phassa*). *Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso*—the coming together of these three is contact. Contact is a very deep matter. It is shown to be dependently co-arisen. No one actually "made" contact; contact is something that emerged through those causes and conditions. Next, it is stated: *phassa-paccayā vedanā*—dependent on contact as condition, feeling (*vedanā*). Here too, the conditional relation is stated, showing it is dependently co-arisen. No one "made" contact; contact arose through other causes and conditions. Dependent on that contact, there is feeling (*vedanā*). But going forward from there, it is after feeling arises that the hidden "self" wakes up. As mentioned in another Sutta, the Buddha asks: "Ānanda, if there were no feeling (*vedanā*) at all, would there be any room for a self?" The answer is "No." This shows that after reaching the stage of feeling, let us see how Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana's exposition proceeds.

"*Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe uppajjati cakkhu-viññāṇaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassa-paccayā vedanā*." From there, it goes in a unique way: *yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti*—what one feels, that one perceives. So, one perceives that feeling: what one feels, that one perceives. Next, *yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi*—what one perceives, about that one thinks. *Yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti*—when one thinks about it, without one even knowing it, one gets carried away by those thoughts. Why does one get carried away? That too is in the Buddha's teaching.

Wherever there are conceptual proliferations (*papañca-saññā*) due to some cause, the Buddha uses three words: *abhinanditabbaṃ, abhivaditabbaṃ, ajjhosetabbaṃ*—to be delighted in, to be welcomed, to be grasped. These words refer to what you know very well as craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and views (*diṭṭhi*). One delights through craving (*taṇhā*); one welcomes/asserts through conceit (*māna*); one grasps/clings through views (*diṭṭhi*). That is why all three words are connected. Thus, due to forming craving, conceit, and views (*taṇhā, māna, diṭṭhi*) regarding those thoughts (*vitakka*), those conceptual proliferations (*papañca*) overflow. Those thoughts overflow, and what happens in the end? The person who directed their intellect in that way is overwhelmed. Therein lies *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā samudācaranti*—the concepts, reckonings, or designations characterized by the prolific tendency of concepts beset and overwhelm that man.

"Saṅkhā" derived from conceptual proliferation (*papañca-saññā*). Now, the word *saṅkhyā* is used in daily life for numbers/figures. Everyone knows that. Actually, when we think about it, in language usage, for humans to exchange ideas, the easiest way they first use to communicate is numbers. One can even point with fingers and reckon. This reckoning is called counting. The same reckoning done with numbers is later done with words. Therefore, *papañca-saṅkhā* means the reckonings or designations created by

conceptual proliferation. Why is it called designations? In another place, if we seek the etymology of this word based on the Buddha's teaching, there are three words: *saṅkhā, samaññā, paññatti*. These are synonyms—meaning they have similar meanings. *Saṅkhā* is a reckoning, arriving at a convention. Next, *paññatti* is like the first presentation of something like a "clock" through some reckoning. Then it is conventionally agreed upon. We all call it a "clock." If we used another name, it would cause confusion. Thus, the convention arose. So, the "clock" became a convention. First, the reckoning was done, putting the pieces together. At that point, let's say we decided to call it a "clock," and thereafter it was conventionally agreed upon. Next, once it is established as a designation (*paññatti*), no one doubts it because it has been accepted. That reckoning called *saṅkhā* goes very far. Through those thoughts, through that reckoning, that person is unknowingly overwhelmed by *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*. *Samudācaranti*—due to that overwhelming, they slip into the three periods of time: past, present, and future (*atīta, anāgata, paccuppanna*). Confusing the three periods of time, there is a past. One thinks the past is the present, and one thinks the future is also the present. That is why the Buddha preached that wise ascetics and Brahmins do not confuse these three periods of time. For past things, they say "it was"; for future things, "it will be"; for present things, "it is." But the ordinary world confuses this. This happens mostly due to being overwhelmed by craving (*taṇhā*) and conceit (*māna*).

Explaining this story in this way, many might not understand. Therefore, let us tell a small, heart-touching story that anyone can relate to. The Buddha did similar things. Some of you might have heard that during the Buddha’s time, there was an Arhat monk named Saṅgharakkhita. A nephew of his was ordained under him. Therefore, that monk was called Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita (Nephew Saṅgharakkhita). This young monk observed the rainy retreat (*vassa*) in a temple in a certain remote village. At the end of the retreat, he received a piece of cloth of seven cubits and another of eight cubits as retreat garments to make a robe. This young monk thought: "I will use this seven-cubit cloth. I must offer the eight-cubit cloth to my teacher." He returned to the monastery. Since the senior monk was out on almsround, he planned to make a grand offering to his teacher. When the venerable elder returned, the young monk placed the cloth at his feet, offered it, saying "I offer what I received to you," and began to fan him. The elder Saṅgharakkhita said: "You keep it, my robes are complete." The young monk repeated: "I had intended to offer this robe only to you." Yet, the elder Saṅgharakkhita refused. Because of this, the nephew monk’s mind became deeply disappointed.

This young monk thought: "Even though we are related, he did not even consider that." He thought, "Now, there is no use in my being a monk," and while fanning, he planned to disrobe. "After disrobing, I cannot live doing nothing. I will sell this eight-cubit cloth and buy a she-goat. She-goats give birth quickly. By selling the kids, I will get a wife to look after the house. After we have a child, I will name him after my uncle, and taking the child in a carriage, I will go to visit my uncle, the elder Saṅgharakkhita. On the way, I will ask, 'Give the child to my hands.' My wife will say, 'You drive the carriage, I will look after the child.' Somehow, due to carelessness, the child will fall. The wheel of the carriage will run over the child. I will get angry. Because she did not give me the child

when I asked, I will get angry and beat my wife with the goad." But whom did he actually beat? With the palm-leaf fan, he struck the head of the chief monk! Since Ven. Saṅgharakkhita could read the minds of others, he looked to see what had happened. "Aha! You were striking your wife, but you struck the old monk, didn't you?" At that, the nephew monk thought, "I am ruined!" and dropping the fan, he started to run. The other monks caught him. Later, when they brought him to the Buddha and explained the matter, the Buddha uttered the verse from the *Dhammapada*: *dūraṅgamaṃ ekacaraṃ* ("wandering far, wandering alone"), to show how far the mind can travel.

Though it is not a long story, regarding what happened at that moment, he projected a future. Then, he was overwhelmed by those *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*—things created entirely by his own mind. He had not bought a she-goat, he had not married a wife, he had not had a child. Nothing had happened. Yet, in his mind, he took all of those, became overwhelmed by them, and got into an entanglement. This happens to everyone in some way, at various levels.

But here, let us take the word *saṅkhā*. This is a linguistic matter. When a word is formed, we think it is a "thing." In grammar, there is a nature that deludes the world. That is where ignorance (*avijjā*) lies hidden. Through nouns, verbs, and the general connection of subject and object, in the structures of agent and action, the ordinary world easily falls into delusion. That is why this Dhamma is difficult to understand. These aspects are found everywhere in this world. When the Blessed One explained dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), he showed: think of the beginning of a river flowing from a mountain. Sometimes, when rainwater falling from a roof mixes with water coming from around, it becomes a stream, a brook, a river, and flows into the ocean with a great roar. We call that a stream, a brook, a river. We conceive of a "thing" through words, but the world exists only as a continuity (*santati*). It arises due to causes and conditions. From whichever side it flows, we have given it a name—the Kelani River or the Mahaweli River. But there is nothing of the sort. We are overwhelmed by that word. There is such a thing within language. It is within this that ignorance (*avijjā*) lies hidden. An example of this is *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*. Even if we do not have long stories to illustrate these *saṅkhā*, consider it in brief.

In Western literature, a similar event is mentioned. There is the story of the goose that laid golden eggs. There was a goose that laid one golden egg a day. Its owner thought: "Since she gives one egg a day, I can get all of them at once." But when he cut open the belly of the goose, there were no eggs. Why? He thought the future was in the present. He took the future to be the present. This kind of thing happens constantly.

This is an extremely deep Sutta. On one hand, it is the disregarding of the fact that things arise from causes and conditions. That is why even consciousness (*viññāṇa*) was shown here as not existing on its own. To explain this: when we say "matchbox," there is no fire in the matchbox, nor is there fire in the matchstick. Yet, when they strike together, fire emerges due to causes and conditions. The Blessed One says that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is also such a thing. It is an arising due to causes and conditions. But through forgetting this, and thereafter turning them into "things," one separates the "eye" and

separates the "form." This is the kind of thing that happens. This is a deep matter. I am trying to explain it in brief.

On certain occasions, the Blessed One has given wonderful similes regarding this "duality"—regarding taking the eye and forms as two separate things. Sometimes, he gives the simile of a seamstress. The seamstress is craving (*taṇhā*), which ties the knot. The seamstress takes two ends and ties them in a knot. One end is the past; the other end is the future. The seamstress takes the past and the future and ties them in a knot, disregarding the present. This is what happened to the monk Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita. He tied the past and the future in a knot. He forgot the act of fanning.

In other places, it is shown that between the internal sense base and the external sense base lies consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Disregarding this, one ties them together. Think of a mirage. Through memory/perception, why does a deer mistake that distant shimmer for water? Because of craving (*taṇhā*) and conceit (*māna*), it thinks, "There is water over there, and here am I," and goes in search of water. But what appears as a mirage is a vision arising through causes and conditions. In that same way, the world is trapped between the two ends and the middle. It tries to knot the two ends together. In that attempt, it is craving (*taṇhā*) that comes forward. That is why craving is called *yāyaṃ taṇhā ponobhavikā nandīrāgasahagatā tatra tatrābhinandinī* ("this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, finding delight here and there"). Craving has a nature of finding delight here and there. It has a nature of reproducing. This craving is described as a sticky sap (glue). Why is it shown in so many different ways? Within craving, there is both the covering nature of ignorance (*avijjā*) and the sticking nature of craving. Thus, this illusion is exposed here. Disregarding that things have arisen from causes and conditions, after that personal feeling (*vedanā*) arises, one thinks: "Ah! This is my feeling, now I have recognized it."

Next, one thinks about that recognized perception. This is what a person keeps doing. Having gone on thinking, a point comes when, without even knowing it, that person is overwhelmed by those reckonings, or rather those feelings they created themselves, through the *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā* born of those thoughts. For this, many more stories have to be told.

Another small story, also from Indian literature. There were three magicians. Having learned the art of magic from their teachers, they were returning home through a forest. A good opportunity arose to show their skills. The bones of a tiger were scattered here and there. Among them, the first one, to show his skill, collected the bones of the tiger and reconstructed the form of the tiger. After the skeleton was made, the second one, to show his cleverness, filled the skeleton with flesh, skin, and blood. That was the magic method he had learned. What did the third one do? He gave life to the tiger. What happened to the three of them after that? The tiger leaped up and ate all three. This simile fits here perfectly. These people were overwhelmed by the *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā* they themselves had created. There are many other similes in all literatures, like the story of the man with the pot of flour on his head. These demonstrate the nature of *papañca* in daily life. No extraordinary stories are needed; everyone can experience it

themselves. At a moment when a great, powerful craving or desire arises, someone nearby has to shake you and ask, "Where are you?" In the meantime, one goes further and further into that *papañca* and, like that monk, does not know until one falls into a great disaster.

So, what is the cause of this? It is due to not knowing the reality, the lack of *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). In the Dhamma, *yoniso manasikāra* means returning to the place where things started. *Ayoniso manasikāra* (unwise attention) is running after the mirage. Think of it that way. *Yoni* means the source, the place of origin. That is what was said: dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The contact of these three means, in truth, one turns them into three. Then one counts them as three. One forgets that consciousness arose because of these two. At the moment of counting them, one takes it as contact (*phassa*). This is a very deep matter. That is what lies at the end of Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana's sermon. Let us mention that part too. Where there is an eye, a form, and eye-consciousness, there is a designation (*paññatti*) called contact (*phassa*). Because of that itself, there are other designations like feeling (*vedanā*), etc. Where they are not, there is no contact (*phassa*), no feeling (*vedanā*), no craving (*taṇhā*), no applied thought (*vitakka*), and nothing called *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*. What does that mean? We did not mention that earlier. That is what is called Nibbāna, the *asaṅkhata-dhātu* (the unconditioned element). Why? At some point, through *yoniso manasikāra*—the ultimate end of *yoniso manasikāra* is wisdom (*paññā*). *Yoniso manasikāra* is the seed of wisdom. When one reaches the next stage of *yoniso manasikāra*, consciousness subsides. *Sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*—all preparations are stilled. Along with that, consciousness too must subside. It is because of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists. At that moment, the subsiding of consciousness is the rise of wisdom. On one hand, when the light of wisdom arises, the reality of the illusion of consciousness is understood. Right there, that indeed is the supreme, deathless Nibbāna.

So, considering the time, I have said this much. Devotees may ask for further details from someone else. Consider this as a highly valuable ball of honey. If you suck this ball of honey well, you can extract the taste of Nibbāna from within it. Reminding you of this, today is the valuable Esala Full Moon Poya day, the day the Blessed One presented the sublime Dhamma to the world. In the first sermon, as everyone knows, only Ven. Aññā Kondañña understood that deep Dhamma to that extent. But subsequently, a large number of monks realized it. Through the expansion of the Dhamma, you devotees too might be thinking, "I must not be born again." So, to fulfill that, may this Dhamma sermon, supported by the virtue (*sīla*) you have observed, by engaging in sermon-hearing and meditation, and by completing both serenity and insight (*samatha* and *vipassanā*), lead you at some point to realize the noble cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*) in this very life, to realize the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) in this very life, and to attain the supreme, deathless Nibbāna, liberated from all suffering of saṃsāra! Through the sermon delivered so far, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha Brahma world, if any being wishes to rejoice in the merit of hearing this Dhamma, may they, through that rejoicing, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna

through a wished-for Bodhi (awakening)! For you devotees too, may this merit be a cause and condition for the swift realization of the paths and fruits, starting from Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), within this very Buddha-dispensation! Now recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi*....."

Pahankanuwa Sermon #49

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.204)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Kumbhakāro pure āsiṃ, Ghaṭīkāro mātāpettibharo āsiṃ;

Kassapassa upāsako, virato methunā dhammā;

Brahmacārī nirāmiso.

Ahuvā te sagāmeyyo, ahuvā te pure sakhā.

From:

Ghaṭīkāra tradition, connected with the Ghaṭīkāra Sutta (MN 81)

Dear Listeners,

This noble Vesak Full Moon Poya Day is the day on which the extremely rare, miraculous event of the arising of a Buddha in the world naturally comes to our minds. Although it is an event that occurs very rarely, we, as Buddhists, believe that the arising of a Buddha in the world takes place in accordance with a certain natural law (*dhammatā*). This matter becomes very clear to us, especially through the Sutta discourses in which our Blessed One spoke about the Buddhas of the past. The *Ghaṭīkāra Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* is one such discourse. As an introduction to that Sutta discourse, we presented as our theme two verses extracted from the *Ghaṭīkāra Sutta* in verse form, found in both the *Devatā Saṁyutta* and the *Devaputta Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. On an occasion when the Blessed One was residing at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthi, during the night, the Brahmā king Ghaṭīkāra—these Brahmā kings are also referred to by the names *devatā* (deities) and *devaputta* (sons of devas)—came during the night, paid homage to the Blessed One, stood to one side, and gave a piece of news or information to the Blessed One. What was that? It was the fact that seven Non-returner (*anāgāmi*) bhikkhus who had passed away in this Dispensation, immediately upon being born in the Aviha Brahmā world, attained the Fruit of Arahantship and achieved liberation. The names of those seven bhikkhus are mentioned as follows: Upaka, Palagaṇḍa, Pukkusāti, Bhaddiya, Bhaddadeva, Bāhudantī, and Piṅgiya. The Brahmā king came and declared

that these seven had attained Arahantship immediately upon birth in the Aviha Brahmā world. At the same time, while that verse dialogue was taking place, this Brahmā Ghaṭīkāra related his past history in the two verses we quoted earlier.

"In the past, I was a potter in the village of Vehaḷiṅga (*Kumbhakāro pure āsiṁ Vehaḷiṅge*)."

"In the past, I was a potter doing the work of Ghaṭīkāra."

"I was one who supported his mother and father (*Mātāpettiharo āsiṁ*)."

"I was a lay disciple of Kassapa Buddha (*Kassapassa upāsako*)."

"Abstaining from sexual intercourse, I was a celibate free from sensual attachments (*Virato methunā dhammā brahmacārī nirāmiso*)."

"I was a co-villager with you (*Ahuvā te sagāmeyyo*)."

"In the past, I was your friend (*Ahuvā te pure sakhā*)."

After he said this, the Blessed One also confirmed that fact, saying, "Yes, indeed we are old friends." That old friendship is revealed to us in the aforementioned *Ghaṭīkāra Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. The origin (*nidāna*) of that Sutta is recorded in the books as follows.

On one occasion, while the Blessed One was wandering on a tour in the Kosalan country with a large community of bhikkhus, he stopped at a certain place, stepped off the road, and at a certain spot, displayed a gentle smile. Ven. Ānanda thought, "What is the cause, what is the reason for the Blessed One to display a smile at this place and at this moment?" Knowing that the Tathāgatas do not smile without a cause, he arranged his robe over one shoulder, paid homage, and asked the Blessed One, "What is the cause, what is the reason for the Blessed One to display a smile?" When asked thus, the Blessed One revealed a certain history: "Ānanda, in the past, in this very region, there was a market town called Vehaḷiṅga. It was depending on that market town that Kassapa Buddha resided. Ānanda, right here was the monastery of Kassapa Buddha. Sitting right here, Kassapa Buddha gave advice to the Saṅgha." When this was said, Ven. Ānanda folded his double-layered outer robe into four, prepared a seat, and invited the Blessed One: "In that case, Venerable Sir, let the Blessed One sit on this seat. Thereby, this place will become a site used by two Buddhas." The Blessed One agreed and sat there. He then continued to relate that story further: "Kassapa Buddha resided depending on that village of Vehaḷiṅga. His monastery was right here. Kassapa Buddha had a chief attendant named Ghaṭīkāra, who was a potter. A potter by the name of Ghaṭīkāra. That potter Ghaṭīkāra had a very dear and close friend named Jotipāla. Now Ānanda, on one occasion, this potter Ghaṭīkāra said to the young man Jotipāla: 'Come, Jotipāla, let us go and see the Blessed One. Seeing such Buddhas is highly acclaimed. Come, let us go.' When he said this, the young man Jotipāla rejected it, saying: 'What is the use, Ghaṭīkāra? What is the use to me of seeing that bald-headed recluse?' For a second and a

third time, Ghaṭīkāra the potter made this request. But the young man Jotipāla did not wish to go and see the Blessed One. Then the potter Ghaṭīkāra said to his friend Jotipāla: 'In that case, let us go to the river to bathe. Take your bathing requisites,' and they went to the river. Even there, the potter Ghaṭīkāra said to his friend: 'Jotipāla, the monastery of that Blessed One is very close by. Come, Jotipāla, let us go to the Blessed One.' Then, once again, the young man Jotipāla said: 'What is the use, Ghaṭīkāra? What is the use of seeing that bald-headed recluse?' and rejected it three times. Thereupon, Ghaṭīkāra grabbed the young man Jotipāla by his waist-cloth and said: 'Come, let us go and see the Blessed One.' Even so, the young man Jotipāla released his waist-cloth and rejected it, saying: 'There is no use in going,' and refused. This happened three times. Next, both of them bathed in the river. After bathing, when they came ashore, this potter Ghaṭīkāra grabbed the young man Jotipāla by his hair-lock. Holding him by the hair-lock, he said: 'Come, Jotipāla, the monastery is right here, very close. Come, let us go and see the Blessed One.' At that moment, the young man Jotipāla thought, 'I am a Brahmin. Although this potter Ghaṭīkāra is of a low caste, for him to grab me by my hair-lock like this after bathing, there must indeed be something of great value here.' Having undergone a certain awakening, he said: 'In that case, let go of my hair-lock. I will come to see the Blessed One.' Thereupon, going to Kassapa Buddha, the potter Ghaṭīkāra paid homage with great faith and sat to one side. The young man Jotipāla exchanged polite and friendly greetings and sat to one side. The potter Ghaṭīkāra introduced his friend: 'Venerable Sir, this Jotipāla is a very dear companion of mine. Please preach some Dhamma to him,' thus requesting the declaration of the Dhamma. The Blessed One delivered a Dhamma talk to both the potter Ghaṭīkāra and the young man Jotipāla, giving them a gladdening Dhamma instruction. After listening to it, as the two of them arose, paid homage to the Blessed One, and were leaving, the young man Jotipāla asked the potter Ghaṭīkāra: 'Why, Ghaṭīkāra, having heard such Dhamma, do you not ordain?' Then the potter Ghaṭīkāra replied: 'Why, Jotipāla, don't you know that I am one who supports his blind and elderly parents?' Then Jotipāla said: 'In that case, I shall ordain.' Once he said that, Ghaṭīkāra took him back to the Buddha and said: 'This is my friend, Jotipāla, who wishes to ordain. May the Blessed One ordain him.' Thereupon, the Blessed One ordained the young man and gave him higher ordination (*upasampadā*)."

Two weeks after that ordination and higher ordination ceremony, the Blessed One set out on a tour towards Vārāṇasī with the community of bhikkhus. Having arrived in Vārāṇasī—behold these wonderful events! Kassapa the Blessed One resided in the Isipatana Deer Park in Vārāṇasī. At that time, the name of the King of Kāsī was Kikī. Kikī, the King of Kāsī, heard that the Blessed One had now arrived in Vārāṇasī and was residing in Isipatana. The King came with his retinue. When the King came to see him, paid homage, worshipped him, and sat down, the Blessed One gladdened the King with a talk on the Dhamma. King Kikī invited the Blessed One, along with the Bhikkhu Saṅgha, to the palace for the almsfood the following day. The Blessed One accepted the invitation. The following day, once the preparations had been made and the King sent word, the Blessed One proceeded to the palace with the community of bhikkhus. The King personally served the almsfood to the Blessed One and the community of bhikkhus,

and at the end of the meal, he sat near the Blessed One and said: "Venerable Sir, please spend this rainy season (*vassa*) in Vārāṇasī. I shall attend on the Saṅgha in this manner," thus making an invitation for the rains-residence. Then Kassapa Buddha said: "Great King, I have already accepted an invitation for the rains-residence. Therefore, I cannot accept this." When he said this, the King requested for a second and a third time. Sadness (*domanassa*) arose in the King's mind over the rejection of his invitation. The King asked: "Is there an attendant for the Blessed One who is superior to me?"

The Blessed One declared: "There is, Great King. In the village of Vehaḷiṅga, there is a potter named Ghaṭīkāra. He is my chief lay disciple. Great King, your mind became sad because I rejected this. But the mind of this potter Ghaṭīkāra would never harbor such displeasure or sadness towards me." Saying this, Kassapa Buddha went on to declare numerous virtues of the potter Ghaṭīkāra to the Great King. "Great King, as to what kind of person this lay disciple, the potter Ghaṭīkāra, is: he has gone for refuge to the Buddha, gone for refuge to the Dhamma, gone for refuge to the Saṅgha; furthermore, abstaining from taking life and so forth, he observes the five precepts with excellent understanding. He possesses unwavering confidence (*aveccappasāda*) in the Buddha—what is called *aveccappasāda* is the pure faith in the Triple Gem that arises through the realization of the Paths and Fruits (*magga-phala*), through the realization of the Dhamma. He possesses unwavering confidence in the Buddha, which arises from realization. He is possessed of such confidence in the Dhamma, and likewise in the Saṅgha." Explaining that aspect, he continued further as follows: "Moreover, this potter Ghaṭīkāra partakes of food only once a day. He leads a celibate life. Not only that, but this Ghaṭīkāra does not handle money, gold, silver, pearls, or gems. What does he do instead? Since he is a potter, he must obtain clay, mustn't he? Instead, this potter Ghaṭīkāra does a very wonderful thing: he does not dig the earth with his own hands. He brings clay from the collapsed banks of the river, or from earth piled up by mice, fashions vessels, shapes them, and even then, he does not sell them for money. Having made them, he places them in front of his house and tells people: 'Take these vessels, and leave for our use something like rice, mung beans, or chickpeas.' That is his trade. He is one who possesses such a wonderfully righteous livelihood. He also supports his blind parents. Furthermore, finally, he declares that this potter Ghaṭīkāra, having destroyed the five lower fetters (*orambhāgiya-saṁyojana*) that drag one down in this *saṁsāra*, is a person who has attained the stage of a Non-returner (*anāgāmi*)."

The Blessed One did not stop there; he went on to relate certain unusual incidents. You lay devotees will find them amazing. The incidents you will hear next are of a wonderfully fresh fragrance, unique to the era of a Buddha's arising. He declared several such incidents: "Great King, on one occasion when I was residing in the market town of Vehaḷiṅga, while walking for almsfood (*piṇḍapāta*), I went to the house of this potter Ghaṭīkāra. Since only his blind parents were there, I went and asked: 'Where has Bhaggava gone?' The Blessed One addresses the potter Ghaṭīkāra as 'Bhaggava'. Those blind parents said: 'Venerable Sir, your attendant has gone out of the house at this moment. There is rice in the pot, and soup in the soup bowl. Please take and partake of it.'" This is what they said to the Blessed One. "Then, having been given permission by

the parents, I took rice from the pot and soup from the soup bowl, and sat there and partook of it. After I partook of it and departed, the potter Ghaṭīkāra returned home and asked his parents: 'Who has taken rice from the rice pot and soup from the soup bowl and eaten?' Then they said: 'Son, Kassapa Buddha came, and when he inquired thus, we gave him permission, and he partook of it.' Thereupon, the potter Ghaṭīkāra said: 'It is a great gain for me, a massive gain, that the Blessed One places such trust in me!' He expressed the joy (*pīti*) that arose due to that event. Because of that joy, the potter Ghaṭīkāra experienced that joy and happiness (*pīti-sukha*) for two whole weeks, and his blind parents experienced it for one week."

He then related another such incident: "On another day, while I was again on almsround, I went to the house of the potter Ghaṭīkāra and asked his parents: 'Where has Bhaggava gone?' On that occasion too, he had gone out of the house. They said: 'There are flour-cakes (*kumāsa-piṇḍa*) in the pot, and soup in the soup bowl. Please take and partake of it.' I took those flour-cakes along with the soup from the soup bowl, partook of them, and departed. When the potter Ghaṭīkāra returned and asked: 'Who has taken these flour-cakes?', and was told that the Blessed One had come and taken them, he exclaimed: 'A valuable thing, a great gain has come to me, that the Blessed One came to my house and partook of food with such trust!' Here too, it is said that due to that joy, the potter experienced that joy and happiness for half a month—two weeks—and his parents experienced that joy and happiness for a week."

Then, the Blessed One related yet another unique incident to King Kikī: "Great King, on another occasion when I was residing in the village of Vehaḷiṅga, the roof of my hut began to leak due to the rain. I told the bhikkhus to go and see if there was any thatch at the house of the potter Ghaṭīkāra. Then the bhikkhus said: 'Venerable Sir, there is no loose thatch at the house of the potter Ghaṭīkāra. However, there is thatch covering his roof.' 'In that case, go and bring that thatch.' The bhikkhus went and began to take the thatch that was on the roof of that house." Now, there is a slight difference of opinion there. In modern translations, it is often presented not as the roof of his house, but as the roof of the potter's workshop. However, the Commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*) indicate that it was indeed the roof of the house. In any case, this was a very miraculous event that occurred. When the Saṅgha was taking the thatch from the roof, the blind parents asked: "Who is removing the thatch from the roof?" Then they replied: "We are bhikkhus. The hut of the Blessed One is leaking. We are taking it for that." "Take it, please take it!" said the blind parents, expressing great joy. Then the bhikkhus took the thatch from that roof and thatched the hut of the Blessed One. When the potter Ghaṭīkāra returned home—the Blessed One is still speaking to the King—he asked his parents: "Why is there no thatch on this roof?" Then they told him: "The bhikkhus took this thatch." Even on that occasion, the potter Ghaṭīkāra said: "A great gain has come to me! Such trust has been placed in me by the Blessed One." There too, it is mentioned that the potter experienced that joy and happiness (*pīti-sukha*) for half a month, and his parents for about a week. Not only that, but a miracle is also recorded here. For three whole months, the sky was the only roof over the house of the potter Ghaṭīkāra. Yet, it is said that it did not get wet in the rain. That is to say, there was no roof, but it did not get wet in the rain. Greatly

miraculous things regarding this are mentioned in the Commentaries. Be that as it may, the Blessed One declared these events to the King. When he said this, the King exclaimed: "A massive gain has come to this potter Ghaṭīkāra! A massive gain!" Expressing his appreciation, the King, in order to manifest his delight, sent five hundred cartloads of red hill-rice, along with suitable condiments and provisions, to the market town of Vehaḷiṅga through his royal officers. When the royal officers who brought it said: "Venerable Sir, the King requested us to hand these over to you," the potter Ghaṭīkāra replied: "Kings are people with many duties and much business. Let these remain for the King himself. I have no use for them," and rejected them. The Blessed One declared: "Such a person, Great King, is the potter Ghaṭīkāra."

Next, the discourse is concluded; that *Ghaṭīkāra Sutta* ends like this: "Ānanda, perhaps you may think that the young man Jotipāla was someone else. But, Ānanda, I myself was the young man Jotipāla. I was that young man Jotipāla." This is a very wonderful story. Anyone listening to this might be astonished. This Bodhisatta, who was destined to become the next Buddha, when invited by his friend as many as nine times, saying, "Come, let us go see the Blessed One," said, "What is the use of seeing that bald-headed recluse?" Even for a Bodhisatta, actions of this nature are called "abuse of noble ones" (*āriyūpavāda*). Disparaging a Buddha is a grave unwholesome deed (*akusala*). The reason for this is shown to be Brahmin pride, or whatever it was, which led to it being uttered nine times. There are various opinions regarding this matter. In the Pāli canon, there is a section called the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna*. In that section, our Blessed One on one occasion gives an account to the bhikkhus of the past unwholesome deeds (*kamma*) that affected his life. On that occasion, it is shown there: "Being the young man named Jotipāla, because of the disparagement I directed towards Kassapa Buddha in that era, the Path to Supreme Enlightenment was obstructed for me for six years, and I was compelled to practice self-mortification (*dukarakiriyā*) for those entire six years. My mind was inclined to perform those self-mortifications." Now, we know that not every Buddha practiced self-mortification. The reason he had to practice self-mortification for six years was that he followed the teachings of the Nigaṇṭhas in that direction until he found the Middle Path. This occurred, as mentioned, as a result of the disparagement directed at Kassapa Buddha. Some say that unwholesome results do not affect Buddhas. But you devotees know that even for the Blessed One, and likewise for Ven. Moggallāna the Great Arahant—who was so highly psychic-powered—various events of this kind are mentioned, where he was beaten until his bones were crushed in his final moments because of having killed his parents in a past life. Even after attaining Arahantship, one must pay off those remaining kammic debts in a severe manner. Why? Because the attraction is towards this physical body; both wholesome energy and unwholesome energy are attracted to this body. Even Arahants experience gain and loss; the eight worldly conditions (*aṭṭha-lokadhamma*) are common to all. One must understand it in this way.

Through this story, you lay devotees can obtain a very important lesson and an excellent example. Indeed, the life of this potter Ghaṭīkāra was a truly wonderful life; it culminated in the Brahmā world. At that time, he had to take care of his parents. It was due to that

sacrifice that he did not ordain. As he told the young man Jotipāla, the reason he did not ordain after hearing such Dhamma was to support his parents. How did he live? It was a highly miraculous life. What a pure livelihood (*ājīva*) it was, in a way that lay devotees of today cannot even imagine! That is to say, he did not handle money. He did not dig the earth with his own hands, and he did not engage in deceptive trade under the name of commerce. He supported his parents in that very manner. Consider this: it was because he performed service to the Buddha while supporting his parents that the potter Ghaṭīkāra was appointed to the position of chief attendant. Now, in the case of our Blessed One, it was always a member of the Saṅgha (Ven. Ānanda) who was the attendant. This is a very wonderful thing. The chief attendant of Kassapa Buddha was this layman. Furthermore, in addition to those virtues of the potter Ghaṭīkāra, think of what a valuable spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) he was! Even when his friend refused nine times, without quarreling with him, he advised him repeatedly, and finally, even dragging him by his hair-lock, he directed the young man Jotipāla towards the monastic life. What a precious spiritual friend! According to our books, even after an intervening period between two Buddhas (*buddhantara*) had passed, and finally while residing in the Brahmā world, he continued to perform that very act of spiritual friendship.

This is an account from the *Nidānakathā* of the *Jātaka Commentary*, which you devotees must have heard many times. When our Blessed One, as Prince Siddhartha, renounced the world and went to the far bank of the river Anomā, deciding to ordain, and cut his own hair with his sword—reminiscent of being held by the hair-lock—it was that very spiritual friend, the Brahmā king Ghaṭīkāra, who brought the eight monastic requisites (*aṭṭha-parikkhāra*), as recorded in the books. Thus, as you lay devotees can understand, the character of Ghaṭīkāra is a great example. At the same time, we see that the Buddha was not biased. Had he accepted the invitation of a king, a king's invitation for the rains-residence, it would have been highly advantageous for the bhikkhus and the Blessed One. Yet he rejected all of that. It is virtue (*guṇa*) that Buddhas respect. It is virtue, not power or status. For this reason, accepting the rains-residence invitation made by that poor potter, he rejected the King's invitation. Next, look at the greatness of that potter Ghaṭīkāra: he rejected all the red hill-rice sent by the King in so many carts. He lived by making pots after bringing clay with great difficulty. See how a person who did such work, carrying on one hand the heavy responsibility of supporting his blind parents, and on the other hand, serving as the chief attendant of the Blessed One—with all of this, how did this person live? In that very manner, possessing a highly righteous livelihood, while observing virtue (*sīla*), he led a wonderfully miraculous life. If we go a bit deeper, from this story into the deeper aspect of the Dhamma, let us now direct our minds along the message brought by the Brahmā king Ghaṭīkāra.

You devotees have heard that this stage of Non-returner (*anāgāmi*) is the state just below that of an Arahant. To say something about it, ten fetters (*saṁyojana*) that bind one to this *saṁsāra* are mentioned in this Dhamma. Among them, the fetters that drag one downwards are called lower fetters (*orambhāgiya-saṁyojana*), namely: the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), adherence to rules and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), sensual lust (*kāmarāga*), and aversion (*paṭigha*). Those five

fetters drag one downwards. After transcending them and becoming a Non-returner, there remain the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya-saṁyojana*) that pull one upwards. What are they? Attachment to form (*rūpa-rāga*), attachment to the formless (*arūpa-rāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). Those five still remain. They are extremely subtle, and that is why Non-returners have not yet attained Arahantship, but remain in that stage. Furthermore, why is it called *anāgāmī*? Because they do not return to a mother's womb. They have absolutely no energy left to go to a mother's womb. Instead, they are born in the Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsa*), of which there are five worlds. Some of you may have heard of them: Aviha, Atappa, Sudassa, Sudassī, and Akaniṭṭha. Thus, the highest point of existence (*bhava*) is considered to be Akaniṭṭha. Those five are the Pure Abodes, and among them, this word "Akaniṭṭha" is a puzzle to many. As far as we understand, it is precisely due to these higher fetters that these Non-returners are called "those of upward stream" (*uddhamsoto*). Normally, a stream flows downwards. When caught in a stream, the tendency is to be dragged downwards. But here, what is meant by *uddhamsoto* is a journey towards final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*). That is why Akaniṭṭha is considered the highest point of existence. Now we speak of "from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha."

Next, the Blessed One has delivered a special discourse concerning those Brahmā worlds and the manner in which Non-returners attain Arahantship, in the *Sattaka Nipāta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, titled *Satta Purisagatiyo* ("Seven Destinations of Persons"). "Seven Destinations of Persons" means that the Buddha has illustrated the manner in which seven types of Non-returner persons attain Arahantship, using unique similes as follows. Let us first state those similes. The Blessed One preaches: Just as when an iron slab that has been heated all day—now, when an iron slab is beaten on an anvil in a smithy, sparks of fire arise, sparks leap up; let us call it a flake, a tiny flake—in the first instance, when that iron slab is beaten, a spark or flake arises, and as soon as it arises, as soon as it leaps up, it is extinguished right there. That is the first instance. Next, the second instance is shown as follows. We shall state the similes first. While beating that iron slab in the smithy, that spark leaps up, goes high into the air, and is extinguished up there. The third instance is where that spark goes high and, as it descends towards the earth, is extinguished before it hits the ground. Those are the three instances. Those three instances are shown, devotees; now, when describing Non-returner persons, not only in that Sutta but also in other places, they are divided into five categories or five groups according to the manner in which they attain Arahantship. Let us state that first. It is mentioned as follows: they are divided into five categories: *antarā-parinibbāyī*, *upahacca-parinibbāyī*, *asaṅkhāra-parinibbāyī*, *sasaṅkhāra-parinibbāyī*, and *uddhamsoto-akaniṭṭhagāmī*. However, those five categories are shown here as seven. Now, those first three categories we mentioned belong to the *antarā-parinibbāyī*—attaining final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*) in-between. Now, understand that the spark represents the kammic velocity, or rather, the force of preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra-bala*), the energy of preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra-sakti*) that the Non-returner person carries. To show how quickly this happens after passing away from here, it is compared to when that iron slab is beaten and a spark arises, and immediately upon arising, it is extinguished. In the second instance, it goes some distance and is

extinguished. In the third instance, it flies through the air and is extinguished before hitting the ground. All three of these instances belong to the *antarā-parinibbāyī*. Next, it is said that the iron flake flies through the air and is extinguished after falling onto the ground. This illustrates the *upahacca-parinibbāyī*. In this case, they attain Arahantship after some delay. Next, the simile the Blessed One shows is that as the iron is cut, a piece, a flake, or a spark, let us say, flies through the air and falls onto a small heap of wood-chips or a heap of grass. Falling there, it burns it up and is extinguished. This is called *asaṅkhāra-parinibbāyī*. There are some very subtle distinctions here. Then, the next instance is shown where that spark falls on a large heap of grass or a large heap of wood-chips. Falling there, it burns it, and after completely burning up that large heap of grass or heap of wood-chips, it is extinguished. This is called *sasaṅkhāra-parinibbāyī*. Next, it says that in the final instance, falling on a large heap of grass or wood-chips, it burns it completely, but does not stop there. It burns the nearby bushes, and burns parks and gardens. Burning along in this way, it reaches some water, a rock, or a road, and being deprived of fuel (*indhana*), it is extinguished. That final instance is what is called *uddhamsoto-akaniṭṭhagāmī*. That is to say, this simile was spoken to illustrate the case of that Non-returner person who, passing through the Brahmā worlds of Aviha, Atappa, Sudassa, and Sudassī, finally attains the liberation of the Fruit of Arahantship in the Akaniṭṭha Brahmā world. From this simile of the spark shown to us, what we must understand is that what the Blessed One called Nibbāna is extinguishment. This entire becoming / existence (*bhava*) is burnt up. To apply our simile further, think for a moment: we highlighted in our discourses on Dependent Co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) that the secret of this becoming / existence (*bhava*) lies between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). This is proved in one place in the series of verses we selected as our theme, where the Brahmā king Ghaṭīkāra indicates the attainment of Arahantship by those seven bhikkhus with this kind of statement, in this verse:

'Yattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati'

"Where Name-and-Form are ceased without remainder,"

'Taṁ dhammaṁ pariññāya

acchiduṁ bhavabandhanaṁ'

"Having fully understood that Dhamma, they have cut the bond of becoming / existence (*bhava*)." That they, having understood this, cut the bond of becoming / existence is what is declared in that verse. From this, it is clear that the bond of becoming / existence lies between this Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). As we have said before, if we think about it for a moment to understand that simile, the collision between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is like the beating of that heated iron slab. It is through this that all the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*) arise—as we said before, from preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)

caused by ignorance (*avijjā*), and then through that energy, becoming / existence (*bhava*) is built up. Kamma and so forth are also built up by that. Finally, we understand from what was said about those Brahmā kings; according to the books, even Non-returner Brahmā kings, sometimes even after attaining Arahantship, remain for aeons (*kalpas*), because the lifespan in those Brahmā worlds is extremely long. That is why it is often said that the human world is the best place to attain Arahantship. Even after attaining Arahantship in those places, there is still an existence that has no real meaning. What is the reason? One has to exhaust the extremely subtle kamma attracted to this body, attracted to this existence, as long as the life-faculty (*jīvitindriya*) persists. Therefore, they say that lifespans of aeons exist in those realms. Even after attaining Arahantship, those Brahmā kings sometimes have to remain. For this reason, because the lifespan in the human world is very short, it ends right there. All those affairs are finished. That is why Ven. Sāriputta said: "I do not wish for death, nor do I wish for life. I wait, like a worker waiting for his wages." He waits for death. That is why in the final moments of the Blessed One, as recorded in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, even such a supreme Buddha did not easily get even a little water. Even so, through various remnants of kamma, even the Blessed One's life was spent amidst a great mass of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkhakkhandha*) related to the eight worldly conditions. You devotees have also heard about other Arahants. Take Aṅgulimāla, who killed so many people; it is recorded in the books about him, in the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta*. Even after attaining Arahantship, when he went on almsround, he would sometimes return with his head broken and blood flowing, having been hit by discarded potsherds or clods thrown by lay devotees. Why? Because of that kammic attraction. Even if they did not throw them intentionally at him, when boys threw stones, they would go and hit Ven. Aṅgulimāla's head. Therefore, one must contemplate the danger inherent in this becoming / existence (*bhava*). As long as this cage of a body remains, Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Arahants all have to experience those kammic results (*kamma-vipāka*). The cycle of kamma is that dangerous. It was within such a cycle of kamma that the young man Jotipāla, due to some delusion or pride, rejected the invitation nine times in that manner; one cannot think that no unwholesome deed was committed thereby. As recorded in the books, the Blessed One himself declared to the bhikkhus on a certain occasion: "It was due to such and such kamma that I suffered in this way in my life." We must take this as a lesson. It is said that the reason he practiced self-mortification for six years was also due to this. That is one aspect.

Even if we look at it from the other side, we spoke about the state of a Non-returner (*anāgāmi*). What is meant by Akaniṭṭha? In terms of becoming / existence (*bhava*), if one passes away from a deva world or a Brahmā world, one usually goes to a lower realm. But here, a very wonderful thing happens. Suppose one does not attain Arahantship in the Aviha Brahmā world itself. Next, think of that simile of the spark. If the spark is not extinguished as soon as it falls—being "extinguished" means attaining Arahantship. Otherwise, if it is not extinguished in the air, or after falling, then at least in those wood-chips... that is how the story goes. Because they progressively take birth in the Brahmā worlds of Aviha, Atappa, Sudassa, Sudassī, and Akaniṭṭha. The reason for this, in an indescribably subtle manner, depends on the strength of wisdom (*paññā-*

sakti) of each individual; all of this is ignited and cleared through wisdom. According to this force of preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra-sakti*), until that strength of wisdom is fully developed, even for the Non-returner person... That is why the Blessed One declared on one occasion: "Just as even a tiny bit of feces is foul-smelling, I do not praise becoming / existence (*bhava*) even for a single moment." Becoming / existence is that dangerous. In the same way, consider, devotees, the danger in preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), which the Blessed One has explained and highlighted in another discourse. A verse is mentioned in the *Dhammapada*, which some people interpret very superficially:

Jigacchā paramā rogā

saṅkhārā paramā dukhā

Etaṁ yathābhūtaṁ ñatvā

nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ

We explained this on one occasion. When one says "hunger is the ultimate illness," doctors might object. If one tries to interpret it, one would have to say that the biggest sickness in the world is hunger. Who would accept that? They would point to other things. But why it is called the greatest illness, the ultimate (*parama*), is because even if all other illnesses are eliminated, this subtle illness we pointed out—this illness called the digestive fire (*jaṭharāgni*)—is indeed the most dangerous illness. *Jigacchā paramā rogā*: that is why people say "it is a sickness that makes one groan involuntarily"; hunger is that dangerous. It must be taken as a simile for that.

Jigacchā paramā rogā, saṅkhārā paramā dukkhā: preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are indeed the ultimate suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). We do not think so; we think that our troubles—illnesses, pains, worries, and various other disasters—are the great suffering. But the Buddhas declare: *saṅkhārā paramā dukkhā*—preparations / Preparations themselves are suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arise due to ignorance (*avijjā*). Why? Because as long as one remains in the darkness of ignorance, preparations are prepared. Some are gross, some are subtle. Some bring about kammic results. Some maintain becoming / existence (*bhava*) continuously. These are called preparations for becoming / existence (*bhava-saṅkhāra*). It is because of unfinished preparations for becoming / existence (*bhava-saṅkhāra*) that those Non-returners are born in a separate world and spend aeons in that manner. When one thinks about it, it is a very wonderful thing. We have given similes for this, for you devotees to understand. The existence in those Brahmā worlds is like a spinning top, which from a distance appears perfectly still. But it is spinning at high speed. In the same way, becoming / existence is sustained by the velocity of these preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra-vega*). In those Brahmā worlds, it is a meaningless existence, yet one is compelled to wear them out. The difference between that and Arahantship is found in the Suttas. If we try to explain it using those passages, it is stated as follows. Sometimes, when describing Arahantship, it is said:

asmimāna-samugghātaṁ pāpuṇāti diṭṭheva dhamme nibbānaṁ—"one attains the uprooting of the conceit 'I am' (*asmimāna*) and Nibbāna in this very life." It is said that the conceit "I am" is eradicated from its root. As long as the conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*) is not uprooted from its root, the suffering of *saṁsāra* is not ended. Thus, that conceit, the conceit "I am", still remains within the Non-returner person. In some places, it is stated in another way: that Non-returner person is said to have attachment to the Dhamma (*dhamma-rāga*) and delight in the Dhamma (*dhamma-nandī*). Attachment to the Dhamma also ultimately becomes a bond. It is said that by that very attachment to the Dhamma (*teneva dhamma-rāgena*) and by that delight in the Dhamma (*tena dhamma-nandiyā*), they do not return to this world, which is why they are called Non-returners. From this, it is clear that those are the subtle attachments (*bandhana*) existing in the world.

This is further revealed in a Sutta we have mentioned before in these discourses, namely the *Khemaka Sutta*. When a bhikkhu was sent to inquire about the health of Ven. Khemaka, he replied: "I do not see any of these—form, feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), and so forth—as 'this I am' or 'this is my self (*attā*)'. Yet, I am not an Arahant either." When he said this, those sixty bhikkhus did not believe it. "How can this be?" they thought. "If one does not see the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) as 'I' and 'mine', one must indeed be an Arahant." Being unable to avoid it, Ven. Khemaka went, taking his walking staff, and explained it to the bhikkhus using two similes. Let us recall those two similes. He gave two wonderful similes. Suppose the scent of a certain flower wafts. We know that the scent is present. But we cannot say whether that scent comes from the petals, from the stalk, or from the pollen. In that very manner, this Venerable One says: "None of these appear to me as self. Yet, a very subtle underlying tendency (*anusaya*) of the conceit 'I am' (*asmi*) remains within me." Thus he gave the simile of the flower. Likewise, Ven. Khemaka gave another subtle simile on that occasion. Just as a washerman washes a soiled cloth. Using something like the soap we use today—let us call it soap for the sake of the simile—applying something like soap, he removes the dirt from the cloth and hands it back to the owner. Although the cloth is washed and the dirt is gone, yet the scent of the soap still remains, the scent of the soap still remains. When the owner places it in a chest or wardrobe, after some time, even that scent fades away. What is shown by this is how subtle it is. The journey from there onwards consists of the extremely subtle fetters: attachment to form (*rūpa-rāga*), attachment to the formless (*arūpa-rāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). It is through their binding that those Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsa*) exist; if they are not ended right here in this very life, those like Upaka and Pukkusāti, who had developed their minds over a long period in *saṁsāra* and became Non-returners, attained Arahantship immediately upon birth in the Aviha Brahmā world, as declared by the Brahmā king on that occasion. However, some Brahmā kings spent aeons in that manner. Yet, it is not a downward journey. A downward journey is one that goes according to the force of kamma (*kamma-sakti*), the velocity of kamma (*kamma-vega*). This is not like that. This is a far more subtle velocity of preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra-vega*). Many speak of these things in a confused manner. But it is through the preparing (*saṅkhāra*) caused by ignorance (*avijjā*) that the two, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form

(*nāmarūpa*), rotate, just like a water-wheel; it is through this rotation that the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*) and kamma are produced. Keep that in mind. We spoke about mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*). Look at feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). We take volition (*cetanā*) as the middle finger. When the Buddha says, "Volition, O bhikkhus, I declare to be kamma" (*cetanāhaṁ bhikkhave kammaṁ vadāmi*), you devotees must bear in mind: within those mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*), there is the moment when kamma is prepared. It is through the collision of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that the kamma affecting numerous future lives is prepared. The Blessed One has declared this as well:

'Nāhaṁ, bhikkhave, sañcetanikānaṁ kammānaṁ katānaṁ upacitānaṁ appaṭisaṁviditvā vyantībhāvaṁ vadāmi'

The Blessed One shows there the danger of kamma: "Bhikkhus, I say that accumulated kamma does not wear away without giving its result." When it is said that it does not wear away without giving its result, one feels afraid. But the Blessed One explains it further in a subtle manner; if one had to experience the result of every single kamma committed, as the Niganṭhas claim, one could never escape from *saṁsāra*. But the Blessed One presents a wonderful analysis there. We have explained these in detail before. The Blessed One divides them into three parts: some kamma is experienced in this very life (*diṭṭhadhamma-vedanīya*) and thus ended. Other kamma is experienced in the next birth (*upapajja-vedanīya*) and thus ended. Yet other kamma is experienced in subsequent periods (*aparāpariya-vedanīya*). Thus, it was in a deep sense that he said all kamma wears away according to the manner in which kammic results are experienced. But the manner of wearing away varies. That is why we spoke of the liberation of mind through loving-kindness (*mettā-cetovimutti*) on a previous occasion, concerning certain wholesome deeds (*kusala-kamma*). It is through their vast energy that the ability to wear away kamma exists. That is why within this Dispensation, one can end the suffering of *saṁsāra* and realize Nibbāna. But just because this was said, we must not think that this is an easy task. On one hand, that cycle of kamma operates in a terrifying manner. Let us consider it this way. Even when we are told to observe virtue (*sīla*), and all these things, it does not mean one does them only as long as one lives in the world. On occasions that present themselves, without even knowing it, just like the young man Jotipāla—did he do it intentionally?—those words escaped his mouth nine times, even though he was to become a Buddha next. Thereby, a great unwholesome deed was accumulated. Devotees, understand it in this way. As long as ignorance (*aviijjā*) remains in any of us, preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) accumulate; a preparing is performed. Through that preparing, the aforementioned collision between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) takes place with extreme rapidity. Now, many interpret the phrase "swiftly changing is the mind" (*lahuparivattaṁ cittaṁ*) very simply, as if the mind spins like turning a stick. It is not so. We have shown that *lahuparivattaṁ cittaṁ* means a turnaround, a translation. A turnaround between what? A turnaround between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). With extreme speed, that consciousness grasps and releases Name-and-Form. It grasps

another and releases it. Within that velocity, various unique values are derived from it. That is to say, with an unimaginable velocity. It is precisely because of this velocity that it appears to us as a single, continuous thing. For this very reason, the true nature of this world is veiled by the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) and so forth. Through insight (*vipassanā*), through radical attention / wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), one must progressively understand the mental and physical phenomena (*nāmarūpa-dhamma*), and understand this state which goes as "tangled within, tangled without" (*anto jaṭā bahi jaṭā*).

We have analyzed these on a previous occasion. Between name and form, there is a wonderfully strange tangle called "tangled within" (*anto jaṭā*). The great elements (*mahābhūta-dhamma*) are recognized through those aforementioned mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*): feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). These great elements are things that cannot even be recognized directly; according to the state of existence we acquire, an animal recognizes them in one way. A human recognizes them in another way. A deva recognizes these great elements in yet another way. Mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*) are what go along with such great elements. That is the danger in Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). That Name-and-Form is, from that side, a tangle within (*anto jaṭā*). Next, mental consciousness. We said that Name-and-Form has a nature of being reflected in consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is just a reminder. What is reflected in consciousness is called "name" (*nāma*). That is why on various occasions, papers are presented analyzing physical phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*) in a highly academic manner nowadays. Nevertheless, we have shown in a very simple way: this form (*rūpa*) is a perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*). It is only the form created in the mind based on the elements, through those mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*). Remember the story about Narcissus. The very drama played with that shadow is what goes on throughout this entire *saṁsāra*. Narcissus, because of the reflective nature of his image in the water, repeatedly tried to embrace the water-deity and died. We too, not knowing the reflective nature present in consciousness, take these things presented to us as real things and run after a mirage; that is why the Blessed One preached in that manner. The serious becoming / existence (*bhava*) arising through this proceeds, on one hand, in a subtle manner. In this way, those like attachment to form (*rūpa-rāga*) go up to the highest point of existence, up to the Akaniṭṭha Brahmā world. That is precisely why the Blessed One said: *saṅkhāras* are the ultimate suffering (*saṅkhārā paramā dukkhā*). The subtlest of all suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress in the world is preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Then, how does one destroy preparations? By destroying ignorance (*avijjā*).

Devotees, bear in mind that passage we took as the theme of our sermons on Nibbāna:

> *'Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ*
>
> *yadidaṁ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho*
>
> *sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo*

virāgo nirodho nibbānaṁ'

"This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely, the stilling of all preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*), the relinquishment of all assets (*sabbūpadhi-paṭinissagga*), the destruction of craving / thirst (*taṇhakkhaya*), dispassion (*virāga*), cessation (*nirodha*), Nibbāna." This can also be connected to the simile of the spark we discussed. "This is peaceful, this is excellent." What is *sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*? It is because all preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are not stilled (*samatha*) that one goes to those Brahmā worlds. Along with the stilling of all preparations, there is *sabbūpadhi-paṭinissagga*. "Assets" (*upadhi*) means those assets built up in this *saṁsāra*—the five aggregates of grasping; as long as one does not relinquish them, one has to experience that suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress. Therefore, *sabbūpadhi-paṭinissagga* means past preparations, future preparations, and present preparations. All of them must be relinquished. The state where all of them are relinquished is *sabbūpadhi-paṭinissagga*. Going hand in hand with that is *taṇhakkhaya*—the destruction of craving / thirst. *Virāgo*—all those things are washed away. *Virāga* means fading away of lust, complete non-attachment; along with that, the cessation of becoming / existence (*bhava-nirodha*). This cycle, which has been spinning for so long, ends right there. It culminates in Nibbāna. That is "Nibbāna is the ultimate happiness" (*nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ*). Devotees, you are going forward in a very difficult time. Even though you devotees bless us in various ways, we are compelled to remind you that we will not live much longer. Therefore, at this moment, you must strive to accomplish your own work. If you devotees have gained some strength from this discourse on this Vesak day, instead of just listening and throwing it away, if you make use of it to support your own practice, keeping the life of the lay disciple Ghaṭīkāra as your exemplar, and try to walk this path of Dhamma, you must firmly believe that you can, at the very least, at the very least, become a Non-returner (*anāgāmi*). No matter what anyone says, today's discourse is special. Making this the basis to strengthen your future journey in the Dhamma, and using the virtue (*sīla*) observed by you devotees today—especially on this noble day of Vesak—may everyone receive the strength to make their Dhamma studies and meditation fruitful with more and more diligence in the coming year, and to reach the supreme goals they aspire to! This is my wish.

If there is anyone from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who wishes to rejoice in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, may they, by so rejoicing, realize the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! Say these verses with this thought.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #50

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.207)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Samāhito sampajāno sato buddhassa sāvako,

Āsave ca pajānāti āsavānañca sambhavaṃ;

Maggañca khayagāminaṃ,

āsavānaṃ khayā bhikkhu nicchāto parinibbuto.

From:

Verse 373 from the Bhikkhuvagga (Chapter on the Monk) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The most distinctive characteristic of the fruit of Arahantship is the destruction of the influxes (*āsavas*). It is precisely because of this that Arahants are known as *khīṇāsava* (those whose influxes are destroyed) and Nibbāna is known as the destruction of influxes (*āsavakkhaya*). Accordingly, one can comprehend the significance given to the word *āsava* in the path leading to Nibbāna. The two verses extracted from the *Itivuttaka Pāḷi* that we have chosen as the theme for today's sermon are indeed like an introduction to the exposition of the term *āsava*. That sutta begins in this manner, to quote the words of the Buddha:

“Vuttaṁ hetaṁ bhagavatā vuttamarahatātipi me sutaṁ: ‘Tayo me, bhikkhave, āsavā. Katame tayo? Kāmāsavo, bhavāsavo, avijjāsavo. Ime kho, bhikkhave, tayo āsavā’ti.”

"This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I heard: 'Monks, there are these three influxes. Which three? The influx of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), the influx of *Bhava* (Becoming) (*bhavāsava*), and the influx of ignorance (*avijjāsava*). These, monks, are the three influxes.' Thus having begun, the meaning declared there by the Buddha is

presented in this sutta through two verses. It is those two that we have chosen as our theme:"

Samāhito sampajāno sato buddhassa sāvako,

Āsave ca pajānāti āsavānañca sambhavaṁ,

maggañca khayāgāminaṁ āsavānaṁ khayā bhikkhu nicchāto parinibbuto.

The meaning of this is: the disciple of the Buddha, concentrated, endowed with clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) which is right wisdom, and mindful, understands the influxes, and also knows the origin of the influxes. Where the influxes cease, he knows that too. He also knows the path leading to their cessation. With the destruction of the influxes, the monk, free from the hunger of *Taṇhā* (Craving), is fully extinguished. This is the meaning of those verses. Guided by these verses, we can understand that a disciple of the Buddha must necessarily understand the influxes, the origin of the influxes, their cessation, and the path leading to their cessation.

Similarly, we come across the *Sammā-diṭṭhi Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. In that *Sammā-diṭṭhi Sutta*, dear devotees, our chief disciple, the Great Arahant Sāriputta, sets out sixteen ways of defining right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). He analyzes *sammā-diṭṭhi* in sixteen ways, progressing from the simple to the deeper and deeper. Having analyzed it, finally, as the sixteenth explanation of *sammā-diṭṭhi*, he presents the aspect of the influxes (*āsavas*). To express in Sinhala what Ven. Sāriputta the Great Arahant presents, it is in this manner: 'When a noble disciple knows the influxes, knows the origin of the influxes, knows the cessation of the influxes, and knows the path leading to the cessation of the influxes, to that extent, too, a noble disciple is one of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).' Having said so, he then explains what these three influxes are: *kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava* (the influx of existence), and *avijjāsava*. Next, he shows the origin of the influxes as: '*avijjāsamudayā āsavasamudayo*'—with the arising of ignorance, the influxes arise. Next, he explains the cessation of the influxes: '*avijjānirodhā āsavanirodho*'—with the cessation of ignorance, the influxes cease. The path leading to the cessation of the influxes is shown as the Noble Eightfold Path. From this, the point necessary for *sammā-diṭṭhi* is directly expressed in relation to those influxes.

Now let us directly look at the word *āsava*. In understanding certain words, we are compelled to go as far as their etymology. If we look at how this word *āsava* is formed: '*āsavantīti āsavā*'—they are called *āsavas* in the sense of 'flowing in' or 'flowing out' (oozing). In common parlance, the word *āsava* is used for alcoholic liquor, for spirits. Through that, we can extract two meanings relevant to this. When we think of alcoholic spirits, they have an intoxicating nature; likewise, the intoxicating quality produced by stagnation and fermentation in one place is called *āsava*. Furthermore, that *āsava*, or the essence of spirits, has a potency to produce more spirits; it has the power to flow into other things added to it and turn them also into an intoxicating state. When we contemplate according to this, the three greatest intoxications by which the world is intoxicated are what the Buddha has presented as *kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava* (the influx of

existence), and *avijjāsava*. Due to being lured by sensual pleasures over a long period, being intoxicated within those sensual pleasures, stagnating and fermenting within them, the influxes that arise are *kāmāsava*. Stagnating within that existence called *Bhava* (Becoming) which is mentally constructed and thought of as 'I' and 'mine', being intoxicated and stagnating in that manner, the influxes generated are *bhavāsava* (the influx of existence). Understand that the influxes coming from stagnating for a long period within ignorance (*avijjā*) itself, by preferring darkness and remaining within it, are *avijjāsava*. Generally speaking, in simple terms, what we have to say is that this meaning of 'flowing' is what is important here. The reason for this can be understood as this sermon progresses. Furthermore, the reason why the Great Arahants who compiled the Dhamma (*saṅgītikārakas*) decided to compile the *Sabbāsava Sutta* as the second sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya* is because this term *āsava* is extremely important.

The *Sabbāsava Sutta* is the second sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. The Buddha begins it with this passage: '*Sabbāsava-saṁvara-pariyāyaṁ vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi*'—'Monks, I shall teach you the exposition of the restraint of all influxes.'

Now, in the first sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*, it is stated: '*Sabbadhamma-mūlapariyāyaṁ vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi*'—the sutta begins saying, 'Monks, I shall expound to you the root-scheme of all things, of every object that comes to the mind.' Thus the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* was preached. Here, in the *Sabbāsava Sutta*, it is declared: 'I shall preach the method of restraining all influxes.' Next, another important point is expressed right at the beginning. Regarding this restraint or destruction of the influxes, the Buddha declares thus:

'*Jānato ahaṁ, bhikkhave, passato āsavānaṁ khayaṁ vadāmi, no ajānato no apassato*'—'Monks, I say that the destruction of the influxes is for one who knows and sees, not for one who does not know and does not see.' From that, we can understand that if the influxes arise because of ignorance, it is through knowing and seeing that the influxes can be destroyed. We can comprehend that. Next, it is said: '*Kiñca, bhikkhave, jānato kiñca passato āsavānaṁ khayaṁ vadāmi?*'—'Knowing what, monks, and seeing what, do I say there is the destruction of the influxes?' Here, an important point comes to light: '*yoniso manasikārañca ayoniso manasikārañca*' (*Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) and unwise attention). Therefore, what the noble disciple must primarily understand is the difference between *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) and *ayoniso manasikāra* (unwise attention). The Buddha explains the reason for this. First, he speaks of *ayoniso manasikāra*. Since we have explained this word to you before, there is no need to analyze it anew. Generally, those who are hearing this for the first time can consider: *ayoniso manasikāra* is what is most prevalent in the world. Think of it as improper reflection. *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) is proper reflection. Now, first he speaks about *ayoniso manasikāra*:

'*Ayoniso, bhikkhave, manasikaroto anuppannā ceva āsavā uppajjanti, uppannā ca āsavā pavaḍḍhanti*'—'Monks, in one who attends unwisely, unarisen influxes arise, and arisen influxes increase.' On the other hand: '*Yoniso ca kho, bhikkhave, manasikaroto anuppannā ceva āsavā na uppajjanti, uppannā ca āsavā pahīyanti*'—'Monks, in one

who attends with *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), unarisen influxes do not arise, and arisen influxes are abandoned.' Within this, regarding the significance of the two words *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) and *ayoniso manasikāra*, a highly important point is raised here. In fact, many people, including Western scholars who question this matter, find it a problem. At first glance, there is a seemingly contradictory statement in the declaration of Ven. Sāriputta. What is it? He introduces the influxes as *kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava* (the influx of existence), and *avijjāsava*. The word ignorance (*avijjā*) is mentioned there too. Thus, ignorance is also an influx. Next, when showing the origin of those influxes, it is said: '*avijjāsamudayā āsavasamudayo*'—with the arising of ignorance, the influxes arise. Contemplate on this, dear devotees: at first glance, is it not a dilemma, an inconsistent statement? Ignorance is one of the influxes. Even so, it is said that the influxes arise because of ignorance. This is a somewhat deep matter. However, it is according to the point we mentioned about stagnation, and the point about knowing, that this must be resolved.

This is precisely why, first of all, this vision (*dassana*) regarding this is shown in the *Sabbāsava Sutta*. There has come an ignorance that is difficult to resolve, a wonderful ignorance whose end cannot be found. Yet, through stagnating within ignorance, there is a tendency to drag on continuously in the manner described. The only way to restrain and prevent it from dragging on continuously is *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) which was brought to light by the Buddha. As we have told you before, *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) is indeed the primary seed of wisdom. One might say, 'We are worldlings (*puthujjanas*); we have no wisdom. Wisdom belongs only to Arahants and noble ones (*ariyas*).' But everyone has attention (*manasikāra*). We have explained much about these in our sermons on dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Anyone can turn *ayoniso* into *yoniso*. *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) is the primary seed of wisdom. That is why the Buddha highlights that the first thing a noble disciple must know, must see, is the difference between *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) and *ayoniso manasikāra*. For it is through *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) that the backbone of ignorance is broken, let us say. Because it is *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) that helps us to prevent unarisen influxes of ignorance from arising, and to abandon arisen influxes of ignorance. Let us proceed from there.

The more one contemplates this sermon, the second discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the deeper and more wonderful it becomes, just like the first discourse. There, the Buddha further speaks about two individuals: the uninstructed worldling (*assutavā puthujjana*)—the one who does not know—on one side, and the instructed noble disciple (*sutavā ariyasāvaka*) on the other. First, he speaks about the uninstructed worldling. The uninstructed worldling does not know the things fit for attention, nor does he know the things unfit for attention. Because he does not know the things fit for attention and does not know the things unfit for attention, he attends to things unfit for attention and does not attend to things fit for attention. Next, the danger of that is shown. As mentioned before, by attending to things unfit for attention, unarisen influxes of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), *Bhava* (Becoming) (*bhavāsava*), and ignorance (*avijjāsava*) arise, and those already arisen increase. Understand it briefly, as described earlier; thus,

through *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), unarisen influxes do not arise, and arisen influxes do not increase. That is the benefit. So, due to not knowing *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), the uninstructed worldling reflects in an incorrect, *ayoniso* manner.

Next, the ways of incorrect reflection are set out in that sutta. Since there is much to say, I will try to state it briefly. As these have been mentioned on various occasions, this is how the Buddha shows the thought-process of the uninstructed worldling. How does that person reflect improperly? By putting forward the concept of 'I'. Regarding the past, the uninstructed worldling thinks thus: 'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become in the past?' It is by putting the story of 'I' forward that he reflects and thinks in this manner. Next, regarding the future, he reflects thus: 'What will I be in the future? Will I not be in the future? How will I be in the future? Having been what, what will I become in the future?' That is about the future. Regarding the present, too, he harbors an inner doubt in this manner: 'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I?' Next comes: 'Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?' It is clear that all this is because he starts to reason with *ayoniso manasikāra*, putting forward the 'I' as a soul (*ātman*). Everything found in all other religions in the world is what has been constructed through this *ayoniso manasikāra*.

The Buddha points out that by reflecting in this way on the past, the future, and the present, one falls into one of six views. What are those six views? Either one takes up the view: 'A self exists for me' (*atthi me attā*), or 'No self exists for me' (*natthi me attā*). He takes that to be a true view. Or else, he thinks, 'With self I perceive self.' Or else, 'With self I perceive non-self.' Or else, 'With non-self I perceive self.' The last, sixth one, is presented as: 'This self of mine that speaks and feels, which experiences the results of good and bad deeds in this saṁsāra—that self is stable, eternal, and does not change.' There, he has firmly stood on the self-view. In that manner, the uninstructed worldling falls into one of six views.

Next, the thinking of the instructed noble disciple. He knows the things fit for attention. He knows the things unfit for attention. He knows the danger that arises from attending to things unfit for attention. Let us consider briefly what those things fit for attention are. Next, the Buddha shows how he reflects: he reflects, 'This is *dukkha*' (suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress)—'*idaṁ dukkhan'ti*'; he reflects, 'This is the origin of *dukkha*'; he reflects, 'This is the cessation of *dukkha*'; he reflects, 'This is the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.' In short, it is reflecting in accordance with the Four Noble Truths. Reflecting in accordance with the Four Noble Truths, without stories of 'I' or 'person', is *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). As the ultimate end of that reflection, the Buddha shows that through that reflection, the noble disciple—whether instantly or after some time, though there is no fixed time limit—breaks the three fetters: *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body), *vicikicchā* (skeptical doubt), and *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* (attachment to rules and vows). This is regarding the noble disciple. There lies that vision (*dassana*).

Next, the Buddha points out the methods of restraint. 'Monks, there are influxes to be abandoned by vision (*dassana-pahātabbā*).' We shall mention them briefly. There are influxes to be abandoned by restraint (*saṁvara-pahātabbā*). There are influxes to be abandoned by using (*paṭisevanā-pahātabbā*), which means proper utilizing. There are influxes to be abandoned by tolerating (*adhivāsanā-pahātabbā*), which means patience. Next, there are influxes to be conquered and restrained by avoiding (*parivajjanā-pahātabbā*), which means steering clear. Next, there are influxes to be restrained by removing (*vinodanā-pahātabbā*), which means dispelling. Finally, it is said there are influxes to be restrained by developing (*bhāvanā-pahātabbā*), which means meditation. Let us consider each of these briefly.

The influxes to be abandoned by vision are *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body), *vicikicchā*, and *sīlabbata-parāmāsa*. They must be abandoned through the aforementioned attention. That is why the Buddha declared—let the devotees recall: '*Sahāvassa dassanasampadāya, tayassu dhammā jahitā bhavanti*' (With his achievement of vision, three things are discarded). Next, recall: '*Diṭṭhiñca anupagamma, sīlavā dassanena sampanno*' (Not falling into wrong views, virtuous, endowed with vision). All of these point to the value of vision; they are abandoned by vision, and cannot be abandoned by any other method. They cannot be grabbed and thrown away. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body), *vicikicchā*, and *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* must be abandoned solely by reflecting in accordance with the Truth. When speaking about wrong views, I missed mentioning some of the words used by the Buddha. The Buddha describes how the uninstructed worldling ends up in his thinking with a wonderful sequence of words: 'Monks, this is finally a thicket of views (*diṭṭhigataṁ*), a wilderness of views (*diṭṭhigahanaṁ*), a desert of views (*diṭṭhikantāraṁ*), a contortion of views (*diṭṭhivisūkaṁ*), a vacillation of views (*diṭṭhivipphanditaṁ*), a fetter of views (*diṭṭhisaṁyojanaṁ*)...' there are many such words. That person, going through those views, gets lost in a desert of views, in a wild jungle. That uninstructed worldling is never freed from *jāti* (birth / arising) and *jarāmaraṇa* (decay and death / aging and death). The instructed noble disciple, without putting 'I' forward, reflects according to the Truth which is presented as the unique teaching (*sāmukkaṁsika desanā*) of the Buddhas, and thereby breaks *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body), *vicikicchā*, and *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* which he was unable to break so far.

Next, regarding 'abandoned by restraint', let us consider it briefly. It refers to guarding the sense doors (*guttadvāratā*), which is the restraint of the senses. The term *vighāta-pariḷāha* (vexation and distress) is mentioned when speaking of this restraint; also, the word *vighātapariḷāha* is applied there in relation to incorrect reflection. If some weariness, distress, or dust (defilement) arises due to non-restraint of the senses, they are removed by restraint. Think about it a little: if certain influxes, weariness, and dust can arise due to not restraining the eye, they are eradicated by restraining the eye. The Buddha preaches in that manner about all the six sense bases, including the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. That is about those 'to be abandoned by restraint' (*saṁvarā pahātabbā*). If certain influxes flow in due to non-restraint, they cease to exist

through restraint, along with the vexation and distress (*vighāta-pariḷāha*) that arise in connection with them.

Next, 'to be abandoned by using' (*paṭisevanā pahātabbā*). In our words, dear devotees, *paṭisevana* means utilizing or using. There, the Buddha points out what is truly the bare minimum required for the Saṅgha to survive: clothing, food, lodging, and medicine. Indeed, in all instances where these restraints are mentioned, the occurrence of the phrase '*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*' (reflecting wisely) is important. It is the very same importance given to the term *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). '*Yoniso*' means contemplating with wisdom. Even when speaking of restraint, it is '*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*'—reflecting wisely, one closes the eye. Actually, when we speak of restraint, one cannot keep the eye, ear, and nose closed all the time. Instead, we have shown the correct term: guarding the doors (*guttadvāratā*), having a gatekeeper, which means one must be able to close the door according to the situation. That is restraint. Restraint happens based on that. That is '*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*'—reflecting wisely, one closes the eye, ear, and nose against those defiled sense objects according to the situation.

Likewise, let us say a robe is necessary; considering its minimal utility, as stated in the passage of reflection (*paccavekkhaṇa*): '*patisaṅkhā yoniso cīvaraṁ paṭisevāmi, yāvadeva sītassa paṭighātāya, uṇhassa paṭighātāya, ḍaṁsamakasavātātapasiriṁsapasamphassānaṁ paṭighātāya, yāvadeva hiri-kopīna-paṭicchādanatthaṁ*'—in this way, one uses the robe considering its minimal utility, to ward off the trouble from cold, heat, gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, and creeping things, and simply for the sake of covering the parts that arouse shame. Next, regarding alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), '*patisaṅkhā yoniso*'—we have spoken about these many times. You too, dear devotees, must be practicing this to some extent. That is the reflection on food. Contemplating with wisdom: 'I do not take this food for amusement, nor for intoxication, nor for physical beauty, nor for beautification' (*neva davāya na madāya na maṇḍanāya na vibhūsanāya*), unlike how ordinary people do. Not for entertainment or building up the body, but 'only for the support and maintenance of this body' (*yāvadeva imassa kāyassa ṭhitiyā*). 'Only'—the word 'only' comes first. Only for maintaining this body, for keeping it going (*yāpanāya*), for ending the harm of hunger (*vihiṁsūparatiyā*), as an aid to the holy life (*brahmacariyānuggahāya*); and because one cannot survive without taking food. 'Thus I shall eliminate the old *Vedanā* (Feeling) (of hunger), and I shall not generate new *Vedanā* (Feeling) (from overeating).' One takes food in a manner suitable for meditation, intending: 'Thus my easy living (*phāsuvihāra*) will be secured.' Next, regarding lodging (*senāsana*), it is similar to what was said about clothing: to ward off the distress of cold, heat, gadflies, mosquitoes, and so on, and '*yāvadeva utuparissayavinodanatthaṁ*'—only to dispel the trouble of the seasons. Lastly, medicine (*gilanappaccaya*) is spoken of in the same way: '*uppannānaṁ sārīrikānaṁ veyyābādhikānaṁ vedanānaṁ paṭighātāya*'—to ward off arisen physical *Vedanā* (Feeling) due to illness; because if they are not treated, they will cause the aforementioned distress, so one takes medicine. These are 'to be abandoned by using' (*paṭisevanā pahātabbā*)—the influxes to be removed by proper utilization.

Next is shown 'to be abandoned by tolerating' (*adhivāsanā*), which is patience. If, for some reason, we do not receive those bare minimum requisites, we must train ourselves to bear it without shouting and making the mind corrupt. The things to be tolerated are mentioned in this way: a certain monk is patient (*khamo hoti*); he has the capacity to endure. If cold, heat, hunger, thirst, trouble from gadflies and mosquitoes arise, and if they cannot be stopped, he endures them. Likewise, he cultivates the strength to endure illnesses and severe bodily pains. '*Duruttānaṁ durāgatānaṁ vacanapathānaṁ*'—the capacity to bear harsh and ill-spoken words of criticism from others. In this manner, if weariness and distress arise due to not bearing or not tolerating certain things, they are dispelled through endurance. That is 'to be abandoned by tolerating' (*adhivāsanā pahātabbā*).

Next, 'to be abandoned by avoiding' (*parivajjanā pahātabbā*), which is avoiding and steering clear. This is illustrated as follows: a certain monk avoids wild elephants, wild horses, wild dogs, and similar beasts. Next, he avoids thorny places, pits, and so forth. Not only that, he keeps away—keeps far away—from associating with evil friends and visiting unsuitable places (*agocara*) that might bring him disrepute. For, by not avoiding them, various troubles such as blame, and vexation and distress (*vighāta-pariḷāha*) might come upon him. These can be overcome through avoidance. That too is a method of restraint.

Next, 'to be abandoned by removing' (*vinodanā pahātabbā*). *Vinodana* means dispelling, not 'amusement' (as in common Sinhala *vinoda*). What is shown there are the very points presented as the perception of abandoning (*pahāna-saññā*) in the *Girimānanda Sutta*. What are they? A certain monk 'does not tolerate an arisen sensual thought (*kāmavitakka*), he abandons it, dispels it, ends it, and brings it to non-existence' (*uppannaṁ kāmavitakkaṁ nādhivāseti, pajahati, vinodeti, byantīkaroti, anabhāvaṁ gameti*). This is how it is said. Regarding thoughts of sensual desire (*kāmavitakka*), thoughts of ill-will (*byāpādavitakka*), thoughts of cruelty (*vihiṁsāvitakka*), and any arisen evil unwholesome states, what is the course of action to be taken? He dispels them. The series of words used for this dispelling is also extremely important. If we think about it deeply: '*nādhivāseti, pajahati, vinodeti, byantīkaroti, anabhāvaṁ gameti*'. Let us explain these words with a small simile. Suppose you are in your house doing some important work, and some useless drunkard comes in. We say, 'You are not needed here, get out.' He does not listen. He tries to enter. We push him out. Even so, he tries to come back. Next, what do we do? We push him further and further away, all the way to the gate. Then, we push him out of the gate and close it. Think about it a bit: *nādhivāseti* means 'does not tolerate'—the first step we mentioned. 'You are not needed here, go away.' *Nādhivāseti, pajahati*—telling him to go again. *Vinodeti*—pushing him along. *Byantīkaroti*—pushing him right to the edge of the garden and putting him outside the gate. *Anabhāvaṁ gameti*—locking the gate so he cannot return. This is just a small simile. In that manner, one must be restrained by dispelling thoughts of sensual desire (*kāmavitakka*), thoughts of ill-will (*byāpādavitakka*), thoughts of cruelty (*vihiṁsāvitakka*), and evil, unwholesome states. For, if any weariness or distress arises due to not dispelling them, they are removed by dispelling them.

Finally, there is development (*bhāvanā*). 'Monks, there are influxes to be abandoned by development (*bhāvanā-pahātabbā*).' What are they? There, it directly mentions the factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅgas*): mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhammavicaya*), energy (*viriya*), joy (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). These are to be developed leaning towards Nibbāna. 'Here, monks, a monk, reflecting with *yoniso* (radical attention / wise attention), develops mindfulness... based on seclusion (*viveka-nissitaṁ*), based on dispassion (*virāga-nissitaṁ*), based on cessation (*nirodha-nissitaṁ*), culminating in relinquishment (*vossagga-pariṇāmiṁ*).' Understand the others in the same way. The four terms—based on seclusion, and so forth—all refer to Nibbāna. Basing on and aiming at Nibbāna, which is seclusion and cessation, one develops the factors of enlightenment like mindfulness and investigation of states. There too, it is said that if any weariness and dust (defilement) arise from not developing them, they are removed by developing them. That is the general introduction. Because 'vision' (*dassana*) comes first when explaining these, someone might think: 'Then to become a Sotāpanna, it is enough to hear the Dhamma and gain that vision. The rest are not needed. The other activities like the reflection on food are not needed. Meditation is not needed either.' That is a wrong view. Whatever discourse the Buddha presented, it is highly systematic. That vision is important. '*Sammā-diṭṭhi-pubbaṅgamā*'—right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) leads the way. We mentioned that the influx of ignorance (*avijjāsava*) and the influx of views (*diṭṭhāsava*) must be suppressed first before doing all the other things. It does not occur by itself. The others are also relevant to it. Therefore, one should not think in that way. Those other factors are indeed relevant to meditation itself. However, at the end, it is presented systematically: finally, 'abandoned by development' (*bhāvanā-pahātabbā*), which is the development of the factors of enlightenment. Consider it briefly in this manner.

We have shown the seven methods of abandoning the influxes as the summary of the *Sabbāsava Sutta*. The Buddha concludes it thus: when a monk has abandoned by vision those influxes to be abandoned by vision, has abandoned by restraint those influxes to be abandoned by restraint, has abandoned by using those influxes to be abandoned by using, has abandoned by tolerating those influxes to be abandoned by tolerating, has abandoned by avoiding those influxes to be abandoned by avoiding, has abandoned by removing those influxes to be abandoned by removing, and has abandoned by development those influxes to be abandoned by development—then that monk has destroyed *Taṇhā* (Craving). He has overturned all hindrances (*nīvaraṇas*) and all fetters (*saṁyojanas*). He has become an Arahant. That is the end of the *Sabbāsava Sutta*.

Next, let us contemplate a little more on this sutta. There are things in it to go even deeper. Now, we spoke about these *āsavas*. The *āsavas* are *kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava* (the influx of existence), and sometimes *diṭṭhāsava* is also mentioned. As we mentioned earlier, within the intoxicating quality, there is a nature of flowing forward. Within sensual pleasures and temptations, there is that intoxicating nature, and it has the tendency to bring more temptations. Next, regarding views (*diṭṭhi*), it is the same. One who remains in them for a long time cannot get free from them. They are entangled in them to that extent. In some places, it is called *diṭṭhāsava* (influx of views) as well. But

that generally belongs to ignorance (*avijjā*). *Bhavāsava* refers to existence, which is *Bhava* (Becoming). The craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) is extremely severe, is it not? Next, ignorance is liking darkness, disliking light, and being pleased only with darkness. It does not like light. Keep in mind that what are mentioned are *kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava* (the influx of existence), *avijjāsava*, and in some places, *diṭṭhāsava* as well.

Now next, there is a word called *ogha* (flood), which is a closely related word. We must show the difference between these two. On a previous occasion, I pointed this out briefly. Now, to see how significant this word *ogha* is, despite the availability of countless suttas, the Great Arahant compilers of the Dhamma presented the *Oghataraṇa Sutta* as the very first sutta of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. In brief, it is like this: during the night, a deity comes and asks the Buddha, 'How, dear sir (*mārisa*), did you cross over the flood?' There are four floods: *kāmogha*, *bhavogha*, *diṭṭhogha*, and *avijjogha*. Four of them: the flood of sensual desire, the flood of existence, the flood of views, and the flood of ignorance. He asks the Buddha how he crossed over these four floods. The Buddha gives a brief answer in a very riddlesome verse: 'Without halting and without straining, I crossed over the flood' (*appatiṭṭhaṁ anāyūhaṁ*). When the deity asks why he says so, he explains further: 'If I halted, I sank; if I strained, I was swept away. Therefore, without halting and without straining, I crossed over safely.' That is the sutta. But there is a very deep meaning here. We pointed this out on a previous occasion too. The Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) is found right here. That is why we showed it through words like 'practical' and 'relative'. This discourse is about the flood (*ogha*).

Now let us try to bring the word *āsava* close to this. When we go near a stream, we see a torrent of water flowing along. We want to cross over it. Once we step into it to cross over, it does not appear to us simply as a flowing flood (*ogha*), but as water flowing against us. Think about it. The moment we step in, we cannot even trust our foothold; we are swept away. We cannot even take the next step. We are swept along by the current. Then, we look at that same flood not as water flowing away, but as water flowing towards us (or rushing upon us). There lies the term *āsava* (flowing in/upon). When the noble disciple crosses over these four floods, it is not easy to escape from this current, from this flow—especially with that 'intoxicating quality' we mentioned earlier, which has been flowing for a long time due to its momentum. You know, dear devotees, that at the beginning, the Buddha spoke of two extremes: indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*)—there is nothing new to tell you about that. Next, due to the Nigaṇṭha view that 'pleasure is to be attained through pain' (*dukkhena sukhaṁ adhigantabbaṁ*), he performed painful austerities for six years to torture the body. He went to that extreme. It is between those two extremes that the Buddha discovered this Middle Path. Here, halting is indulgence in sensual pleasures; within that, one sinks down even unto hell. Next, just as the Nigaṇṭhas did, the Buddha too finally realized that he was straining, and through straining, he was swept away. Instead, one must cross over carefully. It is that very thing, dear devotees, which is found in this *Sabbāsava Sutta*.

So why is this called 'the exposition of the restraint of all influxes' (*Sabbāsava-saṁvara-pariyāya*)? Because once we step into the water, in crossing over, when we look at the

world, there is a situation where some things are such that we cannot do with them, yet we cannot do without them either. Contemplate on it a little. If we contemplate from the very beginning, some vision (*dassana*) is necessary for our life. If we grasp the aforementioned views, we will revolve within them forever. The Buddha spoke about the person subject to *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body) using the simile of a dog. Now, if a dog is tied to a post or a leash, it just revolves and revolves around it. It cannot go beyond that. In the same way, '*assutavā puthujjanassa gaddulabaddho*'—just as a dog tied to a post only revolves around it without any escape, so there is no escape for one who has taken up *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body). Therefore, the Buddha showed another standpoint in its place: the Four Noble Truths. That is indeed what we do, dear devotees, by keeping *sammā-diṭṭhi* at the forefront (*sammā-diṭṭhi-pubbaṅgamā*), and walking this path. That is how view (*diṭṭhi*) becomes primary. Next, think of how to escape the torrent of water in the journey from there. Dear devotees, regarding restraint (*saṁvara*), we cannot keep our two eyes closed. Certain Brahmins held such a view: they said that sense restraint means not seeing with the eye and not hearing with the ear. The Buddha ridiculed those views. To remain in that way (is impossible).

Instead, the Buddha said to be a true gatekeeper when necessary. That is '*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*'—reflecting wisely, one restrains the eye, restrains the ear. That is how the Middle Path is. Likewise, regarding food, the Buddha went to the extreme, did he not? He completely rejected food until his body was extremely emaciated, and having performed great difficult practices, he realized that this was not correct. Instead, we have to take food. Thus, considering the bare minimum requirements, namely the four requisites. Now, unlike the sense restraint (*indriya-saṁvara*) mentioned earlier, teachers of the past refer to this as the 'restraint through knowledge' (*ñāṇa-saṁvara*). One becomes restrained through wisdom by reflecting, so that one does not get swept away by craving for food, craving for taste, and so forth. 'Only'—the term '*yāvadeva*'—'Only as a support to the holy life do I take this food,' thus turning even that into a meditation. That is *paṭisevanā* (using). There too, understand that one cannot do without food. We must go on this journey to Nibbāna keeping some vision at the forefront. That was given through the Four Noble Truths. Next, in going on that journey, we need the four requisites: clothing, food, lodging, and medicine. Considering their minimal value, considering their necessity, '*paṭisaṅkhā*'—one takes alms-food while reflecting wisely. Next, consider the others in the same way. Suppose we go for alms-food and do not receive any. The Buddha is speaking with focus on the lives of the bhikkhus. If, for some reason, we do not have lodging or other deficiencies exist, instead of going to fight with lay-donors saying, 'Why don't you look after us who have ordained?'—one must have the strength to bear them. That is *adhivāsanā* (tolerating). Endurance of *paṭisevanā* is also needed for that. What is tolerated is cold, heat, hunger, thirst, trouble from gadflies and mosquitoes when living in the forest—every single one of them. Not only that, but also the taunts, insults, and various other things spoken by humans; those too must be tolerated. Because if defilements arise due to not enduring them, vexation and distress (*vighāta-pariḷāha*), weariness, and fever will arise.

Understand that these are the very same things. Particularly when speaking of restraint, recall that it is generally mentioned: '*viharantaṁ pāpakā akusalā dhammā*'—to prevent the flowing in of evil, unwholesome states related to covetousness and dejection, one restrains the eye, ear, nose, and so forth. Likewise, patience. We usually expect certain things, but when what we expect is not received, there arises in the mind *vighāta-pariḷāha*—meaning the weariness and fever arising from disappointment and dejection. The strength to bear them to eradicate that distress is *adhivāsanā* (endurance). Likewise, some things are to be avoided (*parivajjanā*). Now, one has to go to the forest to meditate. Just because one goes, saying 'I am a yogi (*yogāvacara*)', one does not go in front of wild elephants, tigers, or bears. One tries to stay safe from those dangers as much as possible. Not only that, one avoids evil friends. One avoids unsuitable places (*agocara*). For, they can bring disrepute. It is by contemplating wisely that one does so. That is 'to be abandoned by avoiding' (*parivajjanā pahātabbā*).

Next, 'to be abandoned by removing' (*vinodanā pahātabbā*). This too can be easily understood: by contemplating the stream of thoughts that arise in the mind, contemplating their dangers, and dispelling them. Finally, it is said 'to be abandoned by development' (*bhāvanā pahātabbā*): if any influxes arise through (not developing) states like mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhammavicaya*), energy (*viriya*), and joy (*pīti*), they are eliminated through development. Why is all of this stated? It is to cross over the four floods (*caturogha*). Crossing over the four floods is not something one does by merely looking on. These problems are for the person who has actually stepped into it to cross over. The Buddha showed the answer to those problems in the *Sabbāsava Sutta*: the methods of restraining them. Next, recall what we have mentioned before: the depth of this Middle Path shown by the Buddha. The aspect of attention (*manasikāra*). We have told you on previous occasions, in the talk about *nāmarūpa-viññāṇa* (Name-and-Form and Consciousness), that it is not something found in the forest; out of the five factors—*Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā* (perception), *cetanā* (volition), *phassa* (contact), and *manasikāra* (attention)—the Buddha utilized attention (*manasikāra*) to aid his Middle Path. As we said in that simile, if there is no witness for a court case, one of the respondents is pardoned and made a state witness to get the story out; in the same way, what the Buddha did was catch this attention (*manasikāra*) which is hidden among the mental states (*nāma-dhammas*). He himself was the biggest thief as *ayoniso-manasikāra*; gathering *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā*, *cetanā*, and *phassa* (contact), he has dragged us through saṁsāra for so long. The Buddha caught him by the neck and said, 'You shall be our witness. But from today, you must abandon *ayoniso* and become *yoniso*. We pardon you.' And finally, it is from him that we get everything revealed. That *yoniso-manasikāra* (radical attention / wise attention) is what we called the primary seed of wisdom. That is why, taking '*dassanā pahātabbā*' in that way, and separating *ayoniso* and *yoniso*, it is based on this that the Buddha brought forth the courage necessary for us to practice the path. Otherwise, there is no standpoint. One cannot start from here. For, recall again the point we mentioned earlier.

Ignorance is one of the influxes. Yet, it is because of ignorance that the influxes arise. To tame that arising, we put aside wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), keep right view (*sammā-*

diṭṭhi) at the forefront, and walk this journey with *yoniso-manasikāra* (radical attention / wise attention) itself. In this manner, we can understand the values related to the path of these influxes from this perspective. Within that state of intoxication, the world continuously has a higher power of temptation within sensuality (*kāma*), becoming (*Bhava* (Becoming)), views (*diṭṭhi*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). To break these, the Buddha presented this Noble Eightfold Path. That too begins with *sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view). The path of *sammā-diṭṭhi*, *sammā-saṅkappa*, *sammā-vācā*, and so on, ending in *sammā-samādhi*. That is why it is said that the Noble Eightfold Path itself is to be taken as the destruction of the influxes. Just like these *āsavas*, think of the word *ogha* (flood) as representing the habitual currents of saṁsāra that have come over a long period. It is for these saṁsāric habitual currents that words like *āsava* and *ogha* are used. Escaping that current is like escaping a torrent of water; it is extremely difficult. That is why it is said that once you step into it, you are either swept away or you sink. Those two extremes are the deepest matter in the Buddha's Dhamma. That is what is called the Middle Path. The Buddha too realized this through his search. He fell from one extreme to the other. Finally, he understood. Having understood the true nature of this world, (he saw that) regarding these four requisites and other things, we cannot do with them, yet we cannot do without them either. There, the word *yoniso*—reflecting wisely—it is through that, at some point, that one proceeds carefully. Stepping into a rapidly flowing torrent of water, without halting and without straining, one cannot bet and say, 'I will go from here to exactly there, as if drawing a straight line.' Once you step into it, you must proceed gradually, yielding to the water as well. Dear devotees, contemplate on this carefully. One who crosses over a torrent of water must proceed while yielding to it, yet he must also make progress; he must cut across it. That is the strength found in this Dhamma. The Buddha has shown this in various ways through the verses of the *Dhammapada*.

Where does one go when freed from the floods of these influxes? That is indeed why Nibbāna is presented as an island. That island is shown as the place crossed over from those floods: '*Dīpaṁ kayirātha medhāvī, yaṁ ogho nābhikīrati*'—'Let the wise man make an island which the flood cannot overwhelm.' If one has cut through the floods and gone to the other side without being swept away by the torrents of water, at that moment, that person is on an island. What is that island? It is the liberation of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-vimutti*). We have highlighted this in various sermons. There are certain suttas that mention this: '*Evaṁ sammā vimuttassa, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno cebi cakkhuviññeyyā rūpā āpāthaṁ āgaccheyyuṁ, amissīkatamevassa viññāṇaṁ hoti ṭhitaṁ āneñjappattaṁ*.' To that monk of fully liberated mind, even if many forms cognizable by the eye come into the range of his vision, his *viññāṇa* (Consciousness) remains unmixed with them; it does not get mixed with those influxes. It remains unmixed, steady, and has attained imperturbability (*āneñjappattaṁ*). He is not swept away by them. The word '*āneñja*' means that the Arahants do not shake—their minds are directed to conquering the objects flowing in from the six sense bases. That itself is spoken of as the concentration of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samādhi*), in terms like '*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*' (the stilling of all *saṅkhāra*), and so forth. In some places, it is said of those Arahants:

Yassāsavā parikkhīṇā, āhāre ca anissito,

Suññato animitto ca, vimokkho yassa gocaro,

Ākāseva sakuntānaṁ, padaṁ tassa durantayaṁ.

That is a verse from the Arahant Vagga of the *Dhammapada*. '*Yassāsavā parikkhīṇā*'—he whose influxes are completely destroyed; '*āhāre ca anissito*'—who is unattached to food. Why is he unattached to food? '*Animitto ca vimokkho yassa gocaro*'—'*gocara*' means pasture or grazing ground. What is the grazing ground of the Arahants? It is not food. It is '*suññato animitto ca*'—the voidness (*suññatā*) and the signless (*animitta*). You have heard about the three liberations (*vimokkhas*): *suññata* (void), *animitta* (signless), and *appaṇihita* (undirected). That is where Nibbāna is. The place freed from the aforementioned sense objects. '*Suññato animitto ca*'—that is their true grazing ground. The Arahants and the Buddhas dwell in that grazing ground. The Buddha went into the forest and stayed for three months, saying, 'Let no monk come to see me, except the one who brings alms-food because it is necessary for survival.' What was his grazing ground? It was the aforementioned *suññata*, *animitta*, and *appaṇihita*. At that moment, that was the island we spoke of. A simile is given there: '*Ākāseva sakuntānaṁ, padaṁ tassa durantayaṁ*'—when a bird flies in the sky, can its path be traced? In the same way, the track of the Arahants' minds cannot be known. There is no object of mind (*ārammaṇa*). That is what is called '*anārammaṇaṁ cittaṁ*' (the objectless mind). In some places, as mentioned in our sermons, deities, Sakka, and Brahmas are said to come and worship the Buddha in this manner:

Namo te purisājañña, namo te purisuttama,

Yassa te nābhijānāma, yam'pi nissāya jhāyasi.

'Homage to you, O noble thoroughbred of men, homage to you, O supreme among men! We do not comprehend what it is relying upon which you meditate.' For it is *animitta* (signless), *appaṇihita* (undirected), and *suññata* (void). There is no sign (*nimitta*). '*Paṇidhi*' means there is no desire. '*Suññata*' means there is no perception of self (*attā-saññā*). That state of liberation is indeed the island. Therefore, understand that crossing over the four floods, escaping the power of those influxes, the Arahants finally land on that island. That island is what is called their liberation (*vimutti*), because they experienced the cessation of *Bhava* (Becoming) (*bhava-nirodha*) in this very life. All those others are things related to *Bhava* (Becoming). There are many such valuable verses here and there. We shall mention just one. There is a sutta called the *Sundarika Bhāradvāja Sutta* in the *Sutta Nipāta*. In it, it is stated:

Bhavāsavā yassa vacīkharā ca, vidhūpitā atthaṅgatā na santi.

This is said about that Arahant. This is the word of the Buddha. '*Bhavāsavā yassa vacīkharā ca*'—that Arahant's influx of existence (*bhavāsava*) is destroyed. Likewise, there is a strange word *vacīkhara* (or *vacīkharā*). The commentary explains *vacīkhara* as 'harsh speech'. But our view is that *vacīkhara* refers to something belonging to this

linguistic usage, to *Bhava* (Becoming) and the world. One must get free from that too. *Vacīkhara* means 'linguistic rubbish'—the *papañca* (conceptual proliferation / prolific conceptualization) found in linguistic usage. Arahants are freed even from this linguistic rubbish. That is why they are called '*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā-pahāna*' (those who have abandoned concepts, reckonings, or designations characterized by the prolific tendency of concepts). We are mentioning this briefly. At times, they direct their minds to that *animitta-dhamma* (signless state) freed from those worldly conventions, where there is no earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), or air (*vāyo*). There is no sun, moon, or stars. There is no going, no coming. There is no birth, no death. The reason why the descriptions regarding this Nibbāna could not be understood for so long is because they could not understand the island we spoke of. Instead, those people called the island 'Siyadoris's Nibbāna'—something that happens after death. We have pointed out that it is the very direct, experiential state that the Arahants experience in this very life. Arahants are freed from the influxes of becoming (*bhavāsava*), in short, even from the linguistic usages that deceive humans. In some places, regarding the liberation of those Arahants, it is mentioned in this way:

'*So kāyo'ti pi na hoti, so vācā'ti pi na hoti, so mano'ti pi na hoti, khettaṁ taṁ na hoti, vatthu taṁ na hoti, āyatanaṁ taṁ na hoti, adhikaraṇaṁ taṁ na hoti, yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati sukhadukkhaṁ*.'

There ceases to be the perception of a body through which pleasure and pain are felt within. The perception of speech ceases. The perception of mind ceases. In modern terms, all 'activities' take place within body, speech, and mind. In the mind of the Arahant, then, there is no place for body, no place for speech, and no place for mind. That is what is shown in many suttas regarding Nibbāna through various negative terms, through many terms of negation. Why can that liberation not be expressed in words? Because the world is connected to *Bhava* (Becoming). If they ask about something, they speak of it in terms relevant to that *Bhava* (Becoming). Complete liberation is the state of being freed from all of this at some point.

The Buddha uses language and linguistic usage. That is indeed what we have mentioned on many occasions—at the end of the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*, the Tathāgata declares concerning himself: '*Itimā kho, Citta, loka-samaññā loka-niruttiyo loka-vohārā loka-paññattiyo yāhi Tathāgato voharati aparāmasaṁ*.' Addressing that person, 'Citta, these are worldly names, worldly expressions, worldly usages, and worldly designations (*loka-paññatti*), which the Tathāgata uses and speaks of, but without misapprehending (*aparāmasaṁ*) them.' He does not hold onto them firmly. That is what we refer to when we say that just as adults use baby talk, he uses the language of the worldlings. In that case, such is the nature of the Arahant's mind towards language. It is not only regarding the arisings, passings away, fallings (*cuti*), rebirths (*upapatti*), heavenly worlds, and Brahma worlds of ordinary worldlings; in short, even the great primary elements like earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*) are erased from the mind.

Now, those scientists are struggling to understand what these four are. Having distanced them from the mind, having distanced them from thought, they have gone to the

ultimate extreme, and having nothing else to do, a moment has arrived where they even deprecate science as 'this miserable science.' That is the end of science. The Buddha pointed out the ultimate end of that science in passages like '*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*' (mind precedes all states). Looking at the final chapter, that liberation through the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha-vimutti*) of those Arahants is something we cannot even conceive. For if there were no such liberation, then they would remain in doubt after doubt. Think about it for a moment: if this Nibbāna were something after death, at the moment of death they would have to remain in doubt. The Buddhas and the Arahants experienced the state of the cessation of *Bhava* (Becoming) in this very life, in the manner described. Whatever things exist related to *Bhava* (Becoming), including the great primary elements like earth, water, fire, and air, they erased all of them from the mind; this is called '*virājitā*' (faded away). The Buddha experienced the emptiness and voidness of even those concepts of earth, water, fire, and air, and of the various heavenly worlds, Brahma worlds, goings and comings arising because of them. That is what is called liberation: the liberation of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-vimutti*).

Therefore, recall and meaningfully reflect on that *Dhammapada* verse: '*Dīpaṁ kayirātha medhāvī, yaṁ ogho nābhikīrati*'—'Let the wise man make an island which the flood cannot overwhelm.' We tried to speak briefly because there are a great number of suttas to be discussed. What we have to say to you, dear devotees, is to try to understand this through a thousand methods, in connection with the other things we have discussed. All of this is Dhamma that must be understood individually by the wise, each according to his own wisdom. It is not solely through the sermons, meditation, and studies that one has done; as one progresses further and further on the path of meditation, the things we have spoken of here will become clear.

Today, as everyone has inclined towards this path, established in mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), established in high virtue (*sīla*), on such an occasion today, many can understand this Dhamma more clearly. In the future as well, utilizing this, by proceeding on this path of the Dhamma, keeping *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) at the forefront in accordance with the practical and relative principles of the Middle Path we discussed, may these few words help you to realize the supreme goal you hope for in this very life, through the penetration and fruit of the path as a Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant. We pray that whatever beings exist from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha may rejoice in this merit of sharing and hearing the Dhamma, and through that rejoicing, may they attain the deathless, great Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! Please recite these verses to share the merit:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #51

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.49)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Bahuṃ ve saraṇaṃ yanti, pabbatāni vanāni ca;

Ārāmarukkhacetyāni, manussā bhayatajjitā.

Netaṃ kho saraṇaṃ khemaṃ, netaṃ saraṇamuttamaṃ;

Netaṃ saraṇamāgamma, sabbadukkhā pamuccati.

Yo ca buddhañca dhammañca, saṅghañca saraṇaṃ gato;

Cattāri ariyasaccāni, sammappaññāya passati.

Dukkhaṃ dukkhasamuppādaṃ, dukkhassa ca atikkamaṃ;

Ariyañcaṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ, dukkhūpasamagāminaṃ.

Etaṃ kho saraṇaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ saraṇamuttamaṃ;

Etaṃ saraṇamāgamma, sabbadukkhā pamuccati.

From:

Verses 188-192 from the Buddhavagga (Chapter on the Buddha) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

Today is the Esala full-moon Poya day. Indeed, the Triple Gem, which serves as the refuge from the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra, truly became manifest on an Esala full-moon Poya day such as this. Why do we say so? We all know that the Buddha realized supreme enlightenment at the foot of the Bodhi tree on a Vesak full-moon Poya day. However, he preached that supramundane realization he attained to the world of devas

and humans at a level they could comprehend, as an auspicious Dhamma sermon—the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*—on an Esala full-moon Poya day. Furthermore, among the group of five monks who were the recipients of that sermon, Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña realized Nibbāna with the path-knowledge of Stream-entry at the end of the discourse. Thus, we must understand that the Dhamma Gem became manifest through the preaching of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Next, this can also be considered the beginning of the manifestation of the Noble Saṅgha Gem. That is why we say that the Esala full-moon Poya day is the day on which the Triple Gem, the only refuge for this saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*), became manifest.

When we reflect in this manner, what is declared and emphasized in this series of verses, which is the theme of our sermon today, is that the only refuge for the saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) of living beings is the Triple Refuge, the Triple Gem itself, and that the path to escape from this saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) is none other than that supramundane path of liberation. The Buddha preached these few verses to a brahmin named Aggidatta. The background story (nidāna-kathā) regarding this is recorded as follows.

In Sāvatthī, King Mahā Kosala—that is, the father of King Pasenadi Kosala—had a royal priest (purohita) brahmin, who was the aforementioned brahmin Aggidatta. After King Mahā Kosala passed away, King Pasenadi Kosala, who succeeded him, also retained the brahmin Aggidatta—who was by then quite advanced in age—in the position of royal priest with great respect. To show how much respect he had, whenever the priest came to the royal palace, the King himself would go forward to receive him. Moreover, out of respect for him as a teacher, he would offer him a seat equal to his own. That is how well he treated the royal priest, Brahmin Aggidatta.

However, this brahmin thought wisely: "Young kings prefer young royal priests. I am too old. I will not be able to retain the King's favor forever in this way." Thinking thus, he obtained permission from the King. He understood that ordination (going forth) is not merely a change in external appearance, but requires renunciation (*nekkhamma*). Therefore, how did he free himself from his vast wealth and great treasure? He sent town-criers through the city with drums, opened his doors, and gave it away in charity. Within seven days, he opened the doors and told anyone to take whatever they wanted from his entire wealth, and having freed himself from those riches, he went forth. Along with his departure, a large number of city-dwellers, said to be about ten thousand people, departed with this royal priest brahmin to practice asceticism under the sage's going-forth (rishi ordination). This group went and prepared a hermitage in a certain habitation between the kingdoms of Anga-Magadha and Kuru, where they practiced asceticism.

What was the advice that the brahmin Aggidatta, as their leader, gave to this group? "Whenever a defiled thought such as a sensual thought (*kāma-vitakka*) arises in you, at that very moment, go, bring a bag of sand, and dump it in this place." Thus, he gave them a meditation instruction. As a result of this, after some time, a huge mound of sand was formed there. This shows how obediently they brought and dumped a bag of sand for every defiled thought that arose in them. After such a massive mound of sand was

formed, it is said that a king of serpents (nāga king) named Abhicchatthaka took guardianship of that sand pile. This is not like the cobras we see today; what is referred to here is a kind of non-human/spirit entity (*bhūta*). Like what is said about the Nāga King Mucalinda, this was a powerful nāga king possessing special powers, psychic power (*iddhi-bala*), and the ability to change his physical form. That Nāga King Abhicchatthaka took up residence there.

Furthermore, large crowds of people from the kingdoms of Anga and Magadha regularly visited to offer alms and respect to this brahmin and his group. What was the advice that this brahmin sage gave to them? "Go for refuge to mountains, parks, trees, and forests. Only by going for refuge to them can one be released from this saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*), from all suffering (*dukkha*)." In this way, he advised them to take refuge in those things. He also gave the same advice to his own disciples.

While things were going on in this way, as time passed, the Buddha appeared in the world. On one occasion, while residing at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī, as he surveyed the world in the morning through the attainment of great compassion (*mahā-karuṇā-samāpatti*), he saw that this brahmin Aggidatta and his group possessed the supportive conditions to attain Arahantship. Having seen this, and devising a skillful means (*upāya-magga*), he invited the great Arahant Moggallāna: "Moggallāna, do you not see? This brahmin Aggidatta is misleading a large crowd, preaching to them, 'By taking refuge in these mountains, forests, trees, etc., you can bring an end to suffering (*dukkha*).' Go and turn this brahmin toward the Dhamma." The great Arahant Moggallāna replied, "Blessed One, there is a very large crowd there. I cannot do this alone. If the Blessed One also visits, perhaps it will be possible." Then the Buddha said, "Moggallāna, you go ahead first," and sent the great Arahant Moggallāna on his way that very evening.

Before arriving at that place, the great Arahant Moggallāna also thought: "If I go before this massive crowd and say something, and if they start leaving in groups, I will not be able to accomplish what I intend." It is said that using his psychic power (*iddhi-bala*), he created a heavy drizzling rain. Because of that rain, those ascetics retired to their respective quarters, that is, their huts.

Then, the great Arahant Moggallāna went near the hut of the brahmin Aggidatta and called him by name: "Aggidatta, Aggidatta!" Aggidatta, due to his conceit (*māna*), felt some anger at this. Thinking, "Who in the world is calling me by my personal name?", he asked, "Who is that?" "I am a renunciant. Please give me a place to stay tonight." Aggidatta replied, "Each of us has separate huts; we have no space."

"Do not say so. It is the custom for humans to go to humans, cattle to cattle, and renunciants to renunciants. Therefore, please give me a place to stay tonight." He then said, "Since there is no other place, I can stay on that sand mound." Aggidatta warned him, "A great serpent king (nāga) lives there. It is dangerous. Do not go there under any circumstances." But saying it did not matter, as the great Arahant Moggallāna walked toward the sand mound to spend the night there, the serpent king became extremely

angry. It is then mentioned that through his psychic power, the serpent king began to emit a powerful blast of smoke. The great Arahant Moggallāna also emitted smoke through his own psychic power. The serpent king was overwhelmed by this, while the great Arahant Moggallāna suffered no harm whatsoever.

Next, the serpent king began to spit fire. The great Arahant Moggallāna, entering the fire-element attainment (*tejo-dhātu-samāpatti*), also emitted fire in the same way. Eventually, in one way or another, the serpent king was tamed. Having been tamed, it is said that the serpent king spread his hood around the great Arahant Moggallāna as a shelter, enabling him to spend the night there. Meanwhile, the brahmins, seeing the smoke and fire, thought, "This recluse, this monk's life must have been destroyed." When they looked in the morning, the great Arahant Moggallāna was perfectly fine. When they heard the details of what had occurred, they were all astonished, thinking, "What an incredibly powerful renunciant this is!"

Just as they were expressing their joy, the Buddha arrived at the scene. When the great Arahant Moggallāna stood up and paid homage to the Buddha, these people were even more astonished. When they asked, "Is this someone even more powerful than you?", Moggallāna replied, "This is my Teacher." At that moment, the Buddha asked the brahmin Aggidatta: "Brahmin, in what manner do you preach the Dhamma to this crowd?" Then the brahmin Aggidatta declared, "I tell them that by taking refuge in mountains, forests, parks, and trees, they can be freed from this suffering (*dukkha*)." It is recorded in the texts that the Buddha then proclaimed the series of verses we mentioned earlier.

Now let us look at the general meaning of those verses.

Bahuṃ ve saraṇaṃ yanti pabbatāni vanāni ca

ārāmarukkhacetyāni manussā bhayatajjitā

Many people, driven by fear, go for refuge to mountains, forests, parks, and tree-shrines; they go seeking protection in them.

N'etaṃ kho saraṇaṃ khemaṃ n'etaṃ saraṇamuttamaṃ

n'etaṃ saraṇamāgamma sabbadukkhā pamuccati

But these things are not a secure refuge or protection. "That is not a safe refuge, that is not the supreme refuge." This is not the truly supreme refuge. The Buddha explains in detail that by going to such a refuge, one cannot be released from all suffering (*dukkha*). Next, he declares how one is released from suffering (*dukkha*).

Yo ca buddhañca dhammañca saṅghañca saraṇaṃ gato cattāri ariyasaccāni sammapaññāya passati Dukkhaṃ dukkhasamuppādaṃ dukkhassa ca atikkamaṃ ariyañcaṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ dukkhūpasamagāminaṃ

But whoever goes for refuge to the Triple Gem—the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha—and sees with right wisdom (*sammā-paññā*), with great wisdom, these Four Noble Truths: suffering (*dukkha*), the arising of suffering (*dukkha-samuppāda*), the transcending of suffering (*dukkhassa ca atikkamaṃ*), and the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to the calming and appeasing of suffering (*dukkhūpasamagāminaṃ*);

Etaṃ kho saraṇaṃ khemaṃ etaṃ saraṇamuttamaṃ etaṃ saraṇamāgamma sabbadukkhā pamuccati

This indeed is the secure refuge, the true protection. "This is the supreme refuge." This is the truly supreme refuge. "Having come to this refuge, one is released from all suffering." The Buddha declared that only by coming to this refuge, this protection, can one be released from all the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra.

From these verses and this story, we can extract many Dhamma principles. Even if we reflect on the story itself, according to the standards of the present day, there are things in it that appear miraculous, especially concerning psychic miracles (*iddhi-pātihāriya*). Nowadays, these are things that people might doubt. However, during the time of the Buddha, when we speak of the great Arahant Moggallāna being the foremost among those possessing great psychic power, wonderful things are recorded in the texts. Now, the most important point here is the ordination (going forth) of the brahmin Aggidatta.

Going forth is something done very easily even in this day and age. But regarding the ascetic going-forth—how did the brahmin Aggidatta go forth? It was not because of a lack of food, drink, clothing, shelter, or social status. It was not due to illnesses. Even while receiving royal honor at the highest level, even while possessing the privilege to sit on a seat equal to the King's, and even while having the power to get "anything whatsoever" done, and having such great favor of both the country and the King, he reflected with far-sighted wisdom: "This status will not last forever. I am now old. I must retire now, retire completely."

When we talk about retiring, what that brahmin did was not what people do nowadays when they retire. When he retired, he did not do so keeping a little savings for himself. He gave everything away in charity. He opened the doors of his treasuries, announced it with the beat of drums, gave away all his wealth, and went forth only after freeing himself from those riches. That is a lesson for us. Even though we might call those external ascetics "wrong-viewed" (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), they have given us a valuable lesson, especially when we think about ordination in the present era. It is the very strength that comes from renunciation (*nekkhamma*) that helps to carry the ordination forward. Where there is no renunciation (*nekkhamma*), it is a mere ordination—a totally empty ordination. There is no strength within it; one cannot progress; one spins back to lay life. But concerning the ascetic going-forth in the past, even during times when no Buddha had appeared in the world, even great kings were called "royal sages" (*rāja-rishi*). They abandoned kingship and went to practice asceticism in the Himalayan forests, discarding all sensual pleasures like a glob of spit spat out in the early morning; it was not done lightly.

That is how it is mentioned. So here too, according to the ascetic going-forth, that custom is an eternal custom regarding renunciation (*nekkhamma*). Respecting that custom, the departure of the brahmin Aggidatta is a lesson for us when we reflect on our present times. So let us look at what is said from that point onwards.

Next, indeed, that brahmin taught a certain skillful method to his disciples for eliminating defiled thoughts such as sensual thoughts (*kāma-vitakka*). It is also apparent that the disciples acted obediently according to it. As soon as defiled thoughts arose—such as sensual thoughts or angry thoughts—what did they do? They ran, brought a bag of sand right at that moment, and dumped it. If we contemplate the Dhamma-principle behind this, they cut off that defiled thought by directing their minds to another activity without giving room to the defiled thought (*kilesa-vitakka*). There is such a technique there, a certain skillful device. It was through this that those brahmins developed great strength. So much so that, at the end of the sermon, all those ascetics attained Arahantship with the analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*) and became disciples of the Buddha through the "come, monk" (*ehi-bhikkhu*) ordination.

Thus, what helped them to develop such great strength was that this work of suppressing the defilements had begun from that very moment. It was precisely because of this that a massive crowd supported them as their patrons. In the end, having heard the Dhamma sermon of the Buddha, they understood: "This is not the true way of taking refuge and seeking protection. Taking refuge in mountains and forests is not it. It is taking refuge in this Triple Gem." It was because of this understanding that, upon hearing the Buddha's sermon containing those verses, the cognitive revolution—the transformation—that occurred within those brahmins was so great that they attained Arahantship. Next, the Buddha granted them ordination through the *ehi-bhikkhu* formula.

That is how it is mentioned in the Dhamma. Just as devotion toward the Triple Gem arose within a massive crowd, we generally understand "taking refuge" as going for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. However, this verse states that it is not merely that; taking refuge begins there, but it culminates in the realization of the Four Noble Truths. This saṃsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*), its cause is craving (*taṇhā*), the extinguishment of that craving (*taṇhā*) is Nibbāna, and the path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path. By properly understanding the meaning of those verses, that large crowd finally became disciples of the Buddha. At that very moment, a large crowd of other patrons from the kingdoms of Anga and Magadha arrived. Seeing the transformation that had occurred, they initially thought, "The Buddha is a disciple of this brahmin Aggidatta." It is mentioned that to dispel this, the Buddha spoke to the brahmin Aggidatta at that moment, asking him to settle the doubts of the crowd. Then, using the psychic power (*iddhi-sakti*) he had attained, the brahmin Aggidatta rose into the air and paid homage to the Buddha seven times, declaring: "The Blessed One is my Teacher, I am the disciple; I am the follower," thereby dispelling the doubts of the visiting patrons, as the story further records.

Thus, through this story, we must reflect not only on the model of ordination shown at the beginning, but also on the cognitive revolution and transformation that occurred

within the ordained group as a result of this sermon. Nowadays, many people, due to their saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) as well as the various suffering-filled situations that arise in life, go searching for protection, searching for refuge. How this search for protection and refuge can become truly fruitful and successful is what is declared in this sermon. Regarding taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha—the ordinary world thinks that there is some occult/mysterious power in trees, rocks, and mountains, and they expect protection from those forces; that is how the ordinary world thinks.

But the Buddha pointed out that the true shelter for the world to escape saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*)—in short, to be released from all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness—is to seek refuge in this Triple Gem, namely the Buddha-gem, the Dhamma-gem, and the Saṅgha-gem. That is why, as you devotees know, it is stated in the Dhamma that a person becomes a lay follower (*upāsaka*)—the minimum requirement being described as: "*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hoti, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hoti, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hotī*"—that is, when someone goes for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, by that much they become a lay follower. Then, for that lay follower to become virtuous, they undertake some precept-discipline such as the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*). However, just because it is described in this minimum way, one should not think, "We have said '*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ*' three times, so everything is complete." That is precisely why the verse states that immediately after taking refuge, one must see with right wisdom (*sammā-paññā*), with great wisdom, the Four Noble Truths: suffering (*dukkha*), the arising of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*), the transcending of suffering, the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*) which is Nibbāna, and the Noble Eightfold Path that assists it. It is by seeing this that one truly attains release from saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*). Therefore, to complete the act of taking refuge (*saraṇāgamana*), one must walk on this path.

Next, even if we think only of this act of taking refuge, you devotees have heard of a protection chant (*paritta*) called the *Dhajagga Sutta*. There, the Buddha declares that even for monks meditating in forests, at the foot of trees, or in empty dwellings (*suññāgāra*), if any fear, terror, or hair-standing-on-end should arise, they should recollect him. How should they recollect him? As you all know, through the *Itipi so* passage. They should recollect the passage on the nine supreme qualities of the Buddha, starting with "*Itipi so bhagavā*..." If they do not recollect this, they should recollect the Dhamma—the six qualities of the Dhamma starting with "*Svākkhāto*..." If they do not recollect that, they should recollect the nine qualities of the Saṅgha, starting with "*Supaṭipanno*..." The *Dhajagga Sutta* presents these twenty-four great qualities as a protective chant, stating that when one recollects them, any fear, terror, or hair-standing-on-end will disappear. Therefore, it must be remembered that the only refuge for the world is these twenty-four great qualities. That is why in the *Ratana Sutta*, the qualities of the Triple Gem, such as the qualities of the Buddha, are used as the foundation even for an asseveration of truth (*sacca-kiriyā*).

In the background story of the *Ratana Sutta*, it is mentioned that during the great devastation in the city of Vesālī caused by the three fears—the fear of non-humans, the

fear of disease, and the fear of famine—the Buddha commissioned Ven. Ānanda to wish peace for that region using the power of truth, the power of asseveration of truth, through the verses in the *Ratana Sutta*, chanting "*Etena saccena suvatthi hotu*" (By this truth may there be well-being). From this too, we see a good example: the power within the Triple Gem. The power within the Triple Gem is the power of truth. It is a Dhamma-principle that exists eternally in the world. There is immense power within truth, within an asseveration of truth. In the Jātaka stories, it is often seen and stated that due to various weaknesses, the Bodhisatta broke other precepts on various occasions, but regarding truth—that is, lying (*musāvāda*)—he strictly kept that training rule and preserved the truth. That is why there is the miracle of truth in the life of the Buddha.

So that is exactly what we find here: the qualities of the Triple Gem. Those twenty-four great qualities are a truth. It is by the power of that truth that, in various ways, in blessing-verses, well-wishes are made for the world by focusing on and taking refuge in the Triple Gem, chanting "*Etena saccena suvatthi hotu*". Even in the problems and crises of daily life, it is worthwhile to consider the Triple Gem as one's refuge. Moreover, especially concerning what is called the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra—that terrifying suffering, that disaster—one cannot escape from it easily. One cannot be released merely by going for refuge to the Triple Gem in word only. For the refuge in the Triple Gem to be complete, one must see the Buddha, one must see the Dhamma, and one must personally see that realization seen by the Saṅgha Gem; one must walk on the path trodden by the Great Saṅgha Gem of the eight noble individuals (*aṭṭha-ariya-puggala*) and see its fruit. That is what is declared here: to realize it with right wisdom (*sammā-paññā*).

Therefore, reflecting from that perspective as well, we must direct our minds to these Four Noble Truths. If we describe the entire Dhamma in brief—what the Buddha preached—it is indeed this preaching of the Four Noble Truths. That is exactly what the Buddha presented in detail in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. It is this entire mass of saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*), such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness, that the Buddha pointed out there as the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*). Its cause was pointed out by the Buddha as craving (*taṇhā*). It is due to this craving—described as sensual craving (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*), and craving for non-becoming (*vibhava-taṇhā*) existing in living beings—that the world of beings suffers birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), and so forth for an infinite time in saṃsāra. The state of having eliminated this craving (*taṇhā*), of having appeased this craving (*taṇhā*), is indeed called Nibbāna. That extinguishment and the path leading to it is the Eightfold Path, namely *sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view), *sammā-saṅkappa* (right intention), *sammā-vācā* (right speech), *sammā-kammanta* (right action), *sammā-ājīva* (right livelihood), *sammā-vāyāma* (right effort), *sammā-sati* (right mindfulness), and *sammā-samādhi* (right concentration). Thus, by completing this path—by completing it supramundanely—one is able to be released from the entire suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra. That is how it is shown.

When we contemplate this a bit more carefully, what is called "right wisdom" (*sammā-paññā*) here is a capacity to comprehend and realize that exists within all of us.

However, this wisdom is not something to be acquired through reasoning and logic (*tarka*). It must be developed through meditation (*bhāvanā*). Everyone makes a certain effort in practicing the Noble Eightfold Path. That is a somewhat piecemeal effort. Step by step, they try to practice that Eightfold Path to the best of their ability. But there are various twists and distortions in it. That is why it is shown as a separate wholesome action called "straightening one's view" (*diṭṭhijju-kamma*). An ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) makes an effort to straighten their view.

The Eightfold Path is not fully present in an ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*). It has twists and distortions. What they do is make an effort to align and straighten it. Such an effort to align it becomes successful when meditation reaches its culmination, when it bears fruit. Established in virtue (*sīla*), having developed concentration (*samādhi*), if at some point one realizes the truth through insight (*vipassanā*), it is at that moment that the Noble Eightfold Path—which is described in the Dhamma as the supramundane path (*lokuttara-magga*)—is realized. Indeed, mundanely, one practices it in a piecemeal fashion; however, on the supramundane path, it is said that all eight factors arise simultaneously in a single mind-moment. All eight factors arise in a single mind-moment, which is extremely brief. It is mentioned that path-concentration (*magga-samādhi*) arises as a momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*). This is an extremely profound matter. One can understand to some extent that although right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) leads the way, the other factors may be scattered in different directions. They have many twists and distortions. When these are aligned and straightened, this right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) ultimately develops and becomes right vision (*sammā-dassana*).

That is precisely what occurs at the moment of path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*). That is why the Buddha declared this Noble Eightfold Path to be a straight path. One has to straighten this. It manifests as perfectly straight at that supramundane level—for the first time at the stage of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*). Why is this straightening necessary? A powerful mass of defilements (*kilesa*), a mountain of defilements, is deposited within this mental continuum (*citta-santāna*). It completely covers it, like a thick layer of rust. This cannot be cut away by ordinary thinking power. It can only be cut away by the concentration of the path-consciousness (*magga-citta-samādhi*). The supramundane mind is an immensely powerful concentration. In terms of meditation, the absorptions (*jhāna*)—described as the first absorption, second absorption, and so on—are indeed very powerful minds. Yet, a supramundane path-concentration is even more powerful than those ordinary absorption-minds. It is through this that these defilements (*kilesa*) can be cut away. That is why it is stated: "*Yaṃ buddhasettho parivannayī suciṃ, samādhimānantarikaññamāhu, samādhinā tena samo na vijjati*"—indicating that this supramundane concentration is so powerful and mighty that no other concentration can be compared to it. This power is obtained because all eight factors come together, and in a single moment, right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) arises as right vision (*sammā-dassana*). Through this, at the stage of the path of Stream-entry, those powerful defilements are broken at one level, leaving at most seven lifetimes. At the second stage of Once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), it is reduced further so that one returns to this world only once more. At the stage of Non-returner (*anāgāmi*), one goes to the Brahma-world and ends it there.

Finally, at the stage of Arahantship, one is completely released from all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) such as birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness; having broken that karmic force, one is brought to the state of non-arising. That is what is called release from all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*). Therefore, this meritorious crowd should reflect that there is a profound aspect to this taking of refuge. Otherwise, one might generally think that just because we say "*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*," we are all Buddhists and all our work is complete. However, here we generally use the term *saraṇāgamana*. If we consider *saraṇāgamana* according to the grammar of the language, it means "arriving at a refuge," "attaining protection." Yet, in truth, *saraṇāgamana* itself is "going in search of refuge."

So, this journey in search of refuge is completed through the realization of the Four Noble Truths. The proper term is the "going to the three refuges"—going for refuge to the Triple Gem. The target, the end of this taking of refuge, is Nibbāna. The journey up to that point is indeed something that must begin with faith (*saddhā*). Now, let us next reflect on this faith (*saddhā*). Here too, we know that to develop the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), the recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*), and the recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*), a certain faith (*saddhā*) must arise within us. For one who lacks it—one who has taken only to logic and argument—there is no meaning visible in this. To the extent that it is felt in the heart, that abundance of qualities—the qualities of the Buddha, the qualities of the Dhamma, and the qualities of the Saṅgha—must penetrate the mind.

For such a person, next, as recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*)—which means contemplating, recollecting the Buddha's qualities over and over; recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*), which means repeatedly contemplating and bringing to mind the qualities of the Dhamma; and recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*), repeatedly bringing to mind the qualities of the Saṅgha. Through such recollection, a certain development takes place within this person's character. One who constantly contemplates virtue becomes like an ocean of virtue. In short, it is mentioned in the scriptures regarding a person who constantly practices the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) that they become just like the fragrant chamber (*gandha-kuṭi*) of the Buddha. The person who constantly contemplates the Buddha's qualities becomes like the fragrant cell (*gandhakiḷi*), the fragrant chamber, where the Buddha resides. Because when one constantly develops that mass of qualities, there is no room for unwholesome states (*akusala*). There is no room for unwholesome states to enter. One constantly lives in virtue itself—the qualities of the Buddha, the qualities of the Dhamma, the qualities of the Saṅgha. It is the very protection obtained from this that is mentioned in suttas like the *Dhajagga*.

When recollecting the qualities of the Buddha, if there are certain karmic forces (*kamma-vega*) about to ripen, their ripening force is also averted. Furthermore, because the most powerful principle in the world is the principle of truth, by the power of truth, a certain force from the universe is also added to it. One might call it invisible. However, it

is not an occult/mysterious force of the kind the ordinary world imagines. In the past, the aforementioned brahmin Aggidatta said that in trees, rocks, mountains, and places considered as shrines, there exists some occult force through which suffering can be ended. But what is spoken of here is not such a thing. By contemplating the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, and bringing them to mind, one generates their power within oneself. Through that power, those karmic forces are worn away, and one receives a certain relief, even a limited relief in daily life. That is why the Buddha spoke of the ordinary world as "*manussā bhayatajjitā*"—it is the ordinary nature of people to live driven by fear in the face of hazards and disasters that come in daily life. At that moment, if one contemplates the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, one can obtain a substantial Dhamma-comfort through that Dhamma-power. Moreover, a capacity to withstand those incoming hazards is also developed.

Often, we are agitated and troubled by the disasters that come our way because our minds are not prepared to accept them. However, when we keep that mass of qualities regarding the Buddha-gem, Dhamma-gem, and Saṅgha-gem sustained in our minds, a capacity to withstand those disasters is also developed in the mind. By that too, the power of those disasters is broken. Not only that, through that very Dhamma-power, those karmic forces are worn away. This is the kind of Dhamma-principle that is present here. Therefore, one should not think wrongly: "At the beginning, it was said that people driven by fear go seeking protection in mountains, forests, trees, and shrines, and that this is not a refuge, not a protection." Looking at these verses, someone might say, "If so, are not these Bodhi-puja and stupa-worship performed by some Buddhists also wrong-viewed (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) things like that?" There is a point that needs to be clarified there.

In this day and age, we hear some people who follow that line of logic saying, "Those are empty things." They say it is the work of undeveloped minds. However, what we must understand here is that the journey to Nibbāna begins with faith (*saddhā*). The meaning of the word *saddhā* is "establishing the heart." Therefore, if a person has a heart, some development must occur regarding it as well. If one develops intellect (*buddhi*) alone, an imbalanced development occurs within that person. We know that even when a fruit ripens, there is a difference between it ripening well or becoming stunted/withered. If it does not ripen well, if there are some deficiencies, it becomes stunted. Similarly, those who take intellect alone, disregarding feeling—not that they have no feeling, and not that they have no heart—but they sometimes hold rigidly to intellectualism, applying logic, and regard things like stupa-worship as things done by foolish people. However, in our Dhamma, it is shown that the stupa-worship in this dispensation is done with a profound meaning. You devotees have heard that there are three types of shrines (*cetiya*): bodily relics (*sārīrika*), items of use (*pāribhogika*), and memorial symbols (*uddesika*).

Shrines in which the bodily relics of the Buddha are enshrined are *sārīrika*; next, the Bodhi tree which he associated with, his alms-bowl relic, etc., are *pāribhogika*; next, *uddesika* refers to Buddha-statues and images made in his honor—these are symbols of the Buddha, objects that assist in the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) and in remembering the Buddha's qualities. It is by associating with these that humans purify,

inspire, and gladden their minds. Therefore, if someone treats such an object with contempt, or destroys such a thing, saying, "This is the work of fools, there is no use in this, it is just a pile of stones and bricks," that person commits a grave unwholesome deed (*akusala*). It is due to a lack of understanding regarding wholesome and unwholesome actions that some people undervalue these, calling them foolishness done out of faith (*saddhā*). However, through this, the wise, meritorious person regards it as part of Buddha-worship itself, used to bring the Buddha to mind. We know that in daily life, people who live in houses use photographs or other symbols to remember their deceased relatives or other loved ones. Even those intellectualists do so. But when we come to this point, we must understand that to bring to mind the Buddha who is no longer physically alive, we need certain objects and assistance. It does not always come to our minds automatically. When we see it, that faith (*saddhā*) arises within us. That is where the beginning lies. That is why such objects have been used for so long.

Next, those offerings (*pūjā*) are made as an expression of the response that arises upon bringing the Buddha to mind. Regarding these too, some people accumulate unnecessary unwholesome karma (*akusala*) by criticizing them. That faith (*saddhā*) is something another person cannot understand. That person's faith—even the Buddha remained equanimous (*upekkhā*) toward the way different individuals express their faith. Yet, through that, a spiritual development occurs within that person. If one insults it or destroys those objects, one commits a grave unwholesome deed (*akusala*). That is why we expressed these points, because there is a possibility of misunderstanding this sermon.

Therefore, one must contemplate that the things that assist in this taking of refuge, the taking of refuge in the Triple Gem, are to daily sustain and deposit in one's mind this mass of qualities of the Triple Gem as recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*), and recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*). Why is the Triple Gem important? Because for this journey of ours, the Buddha is our Teacher. Next, why is he our Teacher? Because he declared a certain Dhamma. That is why we said that the Triple Gem fully became manifest on the Esala full-moon Poya day. The collection of Dhamma discourses that began with that auspicious Dhamma sermon starting with the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* is what we consider as the Dhamma Gem. Next, that Dhamma Gem can be put into practice; if it were something that could not be put into practice, the Saṅgha Gem would be of no use to us. What is demonstrated through the Saṅgha Gem is that this Dhamma can be practiced, and its practicality.

Next, if we consider this entire practice—or this supramundane practice—as a great highway, the Great Saṅgha Gem of the eight noble individuals (*aṭṭha-ariya-puggala*) is like eight lamp-posts or lampposts. Those respective stages demonstrate that this or that stage can be attained—the stage of Stream-entry, Once-returning, and so on—giving that signal of possibility to the world. That is why the qualities of the Saṅgha are important, because of that richness of qualities they have attained. Along with this is the quality of "*Arahaṃ*"—"worthy of offerings," meaning the quality of being fit to receive offerings.

When we constantly say that the Buddha is one worthy of offerings, our mind naturally says, "Ah, we must offer whatever we can." The cleanest, most naturally pure thing that nature constantly provides to the world is the flower. That is why, instead of the celestial flower offerings (*parasatu*) made by deities, we, according to our capacity, make offerings with wild flowers plucked from the forest. In this way, each person makes some offering to the Buddha according to the level of their faith (*saddhā*).

The same applies to the offerings made to the Dhamma and to the Saṅgha. Through this, what do we do? We cultivate that quality of faith (*saddhā*) within. Where there is no moisture of faith (*saddhā*), there is no cultivation of virtuous qualities. Some people go shopping with money in their pockets. They go from shop to shop, peering through the glass windows, but they do not buy anything. They return home empty-handed. There are many such people in the world. They poke their noses in everywhere, but they derive no benefit. They have no real faith (*saddhā*); faith (*saddhā*) does not truly settle anywhere. That is why if one wants to utilize this Dhamma to end saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*), one must have this faith (*saddhā*). That is why the Buddha declares: "*dukkhūpanisā saddhā*" (suffering is the proximate cause of faith). For faith (*saddhā*) to arise, some level of understanding of suffering (*dukkha*) must occur. The Buddha has declared that faith (*saddhā*) has suffering as its support. Even in society today, we can see some people who have absolutely no interest in the Dhamma, and we meet many such people even in these times. Through those who come to discuss with us, we learn that initially their lives followed that aforementioned intellectualism, or they went searching for other things. While going on like that, when crises such as illnesses or domestic troubles come upon them, they realize: "This life is not a bed of roses." It is full of terrifying suffering (*dukkha*) and hardships, and one does not know at what moment this life will be lost.

Next, a certain level of understanding regarding suffering (*dukkha*) arises. They think: "This is indeed what the Buddha has explained better than me, and more deeply than I could comprehend." Then, they understand that Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) to a certain extent. Next, they understand: "Is not the cause of this suffering (*dukkha*) my own craving (*taṇhā*)?" They realize: "To the extent that craving (*taṇhā*) is reduced, this suffering (*dukkha*) is also reduced, is it not?" That is indeed the Four Noble Truths.

Even if one reflects on one's own life this very day, one can understand it to a certain extent; that is why there is right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). One does not have to wait until becoming a Buddha or an Arahant. One can realize this Four Noble Truths—the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāric existence—at one's own level. Some people wait until suitable opportunities arise. For those who have cultivated spiritual perfections (*pāramī*) in past saṃsāra and have traveled far on this path, there is no need for such a massive revolution, disaster, or crisis to occur. Even before that, some wake up. Some wake up on their own in the morning, some need alarm clocks, some do not even wake up with that but wake up when a bomb explodes, and some do not wake up even when a bomb explodes.

No. Therefore, we must reflect that each individual's saṃsāric intellect is a different thing altogether. It is not like mundane intellect. Sometimes, the saṃsāric intellect can be matured even in a seven-year-old child. Such are those who, using the skin-pentad meditation subject (*taca-pañcaka-kammaṭṭhāna*)—"*kesā, lomā, nakhā, dantā, taco*"—attain Arahantship at the very moment their hair is shaved and they are ordained. Having understood the suffering-nature and repulsive nature of the entire body, and the suffering-nature of saṃsāra and the world, they realize these Four Noble Truths. Therefore, saṃsāric intellect in the world is one thing, and the intellectual level the ordinary world thinks of is another. It is that mundane intellect that is used to pass exams and such.

The person with sharp saṃsāric intellect thinks: "This is not a journey to be traveled half-heartedly." We daily refer to this in terms of the intellectual side and the emotional side, which exist in everyone. Because we need physical concepts to represent them, we say "the brain and the heart." Even though we express it that way, everyone has an intellectual side and an emotional side. If one develops the intellect alone without purifying that emotional side and without paying attention to it, one becomes cunning and deceitful. That is what is shown in the Dhamma. In some instances, it is shown: "*balava-saddho manda-paññho*"—one who is strong in faith but weak in wisdom goes to the side of delusion. One's faith is high but wisdom is low; such a person turns toward the foolish side. On the other hand, it is said that when faith is low and wisdom—or the power of realization, the intellectual level—is high, such people go to the deceitful/cunning side. Such people extremistically reject all these things, making disparaging remarks about stupa-worship and efforts made to develop the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), thereby committing unwholesome deeds (*akusala*). Therefore, one must be careful about this as well.

Therefore, through this sermon, we see the value of this taking of refuge. Indeed, in this crisis-ridden era, we see in society that people look in all directions, hoping for pacification rituals (*śānti-karma*) to comfort their minds during their difficulties. This is an era where people run here and there, in all directions. However, as Buddhists, if we have come to recognize the Triple Gem—whether through parents or through books—there is no use in running here and there anymore. Regarding taking refuge in the Triple Gem, the Buddha has declared with absolute emphasis, concluding this series of verses: "*Etaṃ kho saraṇaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ saraṇamuttamaṃ, etaṃ saraṇamāgamma, sabbadukkhā pamuccati.*" It is not that other refuge mentioned earlier; this refuge is the supreme refuge, the secure refuge. It is by seeking such a refuge that one can be released from all suffering (*dukkha*).

Thus, that journey begins by hearing the Dhamma in that manner, comparing it with the experiences of one's daily life, and attaining a certain understanding: "This is acceptable; this indeed is the true path." From there, one must move forward. One must go right up to direct realization. When it is said "*sammā-paññāya passati*" (sees with right wisdom), it means one must develop wisdom for that purpose. That journey is not an ordinary journey traveled on foot. It is traveled along those steps called virtue (*sīla*),

concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Or in other words, through *sammā-diṭṭhi*, *sammā-saṅkappa*, and so on of the Noble Eightfold Path. There itself we can see why it is called a path. We can see this when we reflect a little on the Noble Eightfold Path.

What is present there as steps—these steps are not the kind of steps we think of in the world. What is called right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is shown. The Buddha has declared that in one who has right view, right intention arises: "*Sammādiṭṭhissa sammāsaṅkappo pahoti*". That occurs naturally. When right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) develops well, when right vision is properly cultivated, right thoughts arise. Next, it is shown in the same way, connecting one factor to another: when right thoughts arise, that person's mind inclines to utter right words. When the utterance of right words is purified, one is directed toward right courses of action. When right courses of action are completed, as one eliminates the defilements (*kilesa*) within oneself and corrects deficiencies, one's very livelihood—the true livelihood, the way of living—is also corrected. In the effort made to correct that way of living, a fourfold effort (*vīriya*) is developed, which consists of: not giving room to defilements (*kilesa*) that may arise within oneself, eliminating existing defilements (*kilesa*), bringing close unarisen wholesome qualities (*kusala-dhamma*), and developing existing wholesome qualities (*kusala-dhamma*).

To prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome states, to abandon arisen unwholesome states, to produce unarisen wholesome states, and to stabilize arisen wholesome states. In this way, the fourfold effort develops as right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*). In applying that effort, as right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) is applied in that manner, right mindfulness—the proper mindfulness—develops. The stabilization of that mindfulness is what is called concentration (*samādhi*). That is why we stated that when this Noble Eightfold Path, from right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) right up to concentration (*samādhi*), has its twists straightened out and is aligned, it is at that moment that a supramundane path-knowledge (*lokuttara-magga-ñāṇa*) arises as right vision (*sammā-dassana*). It is through that path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) that one breaks through those thick, dense levels of defilements (*kilesa*), that darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*), and is able to realize Nibbāna through the light of wisdom.

Certain teachers have illustrated this with two excellent similes. There are two valuable similes that can encompass all of this. One is the lighting of a lamp. When a lamp is lit—it is compared here to the Four Noble Truths—it is said that four things occur simultaneously. We know that when a lamp is lit, the wick burns down to a certain extent; likewise, the darkness is dispelled; the light spreads; and the oil is consumed, decreasing bit by bit. These four similes are compared to the Four Noble Truths. Like the burning of the wick, the understanding of suffering (*dukkha*) develops gradually. Like the dispelling of darkness, craving (*taṇhā*) is abandoned (*pahīṇa*), decreasing bit by bit. Like the spreading of light, the Noble Path (*ariya-magga*) is developed. Like the consuming of the oil, the levels of defilements (*kilesa*) are reduced, and Nibbāna is realized.

Another simile is given concerning the rising of the sun. When the sun rises, with the support of that light we see forms. Next, as the sun rises, darkness is dispelled to a certain extent; likewise, light spreads; and due to the sun's warmth, the cold is also reduced. This is compared to: just as we see forms when the sun rises, we gradually understand this Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) through this light of wisdom. With the arising of the sun, next, darkness is dispelled. Similarly, craving (*taṇhā*) is reduced to a certain extent. The spreading of light is the development of the path (*magga*). Finally, like the reduction of cold, the levels of defilements (*kilesa*) are reduced, and the realization of Nibbāna is attained.

Cessation (*nirodha*) is compared to the Four Noble Truths in this way through similes. Whichever way it is explained, it is through this wisdom—right wisdom—that the defilements (*kilesa*) are ultimately dried up and destroyed. Having appeased the defilements (*kilesa*), one is able to be released from the entanglement of karma (*kamma*) that causes this saṃsāra. Why is it that we are born in this saṃsāra for such a long time, even if we do not wish for it? Reflect on this a little: in our mental continuum (*citta-santāna*), there exist Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—a nature of preparing and constructing things due to delusion and ignorance (*avijjā*)—accumulating karma (*kamma*). We accumulate karma (*kamma*), whether wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*). There is a nature of those accumulated karmas to give results; that is a natural law. If something has been accumulated, one must experience its results. The journey between that karma and its result is what we call the saṃsāric journey. In it, we do not experience only the pleasures we hope for, but we have to experience a mass of suffering (*dukkha*) as the result of the things we have done. Even if there were no other additional suffering (*dukkha*), there is the suffering (*dukkha*) rooted in birth (*jāti*). If one is born, from that point on, one decays, is harassed by illnesses, and eventually must die. That is the greatest fear. In this way, a massive crowd of suffering (*dukkha*) comes as the suffering of birth (*jāti-dukkha*).

So, release from this entire mass of suffering (*dukkha*) is possible only through those supramundane path-knowledges (*lokuttara-magga-ñāṇa*) we mentioned: the supramundane path-knowledges of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship. Therefore, properly understanding this Triple Refuge, may this meritorious crowd seek protection only in the Triple Gem on this valuable Poya day, without searching for other protections. To strengthen this Triple Gem, may they engage in cultivating virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), and in practicing meditation, which assist in attaining that supramundane right wisdom (*sammā-paññā*). May this listening to the Dhamma definitely assist them in this very life to be freed from all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*), and to be comforted by the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! May those qualities of faith (*saddhā*), effort (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) that arise through this listening to the Dhamma become Dhamma-powers (*bala-dhamma*). Through association with good friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), making this human existence obtained during a rare era of a Buddha's appearance fruitful, may this listening to the Dhamma

definitely be a cause and support for this meritorious crowd to be comforted by the deathless, great Nibbāna!

Likewise, may this mass of merit we accumulated today through preaching the Dhamma and listening to the Dhamma be shared with the deities who protect the Dispensation, as well as our deceased relatives, and any beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who wish to rejoice in these merits! May they all rejoice in these merits and realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi (enlightenment) they aspire to! Holding that aspiration, let us share merits by reciting the verses in this manner.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #52

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.160)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Sabbhireva samāsetha, paṇḍiteh'atthadassibhi;

Atthaṃ mahantaṃ gambhīraṃ, duddasaṃ nipuṇaṃ aṇuṃ.

Dhīrā samadhigacchanti, appamattā vicakkhaṇāti.

From:

Khuddaka Nikāya

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha has declared that the greatest blessing one can obtain through association with the virtuous (*sappurisa*) and through association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) is the opportunity to listen to Dhamma discussions directly relevant to Nibbāna. The Buddha designated those members of the Sangha who possessed a special skill in conducting such Dhamma discussions by the title 'Dhamma-speakers' (*dhamma-kathika*). In accordance with this special skill, it was the great Arahant Puṇṇa Mantāniputta who attained the foremost (*etadagga*) position among the Dhamma-speaker monks in this Dispensation of the Buddha. A verse of Dhamma declared by him as an utterance of joy after attaining Arahantship is what we have taken as our theme today: *Sabbhireva samāsetha* – "Associate only with the virtuous, with wise sages who see the true benefit." *Atthaṁ mahantaṁ gambhīraṁ duddasaṁ nipuṇaṁ aṇuṁ, dhīrā samadhigacchanti appamattā vicakkhaṇā* – "The wise, diligent and discerning, realize the great, deep goal, hard to see, subtle, and infinitesimal"—this is the meaning of this verse.

Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta was born into a Brahmin family in a Brahmin village in the city of Kapilavatthu. He is mentioned in the Dhamma as a nephew of Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña. It is recorded in the texts that at the very inception of this Dispensation, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta, as a young Brahmin layman, went to Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña, received ordination and higher ordination (*upasampadā*) from him in the

city of Rājagaha, returned to Kapilavatthu, and having developed insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) there, attained Arahantship. Furthermore, after attaining Arahantship, he instructed a large retinue of about five hundred disciples according to a course of talk highly praised and spoken of by the Buddha, known as the "ten bases of talk" (*dasa kathāvatthu*). Devotees, these "ten bases of talk" are ten types of talk declared by the Buddha that help cut away the defilements, bring out mental strength, and are directly relevant to absolute disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, and Nibbāna. They are designated as follows: *appiccha-kathā* (talk on wanting little), *santuṭṭhi-kathā* (talk on contentment), *paviveka-kathā* (talk on seclusion), *asaṁsagga-kathā* (talk on aloofness / non-association), *vīriyārambha-kathā* (talk on arousal of energy), *sīla-kathā* (talk on virtue), *samādhi-kathā* (talk on concentration), *paññā-kathā* (talk on wisdom), *vimutti-kathā* (talk on deliverance), and *vimutti-ñāṇadassana-kathā* (talk on the knowledge and vision of deliverance). Let us try to understand these ten bases of talk briefly. *Appiccha-kathā* means talk concerning the quality of fewness of wishes and having little desire. *Santuṭṭhi-kathā* means talk expressing the benefits and quality of being content with what one receives. *Paviveka-kathā* means talk praising the value of living in deep physical and mental seclusion. *Asaṁsagga-kathā* means talk on living apart from crowds, dwelling away from groups for the sake of meditation, and the benefits thereof. *Vīriyārambha-kathā* means talk expressing the value of arousing energy for the sake of Nibbāna. *Sīla-kathā* means talk spoken about the value of virtue (*sīla*). *Samādhi-kathā* means talk on the value of concentration (*samādhi*). *Paññā-kathā* means talk related to wisdom (*paññā*). *Vimutti-kathā* means talk concerning deliverance and Nibbāna. *Vimutti-ñāṇadassana-kathā* refers to talk regarding the knowledge and vision of deliverance, which is the direct knowledge and vision of the realization that yields deliverance. He constantly encouraged his disciples by speaking to them about these very ten bases of talk.

Having received assistance from those talks of the great Arahant Puṇṇa Mantāniputta, that group of disciples quickly attained Arahantship. Having attained Arahantship, they on one occasion requested permission from their preceptor (*upajjhāya*), saying: "We wish to go and see the Blessed One. Now our monastic task is complete." Then, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta thought: "If I go to see the Buddha surrounded by this large group of disciples, it would not harmonize with my talk on aloofness (*asaṁsagga-kathā*) and the benefits of living apart from crowds." Therefore, he told his disciples to go ahead of him. The occasion of those disciples going and visiting the Buddha is what is first recorded in the *Rathavinīta Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. In the *Rathavinīta Sutta*, it is told as follows: On one occasion, the Blessed One was residing in the Veluvana monastery in the city of Rājagaha. At that time, a large number of 'native-born' (*jātibhūmaka*) monks—devotees, 'native-born' means they were from the Buddha's birthplace—who had journeyed from his birthplace to see the Buddha arrived, paid homage to the Buddha, and sat to one side. Then the Buddha asked them this question: "Monks, who among the native-born monks is held in such high esteem and honor by his fellow-celibates (*sabrahmacārī*) through a recital of his virtues? In what manner is this done?" The Buddha described him: "Himself of few wishes (*appiccha*), he talks to the monks on wanting little. Himself content (*santuṭṭha*), he talks to the monks on

contentment and its benefits. Himself fond of deep physical seclusion, he talks to the monks on the benefits of seclusion (*paviveka-kathā*). Himself living apart from crowds (*asaṁsagga-kathā*), he talks to the monks on the benefits of living apart from crowds. Himself with energy aroused (*vīriyārambha-kathā*), he talks to the monks on the benefits of arousing energy. Himself endowed with virtue, he talks to the monks on the benefits of being endowed with virtue. Himself endowed with concentration, he talks to the monks on the value of concentration. Himself endowed with wisdom, he talks to the monks on the value of matters related to wisdom. Himself having attained deliverance, he talks to the monks on the value of attaining deliverance. Himself having attained the knowledge and vision of deliverance, he talks to the monks on matters related to the knowledge and vision of deliverance. Who is it among the native-born monks that is thus respected and honored with such a reputation and praise of virtue?" the Buddha asked.

The disciples of Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta declared: "Venerable Sir, it is the Venerable Mantāniputta who is respected and honored with such a reputation among the native-born monks." While this conversation was taking place, the chief disciple, Venerable Sāriputta, was seated near the Buddha. He thought: "It is a great gain, a grand blessing for the Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta that his disciples speak of his virtues in this manner in the presence of the Buddha, and that the Buddha too approves of it." Then, Venerable Sāriputta thought: "If only I could meet Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta, if only I could get an opportunity to have a Dhamma discussion with him!"—such a thought arose in Venerable Sāriputta. Next, as recorded in this sutta, the Buddha, having resided in Rājagaha for some time, set out on tour by stages and arrived at Jetavana monastery in the city of Sāvatthi. Having heard that the Buddha had arrived at Jetavana, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta put his lodging in order and journeyed by stages to Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthi. In due course, he went to see the Buddha, paid homage to him, and sat to one side. The Buddha engaged in friendly greetings, and delivered a Dhamma talk to Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta that was encouraging and gladdening. Having listened to that Dhamma talk, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta set out for the forest for his day's abiding (*divāvihāra*—day's abiding means spending the daytime in secluded meditation).

At that moment, a certain monk who was present there went to Venerable Sāriputta and said: "Venerable Sāriputta, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta, whose virtues you constantly praise, has just visited the Buddha, listened to a Dhamma talk, and has now departed to the Blind Men’s Grove (*Andhavana*) for his day's abiding." Venerable Sāriputta quickly took his sitting rug (*nisīdana*) and set out. Having set out, while Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta was walking to the Blind Men’s Grove, he followed him from behind at a distance keeping just his head in sight, in a manner unnoticed by him. Venerable Mantāniputta entered the Blind Men’s Grove and sat at the foot of a tree in meditation. Venerable Sāriputta also entered the Blind Men’s Grove and sat at the foot of another tree in meditation. Both Venerables spent the entire afternoon in meditation. Rising from meditation in the evening, Venerable Sāriputta went to Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta, exchanged friendly greetings, and asked him a Dhamma question: "Friend, is it under the Blessed One that you live the holy life (*brahmacariya*)?" (Living

the holy life means, is it under the Blessed One that you spend your monastic life?) "Yes, friend," he replied. Next, Venerable Sāriputta asked: "Friend, is it for the sake of purification of virtue (*sīla-visuddhi*) that you live the holy life under the Blessed One?" Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta replied: "No, friend." Then Venerable Sāriputta asked: "Then is it for the sake of purification of mind (*citta-visuddhi*)?" "No, friend." "Is it for the sake of purification of view (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*)?" "No, friend." "Is it for the sake of purification by overcoming doubt (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*)?" "No, friend." "Is it for the sake of purification by knowledge and vision of what is and what is not path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*)?" "No, friend." "Is it for the sake of purification by knowledge and vision of the way (*paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*)?" "No, friend." "Is it for the sake of purification by knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*)?" "No, friend." Thus, he replied "No" to all seven questions.

Before proceeding further with this Dhamma discussion, it is necessary to briefly explain to you, devotees, what these seven purifications (*visuddhi*) are. 'Purification of virtue' (*sīla-visuddhi*) means the purity obtained by abstaining from wrong actions of body, speech, and livelihood, according to the respective levels of a layman or a monk. 'Purification of mind' (*citta-visuddhi*) means the purity obtained by cleansing the mind of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) that obstruct mental concentration. 'Purification of view' (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*) means the purity obtained by separating the mind from wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). 'Purification by overcoming doubt' (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*) is the purity obtained by removing doubts and hesitations regarding existence in *Saṁsāra*. 'Purification by knowledge and vision of what is and what is not path' (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) means the purity obtained by freeing the mind from the defilements of insight (*vipassanupakkilesa*) such as light, etc., that present themselves during insight meditation, and by correctly distinguishing what is the path from what is not the path. 'Purification by knowledge and vision of the way' (*paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) means the purity obtained by removing the defilements that obstruct the practice leading to Nibbāna. 'Purification by knowledge and vision' (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) means the purity obtained by eradicating the defilements that obstruct the supramundane path. These seven purifications are what are known as the 'seven stages of purification' (*sapta-visuddhi*) in this Dispensation. Thus, Venerable Sāriputta questioned Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta one by one as mentioned before: "Is it for the sake of purification of virtue?" "No." "Is it for the sake of purification of mind?" "No." "Is it for the sake of purification of view?" "No," and so on. After he had said this, Venerable Sāriputta, echoing those "No" responses, presented them again and asked his second question:

"Friend, just now when I asked you whether you live the holy life under the Blessed One for the sake of purification of virtue, you said 'No'. You also said 'No' to purification of view. When asked if it was for purification by overcoming doubt, you said 'No'. When asked if it was for purification by knowledge and vision of what is and what is not path, you said 'No'. When asked if it was for purification by knowledge and vision of the way, you said 'No'. When asked if it was for purification by knowledge and vision, you said 'No'. If so, friend, for what purpose do you live the holy life under the Blessed One?" This

was the question asked by Venerable Sāriputta. Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta replied: "Friend, it is for the sake of final liberation without grasping (*anupādā-parinibbāna*) that I live the holy life under the Blessed One." Devotees, when you hear the words *parinibbāna* or *parinirvāṇa*, you might think it refers to the final moment of an Arahant's life. That is not what is meant here. It refers to the complete extinguishment (Nibbāna attained by not grasping anything (*upādāna* – grasping/fuel). It is a moment realized in this very life, realized during the attainment of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samāpatti*). So, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta replied: "It is for the sake of that complete extinguishment through non-grasping, that I live this holy life."

Then, Venerable Sāriputta presented a series of questions to Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta: "Friend, is purification of virtue itself final liberation without grasping?" "No, friend," Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta replied for the second time. "Is purification of mind final liberation without grasping?" "No, friend." "Is purification of view?" "No." "Is purification by overcoming doubt?" "No." "Is purification by knowledge and vision of what is and what is not path?" "No, friend." "Is purification by knowledge and vision of the way?" "No, friend." "Is purification by knowledge and vision?" "No, friend." He stated that not one of these is final liberation without grasping. Then Venerable Sāriputta asked: "Then, friend, does final liberation without grasping exist apart from these states?" "No, friend," he replied. Now, a sort of riddle has arisen. It seems contradictory. Thereupon, Venerable Sāriputta pointed out that apparent contradiction with another series of questions.

"Now, friend, you said that purification of virtue is not final liberation without grasping. You said purification of mind is not it either. You said purification of view is not it. You said purification by overcoming doubt is not it. You said purification by knowledge and vision of what is and what is not path is not it. You said purification by knowledge and vision of the way is not final liberation without grasping. You said purification by knowledge and vision is not final liberation without grasping. Furthermore, when asked whether final liberation without grasping exists apart from these states, you also replied 'No'. How, friend, am I to understand the meaning of your words? How should I understand what you are saying?" Venerable Sāriputta thus highlighted that apparent contradiction. Now, it is at this point that Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta gave the correct explanation. "Friend, if the Blessed One had declared purification of virtue to be final liberation without grasping, he would have declared something that is still accompanied by grasping (*sa-upādāna*) to be final liberation without grasping (*anupādā-pariNibbāna*). Devotees, you must have heard the word *upādāna*. It means grasping or holding. *Anupādā* means not grasping. Here, what is the reason given by Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta? If, in some way, the Buddha had said that purification of virtue is *anupādā*, he would have shown something with grasping to be final liberation without grasping. The same applies to purification of mind. If the Buddha had shown purification of mind to be final liberation without grasping, there too, he would have presented something still accompanied by grasping as final liberation without grasping. Having spoken of all seven in this manner, the sentence he said at the end is even more important: "Friend, if there were final liberation without grasping apart from these seven

states, then the worldling (*puthujjana*) would have already attained final liberation." For the worldling does not possess these seven; not even one of these seven is possessed by the worldling. Having said this, to clarify further, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta said: "Well then, friend, I will give you a simile to make this matter clear. For some wise people in this world understand the meaning of what is said by means of a simile." And then he gave this simile. If there is anyone who has not understood this line of argument so far, try to understand it through the simile that follows. The simile that Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta gave next is a very wonderful one. It goes like this:

"Friend, while King Pasenadi of Kosala is residing in Sāvatthi, some urgent business arises for him to go to the city of Sāketa—which was also a city belonging to the King of Kosala. For the sake of such urgent journeys, seven relay-chariots (*ratha-vinīta*) have been placed for King Pasenadi of Kosala along the long road, at intervals. Leaving Sāvatthi, this King of Kosala mounts the first chariot at the palace gate. Having traveled in the first chariot and reached the second chariot, he dismounts from the first chariot and mounts the second chariot. Having traveled in the second chariot and reached the third chariot, he dismounts from the second chariot and mounts the third chariot. You can now imagine the rest in this manner. Traveling from the third chariot to the fourth, he dismounts from the third and mounts the fourth. From that, he reaches the fifth; from the fifth, he reaches the sixth; and finally, from the sixth, he changes to the seventh chariot. It is by means of the seventh chariot that the King arrives in the city of Sāketa."

"Afterwards, his relatives, well-wishers, and friends in Sāketa ask the King: 'Your Majesty, did you travel from Sāvatthi to Sāketa in this very chariot?' How, then, should King Pasenadi answer? How should he answer so that it would be a correct reply?" Raising that question, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta immediately explained the manner in which the King would reply: "The King would say, 'While I was in Sāvatthi, some urgent business arose for me to go to Sāketa. Seven relay-chariots were stationed. I set out in the first chariot. By means of that chariot, I reached the second. I left the first chariot and mounted the second. By means of the second chariot, I reached the third, and left the second chariot... and in this manner, it is by means of the seventh chariot that I have now arrived.' The King would have to explain the entire sequence of events." That was the simile given.

The significance of the simile—meaning the Dhamma point highlighted by the simile—was then brought out by Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta: "In the same way, friend, *sīla-visuddhi yāvadeva citta-visuddhatthā*." Because an important phrase is mentioned there, we stated it in Pali. If we look for a Sinhala meaning for the Pali phrase *yāvadeva*, we must use the word 'merely' or 'solely'. It means 'solely for the sake of that'. Thus, purification of virtue is solely for the sake of purification of mind. Purification of mind is solely for the sake of purification of view. Purification of view is solely for the sake of purification by overcoming doubt. In this manner, each purification assists the next purification. Finally, it is shown that going in this manner, purification by knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) assists in the final liberation without grasping (*anupādā-pariNibbāna*). Therefore, one cannot obtain purification by knowledge and

vision all at once. It is only by going through that lineage of purifications that one realizes Nibbāna through purification by knowledge and vision. Final liberation without grasping means that even purification by knowledge and vision is not grasped. I repeat: let alone anything else, even purification by knowledge and vision is not grasped. He clarified the Dhamma principle by explaining that it is by relinquishing one stage through another that one arrives at the complete extinguishment of non-grasping, where absolutely nothing is held.

Gladdened by this, Venerable Sāriputta asked: "Friend, what is your name? How do your fellow-celibates address you?" Then Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta replied: "My name is Puṇṇa. My fellow-celibates know me as Mantāniputta." Thereupon, Venerable Sāriputta, expressing his joy, exclaimed: "It is wonderful! It is marvelous! The manner in which the Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta has answered these deep questions. It is a great gain for his fellow-celibates to have the opportunity of associating with someone like you. Even if they had to carry the Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta around on their heads on a cushion of silk, to associate with him and serve him would be a great gain. We too have received a great gain in meeting you and holding such a Dhamma discussion." Thus he expressed his deep joy and appreciation.

When Venerable Sāriputta spoke in this manner, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta also asked: "What is your name, friend? How do your fellow-celibates address you?" Then Venerable Sāriputta said: "My name is Upatissa. My fellow-celibates know me as Sāriputta." Thereupon, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta exclaimed: "Oh! Indeed, I have been conversing with a disciple who is like the Teacher himself! I did not know that you were Venerable Sāriputta. Had I known you were Venerable Sāriputta, I would not have addressed you simply as 'friend' (*āvuso*). Then, I would not have explained this line of argument and these similes in this manner!"—and he praised him in the same way. "If any fellow-celibates get the opportunity to associate with a monk who has the ability to present such deep questions in such a systematic manner, like the Venerable Sāriputta, it is a great gain. If they could carry such a monk around on their heads and serve him, it would be a great gain. For us too, to see Venerable Sāriputta and to hold a discussion with him is a great gain." Thus he expressed his appreciation and joy. Next, the *Rathavinīta Sutta* ends with a very valuable passage, the meaning of which is as follows: The discourse ends by noting how these two great tuskers (*ubho mahānāgā*) in this Dispensation rejoiced in each other's well-spoken words, praised one another for the discussion they held, and expressed mutual appreciation.

From this alone, this Dhamma discussion may not be completely clear to you, devotees. We shall now provide an exposition on it. Before that, let us highlight an exemplary lesson that this modern era can draw from this sequence of events. We all know that Venerable Sāriputta was no ordinary person. He was the chief disciple. Yet, when the disciples of Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta came before the Buddha and praised his virtues, with what a great quality of empathetic joy (*muditā*) did he think! Even though he was such a wise person, he thought with profound empathetic joy: "Oh, if only I could meet this Venerable one someday and speak with him." Furthermore, as soon as he

heard that Venerable Puṇṇa had arrived in Sāvatthi, he immediately took his sitting rug and set out. Even though he went, and no matter how hurried he was, see what a valuable quality is shown there: he did not barge in abruptly. He did not barge in demanding, "Are you the Venerable Puṇṇa?" Instead, he walked slowly behind Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta at a distance, keeping just his head in sight. When Venerable Puṇṇa sat in meditation, he too sat in meditation under another tree. He spent an entire afternoon waiting for the right opportunity. There too, we see his precious quality. That is an exemplary lesson for this era. Those great masters of the past did not highlight their personal identity; they highlighted the Dhamma. They gave priority to the Dhamma, not to building up a personal image. They strove to present the Dhamma for the benefit of future generations to build up this Dispensation. That is why Venerable Sāriputta did not say as soon as he arrived: 'I am the chief disciple of this Dispensation, Sāriputta Mahā Thera.' He did not introduce himself in that manner. Instead, without even asking 'who are you' or 'where are you from', he simply started. Through a few Dhamma questions, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta recognized Venerable Sāriputta, and Venerable Sāriputta recognized Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta. This is a valuable lesson for this era.

Furthermore, if we are to say something more in connection with this story, a question that many people ask these days is about the 'four analytical knowledges' (*catu-paṭisambhidā*). In Dhamma talks everywhere, we hear about Arahants possessing these four analytical knowledges. So, almost everyone asks: what are these four analytical knowledges? Let us try to present how these four are utilized, in a manner we can understand. Devotees, the four analytical knowledges are: *Attha*, *Dhamma*, *Nirutti*, and *Paṭibhāna*. *Attha* (meaning/effect) refers to whatever phenomenon is right in front of us. What is before us is merely cause and effect; we see the effect. We do not immediately see the underlying cause behind it. *Attha-paṭisambhidā* is the comprehension of the presented effect—its correct understanding. *Dhamma* (cause/principle) refers to the underlying natural law or cause. *Dhamma-paṭisambhidā* is the knowledge of the cause. *Nirutti-paṭisambhidā* (analytical knowledge of language/expression) means presenting that cause to make others understand it. It is the linguistic aspect concerning grammar, language, and explanations, adapting debates or arguments to the occasion according to how they present themselves. Then, *Paṭibhāna-paṭisambhidā* (analytical knowledge of perspicuity/inspiration) is the capacity to strike upon appropriate similes, etc., to drive that point home to the mind as a whole, presenting its essential meaning in a timely manner.

Now, if we analyze this in the light of our story, Venerable Sāriputta asked Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta: "Friend, for what purpose do you live the holy life under the Blessed One?" That was the question. When that question was presented, what was the answer? The underlying cause—the natural law. It was declared by Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta: "It is for the sake of final liberation without grasping (*anupādā*) that I live this holy life." But that cannot be understood by someone all at once. It is not that Venerable Sāriputta did not understand it. These explanations are for our sake. This was a discussion conducted by Venerable Sāriputta for our sake, acting as if he did not know, in disguise as it were, without asserting his greatness. We must be deeply grateful to

Venerable Sāriputta. Next, through the questions and answers presented, we see the *nirutti-paṭisambhidā*—the analytical knowledge of expression of Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta. To the questions raised, he said 'yes' where 'yes' was due, and 'no' where 'no' was due. Finally, in a situation where neither 'yes' nor 'no' applied, he brought out the fact that it is neither 'yes' nor 'no', but this is the reality. This belongs to *nirutti-paṭisambhidā*. Yet, no matter how much is said, an ordinary person cannot fully comprehend this story; it remains just a heap of words. It is the next part that clarifies the Dhamma talk, as illustrated by the story of King Pasenadi of Kosala.

Now, from that point on, devotees, let us try to understand the part relevant to this Dhamma principle using the simile. In our society today, there is a thing called running races. In these running races, we have heard of what is called a relay race. In a relay race, the baton is the symbol, and that baton symbolizes momentum/energy. So, in order to complete a relay race, the team must run collectively in stages, carrying the baton. Think about it: the first runner runs as fast as possible to hand it over to the next runner. The second runner waits impatiently to receive it. What is present there is expectation. This is what we call relativity—that is, one thing is relative to another.

Thus, in running by stages, it is just like what was said about the chariots. He traveled in the first chariot with the expectation of the second chariot. Leaving the first chariot and mounting the second, while traveling in the second chariot, he was looking forward to the third chariot. That is the kind of process taking place here. Within this sequence of purifications, what is present is the ultimate goal called final liberation without grasping (*anupādā-pariNibbāna*). It brings out the momentum required for Nibbāna, which is the non-grasping of anything. One does not grasp purification of virtue. One does not grasp purification of mind. One does not grasp purification of view. Not a single one is grasped. But if one simply discards them, then even the worldling would have attained Nibbāna. So, one cannot simply discard them either. That is why, in the final part of the discussion, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta declared: "Not one of these is final liberation without grasping. Yet, there is no final liberation without grasping apart from these. If we say there is final liberation apart from these, then the worldling too would have already attained final liberation." There is a very deep matter within this.

Next, we can show this as a part of the Middle Path itself contained in this Dhamma. The characteristics of the Middle Path are spread throughout this. It is in direct relation to this Middle Path that you, devotees, have heard to some extent about dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). Think about the word *paṭicca*. *Paṭicca* implies two things, connected to each other—one thing exists for the sake of another, there is a connection between the two. The second chariot waits for the first chariot to arrive. The third chariot waits for the second chariot to approach. Such a dependent (*paṭicca*) nature is what exists in the world. The river of *Saṁsāra* is a flowing river. Even though we show it in parts, it flows continuously. It is a continuity (*santati*). That is why the Buddha brought to light a natural law inherent in the continuity of existence in the world. He brought to light a group of Dhamma principles, a Dhamma continuity, relevant to the path leading from existence to cessation. Those are these seven Dhamma stages. To make use of each

one without grasping a single one—that is a truly wondrous thing. That is why, on certain occasions, the Buddha expressed this natural law in a single sentence: *"Iti kho, bhikkhave, dhammā dhamme abhisandenti, dhammā dhamme paripūrenti apārā pāraṁ gamanāya."* "Thus, monks, Dhamma states flow into Dhamma states, Dhamma states fill up Dhamma states, for the sake of going from this shore to the other shore." Going from this shore to the other shore is done in that manner.

This is not a journey undertaken by any 'someone'. No 'someone' goes to realize Nibbāna. It is a movement from suffering (*dukkha*) to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*). Otherwise, it would become a doctrine of self (*atta-vāda*), whereas this is a teaching of non-self (*anattā*). These are the difficulties everyone faces. The relevance to dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) and non-self (*anattā*) is contained within this simile. In truth, what exists in these practices is indeed a collection of Dhamma states. They flow systematically from one to another toward the Dhamma. Through this flowing, they reach completion. Through the flowing of purification of virtue, it joins with and completes purification of mind. Purification of mind flows into purification of view. It is in this manner that the Buddha declared in that short sentence. Here, when we describe the Middle Path, we can summarize it in two words. We mentioned the word 'relative' (*sāpekṣaka*). To understand that, we spoke of the relay race running in stages. The next valuable word is 'practical' (*prāyogika*). Practical means that for a certain purpose, the King had a journey he had to complete quickly. He had to generate the necessary momentum/energy for it. To generate that, he used seven chariots in that manner. He did not hold onto a single chariot, yet he utilized them. He relinquished them all. This is what is called 'practical'. If the Middle Path is to be correctly fulfilled, we must remember both of these words. For one supports the other. Not a single one possesses absolute value. There is nothing to be grasped in any single stage. One merely assists the next. For Nibbāna is ultimately shown by the Buddha as final liberation without grasping (*anupādā-pariNibbāna*)—a complete extinguishment through non-grasping.

Within the path leading to it, too, on one hand, it is relative. The various stages and factors are interconnected. In the order of dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), as cause and effect, they are wondrously linked to one another. Just because these are relative, they cannot be rejected either. If rejected, one would have to say that even the worldling has attained Nibbāna. Nor does it happen automatically. That is the greatest problem in this *Saṁsāra*. One cannot discard them all, nor can one hold onto them. The Buddha brought to light how one, in a very subtle manner, makes use of one stage for the sake of another. If we are to express this matter in two words, we can describe the Middle Path as 'relative and practical'. 'Relative' (*sāpekṣa*) means those causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*) are bound to one another. Within the word *paṭicca*, there is the meaning of being interconnected, in a manner that they support one another. Likewise, 'practical' (*prāyogika*) means something taken up for a specific purpose or goal, not just for nothing.

Now, if we direct our minds to another sutta regarding these two points—briefly, as appropriate—many devotees who know this Dhamma would have heard of that valuable

discourse, the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*. It is a sutta discourse delivered by the Buddha on one occasion addressing the Sangha. Let us mention only the essence: *"Kullūpamaṁ vo, bhikkhave, dhammaṁ desessāmi nittharaṇatthāya, no gahaṇatthāya..."* The Buddha shows the matter concerning crossing over *Saṁsāra*. When a person traveling on a long journey comes across a great expanse of water, and there is neither a ship nor a bridge to cross over, what is there to do? He collects grass and branches nearby, binds a raft, and with the help of his hands and feet, crosses over with the aid of the raft. Having crossed over, if he were to carry the raft on his shoulders out of gratitude, that would be a foolish act. That is one extreme. But in that manner, another extreme is also shown in that sutta. If one says 'I don't want any of those rafts at all', then another thing is shown by a different simile. *Alagadda* actually means a water-snake. A person who does not know how to catch a water-snake catches it by the tail. As soon as he catches it by the tail, it turns around and bites him. "We only want final liberation without grasping (*anupādā-pariNibbāna*). We do not need all this talk of purification of virtue and purification of mind. We only want *anupādā-parinibbāna*." There, they have caught it by the tail! There are many who catch it by the tail in this manner. "We don't need virtue (*sīla*), we don't need concentration (*samādhi*); we can directly attain final liberation without grasping. We don't need to perform meritorious deeds, we don't need *Saṁsāra*, we don't need anything." Those are the ones who catch the snake by the tail. Yet, we must remind ourselves that the Middle Path lies between those two extremes. These must be considered relatively. We do not grasp them, nor do we abandon them prematurely. If caught by the tip of the tail, it is wrong. Utilizing the raft means arousing one's energy. What is represented by the raft is actually the Noble Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path is not a path constructed by the world; it is a path one must construct for oneself. That characteristic of the Noble Eightfold Path is what was illustrated by the Buddha in the simile of the raft. One gathers branches from here and there, binds them together, and constructs a raft in that manner. Not carrying it on one's shoulders means that not a single factor of it is held onto / grasped. The other aspect is that if one discards all of these, then that person falls into the extreme where the worldling would be said to have attained Nibbāna. Through that, he goes to ruin. There were such people even during the time of the Buddha, like Ariṭṭha and others. When the Buddha declared certain things to be obstructive states, and Ariṭṭha asserted 'These are not obstructive,' the Buddha strongly admonished him, calling him a 'foolish man' (*mogha-purisa*), and ultimately laid down disciplinary rules forbidding monks from even associating with those holding such wrong views. But such things are common in this day and age. That is taking things in the wrong way. Therefore, the Middle Path means correctly combining, synthesizing, and understanding both the relative aspect and the practical aspect.

The confusion arising from the inability to understand this is mentioned in another place. In the *Sutta Nipāta*, there is a discourse called the *Māgandiya Sutta*. The Brahmin Māgandiya asks the Buddha a question in verse. It concerns what the wise call 'inner peace' (*ajjhatta-santi*). "How is that obtained?" Inner peace refers to Nibbāna itself. The Brahmin asks how this inner peace is to be attained. The answer the Buddha first gave to this was very much like the answer given by Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta. The Buddha declared: *"Na diṭṭhiyā na sutiyā na ñāṇena, sīlabbatenapi visuddhimāha."*

He answered in that manner: "I do not say that purification is attained by view (*diṭṭhi*), nor by learning (*suta*—meaning knowledge obtained through hearing, etc.), nor by knowledge (*ñāṇa*), nor by vows and observances (*sīlabbata*)." Having said that as one side, he also stated the other side: *"Adiṭṭhiyā assutiyā aññāṇā, asīlatā abbatā no pi tena."* "Nor is it obtained without view, without learning, without knowledge, without virtue, or without vows." Having first said that it cannot be obtained by view, learning, knowledge, or vows and observances, he next said that it cannot be obtained without them either. When this was stated, the Brahmin Māgandiya—unlike Venerable Sāriputta who asked follow-up questions for our sake, this Brahmin asked out of ignorance: "You said it is not by view, not by learning, not by knowledge, and not by vows and observances. Yet in the very next breath, you say it is not without view, not without virtue, and not without knowledge, stating the opposite. If we look at it this way, to me, this seems to be a delusion (*mohumeva dhammaṁ*)—a great delusion!" The Buddha briefly explained: one utilizes these states, yet one does not grasp a single one of them—*ete ca nissajja anuggahāya* (relinquishing these, not grasping them). It is through non-grasping that one realizes this inner peace.

The dogmatists of the past did not arrive at Nibbāna because of this very deep aspect. A certain group firmly grasped views, etc. They held onto them. Another group, under teachers like Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, discarded everything. Some wriggled like eels, avoiding any commitment by saying 'no, no'. The Buddha does not declare either of those. This is a practical purpose. Often, when explaining dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), the Buddha gives a simile of rivers flowing: when it rains on a mountain peak, the water flows down according to the low-lying lands, filling up the creeks, streams, and rivers, and finally flows into the ocean. Likewise, when the water level of the ocean falls, the water levels of the creeks and streams fall. Such a natural law exists in the world—one stage assisting another, from one to the next. Yet, from the past, as mentioned in the oldest historical texts like the Vedas, the undeveloped mind thought that someone was residing inside these phenomena. Let alone other things, you devotees would have heard that even lightning, thunder, etc., were regarded as things done by 'someone'—that the rainbow, fire, etc., occurred because someone lived inside them. Such thinking is refuted by dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). The Buddha shows that there is no creator here. Likewise, there is no one who can create deliverance for us. There is no god, Brahma, or Lord Creator. What exists here is merely a lineage—understand this through a lineage of Dhamma states.

With ignorance (*aviijjā*) as condition, certain preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are prompted to operate. Because of not knowing the Four Noble Truths, the end result of accumulating those preparations is suffering (*dukkha*). Through those actions, wholesome and unwholesome deeds are accumulated within a heap of preparations. The texts illustrate this with a simile: performing unwholesome actions and committing sins in *Saṁsāra* is like giving hot water to a cow being led to the slaughterhouse. Performing wholesome deeds is like giving cold water to a cow being led to the slaughterhouse. Whichever water it drinks, it will meet its death. The accumulation of preparations is just like that. What the Buddha points to is the journey leading to the stilling of preparations (*saṅkhāra-*

samatha). Where preparations are stilled—that indeed is where suffering ends. Because of not knowing the Four Noble Truths, there is an accumulation of preparations. Having separated oneself as a 'person' from the world, from this nature—the person who calls himself a 'hero' or speaks of 'truth' thinks in a peculiar way. People talk about being eco-friendly and such. However eco-friendly they might be, the eco-friendliness shown by the Buddha in meditation is like this: the internal earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*)—hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, etc.—and the external earth element are one and the same. That is true eco-friendliness—being one with the environment. Blood, phlegm, snot, urine, etc., are the same as what is found outside. Through such attention to the elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*), the Buddha shows that the environment and this bodily cage which this person grasps as 'I' and 'mine' are the same. Yet, it is through this separation that this person travels endlessly in *Saṁsāra*. That very separation is what is called consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This consciousness, which is said to be something trees and plants do not possess, this consciousness which we hold in high regard—the Buddha shows it to be a great suffering (*dukkha*). That is the greatest suffering. He calls it an illusion. Caught up in that illusion, this being is born again and again in *Saṁsāra*, going from becoming (*bhava*) to becoming. Therefore, to bring birth (*jāti*) to an end, one must gain comprehension of those Four Noble Truths. Through that comprehension, one must still the preparations. The path leading to that stilling is the Noble Eightfold Path.

That was something no other sages or anyone else could discover. It belongs only to a Fully Self-Awakened One (*sammā-sambuddha*). Even though Paccekabuddhas also realize it, why is it that, like a dream seen by a mute person, they cannot explain it to the world? Because this natural law is beyond the sphere of reasoning (*atakkāvacara*). It cannot be grasped by logic. It is precisely because it cannot be grasped by logic that Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta had to debate in that manner with Venerable Sāriputta. It does not yield to reasoning. One cannot say 'yes', nor can one say 'no'. Something of that nature is what is present here. It is such a deep Dhamma that is called *atakkāvacara*. Devotees, you would have heard that the Dhamma is *atakkāvacara* (beyond reasoning). Usually, one must say either 'yes' or 'no', like in a court of law. Logic operates in a world constructed by words, dividing and pieceing things together. Thus, human beings are deluded within the very language of this world. We can imagine how difficult it is to show the path of deliverance using that very language.

The Buddha spent seven weeks pondering how to declare this realized Dhamma, this Dhamma of dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), to the world, and who would understand it. It was not out of craving (*taṇhā*) that he hesitated to teach the Dhamma, but, as we can see, due to the depth of the Dhamma. It is extremely subtle. Just now it was mentioned as *duddasaṁ*—hard to see. In the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*, the Buddha declares two matters that are extremely difficult for the world to understand. These are: this very specific conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) along with the word *paṭicca*—dependent arising. "With this as condition, this comes to be; with the absence of this, this does not come to be." In that manner, it is because that principle of specific conditionality is so difficult for the ordinary world to understand, and likewise this state of Nibbāna—which is the stilling of all preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*) and the

relinquishment of all—is so difficult for the world to understand, that the Buddha was hesitant to teach it. After the Great Brahma made his request, the Buddha delivered this extremely deep Dhamma for the sake of the world.

The Buddha declares that whether Tathāgatas arise or do not arise, this natural law always remains: *"Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ, ṭhitāva sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmetā idappaccayatā paṭiccasamuppādo."* Whether Tathāgatas arise or do not arise, that element, that stability of Dhamma, that orderliness of Dhamma, specific conditionality, dependent arising, always stands. Whether Tathāgatas arise or not, this natural law, specific conditionality, is always in the world. Next, the Tathāgata awakens to that natural law, comprehends it. *"Abhisambujjhitvā abhisameti, ācikkhati deseti paññāpeti paṭṭhapeti vivarati vibhajati uttānīkaroti."* Having awakened to it and comprehended it, the Tathāgatas declare it, teach it, describe it, set it up, open it, analyze it, and make it plain. *Uttānīkaroti*—analyzing it and showing it, saying 'look at this', bringing down that deep Dhamma which is placed high up, making it plain and saying 'behold this'. In that manner, the Fully Self-Awakened One analyzed and showed this Dhamma, this deep principle, which cannot be understood by the ordinary world. We must realize at this moment that it is this very Dhamma that great Arahants like Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta discussed through their Dhamma discussions, acting as if in disguise, for our sake. Venerable Sāriputta could have gone directly and announced: 'I am the chief disciple.' Had he said so, that inspired perspicuity (*paṭibhāna*) of Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta would not have arisen. Now, when we go to someone, it is through the Dhamma discussions we hold that things are brought to light. When a question is asked, it is through that question that similes occur to us on how to explain this to a person. That is a natural occurrence. Similarly, in this instance too, wishing for a Dhamma discussion with Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta, Venerable Sāriputta went in disguise, as it were, without revealing his identity, acting as if he did not know, and asked: "If this is so, how does that come to be?" Through that, we have received such a valuable Dhamma discussion within this *Rathavinīta Sutta*.

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Not only that. It was not for nothing that Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta received the foremost position among the Dhamma-speaker monks. Even Venerable Ānanda on one occasion states: 'When we were newly ordained monks, the Venerable Puṇṇa

Mantāniputta was of great assistance to us in explaining deep Dhamma points.' There are such records in the texts. On this occasion, the mass of virtue (*guṇa-kkhandha*) of Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta, and automatically the mass of virtue of Venerable Sāriputta, have been presented through this sermon. Through that dialogue, you, devotees, had the opportunity to hear many Dhamma points relevant to the seven purifications, the ten bases of talk, and so forth. Now reflect: to derive benefit from this Dispensation means that starting from this virtue (*sīla*) which we have established, strengthening it with concentration (*samādhi*), and next through insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), through the realization of the paths and fruits, we can attain that state called final liberation without grasping (*anupādā-pariNibbāna*).

As time permits, you, devotees, must contemplate these matters deeply, bear them in mind, and without stopping there, bring them close to your lives. To derive the true benefit of this Dhamma and the Dispensation, you must strive to realize these Dhamma principles for yourselves. I wish that through the virtue practiced by you devotees today, through the meditation developed, and through this Dhamma talk heard, it may serve as a supportive condition to realize as quickly as possible those noble goals you aspire to. Likewise, if any being from the lowest hell (*Avīci*) to the highest heaven (*Akaniṭṭha*) wishes to share in these merits by hearing such a Dhamma sermon and listening to the Dhamma, may they by sharing in these merits find peace in the supreme deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi. With this aspiration, recite these verses and share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #53

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.162)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Mama saṅkappamaññāya, satthā loke anuttaro;

Manomayena kāyena, iddhiyā upasaṅkami.

Yadā me ahu saṅkappo, tato uttari desayi;

Nippapañcarato buddho, nippapañcaṃ adesayi.

Tassāhaṃ dhammamaññāya, vihāsiṃ sāsane rato;

Tisso vijjā anuppattā, kataṃ buddhassa sāsanaṃ.

From:

Theragāthā

Dear Listeners,

Venerable Anuruddha Maha Thero was a great Arahant who is placed in the very forefront among the eighty chief disciples of the Supreme Buddha. He was declared by the Blessed One to be the foremost (*etadagga*) among the bhikkhus who had attained the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*). He had highly developed the powers of absorption (*jhāna*) and higher spiritual knowledges (*abhiññā*) to the highest degree. Even today, for yogis who aspire to develop their mental power, the life of Venerable Anuruddha Maha Thero can serve as an ideal. In the Dhamma literature, various colorful narratives are recorded as the background to the life of Anuruddha. However, in this brief period, we hope to summarize certain facts in a manner relevant to our theme.

Venerable Anuruddha Maha Thero was the son of Amitodhana, the Sakyan king who was the paternal uncle of the Supreme Buddha. Having decided to ordain under the encouragement of his brother, Mahanama the Sakyan, Prince Anuruddha asked his mother for permission, but she opposed it. When he repeatedly urged her, his mother, as

a stratagem, said: "Only if your friend, King Bhaddiya, who is currently ruling as the Sakyan king, ordains, will I give you permission to ordain." Prince Anuruddha, in a very clever manner, persuaded King Bhaddiya to give up his wife and children, renounce the kingdom, and agree to ordain within a week. Ultimately, the six Sakyan princes—Anuruddha, Bhaddiya, Ānanda, Bhagu, Kimbila, and Devadatta—set out with Upāli the barber, pretending to go to the pleasure garden. Stopping their army at a distance, these six crossed the border with Upāli the barber, removed their royal ornaments, tied them in a bundle, and gave them to Upāli. They sent him off, saying, "Take these, go back, and live comfortably." Upāli the barber also went a short distance and began to reflect: "Now, if I take these back, the Sakyans will think that I killed these princes and took their ornaments. Why do I need these ornaments that they have abandoned? Let whoever wants them take them." So, hanging them on a tree, he returned and joined the six princes. In the end, these six princes and the barber went to the Anupiya Mango Grove of the Mallans, where the Buddha was residing at that time, and were ordained in the presence of the Blessed One. It is a significant event that the princes themselves requested Upāli the barber to be ordained first, in order to crush their Sakyan pride. To put it briefly, after Venerable Anuruddha was ordained, he made great efforts to attain *jhānas*, *abhiññās*, and the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*), while observing strict ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*). Several sutta discourses reveal how hard he strove.

Even today, yogis can derive practical insights from the discussions Venerable Anuruddha had with the Supreme Buddha and Venerable Sāriputta Maha Thero regarding his meditation. As the most important event, it is mentioned that on one occasion, Venerable Anuruddha was meditating in the Pacīnavaṁsa park in the country of the Cetis. At that time, the Supreme Buddha was residing in the Bhesakalā Forest in the Saṁsumāragiri region of the Bhagga country. While Venerable Anuruddha was meditating, seven thoughts of a great man (*dhamma-vitakka*) arose in his mind in sequence:

1. *Appicchasāyaṁ dhammo, nāyaṁ dhammo mahicchasassa*: This Dhamma is for one of few wishes, not for one of many wishes.

2. *Santuṭṭhasāyaṁ dhammo, nāyaṁ dhammo asantuṭṭhassa*: This Dhamma is for one who is contented, not for one who is discontented.

3. *Pavivittasāyaṁ dhammo, nāyaṁ dhammo saṅgaṇikārāmassa*: This Dhamma is for one who is secluded, not for one who delights in company.

4. *Āraddhaviriyasāyaṁ dhammo, nāyaṁ dhammo kusītassa*: This Dhamma is for one who is energetic, not for one who is lazy.

5. *Upaṭṭhitasatissāyaṁ dhammo, nāyaṁ dhammo muṭṭhassatissa*: This Dhamma is for one of established mindfulness, not for one of muddled mindfulness.

6. *Samāhitasāyaṁ dhammo, nāyaṁ dhammo asamāhitassa*: This Dhamma is for one who is concentrated, not for one who is unconcentrated.

7. *Paññavantasāyaṁ dhammo, nāyaṁ dhammo duppaññassa*: This Dhamma is for one who is wise, not for one who is unwise.

While he was reflecting on these seven thoughts of Dhamma that had arisen, the Supreme Buddha perceived the manner in which Venerable Anuruddha was reflecting on these thoughts. Seeing this, through psychic power, with a mind-made body, He disappeared from the Bhesakalā Forest and appeared before Venerable Anuruddha. After the Buddha sat on the prepared seat, Venerable Anuruddha paid homage to Him. Then, the Supreme Buddha said to him: "Sadhu! Sadhu! Anuruddha, it is very good that you are reflecting on these seven thoughts of a great man (*mahāpurisa-vitakka*). Add to these seven the eighth one as well, the eighth thought of a great man," and the Supreme Buddha declared the eighth thought of a great man:

Nippapañcārāmassāyaṁ dhammo nippapañcaratino, nāyaṁ dhammo papañcārāmassas papañcaratino: "This Dhamma is for one who delights in the non-prolific, who rejoices in the non-prolific, not for one who delights in conceptual proliferation (*papañca*), who rejoices in conceptual proliferation."

We will explain the word *papañca* in due course. What is important here is only this: having presented this eighth thought of a great man, the Supreme Buddha went on to give instructions on the benefits of that thought: "Anuruddha, if you now work with all these eight thoughts of a great man, you will soon be able to enter and dwell in the first, second, etc., absorptions (*jhānas*) and develop skill in those absorptions. Likewise, you can also develop the quality of contentment with whatever is received." The Supreme Buddha also gave another special advice: "Anuruddha, spend the upcoming rainy season (*vassa*) right here in this Pacīnavaṁsa park." The Supreme Buddha must have seen that there was a good environment there for attaining Arahantship. In any case, Venerable Anuruddha, in accordance with the instruction of the Supreme Buddha, meditated diligently and attained Arahantship during the following rainy season. The three verses we placed at the beginning as our theme were those expressed by him after attaining Arahantship, mentioning and expressing gratitude for the advice received from the Supreme Buddha.

> "Knowing my thought, the Teacher, unsurpassed in the world,
>
> Came to me through psychic power with a mind-made body."
>
> "Whatever thought I had, the Buddha taught me further still;
>
> He, who delights in the non-prolific, taught the non-prolific (nippapañca)."
>
> "Therefore, knowing the Dhamma, I dwelt delighting in the Dispensation;
>
> The three knowledges have been attained, the Buddha's bidding has been done."

This means, "I have attained Arahantship."

These three verses also reveal that the instruction given by the Supreme Buddha was particularly helpful to Venerable Anuruddha in attaining Arahantship. Likewise, it is revealed that the credit for listing those first seven thoughts of a great man in that manner goes to Venerable Anuruddha. It is mentioned in that sutta that after the Supreme Buddha had instructed Venerable Anuruddha in this way and returned to the Bhesakalā Forest, He addressed the Sangha: "Monks, I shall teach you the eight thoughts of a great man," and delivered the complete discourse. However, right here, a peculiar word emerged for us: '*papañca*'. Likewise, its opposite word, '*nippapañca*', was also expressed. Indeed, the word *papañca* is a very useful word for meditators, yet for many, it is a word that is difficult to comprehend. This word *nippapañca* is, in fact, applied to Nibbāna as well. *Nippapañca* is shown as a state of Nibbāna.

Let us try to understand this word *papañca*. Even in society today, when someone speaks extensively instead of briefly, people say: "Speak without *papañca* (prolific details); say what you have to say briefly without *papañca*." Therefore, when looking at speech, '*papañca*' means talking unnecessarily and at length in a way that is irrelevant to the topic. However, when we consider this in relation to meditation and the mind, its depth is revealed to us. If we consider briefly according to the context of suttas like the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* of the Majjhima Nikāya, we can understand from the details mentioned in that sutta: through the collision of the six sense faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—with their respective objects, first a feeling or sensation (*vedanā*) arises within us. Some kind of feeling is born. Conditioned by that feeling (*vedanā*), perception arises. One reasons about what one perceives. One maintains thoughts. It is said that through maintaining those thoughts, conceptual proliferation (*papañca*) arises. The sutta expresses that having arisen, one becomes overwhelmed by the various ideas created due to that *papañca*. What is the reason for becoming subject to *papañca*? In meditation, it is because of the proliferation created in the mind by extending the thoughts that come through the sense objects of those six sense faculties into the time cycle of past, future, and present, under the instigation of defilements present within the being, namely craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and views (*diṭṭhi*). That is to say, a multitude of unnecessary thoughts often arise for these meditators. Without even realizing it, they go off-topic. Next, if we analyze those thoughts, beneath them lies either craving (*taṇhā*), conceit, or views. Once they go into those conceptual proliferations (*papañca*) and become overwhelmed by them, they do not even know where they are. Next, the things they construct from them—a future event appears as present, a past event appears as present. They are even prompted to act accordingly. There are various illustrations of this; there is no need to repeat them. Why there is no need to mention them here is because the meditators themselves would have experienced this. Be that as it may, this word *papañca* is extremely important.

It is to show that this state of *papañca* does not exist in Nibbāna that Nibbāna is called '*nippapañca*'. Now, even in that verse, it is stated that the Supreme Buddha delights in *nippapañca* and preached *nippapañca* to me. From this, what we have to understand is that although they were good thoughts, the Venerable Thero went into *papañca* through them. This is exactly where many meditators get caught. Let us say one sat down for

mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). But in the end, when they observe, they find themselves thinking about the virtues of the Buddha or something else. That is not relevant to that meditation. We find another short sutta discourse which clearly shows that the conceptual proliferation (*papañca*) created through those thoughts is an obstacle to meditation. It is a short, instructional discourse preached by Venerable Sāriputta Thero to the bhikkhus. There, Venerable Sāriputta Thero says: "Friends, there are five things that can lead to the decline of a monk's meditation. What are they? *Kammārāmatā* (delight in work)." To put it briefly, *kammārāmatā* means engaging the mind and body in various activities irrelevant to meditation, a liking for work. *Bhassārāmatā*—delight in constant talking, chattering. *Niddārāmatā*—delight in sleep. *Saṅgaṇikārāmatā*—delight in socializing, and finally, *papañcārāmatā*—delight in *papañca* (conceptual proliferation), delight in thoughts. Perhaps because of the importance of the word *papañca*, Venerable Sāriputta Thero uttered two verses at the end of that short discourse:

Yo papañcaṁ anuyutto, papañcābhirato mago;

Vīrādhayī so nibbānaṁ, yogakkhemaṁ anuttaraṁ.

Yo ca papañcaṁ hitvāna, nippapañcapathe rato;

Ārādhayī so nibbānaṁ, yogakkhemaṁ anuttaraṁ.

These are two identical verses showing the two sides. Here, the word *mago* (or *mūgo*) is used. *Mago* means a fool (or beast-like fool). If any foolish person is engaged in conceptual proliferation (*papañca*) and becomes one who delights in *papañca*, that person falls away from Nibbāna. *Vīrādhayī so nibbānaṁ yogakkhemaṁ anuttaraṁ*—*yogakkhema* means being freed from the yoke. He falls away from Nibbāna. But if someone, *yo ca papañcaṁ hitvāna*, abandons conceptual proliferation (*papañca*) and *nippapañcapathe rato*, delights in the path free from conceptual proliferation, *ārādhayī so nibbānaṁ yogakkhemaṁ anuttaraṁ*, that person wins Nibbāna. This also shows us how extremely important the words *papañca* and *nippapañca* are. From this, we can understand that this subtle attachment we have is the attachment to thoughts. In suttas like the *Satipaṭṭhāna*, these are expressed as *dhamma*—that is, mind-objects or thoughts. *Taṇhā loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ, etthesā taṇhā uppajjhamānā uppajjati, ettha nivisamānā nivisati*: that is, in the world, this category called thoughts is extremely dear and pleasant. There, this craving (*taṇhā*) arises and settles. No one can see this, generally speaking. These are subtle thoughts within. Yet, that is the subtlest entanglement of all at the very end.

We find another beautiful incident in the sutta discourses which shows that Venerable Anuruddha had this 'entanglement of thoughts' (*vitakka-paṭalavilla*). Venerable Anuruddha went directly and discussed his meditation problems with Venerable Sāriputta Thero. He presented his questions like this: "Friend Sāriputta, with the

purified divine eye, which surpasses human vision, I see and perceive a thousandfold world system. My energy is aroused, my mindfulness is well established, my body is tranquil, and my mind is concentrated. Yet, my mind is not liberated from the influxes (*āsava*) without grasping; it does not attain Arahantship." Thus he declared his illness. Then, Venerable Sāriputta Thero, like a highly skilled psychiatrist, wonderfully revealed the illness from that very statement of Venerable Anuruddha. This is how Venerable Sāriputta Thero analyzed it: "Now, friend Anuruddha, did you not say, 'With the purified divine eye surpassing human vision, I see a thousandfold world system'? That is your conceit (*māna*). You said, 'My energy is aroused, my mindfulness is established, my body is tranquil, and my mind is concentrated.' That is your restlessness (*uddhacca*). Next, you said, 'Yet, my mind is not liberated from the influxes.' That is your worry (*kukkucca*).' Therefore, Anuruddha, abandon these three defilements, and without directing your mind to them, direct your mind to the deathless element (*amata-dhātu*), which is Nibbāna."

Devotees, Nibbāna is not something of the sort that one thinks of now. It is the state of releasing the mind from these defilements, in short, from the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). The deathless element (*amata-dhātu*) which designates Nibbāna is often shown in the discourses as: *Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṁ*. From this, one can understand that this peaceful and sublime state is not those thoughts we mentioned. True peace and sublimity is *sabbasaṅkhārasamatho*—the stilling of all Preparations/volitional activities (*saṅkhāra*), the relinquishment of all acquisitions (*upadhi*) grasped as ours. By showing this, we can see that thinking, "I have these things, I see divine worlds, I am striving well," is a delay. Those are subtle defilements. Next, thinking, "Unlike others who have these defilements, I have not received this yet," is a worry (*kukkucca*). What a meditator has to do is to engage in the work that belongs to them, not to increase expectations. As soon as expectations increase, it is no longer meditation; then, thinking "Why have I not received this yet?" becomes a cause for the decline of one's meditation. We can understand something from this question of Venerable Anuruddha.

Next, we find an equally important sutta discourse, the *Upakkilesa Sutta*. This is a very important and valuable sutta in the life of Anuruddha. Likewise, it is a very important sutta for meditators for many reasons. It begins like this. It is a certain poignant moment in the Dispensation. That is, as you may have heard, on one occasion, the monks in the city of Kosambi began to quarrel, splitting into two factions, and in the end, the Supreme Buddha went to the Pārileyyaka forest for seclusion. You have all heard that story. It is related to that incident. When the Supreme Buddha was residing at the Ghositārāma in Kosambi, and the monks were quarreling and disputing, the Supreme Buddha went there and tried to reconcile those monks, saying: "Monks, do not quarrel. Do not dispute. Be united." A talkative monk among them said: "Wait, Blessed Lord, do not trouble yourself about this. According to your own seclusion, dwell in the happy dwelling of absorption (*jhāna*) and meditation. We will resolve our own quarrel." When the Supreme Buddha told them to unite a second time, that monk said the same thing a

second time. No one else tried to stop him either. When the Supreme Buddha spoke for the third time, that monk spoke in that talkative manner for the third time. It is mentioned that the Supreme Buddha, having gone for alms round that day, returned, put away his lodgings, took his bowl and robe, and while standing, uttered a series of verses. Some of those verses are in the *Dhammapada*. Having uttered those verses expressing the danger of hatred, the danger of quarrels and disputes, and the value of the happiness of seclusion, the Supreme Buddha, on his way to the Pārileyyaka forest, visited the place where Venerable Bhagu was living alone. There, He delivered a Dhamma talk to Venerable Bhagu.

Next, He journeyed to the Pacīnavaṁsa park, where that wonderful trio—Venerable Anuruddha, Venerable Nandiya, and Venerable Kimbila—were meditating. When the Supreme Buddha was about to enter the park, the park-keeper, not recognizing the Supreme Buddha from afar, said: "Monk, do not enter this park. There are three Venerable Ones meditating in this park, three sons of noble families. Do not disturb them. Do not enter." Hearing these words, Venerable Anuruddha looked and saw that the Supreme Buddha was coming. So he said to the park-keeper: "Park-keeper, do not say that. This is our Teacher." He quickly went and informed the Venerable Nandiya and Venerable Kimbila: "Venerables, come, come! Our Teacher has arrived." One Venerable Thero went and received the bowl and robe of the Supreme Buddha. One Venerable Thero prepared the seat. Another Venerable Thero brought water for washing the feet. After the Supreme Buddha washed His feet and sat on the seat, all three paid homage to Him. As was customary, the Supreme Buddha asked about their well-being, whether they were getting alms food, etc., and then asked an important question. There, the Supreme Buddha addressed Venerable Anuruddha, but in the plural. From this, we are to understand that Venerable Anuruddha was the leader of the three.

If we were to say it in modern terms, He asked: "Anuruddha, are you all living in harmony, without disputing, blending like milk and water, looking at each other with eyes of affection?" The Supreme Buddha pointed out the true characteristics of unity. Venerable Anuruddha answered beautifully: "Yes, Lord, we live in harmony, happily, without disputing, blending like milk and water, looking at each other with eyes of affection." Satisfied with this, the Supreme Buddha asked: "How is it, Anuruddha, that you three live in such harmony?" The description given by Venerable Anuruddha is very important and beautiful. Venerable Anuruddha said: "Sometimes I think, Lord: 'It is a great gain for me, a great blessing, to live with such co-residents.' I maintain acts of loving-kindness (*mettā*) by way of body toward these two Venerables, both openly and in private. I maintain acts of loving-kindness by way of speech, both openly and in private. I maintain acts of loving-kindness by way of mind (thoughts), both openly and in private. Furthermore, Lord, sometimes I think: 'Why don't I discard my own mind and live according to the minds of these Venerables?' I think like that too. Sometimes it occurs to me: 'Though we are three in body, indeed we are one in mind.'" Just as Venerable Anuruddha expressed this, Venerable Nandiya also expressed the same. Venerable Kimbila also expressed the same.

The Supreme Buddha said, "Sadhu! Sadhu!" in appreciation, and then asked further: "Anuruddha, do you spend your days diligently, striving with energy?" "Yes, Lord," said Venerable Anuruddha, and then he described the daily routine of the three of them. That too is a particularly valuable model for the lineage of the Sangha. Venerable Anuruddha explained it in this way: "Lord, all three of us enter the village for alms food. Whichever monk returns first from the alms round prepares the seats. Next, he sets out water for drinking and water for washing feet. He prepares the vessel for left-over food. Next, the monk who returns last from the village eats whatever is left in that vessel if he wishes to eat. Otherwise, he takes that vessel and discards the left-over food where there is no grass, or pours it into water where there are no living beings. Next, he washes the vessels and puts them away. He puts away the seats. He sweeps the refectory. Whichever of us notices that the vessel for drinking water is empty, he fills it. If it is too heavy for him to do alone, he signals a second monk with his hand, and both of them together bring the water vessel. We do not spend even a single word for that purpose." This is how they showed their unity. "Furthermore, once every five days, all three of us spend the entire night in Dhamma discussion, staying awake and discussing." The Supreme Buddha said, "Sadhu! Sadhu! Very good, Anuruddha." Next, He asked: "While you are living in harmony in this way, Anuruddha, have you attained any superhuman state (*uttarimanussadhamma*), a noble state through meditation?" At that moment, Venerable Anuruddha expressed a meditation problem common to all three of them.

"Lord, sometimes in our meditation, we perceive a light and see forms. But after a short while, they disappear. We cannot understand the cause of this. We do not know." Then, the Supreme Buddha beautifully presented His own experiences from His days as a Bodhisatta as advice to the Venerables. For those who ask the same question about meditation nowadays, this shows how much effort the Supreme Buddha exerted in meditation. "Anuruddha, such a situation occurred to me as well. Sometimes, a light appeared and visions were seen. Suddenly, they disappeared. Then I investigated the cause: 'Why did this happen?' While investigating, I saw that doubt (*vicikicchā*) arose in me. Because of that doubt, my concentration (*samādhi*) was lost, it slipped away. That is why that light and the vision of forms disappeared. Then, I resolved to meditate without it. As I proceeded, that light came and visions were seen. But again they disappeared. At that time, when I considered, I thought: 'I did not attend to that light properly. Due to a deficiency in attention, the concentration (*samādhi*) that had arisen slipped away and disappeared.'" In this way, He mentioned eleven things at that time, that eleven imperfections (*upakkilesa*) arose for the Bodhisatta. Sometimes, it is mentioned as sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*); at other times, due to a startle, a fright—perhaps from the sound of an animal while meditating in solitude, or due to some fright caused by visions within meditation itself. At other times, due to an unnecessary elation, an excessive joy, a limitless excitement. At other times, due to looking at those visions of forms and having too much attachment to them, concentration slipped away. At other times, due to excessive energy or deficient energy, concentration was lost. At other times, due to physical fatigue (*kāyadaraṭha*), concentration slipped away. These imperfections (*upakkilesa*) are often subtle and unseen. Sometimes, when joy comes during meditation, everyone thinks it is good for meditation. But those are obstacles to

meditation. We can understand it in this way. So, having given such instruction, the Supreme Buddha departed for the Pārileyyaka forest. Thus, from the *Upakkilesa Sutta* too, we can learn many things about the life of Venerable Anuruddha.

Next is an important sutta, from which we can gather many valuable points for our life: the *Cūḷagosinga Sutta* in the Majjhima Nikāya. The occasion is mentioned like this: The Supreme Buddha was residing at the brick house (*Giñjakāvasatha*) in the village of Nādika for some time. It was close by that Venerable Anuruddha, Venerable Nandiya, and Venerable Kimbila were meditating at that time. The Supreme Buddha, having risen from His meditation in the evening, was walking to the Gosinga Sāla forest. Here too, it is mentioned in this sutta, for some reason, just as in the *Upakkilesa Sutta*, the park-keeper did not recognize the Supreme Buddha from afar and told Him not to enter. Then, Venerable Anuruddha prevented him, and it is mentioned in that manner.

Next, you can imagine that after the Supreme Buddha inquired about their well-being as usual, asking "How do you live?", in this Gosinga Sāla forest too, these three Venerables described their daily routine and their unity. However, the moment the Supreme Buddha asked about their meditation, it was special. The Supreme Buddha asked Venerable Anuruddha: "Anuruddha, have you now attained any superhuman state (*uttarimanussadhamma*)?" At that moment, Venerable Anuruddha said: "Why not, Lord?" He did not say this out of disrespect. Having said so, he declared that they had attained Arahantship. What did he say first? Venerable Anuruddha spoke on behalf of all three of them: "Lord, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, we enter and dwell in the first absorption (*jhāna*) as we wish." The Supreme Buddha asked: "Having transcended that, have you obtained anything further?" Then he mentioned the second absorption. He did not declare their attainment of Arahantship all at once. Venerable Anuruddha went on mentioning one by one, higher and higher absorptions, and finally, having transcended the high formless state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññā*), they entered the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodha*), and having emerged from it, seeing with wisdom, their influxes (*āsava*) were destroyed. This means they had attained Arahantship. Then the Supreme Buddha said, "Very good, Sadhu! Sadhu!", and after delivering another Dhamma talk, He departed.

After He departed, a peculiar thing happened. Venerable Nandiya and Venerable Kimbila came and asked Venerable Anuruddha: "Friend, did we ever tell you that we have attained these states? You declared it up to Arahantship to the Supreme Buddha on behalf of all three of us." Then, Venerable Anuruddha said: "Venerables, you did not tell me. I saw with my mind that you had attained these. Likewise, deities also came and told me." There is something special here. That is, although these three lived in such harmony, sharing their food, they did not declare their superhuman qualities (*uttarimanussadhamma*) to each other. In the Dispensation, this is recognized as a very valuable quality: *adhigama-appicchatā* (contentment regarding one's spiritual attainments). It is a quality of having few wishes. One's attained state is not something to go around talking about, publishing in books, and publicizing. It is a deep, valuable thing. Its value is lost when one goes about talking about it. Leaving everything else

aside, this is something to be guarded in the most excellent manner; even these three who lived together did not tell each other, "I have attained these levels of absorption and am an Arahant."

A being who understood this quality—not an ordinary human but a yakkha named Dīgha Parajana—then takes the story in a whole new direction. Having listened to this conversation, after the Supreme Buddha had departed, the yakkha Dīgha Parajana approached the Supreme Buddha and expressed a eulogy about these three Venerables. This yakkha Dīgha Parajana declared how extremely virtuous these individuals were. He said: "It is a great gain for the Vajji country, a huge gain for the inhabitants of the Vajji country, that the Tathāgata, the Fully Self-Enlightened One, resides in this country, and also that these three—Venerable Anuruddha, Venerable Nandiya, and Venerable Kimbila—reside here," and he made this proclamation of praise. As mentioned in that sutta, this proclamation of the yakkha Dīgha Parajana reverberated. You know, just as in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the earth-dwelling deities (*bhumma devas*) reverberated it. Next, it is mentioned in that sutta that this fame reverberated from the Cātumahārājika, Tāvatiṁsa, etc., all the way up to the Akaniṭṭha realm. It is mentioned in that sutta that the Supreme Buddha also added to this, saying: "So it is, Dīgha, so it is, Dīgha. How valuable these three are..." This is what the Supreme Buddha declared: "If the family from which these three went forth and ordained should think of these three with a confident, joyful mind, it will lead to the welfare and happiness of that family for a long time."

"Likewise, if those of whatever village, town, or province from which these three went forth to ordain should think of these three, it would be of great meritorious benefit to them." Finally, He said: "If the world with its devas, maras, and brahmas, this generation with its devas and humans, samanas and brahmanas, should recollect these three with a confident, joyful mind, it will lead to their welfare and happiness for a long time." This was a great tribute declared by the Supreme Buddha regarding these three. From the *Cūḷagosinga Sutta*, we can see that Venerable Anuruddha had attained all those wholesome minds and become an Arahant.

We can see a great service rendered to the Dispensation by such a valuable character in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*. You know the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*. Before the passing away (*parinibbāna*) of the Supreme Buddha, the chief disciples had already passed away. At the time of the *parinibbāna*, Venerable Ānanda was nearby. Among the Venerables present, the most important and valuable Venerable Thero—who was like the organizer in this era—was Venerable Anuruddha Maha Thero. It is mentioned how, through his power of the divine eye, the opportunity was provided to carry out the great *parinibbāna* and the subsequent matters properly. The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* is a very long discourse. If we extract the necessary part: when the Supreme Buddha was on the bed of His passing away—at the time of His *parinibbāna*, you have heard of the *pacchimā buddhavācā*, the final words of the Buddha: *"Handa dāni bhikkhave āmantayāmi vo, vayadhammā saṅkhārā appamādena sampādetha."*

"Now, monks, I address you: all Preparations/volitional activities (*saṅkhāra*) are subject to decay. Strive with diligence for your salvation." Having declared this, preparing for His *parinibbāna*, the Supreme Buddha first entered the first absorption (*jhāna*), then the second absorption, the third absorption, and so on, up to the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodha*). When He entered the cessation of perception and feeling, Venerable Ānanda thought that He had passed away. Venerable Ānanda asked: "Venerable Anuruddha, has the Blessed One passed away?" Venerable Anuruddha said: "No, Ānanda, the Supreme Buddha has not passed away. He has only entered the cessation of perception and feeling." Thereafter, the Supreme Buddha entered the lower absorptions again, such as the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*) and so on, down to the first absorption. Then, He ascended again from the first absorption to the second, from the second to the third, and from the third to the fourth absorption, and having emerged from the fourth absorption, the Supreme Buddha passed away. At the moment of His passing away, as mentioned in that sutta, great earthquakes and other extraordinary phenomena occurred. It is mentioned that Sakka, the king of devas, and Great Brahma uttered verses. Here, the special significance of Venerable Anuruddha is that he expressed two extremely valuable verses describing how the mind of the Supreme Buddha attained *parinibbāna*:

Nāhu assāsapassāso, ṭhitacittassa tādino;

Anejo santimārabbha, yaṁ kālamakarī muni.

Asallīnena cittena, vedanaṁ ajjhavāsayi;

Pajjotasseva nibbānaṁ, vimokkho cetaso ahū.

"There was no longer inhalation or exhalation for the one of steadfast mind, the Tathāgata. Unshaken, aiming at peace, the Sage passed away." (Passing away is mentioned here with a special meaning).

"With unshrinking mind, He endured the feeling (*vedanā*). Like the extinguishing Nibbāna of a lamp, was the liberation of His mind." Venerable Anuruddha declared how the mind of the Supreme Buddha attained *parinibbāna*. That too is an important thing. Although we do not speak of them at length, we have explained these in other places.

It is mentioned that at the moment of His passing away, the monks who were not yet Arahants wept, rolling on the ground in grief: "Too soon has the Tathāgata passed away! Too soon has the eye of the world been extinguished!" While they were grieving in this way, Venerable Anuruddha comforted them, saying: "Monks, do not weep. Do not lament. Has not the Blessed One already declared that there must be parting and separation from all that is near and dear? How is it possible that what is conditioned (*saṅkhata*), produced by causes and conditions, should not decay, disappear, and dissolve? Furthermore, the deities are finding fault with this behavior of the monks." Then the monks asked: "Venerable Anuruddha, how do the deities behave? What are the

deities saying at this moment?" Then he said: "The deities who are not yet Arahants are lamenting and weeping in the same way. But those deities who are Arahants comfort their minds, reflecting that all Preparations/volitional activities (*saṅkhāra*) are impermanent (*anicca*)."

Next, Venerable Anuruddha told Venerable Ānanda: "Go now and inform the Mallan princes of Kusinārā that the Blessed One has passed away." As soon as Venerable Ānanda informed them in that way, the Mallan princes also began to weep and lament in the same manner. They also said to take charge of what needed to be done next, to take charge of the cremation. So, those Mallan princes came, and eight of them, having bathed and dressed in clean clothes, tried to lift the sacred body of the Supreme Buddha to take it to the cremation ground, but they could not lift it. At that moment, they asked Venerable Anuruddha: "Venerable Sir, why is it that despite our best efforts, we cannot lift it?" Then he told the Mallan princes: "Your intention is different; the deities' expectation is different." Then they asked: "How do the deities expect it?" "You expect to carry the sacred body out through the southern gate of the city and cremate it outside the city. But the deities expect to carry it through the northern gate, and cremate it at the Makuṭabandhana shrine located to the east of the city." Once they said, "Let the wishes of the deities be fulfilled!", the body of the Buddha was taken in that way, placed on the pyre, and four Mallan princes, having purified themselves, prepared to light the pyre. Although they tried to light it, the fire would not catch. At that moment too, they asked Venerable Anuruddha: "Venerable Sir, why does the pyre not catch fire?" At that moment too, Venerable Anuruddha declared: "The deities' expectation is different; your expectation is different. The deities are thinking like this..." To state it in Venerable Anuruddha's own words: "Venerable Maha Kassapa Maha Thero, with five hundred monks, is currently traveling on the high road from the city of Pāvā to Kusinārā. The deities' intention is this: 'Let this pyre not catch fire until Venerable Maha Kassapa Maha Thero arrives and pays homage to the feet of the Supreme Buddha!'" When he said that there was such an expectation of the deities, they delayed lighting the pyre in accordance with that request. In due course, Venerable Maha Kassapa Maha Thero arrived with his retinue of five hundred, clasped his hands in reverence, circumambulated the pyre three times, opened the pyre at the feet of the Supreme Buddha, and paid homage. Those five hundred monks also paid homage. As soon as they paid homage, it is mentioned in that discourse that the pyre caught fire by itself.

So, now we can see: in modern times, during such festive occasions—we do not need to describe how they organize them with various equipment for the ear and eye. Yet, they do not have the power to connect with the divine world. It is difficult to think that such a power could arise in this era. Venerable Anuruddha accomplished that task without any of these. Nowadays, our interest in computers is like the past interest in absorptions (*jhānas*) and so on. Everyone made a special effort to develop the mind. That is not something done with external equipment and tools. It was in such an era that Venerable Anuruddha stood out in that manner, although they had no need to stand out. Since the other chief elders had passed away, Venerable Anuruddha very skillfully organized those activities during that supreme moment, in accordance with the situation, utilizing his

powers of absorption (*jhāna*) and higher spiritual knowledges (*abhiññā*). Therefore, we should reflect that in this era, at the start of a year, the benefits as well as the disadvantages of those tools are manifest to the world. Likewise, this is a time when the mental powers of human beings, the special powers and qualities of Dhamma associated with our humanity, are in decline. At such a time, the character of Venerable Anuruddha we have declared, with those valuable qualities, can be called a supreme model of unity. These delicate princes—as mentioned in the Dhamma, who had palaces suited to the three seasons just like Prince Siddhartha, sometimes without even coming down to the ground floor during the rainy season—these Sakyan princes of delicate upbringing strove hard in the forest, meditated, and exerted special energy to attain those states, for no other reason than for liberation from *saṁsāra*. Not only that. Through the absorptions (*jhānas*) and higher spiritual knowledges (*abhiññā*) they attained, they rendered a great service to the world in that manner. Therefore, this is an opportunity for you to reflect, especially for meditators, on this life of Anuruddha. Through his shortcomings as well as the things expressed through his strength, one can understand those obstacles of the mind, the imperfections (*upakkilesa*) of the mind, and the word *papañca* (conceptual proliferation) we expressed, which often present themselves to meditators in a good guise, as seen in the discussions the Supreme Buddha and Venerable Sāriputta had with Venerable Anuruddha. Next, it is seen that they attained absorptions (*jhānas*), higher spiritual knowledges (*abhiññā*), and did a great service to the world through them.

Therefore, if we reflect on the aims of this Dispensation of the Buddha, they consist in developing inner spiritual strength, and there are three: virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Developing concentration based on virtue, it is by using that as a support that wisdom can be attained. Nowadays, we hear various kinds of talk, claiming that one can attain the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) merely by listening to a sermon. In some places in the sutta discourses, those who had developed these in past lives did indeed attain not only the fruit of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*) but even the fruit of Arahantship with the help of a brief word of the Buddha. But if someone thinks that in this era, these can be obtained instantly like modern gadgets, that is a delusion. That is why we must reflect: these are the values of the Dispensation. It is true that we use these devices. But we must use them only as tools and not make them the ultimate goals of our lives. If we can get some help from them to develop our inner spiritual strength, that is what is necessary. Just as we use the four requisites in life to attain Arahantship. You are listening to the Dhamma in this mechanical age using such devices. You do many other things. But it is difficult to think that the Dispensation develops merely because the Dhamma is abundant. If, because of its abundance, one is led to think of these as worthless, trivial things, that is a great foolishness. We say that the appearance of a Buddha (*buddhōtpāda*) is rare. We say it is rare.

But this Dhamma is not rare. Nowadays, it is more than abundant. You can carry the Tipitaka in your pocket. There is no need to carry it in the mind or memorize it. Such is the era. Likewise, this is what meditators expect in this era: to obtain these paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) instantly. Even meditation centers are turning into fruit shops nowadays.

We must reflect that even such highly meritorious Venerable Ones like Anuruddha attained those states only by exerting great energy. Therefore, in the coming year of your lives, you must reflect on what our true aim in this Dispensation should be, compared to how ordinary people think. That is why even Venerable Anuruddha had a worry (*kukkucca*): "I see divine worlds. I have concentration. Why is my mind not yet liberated from the influxes (*āsava*)?" Indeed, Arahantship must be our target. If we take only the higher spiritual knowledges (*abhiññā*), even some worldly yogis had those powers. We have heard that even the Elder Devadatta attained these higher spiritual knowledges (*abhiññā*). Worldly higher spiritual knowledges (*lokiya-abhiññā*) alone are not enough. One must know how to use worldly higher spiritual knowledges correctly with insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). Otherwise, those mental powers become the path to one's own destruction, the wrong path. That is why, as Buddhists, we must remember that. Taking those yogic meditations and so on as major achievements, without forgetting the message of Nibbāna, which is the most valuable life of this Dispensation of the Buddha, we must keep this liberation from *saṁsāra* shown by the Supreme Buddha as our target in mind.

To help in that, you have undertaken a valuable virtue (*sīla*) today. It is by being established in virtue that one can develop this concentration. Established in that virtue, using mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) to develop what is called concentration, not stopping there, if there is a concentration sign (*samādhi-nimitta*)—it is clear that a concentration sign was developed, as seen in the way the Supreme Buddha strived during His time as a Bodhisatta, when mentioning those imperfections (*upakkilesa*). The way Venerable Anuruddha energetically strived for meditation is also clearly shown. But some people think that those are unnecessary, that mindfulness alone is enough, clear comprehension alone is enough. That is not enough. If so, there would be no need to speak about concentration. But the Supreme Buddha has spoken about concentration next to mindfulness. Therefore, within clear comprehension, there is a power to attain concentration. Likewise, there is a higher purpose, a side that turns towards insight-wisdom (*vipassanā*). Having understood these, and having understood that our ultimate goal is Nibbāna, we must strive to develop concentration to the highest level according to our special paramis in *saṁsāra*, and realize that noble liberation. With the eye we use, if we cannot see properly with this eye, we use spectacles, we use other devices to look at things. But for those noble ones who have developed the divine eye like Venerable Anuruddha, who have well developed the powers of absorption (*jhāna*), when questions are asked, not only the deities in those divine worlds but even their thoughts and wishes are visible. How wonderful! It is a great encouragement to you pious meditators that in the past, those Venerable Ones came from royal, wealthy, and noble families, strived with energy, and attained such powers. In the next year too, without losing this rare opportunity of a human life by becoming enslaved to that technology, we must understand this rare opportunity and make a resolution to walk on the path of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla-samādhi-paññā*).

Today, having left your homes and having developed renunciation (*nekkhamma*) to some extent, you directed yourselves towards seclusion. Indeed, although everyone

cannot ordain, it is bad to think: "We cannot attain these powers of absorption (*jhāna*) and so on." By training oneself to live in seclusion, starting with being established in virtue, if one constantly develops one's meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), one can develop those powers. It is through that that one is said to have walked on the true path walked by the Supreme Buddha, with the true strength of humanity.

Through this undertaking of virtue, you must have engaged in the Dhamma and meditation you are accustomed to during this time. In this sermon, helping these pious meditators by using the exemplary characters of Venerable Anuruddha and other Theros, taking at least one percent of the energy they exerted, walking on this path of Dhamma, these characters of Arahants show us the maximum fruit that can be obtained from the rare human existence in this rare period of a Buddha's appearance (*buddhōtpāda*). One must strive to attain that goal in this very life. We have to say that nowadays, there are invitations from various places in this country saying, "Come with us, why are you in such a hurry? Let us go in the next bus." In the morning, at that time too, we said: "Do not accept those invitations. If you do, you will always be in the queue." Therefore, if you do not understand this rare opportunity, if you do not make use of it, you will have to regret. Leaving this human existence, one does not know where this mind of ours will be born. Therefore, you must make proper use of it. Hence, it is not about going to the end of technology. By developing the true inner strength, the spiritual strength, while bringing welfare to the world, to realize one's own liberation from *saṁsāra*, we ask you to make a resolution at this moment when one year is ending and a new year is about to begin. Likewise, we wish that this sermon may serve as a support (*upanissaya*), a conducive cause, for you to fulfill your future noble aspirations!

Likewise, from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, if there are any beings who wish to rejoice in this merit of preaching the Dhamma and hearing the Dhamma, may they, through that rejoicing, quickly realize their aspired supreme goals! With this expectation, recite these verses and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #54

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.203)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Aho buddhā aho dhammā, aho no satthu sampadā;

Yatthetādisaṃ dhammaṃ, sāvako sacchikāhisi.

Asaṅkheyyesu kappesu, sakkāyādhigatā ahu;

Tesaṃ ayaṃ pacchimako, carimoyaṃ samussayo.

Jātimaraṇasaṃsāro, natthi dāni punabbhavoti.

From:

Theragāthā

Dear Listeners,

The Venerable Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant was a disciple who received from the Blessed One the foremost position (*etadagga*) among those who are eloquent speakers (*citta-kathika*). The term *citta-kathika* signifies the ability to preach the Dhamma in a wondrous and diverse manner, presenting appropriate similes and illustrations according to the occasion. Today, we have selected as our theme two verses mentioned in the *Theragāthā Pāḷi*, which the Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant uttered in praise of the virtues of the Triple Gem after attaining Arahantship. In these verses, the indeclinable particle '*aho*' is used in the sense of expressing wonder. "Oh, how wondrous are the Buddhas! Oh, how wondrous is their Dhamma! Oh, how wondrous is the attainment of our Teacher! In what kind of teacher's achievement, within what kind of dispensation of holy life (*brahmacariya*), a disciple realizes such a Dhamma—how wondrous is that achievement of the Teacher!" In the next verse, it is said: "In incalculable aeons, existences of the existing group (*sakkāya*) have been received by me, have arisen for me. Of those, this is the last group of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). This is the final existing group (*sakkāya*). This is the last body. The round of rebirths characterized by Birth and Death (*jātimaraṇasaṁsāra*) is

ended; now there is no renewed becoming (*bhava*)." That is the meaning of those two verses.

Through these two verses, the Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant has very beautifully praised the virtues of the Triple Gem, taking his own direct realization as an illustration. There are certain remarkable features in the life story of Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant, just as in his eloquence. According to the Pāḷi records, like other great disciples who received foremost positions, Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant had also fulfilled the perfections (*pāramī*) for a long period in the presence of past Buddhas, aspiring for this position. In the time of our Buddha, he was born in Rājagaha as the son of a treasurer's daughter. His birth is recorded as follows:

That treasurer's daughter had a great desire to ordain and asked her parents for permission to become a *bhikkhunī*, but they did not grant it. Instead, they gave her in marriage to someone. Not long after being married, having obtained permission from her husband, she ordained in the Bhikkhunī Order. However, she did not know at the time that she was pregnant. As the womb matured, the other *bhikkhunīs* suspected her and informed Elder Devadatta about this. Elder Devadatta said that this *bhikkhunī* should be disrobed. But that *bhikkhunī*—let us call her the mother of Kumāra Kassapa—when she had the matter referred to the Buddha, the Buddha assigned Elder Upāli, the foremost among the masters of discipline (*vinayadhara*), to resolve this issue. Elder Upāli summoned the residents of Sāvatthi and the great laywoman disciple Visākhā, and in the midst of an assembly including the King, had a screen put up. He had Visākhā examine the *bhikkhunī* and concluded that the pregnancy had occurred during her lay life, and thus she was innocent. In due course, while in the bhikkhunī monastery, she gave birth to this child. Later, King Pasenadi of Kosala, thinking that raising this child would be an impediment and a trouble for the *bhikkhunīs*, took over the responsibility of raising him. Because of this, it is said he received the name 'Kumāra Kassapa' (Kassapa the Prince). Furthermore, this prince entered the order at the young age of seven.

There is a highly important discourse associated with him in the Tipiṭaka literature, called the *Vammika Sutta* ('The Ant-hill Discourse') in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. In truth, that was not a sermon preached by him. At that time, the Ven. Kumāra Kassapa had not yet attained Arahantship. One day, while he was meditating in the Andhavana forest during the night, a deity appeared and presented fifteen deep, enigmatic questions using the simile of an ant-hill. No one else in this world-system could answer these questions; only the Buddha could answer them. So the deity told him to go and ask the Buddha. When the Ven. Kumāra Kassapa asked those questions, the explanation given by the Buddha is what is recorded in the *Vammika Sutta*. According to what is mentioned in the *Apadāna Pāḷi*, the Buddha's profound exposition helped the Ven. Kumāra Kassapa to attain Arahantship.

Although he received the foremost position as an eloquent speaker (*citta-kathika*), among the discourses available to us, the only sutta that reveals the eloquence of Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant is the *Pāyāsi Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. It is a very long discourse, containing numerous illustrative similes. Let us try to extract a few similes

from it that are suitable for this occasion. The story is recorded as follows. According to the opinion of scholars, this *Pāyāsi Sutta* appears to have been preached after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha. At that time, Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant was elderly and held a highly respected position. It is recorded as follows: On one occasion, while Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant was wandering in the Kosala country with a large retinue of five hundred bhikkhus, he arrived at the city of Setavyā and resided in the Siṁsapā grove, an *Aṭṭēriyā* (Indian Rosewood) forest located to the north of the city. Next, the book describes the city of Setavyā as follows.

The ruler of the city of Setavyā was a local chieftain appointed by King Pasenadi of Kosala, named Pāyāsi Rājañña. He was not a king, but was known as 'Rājañña' (chieftain/prince). This ruler is specifically described as follows: He was a person who held a very grave wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). What was the view he clung to? 'There is no other world; there are no spontaneously born (*opapātika*) beings; there are no fruits or results of good and bad deeds.' This Pāyāsi Rājañña was someone who held such a terrible, sinful view. Then, it is recorded as follows: When the news spread that the Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant had arrived—that a wise, learned, intelligent, eloquent, elderly Mahā Arahant was residing there—his reputation spread far and wide. While a group of residents from Setavyā was preparing to go to the Siṁsapā grove to see him, Pāyāsi Rājañña, who was resting during the day, saw the crowd going and asked his doorkeeper, "Where is this crowd going?" The doorkeeper replied: "They are going to see a monk named Kumāra Kassapa who has arrived." Then Pāyāsi Rājañña told his servants: "In that case, go and tell that crowd not to go until Pāyāsi comes. I will also go with you. Before that ascetic deceives foolish brahmins by spreading false rumors that there is another world, that there are spontaneously born beings, and that there are results of good and bad deeds, I must go there." Thus he went.

That chieftain went along with the crowd, exchanged pleasantries with Ven. Kumāra Kassapa, and then directly stated his view: "My view, Kassapa, is this: there is no other world, there are no spontaneously born beings, there are no fruits or results of good and bad deeds." Then Ven. Kumāra Kassapa remarked: "I have never heard of such a thing. This is indeed a very wrong view." First, he asked: "Are the sun and moon things belonging to this world or the other?" Pāyāsi admitted: "They do not belong to this world; they belong to the other world, the higher celestial world." Then the Elder asked: "Why then do you hold such a view?" From that point onwards, a very long discussion ensues. These are long narratives that reveal the patient endurance and the brilliant, creative intelligence of Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant.

Some of the similes are very long. This is how it begins. The Elder asks, "Why did you adopt such a view, such a wrong opinion?" To this, Pāyāsi Rājañña explains the kind of experiments he performed. He says: "I have friends and relatives who commit the ten unwholesome deeds—killing, stealing, and so on. When these relatives and friends of mine fell ill and were close to death, I went to them and said: 'If you die and are born in hell, come and tell me that there is another world.' Although I told them so, no one has yet come and told me that there is another world." It is based on this that Pāyāsi Rājañña asserts there is no other world. The simile given by Ven. Kassapa to this is as follows:

"Now, Rājañña, suppose you are a king's officer, and your servants capture a criminal who has committed an offense, and bring him to you to be punished. Then, as a punishment, you order: ‘Bind him with ropes, beat the execution drum, take him through the streets, and execute him by cutting off his head at the place of execution on the south side of the city.’ When the executioners have bound that man and taken him there, and he sits down to be beheaded, can that man say to the executioners: ‘Wait a moment until I go and take leave of my relatives and friends and return’?" Pāyāsi replies, "No, he cannot." Then the Elder says: "Rājañña, if that human thief cannot get permission from those human executioners, how could he, after going to hell, get permission from the wardens of hell to come and tell this chieftain about the matter?" Then Pāyāsi admitted it was impossible, but added: "Even so, Ven. Sir, I still cling to my view."

Again, he gives another reason for it. It proceeds in the same manner. This was regarding the ten unwholesome deeds. "Similarly, I went to my friends and relatives who abstain from the ten unwholesome deeds like killing and so on, when they were on their deathbeds, and said: ‘If you are born in a celestial world, come and tell me.’ Let the devotees think of this in the same way. ‘None of them have come so far to give me the message, even though I asked them to.’" Then the Ven. Thero says: "Just as a man who has fallen into a cesspit, after being pulled out, washed, and cleaned, would not want to go back into that cesspit again, so a person who has gone from this human world and is enjoying celestial pleasures in the heavenly world would not trouble himself to return to the human world to tell this to the Rājañña." Related to the same point, the chieftain says: "The ascetics and brahmins say that if one keeps the five precepts properly, one goes to the Tāvatiṁsa heaven. I also told such people who keep the five precepts properly: ‘If you are born in the Tāvatiṁsa heaven, come and tell me.’ But in that case too, no one came to tell me." Then Ven. Kassapa explains the life-span of the Tāvatiṁsa heaven. One hundred years in the human world is equivalent to a single day in that celestial world. Therefore, if a person born in that heaven thought of coming to fulfill the message after enjoying heavenly bliss for just two or three days, would you still be alive in this human world to receive it? Pāyāsi answers that question too.

Next, he describes another experiment he conducted. To put it briefly, dear devotees, think about this carefully: Pāyāsi was like a pioneer to modern physical scientists who use advanced machinery to study the workings of the mind. Understand this from what Pāyāsi says next. On this occasion, Pāyāsi Rājañña relates an experiment he performed and its results: "When a criminal like that is brought to me, I tell my men to put that man alive into a large jar, cover its mouth with a damp hide, seal it well with clay, place it on a furnace, and light a fire. When the man is about to die, I carefully open it to see if the vital principle (*jīva*) escapes from the jar. Although I did so, as a result of that experiment, I did not see any vital principle escaping." That was a very foolish experiment.

The answer given by Ven. Kassapa to this is worth contemplating. He asks: "Rājañña, do you remember when you go to sleep during the day—indeed, one has dreams even during the day—do you not see yourself in dreams going to beautiful, delightful ponds and

gardens? Do you remember?" "Yes," he replies. "On such occasions, if you have attendants and maids watching over you, do they see your vital principle departing, or your mind departing?" "No," he says. From this, we can understand something. Ven. Kassapa says: "If they cannot see the movement of your mind while you are alive, how could one see the mind departing at the moment of death?" When this was said, what could he say? This Rājañña was someone who had conducted a fair number of experiments; in short, he can be called a pioneer among physical scientists who conduct experiments.

Then he says: "On some occasions, I weigh a condemned man on a scale before he is executed. Then I weigh him again after he is dead. When weighed after death, he is heavier than before. If the vital principle had departed, shouldn't he be lighter?" This was his logic. Then Ven. Kassapa asks: "Rājañña, then answer this question. When an iron ball is heated all day long, it is lighter when weighed, isn't it? When it is completely cooled, it is much heavier, isn't it?" Pāyāsi replies: "Yes, that is so. When the heat element (*tejo-dhātu*) and the wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*) are combined and active, the iron ball is lighter. When they subside, it is heavier."

"Just like that," Ven. Kassapa says, "as long as this body possesses life-span, warmth, and consciousness (*āyu, usmā, viññāṇa*), the body is lighter. After death, it becomes stiff and heavy." In this manner, he answers that question. Thus, there were various kinds of experiments.

Some other arguments are quite humorous. He says: "If virtuous people go to heavenly worlds and such places after death, why do they protect their lives? They could eat poison and die sooner, if they knew they would be born in a good place. I do not see anyone doing that." At that point, Ven. Kassapa gives a unique simile. This is how it is told. These are illustrative stories. Whether they are actual events or not, he says: "A certain brahmin had two wives. The child of one wife was ten or twelve years old. While the other wife was pregnant with a child, the brahmin passed away. That ten or twelve-year-old boy said to his stepmother: 'Now, this wealth of my father belongs to me, not to you. Therefore, hand it over to me.' Then this woman said: 'Wait a little while until this child is born. If this child is a boy, he will also get a portion. If it is a girl, I will hand it over to you.' Again and again, the boy harassed her. Later, this woman—since in those days there were no instruments to find out the state of a child in the womb as there are today, nor were there methods to hasten birth as many do today—what did she do? She took a knife, went into a room, and in order to quickly deliver the child, performed a certain surgical operation on herself, and consequently died." Giving this simile, Ven. Kassapa says: "Just like that, virtuous people do not destroy their lives prematurely when there is still time to live. Committing suicide in expectation of a happy destiny is like what that woman did in trying to force the birth before the child was due."

In this way, he goes on giving similes. But this person, the Rājañña, continues to state such points endlessly. After a certain point, when he was convinced to some extent, he says: "If I abandon this view of mine now, King Pasenadi of Kosala and many others, as well as people of neighboring countries, know that Pāyāsi Rājañña holds such a view. If I

abandon this view, I might face various accusations from others. Otherwise, they will look down on me, saying that I behaved foolishly for so long." Even after understanding and being convinced, the Rājañña was reluctant to abandon his view due to pride (*māna*). At that point, the Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Arahant relates a great number of similes. If I were to relate all of them, it would be a very long description. I am mentioning only what is essential. On that occasion, Pāyāsi says: "It is not because I am not convinced that I do not abandon this, but out of shame for what I have held for so long." The simile then given by Ven. Kassapa is a good story worth remembering for all of us.

You may have heard this before. He says: "Rājañña, the people of a certain province abandoned that province. It became an empty, desolate province. Two friends from a neighboring province discussed: 'Let us go to that desolate province to gather some wealth.' So the two started their journey. In the first village they reached, they found a large quantity of discarded hemp-tow (*hana-vähari*). These two friends said: 'Let us bind bundles of hemp,' and they both bound two bundles of hemp. Carrying them, they proceeded further, and in the next village, they found hempen thread. One friend said: 'Why are we carrying this hemp-tow? Thread is more valuable. Let us discard this hemp and take the thread.' But what did the other friend say? 'I have carried this bundle of hemp for a long distance. It is well bound. I cannot abandon it.' Therefore, that friend carried the bundle of hemp as it was. The other friend bound a bundle of hempen thread and carried it. Going further, they found hempen cloth, which we call sacks. Discarding the hempen thread, the wise friend said: 'Friend, carrying a valuable thing is useful to us.' He discarded the thread and bound a bundle of hempen cloth. The other carried his bundle of hemp just as before. The story goes on like this. To make it short, in the next village they found cotton, then cotton thread, then cotton cloth. Think of it in this way. At every stage, the wise one abandoned the old bundle and took the new, more valuable thing."

Then, as they went further, there were discarded metals, scrap iron. Even scrap iron is valuable. Indeed, iron was also there. Then lead, copper, and so on, step by step, there was a list of valuable things. Next, silver. Silver was also discarded there. This is said as a simile. Then, one friend, the wise one, bound a bundle of silver, while the other still carried his old bundle of hemp. Finally, at the last place, gold was discarded. The wise friend gathered that gold. The other friend kept his bundle of hemp just as it was. Eventually, these two returned to their village. When they returned, the family of the one who had brought the bundle of gold was extremely happy. Relatives, parents, everyone was delighted. The family of the one who carried the old bundle of hemp was very disappointed. "Similarly, Rājañña, you too are carrying a bundle of hemp." When this was said, Pāyāsi Rājañña replied: "Venerable Sir, I was convinced even when I heard the first few similes. But in order to experience your brilliant and creative eloquence, I pretended to show opposition further." Thereupon, the Rājañña, just as it is said in other places, uttered "*Abhikkantaṁ bhante*" (Excellent, Venerable Sir! Excellent!), took refuge in the Triple Gem, and declared: "I take refuge as a lay disciple from this day forward, as long as life lasts."

Furthermore, he said to Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant: "Venerable Sir, I wish to give a great alms-offering. I am a man who has never even thought of how to give alms before. I wish to give a great alms-offering; please advise me on this,"—he, a man who knew nothing of alms-giving. On this, Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant preached something: "In any alms-giving or sacrifice where cattle, goats, sheep, etc., are slaughtered, and if those who accept the alms are individuals of wrong views, wrong thoughts, wrong concentration, etc., then that alms-giving does not yield great fruit or great benefit. It is just like a farmer who takes a plough and seed-paddy, goes into the forest, and sows the seeds in uncultivated, infertile, poorly protected soil, and does not get a good harvest; the benefits of such sacrifices are minimal. On the other hand, in a true sacrifice, there is no slaughter of animals. Furthermore, those who receive the alms are individuals of right view, right thought, right speech. Alms given to such people yield great fruit and great benefit." If we explain this with the simile of farming, it is like preparing the soil well, setting up the field, and sowing the right kind of seeds in the proper manner, which yields an abundant harvest.

Then, Pāyāsi Rājañña for the first time established a regular charity (*dan-väṭa*). A *dan-väṭa* means a great alms-distribution to ascetics, brahmins, the poor, travelers, and beggars. He started a daily almsgiving. There, it is mentioned as follows: In this almsgiving, what did this Rājañña give? Gruel-broth (*kāḍi-hodda*) and broken-rice bread (*nivuḍu-salē bata*). After some time, a young man named Uttara, a close associate of Pāyāsi Rājañña who was in charge of organizing, preparing, and distributing this alms, made various sarcastic remarks: "I may be with this Pāyāsi Rājañña in this world, but I do not wish to be associated with him in the next world." Pāyāsi summoned him and asked: "Why do you say so, young man?"—or let us say, ‘friend’ or ‘your majesty/sire’. "Sir, you give to others food that you would not even wish to touch with your foot. You give to others coarse garments that you would not even wish to touch with your foot." When this was said, Pāyāsi changed his mind and told the young man Uttara: "In that case, arrange to give them the same food that I eat, and good garments like the ones I wear." In this way, the alms-giving continued. It went on and on, and next is the side of results.

The *Pāyāsi Sutta* ends with extraordinary historical events. Some people might disbelieve them. But this is what is recorded. Ultimately, as a result of this almsgiving, Pāyāsi Rājañña, after his death, was born in an empty celestial mansion called Serīssaka, belonging to the realm of the Four Great Kings (*Cātumahārājika*). However, the young man Uttara was born in a celestial world with much greater wealth and splendor. What was the reason? There, something is mentioned regarding the manner of giving alms, which you may have read in other places as well. Regarding how an almsgiving should be properly conducted, it is described in four terms:

Sakkaccaṁ dānaṁ deti: He gives alms carefully, properly, and in an orderly manner.

Sāhatthā dānaṁ deti: He gives alms with his own hands.

Cittīkatvā dānaṁ deti: He gives alms having pleased his mind with faith, compassion, etc.

Anapaviddhaṁ dānaṁ deti: He gives alms respectfully, not as if discarding it.

This is what is called a good almsgiving: *sakkaccaṁ, sāhatthā, cittīkatvā, anapaviddhaṁ*. But Pāyāsi Rājañña gave alms in the wrong way. He gave alms carelessly (*asakkaccaṁ*), at least in the early stages, not properly. It was that gruel-broth and broken-rice. Furthermore, it was not done with his own hands, nor was it done with a pleased mind, but as if discarding it. Therefore, it is shown that the Rājañña received lesser results. He appeared in an empty mansion in the *Cātumahārājika* realm. But the young man Uttara was born in a place of great comfort in the Tāvatiṁsa heaven.

This story goes even further. You have heard about Yasa, the clansman's son. Among the fifty-five friends of Yasa the clansman's son, four prominent ones are mentioned: Vimala, Subāhu, Puṇṇaji, and Gavampati. The Elder named Gavampati was very elderly by that time; he was an Arahant. He had a habit of going to that empty Serīssaka mansion belonging to the *Cātumahārājika* realm for his daytime abiding (*divā-vihāra*). One day, when he went there, the Rājañña was there. He asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Pāyāsi."

"Why, did you not hold such a wrong view: ‘There is no other world, there are no spontaneously born beings, etc.’?"

"Yes, indeed I did. But the Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant removed my wrong view. It is because of that I was born in the *Cātumahārājika* realm."

"Then where is the young man Uttara, who managed your almsgiving?"

"He gave alms better than I did, and has been born in the Tāvatiṁsa heaven."

In the *Vimānavatthu* Commentary, Pāyāsi Rājañña is referred to by the name Serīssaka. This is a long story. Pāyāsi Rājañña then makes a request to the Ven. Gavampati Mahā Arahant:

"Venerable Sir, please go to the human world and tell the humans, with this illustration, that Pāyāsi gave alms carelessly, did not give with his own hands, did not please his mind, and gave alms as if discarding them, and consequently was born in an empty mansion in the *Cātumahārājika* realm. But Pāyāsi Rājañña's organizer and pupil, the young man Uttara, did the opposite: he gave alms carefully, with his own hands, with a pleased mind, and not as if discarding them, but with great care and respect, and has gone to the Tāvatiṁsa heaven. Venerable Sir, preach to these humans in the human world to give alms carefully, to give with their own hands, to give with a pleased mind, and not to give alms as if discarding them." In this way, that discourse ends.

Thus, we can think that even someone who had committed such sins as to go to hell—we can imagine how terribly—every leader knows it, there is no need to elaborate. That is

why they say being a ruler is like a gateway to hell. If, for some reason, without believing in karma and its fruits, he had remained drowned in such sinful karma, we cannot say where this man would have ended up; ultimately he would have fallen into hell. But due to the compassion and patience of the great Kumāra Kassapa Arahant, who turned the Rājañña around by giving so many similes, he went to a celestial world. The commentaries and other texts further state: someone might ask how this could happen when he had committed so many sinful deeds. Let us say, whether it was broken-rice bread or some other alms (later on, he gave alms well), if one gets the opportunity to offer alms to a Mahā Arahant like Kumāra Kassapa at the very moment he arises from the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), through that very wholesome merit, one escapes hell in the next life. Someone might ask how a person who committed so many sins could go to the *Cātumahārājika* realm.

In this way, there is a very deep side to wholesome and unwholesome deeds (karma). That is why the arising of the Triple Gem brings such peace and blessing to the world. Contemplate on that. But even in this day and age, there are materialists. Think also of the lessons that can be drawn from this. It is not just about telling stories. When we think of the present era, we do not have the primitive instruments of those days, like conducting experiments by putting a man in a jar. Yet today, they do the very same thing in a more subtle manner. I forgot to mention one thing, a simile suited for this moment.

On the occasion when the Tāvatiṁsa heaven was mentioned, the Rājañña asks Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant: "How do you say there is a Tāvatiṁsa heaven, and that there is such a life-span? How is it, have you seen it?" Then comes this simile: "If a man blind from birth says there is no sun, moon, or stars, can that be accepted?" "No." "Similarly, there are yogis dwelling in the forest who have developed the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*). It is with that divine eye, not with the physical eye, that this is said." This was mentioned by Ven. Kumāra Kassapa at one point during those similes. If we bring that up again here, this is what is being done even now.

We have said before that there are three eyes. When we speak of three eyes, there are various stories about them. But in the Dhamma, there are: the physical eye (*māsa-cakkhu*), the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), and the wisdom eye (*paññā-cakkhu*). The physical eye is the eye of flesh. The divine eye is what yogis and sages of the past brought forth through meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). Next is the wisdom eye. When speaking about the movement of the mind, you may have heard some of our discourses on dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). One can never make a decision about the existence of the mind using the physical eye. Today, what goes by the name of physical science attempts to talk big about the mind by examining how the brain functions and doing other things. This is what they hold onto as ‘psychology’. It is extremely limited, because they arrive at these conclusions using instruments connected only to the five physical senses. But next, there is the divine eye. That is higher than the physical eye. It is through that divine eye that the existence of another world is seen, rebirth is seen, and the results of karma are seen. Sages of the past saw that level. However, the entirety of the mind is not grasped by it. The divine eye is superior to the physical eye, and the wisdom eye is superior to the divine eye. The working of the mind grasped by that

wisdom eye is what we have been showing so far through discourses on dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).

What was not seen by any sage or yogi was seen by the Buddha. There is such a deep matter here. But people dilute these and speak of psychology and this and that. What they say may be correct to some extent. But that is why we said that this Rājañña was like the pioneer of physical science. One can see even today how far the wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) derived from this can go. Some people say: "I cannot see it; our scientists have not said that there is another world," and they cling to that opinion. It is for such people that a verse from the *Subhāṣitaya*—which is a certain matter expressed in very simple language by Alagiyavanna Mukaveṭi—applies. The older generation might know it:

> Whether there is another world or not, O virtuous ones,
>
> It is indeed good to abandon sinful deeds, keeping the mind pure.
>
> If there is no other world, no harm is done thereby;
>
> But if there is, ruin befalls the one who sinned, thinking there is none.

Therein lies that profound truth. If we state the deep meaning of the verse in the *Subhāṣitaya* in Dhamma terms, it can be called the 'Incontrovertible Path' (*apaṇṇaka-paṭipadā*). Let us proceed to that. To understand the term *apaṇṇaka-paṭipadā*, for many people, the very first Jātaka story among the Jātaka stories is the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka*. Furthermore, in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, there is a special discourse called the *Apaṇṇaka Sutta*. To tell the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* story briefly here: while the Bodhisatta and Devadatta, as two merchants, were traveling through a desert, a demon, intending to prey on them, came forward with wet hair and holding lotus flowers, to show that there was plenty of water on the other side. When asked, he said there was water over there. The first merchant discarded all the water they carried in their carts, and consequently fell prey to the demon. The Bodhisatta, who came second, thought: "What he says might be true or might not be true. If we carry our water, it is only a slight trouble. We can discard it later." Thus, thinking wisely, he escaped that disaster. The general principle of the *apaṇṇaka-paṭipadā* can be stated like this: whether it is right or wrong, we are safe in the end.

In the *Apaṇṇaka Sutta*, the Buddha shows this. It is a very profound discourse. On one occasion, the Buddha said to the householders of Sāleyyaka: "If you do not have a teacher in whom you have placed a reasoned faith (*ākāravatī saddhā*) after making a deliberate decision, I tell you to adopt this principle regarding this matter, to understand what is good and bad, right and wrong. This is called the *apaṇṇaka-paṭipadā* (the safe or incontrovertible path)." Next, he illustrates it as follows: "Suppose a certain teacher comes and declares the ten-fold wrong view (*dasa-vatthuka micchā-diṭṭhi*). You know it, even if I do not describe each one. 'There is no alms-giving, no offering, no sacrifice; there is no mother, no father; there is no this world, no other world; and finally, there are

no spontaneously born beings.' A person holding wrong views says this. Next, those who hold right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) say that these exist—that there are results of sacrifices, and so on. Then, a person who does not have a proper teacher falls into doubt as to which of the two is correct."

Then, the Buddha expounds the way to resolve this—the way a wise person should contemplate to resolve it: "Now, if I accept the view of the first person mentioned, what would be the result? What can be expected from a person who holds that nihilistic view? He spends his life committing various crimes without any understanding of wholesome and unwholesome deeds. Meanwhile, he is censured by the wise. When caught in crimes, it happens naturally. Meanwhile, if indeed there is no other world, there is nothing to fear. But he has already experienced the retribution in this very life. If there is another world, he will fall into a terrible place. Next, one should think about what was said by the second teacher who holds right view, according to the method of conclusion in the *apaṇṇaka-paṭipadā*. If what they say is true, those who hold this view avoid bad deeds and lead a good life even in this world. They are praised by the wise. If their view turns out to be wrong, there is no loss to them in this life. If it turns out to be correct, they will go to a heavenly world." By giving such illustrations, what the Buddha expounds is the *apaṇṇaka-paṭipadā*.

This is a problem for many people even today. "So-and-so says this, and so-and-so says that." This must be thought of according to the situation. Decisions must be made regarding the results, drawbacks, and benefits. Now, that Rājañña clung to his experiments and carried that wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) for a long time. Similarly, today there are such people with big titles, be they philosophers or scientists, who say: "He said this, she said that. The result of this experiment is such, therefore there is no result of karma; heaven and such things are not visible yet." In such situations, if one cannot establish faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha, one must think in that manner. For those who have faith (*saddhā*), this question does not arise. But for those who do not have faith (*saddhā*) but possess wisdom, the course of action to be taken is what is shown through the *apaṇṇaka-paṭipadā*. In such instances, one should think that there are benefits to the aforementioned right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) in this life, and also in the next life. That is why we said, whether it is right or wrong, we must think of shaping our lives accordingly, and not just keep talking about it. This story of Pāyāsi is an example for us in several ways. On one hand, Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant, due to his abundance of compassion, and on the other hand, due to his eloquence (*citta-kathikatā*), gave various matching similes to every question asked by the Rājañña. He gave illustrative stories, subdued him, made him a donor, and even enabled him to go to a celestial world.

Next, we must contemplate what was said about almsgiving. Even when offering a spoonful of rice, we must bear those points in mind. In modern times, almsgiving is not a transactional business done as a physical process. Although the topic of almsgiving is not explained anew, it is very familiar to you. But almsgiving is not just about giving. You have heard various details about giving with a pleased mind throughout the three phases

(before, during, and after). How profound a matter it is becomes clear from this story. The pupil, the young man Uttara, who gave alms carefully and with his own hands, surpassed the Rājañña who merely supplied the materials for the alms, and enjoyed the benefits thereof. Contemplate on those; contemplate on their depth. Giving is not just a visible physical act—though it appears so. It is not an ordinary worldly transaction. There is a deep meaning here, such as preparing the mind and giving with one's own hands. Thus, the concept of almsgiving also goes deep. You can learn something from that as well.

Next, the story of this world and the next. We must constantly contemplate the three eyes we mentioned. Our physical eye is not sufficient. What have they done for hundreds of years by inventing various instruments? They are still going in the same direction. The eye cannot see enough, so they used spectacles. Finding spectacles insufficient, they used telescopes and microscopes. It is the same with other senses. Finding that the ear cannot hear enough, they invented other things. There is no need to elaborate on these. In fact, a person in this era can say that if one has a sufficient amount of money, there is no need for supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*). There is no need for *abhiññā*. The divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) is in that box at home. Next, the divine ear (*dibba-sota*) is there. They have not just one or two, but many of these instruments. They even walk on the roads listening with the divine ear. The divine ear is close by. Going through the air is also like that. Everything is like that. Looking at it that way, supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*) are not needed in this era. But when looking deeply, there is no truth within them; it is only a departure from the truth. It is true that we cannot escape them due to the current trend. But we must contemplate that the truth lies in the Dhamma, which might seem outdated to people of this era. The minds of those who are subdued by those instruments and trends become dull. Ultimately, they become subservient to instruments. Knowing these drawbacks—and indeed, what we say now is also being recorded—perhaps you might think: "It doesn't matter if we sleep now; we can listen to this later." But the manner in which they listened to the Dhamma and took in the teachings in the past is extremely valuable to us.

In the past, even in the times we remember, when starting a Dhamma sermon, they would first state how one should listen to the Dhamma. Today, they do not even say that, because there are recording instruments. We frequently remind you: *Atthīkatvā, manasikaritvā, sabbacetaso samannāharitvā, ohitasoto dhammaṁ suṇāti* (paying attention, reflecting, with all his mind applied, lending an ear, he listens to the Dhamma). It is in such instances that the fruits of the path (*magga-phala*) arise, and concentration (*samādhi*) is established. This means thinking: "There is something beneficial for me in this," reflecting on word by word, applying the entire mind (*sabbacetaso samannāharitvā*), lending an ear (*ohitasoto*)—it is when listening in this way that concentration (*samādhi*) is established therein.

Especially when listening to the Buddha, or listening to those noble disciples, even if a snake bit them, they would not know. They were absorbed in such a wondrous concentration (*samādhi*). For such people, the fruits of the path are not far. Within that very state, the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are removed, and concentration (*samādhi*) comes.

That is why the Buddha expounds that when one listens to the Buddha's Dhamma, at that moment, a mind accompanied by lust (*rāga*) does not arise, a mind accompanied by hatred (*dosa*) does not arise, a mind accompanied by delusion (*moha*) does not arise; the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are removed. Having been removed, concentration (*samādhi*) is prepared. That is what is called: *kalla-cittaṁ, mudu-cittaṁ, vinīvaraṇa-cittaṁ* (a prepared mind, a malleable mind, a mind free from hindrances). We have also spoken to you on some occasions about the Buddha's preaching style. How a person who has never heard the Dhamma before attains Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) in a single sermon is a great mystery to some. But the Buddha's discourses are 'graduated discourses' (*anupubbī-kathā*). We have given more details about these on other occasions. *Dāna-kathaṁ, sīla-kathaṁ, sagga-kathaṁ, kāmānaṁ ādīnavaṁ, okāraṁ saṅkilesaṁ, nekkhamme ānisaṁsaṁ* (talk on giving, talk on virtue, talk on heaven, the danger, degradation, and corruption of sensual pleasures, and the benefit of renunciation)—these form the basic part of the graduated discourse. This means that through the talk on giving, even to beggars who have nothing to give, the thought of giving arises: "Ah, if only I had something to give, I would give it!" Even though they are not asked to observe the precepts, when the Buddha speaks of the benefits of virtue (*sīla*), they rejoice right then and there and adopt those training rules. Thus, both giving (*dāna*) and virtue (*sīla*) are established. Next, when speaking of the benefits of both, the talk on heaven (*sagga-kathā*), it is as if they have gone to the heavenly world. After that, when the Buddha preaches the dangers of sensual pleasures (*kāmānaṁ ādīnavaṁ*)—all the pleasures of the celestial and human worlds—their corrupt nature and their low nature, and speaks of the benefits of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), they turn to the other side.

A passage that is frequently mentioned describes how at that moment the Buddha looks at the mind of that disciple. That is why it is said: *Yathā bhagavā aññāsi kalla-cittaṁ mudu-cittaṁ vinīvaraṇa-cittaṁ udagga-cittaṁ pasanna-cittaṁ* (When the Blessed One knew that the mind of the hearer was prepared, malleable, free from hindrances, uplifted, and bright). Seeing that the disciple's mind is properly prepared, soft, free from hindrances, well-uplifted, and full of joy and confidence, only then does the Buddha expound the Four Noble Truths: *dukkha, samudaya, nirodha, magga* (Suffering, Origin, Cessation, Path). It is through such a preaching style, as well as the manner in which the Dhamma is heard, that the fruits of the path are attained.

Now, what do many people say? They say: "It is enough to just listen to the Dhamma to become a Stream-enterer." But they do not say how one should listen to the Dhamma. To tell the truth, if that were the case, it is this recording machine that should become a Stream-enterer, not the people who listen to it! Such is this era. We remind you of these according to the times, because this is a world bound to the physical eye, enslaved by the aforementioned machines. In such an era, they are like Pāyāsi. They too must have followers. It is the same in this era. Therefore, you must protect yourselves from these and walk on this path of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) declared by the Buddha. There are no short cuts like pressing buttons to attain the fruits of the path; one must go from the very beginning. Therefore, established in a certain

virtue (*sīla*), and using that virtue as a support, as we often say, one must then make an effort towards a state of concentration (*samādhi*).

According to the talks going on now, something often said by those who come to us is that meditation is merely looking at the mind. They say that looking at the mind is all that is needed. It is a very easy task. There is no talk of concentration (*samādhi*), and then they even say that concentration is not needed. "We are wise people; we do not need concentration." Such are the stories going around. But we must keep in mind the Buddha's word: *Natthi jhānaṁ apaññassa, paññā natthi ajhāyato, yamhi jhānañ ca paññā ca, sa ve nibbānassa santike* (There is no meditative absorption for one who lacks wisdom, nor is there wisdom for one who lacks meditative absorption. He who has both meditative absorption and wisdom is indeed close to Nibbāna). Thus, the Buddha has declared that the one who has both is close to Nibbāna. Through this narrative, we must understand the supremacy of the Buddha's teaching, as well as the brilliant and creative intelligence of his disciples. In the past, that brilliant and creative intelligence and the wonderful style of preaching were directed towards Nibbāna—directed solely towards Nibbāna. By the time one finished listening to it, one was already inclined towards the path of Dhamma. But this is not something done for fame. The terms "wonderful sermon" and "eloquent preacher of Dhamma" are used very casually nowadays.

Perhaps to assist the wonderful preaching style of such great noble ones as Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant, a deity came and asked fifteen very deep questions from the Elder. We did not go on to relate that. That is not a sermon of his. The *Vammika Sutta* is an extremely profound discourse. It contains fifteen very deep questions asked by a deity using the simile of an ant-hill. No one else could answer them, and he was told to go and ask the Buddha. But if we think about why this was said to Ven. Kumāra Kassapa, it must have been a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) for his Arahantship. It must have been a subject of meditation for his eloquence. We should think of it in that way.

Through these Dhamma talks, we must become more energetic. Whether as lay women or lay men disciples, it is good to recall the time of the Buddha. Now, things are going in the opposite direction. We must shatter the perception of "inability" prevalent in this era, arouse the perception of "ability", and strive. It is true. There are a thousand obstacles within the modernizing trend. But if someone thinks wisely, discards unnecessary things, keeps close what is valuable and necessary, and makes an effort during this short life-span without putting it off further, they will be able to achieve those supreme goals they hope for.

Therefore, today as well, you should observe a valuable virtue (*sīla*), without looking down on it, without thinking: "We do not need qualities like virtue; we can jump straight to the fruits of the path." Instead, turning away from the daily pattern of life, and inclining towards the practice of the Arahants at least for a single day, observe a valuable virtue (*sīla*), and spend this day directing your mind to your Dhamma study and meditation. It is in such a situation that, if one is to understand, one can understand properly. Therefore, understanding these words of ours, on one hand, if there are shortcomings in your views, correct them with right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). We must use

the very words of the Rājañña: "Having been in such a sinful view, it is due to Ven. Kumāra Kassapa Mahā Arahant that I, who was bound for hell, obtained such a celestial rebirth." Thinking in this way, we must understand the value of all three: giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*), in the light of this Dhamma talk.

All of this is done during the short time we live. Because if this valuable opportunity is lost, many people indeed think with fear about the place where they will be born next. "We do not know where we will be born, if rebirth is a truth." The Buddha points out its danger. If one becomes a Stream-enterer at least, the greatness of the arising of the Dhamma-eye is that, once that Dhamma-eye has arisen, one loses the eligibility to go to hell, and one loses the eligibility to go to the animal world, through the eradication of the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). There lies the secret. Therefore, the Buddha has shown that even by the measure of the arising of that Dhamma-eye, one escapes a vast mass of suffering (*dukkha-kkhandha*) in saṁsāra. Understanding these, discarding the perception of "inability", and arousing the perception of "ability", may this sermon delivered today help you to proceed further and further on this path of Dhamma! Let us make that aspiration.

Aspiring thus, as we constantly say, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, if anyone wishes to rejoice in the merit of this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening, may they, through that rejoicing, realize the supreme goal through their aspired Bodhi! Recite these verses with that aspiration.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #55

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.208)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Kena-ssu nivuto loko, kena-ssu nappakāsati;

Kissābhilepanaṃ brūsi, kiṃsu tassa mahabbhayaṃ?

Avijjāya nivuto loko, icchāya nappakāsati;

Taṇhābhilepanaṃ brūmi, dukkhamassa mahabbhayaṃ.

Savanti sabbadhi sotā, sotānaṃ kiṃ nivāraṇaṃ?

Sotānaṃ saṃvaraṃ brūhi, kena sotā pidhiyyare?

Yāni sotāni lokasmiṃ, sati tesaṃ nivāraṇaṃ;

Sotānaṃ saṃvaraṃ brūmi, paññāyete pidhiyyare.

From:

Parāyana Vagga, Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

The Supreme Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, introduces the world to us as a place enveloped in ignorance (*avijjā*). The entire Buddhist path of practice is a journey from ignorance (*avijjā*) to wisdom (*vijjā*)—a journey from darkness to light. It is a few verses revealing this fact that we have taken today as our theme. These verses are found in the *Ajita Māṇava Pucchā* (The Questions of the Youth Ajita) in the *Pārāyana Vagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. The introductory story of these verses is the account concerning the Brahmin Bāvarī. Briefly stated, Bāvarī was a Brahmin teacher who had mastered the Vedic texts. He left the Kosala country with his sixteen disciples and set out for the far regions of Southern India, known at that time as the *Dakkhiṇāpatha* (Southern Path). He departed in search of 'nothingness' (*ākiñcaññāyatana*), the sphere of nothingness.

Having traveled a long distance, this group built a hermitage and resided on the banks of the River Godāvarī, in an area belonging to the King of Assaka. The number of disciples in that hermitage gradually increased, and the surrounding village also became prosperous. The king directed the revenue of that village to this hermitage. However, the Brahmin Bāvarī used those funds from time to time to conduct grand sacrifices.

On one occasion, after using that revenue to conduct a grand sacrifice, just as the Brahmin teacher Bāvarī returned to the hermitage, a certain visiting Brahmin arrived and demanded, "Give me five hundred coins (Kahāpaṇas)." Then the Brahmin Bāvarī said, "All my wealth for almsgiving has been exhausted. There is no way I can give you five hundred coins." Thereupon, this deceitful Brahmin said, "If you cannot give me what I ask, within seven days your head will split into seven pieces." Because of this curse, the Brahmin Bāvarī became terrified. Seeing him sitting in grief, unable to eat or practice absorption (*jhāna*), a benevolent deity approached Bāvarī to console him, saying, "That deceitful Brahmin does not know what the head is, nor does he know the splitting of the head. That Brahmin has no knowledge regarding this." Then the Brahmin Bāvarī asked the deity, "Do you know what the head is, and what the splitting of the head is?" The deity replied, "I too do not know. Knowledge regarding the head and the splitting of the head is unique only to the Buddhas. The Buddhas are the ones who possess that knowledge." Then Bāvarī said, "If there is anyone on this entire earth who knows this matter, tell me about them." It was then that the deity revealed the news: "Having departed from the city of Kapilavastu, the Lion of the Sakyas, the Savior of the World, has attained Supreme Enlightenment. He is residing in the Kosala country, preaching the Dhamma to the world, fully liberated. Go to that Supreme Buddha and ask this question." The moment he heard the name "Sambuddha" (Fully Enlightened One), the Brahmin's grief was appeased, and his heart leaped with joy. Then he asked, "In which village, province, or city does the Blessed One reside?" The deity replied, "In Savatthi, in the Kosala country."

Since the Brahmin Bāvarī was very advanced in age, he called his sixteen disciples and said, "A Buddha, a Fully Enlightened One, who rarely appears in the world, has now arisen. Go and meet the Supreme Buddha." When he said this, those disciples asked, "How are we to recognize that he is indeed a Buddha?" Then the Brahmin Bāvarī replied, "In our Vedic texts, there is mention of the thirty-two marks of a Great Man. If those marks are present on a person's body, there are only two paths open to him. If he remains a layman, he will become a Wheel-Turning Monarch (*Cakkavattī*). If he goes forth into homelessness, he will attain Supreme Enlightenment. When you go and meet the Buddha, ask him these questions in your mind: ask about my age, my clan, my learning, the marks on my body, and the number of my disciples. Ask these mentally. Furthermore, ask mentally about the head and the splitting of the head. Since the Buddha possesses unobstructed knowledge and vision (*anāvaraṇa-ñāṇa-dassana*), he will answer the questions asked mentally with spoken words."

That group of disciples set out on the long journey from the *Dakkhiṇāpatha*. There were sixteen disciples in this group: Ajita, Tissa Metteyya, Puṇṇaka, Mettagū, Dhotaka,

Upasīva, Nanda, Hemaka, Todeyya, Kappa, Jatukaṇṇī, Bhadrāvudha, Udaya, Posāla, Mogharāja, and Piṅgiya. As this group completed their long journey, the Buddha was at the Pāsāṇaka Shrine in Magadha, preaching to the Sangha. Having climbed that hill, the youth Ajita asked in his mind the questions entrusted to him by the Brahmin Bāvarī. First, he asked about Bāvarī himself. The Buddha answered in words: "The Brahmin Bāvarī is one hundred and twenty years old. His clan name is Bāvarī. There are three of the thirty-two marks of a Great Man on his body. He is a master of the Vedas. He has five hundred disciples." He explained in this manner. The listening crowd was astonished at how the Buddha could declare these things without any verbal question being asked. After that, the chief disciple, Ajita, asked the specified question in his mind. The Brahmin Bāvarī asks: "What is the head, and what is the splitting of the head?" It was then that the Buddha declared this in a verse:

Avijjā muddhā ti jānāhi,

vijjā muddhādhipātinī,

Saddhā-sati-samādhīhi,

chanda-vīriyena saṁyutā.

That verse declares: "Know that ignorance (*avijjā*) is the head. The splitting of the head is wisdom (*vijjā*). That wisdom (*vijjā*) is accompanied by faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), desire (*chanda*), and energy (*vīriya*)." The moment this verse was uttered, the sixteen disciples, headed by Ajita, prostrated with great devotion at the feet of the Buddha, declaring that Bāvarī and his disciples paid homage to the Blessed One. When they said this, the Buddha blessed them, wishing that Bāvarī as well as his disciples may be happy. He gave a special blessing to the youth Ajita: "May you too be happy! May you live long!" Then he invited them: "If Bāvarī or any of you have any questions, ask them. I will answer." It was at that moment that the chief disciple Ajita presented his questions through the verses we chose as our theme. In this *Pārāyana Vagga*, the questions of all sixteen disciples and the answers given to them by the Buddha are recorded in a very profound manner. The question asked by the youth Ajita is what we took as our theme.

Kena-ssu nivuto loko,

kena-ssu nappakāsati,

Kissābhilepanaṁ brūsi,

kiṁsu tassa mahabbhayaṁ.

By what is the world enveloped?

Why does it not shine?

What is its sticky smear?

What is its great terror?

Now, the Buddha answers:

Avijjāya nivuto loko,

vevichā pamādā nappakāsati,

Jappābhilepanaṁ brūmi,

dukkhaṁ assa mahabbhayaṁ.

The world is enveloped by ignorance (*avijjā*).

Because of stinginess and negligence, it does not shine.

Craving (*taṇhā*) is its sticky smear, I declare.

Suffering (*dukkha*) is its great terror.

Then, the youth Ajita asks another question:

Savanti sabbadhī sotā,

sotānaṁ kiṁ nivāraṇaṁ,

Sotānaṁ saṁvaraṁ brūhi,

kena sotā pithiyyare.

Streams flow everywhere.

What is the dam for these streams?

Tell me the restraint for the streams.

By what are the streams shut off?

Now, the Buddha answers:

Yāni sotāni lokasmiṁ,

sati tesaṁ nivāraṇaṁ,

Sotānaṁ saṁvaraṁ brūmi,

paññāy'ete pithiyyare.

Whatever streams of craving (*taṇhā*) there are in the world,

Mindfulness (*sati*) is their dam, their prevention.

I declare it to be the restraint of the streams.

But by wisdom (*paññā*) they are completely shut off.

Thus, the questions and the answers given by the Buddha have been declared. Now, we have to say something about this. You must have understood, devout friends, that these verses mainly speak about ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), which we frequently encounter. Anyone who knows the Dhamma has read about these factors in various places. Particularly in the *Anamatagga Saṁyutta*, the statement made by the Buddha regarding ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) is indeed wonderful.

"Bhikkhave, saṁsāro anamataggo, pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṁ sattānaṁ taṇhāsaṁyojanānaṁ sandhāvataṁ saṁsarataṁ..."

"Monks, this saṁsāra is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings hindered by ignorance (*avijjā*) and fettered by craving (*taṇhā*) faring on and running through saṁsāra." It is impossible to see a starting point for this running and wandering in saṁsāra, enveloped by ignorance (*avijjā*) and bound by craving (*taṇhā*). The Buddha also indicates in some places that a beginning limit of ignorance (*avijjā*) cannot be shown by saying, "Prior to this, ignorance (*avijjā*) did not exist, and it arose only thereafter." It is because of these two—ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*)—that beings wander for such a long time in saṁsāra. Next, it was mentioned here that the world is enveloped by ignorance (*avijjā*). What is this world? What is this world!! Let us try to understand what "the world" means according to the Dhamma and according to common usage. Today, many people talk about the world. But although they talk about it, those who do not even have an understanding of the world often express various opinions. The Buddha introduces the world to us. He points it out in various suttas. On one occasion, the Venerable Samiddhi asks the Buddha:

"Loko, loko'ti, bhante, vuccati. Kittāvatā nu kho, bhante, loko vā assa lokapaññatti vā'ti?"

"Venerable sir, it is said 'the world, the world.' To what extent, venerable sir, is there a world or a description of a world?" Then the Buddha says:

"Yattha kho, Samiddhi, atthi cakkhu, atthi rūpā, atthi cakkhuviññāṇaṁ, atthi cakkhuviññāṇatabbā dhammā, atthi tattha loko vā lokapaññatti vā."

"Where there is the eye, Samiddhi, where there are forms, where there is eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*), where there are things to be cognized by eye-consciousness (*viññāṇa*), there is the world or the designation of the world." In this manner, the world is described based on the six sense bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Similar analyses are found in many places. On one occasion, Venerable Ānanda addresses the monks and states: *"Yena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṁ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, ayaṁ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko."* "That by which one is a perceiver of the world and a conceiver of the world, friend, is called the world in the discipline of the Noble Ones." By what does one become a perceiver and a conceiver of the world? By the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body,

and mind. By these. We understand that the world is that which is contained within the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*), where the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*) begins.

Next, to gain a deeper understanding of this, let us present a valuable story. In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, in one place, a Brahmin named Verañja used a few derogatory words to insult the Buddha. The Buddha elevated every word to a new meaning, turned it toward the Dhamma, and cleansed the filth from that word. One word used by this Verañja Brahmin was: *"Apagabbho samaṇo Gotamo"* (The ascetic Gotama is devoid of embryonic growth/sterile). He meant a bad birth, born from a foul womb—something like an abusive term in modern times. Then the Buddha said, "Yes, that is true. I am indeed *apagabbha*. I will not undergo birth in a mother's womb again. Therefore, what you said is correct." But he did not stop there. He gave a novel simile: "Brahmin, suppose a hen has eight, ten, or twelve eggs and sits on them properly. If one of those chicks is the first to break through the eggshell with its claw or beak and come out safely, what would you call that chick, Brahmin—the youngest or the eldest?" The Brahmin replied, "Master Gotama, I would call it the eldest." "In the same way, Brahmin," the Buddha connected, "among those beings who are enveloped by ignorance (*avijjā*), imprisoned inside the eggshell of ignorance (*avijjā*), I am the very first to break through that eggshell and come out. Therefore, I am the eldest in the world."

Based on this, we can contemplate: what is the eggshell? What is the eggshell? The eggshell in which the entire world is trapped is the eggshell of the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*) that we mentioned earlier. Everyone, including scientists, is trapped inside this. Then, what does it mean to break the eggshell and come out? It is to become world-transcending (*lokuttara*). Everyone talks about the experience limited to this eggshell. This is what scientists talk about, and what everyone knows. But the Buddha points out another side. Even when there is the cessation of the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*), there is a certain experience. That is indeed the coming out of the eggshell. Liberation is there. Nibbāna is there. Think about it from that perspective. We have provided a deeper meaning of ignorance (*avijjā*) and the world from that.

Next, let us speak about craving (*taṇhā*). Often, when speaking about craving (*taṇhā*), the word *lepa* (smear/glue) is used; sometimes it is called *visattikā*. *Visattikā* means a sticky substance. The quality of binding is also what is found in the fetters (*saṁyojana*). Thus, ignorance (*avijjā*) veils, and craving (*taṇhā*) adheres, or binds. Sometimes we refer to these two as the father and mother of saṁsāra. It is through these two that this entire suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra is accumulated. When we look at Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), we see that starting with 'dependent on ignorance' (*avijjā-paccayā*), craving (*taṇhā*) is found in the middle. Whichever way you look at it, these two are the main factors.

On one occasion, in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṁyutta*, the Buddha gives another valuable simile showing this sticky nature of craving (*taṇhā*). "Monks, there are level regions in the Himālaya mountains where both humans and monkeys roam. In such a region, a monkey-catcher sets a sticky trap of pitch to catch monkeys. Suppose the pitch is

smeared on a piece of wood or a tree trunk. It must be a tasty pitch for monkeys. The Buddha states that those monkeys who are not greedy and have some understanding will see the pitch from afar and keep away. But a greedy and foolish monkey comes along, sees the pitch, and catches it with one hand. It gets stuck. He tries to free it with his second hand. That too gets stuck. He brings a foot close to free the hand. That too gets stuck. He brings his second foot. That too gets stuck. After that, he brings his mouth close to free his hands. That too gets stuck. Now, when he is stuck in five places, the monkey-catcher comes, shoots him, and carries the monkey away along with the piece of wood." What does this simile represent? The five cords of sensual pleasure. The five cords of sensual pleasure are just like that, the Buddha points out through this simile. That sticky nature is well illustrated by this simile. This entire suffering (*dukkha*) is prepared within these two. *Jappābhilepanaṁ brūmi* (Craving is the sticky smear in which the world is stuck).

Next, the greatest fear in the world is suffering (*dukkha*). The suttas on Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) also show us how suffering (*dukkha*) is prepared—how this entire mass of suffering (*dukkha*) is prepared. Beginning with ignorance (*avijjā*), joined by craving (*taṇhā*), these two combine to finally prepare the entire five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). That is what was shown in the main points of the first verse. Next, another nature of craving (*taṇhā*) is mentioned. The youth Ajita asks: *Savanti sabbadhī sotā*—"Streams flow everywhere. How are they to be dammed?" This is the question he asks. Those streams are sometimes described as being thirty-six in number: *Yassa chattiṁsatī sotā, manāpasavana bhūsā* (He whose thirty-six streams flow strongly towards pleasant things). This is explained as follows: the streams of craving (*taṇhā*) flow through the senses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind towards their respective objects. When these six are multiplied by the three types of craving—craving for sensual pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*), and craving for non-becoming (*vibhava-taṇhā*)—they become eighteen. When multiplied by the two aspects of internal and external, they become thirty-six. Some commentaries show that when multiplied by the three periods of time—past, future, and present—they become one hundred and eight. How are these one hundred and eight streams of craving (*taṇhā*) to be dammed? This is Ajita's question. The Buddha says: by mindfulness (*sati*). It is by mindfulness (*sati*). *Sati nivāraṇaṁ* (mindfulness is their dam). That is why you can understand, devout friends, why the Buddha has given such a prominent place to the four establishments of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhāna*) as the direct path (*ekāyana maggo*). This mindfulness and wisdom (*paññā*) are indeed the most practically important things among these teachings. There are many other suttas revealing the importance of mindfulness (*sati*). We point each of these out so that you may ponder deeply upon them.

On one occasion, a Brahmin named Unṇābha came to the Buddha and asked: "These five faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—have different domains and different pastures. That is, the eye is for seeing forms and cannot do what the ear does. The ear cannot see forms. In this way, their respective pastures—what is called the objective field—are different. The pasture of the eye is form; forms are the pasture of the eye.

Sounds are the pasture of the ear, and so on. The pasture fields of these five are different. Then, Master Gotama, what is the resort (*paṭisaraṇa*) for these pastures brought in by the five sense faculties? Where do they go and gather?" The Buddha replied: "The mind (*manas*)." You can contemplate this, devout friends. What is brought from these five external sense bases gathers in the mind (*manas*). Then he asks another question: "What is the resort (*paṭisaraṇa*) of the mind?" The Buddha's answer to this is mindfulness (*sati*). The resort of the mind is mindfulness (*sati*). This goes even further. From an ordinary point of view, it seems as if there is no problem, but the entire Dhamma is contained within this. Next, he asks: "What is the resort of mindfulness?" The resort of mindfulness is liberation (*vimutti*). "What is the resort of liberation?" The resort of liberation is Nibbāna. There the discussion ends.

From this we see how important mindfulness (*sati*) is. Once what is brought by the body-senses comes to the mind, some control can be exercised over them through mindfulness (*sati*). That is why in so many suttas you have heard, especially when describing sense restraint, mindfulness (*sati*) is depicted as a gatekeeper (*dvārapāla*). It is said, "guarded as to the doors of the faculties" (*indriyesu guttadvāratā*). It is the job of a gatekeeper to let in suitable people and close the door when unsuitable people arrive. In other places, mindfulness is described as "the protecting charioteer" (*sati-ārakkha-sārathī*). There are occasions where this is shown through the simile of a chariot. The charioteer who drives the chariot, the one engaged in guarding, the gatekeeper—in this manner, the function of mindfulness (*sati*) is shown. It provides protection to the mind. That is why mindfulness is shown to be so important in this verse. But the last line can sometimes be a problem. Mindfulness (*sati*) only does the damming. It only temporarily blocks the flowing streams. This is completely, thoroughly shut off by wisdom (*paññā*). There lies the problem.

What is this wisdom (*paññā*)? How does this wisdom (*paññā*) shut off all these streams? From there, let us go a bit deeper. Now we declared the story of the head and the splitting of the head. That indeed is the basis of this entire sermon. Then, ignorance (*avijjā*) was said to be the head. The splitting of the head means the shattering of ignorance (*avijjā*). How is ignorance (*avijjā*) shattered? It is through the shattering of ignorance (*avijjā*) that wisdom (*vijjā*) emerges. When ignorance (*avijjā*) ceases, wisdom (*vijjā*) arises. Wisdom (*vijjā*) means realization. When speaking about realization, the topic of wisdom (*paññā*) arises. Wisdom (*paññā*) is shown as a light in some places. We mentioned being trapped inside an eggshell. It is only after breaking the eggshell and coming out that one sees things as they truly are. To the one trapped inside the eggshell, nothing beyond is visible. That is why wisdom (*paññā*) is described in a wonderful manner. In some places, wisdom (*paññā*) is shown as an eye. You may have heard of the fleshly eye, the divine eye, and the wisdom eye. Everyone has the fleshly eye (*maṁsa-cakkhu*). Next is the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), which is attained by sages and those who have attained absorptions (*jhāna*). Even higher than that is the wisdom eye (*paññā-cakkhu*) introduced to the world by the Buddha. There is a certain passage describing wisdom (*paññā*) and how that wisdom eye is brought to light:

"Udayatthagāminī paññā ariyā nibbedhikā sammā dukkhakkhayagāminī."

"The noble, penetrative wisdom (*paññā*) that goes to the rise and fall (of phenomena), and leads to the complete destruction of suffering (*dukkha*)." The seed of this wisdom (*paññā*), or its beginning, starts in a manner suited to the realization of the yogi. It is the wisdom (*paññā*) that sees the arising and passing away of things. The world stands on the side of arising (*samudaya*). Generally, cessation (*nirodha*) is not within their domain. The worldling disregards cessation and constantly goes from arising to arising. That is what is called craving (*taṇhā*). It leads to renewed existence (*ponobbhavikā*), pulling and sticking from existence to existence. The primary function of wisdom (*paññā*) is to bring to light the veiled cessation (*nirodha*). Its primary aspect is that the yogi understands the arising and passing away of this world—its impermanence (*aniccatā*)—through these two words. We can call it *samudaya-vaya* (arising and passing away). We can call it *udayatthagama* (rise and fall). This is the nature of preparations (*saṅkhāra*).

Aniccā vata saṅkhārā,

uppādavayadhammino,

Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti,

tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho.

"Impermanent (*anicca*) indeed are preparations (*saṅkhāra*), subject to rise and fall. Having arisen, they cease; their calming is bliss." Everything is contained right there. It is not something that happens after death. "Impermanent indeed are preparations (*saṅkhāra*)"—every preparation (*saṅkhāra*) is impermanent (*anicca*). "Subject to rise and fall"—their nature is arising and passing away. "Having arisen, they cease"—they arise only to cease. "Their calming is bliss"—that is the very thing that leads to wisdom (*paññā*), the path leading to cessation (*nirodha*).

In some places, that wisdom (*paññā*) is shown as a light. These may sometimes be a problem for someone. They might think of these statements made by the Buddha in various places as mere similes. There are many similes for light. It is called *ābhā* (radiance); it is called *pabhā* (splendor). There is a sutta that some do not take very seriously, thinking of it merely as something beautifully said: *"Catasso imā, bhikkhave, pabhā. Katamā catasso? Candappabhā, sūriyappabhā, aggippabhā, paññāpabhā. Etadaggaṁ, bhikkhave, imāsaṁ catunnaṁ pabhānaṁ yadidaṁ paññāpabhā."* "There are these four splendors, monks. Which four? The splendor of the moon, the splendor of the sun, the splendor of fire, and the splendor of wisdom (*paññā*). Among these, the splendor of wisdom (*paññā*) is supreme." All other splendors are surpassed by this splendor of wisdom (*paññā*). One can understand that this is not a statement made lightly. We said that this is a journey from ignorance (*avijjā*) to wisdom (*vijjā*), a journey from darkness to light. That light is contained within the word *paññā*. It is called the lamp of wisdom (*paññā-pajjoto*). In many places describing the direct experience of the Arahants, the final mention is:

"Paññāya tassa disvā āsavānaṁ parikkhayaṁ gacchati."

"Having seen with wisdom (*paññā*), his influxes are completely destroyed." It is because of this that we said these flowing torrents of craving (*taṇhā*) cannot be completely shut off by mindfulness (*sati*) alone. It must be done by wisdom (*paññā*) itself. Because the word *āsava* (influx/canker) also contains the meaning of "flowing." As long as the influxes are not destroyed, liberation is not complete. It is only when those influxes are destroyed that everything is completed. This light, the light of wisdom (*paññā*), is an internal light. That light, as mentioned here, surpasses the splendor of the moon and the sun. There is a verse related to this, which scholars have discussed for a long time, at the end of the *Bāhiya Sutta*:

Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī,

tejo vāyo na gādhati,

Na tattha sukkā jotanti,

ādicco nappakāsati,

Na tattha candimā bhāti,

tamo tattha na vijjati.

Yadā ca attanāvedi,

muni monena brāhmaṇo,

Atha rūpā arūpā ca,

sukhadukkhā pamuccatī'ti.

This stands as a great riddle-like verse. After the ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya attained Arahantship instantly and passed away (*parinibbāna*), the Buddha uttered this extremely profound verse as an inspired utterance (*udāna*). This matter is expressed subtly within it.

"Where water, earth, fire, and wind find no footing." In which consciousness (*viññāṇa*)? Everyone is established within these great elements (*mahābhūta*), but they do not reside, they find no footing, in that mind. In such a state: "There the stars do not shine." "The sun does not shed its light." "The moon does not beam." What is the reason? Within that splendor of wisdom (*paññā*), all those objects that give light to the world are rendered lusterless. The world sees things through a medium. To see, they need a medium. In the night, they need starlight, or they need moonlight, or they need sunlight. Otherwise, they need fire—which includes electricity, and so forth. It is through such light that we see. But when the light of wisdom (*paññā*) comes, those other lights are made lusterless. The moon, sun, and stars all lose their luster. That is what we have to say, because those things are not caught up in that state. That splendor of wisdom (*paññā*) at the moment of release from the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*) is what is

called the destruction of the influxes. "Having seen with wisdom (*paññā*)"—having seen through that wisdom, the influxes are destroyed. That is liberation.

The word wisdom (*paññā*) coming after mindfulness (*sati*) becomes extremely important. Some explain this in various ways. A good proof of this is mentioned in the *Ajita Māṇava Pucchā* itself. After receiving answers to those verses, the youth Ajita asks the Buddha: "Where does Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) cease completely?" (*Nāmañca rūpañca, asesaṁ uparujjhati*). At that point, the Buddha says: "With the cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇa-nirodha*), it ceases completely" (*Viññāṇassa nirodhena, uparujjhati*). Two words are mentioned there: cessation (*nirodha*) and complete cessation (*uparodhana*). Cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇa-nirodha*) means that the prepared consciousness (*abhisaṅkhata-viññāṇa*), the un-Arahant consciousness, exists depending on Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). When that prepared consciousness (*saṅkhata-viññāṇa*) which existed depending on Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) ceases, that state is called the unmanifestative consciousness (*anidassana-viññāṇa*). That consciousness (*viññāṇa*) does not show Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). That unmanifestative consciousness (*anidassana-viññāṇa*) is indeed the state of the liberated mind. There, the moon, sun, etc., find no place. At the conclusion of the sutta, something similar is said:

"Viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ, anantaṁ sabbato pabhaṁ..."

"Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that is non-manifestative, infinite, radiant all-round; here water, earth, fire, and wind find no footing; here long and short, fine and coarse, pleasant and unpleasant (Name-and-Form cease completely)." In this manner, the verse goes on. That is, that unmanifestative consciousness (*anidassana-viññāṇa*), the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that does not manifest Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), is that liberated mind. It is infinite (*anantaṁ*); there are no limits such as long or short. "Radiant all-round" (*sabbato pabhaṁ*)—it is luminous in every way. That is the reason. Because it is luminous in every way, this is a state where everything the world regards as light-giving objects is rendered lusterless. That is why it was said that the moon, sun, etc., do not shine. What is obtained from this is not the meaning obtained from ordinary words. The light of wisdom (*paññā*) is not something external. It is something that comes from within. In the presence of that light of wisdom (*paññā*) that comes from within, the entire world of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) ceases, or is completely stopped. That completely stopped state is what exists in the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samāpatti*). We have pointed out the relevant suttas on various occasions. If the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*) is the world, then the cessation of the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*) is the world-transcending (*lokuttara*) state. It is the moment of breaking through the eggshell and coming out. It is not the vision thought of by the ordinary world. That vision is an entirely open vision; it exists within that open mind. What is put together is called the prepared (*saṅkhata*). Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is a prepared thing. If we are to say a little more about how it is made, we have explained these to some extent in sermons on Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).

The twelve factors of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), as we all know, begin indeed with ignorance (*avijjā*). But as we have pointed out, within that darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*), a certain preparation (*saṅkhāra*) is made. We can say that preparation is like groping in the dark. Through that groping in the dark, the worldling makes that preparation (*saṅkhāra*). Sometimes it is shown as follows. The most basic preparation (*saṅkhāra*) necessary for existence (*bhava*) is inhalation and exhalation. Inhalation and exhalation are what give the feeling of self and world. The breath taken in is something taken from the external world. Having taken it in, it is given back to the world. Right there, one is caught up in the world. Inhalation and exhalation are indeed described as "bodily preparation" (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), in the context of "dependent on ignorance, preparations arise" (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*). Next is "verbal preparation" (*vacī-saṅkhāra*); people in the world use words to live, to exchange ideas. But beneath that are initial and sustained mental application (*vitakka-vicāra*), which are described as preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Before uttering a word, if it is a question, one thinks for a long time before uttering the word. Think of it in such situations.

The Buddha did not refer to *kamma* there as *saṅkhāra*, but to the extremely subtle aspect of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Inhalation and exhalation—these too belong to existence (*bhava*). Existence is right there. Taking a breath in, one tries to hold it. When it is gone, one quickly takes another breath. Craving (*taṇhā*) is right there. Ignorance (*avijjā*) is right there. In order to protect this internally grasped body, thoughts (*vitakka-vicāra*) are used, and words are uttered through them. Next, "mental preparation" (*citta-saṅkhāra*) is feeling and perception (*saññā vedanā*). It is because of perception (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*) that intentions, etc., are prepared, and we are prompted to act. What is done by those preparations (*saṅkhāra*) against the background of ignorance (*avijjā*)? Through them, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) emerge as two. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) means discrimination. One person's consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is different from another's consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Even if all else is equal, when looking at it in terms of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), it is an extremely personal thing. The world is reflected in consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). We have pointed this out. It is recognized through the mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*), along with the great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind. Consider that as humans, the experience we derive from those feelings, perceptions, and intentions is not shared by animals, or by birds, or by creatures in the water. They have a different world. Their world of the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*) is different. That is why the Buddha always described the world in terms of the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*). The Buddha showed the world through the personal sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*) of each individual being, because the origin of the world and the cessation of the world are right there. When speaking about the cessation of the world, this is the kind of thing that is found there. The prepared (*saṅkhata*) is constructed between Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Next, "dependent on Name-and-Form, the sixfold sense base arises" (*nāmarūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanaṁ*). We called that duality which arose between consciousness

(*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) "the two." A split into two. That is also present within the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*). The sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*), devout friends, means the six sense bases, which go in pairs: eye and form, ear and sound, and so forth. So much so that on one occasion the Buddha declared: "Monks, I will teach you the dyad. What is the dyad? The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile objects, the mind and mental phenomena." Then the Buddha makes a challenge: "Monks, if anyone should say there is another dyad in the world apart from this, it would be empty chatter." This shows that this is the dyad. It is through the conflict between these two that the aggregates are accumulated. The eye clings to forms, or conflicts with them. The ear clings to sounds, and so on. Next, through that, *kamma* is accumulated.

We spoke about Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*): feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Remember the simile of the five fingers we gave. We said feeling (*vedanā*) is the little finger, perception (*saññā*) is the middle finger, next is contact (*phassa*) which comes to dispute, the index finger, and finally the thumb is attention (*manasikāra*). We showed in various ways that the journey towards this wisdom (*paññā*) begins with radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). We illustrated this through various similes. Even if we look at it legally, using stories from the world, if there is no witness, a court case must be dismissed. This problem between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) was like a court case without a witness, which even the ancient sages of the deep past could not resolve. How to understand consciousness (*viññāṇa*)? It is through consciousness (*viññāṇa*) itself that everything is presented to us. How to understand it? It was there that the Buddha applied the middle path. He made one of the defendants a witness. Who is the biggest culprit? Attention (*manasikāra*). Having pardoned that inappropriate attention (*ayonisomanasikāra*) which, combining ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), committed this crime, he turned it into radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), saying, "You tell us the internal story." In the Dhamma, radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means doing things in the proper manner, and it is based on this that one travels on the path of wisdom (*paññā*).

The passing away, the cessation (*nirodha*), which is invisible to the ordinary world, is seen correctly as impermanence (*aniccatā*) by the noble disciple, the yogi. What the ordinary world calls "impermanent" is when something that existed decays, is discarded, and another is taken. The world does not know any impermanence (*aniccatā*) deeper than that. The Buddha showed that this is a wisdom (*paññā*) that penetrates. Why did he call it penetrating? *Ariyāya nibbedhikāya* (noble and penetrative)—the moment something arises, one sees that its nature is to be destroyed. There lies the penetration. The world's side is the side of arising (*samudaya*). Forgetting cessation (*nirodha*), they highlight only arising (*samudaya*). Within that, they stick things together, one to another, through craving (*taṇhā*). Instead of that, the yogi highlights cessation (*nirodha*), though with difficulty, through the two aspects of arising and passing away. Therein lies liberation. Because if everything that arises ceases, no permanent stance can be taken there. It cannot be taken as "me" or "mine." That penetration is what is called

penetrative wisdom (*nibbedhikā paññā*). Gradually, through that impermanence (*aniccatā*), the mind arises, and cessation (*nirodha*) comes to the fore. Because if everything that has arisen ceases, that is what the mind must be applied to. Liberation is also there. Many scholars today distinguish this path leading to cessation (*nirodha*) by putting the prepared (*saṅkhata*) on one side and the Unprepared (*asaṅkhata*) on the other. But this is where it lies. That consciousness (*viññāṇa*) we spoke of is a prepared consciousness (*abhisaṅkhata-viññāṇa*), a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that manifests Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). If on some occasion, having developed disillusionment towards Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) in that manner, the meditator contemplates the preparations of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa-saṅkhāra*)—the objects that come to the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are described as Name-and-Form preparations (*nāmarūpa-saṅkhāra*). Within the objects that come to them, there are indeed those feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), intentions (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*), and the great elements grasped by them are right there. In any object, whether form or sound, if on some occasion one sees their impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and unsubstantial (*anattā*) nature and frees the mind from them, then indeed arises "non-manifestative consciousness" (*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ*), the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that does not reflect Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Therein lies that liberation. That indeed is the splendor described as "radiant all-round" (*sabbato pabhaṁ*).

A truly wonderful sermon. What the Buddha has shown here is the difference between the world and the world-transcending (*lokuttara*) state. Generally, most people explain the world-transcending (*lokuttara*) state—for example, when an Arahant passes away (*parinibbāna*)—by saying that they go and are born in some place where there is no sun, moon, or stars. That is how it has been understood for a long time. But the depth lies here. That is the great wisdom (*paññā*) that comes from within. It is unmediated. The world generally sees through a medium, by moonlight, by starlight. This is not like that. It is a splendor that comes from within. What is shown through that splendor? The emptiness (*suññatā*) of the world. How to see the emptiness (*suññatā*) of the world? When light comes from all sides (*sabbato pabhaṁ*). Suppose there is something transparent like a piece of glass. If a great light shines on it, it reaches a state where it becomes invisible. In the same way, if one sees deeply the nature of this prepared (*saṅkhata*) world that the world has conjured up, on some occasion the mind becomes liberated. It is through that liberation that Nibbāna is spoken of. What is the result there? It is only as long as consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is bound that there is a future birth. The liberated mind is sometimes described as an island. It is often said that when Arahants are absorbed in the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samāpatti*), they do not hear even a thunderbolt. That is the state of release from the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*). That is experiencing the bliss of Nibbāna in this very life.

Next, at their final moment, that direct experience we spoke of comes to the fore. What is the reason? Even during their lifetime, if they had gained an experience of the deathless (*amata*), if that person had attained the direct realization that there is no fear of death

when craving (*taṇhā*) is destroyed, even when death approaches, what arises at that moment is the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samāpatti*) registered in that mind. It is said that Buddhas and Arahants finally pass away (*parinibbāna*) through an absorption (*jhāna*). But the depth lies in this: from that absorption (*jhāna*), they then enter that attainment of the fruit (*phala-samāpatti*). Breaking through the absorption (*jhāna*), and having entered the attainment of the fruit (*phala-samāpatti*), Buddhas and Arahants let go of the body. That is why, as we described on previous occasions, Arahants like Dabba Mallaputta are recorded to have set fire to their own bodies and attained *parinibbāna*. That is not like lighting a fire in modern times. It is like letting go of a garment and setting fire to it; having put the body aside through their attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samāpatti*), they burned it through the power of the fire-device (*tejo-kasiṇa*). That is a matter showing that liberation. That is why the Buddha even uttered a special inspired verse on that occasion:

Abhedi kāyo, nirodhi saññā,

vedanā sītirahesuṁ sabbā.

Saṅkhārā vūpasamiṁsu,

viññāṇaṁ atthagamā.

When the Arahant Dabba Mallaputta set fire to himself and attained *parinibbāna*, there was neither soot nor ash remaining. That indeed was what the Buddha declared as a special inspired utterance. He showed the state of Nibbāna very clearly.

"The body broke up"—the physical body broke up. "Perception ceased"—perception (*saññā*) was extinguished. "All feelings became cold"—all feelings (*vedanā*) became cool. We might think that when Dabba Mallaputta set fire to himself, he must have felt the heat. No. All feelings (*vedanā*) became cool. "Preparations were stilled"—all preparations (*saṅkhāra*) were calmed. The mind did not go towards a future birth again. "Consciousness came to an end"—consciousness (*viññāṇa*) went to its end, it reached its termination. The entire problem lies within this termination of consciousness (*viññāṇa-atthagama*). For so long, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) goes through saṁsāra with the help of ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), accumulating *kamma*. That is why it is said that the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) are accumulated. In some places in the Dhamma, it is mentioned that all these problems are resolved through the cessation of preparations (*saṅkhāra-nirodha*). The Buddha declared on one occasion:

"Kāye vā, bhikkhave, sati kāyasañcetanahetu uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ."

"Monks, when there is the body, internally pleasure and pain arise due to bodily intention." Similarly, when there is speech, pleasure and pain arise in connection with speech. When there is the mind, the same is declared. All these are said to have ignorance (*avijjā*) as their condition. But finally, it is shown:

"Avijjāyatveva asesa-virāga-nirodhā so kāyo na hoti yaṁ-paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ... sā vācā na hoti... so mano na hoti... khettaṁ taṁ na hoti, vatthuṁ taṁ na hoti, āyatanaṁ taṁ na hoti, adhikaraṇaṁ taṁ na hoti yaṁ-paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ."

"But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance (*avijjā*), that body does not exist conditioned by which that internal pleasure and pain arise; that speech does not exist... that mind does not exist... that field does not exist, that site does not exist, that base does not exist, that ground does not exist, conditioned by which that internal pleasure and pain arise." But through the cessation of ignorance (*avijjā*)—at the beginning we said that because of ignorance (*avijjā*), bodily preparations (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), verbal preparations (*vacī-saṅkhāra*), and mental preparations (*citta-saṅkhāra*) arise. This says that when ignorance (*avijjā*) is completely ceased, there is no body, no words, and no mind. Those are shown as the places where *kamma* was accumulated. Liberation, the state of *parinibbāna*, is shown as something mysterious. That is why there is a truly wonderful sermon of the Buddha. We have delivered separate sermons on these. It is a grand sermon that even foreigners are astonished by. For those who seek liberation elsewhere, this is a great answer:

"Imasmiṁ yeva byāmamatte kaḷevare sasaññimhi samanake lokañca paññāpemi lokasamudayañca lokanirodhañca lokanirodhagāminiñca paṭipadaṁ."

"In this very fathom-long carcass, endowed with perception (*saññā*) and mind (*manas*), I declare the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." Within this carcass, which is endowed with perception (*saññā*) and mind (*manas*)—not a dead carcass, but within this physical frame endowed with perception (*saññā*) and mind (*manas*)—I declare the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world. It was because of this matter that the Buddha uttered this wonderful lion's roar. Therefore, this wisdom (*paññā*) we spoke of, "the wisdom (*paññā*) that goes to the rise and fall" (*udayatthagāmiṇī paññā*), is where a yogi has to begin. Through the cultivation of the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), that impermanence (*aniccatā*) is seen in two aspects: arising and passing away. Along that, the mind goes deeper and deeper. It is there that attention (*manasikāra*)—the defendant we made into a witness—finally reveals the story through radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).

As one sees each of these extremely subtly through radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), impermanence (*aniccatā*) comes to the fore. Cessation (*nirodha*) comes to the fore. Then, just as existence (*bhava*) grows through that arising (*samudaya*), when cessation (*nirodha*) comes to the fore, right there is the cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*). That is what comes to the fore. That is why the Buddha declares almost everywhere: *Bhava-nirodho nibbānaṁ, bhava-nirodho nibbānaṁ*—"The cessation of existence (*bhava*) is Nibbāna." But when the cessation of existence (*bhava*) is mentioned, many people become afraid, because there is such a great craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) within the world. But this cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*) is shown as a direct experience. The cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*) is a

direct experience obtained in this very life. Within it lies the bliss of liberation. If there is suffering (*dukkha*) within existence (*bhava*), where the cessation of existence (*bhava*) is a direct experience, the bliss of liberation is found right there. That is what is meant by experiencing the bliss of liberation. Even a living Arahant experienced that bliss of liberation as a direct realization. That is why, when speaking about Nibbāna, it is said: *sandiṭṭhiko dhammo*... (Dhamma to be realized here and now). It is something that can be attained and seen. Now, do it! It is not something to be obtained after going to the next world. It is in this very life (*diṭṭheva dhamme*). That is indeed concerning Nibbāna. Then, extinguishing or cooling down means, finally, that mass of saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*). That is it. In various sermons, we highlighted a series of words describing Nibbāna. In applying the mind to Nibbāna as the recollection of peace (*upasamānussati*), that can be used as an aid.

"Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ, yadidaṁ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhākkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṁ."

"This is peaceful, this is sublime, namely, the stilling of all preparations (*sabbasaṅkhārasamatho*), the relinquishing of all assets (*sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo*), the destruction of craving (*taṇhākkhayo*), dispassion (*virāgo*), cessation (*nirodho*), extinguishment (*Nibbānaṁ*)." Within those few words, everything we have said is contained. "The stilling of all preparations" (*sabbasaṅkhārasamatho*)—if all preparations (*saṅkhāra*) have been calmed. "The relinquishing of all assets" (*sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo*)—assets (*upadhi*) refer to the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*); those accumulated five aggregates of grasping are also relinquished. "The destruction of craving" (*taṇhākkhayo*)—craving (*taṇhā*) is destroyed. "Dispassion" (*virāgo*)—dispassion also refers to Nibbāna itself, that state of detachment. "Cessation" (*nirodho*)—extinguishing. "Extinguishment" (*Nibbānaṁ*)—finally, cooling down. If the world is in a state of burning, what the Buddha points out instead of that burning is cooling down. All this is contained within the word Nibbāna. Various meanings were added to this in later times. Indeed, each verse in this *Pārāyana Vagga* is truly wonderful. Those disciples had gone that far, practicing absorptions (*jhāna*), in search of "nothingness" (*ākiñcañña*)—the direct experience of "there is nothing." But having returned, they met the Buddha and obtained "nothingness" (*ākiñcañña*) in its highest sense. The sphere of nothingness is a state of absorption (*jhāna*). This is not like that. It is said: *"Akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ, etaṁ dīpaṁ anāparaṁ."* "Possessing nothing, grasping nothing, this is the island, there is no other." The Buddha has shown that as an island. It shows the bliss of liberation that exists when all grasping (*upādāna*) is destroyed. It is said that many, including the youth Ajita, became Arahants on the spot upon hearing the answer given by the Buddha. It is truly wonderful. From this, we see how much deep meaning is contained in a single four-line verse. We tried to explain it at our own level. Do not think of these as things that merely pass over the surface. The Dhamma is a profound thing. It can be understood through various similes in a simple way. For one who is engaged in the Dhamma in the present, these are not deep. They are simple. That is what we must take into consideration.

Today too, you have had the opportunity to listen to a certain insight-oriented sermon that is helpful for your meditation. We hope that you will derive the full benefit of this program of virtue (*sīla*). If you spend your time wandering here and there, talking about other things, you will not be able to properly understand even this Dhamma that is being spoken. Therefore, this group must be more careful. If activities are conducted within a certain schedule of virtue (*sīla*), you must conform to it. Only then can you understand this kind of Dhamma. Otherwise, if you remain talking about useless things, you cannot understand a Dhamma of this nature. I wish that those of you who have undertaken a high standard of virtue (*sīla*) today, walking on the path of Dhamma and applying your minds to it, may gain the strength and power to realize these expected noble goals in this very life!

From the lowest hell Avīci to the highest heaven Akaniṭṭha, if there are any beings who wish to rejoice in this merit of listening to and preaching the Dhamma, may they, through their rejoicing, find peace in the noble, deathless, supreme Nibbāna through their aspired enlightenment! Recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #56

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.70)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Aciraṃ vatayaṃ kāyo, pathaviṃ adhisessati;

Chuḍḍho apetaviññāṇo, niratthaṃva kaliṅgaraṃ.

From:

Verse 41 from the Cittavagga (Chapter on the Mind) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The Great Compassionate Buddha clarified to the world the value of nursing the sick, not only through advice but also by example. The state of illness is a time when a person becomes helpless. Caring for them at such a time, with loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathy at the forefront, is a noble quality of a virtuous person. On the other hand, through illness, a person is able to properly understand the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature of these five aggregates. What assists in this is timely Dhamma advice. A valuable story that demonstrates how the Buddha performed the nursing of the sick in both these ways is presented as the background story to the stanza we have chosen as our theme today.

A certain faithful young man in the city of Sāvatthī ordained in the Dispensation and received higher ordination. He was known as Venerable Tissa. In the course of time, Venerable Tissa developed a severe illness. Starting as small pimples on his body like eczema, they gradually became large boils, then developed into large abscesses, which burst and began to ooze blood and pus. Holes appeared here and there all over his body. Likewise, his robes and undergarments became sodden with blood and pus; they were completely wet. Finally, he reached a state where even his attending monks could not look after him, and this venerable monk lay there helpless, without anyone to nurse him.

At that moment, the Buddha, having entered the attainment of Great Compassion and looking at the world, beheld this monk. By that time, Venerable Tissa was known by the

name 'Pūtigatta Tissa' (Tissa of the Putrid Body). Because his body was decaying, the nickname Pūtigatta Tissa was attached to him. So, Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa appeared to the Buddha's knowledge of the attainment of Great Compassion. He understood that this helpless Tissa had the supportive conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*) to attain Arahantship. But as things stood now, it would be difficult. Understanding that 'if even I do not help him, that opportunity will slip away,' the Buddha went to that monastery. Having arrived, he did not go straight to that monk. He went to the fire-house, washed the vessel used for heating water for bathing, poured water into it, placed it on the hearth, and stayed in the fire-house until the water boiled. Then, after the water had boiled, the Buddha went to the bed where that monk was lying and lifted one end of the bed. Since the bed has two ends, the other monks also understood that the Buddha was now preparing to nurse this monk. Saying, 'Venerable Sir, we will do that,' the monks lifted the bed and carried it to the fire-house.

Next, the Buddha, with the assistance of those monks, first washed the monk's outer robe and set it to dry in the sun. Then, with the help of those monks, the Buddha poured water, and those monks washed him. In this manner, they bathed him. After bathing him, by that time, the outer robe had dried. Having put that on him, they washed his undergarment as well. Washing it with hot water in the same way, and after it had dried in the sun in a short while, they put the undergarment on him too. Now indeed, Venerable Tissa felt great comfort after a long time due to this bath; he felt a lightness in his body and a peace in his mind. Wearing that undergarment and wrapped in his outer robe, he lay comfortably on the bed. Standing at the head of the bed, near his head, it was at that very moment that the Buddha preached the stanza we took as our theme.

Aciraṁ vatayaṁ kāyo paṭhaviṁ adhisessati chuddho apeta-viññāṇo niratthaṁva kaliṅgaraṁ

"Before long indeed, this body, devoid of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), will lie upon the earth, cast aside like a useless log"—this is the meaning contained in that stanza. Hearing this stanza, Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa attained Arahantship together with the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*). Many other monks also attained various paths and fruits. Then, immediately along with his attainment of Arahantship, Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa attained final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*). Such events do occur, where life ends simultaneously with the realization of the Dhamma. However, those monks knew nothing of this. The Buddha had the body of Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa—who appeared to have passed away or attained final extinguishment—cremated, and caused a stupa to be built enshrining his relics.

The monks asked, "Where has this Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa been born?" It was on that occasion that the Buddha declared, "Monks, this Pūtigatta Tissa has attained Arahantship and final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*)." Then those monks asked: "Venerable Sir, if he had such supportive conditions to attain Arahantship, why did his body decay in this manner? Why did he fall into this state with boils oozing pus?" Furthermore, not only that, but Venerable Tissa's bones also broke. In his final days, his bones broke, and his body was decayed in a most terrible manner. "What is the reason

for his bones breaking? What is the reason for his attaining Arahantship?" When the monks inquired about this, the Buddha, pointing out his past karma, declared: "All of this is the result of past karma done by Tissa." The story is given as follows:

In the time of Kassapa Buddha, this Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa was a bird hunter. His livelihood was catching birds and selling them to wealthy people. In order to keep the birds that remained unsold for the next day—with the thought that if he killed them, the meat would spoil and rot—he broke the wings and legs of those birds, plucking their feathers, and kept them alive to be sold the next day. He also killed and ate some of them. That indeed was his unwholesome karma. However, despite leading such a life, on one occasion, with great devotion, he offered food, offered alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), to an Arahant who had come to his house for alms, and made a wish: "May I realize the same Dhamma that the Venerable Sir has realized." The Arahant also blessed him, saying, "May it be so." The Buddha explained that this wholesome merit was the supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for his attaining Arahantship.

So, that is the story. This story is exemplary to us in several ways. First, we should pay attention to the nursing of the sick performed by the Buddha. Now, here, Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa did not appear to the Buddha's knowledge of the attainment of Great Compassion merely because of his illness. A person is usually caught in that knowledge of the attainment of Great Compassion because they have the qualifications to be released from this suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra. Here too, it was not solely due to his illness, but because he possessed the supportive conditions to attain Arahantship that he appeared in that manner. On such occasions, the Buddha often went to that place alone. Even here, the Buddha went there without taking even Venerable Ānanda with him, went first to the fire-house, and like a true attendant, washed the vessel, placed water on the hearth, boiled it, did all of that, and only then went to the patient's bedside. Furthermore, the very manner in which he performed that nursing is worthy of emulation even for us—the manner of nursing a patient. He first washed that monk's robe, let it dry, then bathed him, and finally washed his undergarment, performing the nursing in a very systematic, highly methodical manner. Lastly, the Buddha nursed that monk with the Dhamma. By nursing him with the Dhamma, He cured his entire disease of saṁsāra.

Indeed, that is a very valuable story. A somewhat similar incident of the Buddha nursing the sick is mentioned in the Vinaya Piṭaka. Let us include that story here too, due to several reasons. A certain monk had a severe abdominal ailment, fell to the ground wallowing in his own urine and excrement, and was utterly helpless. Not a single monk went to nurse that monk. At that helpless moment, while the Buddha was on a walking tour of the lodgings (*senāsana cārikā*) with Venerable Ānanda—a walking tour of the lodgings means the Buddha, from time to time, went from monastery to monastery to see how the monks were living—while walking in that manner, he went with Venerable Ānanda to the place where that monk was and said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, go and bring water, bring water, let us bathe this monk." Then, Venerable Ānanda brought water. The Buddha poured water. Venerable Ānanda rubbed his body. After bathing him,

the Buddha lifted him from the head side, and Venerable Ānanda lifted him from the feet side. They lifted him and laid him on the bed. He asked this monk, "Monk, why do others not nurse you?" This monk said, "Venerable Sir, since I do not nurse or help other monks, those monks do not look after me either."

Then, based on this, the Buddha gathered the monks and asked: "Monks, is there a sick monk in such-and-such a monastery?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." "Does that monk have an attendant?" "No, Venerable Sir." "Why is there no attendant?" When asked, they replied, "That monk does not nurse us either. He does not help us. Therefore, we do not help him either." At that moment, the Buddha declared to the monks: "Monks, you have no mother or father here to nurse you. If you do not nurse one another, who else is there to nurse you?" Next, the Buddha declared a statement of profound meaning, which is interpreted in various ways today. It is mentioned in the Pāli language as:

Yo bhikkhave maṁ upaṭṭheheyya so gilānaṁ upaṭṭheheyya

"Monks, he who would nurse me, should nurse the sick."

Some interpret that passage to mean that nursing a sick person is equivalent to nursing the Buddha. However, we have to say that if the Buddha had expressed such a thing, that sentence would have been expressed differently. In that case, it should have been said: "He who nurses the sick, nurses me." As a reason for this, we point to a well-known Dhamma advice mentioned in the teachings:

Yo dhammaṁ passati so maṁ passati

"He who sees the Dhamma, sees me."

Whoever sees the Dhamma is equivalent to having seen the Buddha. According to that sentence structure and logic, if we were to take the first meaning we mentioned, it should have been said on this occasion: "He who nurses the sick, nurses me." But here, the Buddha declares: "He who would nurse me, should nurse the sick." Now, some interpret this from another angle. They say it means that nursing the sick can never be made equal to nursing the Buddha. Nursing a lay or ordained sick person is not as fruitful in terms of merit as nursing the Buddha. On this occasion, what the Buddha declared and meant was: "If you would nurse me by way of accepting my advice, you should nurse the sick." It is also interpreted in that way. But that is interpreted by adding words unnecessarily.

If we reflect on this quietly, comparing this story with that of Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa, we will be able to bring out the true meaning of this Buddha-word. Now, in the story of Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa, we saw that because of his supportive conditions to attain Arahantship and because he appeared in the knowledge of the attainment of Great Compassion, the Buddha went there alone, not even with an attendant. He went alone and commenced the duties of nursing the sick. But here, the Buddha was on a walking tour of the lodgings (*senāsana cārikā*) with Venerable Ānanda. Pious devotees, this walking tour of the lodgings is something that a clever leader, a clever teacher, must do. It is a valuable custom. It means to observe things. Just as modern sudden raids or

surprise inspections are carried out when reorganizing some departments, the Buddha also had a custom of quietly visiting monastery after monastery without prior notice. Then, when he saw the shortcomings of the monks in those places, he could advise them accordingly. Such an occasion is found here. So here, the Buddha went with Venerable Ānanda and nursed that monk with the assistance of Venerable Ānanda. Having done so, he came and gave advice in that manner.

If we reflect according to that, we have to take it in this way. From what the Buddha declared here, it is clear that since there are no parents in this Dispensation, the monks must nurse one another. Furthermore, in this Dispensation, there are two teacher-pupil dyads: preceptor and co-resident (*upajjhāya-saddhivihārika*), and teacher and pupil (*ācariya-antevāsika*). For the proper conduct among these monks, for this monastic institution to function correctly, the Buddha has laid down these two teacher-pupil levels or dyads: the pupil of the preceptor is the *saddhivihārika*, and the pupil of the teacher is the *antevāsika*. The mutual relationship between these two groups is described as a relationship between a father and a son. That is how the Buddha has laid it down. Not only that, the Buddha has frequently declared that companion monks (*sabrahmacārī*) should help and nurse one another with a sense of brotherhood. So, if in some way they do not fulfill that responsibility, what happens? All of these are the Buddha's children, the Sakyaputta ascetics. If these children do not behave in that manner, the Buddha himself will have to go from lodging to lodging, from monastery to monastery, with his own attendant, and nurse the sick. That is why the Buddha declared on this occasion: "He who would nurse me, should nurse the sick." When we think about it in this way, based on what is said here, nursing the sick is a part of nursing the Buddha itself. It is a part of the service done to the Buddha. Otherwise, one cannot take it to mean that nursing the Buddha and nursing a lay or ordained sick person with medicine and care are exactly identical.

Be that as it may, we can see through this the place the Buddha gave to nursing the sick. Furthermore, when the Buddha laid down various rules in the Vinaya Piṭaka, he provided various allowances for the sick, stating: "There is no offense for one who is sick" (*gilānassa anāpatti*). Thus, after laying down a certain rule, considering the sick, he exempts the sick monk by saying there is no offense. In many other ways too, the Buddha has described the nursing of the sick in the Vinaya Piṭaka. On one occasion, the Buddha points out five qualifications of a true sick-nurse. What is the first qualification of a true sick-nurse? He must be capable of preparing the medicine needed for that patient. Administering medicine is the first point. The second qualification is to understand what is suitable (*sappāya*) and unsuitable (*asappāya*) for that patient. The word *sappāya* is used to mean what is beneficial to someone—beneficial things, suitable things. So, one must understand what is suitable and unsuitable for the patient. Likewise, one must have the ability to remove unsuitable things and bring suitable, beneficial things close to the patient. Next, what is the third qualification mentioned? One must nurse with a mind of loving-kindness, without any expectation of gain from that patient—without even the expectation of taking the food received by the patient, or any expectation of gaining money or benefit from the patient. That is the next point. The fourth qualification is that

one must be capable of removing the excrement, urine, saliva, phlegm, mucus, vomit, etc., of that patient. One must be able to handle those things without disgust. The fifth qualification is that one must be capable of delivering a timely Dhamma talk in a way that encourages the patient's mind—nursing them with the Dhamma. The Buddha demonstrated all of these through his own example as well. Thus, we should understand that the Buddha clarified the nursing of the sick to the world not only by advice but also by example.

Similarly, on the other hand, just as the qualities of a good sick-nurse were mentioned, the characteristics or habits of a good patient—that is, a patient who is easy to nurse—are also shown. If one is a good patient, regarding that patient, he should know what is beneficial to him. He must act in accordance with what is beneficial; this is called *sappāya*. He must be able to behave in a way that suits his illness; otherwise, the attendant will not be able to manage him. So, behaving in that manner, in a way suited to one's illness, is necessary. The second point is that he must know the proper quantity of suitable things, such as medicine given. If one consumes or accepts too much of something thinking, "This is a good, beneficial thing," then another illness will arise. That is also necessary. One must know the measure to be taken even of things that are suitable and beneficial to oneself. That is something belonging to the patient. The third point is that he must use the medicine given systematically and in the proper manner. He must use the medicine continuously without rejecting it. The fourth point is that he must declare the state of his illness accurately and truthfully to his attendant. Is the illness getting better now? Is it increasing? Is there relief now? He must clearly state all of that to the attendant. The fifth point is that even if there is severe pain (*vedanā*), he must have the strength to bear it without crying out. In this manner, the Buddha has laid down both the qualities of a true sick-nurse and the behavior that should exist in a patient who is easy to nurse.

Likewise, you have heard of occasions when the Buddha himself nursed with the Dhamma. You may have heard that to Venerable Moggallāna and Venerable Mahā Kassapa, on occasions when they were very gravely ill, the Buddha himself visited and recited the factors of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*). It is said that as soon as they heard it, their illnesses were cured. Similarly, another highly famous discourse is the Girimānanda Sutta. The Buddha preached the Girimānanda Sutta when Venerable Ānanda came and informed Him that Venerable Girimānanda was severely ill. On that occasion, the Buddha said: "It is alright even if I do not go. If you preach this discourse, the illness will be cured." Contained within that discourse are ten meditation themes called the ten perceptions (*dasa saññā*), which are about meditation. He preached an amazing discourse that develops the mind regarding the diseased conditions of the body. There too, it was nursing the sick. From that we can see that the Buddha does not endorse merely handing the patient over to doctors and nursing them only physically. You must set the mind right, make the mind healthy. If possible, one must be able to nurse them in such a way that the mind is led all the way to final Nibbāna, eradicating the disease of saṁsāra. This is the deepest aspect of nursing the sick. Thus, we can extract many points from these stories. Apart from that, let us now turn to another aspect.

Now, next, what is the lesson we have to learn from this Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa? He too passed away after teaching us a lesson. What is the lesson? His body rotted. Why did it rot? During the time of Kassapa Buddha, as a bird hunter, with the business intention of supplying un-decayed, fresh meat to his customers, he broke the limbs and plucked the wings of those helpless animals and kept them overnight. Why was this? Because of the fear that the meat would spoil. The result of that grave unwholesome karma indeed yielded its fruit to Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa. Now, on this occasion, in the Right Livelihood characterized by the eight-fold virtue (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*) that you have undertaken, there are livelihoods that a faithful layperson should not perform, which you may have heard of. Livelihoods such as the trade in meat, or breeding animals for slaughter—that was the very livelihood that Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa also carried out. So, the result of that karma yielded its fruit in his final life. Therefore, we too must reflect. If we, with the intention of making wealth, direct ourselves toward such things—if we inflict such cruel torture on animals with the intention of supplying fresh meat to customers—the clear result of harming living beings is having abundant ailments, abundant diseases. We must all reflect that many, or perhaps all, of the ailments we experience are the results of the harm and torture we inflicted in various ways during this long saṁsāra. Thus, we must learn lessons from these. Through this, we see the immense power of karmic results. No matter how much we try to run away from these, we will have to suffer them in some way or other. It was because of this that he fell into a helpless state, oozing blood and pus, and finally, even his bones broke, as it is said. Even in modern times, there are various diseases. We do not know their causes. But we can understand from this that the real cause is the cause of karma. Such a state exists in this saṁsāra.

Therefore, indeed, this saṁsāra is a dangerous place. Some people are tempted into such livelihoods because of the problem of their survival. What is survival, pious devotees? It is keeping this cage of a body going for a little longer. For another person, it is not just keeping it going, but nourishing it, making it strong—it is for this purpose that they engage in eating meat and so forth. You know where the proteins (muscle-building elements) are mostly contained. So, they direct themselves to those things with the intention of obtaining them. But those will have to be paid back someday. It is this condition, this story of the body, that the Buddha preached in that short stanza. That indeed is the stanza we took as our theme. That stanza alone was sufficient for Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa to realize Arahantship. Let us recollect that stanza once more:

Aciraṁ vatayaṁ kāyo paṭhaviṁ adhisessati chuddho apeta-viññāṇo niratthaṁva kaliṅgaraṁ

"Before long indeed, this body—devoid of consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—having abandoned this cage of a body, cast aside like something thrown away in the forest, will lie upon the earth like a useless log." Indeed, this became a very direct, experiential fact to Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa. It was at the moment when this body was in such a state, oozing blood and pus, with broken bones, just like a decayed, termite-eaten piece of wood in the

forest, that the Buddha declared this stanza. Why did the Buddha express it in this way? We travel through this long saṁsāra because of our attachment to this body.

To beautify this body, to make it fat, to make it strong, we employ various devices—not according to the Dhamma, but often unrighteous devices. All of this we do for this cage of a body. But a certain moment comes when this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) departs. Even after consciousness (*viññāṇa*) departs, it does not end there. Next, it grabs hold of another cage of a body. The condition of that cage of a body is decided according to one's own past karma. For Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa, indeed, saṁsāra ended there. For an ordinary person, after exhausting that karmic force, they might go and be born in another similar place. Such a dangerous situation exists. Therefore, if we reflect according to the Dhamma, if our purpose is to maintain this cage of a body, why do we maintain it? We must maintain this body for the sole purpose of understanding the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*)—namely, impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—which are the truths about life and the universe declared by the Buddha. So, it is to understand the three characteristics and to gain that realization that we maintain this cage of a body.

Otherwise, when looking at a body thrown in a cemetery, you can imagine—in the past, unlike today, there was what was called an open cemetery. It was in open cemeteries that corpses were thrown. A corpse thrown in an open cemetery swells up thoroughly in a day or two; it swells to the highest possible level in two or three days. Next, it turns blue. Next, it putrefies, bursts, flows away, and finally, after several days, the skin also disappears, leaving only a heap of bones. Such indeed is the historical story of the body.

Unless ordinary people think about this with difficulty and take it to heart, they generally do not understand it. They are not even inclined to think about it. But why do we think about these things? Through these, the Buddha demonstrates that if we hope to escape from this saṁsāra, we must eliminate attachment to this cage of a body. We conventionally refer to this as a "cage of a body." If we think of it in another way, it is fine to take it even as a cage in which a parrot or a bird lives. As long as there is attachment to this cage of a body, even if the mind departs from this cage, it will go and enter another cage. Such a state exists in this saṁsāra. Therefore, the Buddha shows that systematically, either by developing the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) through meditation—and in developing through meditation, what one must use as an aid is indeed one's own body. For Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa, indeed, this was easily understood because his body had also reached that very state. But for some people, even if they reach that state, understanding does not come. Without waiting until we reach that state, according to the Dhamma advice declared by the Buddha, we must practice the necessary meditations: meditation on the foul (*asubha bhāvanā*), especially the state of a body in a cemetery, and then the thirty-two putrid parts of the body. The Buddha has told us to contemplate these in order to abandon attachment to this body. The Buddha has declared that as long as attachment to these five aggregates is not removed, there is no release from this saṁsāra.

Now, the most visible thing to the eye is form (*rūpa*). The Buddha has shown the suffering (*dukkha*) nature, the pain-giving nature of this form (*rūpa*) in eleven ways: as impermanent (*aniccato*), as suffering (*dukkhato*), as a disease (*rogato*), as a boil (*gaṇḍato*), as a dart (*sallato*), as a calamity (*aghato*), as an affliction (*ābādhato*), as alien (*parato*), as disintegrating (*palokato*), as empty (*suññato*), as not-self (*anattato*). Why has the Buddha declared to look at this body in various ways—such as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a boil (like a cancer), as a mass of great troubles, as an affliction, as something belonging to others, as an empty thing, as something not-self (*anattā*), as something that disintegrates? Because disenchantment (*nibbidā*) with saṁsāra supports final Nibbāna. So, it is not only regarding this. Even the aggregate of feeling (*vedanā*)—no matter how pleasant a feeling (*vedanā*) is, in a moment it turns the other way. Or sometimes, pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) itself emerges as suffering (*dukkha*). Union with the beloved, which was thought of as pleasant, next becomes suffering (*dukkha*) by way of separation from the beloved. Such is the situation. That is why the Buddha told us to first contemplate the impermanent nature, the suffering nature of this cage of a body, as a disease and an affliction. He asked us to contemplate in that way, to train ourselves to see in that way. It is through that, first through impermanence (*aniccatā*), and then through the suffering nature, the not-self nature (*anattatā*)—it is through understanding these that one can develop disenchantment towards the five aggregates, or in other words, towards the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). To the extent that one understands its true nature, to that extent disenchantment arises. To the extent that disenchantment arises, to the extent that disenchantment with saṁsāra arises, to that extent one draws closer to final Nibbāna. Thus, final Nibbāna is the release from these sufferings—namely, birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*)—which belong to a person along with existence (*bhava*), or birth after birth in various places arising in accordance with karma over a long period. It is not some other strange heaven.

Therefore, we must reflect according to this Buddha-Dhamma. The Buddha declared that noble truth as suffering (*dukkha*). When ordinary people talk of the world being suffering (*dukkha*), they speak only of a very minor part of suffering. What the Buddha meant by telling us to fully comprehend suffering, to understand it properly, is to go towards the realization that this entire existence is one hundred percent suffering (*dukkha*). Indeed, that is not understood by the ordinary world. Just like a small child who cries for a moment and then laughs, no matter what suffering (*dukkha*) this world undergoes—whether separation from the beloved, illness, or any other suffering—as soon as they feel slightly better, they forget all of that. Again, through ignorance (*avijjā*), they drown in existence (*bhava*). Such is the state of saṁsāra. Therefore, this is something that must be brought out through effort. This meditative attention (*manasikāra*) shown by the Buddha must be brought out through effort, otherwise it gets suppressed by ignorance (*avijjā*). As it gets suppressed and suppressed, one has to travel in saṁsāra for a long time. That is why the Buddha has highlighted the necessary meditation signs (*nimitta*) and themes (*kammaṭṭhāna*). When this suffering (*dukkha*) is properly understood, along with it, the underlying craving (*taṇhā*) must also be understood. To whatever extent some suffering (*dukkha*) arises, underlying it, craving (*taṇhā*) is

necessarily present together with it. If we lament over the death of someone, underlying it is the craving (*taṇhā*) and desire we have for that person. In that same way, we grieve over the loss of wealth because of the craving (*taṇhā*) we have for that wealth. This same principle applies to our body as well. As long as there is this strong attachment to our body, we do not wish to be separated from this body even by death. It is because of this very thing that we conjure up another cage in its place. Although we expect it, the cage is not conjured up as we wish. It is conjured up according to the karma one has performed. Such a state exists in this saṁsāra. That is why the Dhamma advice declared by the Buddha is the most valuable nursing of the sick here. The Dhamma advice given through that stanza is more important than the other external physical nursing the Buddha performed for Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa. It was through that indeed that he was able to end all suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra.

Now, likewise, when we look at the animal world, the Buddha has declared that there are even more terrifying, suffering-laden states, various planes of existence (*bhava*) in saṁsāra. This mind within this human being, in this human state of existence, is a very valuable thing. How do we use this valuable mind? Especially in this era, we often direct this mind to things of the external world, to go towards other worlds, to fulfill targets presented by our craving (*taṇhā*). But the Buddha declares: we have traveled in this saṁsāra for an infinite time. If there is something to be done by a person, it is to stop this journey of saṁsāra. It is for that purpose that the Buddha has shown the Noble Eightfold Path. We must straighten our suffering properly. We must straighten our view (*diṭṭhi*) according to the Dhamma. What exists in the ordinary world is a view (*diṭṭhi*) that entirely cultivates existence (*bhava*). It is a view that entirely moves within this existence (*bhava*) and cultivates existence (*bhava*), following the luxurious world. This is often what exists even among Buddhists. But the Buddha reminds us that by constantly recollecting the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), as well as those meditations on the foul (*asubha bhāvanā*) which support disenchantment with saṁsāra, one can draw close to final Nibbāna.

This Dhamma advice is indeed the highest nursing of the sick that can be given to someone. When someone close to us is sick, we must make them understand what the Buddha pointed out. It was that very thing that the Buddha did not hide in the Girimānanda Sutta. There, the Buddha presented a directory of diseases existing within this body. Some might doubt how a sick person can be cured by listening to a directory of diseases. But what was the Buddha's method of treatment? It was to help bring the mind to composure. By bringing the mind to that reality, the affliction arising from that suffering (*dukkha*) can be removed. For one who has the understanding that "this is the nature of this body"—let us think, now there is a directory of diseases in the Girimānanda Sutta. When listening to it, a person might think for a moment: "Out of this mass of diseases, how many do I actually have? I have comfort at least to that extent." But at that moment, one can reflect that the nature of the body is that it is a single cage of disease. Not only that, when we think of the last few diseases with which that list ends, it is proved that the entire body is a cage of disease. Finally, it is mentioned there:

sītaṁ uṇhaṁ jighacchā pipāsā uccāro passāvo

It points out at least six diseases that exist in this body: cold is felt, heat is felt, hunger is felt, thirst is felt, and because of hunger and thirst, one is inevitably forced to defecate and urinate. It is mentioned in the texts that even during times when there were long-lived humans with few ailments, these six diseases existed.

According to that, we must reflect that this body is not some wonderful, strange creation of a god. Most people in the world think that a healthy state belongs to this body and that disease is something that has arrived as a visitor—that disease is something that came from outside. But the Buddha points out that this is a cage of disease. Its very nature is to be sick. Being healthy is entirely a conceit (*māna*) one has developed. That is what the Buddha declared to a certain lay devotee named Nakulapitā the householder. The advice the Buddha gave during his illness was:

Ātura-kāyassa me sato, cittaṁ anāturaṁ bhavissati

"Though my body is sick, my mind will remain unafflicted." He asked him to think in that manner. The Buddha declares: if anyone, based on this cage of a body, harbors a conceit (*māna*) of being healthy even for a single moment, there is no greater foolishness than that. Thus, what we call health is merely a state where disease is hidden. Being healthy is what is foreign; disease belongs to us. We must understand it in that way. When we reflect in that manner, our attachment to this cage of a body decreases. As long as we do not eliminate attachment to this cage, we will remain in this very saṁsāra. That is why the Buddha declared so. Some think of this as a form of pessimism. It is no such thing. The Buddha shows this because it is something that must necessarily be done. He shows that as long as one does not understand the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature of, or develop disenchantment towards, form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṁkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—or the concept of a person that one imagines as oneself, which are the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*)—one cannot be released from this saṁsāra. Therefore, our effort must be to realize this. The target of our entire Buddhist practice, such as virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*), and giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*), is release from this saṁsāra.

Even when a Buddha appeared, even those of other religions in the world had the target of escaping from this saṁsāra. In some way, the path they took, their view (*diṭṭhi*), was wrong. But they understood it to some extent because, especially at that time, there were ascetics who possessed direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). Pious devotees, those who possessed direct knowledges means that even before the Buddha appeared, there were various ascetics who, having developed absorption meditations (*jhāna bhāvanā*), had gone to the highest levels in the aspect of tranquility (*samatha*). This is mentioned regarding Āḷāra Kālāma, Uddakarāmaputta, and others. Through the power of direct knowledges, they saw their past births (*jāti*). They saw their past lives, livelihoods, and so forth. If they saw those, the suffering (*dukkha*) nature of this saṁsāra must also have been necessarily visible to them. That is why every one of them wished for release from

saṁsāra. But though they wished for it, what of it? The most fundamental premise for it—namely, the perception of not-self (*anattā-saññā*), the concept of not-self (*anattā*) which was pointed out by the Buddha—did not arise in them. Therefore, they thought that escaping from this meant being born in some eternal existence (*bhava*), or a Brahma world, in such a place. That was what existed as their goal.

The Buddha alone showed that unless this disease of saṁsāra is completely, one hundred percent eradicated, if even a little bit of it is left over, it will go on and on. To what extent? On one occasion, the Buddha declared: "Monks, just as even a tiny amount of excrement stinks, I do not praise existence (*bhava*) even for a single moment." Just as even a very small amount of excrement stinks, this existence (*bhava*)—the entire existence (*bhava*) including the Brahma worlds—stinks, or in other words, stinks of suffering (*dukkha*). That is the Buddha-word. When one thinks of this, one feels fear, because the lust for existence (*bhava-rāga*) is so strong within beings. They want to end suffering (*dukkha*), but what they think of as ending it is merely taking on another pile of suffering. So, this is just like the condition of a hospital. Looking at it from that perspective, this entire existence can be taken as a hospital. In this existence of saṁsāra, having taken birth (*jāti*) in various species, one has to face decay (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), death (*maraṇa*), and so forth in all of them. It is because of this condition that the Buddha declared that as long as a person does not develop disenchantment with saṁsāra, they cannot escape from this saṁsāra.

So, that state arose for Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa in that manner, being completely decayed and covered in blood and pus. At such a time, sometimes it may not be possible to calm the mind. Now, the Buddha nursed Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa to that extent not with the intention of making him live for another day. It was visible to the Buddha-eye that "if I do not intervene at this moment, that opportunity to attain Arahantship will slip away." Therefore, he nursed him to that extent, not to make Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa live for a longer time, but to cure this disease of saṁsāra and to give him that true health through Arahantship. We must bring out such a contemplation from this Dhamma talk.

In an era like today when social values are highly degenerated, the nursing of the sick also quickly loses its value. This is revealed to us even through the relationships between parents and children at home. Not only that, even in hospitals, when human kindness, sympathy, and compassion disappear, when the understanding of the true nature of the cage of the body decreases, and when people direct themselves towards a certain superficial existence, it is forgotten that this nursing of the sick is something that people must do mutually. Then, the Buddha brought out valuable fundamental principles. Who is the true sick-nurse? It is the one who, as mentioned, without any expectation of gain, endowed with loving-kindness and compassion, with the sole intention of curing the patient's illness, with the sole intention of rendering good to the patient, and also comforting the mind with Dhamma advice, nurses with the absolute intention of giving health to the patient. On the other hand, the Buddha also declared how the patient should behave so as not to trouble the attendant. In this manner, in the Vinaya Piṭaka, the Buddha has, as a skilled physician, pointed out various instructions for one's

ordinary life, and in short, for living healthily in order to travel on this path of Dhamma. What is the reason for that? The Buddha himself declares that to develop our mind, we must also use the body as an aid. Health is also necessary. That is why it is said: *Ārogyā paramā lābhā* (Health is the supreme gain).

"*Ārogyā paramā lābhā, santuṭṭhi paramaṁ dhanaṁ*"—you have heard such verses from the Dhammapada. Through those, we must reflect. No matter what gains there are, if one does not have health, since its loss is visible, the Buddha declared *Ārogyā paramā*. The highest of gains is health. It was with that same meaning indeed that He said *paramaṁ dhanaṁ* (supreme wealth). No matter what resources one has, even if one has millions, if there is no joy and peace within the mind, that person is utterly poor. Thus, one must reflect in that manner. *Ārogyā paramā lābhā, santuṭṭhi paramaṁ dhanaṁ, vissāsā paramā ñātī*—similarly, no matter how many relatives one has, if they are not trustworthy, they are like enemies. The trustworthy person is like one's relative. These are very deep Dhammas. So, having reflected on all of these, finally, the Buddha declared:

Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ

The supreme bliss, the highest happiness, is final Nibbāna. Why is it said that final Nibbāna is the supreme bliss? The Buddha points out that the entire existence of saṁsāra is suffering (*dukkha*); it is a complete equation. This is not only in this human world. As mentioned, even in the Brahma worlds, there exists a very subtle nature of suffering (*dukkha*). Because of our coarse nature of suffering (*dukkha*), we do not understand that subtle nature of suffering (*dukkha*). The Buddha has shown these three types of suffering (*dukkha*): *dukkha-dukkhatā* (suffering as pain), *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā* (suffering due to change), and *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā* (suffering due to preparations).

"*Dukkha-dukkhatā*" means the things we consider as raw suffering (*dukkha*)—sicknesses, afflictions, and various other losses and damages that we consider as suffering (*dukkha*) in our daily lives—that coarse, gross mass of suffering (*dukkha*). That is called *dukkha-dukkhatā*, pure suffering. Everyone understands that to some extent. Next, there is another type of suffering (*dukkha*), which is called "*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*". When some people receive great wealth, they think of this as the greatest happiness they have received. As soon as that wealth is lost, destroyed, or consumed by fire, or when that child is lost due to some accident or illness, then they understand *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*. "That state we had is lost, isn't it? It changed, didn't it? Aren't those impermanent (*anicca*)?" Through that, they fall into suffering (*dukkha*). That is *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*. Thus, *dukkha-dukkhatā* is, in short, what exists in association with painful feeling (*vedanā*). *Vipariṇāma-dukkhatā* is pleasant feeling (*vedanā*); for a moment, it exists as pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), and then it turns into suffering (*dukkha*). Now, we have been turned to one side for a short while. If someone says, "Sit like this for an hour," one cannot stay without moving even on the most comfortable seat in the world for an hour. In that manner, we hide suffering (*dukkha*) by changing postures.

Through changing postures, we hide that change (*vipariṇāma*). So, in short, *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā* is the second level.

There is an even more subtle level. It is one that is understood by the meditative mind, and that indeed is called "*saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*". The word *saṅkhāra* (preparations) is an extremely broad word. For practitioners, it might be familiar. To put it briefly, within the entire existence of life, there is a lot of preparing, a lot of getting ready. Physically, a lot of getting ready; verbally, a lot of getting ready. Now, for this Dhamma sermon, I too have to take a considerable amount of effort, occasionally when this sound goes down or when the sound amplification is lost. Even to use my own voice projection. This too is a great suffering (*dukkha*). So, in any case, these words are spoken to make you understand that suffering (*dukkha*). When we look at it in that way, just like these preparations (*saṅkhāra*), our thoughts—the thoughts that arise in the mind—every single one of them has been shown by the Buddha as suffering (*dukkha*). That indeed is *saṅkhāra*. This mass of thoughts within this mind, which we think of as pleasant. Let us think, now, a very wealthy person had a certain problem. If this problem is not solved by tomorrow morning, the entire business is destroyed. When such a problem arises, he thinks all night without sleeping. At that moment, the suffering (*dukkha*) nature of those thoughts, of those ideas, is understood. Thus, one can understand the suffering (*dukkha*) nature of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to some extent.

It is according to this indeed that the Buddha refers to this final Nibbāna as "*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*" (the stilling of all preparations). This constant doing within this mind. This preparing also includes karma. Within those karmas, there are two called merit (*puñña*) and demerit (*pāpa*), as you know. The ordinary world says, "Do not do demerit, let us accumulate merit." Do not misunderstand this. Do not take these to extremes. But if we reflect deeply, considering this existence of saṁsāra, whether we accumulate merit or accumulate demerit, saṁsāra grows. This is shown in the books by way of a simile. Let us think, a cow is being taken to be slaughtered. On the path this cow is being taken, at one place she is given cold water. At another place, she is given hot water. Whether she drinks this hot water or cold water, that cow definitely goes towards her death. According to that simile, we have to take it. Whether we do merit or do demerit, we will have to abandon all of this and go. Even the divine state of existence (*bhava*) is just the same. No matter how many aeons one stays there, at the moment of passing away, one falls into suffering (*dukkha*). Such is the state. Whether dying or passing away, at the moment of flying away from there, one falls into suffering (*dukkha*). That is why the Buddha declared that our effort should be to eliminate this craving (*taṇhā*). It is craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*aviijjā*) together that prompt us to accumulate these preparations (*saṅkhāra*).

We cannot avoid accumulating some preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is what is called the Middle Path. That is why we say that we should not extremely say, "Let us abandon merit too, let us abandon wholesomeness too, let us abandon meditation too." It is bad to take it in that way. But the Buddha has shown a systematic, gradual path (*anupubba-paṭipadā*). Having eliminated that sinful nature, that leaning towards demerit, we must

lean the mind towards the wholesome side, the meritorious side. It was indeed through that leaning, perhaps due to the merit of having given alms, that Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa received nursing from the Buddha in his final moment. If he had not received even that nursing, Venerable Pūtigatta Tissa would have fallen back into saṁsāra due to the lack of supportive conditions from that meritorious act.

According to that, we must reflect. We must turn away from demerit and do merit. But we should not cling to merit. We must understand its practical meaning. What we do through this merit is raising our mind to a high state. What is called a high state? Unwholesome things are those that arise from greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Wholesome things are from non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). On every occasion we perform a wholesome act, we turn away, even slightly, from greed, from hatred, from delusion. That is what assists us. Why? Because our final Nibbāna is the state of being completely free from greed, from hatred, and from delusion. So, we walk the path of wholesomeness turned towards that direction—turned towards final Nibbāna. The path of unwholesomeness is walked turned towards the other direction—towards saṁsāra. Therefore, wholesomeness assists us. But that too is a force of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). At some stage, we must be strong enough to be released even from that. What assists in that is contemplating their impermanent nature, contemplating their suffering nature, contemplating their not-self nature, and deeply, gradually bringing our mind through meditation to a state where it is released from all of these—released from the five aggregates. In that manner, indeed, you were able to extract many Dhamma points leading all the way to final Nibbāna from this Dhamma talk. When looking at nursing the sick as a social duty in this society, there are things relevant to that too. But along with that, we must reflect: at the moment when our relative or well-wisher is sick, we must train ourselves to nurse them with the Dhamma too. Because this disease of saṁsāra is the most dangerous disease. Helping to escape from this is indeed the true nursing of the sick.

Reflecting in that manner, you have now listened to a Dhamma sermon for about an hour, established in the Right Livelihood characterized by the eight-fold virtue (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*) or an even higher virtue. As we frequently remind you, as the benefits of hearing the Dhamma, we consider the generation within this hour of thoughts and aspirations that help to develop and increase the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*)—namely, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—which assist in final Nibbāna. Through the power of that merit you have generated, may all of you be able to develop your own meditation as quickly as possible, and through the association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship, gain the strength and power to escape from this entire disease of saṁsāra through the supreme, deathless final Nibbāna!

Similarly, if there are beings from Avīci to Akaniṭha who are waiting to rejoice in this merit of hearing and preaching the Dhamma—including all our departed relatives—

through rejoicing in this merit, may they as quickly as possible be released from all the suffering of saṁsāra, such as birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*), and find peace in the supreme, deathless final Nibbāna! With that compassionate intention, let us share the merits by reciting the stanzas.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi*....."

Pahankanuwa Sermon #57

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.89)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Paṇṇavīsati vassāni, bhagavantaṃ upaṭṭhahiṃ;

Mettena kāyakammena, chāyāva anapāyinī.

Paṇṇavīsati vassāni, bhagavantaṃ upaṭṭhahiṃ;

Mettena vacīkammena, chāyāva anapāyinī.

Paṇṇavīsati vassāni, bhagavantaṃ upaṭṭhahiṃ;

Mettena manokammena, chāyāva anapāyinī.

From:

Ānanda Thera – Theragāthā

Dear Listeners,

The greatest spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) who has ever appeared in the world is that Blessed, Arhat, Fully Self-Awakened Buddha. To constantly associate with and serve that Blessed One is an immense blessing. In this Buddha-dispensation, that fortune belonged to Venerable Ānanda. For about twenty years, the Buddha did not have a permanent attendant. It is mentioned that monks such as Nāgasamāla, Sāgata, Meghiya, Upavāṇa, and Nāgita served the Buddha from time to time. It is also recorded that some of those monks were disobedient to the Buddha and acted according to their own whims.

On one occasion, while walking on a long journey with the Buddha, the monk named Nāgasamāla took the bowl and robes, arrived at a fork in the road, and said to the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, this is the path. Let us go by this path." The Buddha replied: "No, Nāgasamāla, this is the path. Let us go by this path." For a second time, the monk Nāgasamāla said: "No, no, Venerable Sir, this is the path." The Buddha rejected it. In this way, even though the Buddha pointed out the correct path three times, the monk

Nāgasamāla kept pointing to the other path, and finally, putting down the bowl and robes right there, said: "Here, Venerable Sir, are the bowl and robes," and went along the path of his own preference. But he did not get far. Robbers assaulted him, broke his bowl, tore his robes, beat him, and in the end, he had to return to the Buddha.

Similarly, another incident is mentioned. When the monk named Meghiya was walking for alms with the Buddha, he saw a beautiful mango grove and wished to go there and meditate. Although the Buddha asked him, "Meghiya, wait until another attendant monk arrives," he disobediently went to that mango grove, saying, "The Blessed One has nothing new to meditate on, but I have meditation to do." However, unable to concentrate his mind, he had to return to the Buddha and explain the matter. Because of incidents like these, on one occasion when the Saṅgha was assembled, the Buddha declared: "Monks, I am now old. Some of the monks who come to serve me, even when told 'this is the path', go on whichever path they please, leaving the bowl and robes on the ground. Therefore, it is good to appoint a permanent attendant." When this idea was expressed, a great sense of spiritual urgency (*dhamma-saṁvega*) arose within the entire assembly of monks.

The Great Arhat Sāriputta arose and declared to the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, I shall serve the Blessed One." The Buddha declined. Likewise, the Great Arhat Moggallāna and the other great disciples stepped forward individually. The Buddha declined them all. Venerable Ānanda alone remained silent. The other monks said: "Why, Friend Ānanda, do you not request the opportunity to serve?" Venerable Ānanda replied: "What is the use of a position obtained by begging? If I am suitable, the Blessed One himself will say so." Then the Buddha declared: "Monks, Ānanda does not need to make any special effort. Ānanda will serve me, knowing it himself." At this moment, Venerable Ānanda stood up and addressed the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, if the Blessed One grants me these eight boons, I shall serve the Blessed One." What were those boons?

Although called eight boons, the first four were refusals. What were they? "If the Blessed One does not give me the excellent robes (*cīvara*) received by the Blessed One, I will serve. Likewise, the second: if the Blessed One does not give me the excellent almsfood (*piṇḍapāta*) received by the Blessed One, I will serve. If the Blessed One does not grant me the privilege of residing in the same scented chamber (*gandhakuṭi*) with Him, I will serve. And if the Blessed One does not take me along to the alms-invitations made to the Blessed One, I will serve." These were the four negative conditions (refusals).

What was the purpose of these? Someone today might say, "If such privileges are received, who wouldn't serve the Blessed One?" There was room for such blame. People might say, "Who cannot do it if one receives robes, requisites, and almsfood from the Blessed One?" That is why he said, "I will serve only if these are refused."

Next, he presented four other requests to the Blessed One as appeals: "If the Blessed One attends the invitations I accept on behalf of the Blessed One; second, if the Blessed One allows me to arrange meetings for those who come from afar seeking the Blessed One; third, if, whenever a doubt arises in me, the Blessed One permits me to approach Him

and clear my doubt through Dhamma discussion; and fourth, if the Blessed One repeats to me every Dhamma discourse preached in my absence—then I am willing to serve."

Within these four appeals was the intention to acquire the Blessed One's Dhamma, thereby becoming a learned Treasurer of the Dhamma (*Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika*). It was also to avoid the blame of being unable to achieve anything despite associating so closely with the Buddha.

The Buddha agreed to all eight boons. Having agreed, from that day on, Venerable Ānanda began to serve the Buddha with an extraordinary sacrifice of life, dedication, and affection. Providing tooth-wood, water, massaging the feet and back, attending during illnesses, and serving the Buddha in the same manner throughout the day. It is mentioned that at night, he walked around the scented chamber (*gandhakuṭi*) nine times holding a torch, so that if the Blessed One suddenly called for any reason, he would be ready to respond.

In this manner, in various ways, he performed loving bodily action, verbal action, and mental action towards the Buddha in a wonderful and friendly way. Indeed, it is this very matter that was expressed in the opening verses. The three verses we placed as our theme are from the Thera Gāthās, which Venerable Ānanda expounded concerning his own life story. They express this very fact: "For twenty-five years I served the Blessed One with loving bodily action, like a shadow that departs not..." and likewise with verbal action and mental action. These three aspects are what are expressed in those verses.

Thus, while serving with wonderful dedication, by discussing the Dhamma with the Buddha on various occasions and under different circumstances, and by retaining well the Dhamma preached to other groups when it was repeated to him, Venerable Ānanda became a marvelous Treasurer of the Dhamma (*Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika*) of great learning (*bahussuta*).

Considering all these factors, on one occasion in the midst of the Saṅgha, the Buddha awarded Venerable Ānanda the foremost position (*etadagga*) in five aspects: "Among my disciples of great learning (*bahussuta*), Ānanda is chief. Likewise, among those of great memory (*satimanta*), Ānanda is chief. Next, among those of analytical grasp (*gatimanta*)—meaning the wonderful cognitive ability to connect, synthesize, and expound a Dhamma discourse from one single aspect of the Dhamma—he is chief. Then, among those of steadfast fortitude (*ṭhitimanta*)—which means the strength to stand firm in one's determination and successfully accomplish a task amidst any obstacles—he is chief. Finally, among those who are attendants (*upaṭṭhāka*), Ānanda is chief." Thus, he was declared foremost in five qualities.

Similarly, it is mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* that when the Buddha was on his deathbed, Venerable Ānanda's affection and love for the Buddha was so great—since he had only attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*) at that time—that he went inside the monastery, clung to the doorpost, and wept, saying: "I am still only a trainee (*Sekha*). I have only reached the stage of a trainee. I still have much work to do to attain

Arahantship. And my compassionate Teacher is about to attain Parinibbāna." While he was weeping in grief, the Buddha summoned Venerable Ānanda and consoled him, saying: "Ānanda, do not weep. Do not lament. Have I not told you before that whatever is born of causes, whatever has the nature of arising due to conditions, is subject to decay? It is subject to decay and dissolution. And have I not declared beforehand that there must be separation, alteration, and parting from all that is beloved and pleasing?"

Saying so, he then praised Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, for a long time you have served the Tathāgata with boundless, sincere loving bodily action, wishing for His well-being. Likewise, with loving verbal action and loving mental action. You have accumulated much merit. Therefore, strive on. You will quickly become an Arahant." Thus, the Buddha consoled Venerable Ānanda.

Thus, having praised Venerable Ānanda, the Buddha further declared: "Ānanda, whatever Worthy and Fully Self-Awakened Buddhas existed in the past, they all had attendant monks just like Ānanda. And whatever Fully Self-Awakened Buddhas arise in the future, they too will have attendants just like Ānanda." Thus, he pointed it out as a natural law (*dhammatā*)—that serving the Buddha is a status to be achieved by fulfilling perfections (*pāramī*).

Furthermore, he declared: "Monks, Ānanda is wise. Ānanda knows: 'This is the proper time for monks to see the Tathāgata. This is the proper time for bhikkhunīs. This is the proper time for laymen (*upāsaka*) and laywomen (*upāsikā*). This is the proper time for kings, ministers, non-Buddhist ascetics (*tīrthakas*), and their disciples.' Ānanda possesses such deep understanding and wisdom."

Next, the Buddha declared that there are four wonderful and marvelous qualities in Ānanda. What are they? If a group of monks comes to see Ānanda, they are delighted by his very sight. Furthermore, if Ānanda expounds a portion of the Dhamma to that group of monks, they are highly pleased, and while they are still unsatisfied (desiring more), Ānanda falls silent. That is, he does not preach to the point of causing weariness; while they are still not fully satiated, Ānanda becomes silent. Likewise, the same is true for the group of bhikkhunīs, laymen, and laywomen—this is how the Buddha shows these four wonderful and marvelous qualities regarding the fourfold assembly.

He then compared this using a simile. "Similar to these four wonderful and marvelous qualities, there are four qualities in a Wheel-Turning Monarch (*Cakkavatti*). If a group of kṣatriyas (royalty) comes to see the Wheel-Turning King, they are delighted by his very sight. If the Wheel-Turning King addresses that group of kṣatriyas, they are delighted by his speech. Then, while they are still unsatisfied, the Wheel-Turning King falls silent. Just as with royalty, so too with the householders, and likewise with the ascetics; every group that comes is delighted by the very sight of the Wheel-Turning King. If he speaks, they are delighted by that too." In this way, comparing him to the wonderful and marvelous qualities of a Wheel-Turning King, the Buddha praised Venerable Ānanda.

Furthermore, on many occasions, the Buddha praised Venerable Ānanda's state of great learning (*bahussuta*), his wisdom, and his great intelligence.

He also provided opportunities for Venerable Ānanda to bring forth his own capabilities. One such instance—and such incidents are frequently recorded—is when the Buddha would give a brief discourse to the monks, state a riddle-like sentence, and then get up and retire to his temple. Then, the monks, wishing to understand that sermon in detail and obtain its explanation, would go to Venerable Ānanda and entreat him: "The Blessed One and other co-religionists have often praised the Venerable Ānanda for having the ability to explain such brief discourses in detail. Therefore, please explain this to us in detail." But Venerable Ānanda would humbly say, using a simile: "It is like a man seeking heartwood who, finding a tree with good heartwood, bypasses its roots and trunk and looks for heartwood among the branches; when the Blessed One, the Lord of Dhamma, is present to clarify, why do you ask me?" However, when the monks requested repeatedly, Venerable Ānanda would give an explanation of that Dhamma portion. Having done so, he would say: "This is how it appears to me. If you wish, go to the Blessed One, ask Him, and confirm it." Then, when those monks presented that Dhamma explanation to the Buddha, the Buddha would approve it, saying "Sādhu, sādhu!" and declare: "Monks, if you had asked me, I too would have explained it in the very same way." Thus, He validated and approved it.

In this manner, the Buddha employed various methods to highlight Venerable Ānanda's competence. Specifically, it is mentioned that on one occasion, the Sakyans of Kapilavatthu built a new assembly hall and invited the Buddha to use it first. The Buddha, together with the Saṅgha and Venerable Ānanda, went there, preached the Dhamma to the Sakyans for most of the night, and then said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, expound the trainee's path (*sekha-paṭipadā*)—meaning how a Stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*) should train hereafter—to these Sakyans. My back is aching. I will stretch my back." The Buddha then folded His double-outer-robe into four, laid it down right there in the hall, and lay down. He did not sleep; He merely reclined. Venerable Ānanda delivered a long Dhamma sermon on that subject. Hearing this, the Buddha expressed His approval, saying "Sādhu, sādhu!" and commended Venerable Ānanda's skill.

Similarly, praises received from Venerable Sāriputta are also recorded. On one occasion, Venerable Ānanda went to Venerable Sāriputta and asked: "Friend Sāriputta, in what way does a monk become one who has heard what he had not heard? And how does he not forget what he has heard? How does he repeatedly bring to mind what has briefly occurred to his mind? And how does he know what he did not know?" When these four questions were asked of Venerable Sāriputta, Venerable Sāriputta said: "The Venerable Ānanda is of great learning (*bahussuta*). May the answer occur to the Venerable Ānanda himself!" Then, after Venerable Ānanda explained it in detail to Venerable Sāriputta, Venerable Sāriputta declared: "This is wonderful, marvelous! The Venerable Ānanda has here declared six virtuous qualities present within himself through this exposition."

Venerable Sāriputta then said: "Venerable Ānanda thoroughly studies and learns the word of the Buddha, the Teacher’s dispensation, which consists of nine factors: *sutta*

(discourses), *geyya* (mixed prose and verse), *veyyākaraṇa* (expositions), *gāthā* (verses), *udāna* (inspired utterances), *itivuttaka* (as-it-was-said), *jātaka* (birth stories), *abbhutadhamma* (marvelous phenomena), and *vedalla* (catechisms). This is the first quality. He expounds that word of the Buddha in detail to others. This is the second. He teaches that word of the Buddha to others. This is the third. He recites those Dhamma portions in detail. This is the fourth. He repeatedly examines and ponders over those various Dhamma portions in his mind, keeping his mind anchored in them. This is the fifth. And Venerable Ānanda has a habit: in whatever monastery or dwelling where monks of great learning, keepers of the Dhamma, and keepers of the Vinaya reside, he goes there, spends the rainy season, and asks them about what he does not understand, saying: 'Venerable Sir, what is the meaning of this? What is that?' He asks and learns. In this way, Venerable Sāriputta explained the secret of Venerable Ānanda's great learning (*bahussuta*) and praised him in highly appreciative words."

From this, we can see that Venerable Ānanda, as the Treasurer of the Dhamma (*Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika*) in this Buddha-dispensation, made extraordinary use of his close association with the Buddha alongside his role as attendant. Although Venerable Ānanda declined to reside inside the Buddha's scented chamber (*gandhakuṭi*), we see that he made his own heart a scented chamber for the Buddha's virtues. Furthermore, he maintained a Treasury of the Dhamma in his mind for posterity—we must understand that this was for us. We can see that Venerable Ānanda made a tremendous effort to establish this Dhamma Treasury within his own mind.

Thus, three months after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha, when the Great Arhat Mahākassapa was preparing to hold a Dhamma Council (*Saṅgāyana*) with the aim of preserving the Buddha's word, five hundred Arhats were to participate. However, only four hundred and ninety-nine (499) Arhats were selected. Why was one seat left vacant? One seat was left because Venerable Ānanda had only attained Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*) at that time and had not yet become an Arhat. A dilemma arose. Only Arhats must participate. Yet, it was impossible without Venerable Ānanda, and also impossible with him. It was impossible *with* him because he was not yet an Arhat. It was impossible *without* him because Venerable Ānanda held the entire word of the Buddha in his mind. At such a moment, a great challenge arose for Venerable Ānanda for the sake of the Dispensation. The Council was to be held the very next day. Therefore, he resolved, "I must attain this through intense energy." With this hope and determination, it is said that Venerable Ānanda spent most of the day in mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*), and finally, at night, as he was about to rest, after his feet had left the ground and before his head reached the pillow, in that brief interval—free from the four standard postures—he attained Arahantship. Thus, Venerable Ānanda, utilizing his powers of mindfulness (*sati*) and steadfastness (*ṭhiti*), attained Arahantship at that moment as a support to the Dispensation. Through this, we can see Venerable Ānanda's dedication to the Dispensation.

There are many lessons we can draw from his life. An attendant of the Buddha could easily enjoy the gains, favors, and offerings received by Him. Yet, what is shown by the

boons requested by Venerable Ānanda? "I will serve the Blessed One only if He does not give me the robes, requisites, and almsfood received by Him."

Through this, he gave a highly valuable example to the world. The Buddha declared an extremely valuable passage to the monks: "Monks, be heirs of my Dhamma (*dhamma-dāyāda*), not heirs of material things (*āmisa-dāyāda*). This is what I expect from you out of compassion." The Buddha declared this in a certain discourse.

He then explained it in detail as follows: "Suppose I have finished eating my meal and a portion remains. At that point, I could either throw that almsfood onto the ground where there is no grass, or discard it in water where there are no living beings. At that time, suppose two monks who are suffering from hunger arrive. I speak to them thus: 'Monks, I have finished eating. Here is some leftover almsfood. If no one eats it, I will throw it away; eat if you wish.' Then, one monk thinks: 'Now, here is a portion of almsfood left over after the Blessed One has eaten. If I do not eat it, the Blessed One will discard it. But the Blessed One has declared this: "Monks, be heirs of my Dhamma, not heirs of material things." Recalling that word of the Buddha, that monk rejects the almsfood and resolves to spend the day in hunger. The other monk thinks: 'Here is some leftover almsfood... If I do not eat it, He will discard it. Therefore, let me eat this food, satisfy my hunger, and spend the day well.' Thinking thus, he eats the almsfood. Ultimately, the Buddha declared: 'Monks, between these two, although the second monk satisfied his hunger with the food I was going to discard, it is the first monk whom I regard as more venerable and praiseworthy. Why? Because that monk's rejection of the almsfood and spending the day in hunger will help him protect and develop noble spiritual qualities in the future, such as fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*), contentment (*santuṭṭhitā*), easy-supportability (*subharatā*), and the practice of effacement (*sallekha*)—the practice of cutting away defilements through ascetic practices (*dhutaṅgas*). That rejection assists him.'" We can understand that Venerable Ānanda, through his own life, provided a living example of the principle taught by the Buddha in this discourse known as the *Dhammadāyāda Sutta*. "I will serve the Blessed One only if He does not give me the robes, requisites, and almsfood received by Him... and if He does not grant me the opportunity to reside together with Him." Through this, we can take a great example. Venerable Ānanda's store of virtues, such as fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*), is mentioned in many places.

Venerable Ānanda received not only praise but occasionally also criticism and various accusations. On all such occasions, he very humbly accepted his mistakes and never showed anger or hatred. He never engaged in backbiting or carrying tales to the Buddha merely because of his close association. It is shown that he served the Buddha in a wonderfully obedient and humble manner. We must also consider that he had a long-standing familial relationship with the Buddha.

Looking at this life in terms of this world, Venerable Ānanda's background is recorded as being the son of Amitodana, the Sakyan who was the paternal uncle of the Buddha. He came and ordained along with other Sakyan princes such as Anuruddha, Bhaddiya, Bhagu, Kimbila, and Devadatta. Yet, the Jātaka stories reveal an even deeper, ancient

connection with the Buddha. It was due to that attachment, that devotion, and that extraordinary affection that he served the Buddha at the highest level, wishing for His well-being without any duplicity, performing loving bodily, verbal, and mental actions. We should remember Venerable Ānanda's service as a shadow walking behind the Buddha's service to the world. On the other hand, we have his virtuous qualities—especially his quality of great learning (*bahussuta*). Although he had only attained Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*) and was not yet an Arhat, the Buddha and other great elders like Sāriputta referred to Venerable Ānanda using the word "wise" (*paṇḍita*). It is mentioned that due to his great learning (*bahussuta*), he delivered long discourses on many occasions to other monks, non-Buddhist ascetics, laymen, and laywomen, while holding the Dhamma in his heart as the Treasurer of the Dhamma (*Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika*).

Based on these facts we have declared, we should think of honoring Venerable Ānanda. Today, devotees perform Buddha-pūjās. They perform stupa-worship, Buddha-image offerings, and flower offerings. When doing these, we should think: "What we are doing is a Buddha-service, modeled on the symbol of service that Venerable Ānanda rendered to the living Buddha."

This also helps in developing faith (*saddhā*). This is revealed even during the Buddha's time through the account of the Ānanda Bodhi tree in India. According to it, when the Buddha was away on tours, King Kosala, Anāthapiṇḍika, the devout Visākhā, and others had no way of paying their respects and making offerings to the Buddha, so they requested a worshipful object. As a result, it is said that Venerable Ānanda, with the Buddha's permission, obtained a seed from the Bodhi tree in Gayā and planted the Ānanda Bodhi tree. The very name "Ānanda Bodhi" shows that it was a tribute to Venerable Ānanda, continuing the service he rendered to the Buddha. Through this, we expect to inspire clarity (*prasāda*) in our minds. Just as he said "making my heart a scented chamber," the purpose of Buddhist devotees in performing these services should be to make their own hearts a scented chamber for the Buddha's virtues. Venerable Ānanda provides an example for this.

Furthermore, it is mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* that it was under Venerable Ānanda's guidance, and in response to his questions, that the Buddha explained in detail the honors to be paid to the Tathāgata's body, the building of stupas, and so forth. Venerable Ānanda repeatedly asked: "Blessed Sir, after the Parinibbāna of the Tathāgata, how should we serve and honor the Tathāgata's body?" In response to this, the Buddha said that the body should be treated like that of a Wheel-Turning King, and explained the details of constructing stupas. It was according to these instructions that, after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha, the enshrining of relics and the building of stupas began. Therefore, whenever we perform Buddha-worship, we should recall the Buddha-service Venerable Ānanda rendered to the living Buddha and think, "We are doing the very same service, the same duties." Even when performing duties at the temple or the Bodhi tree, these are not things to be considered a hassle; rather, through them, we hope to keep the Buddha alive in our hearts. Therefore, even though nothing belongs to the Buddha now, what do we expect? Clarity (*prasāda*) is a quality that goes along with faith (*saddhā*).

Faith (*saddhā*) and respect for the Teacher (*satthu-garava*) towards the Triple Gem are essential. Especially in these times, even our Buddhists run after various other teachers instead of the Buddha. We hear that some have even claimed that other Buddhas have appeared. In this way, there is a condition where faith (*saddhā*) is corrupted. Therefore, we must understand that observing duties and rituals sometimes helps us to generate genuine respect for the Teacher. To follow Venerable Ānanda's example and cultivate faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha, we must perform activities like stupa-worship and daily duties meaningfully, with the ultimate goal of developing faith (*saddhā*) and clarity (*prasāda*) in our hearts.

In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, the Buddha declared that if anyone clarifies their mind through such actions as stupa-worship, that clarity of mind (*cetaso pasāda*) even helps them to attain birth in a heavenly world. This is regarding the next life. But if we consider this life, it is that very clarity (*prasāda*) accompanying faith (*saddhā*) that helps us to establish concentration (*samādhi*) in our minds. For one listening to a Dhamma discourse, the precursor to concentration (*samādhi*) is the clarity (*prasāda*) that arises in the mind, once the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are removed through that clarity. There is an ancient simile of the water-clearing gem (*udaka-pasādaka maṇi*). In those days, when a certain gem was placed in muddy water, the mud would quickly settle to the bottom and the water would become clear. In the same way, faith (*saddhā*) is described as a water-clearing gem. It is to cultivate this that we perform these duties and rituals.

Just as the Buddha-service symbolizes Venerable Ānanda's service, we must also recall his service to the Dispensation as the Treasurer of the Dhamma (*Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika*). In the pirith suttas and Dhamma portions we chant, we frequently see the words "*Evaṁ me sutaṁ*." This "*Evaṁ me sutaṁ*" means, "Thus have I heard." Who is this "I"? This "I" is Ānanda. This is because, at the Council, Venerable Ānanda placed himself in the position of the one who heard, saying "Thus have I heard," and declared those Dhamma portions. As a tribute to him, the compiling monks (*saṅgītikāraka*) included those words as well. That is why we begin suttas with "*Evaṁ me sutaṁ*." Some people do not even know the reason for this. Through this, tribute is paid once again to Venerable Ānanda and his role as the Treasurer of the Dhamma.

Why do we highlight the characters of these disciples? These disciples did not shape their characters in just one lifetime. If we accept this saṁsāric journey, we know we travel in this saṁsāra for a long time. When we speak of the Buddha, we do not think that He accumulated the store of virtues supporting His Buddhahood in just one lifetime, nor that He suddenly attained it by striving for six years or merely by sitting under a tree. A Buddha arises in the world after fulfilling perfections (*pāramī*) in this saṁsāra for a long time, for an unfathomable number of eons. In the same way, the Buddha declared as a natural law (*dhammatā*) that special positions, chief disciple positions, attendant positions, and so forth, are the results of perfections (*pāramī*) and resolve (*praṇidhi*) made while performing meritorious deeds over a long period. That is how great disciples are born into the world. Although they have attained Parinibbāna and are no longer alive today, we must keep their exemplary characters at the forefront and carry this

Dispensation forward accordingly. Today, as a tribute of worship, we have brought forward the character of Venerable Ānanda. It is worthwhile to integrate his quality of service and the service he rendered to the Dispensation as the Treasurer of the Dhamma into our own lives to help preserve this Dispensation.

Furthermore, the Buddha has declared the value of faith (*saddhā*) through the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and five spiritual powers (*bala*): *saddhā* (faith/devotion), *viriya* (energy/effort), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom). We must carefully consider their mutual relationship. Some people think of faith (*saddhā*) as foolishness. But in reality, before turning to any special task, one must have a deep conviction, a certain degree of faith (*saddhā*) in it. For without faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*) does not arise. Now, of all the objects in the world towards which faith (*saddhā*) can be generated, the Tathāgata, the Fully Self-Awakened Buddha, is the most supreme. Thus, when we practice recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*), we recall the Buddha, and through that, we generate faith (*saddhā*). This came naturally to Venerable Ānanda. To what extent? He mentioned when recounting his life that, although he was only a Stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*), defilements of sensual lust (*kāma*) did not arise in him, because he spent his time constantly dwelling on the virtues of the Buddha, thinking of the Buddha.

We can see that faith (*saddhā*) removes the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). Faith (*saddhā*) means clarity (*prasāda*). Furthermore, like an elephant's trunk, it is by using faith (*saddhā*) that one is able to fulfill these spiritual qualities of the Dispensation. Faith (*saddhā*) is described as the seed. It is with faith (*saddhā*) as the seed that other spiritual qualities grow. With faith (*saddhā*) established, one then cultivates energy (*viriya*). What is done by cultivating energy (*viriya*)? Cultivating energy (*viriya*) means applying fourfold effort to remove unwholesome qualities that flow into one's mind, and to cultivate wholesome qualities. In this way, one exerts energy (*viriya*). When that energy (*viriya*) leaves no room for unarisen unwholesome states, dispels arisen unwholesome states, generates unarisen wholesome states, and consolidates arisen wholesome states, it is through this that mindfulness (*sati*)—the power of memory—emerges. Thus we have *saddhā*, *viriya*, and *sati*. When that mindfulness (*sati*) can be maintained for a considerable time according to one's determination, that is called concentration (*samādhi*). Within this concentration (*samādhi*), there is a power to gather together the energies that are otherwise wasted in our daily lives through a scattered, distracted mind. This is concentration (*samādhi*). Finally, the concentrated mind helps us to gain a deep understanding of the true nature of the world, the true nature of the body, and the process of arising and ceasing in the world as it exists in the Dhamma of Dependent Co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). This is called wisdom (*paññā*).

These are shown as spiritual qualities (*dhamma*) because they must be developed through effort. We know that when a person is born, the five physical senses—eyes, ears, nose, etc.—emerge. They exist, but one cannot realize Nibbāna through them. One must elevate these five spiritual qualities—*saddhā*, *viriya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*—into the position of ruling faculties (*indriya*). "Indriya" means ruler. One turns faith (*saddhā*) into something that has the power to perform a special function. What is that special

function? Through that faith (*saddhā*), one removes double-mindedness and doubt (*vicikicchā*). One cannot make this journey while holding onto doubt and double-mindedness. It is with pure faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem that one is able to apply hundred-percent energy (*viriya*). With a hesitant, doubtful mind, one cannot exert energy (*viriya*) with genuine self-sacrifice. That is why faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha is necessary. Thus, within faith (*saddhā*), there is what is called "resolve" (*adhimokkha*). *Adhimokkha* means releasing, launching. The Buddha states, "Let faith launch forth." If this power of faith (*saddhā*) has launched forth towards the Tathāgata, then one directs oneself to exert energy (*viriya*) without any hesitation. It is through that energy (*viriya*), in the manner described, that mindfulness (*sati*) and other spiritual qualities emerge.

Therefore, let us reflect that this character of Ānanda also helps us to cultivate these spiritual qualities beginning with faith (*saddhā*). By constantly following behind the Buddha like a shadow and serving Him, he not only secured time for the Buddha's daily activities, but at the same time, he himself made true use of his association with the Buddha, presenting his problems and questions on various occasions; and it is their answers that we see today as the sutta portions in the Tipiṭaka. Whenever a thought or reflection arose in Venerable Ānanda, he would go to the Buddha and ask, "How is this, Venerable Sir?" The answers given to those are this vast collection of Dhamma portions. It is this vast collection of Dhamma portions that we use today as sutta discourses. Through all of this, we must consider: what do we expect from these Dhamma discourses? It is crossing over from the suffering of saṁsāra (*saṁsāra-dukkha*). The Buddha has shown the path to cross over from saṁsāric suffering as: Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

Within the Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) of this Noble Eightfold Path, there is also a certain degree of faith (*saddhā*) in the word of the Buddha. Having generated that faith (*saddhā*), as the Buddha declared in the discourse on the elephant footprint simile, one generates a certain degree of faith (*saddhā*) in the Awakening (*sambodhi*) of the Buddha. Without that trust to a certain extent, one cannot walk this path of Dhamma. One would be unable to choose who one's Teacher is. Having established faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha as one's foundation, if one develops the correct vision, the correct view, then from there on, the stream of thoughts that arises—the path-thoughts—constitutes Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*). Through that, one's speech, action, and livelihood are aligned, and ultimately, by bringing forth concentration of mind, one is able to realize the true nature of the world. Essential for walking this path are the qualities shown by the Buddha: *saddhā*, *viriya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. These are both spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and spiritual powers (*bala*). When opposing states arise, by recalling faith (*saddhā*), one can conquer doubt, hesitation, and uncertainty (*vicikicchā*). By putting forward energy (*viriya*), one can conquer the mind's shrinking nature and sluggishness. Developing mindfulness (*sati*) helps to eliminate distraction. Then comes concentration (*samādhi*), one-pointedness, and finally wisdom (*paññā*).

It is by completing these factors that one is able to achieve the highest results on this Dhamma path. Therefore, we must reflect on the spiritual qualities present in the characters of these disciples. While reflecting on them as a tribute of gratitude and worship, we must take the examples we can from them and cultivate these spiritual qualities of the Dispensation within ourselves. It is through this that we can achieve our own liberation and also set an example for others. Even though we might generally think of offerings and rituals as meaningless, within them lie activities related to this Buddha-service. Next, just as Venerable Ānanda did, by retaining these Dhamma portions and constantly using them in a way that assists our liberation, we must put them into practice. It is through these that even the state of great learning (*bahussuta*) helps the longevity of this Dispensation. Through great learning (*bahussuta*), many results are obtained. One gets the opportunity to hear the Dhamma. Especially in an era when there were no books, it is because the monks retained and maintained these as reciters (*bhāṇakas*) through generations that we have received this Dhamma today. Even if we restrict this Dhamma to books and merely print them in books because printing facilities are available, after some time, these will become things that are not understood. Therefore, we must retain this Dhamma in our minds, in our consciousness, in our hearts, repeatedly bring them to mind, examine their meaning (*attha*), and be enthusiastic to protect that Dhamma in our minds.

Along with that, one's life naturally shapes itself. If one is constantly engaged in something, all one's thoughts and aspirations remain aligned with it. A person whose mind is engaged in wrong thoughts and wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) will have all other behaviors aligned accordingly. But when one lives constantly bringing Dhamma portions to mind, reflecting on them, and directing the mind towards them, one is naturally inclined to develop the spiritual qualities present in those Dhamma portions within oneself. Recalling these facts, today these lay devotees—just as the Buddha declared—have received this heritage of the Dispensation, brought down to us by Venerable Ānanda not as an inheritance of material things (*āmisa-dāyāda*) but as an inheritance of the Dhamma (*dhamma-dāyāda*).

Just as Venerable Sāriputta is referred to as the General of the Dhamma (*Dhammasenāpati*), Venerable Ānanda is referred to as the Treasurer of the Dhamma (*Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika*). The Buddha awarded foremost positions to these various elders for the forward journey of this Dispensation. Thus, the Saṅgha knew: "These monks are special in these particular fields. Therefore, matters related to those can be obtained from those specific monks." In this way, through a certain skillful means, the Buddha provided opportunities for His disciples to demonstrate their special skills and talents to the world.

As mentioned in that *Sekha Sutta*, in the trainee's path, the Buddha actually might not have had such a severe backache as to require lying down. But He utilized that opportunity to have Venerable Ānanda deliver a long discourse. He rested, saying, "Ānanda, preach the Dhamma to these Sakyan princes." In that way, on various occasions, He preached the Dhamma briefly and retired from the temple to provide

opportunities for His disciples to practice their skills. In this manner, every one of us must strive to retain the Buddha's Dhamma correctly—both its meaning (*attha*) and its phrasing (*byañjana*) as He said, "with meaning and phrasing"—and expound and teach them to others, anchor our minds in them, ask and learn about what we do not understand or what is unclear, and by depositing that Dhamma in our minds and living according to the Dhamma, we can protect this Dispensation. For various wrong views arise due to a lack of correct understanding of the Dhamma. But today, when the phrasing or the letters and order of words in any Dhamma portion declared by the Buddha are changed, their meaning also changes. If the Dhamma is distorted, pronouncing Dhamma passages incorrectly and retaining them incorrectly, their meaning also gradually becomes distorted. That is how the disappearance of the Dispensation occurs. Therefore, considering it as one's duty, for the longevity of the Dispensation and for the development of one's own spiritual qualities, one must correctly retain the Dhamma portions, teach them to others, and with genuine faith (*saddhā*), perform the duty of teaching others exactly as heard and exactly as learned (*yathāsutaṁ yathāpariyattaṁ*).

If we take the character of Ānanda as our example in all of this—the Buddha has declared that failing to worship and praise those who are worthy of worship and praise is a shortcoming. When we reflect in this manner, by constantly recalling the store of virtues of those Great Arhats, taking them as examples for our lives, and through those spiritual qualities, bringing an end to our saṁsāric journey—by bringing the power of those spiritual qualities such as *saddhā*, *viriya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* taught by the Buddha into our minds—may this Dhamma sermon we delivered today, and the meritorious benefits of hearing the Dhamma you have acquired, be a supportive condition to succeed in your own Dhamma-meditation as quickly as possible before the decline of this Dispensation, relying on the association with good spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*)! Through that merit, may it quickly and definitely be a supportive condition for your release from all saṁsāric suffering—such as birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), illness, and death (*maraṇa*)—and for finding solace in the supreme, noble, stilled mind (Nibbāna! Wishing that the virtue (*sīla*) kept today and the Dhamma heard definitely be a supportive condition for our supramundane progress, let us recite the verses in this manner:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #58

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.141)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Koci bhavo nicco, saṅkhārā vāpi sassatā?

Uppajjanti ca te bhūtā, cavanti aparāparaṃ.

Etamādīnavaṃ ñatvā, bhavasmiṃ anapekkho;

Sabbakāmehi mutto me, āsavakkhayo'ti.

From:

verse from the Aṅgulimālattheragāthā (Thag 121–122), which is found in the Theragāthā (Khuddaka Nikāya)

Dear Listeners,

The Tathāgata, the Fully Enlightened One, revealed to the world that because of not properly understanding *Anicca* (Impermanent) within existence, beings wander in *saṃsāra* for a long period of time. Due to the perverted view of regarding *Anicca* (Impermanent) things as permanent, *bhava-taṇhā* (craving for existence) is deposited within the mind in an extremely subtle manner. Today, we have chosen as our theme two advisory verses that help to eradicate this *bhava-taṇhā*. The Great Arahant Uttara, who uttered these two verses, attained Arahantship through the meditation on the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*). At a time when he was sentenced to be impaled on a stake on a baseless accusation, sitting on that very stake, he conquered that painful feeling (*vedanā*) through the meditation on the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*) and attained Arahantship. The story of Ven. Uttara Thera is told as follows:

To a child born to a certain wealthy Brahmin family in the kingdom of Magadha, the parents gave the name Uttara. As this virtuous child Uttara grew up, seeing him growing in virtue, wisdom, knowledge, and physical beauty, the chief minister of Magadha, Vassakāra, proposed to marry his young daughter to him. However, as his wisdom

gathered over *saṃsāra* had already matured by this time, the young man Uttara rejected that marriage proposal and came into the association of Ven. Sāriputta. Serving the Great Arahant Sāriputta and listening to the Dhamma, he soon received ordination. Having received ordination, he served him as a close attendant.

On one occasion, when the Great Arahant Sāriputta fell ill, the novice monk (*sāmaṇera*) Uttara set out early in the morning to seek medicinal alms food. Having placed his bowl near a pond, he went down to the pond, washed his face and mouth, and while returning, a thief who had broken into a house through a tunnel the previous night and plundered goods was fleeing through the main gate of the city with the king's men in hot pursuit. Arriving near the pond, the thief dropped the bag of gems into the novice's bowl and ran away, escaping. When the king's men arrived and checked, seeing the bag of gems in the bowl, they arrested the novice monk, accusing him of being the thief. Whom did they take him to show? To none other than Minister Vassakāra. Vassakāra, the chief minister who was acting as the judge at the time, harboured ill-will and hatred because his proposal had been rejected. Out of pure hatred because Uttara had rejected his proposal and ordained among the ascetics, without even holding a trial, he ordered him to be impaled on a stake. When the executioners took him and were impaling the novice monk Uttara, the Buddha saw this and arrived at the spot. After he was impaled, the Buddha placed his hand on his head and declared, "Uttara, this is the ripening of your past *kamma* (karma). Therefore, endure and bear that feeling (*vedanā*) through the power of reflection." The Buddha gave a fitting instruction and Dhamma advice to him. Having heard this, the novice monk Uttara suppressed the feeling (*vedanā*), and through that very meditation, attained Arahantship with higher knowledges (*abhiññā*), and as mentioned there, rose into the sky from the stake and even performed miracles.

The monks asked, "Venerable, how did you derive benefit from insight meditation (*vipassanā*) while experiencing such intense feeling (*vedanā*)?" Then the Arahant Uttara said, "For a long time, I had seen the danger in *Bhava* (Becoming). I had understood the nature of *saṅkhāras* (preparations). Therefore, I was able to attain Arahantship through the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*)." Expressing this thought, it is said that he uttered these two verses:

"There is no *Bhava* (Becoming) that is permanent. There are no *saṅkhāras* (preparations) that are eternal or everlasting. They arise as this or that. They pass away in various ways, again and again—not just arising, but changing and passing away. Having seen this danger regarding this *bhava*, this existence, I have come to the firm stance that I have no further use for this *bhava*. Having emerged from all sensual pleasures, the destruction of the influxes, Arahantship, has been attained by me." It is said that Venerable Uttara answered the monks in this manner.

This story is deeply miraculous. Such miraculous things are mentioned in the Dhamma. Sometimes, even more miraculous things are recorded. In the past, even though highly meritorious individuals encountered such disasters due to certain forces of *kamma*, it is recorded in various Dhamma stories that they were able to realize the Four Noble Truths and the truth of *Dukkha* (Suffering) taught by the Buddha through those very disasters.

If we direct our thoughts to the specific matters spoken of here, what is this permanent existence? Now, those of you who have some understanding of the Dhamma of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) would know that it is stated: "*upādāna-paccayā bhavo*" (dependent on grasping/holding is existence). Where there is grasping/holding (*upādāna*), there is existence (*bhava*). This existence is something that goes hand in hand with grasping/holding (*upādāna*).

As Buddhists, we all know that what the Buddha pointed out as a "person" is not a soul or self (*attā*). What is here is a heap of form, a heap of feeling (*vedanā*), a heap of perception (*saññā*), a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and a heap of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These are grasped in the manner of grasping/holding (*upādāna*). It is through grasping, by holding on, that this idea of existence (*bhava*) arises. And due to that very grasping, it becomes a conditioned/prepared (*saṅkhata*) thing. Now, the word *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) was mentioned.

As Buddhists, we have all heard the word *saṅkhāra*. However, it must be said that this is a difficult word to understand. If we think about it at an ordinary level, its basic meaning is "preparing" or "constructing." That *saṅkhāra* means "preparing" is also mentioned in the Dhamma. When defining each of these aggregates (*khandha*), the Buddha asks: "And what, monks, do you call *saṅkhāras*? They prepare/construct what is prepared/conditioned (*saṅkhataṃ abhisaṅkharonti*), therefore they are called *saṅkhāras*." They prepare the conditioned into a state of being prepared. This is done by *saṅkhāras*. Next, what is spoken of as the conditioned/prepared thing (*saṅkhata*)?

"*Rūpaṃ rūpattāya saṅkhataṃ abhisaṅkharonti*"—it is these *saṅkhāras* (preparations) that prepare form to be form as a conditioned/prepared entity. Through a collection of thoughts arising in the mind due to ignorance (*avijjā*), there is a taking of it as "this is mine." Through that, one grasps form as "my form." Thereupon, a limit or boundary is established. A prepared thing, a *saṅkhata*. It is the same with feeling (*vedanā*). Where one grasps it as "my feeling," through that very grasping/holding, they become conditioned/prepared things. Perception (*saññā*) is the same. Finally, preparations (*saṅkhāra*) themselves are prepared into the state of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) by preparations (*saṅkhāra*). It is very difficult to understand that. It is hard to comprehend by thinking logically: how do preparations prepare preparations? Why is it said so? When a person takes something as "my preparations (*saṅkhāra*)," that too is a conditioned/prepared thing (*saṅkhata*). That too is through grasping (*upādāna*). It is the same with consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Consciousness too is made into a conditioned/prepared (*saṅkhata*) entity by preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is why it is said: "dependent on ignorance are preparations (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*), dependent on preparations is consciousness (*saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṃ*)." The story of the five aggregates of grasping/holding (*pañcupādānakkhandha*), of holding on, lies right there.

There is another instance where this is beautifully revealed, which the Venerable (Ananda) expresses to his fellow monks: "Friends, when we were newly ordained, the Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta often admonished us with Dhamma instructions."

Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta is the one who held the foremost (*etadagga*) position among Dhamma preachers during the Buddha's time. He was someone who delivered very deep Dhamma discourses to his fellow monks on many occasions. So, Venerable Ānanda recalls a memorable sermon delivered to him when he was newly ordained. What was it? "Puṇṇa Mantāniputta told me this: 'Friend Ānanda, it is through grasping/holding (*upādāna*) that the conceit "I am" (*asmi*) arises, not without grasping/holding (*upādāya asmi'ti hoti, no anupādāya*).' It is through grasping that the thought 'I am' comes to a person, not without grasping." A very deep point is expressed there. It is only where there is grasping that one can say 'I am'. Then, he also gives a simile for this.

Often, we can understand something with the help of a simile. Even if the sentence regarding that Dhamma point is not understood immediately, Venerable Ānanda relates to the other monks a beautiful simile that Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta had declared to him. Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta said to Venerable Ānanda: "Friend, just as a young woman or man fond of ornaments, looking at the reflection of her or his own face in a mirror, or in a bowl of clean water, does so by grasping/depending on something, by relying on something." In modern terms, we would say "relative to something."

If we take the story told here in light of the simile, a person is reminded of their own form when looking into a mirror. That is when they can say "this is me." Why? Because a mirror has a reflective quality. To reflect means to show back, as if manifesting or conjuring. This reflective quality exists in this consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Within the human mind, within consciousness (*viññāṇa*), there is this reflection (*paccavekkhaṇa*). When looking back, something is caught; something is caught by the mind. It is that which is caught that one grasps as "this is my form." One looks into the mirror to adjust, to prepare and construct one's form, thinking "this is my form." Thus, through that simile, it is shown that existence (*bhava*) arises within that very grasping/holding (*upādāna*).

On another occasion, as a teaching of the Buddha, it is stated that a person sees form as self (*attā*). They regard form as self. That very regarding is a preparation/formation (*saṅkhāra*). Here we get a clue to the word *saṅkhāra* as well. To declare "this is my form" is itself a preparation/formation (*saṅkhāra*). A preparation/formation (*saṅkhāra*) means a prepared/constructed thing. In prepared things, there is an artificial nature, an untrue nature. There is something like a departure from the natural state within the word *saṅkhāra*. Thus, one grasps it as "this is my form." This shows that taking form, feeling (*vedanā*), etc., as "I" and "mine" is itself a preparation/formation (*saṅkhāra*).

It is in this manner, upon preparations (*saṅkhāra*), that this conditioned/prepared (*saṅkhata*) state is built. Next, there is a valuable discourse taught by the Buddha regarding this conditioned/prepared state: "Monks, there are three characteristics of the conditioned/prepared (*saṅkhata*). If something has been prepared/constructed, in every such constructed thing, these three characteristics are found. What are the three? *Uppādo paññāyati* (arising is discerned), *vayo paññāyati* (passing away is discerned),

ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati (alteration of that which stands is discerned)." In any constructed thing, an arising can be shown. *Vayo* means a wearing away or passing away can be shown. *Ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ* means that which is between the arising and the passing away, which we call "existence" or "persisting." Within that existence—here "standing" refers to its state of persisting—*ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ* (alteration of that which stands) is found. That is the special thing. An alteration or change is seen there. This is what the Buddha had to remind the world of.

Now, think about yourselves. When you think about your own lives, one end is birth (*jāti*). The other end is the disaster called death (*maraṇa*). During the period between these two, who thinks about death? How many of us do? Who thinks about this impermanence (*aniccatā*)? Based on the conceit of "I" and "mine," believing that this exists permanently—if aging (*jarā*) begins to show, that too is covered up; some dye or paint is applied to cover it up. You know how with vehicles, they keep the same license plate, but from time to time they patch it up with new-looking parts and keep it running. They are unwilling to accept the truth. So, it persists until then; that is the way.

The Buddha points out *ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ*—this grasped/held portion is not permanent. What is within it is alteration (*aññathābhāva*). Since there is this alteration, due to various social requirements, we sometimes even have to prove our identity—proving an identity that is not there, during various administrative tasks.

Yet, the nature of the world is indeed alteration (*aññathābhāva*). It is change itself. There is nothing identical in this; there is no self-identity. This is precisely what is to be understood as impermanence (*aniccatā*). However, seeing impermanence (*aniccatā*) in the present moment is extremely difficult.

It is easy to think that past things are over. It is also easy to think that in the future, this will cease to be. But seeing impermanence (*aniccatā*) right there in the present, moment by moment, is extremely difficult. That is precisely how the impermanence of preparations (*saṅkhāras*) is contemplated in deep insight (*vipassanā*). What is mentioned as the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) in insight (*vipassanā*) is that the arising and passing away start to appear in a rapid manner when one's attention (*manasikāra*) is directed there. Let us bring in another simile for this. It is close to the mirror simile, but not something found in books. It is a simile we use to explain certain Dhamma points; we cannot claim it is entirely our own. Now, you have surely heard how a dog, while crossing a footbridge carrying a piece of meat, thought there was another piece of meat in the water, jumped in to grab it, and committed a foolish act.

Thinking further along those lines, suppose a dog is crossing a footbridge. While crossing, it sees its own shadow or reflection. It might think it is a friendly dog and wag its tail. Or think it is an enemy and growl. Or look with curiosity, wondering where this dog came from. What is the reason for all this? It is because the dog forgets that water has a reflective quality. If there is reflection (*paccavekkhaṇa*)—real reflection means reflecting within the mind, gaining an understanding—when looking while thinking "this

is something in a mirror," its artificial nature has already struck our mind. Now, that dog looks at the water forgetting the reflective nature of water. That is why it is deceived by it. But to dispel that delusion, that is precisely what the Buddha pointed out as radical attention/wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Thus, through unwise/improper attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), through incorrect reflection, the dog is deceived and might stay there even for hours. But when radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is awakened, it understands, "Because of the reflective nature of this water, it is my own shadow that is seen." In that manner, as one progresses in insight (*vipassanā*), what helps is radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).

Where radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is awakened, one sees that in what the world takes to be "a thing, a thing," there is a Dhamma term for it: Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). We are going through this systematically so that it helps meditating devotees to learn something from this, rather than just listening to a sermon and leaving. "Name-and-Form" (*nāmarūpa*) means that the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) sees the object appearing to them as an instance where some mental phenomena (name) and some material phenomena (form) are mutually supporting each other. Speaking of mental phenomena (name/mental factors), what is the first thing our attention is drawn to? Think about it. Even right now, suppose there is some slight feeling (*vedanā*), even if it is not a major painful feeling (*vedanā*) like being pierced by a thorn. The very first thing felt is feeling (*vedanā*), isn't it? Is it not within feeling (*vedanā*) that we are prompted into action? So much so that on one occasion, the Buddha asked Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, if there were no feeling (*vedanā*) anywhere, could there arise the perception (*saññā*) of a self (*attā*)?" "No, Lord," he replied. From this very fact, it is clear that it is through feeling (*vedanā*) that the notion of a self is awakened. Even if it exists as an underlying tendency (*anusaya*), at the moment of feeling (*vedanā*), behold, it is awakened. Thus, that feeling...

...perception (*saññā*) tries to identify. Suppose some creature bit you, say, a centipede, while you were suddenly sitting here. Thus, perception (*saññā*) is there. Next, based on that perception (*saññā*), shouldn't one find a way to escape from it, to get free? Intention (*cetanā*) is applied. When intention is applied, contact occurs. For contact, the Pali word *phassa* is used there. Wherever it may be, the mind is directed to that point of contact (*phassa*). And what lies at the end of this? Attention (*manasikāra*), reflection. These are the mental phenomena pointed out as "Name" (*nāma*): feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). It is through these that we initially recognize something; we might not know what bit us, but what helped us identify it was that feeling (*vedanā*), the perception (*saññā*) that followed, the intention (*cetanā*) applied accordingly, the contact (*phassa*) there, and the attention (*manasikāra*) that aided it. Thus, those are mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*).

Next, what are shown as material phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*)? As form (*rūpa*), the Buddha has pointed out the four great elements (*cattāro mahābhūtā*): earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). We recognize them through their properties: hardness, fluidity, heat, coldness, etc. You have heard of these characteristics of the four great elements. We identify them through those very mental phenomena (*nāma-*

dhamma). This is why it is said that there is a constant mutual relationship between Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*).

Somehow, it is through these phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), by recognizing Name-and-Form, that we recognize the reflective nature of that consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that directs our attention toward consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Dependent on Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists. It is on this basis that we must proceed. Thus, the Buddha points out that if the world, which is trapped within the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), at some point understands their impermanence (*aniccatā*)—what has been taken so far as the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) are these heaps. The heap of form, the heap of feeling (*vedanā*). All this is taking them as "I" and "mine." What is caught in that taking is the heap (*khandha*). The Buddha also shows what is meant by "heap." *Khandha* means heap. This heap of form is described in eleven ways: past, future, present... Now, when you think about your own form, "this is my form," if we take the past childhood, or youth—it could be a photograph—yet "this is my form." Thus, past, future, then gross or subtle, internal or external—meaning it can be one's own form, or an external form of another. Or it can be gross, or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near. All these are heaps of form. All of of these are taken as "I" and "mine." It is the same regarding feeling (*vedanā*). When a feeling (*vedanā*) is slightly felt, behold, it is already awakened within. Next, one conjures it up in the mind.

If truth be told, contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*) is like a very short path to Nibbāna. Even though short, it is like a difficult path. It is so powerful that it is hard for everyone to face it. That is why it is called a miracle. How does one do this meditation while sitting on a stake? We go searching for a nice, comfortable seat to meditate. Yet, because Venerable Uttara had that understanding of existence (*bhava*), because he had that understanding of preparations (*saṅkhāras*), he used that very feeling (*vedanā*) as an aid. He turned it into a blessing in disguise. He realized suffering (*dukkha*)—the suffering (*dukkha*) concerning existence (*bhava*) taught by the Buddha.

Let us, in our own way, consider what issues arise during meditation for all these devout meditating devotees. First of all, if a teacher has given a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), it is difficult to raise the mind to that meditation subject. Why? Because the mind runs to familiar thoughts. Those are called the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa-dhamma*). Various thoughts about the past, the future, and useless things come crashing into the mind. At that point, there is a battle with thoughts (*vitakka*). When battling with thoughts (*vitakka*), one is not here. Perhaps at home, or somewhere else. Therefore, one does not even know that this body is here. Even feelings (*vedanās*) are not felt because the mind is wandering around. But suppose that at some point, they are suppressed. One tries to raise the mind to the meditation subject. That is called the victory over thoughts (*vitakka-vijaya*).

There are various stages of meditation. Regarding progress, the initial stage is the victory over thoughts (*vitakka-vijaya*). Thoughts (*vitakka*) are the first to present themselves as Māra. When the Māra of thoughts is somewhat subdued, to some extent, it can be

regarded as *vitakka-vijaya*. Next comes feeling (*vedanā*). One must remain in one posture to settle and concentrate the mind. But that is not permitted. Why? Because the Buddha pointed out that the nature of the body is purely a heap of suffering (*dukkha*). It is a heap of suffering, a heap of diseases. In short, one may well consider existence (*bhava*) as entirely a stake. In the Buddha's words, not only form but all five—feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—should be looked at with an insight eye. The Buddha has shown them in various ways. You may have heard: to look at them as *Anicca* (Impermanent), as *Dukkha* (Suffering), as a disease, as a boil, as a wound, as a stake, as a calamity, as an affliction, as *Anattā* (Not-self), as not belonging to oneself, as empty. This was not an exaggeration by the Buddha; it is its actual nature. Therefore, just as was said of form, feeling (*vedanā*) too is purely a stake. Whether it is pleasant feeling, painful feeling, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, within all of these, the Buddha points out that very impermanence (*aniccatā*). In another discourse, the Buddha points out: see pleasant feeling as suffering (*dukkha*), painful feeling as a stake, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling as peaceful but impermanent (*anicca*). It is through such understanding of feeling (*vedanā*) that one becomes an Arahant, if viewed from that angle.

This attaining of Arahantship is the realizing of Nibbāna. One can approach it from several angles. In meditation on the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*), there is disillusionment towards feeling (*vedanā*)—complete disillusionment. That very feeling (*vedanā*) helps in that disillusionment. What is done in *vedanānupassanā* is not looking at it as "my thing," but looking at feeling (*vedanā*) simply as feeling (*vedanā*). When one practices looking at feeling as feeling—now, as we said, after achieving the victory over thoughts, next there is a feeling (*vedanā*) somewhere in the body in the sitting posture. In most cases, by changing posture, we cover up that feeling, the suffering nature of the body. The body reminds us: "this is a heap of suffering." How do we cover it up? By changing postures. But if, at some point, without changing postures, one tries to identify the feeling insightfully, that is a very difficult thing. It is hard to do all at once. But if there is strong determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*), thinking "even if it breaks, let it be," then the practitioner of insight directs the mind right there. They do not look at it as "my feeling." They see it as impermanent (*anicca*). Feeling (*vedanā*) is something that comes from this impermanent (*anicca*) body. It is due to respective contact (*phassa*) that respective feelings (*vedanā*) arise. There is also a passage shown in the Dhamma regarding arising from respective conditions, which helps in meditation:

> *Tajjaṃ tajjaṃ paccayaṃ paṭicca tajjā tajjā vedanā uppajjanti;*
>
> *Tajjassa tajjassa paccayassa nirodhā tajjā tajjā vedanā nirujjhanti.*

Dependent on respective conditions, respective feelings (*vedanās*) arise. Due to the absence of those respective conditions, those respective feelings (*vedanās*) cease. Then, without taking them as "I" and "mine," there is reflection according to cause and condition. Within that, feeling (*vedanā*) too can be recognized as impermanent (*anicca*). That is the meditation of *vedanānupassanā* (contemplation of feeling).

So at that moment, what the meditator (*yogāvacara*) does, if they cannot keep the mind on the meditation subject, is to direct the mind to the place where feeling (*vedanā*) occurs, in the manner of *vedanānupassanā*. Through that, many things can be learned. Sometimes, to conquer that feeling (*vedanā*), one can even extend the sitting period, the duration of the posture. That helps tranquility (*samatha*). Why? Because within that lies the power of determination. Now, we are all afraid of feeling (*vedanā*). We are afraid of it as soon as it approaches. We are afraid when a pin or a needle is brought close. Similarly, we are afraid as soon as a feeling (*vedanā*) is slightly felt. Yet, there is a level at which it can be endured. When the meditator faces the feeling (*vedanā*) at that moment, they realize they can go beyond it. Through that, the tranquility (*samatha*) aspect develops. Next, looking directly at the feeling (*vedanā*) and making it a meditation subject, behold, the nature of preparations (*saṅkhāras*) is understood. All of these are a heap of ripples, a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāras*). Feeling (*vedanā*) is not a single thing.

That is why the Buddha pointed out, as you have often heard, "*vedanā bubbuḷūpamā*" (feeling is like a water bubble). Water bubbles are indeed directly experienced—just as form was said to be like a lump of foam, feeling (*vedanā*) is like raindrops falling during a rainy season. They do not last long. When water falls from the roof, water bubbles arise and pass away, arise and pass away. It is through that understanding that impermanence (*aniccatā*) is realized in the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*). When it is directly realized that "all this is impermanent (*anicca*)," it is then that the lineage of insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) properly emerges within the mind. For we usually consider only arising and passing away. Between the two ends of arising and passing away, there is that alteration (*aññathābhāva*) we mentioned. A change. That change is then caught next, like ripples in various ways. That is one thing. How is it caught? Behold, in the form of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Attention (*manasikāra*) is directed; to that attention is caught the minute feelings (*vedanās*), perceptions (*saññā*), intentions (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). These phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) keep arising and passing away. The realization that "there is no 'I'" arises through that. That is how contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*) progresses in insight (*vipassanā*).

We cannot even imagine how Venerable Uttara did this, sitting on a stake in that manner, but the path of contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*) is to be practiced in this way. Indeed, we do not need to invite or bring feelings (*vedanās*) into our lives. These feelings (*vedanās*) that naturally come are quite sufficient for our meditation on suffering (*dukkha*). In our daily lives, we have to experience various feelings (*vedanās*). Yet, we do not know their meditative value.

That is why on one occasion the Buddha delivered a valuable discourse: "Monks, the uninstructed worldling (*assutavā puthujjana*) experiences pleasant feelings (*vedanā*), painful feelings, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings. The instructed noble disciple (*sutavā ariyasāvaka*) also experiences pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings. What, monks, is the difference between the two?" This was a question asked of the monks. The monks replied: "Venerable Sir, Blessed One," on such

occasions they say a special phrase, "Blessed One, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One. Please, Blessed One, clarify the matter for us. Having heard it from the Blessed One, we, the monks, will retain it." In short, they did not give an answer. They expected the answer from the Buddha himself. This was probably because it was a deep question. Then, behold, the Buddha himself declares, "This is the reason." The Buddha presents that when a painful feeling (*vedanā*) arises in that uninstructed worldling, the ordinary person who does not know the Dhamma...

...they weep, wail, beat their breast, become bewildered, and grieve. Through this, the uninstructed worldling generates another feeling (*vedanā*). The Buddha gives a simile for this: "Suppose a person is struck by an arrow. After being struck by that arrow, another arrow comes and strikes them." In the same way, this uninstructed worldling adds mental suffering to physical suffering. Thus, they experience two arrow strikes. That uninstructed worldling, because of that painful feeling (*vedanā*), reacts in that manner—in reaction to it.

Similarly, another weakness shown regarding the uninstructed worldling is that when a painful feeling (*vedanā*) arises, they develop aversion (*paṭigha*), a friction, or hatred, either towards a person or towards the feeling (*vedanā*). Let's say, they get angry even with their own body, thinking, "Where is this body letting me meditate?" Here, we can understand that because the Buddha's words reminded the novice monk Uttara, "Uttara, this is the force of a past *kamma*. Endure it, reflect on it, and tolerate (*adhivāsetu*) it," it must have helped him. Otherwise, suppose we were in that position at that moment. When impaled on a baseless charge, one would first of all develop a great aversion (*paṭigha*) towards the Brahmin Vassakāra, thinking, "Why was such a punishment given to innocent me?" At that moment, because the Buddha connected it to *kamma*, saying, "This is something that must be endured, a past *kamma*," that too must have helped Venerable Uttara to direct his mind to the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*). But in an ordinary person, it generates aversion (*paṭigha*). They do not think of it as coming from a force of *kamma*. Instead, they develop aversion (*paṭigha*). That is the other aspect.

Next, there is more. When a painful feeling (*vedanā*) arises, the uninstructed worldling wishes for a pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). What is the reason for this? To the uninstructed worldling, the only way to escape from painful feeling (*vedanā*) appears to be pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). No other path of liberation is seen. When an ordinary person experiences a painful feeling (*vedanā*), as a remedy, they run after pleasant feelings (*vedanās*). That is why we say that the ordinary worldling is engaged in a seesaw ride between suffering (*dukkha*) and pleasure (*sukha*). As much as suffering (*dukkha*) comes, they hope for pleasure. But this is not a solution. Thus, one weakness shown by the Buddha regarding that worldling is adding another arrow to the first arrow—through weeping, wailing, beating the breast, and grieving over that feeling (*vedanā*), in addition to the physical pain. The second point is that an aversion (*paṭigha*) arises within this person towards the feeling (*vedanā*). As a result of this, the Buddha points out, the underlying tendency of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*) is deposited in the mind. Aversion,

hatred. That too is a bad thing. Next, in place of that, by running after pleasant feelings (*vedanās*) as a way of escaping painful feeling (*vedanā*), the underlying tendency to lust/attachment (*rāgānusaya*) is acquired. Thus, the Buddha first points out these shortcomings in the uninstructed person.

Next, he shows how the instructed noble disciple who has heard the Dhamma acts. When a feeling (*vedanā*) arises, the disciple who has gained Dhamma knowledge does not weep, wail, or beat their breast in that manner. They do not add mental pain to physical pain. Next, the noble disciple does not develop aversion (*paṭigha*) towards it. There is no conflict with the feeling (*vedanā*). Feeling (*vedanā*) is something natural. Regarding this, the Great Arahant Sāriputta expresses an amazing statement about patience (*khanti*). Venerable Sāriputta is a monk who gave a highly remarkable example of this. He is also a monk who delivered valuable discourses regarding the meditation subjects of the elements: earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*).

On one occasion, he says: "Now, suppose someone strikes your body, say, with a stick." In that case, the Great Arahant Sāriputta does not look at the person who struck with the stick. He looks at his own body. Why? Because the body is made in such a way that if struck with a stick, it hurts. If struck with a stick, it hurts. Someone might laugh, thinking this is humorous. But let us think for a moment: what if this body were made of iron? Then that stick would bounce back and strike that very person, wouldn't it? But this body is at fault. Let us think for a moment: we have a wound. We put a bandage on it and go to a meeting. We collide and clash with everyone we bump into—but it is our wound!

The Buddha declared that this body is entirely a wound, a boil, a disease, an affliction. Therefore, one should not clash either with the stick or with the person who swung the stick. It is the nature of this body. Such was the attitude of the Great Arahant Sāriputta—to us, hearing this sounds like a joke. But the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) has to think in that very way. We should not clash with that feeling (*vedanā*). Sometimes, it might be an unseen force of past *kamma*. We might be harassed innocently. We might be arrested and subjected to harassment by some severe enemy. Yet, there may be some force of *kamma* underneath it. If we react to it without understanding this, we pile up more *kamma*. But the practitioner of insight makes it an opportunity; they make this feeling (*vedanā*) a meditation subject. They make both a meditation subject. A short path to Nibbāna. A difficult path, but a short path.

Because the perception of self (*attā-saññā*) is bound up with feeling (*vedanā*). It is also there that it must be broken. This drive to take things as "I am," as "me." Now, "I am" is indeed what is found in the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), the conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*) which is rooted in "I am"—the proposition "I am." Usually, the fundamental proposition of existence (*bhava*) is "I am." But one has to elaborate "I am" a bit further: "I exist" or "this I am." Now, taking one by one from form, feeling (*vedanā*), etc., one says "this I am." Thus, on whatever occasion existence is brought up or shown, one directly has to say "this I am." But in the beginning, it is in dependence on that very

feeling (*vedanā*) that the sense of "I" and "mine" arises. Why? Because here, feeling (*vedanā*) is something arisen from causes and conditions in that manner.

Venerable Sāriputta was struck with a stick. The body is something that swells or hurts when struck by a stick. That is all there is to the story. If the body were an iron thing, none of that would happen. That is how one must think if looking from that perspective. The noble disciple does not go into aversion (*paṭigha*) in that way. When a painful feeling (*vedanā*) arises, the noble disciple does not chase after pleasant feelings (*vedanās*) as a solution. Why? Because that disciple knows there is another path of release from painful feeling (*vedanā*), a path to Nibbāna. By making that small painful feeling (*vedanā*) the object, sometimes the entire suffering of *saṃsāra* can be brought to an end. This is done through the understanding of these feelings (*vedanās*). To help with this, the Buddha has shown these feelings (*vedanās*) in manifold ways: as arising, as passing away, their satisfaction (*assāda*), their danger (*ādīnava*), and the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from them—by regarding it as an opportunity to gain the correct understanding of all these, making it a meditation subject. Behold, that is how the Buddha shows the difference between the uninstructed worldling and the instructed noble disciple on the question of feeling (*vedanā*).

Thus, it is mentioned in many ways in the Dhamma. According to the Buddha's words, we must reflect on pleasant feeling (*vedanā*)—now, pleasant feeling is indeed what everyone wishes for. The Buddha has pointed out to see that too as suffering (*dukkha*). Why is that? It is mentioned in the Dhamma that these feelings of pleasure, pain, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant are classified in this way. Regarding pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), it is said: "*sukhā ṭhitibhāve, vipariṇāmadukkhā*"—pleasant feeling is pleasant while it persists, but painful when it changes. Painful when it changes.

Therefore, when we invite this pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), we must at the same time be prepared to accept the suffering (*dukkha*) that comes from its change. That is why, in properly considering feeling (*vedanā*), the Buddha tells the noble disciple to see it in this way: "*yo sukhaṃ dukkhato addakkhi*"—he who has seen pleasant feeling as suffering (*dukkha*). Since it brings suffering (*dukkha*), even though we invite pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), what comes with it is the emptiness and suffering (*dukkha*) when it ends. We know how a small child blows soap bubbles and runs after them because they look beautiful. How far can they run? In the end, they disappear without a trace. Such is the way with pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). That is why it is seen as suffering (*dukkha*).

Next, painful feeling (*vedanā*) is directly said to be seen as a stake. Painful feeling (*vedanā*) is indeed a stake. So, a stake must be understood as a stake. Next, neither-painful-nor-pleasant, neutral feeling (*vedanā*). It is peaceful. It is peaceful, yet it too is impermanent (*anicca*). Why? Because between the seesaw of pleasure and pain lies this neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). It too is not permanent. Defilements (*kilesa*) are present there as well. That is why the Buddha rejected even the levels of absorption (*jhāna*) attained with the help of neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), and went beyond them. It is the state of completely stepping off the seesaw regarding this feeling (*vedanā*). This seesaw ride is entirely based on the conceit "I am"

(*asmimāna*). Then, feeling (*vedanā*) is seen simply as feeling (*vedanā*). That is what is called contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*).

The Buddha showed how to approach the knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*). Breaking the coarse level of the grip of "I" and "mine" at the stage of abandoning the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), and then gradually—that is what is found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. "*Kāye kāyānupassī*"—contemplating body as body. "*Vedanāsu vedanānupassī*"—contemplating feeling (*vedanā*) as feeling (*vedanā*). Why is it said to look at them in that way? What is "contemplation" (*anupassanā*)? Contemplation (*anupassanā*) means understanding their true nature, removing the notion of "I" and "mine" as "this is mine, this is another's." Whether it is one's own feeling (*vedanā*) or another's, feeling (*vedanā*) is just feeling (*vedanā*). It is to see it in this manner that we are trained in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. You have heard the term "*bahiddhā*" (externally). The Buddha could have said "one's own" and "another's." But there is no "one's own" and "another's" here. There is only "internally" (*ajjhatta*) and "externally" (*bahiddhā*). The story of internal and external. What is internal is called "mine." What is external is called "another's." But in both, there is the same nature of Dhamma. It is found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta concerning the body, the mind, feeling (*vedanā*), and mind-objects (*dhamma*). It is in reliance on these very things that we must progress in insight (*vipassanā*). The main thing is mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). Next is radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). That is the most important thing. The seed of wisdom is within all of us. It only needs to be awakened. That is what radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is. The Buddha brought to light that way of looking at the world. That is what is mentioned as *vipallāsa* (distortions/perversions). We said that the world has a perverted view; the Buddha points out not just one, but four perverted views/distortions (*vipallāsa*):

> Regarding the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent.
>
> Regarding that which is suffering (*dukkha*) as pleasant.
>
> Regarding that which is not-self (*anattā*) as self.
>
> Regarding the foul as beautiful.

These four perceptions (*saññā*) are indeed shown as the distortions (*vipallāsa-dhamma*). The Buddha declared that this perversity exists in three levels within us: distortion of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*), distortion of mind/thought (*citta-vipallāsa*), and distortion of view (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*). There is a distortion of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*) that takes the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent. *Saññā* means recognition/perception. One forms a perception (*saññā*) that it is permanent. Based on that perception (*saññā*), a stream of thoughts arises, hopes and wishes are formed. That is the distortion of mind/thought (*citta-vipallāsa*). Thus, starting from a distorted perception (*saññā*), it leads to distorted thoughts. Once those thoughts are firmly

established, they become a view/dogma. An unshakeable view. That is what is called the distortion of view (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*).

Thus, the Buddha taught that these distorted phenomena (*vipallāsa-dhamma*) affect the world in three ways: *saññā-vipallāsa*, *citta-vipallāsa*, and *diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*. It is the same regarding those four: "*anicce nicca-saññino*"—whether it is regarding the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, regarding what is suffering (*dukkha*) as pleasant, regarding what is not-self (*anattā*) as self, or regarding the foul as beautiful. They arise at the level of perception (*saññā*), become established as intricate and fancy thoughts, and finally arise as a view (*diṭṭhi*). It is within this perverted state that the world exists.

But why did the Buddha bring this to light for the world? To make a beginning. Through unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) and radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), the Buddha has placed us on the path of Dhamma realization. From that point on, the work is ours. The journey from there on is insight (*vipassanā*). Developing some level of concentration through tranquility (*samatha*) meditation, and gaining the capacity to practice mindfulness and clear comprehension (*satisampajañña*) in a more advanced manner, gradually—it is nothing strange. It is within this very five aggregates of grasping/holding (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) that we see—we must recall that noble word of the Buddha once again: "*Imasmiññeva byāmamatte kaḷevare sasaññimhi samanake lokañca paññāpemi, lokasamudayañca lokanirodhañca lokanirodhagāminiñca paṭipadaṃ*." That is the great word of the Buddha. If we think about it as a summary, that is what we have to take. What is the Buddha declaring there? "Monks, I declare that within this fathom-long carcass (*kaḷevara*)"—"carcass" usually means a dead body, a corpse. But here, the word "carcass" (*kaḷevara*) is used as "with perception (*sasaññimhi*) and mind (*samanake*)" within this carcass. It cannot be called a dead carcass because perception (*saññā*) and mind are present there. Yet, "carcass" is used to make us think. If there were no perception (*saññā*) and mind, this would indeed be like a corpse. Like a tree or a plant. But the Buddha says: "Within this very fathom-long carcass, endowed with perception (*saññā*) and mind, I declare the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world."

These two words, perception (*saññā*) and mind (*manas*), can be made even more meaningful through the analysis we have done so far. Why did the Buddha bring perception (*saññā*) and mind into this? They help us. Even though we blamed perception (*saññā*) on one hand as distorted perception, as distorted phenomena (*vipallāsa-dhamma*), that is the very thing we utilize for insight (*vipassanā*). The perception of permanent (*nicca-saññā*) is not good; in its place, the perception of impermanent (*anicca-saññā*). Those of you who have read discourses like the Girimānanda Sutta know that the Buddha has introduced a series of perceptions (*saññā*) to be developed by the noble disciples: *anicca-saññā* (perception of impermanence), *asubha-saññā* (perception of foulness), *anatta-saññā* (perception of non-self), *ādīnava-saññā* (perception of danger), *pahāna-saññā* (perception of abandoning), *virāga-saññā* (perception of dispassion), *nirodha-saññā* (perception of cessation)—all of these are perceptions (*saññā*). Behold, the perceptions (*saññā*) to be developed. Thus, in place of

the perceptions (*saññā*) that exist in the world, that proliferate *saṃsāra*, in place of distorted perceptions (*saññā*), undistorted perceptions (*saññā*) are practiced according to the Buddha's Dhamma. That indeed is the path.

Now, it was said here that it is found within this fathom-long body. There, "world" meant nothing but this story of suffering (*dukkha*). Just as suffering, its origin, its cessation (*nirodha*), and the path to its cessation are spoken of, so were the world and the origin of the world. At times, the world itself was meant as suffering (*dukkha*). "*Dukkhe loko patiṭṭhito...*" (The world is established on suffering...) The world and suffering are mentioned as one, like two halves of a folding lid. What is said of this world is exactly what is said of suffering (*dukkha*). According to the Buddha's words, within this fathom-long body, there is suffering (*dukkha*), the origin of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*), the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), and the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā*). When we say "path," it is this insight (*vipassanā*) path we are discussing now. To that path belongs this story of perceptions (*saññā*)—the perceptions (*saññā*) of *anicca*, *asubha*, *ādīnava*, etc., are merely a mirage. Yet, it is through a certain level of perception (*saññā*), a Dhamma-conforming level of perception (*saññā*), that we proceed toward realization to escape that mirage.

Next, mind (*manas*) is mentioned. Attention (*manasikāra*). Unwise attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*). So far in *saṃsāra*, we have been led by Māra through unwise attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*). Through incorrect reflection, the reflection of the dog on the footbridge is what we have carried for so long in *saṃsāra*. The Buddha has shown that through proper reflection, radical attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which helps to realize things as they are, is awakened. Unwise attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*) means forgetting the place where something arose and running after it, like a deer running after a mirage. Radical attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*) means targeting the place where something arises and turning back towards that side. It is like a journey of returning back home. Thus, just as the deer runs and runs after the mirage until it dies of exhaustion without ever reaching it, the world runs for a long time seeking the end of suffering in *saṃsāra*. Yet, only suffering (*dukkha*) is encountered. Behold, the Buddha presented radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) to come to the place where these arise. Feeling (*vedanā*)—it starts from contact (*phassa*). Identify those phenomena—the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). That is where radical attention (*yoniso*) begins. Dependent on consciousness (*viññāṇa*), Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) exists. Dependent on Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists. That is where we finally arrive. If, at some point, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is understood, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) becomes understood. If, in some way, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is understood, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) becomes understood. Right there is liberation from *saṃsāra*. This indeed is the Buddha's word.

On this valuable Uposatha day, having undertaken a valuable virtue (*sīla*), I hope that by doing so at this moment, you have gathered those Dhamma portions that assist your meditation, that help your insight (*vipassanā*), and particularly relate to the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*).

If this merit of listening to the Dhamma, as well as this way of thinking relevant to one's own meditation, has helped you draw closer to Nibbāna, then relying on that power of merit, may this power of merit be a supportive condition to achieve peace by attaining the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship as quickly as possible within this very life, escaping from the suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra* such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and pain, and attaining the supreme deathless Nibbāna. Reflect in this manner.

Likewise, if any beings from the lowest Avīci hell to the highest Akaniṭṭha heaven wish to rejoice in the merits gained from this Dhamma sermon and Dhamma listening, may that rejoicing be a supportive condition for them to attain peace by reaching the supreme deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi they aspire to. Make this aspiration.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #59

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.172)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Khīṇaṃ purāṇaṃ, navaṃ natthi sambhavaṃ;

Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṃ.

Te khīṇabījā avirūḷhichandā, nibbanti dhīrā yathāyaṃ padīpo.

Idamapi saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ, etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

From:

Ratana Sutta (Sn 2.1) from the Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

Taking refuge in the Triple Gem is a search for the shelter of the highly powerful Triple Gem. The boundless qualities of this Triple Gem—the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha—are so potent that they can form the very foundation of an Act of Truth (*Saccakiriya*). This is made beautifully clear in the *Ratana Sutta*, which you all frequently recite. The verse we have selected as our theme today comes from the latter part of this *Ratana Sutta*, a discourse that faithful Buddhists often utilize as a protective chant (*paritta*) and refuge in times of adversity.

According to the commentaries, the origin story of the *Ratana Sutta* lies in the city of Vesālī, which was struck by a threefold fear: the fear of famine, the fear of non-human spirits, and the fear of pestilence. To dispel these fears and bring peace and blessing, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, delivered this discourse. It is recorded in the scriptures that during the time of the Buddha, Vesālī was an exceptionally prosperous kingdom in Jambudīpa, governed very righteously and systematically as a republic. However, at one point, a severe drought occurred, leading to famine.

First, the poor and destitute began to die. The citizens threw the corpses outside the city walls. As they rotted, non-human spirits gradually entered the city, drawn by the stench.

Consequently, even more people began to die. Along with this, the texts mention *ahivātaka-roga*—which, in modern terms, was an epidemic akin to the plague.

When this threefold fear of famine, non-human spirits, and pestilence gripped the city, the citizens of Vesālī approached their kings to complain. While the rulers gathered in the assembly hall (*santhāgāra*) to discuss what should be done, they realized that a highly powerful, spiritually potent fully enlightened Buddha, the Tathāgata, had appeared in the world. Concluding that He could be their refuge, the Licchavi kings sent two envoys with gifts to King Bimbisāra in the city of Rājagaha, for at that time, the Buddha was residing at the Veḷuvana monastery. As the story goes, King Bimbisāra remained equanimous about the matter and told them to invite the Buddha themselves. So the envoys went and made their appeal to the Blessed One. Out of great compassion, the Buddha accepted their invitation. There is a detailed account of this journey in the scriptures, but if we dwell on those details, we will not have time to discuss more important matters. In any case, the Buddha arrived in Vesālī. It is said that as soon as He reached the borders of Vesālī, a great rainstorm arose, washing all the rotting corpses into the river. Standing at the city gate, the Buddha then taught the *Ratana Sutta* and instructed the Venerable Ānanda: "Chant this protective discourse throughout the city, within its walls, accompanied by the Licchavi princes." Accordingly, Venerable Ānanda walked through the city, using this sutta as a protective chant, and thereby dispelled the threefold fear. This, in brief, is the origin story of the *Ratana Sutta*.

Now, all of you use this *Ratana Sutta* as a protective chant (*paritta*). When we analyze the *Ratana Sutta*, we can understand that it consists of a series of verses in the form of an Act of Truth, based on the profound qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. If it is an Act of Truth, one must understand what the truth is. An Act of Truth performed without properly understanding its true meaning does not yield its full benefits. Therefore, in the explanation we intend to give today, we hope to focus more on the flavor of the meaning (*attha rasa*) rather than the flavor of the sound (*sadda rasa*). Many of you may already know these through translations, but to make it as comprehensible as possible to everyone, let us first analyze the meaning of the verses of the *Ratana Sutta* in sequence, according to the time available, before we delve into our main theme verse.

You all know the first verse:

Yānīdha bhūtāni samāgatāni,

bhummāni vā yāni va antalikkhe,

sabbeva bhūtā sumanā bhavantu,

atho pi sakkacca suṇantu bhāsitaṃ.

This is an invitation to the spirits: "Whatever spirits are gathered here, whether terrestrial (dwelling on the earth) or celestial (dwelling in the sky), may all those spirits be happy-minded (joyful), and let them listen attentively to what is spoken."

Tasmā hi bhūtā nisāmetha sabbe,

mettaṃ karotha mānusiyā pajāya,

divā ca ratto ca haranti ye baliṃ,

tasmā hi ne rakkhatha appamattā.

"Therefore, O spirits, listen all of you! Show loving-kindness (*mettā*) to the human generation who bring you offerings day and night. Therefore, protect them diligently, without negligence." From this point on, the actual Act of Truth begins.

Yaṃ kiñci vittaṃ idha vā huraṃ vā,

saggesu vā yaṃ ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

na no samaṃ atthi tathāgatena,

idamapi buddhe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

"Whatever treasure there is in this world or in other worlds, or whatever exquisite jewel there is in the heavens, there is none equal to the Tathāgata. In the Buddha is this precious jewel; by this truth, may there be well-being." This is the Act of Truth concerning the qualities of the Buddha.

Khayaṃ virāgaṃ amataṃ paṇītaṃ,

sakyamunī samāhito nadhigā,

na tena dhammena samatthi kiñci,

idamapi dhamme ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

Khayaṃ, *virāgaṃ*, *amataṃ*, *paṇītaṃ*—all these are terms applied to Nibbāna. As you may have heard, Nibbāna is described as the destruction of craving (*taṇhakkhaya*), dispassion (*virāga*), cessation (*nirodha*), and Nibbāna. *Khaya* refers to the nature of destroying craving (*taṇhā*), *virāga* is another name for Nibbāna, and *amataṃ paṇītaṃ* refers to the exquisite Deathless state. What the Sakyan Sage, concentrated in mind, attained—there is nothing equal to that Dhamma. This is the precious jewel in the Dhamma; by this truth, may there be well-being!

Yaṃ buddhaseṭṭho parivaṇṇayī suciṃ,

samādhina-ānantarikaññamāhu,

samādhina tena samo na vijjati,

idamapi dhamme ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

"That pure concentration which the supreme Buddha praised, which the wise call 'immediate' (*ānantarika*)—there is no concentration equal to that concentration. This too is the precious jewel in the Dhamma; by this truth, may there be well-being!"

Now, this point requires some explanation. Here, the text is referring to the Concentration of the Path (*magga-samādhi*). The pure concentration praised by the Buddha, which the Buddhas and Arahants call the *ānantarika* concentration (immediate concentration), is such that no other concentration can equal it. This refers to the supramundane (*lokuttara*) level. Regarding the supramundane Concentration of the Path, as you know, in the Noble Eightfold Path, all eight path factors arise in a highly powerful manner in a single mind-moment. That is the supramundane Path. Immediately after that Path, one falls into the Fruition (*phala*). That is why it is called 'immediate' (*ānantarika*) concentration. The Path is immediately followed by its Fruition without any interval. This concentration is unequal to any mundane concentration. That is the meaning of "there is no concentration equal to that"—it refers to this Concentration of the Path. This describes the aspect of the Path.

Ye puggalā aṭṭha sataṃ pasatthā,

cattāri etāni yugāni honti,

te dakkhiṇeyyā sugatassa sāvakā,

etesu dinnāni mahapphalāni,

idamapi saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

"The eight individuals praised by the virtuous, they constitute four pairs. They are the disciples of the Sugata, worthy of offerings; gifts given to them yield great fruit. This too is the precious jewel in the Saṅgha; by this truth, may there be well-being!" These eight individuals form four pairs. They are the true disciples of the Sugata who are worthy of gifts and offerings. Giving to this Saṅgha yields great fruits. This is the precious jewel in the Saṅgha.

Ye suppayuttā manasā daḷhena,

nikkāmino gotama-sāsanamhi,

te pattipattā amataṃ vigayha,

laddhā mudhā nibbutiṃ bhuñjamānā,

idamapi saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

This describes those members of the Saṅgha: "Those who, with a firm mind and strong determination, are well-applied in the dispensation of Gotama, free from sensory desire, having attained their goal, have merged into the Deathless, and enjoy the extinguishment (Nibbāna) obtained for free. This too is the precious jewel in the Saṅgha; by this truth, may there be well-being!"

This refers to those who are engaged in this dispensation with firm effort. They have attained Arahantship and enjoy "the extinguishment obtained for free" (*laddhā mudhā nibbutiṃ*). *Mudhā* means without any expense, completely free. In the world, all other coolings of desires, such as craving, require one to spend money to acquire things before they can be appeased. But this extinguishment is obtained by letting go of everything. It is a cooling that comes naturally; hence it is called "free" (*mudhā*). Having obtained this extinguishment for free, they experience and enjoy it through the attainment of the Fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samāpatti*). This is presented as a quality of the Saṅgha.

Yathindakhīlo paṭhaviṃ sito siyā,

catubbhi vātehi asampakampiyo,

tathūpamaṃ sappurisaṃ vadāmi,

yo ariyasaccāni avecca passati,

idamapi saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

"Just as a city-pillar (*indakhīla*)—which in ancient times was a firm stone post erected at the city gates—firmly planted in the earth, is unshaken by the winds blowing from the four quarters, so do I call that virtuous person—the Noble disciple who has attained Stream-entry—who sees the Noble Truths with wisdom. This too is the precious jewel in the Saṅgha; by this truth, may there be well-being!" This compares the Noble disciple to the *indakhīla*.

Ye ariyasaccāni vibhāvayanti,

gambhīrapaññena sudesitāni,

kiñcāpi te honti bhusappamattā,

na te bhavaṃ aṭṭhamaṃ ādiyanti,

idamapi saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

"Those who clearly comprehend the Noble Truths, well-taught by the One of deep wisdom—even if they are highly negligent, they do not take an eighth becoming (*bhava*). This too is the precious jewel in the Saṅgha; by this truth, may there be well-being!" This refers to the Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), those who have comprehended the Four Noble Truths for the first time, or who have seen Nibbāna from afar, having directly understood the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha.

There is something to be explained here. Even if they fall into great negligence, they will not undergo an eighth becoming (*bhava*). There is an analysis regarding the Stream-enterer. Some who become Stream-enterers do not advance further within that lifetime. As you know, individuals like Visākhā are called *pamāda-sekha* (negligent disciples on the path of training). They became Stream-enterers but did not progress to the stages of Once-returner, etc., in that very life.

When such individuals pass away, they fall into three categories. Let us say they are divided into three groups. The ultimate limit for a Stream-enterer is a maximum of seven lifetimes. That is what is stated here: they will not go to an eighth becoming. A *pamāda-sekha* who did not attain higher paths and fruits in this life, upon death, is classified by the Buddha into three groups: *ekabīji* (single-seeded), *kolaṅkola* (passing from family to family), and *sattakkhattuparama* (seven times at most). *Ekabīji* refers to a Stream-enterer who takes only one more birth; these are likely those who have highly developed spiritual faculties such as faith (*saddhā*). A *kolaṅkola* Stream-enterer takes two or three more births before ending the suffering of saṃsāra and becoming an Arahant. The *sattakkhattuparama* is the most negligent among them, taking at most seven more births. It is according to this Dhamma-nature that it is said: *na te bhavaṃ aṭṭhamaṃ ādiyanti*—they do not take an eighth becoming. This is an absolute truth, and because it is a truth, it forms a powerful Act of Truth.

> *Sahāvassa dassanasampadāya,*
>
> *tayassu dhammā jahitā bhavanti,*
>
> *sakkāyadiṭṭhi vicikicchitañca,*
>
> *sīlabbataṃ vāpi yadatthi kiñci,*
>
> *catūhapāyehi ca vippamutto,*
>
> *chaccābhīṭhānāni abhabbo kātuṃ,*
>
> *idamapi saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,*
>
> *etena saccena suvatthi hotu.*

"Simultaneously with his acquisition of the vision of Stream-entry, three things are abandoned: the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), doubt, and whatever clinging to rules and vows (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) there may be. He is also completely freed from the four states of misery (apāya), and is incapable of committing the six heinous crimes..."

You have heard that a Stream-enterer eradicates these three fetters (*saṃyojana*). This is what is meant here. Furthermore, that person is freed from the four states of misery and is incapable of committing the six *abhīṭhāna* (heinous crimes). What are these six? Matricide, patricide, murdering an Arahant, maliciously shedding the blood of a Buddha, causing a schism in the Saṅgha, and taking another teacher (proclaiming someone other than the Buddha as one's teacher). A Stream-enterer is incapable of committing these six acts; the Buddha has declared this impossibility. This too is a truth. This is the precious jewel in the Saṅgha; by this truth, may there be well-being!

Kiñcāpi so kammaṃ karoti pāpakaṃ,

kāyena vācā uda cetasā vā,

abhabbo so tassa paṭicchādāya,

abhabbatā diṭṭhapadassa vuttā,

idamapi saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

"Even if he should commit some evil deed by body, speech, or mind, he is incapable of concealing it. This incapability of one who has seen Nibbāna has been declared by the Buddha." This too is the precious jewel in the Saṅgha; by this truth, may there be well-being!

Vanappagumbe yathā phussitägge,

gimhānamāse paṭhamasmiṃ gimhe,

tathūpamaṃ dhammavaraṃ adesayī,

nibbānagāmiṃ paramaṃ hitāya,

idamapi buddhe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

Here, the Buddha gives a beautiful simile: "Just as a forest grove with blossoming tops in the first month of the summer season, such is the sublime Dhamma he taught, leading to Nibbāna, for the supreme benefit of all." The Buddha used this simile to describe the Dhamma of scripture (*pariyatti-dhamma*) that He taught. This too is the precious jewel in the Buddha; by this truth, may there be well-being!

Varo varaññū varado varāharo,

anuttaro dhammavaraṃ adesayī,

idamapi buddhe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

Varo means excellent, used here as an epithet for the Buddha. "The excellent One, the knower of the excellent (Nibbāna), the giver of the excellent, the bringer of the excellent, the peerless One taught the excellent Dhamma. This too is the precious jewel in the Buddha; by this truth, may there be well-being!"

Now we come to the verse we selected as our theme:

Khīṇaṃ purāṇaṃ navaṃ natthi sambhavaṃ,

Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṃ,

Te khīṇabījā avirūḷhichandā,

Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyaṃ padīpo,

Idamapi saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,

Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

"Whatever old there was is destroyed; there is no new arising. Their minds are detached from future becoming." This is said of the Arahants. Their minds are free from desire for future becoming (*āyatike bhavasmiṃ*). "They, with seeds destroyed..."—we will explain these seeds later—"and desires not growing, those wise ones are extinguished just like this lamp. This too is the precious jewel in the Saṅgha; by this truth, may there be well-being!"

The three verses that follow are generally verses of homage. According to the commentaries, after this recital, Sakka, the king of devas, along with the gathered spirits, chanted these three verses to pay homage to the Triple Gem:

Yānīdha bhūtāni samāgatāni,

bhummāni vā yāni va antalikkhe,

tathāgataṃ devamanussapūjitaṃ,

buddhaṃ namassāma suvatthi hotu.

"Whatever spirits are gathered here, whether terrestrial or celestial, let us pay homage to the Tathāgata, the Buddha, who is honored by gods and humans. May there be well-being!"

Yānīdha bhūtāni samāgatāni,

bhummāni vā yāni va antalikkhe,

tathāgataṃ devamanussapūjitaṃ,

dhammaṃ namassāma suvatthi hotu.

"Whatever spirits are gathered here, whether terrestrial or celestial, let us pay homage to the Tathāgata's Dhamma, which is honored by gods and humans. May there be well-being!"

And the third:

Yānīdha bhūtāni samāgatāni,

bhummāni vā yāni va antalikkhe,

tathāgataṃ devamanussapūjitaṃ,

saṅghaṃ namassāma suvatthi hotu.

"Whatever spirits are gathered here, whether terrestrial or celestial, let us pay homage to the Tathāgata's Saṅgha, which is honored by gods and humans. May there be well-being!"

What we have just discussed is the *Ratana Sutta*. As mentioned before, this is a protective chant based on an Act of Truth. Since some people question whether there is room for such practices within this dispensation, we must address this. The Buddha, on many occasions, has declared the supreme power of the qualities of the Triple Gem, as in discourses like the *Aggappasāda Sutta*. He states that among all living beings—whether footless, two-footed, four-footed, many-footed, with form or formless, conscious, unconscious, or neither-conscious-nor-unconscious—the Tathāgata, the Fully Enlightened Buddha, is supreme. If anyone places faith and confidence in the Tathāgata, they place confidence in the supreme.

"For those who have confidence in the supreme, the result is supreme." If one places confidence in the Buddha, the supreme Tathāgata, the result of that confidence is also supreme. Similarly, He states:

"Bhikkhus, among all prepared/conditioned (*saṅkhata*) things, the Noble Eightfold Path is declared supreme." If anyone places confidence in the Noble Eightfold Path, they place confidence in the supreme, and its fruits and results are likewise supreme.

Furthermore, He states that among all things, whether prepared or unprepared/unconditioned (*saṅkhata* or *asaṅkhata*), the Unprepared (*asaṅkhata*)—which is dispassion (*virāga*), Nibbāna—is supreme. If one places confidence in Nibbāna, the supreme, its benefits are also supreme.

Then He states that among all groups, assemblies, or communities in the world, the Saṅgha of the Tathāgata is supreme. If one places confidence in this supreme Saṅgha, the result is supreme. Thus, placing faith and confidence in the Triple Gem, as well as in the truth of the Path and the truth of Nibbāna, is declared to be immensely beneficial.

You might also be familiar with the *Dhajagga Paritta* from your chant books. The Buddha did not teach this protective discourse for things like winning lawsuits. He taught it for the Saṅgha who, in their efforts to attain Nibbāna, dwell in forests, under trees, or in empty huts (*araññagato vā, rukkhamūlagato vā, suññāgāragato vā*). If, during their meditation, they experience fear, trepidation, or hair-standing-on-end (*bhayaṃ vā chambhitattaṃ vā lomahaṃso vā*), the Buddha instructed them: "At that moment, recollect Me" (*mameva tasmiṃ samaye anussareyyātha*). How should they recollect Him? You know the formula: *Itipi so bhagavā arahaṃ sammāsambuddho...* Thus, if any danger, fear, or trepidation arises for the meditating monks in the forest, at the root of a tree, or in an empty hut, the Buddha has permitted them to recollect Him. By doing so, their fear, trepidation, and hair-standing-on-end will be dispelled.

The Buddha further states: "If you cannot recollect Me, then recollect the Dhamma." This refers to the Dhamma endowed with six qualities (such as *svākkhāto...*). Through that recollection, the fear, trepidation, and hair-standing-on-end will disappear. "If you cannot recollect the Dhamma, then recollect My Saṅgha, the Saṅgha of the Tathāgata" (such as *supaṭipanno...*). Then, too, your fear will be dispelled. From this, we can see that the *Dhajagga Paritta* is indeed something that can be recollected for protection.

Although you use the word *paritta* (pirit), you might not know its etymology. *Paritrāṇa* is made of *pari*, meaning "around" or "from all sides", and *trāṇa*, meaning "protection". Thus, it means protection from all sides. It provided protection all around the city of Vesālī. "From all sides" can refer to various seen and unseen forces, since Vesālī was afflicted by diseases as well as non-human spirits. Similarly, meditating monks can encounter such unusual disturbances. The Buddha approved this protective chanting to provide comprehensive protection from all sides.

Furthermore, it is our duty to preserve this paritta that the Buddha taught for our protection. Why do we say this? Because these discourses were preserved with great difficulty over centuries by the lineage of reciters (*bhāṇaka*) through memorization. Today, due to various modern influences, they are sometimes caught up in musical trends, and the protective chants are being diluted. The flavor of the sound (*sadda rasa*) is emphasized at the expense of the flavor of the meaning (*attha rasa*). Such a thing is happening in society, and many of you are drawn to it. There is a slight excuse for being drawn to music under the guise of listening to paritta, but what actually happens is that the meaning is entirely lost and forgotten. The flavor of meaning is destroyed. The Saṅgha preserved these chants with great difficulty, staying awake at night, through famines and droughts, carefully maintaining the distinction between aspirated and unaspirated sounds. Now, in an era where we have all kinds of recording devices, if we corrupt this heritage, how can we justify it?

This is why, dear devotees, the *Ratana Sutta* is specifically an Act of Truth. To recollect the qualities of the Buddha, one must first possess faith in those qualities. These are not mere magic spells. In some other religions, like Hinduism, as you may know, they have mantras in the Atharvaveda and so forth. When you look at them, they have no meaning; they are just a string of sounds. Yet they believe there is some occult power in them. The

Buddha generally rejected such things. Instead, He presented something meaningful. We have previously explained to you the rich meaning behind the *Metta Sutta*.

We have also explained how the *Mahā-maṅgala Sutta* was made meaningful. By discarding the superstitious views of that era—such as things seen as auspicious (*diṭṭha-maṅgala*), heard as auspicious (*suta-maṅgala*), or felt as auspicious (*muta-maṅgala*)—the Buddha presented a set of meaningful auspicious actions showing how one can cultivate one's own well-being and establish self-protection. In this *Ratana Sutta*, even unseen forces are subdued by the power and boundless qualities of the Triple Gem. Specifically, what is highlighted here is the power of truth. This Act of Truth is a force that exists in the universe not only during the time of a Buddha's appearance. As we learn from the Jātaka stories, the Act of Truth is a cosmic force that operates even during eras when no Buddha is present. Truth is a force; there can be no action without energy. If you perform an Act of Truth without even knowing what the truth is, then there is no real Act of Truth. That is why we have taken so much trouble to bring out the meaning of these verses, which many of you recite so fluently from memory.

Because of modern trends, the musical sound is overemphasized. Sometimes, the chants are recited in a way that the meaning of the words is completely erased. We do not say this to attack anyone in the dispensation, but out of a deep desire to preserve this dispensation.

If you, too, encourage such trends, the flavor of meaning and the profound depth of these teachings will be suppressed. You can now appreciate what a vast ocean of deep meaning lies within this *Ratana Sutta*. These additional explanations were meant to clarify this.

Now, to elaborate further on the verse we selected as our theme: *Khīṇaṃ purāṇaṃ navaṃ natthi sambhavaṃ*—"The old is destroyed, there is no new arising." When we speak of "the old" as past kamma, some might ask: if past kamma is destroyed, how do the Buddha and the Arahants experience the results of kamma? Some even claim that the Buddha and Arahants do not experience the results of kamma at all. However, there is a very deep point here. The Buddha Himself, on one occasion, delivered a discourse to the Saṅgha regarding "New and Old Kamma" (*Nava Purāṇa Kamma*).

He said: "Bhikkhus, I will teach you new and old kamma." But in His explanation, He first presents old kamma. "What, bhikkhus, is old kamma? The eye is old kamma, prepared (preparations - *abhisaṅkhataṃ*), willed (volitional activity - *abhisañcetayitaṃ*), to be felt (sensation/feeling - *vedanīyaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ*)." The eye, bhikkhus, is old kamma. It is prepared through kamma, willed through the energy we generated in the past, and it is something to be felt.

Now, think about this. You may have heard of the Venerable Cakkhupāla. At the very moment he attained Arahantship, he lost his eyesight. He became blind due to a past kamma. An even clearer example, which everyone knows, is the Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, who was supreme in psychic power in this Buddha's dispensation. In the very distant past—so distant that it can hardly be measured—he had beaten his own

parents to death. Because of that evil kamma, five hundred bandits came and crushed his body to pieces. Just as the Buddha explained regarding the eye, He declared the same for the other sense faculties. As we mentioned: "The eye is old kamma, prepared, willed, to be felt." It is given to us to be felt. You must understand that all six sense faculties—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—have been received by us, as well as by the Buddha and the Arahants, due to the power of past kamma (*abhisaṅkhataṃ abhisañcetayitaṃ*). And they are "to be felt" (*vedanīyaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ*)—we must experience them. This experiencing is the same for both the Buddha and the Arahants. When does this experiencing come to an end? It ends only at the moment of the Arahant's *anupādisesa-nibbāna-dhātu* (the extinguishment without residue). That is the meaning here.

Some Arahants pass away at the very moment they attain Arahantship; they are called *samasīsī* (those who attain ending of defilements and life simultaneously). Others must continue to live. Even though the Buddha was requested to live for an aeon, He could not do so. Because of past kamma, He had to undergo severe physical pain in this body. Even if the specific details are not fully recorded in the books, it was due to some past kamma. This is because the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are given to us with the mandate: "Go and experience them!" Out of craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance, we begged Māra for them, and Māra gave them to us, saying: "Go and experience them!" So we must experience them. The same applies even to the pleasant side. Even the fact that we have to wear spectacles now is due to this. It was given to us to be felt. I mentioned this so that you might understand it. This is how we should understand *khīṇaṃ purāṇaṃ*—at that final moment, all past kamma is completely exhausted.

Navaṃ natthi sambhavaṃ—"There is no new arising." This means that there is no more kamma to cause a future becoming (*bhava*) for the Arahants. Having destroyed ignorance, they have seen the stilled nature of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). By destroying craving (*taṇhā*)—that is, sensual craving (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*), and craving for non-becoming (*vibhava-taṇhā*)—they have also destroyed the craving for becoming. Therefore, they do not delight in becoming (*bhave na rajjati*); they do not wish for a future becoming. That is why there is no new arising. *Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṃ*—they have no desire for a future becoming; their minds are detached from it.

Now, some people do not like our way of explaining the Dhamma because they think: "Then the Arahant is annihilated, there is nothing left." But if there is no craving (*taṇhā*), why should we force another life upon the Arahant? Why try to feed someone who is not hungry? Why try to give water to someone who is not thirsty? Why try to plant the Arahant, who is free from craving, back into becoming, and invent some kind of 'everlasting Nibbāna' for them? *Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṃ*—there is no attachment in the detached mind for another becoming.

Te khīṇabījā—here, another profound point is made. What is meant by "those with seeds destroyed" (*khīṇabījā*)? In one of His discourses, the Buddha defines what the seed is:

"Kamma is the field, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the seed, and craving (*taṇhā*) is the moisture." When discussing rebirth, this is a key point that many scholars might not even know. *Kammaṃ khettaṃ*—kamma is the field. *Viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ*—consciousness is the seed. *Taṇhā sineho*—craving is the moisture. For a seed to grow, it needs moisture, and it also needs a field. The Arahants have destroyed even that field.

To add to this from the same discourse, we mentioned "old kamma". The discourse also speaks of "new kamma"—the kamma created in this life through body, speech, and mind. One might ask: "Do the Arahants just sit idle? Do they not perform various actions like offering to the Buddha?" Those actions do not accumulate kamma. They do not accumulate the kamma necessary to bring about a future becoming. In this field of kamma, the consciousness of an ordinary person sprouts because the moisture of craving is present.

Now, here is the deep point. Why is it said that their seeds are destroyed (*khīṇabījā*)? The seed of consciousness of the Arahants does not sprout because its core has been removed. The core of that seed has been pulled out. What is that core? It is Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). This exact simile is not found in this sutta discourse, but I am explaining it so that you can understand. In the light of the Dhamma, the consciousness of such Arahants is called *anidassana-viññāṇa* (non-manifestative consciousness). This *anidassana-viññāṇa* is a major point of contention for many scholars today. *Anidassana-viññāṇa* means a consciousness that does not project or establish itself in Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). This is because the Arahants have attained the wisdom that penetrates Name-and-Form. They do not cling to, merge with, or get entangled in Name-and-Form.

Therefore, that consciousness, in truth, is a ceased consciousness—it is quenched. The Arahants experience this cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇa-nirodha*) during the attainment of the Fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samāpatti*). It is this very mind of Fruition-attainment that presents itself at the final moment of the Arahant's life. That is why they do not go to a future becoming. *Te khīṇabījā avirūḷhichandā*—hence, that desire (*chanda*) is, we may say, the very sprout of craving. When a plant sprouts, a shoot emerges. Similarly, the unseen aspect of craving is called *chanda* (desire/will). It is not the desire of modern terms. Everything begins once a liking or desire for something arises. *Chanda* contains a very subtle state of desire; it arises in a highly subtle manner. It means this desire does not spring up again. Kamma is destroyed, and when Name-and-Form is fully understood, one is liberated from Name-and-Form. *Te khīṇabījā*—it is then, at the final passing away (parinibbāna) of the Arahants, that the process is completed, like a lamp going out. The oil of the lamp is exhausted, the wick is burnt out—that is what is called Nibbāna, that extinguishment.

Why is this Nibbāna called the Deathless (*amata*)? Because even a person who has merely glimpsed Nibbāna, like a Stream-enterer, becomes free from the fear of death. This is because, for a moment, through the power of insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), the five aggregates are let go of. In that letting go, they experience a unique, extraordinary supramundane peace and tranquility that the world cannot even fathom. It

is this very peace that becomes fully manifest. It is experienced at the highest level by the Arahant who has eradicated all fetters.

They consume and experience that Deathless state in the attainment of the Fruition of Arahantship. Because of that experiencing, what exists there is the bliss of the absence of death. Everyone has the fear of death. That bliss of the Deathless is natural. If one has realized this by letting go of grasping (*upādāna*) in the mind, even without discarding the physical body, then this Dhamma is realized in this very life (*sandiṭṭhiko dhammo*). When the time comes to discard the physical body, it is this state that presents itself.

That is why: *Te khīṇabījā avirūḷhichandā, nibbanti dhīrā yathāyaṃ padīpo*—no more oil is poured into that lamp, no more wicks are added. It is just like a lamp going out.

We have tried, to the best of our ability, to bring out the flavor of the meaning of the *Ratana Sutta* for you. There are singers with voices far sweeter and more melodious than mine. Even if we record these, people might not be very interested in listening to them. Be that as it may, we decided to present this theme because this valuable *Ratana Sutta* is on the verge of fading away. Therefore, wise devotees should take the flavor of its meaning into consideration and recite it as a true Act of Truth. Due to a lapse in mindfulness, the flavor of the meaning can easily be forgotten. You must make an effort. Even when chanting, do it as a genuine Act of Truth, reflecting on the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. Otherwise, it is very easy to use a machine to chant it a hundred thousand times. You do not have to tire yourself out to do it a hundred thousand times; you can just use a device. But then, it does not become an Act of Truth.

We say this because many people today are drawn to such things. Through this, both the laity and the clergy fall into decline. Moreover, what is even more dangerous is that for future generations, nothing will remain of these valuable discourses—which have been preserved for centuries—except the sound. Only a hollow sound will remain. Therefore, today, we have tried to present this sutta—which you all love, listen to, and recollect, and which was recollected even this morning—in a meaningful way. Benefit from this. While using this as a comprehensive protection and refuge in your daily life and meditation, may you draw closer and closer to the qualities of the Triple Gem. May this sermon help all of us to achieve the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, which are attainable through the supreme Triple Gem—the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha—as mentioned in this *Ratana Sutta*! This is our wish.

May all beings, from the Avīci hell to the highest heaven of Akaniṭṭha, who wish to rejoice in the merits generated by this Dhamma sermon and Dhamma listening, rejoice in these merits and attain the supreme, peaceful, great Nibbāna through the path of awakening of their choice! Please recite these verses to share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #60

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.177)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Manujassa pamattacārino, taṇhā vaḍḍhati māluvā viya;

So plavati hurā huraṃ, phalamicchaṃva vanasmiṃ vānaro.

Yaṃ esā sahatī jammī, taṇhā loke visattikā;

Sokā tassa pavaḍḍhanti, abhivaṭṭhaṃva bīraṇaṃ.

Yo cetaṃ sahatī jammiṃ, taṇhaṃ loke duraccayaṃ;

Sokā tamhā papatanti, udabindūva pokkharā.

Taṃ vo vadāmi bhaddaṃ vo, yāvantettha samāgatā;

Taṇhāya mūlaṃ khaṇatha, usīratthova bīraṇaṃ;

Mā vo naḷaṃva sotova, māro bhañji punappunaṃ.

Karotha buddhavacanaṃ, khaṇo vo mā upaccagā;

Khaṇātītā hi socanti, nirayamhi samappitā.

Pamādo rajo, pamādanupatito rajo;

Appamādena vijjāya, abbahe sallamattano ti.

From:

Verses 334-337 from the Taṇhāvagga (Chapter on Craving) together with Verse 315 from the Nirayavagga (Chapter on Hell) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, pointed out that it is because of *Taṇhā* (Craving) that we journey through this round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), being born and dying. Precisely because it is the primary cause of renewed existence (*punarbhava*), *taṇhā* is designated by the term *ponobhavikā* (leading to renewed existence). Until *taṇhā* is uprooted, one runs panting through this *saṃsāra*. What is shown by this series of verses chosen as our theme today is the nature of *taṇhā*—its disadvantageous side.

According to what is explained in the Commentary regarding the background story related to the Māluṅkyaputta Thera Gāthā in the Theragāthā Pāli, these verses were preached by the Great Arahant Māluṅkyaputta. The account concerning him is as follows: This Venerable Māluṅkyaputta was born into a high-class family in Sāvatthi. He was known as Māluṅkyaputta, derived from his mother's name, Māluṅkyā. Having lived in the household life for some time, he became disillusioned with it, went forth from the home life, and received ordination among the wanderers (*paribbājakas*). Having stayed among the wanderers for some time, on a certain occasion he met the Buddha, heard the Dhamma, went forth under him, developed insight (*vipassanā*), and attained Arahantship. After attaining Arahantship, out of compassion for his relatives, he visited his birthplace or former home. His relatives served him with delicious food and drinks and offered alms. At the same time, hoping to entice the Venerable Thera back to the household life, they gathered and piled up their family wealth before him and invited him, saying: "All of this belongs to the Venerable Sir. May you return to the household life, become a layman, and support a wife and children with this wealth." At that moment, according to the Commentary, he rose into the air and declared the disadvantageous side of *taṇhā* through these verses. In fact, some of these verses are also recorded in the Dhammapada as the Buddha's own words. The meaning of these few verses is extremely deep. Let us try to understand them generally.

"Manujassa pamattacārino, taṇhā vaḍḍhati māluvā viya" — For a person who behaves negligently, *Taṇhā* (Craving) grows like a *māluvā* creeper.

"So plavati hurā huraṃ, phalamicchaṃva vanasmiṃ vānaro" — He leaps from life to life in *saṃsāra*, like a monkey seeking fruit in a forest jumping from tree to tree.

"Yaṃ esā sahatī jammī, taṇhā loke visattikā" — Whomever this wretched, sticky *taṇhā* in the world—known as *visattikā* (clinging / spreading)—overcomes,

"sokā tassa pavaḍḍhanti, abhivaṭṭhaṃva bīraṇaṃ" — his sorrows multiply like *bīraṇa* grass after a downpour of rain.

"Yo cetaṃ sahatī jammiṃ, taṇhaṃ loke duraccayaṃ" — But whoever overcomes this wretched *taṇhā*, so difficult to escape in the world,

"sokā tamhā papatanti, udabindūva pokkharā" — his sorrows fall away from him, like drops of water from a lotus leaf.

"Taṃ vo vadāmi bhaddan vo, yāvantettha samāgatā" — Therefore I say to you, blessings to all of you who have assembled here!

"mūlaṃ khaṇatha usīratthova bīraṇaṃ" — Dig up the root of *taṇhā*, just as one digs up the root of the *bīraṇa* grass seeking its fragrant root (*usīra*).

"mā vo naḷaṃva sotova, māro bhañji punappunaṃ" — Do not let Māra break you again and again, like a torrent breaking reeds. Do not allow yourselves to be swept away by that torrent of *taṇhā*, nor let Māra destroy you repeatedly through repeated birth and death.

Having declared so, he next says: *"Karotha buddhavacanaṃ, khaṇo vo mā upaccagā, khaṇātītā hi socanti, nirayamhi samappitā"* — Act according to the word of the Buddha. Let not the supreme moment pass you by, for those who miss the moment sorrow when they are consigned to hell.

"Pamādo rajo, pamādanupatito rajo" — *Raja* means dust. Negligence generates and increases the dust of defilements. Therefore, through diligence (*appamāda*) and *vijjā* (wisdom / understanding / clear vision), uproot that dart of *taṇhā* from oneself: *"abbahe sallamattano'ti"*.

This is the meaning of those verses. What I have stated is their general meaning. Even the similes contained in these verses are extremely valuable.

That *māluvā* creeper is a parasitic plant that grows on trees. One often sees a *māluvā* creeper on trees. It starts small and eventually covers and destroys the tree. That is the simile used here. The *taṇhā* of a negligent person grows in the same way.

Next, *"So plavati hurā huraṃ, phalamicchaṃva vanasmiṃ vānaro"* means that just like a monkey wishing to eat fruit leaps from tree to tree in the forest, it carries that person from existence to existence, from *bhava* to *Bhava* (Becoming).

The next simile: *"Yaṃ esā sahatī jammī taṇhā loke visattikā"*—whomever is overcome by this wretched, sticky *taṇhā* in the world, that person's sorrows grow like a *bīraṇa* grass bush on which rain has fallen. On the other hand, if someone subdues that *taṇhā*, his sorrows roll off him like water drops on a lotus leaf. Thus, it is explained through various similes.

Next, as an invitation to eliminate that *taṇhā*, it says: *"Taṃ vo vadāmi bhaddan vo, yāvantettha samāgatā, taṇhāya mūlaṃ khaṇatha bīraṇaṃ"*. The tuber of this *bīraṇa* plant is called *usīra*. Some identify it as vetiver, and in some regions, it is called *sēra* (lemongrass). Just like digging up this plant for its *usīra* root, dig up the root of *taṇhā*. That is what is said through various similes. We can discuss more details related to these Dhamma matters in due course.

Before that, there are many accounts concerning the Great Arahant Māluṅkyaputta in the Sutta discourses. Let us mention some. Regarding him, the following is mentioned in the Saṃyutta Nikāya: On one occasion, the Venerable Māluṅkyaputta approached the

Blessed One and made this request: "Venerable Sir, please teach me the Dhamma in brief. With the help of that teaching, I shall go into seclusion, dwell alone, put forth effort, and realize Arahantship." When he said this, the Blessed One remarked: "Māluṅkyaputta, what am I to say to the young, newly ordained monks when you, who are old and advanced in years, come and ask for a brief teaching?" The Buddha said this as a form of mild admonishment. Then the Venerable Māluṅkyaputta said: "Venerable Sir, please preach to me a brief discourse. In that way, I shall become an heir of the Blessed One's teaching."

Next, before giving that brief sermon, as if to test his suitability, the Buddha asked Ven. Māluṅkyaputta: "What do you think, Māluṅkyaputta? Do you have any desire, lust, or affection for forms cognizable by the eye that you have not seen before?" Similarly, one can think of the others: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and thoughts—the objects met at the six sense-doors. "Do you have any passion, affection, or desire to experience them?" He replied in the negative to all of these. It was then that the Buddha delivered that brief sermon.

To express this in English: "Then, Māluṅkyaputta, regarding things seen, heard, sensed, and cognized—that is, *diṭṭha, suta, muta, viññāta*—in the seen there will be only the seen, in the heard there will be only the heard, in the sensed there will be only the sensed, in the cognized there will be only the cognized. Then, Māluṅkyaputta, you will not be 'by' that. When, Māluṅkyaputta, you are not 'by' that, then, Māluṅkyaputta, you will not be 'in' that. When, Māluṅkyaputta, you are not 'in' that, then you are neither here, nor there, nor in between the two. This itself is the end of *Dukkha* (Suffering)." He delivered this riddle-like discourse. Those devotees who have listened to our previous sermons would know that this is the very same brief sermon the Buddha preached to the ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya, which he also preached here to the Thera.

Now, if we consider the meaning of this brief sermon: those four terms—seen, heard, sensed, and cognized—are in Pali *diṭṭha, suta, muta, viññāta*. What is caught within these four are our six sense bases. That is, the very objects that are the domain of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Usually, we are accustomed to taking things as "the thing seen," "the thing heard," and so on. Here, the Buddha states that everything coming through these sense bases, that entire mass of objects, is encompassed by these four words: seen, heard, sensed, and cognized. The "sensed" refers to what is experienced through the tongue, body, and nose. So, one can understand "seen" as the objects coming to the eye, and "heard" as the objects coming to the ear. "Sensed" refers to the sensing through the nose, tongue, and body. Lastly, "cognized" refers to the sensing or cognition that comes to the mind.

So, concerning these, what is preached here is a wondrously brief discourse. Its meaning is that in the seen, it stops at just the seen; in the heard, it stops in that way. What ultimately happens through such stopping is extremely deep. What happens then? According to the Buddha, then "you are not 'by' that." This means you do not make assumptions, conceptualizations, or proliferate regarding them in terms of the seen, heard, sensed, and cognized. To explain this in an understandable way: normally, when

something strikes our eye, we take it as "a thing seen." But in reality, there is only a seeing, only a hearing, only a sensing, only a cognizing. Yet we do not understand this. Extremely rapidly, the mind acts, and what was taken as "that seen thing" becomes established through *taṇhā* (craving), *māna* (conceit), and *diṭṭhi* (views). Through *taṇhā*, we take it as "this is mine"; through *māna*, we take it as "this am I"; through *diṭṭhi*, we take it as a self. It is through this grasping, through getting established, that—now you can understand—one exists "by" that. Once you make that seen thing into your own, then by taking it "from" that, you exist "in" it. You enter into it. We have analyzed this in detail previously so that you can get some idea of it.

What the Buddha is pointing out is that instead of taking the objects met by our six sense bases—the eye, ear, nose, etc.—exactly as they are, we become established there through the defilements of *taṇhā*, *māna*, and *diṭṭhi*. It is by thus getting established that it is said "you are 'in' it." Once you go inside it, then a "here" is created. When a "here" is created, along with that "here," a "there" also arises. This is what we call duality. So, when something is taken as "here," opposed to it, a "there" is also created. The moment those two are created, there is also an "in-between." Here, the Buddha shows that liberation—complete liberation from *saṃsāra*—lies within these few words. Accordingly, if we do not get established in terms of *taṇhā*, *māna*, and *diṭṭhi* in the seen, heard, sensed, and cognized, and if we do not grasp them as "I" and "mine," then we have no "here." When there is no "here," there is no "there." When those two are absent, there is also no "in-between." Indeed, it is through the story of "here," "there," and the "in-between" that this *saṃsāra* goes on and on. That is precisely why it was said that this itself is the end of *dukkha*.

It is recorded that upon hearing this advice, Ven. Māluṅkyaputta went into seclusion and very quickly realized Arahantship. Thus, we began this discourse concerning the Great Arahant Māluṅkyaputta with the event that took place after he became an Arahant. However, next, because of matters directly related to *taṇhā*, we also mentioned this passage which was supportive of his Arahantship. But the explanation does not end here. This too is a matter mentioned in the Sutta itself. After the Buddha presented this brief discourse, Ven. Māluṅkyaputta said: "Venerable Sir, I understand the detailed meaning of this brief discourse preached by you in this manner." Here, the Great Arahant presents an explanation like a brief commentary. How does he explain it? He shows it through a series of verses related to the six senses. When we discuss one sense, you can apply it to the others and understand.

Here, Ven. Māluṅkyaputta says: "Having seen a form with the eye, by grasping an agreeable sign, one's mindfulness (*sati*) is bewildered, and then one engenders lustful thoughts. One experiences feeling (*vedanā*). Through experiencing that feeling, strong greed arises. Then, the mind is defiled by distress and so on. Through that, *dukkha* is next accumulated—that is, the five groups of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) are accumulated. This means that through grasping them, they go and accumulate. By such accumulation, one is far from Nibbāna—*ārā nibbānā*, far from Nibbāna."

Through that verse, the Venerable Thera shows that side of clinging. Just as it was said about the eye and the objects coming to the eye, you can briefly apply this to the objects coming to the ear, nose, tongue, body, and finally, the deepest one, the objects coming to the mind. By taking them as agreeable in that way and by grasping (*upādāna*) them, the groups of grasping (*upādānakkhandha*) that expand *saṃsāra* are accumulated.

Next, he states the other side: "But if someone establishes mindfulness (*sati*) regarding the objects coming to the eye, and does not develop clinging or lust towards them, that person is liberated from those aforementioned sufferings. Sometimes, that leads to the reduction of the groups of grasping, to their wearing away." What was first mentioned was "accumulation"—through defilements, the groups of grasping are accumulated. Next, through developing dispassion (*virāga*) toward them, they are eliminated, they decrease. In Pali, the terms used are *ācinati* (he accumulates) and *apacinati* (he decumulates/reduces). Words like *upacaya* (building up) and *apacaya* (wearing down) are also used. The groups of grasping are accumulated because of one's grasping of them and clinging to the feeling (*vedanā*) experienced through the senses. By seeing them right there, and letting in the seen be only the seen, in the heard only the heard, what happens is their wearing away. It is recorded that after these things were said, the Buddha approved what Ven. Māluṅkyaputta had said, saying "Sādhu, Sādhu!" After that, the Thera went and meditated accordingly and quickly attained Arahantship.

Now, in connection with this, we spoke of the *ponobhavikā* (renewed existence) nature of *taṇhā*, like a monkey leaping from tree to tree. There are many important points in that. If we are to speak of it, the nature of *taṇhā* is to connect one thing to another. There is a very good Sutta to illustrate this. On one occasion, when the Buddha was staying in the Deer Park at Isipatana in Benares, after their alms-round, the Theras assembled in the circular pavilion and discussed the meaning of a verse preached by the Buddha in the Metteyya Sutta of the Pārāyana Vagga, holding a discussion on it. Here is that verse:

> *"Yo ubhante viditvāna,*
>
> *majjhe mantā na lippati;*
>
> *taṃ brūmi mahāpurisoti,*
>
> *so'dha sibbanimaccagā."*

This is a deep verse preached by the Buddha, currently found in the Pārāyana Vagga. It is like a riddle. "He who, having known both ends, does not cling to the middle with wisdom—him I call a great man; he has escaped the seamstress here." 'Seamstress' (*sibbanī*) is a name for *taṇhā*. It means he has bypassed the seamstress called *taṇhā*.

Now, as to the meaning of that verse, six bhikkhus offered six different explanations. I am not going to mention all six here. On this occasion, only the very first explanation is relevant. Actually, when all six explanations were presented to the Buddha, saying, "During our discussion, six different opinions arose like this," the Buddha said that all six were correct. However, he declared that what he himself intended by that verse was

the first explanation presented. That is the explanation we are presenting at this moment. During the discussion among the Theras, the question arose: What are the two ends mentioned by the Buddha in this verse? What is the middle? Who is the seamstress called *sibbanī*? That is why those six opinions were presented.

Only the first opinion is relevant to us here. That first Thera declared: "As I understand it, these two ends are *phassa* (contact) and the origin of *phassa* (*phassa-samudaya*)." There is nothing special to define about *phassa*. The origin of *phassa* means the arising of contact. *Phassa* is one end, and the arising of *phassa* is the other end. The middle is the cessation of contact (*phassa-nirodha*). Looking at this, too, it is like a riddle. *Phassa* is one end, the origin of *phassa* is the second end, and the middle is *phassa-nirodha*, the cessation of contact.

Next, *sibbanī*, that is, the seamstress, is *taṇhā*. This is worth reflecting upon. It is a complete subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) in itself. Although the Buddha said the other explanations were also correct, since he intended the first explanation, we should pay closer attention to it.

Thus, it shows a certain characteristic of *taṇhā*. Along with this contact and the arising of contact, there is also its cessation taking place extremely rapidly. But we do not see it. Cessation lies in the middle. There is a tendency in this *saṃsāric* being to forget that cessation. That is why it is generally said that *saṃsāric* beings dwell on the side of arising (*samudaya*). On one occasion, the Buddha declared that those living in the fine-material worlds (*rūpa-loka*) and those in the immaterial worlds (*arūpa-loka*)—indeed, all these beings—keep returning to *saṃsāra* and *Bhava* (Becoming) because they do not understand cessation (*nirodha*). This shows that we do not see this cessation, which is the breaking up and vanishing of things. Instead, we connect one thing to another through *taṇhā*. Through *taṇhā*, we only see each contact and the arising of contact. We do not see the cessation of contact. That cessation is the middle. In fact, the essence of this entire Saddhamma is Nibbāna. Nibbāna is called cessation—*nirodho nibbānaṃ*. So, what is unseen by ordinary worldlings is this cessation. Thus, contact and the arising of contact are stitched together. When there is a seamstress, she joins two pieces of cloth and sews them. Likewise, contact and the next arising of contact are joined together while forgetting the cessation of contact, ignoring the *nirodha*. It is through this that one falls under the power of *taṇhā*.

Now, from the advice given to the Arahant here, as well as from the advice previously given to Bāhiya Dārucīriya, we see that it stops at "in the seen, only the seen." It does not allow it to go beyond. It stops at the mere seeing. Next, it does not allow contact to proliferate into *Vedanā* (Feeling), *taṇhā*, and so forth. Indeed, that is why *taṇhā* was called *ponobhavikā* (leading to renewed existence). Within *taṇhā* itself, there is a force that creates another existence (*bhava*).

On another occasion, there is a highly debated Sutta passage. Let us recall it. Once, the wanderer Vacchagotta, illustrating with a simile regarding the story of rebirth, asked about how a flame thrown and spread by the wind has what as its grasping (*upādāna*)

when a person dies. When someone dies, this life ends here; we do not see anything going. Indeed, that is the very question of the whole world: what goes from here? There, the Buddha declares that the flame, thrown and propelled by the wind, clings to another tree. Similarly, within this *taṇhā* there is a nature of *upādāna* (grasping / fuel). Therefore, the Buddha states that when one discards one body and goes to another body, it is *taṇhā* itself that assists. "*Taṇhā* itself stands as the *upādāna* (grasping / fuel)," he said. Thus, we see that as long as there is *taṇhā*, there is also *upādāna*. Through *taṇhā*, something to grasp is created.

We can think of it like this. Just as when we talk about a mirage, the vision seen by a deer appears as something helpful for drinking, *taṇhā* connects things again and again. That is one aspect of it—creating another existence (*bhava*) repeatedly. That is precisely why it is also described as *tatratatrābhinandinī*—finding delight here and there—like jumping around from place to place. Because of this, at the moment of death, due to not being satisfied, and because *taṇhā* is present, one wishes for another *bhava*. One wishes for a *bhava* in a subtle manner. How subtle this is, is shown in a statement by the Buddha in a Dhammapada verse:

> *"Yathāpi mūle anupaddave daḷhe,*
>
> *chinno'pi rukkho punareva rūhati;*
>
> *evam'pi taṇhānusaye anūhate,*
>
> *nibbattatī dukkham'idaṃ punappunaṃ."*

Just as when the root of a tree remains undamaged and firm, the tree grows again even if its branches are cut down, so long as the underlying tendency of craving (*taṇhā-anusaya*) is not destroyed, this *dukkha* (suffering / unsatisfactoriness) arises again and again in *saṃsāra*. It has been shown in that way.

Thus, a dangerous side of *taṇhā* is shown. We are analyzing the very words mentioned in the verses. Furthermore, more similes are mentioned in the Dhamma. *Visattikā* refers to the sticky, clinging nature of *taṇhā*. It is also called *lepa* (plaster/glue). In Sinhala, too, we use the word *lēpa* as in "applying" (*ālēpa karanavā*). *Lepa* means the sticky nature. The Buddha once gave a wonderful simile for this, like telling an ancient story, to the Bhikkhus. This was particularly addressed to the Bhikkhus, though the world too can learn something from it. In the Himalayan forests, there are level regions where both humans and monkeys roam. In such areas, a hunter seeking to catch monkeys hangs some sticky pitch/gum (*lēpa*) on a tree along the path where monkeys travel as a trap. So, a foolish monkey, being greedy by nature, goes and touches that sticky pitch with one hand. When he touches it, it sticks. Next, trying to free it with his other hand, that hand also gets stuck. The Buddha describes it in this way. Next, to free his two hands, he presses one foot against it. That foot also gets stuck in the pitch. Then, to free his hands and foot, he presses his other foot against it. That also gets stuck. Now, both hands and both feet are stuck in this pile of pitch. This is a method of catching monkeys, a kind of

trap. Then, the monkey presses his snout/mouth against it to free them. That too gets stuck. In the end, the monkey, stuck in five places, is shot/captured by the hunter and taken away.

That simile was given to show the *lepa* (sticky) nature of *taṇhā* arising from the five strands of sensual pleasure—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. In that way, on various occasions, the Buddha described that sticky nature of *taṇhā*, the world's clinging nature, as *lepa*. Having taught the disadvantageous side in that manner, and on various other occasions, the Buddha showed how *taṇhā* repeatedly creates another *bhava*. This is because there is a nature in *taṇhā* that is never satisfied, like the ocean that is never filled. Since there is no limit to *taṇhā*, it is repeatedly clinging to the next *bhava*. It is also called *nati* (leaning/inclination). If a mountain range leans towards one side, it will fall to that side. Within *taṇhā* there is a nature that carries the world repeatedly to another *bhava*.

Next, the root of *taṇhā* has also been declared—to dig up the root of *taṇhā* like digging up the *bīraṇa* bush. What is the root of *taṇhā*? The root of *taṇhā* is shown to be *avijjā* (ignorance) itself. That is why it is said to uproot this root with the help of *vijjā* (wisdom/clear vision). This *avijjā*, which is the root of *taṇhā*, is sometimes shown as the non-seeing of the *anicca* (impermanent) nature of this eye, the incoming objects, and every phenomenon arising in connection with them. Thus, sometimes it is shown how the world lives within these sense bases. To show this, the Buddha points out the reality as follows: "Bhikkhus, the eye is *anicca* (impermanent), unstable, subject to change. Forms are *anicca*, unstable, subject to change. *Calaṃ*—it is moving, unstable. There is a nature in the eye of becoming otherwise. Forms are the same."

Next, because of not understanding that *anicca* nature, dependent on those two, *viññāṇa* (consciousness) arises. But the Buddha says *viññāṇa* is also *anicca*. So, the eye is *anicca*, forms are *anicca*. By taking what is *anicca* as permanent, and through the coming together of those two, the illusion called *cakkhu-viññāṇa* (eye-consciousness) arises. That is why *viññāṇa* is called an illusion. Trees and plants do not have it. So, this being with defilements like *avijjā* and *taṇhā* took the eye to be permanent. He took a stand there. Next, without thinking of forms as a mirage, he took a stand there too. Those two came together and arose. But the Buddha says that *viññāṇa* is also *anicca*. Yet, due to not understanding that either, bringing all three together, one constructed something called *phassa* (contact). There comes that story of *phassa—cakkhu-samphassa* (eye-contact). But the Buddha says that *cakkhu-samphassa* is also *anicca*. The world does not see it. By taking that too as permanent, one creates a sensation—one creates it in terms of *Vedanā* (Feeling). Those too are *anicca*. It is this non-seeing of *aniccatā* (impermanence) that is the cause of our falling under the power of *taṇhā*. Indeed, if one understands the twelve links of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent arising), we see that there are many links prior to *taṇhā*. At the root is *avijjā*. This shows that the world falls under *taṇhā* because they do not know the Four Noble Truths—that is, due to *avijjā*. Without knowing that a mass of *dukkha* is arising, we consider them as permanent.

Thus, it shows us that knowing the true nature lies within the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*).

If one constantly remembers that the eye is *anicca*, forms are *anicca*, the resulting *viññāṇa* is *anicca*, the contact (*phassa*) from the coming together of those three is *anicca*, and the feeling (*vedanā*) arising from it is *anicca*—when one develops the perception of impermanence, such *taṇhā* and so forth cannot accumulate. That is the meaning.

The Buddha on one occasion declared: "Bhikkhus, when the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) is developed and cultivated..." If the perception of impermanence is well developed, it destroys all sensual lust (*kāma-rāga*), lust for existence (*bhava-rāga*), and lust for form (*rūpa-rāga*). Now next, there is a certain Sutta discourse related to this *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, and the story of the "dart" (*salla*) mentioned in the final verse.

If we take the portion relevant to us from a discourse preached by the Buddha to a Licchavi youth on one occasion; a wonderful simile is given there too. The Buddha says: A man was struck by a poisoned arrow. When this happened, his relatives summoned a physician. Here, he is described as *bhisakko sallakatto*. *Sallakatta* means the surgeon. *Bhisakka* means the poison-doctor or physician. So, both are connected. They summon a doctor who knows both general medicine and surgery. The doctor, using an instrument used by surgeons, opens the wound where the arrow struck, and then, if any part of the arrow remains in the body, to locate it—a Pali word is used there, *esanī*, which is a probe used by surgeons to extract a dart—he pulls out the dart with that instrument. Having extracted it, he applies medicine to heal it.

Next, comparing the simile with the meaning, the Buddha states: that man struck by the poisoned arrow is this worldling, pierced by the dart of craving (*taṇhā-salla*). What is the poison in this dart of *taṇhā*? It is *avijjā* (ignorance). It is called the poison of *avijjā*. Thus, the word *taṇhā-salla* (the dart of craving) is mentioned in many places. The Buddha is called the destroyer of the dart of craving (*taṇhā-sallassa hantā*). This became a poisoned arrow precisely due to that toxic defect of *avijjā*.

Next, the instrument used to open the wound is called "Noble Wisdom" (*ariya-paññā*). Next, the probe called *esanī* used to locate the dart is mindfulness (*sati*). That is why it is said that everything is contained within *satipaṭṭhāna* (establishments of mindfulness). So, opening the wound through Noble Wisdom, and using the probe of mindfulness (*sati*), one locates and extracts that dart.

Next, who is this surgeon, this physician? It is the Tathāgata. Thus, based on this simile given by the Buddha, one should treat oneself. That is how that verse concluded: *abbahe*—one pulled out one's own dart. That was extracted through the instruments shown according to the surgical and medical principles given by the Buddha. From this, one can understand that the dart of *taṇhā* is pierced within. It is a poisoned arrow. That poison is *avijjā*. So, to extract it, one uses the weapon of Noble Wisdom. Opening the

wound and through mindfulness (*sati*), one extracts that arrow from where it was pierced. That is where the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) is helpful.

So, that wisdom is on one side. The Buddha has given the world the fundamental understanding to pull out that dart. In fact, the Buddha highlighted the nature of arising and passing away—*udayabbaya*—present in everything in the world. That is "perception of impermanence" (*anicca-saññā*). In two words, it is *udayabbaya*—through arising and passing away. So, that is the basic lesson of insight (*vipassanā*). First, within this perception of impermanence, one sees the arising and passing away of everything. Even realizing this is difficult for the ordinary worldling, because, due to the work of the aforementioned seamstress, they forget the passing away side. The world likes this forgetting very much.

To tell you an incident from daily life: in this world of fashion, there are clothes and other things you use. Once you buy a more valuable, modern design from the shops for some money and bring it home, the old one goes somewhere and ends up in the rubbish heap. Thus, forgetting the passing away side, they renew it. Worldlings are constantly renewing. *Taṇhā* assists in this. The seamstress *taṇhā* ties knots. What is that knot? Forgetting cessation (*nirodha*). Forgetting that this breaks up. Then, what does the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) do? With the help of that fundamental principle given by the Buddha, he sees that everything has a nature of arising and passing away momentarily and very rapidly. To show this, it was said that "this eye exists." From the very beginning of this sermon, "this eye of mine exists." Likewise, "forms exist." "You, devotees, are in front of me." We do not say that they do not exist. But the Buddha says that the eye is also *anicca*, changing moment by moment, *calaṃ*—it is moving. In that way, many words are used there, like *aññathābhāvī* (becoming otherwise). Words like *aniccaṃ*, *calaṃ*, *vayaṃ*, *vipariṇāmī*, *aññathābhāvī*, etc., are applied to impress this upon the mind. Although none of this is visible to the physical eye known to the ordinary world, this eye also changes extremely rapidly. Next, the thing we took to be "form" also changes in the same way. But we do not realize it. The aforementioned *taṇhā* stitches it together. Even when it is said that *viññāṇa* (consciousness) is also *anicca*, we do not realize that either. That is indeed the deepest point.

Generally, we said that if we take all four—seen, heard, sensed, cognized—turning back to what was explained earlier, these are the six bases themselves taken as seen, heard, sensed, cognized. Among them, the "seen" is highly gross (*oḷārika*) and coarse. Because even if we look at something and then look away, it seems to still be there, doesn't it? It is still there. How can we say it is not? Although the Buddha says it is not, it remains visible to our physical eye, and we say it exists in that very manner. Even if we are told, when we look once and look away, it remains just as it was. So, how can we say it changes? Thus, looked at in that way, the "seen" is still coarse and gross.

Next, how about the "heard"? Now, as long as there is an echo of the words I speak, you will hear them. Sometimes we have heard that in vast deserts where no echo can occur, when someone speaks, the words vanish right where they are spoken. Now, you know very well the echo coming from the surrounding hills, don't you? It is like two people

speaking. Likewise, in this environment, the sound we make reverberates and returns as an echo. That further assists our hearing. Though it is not as gross as the "seen," the "heard" is also somewhat gross.

Next, what is more personal and even subtler is found in the "sensed" (*muta*). The "sensed" refers to what is felt by the tongue, nose, and body. Now, just like what Andare did, if someone says "this is delicious," to show that taste to another, he must feed it to him. Otherwise, it is impossible. It is highly personal. It is extremely subtle there. What is sensed by the nose, tongue, and body is extremely subtle. So, searching for their impermanence is harder than the others.

Next, the "cognized" (*viññāta*) is even harder and subtler. The cognized mind—the story about that mind is said to be a bizarre illusion (*māyā*). There, what are the objects coming to the mind? Not *Dhamma* in the sense of the teachings. If we speak of them as objects, just as forms are to the eye, sounds to the ear, smells to the nose, tastes to the tongue, and touch to the body, so *dhamma* is applied to the mind. If we translate *dhamma*, it means "things that come to the mind." We think the mind is one thing, and the things coming to the mind are another. Those two must collide. We are caught right there. That is what the Buddha preached: *"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā"*. There, *dhammā* means thoughts/objects coming to the mind. But the world thinks that the things coming to the mind exist separately. However, the Buddha says the mind is the forerunner. These are mind-made. Things constructed by the mind. Right there is the work of the magician—the illusion (*māyā*). Yet, the world does not realize it. Taking the thought coming to the mind as separate, making it our own, we get caught in clinging, entanglement, confusion, and *papañca* (conceptual proliferation / prolific conceptualization). That is the extremely subtle point. It is there that the practitioner of insight gradually extracts the impermanence of the seen, starting from that, and next contemplates the impermanence of the heard. Going even deeper, there is what is personally felt, what is felt by the tongue. That is why it is said that one can realize Nibbāna based on any one of these six sense bases. From that perspective, one can say Nibbāna is at the tip of the tongue.

That is why in the past, some Bhikkhus are said to have attained Arahantship while taking their meals, by contemplating that contact (*phassa*) felt on the tongue. Likewise, contemplating the contact felt by the eye, even upon seeing the form of a dancing girl, they are said to have attained Arahantship by generating the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) at that moment. Similarly, one can realize Nibbāna through what is heard by the ear, and through the smell felt by the nose. But the world does not turn in that direction. For one who constantly contemplates those two—arising and passing away—given by the Buddha, as one goes deeper into the understanding of arising and passing away, the breaking-up side (*bhaṅga*) becomes clearer to the practitioner of insight than before. The side of breaking up, which was unseen hitherto. Because as that desire called *taṇhā* fades away, the true nature emerges. The Buddha's word on arising and passing away becomes clear. When, between the two of arising and passing away, the breaking-up side is seen more clearly, that is where knowledge of dissolution—*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*—is shown in insight meditation. To that person, everything is

seen as breaking up. Even thoughts are seen to dissolve. Then, it is from those breakups that disadvantages and so forth arise. There lies *mano-samphassa* (mind-contact). Understanding that the thought coming to the mind strikes the mind is also extremely subtle. Yet, at some point, a space is seen: the mind and the thought strike each other. When one understands that they strike in this way, it is called "in the cognized, only the cognized" (*viññāte viññātamattaṃ*). It is said that the ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya attained Arahantship the moment this was said, extremely rapidly.

This Arahant Māluṅkyaputta also attained Arahantship quickly by depending on this brief advice. From this, we see that beyond stopping at "in the seen, only the seen," next is "in the heard, only the heard," "in the sensed, only the sensed," and finally "in the cognized, only the cognized." This is something so wonderful that it is hard for us to even conceive. The practitioner of insight, at some stage in meditation, understands according to the Buddha's word that both the mind and the thought are *anicca*, subject to change. Instead of saying "heart," let us say "mind" (*manas*) is *anicca*, and the mental object (*dhamma*) coming to the mind is also subject to change. It is when such changing things come together that it is called mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*). That is what the Buddha means. The beings of this world, even those in the aforementioned fine-material and immaterial worlds, create another *bhava* repeatedly because they do not know cessation (*nirodha*). If they saw cessation, just as in the story of the seamstress: *"yo ubhante viditvāna"*—having known these two ends. One understood contact (*phassa*). One understood the origin of contact. Next, when the mind is established in that cessation of contact—*phassa-nirodha*—that is when one is liberated. One is liberated from the world, freed from the world. This is what is meant by "the end of *dukkha*." We previously mentioned the story of the flame. So, this *taṇhā*—as long as there is unsatisfied desire, incomplete desire, the mind constantly radiates outward. It radiates outward from this body. It grasps whatever is presented by kamma. Be it a mother's womb, an animal's womb, or in hell, the sign presented according to kamma is grasped through *taṇhā* at the moment of death. As long as the underlying tendency of craving (*taṇhā-anusaya*) is present, there is no need to explain further about being reborn. There is no need for a strange life-force to go and plant itself there, as the world thinks. *Taṇhā* is sufficient. That is why it was said that just as a flame is thrown and spread by the wind, as long as *taṇhā* exists, beings of the world construct another *bhava*. This is what we called *ponobhavikā*. Now, one understands here that it is *taṇhā* that creates renewed existence (*punarbhava*). To understand its operation, one must eliminate the aforementioned *avijjā* and bring forth Noble Wisdom (*ariya-paññā*).

Now, we have presented the meaning of those brief discourses in the verses in various ways. It is possible to explain even further. But if you would at least apply your minds to the similes given by the Buddha, you can understand many things. We wish that this discourse will assist you in walking on this path of insight (*vipassanā-magga*) at your own level in daily life. It is because you understand the fearsomeness of *saṃsāra* that you observe the precepts and practice meditation on an occasion like this. Indeed, this is a time when the fearsome nature of this *saṃsāra* becomes self-evident to oneself, according to the teachings of the Buddha.

Therefore, as long as we do not eliminate that aforementioned *taṇhā*, no matter how much we say "I will not be born again," that birth belongs to us because of that aforementioned inclination (*nati*). For that reason, one must strive again and again, with the help of the virtue (*sīla*) one guards, through meditations like tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*), to realize the Noble Wisdom shown by the Buddha, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship—and by using *satipaṭṭhāna* and mindfulness (*sati*), may you aspire that this discourse will help you realize in this very life the supreme state you hope for. Then, may all beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, whoever wish to rejoice in this sharing of the merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, by so rejoicing, realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through the Bodhi of their aspiration. Say in this manner.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #61

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.88)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Accāraddhamhi vīriyamhi,

satthā loke anuttaro;

Vīṇūpamaṃ karitvā me,

dhammaṃ desesi cakkhumā.

Tassāhaṃ vacanaṃ sutvā,

vihāsiṃ sāsane rato.

Samathaṃ paṭipādesiṃ,

uttamatthassa pattiyā;

Tisso vijjā anuppattā,

kataṃ buddhassa sāsanaṃ.

From:

Khuddaka Nikāya → Theragāthā → Terasanipāta → Soṇakoḷivisattheragāthā → Thag 13.1 (verses 638–639)

Dear Listeners,

The Supreme Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, has declared that this Dhamma, which leads to the great, deathless Nibbāna, is for one who has aroused energy (*āraddha-vīriya*), and not for the lazy or indolent. It is shown in this Dhamma-Vinaya that only the energetic person lives happily, and that living even a single day with aroused energy is far more noble than living a hundred years in laziness and indolence.

That is why on this Vap Full Moon Poya day, we hope to present some verses and a story that are meaningful and inspiring specifically to the energetic person.

In the city of Campā, which belonged to the kingdom of King Bimbisāra, a meritorious child was born to the millionaire family of Kolivisa. His parents named the child Soṇa. The body of this millionaire's son, Soṇa Kolivisa, was extremely delicate and tender. So delicate was he that hair grew even on the soles of his feet. This was a wondrous thing. King Bimbisāra heard this news, and on one occasion, when summoning eighty thousand village chiefs for state affairs, he sent a messenger with a message saying, "I wish to see Soṇa. It would be good if Soṇa comes here. Please arrange for him to come." So, Soṇa's parents told the millionaire's son: "Son, the King wishes to see the soles of your feet. When you go there, do not stretch out your feet towards the King. Sit cross-legged—that is, fold your legs—and then the King will see the soles of your feet."

So, when the people of Campā went to see King Bimbisāra, the millionaire's son Soṇa Kolivisa was carried in a palanquin. Having been brought before the King, the millionaire's son Soṇa paid homage to the King and sat down in the manner described. The King saw the soles of his feet. He witnessed the wondrous phenomenon of hair growing on the soles of his feet. Next, the King gave instructions on state matters to the eighty thousand village chiefs and said: "Now I have shown you how to achieve well-being in this world. To secure well-being in the next world, go and meet the Blessed One."

At that time, the Blessed One was residing on the Vulture's Peak mountain (Gijjhakaṭa). So, this crowd of eighty thousand went to pay respects to the Buddha. At that time, the Buddha's personal attendant was Venerable Sāgata, a monk who had practiced kasina meditation and possessed great meditative absorptive powers. Venerable Sāgata conveyed the invitation to the Buddha on behalf of the eighty thousand people in a miraculous manner. Disappearing from where he stood, as if diving into the earth, he presented the invitation to the Buddha.

Having witnessed this psychic miracle, the eighty thousand people focused their attention on Venerable Sāgata even more than on the Buddha. Understanding this, the Buddha told Venerable Sāgata: "Sāgata, display more psychic marvels." So, the Venerable monk rose into the air, and performed various miracles related to the fire-kasina (*tejo-kasiṇa*), such as sitting in the sky, walking up and down, and emitting flames, and finally descended to the ground, worshipped the Buddha's feet, and declared: "The Blessed One is my Teacher, I am the disciple."

Hearing this, the crowd thought, "If the disciple can do such wondrous things, how great must the Teacher be!" At that moment when confidence (*saddhā*) arose in them, the Buddha delivered a Dhamma sermon consisting of the gradual instruction (*anupubbikathā*). It is mentioned that upon hearing that Dhamma sermon, the entire crowd attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*) on their very seats. Having attained the fruit of Stream-entry, they became lay devotees who had taken refuge in the Triple Gem.

Then, the millionaire's son, Soṇa Kolivisa, who was in this crowd, was deeply moved by this Dhamma sermon and thought: "It is not easy to live the pure holy life (*brahmacariya*) according to the Dhamma preached by the Blessed One while remaining in lay life. I must ordain." With this resolve, he approached the Buddha and requested ordination. The Buddha granted him ordination and higher ordination (*upasampadā*).

Not long after his higher ordination, Venerable Soṇa went to the forest dwelling known as Sītavana (Cool Grove) and began practicing intense energy. He put in such great energy that, by spending too much time on the walking path (*caṅkamana*), the soles of his feet, which had hair on them, cracked. They cracked and began to bleed. It bled so much that the walking path was covered in blood, looking like a slaughterhouse where cattle had been killed. When, despite practicing such intense energy, he did not attain Arahantship, Venerable Soṇa, during a moment of rest, thought: "Among those disciples of the Blessed One who have aroused energy (*āraddha-vīriya*), I am indeed one. Yet, despite putting in such energy, I have not achieved Arahantship. There are abundant riches and wealth in our family. Therefore, I should enjoy those riches and perform meritorious deeds." Thus, he thought of returning to the lay life.

The Buddha, who was staying on the Vulture's Peak, perceived this thought of Venerable Soṇa Kolivisa. Right at that moment, as quickly as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm or bend his outstretched arm, the Buddha vanished from Vulture's Peak and appeared in Sītavana. Then, the Buddha went on a tour of the lodgings with the other monks residing in Sītavana, as if to inspect lodgings from dwelling to dwelling, hut to hut. While walking, He came to the walking path of Venerable Soṇa Kolivisa and asked the monks: "Whose walking path is this? This path covered in blood, looking like a slaughterhouse?" The monks replied: "Venerable Sir, this is the walking path of the Venerable Soṇa. Venerable Soṇa, having exerted extreme and excessive energy, walked up and down until his path was covered in blood in this manner."

Then, the Buddha went to Venerable Soṇa's hut. Sitting on the prepared seat, He asked Venerable Soṇa: "Soṇa, did a thought like this occur to you during a moment of rest: 'Now, despite exerting so much energy, I have not become an Arahant. Therefore, I should return to lay life'?" "Yes, Venerable Sir," he replied. Then the Buddha asked: "Soṇa, when you were a layman, were you not skilled in playing the lute?" "Yes, Venerable Sir," he replied. "How was it, Soṇa? When the strings of your lute were pulled too tight, extremely tight, was the lute in a playable condition?" "No, Venerable Sir." "And when the strings of your lute were too loose, was it in a good condition? Could the lute be played?" "No, not even then, Venerable Sir." "But, Soṇa, when the strings of your lute were neither too tight nor too loose, but tuned to an even pitch, was it then playable and melodious?" "Yes, Venerable Sir," he replied.

Thus, using the simile of the lute, He gave advice to Venerable Soṇa. Having given this advice, He returned to Vulture's Peak through the air. Venerable Soṇa, acting according to this advice, practiced energy once more and understood the principle of the balancing

of energy (*vīriya-samatā*)—the fact that there must be a certain middle or balanced state regarding energy.

There is something called "balancing of the faculties" (*indriya-samatā*) in this Dhamma. What are called "faculties" (*indriya*) here are not the external physical faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. The spiritual faculties (*indriya*) are conviction (*saddhā*), energy (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), which are wholesome qualities that assist in reaching the noble state. Understanding the need for a certain balance among these, and the importance of developing them to a middle, balanced level, Venerable Soṇa very quickly realized Arahantship.

Having become an Arahant, he then thought: "I must declare my Arahantship to the Blessed One." He approached the Buddha and, without explicitly saying he had attained Arahantship, presented the state of an Arahant's mind by explaining a range of Dhamma principles. The Buddha too, praised this, declaring to the community of monks: "This is indeed how noble clansmen declare their Arahantship; without explicitly asserting, 'I have attained Arahantship,' they reveal their attainment through Dhamma principles. That is the correct method. In doing so, their fewness of wishes is a valuable quality. It is a valuable quality of those noble ones who have achieved the higher realization." Thus, the Buddha praised it.

Then the Buddha said: "Soṇa, your body is extremely delicate. Therefore, I allow you to wear single-layered footwear." Then, Venerable Soṇa replied: "Venerable Sir, I renounced eighty cartloads of gold coins and various other luxuries, left the household life, and ordained. Having ordained, if I start using a pair of single-layered footwear as a special privilege, people might start rumors. They might blame me. They would say: 'This monk Soṇa Kolivisa, having renounced wealth as vast as eighty cartloads, has now developed an attachment to a single-layered pair of sandals; he has become attached to it.' Therefore, if the Blessed One allows the wearing of footwear for the Sangha in general, I too will use them. If the Blessed One does not grant permission to the Sangha in general, then I too will not use them." It was on that occasion that the Buddha, for the first time, declared to the monks: "I allow single-layered footwear."

From this, you lay devotees can understand many things. When the Buddha on various occasions awarded the chief (*etadagga*) titles to monks who excelled in outstanding qualities, He also paid special honor to Venerable Soṇa by declaring him the foremost among those of His disciples who have aroused energy (*āraddha-vīriya*).

Thus, presenting all these facts, Venerable Soṇa expressed his past course of practice in verses, and two of those verses mentioned in the *Theragāthā* are what we have placed today as our theme.

Accāraddhamhi vīriyamhi,

samatho me anuttaro;

Vīṇūpamaṃ pi me dhammaṃ,

desesi cakkhumā.

"Regarding the matter of over-exerted energy, the Unsurpassed Teacher in the world, the One with Vision, preached the Dhamma to me using the simile of the lute."

Tassāhaṃ vacanaṃ sutvā,

vihāsiṃ sāsane rato;

"Having heard His word, I dwelt delighting in the Dispensation."

"For the attainment of the supreme goal—noble Nibbāna—I achieved the balancing of the faculties (*indriya-samatā*)."

Tisso vijjā anuppattā,

kataṃ buddhassa sāsanaṃ.

"The Three Knowledges—namely, the recollection of past lives (*pubbe-nivāsānussati*), the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), and the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya*)—have been attained. The instruction of the Buddha has been fulfilled." These are the two verses from the *Theragāthā* that we have placed as our theme.

Through this story, many noble qualities in the character of Venerable Soṇa Kolivisa are revealed to us. Let us look particularly at his development of energy. If someone with such delicate soles had been full of pride like an ordinary person, he might have thought: "Even King Bimbisāra summoned me just to see this feature of mine. I cannot perform walking meditation." He did not think so. Energetically, he engaged in walking meditation. Ultimately, he put in such intense energy that his feet cracked and bled.

Then, wisely understanding the simile of the lute presented by the Buddha, he brought himself to a balanced state of energy—a middle state—and thereby attained Arahantship. Furthermore, after attaining Arahantship, his declaration before the Buddha was highly exemplary; without explicitly saying "I have attained Arahantship," he presented it through Dhamma principles by describing the nature of an Arahant's mind as he understood it. Also, how content with little (*appiccha*) he was! He did not expect any special privileges. When the Buddha allowed him footwear, he stated that he would use them only if permission was granted to the Sangha in general. All of these are a collection of valuable qualities that we should take as examples.

Next, when considering the Dhamma aspects, the key points are the balancing of energy (*vīriya-samatā*) and the balancing of the faculties (*indriya-samatā*). What is this balancing of the faculties (*indriya-samatā*)? Merit-seeking friends, it is not the external faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body that assist in seeing Nibbāna. Indeed, what assists in realizing Nibbāna are the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) of the Dispensation: conviction (*saddhā*), energy (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Why are these presented as "faculties" (*indriya*)? It is because when they are developed and strengthened in one's mind, one understands the Dhamma of

Nibbāna through that power and strength. There is also a certain systematic order among these five. We can understand it in this way.

It is in one who has conviction (*saddhā*) that energy (*vīriya*) arises. Through conviction, energy is brought forth. Conviction is necessary to bring forth energy. Relying on energy, mindfulness (*sati*) is established. One develops mindfulness in the form of the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). By developing mindfulness, one achieves concentration (*samādhi*)—one-pointedness of mind. It is with a concentrated mind that one understands reality as it is through insight (*vipassanā*), understanding the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature of the world, and thereby brings forth insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*). In this way, there is a connection of one to another among the five: conviction, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

However, when discussing their balance (*samatā*), we have to analyze it in a different way. The two factors, conviction and wisdom, are shown as a pair, a twin quality. Conviction is said to be related to the heart. Conviction means placing the heart (devotion). It is the emotional/affective aspect. The quality of conviction belongs to the feeling aspect of a person. Wisdom belongs to the understanding aspect. It is the intellectual/cognitive aspect. There must be a balance between these two. Teachers of old described a person who is low in conviction but high only in intellect as cunning or deceitful. One who has only conviction but lacks intellect becomes a foolish person; he develops blind faith even in improper things. To balance these, one enters the practice to develop wisdom through conviction. That is why it is necessary. Thus it is with those two.

Similarly, another pair is energy and concentration. Energy tends toward restlessness (*uddhacca*). If one exerts excessive energy, the mind is bound to become restless. That is what happened to Venerable Soṇa. Concentration brings stillness to the mind. It is something that leads to sluggishness (*līnatā*) or absolute stillness. Restlessness comes through energy; the goal of concentration is stillness. At a glance, these seem contradictory. However, these must be developed systematically and evenly. One cannot develop concentration without energy. It is necessary to reach a certain level of concentration; it does not come by just doing nothing. Mindfulness (*sati*), which stands in the middle of these, balances conviction, wisdom, energy, and concentration, just like the needle of a weighing scale. There is such a relationship among these five Dhamma factors.

The balancing of the faculties (*indriya-samatā*) is an important matter in this Dispensation. Through the balancing of the faculties, we can see the Middle Path taught by the Buddha. In the middle way, nothing is extremist. Here, every factor assists another, at a balanced, middle level. Bringing it to this balanced level might sometimes exceed limits for certain individuals, depending on their personal disposition. Just like Venerable Soṇa, who practiced excessive energy until his feet cracked and bled. As you all know, the Buddha Himself was caught up in the two extremes. Everyone has heard of the two extremes mentioned in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. He experienced self-indulgence (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) in the royal palace, and He was also caught in

the extreme of self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). It was after abandoning both those extremes that He arrived at the balanced level.

Not only that, on one occasion, the Buddha explained very intimately to the three monks Anuruddha, Nandiya, and Kimbila how He Himself had realized this balancing of energy during His days as a Bodhisatta. "On one occasion, I exerted intense energy." He gave a simile for this: "If a person trying to catch a quail holds it too tightly in his grasp, the quail might die. On the other hand, if he holds it too loosely, the bird will fly away. In the same way, I understood from that simile that energy must be balanced." He explained this based on His own experience through various similes.

Teachers of old also illustrated this point regarding the balancing of energy with various similes on different occasions. One simile found in the texts is that of the surgeon. In ancient times, surgeons trained their students—especially in surgeries like eye surgery—by having them draw lines with a scalpel on a blue water-lily petal floating on water. If someone is overly agitated, they will either submerge the lily petal in water or slice it completely through. The unskilled person, who has no dexterity, is too afraid even to touch the lily petal with the blade. The truly skilled person, who can apply balanced energy, is the one who carefully draws lines on the lily petal with the blade and passes the exercise.

There is another simile: the simile of filling oil into a narrow tube. If one tries to pour oil in a hurry, the oil will spill. On the other hand, some might be unable to pour oil into a narrow-mouthed tube because they are too afraid of spilling it. But if one applies extremely balanced energy, carefully and with mindfulness (*sati*), one can fill the oil successfully.

To take a simile suited to the modern mind, though not found in the texts: think of long-distance races in stadiums—let's say a ten-lap race around the track. What do some unskilled runners do? Eager for the cheers of the spectators, they run the first two or three laps as fast as they can. In the end, they are exhausted and have to drop out of the race. But what does the truly skilled runner do? He runs at a steady, moderate pace for the first few laps. It is in the final stretch, as if possessing the fourfold energy (*caturanga-samannāgata-vīriya*), that he applies his conserved strength when the right moment arrives, runs very fast, and wins the race.

The fourfold energy (*caturanga-samannāgata-vīriya*) is mentioned in the life of the Buddha. You devotees must have heard of this. Once the right time comes, once the balancing of energy is perfectly achieved, the energy applied is one of life-sacrifice. "Let only skin, sinews, and bones remain; let flesh and blood dry up. Whatever goal can be achieved by manly energy, by manly strength, by manly effort, will not be abandoned until it is reached." The Buddha Himself exerted this supreme effort, known as the fourfold energy (*caturanga-samannāgata-vīriya*). He also exhorted His disciples to apply such energy.

However, this energy becomes successful only when, as mentioned before, the balancing of the faculties (*indriya-samatā*) emerges. Only after arriving at the balanced middle.

Indeed, it was only after arriving at the Middle Path that the Buddha realized Buddhahood through that fourfold energy. What happened to Venerable Soṇa initially was that he exerted extreme energy on the walking path for long periods in a way his body could not withstand. It was because of this that he even became discouraged in the first place.

The Buddha has illustrated the balancing of energy in the Dhamma through various similes. On one occasion, the Buddha related to the monks an account concerning a past Buddha. The Buddha Sikhī once visited a certain Brahma-world along with His chief disciple, the monk Abhibhū. Having gone there, He assigned that disciple, Venerable Abhibhū, to preach the Dhamma to the Brahmas. On that occasion, the psychically powerful Venerable Abhibhū proclaimed two verses in a voice that resounded throughout a thousand world systems. These are very famous among energetic practitioners as the *Aruṇavatī Sutta*. One of those verses is as follows:

> *Ārabhatha nikkhamatha,*
>
> *yuñjatha buddhasāsane;*
>
> *Dhunātha maccuno senaṃ,*
>
> *naḷāgāraṃva kuñjaro.*

Even upon hearing it, it is phrased in a way that arouses energy. "Arouse energy, go forth, exert yourself in the Buddha's Dispensation; destroy the army of Death, like an elephant crushing a reed-hut." Such teachings on energy are found in the Dhamma.

Similarly, the Buddha Himself has pointed out three types of potential energies within our mental continuum as qualities that help overcome sleepiness and laziness:

> *Ārambha-dhātu*: the element of instigating effort (the power to begin something).
> *Nikkhama-dhātu*: the element of launching out (the power to carry forward what has been started).
> *Parakkama-dhātu*: the element of exerting progress (the power to advance by overcoming obstacles encountered along the way). These energies exist within us.

This is precisely what is indicated in that verse:

> *Ārabhatha* - "Arouse energy" (corresponds to *ārambha-dhātu*).
> *Nikkhamatha* - "Go forth" (corresponds to *nikkhama-dhātu*).
> *Yuñjatha* - "Exert yourself" (corresponds to *parakkama-dhātu*, overcoming obstacles and moving forward).

That showed the value of developing energy.

Likewise, on one occasion, the Buddha showed the eight grounds for laziness (*kusīta-vatthu*) and the eight grounds for arousing energy (*ārambha-vatthu*). What are called

the "grounds for laziness" (*kusīta-vatthu*) are the eight occasions a lazy person uses to justify his lazy behavior. What are they? This is illustrated using a lazy monk. But it is not only for a monk; even a practicing layperson can take an example from this teaching. A lazy monk thinks in this way:

1. The lazy monk has some special work to do. Let us say a task connected with monastic life, such as dyeing robes. Then that monk thinks: "Now, I have such-and-such work to do. When doing this work, my body will get very tired. Therefore, I must sleep now." Saying this, he sleeps.

2. Next, let us say he has finished the work. Once the work is done, that monk thinks: "Now, I have done some heavy work. I am tired. Therefore, I must sleep now." He sleeps. Thus, he slept before doing it, and he slept after finishing it as well.

3. Next, let us say the lazy monk has to go on a journey. Before embarking on the journey, he thinks: "Now, when I go on the journey, my body will get tired. Therefore, I must rest now." He sleeps.

4. Next, he returns from the journey. Then he thinks: "Now, because I went on the journey, I am very tired." He sleeps. He slept again.

5. Next, the lazy monk goes on alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*). That day, he does not receive a stomach-full of food on his alms-round. Then he thinks: "Now my body is very weak. Today I did not receive proper food. Therefore, I must sleep." He sleeps.

6. Alternatively, let us say he received plenty of food on his alms-round. Having eaten his fill, after finishing the meal, he thinks: "Today my body is very heavy, as if stuffed with beans. Today, therefore, I cannot meditate." He sleeps.

7. Next, when the lazy monk has a slight illness, how does he think? "Now, I have fallen ill. How can a sick person meditate?" So he sleeps.

8. Next, after he recovers from that illness, he thinks: "I have only just recovered from this illness. My body does not yet have full strength." Therefore, he sleeps.

He is asleep all the time, the lazy monk, in this manner.

The Buddha shows in this wonderful manner how the energetic monk uses these very same situations to arouse his energy:

1. The energetic monk has some special work to do. Then what does he think? "I have such-and-such work to do. While doing that work, I will not be able to easily maintain my meditative wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) according to the Buddha's instruction. Therefore, I must practice energy right now. I must meditate, so as to quickly realize Nibbāna." Thus, he meditates with great enthusiasm.

2. Next, having finished that work, how does the energetic monk think? "While doing that work, I was unable to maintain my meditative wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)

according to the Buddha's instruction. Now at least I must do so." Thus, he meditates with enthusiasm.

3. The energetic monk has to go on a journey. So, that monk thinks: "Now, I have to go on such-and-such a journey. While traveling, I will not be able to meditate properly according to the Buddha's instruction. Therefore, I must meditate right now, before the journey."

4. After returning from the journey, that monk thinks: "While on the journey, I was unable to meditate properly. Now at least I must do so." Thus, he meditates.

5. When the energetic monk goes on alms-round and on a certain day does not receive a stomach-full of food, how does he think? "Today my body is very light. Today my body is highly active and workable. Today I must meditate. That is the best thing to do." Thinking thus when receiving little food, he meditates.

6. On another day, returning from alms-round after receiving a stomach-full of food, how does he think? "Today my body has good strength. I must meditate well." Thus, he meditates.

7. Next, when the monk with aroused energy (*āraddha-vīriya*) gets a slight illness, how does he think? "Now, a slight illness has arisen in me. If it increases, I might even die. Therefore, I must meditate right now." Thus, he meditates.

8. As soon as he recovers from the illness, when he has just risen from his sickbed, what does he think? "Because of this illness, I was unable to practice properly. Perhaps the illness might return. Therefore, before that happens, I must meditate well to see Nibbāna." Thinking thus, he meditates.

Through this, we can see that between laziness, indolence, and energy, there is actually only a difference in attitude. This correct attitude, which is praised by the Buddha, is indeed the attitude of the energetic person. The energetic person utilizes every arising opportunity in a way that assists in reaching Nibbāna. The lazy person uses every single one of them in a way that assists saṃsāra. As there is a saying, "The lazy man has divine eyes..." Just like that, the lazy person has excuses for everything. The Buddha has always given the foremost place to the energetic person.

Furthermore, the Buddha introduces Himself as a teacher of action (*kamma-vāda*), a teacher of efficacy of action (*kiriya-vāda*), and a teacher of energy (*vīriya-vāda*). If we consider His doctrine (*vāda*), the Buddha is to be identified by these three terms.

> *Kamma-vāda*: that is, stating that one must act with faith in the power of action (*kamma*).
> *Kiriya-vāda*: that a person possesses the potential/power for action.
> *Vīriya-vāda*: that by exerting energy, one can bring forth that potential for action.

The Buddha explains the importance of these.

But there is also something in the world called the doctrine of non-action (*akiriya-vāda*). During the time of the Buddha, there were sharp proponents of non-action. The doctrine of non-action (*akiriya-vāda*) claims that there is no such thing as *kamma*, no power of action, and no such thing as energy; and that doing nothing should be one's ultimate goal. A teacher during the Buddha's time who promoted this philosophy was Makkhali Gosāla. So, on one occasion, the Buddha spoke to the monks about this philosophy of Gosāla in this manner: "Monks, of all the garments woven from threads, the most wretched, the most disgusting garment is the hair-blanket (*kesa-kambala*)." This was a garment woven from human hair used by certain ascetics of that time who claimed to practice fewness of wishes. That is indeed the most disgusting garment. "In the same way, of all the doctrines of ascetics, of all the views held among ascetics, the doctrine of non-action (*akiriya-vāda*) is the most disgusting, the most wretched doctrine."

Furthermore, He declared: "Whatever Fully Self-Enlightened Buddhas existed in the past, they were all teachers of action (*kamma-vādī*), teachers of the efficacy of action (*kiriya-vādī*), and teachers of energy (*vīriya-vādī*). Whatever Fully Self-Enlightened Buddhas arise in the future, they will all be teachers of action, teachers of the efficacy of action, and teachers of energy. I, who am now the Fully Self-Enlightened Buddha in the present, am also a teacher of action, a teacher of the efficacy of action, and a teacher of energy. This foolish man (*mogha-purisa*) Makkhali strikes at the teaching of the past Buddhas, strikes at the teaching of the future Buddhas, as well as my teaching in the present." He also gave another simile: "Monks, just as someone might cast a fishnet at the mouth of a river for the harm, suffering, and destruction of a vast number of fish, even so, this foolish man Makkhali has cast the net of this doctrine of non-action (*akiriya-vāda*) for the ruin, harm, and suffering of a vast number of human beings." The Buddha criticized and condemned Makkhali Gosāla's doctrine to that extent.

Yet, merit-seeking friends, you may have also heard that nowadays, it is this very doctrine of non-action (*akiriya-vāda*) that is gaining more ground. Presenting various arguments such as "there is no such thing as *kamma*, no such thing as merit or demerit, one should not have conviction in their operation; exerting a person's power of action or energy is spiritually useless, it only reinforces the sense of 'I' (egotism)," they completely reject energy, without any understanding of the Dhamma principles shown by the Buddha, such as the balancing of energy (*vīriya-samatā*).

This is the philosophy of Makkhali. At first glance, this path seems easy. When a net is cast at the mouth of a river, it is sometimes cast with bait. Just as a large number of fish gather to eat that bait, only to meet their destruction, within the philosophy of non-action (*akiriya-vāda*), giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*) are deemed useless. "There is no need to tire oneself with giving. No need to spend money and undergo trouble." "Observing virtue is also a useless thing." "Meditation is also a foolish thing." "It is a waste of time." Such wrong views appear easy. Swallowing that bait, people then get lost in saṃsāra. They meet with terrible destruction. That is why the Buddha specifically condemned that doctrine of Makkhali. It kills the power of action

and the power of energy within a person. Through that, one can never achieve liberation. It is an extremely dangerous kind of philosophy.

Yet, in these times, many people are drawn to such views, like fish drawn into a net. A large number of people are drawn in because it seems easy, because they can just do nothing. A special reason for this is modern life—the luxurious lifestyle. If one can get electric light just by pressing a button, why can't one obtain the light of wisdom (*paññā*) just as easily? If, just by pressing a button, one can turn on a fan at home and enjoy a nice cool breeze, can one not obtain the peace of the coolness of Nibbāna while doing nothing? Either by doing nothing, or with very little energy. That is how someone argues. But what lies within this is none other than that doctrine of non-action (*akiriya-vāda*) of Makkhali Gosāla.

Another example of aroused energy (*āraddha-vīriya*) that can be taken from the Buddha's time is Venerable Ānanda's attainment of Arahantship. Three months after the parinibbāna of the Buddha, a Dhamma council was held. Although seats were prepared for five hundred Arahant monks to assemble, one monk was missing. A highly essential Venerable monk was missing. Venerable Ānanda, who had retained all the Buddha's discourses in memory and served as the Buddha's personal attendant for many years, had not yet attained Arahantship. That was the deficiency. The council was to begin the following day.

The night before, Venerable Ānanda put in all the effort he could, meditating intensely while resolving in all four postures. Still, he did not attain Arahantship. While meditating intensely in this way, late at night when it was time to rest, he washed his feet, went to his bed, and bent his body to lie down on the couch. At that moment, he was neither in the sitting posture nor yet in the lying posture. It was right in between those two postures that Venerable Ānanda’s mind was liberated from all taints (*āsava*), and he attained Arahantship. This is a unique occurrence in this entire Dispensation, making Venerable Ānanda the only monk to have attained Arahantship apart from the four standard postures, right in between them. Yet, some people argue even about this event, saying: "Even Venerable Ānanda attained Arahantship only after making so much effort and then giving it up, didn't he?" Most people do not understand the underlying principle (*dhammatā*) in this.

Venerable Ānanda was indeed a wondrous monk who received the chief (*etadagga*) status from the Buddha in several categories. *Etadagga* means the Buddha declaring: "Foremost among my disciples." You all know that the Buddha declared Venerable Ānanda foremost among personal attendants. He is also declared: *Satimantānaṃ*, *gatimantānaṃ*, *dhitimantānaṃ… etadaggaṃ*.

> *Satimantānaṃ*: Foremost among disciples of great mindfulness (*sati*).
> *Gatimantānaṃ*: Foremost among those of great comprehension/behavioral course (*gati*).

Dhitimantānaṃ: Foremost among those of resoluteness (*dhiti*)—those who stand firm in the task they have undertaken, acting with intense energy and power of determination.

Furthermore, Venerable Ānanda once declared about himself: "My best noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) is mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatā-sati*)." With this background, keeping Venerable Ānanda in mind, let us analyze the energy he exerted on that day in this manner.

The Venerable monk made effort with intense determination, thinking: "I cannot join this Sasana activity tomorrow without becoming an Arahant. This Sasana task is an absolute necessity. Somehow, for the sake of the Sasana, I must practice energy, become fit for this task, and then enter it." You devotees can understand that within this, a certain restlessness (*uddhacca*) naturally arises. That is called over-exerted energy (*accāraddha-vīriya*). In this verse, it is mentioned as *accāraddhamhi*. Aroused energy (*āraddha-vīriya*) is good. Initiating energy is good. But over-exerted energy (*accāraddha-vīriya*) is bad. *Ati-āraddha-vīriya*—excessive energy—is bad. For Venerable Ānanda, at the moment of that exertion, his mind had actually slipped unconsciously into a state of restlessness (*uddhacca*).

So, while acting with mindfulness in every posture, practicing mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatā-sati*), during the transition from the sitting posture to the lying-down posture, we can think of an analogy: even a skilled driver driving a high-speed vehicle has to carefully reduce the speed slightly before making a turn. Something similar must have occurred with Venerable Ānanda. In every posture, he had established mindfulness with intense energy. At that transition between postures, he arrived at the balancing of energy. That is the concentration of bodily postures (*iriyāpatha-samādhi*).

Indeed, merit-seeking friends, the Buddha compares these four postures to the rolling of a wheel. Postures change just like a rolling wheel. From the sitting posture, one stands up. Having stood up, one remains standing. Then, one takes steps. One walks, sits, lies down. In this way, it goes around. Like a cycle. Between these four postures, there are transitions (joints). Most people are not even aware of these transitions. One who works in a constant hurry has no understanding of these postures. As soon as he hears some urgent news in a rush, he does not even realize that he has stood up. The person who was sitting is suddenly running.

On the other hand, a mindful person, while sitting, contemplates that very posture of sitting. Contemplating the sitting posture, he stands up. The physical vehicle that was sitting has now stood up; contemplating the standing posture, he puts it into action. He begins walking. That is how one walks if one is mindful. But the one who lacks mindfulness, as soon as that news is heard, there he goes running. Ordinary worldlings do not have any understanding of even these postures of the body (*iriyāpatha*). Yet, Venerable Ānanda—the mindful one, who had long practiced mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatā-sati*) as his friend—even though he had exerted excessive energy (*accāraddha-vīriya*) due to a certain weakness in his eagerness for that Sasana purpose,

nevertheless, by some underlying principle, arrived at the balancing of energy at the transition of postures. That is why he attained Arahantship at that moment. It was not because he abandoned energy. Some people think it was because he abandoned energy. That was not what happened. He attained Arahantship by realizing the balancing of energy (*vīriya-samatā*).

Indeed, the balancing of energy is understood only by the person who enters into the work. You cannot swim while staying on dry land. Whether in swimming or driving vehicles, in all these, the skill emerges only when one is engaged in it and understands the balancing of energy. For within that energy, there are two extremes. In intense energy, there is rigidity. Rigidity is not good. In low energy, there is laxity. That is also not good.

If even the Bodhisatta, who had fulfilled the perfections (*pāramīs*) to such an extent, and Venerable Ānanda made mistakes, there is no fault in our making mistakes. But one must enter into the work. Only the person who has entered into the work understands this. The ordinary worldling has no issue regarding this at all. It is only from the moment one starts driving a vehicle that one understands how to control the vehicle. Should the steering wheel be turned too much, or turned too little? All of this is understood only when one actually drives the vehicle. Like the person who gets into the water to swim, there too, one must be able to stay afloat without sinking. For that, a special skill must be brought forth. Similarly, only the person who has entered into the work can gradually move away from the two extremes and arrive at the middle. That is how one begins playing the lute as well. The beginner does not know whether the strings are too tight or too loose. Whichever way you look at them, these similes are highly practical.

It is the habit of many to take only the literal meaning (*vācyārtha*) of these similes and illustrations in the Dhamma, looking only at the external aspect of the event, and thereby arrive at various wrong conclusions. But the Buddha has firmly declared: "If you are to take any doctrine as mine, it is to be stated as *kamma-vāda*, *kiriya-vāda*, and *vīriya-vāda*."

Some might misunderstand *kamma-vāda*, thinking: "Everything happens because of the past. Therefore, there is nothing for us to do. Let things go as they will." It is not so; there is a deep meaning to this concept of *kamma*. All of this is a power arising through our intention (*cetanā*) in the present moment. Just as it is said, "Intention, monks, is what I call action (*cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*)," we possess a power in the present moment through this power of intention. To change these forces, we must apply energy at a certain point, just like in the race mentioned earlier. Steadying ourselves as described, and in the final moment, developing that fourfold energy (*caturanga-samannāgata-vīriya*) with life-sacrifice, making the effort...

Even those who speak against exerting energy in spiritual life apply energy to worldly affairs, such as earning wealth. Why, then, do they say that no energy is needed for Sasana activities, meditation, and so forth? There lies a wrong view regarding the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). Nowadays, we hear various distorted explanations such

as "developing energy increases the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)." As mentioned, nets have been cast everywhere at the mouth of the river. There are nets of wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) on all sides. Without falling into them, without being caught by them, one must understand this Dhamma of the Buddha in the way it should be understood. One must understand not only the literal meaning (*vācyārtha*) of these stories but also their deep meaning—the Dhamma-conforming meaning—and enter into the Middle Path to practice. Within this Dhamma, there is a Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). A simile often used is that to cross a fast-flowing, torrential river, we must apply balanced energy. One cannot simply rush blindly into it. Yielding to the water while maintaining mindfulness and wisdom, slowly, step-by-step, one must reach the other shore. There too, lies a middle way, a balanced level.

This is the very principle (*dhammatā*) we can bring forth from this story. If you devotees deeply absorb these facts into your minds, performing your deeds of giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*) with greater conviction (*saddhā*)—for it is from conviction that energy (*vīriya*) arises—you can then bring forth mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The balancing of faculties can be brought forth in that manner at some point; but to say it has truly arisen—it is the person who has attained the path and fruit, the Stream-entrant (*Sotāpanna*), who possesses true conviction (*saddhā*). Generally, no matter how much conviction we claim to have, true conviction belongs only to the person who has seen Nibbāna for the first time. It is truly established only at the moment of attaining the path and fruit.

A balance in this does not occur automatically. That is what needs to be understood. Just as Venerable Soṇa understood it. Just as Venerable Ānanda understood it. Let alone others, even the Buddha, despite having fulfilled the perfections (*pāramīs*) to such an extent, did not find his intense, extreme energy fruitful until He first brought forth this Middle Path. Therefore, we must indeed reflect that if liberation from saṃsāra is our ultimate goal, it is not obtained effortlessly. It requires an effort more intense than in any other pursuit, yet in a highly systematic and orderly manner—neither struggling restlessly, nor doing nothing, nor over-exerting, but at a balanced middle level can we succeed in this ultimate goal.

On this valuable Poya day, you devotees listened to this precious Dhamma for about an hour. You also undertook a noble virtue (*sīla*) and developed those qualities of wisdom (*paññā*), energy (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), and concentration (*samādhi*). As we mentioned, these truly emerge in their proper form only at the stage of the path and fruit. Yet, as a preliminary phase, if these principles sink into your minds, you too will be able to achieve that state. Thus, having gained an understanding of the balancing of energy, and having guarded your virtue (*sīla*) to some extent through today's practice... That virtue is what assists concentration (*samādhi*). That concentration is what, to some level, assists wisdom (*paññā*). Understanding this systematic sequence, make an aspiration: "May the merits of listening to this Dhamma lead me to quickly escape all suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra, such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness, and to realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna!"

Likewise, make this aspiration: "May all those throughout this universe, from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including our deceased relatives, who wish to rejoice in the merits of this Dhamma sermon and Dhamma listening—by rejoicing in this merit, may they attain peace in the noble, deathless Nibbāna through the Bodhi of their aspiration!" Having made this aspiration, recite the verses in this manner:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #62

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.130)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Asātaṃ sātarūpena,

piyarūpena appiyaṃ;

Dukkhaṃ sukhassa rūpena,

pamattaṃ ativattati.

From:

from Udāna 2.9, Asātarūpa Jātaka, and Sutta Nipāta 1086

Dear Listeners,

The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Supreme Buddha, points out to us that the entire journey of saṃsāra, which is a struggle between life and death, is indeed a state of heedlessness, and that the path to the Deathless Nibbāna is heedfulness. One traverses this journey of saṃsāra by regarding Suffering (Dukkha) as happiness. How one falls prey to this perverted perception, which arises due to ignorance and Craving (Taṇhā), will become clear through today's thematic verse and its corresponding origin story.

In the Kuṇḍasāla forest of the Koliya country, the Buddha preached this verse in connection with the female lay disciple named Suppavāsā. She, known as Suppavāsā Koliyadhītā, was the mother of the Great Arahant Sīvalī. The Great Arahant Sīvalī, who attained the foremost position among those of great gains, obtained the gift of life amidst a mountain of great Suffering (Dukkha). For Ven. Sīvalī spent seven years and seven days in his mother's womb. During those last seven days, that mother experienced extremely bitter labor pains due to an obstructed pregnancy. Even at that moment, having faith in the Triple Gem, she endured that bitter pain through three Dhamma-accordant reflections, through three thoughts. It is recorded there in this manner:

“Sammāsambuddho vata so bhagavā yo imassa evarūpassa dukkhassa pahānāya dhammaṃ deseti”

The Blessed One is indeed the Fully Self-Awakened One, who teaches the Dhamma for the abandoning of such Suffering (Dukkha).

"Supaṭipanno vata so bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho yo imassa evarūpassa dukkhassa pahānāya paṭipanno"

Of good conduct indeed is the Sangha of disciples of that Blessed One, who have entered the path for the abandoning of such Suffering (Dukkha).

"Susukhaṃ vata taṃ nibbānaṃ yatthidaṃ evarūpaṃ dukkhaṃ na vijjati"

Extremely peaceful indeed is that Nibbāna wherein such Suffering (Dukkha) is not found.

Through these kinds of reflections, through these three Dhamma-accordant thoughts, she endured that bitter pain. Then, she spoke to her husband and told him: "Go and inquire about the health of the Blessed One, and then inform Him in this manner: 'Suppavāsā, the Koliya daughter, having carried a child in her womb for seven years, is now experiencing the bitter pain of a difficult pregnancy for these seven days. Yet, she endures that pain through these three kinds of reflections.'" Suppavāsā's husband met the Buddha and conveyed that message exactly as requested. As soon as it was spoken, the Buddha uttered just one sentence as a blessing: *"Sukhini hotu suppavāsā koliyadhītā, arogā arogaṃ puttaṃ vijāyatu"* — "May Suppavāsā, the Koliya daughter, be happy. Being healthy, may she give birth to a healthy son." At that very moment, Suppavāsā became well and gave birth to a son.

Now, when the husband returned home and witnessed this miracle, he was greatly delighted, thinking: "This is a great wonder, a marvelous thing! Such relief was received just by the word of blessing spoken through the power of the Blessed One." Next, Suppavāsā says to her husband: "Now, go and make this invitation to the Blessed One: 'Suppavāsā, the Koliya daughter, has given birth to a healthy child. Suppavāsā invites the Sangha of monks headed by the Buddha to accept alms for seven days.'" So, the husband went back, reported this matter to the Buddha, and made the alms invitation on behalf of Suppavāsā.

By that time, the Sangha of monks headed by the Buddha had already received another invitation from a certain lay disciple, who was an attendant of the Great Arahant Mahā Moggallāna. The Buddha did something special here; He called Venerable Mahā Moggallāna and said: "Moggallāna, tell that lay disciple: 'Suppavāsā, the Koliya daughter, having carried a pregnancy for seven years and seven days, has now safely delivered. She makes this invitation for seven days. Let those next seven days be given to her, and postpone your alms-giving to a later date.'" The Great Arahant Moggallāna went and made this request to that lay disciple.

Perhaps because that lay disciple was wise, he made the following statement to the Great Arahant Moggallāna: "Venerable sir, if you can guarantee three things for me, I will yield my turn of alms-giving to Suppavāsā." What were those three things? "You must assure

me that my wealth and possessions will not be destroyed within these seven days. Similarly, you must guarantee that my life will not end; that is the second point. And you must guarantee that my faith (saddhā) will not waver or decline." He asked the Great Arahant Moggallāna to guarantee these three things.

The Great Arahant Moggallāna says: "Lay disciple, I can guarantee two of those things for you. But the third thing you must guarantee for yourself." You, meritorious friends, know that the Great Arahant Moggallāna possessed great psychic powers; he was the foremost among those with psychic power. He must have seen clearly regarding those two matters. He says: "I can guarantee that your wealth will not perish during these seven days, and that your life will not perish. But faith is something that belongs to you alone; you yourself must be responsible for it."

Then, that lay disciple wisely replied: "Very well, Venerable Sir, if you assure me of those two, I agree. Let Suppavāsā offer this alms-food. I will undertake to offer my alms-giving later." After the Great Arahant Moggallāna went and reported this matter to the Buddha, Suppavāsā prepared the alms-food magnificently on the following day and personally offered it with her own hands to the Sangha of monks headed by the Buddha.

Indeed, this is a miraculous event. Perhaps some might even doubt it. It is mentioned that even that young child was made to pay homage to the Sangha headed by the Buddha. Not only that, the Great Arahant Sāriputta addressed this child and asked: "Child, I hope you are comfortable, with no pain or trouble?" This was like inquiring about the well-being of an ordinary person. Then this little child answered: "Venerable Sir, what happiness could there be for me? What happiness could there be for one who lived for seven years and seven days inside a jar of blood?" Hearing this conversation, Suppavāsā, the Koliya daughter, was exceedingly delighted. She was overjoyed thinking, "What a meritorious child this is, to converse with the Great Arahant Sāriputta in this manner!" Seeing her joy, the Buddha asked Suppavāsā: "Well, Suppavāsā, would you like to have more children like this?" Then Suppavāsā replied, just like many mothers say nowadays: "Not just one child, I would be delighted to have even seven children like this!" It was then that the Buddha uttered the verse we mentioned earlier.

Asātaṃ sātarūpena,

piyarūpena appiyaṃ,

dukkhaṃ sukhassa rūpena,

pamattaṃ ativattati.

This is declared as an Udāna verse. When we say 'Udāna' (inspired utterance), we usually think of a joyful exclamation. But one should not think that the Buddha was merely approving Suppavāsā's words. Looking at the mind in accordance with the Dhamma, this verse contains an instructive, advisory statement.

Asātaṃ sātarūpena — what is unpleasant in the guise of the pleasant;

Piyarūpena appiyaṃ — what is unlovely in the guise of the lovely;

Dukkhaṃ sukhassa rūpena — Suffering (Dukkha) in the guise of happiness;

Pamattaṃ ativattati — overwhelms the heedless person.

Now, you, meritorious friends, can think about this. In addition to this, we must say that you have probably heard much about the Great Arahant Sīvalī. As the foremost Great Arahant in terms of great gains, many meritorious people even hang pictures of the Great Arahant Sīvalī in their homes. But they do not think much about the other side—about the mountain of Suffering (Dukkha) he endured. They do not think of the immense mountain of Suffering (Dukkha) amidst which he obtained his limited gains. Well, the Buddha, on a certain occasion in the Jātaka Pāli, explains under the name 'Asātarūpa Jātaka' that there was a kamma underlying this as well. It appears that when the monks had gathered, they discussed: “Ah, what Suffering (Dukkha) this mother and son have endured, especially Ven. Sīvalī in his childhood!” The Buddha, having entered the Dhamma hall, revealed the past story in this manner:

In the past, when the Bodhisatta was born as the son of King Brahmadatta of Bārāṇasī and was ruling, the King of Kosala, being more powerful, came and seized the kingdom, killed the king, made the queen his chief consort, and began ruling Bārāṇasī. At that time, the son escaped through a waterway, hid, gathered an army, and came to fight to reclaim his kingdom. He sent a message to the King of Kosala: “Hand over the kingdom or fight!” As the king prepared for war, the chief consort, who was the prince's mother, sent a secret message: “There is no need to fight; just besiege the city. Once the city is besieged, you can capture it by leaving the people with nothing to eat or drink, starving them.” This was the advice given by the mother. Following this, the son blockaded the city for seven days. With the people left helpless, they finally killed the King of Kosala and brought his head to the prince. In that manner, the problem was solved. However, it is the unwholesome kamma that is pointed out here. The Buddha declared that because of the advice given—the advice to blockade and starve them in that manner to capture the kingdom—and the kamma committed by the son who followed that advice, the kamma ripened in this exact manner.

Now, a certain aspect of the ripening of kamma is revealed through this. Next, let us try to uncover an important aspect of this story. We see that there is something to be grasped even from the conversation between that lay disciple and the Great Arahant Moggallāna. The lay gentleman was not ready to yield his turn of alms-giving merely because the Buddha said so. A doubt arose in the lay disciple: “Even though I promised to give alms, if by any chance my wealth to give alms is lost during these seven days, or if my life is not preserved, or even if all these are present, if my faith (saddhā) is lost, how will I give alms?” Thinking in this way, he made that request to guarantee these things.

And the Great Arahant Moggallāna, too, acted in accordance with the Dhamma; there too, we have a lesson to learn. Even though he was so highly advanced in psychic power

and possessed great majesty, he could not guarantee another person's faith (saddhā). This is an important point in the Dhamma.

The faith (saddhā) found in the Dhamma of the Buddha is not blind devotion. It is not something done by becoming enslaved or subservient to anyone. It is something belonging to oneself. One must be responsible for it oneself. Regarding that matter, the word of the Great Arahant Moggallāna is indeed in agreement with the Buddha's word. Related points are mentioned in various places in the Dhamma. Especially, there is a discourse called the Vīmaṃsaka Sutta. There, the Buddha tells the monks that even a monk who does not possess the power to read others' minds should investigate even the Tathāgata Himself through things cognizable by the eye and ear, and only then develop faith (saddhā). Thus, the living Buddha invited even His own Sangha of monks to investigate whether He has any shortcomings, and then, having investigated, to establish their faith (saddhā) that He is indeed the Fully Self-Awakened One.

Similarly, on another occasion, in the discourse called the Upāli Sutta, mention is made of Upāli the householder, who was a very prominent disciple of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. When, on a certain occasion, through a Dhamma discussion, he developed faith (saddhā) in the Buddha and took refuge in the Triple Gem, the Buddha declared: "Householder Upāli, it is not good for well-known people like you in the country to make such hasty decisions. *Anuviccākāro*—investigate, think it over, and think further before taking refuge in the Triple Gem. Do not be so hasty." Then, the householder Upāli was actually much more delighted. What is shown by this is that the Buddhist attitude leads to investigation. That faith (saddhā) is not blind devotion. It is something belonging to each individual. This, meritorious friends, you too should understand well.

That wealth belongs to oneself. Among the types of wealth such as the wealth of faith, the wealth of virtue, and the wealth of moral shame and fear, this is the foremost wealth; it cannot be shaken by anyone in that manner. Whether it is shaken or not is something belonging to oneself. Wrong views can indeed shake it. But one must strive to make it unshakable faith. What is called unshakable faith is the stage where one has, to some extent, directly realized the Dhamma. We pointed out this fact as an additional point, yet it is contained within this discourse.

Next, let us return to the main narrative mentioned in this story. Look now at the mother of the Great Arahant Sīvalī, Suppavāsā. Having suffered such pain—pain that no other mother had ever experienced—and due to the joy arising from maternal affection, when the Buddha asked her, she said she would be pleased to have even seven more such children. That is exactly what is expressed in that verse. That is the nature of the world. Even if one suffers a massive mountain of Suffering (Dukkha), one forgets it. That is why it was said: *Asātaṃ sātarūpena*—what is unpleasant appears as pleasant, and what is unlovely appears as lovely. Thinking in this way, one falls into heedlessness. No matter how much faith (saddhā) she possessed, because Suppavāsā fell into heedlessness at that moment, the Buddha uttered this verse as an admonition. This is a hidden aspect of the life of the Great Arahant Sīvalī during his childhood.

We rarely hear of people who have the power to recall the past. However, in most cases, a child has no memory whatsoever of the time spent in the mother's womb. Even if there is no memory, the child comes out crying, as if to express that Suffering (Dukkha) in brief. We must understand this. Yet, it is mentioned that the Great Arahant Sīvalī possessed a certain power. It is clear from his answer that he had a recollection of it. If he was able to say, “What happiness could there be for me who lived for so long inside a jar of blood?” then that child indeed had that power. Regarding this, it is recorded in the texts in this manner: Ven. Sīvalī did not need to be given a separate meditation subject. Simply by reflecting on that Suffering (Dukkha), on that Suffering of Birth (jāti-dukkha)...

Many of our Buddhist friends do not even like to accept the Suffering of Birth (jāti-dukkha). When a child is born in a home, it is a cause for great joy—obtaining the 'treasure of a child.' But the disaster within it is not understood by many. That disaster is also quickly forgotten. That birth was a disastrous, perilous occasion for both the mother and the child. They forget it, make merry over it, and commemorate it year after year by holding birthday parties. There lies the Suffering of Birth (jāti-dukkha). Thus, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that by recollecting the Suffering of Birth (jāti-dukkha), the Great Arahant Sīvalī attained his Arahantship, making that his subject of meditation.

Furthermore, if we go deeper into this, and compile the Dhamma categories mentioned here like 'pleasant form' and 'agreeable form,' the Buddha points out that the defilement or purification of beings occurs through causes and conditions. The most valuable part of this Dhamma—as you, meritorious friends, also accept—is the teaching of Dependent Arising (paṭicca-samuppāda), which is the teaching that everything occurs according to causes and conditions, a teaching not found in any other doctrine. An occasion that highlights this is mentioned. Once, a Licchavi chief named Mahāli said to the Buddha: “Venerable Sir, the teacher named Pūraṇa Kassapa expresses this view: ‘Beings are defiled without cause, without condition. Beings are purified without any cause. The purification and defilement of beings are without cause and without condition.’ Pūraṇa Kassapa holds such a view. What does the Blessed One say about this?” he asked the Blessed One.

Then, the Buddha declared: “I say that it is with cause and condition that one becomes defiled. Likewise, it is with cause and condition that one obtains purity, obtains purification of mind.” When asked, “How do I understand this?” the Buddha explained it by means of these five: form, Sensation (vedanā), perception, Preparations (saṅkhāra), and Consciousness (viññāṇa).

The Buddha analyzes it in this way: “If this form, or the part we call the body, were exclusively painful, if nothing called happiness could ever be associated with it, if this body were purely filled with Suffering (Dukkha), beings would not become attached to it. This body is not purely Suffering (Dukkha); there is a pleasant aspect to it, and one can form a perception of pleasure in it. It is because of this that they get attached to it. Due to that attachment, a bond is formed. Due to that bond, defilement occurs.” There, the natural law was shown. It is the same with the others. In Sensation (vedanā), too, there is a similar nature. Sensation (vedanā) is not purely Suffering (Dukkha). There is also a

pleasant aspect. It is the same with perception and so on. Up to Consciousness (viññāṇa), every single one cannot be said to be purely Suffering (Dukkha); there is also a pleasant aspect. If we look at things as they really are, that is why there is attachment. Due to that attachment, a bond is formed. Due to the bond, there is defilement. Due to that defilement, one goes on and on in saṃsāra.

Next, He states the other side. What was described just now was how one becomes defiled. Next, He explains how one becomes purified: “If this aggregate of form was purely pleasant, if there were no Suffering (Dukkha) in this form, then one would never become disenchanted with it. One becomes disenchanted with it because there is a certain nature of Suffering (Dukkha) in it.” That too is a natural law. The Buddha accepts that too as a truth. It is because of that nature of Suffering (Dukkha) that beings become disenchanted with it. Through that disenchantment, dispassion arises. Through that dispassion, purification, liberation arises. This is the natural law shown there by the Buddha. It is not something done by the Buddha, nor is it something done by anyone else. It is demonstrated here that this occurs in accordance with causes and conditions.

Now, next we present a Dhamma category that is extremely valuable for practitioners and meditators. You, meritorious friends, might have heard that the Buddha preached deep, valuable discourses like the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Mahānidāna Sutta to the people of the Kuru country. Even in the commentaries to those origin stories, it is mentioned that the Kuru country was a prosperous land and its people were wise. The Buddha preached those valuable discourses on His own initiative, even without any specific question being asked.

On one occasion, the Buddha addressed the Sangha of monks and asked this question: “Monks, do you practice the exploration called *antara-sammasana* (internal scrutiny)?” *Antara-sammasana* means scrutinizing from within. Scrutiny actually means exploring or investigating. Otherwise, the general idea is "investigation from within." This can be analyzed further in due course. When He asked the monks in general whether they perform such an internal investigation, a certain monk declared: “Venerable Sir, I do practice such a thing.” Next, this is all that is mentioned in the Dhamma: when that monk was asked, “How do you practice that internal exploration called *antara-sammasana*?” the answer given by that monk is not recorded. It is recorded in this way: the Blessed One was not satisfied with the answer he gave, deeming it insufficient. At that moment, Ven. Ānanda stepped forward and said: “Blessed One, this is the time, this is the proper time! Let the Blessed One explain to the Sangha of monks what this *antara-sammasana* (internal scrutiny) is, what this investigation from within means.”

From there, the Buddha explains: “A certain monk investigates the facts from within, as they really are, in this manner. He thinks: ‘What is this Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa)?’ If there are various kinds of Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa) and diverse forms of Suffering (Dukkha) in the world in connection with this life, what is the cause of these sufferings? From what does this Suffering (Dukkha) arise? What is its root? What is its cause?’ Investigating thus, he realizes: ‘Whatever Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa) and Suffering (Dukkha) exist, they all arise due to assets (upadhi).’”

The word 'upadhi' (assets) is used in the Dhamma to refer to the five aggregates of Grasping (upādāna)—form, Sensation (vedanā), perception, Preparations (saṅkhāra), and Consciousness (viññāṇa), which one holds on to thinking ‘this is mine.’ These things grabbed through Grasping (upādāna) are what become assets (upadhi). To put it briefly, the wealth we earn and acquire becomes deposits, our assets, when deposited in a bank. In the same way, the greatest asset we carry through saṃsāra is the five aggregates of Grasping (upādāna). These five heaps of 'my form, my Sensation (vedanā),' which are held by the mind—that is what is called assets (upadhi). When that monk investigates within, he understands that this problem of Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa) arises precisely because of these five. He investigates further into it from within: ‘Why do assets (upadhi) arise? Due to what cause? By what condition? What is its root?’ When seeking the cause in this way, he understands that Craving (Taṇhā) is its root. For it is due to that Craving (Taṇhā) that one grabs things through Grasping (upādāna). It is those grabbed things that one deposits as 'I' and 'mine.' Therefore, Craving (Taṇhā) is the root. This is how one penetrates deeper. May you, meritorious friends, direct your minds accordingly.

Next, that monk contemplates: ‘Where does this Craving (Taṇhā) arise? Where does it establish itself?’ Then he realizes that this Craving (Taṇhā) arises—the words ‘piya-rūpa’ (lovely form) are mentioned there—wherever there is something of a lovely nature, an agreeable nature in the world; it is there that Craving (Taṇhā) arises. It is there that Craving (Taṇhā) settles down, or establishes itself. Wherever the world perceives or thinks there is a lovely nature, an agreeable nature, right there Craving (Taṇhā) settles down. There Craving (Taṇhā) is born. There Craving (Taṇhā) establishes itself.

Next, it is asked: ‘What is it in the world that is regarded generally as lovely form and pleasant form, as a lovely nature and an agreeable nature?’ It is these six sense-bases—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—that are regarded in the world as lovely and pleasant things. It is in dependence on them that one experiences that pleasure in the world. The Buddha further declares regarding this: “In the past, whatever recluses and brahmins regarded these things considered as lovely and pleasant form—these six sense-bases, either one or all of them—as pleasure, as permanent, as a refuge, as health, as safety, those recluses and brahmins, because of that, fell into those attachments. Consequently, because of that attitude, they nurtured what they had regarded as lovely and pleasant form. Since Craving (Taṇhā) grows through that attitude, assets (upadhi) grew as a result. What was grabbed by Grasping (upādāna) due to Craving (Taṇhā) deposited in the mind and grew as assets (upadhi). If any recluse or brahmin nurtured assets (upadhi), they nurtured Suffering (Dukkha).”

So, what we have here is that, due to that attitude, because of regarding those lovely and pleasant things as permanent, as pleasure, as health, as safe, as a refuge, they grew. Due to Craving (Taṇhā), assets (upadhi) grew. Due to assets (upadhi), Suffering (Dukkha) grew. Because Suffering (Dukkha) grew, they never escaped from saṃsāra. They did not escape from Birth (jāti), Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa), sorrow, lamentation, and despair. Just as in the past, so too in the future, whichever recluses and brahmins adopt that attitude regarding these lovely and pleasant things, regarding them as permanent,

as pleasure, as health, as safe, they will nurture Craving (Taṇhā). By nurturing Craving (Taṇhā), assets (upadhi) grow. From assets (upadhi), Suffering (Dukkha) grows. Through the growth of Suffering (Dukkha), they remain imprisoned in saṃsāra, enduring that kind of mountain of Suffering (Dukkha).

Next, He gives an illustration and a simile for this: "Monks, suppose there is a cup of beverage that is very fragrant, colorful, and delicious, but it is mixed with poison. A man arrives there, thirsty and exhausted in the scorching heat of summer. When he arrives, the people there say to him: 'Here is a beverage that is beautiful, fragrant, and tasty. But there is a small drawback: it is mixed with poison. If you wish, you may drink it. While drinking, it is very delicious and fragrant, a beautiful drink. But once drunk, you will either die or undergo suffering equivalent to death.' Yet that man, without thinking further, being thirsty and exhausted, drinks it. Having drunk it, he either meets death or undergoes suffering equivalent to death." This is the simile the Buddha presents regarding that first attitude.

Next, the Buddha shows the other side regarding those lovely and pleasant things. "In the past, if any recluses and brahmins changed their attitude towards them, regarding them as Impermanent (anicca) (whereas previously they regarded them as permanent), as Suffering (dukkha), as Not-self (anattā), as a disease, as a danger, they thereby abandoned Craving (Taṇhā)." This is the second attitude towards those lovely things. What is it? They regarded them as Impermanent (anicca), as Suffering (dukkha), as Not-self (anattā), as a disease or illness, as a danger. "Such recluses and brahmins destroyed Craving (Taṇhā). When Craving (Taṇhā) was destroyed, assets (upadhi) were destroyed. When assets (upadhi) were destroyed, Suffering (Dukkha) was destroyed. They were liberated from those sufferings such as Birth (jāti), Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa)." Hearing this, you, meritorious friends, can now understand those terms like lovely form and pleasant form.

Here is the simile given for that: "Just as before, there is a cup of poison. Just as before, a thirsty and exhausted man arrives. People say to him: 'This is a colorful, fragrant, and delicious beverage. However, once drunk, such-and-such a thing will happen.' That person, contemplating wisely, thinks: 'I can quench my thirst with some water, or buttermilk, or some other beverage. I can satisfy my thirst with that. If I drink this, it will bring about my ruin.' Thus thinking, he rejects it." This is what is said about that attitude. Recluses and brahmins of that kind, through that attitude, reject those lovely things. Through that, they are liberated from Suffering (Dukkha).

This is an extremely deep discourse. Now, if we investigate this word *sammasana* (scrutiny) a little further: for an insight (vipassanā) practitioner, meditation means practicing the scrutiny of Preparations (saṅkhāra-sammasana). We have occasionally compared this word *sammasana* (scrutiny) with the word *parāmāsa* (grasping). The word *parāmāsa* is mostly used in connection with views. Followers of other sects often look at things superficially, adopt a certain view, and asserting *"idaṃ eva saccaṃ mogham-aññaṃ"* — 'this alone is the truth, everything else is false' — they hold on to it through Grasping (upādāna), become trapped within it, and end up unable to progress.

But what is found in the Dhamma is not *parāmāsa* (dogmatic grasping) but *sammasana* (wise scrutiny). If we go further by means of a simile, we can explain the simile the Buddha gave for those Preparations (saṅkhāra) when discussing *parāmāsa*.

You, meritorious friends, have heard that the aggregate of Preparations (saṅkhārakkhandha) is compared to a banana tree trunk. The Buddha on one occasion explained why this aggregate of Preparations (saṅkhārakkhandha) is compared to a banana tree trunk. It is like this: when a man enters a forest and sees these banana trees, what does he think? Thinking there is some essence or heartwood in it, he cuts it at the root, shoulders it, brings it home, and when he examines it, he finds no heartwood at all. He realizes there is no essence in it. But let us think for a moment: without going to the trouble of carrying the banana trunk home, what if he gently peeled it and inspected it right there? As he removes one layer of the banana trunk, there is another layer. As he removes that, there is yet another layer. It is just a pile of layers. There is no heartwood or essence whatsoever. The method that leads to this understanding is what is called *sammasana* (wise scrutiny). It is like carefully touching and examining. On the other hand, tightly gripping it, grasping it, and carrying it on one's shoulder is what is called *parāmāsa*. *Sammasana* means gently handling, inspecting, and examining.

Therefore, this is why the Buddha spoke of *antara-sammasana* (internal scrutiny) here. One approaches those lovely and pleasant forms gently through that understanding: ‘From where does this mass of Suffering (Dukkha) arise? From where does this Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa), this Suffering (Dukkha) arise?’ When thinking about it, here are the assets (upadhi). Beneath them is Craving (Taṇhā). Going step-by-step in this manner, one comprehends those lovely and pleasant forms. The Buddha has left it to the practitioner himself to realize this directly through scrutiny. Yet, there is a vast difference in attitude. That is why various perceptions (saññā) are shown in the Dhamma: the perception of Impermanence (anicca), the perception of Suffering (dukkha), the perception of danger, and so forth. To develop the strength to reject the invitation made by the world regarding those lovely forms, one must develop these special Dhamma-accordant perceptions.

What exists in the world is a heap of perverted perceptions arising due to ignorance, Craving (Taṇhā), and thirst, much like a deer chasing a mirage. These are what you, meritorious friends, have often heard of as perversions. There are four perversions: the perception of permanence in the Impermanent (anicca); the perception of pleasure in what is painful/Stress (dukkha) (now, Suppavāsā experienced Suffering (Dukkha), but in the end, she formed a perception of pleasure); next, forming a perception of beauty in what is unbeautiful; and regarding what is Not-self (anattā) as self, as belonging to oneself. These perverted perceptions are called perversions.

Therefore, we can understand from this that we must strive diligently (even though the world makes its invitations) to contemplate wisely in accordance with the hint given by the Buddha. We must constantly strive to develop those Dhamma-accordant perceptions. This is further explained as the 'modes of scrutiny' (*sammasana-vidhi*). Especially in the Dhamma related to meditation, eleven modes of scrutiny are

mentioned: *aniccatō* (as Impermanent), *dukkhatō* (as Suffering), *rōgatō* (as a disease), *gaṇḍatō* (as a boil), *sallatō* (as a dart), *aghatō* (as a calamity), *ābādhatō* (as an affliction), *paratō* (as alien/other), *palōkatō* (as disintegrating), *suññatō* (as empty), and *anattatō* (as Not-self) — thus, eleven are shown.

In the Pāli language, this suffix *-tō* means looking at something in a certain manner. When looking at it superficially, it seems permanent, but one looks at it as Impermanent (*aniccatō*), because in reality, it is Impermanent (anicca). It is not as it appears on the outside. That is why it was called *antara-sammasana* (internal scrutiny). One penetrates and looks within. It is not in the way the world accepts, but in the way the Buddha brought to light. One sees it as Impermanent (*aniccatō*). Next, one sees it as Suffering (*dukkhatō*). One sees it as a disease (*rōgatō*). One sees it as a boil (*gaṇḍatō*). One sees it as a dart (*sallatō*). One sees it as a calamity (*aghatō*). One sees it as an affliction (*ābādhatō*). One sees it as alien/other (*paratō*), as belonging to someone else. One sees it as disintegrating (*palōkatō*). One sees it as empty (*suññatō*). One sees it as Not-self (*anattatō*). These are the modes of scrutiny described in the Dhamma.

These are shown in this manner according to a certain practical value. Many logicians argue that happiness can be obtained through impermanence. They say: “Why, it is because of impermanence that an illness or a painful Sensation (vedanā) which existed has now disappeared!” A sophist could even take up this very story of Suppavāsā and say: “Even though she suffered so much for seven years and seven days, Suppavāsā was so happy in the end!” If one views Suppavāsā from a logical standpoint, that is exactly what one would have to say. But the Buddha showed that despite suffering such pain, she forgot it through ignorance and, through maternal affection, fell back into heedlessness. That is how we must understand it. Nowadays, many people, when a painful Sensation (vedanā) disappears, claim it is happiness, and ask: “How can impermanence be called Suffering (Dukkha)?” In this way, wrong, perverted views taken up through logical speculation prevail in the world.

At that point, we must consider: ‘What is my ultimate goal? Is it bondage to saṃsāra, or liberation? Is it defilement, or purification?’ That choice belongs to oneself. If one has clarified one's ultimate goal, then we must adopt what the Buddha points out in relation to it. The Buddha shows Himself to be a true physician. He points out the causes of the disease, and also the method of curing it. You, meritorious friends, know that for a true physician, it is essential to understand the disease, the origin of the disease, the causes of its occurrence, and also its cure. The Buddha pointed out that this is a disease, and showed Dhamma-accordantly how it arises. Otherwise, He could have just said, on someone else's word, that this is entirely Suffering (Dukkha). See how objectively the Buddha presented it. In the section mentioned at the beginning, He declared that if this were entirely characterized by Suffering (Dukkha), the world would not get attached to it; there is a pleasant aspect to it. Yet, the Buddha preaches the reality: sensual pleasures are of little gratification and of much Suffering (Dukkha). The gratification aspect is very little, and the Suffering aspect is far greater.

It was through the research conducted over a long period in saṃsāra that the Buddha understood this. On one occasion, the Buddha declared: “Monks, for a long time in this saṃsāra, I conducted research into gratification. Whatever results there are from that research into gratification, I possess them. Next, I researched the danger of it. The results of that research are also with me. Next, I sought the escape. I arrived at that escape.” It is in this manner, like a physician, that the Buddha speaks with a clear understanding of every state of affairs. You, meritorious friends, might be working in various institutions. But more than any of those institutions, it is these six sense-bases that are dear to everyone, that are pleasant. It is in association with these six sense-bases that anyone who experiences pleasure in this world does so. Yet, the Buddha points out that although they are indeed lovely and pleasant—having a lovely nature, a pleasant nature—it is right here that Suffering (Dukkha) also lies.

On one occasion, the Buddha preached: “This pleasant Sensation (vedanā) is pleasant as long as it lasts; when it changes, it is Suffering (Dukkha). A painful Sensation (vedanā) is painful as long as it lasts; when it changes, it is pleasant.” As for the neutral Sensation (vedanā), neither-painful-nor-pleasant, as long as it lasts, some do not even recognize it—therein lies ignorance. Furthermore, though it is peaceful, it is Impermanent (anicca). The ordinary worldly person has no understanding of this neither-painful-nor-pleasant Sensation (vedanā). It is the practitioner who gradually uncovers that aspect. This worldly person merely plays a game of seesaw between pleasure and pain.

That is precisely why, when explaining the five aggregates, the Buddha mentions: “What is the gratification of this form? Whatever pleasure and joy arise in dependence on this form, that is the gratification of form.” Next, He points out the danger: “What is the danger of form? The fact that this form is subject to change, alteration, turning into something else, the inability to keep it as one wishes—that is the danger of form.” Next, what is the escape from it? It is not suicide. It is the abandoning of desire-and-lust, the attachment towards this form. It is because of the attachment towards this form that those other attitudes exist. Therefore, the stage where that attachment is abandoned is called Nibbāna. The abandoning of desire-and-lust—that is the escape. The practitioner who targets that indeed moves towards realization with the help of those modes of scrutiny (*sammasana*) mentioned before. The world constantly invites us in the opposite direction. “Yes, this beverage is colorful. It is delicious. It is fragrant. But it contains poison. There is only a small drawback: it is poisoned.” That is what has happened.

At any rate, you, meritorious friends, might have heard of a discourse where the Buddha preached this very point to the monks in a way that evokes deep urgency. It is truly wonderful. When stating it, it is just like shouting to neighbors when a house is on fire. The Buddha declares: “Monks, the eye is burning. Forms are burning. Eye-Consciousness (viññāṇa) is burning. Contact (phassa) associated with the eye is burning. The Sensation (vedanā) arising from that Contact (phassa) is burning.” It is like an alarm calling the fire brigade. Some discourses are like that. Even though they seek Nibbāna, the ordinary worldly person does not realize that these are on fire. It is within these very things that they seek Nibbāna. For one who looks forward to extinguishment, the Buddha gives a method of scrutiny—not tightly grasping and carrying it on one's

shoulder as the world does. One examines with wisdom. Examining, comparing, and weighing the aspects of gratification and danger, if the gratification is little and the danger is great, and if it leads to the defilement of the mind, one rejects it. If it leads to the purification of the mind, that is where the natural law is shown: through that attachment, a bond is formed, and through the bond, defilement occurs.

Next, He points out the other side. There, He uses an important word: *nibbidā*. The meaning of the Pāli word *nibbidā* is disenchantment. For the world, 'disenchantment' is an unpleasant, disagreeable word. But why does the Buddha highlight it? It is because through disenchantment with saṃsāra that dispassion (no-attachment) comes. *Nibbidā, virāga*—from disenchantment with saṃsāra comes dispassion. From dispassion comes purification. Therefore, if we expect purification, we must definitely develop an attitude that leads to dispassion. To develop an attitude that leads to dispassion, we must constantly apply those mentioned modes of scrutiny. Because the nature of the mind is such that if it is constantly inclined towards something, it gets drawn in that direction. Just as dripping water on a stone or tree eventually leaves a mark even on a rock over time, by inclining the stream of thoughts towards that direction over time, one inclines towards liberation. We know nothing of the lives we spent in our past saṃsāra. Yet, the meritorious friends participating in these activities must reflect, must encourage their minds: “Out of these millions and billions of people, we have been fortunate enough to incline towards such a lineage of thought because we must have developed those mentioned perceptions to some extent in our past saṃsāra.” One must understand that this strength lies within oneself. Although the mind may wander at other times, this is something to be done with effort. For, as mentioned, the side of the world’s temptation is extremely powerful. Especially in this era, which is inclined towards materialism, the invitations from that side to drink this poison are very frequent.

One must contemplate wisely, Dhamma-accordantly, with the help of those mentioned modes of scrutiny. When discussing Nibbāna, although we constantly use the word 'extinguishment,' many do not contemplate the true, deep meaning associated with that word. In discussing Nibbāna, the Buddha illustrated with the simile of fire, showing the entire journey of saṃsāra as a sheer fire. As we demonstrated on a previous occasion, an old Sinhala poet described this entire body in this way:

Dara-ræsa gini æviluṇa kala nibaňdē

Gini-misa dara-yayi yana nama e-ma-lesē

Ek-koṭa vadahāḷa muniňdē

Duka-misa kaye-kayi yana nama e-ma-lesē

Once a heap of wood is on fire, inside those flames one cannot find a single piece of firewood. One cannot say, “There is a bundle of firewood.” It cannot be called 'firewood'; it is only called 'fire.' “Likewise, the Sage declared collectively, there is only Suffering (Dukkha), and the name 'body' no longer applies.” According to the vision of the Buddha, what we call this body is purely Suffering (Dukkha). We all talk about this mass of

Suffering (Dukkha). Some even say: “I understood the First Noble Truth. I also understood the second one a little. I learned the third one from books. It is only the fourth one that I don’t understand.” There are people who say such things. Actually, they have not understood the first one at all. If one had understood the first, one would pass up to the fourth. Why? Because they separate it into departments: “Only where we two live is happiness, the rest is Suffering (Dukkha).” “As long as our children and our bank deposits are safe, there is happiness. It is only when something happens to them that there is Suffering (Dukkha).” But the Buddha sees, at the deepest level, the mass of Suffering (Dukkha) generated within the mind itself. That is why the Buddha preaches *saṅkhārarūpā paramā dukkhā*—Preparations (saṅkhāra) are the ultimate Suffering (dukkha). Preparations (saṅkhāra) themselves are a heap of Suffering (Dukkha). If we understand Preparations (saṅkhāra) deeply, they include all volitional forces, desires, and expectations arising in the mind. Now, let us take the example of a multi-millionaire possessing great wealth. Is he living in happiness? With what great fear does he spend the night? “What will happen to those deposits? What will happen to those banks? What will tomorrow be like? What will happen to me through economic inflation and such crises?” He lives amidst such a mountain of Suffering (Dukkha). Yet he does not understand it. That is why the Buddha declared *saṅkhārā paramā dukkhā*—Preparations (saṅkhāra) are the ultimate Suffering (dukkha). That entire mass of thoughts is a heap of Suffering (Dukkha).

And it is upon those Preparations (saṅkhāra) that this Consciousness (viññāṇa) depends. We think of this Consciousness (viññāṇa) as a solid, singular entity. But on one occasion, this very question was raised with Ven. Ānanda. A monk named Ven. Udayī asked Ven. Ānanda: “Friend, I understand the statement that this body is Not-self (anattā). But how are we to understand that Consciousness (viññāṇa) is Not-self (anattā)? Please explain this to me.” Then, Ven. Ānanda declared: “This Consciousness (viññāṇa), too, is of six kinds. We must understand that it is not a single, independent thing. Eye-Consciousness (viññāṇa) arises because of the eye and forms. Ear-Consciousness (viññāṇa) arises because of the ear and sounds. Just because there is an ear, Consciousness (viññāṇa) does not exist there. Just because there is a form there, Consciousness (viññāṇa) does not exist there. That is what is called Dependent Arising (paṭicca-samuppāda).” The Buddha points out that only when the eye and forms meet, and attention (manasikāra) and attachment towards it combine, does eye-Consciousness (viññāṇa) arise. But thinking otherwise is like the foolish idea that fire exists inside a matchbox. It is true that the matchbox is there. But the fire is neither in the matchstick nor on the side of the matchbox. It is when they are struck together that fire arises. Likewise, Consciousness (viññāṇa) arises where the eye and form meet. Similarly, ear-Consciousness (viññāṇa) arises where the ear and sound meet. Yet, one thinks, 'Consciousness (viññāṇa) is mine.' Because it revolves so rapidly—revolving at a speed beyond comprehension, at a speed for which no simile can even be given—the world thinks that Consciousness (viññāṇa) is my self.

One can understand that form is not self. One can also understand that Sensation (vedanā) passes away. But in the end, it is Consciousness (viññāṇa) that is grabbed. Even

those who attained absorptions went and got stuck right there. The Buddha points out that, let alone others, even mind-Consciousness (viññāṇa) arises only when the mind and the object of the mind—whatever that object may be—come together. Yet, it happens with such speed that one feels: 'This Consciousness (viññāṇa) of mine does not change.'

That is what the Buddha calls a stream. Like a river flowing down over a long time in saṃsāra, holding on to one thing after another—just as a river flows, rolling boulders, drawing under rocks, from here and there—in the same way, driven by the speed of ignorance and Craving (Taṇhā), based on this wrong perception of permanence, that Consciousness (viññāṇa) also flows extremely fast, grabbing various objects. The Buddha gives another simile for this grabbing. A monkey jumping rapidly from tree to tree in a forest does not consciously think, 'I am grabbing this branch.' Yet, because of its rapid habit, it does not fall to the ground; it goes on grabbing branch after branch. In the same way, Consciousness (viññāṇa) also goes on grabbing objects with great speed. This is the secret that the practitioner has to uncover. This is what is to be directly realized.

To realize this directly, one has to systematically practice reflection, which is called *manasikāra*. As Ven. Ānanda states, in the end, there is no self-nature in Consciousness (viññāṇa) either. Because Consciousness (viññāṇa) too depends on Preparations (saṅkhāra). It is something put together by combining the eye, forms, and so on. When a person directly realizes that stage, Consciousness (viññāṇa) ceases right through that. Thus, if a putting-together occurs due to ignorance, because of that putting-together, there is something we took to be Consciousness (viññāṇa). If, at any stage, Preparations (saṅkhāra) are stilled, at that very moment Consciousness (viññāṇa) also ceases. If Consciousness (viññāṇa) is also a running state, the direct realization of complete extinguishment is the stage where Consciousness (viññāṇa) also is extinguished. Right there is the cessation of Becoming (bhava-nirodha) as well. It is said, *"bhava-nirodho nibbānaṃ"* — the cessation of Becoming (bhava) is Nibbāna. Usually, one who has the Craving for Becoming (bhava) cannot even get close to this Dhamma. But if one looks at this with an open mind as shown by the Buddha, if what one wishes for is liberation from saṃsāra, the end of Suffering (Dukkha), the extinguishing of this fire of Suffering (Dukkha), we have to adopt that very attitude. This is exactly what the Buddha demonstrates through the Dhamma of Dependent Arising (paṭicca-samuppāda). When that practitioner goes deeper into that understanding, at some stage he understands that this Consciousness (viññāṇa), too, depends on causes and conditions. Together with that understanding, this Consciousness (viññāṇa) ceases. That itself is shown as the supreme peace.

Thus, all of you, meritorious friends, having undertaken a valuable virtue today—for this path in the Sāsana begins with virtue—and established in that valuable virtue, engaged in your accustomed meditation. Today's Dhamma sermon, too, was particularly oriented towards insight (vipassanā). Therefore, with its help, if you can bring your journey in saṃsāra to an end right here, you must strive to that extent. May all these meritorious deeds—such as the undertaking of virtue, offering alms to the virtuous, and other supplementary merits, as well as the strength of concentration gained through Dhamma

discussion and meditation, and whatever strength of insight (vipassanā) absorbed through this Dhamma sermon—serve as a supportive condition to quickly attain peace through the Deathless Nibbāna, through the realization of the stages of the path and fruit: Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, before the decline of the Sāsana!

May all beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, who wish to rejoice in the merit of this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma hearing, by so rejoicing, attain peace through the supreme Deathless Nibbāna by means of their aspired-for Bodhi—along with all one's relatives, friends, and everyone else. Pray in this manner, and having so prayed, recite these verses to share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #63

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.137)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Ārogya paramā lābhā, nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ;

aṭṭhaṅgiko ca maggānaṃ, khemaṃ amatagāminaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 204 (Sukhavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The realization of the Four Noble Truths is equivalent to the arising of the Dhamma-eye. The arising of that Dhamma-eye is like one born blind receiving sight. Whenever a person born blind begins to see, a great mental revolution takes place within that person at that moment. The Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, declared to the world that a similar mental revolution occurs with the arising of the Dhamma-eye.

The verse of inspired utterance (*udāna*) declared by the Buddha while explaining this matter to the wanderer (*paribbājaka*) Māgandhiya is what we have set as our topic today. On one occasion, the Buddha was staying in the fire-hall of the Brahmin Bhāradvājagotta in the market town of Kammāsadhamma in the Kuru country, using a grass mat as a bed. That Brahmin Bhāradvājagotta was someone who had some devotion towards the Buddha. One day, the Buddha went to Kammāsadhamma market town for alms in the morning, partook of His alms-food, and entered a forest grove. He went to the foot of a tree for His day-abiding (*divāvihāra*), staying in meditative seclusion during the day. In the meantime, the wanderer named Māgandhiya, while walking about for exercise, arrived at the fire-hall of the Brahmin Bhāradvājagotta. Seeing that grass mat in the fire-hall, he said to the Brahmin Bhāradvājagotta: “Master Bhāradvāja, for whom is this grass mat prepared? This looks like a grass mat prepared for an ascetic (*samaṇa*).” When he said this, the Brahmin Bhāradvājagotta replied: “Master Māgandhiya, there is the ascetic Master Gotama, who went forth from the Sakyan clan. A glorious report regarding Him has spread, highlighting His nine virtues, starting with: ‘He is indeed the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Awakened One…’”

“It is for Him that this grass mat has been prepared as a bed.” Then Māgandhiya said: “Master Bhāradvāja, it is indeed an ill sight that we have seen. To see a bed prepared for that *Bhūnahu* (destroyer of growth/life) ascetic Gotama.” The word *Bhūnahu* was used as a term of abuse. These wanderers used that name for the Buddha to mean someone who destroys *Bhava* (Becoming), who thwarts growth and development. The Brahmin Bhāradvājagotta said: “Māgandhiya, watch your words, watch your words! A vast number of wise Brahmins, wise householders, and wise ascetics and kṣatriyas who are highly pleased with Master Gotama have been tamed by Him. Therefore, do not say such things.” But Māgandhiya replied: “Even if I meet the ascetic Gotama face to face, I will say this very thing: that the ascetic Gotama is a *Bhūnahu*.” Then the Brahmin said: “Very well, if you do not mind, I shall tell the ascetic Gotama that you said this.” Māgandhiya replied: “Yes, by all means, tell Him.”

The Buddha, while dwelling in seclusion, heard this conversation with His divine ear (*dibba-sota*). Then, that evening, He arose from His meditation, went back to the fire-hall of the Brahmin Bhāradvājagotta where the grass mat was, and sat down. When the Brahmin Bhāradvājagotta came there to converse, the Buddha asked him: “Bhāradvāja, was there some conversation between you and the wanderer regarding this grass mat?” As soon as He asked this, the Brahmin Bhāradvāja’s body shuddered and his hair stood on end. He thought: “I was intending to tell this to Master Gotama. Now indeed, there is no need to tell it anew.”

Just about then, the wanderer Māgandhiya also came there on his evening walk. Having arrived, he sat down near the Buddha, and while they were engaging in conversation, the Buddha asked him: “Māgandhiya, the eye delights in forms, is enchanted by forms. In the Tathāgata, this eye is tamed, guarded, and restrained; He teaches the Dhamma for the restraint of the eye. Dwell with the eye restrained, and with a mind stilled within. Is it on account of this that you say ‘Bhūnahu’?” The wanderer Māgandhiya replied: “Yes, it is because of that. For in our teaching, it is stated that such restraint is something that destroys growth and development. That is why we say so.” Then the Buddha asked: “Māgandhiya, if someone dwells with the eye restrained and with a mind stilled within, having attained internal peace, is there anything to be said against that?” Māgandhiya replied: “I have nothing to say against that.” (The Buddha likewise spoke about the ear—how the ear delights in sounds and how He teaches the Dhamma for its restraint. In the same way, He spoke about the mind; how the mind delights in thoughts and mind-objects (*dhammā*), and how He teaches the Dhamma for taming and restraining them as well.)

Even though Māgandhiya had previously said it was stated in their teaching, at that moment he had to admit that if one dwells with the eye restrained and with a mind stilled within, and likewise with the other senses, there is nothing negative to be said about it. It was then that the Buddha declared His own past household life: “Māgandhiya, in my lay life, I too lived a life of gratification, pampered by pleasing, agreeable forms, sounds, tastes, and touches. I had three palaces: one for the rainy season, one for the winter season, and another for the summer season. For the four months of the rainy season, entertained solely by female musicians, I did not even

descend to the lower floor, enjoying such happiness and luxury. At a later time, having correctly understood the five aspects of these pleasures—namely their origin (*samudaya*), their passing away (*atthaṅgama*), their gratification (*assāda*), their danger (*ādīnava*), and the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from them—I abandoned the longing and *Taṇhā* (Craving) for forms, tastes, and touches, and now I dwell with a mind stilled within."

Having stated this, the Buddha asked: "Suppose there is a very wealthy householder, fully enjoying the five strands of sensual pleasure. On a later occasion, having fulfilled wholesome qualities and practiced good conduct, he is reborn in the Nandana Grove of Tāvatiṃsa, enjoying celestial pleasures in the company of celestial nymphs. After receiving such pleasures, would that person ever long for the pleasures enjoyed by ordinary householders in the human world?" Then Māgandhiya replied: "No, because celestial pleasures are far superior to human pleasures." At that, the Buddha declared: "Just so, Māgandhiya, having abandoned the desires for the five strands of sensual pleasure and stilled the mind within, I experience a happiness that is aloof from those sensual pleasures and unwholesome states, which is far superior even to celestial happiness. Therefore, seeing those who enjoy the five strands of sensual pleasure, I do not envy them, nor do I develop a longing for those pleasures."

Next, the Buddha gave a simile: "Māgandhiya, suppose there is a leper whose entire body is covered in sores and boils, which are festering and being eaten by worms. This man, sitting near a pit of fire, a pit of glowing embers, cauterizes and scratches the scabs of his wounds. His relatives and friends summon a surgeon to treat this leper. After the treatment, he is cured and becomes healthy."

"Once cured, if this man sees another leper scratching his wounds near a pit of embers in the same manner, would this cured man feel any longing or envy towards that leper or his treatment?" the Buddha asked the wanderer. Māgandhiya replied: "No, Master Gotama. It is only when there is a disease that medicine is of use. For this healthy person, medicine or those treatments have no meaning." Just so, the Buddha declared: "When I have abandoned the longing for those five strands of sensual pleasure, I do not feel any envy or longing when seeing someone enjoying them. Just as the cured leper, upon looking at another leper, feels no desire for the treatments, medicines, or cauterizations that the other is undergoing."

This simile given by the Buddha is profound. It is given to convey a deep meaning. Next, the Buddha presented another simile concerning that very leper: "Suppose someone who was cured of leprosy in that manner is grabbed by his arms by two strong men and dragged towards a pit of glowing embers. What do you think, Māgandhiya? Would that man twist his body this way and that to escape from being dragged towards the pit of embers? Why would he do so?" Māgandhiya replied: "Because the fire in that pit of embers is painful to touch; fire is something that causes burning and torment. That is why he would twist his body."

Then the Buddha asked: "Is it only now that the fire causes burning and torment, or was it so previously as well?" Māgandhiya replied: "Both now and previously, fire is indeed

something that causes burning and torment. However, the leper, because of his leprosy and the distorted condition of his body, had developed a distorted perception (*viparīta-saññā*) of pleasure regarding that fire." Thereupon, the Buddha declared: "These five strands of sensual pleasure are themselves a mass of burning and torment. Those with bodies distorted by them and fraught with painful contacts regard those sensual pleasures as happiness." This is where the similes of the pit of embers and the leper apply. The five strands of sensual pleasure are things that cause great burning and torment. Yet, ordinary worldlings, due to their distorted perception, do not understand that they cause burning and torment, just as the pit of embers was appealing to the leper. But once cured, the burning and tormenting nature of these things becomes apparent.

Through these similes, the Buddha reveals that the five strands of sensual pleasure, which the ordinary world regards as supreme, are actually a distorted state, and that freedom from them is the true state of health. Next, the Buddha further expanded on the simile of the leper, saying that if a leper scratches and cauterizes the open sores of his body near a fire-pit or a pit of embers, the more he scratches and cauterizes, the more infected, foul-smelling, and festering those sores become. Yet, he derives a mere measure of gratification from that cauterization. In the same way, the five strands of sensual pleasure are entirely a mass of burning and torment. But due to the world's ignorance, they derive a mere measure of gratification in accordance with those sensual pleasures.

Then the Buddha asked: "Have you ever seen or heard of any king or royal minister who, while enjoying the fivefold sensual pleasures, dwelt with a stilled mind having attained internal peace—either in the past, now in the present, or in the future?" Māgandhiya replied that he had never seen such a person. "Very well, I too have never seen such a person. But if any ascetics and Brahmins have liberated their minds from the five strands of sensual pleasure and attained internal peace, it is because they understood their feverish burnings (*pariḷāha*), fully comprehended the arising and passing away of sensual pleasures, their gratification (*assāda*), their danger (*ādīnava*), and their escape (*nissaraṇa*), and thereby detached themselves from them," declared the Buddha. It was at that moment that the Buddha uttered that inspired verse (*udāna*):

Ārogya paramā lābhā

Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ

Aṭṭhaṅgiko ca maggānaṃ

Khemaṃ amatagāminaṃ

Among gains, the highest gain is health, the state of being free from disease. Among pleasures, the supreme pleasure is Nibbāna. Among paths leading to the Deathless, the eight-factored Noble Eightfold Path is secure (*khemaṃ*) and safe.

As soon as this verse was uttered, the wanderer Māgandhiya, thinking of the first two lines: "Health is the supreme gain, Nibbāna is the supreme bliss," said: "Master Gotama, this is a well-spoken statement you have made. We too have heard our former teachers of

the wanderers uttering these first two lines. This agrees perfectly with the Dhamma of the Blessed One. In our teaching, our teachers have also stated these first two lines." The Buddha then asked: "What is the health and Nibbāna that is meant according to the view of your teachers?" When asked this, the wanderer Māgandhiya began to stroke his own limbs and said: "Master Gotama, this is health, this is Nibbāna. I have no illness whatsoever. I am in perfect health. I have no affliction at all."

Then the Buddha declared: "Māgandhiya, because you do not possess the Noble Eye, you see this which is diseased as healthy." Here, five terms are mentioned that convey the idea of this body being purely a disease, purely a boil, purely a dart, purely a calamity, and purely an affliction: *rogabhūta* (consisting of disease), *gaṇḍabhūta* (consisting of boils/tumors), *sallabhūta* (consisting of darts), *aghabhūta* (consisting of calamity), and *ābādhabhūta* (consisting of affliction). "It is because you lack the Noble Eye that you speak of health and freedom from disease regarding this body, which is purely a disease and an affliction."

Here, we realize that the Buddha is pointing to a concept far superior to what ordinary worldlings consider to be health. The entire body is a disease. This is frequently mentioned throughout the Dhamma, in terms such as *rogatiddaṃ pabhaṅguraṃ* (a nest of disease, fragile). This body is purely a cage of disease. Yet, we hold on tightly to our concept of health and wellness. The concept of health that the Buddha intends here is far more excellent. What that wanderer spoke of is the ordinary mundane concept of health. That is why the Buddha said to him: "This is not the real health, this is not the real Nibbāna." It was to explain this matter that the Buddha presented the simile of the person born blind.

"Now, Māgandhiya, suppose there is a man blind from birth. That blind man cannot distinguish black and white, nor can he see colors like blue, yellow, or red. He cannot see even and uneven places, nor can he see the sun, moon, and stars. He is completely blind. That man hears a sighted person saying: 'A white cloth is spotless, clean, and extremely beautiful.' This man then goes about searching for a white cloth. Then, a deceitful man brings an extremely dirty, greasy, and soiled cloth, and deceives him:

'Here is a beautiful, spotless white cloth.' That blind man wraps himself in it and makes a joyful exclamation: 'Ah, now I am wearing a beautiful, clean, white cloth!' Then the Buddha asked Māgandhiya: 'Does that man say that the cloth is white and clean out of his own knowing and seeing, or is it because he heard what the sighted person said?' Māgandhiya replied: 'He says so only having heard what another said, but that is not a clean, genuine cloth.' 'Just so, Māgandhiya, these wanderers have no eyes. It is merely their statement that you are expressing. This body is purely a boil and a disease, yet you speak of health within it.' Here, the Buddha presented the simile of the blind man.

The Buddha further declared: "If, on a later occasion, his relatives summon an eye physician who treats him, and this man is cured of his blindness and his eyes begin to see, he might even feel angry towards the person who had previously deceived him with the dirty cloth, thinking: 'For so long indeed, this person has been deceiving me with a

soiled cloth!' In the same way," the Buddha declared, "if the Noble Eye arises, on some occasion you will realize that these five—namely form, *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness)—are purely a boil, a disease, a dart, and an affliction. It is because you lack the Noble Eye that you have formed a concept of health regarding them." Thus did the Buddha explain to Māgandhiya.

Then Māgandhiya said: "In that case, O Blessed One, now a great devotion has arisen in me towards the Blessed One. Please preach the Dhamma to me so that I may be freed from this blindness. I can see that you are capable of freeing me from this blindness." At that, the Buddha declared: "Suppose there is a man born blind, and a doctor comes and administers medical treatment. Yet, the man's eyes do not clear up. That would only be a weariness and trouble for the doctor. In the same way, if I tell you what the Noble Eye is and what Nibbāna is according to the Noble concept, and you do not understand it, that would only be a weariness and trouble for Me."

Then Māgandhiya pleaded again: "I feel that the ascetic Master Gotama is indeed capable of explaining to me how to be freed from this blindness." It was then that the Buddha declared: "When you develop that eye, you will experience revulsion towards these five aggregates of grasping (*upādāna*)—namely form, *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness). Just as the cured man felt resentment toward the person who had deceived him for so long, you will realize: 'For a long time indeed, have I been deceived and cheated by this mind (*iminā cittena*)!' Here, the mind is revealed as the culprit. Just as the dirty cloth was seen as a clean cloth, this mind has presented these things as beautiful (*subha*), healthy, good, and attractive. It is in order to bring about that realization that the Buddha preaches the Dhamma."

There, the Buddha further declared: "If you are to develop this eye, you must associate with superior persons (*sappurisa*). When associating with superior persons, you will get to hear the True Dhamma (*saddhamma*). Having heard the True Dhamma, you must then engage in the practice of the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*). When practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, on some occasion, you will be able to develop this Noble Eye." When this was declared, the wanderer requested going forth (*pabbajjā*) and higher ordination (*upasampadā*) from the Buddha. The Buddha said: "In this dispensation, if a member of another sect wishes to go forth and receive higher ordination, he must undergo a probationary period (*parivāsa*) of four months. After that probationary period, only if the Saṅgha is pleased, they will grant the going forth and higher ordination. However, I have room to make exceptions for certain individuals." The wanderer said: "Master Gotama, if there is such a rule in your dispensation, I will undergo probation not just for four months, but for four years." In any case, the Buddha granted the going forth and higher ordination to the wanderer Māgandhiya. It is said that not long after his higher ordination, practicing meditation with firm energy, the monk Māgandhiya attained Arahatship.

The essence that we can extract from this detailed narrative is what the Buddha points out here. We have often heard the phrase *ārogya paramā*. However, there is a much deeper concept there. In sayings such as: "Health is the supreme gain, contentment is the supreme wealth (*santuṭṭhi paramaṃ dhanaṃ*)," what is spoken of is the ordinary worldly concept of health, identifying the greatest gain in terms of wealth. But here, the greatest gain and the greatest bliss is shown to be Nibbāna. That means the state of being liberated. True health is the liberation from what is a disease, what is a boil. It is in this sense that Nibbāna becomes both a gain and a bliss.

Thus, the Buddha has presented a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) for insight (*vipassanā*) known as comprehension (*sammasana*), instructing us to contemplate the five aggregates of grasping in eleven ways:

1. *Aniccato* – as Impermanent / Inconstant

2. *Dukkhato* – as Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress

3. *Rogato* – as a disease

4. *Gaṇḍato* – as a boil

5. *Sallato* – as a dart

6. *Aghato* – as a calamity

7. *Ābādhato* – as an affliction

8. *Parato* – as alien (not belonging to oneself)

9. *Palokato* – as disintegrating

10. *Suññato* – as empty

11. *Anattato* – as Not-self / Non-self / Unsubstantial

Let us consider this through a simile. Although it is not mentioned in the Dhamma in this way, let us reflect for a moment in light of the *Māgandhiya Sutta*, just as we spoke of the leper. Suppose a thorn or a dart has pierced someone's hand or foot, but they are unaware that it has pierced them. However, it begins to swell. Sometimes, this person might think: "This is starting to heal." They might even consider the swelling as a sign of health. But when they go to a physician, upon examination, the physician understands: "This is happening because a thorn has pierced here." Then, the thorn must be pulled out. Only then is it cured.

Let us contemplate a little based on that simile. Now, when the Buddha asks us to look at each aggregate (*khandha*) in this way—as *Anicca* and so on—we can easily understand why. *Aniccato* – this is impermanent. Then, this bodily cage arose for us as a swelling, just as we mentioned in the simile of the thorn. The swelling that occurs in the body does not affect only the body; it also goes to the head. That is what is called the intoxication of

health (*ārogya-mada*). It means: "Others may be sick, but I am healthy." This is an intoxication. Thus, that swelling is not confined to the body. Now, many people take pains to enlarge their bodies using various kinds of nourishing foods, trying to make the body look robust in different ways. Having made it robust, they then develop the intoxication of health. But the Buddha says that this growth is actually the swelling of a pierced thorn. What is the thorn? The dart of *Taṇhā* (Craving). The dart of *Taṇhā*.

The Buddha Himself uses terms like the supreme and incomparable physician and surgeon to refer to Himself. This is because, just as surgeons use special instruments to locate a pierced thorn and pull it out, the Buddha, with the aid of mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom, pulled out the dart of *Taṇhā* (Craving) that had pierced the heart. Therefore, we must understand this body as a wound caused by that dart of *Taṇhā* which has pierced the heart. Thus, the Physician says: "This is *Anicca*." That swelling is not something that belongs to you. It has arisen due to a certain cause of disease. Now, let us try to understand those eleven ways of contemplation according to our own capacity:

> *Aniccato* – This is impermanent. The Physician has said that this is impermanent; it is merely a swelling caused by the piercing of that dart of *Taṇhā*.
> *Dukkhato* – As this festers and purulates, it is a mass of suffering (*Dukkha*).
> *Rogato* – He asks us to look at this purely as a disease, an illness.
> *Gaṇḍato* – This is a boil, a festering wound.
> *Sallato* – Beneath this lies a dart or a thorn.
> *Aghato* – This is a great calamity, a trouble.
> *Ābādhato* – This is an affliction.
> *Parato* – This is not something that belongs to you; it is something that arose due to the thorn.
> *Palokato* – This is a swelling that disintegrates. This festering wound will burst open at any moment. This can be clearly seen in the charnel ground during the stage of discoloration (*vinīlaka*). The time when this body becomes most swollen and bloated is a few days after one takes their last breath; only then can one see its bloated form clearly. It turns blue and bursts open. That is *palokato* – a thing that disintegrates.
> *Suññato* – This is an empty thing. In the end, nothing remains.
> *Anattato* – There is nothing to be taken as a self, as "I" or "mine" (*Anattā*). The bones lie scattered here and there. That burst body becomes food for other animals, dissolves and merges with the earth, returning to the four great elements. That is the whole story.

If we connect this to that simile, it is stated in the Dhamma that it is due to ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) that we wander in *saṃsāra*. Within the darkness of ignorance, through lack of knowing and the absence of the Noble Eye, one longs for a body out of craving (*taṇhā*). As long as craving is not abandoned, a body is brought into existence somewhere through those karmic energies. That is the story of the body. It is the same with other things. Therefore, the Buddha points out that elevenfold comprehension (*sammasana*) regarding the five aggregates of grasping (*upādāna*). To

this, we can add the two main similes presented by the Buddha in the *Māgandhiya Sutta*. The first is the simile of the leper. A patient does not represent a normal state; rather, it is a distorted state. It is because that person's body was distorted that he developed a distorted perception (*viparīta-saññā*) regarding the painful glowing embers, perceiving them as pleasant. Similarly, the Buddha shows that it is by clinging to this bodily cage that the world runs after the five strands of sensual pleasure. Those sensual pleasures are always of a burning nature. But this is not realized, just like the distorted perception of the leper.

Next, we also see from that story how the deceitful man brought a cloth stained with oil and dirt, claiming: "This is a beautiful, clean white cloth." That blind man wrapped it around himself and walked along the streets. That is exactly how we have been carrying this burden throughout *saṃsāra*. That is why the Buddha declared:

Bhārā have pañcakhandhā

Bhārahāro ca puggalo

Bhārādānaṃ dukkhaṃ loke

Bhāranikkhepanaṃ sukhaṃ

"The five aggregates are indeed burdens, and the person is the bearer of the burden. Taking up the burden is suffering in the world, and laying down the burden is happiness."

"The five aggregates are indeed burdens" – these five aggregates of grasping are five heaps of burdens. "The person is the bearer of the burden" – the person is the one who carries this burden. Some regard the person as a self (*attā*); that is incorrect. "Person" is merely the one with such-and-such a name. A conventional name is given to this heap of five aggregates. There is no need to give further examples to you, devout devotees. A certain name is given. These five aggregates of grasping are identified as that "person". The person is indeed these five heaps. "The person is the bearer of the burden" – the person is the one carrying and lifting these five heaps.

Next, the Buddha declared: *Bhārādānaṃ dukkhaṃ loke* – carrying these five burdens and holding onto them is suffering (*Dukkha*). *Bhāranikkhepanaṃ sukhaṃ* – letting go of those five heaps of burdens is happiness (*sukha*). Therefore, the health that the Buddha refers to there is not about curing this body with medicines to make it healthy. There is something much deeper here. If the five aggregates of grasping are themselves a disease, a boil, a dart, and a calamity, then the moment of letting them go is the real health, the real happiness. That moment of letting go is when the Arahants liberate their minds in the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*)—liberating the mind from them and experiencing the bliss of pacification that we call Nibbāna, described as *ajjhattaṃ vūpasantacitto* (with a mind stilled within). That is indeed the moment of laying down the five heaps of burdens: *Bhāranikkhepanaṃ sukhaṃ* – "laying down the burden is happiness."

Thus, at the moment of attaining the Path and Fruit, it is to some like laying down a heavy burden on the ground. Even in ancient Dhamma stories, Arahants are described as *ohitabhāro* (one who has laid down the burden), *anuppattasadattho* (who has attained his own goal), and *parikkhīṇabhavasaṃyojano* (whose fetters of *Bhava* (Becoming) are destroyed). The burden has been laid down on the ground. Similarly, the hooks of becoming that bind one to existence are unhooked. Having destroyed the fetters of becoming, they have arrived at the destination.

Nibbāna is described as a happiness, specifically as *avedayita* (unexperienced/non-sensory bliss), because it is the state where the mind is liberated from these five aggregates of grasping. That is the very state where craving is extinguished. As long as the thirst of *Taṇhā* (Craving) exists, one wanders in this *saṃsāra*, creating a physical form—whether subtle or gross—from *Bhava* to *Bhava* (Becoming), while experiencing the five strands of sensual pleasure.

The wanderer Māgandhiya abused the Buddha using terms that certain Brahmins of that time used, such as *ucchedavādī* (annihilationist) and *bhūnahu* (destroyer of growth). They used the word *bhūnahu* to mean "one who destroys *Bhava* (Becoming)," because they highly valued the continuation of existence, holding the view that one should live boundlessly chasing after forms, sounds, and so forth. They considered any form of control or restraint over these to be an error. However, on this occasion, the Buddha showed Māgandhiya that it is only when one restrains oneself regarding forms, smells, tastes, and mind-objects (*dhammā*)—the objects of these senses—and liberates the mind from them, that true pacification is found.

When speaking of Nibbāna, just as the laying down of the five heaps of burdens is shown as Nibbāna, on some occasions it is also referred to as *saḷāyatana-nirodha* (the cessation of the six sense-bases). These six sense-bases function through an interaction between two aspects: the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and touch (*phassa*), and the mind and mind-objects (*dhammā*). It is through this interaction between the sense organs and their objects that *Taṇhā* (Craving) and desires are nurtured. Thus, the Buddha pointed out their impermanence. When one comprehends them in those eleven ways through the three characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self)—which means reflecting on them with wisdom—one develops revulsion (*nibbidā*) towards the five aggregates of grasping (*upādāna*).

That is why the Buddha said that when your eyes open, you will feel resentment toward that deceitful person who cheated you with the dirty cloth. You might even feel like killing him. Who is the deceitful one here? It is the mind itself – *citta*. Through this, the understanding arises: "Has not this mind deceived me for so long?"

What is this mind? This mind is a highly diverse, variegated thing. The Buddha declared that there is nothing as diverse as this mind. There are many colorful, beautiful things in the world, but none is as diverse as the mind. It is by this diverse mind that we have been deceived. To the world, these things appear as good and beautiful (*subha*), which is a

distorted perception (*viparīta-saññā*). This diverse mind presents what is *Anicca* (Impermanent) as permanent, and what is *Dukkha* (Suffering) as pleasant. It presents what is foul as beautiful, and what is not one's own as one's own. Within these distorted perceptions, worldlings go on multiplying *saṃsāra*. When, in accordance with the three characteristics, one understands the impermanence and unsubstantiality (*Anattā*) of form, *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness), and likewise correctly understands the impermanent nature and lack of essence in the sense organs—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—and their objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches—the state of liberating the mind from them is shown in various places as Nibbāna. That is what is called supramundane (*lokuttara*)—the state of having gone beyond the world. If that state is liberation, and if the ultimate goal of this dispensation is freedom, then the Buddha is not pointing to some kind of eternal existence here.

The Buddha declares that *Bhava* (Becoming) is definitely a mere mass of suffering. *Dukkhe loko patiṭṭhito* – the world is established on suffering. It is like two panels of a door that fit together perfectly. When you finish talking about suffering, you have finished talking about the world; when you finish talking about the world, you have finished talking about suffering. They are like two door panels. The world is established on suffering, and suffering is established on the world. This is the reality. But worldlings do not understand this. It is like their attitude towards existence. There are concepts everywhere in the world that boundlessly encourage this. Philosophies that cultivate becoming and reinforce the view of becoming (*bhava-diṭṭhi*) are found everywhere. Amidst these philosophies, the Buddha presented the concept of the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*). *Bhava-nirodha* is Nibbāna. Thus, the cessation of this becoming, this existence, is what the Buddha showed here as Nibbāna. This is *sandiṭṭhiko dhammo* – a Dhamma that can be realized directly here-and-now. Through that direct realization, one can attain that internal peace in this very life. It is not an eternal existence or a separate realm of Nibbāna.

Thus, we can make use of the two similes shown in the *Māgandhiya Sutta* to understand these matters. The simile of the leper is not something pleasing to the mind. Yet, the Buddha presented it here to deeply impress this upon the world. According to the Buddha's concept, if even a person who is considered "healthy" is drawn towards the five strands of sensual pleasure, they must be regarded as a leper. If one has understood this through the power of comprehension—understanding their impermanence (*Anicca*) and unsubstantiality (*Anattā*)—then liberating the mind from them is the true state of health. That is the genuine gain, the real health, the supreme gain. Thus: *Ārogya paramā lābhā Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ*.

Next, the Buddha pointed out the path to it: "and of paths, the Eightfold..." Various teachers point out different paths, claiming: "By this path, one goes to the Deathless." Since ancient times, even before the Buddha's era, everyone spoke of a "Deathless" (*amata*). They conceptualized and imagined the Deathless as a place where there is no dying, as an eternal existence. The Buddha pointed out that this Deathless is not some

special drink, nor is it a drink that grants eternal existence. Why? Because existence is everywhere. If there is existence (*Bhava*), there is *Jāti* (Birth), there is *Jarā* (decay/aging), there is sickness, and there is *Maraṇa* (death). Nowhere is there an existence free from *Jāti*, *Jarā*, sickness, and *Maraṇa*. It does not exist anywhere in the universe. Therefore, the Buddha declared that existence itself is purely suffering (*Dukkha*). Thus, the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), the extinguishment of existence, is what the Buddha showed here as Nibbāna.

He also described this *Bhava* (Becoming) as a fire. This journey of *saṃsāra* is a journey that goes on creating a mass of fires of suffering through *Upādāna* (Grasping) and the thirst of *Taṇhā* (Craving). The Buddha has presented the liberation from this as a peaceful, sublime extinguishment (Nibbāna that can be directly realized in this very life, by elevating those five aggregates of grasping to the level of meditation. Having deeply impressed upon the mind their impermanence (*Anicca*) and unsubstantiality (*Anattā*), when the three characteristics are fully developed, one experiences revulsion (*nibbidā*) towards them. Just as the cured leper, upon seeing another leper, develops no longing for that condition, nor any desire for those medicines, the Buddha points to Nibbāna as the ultimate reality, and the continuation of *saṃsāra* as a distorted state. That is why the Buddha constantly speaks about ending the suffering of *saṃsāra*. Yet, this view, this vision, is disagreeable to many.

The Buddha states that the majority of people are "world-multipliers" (*lokavaḍḍhanā*). Their talk is about developing the world. But the Buddha declares that multiplying the world is merely multiplying the cemeteries (*kaṭasivaḍḍhanā*). For such a long time, as the Buddha reveals in suttas like the *Anamatagga Sutta* using marvelous similes that are beyond imagination—which you must have heard many times—such as the grief of a single being over the death of their mother. It is said that the tears shed by a single being throughout *saṃsāra* over the death of their mother are greater than the waters in the oceans. For such a long time, we have been wandering, being born and dying in *saṃsāra*. What operates within this long existence is ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). Therefore, if what the world expects is the cessation of suffering, the Buddha declares:

It is only when one is liberated from *Bhava* (Becoming), when one has directly realized the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), that the true bliss of pacification is obtained. That is why it is described as an unexperienced/non-sensory bliss (*avedayita-sukha*). However, the worldlings, those "world-multipliers," only think about multiplying this world. That is why the Buddha declares: *Na siyā lokavaḍḍhano* – "do not be a world-multiplier." Think about liberating yourself from this becoming. You cannot be free from suffering while remaining in this becoming. If you are freed from suffering, along with it, becoming also ends. You cannot have both.

The Buddha reveals that it is the mind that presented these five aggregates of grasping as beautiful (*subha*) and pleasant. The very moment the eye of understanding arises, one experiences revulsion towards the mind: "Was it not this mind that has been deceiving me for so long?" That understanding arises through wisdom. Therefore, the Noble Eightfold Path is the path that leads to that wisdom. That is why, as you devotees know,

it begins with the first factor, Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Through Right View, right thoughts and intentions arise, and one acts accordingly. What is shown here is a complete transformation of personality. When Right View is fulfilled to some extent, it turns into right thoughts and intentions. Consequently, there is the utterance of right speech, followed by acting in accordance with it, which is Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) and Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*). The effort and mindfulness applied to this are Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) and Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*). Finally, Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) is presented as the one-pointedness of that person.

It is such a complete transformation that is presented as the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha has shown here a path that is more marvelous than any other pathways accepted by the world. This path is something that must be developed within one's own mental continuum (*citta-santāna*). If you develop that Noble Eightfold Path to some extent in your daily life, one day, at the moment of attaining the Path and Fruit, all eight factors will arise in a single mind-moment. It is through that Noble Path-energy, that supramundane Path-energy, that one is cast out of this world. That is what is called the supramundane (*lokuttara*) state. Ultimately, what is the driving force needed for this? It is revulsion (*nibbidā*) towards *saṃsāra*. The Buddha's words actually point us ultimately towards: *ekanta-nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya* – "for utter revulsion, dispassion, and cessation." The Buddha's Dhamma is preached solely for the sake of developing revulsion towards *saṃsāra*, to end the attachment to *saṃsāra*. Yet, the world looks in the opposite direction – towards the development of the world. That was how Māgandhiya also looked at it. If any control or restraint was practiced regarding these, they used the word *bhūnahu*. But here, the Buddha reveals to us something that no other philosopher has ever shown. The cause of the fear within worldlings is their wrong view of self (*atta-diṭṭhi*). The vision of "I" and "mine" is completely wrong. Here, there are only five heaps. "I" and "mine" is something super-imposed upon these five heaps. That is why, when the Noble Eye arises, the Buddha declares that you will realize:

"...was it not merely a heap of form that I was grasping as 'I' and 'mine'? Was it not merely a heap of *Vedanā* (Feeling) that I was grasping as 'I' and 'mine'? Was it not merely a heap of perception that I was grasping as 'I' and 'mine'? Was it not merely a heap of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) that I was grasping as 'I' and 'mine'? Was it not merely a heap of *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) that I was grasping as 'I' and 'mine'?" That is the understanding that comes. Just as the blind man, after receiving sight, thinks: "For so long indeed, have I been holding onto a dirty, oil-stained cloth!" when the Noble Eye arises, one sees that there is nothing here to be taken as "I" or "mine". It is merely a heap of form constantly arising and passing away.

Devout devotees, you have often heard the beautiful similes—let us call them beautiful, though they might be unappealing to some—given by the Buddha summarizing the entire Dhamma:

Pheṇapiṇḍūpamaṃ rūpaṃ

Vedanā bubbuḷūpamā

Marīcikūpamā saññā

Saṅkhārā kadalūpamā

Māyūpamañca viññāṇaṃ

Desitādiccabandhunā

"Form is like a lump of foam, feeling is like a water bubble, perception is like a mirage, Preparations are like a plantain trunk, and consciousness is like an illusion—so has the Kinsman of the Sun declared."

It is said in that simile that the Buddha, who is the Kinsman of the Sun (*ādiccabandhu*), declared this in the following way:

Pheṇapiṇḍūpamaṃ rūpaṃ – this form, this bodily cage that we puff up so greatly and beautifully, using it to compete and display our wellness and health, is shown by the Buddha to be purely like a lump of foam. When you go near a bridge during the rainy season, you can see a heap of debris collecting near a log as the dirty water flows. From a distance, that pile of rubbish looks like a beautiful, white, solid rock. It appears as something strong. But it is just a heap of foam! A heap of foam! Similarly, this bodily cage is built up from the food we consume – the foam of rice, the foam of gruel, all gathering together. Thus, we can see that form is like a lump of foam. It is constantly arising and passing away, changing even more subtly than what is described in the cellular theories of modern scientists. That is how the heap of form is.

Vedanā (Feeling) is also like that. To show that *Vedanā* is constantly changing, the Buddha illustrated it with the simile of raindrops falling on water during a heavy rain. *Vedanā bubbuḷūpamā*... If you watch for a moment, you can see the raindrops falling from the roof forming bubbles and bursting right there. That is *vedanā bubbuḷūpamā* – the bubble-simile that we see in our daily lives.

Next, *marīcikūpamā saññā* – this perception is what we grasp through the eye, ear, nose, and so on. Just as a deer, seeing a mirage, runs after it—a mirage being something that deceives the deer, which is a characteristic of the dry season—the Buddha compares the entirety of perception to a mirage.

Saṅkhārā kadalūpamā – Saṅkhāra (Preparations) refer to our volitional energies, our desires, hopes, and intentions. Highlighting every one of them as "I" and "mine", we cultivate expectations and make various plans. The Buddha compares that entire mass of expectations to a plantain trunk (banana stem). Just as a plantain trunk has no core or heartwood, being merely a collection of layers or sheaths, there is no essence to be found even at its center. In the same way, there is nothing here that can be grasped as a self. This is merely a heap of *Saṅkhāra*.

Next, the Buddha points out something even deeper: *māyūpamañca viññāṇaṃ* – and *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) is like an illusion. Other religionists and teachers ultimately

grasped onto *Viññāṇa*, the invisible mind. The Buddha points out that this mind is purely illusory. The Buddha reveals *Viññāṇa* to be like a magician's trick, which conjures up and displays something non-existent as if it exists. Thus, although there is no actual self (*attā*), it presents a non-existent thing as if it is real: "This is my *Viññāṇa*. I think, therefore I am." In this manner, one falls into wrong view. But the Buddha reveals that *Viññāṇa* is purely an illusion. Even the *Viññāṇa* that others grasp onto is shown by the Buddha to be like an illusion. It is when this is understood that complete liberation is attained.

Therefore, devout devotees, you should reflect on this. Do not think that the long sutta we took as our topic is too heavy or profound. Even if the sutta itself seems so, the similes within it can be brought close to our daily lives. Take the leper: we too get skin diseases, and we have seen lepers; they are among us. We have also seen many blind people. If we apply their way of thinking and their experiences to ourselves and reflect, we can understand this matter. When the Buddha looked through the Buddha-eye, we appeared to Him as lepers, and as blind people too. That is why He declared this. Reflecting in this way, without developing any displeasure toward the Buddha's word, if we expect ultimate liberation, ultimate bliss, and ultimate health, realize that it lies within this Dhamma. Try to walk on this Path of Dhamma with an eye of understanding.

As you devotees know, although this valuable Noble Eightfold Path has eight factors, it is comprised of the threefold training of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Among them, virtue is foremost. It is by establishing oneself in virtue that everything else can be accomplished. Thus, today, you have observed virtue according to your respective levels, and then, as occasion permitted, you developed concentration by practicing meditation and so forth. This Dhamma sermon, as mentioned, also helps you to journey on this Path of Dhamma. Four factors of a superior person (*sappurisa*) are shown: *sappurisa-saṃsevo* (association with superior persons), *saddhamma-savanaṃ* (hearing the True Dhamma), *yoniso manasikāro* (radical attention / wise attention), and *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti* (practice of the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma). One must associate with superior persons, associate with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), listen to the Dhamma, practice *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention)—which means developing correct reflection—and then engage in the practice of the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. Only then does the Dhamma-eye arise.

May the wholesome energy gathered by you devotees today, and gained through this Dhamma sermon, serve as a supportive condition for the arising of that Dhamma-eye! We aspire that by sharing the merits of this great store of wholesome deeds gathered through preaching the Dhamma and listening to the Dhamma, any merit-desiring beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha may rejoice in it, transcend the suffering of *saṃsāra*, and find peace in the supreme Deathless Nibbāna!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #64

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.180)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Nārati sahati dhīraṃ, nārati dhīrasahāti;

dhīro ca aratiṃ sahati, dhīro hi aratīsaho.

Sabbakammavihāyinaṃ, paṇuṇṇaṃ ko nivāraye;

Ko taṃ jambonadassevā, nekkhaṃ ninditumarahati;

Devāpi taṃ pasaṃsanti, brahmunāpi pasaṃsito ti.

From:

Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN 2.3.9 / Aṅguttara Nikāya Duka Nipāta)

Dear Listeners,

This Poson Full Moon Poya Day, which is regarded as the day on which the Buddha Sasana was established in our island, is an excellent day to recollect our practice. Especially in this year, which commemorates the passing of 2600 years since the Enlightenment, we hear many discussing "aligning ourselves in practice." It was with this "aligning ourselves in practice" in mind that we decided to present to you today a sutta discourse that was immensely popular during the times when the Buddha Sasana established in Lanka by Ven. Mahinda Maha Arahant shone brilliantly. In the past, this discourse was known as the *Maha Ariyavamsa*. The two verses recited at the end of that sutta are what we have presented as our theme.

On one occasion, while the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Self-Awakened One, was residing at Jetavana monastery in Savatthi, he addressed a large congregation of monks and delivered this *Ariyavamsa Sutta*. Today, this is found in the Book of Fours (Catukka Nipata) of the Aṅguttara Nikāya. It was not prompted by any particular external event; rather, we must understand that an intention arose in the Buddha

himself to highlight the dispensational practices in a way that would deeply touch the hearts of the Sangha.

Therefore, he commenced this marvelous discourse in this manner: "Monks, there are these four noble lineages (ariyavaṃsā) which are recognized as foremost (aggaññā), long-standing (vaṃsaññā), ancient (porāṇā), unadulterated (asambhinnā); which are not doubted, which were not doubted in the past, nor will be doubted in the future, and which are not rejected by wise ascetics and brahmins." Having commenced thus, he explains them one by one to the Sangha as follows:

"Herein, monks, a monk is content with any kind of robe whatsoever (*itari-itara cīvara santosa*)." We need to explain the meaning of the words *itari-itara cīvara santosa* so that you can understand. In Pali, *itara* refers to "one of two." Thus, if we say *itari-itara cīvara santosa*, what are the two alternatives? It could be a coarse robe or a refined robe; it could be a new robe or an old robe. Thus, it means "either of the two." To be content with *itari-itara* robes generally means that whatever kind of robe is received, one is fully satisfied with it. The first point is that a monk in this Sasana is endowed with contentment with any kind of robe whatsoever. The second point is that he praises the virtue of such contentment with robes. He speaks of its value to other members of the Sangha. The third point is that, in his search for robes, he does not resort to improper or unsuitable means. If he fails to obtain a robe, he does not become dejected, troubled in mind, or distressed. If he does obtain a robe, he does not become greedy (*giddha*), bound, or attached to it with craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). Instead, seeing its danger (*ādīnava*), he uses it with the wisdom of deliverance (*nissaraṇa-paññā*). Furthermore, it is said that he does not exalt himself or disparage others on account of his virtue of contentment with robes. Finally, it is stated that the monk is skilled and energetic in this contentment, not lazy, and is possessed of mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). The Buddha declares that such a monk is said to be established in the ancient, foremost noble lineage. This is the first quality: contentment with any robe whatsoever—the virtue of being satisfied with whatever robe is received.

Next, the Buddha declares: "Herein, monks, a monk is content with any kind of alms-food whatsoever (*itari-itara piṇḍapāta santosa*)." This means that when he goes on alms-round, whether the food is coarse or sweet, little or much, he possesses the virtue of being content with whichever of the two he receives. He is content with any alms-food whatsoever. Secondly, he praises the virtue of such contentment with alms-food. He tells others that this is a valuable practice. Thirdly, in his search for alms-food, he does not resort to improper means. Fourthly, if he does not receive alms-food, he does not become dejected or mentally distressed. When he does receive alms-food, he does not become greedy, attached, or enslaved by it through craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). Instead, seeing its danger, he consumes the alms-food with the wisdom of deliverance (*nissaraṇa-paññā*), keeping Nibbāna as his goal. Furthermore, he does not exalt himself or disparage others because of his virtue of being content with any alms-food whatsoever. Finally, he is skilled and energetic regarding this contentment with alms-food, not lazy, and is possessed of mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-*

sampajañña). Concerning such a monk, the Buddha declares that he is said to be established in the ancient, foremost noble lineage.

Next, the Buddha speaks concerning lodging: "Herein, monks, a monk is content with any kind of lodging whatsoever (*itari-itara senāsana santosa*)." This refers to the quality of being content with whatever lodging is received. He is endowed with contentment with any lodging whatsoever. He praises the virtue of such contentment with lodging to others. Furthermore, he does not resort to improper means to acquire lodging. If he does not obtain lodging, he does not become mentally distressed. To state it briefly: when he does obtain a lodging, instead of using it with greed, clinging, and possessiveness, he uses that lodging while contemplating its danger, with the wisdom of deliverance (*nissaraṇa-paññā*), and with Nibbāna in mind. He does not exalt himself or disparage others on account of his virtue of being content with any lodging whatsoever. He is skilled, energetic, and possessed of mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) regarding this contentment with lodging. The Buddha declared this as the third quality of a monk established in the foremost noble lineage.

The fourth noble lineage is presented in a unique way: *bhāvanārāmo hoti bhāvanārato, pahānārāmo hoti pahānārato*—both of these spiritual qualities are mentioned there. He is one who delights in meditation, one who rejoices in meditation; one who delights in abandoning, one who rejoices in abandoning. By "delighting in abandoning," we should understand the abandoning of defilements. This fourth factor concerns the monk who possesses both qualities: meditation and abandoning. He is devoted to meditation and delights in it. Likewise, he is devoted to the abandoning of defilements; he desires it and engages in it. Secondly, such a monk does not exalt himself or disparage others on account of these two noble qualities of delighting in meditation and delighting in abandoning. Thirdly, he is skilled and energetic in delighting in meditation and abandoning, not lazy, and possesses mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) regarding them. Such a monk is described as one established in the fourth noble lineage.

Summarizing these, the Buddha then declares: "Monks, these four noble lineages are foremost (aggaññā), long-standing (vaṃsaññā), ancient (porāṇā), unadulterated (asambhinnā), not doubted in the past, nor will they be doubted in the future, and not rejected by wise ascetics and brahmins." With these words, the Buddha describes them as qualities accepted since ancient times as foremost, enduring over a long period, belonging to the noble lineage, and highly valued qualities that are neither doubted nor rejected by wise ascetics and brahmins.

Having shown these four noble lineages, the Buddha further states: "A monk who is endowed with, possessed of, and established in these four noble lineages, even if he dwells in the eastern quarter, he overcomes discontent (*arati*) and is not overcome by discontent." Discontent (*arati*), dear merits-seekers, refers to a lack of delight in the wholesome practices of the Sasana, such as meditation. At the same time, we must also understand its counterpart. The words *arati* (discontent) and *rati* (delight) appear together in this sutta and are frequently encountered. *Rati* means delight in the five

cords of sensual pleasure. *Arati* is also unwholesome, though in a different way. It is not a lack of delight in sensual pleasures, but rather a lack of delight in the spiritual virtues of the Sasana. To put it simply, discontent (*arati*) is like the thought of reverting to lay life.

Here, the Buddha concludes by stating that even if a monk endowed with these four noble lineages dwells in the eastern quarter, he overcomes discontent. This means he can conquer any dissatisfaction with the monk's life. Discontent does not overcome him; he does not submit to discontent. Furthermore, the Buddha declares that even if such a monk dwells in the western quarter, the northern quarter, or the southern quarter—indeed, in whichever quarter he may dwell—he overcomes discontent and is not overcome by discontent.

Next, the Buddha asks: "Why is that, monks? Why do I say so? *Arati-rati-saho hi dhīro*—because that wise one, endowed with courage and fortitude, conquers both discontent and delight." Having declared this, he summarized the matter in the two verses we mentioned earlier. Discontent does not conquer the wise one; it does not crush or overwhelm him. Why? *Nārati dhīraṃ sahati*—discontent has no strength to overcome the wise one; *nārati dhīrasahāti*—discontent possesses no power to subjugate the wise one.

Next, it says: *dhīro ca aratiṃ sahati, dhīro hi aratīsaho*—only the wise monk conquers discontent; indeed, only the wise one is capable of overcoming discontent. The Buddha has declared this multiple times to emphasize this single point. Then he says: *sabbakammavihāyinaṃ*—one who has cast off all *kamma* (volitional actions); *paṇuṇṇaṃ*—one who has dispelled all defilements. "Who can obstruct such a monk?" (*paṇuṇṇaṃ ko nivāraye*). This means there is no one capable of obstructing him.

"Ko taṃ jambonadassevā, nekkhaṃ ninditumarahati" — *Jambonada* refers to gold obtained from the Jambu River, which is considered far more valuable than other kinds of gold. Who would dare to blame a monk who is as pure as a gold coin made of Jambonada gold? The meaning is that no one is capable of blaming him.

Then, further praising him, the verse says: *devāpi taṃ pasaṃsanti, brahmunāpi pasaṃsito*—even the devas praise that monk, and he is praised by Brahma as well. With these verses, the Buddha presents a statement that further elevates and reinforces the points made.

In explaining these verses, since ancient times, commentators have generally drawn upon the thirteen rigorous ascetic practices known as the *dhutangas* of the Sangha. It is in light of these thirteen rigorous practices that contentment with robes, contentment with alms-food, contentment with lodging, and delight in meditation are explained. In explaining them, as we have heard from the past, someone might think—it might appear that there is something missing here. You have surely heard of the four requisites (*sivpasa*): robes (*cīvara*), alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), lodging (*senāsana*), and medicinal requisites for the sick (*gilānapaccaya*). You might see the omission of medicinal

requisites as a shortcoming. However, medicine is generally considered to be subsumed under alms-food. In ancient times, medicines and such were also obtained by going on alms-round. Therefore, it is shown as belonging to that category. The fourth factor presented here is meditation and abandoning. When discussing these, various commentaries point to the rigorous ascetic practices (*dhutanga*). You may have heard that the Buddha placed the Maha Arahant Kassapa in the foremost position (*etadagga*) among those who practice these *dhutangas*. Ven. Maha Kassapa received such great respect from the Buddha precisely because he maintained these rigorous ascetic practices.

We need to gradually familiarize ourselves with these *dhutangas*. Among them, two of the thirteen practices concern robes, corresponding to contentment with robes. There are two *dhutangas* related to being content with whatever robes are received. The first is *paṃsukūlika* (the refuse-rag-robe-wearer's practice). Though the term "paṃsukūla" has different meanings today, *paṃsu*, dear merits-seekers, means dust or a heap of dust. Rag-robes are pieces gathered and picked up from dust heaps. Today, no one would even like to think about such things. Yet, we have heard that even the Buddha made his rag-robes this way. Where did they find the cloth required for these rag-robes? It was either while going on alms-round, from rubbish heaps, or from shrouds discarded in cemeteries. It is recorded in the texts that the Buddha took the shroud thrown over the slave girl Punna in the cemetery to make his own rag-robe. In any case, such a robe is of few wishes (*alpecca*). A monk who undertakes the *paṃsukūlika* ascetic practice rejects robes offered directly by laypeople. He upholds the rigorous practice of using only robes stitched from pieces of cloth gathered from roadsides or cemeteries.

When someone is ordained, especially at the time of higher ordination (*upasampadā*), the Buddha reminds the monk of the minimum things he should expect. These are known as the four supports (*nissaya*). "This monkhood has refuse-rag robes (*paṃsukūlacīvaraṃ nissāya*) as its support." One must be content with rag-robes. Household offerings are extra gains; therefore, one should not ordain with the expectation of extra gains. It is said that, at the very least, if one receives a refuse-rag robe, one should be satisfied. Thus, this *dhutanga* of using refuse-rag robes is shown as the first aspect of contentment with any robe whatsoever.

The second *dhutanga* related to robes is *tecīvarika* (the triple-robe-wearer's practice). Members of the Sangha sometimes resolve: "I will be content with only three robes." The three robes are the outer patch-robe (*saṅghāṭi*), the upper robe (*uttarāsaṅga*), and the inner robe (*antaravāsaka*). To be content with these three robes is the practice. Here, a monk resolves for a certain period, or for his entire life: "I will not use a fourth robe; I will be content with only these three robes." This contentment with robes is what is called the *tecīvarika* ascetic practice. This too is a form of contentment. When people come from the lay world, they often bring along ideas of clothing fashion. If they continue to pursue such fashions even after wearing robes, what monkhood is left there? Therefore, to introduce the fundamental purpose and value of monkhood, the Buddha demonstrated this through his own example.

In particular, the Maha Arahant Kassapa strictly observed this *tecīvarika* practice. He never took more than three robes. These two *dhutangas* concerning contentment with robes are detailed in the texts.

Next is contentment with alms-food. This is represented by five *dhutangas*. The first is one you can easily understand: if a monk resolves to undertake the *piṇḍapātika* (alms-food-eater's) practice, he survives solely on food received through alms-round. If observed rigorously, he does not accept invitations to meals or food brought to the monastery by laypeople.

This is why, when explaining the supports (*nissaya*) to a newly ordained monk, the Buddha states that this is the minimum he should expect: "This monkhood has alms-food (*piṇḍapātabhojanaṃ nissāya*) as its support." He says that one ordains for alms-food. This is because it is a practice of few wishes, and living on alms-food is a way of showing favor to the world. Furthermore, it is described in the texts as being like a bee that takes pollen from a flower without harming its fragrance or color. In this way, without causing trouble to anyone, he goes from house to house and is content with whatever is received. Through this, he also abandons his pride. He does not say, "I live on my own wealth." Instead, he reflects: "My life is dependent on others" (*para-paṭibaddhā me jīvikā*). Understanding that "I survive on food given by faithful devotees" helps in maintaining the virtues of a monk. Therefore, a monk who resolves to practice this even more rigorously depends solely on alms-food.

Next, a monk who practices this even more strictly undertakes *sapadānacārika* (the uninterrupted alms-round practice). This too is designated as an ascetic practice. *Sapadāna*, dear merits-seekers, means going on alms-round from house to house in uninterrupted order. Even during the Buddha's time, there were some monks who frequently visited the houses of wealthy, faithful devotees, sometimes even entering inside to eat. Without selecting houses in that manner—whether it be a wealthy mansion or a poor hut—he walks for alms in consecutive order (*sapadāna*). This is considered a valuable practice. There were those who kept such rigorous ascetic practices. Ven. Maha Kassapa Maha Thero must have observed these. He walked for alms from house to house. Through this, he was like the moon (*candūpama*); he never became attached to any household. He was seen, but he did not cling. He maintained no intimacy or close association. The benefits of this are great: the monk avoids unnecessary involvements with laypeople, and it also guards against the craving for taste (*rasa-taṇhā*). Sometimes, monks frequent certain houses because they receive delicious food there. Free from such greed and craving for taste, and providing an opportunity for everyone to gain merit, a monk resolves and practices this *sapadānacārika* ascetic practice.

Next is the special practice called *ekāsanika* (the one-session-eater's practice). Certain monks who are devoted to meditation resolve to eat only once a day. Indeed, even the Buddha observed this. It is quite amazing to hear of this today. At one time, in the early days of the Sangha, some monks used to eat even at night. When the Buddha opposed this and laid down rules, some monks rebelled. Yet, when the Buddha spoke of the benefits of *ekāsanika*—eating only once a day—it was truly wonderful. He declared many

benefits of eating only once a day: *appābādhatañca, lahuṭṭhānañca, balañca, phāsuvihārañca*—fewness of illnesses, lightness, physical strength, and a comfortable dwelling. Taking light food in this way supports a meditative life. Some resolve to observe this practice of eating only one meal a day as a *dhutanga* for their entire life, and some for a specific period. This is what is called the *ekāsanika* practice.

Another such difficult ascetic practice is *pattapiṇḍika* (the bowl-eater's practice). Some monks resolve to consume only food that is placed directly into their alms-bowl. They do not eat from other plates or vessels. This brings them great tranquility. Today, laypeople bring food in various types of vessels, which can sometimes distract the mind. But that monk takes whatever is received in his bowl, goes under a tree, and eats. While being content with whatever is received, this practice also prevents the mind from being distracted by the craving for taste and unnecessary vessels, thereby aiding concentration. Therefore, monks adopt this as an ascetic practice. Thus we have *piṇḍapātika*, *sapadānacārika*, and *ekāsanika*.

Next is *khalupacchābhattika* (the practice of refusing later food). You may not have even heard of this. It means that while some members of the Sangha might eat more if something else is brought after they have finished their meal, a monk undertaking this practice firmly resolves: "Once I have finished eating and indicated that I am done, I will not take any extra food." It reduces the craving for taste and helps maintain a light, unburdened existence. Just like craving for clothing, craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) for food is a powerful force in this cycle of existence; we can see how even animals fight and kill each other for food. These are tendencies we have carried in our minds through *saṃsāra*. A verse in the Theragatha states: "One who is greedy and bound by the craving for taste (*rasataṇhāya gadhito*) does not awaken his heart to Nibbāna." Monks conquer this in various ways and correct their own shortcomings. This is not a mere vow to show off to anyone, nor is it to exalt oneself or disparage others. The practice is observed solely to crush one's own defilements. This is called the practice of effacement (*sallēkha-paṭipadā*). Indeed, to summarize these virtues for you, they consist of contentment (*santuṭṭhitā*) and fewness of wishes (*alpeccatā*). First comes *alpeccatā*, which means having few desires. *Santuṭṭhitā* means being content with what is received. *Subharatā* means being easy to support. And there is the special word *sallēkha*, which means the cutting away of defilements—examining one's own shortcomings and practicing accordingly to overcome defilements as the occasion demands. Finally, there is *vīriyārambhatā* (arousing of energy). If one eats too much food, drowsiness increases. What is spoken of here is a light diet suitable for meditation. The five *dhutangas* related to contentment with alms-food are traditionally explained in this manner.

Although we are trying to explain this *Ariyavamsa* sermon in an hour, it is truly wonderful, dear merits-seekers. If we briefly mention its history—it is a significant part of our history. We mention this so you can understand its value. The Mahavamsa records that King Vohārika Tissa was a monarch who performed an extraordinary and grand service for the Sasana in ancient times. The Mahavamsa states that he established alms-funds and arranged for the preaching of the *Ariyavamsa Sutta* throughout the land.

Many other Dhamma stories mention that Theros like Dīghabhāṇaka Abhaya preached the *Ariyavamsa* throughout all three watches of the night. Even if we cannot do so for all three watches, we are attempting to explain it briefly within this hour. It is recorded that during the times when the Buddha Sasana flourished, when the *Ariyavamsa* was preached in the city of Magama, people from the entire region flocked to hear it. It is also mentioned that even kings listened to the *Ariyavamsa* preaching throughout all three watches of the night. It was treated with such great importance because *Ariya* refers to the Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, Arahants, and noble disciples of the Tathāgata. Since this was a discourse that highlighted the lineage of their own noble family, it was treated with immense respect. Not only the Sangha, but even laypeople listened to this *Ariyavamsa* sermon.

We have spoken about robes and alms-food; now we must speak about lodgings. Regarding lodgings, five *dhutangas* are mentioned. First is *āraññika* (the forest-dweller's practice). A monk resolves: "I will dwell in the forest for this period." Or sometimes, so that others do not know, he might come to the village during the day and return to the forest at night. To put it briefly, he dwells in the wild forest. Dhamma stories record that even some novice monks undertook this practice secretly, because it is not something to be advertised. Since it is conducive to their meditation and they require seclusion, they resolve to spend the entire period in the forest, letting go of the expectation of life, arousing spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), and using the seclusion of the forest to develop their meditation.

Next is *rukkhamūlika* (the tree-root-dweller's practice), which refers to dwelling at the root of a tree. We can hardly even imagine this. Yet, you will recall that Buddhas almost always attain enlightenment under a tree. This is because that secluded environment is highly suitable for meditation. Some resolved to practice this *rukkhamūlika* ascetic practice. It was so highly valued that the Buddha, when presenting the four supports (*nissaya*) to a newly ordained monk, advised him to be content with these minimum things. He reminds him that monkhood is for the sake of lodging. He tells him to be prepared to live even under a tree. That is what is meant by contentment with lodging. A monk who has undertaken this *dhutanga* does not go under any roofed shelter; he lives solely under a tree. This is a highly rigorous practice, hard to imagine.

Next is *abbhokāsika* (the open-air-dweller's practice). This is an even more powerful practice. *Abbhokāsika* means dwelling in the open air, under the open sky. Spending a night in the open air in peaceful meditation gives great strength to the mind. Monkhood itself is said to be like the open air, completely open like space. This can be experienced at times. Resolving to undertake this practice, one goes to the open air where there are absolutely no distractions to pull the mind away. In complete seclusion and silence, one's meditation succeeds, and concentration (*samādhi*) is near. Some monks undertake the *abbhokāsika* practice and engage in their meditation in this manner. Ultimately, these are all for the sake of delighting in meditation and delighting in abandoning (*bhāvanārāmatā* and *pahānārāmatā*), not to inflict pain on the body. This is what must be understood. We have mentioned *āraññika* and *abbhokāsika*.

The next *dhutanga* is *sosānika* (the cemetery-dweller's practice). This might sound a bit frightening. It means dwelling in a cemetery, a charnel ground. In ancient times, monks who meditated rigorously—especially those cultivating the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*)—spent their nights in cemeteries to conquer their defilements. Obtaining permission from the cemetery keepers, they practiced in this rigorous manner. Look at what great commitment they showed for the sake of Nibbāna, for the sake of ending the suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra*. In those days, when bodies were left exposed, people were afraid to go near a cemetery due to the belief in spirits. In those raw cemeteries, there were freshly discarded corpses, old corpses, and decaying ones. By contemplating them, they meditated. Today, we practice foulness meditation by looking at foul pictures or attractive pictures, and we do not really perceive the foulness. Looking at the other side, even if it is lacking, it is still something. In the past, when corpses decayed—it is hard to even imagine. In those cemeteries where non-humans were said to dwell, monks developed fear of *saṃsāra* rather than fear of non-humans, meditated, and very quickly achieved the goal they sought. Therefore, these practices should not be ridiculed. That is the *sosānika* practice, where one's shelter is the cemetery itself.

The next is *yathāsanthatika* (the practice of accepting whatever seat is offered). This may be difficult to remember. It means accepting whatever lodging is assigned without choosing. We can understand this from the past. Even if he did not observe it strictly as a *dhutanga*, you remember what Ven. Rahula did when a large congregation of five hundred monks arrived. As senior monks arrived, Ven. Rahula had to move, and where did he spend the night? In the Buddha's washroom. There was no special complaint; he did not go around saying, "My father is the Buddha." Accepting whatever lodging is offered is what is called the *yathāsanthatika* practice. This is shown as the fifth factor. Regarding contentment with lodging, this is the fifth. Thus, within the four requisites, we clearly see contentment with robes, contentment with alms-food, and contentment with lodging.

The fourth factor presented is extremely important, extremely important. That is precisely why the Buddha presents it fourth: *bhāvanārāmo hoti bhāvanārato, pahānārāmo hoti pahānārato*—"He delights in meditation, rejoices in meditation; he delights in abandoning, rejoices in abandoning." Why is all of this done? It is to arouse delight in meditation, to engage in it with delight, to arouse delight in the abandoning of defilements, and to engage in that abandoning. Keep this in mind. Then one might ask, "What is the *dhutanga* associated with this fourth factor of delighting in meditation and abandoning?"

We have already mentioned twelve *dhutangas*. The remaining one is *nesajjika* (the sitting-practice). *Nesajjika* means sitting—never lying down, never letting one's back touch a bed. It is recorded in the ancient texts as a highly rigorous practice. It is truly amazing to hear of it. Conquering drowsiness, conquering sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), a monk spends the entire day and night sitting, and if sleep comes, it is only while sitting; he never lies down on a bed. There are countless such stories. Some monks, when resolving to observe this throughout the entire rainy season (*vassa*), would turn

their beds upside down at the very start, lest they should feel tempted to lie down. That is what is called the *nesajjika* practice. *Nisajjā* means sitting. You may have heard how Ven. Cakkhupāla Thero's physical eyes became blind, but along with the loss of his physical sight, his eye of wisdom arose. Having resolved to maintain the *nesajjika* practice throughout the three months of the rainy season, he eventually attained Arahantship. Do not think that everyone who practices *nesajjika* will go blind. Rather, reflecting on the fact that throughout this long *saṃsāra* one has mostly spent time sleeping, he rouses energy and abandons defilements. Defilements do not enter an awake mind. It is within sloth and torpor that other defilements gain strength. By conquering sloth and torpor through the delight in meditation, both abandoning and meditation occur naturally through the *nesajjika* practice. This is expressed as energy; it is said that one cultivates *nesajjika* to rouse energy.

The dispensational values declared by the Buddha thus far are aimed directly at Nibbāna. These are not mere vows or rituals; it is wrong to treat them as such, and it is wrong to form mistaken views about them. When monks are ordained, even today when tying the robe-belt, they recite: *sabba-dukkha-nissaraṇa-nibbāna-sacchikaraṇatthāya*—"For the sake of release from all suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress and the realization of Nibbāna." It is with this intention of release that everything is performed. In the *Ariyavamsa Sutta*, when speaking of contentment with robes, alms-food, and lodging, the Buddha declared—to give an example—that when a robe is received, one should use it without greed, without being bound by craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), and without being overcome by it. Instead, seeing the danger, one uses it with the wisdom of deliverance (*nissaraṇa-paññā*). Understanding the meaning of "nissaraṇa" means understanding the danger of developing attachment to clothing, reflecting wisely (*paccavekkhaṇā*) on why this robe is used: merely to cover nakedness and to protect oneself from flies, mosquitoes, and so forth. You are somewhat familiar with the wise reflection on food, which laypeople who observe the precepts also practice. Similarly, the Sangha has these wise reflections regarding the four requisites.

What is contained within this wise reflection? The Niganthas (Jains) take no food and wear no clothes. That is one extreme. In contrast, the Buddha showed how to use these four requisites in a way that does not allow one to fall prey to Mara. Generally, Mara lies hidden within these requisites. Today, this must be very clearly evident to you. Mara hides within robes as well; when one pursues highly valuable and fancy robes, there is Mara. Mara hides within alms-food too; the moment one becomes greedy for delicious food, there is Mara. It is the same with lodgings. It is to understand their danger and to use them as an aid for deliverance that the Sangha is given these wise reflections on the four requisites.

One part of the reflection is considering the purpose for which we receive these. If we speak of food, we first declare what it is *not* for: *n'eva davāya, na madāya, na maṇḍanāya, na vibhūsanāya*—not for amusement, not for intoxication, not for physical fattening, not for beautification, unlike in the ordinary world. This is stated first. Instead, it is used solely—and the word "solely" is important here—to appease the painful feeling

/ sensation of hunger, and the Buddha has preached to wisely reflect on this before consuming food. What is the purpose of taking this? Unlike during lay life, it is taken because one cannot survive without it, to appease the painful feeling / sensation of hunger and to maintain this body. To where is this body to be maintained? Up to Nibbāna—this is what is meant by the wisdom of deliverance (*nissaraṇa-paññā*).

Furthermore, to turn this wise reflection on the four requisites into a deeper meditation, it is shown that this food is composed of the elements of earth, water, fire, and air (*pathavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*). This body is also composed of these four elements. Thus, reflecting that this clean, fragrant food enters this impure body and becomes filthy fulfills both element-attention (*dhātu-manasikāra*) and foulness-attention (*asubha-manasikāra*).

The Buddha demonstrates how to conquer Mara at the very place where one is vulnerable to him. If one reflects rightly on these four requisites, contemplating their danger—the danger of overeating, of being enslaved by the craving for taste—and instead practices with the wisdom of deliverance (*nissaraṇa-paññā*) solely to maintain the body for the practice of the Dhamma, then that is for the sake of release. Indeed, the Buddha has declared so deeply: *āhāraṃ nissāya āhāraṃ pajahatha*—"Support yourself on food to abandon food." When we look at this, it seems paradoxical, as if the two parts do not agree. "Support yourself on food to abandon food" is a very profound statement. The Buddha has declared that there are four kinds of nutriment: physical food (*kabaḷīkārāhāra*), Contact (*phassa*), mental volition (*manosañcetanā*), and Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). To eliminate all of these, he says we must support ourselves on this physical food: *āhāraṃ nissāya āhāraṃ pajahatha*. That is the profound aspect. Thus, the Buddha shows that through wise reflection, a monk who acts in this manner is not overcome by Mara.

These four requisites are things given by faithful laypeople with great devotion. Yet, in certain places, the Buddha has described this—please do not be offended by this word—as a "bait" (*āmisa*). *Āmisa* means bait. Without saying "laypeople," let us say "Mara." Mara casts a hook with bait to catch fish. When the bait is cast, some fish, not knowing any better, swallow it and fall into trouble. Therefore, the Buddha calls this *lokāmisa*—the bait of the world. If one does not know how to swallow this bait correctly, if one swallows it wrongly, dangerous consequences will follow. If one does not know how to swallow it rightly, it is better not to swallow it at all. Otherwise, one gets caught by Mara.

Next, the Buddha describes in the *Ariya Pariyesana Sutta* (The Noble Search)—which you might not have heard of much—his own search for release from *saṃsāra*, which he calls the wondrous "Noble Search." In the beginning, the ascetic Siddhattha went astray because the world pointed to self-mortification as the sole path to liberation. Like the Niganthas, he subjected his body to extreme pain. But once he realized its futility, he took the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). Having taken the Middle Path, he accepted a sufficient amount of food to maintain the body. At the end of the *Ariya Pariyesana Sutta*, the Buddha gives a wonderful simile. Because of this simile, the sutta is also known by another name: *Pāsarāsi* (The Mass of Snares). *Pāsa* means a snare or a noose.

A snare is used to catch an animal. The simile describes a deer hunter who sets snares to catch deer. Some deer get caught in those snares, and when the hunter comes, they are helpless and get captured. But the Buddha points out that some wise deer do not get caught in the snares; instead, they lie down right on top of the snare, and when the hunter approaches, they leap away. This is the wonderful simile given by the Buddha near the end of the *Ariya Pariyesana Sutta*.

The Buddha showed that the path he traveled in the past is not a path of completely abandoning food and clothing. That is not how one escapes from *saṃsāra*. Instead, if one reflects wisely, maintains restraint over the senses, and understands the purpose of these requisites, then when Mara—the deer hunter—approaches, this monk can leap away like the wise deer, uncaught. This is what we must extract from this *Ariyavamsa* sermon. Through contentment with robes, satisfaction with what is received, fewness of wishes, and ease of support, one aligns with what was said regarding robes. Regarding fewness of wishes, the Buddha often compared the lifestyle of the Sangha to a bird: *sakuṇo sehi pattehi bārena yen'eva yati*—just as a bird flying in the sky flies freely, carrying only its wings. *Sapatto bhārova ḍeti*—carrying only his bowl and robes like wings, without accumulating many belongings, the monk lives with few wishes. This refers to the triple-robe-wearer (*tecīvarika*) monk. A monk content with only three robes can travel easily from place to place, just like a bird. These virtues of fewness of wishes and contentment are described because they support meditation and abandoning. Therefore, we must understand these four noble lineages declared by the Buddha. Since the very ancient past, wise ascetics and brahmins—not those of ordinary intellect—have walked in this noble lineage. The Buddha mentions that ancient Buddhas and their noble disciples valued these noble lineages, both regarding the four requisites and their ultimate purpose: meditation and the abandoning of defilements.

When we speak of meditation, you can understand that true meditation is cultivated through the factors of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*): mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*vīriya*), joy (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). That is the genuine meditation. Abandoning refers to the abandoning of defilements. You are familiar with the four right efforts (*sammappadhāna*), which are described as four types of energy. They are explained as follows: to prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome states, *chandaṃ janeti vāyamati vīriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati*—he arouses desire, makes an effort, rouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. As we have explained before, one must arouse desire, make an effort, start to rouse energy, and firmly establish the mind. One must exert supreme energy in four ways. First, to prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome states. These *dhutangas* and the contentment with robes assist in preventing unarisen unwholesome states from arising. If one uses these requisites without such reflection, without understanding the value of fewness of wishes, one unknowingly becomes enslaved by the bait of the world, swallows the bait, and eventually is forced to return to lay life. That is why these have been declared.

First is to prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome states. Second is to abandon arisen unwholesome states. When a monk reflects: "These are the shortcomings in my character; I have a strong craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) and greed for food carried over from my lay life," he then resolves to undertake the relevant ascetic practice (*dhutanga*). If he has an excessive attachment to clothing, he resolves to undertake the corresponding *dhutanga*. That is the cutting away of defilements. This is called *sallēkha-paṭipadā* (the practice of effacement). The Buddha has indeed permitted certain comforts, but the monk abandons them—not to tell anyone else, but to cut away his own defilements, to prevent unarisen unwholesome states, and to abandon arisen unwholesome states. Then comes the other side: to arouse unarisen wholesome states. That is the side of meditation. And finally, to maintain and develop arisen wholesome states. Thus, the four right efforts—restraint, abandoning, developing, and maintaining—help us understand this *Ariyavamsa Sutta* discourse.

As we mentioned earlier, in ancient Sri Lanka, not only the Sangha but even lay devotees listened to this *Ariyavamsa Sutta* discourse with immense devotion throughout all three watches of the night. Listening to the sermon with the same courageous energy with which it was preached, some might think it is an exaggeration, but it is recorded that even if a devotee or a monk was bitten by a snake or stung by a scorpion while listening, they would not even look at it but continued to listen to the Dhamma. Such occurrences are recorded.

Not only for the Sangha, but even for laypeople, the capacity to experience this contentment and the sacrifice required for Nibbāna were well understood by everyone in the past through this *Maha Ariyavamsa Sutta* discourse. In ancient times, this discourse was also known as the *Catu-paccaya-santosa-bhāvanārāma-ariyavaṃsa Sutta*. A discourse that highlights contentment with the four requisites and delight in meditation. Such sublime and noble discourses are rarely heard today. People have no desire to hear them. Even if preached, it has reached a state where it is deemed of no use, as you well know.

However, for some reason, this year we see the slogan "Let us line up in practice, let us line up in practice" everywhere. Therefore, we too felt the need to say something relevant to that. Whether it is accepted or not, we felt like preaching this marginalized *Ariyavamsa Sutta* today. Today, on this Poson Poya day, which is significant to our Sri Lankan history, just as mentioned in the Mahavamsa and the commentaries, vast crowds gathered to listen to the *Ariyavamsa Sutta* discourse.

Whether lay or ordained, we must reflect on the value of the Sasana. The values of the Sasana are entirely different from the values of the lay world. What is the value of a refuse-rag robe? It is something pulled from a rubbish heap, taken from a cemetery. Yet, even the Buddha dyed such cloth and wore it. You may be familiar with the *Dasa-dhamma Sutta*, where a monk must constantly reflect: *vevaṇṇiyaṃ bhāvaṃ upagato'smi*—"I have entered upon a state of classlessness / disfigurement." The nature of laypeople is to seek colorfulness (*vevaṇṇiya*). The nature of a monk is disfigurement (*vivaṇṇiya*). This is explained as the disfigurement of the body (*kāya-vevaṇṇiyaṃ*) and

the disfigurement of requisites (*parikkhāra-vevaṇṇiyaṃ*). The disfigurement of the body is removing the hair and beard, which laypeople tend to beautify. The disfigurement of requisites is discarding fine clothing and instead wearing a dull-colored refuse-rag robe. A robe stitched from pieces of cloth gathered here and there, and using a black alms-bowl. These things serve to remind him: "I am no longer a layperson, but a monk." We must reflect according to these monastic values. That is the significance of the *Dasa-dhamma Sutta* declared by the Buddha. All of these are directly related to the matters discussed in the *Ariyavamsa Sutta*. Therefore, we must not think of these as outdated or obsolete. If these were things that could become obsolete, the Buddha would not have used those terms:

Aggaññā, vaṃsaññā, porāṇā, asambhinnā, asambhinnapubbā... viññūhi samaṇabrāhmaṇehi. Wise ascetics and brahmins regard this as foremost. Over a long period, wise ascetics and brahmins have neither doubted nor rejected it. Such is the nature of this practice.

Therefore, on a day like today, you must make a firm determination. If we wish to preserve this dispensational practice, whether we are lay or ordained, we must at least recognize these values. If lay devotees do not recognize these values, it directly affects the lives of the Sangha. If these practices are ridiculed or mocked, it becomes difficult for the Sangha to maintain these *dhutanga* practices. A much better environment is created when lay devotees also understand these dispensational values. That is why we speak these words.

You must bear in mind what we often say—that the lamp of the Sasana is about to go out. We are compelled to say that it is about to go out. In such an era, if anyone wishes to bring an end to the suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra*, let them recollect the dispensational values spoken of today. The beginning of that is the valuable precepts you have undertaken today, dedicating yourselves to keeping them, meditating, and listening to the Dhamma. At this moment, you have also listened to this Dhamma discourse. May whatever is of value to be taken from this be taken by you to develop the virtues of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). May this discourse be a supportive condition for everyone to realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through the realization of the path and fruit, starting from stream-entry (*sotāpatti*).

May all beings from the lowest hell (*Avīci*) to the highest heaven (*Akaniṭṭha*) rejoice in the merit of listening to this Dhamma, and through that appreciation of merit, may they find solace in the noble, deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi they aspire to. Likewise, may this merit of delivering the Dhamma be a supportive condition for you to preserve these dispensational virtues. Let us chant these verses to share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #65

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.205)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ,

akkhātāro tathāgatā;

paṭipannā pamokkhanti,

jhāyino mārabandhanā.

From:

Dhammapada 276 (Maggavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Today is this Poson Full Moon Poya day. This is a day on which the attention of pious Buddhists is directed toward both the past and the future of the Buddha Sāsana (Dispensation) in this country. We all accept that on that day, a Dhamma mission of seven members, led by the Great Arahant Mahinda, arrived from Jambudīpa to Mihintale precisely to establish the Buddha Sāsana. Since this mission included five ordained Arahant Theros—Mahinda, Ittiya, Uttiya, Sambala, and Bhaddasāla—along with the Sāmaṇera Sumana and the lay disciple (*upāsaka*) Bhanduka, we can understand that the relationship between the clergy and the laity in the Sambuddha Sāsana was represented therein.

We all have heard that Arahant Mahinda introduced his group to King Devānampiyatissa with the stanza:

> *Samaṇā mayaṃ mahārāja,*
>
> *dhammarājassa sāvakā;*
>
> *Taveva anukampāya,*
>
> *jambudīpā idhāgatā.*

"O Great King, we are recluses, disciples of the King of Dhamma. Out of compassion for you, we have come here from Jambudīpa." Thus they introduced themselves. Furthermore, history records that King Devānampiyatissa, with great faith and confidence in the group led by Arahant Mahinda, acted to establish the Sambuddha Sāsana in this island of Lankā. From then until now, amidst various temporal crises and vicissitudes, the Sambuddha Sāsana has been preserved in this country to a certain extent up to the present day. For the pious who reflect and ponder upon the future of the Buddha Sāsana, we chose as our theme today a valuable Dhammapada stanza that specially reminds us of the practice (*paṭipadā*) of this Buddha Sāsana.

"*Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ, akkhātāro tathāgatā*"—The duty, the exertion that must be made, must be striven for by yourselves. The Tathāgatas are merely teachers who point out the Dhamma.

"*Paṭipannā pamokkhanti jhāyino*"—Those who enter the path and cultivate absorption (meditation) are freed from the bonds of Māra.

Through this stanza, the practicality as well as the fruitfulness of the Blessed One's practice is expressed. Indeed, when speaking of this, a valuable discourse (*sūtra*) that reveals the special characteristics within the practice of this Buddha Sāsana is the *Gaṇaka-Moggallāna Sutta* of the Majjhima Nikāya. Even in the opening narrative (*nidāna-kathā*) of that Sutta, an important principle regarding practicality emerges. At a time when the Blessed One was residing in Sāvatthī, at the Eastern Monastery (*Pubbārāma*) known as the palace of Migāra's mother (*Migāramātupāsāda*), which was built and offered by the great lay disciple Visākhā, a Brahmin named Gaṇaka-Moggallāna came to see Him. (Devotees, in modern terms, the Brahmin Moggallāna was an accountant.) Having arrived, he addressed the Buddha as follows: "Just as, Master Gotama, in this palace of Migāra's mother, there is a gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual practice, visible even down to the last step of this staircase"—the three specific terms mentioned there are *anupubba-sikkhā* (gradual training), *anupubba-kiriyā* (gradual performance), and *anupubba-paṭipadā* (gradual practice)—"and just as among us Brahmins, in our education, a gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual practice is seen; and also in the art of archery, and also among us who make a living through this accounting, there is a similar training. When we get a new apprentice, a pupil, we train him to count systematically in this way: one-one, two-twos, three-threes, four-fours, five-fives, six-sixes, seven-sevens, eight-eights, nine-nines, ten-tens, and so on, even up to a hundred. In the same way, Master Gotama, is it possible to show such a gradual training, gradual performance, and gradual practice in your Dispensation?" Thus he asked the Blessed One.

The Blessed One replied: "Brahmin, in my Dispensation too, it can be shown in that way. Just as a horse-trainer, upon receiving a thoroughbred horse that can be trained, first applies the bit and systematically performs the tasks relevant to that training; even so, the Tathāgata, on receiving a person fit to be disciplined, tells that monk: 'Come, monk, be virtuous. Dwell restrained by the restraint of the Pātimokkha. Be perfect in conduct and resort. Seeing danger in the slightest faults, train yourself by undertaking the

training rules.' Thus, He gives that very first training. If at any stage that monk has become virtuous in that manner, then the Tathāgata gives him the second step:

'Come, monk, dwell with the doors of your senses guarded. On seeing a form with the eye, do not grasp its signs or secondary characteristics. Lest evil, unwholesome states such as covetousness and grief flow in on account of not guarding it, establish restraint over the eye.' In that manner, He instructs him to practice sense-restraint over the eye, as well as over the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—all six senses.

When that monk has reached the state of being devoted to guarding the doors of his senses (*indriyesu guttadvāratā*), at that point, the Tathāgata trains this monk further.

'Come, monk, be moderate in eating. Consume food reflecting and considering wisely: "Neither for amusement, nor for intoxication," and so on. "Not for beautification, nor for adornment, but merely for the maintenance and survival of this body, for ending the discomfort of hunger, and for assisting the holy life." In this way, He establishes him in that training, instructing him to take food after reflecting in a certain reflective manner, solely to appease the feeling of hunger, to avoid the discomfort that arises from overeating, and for living in comfort.'

When that monk practices that training of knowing moderation in food (*bhojane mattaññutā*), at that stage, the Tathāgata disciplines him thus: 'Come, monk, dwell devoted to wakefulness (*jāgariyānuyoga*).' Dwell accustomed to the practice of wakefulness relevant to effort, and then He gives him the schedule: 'Dwell during the entire day walking back and forth and sitting, purifying your mind of obstructive states. Dwell during the first watch of the night walking back and forth and sitting, freeing your mind of obstructive states. During the middle watch of the night, lie down on your right side in the lion's posture (*sīha-seyyā*). Having awakened in the last watch of the night, dwell walking back and forth and sitting, freed from obstructive states, devoted to the practice of wakefulness.'

At whatever stage he dwells devoted to that practice of wakefulness, at that stage the Tathāgata disciplines him further still: 'Come, monk, dwell possessed of mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*).' When going forward and returning, one acts with clear comprehension (*sampajānākārī hoti*). That is, he acts with awareness. It means being possessed of established mindfulness. Next, in looking ahead, looking aside, bending, extending (*samiñjite pasārite*), in wearing the outer robe, inner robe, and carrying the bowl, in eating and drinking, in passing stool and urine, and furthermore, in walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, speaking, and keeping silent—in every action, He trains him in mindfulness and clear comprehension, saying 'be one who acts with clear comprehension.'

When mindfulness and clear comprehension are complete, the Tathāgata admonishes that monk: 'Monk, resort to a secluded dwelling. Get accustomed to resorting to secluded places such as a forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, the open air, or a heap of straw.' When that monk has reached that state, having returned from his alms-round, he sits down quietly, cross-legged, keeping his body erect,

and frees his mind from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). He frees his mind from the hindrances of covetousness, ill-will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and worry, and doubt, as well as from excessive hatred, sleepiness, laziness, unsettled anxiety, and indecisiveness. Then, as an illustration of that systematic path, the Buddha explained to that Brahmin how he gradually attains the first absorption (*jhāna*), second absorption, third absorption, fourth absorption, and so forth. Next, the Buddha declares: 'If there are monks who are learners (*sekha*)—who are not yet Arahants but have attained the paths and fruits—this is the Tathāgata's instruction to them as well. And to the Great Arahants whose taints are destroyed (*khīṇāsava*), this training helps in their daily comfortable dwelling (*diṭṭhadhammasukhavihāra*) and for mindfulness and clear comprehension.'

Then this Brahmin Gaṇaka-Moggallāna asks: 'Master Gotama, when the Saṅgha is thus advised and instructed, do all of them attain Nibbāna, which is the ultimate goal in your Dispensation, or are there some who fail to attain Nibbāna?' Then the Buddha declares: 'Even though I advise and instruct them in this way, some attain that state, while others fail to attain it.' Then the Brahmin asks: 'What is the cause for that, Master Gotama? When Nibbāna exists, and the path to Nibbāna exists, and a teacher like you who shows the path to Nibbāna is present, why is it that some attain it, while others do not attain it?' Then the Buddha replies:

'In that case, Brahmin, I will ask you a question. Do you know the road that leads to the city of Rājagaha?' 'Yes, I know it very well.' 'Suppose someone asks you for the road to Rājagaha. You say: "Go by this road. As you go, you will find a village. Beyond that, there is a market town. Going along in this way, you can reach Rājagaha." Even though you say so, that person, having received that instruction, takes a different road. Turning the opposite way, he goes in another direction. Consequently, instead of Rājagaha, he arrives in a different region. Then another person comes, asking for the road to Rājagaha. You give him the same instructions, and he follows them correctly and arrives at Rājagaha.' Then the Buddha asks: 'While Rājagaha exists, and the road to Rājagaha exists, and you are there to show the way, what is the reason why one person goes the wrong way like that, while another goes the right way?'

Then this Brahmin says: 'What can I do about that, Master Gotama? I am merely the one who points out the way—*maggakkhāyī*. I only point out the way. There is nothing I can do. They go as they choose.' Then the Buddha says: 'Just so, Brahmin, even though Nibbāna exists, and the path to Nibbāna exists, and I stand as the instructor who explains Nibbāna, some attain it, while others do not attain it.' Thereupon, the Brahmin, having conceived a certain confidence, said: 'Those who ordained in this Dispensation without faith, merely for a livelihood—they are deceitful, undisciplined in that practice, unrestrained regarding food, regarding mindfulness and clear comprehension, and regarding virtues like morality. Such people do not dwell with Master Gotama. But those who ordained out of faith and practice this path honestly—they are the ones who walk with Master Gotama.' Thus Gaṇaka-Moggallāna...

...then expresses his appreciation with two similes: "Just as among root-fragrances, black agarwood fragrance is considered supreme; and among heartwood-fragrances, red

sandalwood fragrance is supreme; and among flower-fragrances, jasmine fragrance is supreme; even so, among the teachings visible today, the vision of Master Gotama is indeed supreme!" Having thus exulted, he became a lay disciple. Thus we see from this...

...that these three terms—*anupubba-sikkhā*, *anupubba-kiriyā*, and *anupubba-paṭipadā*—are extremely valuable, helping all of us to generate effort and courage. It is a systematic path of practice.

Another valuable discourse relevant to this—even if we do not discuss it in full—is the *Pahārāda Sutta*. To mention it briefly, the Asura lord Pahārāda on one occasion told the Buddha that there are eight wonderful and marvelous qualities of the great ocean that delight the Asuras. One of them is—and three terms are mentioned there: "*anupubba-ninno, anupubba-poṇo, anupubba-pabbhāro, na āyatakenēva papāto*"—that the great ocean has a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, a gradual shelf, with no abrupt precipice. He gives this simile as the first wonderful and marvelous quality. The Buddha says: "In my Dhamma-Vinaya too, there are eight wonderful and marvelous qualities."

As the first quality, He declares: "In this Dispensation, too, there is a gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual practice—*anupubba-sikkhā, anupubba-kiriyā, anupubba-paṭipadā, na āyatakenēva aññā-paṭivedho*—there is no abrupt penetration of final knowledge (Arahantship)." This word "gradual" (*anupubba*) is indeed a valuable thing in this Dispensation to bring courage to everyone. It is not something achieved in a single day. If one walks correctly on this path, it shows a gradual, systematic effectiveness. Someone might think, "If so, why is it that many people say, 'We have no perfections (*pāramī*). We have no perfections. We have not obtained a triple-rooted (*trihetuka*) rebirth'?" I have heard that recently, many preachers are discouraging people with words that destroy this Dispensation. I declare at this moment that this talk of triple-rooted rebirth is like a parasite on the Dispensation. The Buddha did not do that; He did not reject anyone based on "triple-rootedness." We will next present a good illustration of this from a Dhamma story.

In Rājagaha, the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma to a large gathering. We have mentioned these before, so we will tell it briefly. While the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma in the midst of this large crowd, there came a leper named Suppabuddha. His skin was discolored all over. He was extremely poor; a beggar. In short, a miserable beggar arrived. Seeing the crowd from afar, he thought, "Perhaps they are distributing food and drink here (as he was starving). If I go there, I might get some food." So he approached. As he drew near, he realized, "No, no, this is not a place where food is being distributed; this is the Ascetic Gotama preaching the Dhamma. No matter, I must at least listen to the Dhamma." So he sat down at the edge of the crowd. When he sat down, the Buddha scanned the entire crowd with His Buddha-cognition, His Buddha-eye: "Who among those present here is capable of understanding the Dhamma?" There might have been kings, treasurers, university graduates, great scholars—all of them were bypassed. The Buddha spotted that beggar. "He is capable of understanding my Dhamma." What followed next was the discourse the Buddha delivered, which was extraordinary. Nowadays, one does not even get to hear such discourses.

Everyone knows the specialty of the Buddha's style of preaching. It is called "*ānupubbī-kathā*" (gradual discourse). There too, the word "gradual" (*anupubba*) is present. This is to show that even within a single discourse, this gradual order exists. Some people leave it to time and remain inactive, thinking, "Nowadays, no matter what we do, the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) are far, far away."

The Buddha delivered that sermon according to the gradual method of discourse. In the Dhamma, it is recorded thus: "*dāna-kathaṃ, sīla-kathaṃ, sagga-kathaṃ, kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ, okāraṃ, saṅkilesaṃ, nekkhamme ca ānisaṃsaṃ pakāseti*." This is the sequence of the gradual discourse: talk on giving (*dāna-kathā*), talk on virtue (*sīla-kathā*), talk on heaven (*sagga-kathā*)—how by giving and keeping virtue, one can go to heaven, saying something about heavenly fortune. Then, He turns it the other way: regarding sensual pleasures, whether in the human world or heavenly world, He declares the danger (*kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ*), the vileness (*okāraṃ*), and the defiling nature (*saṅkilesaṃ*). Next, He explains the benefit of renunciation (*nekkhamme ca ānisaṃsaṃ*). Thus, He goes down the other side of the mountain. He turns it around, showing that all of this is useless. Now, when speaking of the benefits of renunciation, someone might ask: "What did this beggar have to give? What virtue did he undertake?" The Buddha does not administer precepts the way we do as soon as we arrive! But if there is something to let go of in the mind, first of all, he let go of food. He had come searching for food. It was after letting go of that desire that he sat down there. That too is a great letting go—a giving up. Next, when virtue was spoken of, he must have thought, "Oh, if only I could keep these!" Don't we see that? Then, imagine how he understood its benefits.

At one point, the Buddha Himself saw how the mind of the leper Suppabuddha was becoming prepared. It is described in these words:

"*Yathā bhagavā aññāsi*"—concerning that mind: "*kalla-cittaṃ, mudu-cittaṃ, vinīvaraṇa-cittaṃ, udagga-cittaṃ, pasanna-cittaṃ*." The mind of the leper Suppabuddha became prepared, soft, free from hindrances, uplifted, and brightened. It reached a state of overflowing confidence. It was at that moment that the Buddha preached: "*yāsaṃ buddhānaṃ sāmukkaṃsikā dhamma-desanā*"—the truth-discourse that Buddhas themselves introduce to the world: "*dukkhaṃ, samudayaṃ, nirodhaṃ, maggaṃ*" (suffering, origin, cessation, and path).

Then someone might say: "Look, devotees, they have driven away that miserable wretch!" But look at what happened in the end to that leper Suppabuddha. It is recorded thus: Just as a clean cloth takes dye perfectly, the Buddha's discourse on the Four Noble Truths penetrated his mind completely. As a result, the dust-free, stainless Dhamma-eye arose: "*virajaṃ vītimalaṃ dhammacakkhuṃ udapādi*." Briefly, it is stated as: "*yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*." To many who tell stories about stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), we say: here lies the secret—*yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*. He realized stream-entry in the briefest manner: the Dhamma-eye arose, seeing that "whatever is of a nature to arise, all

that is of a nature to cease." That is to say, in short, he saw the Dhamma of Dependent Co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). We have spoken of these before, so we will not explain them in detail at this moment.

In the end, the crowd dispersed. None of them knew that this leper who had come had attained, from his previous state, the highest state—which, in the words of the Buddha, is greater than the sovereignty of a wheel-turning monarch (*cakkavattī*). None of that crowd knew that he had attained such a state. There are some special terms mentioned regarding this state. That is why I say this person possesses as many as eight degrees! For a stream-enterer, even if he is uneducated, the following is stated in the Suttas about him: "*diṭṭhadhammo, pattadhammo, viditadhammo, pariyogāḷhadhammo, tiṇṇavicikiccho, vigatakathaṅkatho, vesārajjappatto, aparappaccayo satthusāsane*." There are eight degrees there.

Diṭṭhadhammo: he saw Nibbāna, at least for a moment. *Pattadhammo*: he reached Nibbāna, even for a split second. *Viditadhammo*: he understood Nibbāna. *Pariyogāḷhadhammo*: he dived into Nibbāna. On some occasions, we have illustrated this with similes such as the iron club of the giant Nīla—seeing Nibbāna for a moment. He saw the cessation of Preparations (*saṅkhāra-nirodha*). *Tiṇṇavicikiccho*: he crossed over doubt and hesitation regarding past lives, future lives, asking "was there such a thing in the past?" and so forth. *Vigatakathaṅkatho*: he does not need to go around asking others "how, how?". He attained certainty. *Vesārajjappatto*: thus, that beggar became independent, bold. How did that happen? Through that sermon, he became bold in the Dhamma.

"*Aparappaccayo satthusāsane*"—this is a profound statement. It means reaching a state where one no longer needs the support of anyone else in the Teacher's Dispensation. What does that mean? As you all have heard, a stream-enterer cannot be stopped by anyone. It is said "*sattakkhattu-paramo*"—he is bound to become an Arahant within seven births (*jātis*) at most. His suffering (*dukkha*) will definitely be brought to an end. That is how it is if he is negligent. Otherwise, if he exerts himself in this very life, he can reach those higher states. That is why it says "*aparappaccayo satthusāsane*"—he does not need another's support in the Teacher's Dispensation. If support is received, the work is quickened, which is true, but what was necessary has been obtained. He has obtained the principle that leads to Nibbāna. Like a log thrown into a river that eventually reaches the ocean, such is the state of stream-entry. That is the kind of state he attained.

Look, on one hand, at the Buddha's style of preaching. It was not something that happened by accident. Through the gradual discourse (*ānupubbī-kathā*), everything was accomplished. And it also happened in an instant. Through this, I am presenting the practical nature of the Dhamma. Some people, as I mentioned, say: "We have no perfections (*pāramī*). Our monks say we do not have triple-rooted rebirth, and so forth"—a bundle of confusions. You must not think of any of this. If this Dispensation is preserved through practice, we said these few words to tell you to engage in these tasks without fear. In some places, as we say briefly in the *Bāhiya Sutta* and others, when it

was said "in the seen, let there be only the seen" and so on, he was already an Arahant. Even if we cannot see it, the Buddha, through His "knowledge of the inclinations and underlying tendencies of beings" (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*), sees the inner potential within every individual in a wonderful way. It is according to this that the Buddha preaches. Although He did so for the leper Suppabuddha, in some places we see it happening instantly. Even if we do not speak of the reasons at length, we can mention them briefly as follows.

There are four main terms mentioned regarding the realization of the Dhamma in this Dispensation. Four types of individuals are mentioned: *ugghaṭitaññū, vipañcitaññū, neyya, padaparama*. *Ugghaṭitaññū* refers to one who, just like a door opening the moment the latch is turned, realizes the Dhamma through a very brief discourse. People like Bāhiya Dārucīriya are highly developed; they need only a slight hint. Then they attain everything. *Vipañcitaññū* is the next category. They require a somewhat longer Dhamma discourse. It is only when a detailed Dhamma discourse is delivered that they understand the Dhamma.

"*Neyya*" means those who need to be led by the hand, as it were, to be shown Nibbāna, through teacher's guidance, association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), listening to the Dhamma, and so on. Only when these come together does the *neyya* person realize the Dhamma at some point. The category called *padaparama* cannot, for some reason, attain the paths and fruits in this life. But they do not need to sit around looking at their horoscopes! Even if such a person has learned something—*padaparama* means one for whom what has been learned will at some point in the future assist in the penetration of the paths and fruits. From this, it is clear that not a single person is cast aside by the Buddha.

"*Ugghaṭitaññū, vipañcitaññū, neyya, padaparama*"—all of this is said to give you courage, not to criticize anyone else. Such is the situation in the Dispensation. There is no end to the various Sutta discourses that show how fruitful the practice of the Dispensation is.

If we bring out another valuable Sutta discourse at this moment, the *Bhūmija Sutta* of the Majjhima Nikāya is one such. As shown in the *Bhūmija Sutta*, Ven. Bhūmija went to the house of Prince Jayasena in Rājagaha. Prince Jayasena did not have much faith. After exchanging pleasantries and arranging a seat, Prince Jayasena engaged in conversation and said: "Some ascetics and brahmins make this kind of claim: 'Even if one leads the holy life (*brahmacariya*)—which means the practice of the Dispensation—with a desire (for results), it is fruitless, not productive. Likewise, even if one engages in it without a desire, it is also fruitless. Even if one engages in the holy life on that path with and without a desire, it is fruitless. Next, even if one engages in it neither with nor without a desire, it is still fruitless.' What does Ven. Bhūmija say about this?" Then Ven. Bhūmija said: "Prince, this is not a statement I received directly from the mouth of the Blessed One. I do not know how the Blessed One explains this. But I think that if the Blessed One were asked, He would say something like this." According to his own understanding, Ven. Bhūmija told Prince Jayasena: "According to my view, this is how

our Teacher would put it. If someone leads the holy life in an improper manner, on an improper path, even if he does so with a desire, it is fruitless. Even if he does so without a desire, it is fruitless. If he engages in the holy life in an improper manner with and without a desire, it is fruitless. If he leads the holy life in an improper manner neither with nor without a desire, it is still fruitless."

Then he states the other side: "But if someone engages in the holy life in the proper manner, with a desire, there is a fruit. Even if he leads the holy life without a desire, he can still obtain a fruit. Even if he does so with and without a desire, he can still obtain a fruit. Even if he does so neither with nor without a desire, if the proper path is correct, the fruit (will come)." When this was said, Prince Jayasena was pleased and said: "If it is stated in this way, this Teacher of yours deserves to be placed on the heads of all teachers living today!" Expressing his appreciation, the prince offered the tray of rice brought for him to Ven. Bhūmija. Having partaken of the alms, Ven. Bhūmija went to the Buddha in the evening and related this description: "In the morning, I went to the house of Prince Jayasena. The prince said such and such a thing. I gave such a reply. I hope that in saying so, I did not fall into the error of stating what the Blessed One did not say." He said very humbly, "I believe I presented the Blessed One's view. Do you think I made any mistake?" He asked with great faith. The Blessed One said: "Ah, Bhūmija! No mistake was made. What you stated is exactly what I approve of." To make it even more striking, the Buddha then gave several similes to demonstrate this principle. This is how He explained it in more detail:

In whatever dispensation—you devotees know the Noble Eightfold Path—think of its opposite: wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), wrong intention (*micchā-saṅkappa*), wrong speech (*micchā-vācā*), wrong action (*micchā-kammanta*), wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*), wrong effort (*micchā-vāyāma*), wrong mindfulness (*micchā-sati*), and wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*). In a dispensation that has a practice leading from wrong view to wrong concentration, even if a disciple leads the holy life with a desire, there is no fruit. Even if he leads the holy life without a desire, there is no fruit. Even if he leads it with and without a desire, there is no fruit. It is fruitless. Even if he leads the holy life neither with nor without a desire, there is no fruit. What is the cause? The word *ayoniso* (unwisely / improperly) is mentioned there. This word is somewhat difficult to translate into Sinhala. Briefly, *ayoniso* means in an improper manner, in a wrong way. This will become clearer from the similes. As we proceed, what is this improper manner? Because it is a practice starting from wrong view and ending in wrong concentration, whether there is desire or not, there is no fruit.

Then He gives some similes: "Just as, Bhūmija, if someone wanting sesame oil piles sand in a trough, sprinkles it with water, churns it with water, and squeezes it, no matter how much he squeezes it with a desire, or squeezes it without a desire, or squeezes it both with and without a desire, or squeezes it neither with nor without a desire—he cannot get oil by squeezing sand. What is the cause? He did it *ayoniso*—in an improper manner, by a wrong method. Therefore, no matter how much he squeezes the sand, no oil comes." Then the second simile: "Just as, Bhūmija, if someone wanting milk pulls a young cow by the horn to milk her, even if he pulls the cow's horn with a desire, or does so without a

desire, or does so both with and without, or does so neither with nor without—no milk comes by pulling the horn. Such is the effort of those people." Since that effort starting from wrong view is improper, there is no fruit.

He gives a third simile as well: "Just as, Bhūmija, if someone wanting butter pours water into a jar and churns it with a churning-stick for however long, whether he does so with a desire, or without a desire, or both with and without, or neither with nor without, he cannot obtain butter from the water poured into that jar. Such is the effort of those people." The fourth simile: "If someone wanting fire"—you know how they obtained fire in those days—"rubs two pieces of wood together, placing a wet, green piece of wood on top and rubbing it and rubbing it, whether he does so with a desire, or without a desire, or both with and without, or neither with nor without, no fire is produced." These four similes demonstrate the fruitlessness and failure of the practice of those ascetics and brahmins who hold wrong view, and so forth. Next, He shows: "In whatever dispensation right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) are found, in that dispensation, if one leads the holy life, whether he does so with a desire, or without a desire, or both with and without, or neither with nor without, that fruit is definitely obtained."

Then the other similes: "If someone wanting oil places sesame flour in an oil-trough, mixes it with water, and rubs and squeezes it with a desire, or does so without a desire, or both with and without, or neither with nor without, oil emerges from that sesame flour; he can obtain oil." Next, He states the second simile in reverse: "If someone wanting milk pulls a cow that has a young calf at the place where milk can be obtained—you know where that is, the udder, the teat. He pulls precisely from the teat. If he pulls from the teat, whether he does so with a desire, or without a desire, or both with and without, or neither with nor without, milk definitely comes." The third simile—you devotees can infer the rest of it. In brief, these are the similes. The simile the Buddha gives about butter: "If someone pours curd into a jar and churns it with a churning-stick, he can produce butter from it." The fourth simile: "If someone wanting fire rubs a dry stick with another dry stick, he can produce fire from it." Having given these similes, the Buddha says to Ven. Bhūmija: "Bhūmija, if you had told this much to Prince Jayasena, the prince would have expressed great appreciation and, according to that appreciation, would have practiced under you." When this was said, Ven. Bhūmija very humbly said: "How could such similes occur to me, Blessed One, as they occur to the Blessed One?" This is that Sutta.

Pious devotees, all of this was said because on a day like today, we must remind ourselves of this Noble Eightfold Path in this Dispensation, which goes from right view to right concentration. What is the cause? What is the cause? In the Sambuddha Sāsana, that side is declining, that side is declining. "It is not possible; in this era, it is not possible to realize Nibbāna." In that way, various forces have arisen that discourage those who are enthusiastic. Not from outside, not from other religions, but from within ourselves, from our own people, these things emerge. That is why I am saying these few

words. Those who have been discouraged in that manner come and tell us too that such and such was said in various sermons. That is why I am saying this. Such is the Dispensation that lies before us. It is of no use to go on boasting about the past, saying: "Those times were not like today; one cannot even dry a mat of paddy now because Arahants are flying through the sky." Going on repeating such stories with exaggerations will not do. Where we can act, starting from this very step, we must exert ourselves to make the journey. What is relevant to that is what we have stated in this Dispensation. This Dhamma is preached to lay devotees. Lay devotees must by no means think: "We cannot get close to these things." What we must recall is the lay disciple Bhanduka we mentioned earlier, who was an Anāgāmī (Non-returner) and a possessor of higher knowledges (*abhiññā*). During the Buddha's time, there were lay Anāgāmīs like Citta the Householder, Hatthaka of Āḷavī, and others. There were those who walked the path of absorption (*jhāna*) and paths and fruits, such as Nandamātā of Veḷukaṇḍaka, Nakulamātā, Kāpilānī, and others.

Furthermore, consider how this lay practice is structured. In the past, the lifestyle of those Buddhist devotees was not complex like this. They were people who lived a simple lifestyle of farming, and so forth. Our books record that especially in the evening of life, there were those who observed virtue (*sīla*) on all four Poya days. So, there is the lay five precepts and the Poya eight precepts. Lay five precepts and Poya eight precepts. What is this Poya eight precepts? This is not a performance where a group of people dress up nicely in white, walk in a procession, and act until a photograph is taken. What is the depth in this? What is recorded in the ancient books is that the lay devotee makes a great sacrifice on the day they undertake the Poya eight precepts. Even when there was great hardship and work, even in those times, that lay devotee would incline toward the practice of an Arahant. That is why it is written in those books: "Today, this night and this day, I shall live in accordance with the practice of the Arahants." The Poya eight precepts contain precisely this effort to live in accordance with their practice, even to a small extent. Many do not even know that. While keeping the Poya eight precepts, the lay devotee gradually—either at the end of life, when freed from children, or when viewing it as another trouble—stops using money, and so on, and observes the ten precepts of a householder (*gahaṭṭha-dasa-sīla*). In the past, the term *anagārika* (homeless one) was also applied to the Saṅgha. One can live as an *anagārika*. By undertaking the ten precepts and proceeding further in this way, we once gave a simile to show that it is from within the lay devotee that the monk emerges. It is from the lay caterpillar that the ascetic butterfly will one day fly into the sky. Pious devotees, do not feel bad when I say "lay caterpillar." Why do I say lay caterpillar? That caterpillar's movement is slow. Its appearance is also not so beautiful. But at some point, there is a great wonder in this world. Watching how a butterfly emerges from a caterpillar is wondrous. Similarly, when the form of a monk emerges from a murderer, a beggar, or a person like that leper, it does not happen just casually. It is not because robes are available in shops. It is as an internal transformation—yes, it is through an internal transformation that one becomes a butterfly. Butterfly wings do not emerge from a caterpillar for no reason.

Nowadays, there are various confusions in this country, such as the practice of temporary ordination for a week as a business. We have said that through this, the pure idea regarding renunciation (*nekkhamma*) is increasingly lost. With various business ideas, they ordain people for a week or two. The tempering, the value of this is lost. They destroy its value. That is why I say this, not to blame anyone who does so. If necessary, there is the ten precepts of a householder (*gahaṭṭha-dasa-sīla*). If at some point one can break all those ties, abandon those connections, and ordain, that indeed is renunciation (*nekkhamma*). That is the moment—sometimes we use this as a simile: cattle that have been penned in a stall for a long night are waiting to see when the door will be opened; the moment the door is opened, they break out and run. Such is the person who has the intention of renunciation (*nekkhamma-cetanā*). At whatever point those basic requirements are fulfilled, they break out of the lay pen and ordain. That is why it is called "*pabbajjā*". The word *pabbajjā* is there. 'Vaja' (pen/stall) is a word that designates a stall. 'Pra' is a word indicating movement. *Pabbajjā* means breaking out of the pen. It is not an act of indiscipline. Breaking out of the lay pen, one goes to ordination, which is like the open air. That is why it is called "two wings." Taking only the bowl and robe—especially in those days, the monks who observed the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*) did not have many things. Even that saying demonstrated the beauty of that practice; it has been shown in those similes. We told the story of the butterfly to show that. Nowadays, the word "butterfly" is used in the opposite sense! Be that as it may, we showed those similes to display the greatness of this practice.

If necessary, lay disciple Bhanduka could have been ordained in India before being brought here. But why was he brought as a lay disciple? To show, to show this relationship. It is from the laity that the monk is born. It is from them that Arahants are born. They do not just fall from the sky. Many people have forgotten that. This is said not to diminish respect for the Saṅgha, but to make you think of the practical aspect. We think: "Well, we are lay people, we cannot do it. Let us keep doing the work that belongs to lay people." If we remain like that, we will be in saṃsāra forever. Constantly. In every sermon, we say: bring out the perception of "I can" (*haki-saññā*). The perception of "I can." But what we hear most in the country is the perception of "I cannot" (*bāri-saññā*). "We cannot do it, and you cannot do it either. If we cannot do it, how can you do it?" That is the kind of talk going around the country. If I do not say this on a day like today, there seems to be no one else to say it. That is why I speak thus. This is the kind of Dispensation we have before us. At least this group of devotees must try to walk on this path of Dhamma.

There is another point to be made. The factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*)—four factors that help in becoming a stream-enterer are mentioned in the Dhamma: "*sappurisa-saṃsevo, saddhamma-savanaṃ, yoniso-manasikāro, dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*." These help in stream-entry: association with superior persons (*sappurisa*), listening to the True Dhamma (*saddhamma-savanaṃ*), wise attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*), and practice in accordance with the Dhamma (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*). Association with superior persons: the Buddha is the greatest superior person, the noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). Next, listening to the True Dhamma: at least

one has to hear a four-line stanza. Without the association of a Buddha, a disciple cannot become an Arahant. Next is *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). According to that, one must apply proper reflection. Next is *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*—leading one's life in accordance with the Dhamma. In this way, we see the greatness of associating with superior persons. Noble friendship: when Ven. Ānanda estimated this as half of the holy life, how did the Buddha correct that undervaluation? He said: "The entire holy life is association with noble friends." The noble friend is indeed that very same superior person (*sappurisa*).

To impress this further on your minds, we have given various similes in some sermons. One is the simile of the target board. Those who listened to the sermons in those days might remember. There are six rare occurrences that monks recite at the conclusion of protective chants (*paritta*): "*dullabho buddhupādo lokasmiṃ, dullabho manussatta-paṭilābho, dullabhā khaṇa-sampatti, dullabhā pabbajjā, dullabhaṃ saddhamma-savanaṃ, dullabho sappurisa-saṃsevo*." We painted a small picture of these six occurrences to keep them in mind. Think of a target board. In those days, we used to practice shooting at a target. Nowadays, a marksman shoots. Target boards can have various colors, striking to the mind, with one colored circle inside another. The final aim is directed at the center.

If we show these six points in that way, indeed we all accept that the arising of a Buddha is rare. It is extremely rare. It is rare beyond imagination: "*dullabho buddhupādo lokasmiṃ*." But even rarer than that is obtaining a human birth (*manussatta-paṭilābho*). We must understand that a human existence obtained during the time of a Buddha's arising is that next circle on the board. Obtaining a human existence during the time of a Buddha's arising is extremely rare. Next, even if one obtains a human existence, obtaining the opportunity of the moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*)—being born in a region where one can understand the Dhamma without being blind, mute, deaf, or having other such disabilities, and obtaining a wise human existence—which is explained as the eight wrong times (*akkhaṇa*), obtaining the true opportunity of the moment free from those eight wrong times is the next point: "*dullabhā khaṇa-sampatti*." Within that opportunity of the moment, obtaining ordination (*pabbajjā*)—amidst a thousand difficulties, with great effort, obtaining that ordination we spoke of. Even if one obtains ordination, listening to the True Dhamma (*saddhamma-savanaṃ*) that helps toward Nibbāna is also just as rare. Next, where does that Dhamma come from? That association with superior persons (*sappurisa-saṃseva*) is ultimately the most wonderful, extremely rare thing mentioned in the Dhamma—that association with noble friends that helps one to hear the Dhamma. It is when that is obtained that one can gather all other practices. That is why "*sappurisa-saṃsevo*" is placed at the beginning.

Therefore, you devotees must contemplate walking on this path of Dhamma, relying on this association with noble friends. They say that in this Dispensation, they are elevating it more and more. The Dispensation can be preserved through external things and external activities. That is true, it seems to rise. But indeed, this is something that must

happen from within. At the very beginning, we declared that entire stanza spoken by the Buddha:

Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ,

akkhātāro tathāgatā;

Paṭipannā pamokkhanti,

jhāyino mārabandhanā.

You yourselves must do what must be done. The Buddha preached the Dhamma. Arahant Mahinda brought the Dhamma preached by the Buddha and preached it to us. Other Theros preached the Dhamma preached by Arahant Mahinda. That Dhamma goes along, passed from hand to hand like a basket. But if we do not put it into practice...?

That is the deep meaning of this stanza: "*Tumhehi kiccaṃ*"—you yourselves must do what must be done. "*Akkhātāro tathāgatā*"—not only the Tathāgatas, but other preachers too only point it out. Next, "*paṭipannā pamokkhanti*"—only those who walk in this practice attain Nibbāna. Not by merely committing it to memory. If lay devotees walk in that practice at some level, as we mentioned, and if that is the target, then when keeping the daily five precepts and the Poya eight precepts, a shadow of the practice of an Arahant emerges. In that way, gradually, next comes the householder's ten precepts. Next is ordination. This is a journey that goes step by step. The Buddha has often declared, in discourses like the *Anamatagga Saṃyutta*, that bringing an end to this suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra through that path is an extremely rare thing. Why did sixty monks become Arahants upon hearing a single discourse? Because the Buddha described the danger and length of this saṃsāra with unimaginable similes.

When the length of an eon (*kalpa*) is described, it is astonishing. It is terrifying. You devotees must have heard: if there is a solid stone mountain, one league (*yojana*) in length, width, and height, and a person comes once every hundred years and wipes it with a piece of silk cloth, the mountain would be worn away by that wiping, but the eon would not yet have ended. How amazing! Such a long time. That is why the Buddha says: because of ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*), you and I have been traveling for an extremely long time. If the arising of a Buddha is rare, if the human existence obtained through that arising is rare, if that human existence is complete with the opportunity of the moment, if ordination has been obtained, and if the Dhamma is heard—then what must be done next is what we must contemplate. Accordingly, when we speak of the Buddha on a valuable day like today, since He said in His own words that the offering of practice (*paṭipatti-pūjā*) is more valuable than material offering (*āmisa-pūjā*), even today we must think not in terms of this material side. We must offer to Arahant Mahinda precisely through practice.

If, through these few words, you devotees have gained some courage and determination to carry this Dispensation into the future, I consider that as the fruit of this sermon. Today, this pious gathering spent the day observing a valuable virtue and engaging in

Dhamma-meditation. You have heard from us a sermon that helps in all activities, including tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Relying on this sermon, without being discouraged, walking on this path of Dhamma, may all of you receive the strength and power to quickly approach the noble and supreme deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship. While praying thus, if there are any beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who wish to rejoice in this merit of listening to the Dhamma, through that rejoicing, may they attain peace in the supreme deathless Nibbāna through the Bodhi of their aspiration. Let us share these merits by reciting these stanzas:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #66

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.23)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Sududdasaṃ sunipuṇaṃ,

yatthakāmānipātinaṃ;

Cittaṃ rakkhetha medhāvī,

cittaṃ guttaṃ sukhāvahaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 36 (Cittavagga)

Dear Listeners,

For beings wandering in saṃsāra for an infinite time, the extremely rare opportunity to bring an end to the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra arises only when a Fully Self-Awakened One, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, appears in the world. Everyone who properly understands the value of this rare opportunity strives and makes an effort to reap the maximum benefit from the rare human existence they have obtained during the era of a Buddha's arising. To whatever extent one feels spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra, to that same extent, one diligently goes in search of the supreme bliss of Nibbāna. Furthermore, if there is any sacrifice to be made for that purpose, they strive to make it completely. Such people seek the shortest possible path to fulfill their aspiration—their diligent aspiration for Nibbāna. It is for such individuals that the Blessed Buddha, on certain occasions, enabled the realization of Nibbāna through a brief sermon. The verse we have chosen as our theme today is one such verse. The introductory story behind it is as follows.

There was a certain treasurer (*seṭṭhi*) living in the city of Sāvatthī. He went to his close, associated monk and asked, "I need to escape from this suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra; please tell me a good method for this." This monk, perhaps thinking at the level of the treasurer, gave him advice: "Then give alms. Offer robes to the Sangha. Serve them with

the four requisites. Also, divide your income into three parts: use one part for your business and industries, use another part to support your wife and children, and dedicate the third part to the Sāsana." He gave advice in this manner. The treasurer acted accordingly and asked the monk again, "Is there anything more than this that would help me cross over this saṃsāra?" Then the monk declared, "Guard well the five precepts together with the three refuges." Excellent; having completed that as well, the treasurer asked again, "Is there anything higher than that?" "Then observe the ten precepts," the monk said. When he went back and asked, "Is there anything even higher to do?", he was told, "Then renounce the household life and go forth into monkhood."

In this manner, the treasurer went forth into the Sāsana. But despite having ordained, the teacher (*ācariya*) this newly ordained monk received was an Abhidhammika monk who had reached the further shore of the Abhidhamma. His preceptor (*upajjhāya*) was a Vinayadhara monk who had reached the further shore of the Vinaya. Both of these senior monks continuously taught Abhidhamma and Vinaya to this newly ordained monk at every opportunity. Now, learning is indeed necessary for a newly ordained monk. However, to this monk, who had ordained with the hope of diligently bringing an end to suffering (*dukkha*), this felt like a burden. He felt that his teacher and preceptor were endlessly talking about Abhidhamma and Vinaya all the time, without giving much help for his meditation. Due to the weariness that arose from this, this monk thought, "I renounced the household life and ordained with the intention of ending suffering (*dukkha*), but now there isn't even room to stretch out my hands." What he meant was that there was no room for things like meditation. Having fallen into this state, he became disillusioned and then thought, "It is better for me to return to the household life and try to realize Nibbāna as best as I can." Disillusioned with the monastic life, he did not tell anyone about it. Losing his previous enthusiasm for his duties and vows, he just stared blankly wherever he looked, and stood still wherever he stood. His body also grew weak because of his dejected mind. Seeing this, the novice monks (*sāmaṇeras*) asked him, "What is the reason for this change?" After this monk explained the reason, they informed the teacher and preceptor as well. These teachers and preceptors then took the monk to the Blessed Buddha. When the Blessed Buddha asked about the matter, this monk declared, "Venerable Sir, I ordained with the intention of bringing an end to the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra. My teacher and preceptor constantly teach me Abhidhamma and Vinaya. I felt that I have no room even to stretch my hands. Therefore, I want to return to the lay life."

Then the Blessed Buddha asked this monk, "Very well, monk, there is no need for many things. Can you guard just one thing?" When asked what that was, the Blessed Buddha declared, "Monk, if you guard only this mind, everything else will automatically be guarded." Having stated this, He uttered the Dhamma verse we chose as our theme earlier:

Sududdasaṃ sunipuṇaṃ,

yatthakāmanipātinaṃ;

Cittaṃ rakkhetha medhāvī,

cittaṃ guttaṃ sukhāvahaṃ.

The meaning of this verse is: *medhāvī* means the wise person. This wise person guards the mind which is *sududdasaṃ*—extremely difficult to see, and *sunipuṇaṃ*—extremely subtle; *cittaṃ rakkhetha*—guards the mind. Why? *Cittaṃ guttaṃ sukhāvahaṃ*—because a guarded mind brings happiness. At first glance, the verse seems very simple. Yet, it is said that upon hearing this very verse, that monk attained stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). Therefore, this must have occurred because there is a certain depth in this verse. Let us now first reflect on this story, and then direct our attention to the meaning contained in this verse. From the story itself, we can see that this monk, due to his enthusiasm to diligently realize Nibbāna, felt a sense of weariness and distress regarding the teachings of his teacher and preceptor. Perhaps those venerable monks showed more concern for books and mere academic knowledge than for meditation.

The Blessed One has declared in a certain discourse: "Monks, all those who are newly ordained in this Sāsana, who have newly entered this Dhamma-Vinaya, should be established in the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*). They must practice the four foundations of mindfulness." From this, we can see that the foundation of going forth is the four foundations of mindfulness. If one engages in other activities without paying much attention to the four foundations of mindfulness, it becomes an obstacle for someone who has ordained with great diligence and enthusiasm to realize Nibbāna. That is why the Blessed Buddha, as a relief to that monk, asked, "Can you do just one thing?" Thus, from this story, we can see that the Blessed Buddha, with great skill in means (*upāya-kosalla*) and compassion, through a certain masterly device, must have directed this monk's mind towards meditative reflection by means of this verse. For, what is expected from all those things taught as Abhidhamma is to demonstrate the extreme subtlety of this mind.

The mind is something difficult to see. Its nature is extremely subtle. What books and other teachings attempt to show, a meritorious meditator (*yogāvacara*)—someone who has turned towards meditation—realizes through their own direct experience. Through meditative reflection, through *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention)—which means wise reflection—a meditator understands the extremely subtle nature of this mind and that it is difficult to see, grasping the very essence of the entire Abhidhamma. Furthermore, *yatthakāmanipātinaṃ* means that the mind alights on whatever object it pleases. That is the nature of the mind; it falls upon whatever object it desires. *Kāmanipātinaṃ*—it is precisely to prevent this falling onto whatever object it pleases that various Vinaya rules and regulations have been laid down.

Various disciplinary rules are prescribed for the restraint of body and speech. Thus, the Blessed Buddha declared that it is this very mind—which has the nature of alighting on whatever object it pleases, denoted as *yatthakāmanipātinaṃ*, which is the essence of the Vinaya—that must be guarded. It must have been because he contemplated the meaning

of that verse deeply that the monk was able to attain even the realization of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*).

Although ordinary worldly people exert themselves regarding the body, they do not direct their attention to the importance of the mind. Yet, this entire bondage of saṃsāra rests upon the mind. What is done through meditation is the training of this mind, the guarding of this mind. The factor necessary for guarding that mind is mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*)—which means mindfulness and proper wisdom, or mindfulness and awareness. When the mind that runs to the past and the future, and similarly runs towards greed and hatred, is brought to the present and strengthened with equanimity and concentration, it is only then that one can understand the true nature of this life and the world through insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). To guard the mind, the Blessed Buddha has first of all pointed out mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). For,

it is said, "mindfulness is the guardian" (*sati ārakkhikā*). Just like a driver who is there to protect a chariot, mindfulness is the guardian of the mind. It is called mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*): mindfulness and wisdom, mindfulness and awareness. To the extent that one develops this mindfulness and clear comprehension, one can eliminate the scattered nature of the mind and attain concentration (*samādhi*).

As taught in the Dhamma, by developing mindfulness and awareness in daily life, one first establishes concentration. Next, one realizes the three characteristics: *anicca* (impermanent), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anattā* (not-self). To realize this, one uses these very things that are closest to oneself: the body, feeling (*vedanā*), the mind, and the objects of the mind—by maintaining the mind upon them. Because of the instigation of defilements, the mind always looks to the past and the future. Keeping the mind that runs to the past and future anchored in the present, making it concentrated, one then observes how everything arises, exists, and vanishes. If we look more closely at what we call "impermanence" (*anicca*) in the world, we see everything arising; there is a certain phase we regard as its existence, and then it fades away. There are only these three phases. Not a single thing is permanent. This

one who dwells with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) regarding the body, feeling (*vedanā*), the mind, and mental objects, understands the subtlety of this mind. That is why the Blessed Buddha declared that what is done through mindfulness and clear comprehension, even in ordinary postures, is: when walking, he knows "I am walking"; when standing, he knows "I am standing"; when sitting, he knows "I am sitting"; when lying down, he knows "I am lying down"—thus becoming aware of daily postures in a very simple manner. It is being aware with mindfulness and proper wisdom. Furthermore, in whatever way his body is positioned, he understands it as such. By always observing how one's body is positioned and how it moves, the impermanent (*anicca*) nature of this body, of feelings (*vedanā*), of the mind, and of mental objects, and their nature of arising and passing away, automatically begins to be seen. For this, reflection (*manasikāra*) is particularly helpful. Reflection coupled with mindfulness and clear comprehension is necessary.

Here lies an important point. Generally, when there is mindfulness and clear comprehension, one is able to see feelings (*vedanā*) and so forth arising, persisting, and ceasing. Similarly, one sees perceptions (*saññā*)—which we regard as recognition—arising, persisting, and passing away. Even thoughts are seen arising, persisting, and passing away. However, it is difficult for a person to gain this understanding all at once. Why? Because of the deceitful nature of the mind. In many instances, we know how the mind operates; some people feel, "Now I am thinking." Yet, it is as if thoughts occur without one even realizing it. Even when one thinks "I am thinking," thoughts just happen. One is carried away by the mind.

This mind is just like a wild bull. Led by defilements—according to greed, hatred, or delusion—this mind runs very far along some object without us even knowing it. Therefore, one can practice reflection only by being established in a certain level of concentration (*samādhi*). Now, a running wild bull cannot be caught and stopped all at once. A certain momentum is required. For that, there is a general method through the "Four Protective Meditations" (*caturārakkhā bhāvanā*): the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), foulness (*asubha*), and the mindfulness of death (*maraṇassati*), by practicing and training in a certain simple meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). For this, a short word is used as an aid. If it is the recollection of the Buddha, one of the virtues of the Buddha is recalled. By bringing this to mind at all times, the scattered nature of the mind is stopped and the mind is calmed. Some wholesome object is used for this purpose. One strives to concentrate the mind on a wholesome object. When one repeatedly exerts effort to stop the running mind or calm the scattered mind using a short word, one gradually realizes that this can be done more and more quickly. Then, through the recollection of the Buddha, faith (*saddhā*) increases in a person. Through loving-kindness, one gains the strength to suppress the thoughts of hatred that constantly arise. Through the meditation on foulness, one gains the ability to subdue thoughts of lust. Through the mindfulness of death, spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) is aroused, urging one to practice diligently. These are the special qualities present in the Four Protective Meditations. By using a short word as an aid for each of them—for instance, for loving-kindness: "May all beings be well and happy!" When these are practiced in daily life, whenever the mind runs to unnecessary things, one unifies the mind with the thought: "May they be well and happy!"

In that way, the person who has established that concentration is then able to reflect wisely by using that level of concentration. *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) is generally explained as wise reflection. Otherwise, it is reflecting on things according to the actual origin from which various things arise in the world. In the ordinary world, the Blessed Buddha has compared these perceptions (*saññā*) to a mirage; there is a tendency in our minds to run after these perceptions. Why? Because we take that distant mirage to be something real. But the true understanding regarding it is that from where we are looking, it is merely something that appears. It has a deceptive nature. This is revealed by understanding that this is a certain delusion connected to one's own mind, or rather, to one's own eye. In the same way, through *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), through wise reflection, one is able to escape from the delusion called ignorance (*avijjā*)

and from this tight bondage called craving (*taṇhā*). The method used for this wise reflection is mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānassati*).

The Blessed Buddha has taught, has declared, mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānassati*) for the purpose of cutting off distracting thoughts (*vitakka*)—for cutting off thoughts. One's in-breath and out-breath are something that is always with oneself. Applying mindfulness to that, mindfulness of breathing means the mindfulness directed towards the in-breath and out-breath. One establishes that mindfulness at the point where the breath touches. While constantly bringing the mind back to that spot, one gradually subdues the scattered things, the scattered mind. Most often, the mind scatters along the objects that come to the five senses: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. Those objects generally try to pull the mind away, according to greed, hatred, or delusion. What, then, is the device to stop that running? Generally, regarding what is seen, without taking their signs (*nimitta*) and going far, the meditator (*yogāvacara*) briefly reflects twice: "a form, a form," "a sound, a sound," thereby cutting off the running mind right there, or breaking it, and bringing it back to the meditation subject, to mindfulness of breathing. In that manner, through reflection, the mind that runs after perceptions (*saññā*) can be kept within the meditation subject itself. Distracting thoughts (*vitakka*) grow in accordance with those perceptions, and thoughts grow. It is through those thoughts that defilements are dragged in.

The Blessed Buddha has declared five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) that obstruct the concentration of the mind and obstruct realization. They are: sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), which refers to sensual thoughts; ill-will (*byāpāda*), which refers to thoughts of hatred; sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), which refers to laziness of mind and sleepiness; restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), which refers to the scattered nature of the mind and regret; and doubt (*vicikicchā*), which refers to indecisiveness. It is through these that one becomes subject to them. It is precisely these hindrances that drag in those distracting thoughts. Therefore, it is only when these hindrances are absent that the mind becomes properly concentrated. A wholesome meditation object (*kusala-ārammaṇa*) is helpful for this. Thus, a person who has developed some concentration by practicing the Four Protective Meditations is able, while practicing mindfulness of breathing, to gradually stop the running mind and understand the internal state of this mind, the subtlety of the mind.

The reason why the mind was described here as subtle and difficult to see is that there is a certain quality in this mind. The Blessed Buddha has shown consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to be like an illusion (*māyā*). This is an extremely deep matter. An illusion means showing something that does not exist as if it exists. An illusionist or a magician shows something non-existent as existing by conjuring it up. There is such a power in our minds. It shows a non-existent thing as if it were an existing thing. It is because of this illusion that the mind is difficult to see. How is this revealed? Only a Buddha points out the way to this. When that understanding regarding the nature of this world and life matures through insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), one must realize: what is actually here that we have taken as "I" and "mine"? It is only a collection of mental

phenomena (name-factors) and physical phenomena (form-factors)—only Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). The mental phenomena (name-factors) are mentioned as: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Chiefly, there are these five. "Name" (*nāma*) refers to certain powers within the mind itself that help us identify something. Feeling (*vedanā*), as everyone knows, is experiencing. Next, perception (*saññā*) means recognition; if there is a certain experiencing, there is a corresponding recognition. Next, there is also a volitional power (*cetanā*) in our minds regarding what should be done with them. Contact (*phassa*) is the awareness of their impingement or collision. Next is attention (*manasikāra*), which is reflection. If we can present these five factors as an analogy, they are just like the five fingers of the hand. Feeling (*vedanā*) is like the little finger. Perception (*saññā*) is like the ring finger. Intention (*cetanā*) is like the middle finger. Contact (*phassa*) is like the index finger. Attention (*manasikāra*) is like the thumb.

So, among the five mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) present here, we already mentioned attention (*manasikāra*). Attention is helpful and applicable for understanding the true reality of this world, or rather, of life. If we take an analogy for this, we know that in some murder or criminal cases, one of the accused arrested as defendants has to be granted a pardon if there is no other evidence. If no one else comes forward to give evidence, because the case would otherwise be dismissed, one of the defendants is pardoned in court itself—like a state pardon—and the facts are obtained from him. When the testifying is finally over, it is revealed that he himself was also involved in the crime. However, somehow the case is proven and the truth is uncovered. It is in this very way that we have to understand Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Yet, what helps us untangle this is that very factor called attention (*manasikāra*). We compared it to the thumb. According to this analogy, when we think about the functioning of the fingers of our hand, we can see that the thumb maintains a relationship with the little finger, the ring finger, the middle finger, and the index finger—with every one of them. The thumb is the one that can bear witness to them. In the same way, there is a power in this factor of attention (*manasikāra*). Attention directs itself to feeling (*vedanā*), to intention, and to contact (*phassa*), and by directing itself to these, it can understand their true reality. This is precisely what the Blessed Buddha highlighted. Thus, we understand what are called Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) not by bringing in an external witness, but through this very factor of attention (*manasikāra*). However, the difference here is that ordinary worldly people reflect in the wrong way. In the Dhamma, this is called *ayoneso manasikāra* (unwise attention)—wrong reflection. Now, if we consider

what we said earlier, a deer thinks of the mirage, regards its appearance, as water in the distance. Thinking it is water, the deer runs. But a wise person considers, "This is merely an appearance due to a defect in my eyesight and due to atmospheric and climatic causes." Thus he does not run, but stops right there. Having stopped, he investigates the matter.

In the same way, reflecting on the very place where this arises is what is taken as *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). This itself is called wise reflection—proper reflection. In that manner, even though we utilize the mental phenomenon (*nāma-dhamma*) of

attention (*manasikāra*) here, it is not used in an *ayoniso* (unwise) way, but in a *yoniso* (wise) way. This is just like after a defendant is pardoned in order to give evidence in a case: that person is now a witness for the state. He is not like before when he gave false evidence; now he speaks the absolute truth. It is under obligation that he receives such a pardon, to declare the complete truth. It is having promised, and having been made to promise, that such a pardon is granted to someone. In the same way, here too, attention is applied with *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) for the sake of realizing the truth. It is precisely through attention utilized in this way that we strive to arouse insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). When we reflect on the manner in which these arise and pass away, we see that there is nothing here to be grasped. What is here is only a collection of mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*), and what is called physical phenomenon (*rūpa-dhamma*)—which is a conjuring up by the elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). This is all that is present here: a collection of mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) and a few physical phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*) (Name-and-Form).

As this realization matures, the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)—the tightly held view of 'I' and 'mine'—is gradually relinquished; as the Blessed Buddha declared, this must be realized by oneself, individually. As long as this is not realized, this bondage of saṃsāra, this bondage of kamma, persists. So terrifying is the nature of this saṃsāra that there are accumulated in our minds the seeds of kamma gathered over an infinite, long period in this saṃsāra. So powerful are those kamma-seeds that they repeatedly bring about rounds of retribution. Those kammas committed in the past arise through our mental continuum in various ways, and they keep flowing. The vast amount of kamma accumulated in relation to the eye arises according to the occasion, subjecting the eye to it, and accumulates still more kamma. Thus, what is happening here is also the operation of ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*). Unknowingly, we do not know that these are kammas. We do not know that this is happening due to kamma. Often, when things come to us according to kamma, because we lack realization, we do not understand them, and we accumulate kamma over and over again through them.

When we reflect on the entirety of saṃsāra, we can say that it consists of a lot of struggling and writhing. We have struggled for an infinite time in this saṃsāra. This is done by accumulating kamma, based on the notion of 'I' and 'mine'. As long as one takes these five aggregates—form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—associated with this body or other things, as 'I' and 'mine', one accumulates various kammas in terms of intentions, by way of liking, disliking, and delusion regarding them. Having accumulated those kammas, when we subsequently experience their retributions, we do not know that these are retributions. Sometimes we develop hatred towards those who are instrumental in bringing them about; we conflict with them. In that manner, due to the arising of those defilements, from that mass of struggling, another mass of struggling is created. When the rounds of retribution come, one accumulates more kamma through them due to ignorance, because of the lack of true understanding. Instead, when one’s understanding of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) develops, one realizes: "Here, there is only a process occurring

due to causes and conditions—merely a series of activities." By establishing that realization within the mind, kamma is no longer accumulated. This is what helps one towards liberation.

If one is to escape from this bondage of saṃsāra, one must gain a correct understanding of the process occurring here. This is what is meant by the understanding of mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*). The realization that there is no 'I' or 'mine' to be taken here must come through direct experience—not merely because someone else said so, nor because it is written in a book. It is only by being established in a certain level of concentration and realizing, through insight reflection by way of *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), the true nature of these things—that they all arise, persist, and pass away—that one can obtain liberation, escape from saṃsāra.

Therefore, this very realization is what we must consider as the ultimate goal of our life. As long as this realization is absent, we will have to wander in this saṃsāra for an infinite, long period, repeatedly accumulating kamma, and consequently facing the mass of saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) known as birth (*jāti*), decay, sickness, and death (*jarāmaraṇa*). To attain this realization, we must make a certain effort in our daily life; we must make a certain sacrifice. Now, that treasurer renounced all his vast wealth and ordained. This was due to such a powerful desire, a powerful aspiration (*chanda*). In the same way, we must reflect that in this human existence obtained during the era of a Buddha's arising, there may be various other things, various other goals, and things that can be done. However, if one considers this as the most rare opportunity to escape from saṃsāra, what one has to do is to develop one's mind through meditation and gain this very realization.

First of all, while establishing concentration in daily life through some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) such as loving-kindness, recollection of the Buddha, foulness, or mindfulness of death, one must understand their impermanent (*anicca*) nature by performing activities such as maintaining postures with mindfulness and proper wisdom, with mindfulness (*sati*), in accordance with the four foundations of mindfulness. The three characteristics of *anicca* (impermanent), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anattā* (not-self) are matters that must be realized by each person individually. What helps in this is attention, which is called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). Thus, to realize this group of Dhammas, by initiating them in daily life and then generating the effort called right endeavors (*sammappadhāna*) in one's mental continuum, and by developing the other factors called the bases of spiritual power (*iddhipāda*), one is gradually able to arouse insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). Generally, some individuals are able to arouse these much sooner than they expected. The meditative capacities accumulated in past saṃsāra are stored within our mental continuum. For that, we must make an effort. Without such an effort, they will not arise on their own. When the deep understanding of this impermanence (*aniccatā*), which we regard as insight knowledge, matures as insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), one sees that what is here is only arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*). In this world, we see the sun rise and the sun set. In the same way, in everything of ours—regarding both our body and

thoughts—in every single one of them, there is an arising and a passing away. Because we lack the understanding of this arising and passing away, we regard everything as permanent.

Indeed, the Blessed Buddha has declared that in this world, there is only emptiness. If told this, a person cannot easily conceptualize it. The Blessed Buddha has used an analogy for these six sense-spheres we call the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—the word *āyatana* is used in the Dhamma for these six senses—that all six of these sense-spheres are empty. So much so, that they are to be seen as an empty village. An empty village is what is called when the people of that village have fled; there is no one in that village. In the same way, in not a single one of these—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—is there anything that can be taken as 'I' or 'mine'. In that sense, it is void; the Blessed Buddha declared it is empty. So, it is through that very attention (*manasikāra*) that one can see these as an empty village. There is no essence to be grasped in the forms met by the eye. Moreover, there is nothing there other than a mere natural phenomenon. But what happens here? Because of the lack of that realization, grasping (*upādāna*)—which means holding on—occurs. One grasps them as 'I' and 'mine'. As long as one grasps them as 'I' and 'mine', it is precisely because of that grasping (*upādāna*) that those kammas are accumulated. That is why one wanders in saṃsāra for a long time. In accordance with the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) conjured up by the mind as 'I', one is born in saṃsāra over and over again.

To give an analogy, when twisting a rope made of several strands, if the two people at either end try, even by mistake, to twist the rope in the exact same direction, it will never twist into a knot. But if someone comes and holds it in the middle, then a rope-like thing is twisted there. This happens because it was grasped in the middle. In the same way, everything in the world is spinning. The mind is also spinning. All other things in the world can be thought of as spinning things. They go in circles to that extent. Otherwise, they have a nature of arising and passing away. There is a certain cycle between arising and passing away. It is because of that grasping (*upādāna*) that we perceive something substantial out of that spinning, or rather, out of that struggling. If it were allowed to twist in only one direction, there would be no knot there. Why? If it is not held in the middle, it will not twist either. But because of that grasping (*upādāna*), it appears there as a thing. When this is let go, its complete emptiness (*suññatā*) is understood. That is exactly the kind of thing that happens.

In many instances, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that some individuals with developed insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), when the Blessed Buddha uttered a single line of a verse, realized the path-knowledge of stream-entry (*sotāpatti*) and so forth. Why is that? What was the reason for this? That grasping (*upādāna*) present in the mind, the force of holding on, suddenly slipped away. At some point, if a realization arises that is powerful enough to let go of these five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*)—namely form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which are the five heaps we hold on to with this mind—then, at that moment, just like

the rope unraveling, like how the thing that appeared as a rope unraveled, the true reality of this is understood.

That is precisely why the Blessed Buddha declared: "What is regarded as truth by the world is untruth to the Buddhas and Noble Ones (*ariyas*). What appears as truth to the Noble Ones is untruth to the world." When we look at this, it is a very amazing statement. It seems contradictory. Why? The reason for this is that the world lives within a delusion—within ignorance (*avijjā*). We do not want to accept that. Society always looks to bring that ignorance to the forefront. It is like a process of cultivating and consuming. However, Buddhas arise in the world to point out the way to free our minds from this very delusion. Some individuals with developed wisdom destroyed this delusion extremely rapidly. They realized that emptiness (*suññatā*), that these are empty villages. The eye is an empty village, the ear is an empty village, the nose is an empty village. Why are they called empty villages? If we reflect generally, the forms we saw in our childhood, the sounds we heard—none of them exist now. Yet, they are present in our minds. We think, "I saw these, I heard these." Because of that notion of 'I', these are held onto by way of grasping (*upādāna*). Because of that very grasping, being bound to that bondage of kamma, one wanders in saṃsāra over and over again.

A very amazing thing is present here. That is why consciousness (*viññāṇa*) was said to be an illusion (*māyā*). It is showing something non-existent. Yet, to the one who watches, it is real. Everyone goes to a magic show to see something. Indeed, it is shown as such, but despite being shown, there is no essence there—no substance. That is precisely why the Blessed Buddha declared that this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is an illusion. In every other religion, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is regarded as the essence, the core, the self (*attā*). Even if they say all other things are not-self, every other teacher in the world takes consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to be the self. But the Blessed Buddha alone declared that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is an illusion. For, what is here is a great deception, and what aids this deception is that very ignorance (*avijjā*). Ignorance is entirely a veil. It is called a hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*); it is covered by that veil. When performing a magic trick, a black cloth is put up and some false projection is made through it. Similarly, the black cloth of ignorance (*avijjā*) produces delusion.

Next, that bondage called craving (*taṇhā*) is experienced as an attachment. By means of that craving—called by various names such as craving (*taṇhā*), lust (*rāga*), or greed (*lobha*)—that thing is shown as if it exists. It is in accordance with that craving (*taṇhā*) itself that grasping (*upādāna*) exists. In daily life, one can experience these directly for oneself, to whatever level one is at. When we reflect on the instances that caused our emotional outbursts, we see how we conjured up an existing thing out of something non-existent. Especially, if one reflects on the past as an example—on one's own childhood, or for elderly people, on their youth—where are those things that they held onto as grasping (*upādāna*)? None of them exist. Yet, regarding them, there is a certain notion of 'I' and 'mine' created by the mind. Once 'I' is taken, the feeling that "there is also something that is mine" arises. Between these two, there lies a very amazing delusion. In realizing this, in daily life, one can properly practice the four foundations of mindfulness, using

mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānassati*) as an insight practice. Although we regard our in-breath and out-breath as a single thing, what is present here is a certain process. Through that process, we see its impermanence (*aniccatā*). That is a good illustration. Similarly, when the nature of arising, persisting, and ceasing of all things is understood, that perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) is gradually removed.

The Blessed Buddha has declared that there are four perversions (*vipallāsa*) in the world. Perversions mean four wrong understandings: the perception of permanence in the impermanent (*anicca*), the perception of pleasure in the painful (*dukkha*), the perception of beauty in the foul (*asubha*), and the perception of self in the not-self (*anattā*). There is a notion in the world taking the impermanent (*anicca*) to be permanent. There is a tendency to regard what is painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant. There is a tendency to regard what is foul as beautiful. There is a tendency to regard what is not-self (*anattā*) as self. The mind must escape from this distorted state called perversions (*vipallāsa*). What helps in that escape is the knowledge and vision of things as they really are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*)—the understanding of true reality. That is not something that can be shown to another. Within our own mind, as said before, it is comprised of mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*). All of them are defendants. Yet, at least one must be pardoned to get the work done. By turning this attention into *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), we must make an effort in our daily life itself, established in a certain virtue (*sīla*), to wisely understand the nature of that subtle mind—the nature of the subtle mind which is difficult to see.

What is done through virtue (*sīla*) is subduing this body and speech, and providing the necessary opportunity for mental seclusion (*citta-viveka*). It is freeing the mind from regrets and allowing room for mental seclusion. To establish concentration, there must be mental seclusion within that person. It is through the stages described as physical seclusion (*kāya-viveka*), mental seclusion (*citta-viveka*), and seclusion from acquisitions (*upadhi-viveka*) that the realization of Nibbāna can be achieved. Thus, after establishing that concentration, by relying on concentration and reflecting properly, one sees the mirage-like nature of everything. Why is it stopped right there as "a form, a form," "a sound, a sound"? If one wishes, one can analyze in detail. But that does not help Nibbāna. It may help in daily activities—analyzing what kind of form it is, whose it is, how beautiful, bad, or ugly it is. But through those, saṃsāra only grows further, delusion grows, ignorance grows, and it does not help in realizing the Four Noble Truths declared by the Blessed Buddha. Therefore, everything we do is either good or bad in accordance with our ultimate goal. Thus, the meditator (*yogāvacara*), the meritorious person who hopes to realize Nibbāna, no matter how the world thinks—even if they consider it madness—must direct his attention (*manasikāra*) according to his goal, according to the target he aspires to.

The nature of this running mind is like flowing water, or like being dragged by a wild bull. First of all, this scattered mind must be calmed. Having calmed it, concentration must be established. Next, this running mind must be gradually subdued and stopped. The mind is stopped, indeed, through weariness (*nibbidā*) regarding this; when true reality is understood, weariness grows. When the perception of impermanence (*anicca-*

saññā) grows, realizing "there is nothing here to be taken as 'I' and 'mine', everything is impermanent (*anicca*)," the previous momentum regarding these is lost. Grasping (*upādāna*)—which means holding on—gradually thins out. Having become so, at some point when the exact realization arises, at that moment, it is not that one let go of it on purpose, but it is let go of on its own. To the extent it is let go of, weariness (*nibbidā*) arises. That is what is called weariness with saṃsāra. Disillusionment (*nibbidā*) means weariness with saṃsāra. It is that weariness regarding everything that helps towards ultimate liberation, which is called dispassion (*virāga*).

When looked at as words, to most people in the ordinary world, these are unpleasant words. Why? Because this world always looks to expand the world. The Blessed Buddha has declared, *na siyā loka-vaḍḍhano*—one should not be a world-expander. Expanding the world is not what is to be done. That expanding of the world is Māra's work. Māra always tries to keep us in delusion. The Buddhas and the Noble Ones strive to free the world. To free them from the grip of Māra, what helps is realization. Realization cannot be created for another. Even the Blessed Buddha cannot do that. According to each individual's saṃsāric potential, sometimes through a line of a verse, sometimes through a verse, sometimes through a longer discourse, and through various other devices, the Blessed Buddha directed their matured saṃsāric wisdom towards Nibbāna and granted them the realization of Nibbāna.

Therefore, everyone must reflect that, without any distinction between young and old, the capacity to realize Nibbāna can be present within us. Why did even seven-year-olds become Arahants? Because their saṃsāric wisdom had matured within them. At the very beginning here, we mentioned a teacher who taught Abhidhamma, and a Vinayadhara monk who taught Vinaya. No matter how much one learns from books, if that which helps towards Nibbāna is absent, one remains in the grip of Māra forever.

Generally, whether we think about ordaining or other things, we regard only this erudition as the valuable thing in the world. But that is merely wisdom based on learning (*sutamaya-paññā*)—wisdom gathered from books. One cannot obtain even an understanding of the state of Nibbāna through that wisdom. Generally, by looking at a map, we cannot obtain the actual experience of traveling. It cannot be obtained by looking at a map; one must actually make the journey. In the same way, if one experiences this directly for oneself, at that moment, one’s doubts are dispelled; doubts are removed. No matter how much is obtained from books and so forth, doubts still remain. What helps in this is insight reflection (*vipassanā-manasikāra*).

These should not be regarded as things to be done only by the Sangha, only after ordaining. Even during the Buddha’s time, and even recently, lay devotees—both men and women—aroused their saṃsāric potential, developed these insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), and attained the realization of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). Therefore, by practicing some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) in daily life, establishing concentration, and gradually associating with those capable of giving instructions on them, one must make an effort to arouse those insight knowledges. The

opportunity to bring an end to this saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) is obtained, as we mentioned earlier, only during the era of a Buddha's arising.

The era of a Buddha's arising is an extremely rare opportunity. That is why the Blessed Buddha, as daily advice from the Sugata, pointed out those rare things:

> *Dullabho buddhupādo lokasmiṃ,*
>
> *dullabho manussatta-paṭilābho,*
>
> *dullabhā khaṇasampatti,*
>
> *dullabhā pabbajjā,*
>
> *dullabhaṃ saddhammasavanaṃ,*
>
> *dullabho sappurisasaṃsevo.*

Thus, six things are pointed out as rare. The era of a Buddha's arising is extremely rare. Next, the human existence obtained during the era of a Buddha's arising can be said to be even rarer. If one had obtained other forms of existence—if one were born as an animal or a hungry ghost (*peta*)—one would not be able to realize Nibbāna; that is why human existence during the era of a Buddha's arising is regarded as something extremely precious. Even being an ordinary human is not enough. Just having a human form is not enough; a wise human existence with intact sense faculties and the intellectual capacity to understand the Dhamma is what can be regarded as the "opportune moment" (*khaṇa-sampatti*). Even if that opportune moment is obtained, next is going forth (*pabbajjā*). Going forth is described as renunciation (*nekkhamma*). The strength to renounce, that going forth, is even rarer. Even if one goes forth, though one might get to hear the Dhamma, hearing the Dhamma that actually helps towards Nibbāna is extremely rare. Even if one hears such Dhamma, to practice according to that Dhamma, the association with a person of integrity (*sappurisa*) who can guide one—which is called association with a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*)—is extremely rare. Looking at it in this way, like the bullseye in the center of a target, the association with a noble, spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), as well as the era of a Buddha's arising, can be regarded as the final phase of this Gautama Buddha's Sāsana. If someone hopes to realize Nibbāna, it is at this very moment that it is possible.

When we reflect on the changes occurring in today's society, looking at it from all sides, in a few generations, even the word "Nibbāna" might be forgotten by the world. Instead, other things—other things that overflow—may arise. Due to physical forces and various other forces of defilements, as time goes on, it will fade. That is why when a Buddha arises in the world, some people develop an amazing kind of faith (*saddhā*) just upon hearing the word "Buddha". Until then, even the word "Buddha" is buried. The word "Nibbāna" is buried. Since such an era is coming in the future, every meritorious person at this moment must reflect: we must not dedicate our lives to those mundane pleasures

and wealth. It must be dedicated for the sake of the rare human existence we have obtained.

We must make some effort to guard our mind—this mind whose true nature is difficult to see, extremely subtle, and which grows upon whatever object it pleases. If that effort is completed, as the Blessed Buddha declared, *"cittaṃ guttaṃ sukhāvahaṃ"*—if this mind is properly guarded, if the purity of the mind is established, if liberation is attained—then that person gains the capacity to be pacified by the supreme, deathless Nibbāna, escaping from all suffering (*dukkha*) of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) such as birth (*jāti*), decay, sickness, and death (*jarāmaraṇa*). We should not regard these as things that are far away. We must regard them as things that are extremely close to us. The Blessed Buddha has declared: *"Santike na vijānanti, magā dhammā..."*—"Alas, they do not understand the Dhamma that is close at hand; they are like beasts, foolish people." "Beasts" (*magā*) here refers to fools—alas, what foolishness, they do not see the Nibbāna that is right here! From this, we can see that Nibbāna is not something far away like the sun or the moon. It is something that exists within ourselves.

There is an extremely valuable discourse of the Blessed Buddha: "Monks, within this fathom-long body itself, I declare the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." "The world" here refers precisely to the Four Noble Truths. The Blessed Buddha declared that suffering (*dukkha*), the cause of suffering, Nibbāna attained by ending suffering, and the path to it, are all within this fathom-long body itself. It is within this living body endowed with perception (*saññā*) and mind—not within a dead corpse.

Nowadays, it is only when someone dies, keeping that dead body in front, that we say, "May they attain the bliss of Nibbāna!" This is not what is being said here. The capacity to obtain Nibbāna is within this living human being endowed with perception (*saññā*) and mind. If that is not brought out, then, as the Blessed Buddha declared: *"Santike na vijānanti, magā dhammā..."*—we would have to say, "Alas, fools do not understand the Nibbāna that is close at hand!" Therefore, we must reflect wisely, bring close to our lives the sublime Dhamma pointed out by the supreme Buddhas within this precious human existence we have obtained, arouse our saṃsāric potentials, arouse that wisdom, and reflect: "May this hearing of the Dhamma also help us to be pacified by the supreme, deathless Nibbāna!"

So, on this Poya day, having undertaken the precious virtue of *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (morality with livelihood as the eighth factor), and subduing body and speech, you have listened to the Dhamma with mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom during this short time. We regard the realization of Nibbāna as the benefit of this hearing of the Dhamma. If we look at it deeply, it is not something that happens automatically, nor is it a magical event. Within our mental continuum, during this listening to the Dhamma, a certain series of Dhammas is deposited. These, known as faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), are mentioned as the five spiritual faculties (*pañcindriya*) and five spiritual powers (*pañcabala*) among the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) that help towards Nibbāna. They are

presented as five faculties and five powers: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. During this short time, faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem arose in the mental continuum of you meritorious people. Likewise, generating a certain energy (*viriya*), you sat for about an hour listening to this attentively. Through that, next, mindfulness (*sati*) developed; awareness developed. Next, concentration (*samādhi*) arose; when mindfulness is maintained for a long time, concentration is established. Through this, certain understandings arise in the concentrated mind; those are what is called wisdom (*paññā*).

In that way, a wholesome mental succession arose within your own mental continuum at this moment, which helps to establish faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) as spiritual faculties and powers. Utilizing them, you must aspire: "May we gain the strength and power to realize the supreme deathless Nibbāna as quickly as possible, in this very life, through the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*)—namely Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahanthood!" Likewise, may all deities and Brahmas—including the guardians of the Sāsana, the right-viewed deities and Brahmas, and the deities presiding over this place—rejoice in this heap of merit we have accumulated through this preaching and hearing of the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through whatever state of awakening (*bodhi*) they aspire to, and may they protect the Sāsana! Furthermore, may all our departed relatives, and all beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who desire merit and Nibbāna, rejoice in this merit of our preaching and hearing of Dhamma, and through their aspired state of awakening (*bodhi*), may they realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna and escape from all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*)! Aspiring thus, share the merit by reciting the verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #67

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.71)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve, dussīlo asamāhito;

ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo, sīlavantassa jhāyino

From:

Dhammapada 110 (Sahassavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Adversity is an occasion that highlights and brings out the virtue or vice within a person. The noble-minded, virtuous person (*satpuruṣa*) and the base, unvirtuous person (*asatpuruṣa*) act in two entirely different ways in times of adversity. The virtuous person, according to the situation, would even sacrifice his own life for others, whereas the unvirtuous person, in order to save his own life, would even sacrifice the very person who helped him.

This very point becomes clear through the events in the background story (*nidāna kathā*) related to the verse we have chosen as our theme today. In Sāvatthī, a noble lady from a wealthy family passed away due to a sudden illness during her pregnancy. When her body was brought to the cemetery and cremated, the rest of her body burned, but the womb remained unburned. The undertakers, using the iron hooks they employ during cremation, pulled that womb away from the funeral pyre, threw it onto a heap of embers, covered it with another heap of embers, and returned home. When they came back to look in the morning, there was a child lying on top of the extinguished heap of embers. The womb had burned away, but nothing had happened to the child.

The reason given for this is a certain natural law (*dhammatā*) that a person who possesses the spiritual merit (*puñña*) to attain Arahanthood in that very life will not pass away without attaining Arahanthood. Those who are called *pacchimabhavika* (one in their final birth) are those who have the merit to attain Arahanthood in that very lifetime. There are several stories of this nature mentioned in the texts. This is one such case. Therefore, on one hand, this was a child of immense merit. Be that as it may, those

people, being greatly astonished that the body was cremated with such a massive pile of firewood yet this child survived, took the child to the fortune-tellers as a great wonder. They asked them if there was anything special about this child. They said, "If he remains a layman, seven generations of his family will become impoverished"—making him appear extremely unfortunate from a worldly point of view—"but if he ordains, he will live an excellent life surrounded by a large retinue of five hundred." Furthermore, when the womb was being pulled away with those iron hooks and dragged here and there, the hook struck the corner of the child's eye, causing an injury. Those hooks are called *saṅku*. Associated with that word, this child was named Saṅkicca, because of that mark left on his eye, due to the injury.

The relatives thought that once the child grew up, he should be ordained. Meanwhile, the child also overheard other children playing with him say: "When you were in your mother's womb, she passed away in this manner, and you remained unburned during the cremation." The child felt a great sense of urgency and spiritual anxiety (*saṁvega*) over this. He thought, "If I was saved from such a dread of death, why should I remain in lay life?" and at the age of seven, he asked for permission to ordain. His relatives took him and handed him over to Venerable Sāriputta. Venerable Sāriputta, on that very day, gave him the meditation subject of the "pentad of skin" (*taca-pañcaka*) namely *kesā* (hair of the head), *lomā* (hair of the body), *nakhā* (nails), *dantā* (teeth), *taco* (skin), which is given during ordination, shaved his head, and ordained him. Even while his head was being shaved, he attained Arahanthood together with the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*). At that time, Venerable Saṅkicca was only seven years old.

Around this time, thirty bhikkhus from Sāvatthī—who had ordained in their old age—received meditation instructions leading all the way to Arahanthood from the Buddha, and asked the Buddha for permission to go and reside in a forest hermitage in a remote area. The Buddha asked, "To which area are you going?" and it appeared to his Buddha-insight that they would face an obstacle and danger in that region due to a poor man. Realizing that Venerable Saṅkicca would be the one capable of helping them on that occasion, the Buddha told those bhikkhus, "Very well, you may go. But first, meet our elder, your elder brother in the Sāsana, Sāriputta, before you leave."

Those bhikkhus then went to Venerable Sāriputta and told him, "The Buddha asked us to meet you before we go." Venerable Sāriputta also reflected on this. Discerning the Buddha's underlying intention, he asked these bhikkhus, "Do you have a novice (*sāmaṇera*) to take with you?" They replied, "Why do we need a novice, friend, while we are living in the forest? If we take a novice, he will only be an impediment and a trouble to us." Venerable Sāriputta then declared, "No, friends, the one you are taking is this Saṅkicca of mine. If you take Venerable Saṅkicca, no harm or impediment will come to you because of him. Indeed, if there is to be any danger, it will be to this novice Saṅkicca because of your group." However, he did not explain the specific reason.

So, those bhikkhus agreed and set off on their journey along with the young novice Saṅkicca. These thirty-one monks arrived at a village in a remote area. In accordance with the custom of bhikkhus looking for a place to spend the rainy season retreat

(*vassa*), when the faithful devotees came and asked, "Venerable sirs, where are you going?" and they replied, "We are searching for a suitable place," the devotees understood from those words that they were seeking a place to spend the rains retreat. Those faithful laypeople invited them, saying, "If you, venerable sirs, out of compassion, spend the rains retreat here with us, we too will be able to observe the Uposatha and the eight precepts in this area." They prepared the necessary huts (*kuṭi*) in a section of the forest, cleared walking paths (*caṅkamana*), and made arrangements for the bhikkhus to spend the rains retreat in that forest hermitage. The bhikkhus went into the village for almsfood.

Moreover, at the very beginning of the rains retreat, they made an agreement among themselves: "We have come having received meditation instructions from the living Buddha himself. Let none of us live in negligence. Except for the time of going for morning almsfood and attending to the elder bhikkhu in the evening, let us meditate individually at all other times. If anyone falls suddenly ill, strike the wooden gong (*gaṇḍi*). Then we will all assemble and assist that monk." Having established this agreement, they meditated diligently.

One day, while returning from the almsround, they bathed near a river and were preparing to partake of their meal on the sandy bank. At that time, a certain poor man of that region, who lived with the help of his only daughter, decided to go to another daughter because of a food shortage in that area. While traveling, he saw the monks preparing to partake of their almsfood and approached them. As he stood there watching, the bhikkhus inquired about his whereabouts. When he explained his situation, they noticed he looked very hungry and told him, "Bring a leaf so we can give you some food." The thirty bhikkhus each took a lump of rice from their own almsfood and placed it on the leaf, giving it to the man to eat.

After eating this, the man thought: "I am so poor. Even when I work hard, I never get such delicious food." He asked the monks, "Venerable sirs, was there a special invitation today?" They replied, "No, we had no special invitation. This is how people offer us alms every day." The man then thought, "In that case, I do not need to go here and there. I should remain here to serve them as an attendant (*kappiyakāra*)." He requested permission from the bhikkhus, saying, "I will stay and perform the daily duties and services." The bhikkhus granted him permission. This man remained there, performing his duties in a way that pleased the monks. After two months had passed, he again thought of visiting his daughter. Then he thought, "If I ask permission from the bhikkhus now, they might not let me go." So, he departed without telling anyone.

While traveling, he encountered a band of five hundred thieves in the forest. It is mentioned that in those days, thieves often lived in bands in the forests. Those thieves had made a vow to the deity of the forest, promising to offer a human sacrifice. That day was the seventh day of their vow. On that day, the chief of the thieves climbed a tree to see if anyone was entering the forest, and he saw this man coming. He then signaled the other thieves, who surrounded and captured the man. Having caught him, they bound him tightly. Then they lit a large fire and began preparing their weapons. This man

asked, "I do not see any wild boars or deer here. What are you preparing to do? Why are you lighting a bonfire?" The thieves replied, "We have made a vow to offer a human sacrifice to the deity. Therefore, we intend to kill you and offer the sacrifice with your flesh and blood." Terrified, the man used his cunning and thought of a scheme. He said, "I am an extremely wretched man who lives on leftover rice. In such-and-such a place, there are noble monks ordained from clans like the Sakya clan. Go and bring one of those monks and offer him as a sacrifice. The deity will be far more pleased with that."

The thieves considered this and agreed that it made sense. Guided by that very man, they went to the forest hermitage. Upon arriving, they saw no one. When they asked why, the man, knowing their agreement, said, "Strike this wooden gong, and the monks will assemble." Then the chief of the thieves struck the gong. All thirty bhikkhus came and sat on the stone seats. The chief elder asked, "Who struck the gong?" The chief of the thieves replied, "It was I, venerable sir." When asked, "Why?" he said, "We have vowed to make a human sacrifice. We have come to take one of you monks." Then the chief elder declared, "When a responsibility is given to a group of brothers, it is the leader, the eldest, who must fulfill it. Therefore, venerable sirs, continue your meditation with diligence. I will sacrifice my life for you, venerable sirs, and go with this band of thieves to fulfill this purpose."

When the chief elder gave his pledge to sacrifice his life, the second monk said, "A problem that arises for an elder brother should be resolved by the younger brother. Therefore, let you, venerable sir, and the other venerable ones continue to practice meditation well. I shall go to offer my life." In this manner, all thirty monks, in order of seniority, prepared to sacrifice their lives and go. Finally, the young novice Venerable Saṅkicca said, "Venerable sirs, let all of you remain. I will go and sacrifice my life for you." Then the chief elder and the other monks said, "Even if we all have to die, we cannot send you, young venerable one." When asked, "Why?" they replied, "You are the pupil of Venerable Sāriputta. It would be a great disgrace and blame upon us to have it said that we took a young novice and handed him over to the thieves. Therefore, we can never let you go." Thereupon, Venerable Saṅkicca said, "The Buddha sent you to my preceptor (*upajjhāya*), and my preceptor sent me here with you for this very reason. Therefore, please let me go." Having obtained their permission and asking for forgiveness, saying, "If any wrong has been done by me, please forgive me," he departed.

Then, those bhikkhus felt a deep sense of *saṁvega*—in short, a sorrow so profound that tears welled in their eyes—seeing this young novice step forward to sacrifice his life for them. As Venerable Saṅkicca was preparing to depart, the chief elder made a special request to the thieves: "Please, this young novice might get frightened when you kindle those bonfires and prepare your weapons. Therefore, seat him to one side and carry out your task." The chief of the thieves, in accordance with what was said, had Venerable Saṅkicca seated to one side. Having kindled a great bonfire and sharpened their weapons, the chief of the thieves took his sword, approached Venerable Saṅkicca, swung it around his head, and struck a blow at Venerable Saṅkicca's body. As he struck, the sword bent in two, its sharp edge folding back onto itself. The chief of the thieves thought

there must have been some mistake in his swing, so he straightened it out and struck again. This time, the sword curled up like a dry palmyra leaf, twisting and curling from the tip all the way to the hilt.

The chief of the thieves was utterly astonished. "Nothing like this has ever happened before. I have used this sword for so long. What is this? Even an inanimate sword knows the virtues of this young novice. It is only I who did not know." Saying this, he prostrated himself at the novice's feet and begged for forgiveness. He asked, "Venerable sir, all this time, whenever people entering this forest see us, they tremble with fear. Why is it that you remain so calm, with such a pleasant countenance?" At that moment, Venerable Saṅkicca arose from his absorption—for the young novice had not simply sat there, but had entered into absorption (*jhāna*). It was through psychic power (*iddhi*) that this miracle had occurred. Then he uttered several verses as a Dhamma teaching.

This is the meaning of those verses. He did not address him as the chief of thieves, but in common address, called him "village headman" (*gāma-jeṭṭha*). "Headman, for one who has no *Taṇhā* (Craving) or expectation, there is no mental *Dukkha* (Suffering) regarding death. For an Arahant (one whose taints are destroyed, *khīṇāsava*) who has removed *taṇhā*, death is like laying down a heavy burden from one's head; it is a matter of joy, not something that causes fear." Thus he preached the Dhamma. Having heard this and being inspired, the chief of the thieves asked the others, "Now, what shall we do?" They asked, "What do you intend to do?" The chief of the thieves replied, "After witnessing such a miracle, there is no use in lay life for me. I shall ordain under this venerable sir." All the other four hundred and ninety-nine agreed, and they all requested ordination from Venerable Saṅkicca, the young novice.

Adapting to the situation, the young novice dyed their existing garments with copper-colored clay, shaved their heads with those very swords, and ordained all five hundred of them. While thinking of setting off to see the Buddha, he thought: "From the moment I left, those bhikkhus must have been in great grief. They might not be able to concentrate their minds. I must go and see them before I leave." So, accompanied by the five hundred, the young novice returned to the forest hermitage where the thirty monks resided. When they arrived, the bhikkhus were astonished. He explained the situation: "When this chief of thieves tried to harm me, it failed. Out of faith, they have all ordained. Now, venerable sirs, continue to practice your meditation diligently." Having said this, Venerable Saṅkicca, along with the newly ordained band of thieves, went to Venerable Sāriputta.

Venerable Sāriputta, seeing him, expressed his joy, saying, "Why is it, Saṅkicca, that you return with such a large retinue of pupils?" After Venerable Saṅkicca explained the matter, Venerable Sāriputta sent the group to see the Buddha, saying, "Go and pay respects to the Buddha as well." When they went to the Buddha, he too expressed his joy in the same manner, and the admonitory message he declared regarding the chief of the thieves is what is expressed in today's verse:

Yo ca vassasataṁ jīve, dussīlo asamāhito,

Ekāhaṁ jīvitaṁ seyyo, sīlavantassa jhāyino.

Though one should live a hundred years, immoral and unconcentrated, yet better is a single day's life of one who is virtuous and meditative.

Through this, we can see the exemplary life of the young novice, who lived virtuously and endowed with the power of *jhāna*. On the other hand, we see the immoral life led by those thieves. Accordingly, the Buddha delivered an admonitory sermon. It is said in the Dhamma texts that upon hearing this, all five hundred of them attained Arahanthood. In any case, it served as a support for Nibbāna.

This is what is mentioned in the scriptures as the background story and the occasion for the teaching of this verse. The account of Venerable Saṅkicca is a highly valuable event in the Dispensation. So, let us try to bring out the points that we, by way of commentary, should extract from this.

First of all, let us consider the birth of Venerable Saṅkicca. The Buddha has declared that *jāti*—that is, birth or arising—is *Dukkha* (Suffering). However, lay devotees generally do not like to accept that birth is *dukkha*. This reality is obscured by the concept of the "blessing of children." Yet, we see here that when a child cannot be born naturally, various surgeries are performed, causing great pain to the mother in order to bring the child into the world. This birth was even more miraculous. Here, indeed, birth took place in the midst of a funeral pyre. If someone's birth occurs in the middle of a fire, there can be nothing more terrifying and filled with *saṁvega*. Yet, he survived the fire, and thus his birth occurred. We can only conceive of it as a highly miraculous birth. Along with the power of merit from Venerable Saṅkicca's past, there must have also been some great unwholesome karma (*akusala*). That is why it was said that if he remained a layman, seven generations of his family would be impoverished. Be that as it may, it is shown here as a natural law (*dhammatā*) that a *pacchimabhavika* (one in their final birth) cannot be killed under any circumstances. If someone has attained their final existence, they will not die without attaining Arahanthood. It was because of such a *dhammatā* that this took place.

The next important point is this young child's attainment of Arahanthood through the *taca-pañcaka* meditation subject. Often, the attainment of Arahanthood by highly meritorious individuals is reported at a very tender age—seven years of age being a very young, childhood stage where one is just beginning to understand things. On that occasion, such a simple meditation subject—hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin—parts of the body which ordinary worldly people beautify and consider as additions to their physical attractiveness. Yet, as you virtuous people know, the Buddha placed these at the very beginning of the thirty-two impure parts of the body. Contemplating this meditation subject of hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, and skin, even as the hair of his head was being shaved, insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) arose through a deep disenchantment with saṁsāra, allowing him to attain Arahanthood. This is what we see from this story. It is a Dhamma miracle.

We mentioned that both the Buddha and the great Arahant Sāriputta foresaw this series of future events. Venerable Saṅkicca was sent with a special purpose because some danger was to befall those thirty monks due to that poor man. But why did the Buddha let them go there, rather than telling them to go elsewhere, despite knowing of such a danger? It is because there was a certain *dhammatā* (natural lawfulness) inherent in this. This poignant sequence of events—that is, the *saṁvega* felt by those thirty monks when the band of thieves came and tried to take one of them, as well as the sacrifice of their lives that they offered—must have actually aided those thirty in attaining Nibbāna. That, too, was visible to the Buddha's eye. Moreover, the Dhamma-power of Venerable Saṅkicca, as well as the fact that the band of thieves would ordain, must have been perceived by the Buddha's eye, which is why he permitted those thirty monks to go to that region.

Next, a proof for the point we made at the very beginning was spontaneously illustrated in this story. That is, it is only in times of adversity and disaster that one can recognize whether someone is a virtuous person (*satpuruṣa*) or an unvirtuous person (*asatpuruṣa*), by the way they behave. Now, that poor man, like biting the hand that feeds him, was ready to sacrifice one of the very monks who had helped him, in order to save his own life. On one hand, this demonstrates the behavior of a wicked person. On the other hand, we see how those thirty monks acted. When such a situation arises, what we usually expect regarding the sacrifice of life is that senior, high-ranking elders, holding onto their titles and leadership, would save their own lives by sacrificing others. That is what is commonly seen in the ordinary, worldling (*puthujjana*) world. But these noble monks—indeed, they had not even attained Arahanthood yet. It is mentioned here that these thirty were not even children of the same mother, nor were they Arahants. Yet, they were thirty monks of such sublime virtue. The chief elder took that death upon himself. Then, the other junior monks did the same. The second monk thought of it as a service to the Saṅgha, a service to the elder, and said, "I must perform the duty that belongs to him." In the same way, the monks junior to him took it upon themselves. This is an extremely exemplary event. That is the quality of a virtuous person. It is clearly illustrated in this story how virtuous people sacrifice their own lives for others in times of adversity. This is extremely valuable. It provides a Dhamma-based model of how we should act in our own lives in such situations.

Furthermore, if we look deeper, the most profound Dhamma point within this is what was declared by the young Venerable Saṅkicca. An Arahant has no fear of death. Why, indeed, is there no fear of death? It is because death has been conquered. That victory over death was not achieved merely by bending the sword as he did. The bonds, the hooks that tie us to this saṁsāra, have been bent back in the opposite direction. These are what are called fetters (*saṁyojana*). It is by these ten kinds of bonds called fetters that ordinary worldly people are bound to saṁsāra. It is by reversing them that Arahanthood is attained—meaning they have been destroyed, eradicated. That is why there is no fear of death. In short, Nibbāna is neither a drink obtained from some other world nor a strange, eternal existence. It is the cessation of the fear of death that goes hand-in-hand with the notion of "I" and "mine" which is created within this very person,

within this being, due to *Taṇhā* (Craving) and ignorance (*aviijjā*). When *taṇhā* and expectations are eliminated, the fear of death is also eliminated. This is the deepest point in this Dhamma. This, too, is revealed through the words of Venerable Saṅkicca.

In all of our sermons, we direct the final portion towards Dhamma analysis. We mentioned that the willingness to step forward and sacrifice their lives must have helped those thirty monks in their attainment of Arahanthood. What is called sacrifice of life is the letting go of the desire for life. The relinquishment of the desire for life served as a rehearsal for those thirty monks to let go of the entire heap of acquisitions (*upadhi*). It was according to that very same natural law (*dhammatā*) that the young Venerable Saṅkicca, even as his hair was being shaved, severed all bonds tying him to saṁsāra and realized the Deathless, Great Nibbāna. Thereby, he eradicated the fear of death. That is why he showed no fear whatsoever when the chief of the thieves brought the sword. When we contemplate Nibbāna, we see that the Buddha has shown the true liberation in a way that no other teacher has ever declared. Venerable Saṅkicca further told the chief of the thieves that for an Arahant, death is like letting go of a heavy burden carried on the head. Why? Because an Arahant is described as "one who has laid down the burden" (*ohitabhāra*).

What is this burden? It is the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). You virtuous people may have generally heard of *rūpa* (form), *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā* (perception), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness). However, these are not just single things, they are heaps; *khandha* means a heap or a pile. We show a photograph to others and say, "This is my form (*rūpa*)." But according to the Dhamma, what is shown here is a heap of forms. Similarly, it is a heap of *Vedanā* (Feeling), a heap of *saññā* (perceptions). *Saṅkhāra*—that is, our intentions and volitions, the series of active thoughts we generate—that, too, is a heap. Next, *viññāṇa* (consciousness), which we call "my thoughts"—that, too, is a heap. In this way, they are presented in the Dhamma as heaps. How are these five heaps formed? Let us consider that for a moment. Since each of us can understand things according to our own level of comprehension, there is a certain nature—the Buddha points out that the ordinary person, the person lacking Dhamma-knowledge, spends this saṁsāra merely piling things up.

How do we pile them up? Every one of us possesses six sense-bases (*āyatana*). When we say *āyatana* (bases), various everyday institutions might come to mind. Looking at it through the term itself, it is somewhat similar. The Buddha points out that we have six sense-bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. What is the work done within these six sense-bases? What is the process? Through these, due to ignorance (*aviijjā*) and *Taṇhā* (Craving), in order to gratify and maintain this physical cage, we pile up a vast number of thoughts along various kinds of objects. Based on forms seen with the eye, because of the *Vedanā* (Feeling) arising from them, according to the *saññā* (perceptions) given by those feelings, we generate various expectations and thoughts (*vitakka*). A stream of thoughts runs along, separating "them" as one thing and "I" as another, based on each of these sense-bases. Just as we spoke of the eye, think also of the other sense-bases. Hearing a sound through the ear, if it is a pleasant sound, like a beautiful song,

one develops an attachment based on it. According to those *vedanā*, various thoughts and reflections (*vitakka*) are generated. Then one thinks, "On such-and-such a day, I listened to so-and-so's song. I am the one who listened to that song; others did not get the chance to hear it." In this way, it gets stored in the mind.

The Buddha explains how this piling up occurs, the way the worldlings who spend their time in this saṁsāra continuously accumulate these five heaps. This can also be shown in a subtle way. To summarize and express this briefly, we can say it as follows. The Pali phrase is applied in this manner:

> *"Etaṁ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā"*
>
> (This is mine, this I am, this is my self.)

The Buddha points out that we think about these things in three ways. These three ways are identified as *Taṇhā* (Craving), conceit (*māna*), and view (*diṭṭhi*). By way of *taṇhā*, we think: "This is mine" (*etaṁ mama*). Next, by way of conceit, we regard it as: "This I am" (*eso hamasmi*)—"this is indeed me." Next: "This is my self" (*eso me attā*). Now, we spoke of a photograph. If that photograph is beautiful, everyone thinks they themselves are beautiful: "This is mine." They do not even like to give the photograph away; they try to preserve it. *"Etaṁ mama."* Next, *"eso hamasmi"*—"This is me, not anyone else. Me, me, me." *"Eso me attā"*—"So this indeed is my self." This is what we submit even for an identity card. We do not need to speak of other things. To recall the precious moments of life, we say: "There, in that photograph, at that spot, stands me. Me. And next to me is so-and-so." I have used this small analogy so that it can be understood in an everyday manner.

Gathering this vast number of experiences received through the eye, we say: *"etaṁ mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attā."* We collect them, bundle them up, and finally, it is just like putting a seal on them. We collect and bundle them up through *taṇhā*. We stack them neatly through conceit (*māna*). Then we place the seal: *"eso me attā"*—"This is my self." In this way, when our experiences are seized and grasped in three ways, by way of *taṇhā* and *upādāna* (grasping / fuel / holding), they are filtered, and the form (*rūpa*) aspect of that experience goes and joins our pile called "form." The feeling (*vedanā*) aspect goes and joins there as "my heap of feelings." The perception (*saññā*) aspect goes and joins as "my heap of perceptions." You virtuous people can understand this in relation to some important occasion on a certain day in your life. Let us say, if it was an important event like a wedding, you regard that photograph taken with great pride as something highly significant. Inside that photograph taken on my most important occasion, all of this is contained. The *vedanā*, *saññā*, and intentions (*cetanā*) generated on that occasion are all a part of that person. When one reflects upon one's life, what is called "I" and "mine" is precisely this little bundle.

But the Buddha points out that not a single one of these can be taken as a solid, singular thing. Although they are grasped as a single unit through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), they are actually a heap of processes that arise and cease. They are

Saṅkhāra (Preparations). The precise Dhamma term for it is simply "a heap of *saṅkhāra*." All of these are regarded as *saṅkhāra*. They are merely a heap of preparations. Even this which we consider as our body is a heap of preparations that changes moment by moment. We carry this along, nourishing it with food and drink. If we contemplate deeply, what we call "life" is actually a continuous effort to avoid dying. It is an effort to avoid dying. Even the inhalation we take, though we take it as "my breath," is a heap of breath-ripples. The exhalation, too, is a heap of breath-ripples. Even if we look at the food and drink we take, the Buddha shows every single one of them as a heap of arisings and ceasings (*anicca*). Right there lies *Anicca* (Impermanent). But ordinary worldly people do not understand this. They collect, pile up, and bind these things as mentioned before, and go on and on in saṁsāra. They expand saṁsāra; they expand *Bhava* (Becoming). This is the nature of the world, until a Buddha appears in the world and explains it.

What is the other side of this? How do we untie this? How do we reduce these heaps? The Buddha shows that as well. If we are to present it as a meditation subject, we can state it in this way. Previously, we said: *"etaṁ mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attā."* The Buddha points out, in a perfectly corresponding manner:

> *"Na etaṁ mama, na eso hamasmi, na eso me attā"*
>
> (This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.)

Here, the word "na" (not) is placed in front. Scholars and learned people try to debate and analyze this logically. This was not given for logical debate. This is a passage presented by the Buddha for a practical purpose, for practical *vipassanā* (insight). Thus, what we have to extract from this is: *"na etaṁ mama"*—"this is not mine," or rather, it implies that saying "this is mine" is incorrect. *"Na eso hamasmi"*—"this I am not," meaning it is incorrect to say "this is me." *"Na eso me attā"*—"this is not my self," indicating that the wrong view held so far, the view that "this is my self," is incorrect.

The Buddha points out that if someone adjusts their vision insightfully in this manner, their piling up is reduced. Those heaps get unraveled right then and there. They get unraveled by seeing them as *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). As long as one does not see them as *saṅkhāra*, that feeling of "I" and "mine" is gathered, bundled, stacked, and sealed in that manner, saying, "This is me, this is me." That is what is called *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion). We can understand it in this way.

This is a somewhat deep matter. But we simplify it and present it using analogies. It was by hearing about this very deep philosophy, right at the moment of ordination of that seven-year-old child, regarding the five things—hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin—which everyone beautifies, shows off, and tries to assert to the world, and considers beautiful—that the young novice attained Arahanthood. How did that happen? Let us look at that in some detail. All of you virtuous people know the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Indeed, what was declared here are the first five of the thirty-two impure parts of the body mentioned under mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*) in the Satipaṭṭhāna

Sutta: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin. This is, in fact, the first meditation subject given even today to a newly ordained young novice as a tradition of the Dispensation. Even so, if we look at the state of the Dispensation today, for some people, this is both the first and the last meditation subject they ever receive in their monastic life. To such a state has the Dispensation fallen today. These are open secrets of ours. Nevertheless, what we have to say is that in the past, through this very first meditation subject, some individuals realized the fruit of Arahanthood. There were such highly meritorious individuals who were deeply devoted to the Dispensation.

Be that as it may, let us contemplate the depth contained within these five: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin. For those who have practiced *asubha-bhāvanā* (meditation on foulness) for a long time in saṁsāra, even these parts which we beautify and display to the world—hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin—are very quickly understood as repulsive. When the young child's head was being shaved, he must have thought: "Previously, I was with hair; now, I am without hair." Within this, even the change in one's own appearance helps one to understand *anicca* (impermanence / inconstancy) and the Dhamma of *anattā* (not-self / non-self). Next, there is a simile given by the Buddha for this. You virtuous people might have heard of it. That simile is stated in the Pali words as follows. Where the thirty-two parts of the body are mentioned, the Buddha gives a wonderful simile. Just as if there were a bag with an opening at both ends, and a man with good sight were to open it and examine its contents, saying: "This is hill-paddy, this is wheat, this is mung-beans, this is kidney-beans, this is husked rice," even so, one should reflect upon the impure parts of this body: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, and so on. This is what is found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

Focus your attention on this simile for a moment. Now, what is spoken of here is a bag with two openings. Think about it: a bag with two openings is a bag open at both ends. Is a bag open at both ends really a bag? Is a bag open at both ends a bag? When you think about it deeply, it is not a bag. Yet, ordinary worldly people generally regard it as a bag. To the person who has taken it as a single unit through *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion) and through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), it is not apparent that this is not a bag. Why? Because the two processes of arising and ceasing are not seen here.

To see the two processes of arising and ceasing, which occur extremely rapidly moment by moment within this body, is what is called *vipassanā* (insight). It is to see it in an extremely subtle manner. As long as one does not see it properly, one grasps it through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*). "This is my form, this is my breath, this is my food." In this way, one takes it as "mine, mine." Yet, every single one of these is wonderfully subject to the law of *Anicca* (Impermanent). They are merely a collection of arisings and ceasings. It was to make us understand this fact of arising and ceasing that the Buddha compared it to a bag open at both ends, or a bag with two openings. Some might think that the Buddha gave this simile only in relation to the food and drink we consume. Because one can at least think about that to some extent. That food and drink takes a bit of a detour before exiting; it does not leave the moment it is put in. That is why we think: "The 'I' who goes to the dining hall or restaurant and the 'I' who goes to

the toilet are both one and the same." There is a vast difference between those two. The "I" who goes to the restaurant and eats delicious food might not be the same "I" who goes to the toilet by the time one returns. But one is not inclined to contemplate this.

Within this, there is a massive, circular process, like a labyrinth, that deceives us. There is a process. Even inhalation and exhalation are like this. In modern terms, they might say that the air we inhale is oxygen, and what we exhale is carbon dioxide. What is this? If we contemplate this according to the Dhamma, this body is constantly like a funeral pyre. The breath we take in is exhaled carrying away the heap of charcoal from this burning body. That is why it is called carbon dioxide (or "charcoal-acid"). This etymology might not be scientifically precise, but we say it to highlight a Dhamma point. Even when we inhale the sweet fragrance of a flower, it is subsequently exhaled carrying the toxic gases from within the body. Such a transformation takes place. Yet we say, "I am breathing in, I am breathing out." That is how ordinary worldly people think. This is true not only of our food and drink, but also when we examine inhalation and exhalation.

Let us go even further. Now, let us examine hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth. Is the hair we have now the very same hair we had at birth? There is no need to speak specifically about beards; all of you virtuous people know. It grows, falls out, sheds, and is shaved. Such is the process. In this manner, every single part of the body changes moment by moment. Or rather, day by day, some transformation or change occurs in them. Through ignorance (*avijjā*), we forget this. We bundle this up and stand firmly in the view that says, "This is me." That is *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* means going to the extreme of saying "form is mine, feeling is mine." The Buddha points out that these are merely a heap of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations); when examined ultimately, there is no "thing" here. There is only a heap of preparations, becomings, and endeavors here. We have explained on many occasions that when we look back at our entire life in the end, there is nothing done, nothing remains. There is only a heap of highly sorrowful endeavors.

Saying we are hungry, we consume some food. For how many hours does it last? Then we drink some water. For how short a time does the breath we took support us? Therefore, living is actually a series of massive efforts made just to avoid dying. Generally, we think of it as meaningless (*niratthaka*) only at the moment we realize we are dying. But even before that, it is meaningless. It is this meaninglessness that the Buddha points out as emptiness (*suññatā*). There is no "self" essence here. Here, there is only the internal play of the four great elements (*cattāro mahābhūtā*): earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). We have prepared ourselves to take responsibility for it. That is what is called "clung-to" (*upādinna*). We do not care as much about the things in the external world as we do about these four elements in the body. That is why doctors search for imbalances in these gases, or in the wind, bile, and phlegm. We do not care so much about external things; if they go bad, we discard them and acquire new ones.

Even if we keep fixing pieces onto this body—blood from someone else, a set of teeth from somewhere else, a kidney from another person, and if needed, perhaps even a heart from someone else—it is still "I." The one who leaves that hospital is the very same "I"

who entered. That is how it is held in the mind. In that manner, we go on fixing these pieces. The vehicle number is the same, but what is running are parts taken from here and there. The body is such a thing. Why? Because due to *Taṇhā* (Craving) and ignorance (*avijjā*), there is a powerful *upādāna* (grasping / fuel) regarding this body. This cannot be broken by logic. What is required is to see it through *vipassanā* (insight).

Here, we must deeply contemplate the bag open at both ends. That is the true result of reciting and practicing mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*). It has two aspects. By reflecting on hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, and so on, one develops concentration (*samādhi*). The mind becomes unified. It is mentioned in the past that some monks developed concentration on each of these individual parts. Monks with such wondrous powers of concentration are mentioned in the texts. After establishing such concentration, as the Buddha points out in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, one must look at every single one of them through *vipassanā* (insight). There is a division between their internal and external aspects. Similarly, there is a division between their arising and ceasing. These are two things that come and go: arising and ceasing. At times, we live looking only at the arising side. Lay devotees who practice the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta might know about this. The Buddha points out that these thirty-two impure parts exist within oneself, and they also exist within other persons whom one loves. It is so internally; it is so externally. This is the very nature of every human body. Next, they arise and cease. Just as we spoke of various bodily organs and food and drink, they arise and cease. But when one arrives at intense *vipassanā*, these begin to be understood instantly. Both arising and ceasing are seen instantly. As *vipassanā* becomes sharper and sharper, there comes a point when their dissolution (*bhaṅga*)—their breaking nature, the speed of their breaking, which is even faster than their arising—is understood. It is at such a moment, indeed, that a deep disenchantment with saṁsāra arises through the insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), and the mind is liberated.

It is with the mind that we carry these five heaps. We must realize that what is spoken of here is not the weight measured on a weighing scale. It is the mind that bears the burden of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). It is this mind, defiled with taints, that carries it because it takes them as a single entity. To use an analogy: when a heavy vehicle like a truck is running at high speed, where does the entire weight of that truck reside? Can you pinpoint where it rests? It is only at that point where the rotating wheel touches the ground. The mind is just like that. This mind moves extremely rapidly, with immense speed. Ordinary worldly people cannot grasp where this moving mind rests. For that, deep concentration (*samādhi*) is required—a strong concentration. Similarly, wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) and insight-contemplation (*vipassanā-manasikāra*) are necessary. It is through contemplation with insight-attention that, in the end, one realizes: "It is right here that this exists," and with the meditative mind (*jhāna-citta*), one gathers these scattered five aggregates.

Next, by way of *vipassanā* (insight), one sees this as *Anicca* (Impermanent), *dukkha* (unsatisfactory / suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self). Seeing it thus, the mind finally becomes liberated (*vimutta*). The mind frees itself from those five aggregates. That

experience is just like dying while still alive. Now, when we normally say "dying while still alive," we mean the feeling of barely surviving a serious accident. That is not what is meant here. What does "dying while still alive" mean? It means that when death arrives, one has already let go. One has already surrendered everything. When Māra (Death) comes, everything has already been given up. Māra comes to snatch things away, but by then, everything has already been surrendered. These five aggregates have already been abandoned by the mind. Regarding some Arahants endowed with the power of *jhāna* and higher knowledges (*abhiññā*), like Venerable Dabba Mallaputta, it is mentioned in the texts how they attained final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*). Having obtained permission from the Buddha, they rose into the air and set fire to their own bodies. A person with worldly consciousness would not set fire to their own body, would they? Why is this? It is said that their entire body burned while they were in mid-air. Why was this possible? Because they had completely detached their mind from this body. Such is the wondrous liberation called the liberation of the fruit of Arahanthood (*arahatta-phala-vimutti*). At that moment, they placed their mind in the concentration of the fruit of Arahanthood (*phala-samāpatti*) which they had attained while alive. That is the secret.

To attain the Deathless in this very life, to attain it in the present life (*diṭṭhadhamme*), is precisely that wondrous cessation—let us call it cessation (*virāma*) or liberation (*vimutti*)—declared by the Buddha. This is the detaching of the mind. This can only be achieved through a highly powerful cognitive series of insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa-vīthi*), by seeing this arising and ceasing, and then seeing how it breaks apart. Next, by developing an apprehension and disenchantment towards it, and through the desire to be liberated from it, one deeply cultivates the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*): *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self). That is how this mind is freed from the five aggregates. It is mentioned in this Dhamma that this occurs in four stages or four phases: Sotāpanna (Stream-enterer), Sakadāgāmi (Once-returner), Anāgāmi (Non-returner), and Arahant. That is what we mean by "seeing Nibbāna" (seeing the stilled mind / extinction)—witnessing the cooling down. Previously, we mentioned carbon dioxide. Although that is not scientifically accurate, I used it as an analogy. If this body is completely like a burning funeral pyre, a heap of fire? All of you virtuous people know that this is not a lie. By what is the food we eat digested? By fire, indeed. It is by the fire within that this life is sustained, through the heat within. Looking at it in this way, it is exactly like a funeral pyre. In the end, what the Buddha shows here is extinguishment (Nibbāna. This heap of *Dukkha* (Suffering) that we accumulate through this burning, the Buddha turns into extinguishment. This is concerning the mind.

If someone has experienced that cessation (*virāma*) within the mind—if they have experienced those wondrous mental states of Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant in this very life—then at the moment of death, that very state presents itself. Why? If one can attain such deep states of concentration (*samādhi*) while the body is still here, like dying while still alive, to the extent that one is detached from the world, then at the moment of actually freeing oneself from the body, that very state naturally

presents itself. This is a natural law (*dhammatā*). That is why, for Arahants, at their final moment, that very attainment of the fruit (*phala-samāpatti*) emerges almost spontaneously. This is what the Buddha declared as liberation (*vimutti*).

Because there are various types of analyses regarding this Nibbāna, I have tried to provide some analysis in this brief sermon. However, all of these are not things to be attained through logical reasoning. These belong to the path of direct realization. Even if one cannot do much, if one can properly contemplate each of the thirty-two parts of the body by way of tranquility (*samatha*), repeatedly reflecting on them to generate some power of concentration and unify the mind, then, as stated in that very Sutta, by deeply grasping the understanding that "these are things that arise and cease, these are not to be taken as 'I' or 'mine'," and by developing *vipassanā* (insight), one can indeed attain Arahanthood even through the first five of the thirty-two parts of the body, just as was said of Venerable Saṅkicca. It is possible even through a single part, such as hair of the head.

In this way, there is a highly wondrous *dhammatā*, a Dhamma here. We must consider that this path of liberation shown by the Buddha is something we can traverse according to our own capacity. In the past, those highly energetic monks and lay devotees attained that supramundane state (*lokuttara*) by walking on that very path, and not by merely debating about it. Thus, one must properly understand: What is its target? What is its ultimate goal? What is expected from this? It is liberation from *Bhava* (Becoming), the cessation of *bhava* (*bhava-nirodha*). As long as one remains in this *bhava*, as long as expectations remain, death is a fear. The moment of death is an occasion when everyone becomes greatly afraid. But why did Venerable Saṅkicca face death fearlessly? Because he had already conquered death. Although he used his power of concentration, perhaps out of compassion, to prevent any physical harm from the weapons through a miracle—lest the chief of the thieves lose his chance to attain Arahanthood if any harm befell him—Venerable Saṅkicca had in reality already attained the Deathless. That is how you virtuous people should understand this. You have heard many such stories. In using these stories, we try as much as possible not to merely provide the pleasure of a narrative, to intoxicate you, or to treat them like short stories. It is to challenge you virtuous people to enter the practice (*paṭipadā*) of this Dhamma path. It is so that even the characters in these stories help in shaping our own lives.

You virtuous people must reflect: today, based on a Dhammapada verse and its corresponding background story, we have gained some understanding of the path of liberation preached by the Buddha. We must also contemplate the virtues such as faith (*saddhā*) and virtue (*sīla*) which support us in entering upon it, as well as concentration (*samādhi*) as mentioned here.

Next, the things that support the attainment of Nibbāna are mentioned. These are *saddhā* (faith), *viriya* (energy / effort), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom), which are known as spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*). We must contemplate these as well. Even by listening to a Dhamma sermon such as this, some people can generate these qualities. It is these that support the attainment of

Nibbāna. Faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. That is why the Buddha declared them as spiritual powers. One must strive to develop these. Indeed, this is an era when the Buddha's Dispensation is heading towards decline, like its final stage. Yet, if wise and virtuous people properly understand their value and walk on that practice (*paṭipadā*), while associating with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), it is still possible to escape from this extremely terrifying saṁsāra. One can still obtain the true essence, the core of this human existence. Thinking in this manner, there are those among us here who observe the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (virtue with livelihood as the eighth) or even more valuable precepts. Having observed some level of virtue according to your capacity, restraining body and speech, and if you have focused your mind on this Dhamma sermon on this occasion, then through that, those very qualities of *saddhā*, *viriya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* must have been developed to some extent. Let us make an aspiration: using this very support, and making it a strong decisive support (*upanissaya*), developing them further and further, striving as much as possible through your own meditation, may this wholesome deed of listening to the Dhamma be a cause and a decisive support for realizing the supreme, noble, Great Deathless Nibbāna through the penetration (*paṭivedha*) of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant in this very life!

Likewise, may all beings, including the deities, from the lowest hell (*Avīci*) to the highest heaven (*Akaniṭṭha*), rejoice in this merit of listening to and preaching the Dhamma. Through their rejoicing, may they all realize the supreme, noble, Great Deathless Nibbāna through their own aspired Bodhi (awakening)! Having made this aspiration, recite these verses and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #68

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.95)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Avajje vajjamatino, vajje ca abajjadassino;

micchādiṭṭhisamādānā, sattā gacchanti duggatiṃ.

Vajjañca vajjato ñatvā, avajjañca avajjato;

sammādiṭṭhisamādānā, sattā gacchanti suggatiṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 318–319 (Nirayavagga)

Dear Listeners,

A life turns towards the right path precisely when a correct vision dawns upon it. Today, on this Poson Full Moon Poya Day, we commemorate the day when a correct vision arose in the lives of the people of this country. The light of Dhamma that the Great Arahant Mahinda Thera spread on that day from the summit of Mihintale Mountain brought about a massive transformation in the lives of the people of this land. They abandoned wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), which leads to states of misery, and embraced right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which points the way to happy states and to Nibbāna. The two verses we have taken as our theme today were also preached by the Greatly Compassionate Buddha on an occasion when a transformation of life occurred in a group of children who held wrong views.

The followers of other religious teachers living in Savatthi saw their children playing in groups with the children of lay devotees (*Upāsakas*) who were disciples of the Buddha. When those children returned home, their parents made them promise not to bow down to the Sangha and not to enter Buddhist monasteries. One day, both groups of children were playing near the gate of the Jetavana Monastery. When they became thirsty, those children of wrong view said to a child of a right-view lay devotee, "Go to the monastery, drink some water, and bring some water for us too." That child entered the monastery,

drank water, paid respects to the Buddha, and when he explained the reason for his coming, the Buddha said, "Child, drink your water, and then go and tell the others to come here. Do not carry water back." Accordingly, the other children also came and drank water. As they were about to leave after drinking water, the Buddha called them close and preached the Dhamma to them. He preached to such an extent that he made their confidence (*saddhā*) unshakeable, established them in the refuges and precepts (*saraṇa-sīla*), and sent them on their way.

When these children returned home and told their parents about what had occurred, those parents began to weep and lament, saying, "Alas! Our children have fallen into a wrong view!" After wise neighbors gathered and explained things to those parents, establishing some faith in them, those parents, together with their relatives, took the children and said, "Let us hand over these children to the Ascetic Gotama himself," and went and handed them over to the Buddha. On that occasion, the Buddha preached the Dhamma to the group of parents as well, in accordance with the occasion, and inspired faith in them too. He turned them into lay devotees who had taken refuge in the Triple Gem. Coming back from time to time to listen to the Dhamma, in the end, all of them attained the stage of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*). The two verses included in the sermon delivered to those parents at that time are the very ones we have placed as our theme.

Avajje vajjamatino, vajje ca abajjadassino,

Micchādiṭṭhisamādānā, sattā gacchanti duggatiṃ.

The meaning is that those who have the perception of fault in the faultless, and who see the faultless in the faulty, having embraced wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), go to a state of misery. Next is the other verse:

Vajjañca vajjato ñatvā, avajjañca avajjato,

Sammādiṭṭhisamādānā, sattā gacchanti suggatiṃ.

Those who, seeing the faulty as faulty and the faultless as faultless, have established right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), go to a happy state after death.

In this short story about the little children, a valuable lesson is contained. Along with the Great Compassion of the Buddha, there is also His wisdom of skillful means (*upāya-kosalla-ñāṇa*). It was through a certain harmless, strategic skillful means employed in accordance with that wisdom of skillful means that the group of children of wrong view became established in right view, and their parents also became lay devotees who had taken refuge in the Triple Gem. We can understand that the Buddha, instead of just letting them drink ordinary water, made them drink the nectar of the Deathless (*amā-pæn*). He made them drink the nectar of the Deathless. It was not by giving them other things that He brought the confidence of these children to an unshakeable state, but by giving them the pure Dhamma, by giving them the realization of the Dhamma. On a day like today, that harmless and exemplary method employed by the Buddha is highly beneficial for this era as well.

If we consider the meaning of the verse, the Buddha has shown here the difference between wrong view and right view. This verse shows both the characteristic and the result of wrong view. What is its characteristic? The feeling that the correct thing is wrong, and seeing the wrong thing as correct. That is the characteristic of wrong view. Its result is a state of misery, a realm of downfall, hell. The characteristic of right view is seeing the wrong as wrong and the correct as correct. Its result is arriving at a happy state. Indeed, the Buddha has spoken about this wrong view with grave concern on many occasions. To what extent? On one occasion, addressing the Sangha, He declared: "Monks, I do not see any other single thing so highly detrimental in the world as wrong view. Among great wrongs, the greatest wrong is wrong view." What is the reason for this? If a person's view goes wrong, their entire conduct goes completely upside down. He shows this matter with a simile in a discourse.

On one occasion, the Buddha said to the monks: "Monks, whatever bodily action, verbal action, or mental action a person of wrong view performs—that is to say, whatever work they do through body, speech, and mind—and whatever intentions, aspirations, goals they set, if there are any preparations / Preparations / volitional activities (*saṅkhāra*), all of them lead to that person's harm, suffering, and detriment." Having said so, He gave a simile: "Monks, just as when a seed of nimba (neem), a seed of bitter-melon, or a seed of bitter-gourd is planted in moist soil, whatever soil nutrients and moisture that seed absorbs definitely turn bitter." In the same way, He connects it to that simile: "In this manner, if someone's view is wrong, everything else accordingly turns bitter, harsh, and harmful."

He also shows the opposite side: "For a person of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), all bodily actions, verbal actions, and mental actions are shaped according to that view. Furthermore, that person's intentions, aspirations, goals, processes, activities, and preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—every single one of them—conduce to that person's welfare, goodness, and happiness." What is the simile? "Just as when a sugarcane seed, a sugarcane cutting, a seed of hill-rice, or a grape seed is planted in moist soil, whatever soil nutrients and moisture it absorbs result only in sweet fruit." In that way, one can understand the difference between wrong view and right view. Moreover, this description is shown in a way that provides an opportunity for a person to actually examine whether their own view is correct or wrong.

Furthermore, the sutta discourses of the Tipitaka begin with the sutta called Brahmajāla. For a Buddhist who begins to read the sutta discourses, the Brahmajāla Sutta is the first great discourse they encounter. A "Brahma-net." In that discourse, the Buddha has included every wrong view that has arisen and could possibly arise in the world, pointing out, "These are they." You, merit-seekers, can observe this well; it can be shown like a supreme standard, enabling one to compare one's own view with it and see whether it is correct or wrong—just as every single fish is caught in a finely woven net. That is why it is called the Brahmajāla (The Supreme Net). As a net of views (*diṭṭhi-jāla*), the Buddha has compiled and shown all existing views in the world, sixty-two of them in that manner. In that discourse, the views of the wrong-view teachers of that time are shown as being

"this, this, and this." In this way, because of the extreme danger of wrong view, the Buddha showed them in this manner so that we must safeguard ourselves from them. Not only those sixty-two views, but the views of the six contemporary teachers of the Buddha's time have also been subjected to criticism with reasoned arguments, because we must protect ourselves from them. A wrong view has an enticing nature; it drags one along if it is not clearly pointed out. It has a tendency to lead one astray.

It is said that there were six such teachers, teachers of the past: Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, and Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta. In this way, there were six teachers. Most of them—about four of them, such as Pūraṇa Kassapa and Makkhali Gosāla—were proponents of non-action (*akiriyavāda*), who rejected the doctrine of kamma. They presented a multitude of wrong views, claiming that one escapes saṃsāra without any effort, having no faith in things like merit and demerit, and saying that giving and making merit are unnecessary. They also had large groups of disciples. On many occasions, the Buddha critically refuted them by presenting reasoned arguments and debates. In particular, the teacher named Makkhali Gosāla is called a determinist (*niyativādī*), who claimed that everything happens spontaneously. He asserted that just as a ball of string, when thrown, rolls along until it is completely unwound, so too both the wise and the foolish run through saṃsāra for a certain period and will one day spontaneously bring an end to suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) in saṃsāra. He stated that there is no need for a person to exert effort or strive, nor do they even have the capacity to do so; this happens deterministically. In this manner, it is shown. Similarly, many teachers held a view of "non-cause and non-condition" (*ahētu-appaccaya*), stating that a being is defiled or purified without any cause or condition, and that there is no such thing as merit or demerit. On many occasions, the Buddha, speaking specifically of the teacher Makkhali Gosāla, said: "Monks, I do not see any other single person who has arisen for the detriment of so many people as Makkhali Gosāla. Just as someone casts a net at the mouth of a river for the destruction of fish, so Makkhali Gosāla has cast a net for the destruction of human beings."

Such nets can be cast not only in those times but even in the present day. Those kinds of wrong views reject a person's capacity for action—called *akiriyavāda*—and have no belief in kamma and its result, claiming that these things happen spontaneously or deterministically. Likewise, on certain occasions, the Buddha also subjected the philosophy of the teacher Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta to criticism. That teacher did not reject kamma in that manner. Rather, his view was that everything happens because of past causes, because of past kamma. That too is a going to one extreme; it is an overreaching. Because that teacher's opinion was: "It is solely because of past kamma that a person experiences pleasure and pain. Therefore, this is all there is to do: by tormenting the body and undergoing self-mortification as an ascetic, one must wear out that past kamma. One must refrain from accumulating new kamma. By thus refraining from accumulation, one day kamma will be worn out." Such was the opinion held by the teacher Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. The Buddha Himself has described how He met his disciples, asked them if they held such an opinion, and refuted that opinion. "I ask them:

'Now, you are trying to wear out suffering by tormenting this body. Well, can you say that you have actually committed such and such evil deeds in the past? Do you have any idea about them?' 'No, we do not know.' 'Do you know how much of these sins have been worn out through this effort of tormenting the body?' 'No, not that either.' 'Do you know how much more is left to be worn out?' 'We do not know that either.' 'In that case, this effort of yours is fruitless.'" In this way, the Buddha rejected those opinions that claim everything happens solely due to past kamma.

The wrong view held by many is that there is no this world and no next world, and that everything, such as pleasure and pain, happens spontaneously. Or, as shown in another instance, they say that these things happen because of a god or a Brahma. On another occasion, the Buddha points out: "There are three doctrines. When a wise person examines these three doctrines through question and answer, they ultimately turn into a doctrine of non-action (*akiriyavāda*), which refutes and rejects the capacity for action." The Buddha demonstrates this in the following way: "There are some who say, 'All this happens due to past causes.' I go to them and ask, 'If so, if what you say is true, then when someone becomes a killer of living beings, a thief, one who engages in sexual misconduct, or a liar—does all of that happen because of the past? Can that be so?' But that is devoid of truth. If one says it happens solely due to past kamma, there is no place for anyone's effort or energy. Then one must simply let things happen on their own." The Buddha declares that the aforementioned Niganṭha view ultimately falls into non-action (*akiriyavāda*). Because of that doctrine, the unique power within a human being called desire-to-act (*chanda*), endeavor (*vāyāma*), and energy (*viriya*) is rejected.

The Buddha further states: "On certain occasions, since the view existed among those brahmins that Brahma created everything and that Brahma is the cause of all this pleasure and pain, I also go to them and ask: 'According to what you say, when someone becomes a killer of living beings, a thief, one who engages in sexual misconduct, a liar, or a drunkard—is all that because of the god's creation? Do you accept that?'" They have no answer to that. It is a rejection of the power of intention, effort, and desire-to-act within a person that can turn one's life towards the right path. Just as was said about Makkhali Gosāla, the idea that a being is purified or defiled without cause and condition, without any reason at all, is a completely wrong view. Yet, even during the Buddha's time, those teachers who held such views had a large number of followers. They accepted the doctrines of the six teachers who propounded non-action (*akiriyavāda*), the doctrine of non-cause and non-condition (*ahētu-appaccaya-vāda*), and so forth. Even today, there is no reason why such people cannot exist. But we must reflect that the Buddha raised these matters in the sutta discourses so that we might safeguard ourselves. If we have arrived at any conclusion regarding the Dhamma, we must compare it with these to see how far it agrees with the Buddha's view and whether it is in accordance with the Dhamma.

We can point to an example of an occasion when the Buddha, through the power of His wisdom, dispelled wrong opinions. Once, when the Buddha was residing in the Koliyan country, a certain Punna who practiced the ox-duty (*gova-vatta*)... By "ox-duty" it is meant that certain people in those days behaved like animals. What was the idea? Self-

mortification. There was a wrong opinion that by tormenting the body, one could wear out suffering, achieve liberation, attain a happy state, or become a god or a Brahma. That too was an overreaching, or a going to an extreme—an extremist view. Punna, who practiced the ox-duty, and Seniya, who practiced the dog-duty (*kukkura-vatta*), came to meet the Buddha. Both of them arrived and paid respects to the Buddha, and Seniya, who practiced the dog-duty, sat down curled up just like a dog. After both had sat down, Punna spoke, "Venerable Sir," and introduced the other person like this—a custom that still exists today: "This Seniya who practices the dog-duty is an *acela*—that is to say, a naked ascetic—and for a long time, Seniya has been practicing this kind of difficult vow. After Seniya dies and passes away, where will he go?" he asked the Buddha. So the Buddha said, "Punna, let that question be. Do not ask that question." Then he asked a second time, and a third time. Because he asked, the Buddha said, "Well, Punna, I was not going to answer. But since you harass me, I will answer. I will tell you now." He said, "This Seniya has for a long time practiced the dog-duty, cultivated the dog-precepts, developed the dog-attitude, and cultivated a dog-mind. Therefore, due to cultivating that for a long time, after death he will be reborn among dogs." Next, He tells what happens if he does not get that: "If someone holds the view that by practicing this kind of vow one becomes a god or a Brahma, I say there are only two destinations for that person after death: hell or the animal realm. Thus, if this vow succeeds, he becomes a dog. If it fails, he goes to hell." When this was said, Seniya began to shed tears. He began to cry. Then the Buddha said to Punna, "See, Punna, that is why I did not answer. Since you harassed me, I gave this answer." Then Seniya said, "No, Blessed One, I am not crying because of that, but because I practiced this vow for such a long time."

Next, Seniya speaks: "Master Gotama, this Punna has practiced the ox-duty for a very long time. Just like an ox, he performed a very difficult practice. Where will he be reborn?" There too, the Buddha says, "Let that question be. Do not ask that." But there is no escape. Seniya asks three times. After he asked, the Buddha says, "I will tell you. Because he has practiced the ox-duty for a long time, practiced the ox-precepts, developed the ox-attitude, and generated an ox-mind, after death he will be reborn among oxen. If not, because of that wrong view, he will go to hell. Either to hell or to the animal realm." When this was said, then Punna began to cry. Then the Buddha says, "That is why, Punna, I did not answer. You are crying because I told you." Then Punna says, "No, Blessed One, it is not because the Blessed One told me. I am crying because I practiced this for such a long time. So, Blessed One, please preach the Dhamma to us in a way that we may abandon this wrong vow we have undertaken," he invited. On that occasion, the Buddha delivered a special discourse on kamma.

"Yaṃ karoti tena upapajjati"—one is reborn according to what one does. Finally, He demonstrates as a principle that the reborn person has to experience various results of kamma.

"Kammassakā sattā" / *"Kammādāyādā sattā"* (Beings are owners of their kamma, beings are heirs to their kamma).

When He declared in this manner that beings are heirs to their kamma, in the end, Punna became a lay devotee (*Upāsaka*), having gone for refuge in the Triple Gem, and Seniya, who practiced the dog-vow, was ordained in the Dispensation and finally became an Arahant. In this way, according to the discourses, there are endless instances where the Buddha, in accordance with His method of disciplining individuals, removed them from wrong views and established them in right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

Drawing from these, we can reflect on our own view. The Buddha has declared that no matter how well one observes wrong view, if one possesses that wrong view, wrong thoughts, and incorrect ideas, and even if one perfectly observes a certain religious philosophy with corresponding speech and actions, the final result is completely in vain. To illustrate this, the Buddha has given four similes, such as someone putting sand in a boat, soaking it with water, and trying to extract oil from it—shortly put, like an effort to squeeze oil out of sand. Another one shown is like trying to milk a cow by pulling its horn; such are the fruitless efforts made by those of wrong view. It has been shown in various similes like this, such as trying to produce fire by rubbing two wet pieces of wood together. Through such similes, the Buddha explained the fruitlessness of that view.

So far, we have spoken about wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). Now, let us talk about right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). This right view has been analyzed in several ways in different places according to the respective themes. On one occasion, the Venerable Sāriputta asks the monks: "'Right view, right view' (*sammā-diṭṭhi, sammā-diṭṭhi*), so it is said. What, friends, is right view?" He asks just as a teacher would ask his students. The monks reply, "We have come from afar indeed to learn this Dhamma from the Venerable Sāriputta himself. May the answer to this occur to the Venerable Sāriputta himself." In response to that invitation, the Venerable Sāriputta delivers a long discourse, explaining what right view is. The first introduction he gives is a very simple introduction; since it is useful to everyone, let us present it at this time.

If a noble disciple knows the unwholesome and knows the root of the unwholesome, by that much alone is a person one of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Next, he preaches: "What is the unwholesome?" The unwholesome means killing living beings (*pāṇātipāta*), taking what is not given (*adinnādāna*), sexual misconduct (*kāmesumicchācāra*)—these are unwholesome actions done by body. Malicious speech (*pisuṇāvācā*), harsh speech (*pharushāvācā*), and gossip/idle chatter (*samphappalāpa*) are unwholesome actions done by speech. Everyone knows these; there is no need to explain them in detail. Next, there are three terms: covetousness (*abhijjhā*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), and wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). These are shown as wrongs committed by mind. *Abhijjhā* means intense greed / covetousness. Ignorance (*avijjā*) means not knowing, but that is not what is meant by *abhijjhā* here. It is intense greed / covetousness—the intense greed of thinking about someone else's property, "Oh, if only this were mine!" Greed is bad in any case, but intense greed / covetousness is even worse. This is a wrong attitude generated within the mind itself.

Next, *vyāpāda* means hatred / ill-will. Next, wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). Wrong view is an unwholesome act committed by the mind. Thus, these are the unwholesome acts

committed by body, speech, and mind. Next, he declares what the roots of these unwholesome acts are: greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). These are the unwholesome roots. Now, if you have understood that much, that is one side. Next, he declares what the wholesome is. The wholesome (*kusala*) means abstaining from killing living beings, abstaining from taking what is not given, abstaining from sexual misconduct, abstaining from false speech, and so on. Abstinence, which is called *veramaṇī*. Thus, abstinence itself is taken as the wholesome here. The unwholesome is committing wrongs, which everyone in the world easily does. The wholesome is refraining from them. This might be a problem for some because, according to current usage, many people commonly use "wholesome" (*kusala*) and "merit" (*puñña*) as synonyms. To some extent that is correct, but due to certain reasons, there are shortcomings in that as well.

Venerable Sāriputta introduces two aspects: the wholesome (*kusala*) and the roots of the wholesome (*kusala-mūla*). What are the roots of the wholesome? Non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). Non-greed means detachment from greed. It does not mean it is completely gone. Bringing the mind to a state of detachment from greed, even temporarily, is a wholesome act, a skill. It is towards greed that the world is drawn. It is greed that they face. If one turns one's back on greed and performs some work, such as a meritorious act of giving, that mental strength is wholesome (*kusala*). It is a skill. Next, non-hatred (*adosa*): getting angry is the general habit. But if one can prevent it, if one can remove ill-will, that is a skill. It is easy to be swept away by that wave of wrong view (*micchā*); stopping it with difficulty is non-delusion (*amoha*)—the departure from delusion.

As we said before, because this might be a problem for some, even without elaborate details, it must be said briefly: we often use the words merit (*puñña*), demerit (*pāpa*), wholesome (*kusala*), and unwholesome (*akusala*) synonymously. However, in certain places, we have to associate this word *kusala* with skillfulness regarding the mind. That is the primary idea. When we say "merit and demerit" (*puñña-pāpa*), it is their results, their *vipāka*—pleasant results and painful results—that mostly come to mind. In *kusala*, there is a deeper meaning than that, which is described as skillfulness. To what extent? Here, Venerable Sāriputta speaks of "roots of the wholesome" (*kusala-mūla*) and "roots of the unwholesome" (*akusala-mūla*), but there is never any usage such as "roots of merit" (*puñña-mūla*) or "roots of demerit" (*pāpa-mūla*). No one can point to any usage of "roots of merit" or "roots of demerit" in these books. But "roots of the wholesome" and "roots of the unwholesome" are indeed mentioned. From this fact, one can reflect on something. Wholesomeness (*kusala*) is a deep concept. It is the turning around of our mental energy, which otherwise runs in the wrong direction in saṃsāra. That is why we always say to repeat the word *veramaṇī* with some strength when undertaking the precepts. *Veramaṇī* is abstinence, detachment. That is indeed the difficult part.

Well, having begun to analyze the wholesome and unwholesome in this simple manner, Venerable Sāriputta finally shows at a deep level what this right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is. Indeed, as we all know, the ultimate goal of this Buddha-Dispensation is liberation from

this perilous saṃsāra. That is no easy task. The right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) that only a Buddha reveals to the world is the natural truth of the Four Noble Truths, namely *Dukkha* (Suffering), *samudaya* (origin), *nirodha* (cessation), and *magga* (path). These entire five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)—form, feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception, preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which we call "I" and "mine"—are purely suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Generally, omitting that part, we often say that birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering. We think of stopping just by saying that much. But the Buddha does not end there. After saying those things, He says in brief that the entire five aggregates of grasping are suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Because this is generally understood only partially, the Buddha declared concerning the truth of suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) that it is "to be fully understood" (*pariññeyya*), meaning it must be completely comprehended. An ordinary person has only a partial understanding of suffering. But the Buddha says "pariññeyya"—one fully comprehends it, knows it thoroughly. When one understands that, the entire five aggregates are completely included. That is the truth of suffering (*dukkha-sacca*).

Next, as its cause, the origin of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*) means the cause. As the cause of suffering, the Buddha points to craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). Underlying the suffering of anything and everything is craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). Next is the eradication of that craving / thirst. The stilled mind, the quenching of that thirst obtained by its eradication, is shown as Nibbāna. That is the peace attainable in this very life. Next, the path to it is shown as the Noble Eightfold Path.

What is meant by this "correctness"? Everyone has a view regarding life. There is what is called a philosophy of life. The drunkard's philosophy is about alcohol. The fisherman's philosophy is about fish. In various ways, each has their own philosophy of life. Correct vision according to the Dhamma is shown in two ways: *kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view of ownership of kamma) and *magga sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view of the Path). *Kammassakatā* means that kamma is one's own. The Buddha declares: if a being in saṃsāra takes these aforementioned five aggregates of grasping and performs any action, there are results (*vipāka*) of that action. One cannot escape those results. Some clever scholars ask, "If this is not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*), how can we talk about a result?" But that is not the truth. The Buddha declares that here we have a deep natural law of the mind. Truly speaking, the natural law of dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) is present here as a heap of preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arising due to ignorance (*aviijjā*). Taking the five aggregates of grasping, one is driven to a course of action. The results of that activity must inevitably be experienced, whether as pleasure or as pain. That is what we call kamma and its result (*vipāka*).

What the Buddha shows as the ten-fold view (*dasavatthuka-diṭṭhi*) is His assertion of "there is, there is" against the nihilistic view (*nātthika-diṭṭhi*) of Makkhali Gosāla and others who say "there is not, there is not." There is this world, there is the next world; there is mother, there is father; there are results of wholesome and unwholesome deeds; there are ascetics and brahmins who have a correct understanding of this world; there

are results of treating parents well, and so forth. Why does the Buddha show these? Because from that standpoint, a person can go to a happy state. If they take the other standpoint, they go to a state of misery. That is what is there. Yet, even that is still within saṃsāra.

What helps one to escape from saṃsāra is the realization of the truth. That is called the right view of the Path (*magga sammā-diṭṭhi*). This is the realization that these five aggregates of grasping are suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*); the cause of this is craving / thirst (*taṇhā*); and the quenching of that craving / thirst is happiness. One must actually experience that attainment. It is at the stage of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*) that this becomes directly realized by a person. Next, the path, the practice that helps one to achieve this, is the Noble Eightfold Path.

Now, many have heard that indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) is one extreme. Tormenting the body is the other extreme. Everyone has heard that between these two lies the Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*), which is the Noble Eightfold Path. That is exactly what is said here. The Buddha has declared a wonderful Dhamma that goes right down the middle, transcending all those views. To that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), both of those aspects belong. One does not go to the extreme of annihilationism (*uccheda*); one does not go to the extreme of saying "it ends here, so there are no results for killing animals, theft, and so on." If one has assumed responsibility in saṃsāra, in performing wholesome and unwholesome deeds, one has to accept that there are results according to that responsibility. On the other hand, it goes further: in reality, here there is only a collection of causes and conditions. This must be understood through wisdom. It is when this is seen through wisdom that liberation is obtained. This is called the Path right view (*magga sammā-diṭṭhi*). It is those who confuse these two who sometimes present distorted ideas about this Dhamma. Thus, if a complete right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) of both sides has arisen in someone, thoughts and intentions arise in accordance with it.

Right view, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration—this is how those Pali terms have been translated into Sinhala. They are *sammā-diṭṭhi*, *sammā-saṅkappa*, *sammā-vācā*, *sammā-kammanta*, *sammā-ājīva*, *sammā-vāyāma*, *sammā-sati*, and *sammā-samādhi*. When you, merit-seekers, reflect on this, you will see how systematic it is. A person's life is completely transformed. View is what is important there. If the view goes wrong, it ends up in wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*). If it is correct, one achieves right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) and, through that, can attain one's liberation. Thus, what Venerable Sāriputta finally gave concerning right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) was the right view concerning the truth.

Now, we are gradually moving towards the side of Nibbāna. On one occasion, the Buddha declared: "Monks, right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is twofold." For beings bound to saṃsāra who are unable to bring an end to suffering in this life, He introduced the ten-fold right view of ownership of kamma (*kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi*), which helps

them to turn away from the path to misery and go to happy states. That is "accompanied by taints, siding with merit, ripening on the side of acquisition" (*sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā*). It is accompanied by taints (*āsava*). Taints mean the taint of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), the taint of existence (*bhavāsava*), and the taint of ignorance (*avijjāsava*), which you, merit-seekers, might have heard of—these saṃsāric habits we have formed. Being drawn to sensual pleasures, being drawn to existence / becoming (*bhava*), being drawn to views—in this way, caught in certain currents, we travel on this saṃsāric journey. This right view is accompanied by taints. However, *puññabhāgiyā* means it sides with merit. The aforementioned view of Makkhali Gosāla and others is *apuññabhāgiyā*, or rather, it goes to the side of sin / demerit; it drags one down to states of misery. But from this right view, a person can obtain a small opening to a happy state. In this perilous saṃsāra, if one obtains at least a human state, a divine state, or even a Brahma state, instead of going to hell, there is some degree of peace. It does not mean one is completely freed. But if one goes to states of misery—to the ghost realm or to hell—one cannot rise again for aeons. There too, the Buddha points to the Middle Way. Thus, there is no prohibition for a saṃsāric being to establish themselves on that standpoint and perform meritorious deeds according to the aforementioned right view of ownership of kamma. It does not end there. Through that, one can obtain happy states in this becoming / existence (*bhava*) and realize Nibbāna. Therefore…

The term *upadhi* (acquisitions / assets / fuel) also needs to be explained. *Upadhi* means the worldly assets, possessions, and resources that support a person as accessories once they are born. These are things that help sustain a life. Because they lack these, there are people who spend their entire lives begging in misery, solely to keep body and soul together. For them, there is no opportunity even to think of religious or spiritual progress. Even if we preach the Dhamma, it does not penetrate. What is meant (by *upadhivepakkā*) is that it brings about these assets and resources (*upadhi*). Now, what happens to many people is that they confuse these two.

Next, when speaking of escaping saṃsāra at a deep level, that second right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is introduced thus: *"Atthi, bhikkhave, sammā-diṭṭhi ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggāṅgā"*—the right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, and a factor of the Path. That is the truth; in it, there is no talk of a self. There is no talk of "I" and "mine." It is purely a mass of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Purely a mass of suffering. When some people take to intellectual debates, they speak of the Four Noble Truths. Yet, in their day-to-day lives, they remain at that lower level. It is when these two are confused that many people even reject merit and demerit. These are called intellectual overreachings; they are overreachings. The Buddha clearly shows that here too, there is a middle path. We have reminded you, merit-seekers, on many occasions: a person crossing a swift current must cross the stream at a middle pace, neither struggling excessively nor stopping. It is something like that. In this saṃsāra, the swift currents of sensual desire (*kāmogha*) and the current of existence / becoming (*bhavogha*) are flowing. A person trying to cross this cannot simply leap from this side to the other, even if they wish to do so. Allowing some leeway to the wave, one must cross to the other side carefully, neither struggling excessively nor stopping.

According to that vision, the Buddha shows that beings living in the world must obtain some opening through meritorious deeds. We must remember that whatever wholesome kamma, whatever merit, has granted us at least this human state of existence is gradually wearing away. We have made plans on how to spend the income we earn once a month on payday. This is visible in the budgets of these times. However, we do not see that the merit which granted us this human state, this comfort, is running out. We squander it by dancing, singing, and playing music. Meanwhile, without our even knowing, the moment the merit runs out, if we are in the sky, we will fall straight onto the road along with that luxury vehicle. If we are on a ship, we will sink to the bottom of the sea. Coinciding with the exhaustion of wholesome kamma, the unwholesome kamma surfaces. Some evil deed done in the distant past will surface and yield its result (*vipāka*). It is because of this perilous situation that the Buddha urged us to be diligent (*appamāda*) in performing meritorious deeds. Thus, it was the very Buddha who preached that profound Dhamma who also spoke about merit and demerit. It was no one else. That word of the Buddha is in accordance with the aforementioned Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). No matter how much we say, intellectuals think that just because they have studied books, they stand upon this truth. Yet, unless they possess the Dhamma-eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*), they have not realized the Four Noble Truths. We often mention only half of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), compartmentalizing suffering. Only this much is suffering, and the other part is pleasure, so we think.

But the Buddha says that there is nothing here to be taken up. The five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) are solely (*kevala*) a mass of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). This realization must be reached through meditation, not merely by reading books. It is reached by looking at this body through the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), by looking at feelings / sensations (*vedanā*), by looking at the mind, and by looking at the mental qualities (*dhamma*) that arise in the mind—by watching their coming and going. That is where impermanence (*anicca*) reveals itself. Every single one of these is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*). You, merit-seekers, have heard that what the Buddha said about this entire existence / becoming (*bhava*) is summarized in three words: *"aniccaṃ dukkhaṃ anattā." "Yadaniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadanattā"*—in that way, they are connected. Whatever is impermanent / inconstant is suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*); because of its shaking, changing nature, it is suffering. Whatever is suffering, no one wishes to claim as "I" or "mine." It cannot be kept under one's control.

Now, although that truth exists in mere words, one must realize it directly for oneself through the establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). It is at that moment that the Four Noble Truths are understood. That is why it is "noble" (*ariya*); that is what is meant by attaining the noble state. It is "taintless" (*anāsava*); at that moment, one is freed from the power of those taints (*āsava*), even if for a single moment. What is called directly realizing Nibbāna is, in truth, if the mind has been liberated even for a moment through the power of Path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*), one has seen this not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*) nature, this void nature, the emptiness of the world, right through those taints. At that moment, one has directly realized it for a split second. It

cannot be shown to anyone else. It is something to be realized by oneself. "Supramundane, noble, taintless" (*lokuttarā ariyā anāsavā*). Crossing over the world—crossing over the world is not like going from this country to a foreign country. Supramundane (*lokuttara*) means a state that has transcended this worldliness. The worldly are swept away, submerged under those aforementioned currents.

A person who has practiced insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) for a long time might, perhaps even while listening to a discourse delivered by the Buddha according to His meditation instructions, in a single moment, attain this very realization within the mind through that insight meditation. If it is understood at any such moment, that is "supramundane" (*lokuttara*)—it is a supramundane state. It is a Path factor (*maggāṅga*)—it is the Path, the Eightfold Path. Indeed, we have practiced the Noble Eightfold Path in retail fashion, so to speak, in our day-to-day lives. The moment when it aligns perfectly in depth, from right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) up to right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*), is that very moment of realizing the Path and Fruit (*magga-phala*). That is called the Path-consciousness (*magga-citta*). That is why the Buddha called it *maggāṅga* (Path factor). The moment of profound realization of the Four Noble Truths occurs precisely as a Path factor. It is not something that can be understood through logic. That is the deep-level right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). That is why the Buddha declared right view to be twofold.

The Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) declared by the Buddha is a highly wondrous teaching because there is a vast depth within it. Generally, we think that we have freed ourselves from indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) and from self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*), and that this alone constitutes the Middle Way. Yet, the Buddha has shown it even more deeply in various places. To the brahmin named Kaccāyana, the Buddha declares: "'Everything exists'—this, Kaccāyana, is one extreme. 'Everything does not exist'—this is the second extreme. Without falling into either of these extremes, without approaching them, the Tathāgata preaches the Dhamma by the middle." Next, He shows that Middle Way as dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*)—that profound teaching that there is an arising based on causes and conditions, and that by removing those causes and conditions, there is a cessation. Arising and ceasing; origin and cessation (*samudaya-nirodha*); rise and fall (*udaya-vaya*). In this way, regarding this world—regarding everything physical, bodily, and mental in the world—there is only a series of arisings and ceasings. Impermanence / Inconstancy (*aniccatā*) is understood as an arising and a ceasing. That is why in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Buddha invites one to experience this directly.

Let us take mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), which everyone knows. What is mindfulness of breathing? It is establishing mindfulness on our in-breaths and out-breaths. By establishing mindfulness, as it goes deeper and deeper, one understands: "There is no 'I' here who breathes. There is only a filling and an emptying. An emptying and a filling." When the emptying is finished, there is a desire to fill. Next, having filled, it cannot be maintained; it has to be expelled next. So, existence is found between these two. This is true not only of in-breaths and out-breaths, but of everything else as well. No

matter how delicious the food we eat, even when we go to banquets and five-star hotels, where does even that food, where does everything end up? The delicious drinks we consume... we must contemplate all of these.

That is what the Buddha told us to make our objects of contemplation in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This is not something strange. This is not something to be seen by going to a laboratory. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is not something that can be understood through physical experiments. Its magical/illusionary nature must be realized by oneself through the establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). No one can display consciousness (*viññāṇa*) with any kind of instrument. That is why the Buddha declared: "I do not see any other single thing that changes so quickly as this mind." One can measure the speed of the body's arising and ceasing, but the arising and ceasing nature of the mind cannot be seen by an ordinary person. Some present various similes, like seeing a circle of fire when a whirling brand is spun. Similarly, this mind spins extremely rapidly. That is the greatest myth. The view, the illusion, grasps it as "I." The world dwells within that. It is experienced in that very way—the two aspects of arising and ceasing. Seeing these two aspects of arising and ceasing, as one gradually understands its impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature, a disillusionment (*nibbidā*) arises towards it. That cannot be prevented. As that disillusionment grows, the realization also becomes purified, because it is out of attachment that one grasps this. As disillusionment grows, realization arises and becomes pure. Realization is defiled by craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), desire, and so forth. Therefore, when these are removed, the mind comes to equanimity (*upekkhā*). Without bringing the mind to equanimity, we cannot understand the truth.

That is why this virtue (*sīla*) is needed. That is why concentration (*samādhi*) is needed—to calm the mind. To the extent that one removes what are called unwholesome deeds and wrongs and purifies the mind, wisdom (*paññā*) finally dawns. According to the Dhamma of the Buddha, that wisdom means understanding the principle that whatever has the nature to arise, all that has the nature to cease. When any poor person, any destitute person, attains the path of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna-magga*), that person is described as an expert—an expert in the Dhamma. As the principle of that expert knowledge they have attained, *"yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ"*—whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease—that person has already directly realized. Because they saw for a moment that this form, feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception, preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and this mind called consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which they are grasping and holding as "mine," have all ceased for a moment. They ceased precisely because that aforementioned grasping was removed. It is due to grasping that we see this not as a collection, but as solid things, owing to the perception of solidity (*ghana-saññā*). But when, through wisdom, a person realizes at some point that the moment grasping is abandoned, there is nothing left here—then they deeply understand: "Here it is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*)." There lies liberation. There is the supramundane state. This cannot be understood through machines or by logic. That is why it is called a Dhamma that is beyond logical reasoning (*atakkāvacara*).

The Buddha shows a quality of the Dhamma, *"paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhī"*—to be personally realized by the wise. Even the Buddha cannot simply hand the knowledge of the Stream-entry path to someone. He can only show the way, and by looking at that person's past kamma, past character, inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsaya-anusaya*), and character traits, He can hasten that realization by delivering a suitable discourse. But the Buddha cannot give that realization like giving an object to someone. It must be generated within oneself. If one has sufficient past practice, it takes only a short time. Otherwise, one must strive for it. One must be prepared to work hard for it. One should not think that this can be obtained in a day, a week, from books, or merely by listening to a sermon. It is only when one thinks of this as a difficult thing that one can actually achieve it. On one hand, we must develop the perception that "it is possible." But we must not make this out to be too easy. We must exert that effort; in reality, only when one realizes it is something that can be done with effort does the endeavor apply. Otherwise, if one thinks: "I have obtained so many degrees, I am a world-renowned wise person, a scholar, this is a very minor thing for me; if I want, I can obtain this in a short time after I retire"—then that is wrong. What one must think is that one has to dedicate one's entire life to this. Because for all this time, we have traveled in this saṃsāra due to the lack of this realization, this supramundane right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Therefore, without having too much pride in oneself, one must humbly enter this path of practice, starting from virtues like precepts, just as you, merit-seekers, have done today.

The Buddha Himself has declared that this saṃsāra is like a swamp. One must think of constructing a small platform to sit on for meditation in this swamp. Planting five pillars represents the Five Precepts; planting eight pillars represents the Eight Precepts; planting ten pillars represents the Ten Precepts. Having constructed a small platform in this manner, reflecting on that virtue, generating a concentrated mind, and relying on the meditation subject to concentrate the mind—then, as shown by the Buddha, regarding the Three Characteristics of impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*): insight meditation (*vipassanā*) is not merely repeating these words. We have reminded you on many occasions that insight is not saying, but seeing. For that seeing, we must engage in Satipaṭṭhāna as a meditation. Contemplate according to this body. Through contemplating according to the body, when looking with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), the reality of the body is seen. Next, feelings / sensations (*vedanā*), the mind…

…and the mental qualities (*dhamma*) that arise in the mind. To put it briefly, the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), the factors of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*), and the thirty-seven factors of awakening (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) declared by the Buddha are not things confined to books. These are things to be generated within ourselves. Only to the extent that we develop them will we be able to attain direct realization within ourselves. Everyone keeps precepts, develops concentration, and meditates in order to escape from this highly perilous saṃsāric suffering of birth / arising (*jāti*), decay / aging, sickness, and death (*jarāmaraṇa*).

Today is the valuable Poson Full Moon Poya Day. We speak a lot about protecting the Buddha-Dispensation; the sound of it is heard everywhere. But this is a Dispensation that must be protected from within. Without practicing these principles, protecting anything else is useless. The Buddha-Dispensation will not endure. Therefore, by walking on this path of Dhamma, if one directly realizes it for oneself to the extent of being able to help others as well, only then can the Buddha-Dispensation truly be preserved.

Therefore, with such a deep intention, this merit-seeking group, having engaged in undertaking the precepts today, practicing meditation to the best of your ability with the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), and listening to this Dhamma—may this accumulated store of wholesomeness strengthen your aspirations! Relying further on this very wholesome power, may this merit of listening to the Dhamma be a supportive condition for directly realizing the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the Paths and Fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahatship! I make this aspiration.

From Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, if there be any being who wishes to rejoice in this merit of Dhamma-preaching and Dhamma-listening, may they all, by so rejoicing, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired state of Awakening (*Bodhi*)! Likewise, may all your relatives and friends, and all beings of the world, realize that nectar-like, supreme, deathless Nibbāna! With this aspiration, recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #69

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.170)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Apaṇṇakaṃ ṭhānameke, dutiyaṃ āhu takkikā;

etadaññāya medhāvī, taṃ gaṇhe yadapaṇṇakaṃ.

From:

Apaṇṇaka Jātaka (Jātaka No. 1)

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha points out to us that the difference between the wise person and the foolish person can be understood according to the course of action they take when faced with a problem. The wise person looks at a problem and arrives at conclusions in a manner entirely different from how the foolish person looks at a problem and the conclusions they draw. Because of this very reason, where the foolish person meets ruin, the wise person secures their own progress. In this Dhamma, it is the practice of those wise ones that is known as the *apaṇṇaka* practice (the safe or non-erring path).

The verse from the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* which mentions that wise practice is what we have chosen as our theme. In the Jātaka book, the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* is presented first, like the letter 'A' of the alphabet. This could be due to its foundational theoretical value. Everyone knows the story of the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka*. Its background story (*nidāna*) exists as a narrative. The occasion on which this Jātaka story was preached is mentioned in the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* as follows. At a time when the Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, was residing in Sāvatthi, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika came to see the Buddha along with five hundred of his friends who were followers of other sects (*tīrthaka*). Having arrived and heard the Dhamma from the Buddha, all five hundred of those followers of other sects abandoned their sectarian refuge and took refuge in the Triple Gem. After that, they frequently came to Jetavana monastery with the householder Anāthapiṇḍika. They listened to the Dhamma, gave alms, and observed the precepts. After some time, the Buddha journeyed from Sāvatthi to Rājagaha.

After He had departed, all five hundred who were previously sectarian followers abandoned their refuge in the Triple Gem and once again took refuge in their sectarian teachers. Having done so, when the Buddha returned to Sāvatthi seven or eight months later, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika came to meet the Buddha with these five hundred people and revealed this matter, in a way that made those sectarian followers feel somewhat ashamed. On that occasion, the Buddha, having declared the value of taking refuge in the Triple Gem in various ways, explained that in the past too, certain people, by taking that which is not a refuge as a refuge, fell prey to demons (*yakshas*) in a wilderness infested by non-humans and were destroyed.

When this was declared, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika requested the Buddha to relate that story of the past. The story of the past is as follows. You all know how Jātaka stories begin. In the past, when King Brahmadatta was ruling in the city of Benares in the kingdom of Kāsi, the Bodhisatta was born into a merchant family. Having reached young adulthood, he earned his living as a merchant traveling through deserts with five hundred carts. In ancient books, he is called a caravan leader (*sātthu-nāyaka*), which in modern terms means a cart caravan leader. He was engaged in trade as a caravan leader. In that same city of Benares, there was another merchant who was rather foolish. He too was someone who traveled through deserts with five hundred carts. On one occasion, the Bodhisatta loaded his carts with valuable goods from Benares and prepared to cross the desert to a distant city. At that very moment, the foolish merchant also prepared to go at the same time with his five hundred carts. Then the Bodhisatta thought: "If both of our groups go together, the road will not be sufficient for a thousand carts. The men will not get enough water, and the oxen will not get enough grass. Either I must go first, or this merchant must go first." Thinking thus, he went to the foolish merchant and asked, "Will you go first, or shall I?" The foolish merchant calculated the benefits of going first in this way: "I can lead my carts on a road that is not yet muddy. There will be plenty of grass for the oxen. The men will also be able to get edible leaves. Going first, we can obtain clean, unmuddy water. Furthermore, I can fix the price of the goods as I wish." Seeing five such benefits, he declared, "I will go first."

The Bodhisatta saw the advantages of going afterwards. He reasoned: "Once these merchants have gone and prepared the path, making the uneven places even, my journey will be easy. Also, when their oxen have eaten the mature grass, my oxen will get the tender young grass. Similarly, my men will get sweet edible leaves. Furthermore, as for water, since they would have gone ahead and dug wells in waterless places, we too can obtain water from them. Additionally, haggling over prices is a taxing task, like a slaughter; therefore, it is easier for me to sell my goods at the prices already established by them." Seeing five advantages in that direction, he agreed, saying, "Very well, I shall go afterwards." So, the foolish merchant, having filled his carts with water, set off. Deserts without water are called waterless deserts (*nirudaka*) in the books. *Udaka* means water. There are waterless deserts as well as deserts infested by non-humans. This was a desert that was both waterless and infested by non-humans. When these foolish merchants had reached the middle of the desert, the demon (*yaksha*) infesting that desert thought of making this caravan discard their water to weaken them, so that

he could devour them along with their oxen. He assumed the guise of a great lord and, accompanied by a group of about ten or twelve, came in a carriage. This group wore lotus flowers, chewed lotus stalks, with their hair and garments dripping wet, and had mud on their bodies, looking exactly as if they were coming from a region plentiful in water. Coming forward, he engaged in friendly conversation with the foolish merchant. The merchant asked, "Is there water in the direction you are coming from?" "Oh, it is raining heavily there, there are lakes and ponds," praised the demon. When asked, "What is in those carts at the back?" the merchant replied, "Water." "Why are you carrying that water? There is plenty of water in that direction. You do not need to pull that load in these carts," said the demon.

Listening to the demon's words, these foolish merchants broke their water pots, threw away the water in the carts, and went forward. But contrary to their expectations, there was no water. Both men and oxen stopped the carts at night and lay down exhausted. During the night, the demons came from the demon city and devoured everyone, including the oxen, leaving only their bones. That was the fate of the foolish merchant. Next, about a month and a half after the foolish merchants had left, the Bodhisatta also set out with his five hundred carts. When he reached the middle of the desert, the same demon came in the same manner to deceive the Bodhisatta, saying, "There is plenty of water in this area, throw away your water and go." The Bodhisatta immediately recognized that this was a demon, thinking, "Because of the redness of his eyes and the absence of a shadow, this must be a demon." The Bodhisatta said, "I will not throw away the water I have without seeing other water." Standing firm on that principle, he said, "It does not matter if the load is a bit heavy for us. We will carry it." Thus, the demon's plan did not succeed.

As the Bodhisatta proceeded along that road, a discussion arose among the people: "Why are we carrying such a heavy load? That person said there is water ahead, didn't he?" The Bodhisatta stopped all the carts, gathered his men, and asked, "Have you ever heard of lakes or ponds in this desert?" "No," they replied. "And if it is raining, how far away do you feel the rain-wind and cold?" "About a league (*yojana*)," they said. "Do you feel them now? Do you hear thunder? Do you hear it rumbling? Do you see lightning?" When he asked this, the men had no answers. He said, "Understand that it was a demon who came. Therefore, let us continue our journey forward." Having persuaded them, they went forward. When they went, in the middle of the desert they saw those five hundred carts standing intact, and piles of bones everywhere. They realized the truth of the Bodhisatta's words—that the demons had devoured them. That night, having organized strong security arrangements, and having advised his men, saying, "Do not throw away the water, use it sparingly," they took the better carts in place of their own broken ones. They reached their destination safely, sold their goods, made a profit, and returned. That is what is related in that Jātaka story.

Next, the Buddha, by way of presenting the underlying principle of the story, declared the short verse which we have taken as our theme. We have to understand it by adding a few more words.

Apaṇṇakaṃ ṭhānameke, dutiyaṃ āhu takkikā;

Etadaññāya medhāvī, taṃ gaṇhe yadapaṇṇakaṃ.

What it says is: some wise people adopt that matter, that practice, which is called '*apaṇṇaka*'—let us keep the word as it is. "*Dutiyaṃ āhu takkikā*"—those who are slaves to logic (*takkikā*) accept the second position. Now, the word *apaṇṇaka* is often understood as the non-erring, safe path. Accordingly, wise people adopt the non-erring practice, while those mentioned second adopt the erring path. The wise person (*medhāvī*), having correctly understood this matter—that is, the difference between these two practices, the difference between good and bad, right and wrong—follows the advice: "*taṃ gaṇhe yadapaṇṇakaṃ*", meaning he acts in accordance with that *apaṇṇaka* practice. This is the instruction contained in this verse.

At the conclusion of that story, the Buddha identified the characters, stating that the foolish merchant was Devadatta and the wise merchant was Himself. When we reflect upon this story, we can understand that between the practices of those two, the foolish merchant believed the words of the demon exactly as they were spoken. If we look at it from the perspective of logic, there were signs of someone coming from a place where it was raining. "Therefore, let us throw away the water and go"—that was all he thought. He acted without foresight. But the Bodhisatta not only recognized the demon as a demon; he also did not believe his words outright. Furthermore, he thought: "Why should we throw away the water we have carried without seeing other water? Even though it is somewhat heavy and troublesome, whether it turns out to be right or wrong, let us keep it." It is this very principle of "whether it turns out to be right or wrong" that is contained in this *apaṇṇaka* practice. Some foolish people, just because someone says so, would say, "Alright then, let us throw away the water and go." Our elders may have heard the saying: "Seeing fleeing deer, do not throw away the harvested leaves." A saying that fits this *apaṇṇaka* practice has been absorbed into our literature too: do not throw away the edible leaves you have already gathered just because you see deer running past. In the same way, one should not throw away the water in one's possession merely because someone says there is water ahead.

Moreover, this Bodhisatta merchant saw the benefits of going second in a way different from the foolish merchant. Also, when explaining things to his followers, he thought deeply and wisely considered whether it was really raining or not before making a decision. That is the *apaṇṇaka* practice. Therefore, even though it was troublesome, they carried the water. But in truth, he did not err. It might have seemed like an error initially. These are the valuable points contained within the *apaṇṇaka* practice. From this point on, we must add a few more details to this. We said earlier that the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* is placed at the very beginning of the collection due to some theoretical value. We can say, by way of a simile at this point, that just as the Bodhisatta, standing firm on the *apaṇṇaka* practice as a Bodhisatta, led his followers safely through the waterless desert infested by non-humans, the Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, after His Enlightenment, presented a non-erring practice in the Dhamma under the name

apaṇṇaka that leads all the way to Nibbāna. It is that portion we are going to discuss next.

There is a valuable discourse that reveals this. Today, there is a discourse in the Majjhima Nikāya called the *Apaṇṇaka Sutta* which is highly worth studying for rationalists. This discourse is somewhat deep, and it is something very valuable for intellectuals to investigate. The background story in it is as follows. On one occasion, while wandering on tour with a large community of monks, the Buddha arrived at a Brahmin village called Sālā. The Brahmins of Sālā had heard the widespread report of the Buddha's fame, such as "Itipi so bhagavā...", and thinking that it is wonderful to see an Arahant like the Buddha, this group of Brahmins came to see Him. When they arrived, the Buddha asked, "Householders, is there any agreeable teacher in whom you have placed your faith after investigating the facts?" This group replied, "No, we do not have such a teacher in whom we have established faith." The Buddha declared: "Householders, here the term *ākāravatī saddhā* (reasoned faith) is mentioned. Reasoned faith is the faith that is developed after investigating the facts. If you do not have a teacher in whom you have established reasoned faith, you should adopt and practice the *apaṇṇaka* practice. Standing firm on and practicing the *apaṇṇaka* practice will lead to your welfare and happiness for a long time. And what, householders, is this *apaṇṇaka* practice?"

Now, what follows relates to the *apaṇṇaka* practice. "Householders, there are some ascetics and Brahmins who put forward this view, this opinion: 'There is nothing given, nothing offered... there are no spontaneously arisen beings; there are no ascetics and Brahmins in the world who have correctly understood and declared both this world and the world beyond.' That which was said to exist is denied there, and what is described is what is known in the Dhamma as the 'right view of ownership of action' (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*). You may have heard of the ten-point right view. Next, the Buddha states: 'Householders, these two groups express mutually contradictory views.' He analyzes and explains each of these as follows. Regarding those ascetics and Brahmins who previously presented the nihilistic view (*nātthika diṭṭhi*), because they do not accept good and bad, we can expect this kind of conduct from them: they abandon bodily, verbal, and mental good conduct, and engage in bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct. They do not know the danger in misconduct or the benefit in good conduct, nor do they know how the mind is defiled or purified by them. Therefore, they remain in that position and conduct their lives according to that practice. The Buddha continues further, by way of showing the danger of this: if there is indeed a world beyond—whereas their view is that there is not—then their view turns out to be a wrong view. Their thoughts and intentions become wrong thoughts (*micchā saṅkappa*). Furthermore, in their conduct, they say things opposed to the words of the Noble Ones (*Ariyas*). Moreover, by trying to propagate their view to others, they propagate the false Dhamma. In this way, the side of danger is shown. There are these various dangers in holding such a wrong view. Also, those who hold that wrong view tend to praise themselves and disparage others. Showing five such dangers, the Buddha summarizes them. Now, those who held that nihilistic view, from the very beginning, rejected the virtue of good conduct (*susīla*) and embraced bad

conduct (*dussīla*), showing that they possess wrong view, wrong thoughts, wrong speech, and so on.

Next, how a wise person looks at this matter is shown. This wise person looks at their practice and view and thinks: "If the view of these people is correct, if indeed there is no such thing as sacrifice or offering, and there is no world beyond, then after death, they will not face any trouble. However, if by any chance the opinion they hold is wrong, they will arise in a state of deprivation, in hell. Not only that; even if their view were correct, in this very life wise people censure them, saying: 'These people are of bad conduct, they hold wrong views.' This is called '*ubhayatha kaliggaho*'—losing on both sides. They have failed both in this world and in the world beyond." That is how the wise person reflects.

Regarding those who hold the affirmationist view (*atthika-vāda*), the Buddha explains as follows. If they have presented an opinion in the second manner, which is the right view of ownership of action (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*), we can expect the following from them. Since they believed in *kamma* and its results, they would avoid wrong bodily, verbal, and mental actions and behave in good, wholesome bodily, verbal, and mental actions. Why? Because they know the danger in misconduct which defiles beings, and the beneficial side of good conduct which purifies the mind. This is the positive side of those who adopt the second opinion. The Buddha declares that if the matter is true, they possess right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*), their thoughts are right thoughts (*sammāsaṅkappa*), and the words they use are right speech (*sammāvācā*). If there is an opinion held by the Noble Ones (*Ariyas*), their view is in agreement with it. Their position is not opposed to the Noble Ones, it is in agreement. If they teach the Dhamma to someone, it is the True Dhamma (*saddhamma*). Through "*saddhamma-saññatti*" (persuasion in the True Dhamma), the True Dhamma is sharpened and refined. Furthermore, because they stand firm in that Dhamma, they do not engage in self-exaltation or disparaging of others.

Having thus declared the side of benefit, the Buddha summarizes it: those who held that second view, from the very beginning, removed bad conduct and established themselves in good conduct, possessing good practices such as right view. Therefore, the wise, looking at that group with reason, see that even if by some chance it were true that there is no world beyond, they still receive the praise of the wise in this life, and they lead a good life. And if that matter is indeed true, they will go to a happy destination after death. While the others go to a miserable destination, these go to a happy destination. In that way, on both sides, those who hold this second view win on both sides. While for the first view it was said, "it failed on both sides," here it is "it succeeded on both sides." That is the *apaṇṇaka* practice. We can understand that those who hold wrong view meet with destruction both in this world and in the next. That can be considered bad. For those who adopt right view, whether they turn out to be right or wrong, their practice is a fruitful, non-erring practice.

That discourse does not end there. Taking each of the wrong views such as the nihilist view (*nātthika-vāda*), the doctrine of non-causality (*ahétu-appaccaya-vāda*), the annihilationist view (*ucchēda-vāda*), and the doctrine of non-action (*akiriya-vāda*)

taught by Pūraṇa Kassapa and others, it presents, describes, analyzes, and dissects these principles. It demonstrates the side of danger and the side of benefit, showing how the wise should look at them. Although this discourse continues much further, let us analyze this portion. In our literature, there is a book called *Subhāṣitaya* written by Alagiyavanna Mukaveti. There is a stanza in it that illustrates the *apaṇṇaka* practice:

> Whether there is a world beyond or not, O great virtuous ones,
>
> It is best to abandon sinful deeds without keeping them in mind.
>
> Even if there is no world beyond, no harm comes from doing so,
>
> But if there is, disaster awaits those who sinned thinking there is none.

I spoke at length about the *apaṇṇaka* practice to show that there is something here for rationalists to ponder. From that point onwards in the discourse, the path leading to Nibbāna is presented. So, as summarized, the Buddha rejects the primary wrong views. He does not merely reject them, but by showing reasons and evidence, He demonstrates to the wise how to look at them in accordance with the *apaṇṇaka* practice. Next, the discourse goes into a deeper aspect: "Householders, there are certain ascetics and Brahmins who say that there is absolutely no such thing as formless *Bhava* (Becoming)."

You are all aware of the three realms of *Bhava* (Becoming), namely: the sensual (*kāma*), fine-material (*rūpa*), and immaterial/formless (*arūpa*) realms. Fine-material *Bhava* (Becoming) refers to the planes from the first absorption (*jhāna*) to the fourth absorption. Immaterial *Bhava* (Becoming) refers to those existing above them, such as the sphere of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*), and so on. "Householders, some ascetics and Brahmins say there is no immaterial *Bhava* (Becoming). Some other ascetics and Brahmins say there is immaterial *Bhava* (Becoming). Now, householders, are the assertions of these two groups mutually contradictory?" "Yes," they reply. "If they are contradictory, a wise person looks at this and thinks in this way: 'Whether immaterial *Bhava* (Becoming) does not exist or does exist is something I do not know. If so, if I were to grasp one side as "this is the only truth, all else is false," that would be a view. That is wrong, and that is not suitable for me.'" This is how the Buddha shows a wise person should think. However, the wise person reflects on these two views present before him—that immaterial *Bhava* (Becoming) exists and that it does not. "If the words of those who say there is no immaterial *Bhava* (Becoming) are true, then by acting accordingly, I can be born in the fine-material worlds consisting of mind-made form. If the view of the second group is true, I can obtain birth in the immaterial worlds." Then this wise person reflects: "It is because of form (*rūpa*) that all of this—taking up rods, taking up weapons, quarrels, disputes, false speech, etc.—occurs; none of these exist in the immaterial realm." Therefore, even though he does not know for certain which one of the two is correct, his preference leans towards the immaterial. Why? Because the benefit is greater. "Therefore, I can free myself from form and obtain birth in the immaterial plane." Thinking thus, he chooses the second of the two options.

Next, another scenario is presented. "Householders, there are certain ascetics and Brahmins who say there is absolutely no cessation of *Bhava* (Becoming). Other ascetics and Brahmins say that the cessation of *Bhava* (Becoming) can be achieved in every way." The Buddha shows how the wise should reflect on this: "If the words of those who say that *Bhava* (Becoming) can in no way be ceased are true, then if I follow the path they show, I can obtain birth in the immaterial worlds. The previous one was mind-made immaterial, while this one is perception-made immaterial (*saññāmaya*). This second one is subtle. Like Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, by attaining states of absorption (*jhāna*), I can obtain a corresponding birth through that first option. Secondly, he thinks, if indeed *Bhava* (Becoming) can be ceased in the manner stated in the second view, then I can achieve parinibbāna '*diṭṭheva dhamme*'—in this very life, right here. I will be able to attain extinction/extinguishment in this very life."

Now we come to a profound point. Out of these two, the wise person chooses the second one. If one can attain extinction/extinguishment in this very life, then both the fine-material worlds and the immaterial worlds are completely transcended. That is what this wise person chooses. This demonstrates that *apaṇṇaka* practice. Just as the Bodhisatta, during his life as a Bodhisatta, stood firm on the '*apaṇṇaka* practice' and crossed the desert safely with his caravan despite the various temptations used by the demons to lure them in the waterless, non-human infested desert, the Buddha has shown, through this *Apaṇṇaka Sutta*, the path leading to Nibbāna by saving His followers from various kinds of wrong-viewed demons.

That is why we started with the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* and descended to the *Apaṇṇaka Sutta*. This is a profound matter. On previous occasions, we mentioned how nowadays, many people explain Nibbāna as a state of *Bhava* (Becoming) attained after death. We even treated that view with irony. Here, it is clearly seen that Nibbāna, this so-called parinibbāna, is something that can be realized in this very life. Everyone knows the ultimate conclusion of that Buddha-word that "saṃsāra is *Dukkha* (Suffering)," which was realized when He was a Bodhisatta. As a Buddha, what is contained in the Four Noble Truths that put an end to this saṃsāric journey? The entirety of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)—when we say the five aggregates of grasping, fine-material and immaterial are all included—the five aggregates of grasping themselves are *Dukkha* (Suffering). They exist because of *Taṇhā* (Craving); by eradicating *Taṇhā* (Craving), one is liberated from those five aggregates of grasping. This is shown as a state experienced in this very life. It is a bliss of Nibbāna enjoyed in this very life, not something to be experienced in the next world. This is also clear from this sutta passage: '*diṭṭheva dhamme parinibbāyati*'—one attains parinibbāna in this very life. That does not mean one dies. 'Parinibbuta'—parinibbāna—means calming in every way, relinquishing these assets (*upadhi*), exhausting *Taṇhā* (Craving), and reaching dispassion (*virāga*); that is, experiencing the state of Nibbāna in this very life within the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samāpatti*). What is realized through that is the cessation of *Bhava* (Becoming). It is because of *Upādāna* (Grasping) that there is *Bhava* (Becoming). This is the deepest point of the Dhamma. Although we think that a world exists even without us, the deepest matter in the Dhamma is

upādāna-paccayā bhavo: as long as there is *Upādāna* (Grasping), there is *Bhava* (Becoming). Where there is no *Upādāna* (Grasping), *Bhava* (Becoming) is ceased. That cessation is what is called parinibbāna. Therefore, if the five aggregates of grasping present through *Upādāna* (Grasping) are a fire, on the other hand, there is the cooling, the extinguishment.

As Buddhists who have trust and faith in the Buddha, we must consider that this discourse provides clear evidence. If we return to those views, at the very beginning of the discourse it was shown that those who adopt wrong view, the nihilistic view, go to a miserable destination. Those who adopt the right view of ownership of action perform meritorious deeds and go to a happy destination. If one is to remain in saṃsāra, a happy destination is better than a miserable one. Beyond that, if saṃsāra is *Dukkha* (Suffering), then liberation from saṃsāra is necessary. In the past, those hermits (*risis*) who had attained supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*) and realized that saṃsāra is *Dukkha* (Suffering), tried to elevate their minds to the fine-material plane to escape the sensual world. They realized it. Going even further in this life, there is what is called "immaterial perception-made," such as the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). They were the teachers of the Bodhisatta. He was not satisfied with that, was He? Because that too is *Bhava* (Becoming). Even though Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta handed over their followers and offered Him an equal status, the Bodhisatta left them, saying, "This is not the path to Nibbāna." Nibbāna cannot be that kind of thing. Whether taken by way of sense bases (*āyatana*) such as what is seen by the eye and heard by the ear, or by way of aggregates (*khandha*), *Bhava* (Becoming) arises because all of these are taken by way of *Upādāna* (Grasping). *Upādāna-paccayā bhavo*—each individual goes on creating their own *Bhava* (Becoming). Sensual *Bhava* (Becoming) is what is mostly found in the world. This is not something you can touch with your hand; one dwells inside sensual *Bhava* (Becoming). It is only very rarely that someone experiences fine-material *Bhava* (Becoming) or immaterial *Bhava* (Becoming).

But all of those are defeated by the state of parinibbāna shown by the Buddha. It is something no other teacher was able to demonstrate. So, to understand that, we must understand the value of truth. Although we express truth in words, for convenience we now say: *Jāti* (Birth) is *Dukkha* (Suffering), *jarā* (decay/aging) is *Dukkha* (Suffering), sickness is *Dukkha* (Suffering). We go on reciting this very easily. Finally, it is said that, in short, the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)—these five heaps grasped through *Upādāna* (Grasping), namely form (*rūpa*), *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception (*saññā*), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness)—were declared by the Buddha to be *Dukkha* (Suffering).

If this *Dukkha* (Suffering) exists because of *Upādāna* (Grasping), what is the cause of this *Upādāna* (Grasping)? It is *Taṇhā* (Craving), indeed. Now, we often say that teachers in Dhamma schools teach what the Truth of *Dukkha* (Suffering) is. Next, they say the second truth is *Taṇhā* (Craving). However, they do not properly know the connection between these. If the five aggregates of grasping—the five heaps held onto—are *Dukkha*

(Suffering), then *Taṇhā* (Craving) which causes that holding is the cause; that is the second truth, the Truth of Arising (*samudaya sacca*). It is only by eradicating that cause that one can be liberated from this *Dukkha* (Suffering). That is why in certain places Nibbāna is described as: "*taṇhakkhayo hi rādha nibbānaṃ*"—"Indeed, Rādha, the destruction of *Taṇhā* (Craving) is Nibbāna." But this is not enough for many people. They want to destroy *Taṇhā* (Craving), but they also want to keep something else remaining. That is precisely where they go wrong.

But the Buddha points out that as long as this *Taṇhā* (Craving) exists, this burning remains. Liberation (*vimutti*) is a state of cooling, of extinguishment. In truth, it is often the simple things that people fail to understand, and that is the point being emphasized here. This discourse concludes with '*diṭṭheva dhamme parinibbāyati*'—one attains parinibbāna in this very life.

Therefore, one must wisely reflect upon this *apaṇṇaka* practice. *Apaṇṇaka* means non-erring or safe. In truth, there are differences of opinion regarding the etymology of this word. Some say it comes from '*apraśnaka*', meaning unquestionable or without any issue. Be that as it may, we can find an explanation from the discourses themselves which is helpful even to etymologists. In a certain discourse in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha provides a simile of the "*apaṇṇako maṇi*"—the *apaṇṇaka* gem. He says there is a gem called *apaṇṇaka*, which, when thrown up into the air, always lands squarely on whichever side it falls. The Commentary explains this as a four-sided or cubic object. Just as a perfectly cubic piece of wood, when dropped, always lands flat on one of its six faces—having six sides representing up, down, and the four directions—the gem is described as landing upright no matter which way it is thrown. That is why it was said earlier, "whether it turns out to be right or wrong."

Through the simile of the *apaṇṇaka* gem, we can understand that even if the word *apaṇṇaka* is not fully analyzed, when the Buddha wanted to declare that this *apaṇṇaka* practice is absolutely correct, He said that it happens in an *apaṇṇaka* (unfailing) manner. The Buddha states that if someone engages in misconduct through bodily and verbal actions, just as that *apaṇṇaka* gem always lands securely on some side, it is certain that the person will go to hell. They go there definitely, without fail. Sometimes people say about bad deeds, "it is as if they were placed in hell." The positive side is also applied in the same simile: if someone engages in good conduct through bodily and verbal actions, then, just as the *apaṇṇaka* gem thrown up lands securely, they will go to a happy destination.

The *apaṇṇaka* practice means reflecting on matters wisely, not merely accepting things because someone said so, but making a decision after thoroughly investigating the dangers and benefits. What is found here is not the adopting of an dogmatic view. It is not like saying, "*idameva saccaṃ moghamaññaṃ*" ("this alone is truth, all else is foolish/false"). The wise person should not think: "I do not know for sure if this is correct. Nor do I know if the second one is correct. Why should I, not knowing, declare 'this alone is truth, all else is false'?" Instead, he investigates the path: "If I proceed

according to this path, this is the benefit I will receive. If I act according to the second path, this is the benefit I will receive." He weighs both options, weighing the dangers and the benefits. Thereafter, he gives his preference to the beneficial side. That is the secret of the *apaṇṇaka* simile.

Nowadays, no matter how much we explain to many of those who claim to be intellectuals, it is difficult for them to establish faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha. They question everything, putting logic forward, just like the foolish merchant. If the words sound logical, they would accept them even if spoken by a demon. That is not the approach to which the Buddha gives prominence.

Here, in accordance with this principle, we point out to you a discourse that has been heard of for a long time and is discussed among scholars, namely the *Kālāma Sutta*. At this moment, we will not analyze it extensively. We will mention it briefly: a similar situation arose for the Buddha regarding the Kālāmas of Kesaputta. They said to the Buddha: "Some ascetics and Brahmins who come to us speak in one way, while another group censures them and states a different opinion. We have doubts in choosing between these." Recognizing this, the Buddha declared: "It is natural that you have doubts. When such a double-horned dilemma is presented, doubt is reasonable." Having accepted this, He then presented ten criteria.

To consider them briefly: do not go by oral tradition, do not go by lineage of teaching, do not go by hearsay, do not go by mere logical reasoning, do not go by inference, do not go by superficial evaluation, or because this teacher is respected by us—in this way, He points out ten criteria. He advises not to arrive at a conclusion based on those. Yet, just because this was said, some people use it to reject certain points of the Dhamma. Sometimes we have to say that some of our intellectuals have "eaten up and thrown away the *Kālāma Sutta*" (a play on words: *kālāmā dālā*). They have not understood its value. The *Kālāma Sutta* must be analyzed while standing firm on that very *apaṇṇaka* practice. The Buddha declared directly to them:

"Kālāmas, do not hold firmly to any of those ten criteria. Each one of them can err." That demon was, at first glance, someone who looked clean as if he had bathed well. So how could one doubt him? Thus, there are things like that on all sides. Do not accept any of those. Instead, what should be done? "Relate it to your own lives." Most people leave out that part. The Buddha points out on many occasions that this Dhamma is about the eradication of greed, hatred, and delusion. Then, one can directly see whether greed is a good thing or a bad thing. Greed is bad, hatred is bad, delusion is bad. This is directly experienced.

When speaking of this matter, the qualities of the True Dhamma: "*sandiṭṭhiko, akāliko, ehipassiko, opanayiko, paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*" also apply here. Within this well-expounded (*svākkhāta*) Dhamma, there are things that can be directly experienced by oneself. The Buddha says to the Kālāmas regarding whether greed, hatred, and delusion are good or bad, and whether eradicating them and developing non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion is bad or good: "Kālāmas, when you investigate within yourselves

whether something is wrong, and whether it is good or bad, and realize 'by practicing these dhammas, I will have these benefits'—that is how a matter should be investigated." The Buddha is saying there that you should examine and accept these things by relating them to your own lives, not through any of those ten criteria. It does not mean throwing everything away, nor does it mean accepting everything. It means testing it in one's own life; and testing does not mean through books, but by connecting it to life to see whether it is right or wrong. That is not being done in the way mentioned. Most often, the logic of books is put forward. "If these teachings are brought close to life, we will face ruin; otherwise, because of these teachings, our lives will flourish"—the Buddha is declaring to the Kālāmas to draw conclusions in this manner through investigation and direct experience.

If there is any logic in this Dhamma, it exists to draw conclusions based on direct experience. The journey that is based on that direct experience leads straight to Nibbāna; this Dhamma is well-expounded (*svākkhāta*) and leading out of suffering (*niyyānika*). The *apaṇṇaka* practice is a practice that leads out of suffering. What is the reason for this? Because this Dhamma is well-expounded, it is directly visible (*sandiṭṭhika*); because it is directly visible, it is timeless (*akālika*). The timeless Dhamma can be pointed to as "come and see" (*ehipassiko*). Accordingly, within the Dhamma itself, there is the quality of one step elevating you to the next step. That is how the Dhamma is structured. It is structured as right view, right thought, and so on. One step prepares for and supports the next step. Next is "*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*"—it is to be experienced individually by the wise. It is not about proving it through mere intellectual reasoning or mere belief. It is about bringing it close to one's own life and drawing a conclusion as to whether it is right or wrong. It is this very *apaṇṇaka* practice that the Buddha declared.

What was presented to you today is a somewhat complex sermon. However, take what is to be taken. Try to bring it close to your own lives. By observing these virtues of moral conduct, what you are hoping for is to escape from this saṃsāric *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, and so on. Fine-material *Bhava* (Becoming) and immaterial *Bhava* (Becoming) lose their significance once a Buddha has appeared.

In today's sermon, the *apaṇṇaka* practice was introduced. I wish that by taking this *apaṇṇaka* practice forward, this sermon may support everyone in escaping from the saṃsāric *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, and so on, and realizing the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna! May whoever wishes to share in the merit of this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, rejoice in it and realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired state of Enlightenment! Wishing thus, recite these verses and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #70

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.171)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Bahū devā manussā ca,

maṅgalāni acintayuṃ;

ākaṅkhamānā sotthānaṃ,

brūhi maṅgalamuttamam.

From:

from Sutta Nipāta, Mahāmaṅgala Sutta

Dear Listeners,

The word '*Maṅgala*' has been used since the distant past to designate various signs or occurrences that bring well-being and prosperity to human beings. It is mentioned that during the time of the Buddha, when the Blessed One appeared, there were various disagreements in Jambudīpa as to what should actually be considered a blessing (*maṅgala*). The very first stanza of the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta, which we took as our theme today, reveals that this question of what constitutes a blessing was discussed not only among human beings but even among the deities.

According to the commentaries, while people gathered in the assembly halls of ancient Jambudīpa to discuss various matters, discussions also took place as to what should be designated as a blessing. No consensus could be reached on this. Some declared that the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of the day is determined by the first thing seen in the morning. Some declared that seeing certain things considered auspicious is a stroke of fortune. They are called *diṭṭha-maṅgalika*—those who consider what is seen as a blessing. According to their view, seeing things such as a full pitcher, a pregnant mother, a lime branch, a bull, a cow, or a horse-drawn chariot first thing in the morning was thought of as auspicious, as a blessing. Another group said that it is not what is seen, but what is heard that should be considered a blessing. According to their opinion, hearing

words like "today is a good day," "a good asterism," "a good moment," "growth of goodness," or "glorious prosperity" first thing in the morning was declared by them to be a blessing. Yet another group said that it is neither what is seen nor what is heard that should be considered a blessing, but what is sensed by the nose, the tongue, and the body. According to their opinion, smelling the fragrance of flowers, touching the earth, touching fresh cow dung, touching fruits, wearing a new turban, or touching a new garment—things that come into contact with the body in the morning—were considered blessings. Thus, these disagreements spread further and further, and according to the commentary, a "blessing uproar" (*maṅgala-kolāhala*) arose. An "uproar" does not mean fighting and stabbing as in modern times. It means it became a topic discussed by everyone. The commentaries mention that this "blessing uproar" started among humans and went up to the terrestrial deities (*bhumma-deva*), and then among the deities of Cātumahārājika, Tāvatiṃsa, and so on. So in the end, on behalf of those deities, a certain deity came forward and presented this question to the Blessed One through the stanza we mentioned earlier; this is what is stated in this sutta.

You, meritorious listeners, know how such suttas begin. It is said that when the Blessed One was residing at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī, after much of the night had passed, a deity of radiant beauty, illuminating the entire Jetavana with his light, approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, stood to one side, and uttered this very stanza we have themed:

"Bahū devā manussā ca, maṅgalāni acintayuṃ; Ākaṅkhamānā sotthānaṃ, brūhi maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

"Many deities and humans, desiring well-being, have thought about blessings. Tell us the supreme blessing." This is the general meaning. So, in response to this statement or request made to the Blessed One, the Blessed One expounded, in eleven stanzas, thirty-eight blessing factors—though in counting them, there might be slight discrepancies—which are known today as the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta. So, before analyzing each one, let us try to bring out the general meaning of these stanzas of the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta, which is a sutta used by everyone and frequently heard by all. In reply to that stanza, the Blessed One began like this:

> "Asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānañca sevanā; Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Not associating with fools, associating with the wise, and honoring those worthy of honor—this is the supreme blessing.

> "Patirūpadesavāso ca, pubbe ca katapuññatā; Attasammāpaṇidhi ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Living in a suitable locality, having made merit in the past, and setting one's mind rightly—this is the supreme blessing.

"Bāhusaccañca sippañca, vinayo ca susikkhito; Subhāsitā ca yā vācā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Great learning, craftsmanship, being well-trained in discipline, and speech that is well-spoken—this is the supreme blessing.

"Mātāpitu-upaṭṭhānaṃ, puttadārassa saṅgaho; Anākulā ca kammantā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Supporting one's parents, cherishing one's wife and children, and peaceful (unconfused) occupations—this is the supreme blessing.

"Dānañca dhammacariyā ca, ñātakānañca saṅgaho; Anavajjāni kammāni, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Generosity, righteous conduct, helping one's relatives, and blameless actions—this is the supreme blessing.

"Āratī viratī pāpā, majjapānā ca saññamo; Appamādo ca dhammesu, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Avoiding and abstaining from evil, refraining from intoxicants, and diligence in the Dhamma—this is the supreme blessing.

"Gāravo ca nivāto ca, santuṭṭhī ca kataññutā; Kālena dhammasavanaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude, and hearing the Dhamma at the proper time—this is the supreme blessing.

"Khantī ca sovacassatā, samaṇānañca dassanaṃ; Kālena dhammasākacchā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Patience, obedience, seeing ascetics, and Dhamma discussions at the proper time—this is the supreme blessing.

"Tapo ca brahmacariyañca, ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ; Nibbānasacchikiriyā ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Ardent effort (*tapo*), the holy life (*brahmacariya*), seeing the Noble Truths, and the realization of Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna)—this is the supreme blessing.

"Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi, cittaṃ yassa na kampati; Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Although touched by the worldly conditions, the mind of one who is unshaken, sorrowless, stainless, secure—this is the supreme blessing.

"Etādisāni katvāna, sabbatthamaparājitā; Sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti, taṃ tesaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Having done these things, undefeated everywhere, they go in safety everywhere. This is their supreme blessing. This is the general meaning of the Maṅgala Sutta.

Now let us analyze this meaning further. There are not so many deep things that require analyzing every single word. Most of you know the meaning. There are some words that need to be analyzed in detail. So, the word of the Buddha in the Maṅgala Sutta begins with the letter "A":

"Asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānañca sevanā; Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Let us focus our minds on the three things mentioned here. First, it is presented as a pair: *Asevanā ca bālānaṃ*—not associating with fools, and *paṇḍitānañca sevanā*—associating with the wise.

Here, something needs to be mentioned. In our modern Sinhala usage, we use the word *bāla* to refer to those young in age. We say *bāla-mahalu* (young and old). However, in the Pali language, the word *bāla* is never used in the sense of being young in age. In the Pali language, the concept of "young and old" is expressed as *dahara-vuddha*. *Bāla* is used precisely in the sense of a fool, whereas *paṇḍita* means the wise.

This too can be understood by you through this analysis. Being a *paṇḍita* (wise person) is not something obtained through an academic degree. Indeed, we must discuss these matters in detail because in modern times, certain debaters question this, claiming that the Blessed One said something contradictory here. Why? Because he says not to associate with fools (*bāla*), and to associate with the wise (*paṇḍita*). Then how can there be a connection between these two groups? How can the fools associate with the wise? Can they avoid it?

There are people who formulate such questions. An answer to this will also be found as we proceed. First, let us look at the statements made by the Blessed One regarding fools (*bāla*) or ignorant people, taking them from various places in the texts.

On one occasion, the Blessed One states: "Monks, whatever fears, dangers, and calamities arise, they all arise from the fool (*bāla*), not from the wise (*paṇḍita*)." The fool is shown to be that dangerous there. Dangers and calamities do not arise from the wise. An analogy is also given for this. "Just as, monks, when a reed-house or a thatched house catches fire, even a nearby luxurious house that is well-plastered inside and out can be destroyed. Those other houses catch fire easily. Then, because they have caught fire, even large palaces and mansions nearby are burnt down." That is a simile given by the Blessed One to show the danger that comes from the fool. In another place, the Blessed One states: *"Kammalakkhaṇo, bhikkhave, bālo; kammalakkhaṇo paṇḍito"* ("Monks, a fool is characterized by his actions; a wise person is characterized by his actions"). The character of the fool is recognized through his conduct. The wise person is also

recognized through his conduct. What is the conduct of the fool? A person with bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct is a fool. A person with bodily good conduct, verbal good conduct, and mental good conduct is a wise person. According to this, we do not know how many "wise men" in this country would fall into this list!

In any case, the Blessed One further declares the signs and characteristics for identifying the fool and the wise person. Regarding the fool, his nature is shown: *duccintitacintī, dubbhāsitabhāsī, dukkatakammakārī* (one who thinks bad thoughts, speaks bad words, and does bad deeds). His thoughts are bad, his words are bad, and his actions are bad. The wise person is *sucintitacintī, subhāsitabhāsī, sukkatakammakārī* (one who thinks good thoughts, speaks good words, and does good deeds). The train of thoughts of the wise person is good, his words are good, and his course of action is good. How does one identify someone as a fool or a wise person? That is why the Blessed One introduced certain signs, so that these two groups could be identified through these signs.

Next, the Blessed One speaks of this in the Dhammapada; you may have heard of the places in the Dhammapada where the fool is mentioned. This fool is compared to a pit of filth. The danger that could happen to a wise person is shown in this way. The simile given is that if rotten fish is wrapped in kusa grass, although kusa grass normally has a pleasant scent, when rotten fish is wrapped in it, the kusa grass also stinks. It is just the same with associating with a fool.

So when this is said, we must consider: is it completely impossible for these two groups to come together? That is exactly what we are clarifying as an answer to those debaters mentioned earlier. Fools should associate with the wise just as—to use an analogy—patients associate with doctors. Or, to use a modern analogy, like drug addicts associating with a rehabilitation counselor nowadays. They do not associate to share a bottle! It is with a certain respect. They seek help from a counselor to overcome the wrong addictions they have acquired through habitual patterns of Saṃsāra. It is the same with the teacher-pupil relationship. That is why the Blessed One highlighted its gravity beforehand. Even a doctor has to treat patients, but he does so while maintaining his own safety. Likewise, one must associate with the wise while knowing the fool. One must identify both the fool and the wise and then associate. That, meritorious listeners, is what is meant by *"Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ"*—honoring those worthy of honor. If a fool approaches a wise person with an attitude of honoring those worthy of honor, the extent to which the fool can progress is such that, in the end, the fool becomes a wise person, if he properly receives the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), if he receives the association of the wise well. That is why the Therī Kisāgothamī declares in her Therīgāthā: "Kalyāṇamittatā muninā, lokaṃ ādissa vaṇṇitā; Kalyāṇamitte bhajamāno, api bālo paṇḍito assa." The Blessed One pointed his finger to the world and proclaimed the value of noble friendship; he praised it. By associating with noble friends, even a fool becomes a wise person. From that, we must understand that with that attitude of honoring those worthy of honor, fools can benefit from the wise. Likewise, the wise person must—according to the simile we mentioned earlier, where the counselor trying

to save the drug addict does not go to share bottles—act knowing his own limits. So, regarding that stanza, considering the time, I think this is sufficient.

Now, consider the depth within this. Meritorious listeners, why did the Blessed One say these things first among the thirty-eight blessings? Why did he mention this matter at the very beginning? Because the most fundamental requirement, the most primary factor for laying the foundation of life, is association, companionship. Therefore, one must be careful about that association. Especially, after a person is born into the world, if they happen to associate with such fools in their childhood—even though we now use *bāla* to mean young, that young child eventually becomes a fool (*bāla*) indeed. Therefore, the Blessed One highlighted the matter of association in life through this. Next: "Patirūpadesavāso ca, pubbe ca katapuññatā; Attasammāpaṇidhi ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ." "Living in a suitable locality," "having made merit in the past," and "setting one's mind rightly." There too, there are some matters that need to be analyzed a bit.

"Living in a suitable locality"—in modern times, according to environmental engineering, this might mean suburban proximity, tap water, and perhaps electricity, when thinking about environment. But if we think in terms of the Dhamma, the commentaries specifically point to having the opportunity to associate with the fourfold assembly: monks (*bhikkhu*), nuns (*bhikkhunī*), laymen (*upāsaka*), and laywomen (*upāsikā*). Otherwise, living in an environment suitable for turning towards a life in accordance with the Dhamma is what is called *patirūpadesavāso ca*. Why? Because we previously spoke about association. Next, if we speak using a similar word, this is *nissaya* (dependence/support). First is association, next is environment. In simpler words, in the first one we said association, now we say environment. That is, the locality where one resides.

Next, there is a special factor: *"pubbe ca katapuññatā"*—having made merit in the past. As they say, "Even if one gets a hundred sons of little merit, it is futile"—that is what is meant. This is seen clearly only by the Buddha-eye. Let us call it the innate fortune or the inborn potential of each individual. Now we have spoken about association. We have spoken about environment. Next, we can call this *upanissaya* (strong support/decisive support). There is an ancient term: *upanissaya-sampatti* (the fortune of decisive support). The karmic force and the meritorious force brought from the past become apparent in early childhood. That too is a foundation for this life. In modern times, those who follow Western psychologists ridicule these things. We have heard and seen such instances. They discard what comes from the past and confine everything to childhood. That is the end of it for them. But the Blessed One points out that we have a vast past in our Saṃsāra. Thus, there are both good and bad in it. Depending on those, let us call it past fortune: *"pubbe ca katapuññatā"*. Now next, it says it is not enough to just leave it to that. There is also something for oneself to do.

"Attasammāpaṇidhi ca"—setting one's mind rightly—this becomes extremely important. Behold, that is where the beginning of personality development lies. One's own agency begins from here. *"Attasammāpaṇidhi ca"*—setting one's mind rightly. To put it briefly,

there is a stanza in the Dhammapada regarding this, which you, meritorious listeners, may know: "Na taṃ mātā pitā kayirā, aññe vāpi ca ñātakā; Sammāpaṇihitaṃ cittaṃ, seyyaso naṃ tato kare." Neither mother, nor father, nor any other relatives can do for one such good as a rightly directed mind can do. At one time, this was put into a Sinhala poem: "What parents and relatives cannot do, my own mind, when well-directed, accomplishes for my well-being."

There, the Blessed One has given a beautiful simile about this directing of the mind. Actually, within the word *paṇidhi* is a directing. The proper directing of the mind. The simile given by the Blessed One for this might not be understood by some. A grain of paddy—everyone who does farming knows—has a small sharp point at its tip. The ancient word for it is *vī-naṇḍuva* (the awn/tip of the paddy grain). People of this area do not even have a name for it. A nameless, easily forgotten small dot. The Blessed One has used such a small thing for a simile. In that simile, the Blessed One states that although that pricking part at the tip of the grain is a tiny thing, if that tip of paddy is placed rightly, it can pierce a hand or a foot. Similarly, if the mind is rightly directed, it can destroy the darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*). That is how the Blessed One states it. From that we can see that, whatever the power of past fortune may be, one's own part begins from there by directing the mind to the right side. *"Attasammāpaṇidhi"*—this too is a factor of blessing. Next:

"Bāhusaccañca sippañca, vinayo ca susikkhito; Subhāsitā ca yā vācā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Everyone knows what *bāhusacca* (great learning) is. Having heard and remembered much, erudition. Next, *sippañca*—craftsmanship. This factor also must be considered in accordance with the Dhamma. Even if one learns various worthless things unrelated to the Dhamma, if one lacks the skill to use them properly, we see in the world that one gets destroyed by that very learning. In any case, this learning, this craft, and in modern terms, the basically required training—*bāhusaccañca sippañca, vinayo ca susikkhito*—being well-disciplined, being disciplined. This refers to the discipline necessary for life. *Subhāsitā ca yā vācā*—that too is a part of discipline: well-spoken speech. Here, what is called "well-spoken" is truth in accordance with the Dhamma. Moreover, the Blessed One has shown a beautiful passage in various places to define the word "well-spoken":

"Yā sā vācā nelā kaṇṇasukhā pemanīyā hadayaṅgamā porī bahujanakantā bahujanamanāpā"

"Whatever speech is flawless (*nelā*), pleasing to the ear (*kaṇṇasukhā*), lovely (*pemanīyā*), reaching the heart (*hadayaṅgamā*), polite (*porī*), appealing to many, and pleasing to many"—words like that are well-spoken. Likewise, those truthful, timely words are well-spoken words. Next:

"Mātāpitu-upaṭṭhānaṃ, puttadārassa saṅgaho; Anākulā ca kammantā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Mātāpitu-upaṭṭhānaṃ—some take this as two: supporting the mother, and supporting the father. Whatever the count, if we take these points according to the Buddha's word, supporting one's parents—which you, meritorious listeners, have heard so often—is also a factor of blessing. Why is it a factor of blessing? Because the blessing of those parents can be obtained even during their lifetime by supporting them. In this dispensation of the Buddha, let alone other things, even after they have passed away, a form of service is shown. What is the place given to parents by the Blessed One? They are declared to be like Brahma (*brahmāti mātāpitaro*). "Āpādakā posakā, imassa lokassa dassetāro"—they brought up, nourished, and showed this world to them. That is why they are called first teachers, *pubbācariyo*. Likewise, you, meritorious listeners, may have heard that in suttas like these, the Blessed One represented the eastern direction as supporting parents. That too is indeed a blessing, which brings the parents' blessing. Next, *saṅgaho*—the proper cherishing of one's children and wife. These too are duties in this society. Fulfilling those duties directly in a way that shapes a life. *Anākulā ca kammantā*—occupations that are peaceful, not illegal, and free from improper things, is a factor of blessing. Next:

"Dānañca dhammacariyā ca, ñātakānañca saṅgaho; Anavajjāni kammāni, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Generosity, righteous conduct, *dānañca dhammacariyā ca*, and *ñātakānañca saṅgaho*—helping one's relatives, and *anavajjāni kammāni*—blameless actions: these are the supreme blessing. Behold, next turning towards society, *dāna*—giving. Not only to the Saṅgha, but also to the poor, travelers, and beggars—that giving is altruistic conduct. Having first fulfilled one's duty to one's home, then comes generosity, righteous conduct (*dhammacariyā*), a life in accordance with the Dhamma, and cherishing and helping relatives as the occasion arises. *Anavajjāni kammāni*—blameless action; it is perfectly fine to think of this as abandoning wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) and living by right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*).

"Āratī viratī pāpā, majjapānā ca saññamo; Appamādo ca dhammesu, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Āratī viratī pāpā is explained by showing that *āratī* means avoiding evil through the mind, removing oneself from it mentally. *Viratī* is explained as abstaining from them through precepts and such. Developing self-control regarding that. That too is a blessing. But nowadays, in both weddings and funerals, one cannot do without alcohol! Behold what has become of the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta now. The Mahāmaṅgala Sutta too is probably recited at those auspicious events. Amidst all this, the true blessing factor is this word of the Buddha. *Appamādo ca dhammesu*—diligence in the Dhamma; then, step by step, one turns towards the spiritual side.

"Gāravo ca nivāto ca, santuṭṭhī ca kataññutā; Kālena dhammasavanaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Gāravo ca—showing respect, paying reverence to those worthy of virtue. *Nivāto ca*—humility. *Santuṭṭhi*—contentment with what is obtained. *Kataññutā*—gratitude. There is no need to explain these, is there? You, meritorious listeners, know them. *Kālena dhammasavanaṃ*—hearing the Dhamma at the proper time; *etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*—these are factors of blessing.

"Khantī ca sovacassatā, samaṇānañca dassanaṃ; Kālena dhammasākacchā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Khantī—patience; *sovacassatā*—gentleness, obedience; *samaṇānañca dassanaṃ*—seeing ascetics. Behold, step by step, it turns towards the spiritual life. *Kālena dhammasākacchā*—previously one listened to the Dhamma, next is discussing the Dhamma. Discussing one's own problems by associating with the venerable monks. "At the proper time" means when the opportunity for Dhamma discussions arises. Also, when the mind is overcome by the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), or if there are matters unclear to oneself, discussing them: *kālena dhammasākacchā etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*.

"Tapo ca brahmacariyañca, ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ; Nibbānasacchikiriyā ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Here, *tapo* (ardent effort) is not interpreted in the sense of the ascetic practices of the past, but as the burning away of defilements, sensory restraint, and so forth. Coming to this point, we can think of lay disciples like those present here, who, having spent their lay lives, ponder in their old age. One does not have to be extremely old to walk this path of the Sasana. But some in this Sasana, as you, meritorious listeners, have heard, have become Arahants even at seven years of age. If one argues dogmatically based on this Maṅgala Sutta, one might think that one should incline towards the spiritual life only after growing old like that. One needs to think so only if one failed to do so in one's early years. The primary purpose here is to analyze the meaning of the word "blessing". There, the Blessed One shows *tapo*—that is, undertaking virtue (*sīla*), leaving homes, and doing things by way of burning away defilements, by way of meditation; these are taken as ascetic practice (*tapas*). Celibacy (*brahmacariya*) is possible. What is understood by that, generally understood, is abstaining from sexual relations and the pure conduct associated with it. Some, as we have heard, those laymen and laywomen who led householders' lives, after coming to a life in accordance with the Dhamma, consult each other and establish themselves in this very practice. Not only that, now if on some occasion one can separate from lay life and implement the aforementioned *tapo* and *brahmacariya* at the highest level by ordaining—then that too belongs to this. Through *tapo ca brahmacariyañca* comes *ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ*—the seeing of the Four Noble Truths: the truths of Suffering (*dukkha*), Origin, Cessation, and the Path. At that stage, through one's own life experiences, in accordance with the Buddha's word, if one has understood to some extent that rebirth / arising (*jāti*), aging and death / decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death are Suffering (*dukkha*), and if one is engaged in meditation, going even deeper, if one gets the realization that this entire five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) is Suffering (*dukkha*), that indeed is the understanding of Suffering (*dukkha*).

Next, when reflecting on the cause of this Suffering (*dukkha*), if one understands that it becomes Suffering (*dukkha*) because of the Grasping (*upādāna*) towards the five aggregates of grasping—clinging to them—then, at that point, Craving (*taṇhā*) too is understood. That is, the Craving (*taṇhā*) that lies underneath that Grasping (*upādāna*). Next, that Craving (*taṇhā*), at some point... seeing these Four Noble Truths is indeed the direct realization of the Four Noble Truths. As the final result of some insight-consciousness-process (*vipassanā-citta-vīthi*), having seen the impermanence (*anicca*) of all these things, having seen their nature of arising and passing away, having seen their breaking-up nature by way of *udayabbaya* (arising and passing away), *bhaṅga* (dissolution), etc., and having developed fear towards these preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and next, having understood their disadvantageous side (*ādīnava*), and next, having developed that weariness with Saṃsāra called *nibbidā*, and having generated the thought "I must somehow escape from this", if one constantly develops the three characteristics of Impermanent (*anicca*), Suffering (*dukkha*), and Not-self (*anattā*) in daily life, whether as a monk or a layperson—it is through that development that at some point, when they have matured, using those three characteristics, one drops to the other shore. How does one drop? Through that very weariness. When one drops to the other side at some point due to disgust—that is to say, for a moment, the grip of this holding is let go. In that letting go is what is called extinguishment; therein, for the first time, one experiences a peaceful sensation (*vedanā*). As that experience, it is something completely different from what the people of the world think. That is why it is called world-transcending (*lokuttara*). The peace, the extinguishment obtained through that letting go—one experiences it, even for a short moment. That indeed is: "by the destruction of Craving (*taṇhā*), the Mind Stilled / Extinguishment (Nibbāna) was seen."

For that to happen, indeed, within one's mental continuum, not only the Noble Eightfold Path shown by the Blessed One but also the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) must have been developed to some degree. It is when they have matured through the meditation one does, that the seeing of the Noble Truths (*ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ*) occurs; within this is *nibbānañca*—that is, extinguishment / the Mind Stilled, and *sacchikiriyā ca*—which means direct realization. To realize Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) means the Dhamma is to be realized in this very life. The Blessed One has shown that there is indeed such a thing as this extinguishment / stilled mind. A state of the mind becomes directly realized by oneself. *Nibbānasacchikiriyā ca etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*—this is the supreme blessing. Behold, next, the state of the mind as the result of attaining that Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) is expressed in the next stanza:

"Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi, cittaṃ yassa na kampati; Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

"Worldly conditions" mean the eight worldly conditions (*attha-lokadhamma*). You, meritorious listeners, may have heard: "Lābho alābho ayaso yaso ca, nindā pasaṃsā ca sukhaṃ ca dukkhaṃ." Gain, loss, disrepute, fame, blame, praise, pleasure, and Suffering

(*dukkha*). The Blessed One has expressed these eight worldly conditions in a series of stanzas on one occasion.

These eight worldly conditions revolve around the world, and the world revolves around the eight worldly conditions. If you think a bit deeply, you will understand. The eight worldly conditions revolve around the world. Actually, this is exactly how this whole discussion of blessings arose. The signs that bring goodness and well-being to humans. People went after these blessings with the idea that, through some hidden signs, the suffering caused by these eight worldly conditions could be avoided.

Thus, the Blessed One, having rightly realized Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) spiritually, then declares the state of that person: *phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi*—whose mind is not shaken when touched by the eight worldly conditions; next, that unshakable state is described. *Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ*—sorrowless, dustless (free from the dust of defilements), secure (which is called the ground of safety). That state indeed is the supreme blessing: *asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*.

If we are to say something more related to that—now indeed we have arrived at the deep side of the Dhamma. We have told you on various occasions not to let this become just a mundane lay sermon. Therefore, at this point, we must recall those things stated by the Blessed One, especially regarding Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna). Not only the Blessed One, but the Venerable Sariputta Mahathera also on one occasion states with a beautiful simile, the state of that liberated mind. These are experienced in the state called the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samādhi*). Venerable Sariputta Mahathera describes how the mind remains in that state: "No matter how many visual objects cognizable by the eye may come, the mind of that Arahant does not get mixed up with them. That mind remains in a firm, unshakable state." Just as it was said about visual objects cognizable by the eye, so too with sounds cognizable by the ear, and so on—you can imagine, not only things coming from the five physical senses. Finally, it points to thoughts/mind-objects (*dhamma*) coming to the mind; that indeed is the deepest part. No matter how many of these come, the mind remains unshaken, in that aforementioned stable state; this is what Venerable Sariputta Mahathera states on one occasion. Next, to show that unshakable state, he gives a simile: just as a stone pillar of about sixteen cubits, with eight cubits buried in the ground and standing firmly established, is not shaken no matter from which direction strong storms blow. Venerable Sariputta Mahathera gives this simile regarding the aforementioned unshaken mind. Then, *asokaṃ virajaṃ*—that is, that sorrowless state.

Thus, illustrations of these have been shown on various occasions. When Devadatta once rolled down a rock at the Blessed One—karma affects anyone—a splinter from that rock struck the sole of the Blessed One's foot, causing a deep wound and severe sensation (*vedanā*) of pain. Even though the Blessed One experienced severe sensation (*vedanā*) of pain, he directed his mind to the power of the fruit (*phala-samādhi*), and is said to have endured that severe pain. At that time, even the deities exclaimed that he was enduring such severe sensation (*vedanā*). That mind capable of enduring is what is shown as

"refuge, security, place, shelter, and resort" in Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna). An Arahant can bring the mind to that state by bringing back that aforementioned direct realization; and that will definitely emerge at the final moment of an Arahant. Because of that emergence, because the mind is liberated (*vimutta*), they do not come back to another Becoming / Existence (*bhava*).

Regarding the Blessed One, it is told that on one occasion, when it was raining heavily, with water flooding, and thunderbolts striking and cracking, four oxen and two men were killed by the lightning. At that time, near a threshing-shed (*bhūsāgāra*) or barn, perhaps because the Blessed One was absorbed in this very concentration (*samādhi*), when the Blessed One came out and asked why these people had gathered, they replied: "Why, did the Blessed One not see that such a thing has happened?" He said "No." He said he did not even hear it. "Then, were you asleep, Venerable Sir?" "No, I was conscious." That is a very deep matter that most people cannot understand. If he had been completely without perception (*saññā*), it could have been understood. But what we have here is that the Blessed One had perception (*saññā*) at that time, and was also awake. *"Saññī samāno jāgaro"*—even while awake and conscious, none of those things were heard by the Blessed One. Why? Because at that time, he had attained a wakefulness far greater than what the people of the world call wakefulness.

Think about it a bit. The world being "awake" refers to the state where objects come to the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). The Blessed One being "awake" refers to the supramundane state that transcends them. That is why the Blessed One said *"saññī samāno jāgaro"*. *Jāgara* means staying awake, being awake. What does being awake mean? This perception (*saññā*), *samāno jāgaro* means he was awake. It is perception (*saññā*) that we highlight in most of our sermons. The passage describing Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) is: *"Etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ."* ("This is peaceful, this is sublime, namely, the stilling of all preparations (*saṅkhāra*), the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of Craving (*taṇhā*), fading away, cessation, Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna)"). That is what is shown as *upasamānussati* (recollection of peace). The mind was directed there. Therefore, when the Blessed One remained with his mind directed to that state of Arahantship-fruit which he had ultimately attained as his path-and-fruit realization, that indeed is what is meant by "going to Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna)". That is why so many words are used for Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna), such as "place, shelter, refuge, resort, seclusion (*viveka*)." That is why those words are used. Thus, that state is the state of being liberated from the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). People think: "Ah! How awake the Blessed One was, having been liberated from the six sense-bases, it is a great wonder!" Having become world-transcending (*lokuttara*)—that is what we have shown on certain occasions, based on a simile given by the Blessed One.

The Blessed One declared to the Brahmin Verañja: "In this generation, I am indeed the first chick to have broken the eggshell of ignorance (*avijjā*) and come out." A simile worth reflecting upon, meritorious listeners. "The first chick to have broken the eggshell

of ignorance and come out"—from that, what we have to understand is that all of us are inside that eggshell. The eggshell means the six sense-bases (*āyatana*). It is within those six sense-bases that everyone is active, including scientists. That is Saṃsāra. That is Becoming / Existence (*bhava*). All three worlds—the sensual (*kāma*), fine-material (*rūpa*), and immaterial (*arūpa*)—exist inside that eggshell. Thus, the Blessed One experienced that very world-transcending state. He broke the eggshell and went out. The state of remaining with the mind directed to that direct realization is the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samādhi*). Therefore, in the end it says:

"Etādisāni katvāna, sabbatthamaparājitā; Sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti, taṃ tesaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

"Sabbatthamaparājitā"—undefeated everywhere. Nowadays, we often hear about the defeated. Some have won in worldly terms but are defeated in world-transcending terms. Some have won in this world but are defeated in the next world. Here, it says they won in this world, they won in the next world, and they won Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna). That is why it says *"sabbatthamaparājitā"*. *"Sabbattha sotthiṃ"*—whether in this world, or in the next world, or next, regarding Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) on the world-transcending side, they arrive at safety and well-being from every side.

Regarding the time, this is all there is to say. I think a sufficient amount has been spoken. For centuries, the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta has been on everyone's lips. Hearing the Dhamma is valuable. But implementing these thirty-eight is the true blessing. Therefore, without stopping at the level of seen blessings (*diṭṭha-maṅgala*), heard blessings (*suta-maṅgala*), or sensed blessings (*muta-maṅgala*), we should hope to realize the true truth of blessings by implementing them. Then, this meritorious gathering—there may be people of various age groups here—for the elderly people mentioned, this Mahāmaṅgala Sutta is a great strength. What is past is past. Yes, you spent a lay life. But with this opportunity received, as was said in *tapo ca brahmacariyañca*, having inclined towards the Dhamma and the Sasana, you must resolve to escape as quickly as possible from the Suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṃsāra, such as rebirth / arising (*jāti*), aging and death / decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death, and attain the supreme Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) which is complete liberation.

So, as a step towards that today too, you observed the precepts and meditated to the extent of your minds. We wish that today, this Mahāmaṅgala Sutta may also assist in that. May all beings, from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, whoever wish to share in these merits, rejoice in this merit of expounding the Dhamma and this merit of hearing the Dhamma! Through that rejoicing, may they realize the supreme, deathless, great Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) through whichever state of enlightenment they aspire to! May you, meritorious listeners, also have the strength and power to realize the supreme blessing in the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta as quickly as possible, before the decline of the Sasana, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship!

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #71

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.68)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yo ce gāthāsataṃ bhāse,

anatthapadasaṃhitā;

ekaṃ dhammapadaṃ seyyo,

yaṃ sutvā upasammati.

Yo sahassaṃ sahassena,

saṅgāme mānuse jine;

ekañca jeyyamattānaṃ,

sa ve saṅgāmajuttamo.

From:

Dhammapada 102–103 (Sahassavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha, the Lord of Peace and Teacher of the Three Worlds, presented to the world a path of practice leading to peace and solace. However, in order to suit the mind of combative mankind, on certain occasions the Buddha used words such as "fight," "battle," and "warfare" even to describe the energy and effort exerted towards Nibbāna. On certain occasions, the Buddha pointed this out as a sublime, heroic battle against Māra (the Evil One), a war against Māra fought for the sake of peace, leading all the way to Nibbāna. The verses describing the value of this battle are indeed what we have chosen as our topic today. The background story (*nidāna*) of these verses concerns the account of Therī Kuṇḍalakesā. That account is found in various places in Dhamma

literature with certain minor variations. If we summarize those details, we can present them for this occasion as follows.

In the city of Rājagaha, there lived the sixteen-year-old daughter of a certain merchant (*seṭṭhi*). Since she was a very beautiful maiden, her parents, for her protection, had her live on the top floor of the mansion, guarded under the watchful eyes of attendants. One day, a certain thief in Rājagaha was caught with stolen goods, sentenced to death by royal decree, and was being taken to the place of execution, being whipped at the four-way crossroads. Hearing the shouts of the crowd, this merchant's daughter looked through the window and, upon seeing this young man—perhaps due to some past association in Saṃsāra—conceived a strong affection and attachment towards him. Having fallen in love, she lay face down on her bed, refused food, and went on a hunger strike. When her mother came and asked, she said, "If I get that young man as my husband, I will live; otherwise, my life will end." They tried to change her mind by pleading in various ways, but failed. Afterwards, the merchant was also informed. Having discussed it together, what did they do in the end? They sent a bribe of a thousand *Kahāpaṇas* to the chief executioner to release the thief and send him to them. That officer released the thief, executed someone else in his place, and sent word to the king that the thief had been executed. The merchant then gave that thief in marriage to his daughter. Then, wishing to win her husband's heart even more, she attended to him day in and day out with food, drink, and personal care, herself always beautifully adorned with ornaments.

This thief, perhaps due to the habit of his thievish nature brought from birth, began to plot: "How can I kill this woman and take these ornaments?" Having thought of a ruse, one day he refused food and lay on the bed, whereupon the merchant's daughter came and asked: "Why, my lord, is it an illness?" "No," he replied. "Are you displeased with my parents?" "No," he said. When she asked, "Then what is it?" he said, "On the day I was being taken to be executed, I made a vow to make an offering to the deity residing at the mountain called 'Thieves' Cliff' (*Chorapapāta*), where thieves are thrown down to their death." "It is as a result of that vow that I was released and obtained you." When she asked, "What is required for that offering?" he replied, "Prepare waterless milk-rice (milk-rice prepared without adding water) and roasted paddy with five-fold flowers, etc." Thinking that it was no major task, she prepared those items. But the thief said, "Now, do not go with relatives or attendants. Let the two of us go there together. Also, come well-adorned with your ornaments. We can also make it a pleasure trip." In this manner, they set out. Having arrived, and climbing to the top, he said, "Now, stop the carriage and the attendants here. Let just the two of us go up."

Handing the vessel of offerings to the merchant's daughter to carry on her head, they climbed up the mountain. One side of that mountain could be climbed, while the other side was a sheer precipice. Beyond that was where thieves were thrown off to their death. That is why it was called *Chorapapāta Pabbata* (Thieves' Cliff Mountain) in those days, as a place of punishment. After they ascended, when she said, "Now let us perform the offering ritual," the thief replied, "I did not come for that. I came with a different intention: to take your ornaments and kill you." She said, "Whose are these ornaments?

Whose am I? Why do you do this?" He replied, "I do not understand all that. I am not accustomed to stealing without killing." When he said, "Remove your ornaments and get ready now," she realized: "Now an extremely dangerous situation has come upon me."

"Wisdom is not something cooked and eaten. It is at times like this that wisdom is needed." Realizing this, through her presence of mind, she thought of a strategy. Thinking it over, she said, "This is my last sight of you. Therefore, grant me a single boon: let me circumambulate you, pay my respects, and embrace you while still wearing these ornaments." The thief agreed to this. She also said, "I need to see you clearly." So the thief climbed to the very edge of the cliff and stood there on top of the mountain. Under the guise of circumambulating him three times, she got behind him, grabbed his body firmly, and pushed him down from the mountain; the thief fell and was completely crushed to death. It is further said that the deity residing on that mountain, having witnessed the actions of these two, praised her presence of mind and uttered a certain verse:

Na so sabbesu ṭhānesu, puriso hoti paṇḍito;

Paṇḍitā hoti nārīpi, tattha tattha vicakkhaṇā.

"Man is not wise in all situations. Even a woman can be wise in various matters when she possesses discerning intellect."

After things happened in this way, this young woman thought: "If I go home, my parents will scold me. Even if I say my husband tried to kill me for my ornaments, they might not believe it. What shall I do now?" Wandering far away along a forest path, she reached an ascetic hermitage (*paribbājakārāma*) belonging to the Niganṭhas (Jains). Going to this hermitage where white-robed (*Svetāmbara*) Niganṭha female ascetics lived, she asked to be ordained. When asked what the monastic practice belonging to that hermitage was, she was told that one of them was plucking out the hair with pincers; she gave her consent to that too. Her hair was plucked out. It is said that because the hair that grew back afterwards was curly, she was called "Kuṇḍalakesā" (Curly-hair). Her previous name was Bhaddā. The name "Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā" is what is mentioned in the Sutta discourses. When she asked the ascetics, "What do you teach?" they informed her: "We teach absorptions (*jhāna*), etc., and on the other hand, we teach a thousand systems of debate, in which proficiency can be attained." So she learned the arts of debate and went around the villages, market towns, and cities of India in those days, debating with those accepted as scholars in those areas. That is what she did after learning debate. It is said she was also known as *Jambū Paribbājikā* (Rose-apple Wanderer).

When going to those villages and market towns, she customarily used a rose-apple branch as a challenge. Before going for almsround (*piṇḍapāta*) in a city or market town, she would make a mound of sand at the city gate, plant the rose-apple branch on it, and tell the nearby children: "If there is anyone who wishes to debate with me, let them throw down this rose-apple branch." She would leave it like that for seven days. No one wished to accept that challenge. This was because by then, she had won debates

everywhere. In this way, several years must have passed. According to the story, on one occasion she arrived at the city of Sāvatthī, set up a sand mound and planted the rose-apple branch near the city gate in that manner, and went for alms. Meanwhile, Venerable Sāriputta, returning after his almsround, saw this rose-apple branch. Seeing children gathered around it, he asked what it was, and the children explained the situation. Venerable Sāriputta said, "In that case, kick down that rose-apple branch." When they said, "We are afraid to do that," he replied, "No, no, I am telling you to do it. I will take care of it." When he said something like that, the children kicked down the rose-apple branch. When the wanderer returned, she blamed the children, saying, "I have no debate with you!"

So, after being told of the event, she went looking for Venerable Sāriputta. Prior to that, making a great clamor in the city, proclaiming loudly, "Behold, I am going to debate with the ascetics of the Sakyan clan!" she went to the place where Venerable Sāriputta was residing. As mentioned here, he was seated under a tree in the evening. Having gone there to begin the debate, when she asked whose turn it was to question, the female wanderer took the opportunity and asked all one thousand questions of debate. Venerable Sāriputta answered every single question correctly. Next, when it was Venerable Sāriputta's turn, saying "I too shall ask a question," he asked just one question.

"Ekaṃ nāma kiṃ?"—"What is one?" he asked. That question is mentioned in Dhamma literature as one of the ten questions asked by the Buddha to ordain Venerable Sopāka, who attained Arahantship at the age of seven. The standard answer for "Ekaṃ nāma kiṃ" is "Sabbe sattā āhāraṭṭhitikā"—"All beings subsist on nutriment." But Kuṇḍalakesā knew nothing of this. She was bewildered by it; she did not understand it. Confessing, "I do not understand what that is," she admitted defeat and asked him to explain it to her. Venerable Sāriputta said, "This is what is called a Buddha-question." "To explain a Buddha-question, one must receive ordination," he said. She agreed to this. Venerable Sāriputta sent her to a nunnery (*bhikkhuṇī-upassaya*) and had her ordained as a Bhikkhuṇī (nun). Next, this nun, Kuṇḍalakesā Bhikkhuṇī, listened to the Dhamma from the Buddha. As it is mentioned, immediately upon hearing the discourse, she attained the stage of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*). Furthermore, while pouring water to wash her feet, observing the water flowing away, she very quickly realized the fruit of Arahantship. She attained Arahantship.

On the basis of this event, it is mentioned that a discussion arose among the Sangha about how this Bhikkhuṇī Kuṇḍalakesā, recalling her past history, understood the Dhamma so quickly. They expressed wonder at this: "While as a layperson, she fought such a great battle with a thief and won it!" In this way, they were speaking about her. Having heard this news, the Buddha uttered the two verses we mentioned earlier:

Yo ce gāthāsataṃ bhāse, anatthapadasaṃhitā,

Ekaṃ dhammapadaṃ seyyo, yaṃ sutvā upasammati.

"Monks, though one should recite a hundred verses comprising meaningless words, far better is a single word of the Dhamma (teaching/discourse) that brings about peace and stilling. That is the first verse." Next is the second verse:

Yo sahassaṃ sahassena, saṅgāme mānuse jine;

Ekañca jeyyamattānaṃ, sa ve saṅgāmajuttamo.

"Though one should conquer a million men in battle—even if a single individual conquers a million men—far nobler is he who conquers himself. He indeed is the supreme warrior," the Buddha declared. If we consider the facts based on these two verses, it is first of all mentioned in Dhamma literature that this Kuṇḍalakesā attained the foremost position among the Bhikkhuṇīs of this Buddha-sāsana who possess swift intuition (*khippābhiññā*—understanding the Dhamma instantly). From this, it is evident that it was precisely due to the incident of her quick attainment of Arahantship that she received this foremost position.

It is also said that from a very distant past, starting from the dispensation of Buddha Padumuttara, Therī Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā had received definite predictions to obtain the foremost position among the nuns who possess swift intuition (*khippābhiññā*) in this dispensation of the Buddha. Just as the ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya received the chief position on that side—for swift comprehension of the Dhamma. From the events of her lay life as well, we can understand that she was a person of great comprehension and presence of mind. Furthermore, having learned a thousand debates, she went around Jambudvīpa winning in various places. It was the highly wise Venerable Sāriputta who was finally able to tame her. Therefore, we can understand that, in accordance with some past meritorious power, she had attained the capacity for swift comprehension of the Dhamma.

When we reflect on this matter, we see that swift comprehension is indeed a marvelous thing, worthy of special mention. However, in these times, some people think that just by hearing a single word of Dhamma, anyone can realize the Dhamma in this manner. As for the reason for this, we can think of it in this way: nowadays, with the advancement of science and technology, many people try to impose the stimulated concept of "instantaneity" onto spiritual life as well. This is not such an easy thing. Only if a person's faculty of wisdom has been developed through the long-term perfection of *Pāramīs* can they comprehend the supramundane Dhamma instantly in that manner. Otherwise, it is impossible to measure this matter of wisdom with mundane criteria. To put it briefly, there are certain deep Sutta discourses nowadays, like the Bāhiya Sutta and other special Suttas, which are extremely short. Scholars must have read them twenty or thirty times. But they have still not realized the Dhamma. From that itself, it is evident that thinking of oneself as belonging to the category of *khippābhiññā* (possessing swift intuition) is a form of delusion. Furthermore, because of this matter, we can bring out some important Dhamma points for this venerable audience to consider.

The Buddha has generally shown four modes of practice (*paṭipadā*). Depending on the character and abilities of each individual, they can be divided into four modes of practice: painful progress with slow intuition (*dukkhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*), painful progress with swift intuition (*dukkhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*), pleasant progress with slow intuition (*sukhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*), and pleasant progress with swift intuition (*sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*). Thus, they are made into four divisions.

To consider it briefly, the analysis of painful progress and pleasant progress is done in this way. For those whose progress is painful, it is shown that in the Dhamma, when establishing the mind on Nibbāna, or for the penetration of the Path and Fruits, they have to undergo considerable training. Meditation topics of this nature: *asubhānupassī kāyasmiṃ viharati*—one must dwell contemplating the foulness of the body; likewise, *āhāre paṭikūlasaññā*—one must develop the perception of repulsiveness in food; *sabbaloke anabhiratasaññā*—one must dwell with the feeling of non-delight, of disillusionment, towards the entire world; *sabbe saṅkhāresu aniccasaññā*—in accordance with this, one must develop the perception of impermanence / inconstancy (Anicca) in all preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (Saṅkhāra); next, *maraṇasaññā*—in this manner, mindfulness of death must constantly be established. Training in this way, so that the nature of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (Dukkha) in this world penetrates the mind deeply, is what is called painful progress (*dukkhā paṭipadā*). Its opposite is called pleasant progress (*sukhā paṭipadā*). It is shown that if a person has attained the first, second, third, and fourth absorptions (*jhāna*), it is very easy for them. From the very attainment of those absorptions, it is clear that defilements such as the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are suppressed. This indicates that for certain individuals who have well-developed those absorptions, this progress is pleasant.

Next, regarding comprehension, the matter of "slow intuition" (*dandhābhiññā*) is pointed out. There it is shown that what helps for that comprehension of the Dhamma is what we always mention at the end of Dhamma sermons: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—these five are what assist in this comprehension of the Dhamma. What is the cause of that slow intuition? It is when those five spiritual faculties (*indriya*)—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—are in a soft, undeveloped, or immature state. "Khippābhiññā" (swift intuition) occurs when those five faculties (*pañcindriya*) have fully matured. Then, those who have pleasant progress and swift intuition (*sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*) are skilled in both aspects. They have strong power of absorption (*jhāna*). Also, regarding comprehension, their five faculties—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—are highly developed. It is in this sense that the progress is divided into four.

The Buddha has shown that when we consider individuals, they too can be classified into four types: *ugghaṭitaññū, vipañcitaññū, neyya, and padaparama*. *Ugghaṭitaññū* means those who comprehend the Dhamma the moment it is briefly indicated, even by a small hint. We can think of Bāhiya Dārucīriya, and also Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā in this regard. Such individuals can understand the Dhamma very easily. For them, even an

extremely short discourse by the Buddha is sufficient. Next, *vipañcitaññū* refers to those who realize the Dhamma after a detailed discourse. The *neyya* person is of a lesser category of individual than that. The *neyya* person has to be led as if by the hand; the Dhamma must be explained to them constantly. They need to ask questions. Furthermore, they must associate with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). They must engage in wise attention / radical attention (Yoniso manasikāra). Only after doing many such activities can that person attain comprehension of the Dhamma. Concerning the *padaparama* (one for whom the word is the maximum) person, it is stated in the Dhamma as follows: even if that person memorizes the Dhamma, due to some lack of supportive past conditions, they cannot realize the Paths and Fruits in this life. No matter how much they learn, or how well they memorize the Dhamma, they cannot realize the Paths and Fruits in this life. Yet, a *padaparama* person should not give up, because the effort made in this life will serve as a support for the next life. Thus, the four types of individuals are presented.

Looking at this, those who think of themselves as *ugghaṭitaññū* (possessing instant realization) do not want to start from the alphabet level. But in reality, do they belong to that category? Indeed, those who dwell in such conceit can never understand this Dhamma. They must humbly return to the very beginning. Because they must come to the threefold training (*tividha-sikkhā*) of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Precisely due to their learning, some think: "Faith and virtue are teachings meant for foolish lay-devotees." "These are of no use to us. We are highly intellectual people. What we need is that when a single word is said, we understand everything." Rejecting that basic, gradual path of practice, they carry wisdom on their shoulders and expect liberation through that alone. As we said before, this is an overrunning of the concept of "instant gratification" found in science and technology.

We all know that in this era of the decline of the Sāsana, and even when we consider the environment, this is not an era favorable to spiritual life. Likewise, we must accept that if those who could understand quickly were rare even in the Buddha's time, they must indeed be extremely rare in this day and age. Therefore, we should not take these matters too lightly. If we take them casually, we will never obtain results. We must humbly return to the very beginning and do what needs to be done first, first. The Buddha too has stated that if someone abandons what should be done first and leaps into other things, they will have to regret it someday. That is a point we can consider in this regard. We stated this based on the meaning of the first verse: rather than a hundred verses of no benefit or purpose, a single word of the Dhamma leading to the comprehension of Dhamma, stilling (*vūpasama*), and calming, is superior.

Indeed, there are certain short discourses in the Dhamma through which some disciples realized the Dhamma very quickly. But for others, those must be explained in detail, and they must undergo a certain training in respect of them.

Next, let us look at the idea in the second verse. Even if a certain giant or warrior conquers a million men all by himself, the one who conquers himself is said to be far nobler. What is this "conquering of oneself"? This concept presented by the Buddha is

unique. Because to a world weary of bloodshed and war, the Buddha introduced the concept of conquering oneself. This can be called "self-conquest" (*ātma-vijaya*). In the world, there is the conquest of directions and countries. That conquest is achieved by killing human beings. Many hope to toast and celebrate such a victory. But the Buddha did not consider that a noble victory. Why? Not only do those individuals have to pay for the unwholesome karma (*akusala*) arising from that victory, but they also cannot obtain true liberation, solace, or peace through it. Both the victor and the defeated are helpless in the face of death. But this "conquering of oneself" pointed out by the Buddha is, in truth, the conquering of death. It is in that sense that, as we mentioned earlier, the Buddha brought words like "fight" and "battle" close to this path of practice.

We all know that terms like "battle with Māra" (*Māra-saṅgrāma*) and "fight with Māra" are mentioned everywhere the path of practice is discussed. Through this, the combative nature inherent in human beings is directed towards a wholesome path. The highest, noblest victory is conquering oneself. No matter how much else one conquers, as long as one is subjected to defilements (*kilesa*), there is no real victory or solace for oneself. Not only that, due to those sinful actions, one is caught even more in those very bonds of Saṃsāra. What worldly battles do is not release one from bonds (*bandhana*), but rather multiply them. This battle pointed out by the Buddha, the battle with Māra, is one that goes towards the goal of release from bonds and conquering death. That is why there is a verse, like a battle cry, which the Buddha frequently used and approved for the daily practice of meditating monks (*yogāvacara* Sangha):

Ārabhatha nikkhamatha,

Yuñjatha buddhasāsane;

Dhunātha maccuno senaṃ,

Naḷāgāraṃva kuñjaro.

"Exert! Venture forth! Engage in the Buddha's dispensation! Shatter the army of Death (*Maccu*), as an elephant crushes a reed-hut." There, an army of Māra (Death) is spoken of. That does not mean killing human beings; it refers to the defilements (*kilesa-dhamma*). In the accounts of the Buddha's Enlightenment, the army of Māra is described as: sensual pleasures, craving / thirst (Taṇhā), then discontent with the practice, hunger and thirst, doubt and skepticism (*vicikicchā*)—all such things that arise from within the mind. These defiling states (*kilesa-dhamma*) that hold one back from progressing are what are deeply shown as the army of Māra. Reflecting in this way, the defeat of Māra means conquering the host of defilements within oneself. Appropriate words for this are frequently found in the Dhamma:

Mā nivattatha abhikkama

"Do not turn back, press forward!" Not only that, in matters concerning the Sangha, ordination is described as donning armor—like receiving armor for the battle with Māra.

It is as armor for this battle against defilements that the Sangha wear the robes—not for anything else, not for any other battle. Such a concept is seen in this Dhamma.

The value of this self-conquest must also be contemplated. Since the desire for victory has existed in everyone since ancient times, they either conquer countries in all directions through world conquest (*dig-vijaya*), or reaching the limits of the ocean, they then conquer countries beyond the ocean. Then, when even that is not enough, they seek to conquer the stars and planets in the sky. No matter how they achieve victory, they are all subject to death. Even if one goes to the moon and returns—we all know about the heroes who went to the moon and came back. But we have not yet heard that they became immortal.

Thus, looking at it in that way, it was this conquest of oneself that the Buddha presented to the world as the supreme concept. Conquering oneself is, in truth, conquering death. By overcoming ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving / thirst (Taṇhā), and thereby conquering this host of defilements, one can stand unshaken in the face of death. Having no further rebirth, and because of abandoning craving / thirst (Taṇhā) and grasping / holding / fuel (Upādāna), that person obtains true solace. That is why the Buddha pointed to this as the highest victory. Now, for that victory, just as for a battle, an army organization is necessary. If we turn our attention to that required army organization—speaking in the military terminology fitting for these times—the Buddha has presented a valuable system of Dhamma groups regarding army organization.

We can identify this army organization as the "Thirty-Seven Requisites of Enlightenment" (*sattis-bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). They are so important that, as mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, at the time of passing away, the Buddha summarized everything he had taught up to then—not as a pile of books to be kept in libraries, not in the way we describe Dhamma nowadays, but in a practical sense. He declared: "Monks, those Dhammas which have been directly known and taught by me, namely..." and he mentioned these: the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*), the Four Right Efforts (*cattāro sammappadhānā*), the Four Bases of Power (*cattāro iddhipādā*), the Five Faculties (*pañcindriyā*), the Five Powers (*pañca balā*), the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅgā*), and the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*). According to this, it is these seven groups of Dhamma that we can think of as the Buddha's army. It is these that we must develop within our minds. There is a training here that begins with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and culminates in the Noble Eightfold Path.

If we analyze it in the same way, now you all know the Four Foundations of Mindfulness very well. Contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), contemplation of feeling / sensation (Vedanā) (*vedanānupassanā*), contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), and contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*)—this basic training is the primary military training received by the warrior of the meditating monk (*yogāvacara*). It is on the ground of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness that the first training is received, the military training is obtained. Through that exercise, the meditating warrior brings forth the fourfold energy called the Four Right Efforts (*cattāro*

sammappadhānā). If we mention that fourfold energy in brief, it is as follows: to prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome states, to abandon arisen unwholesome states, to arouse unarisen wholesome states, and to maintain and consolidate arisen wholesome states. This fourfold energy is what the meditator develops through training on the ground of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Next, through that very energy, the meditator is able to realize what the strategies are to win this battle.

Let us say there are four strategies to win this battle. What are those four? They are the Bases of Power (*iddhipāda*). Venerable ones, "iddhi" does not mean merely flying through the air. It refers to the power to fulfill a certain hope, the idea of achieving success. So, *iddhipāda* means the paths to success. The Buddha has presented four paths leading to successful achievement. These can be understood to a certain extent even in relation to mundane matters, not only supramundane ones. What are they? Desire (*chanda*), energy (*viriya*), mind/consciousness (*citta*), and investigation (*vīmaṃsā*). *Chanda* means a strong aspiration or willingness. If one has a strong willingness for something, by putting that willingness forward and placing it in the forefront, one can fulfill one's hopes and overcome a problem. Likewise, *viriya* means energy. There are certain energetic temperaments who can endure anything without fear, disregarding body and life. The *viriya-iddhipāda* (base of power of energy) suits those of energetic temperament. There are some who can realize Nibbāna and perform meditation activities, etc., by making energy primary. *Citta* means the power of determination/mind. There are some who give foremost place to determination: "If I have made up my mind, I will not give up; I will not stop somehow or other." We can call that too a battle strategy. Finally, *vīmaṃsā*: investigative wisdom. There, the meaning is wisdom. Wisdom. Those who have the power of wisdom bring forward investigative wisdom. It is stated in the Dhamma that even if one has just one of these four kinds of *iddhipāda*, it is sufficient to win on the battlefield. Even if one does not have all four, depending on the temperament of each individual, some make *chanda* (desire) primary. Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, for instance, went in accordance with faith, making *chanda* primary to achieve his goal of Nibbāna. Similarly, some make energy primary, and so on.

Next are the Five Faculties and Five Powers (*pañcindriya, pañca balā*). Going further, we can understand that according to this analogy, what is spoken of here are not the mundane "five powers." One must arouse and produce five faculties (*indriya*). Those five faculties are what we mentioned earlier: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—the five faculties/powers that assist in achieving the task of Nibbāna and seeing Nibbāna. These are developed as faculties (*indriya*) and, likewise, with their help, in the sense of conquering opposing states, those same five are shown as "powers" (*bala-dhamma*). Under both faculties and powers, those five—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—are mentioned. Next, once they are all well developed and sharpened, on the basis of that strength, seven factors that aid Enlightenment are lined up. Those are the seven: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), joy (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Those seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) are very close to Nibbāna. When those seven factors of enlightenment are developed, it is as if one is

close to Nibbāna. Having completed their development, the "final operation"—to use modern terminology—is indeed the Eightfold Path.

The final operation employed for this victory over Māra is indeed the Noble Eightfold Path. That is why we always speak of the Noble Eightfold Path. Sometimes other things are forgotten. That is why even scholars forget that one must begin with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. We frequently use the term "Noble Eightfold Path." But to reach that level, one must come from that very beginning. One must obtain training on that battlefield. That is what we are specifically reminding you of. What is this Noble Eightfold Path? It is a path of completely integrated, wonderfully great power. Now, in other places, these are introduced individually and separately. From the way those Pāli words are used—such as *cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*, *cattāro sammappadhānā*, etc.—we see that they are introduced as if separated. But concerning the Noble Eightfold Path, it is expressed as *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*. This is shown as a single unit. These eight are fully integrated and linked to one another. This is the final operation. Indeed, it is a completely interconnected, immensely powerful process that is shown under the name of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Now, if we look, in the Noble Eightfold Path there is also Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*). In that case, can someone who has not developed the Four Foundations of Mindfulness have Right Mindfulness? No, indeed. That is why we say everyone must understand that the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is the place where the basic training on the battlefield is received. That is exactly what the Buddha told Venerable Sāriputta: "Establish every newly ordained monk in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness." In modern times, perhaps, they are established in it only at the very end. But the Buddha told Venerable Sāriputta: "Sāriputta, establish everyone who is newly ordained in this dispensation in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness." The final operation of that basic training—the power gained from it—is: the four right efforts emerged as *sammappadhāna*; those four strategies emerged as *iddhipāda*; then, having developed the faculties, powers, and factors of enlightenment, the special alignment necessary for comprehension. After developing those teachings, the very energy that has been filtered and seasoned through them is what helps one towards Nibbāna as the Noble Eightfold Path.

You all know about the Noble Eightfold Path. The ordinary world has a superficial understanding of it, thinking of Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), and so on, in a mundane way. If taken deeply, "Right View" is to be understood as the comprehension of the Truth. Among those, the ten-fold mundane Right View is the Right View relevant to ordinary Saṃsāra. But what helps for release from Saṃsāra is the correct vision regarding the Four Noble Truths. Making that correct vision primary, it goes all the way to correct thoughts and intentions; in accordance with those thoughts and intentions, as we frequently mention, correct speech and action; in accordance with those, correct livelihood; through that livelihood, correct effort; through correct effort, correct mindfulness—*sati*, good mindfulness—and finally, Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*), which is the unification of the mind.

That supramundane path-concentration (*magga-samādhi*) is indeed the most powerful concentration in the world. It is through that path-concentration that instantly... we can describe the Noble Eightfold Path as a high-speed path. It is direct. Precisely because it is direct, the Buddha has declared that this is a straight path.

Ujumaggamhi asaṅkhate, gacchatha mā nivattatha.

"On the straight path to the Unprepared / Unconditioned / Uncompounded (Asaṅkhata), go, do not turn back!" The Buddha has declared: "*gacchatha*"—go on, or march forward, on the straight path. "*mā nivattatha*"—do not turn back. Do not retreat. Why? Because it is a path that can be traversed with such fearlessness. But since some devotees come and ask us about this Noble Eightfold Path as an additional question, we shall try to clarify that too on this occasion.

Now, the word "magga" (path) is also applied to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. You may have heard that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta discourse begins with:

Ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā, sokaparidevānaṃ samatikkamāya, dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya, ñāyassa adhigamāya, nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya.

That is how it begins. So, what is this "*ekāyana*" path? This is interpreted in various ways. Is this the "sole" path? If this is the sole path, why did the Buddha state elsewhere regarding the Noble Eightfold Path:

Eso'va maggo natth'aññο, dassanassa visuddhiyā.

"This is the path, there is no other, for the purification of vision." Thus, the Buddha declares this regarding the Noble Eightfold Path itself.

In that case, what is meant here by "*ekāyana maggo*"? That word must be understood in the correct manner. "*Ekāyana*" means, venerable ones, a path that has no branchings in between, which can be traversed with absolute certainty. If there were branchings in between, upon reaching them, one would have to ask, "Where do we go from here?" "*Ekāyana*" means this path goes and merges straight into the Eightfold Path. The path that begins with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness merges straight into the Noble Eightfold Path. It does not wander here and there. It is in that sense, venerable ones, that this is called the "*ekāyana*" path. That is exactly what is said there: *Ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā*—for the purification of beings, *sokaparidevānaṃ samatikkamāya*—for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the ending of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (Dukkha) and grief, *ñāyassa adhigamāya*—for attaining the Method (*Ñāya*). "*Ñāya*" refers to that very Noble Eightfold Path. It is a name for the Noble Eightfold Path. It is the supramundane Noble Eightfold Path itself that is called "*Ñāya*." Thus, it is a path that leads surely to obtaining the Noble Eightfold Path. Finally, *nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*—for the realization of Nibbāna.

It is by confusing these two that some people have created problems. "Are these two different paths?" Merely because "*ekāyana*" is said there, it does not mean "only path" in that sense. That is what must be kept in mind. This is a certain path. This is a path that does not turn off into side-roads. It goes and merges straight into the Noble Eightfold Path. That merging occurs only if one develops it in that manner. It is not something that proceeds through books. Practically, it is something that happens within the heart. It is an internal development of the path. That is precisely why we said it is like military training. Having received that military training in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, in the end, a good army division is formed, and finally, the final operation is the Noble Eightfold Path—the supramundane Noble Eightfold Path.

That is how the battle must be won. That too, in four stages. In the stages of Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant, the path-mind (*magga-citta*) becomes progressively powerful. The path-mind in the first stage (Sotāpanna) is surpassed in strength in the second stage; in the third stage of Anāgāmi, it is even more powerful. It is in the fourth stage (Arahant) that, having destroyed all defilements and shattered that mass of darkness, one breaks through ignorance (*avijjā*), which the Buddha described as an impenetrable mass of darkness. If we speak merely by way of metaphor, we say "entering the City of Nibbāna." We say "City of Nibbāna" only as an analogy. We ourselves do not endorse treating it as a literal city. But in terms of the metaphor used, in terms of this analogy, the final operation of that army organization goes and breaks down the gate—like breaking down the gate of Vijitapura—breaks through, and behold! Finally enters the City of Nibbāna, or rather, realizes Nibbāna.

We are speaking by putting this concept of battle in the forefront, because the concept of battle is appealing to the human mind. Also, we know that if a small child is fond of something, to draw them away from it, we must give them something similar. Similarly, we know that throughout history, human beings have made efforts, enduring pain and hardships, to attain world domination and empires, in order to cultivate the pride of victory. In that respect, even history recognizes Emperor Dharmāsoka as the greatest hero of all history. Although he achieved victory by killing hundreds of thousands of people, he abandoned that after discovering this conquest of Dhamma (*dhamma-vijaya*), or rather, this self-conquest (*ātma-vijaya*), once he turned to the side of the Dhamma. From that too, it is understood that conquering oneself is supreme.

Accordingly, we must reflect, we must adjust our thinking if there are shortcomings, and we too must give foremost place to the Buddha's word. We must give the Buddha's Dhamma a place superior to all other mundane concepts. That is how we must think. One can make that "conquering of oneself" meaningful in that manner. Indeed, it is when a battle comes that one's own strength is brought out. That is exactly what is presented by that concept of Māra. Sometimes, when a defilement arises, even the Buddha would declare... because when one just says "it is a defilement," it does not strike the mind. But the moment he says, "Look, monk, there is Māra! Māra is right there!" that monk becomes vigilant. As said, there is an ascription of personality there. That helps to prepare our mind. Since saying we are fighting with lifeless mental states does not strike the heart, we personify them and call them "Māra." Utilizing even that support, in

whatever way, this is all there is to do: to escape from this Saṃsāra. To conquer death. That is what is called self-conquest—conquering oneself. That is the concept we must develop.

So, through this, we can bring out many valuable points, many valuable things. As we mentioned, some scholars in these times have created another problem: "Now, the Noble Eightfold Path begins with Right View." It is analyzed in this way: "Right View and Right Intention belong to the wisdom group (*paññā-kkhandha*); Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration belong to the concentration group (*samādhi-kkhandha*)." Looking at it in that way, first comes wisdom, then virtue, and then concentration. Taking that logically, some try to give foremost place to this wisdom. But that is a completely wrong understanding.

It is mentioned in the Dhamma itself. On one occasion, Bhikkhuṇī Dhammadinnā, in response to a question by her former lay husband, Visākha Upāsaka, says the following (mentioning it briefly due to time constraints): what is the question? Visākha Upāsaka asks: "Noble Lady, is the threefold training of virtue, concentration, and wisdom included in the Noble Eightfold Path, or is the Noble Eightfold Path included in the threefold training of virtue, concentration, and wisdom?" He asked this because even in the past, there were questions just like the ones we have today. What is the answer to that? The threefold training of virtue, concentration, and wisdom was not arranged by the Noble Eightfold Path; rather, the Noble Eightfold Path was arranged under the three groups of virtue, concentration, and wisdom. Through this, we must understand that the division into virtue, concentration, and wisdom is more primary than the Noble Eightfold Path. It is to that division that foremost place must be given. Just as we give foremost place to it, we must also give it place at the end.

That is why, in the poignant account showing how the Buddha, even with such a severe illness, journeyed from village to village, we find a passage where he preached the entirety of the Dhamma in brief:

Iti sīlaṃ, iti samādhi, iti paññā. Sīlaparibhāvito samādhi mahapphalo hoti mahānisaṃso. Samādhiparibhāvitā paññā mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsā. Paññāparibhāvitaṃ cittaṃ sammadeva āsavehi vimuccati.

In a single passage, he summarized and showed the entire Dhamma: "Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is wisdom." Concentration fully developed through virtue is of great fruit and great benefit. Wisdom fully developed through concentration is of great fruit and great benefit. Next, *paññāparibhāvitaṃ cittaṃ*—the mind developed through wisdom, the mind grown in accordance with wisdom, *sammadeva āsavehi vimuccati*—is fully liberated from the taints (*āsava*). That is a passage summarizing the entire Dhamma. Based on that, we can surely understand that the three—virtue, concentration, and wisdom—are primary. The Noble Eightfold Path is something built on that, arising through it.

Likewise, we must understand that when we speak of a "path," Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) must naturally come to the beginning. Even if we think of a gradual transformation of personal character, that too must begin with Right View. It is in accordance with one's view (*diṭṭhi*) that one's thoughts and intentions arise. In accordance with thoughts and intentions, words are spoken. In accordance with words, actions are performed. It is because of this systematic, gradual path of practice, which is connected in a wonderfully interconnected manner, integrated and organically blended, that it is called *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* (the Noble Eightfold Path). It is shown as a single unit, whereas the others are shown separately. Although the four foundations of mindfulness, the four bases of power, and so on are listed separately, in the end, the Noble Eightfold Path is a single unit. When the supramundane path arises, it happens so instantly that all those eight factors arise in a single mind-moment. That instant moment where all eight factors arise simultaneously in a single mind is the powerful concentration: the path-concentration. It is through that concentration that one can realize the Unconditioned.

It is precisely because you all ask questions in various ways regarding this path of Dhamma that we summarized and presented many facts in accordance with this topic. You must reflect on this, not letting these matters remain limited to books, but practically drawing them close to your daily life, and proceeding on your path of virtue, concentration, and wisdom. Depending on your respective abilities—if not *ugghaṭitaññū*, then *vipañcitaññū*; if not that, then *neyya*—in whatever way, aligning with your capacity and putting forth maximum energy in these final times of the Buddha's dispensation, dedicating a place greater than for anything else to this task, may this Dhamma sermon surely serve as a supportive condition for you to escape from this extremely dangerous Saṃsāra, to practice this listening, meditation, virtue, concentration, and wisdom, and to bring an end to this suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (Dukkha) of Saṃsāra. Wish and aspire in this manner.

If, through this, you have developed the spiritual faculties and powers of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, may that surely serve as a strong support (*upanissaya*) for you to realize the Paths and Fruits in this very life, with the help of the association with noble friends. Not only that: if any wholesome store of merit has been gathered through this Dhamma sermon in this seen and unseen world, may all beings, from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, including the deceased relatives in whose names we do so, who wish to rejoice in this merit of listening to and delivering the Dhamma, rejoice in it likewise; and, with the help of that store of merit, may they as quickly as possible escape from all the suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (Dukkha) of Saṃsāra—such as birth / arising (Jāti), decay, aging, and death (Decay and Death / Aging and Death / Jarāmaraṇa), sickness, and so forth—and find solace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! Reciting these verses, let us share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #72

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.75)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Puññañ ce puriso kayirā, kayirāthetaṃ punappunaṃ;

tamhi chandaṃ kayirātha, sukho puññassa uccayo.

From:

Dhammapada 118 (Pupphavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Through faith in kamma and the fruit of kamma (*kamma-phala*), an opportunity is provided for a person to steer their life in the right direction. He who does not have a correct understanding of merit (*puñña*), demerit (*pāpa*), wholesome (*kusala*), and unwholesome (*akusala*) actions gets lost in this samsāra and falls into Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*). Therefore, the Buddha almost constantly reminds us of the value of a life inclined and oriented towards merit (*puñña*). The verse taken as our theme also illustrates such an occasion. The background story (*nidāna-kathā*) related to this verse also presents a fine example of the value of merit.

The Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa, having entered into meditative absorption (*samāpatti*) in the Pipphalī Cave in the city of Rājagaha, emerged from that absorption after seven days and scanned with his divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) to find a suitable place to wander for alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*). He saw a farm-woman parching corn near a paddy field. At the same time, he reflected whether this woman possessed enough faith (*saddhā*) to perform an act of merit by offering alms (*dāna*). He realized that she was a very faithful woman. Thinking, "If I go there, she will be able to accumulate a vast store of merit," and out of great compassion, the Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa journeyed to that paddy field. That farm-woman, seeing the Venerable Thera, was filled with five-fold joy, and with great happiness, took those puffed rice (*lājā*) and offered them into the bowl of the Venerable Thera, and prostrated herself, worshipping him with the five-fold touch. Having worshipped, she made an aspiration (*patthanā*): "Venerable Sir, whatever truth (*Dhamma*) you have realized, may this merit be a supportive condition for me to

attain that same Dhamma!" The Venerable Thera also expressed his appreciation and blessed her: "May it be so!"

While this farm-woman was returning with a very joyful mind, a highly venomous serpent—it must have been a cobra—lying on the ridge of the field bit her calf. She fell dead right there.

However, instantly, as if waking up from a dream, this woman was reborn in a golden mansion in the Tāvatiṁsa heaven. The unique feature of that mansion was that garlands of puffed rice were hanging all over, from side to side. This woman reflected: "How did I receive such a grand fortune?" It became clear to her: "I received this from that small act of merit." Then she thought, "If I could obtain such a fortune from such a small act of merit, then I should not fall into negligence (*pramāda*). Being diligent (*appamatta*), I must further secure this fortune of mine by doing more merit." Thinking thus, at the break of dawn, she went to the hut where the Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa was residing and began to perform duties (*vatta-paṭivatta*), sweeping the courtyard of his dwelling with a golden broom and a basket as described there, and filling the water pots. When the Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa looked, all these chores had been done. He thought that some novice monk must have come and performed these duties. This happened on the second day too, and he thought in the same way. On the third day, hearing the sound of sweeping at the dawn-hour, the Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa looked in that direction and saw a certain light shining through the keyhole of the door—the light of that deity (*devatā*). Seeing it, he opened the door and asked, "Who is sweeping here?" This goddess is known as 'Lājā Devadhītā'—the Puffed-Rice Deity. 'Lājā' means puffed rice; she is known by that name. When asked, "Who is it?" she replied:

"I am your attendant, Lājā Devadhītā."

"I do not know of any attendant of mine. Who are you?"

"The other day, after offering you puffed rice, as I was walking away, I was bitten by a snake and died. Immediately, I obtained this state. Now I thought that I must secure this celestial fortune, and must diligently perform meritorious deeds."

You have heard that the Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa was one of extreme ascetic practices, a Thera observing austere dhutaṅga practices. Even though he had kindly provided her the opportunity to make that alms offering out of compassion, when he looked at this situation in relation to his strict ascetic path, he spoke somewhat sternly: "Who performed these duties yesterday and the day before?" When she replied, "It was I," he said, "What you have done is quite enough. Do not come to this area hereafter." Then she began to weep. "O Venerable Sir, please permit me to further increase and secure my merit and enhance my fortune." But the Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa said, "If you continue to do this, in the future, Dhamma preachers during their sermons will say that even the Great Kassapa received personal services and duties from a goddess. Do not leave room for such talk. Therefore, do not even come near this area," and he sent her away. Then she rose into the sky, weeping, and repeatedly saying, "O Venerable Sir,

please permit me." As she refused to leave, the Great Kassapa snapped his fingers, saying, "This woman does not know her limits. Go away from here!" Only after that finger-snap, under the power of his spiritual majesty, was the goddess unable to remain there any longer. Flying into the sky, she lamented her grief. While she was lamenting, the Buddha, who was residing in the Fragrant Chamber (*Gandhakuṭi*) of Jetavana Monastery in Sāvatthi, heard the sound of her weeping. He reflected upon it and, out of compassion for her, projected a ray of light, appearing as if he were standing right in front of her, and delivered the very Dhamma verse we took as our theme.

What is expressed by that verse, in short, is a sort of balanced, middle-way statement delivered by the Buddha to comfort the deity: "It is my son Kassapa's right to protect his restraint. Likewise, it is also valuable for those who perform merit to be enthusiastic about the merit that belongs to them." Making such a balanced statement, he uttered this verse of our theme. Let us recall it once again:

Puññañ ce puriso kayirā, kayirāthetaṁ punappunaṁ,

tamhi chandaṁ kayirātha, sukho puññassa uccayo.

"If a person should perform merit, he should do it again and again. He should develop a desire (*chanda*), a liking, a keenness for that merit. What is the reason for this? *Sukho puññassa uccayo*—the accumulation of merit is happiness; it is a cause for happiness." Thus, a simple explanation was presented. It is said that upon hearing this verse, that faithful goddess attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). This is a very brief story, but through it, we are shown how merit supports a human being to make their life happy, as mentioned before.

Let us now reflect upon this verse. In this verse, what the Buddha actually intended was merit (*puñña*). That is to say, after performing a meritorious deed, a person should not stop at that single instance thinking, "This merit is enough for my entire life," but should do it *punappunaṁ*—again and again. If one performs merit, and once it is completed, without being complacent, one should perform that merit again and again. When there is no opportunity to perform merit, or when one is unable to do so, at the very least, one should generate a desire or a keenness for it in one's mind. When you contemplate a little, you will understand the importance of generating this keenness. If we do not incline and orient our minds towards merit, if we do foster a desire for merit even during times when we are not actively performing it, we will hesitate and hold back when an opportunity to perform merit actually arises. We will remain indecisive. But for one who always thinks, "Oh, if only I could perform some merit!"—this 'desire' (*chanda*) is a very important factor in this Dhamma. It is called the desire for the wholesome (*kusalacchanda*)—the keenness or liking to perform merit. A person who possesses this will step forward, saying "I will do it, I will do it," to take charge of that meritorious work and lend a hand to it. Such is its strength.

Sometimes, if that desire (*chanda*) is absent when one is not performing merit, and if the mind has not been prepared accordingly, the opportunity to do merit slips away. Later,

one thinks, "Ah, I missed the opportunity to perform that merit; I was just thinking about it." That is why, although it is a small verse, we can understand that it contains a very deep meaning. Why are we asked to perform merit again and again? Because the accumulation of merit is happiness. The accumulation of merit is a cause that brings happiness both in this world and in the next in samsāra. This, in brief, is the meaning of this verse.

Next, let us consider the meaning of this story and the verse further. Generally, this matter of merit is something extremely close to our lives. Therefore, it is not merely about doing it, nor about doing it for the sake of doing it, or doing it with expectations of fame and status. Rather, what is important is to understand the value of merit in its true sense according to the Dhamma and then perform it. Hence, even within the story related to this theme, there is a certain depth. First of all, let us contemplate the practice of the Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa. Indeed, if he had been fasting for seven days and possessed the divine eye, some might wonder why he did not go to royal palaces or mansions of wealthy merchants for alms-food. The Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa was a Thera of wonderful, severe ascetic virtues who observed dhutaṅga practices. It was his custom that after emerging from meditative absorption, the opportunity to give alms was granted to the poor and destitute. He mostly wandered for alms among poor huts, regardless of whatever he might receive. This was because he possessed such great compassion. It was not about securing a rich, heavy meal. At that moment—meaning when a monk wanders for alms immediately after emerging from meditative absorption—if one gets the opportunity to offer him alms, it becomes of great fruit and great benefit (*mahapphala mahānisaṁsa*). That is why he always took the trouble to grant this opportunity to a poor person. On this occasion too, he journeyed to the paddy field not for any grand, heavy food, but for some light puffed rice that floats in the wind, which might seem insufficient even to sustain a person. Yet, he accepted with great joy the puffed rice that the woman brought and offered with faith. It was not a grand offering, yet through the benefit of offering that little puffed rice, she obtained even celestial fortune.

Furthermore, we see that after obtaining that fortune, she made a great effort to further secure that merit and to perform merit again and again through duties and services. Although there was nothing wrong with that, the Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa opposed it and did not give his consent due to a certain scriptural purpose. This was because, through such actions, future human beings might fall into the unwholesome kamma of disparaging Noble Ones (*ariya-upavāda*). We call this "looking to the future"—that is, he followed these practices out of compassion for future generations. Although his action might seem unkind, it reflects this underlying thought: if future members of the Saṅgha were to say, "Even such-and-and-such deities came and performed services for us," it could lead to wrong understandings. At that moment, he firmly dismissed her using words that befitted his restraint.

Yet, the Buddha, with amazing compassion, resolved the issue from both sides in a balanced way, giving a middle-way answer: "Why? My son Mahā Kassapa did what was his duty. For those who perform merit, either they perform it when they can—as this

verse states, they do merit when possible, and when they cannot, they at least generate the desire (*chanda*) for it." That itself is sufficient for a person. That is to say, when one keeps thinking, "Oh, if only I could somehow perform some merit!" one remains in a wholesome state of mind. It is for such a person, when the opportunity to do merit arrives, that the strength to step forward and lend a hand, to take charge of those activities, arises instantly—as it is said in the Dhamma: *"Ahaṁ ahaṁ mitā, ahaṁ ahaṁ"*—"I am here, I am here." Even though this is a short verse, there is a vital point here. We can understand many things through this verse of the Buddha.

Next, if we reflect on merit (*puñña*) in general, the final line here—usually the final line of verses expresses some theory or fundamental principle—states:

Sukho puññassa uccayo

"The accumulation of merit is happiness." The Buddha concludes the verse with this. Let us now direct our minds to this. First, let us see what this merit (*puñña*) is. It is said that we all know what merit is to the extent that it needs no further explanation. Even so, let us pay some attention to it. According to the Dhamma, in the scriptures, three main types of merit are shown:

Tīṇimāni bhikkhave puññakiriyavatthūni

Three grounds for making merit, or three bases of meritorious activity, namely: *dāna* (giving/generosity), *sīla* (morality/virtue), and *bhāvanā* (meditative development). We can generally understand that this refers to a certain spiritual strength developed in the mind through the acts of giving, observing virtue, and practicing meditation. In other places, this is expanded into ten items. You may have heard of them by the name *Dasa puññakiriyavatthu*—the ten bases of meritorious activity. In addition to *dāna*, *sīla*, and *bhāvanā*, they include: sharing of merit (*pattidāna*), rejoicing in others' merit (*pattānumodanā*), rendering services/duties (*veyyāvacca*), showing reverence to those worthy of respect (*apacāyana*), teaching the Dhamma (*desanā*), listening to the Dhamma (*savana*), and finally, straightening one's right view (*diṭṭhijukamma*). Thus, ten meritorious activities are shown under the ten bases of meritorious activity.

Now, here too, it was because performing duties (*vatta-paṭivatta*) is also a form of merit that this woman, not being satisfied with her giving (*dāna*) alone, was enthusiastic to perform services as well. These are things we can do in our daily lives, even in small ways, according to the opportunities that come our way, even if we might think that acts of giving involve high expenses. Now, those puffed rice were such a small thing. Yet, through that, the Great Arahant Mahā Kassapa received the strength to survive for a day. The food of such a noble Thera was puffed rice. From this, we can see that we should not regard these things as trivial. Moreover, what serves as the support in performing that merit is the mind and faith (*saddhā*). That is precisely why we think the Buddha declared *Saddhā dhanaṁ*—faith is a treasure. Faith is shown as a treasure. Why does faith become a treasure? We must reflect on this. What does it mean to have faith in the Triple Gem? What is the Triple Gem? We must first think about this. The Triple Gem (*Tri-*

vidha Ratna). There is a great depth in this concept of "Gem" (*Ratna*). You have heard that there are no other gems equal to each of these gems:

Yaṁ kiñci ratanaṁ loke vijjati vividhā puthū,

ratanaṁ buddhasamaṁ natthi, ratanaṁ dhammasamaṁ natthi, ratanaṁ saṅghasamaṁ natthi...

"Whatever gems there are in the world, in all their variety, none is equal to the Buddha Gem, none is equal to the Dhamma Gem, none is equal to the Saṅgha Gem." Thus, when a person is said to generate faith, in the word *Saddhā* there is an aspect concerning the heart. Depositing the treasure of faith in the heart, or depositing in the chamber of the heart—what is deposited is these three gems: the Buddha Gem, the Dhamma Gem, and the Saṅgha Gem. Through depositing these, a special value is added to that person's thoughts and aspirations. A great light, a clarity arises within that mind. A word that goes hand in hand with faith (*saddhā*) is *Prasāda* (clarity/serenity/devotion). The two words *Saddho pasanno* (faithful and confident/serene) are found together. In the past, various similes were used for this. There is mention of a certain water-clearing gem which, when placed in muddy water, makes the water clean. Similarly, when faith in the Triple Gem arises, the mind is freed from agitation and attains a state of serene clarity (*prasāda*). The Buddha declared that when a meritorious deed is performed with such a serene mind, it becomes highly beneficial. Even if it is a small thing, if given with faith in such a state, it becomes of great fruit and great benefit (*mahapphala mahānisaṁsa*):

Appamapi ce saddahāno dadāti teneva so hoti sukhī parattha

"Even if one gives a tiny bit, if one gives with a faithful heart, by that very act one becomes happy in the world beyond." Thus, regarding this merit, the Buddha shows that merit is happiness because, in the life of a human being, various material goods and hoards of wealth are accumulated. All of them can be claimed by fire, water, thieves, or rulers, or they can be destroyed. Unloved heirs can take them. But regarding merit, it is declared:

> *Asādhāraṇam aññesaṁ acoraharaṇo nidhī*
>
> *kayirātha dhīro puññāni yo nidhī anugāmiko*

This is a very famous verse. "A treasure that is not shared with others"—meaning others cannot claim it or use it as something common—"a treasure that thieves cannot steal, the wise man should perform merits, for this is the treasure that follows one." Other treasures, deposits, and the like—in modern times, banks, and in those days, vast treasures buried in river basins—can be destroyed by the aforementioned disasters. At the very least, due to inflation and various social and economic changes, the wealth we highly prize can become mere scrap paper overnight. But this merit, we can say, is like a gold coin of eternal value. If something has been deposited in our mind-stream (*citta-santāna*) as merit, that merit never fades away without yielding its fruit.

Furthermore, when more merits are added to that merit, they become stronger, and it is through this that even a Buddha arises in the future. Accumulated as perfections (*pāramīs*), the strength of merit developed through giving, according to one's aspiration (*prārthanā*) and resolve (*praṇidhi*), is accumulated under the name of "perfection of giving" (*dāna-pāramitā*). The store of merit accumulated through observing virtue becomes the "perfection of virtue" (*sīla-pāramitā*). In this way, we can understand that what lies beneath the word "perfection" (*pāramitā*) is this very mass of merit, the performance of merit. Therefore, we see a great value in the accumulation of merit. Moreover, the Buddha has declared: *"Puññaṁ sukhaṁ jīvitasaṅkhayamhi"*—"Merit at the end of life is a great happiness." No matter how much wealth, land, or vehicles one has accumulated, when one remembers them at the moment of death, it only brings Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*). A grief arises thinking, "I have to leave all this behind, don't I?" One cannot take them along. That is why it is said they cannot be taken; they do not follow one. None of those treasures follow. But if one has performed merit, each time one recalls it at the moment of death, it becomes a cause for great joy and solace.

You have heard about the final moments of King Duṭugämuṇu. It was not other things he recalled, but he had the register of merit (*pin-potha*) brought and recalled the merits he had performed. In the past, some even kept a register of merit. Even nowadays, though very rarely, some keep registers of merit. Some do so out of pride (*māna*) to show others. It should not be so; it is for one's own recollection. If these performed merits are recorded in one's mind, even if not in a book, when one is on one's deathbed, one can reflect and rejoice: "I have these masses of merit accumulated throughout my entire life." Then, one does not go to the next world empty-handed. From the story of Lājā Devadhītā, we see that it is according to our very thoughts that our future Becoming / Existence (*bhava*) is shaped. A characteristic of her celestial mansion was the hanging of garlands of puffed rice. Why puffed rice? Because puffed rice was what was in her mind. Basing on that offered puffed rice, in exact accordance with that wholesome deed, a celestial mansion was formed.

We must understand that, let alone other things, even for this physical frame of ours to arise, and for us to receive our belongings, kamma lies beneath them in a very subtle way. We think these things happen by chance, or that we made them ourselves: "We can manage things in this world as we want." But beneath these lie the forces of kamma (*kamma-vega*), things of this nature. That which is called merit, then, becomes a support in this samsāra. Now, there are two sides to this. Through merit, on one hand, we turn away from the path of miserable realms (*duggati*) and incline toward the path of happy realms (*sugati*). On the other hand, it also supports us in attaining Nibbāna according to our aspirations.

Now, when speaking of merit (*puñña*), a word that goes hand in hand with it is wholesome (*kusala*). People talk about doing merit (*puñña*) and doing wholesome deeds (*kusala*). Some have even made a question out of this: "Are these two the same? Is there a difference between them?" There are those who spend more time thinking about these things than actually doing them. Whosoever they may be, keeping them in mind as well,

let us now explain the meaning of these words. This merit, indeed, has the word *Puñña*. Its etymology is somewhat hidden. But we have to consider that the ancient commentators (*aṭṭhakathācāriyas*) explain it in the sense of purifying the mind-stream: "Merit is that which purifies the mind-stream," deriving *puñña* from *punāti* (to purify). We can accept this to some extent because these words, *puñña* and *pāpa* (demerit/evil), have come down from ancient times. *Puñña* and *pāpa*. A concept that goes along with this is that the mind is purified by merit and defiled by demerit. The world holds this concept: one is purified by merit and defiled by demerit. This is highly consistent with the fact that through actions performed by our mind, body, and speech, there are occasions when we purify our minds, and occasions when we defile them. The things that defile, we call demerit (*pāpa*); the things that purify, we call merit (*puñña*).

In modern times, however, some people attempt to give Sinhala etymological explanations to this word *pina* (merit). There are indeed ways in which the Dhamma is distorted in various manners. Some explain *pina* in the sense of pleasing or gratifying the mind (*hitha pinavama*). If we define *pina* in the sense of gratifying the mind, there is a great danger of going astray. There are many things that gratify the mind which are actually demeritorious (*pāpa*). Therefore, it should not be taken in that way. Thus, it becomes meaningful to us only in the sense of purifying the mind—that is merit (*puñña*). What supports this, then, is *dāna*, *sīla*, and *bhāvanā*—in terms of giving, virtue, and meditation. The coarse or gross level of greed (*lobha*) is stinginess. It is described as a stain or rust (*mala*). If this rust is not constantly removed, it leads to one's own ruin from within. In the end, one becomes a great miser. Giving (*dāna*), then, supports the removal of this rust. In short, giving helps to abandon the defilement (*kilesa*) of greed (*lobha*). That is how it works through giving.

Through virtue (*sīla*), the defilement that can occur through wrong bodily actions, wrong verbal actions, and wrong mental actions—which are described as bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct—is prevented by observing the practice of virtue and the like.

Next, the same applies to meditation (*bhāvanā*). Going to the very depth of it, meditation has the power to eradicate all the defilements in the mind: greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). In that respect, merit possesses such power.

Next, when we reflect on the wholesome (*kusala*), it is also shown to be largely similar. We find the words *puñña* and *kusala* used in the Dhamma as synonyms, or at least as closely related terms. Yet, at times, we see a specific meaning in this word *Kusala*. The Dhamma mentions unwholesome roots (*akusala-mūla*) and wholesome roots (*kusala-mūla*). On one occasion, the monks asked the Venerable Sāriputta: "People talk about Right View, Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). What is this Right View?" On that occasion, Venerable Sāriputta defined Right View using this very word *kusala*. While Right View can be defined in several ways, here Venerable Sāriputta explained: "Friends, if a person knows the unwholesome (*akusala*), knows the root of the unwholesome (*akusala-mūla*), and likewise knows the wholesome (*kusala*), and knows the root of the wholesome (*kusala-mūla*), by that much he is one of Right View." This refers to knowing good and

bad. Then he analyzes further: what is the unwholesome? What is mentioned here as the unwholesome refers to what is stated in the training rules (*sikkhāpada*). Killing living beings is unwholesome; taking what is not given is unwholesome; sexual misconduct is unwholesome; false speech is unwholesome; malicious speech is unwholesome; harsh speech is unwholesome; gossip is unwholesome; and finally, wrong things of the mind are mentioned: *abhijjhā*—which means covetousness (intense greed); *vyāpāda*—which refers to ill-will, the opposite of loving-kindness (*mettā*); and *micchā-diṭṭhi*—wrong view. These are shown as the unwholesome (*akusala*). The roots of these unwholesome actions are shown as greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*).

Next, when we take the wholesome (*kusala*) side, Venerable Sāriputta explains what is the wholesome and what is the root of the wholesome. The wholesome is abstaining from killing living beings: *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī kusalaṁ*. What is this *veramaṇī*? *Virati* means abstention or turning away. Killing living beings, taking animal life, is an easy thing, or rather, something to which the mind is easily drawn and likes. It is difficult to abstain from it, but that is what must be done—that is a wholesome deed (*kusala*). Now, from this, we can understand the true meaning of the word *kusala*. In ordinary usage, *kusala* means skillfulness. Now, according to the Dhamma, what is the true skillfulness here? It is not the skill in killing animals. It is the skill of abstaining from the thought and intention of killing animals. In this samsāra, one is called truly skillful if one escapes the path of miserable realms (*duggati*) and goes to the path of happy realms (*sugati*), and eventually, transcending both happy and miserable realms, brings an end to samsāric Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) and realizes Nibbāna.

The wholesome (*kusala*), then, is abstaining from those aforementioned unwholesome actions. Next, what are the wholesome roots (*kusala-mūla*)? They are defined as: *alobha* (non-greed), *adosa* (non-hatred), and *amoha* (non-delusion). *Alobha* does not mean that greed is entirely eradicated all at once. It refers to the effort made to turn away from greed. It is the effort made to turn away from hatred, and the effort made to turn away from delusion. It is through this that, when one succeeds in one's target some day, one eradicates greed, hatred, and delusion. Thus, the journey from greed to non-greed, the journey from hatred to non-hatred, and the journey from delusion to non-delusion—these are what can be considered as the wholesome (*kusala*). Accordingly, we can understand that there is a deep meaning in that word *kusala*. However, in our day-to-day usage, we often use both terms: doing wholesome deeds and doing merit.

Be that as it may, on one hand, the mind is purified. On the other hand, as samsāric individuals whose minds are correctly turned toward Nibbāna, we display a certain skillful behavior and practice through merit and the wholesome. Therefore, we must understand that merit is something we must bring very close to our lives. The more merit accumulates, the good that comes to us from it—as the Buddha has said:

Puññāni paralokasmiṁ patiṭṭhā honti pāṇinaṁ

"Merits are the support for living beings in the world beyond." Merit stands as a support, a protection, and a refuge. Not only that, the *Maṅgala Sutta* mentions *pubbe ca kata-*

puññatā—having performed merit in the past—as a blessing (*maṅgala*). Having done merit in the past becomes a blessing in this life. Thus, if we are to receive that blessing in the next life, we must perform merit in this life too. Why? Because we must realize that day by day, the merit and wholesome kamma that granted us this human existence is wearing away. We must make an effort to match this. It is in this regard that the Buddha tells us to be diligent (*appamāda*) in performing merit:

Appamādaṁ pasaṁsanti, puññakiriyāsu paṇḍitā

"The wise praise diligence in meritorious activities." It was following this very advice that Lājā Devadhītā was eager to do more merit to stabilize her celestial fortunes. We too must reflect, based on this example, that in our lives we have various targets such as acquiring wealth, gaining positions and titles, passing exams, and so on. Whether they succeed or fail, and even if they succeed, they might still face destruction. But far more valuable than all those targets is to be mindful of where we will land next in this samsāric journey. Indeed, if we do not possess such a mass of merit, at the last moment, a bad thought might arise as our near-death thought (*āsanna-citta*).

Now, from this story, another matter becomes clear to us. In the story of Lājā Devadhītā, that farm-woman—you have heard well about giving alms with clarity in the three-fold thought (*ti-cetanā*). Giving alms with clarity in the three-fold thought means: before giving, preparing the mind to give with good faith and clarity. Next, at the time of giving, performing the act of giving properly. Then, after giving, rejoicing over it without any regret. That is indeed how the goddess obtained celestial fortune. As mentioned in the Dhamma, these three stages are: *pubba-cetanā* (pre-volition), *muñcana-cetanā* (volition at the moment of giving), and *apara-cetanā* (post-volition)—these three stages of the mind are filled with serene clarity (*prasāda*). It was because she possessed great faith and a desire to give as her *pubba-cetanā* (pre-volition) that the Great Arahant saw her with his divine eye and came to her. Next, with great faith, prostrating with the five-fold touch, she offered a ladle of puffed rice. Thus, her *muñcana-cetanā* (volition at the moment of giving) was also pure. Next, as she went away thinking of it and rejoicing with great happiness, her mind was pure at that moment too. That moment arrived as her near-death thought (*āsanna-citta*). Because her death was a sudden, instantaneous death. Even for us, we must realize that even if we go after performing a great merit, if we go with regret at that moment, and if a sudden death occurs, we cannot expect to go to heaven. That is why we must reflect on the importance of giving with clarity in the three-fold thought.

In performing an act of merit, there are many things involved in the purification of the mind as *pubba-cetanā*. Some say that merit performed with difficulty and effort is highly beneficial. Why is that? A thousand thoughts pull one back. Yet, one rouses one's mind to match it. Rousing it with strong faith and effort, as one prepares for it, that merit becomes stronger. Having done so, even at the moment of performing the merit, one must try not to let the mind weaken. Next, after performing the merit, throughout one's life, one should reflect on it and rejoice—that is what is called sharing and rejoicing in merit (*anumodanā*). The 'Anumodanā sermon' (sermon of appreciation) exists precisely

for this purpose. The value of this is also seen in this story—that the *apara-cetanā* (post-volition) must also be kept pure. Indeed, we must reflect that we cannot say at what moment our death will arrive. Even if we live to be ninety or a hundred years old, in the end, we will have to spend our final days not on two legs, but on four legs. One will have to lie on a bed. At that moment on the bed, what one has is only one's thoughts. Not those lands, vehicles, titles, or jobs. They are merely a pile of dreams. One feels as if one lived amidst a pile of dreams. But if one has been skillful in developing one's mind, purifying it, and turning it toward Nibbāna through accumulating this merit and wholesome kamma, then that person has some solace. That is how we must contemplate. Yet, in these times, some people, under the idea that we must abandon everything, speak with over-enthusiasm: "We do not need to accumulate anything. Why encourage only the accumulation of merit? That leads to the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)."

But we must correctly understand the Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) shown by the Buddha. The Right View of the Buddha has two sides. On the mundane (*lokiya*) level, meaning that which applies to the samsāric individual, the Right View shown by the Buddha is called *Kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi*—the Right View that kamma is one's own property. The meaning of *Kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi* is the Right View that one's actions are one's own. This was referred to by another name: *Dasa-vatthuka sammā-diṭṭhi*—the Right View consisting of ten bases. To explain it further, it is as follows. In Sinhala, although brahmins used the three words *dāna* (giving), *yāga* (sacrifice), and *homa* (oblation), in our Dhamma they are also applied to giving (*dāna*) without distinction. In short, what is said there is that there is a fruit, a benefit in giving. There is giving, there is alms-offering, there is sacrifice, there is oblation. Next, there is the fruit and result (*vipāka*) of good and bad kamma. Next, there is this world, and there is the world beyond. The meaning of "there is this world and there is the world beyond" is that there is rebirth (*punabbhava*). Some do not believe this. There is this world and there is the world beyond. A distinction between this world and the world beyond exists if a person dies and is reborn. That too is accepted: there is this world, and there is the world beyond. Next, there is mother, and there is father. The view "there is mother, there is father" is presented there to show that there is a special importance in caring for mother and father. Otherwise, like brute animals who do not care for parents—animals have no distinction of parents—here, what is explained by the words "there is mother, there is father" is its deep meaning: there is special fruit and benefit in serving one's mother and father.

Next, there is another proposition: there are spontaneously born beings (*opapātika-sattā*). Like the goddess mentioned here who suddenly passed away and was born in the heaven—in this day and age, some who hold only science as supreme may not believe this. Because, according to their way of thinking, this mind is something entirely bound to matter. Therefore, once freed from matter, how can this mind go to the heaven or the Brahma world?—someone might question. Mention is made in the Dhamma of those who conducted experiments on this. There was a certain heretical warrior king named Pāyāsi. He thought that if a person's life-breath is prevented from escaping at the moment of death by sealing the vessel with clay, etc., it would not go anywhere after

death. He even conducted such experiments. Placing matter first, even nowadays, some who hold a physicalist view wonder, "How can a person who dies here suddenly appear in a mansion and obtain such a state?" But here, in this Right View, the proposition "there are spontaneously born beings" is presented by the Buddha as something to be accepted. Even if one has not witnessed it oneself, there are individuals who have seen it. It is stated: *Atthi sattā opapātikā*—"There are spontaneously born beings." Next, it is also stated that there are in the world ascetics and brahmins who, having realized by their own higher knowledge (*abhiññā*), correctly understand this world and the world beyond. Where such Right View is absent, a wrong view (*diṭṭhi*) arises. The philosophy of those who held the view of annihilation (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*) or the view of nihilism (*nātika-diṭṭhi*) in those days is mentioned in a verse like this:

Yāvaj jīvet sukhaṁ jīvet, ṛṇaṁ kṛtvā ghṛtaṁ pibet,

bhasmībhūtassa dehasya, punarāgamanaṁ kutaḥ

"As long as one lives, one should live happily; even by incurring debt, one should drink ghee. Once this body is reduced to ashes on the funeral pyre, how can there be a return?" Those who held such views are called annihilationists or nihilists. It was against the ten items of that nihilistic view that the Buddha presented this ten-fold Right View (*dasa-vatthuka sammā-diṭṭhi*). To those things which they denied—saying "there is no benefit in giving, there are no fruits of good and bad actions, there is no mother, no father, no this world, no world beyond"—the Buddha declared, "There is, there is." Therein lies a middle path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). The Buddha, therefore, did not accept that wrong view or nihilistic view.

Within samsāric existence, there is inevitably the notion "I am, mine" (*mamaya, māgeya*). What is called *Kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi* is the Right View that actions are one's own. Now, some of those intellectuals might say, "If there is no self (*attā*), then there is no such thing as good or bad. Next, how do we know, when reborn in the next life, whether we are experiencing its results?" They try to escape in this way, but there is a situation from which they cannot escape. This is because within kamma itself, there is the perception of self (*atta-saññā*). It is due to ignorance (*avijjā*) that preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arise. *"Cetanāhaṁ bhikkhave kammaṁ vadāmi"*—"Intention, monks, I call kamma." An intention arises based on the designation "I" (*mama*). This intention is put forward to keep the world as one wants. An intention to kill another, an intention to steal something from someone else—when we look back at that intention, an "I" is present there. There is someone called oneself. That cannot be denied. At that point, one cannot merely put forward the view of non-self (*anattā*). This is the reality that the Buddha presents.

The Buddha always speaks the knowledge and vision of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*) within the middle path. Then, according to things as they are, one wanders in this long samsāra due to that very error, that wrong notion—meaning, the notion of "self" (*attā*). That cannot be eradicated all at once merely by thinking, nor is it something that can be eradicated through logic. The way to eradicate it is to enter the

path of meditation, and with a concentrated mind, through insight (*vipassanā*), see things as they are, see that there is no self within these five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), and thereby escape from it. It cannot be done by arguing: "Why, in our books the Buddha has said there is no self. Therefore, what does it matter to us? We can even kill mother or father and live." That goes to the view of annihilation, the nihilistic view. There were those who spoke in that manner in those days too. It was to turn away from that extreme that the Buddha presented the ten-fold Right View.

Next, the deep Right View we have pointed out on many occasions in sermons of deep themes. The deep Right View is the supramundane (*lokuttara*) Right View—the Four Noble Truths. Some confuse these two—mundane Right View and supramundane Right View. What we called mundane is a law that applies to samsāric existence. Why does that law apply? As long as ignorance (*avijjā*) exists, preparations (*saṅkhāra*) remain. As long as preparations exist, there is an operation of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*), etc., in accordance with the law of dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) in samsāra. Therefore, we cannot escape there by saying "there is no self." Within our action, within our intention, there is a wrong perception, an illusion of "I" (*mama*). We must experience its results; we must take that responsibility. If we did something with a certain responsibility, we must also experience its results. That is it. According to this, the Buddha says one must experience it. For the good one does, there are good results. The talk there is about oneself. Because it is by standing upon that proposition that one does wholesome or unwholesome deeds, merit or demerit. That is necessary. It cannot be done without it. One must escape from this.

On many occasions, we have given the simile of crossing a water-current. When crossing a great flowing current or a torrent of water, one has to yield a little to the current, and slowly and carefully place one's feet to reach the other side. A similar thing exists in this samsāra. For a long time, one undergoes Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) in this samsāra through ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*), etc., experiencing the results of the kamma forces generated thereby. Then, all at once, this cannot be done merely by wishing or by logic. This must be realized by oneself—in the manner stated as *paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi* (to be personally realized by the wise)—that there is no self here. It is not because it is in the book, nor through logic. Until that is realized, intention arises in that very way, with strong grasping (*upādāna*), with holding. Where there is grasping, there is again Becoming / Existence (*bhava*). Again, Becoming / Existence is created. Here, indeed, it was said to be a celestial mansion. Just as this celestial mansion was created, if a person performed bad kamma, a Becoming / Existence in hell (*niraya*) or the realm of departed spirits (*peta*), etc., fitting for that action, is created. This is the natural law (*dhamma-tā*). It is in accordance with this natural law that the Buddha declared the *Kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi*. One cannot escape by saying "there is no world beyond, there is no mother, no father." Standing upon that very proposition, one must then turn to the other side. One must turn to the good side. One must abandon the unwholesome side and turn to the wholesome side. One must abandon the demeritorious side and turn to the meritorious side. That is why the Buddha declares

that a Buddhist, without constantly arguing about this, must progress from merit to merit. One must accumulate merit upon merit.

Furthermore, when we speak of merit nowadays, we usually think only of the meritorious act of giving (*dāna*). But we must understand that virtue (*sīla*) is superior to giving; meditation (*bhāvanā*) is superior to virtue. Within all of them, there is a certain letting go. Giving (*dāna*) performs the relinquishment of external objects. Virtue (*sīla*) performs the abstention from various wrong behaviors of body and speech which our mind highly desires—*veramaṇī virati* (abstention). That is a very difficult thing. There too, it is about letting go. In meditation (*bhāvanā*), it goes even further. Our mind always has a scattered nature, drawing in this and that direction. Controlling it and placing it on a single object is what is done in meditation. Next, what is even deeper is seeing deeply and penetrating this notion of "I" and "mine" (*mamaya, māgeya*), and abandoning attachment toward them. That is the great letting go—abandoning the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*).

Looking at it from that perspective, although we consider merit in brief, within the three grounds of meritorious activity—*dānamaya puññakiriyavatthu*, *sīlamaya puññakiriyavatthu*, and *bhāvanāmaya puññakiriyavatthu*—lies the entire path of practice leading up to Nibbāna. The path of practice that a person must take. Why? We have heard that even during times when no Buddha arose, some, firmly adopting the thought of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), went to the Himavanta (Himalayas) and practiced meditation. Within those acts, whether they were fulfilled or not, underneath lay the thought: "Samsāra is fearful, we must escape from it." Sometimes they thought: "It is not enough if I alone escape; I must free others too from this Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*)." This is because, in those lives, being possessors of higher knowledges (*abhiññā*), they saw the suffering and hardships experienced in hell or the realm of departed spirits due to these bad kammas. Out of great compassion, they thought: "It is not enough if I alone escape. I must free others too."

In any case, in terms of meditation, they strived to unify their minds. They attained states of jhāna, making great sacrifices and fulfilling renunciation (*nekkhamma*). Looking at it from that perspective, within all of them lies letting go. Through this letting go, we can understand that, on one hand, the mind is purified. Along with that, one draws close to Nibbāna. Drawing close to Nibbāna means the stilling of all preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*). Stilling all preparations means stilling the forces of kamma. Thus, turning away from bad kamma and unwholesome kamma, turning toward good kamma, and through that, seeing the true nature of ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) which lie beneath kamma, with wisdom and concentration, removing them, escaping from them, and in the end, obtaining Nibbāna—which is the power to still all preparations and all kamma forces, called *sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*. It is also called appeasement (*upasama*). It is this path leading up to Nibbāna that the Buddha has brought out through these words "merit" and "wholesome" (*puñña* and *kusala*).

We must constantly reflect that we should not give room merely to that extreme or over-enthusiastic logic—we are often forced to use the word "intellectuals." They, placing only

the brain first and highly magnifying the activity of the brain, become indifferent to these matters. Indifferent to these acts of merit, faith (*saddhā*), and other factors. Now we said that in the word "faith" (*saddhā*), the heart is spoken of. Whosoever they may be, if they listen to the details well, they will understand that there is an influence of the heart in their daily lives too. But when one goes to the side of logic, that is forgotten. Thus, for a complete transformation to occur in a character, in a life—for a complete transformation to take place, both the brain and the heart must walk this journey together in the same manner, in the same way.

That is why the Buddha—now here too, those acts of merit like giving can be performed externally. If one has great wealth, one can give a great alms-offering. Even though it is a great alms-offering, if the mind is small, one cannot expect great benefit from it. But it was by offering some puffed rice that float in the wind, some parched corn that float in the wind, that this woman was instantaneously reborn in the Tāvatiṁsa heaven. Now, in this day and age, people spend a lot of money to go upwards, attempting to go to various visible worlds like stars by means of great science and technology. Even if they go, they might fall back and in the end even go to hell. Those astronauts who went to the sky and conquered the moon, where are they now? If they have passed away, we do not even know whether they are in hell.

Therefore, it is not like that temporary going upwards. If the mind is purified, if the mind is turned toward Nibbāna, and next, if states of jhāna are attained, that person can instantaneously obtain rebirth in the heaven, rebirth in the Brahma world, in the aforementioned manner. They can even obtain spontaneously born states. This is what is called the Dhamma. Thus, we must return to the very first verse declared by the Buddha in the Dhammapada:

Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā

"Mind is the forerunner of all states, mind is chief, they are mind-made." Mind is chief in all of these; they are prepared by this mind. There, "mind" refers to those aforementioned streams of thoughts. The heart also joins with it. Thus, doing these wholesome or unwholesome actions, one wanders in this world and in samsāra. But if, at some point, one purifies this heart, purifies thoughts, calms the mind, concentrates it, and through that, realizes the true state of oneself—regarding the five aggregates: form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—at that moment, through that realization, the notion "I am, mine" (*mamaya, māgeya*) which was firmly held throughout samsāra as the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), is greatly loosened. Next, starting from there, precisely due to the weakening of the kamma force, the door to the miserable realms is closed for them. Those who possess a strong, gross view of self are found in places like the animal realm. Such is the nature found within animals. Therefore, if one realizes Nibbāna even through the first path (Stream-entry), one's kamma forces are weakened. Going in that manner, if at some point—as the Buddha has shown—one transcends even the subtle states of the conceit 'I am' (*asmi-māna*), and realizes the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature of these five aggregates, then kamma

that leads to Becoming / Existence (*bhava-gāmī kamma*) is no longer accumulated in that person's mind-stream. There lies liberation (*vimutti*). It is the path leading up to that which the Buddha has shown here as the middle path. Therefore, we should not throw these away, thinking that these meritorious deeds are something practiced only by those of simple, foolish faith. It is from this that the beginning starts; without the initial step, the others do not come together.

Therefore, on this day, these virtuous people, treating this observance of virtue (*sīla*) as important, have left their lay-homes for a day and came to observe these valuable practices of virtue. Within that too lies drawing close to the way of life of the Arahants. This observing of virtue—observing the eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*), observing the ten precepts (*dasa-sīla*), and observing a higher virtue after undertaking it—is something highly praised by the Buddha. Next, by practicing meditation while established in that virtue, if one quickly concentrates the mind and realizes the true nature of these five aggregates through insight (*vipassanā*) in the manner shown by the Buddha, one possesses the strength to realize the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) such as Stream-entry.

Therefore, you must now rejoice that on this Poyaday, this virtuous group, to the best of their ability, undertook a certain virtue (*sīla*) and listened to the Dhamma for about an hour. In listening to the Dhamma, we always remind you that the immediate benefit is the opportunity to generate or mature those faculties that support Nibbāna, namely: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Reflecting in this manner, if faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom have developed to some extent through this one-hour Dhamma sermon, may you develop them further, make your Dhamma listening and meditation more successful through association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), remove obstacles (*palibodha*), bring close supportive factors, and as quickly as possible, before the decline of this Buddha Dispensation (*Sāsana*), escape from all samsāric suffering such as Birth / Arising (*jāti*), Decay and Death / Aging and Death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness, and find solace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna. May the deities also rejoice in this merit of teaching and listening to the Dhamma, and by means of their aspired-for enlightenment (*Bodhi*), may they find solace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! With this aspiration, recite this verse and dedicate the merits:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #73

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.110)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Ayoge yuñjamattānaṃ, yogasmiñca ayojayaṃ;

atthaṃ hitvā piyaggāhī, pihayattānuyoginaṃ.

Mā piyehi samāgañchi, appiyehi kudācanaṃ;

piyānaṃ adassanaṃ dukkhaṃ, appiyānañca dassanaṃ.

Tasmā piyaṃ na kayirātha, piyāpāyo hi pāpako;

ganthā tesaṃ na vijjati, yesaṃ natthi piyāppiyaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 209–211 (Piyavagga)

Dear Listeners,

None of us like to be separated from those who are dear (pleasant) to us, nor do we like to be united with those who are undear (unpleasant). However, by having to face both of these situations, we often fall into suffering (*dukkha*). That is why the Supreme Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, included these two circumstances within the Truth in His sermon on the (Four Noble) Truths. Likewise, the Buddha also explained to us the path to be freed from this twofold suffering (*dukkha*). From today's thematic verses and their corresponding background story, we will be able to gather certain important matters, matters of great significance to our lives. The Buddha uttered these three verses based on the improper conduct of three individuals who had entered the order.

In the city of Sāvatthī, a certain family had an only beloved, pleasing son. One day, after listening to an appreciative sermon (*anumodanā dāna*) delivered by the Sangha who had been invited to their home for alms, this boy developed a desire to ordain and asked his parents for permission. The parents did not give permission because of their deep

affection for the child. The son thought, "I must go secretly from my mother and father and ordain." As if understanding this intention, whenever the father left the house, he would entrust the mother to watch over this child. When the mother left the house, she would entrust the father to guard and look after the child. One day, when the father had gone out, the mother was spinning thread at the doorway of the house, leaning against one doorpost and stretching her leg across to the other doorpost. You can imagine it. What is implied by this is that she was blocking the child, guarding him so that he could not go outside. So, this son also thought, "Even by tricking mother, I must go and ordain." He said, "Mother, please move your leg a bit, I need to go to the toilet," and went outside, quickly ran away, obtained permission from the Sangha, and ordained. The father returned home and asked the mother, "Where is our son?" "He was right here in this direction," said the mother. They looked and looked, but he was not there. Later, thinking he might have gone to the temple, they went to check and saw that he had ordained. The father cried out, "Oh son, do not destroy me!" and pleaded in various ways, but the boy did not wish to return home. The father also thought, "Now there is no point in staying, I too must ordain," and so the father also ordained. The mother was waiting for these two to return. When the son and the father were delayed, she thought they might have gone to the temple. When she went and looked, both of them had ordained. She thought, "Why should I stay at home without these two?" and she too went and ordained at a nunnery.

Now, indeed, all three of them had ordained. But despite being ordained, they spent the whole day gathering together at the nunnery, constantly engaged in conversation. A state arose where they could not live without one another. Perhaps the child did not have this attachment earlier, but it arose because of the parents coming there. Because of this, various kinds of criticism arose among the Sangha and the bhikkhunīs. When the bhikkhus complained to the Buddha about this matter, He summoned all three of them and inquired, "Is this story true, that you remain in one place speaking with each other all day long like this?" Then they replied, "Yes, Venerable Sir, that is so; we cannot live without one another." Then the Buddha admonished them: "It is precisely because of that quality of being dear (affection) that all these troubles arise. After ordaining, there is no room for household love (*gehasita pema*) as in the lay life. Therefore, one must engage in that work (of practice)." Admonishing them, He uttered these three thematic verses.

Ayoge yuñjamattānaṁ, yogasmiñca ayojayaṁ, atthaṁ hitvā piyaggāhī, pihayattānuyoginaṁ.

He who applies himself to what should not be applied to, and does not apply himself to what should be applied to, abandoning his own good and grasping after dear things, will one day, upon seeing those who apply themselves to the true ordained life, have to regret with envy. That is the general meaning of the first verse.

The second verse:

Mā piyehi samāgañchi, appiyehi kudācanaṁ, piyānaṁ adassanaṁ dukkhaṁ, appiyānañca dassanaṁ.

Do not associate with those who are dear, never associate with those who are undear. Not seeing the dear is suffering (*dukkha*), and seeing the undear is also suffering (*dukkha*).

The third verse:

Tasmā piyaṁ na kayirātha, piyāpāyo hi pāpako, ganthā tesaṁ na vijjanti, yesaṁ natthi piyāppiyaṁ.

Therefore, do not regard any person or any thing as dear. Do not take them as dear. Why? Because when one is separated from dear ones, separated from dear things, it is felt as a great suffering (*dukkha*), a trouble, a bad thing. Here is the conclusion stated at the end: For whomsoever there is no such thing as dear or undear, they have no knots (bonds). Thus, what this shows is that all knots (bonds) arise because of the state of dear and undear. It is mentioned that upon hearing these verses, many people attained the Paths and Fruits. However, those three said, "Oh Blessed One, as for us, we cannot remain separated in that way," and all three disrobed. They went home. No matter how much they said they could not separate, it is not that they are still living today; they must have had to separate someday. But they were unable to discipline themselves to the word of the Buddha.

If we think about the essence to be taken from this story, we see that in most instances, upon hearing the Buddha's instruction, various people achieved results. But in this case, that medicine was not taken. Now you, devotees, know that doctors give medicine for indigestion—either to go upwards or downwards, either as an emetic or a purgative. Now here, it was like vomiting. They left; that is the kind of thing that happened here. When we look at the end, that boy actually had a good intention of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), but he did not get an opportunity for it because of the parents' affection for their son. It was because of their attachment to that child that they went and ordained, and in the end, that itself became an impediment (*palibodha*).

The word "impediment" (*palibodha*) is used in the sense of an obstacle. It has the meanings of trouble and obstacle. There is something called the "impediment of relatives" (*ñāti-palibodha*). In ordinary daily life, relatives are the ones who come to help. Relatives are prominent. But in the ordained life, relatives are sometimes a great trouble to that journey. That journey to Nibbāna is a journey that must be traveled alone. Why is it called the impediment of relatives? Because with relatives, there are not only saṁsāric attachments but sometimes even in this life, various clingings and bonds come to the mind. Even for an ordained person, it is difficult to protect oneself when the impediment of relatives arises. Likewise is the "impediment of the lay family" (*kula-palibodha*). That means the connections to those lay households. Now, in this case, because of the parents ordaining, it was not only an impediment of the lay family, but in the end, it became home itself. These three made the ordained domain into a home.

From this, we see that the value lies in protecting that state of ordained life. Next, despite trying so hard to protect and keep that child, the child ran away. But in the end, he was not able to complete his goal. The parents themselves ultimately became an obstacle to him. Similarly, based on that story, the Buddha highlighted and showed that dear state—household love (*gehasita pema*). What is called lay love is the love between one another belonging to the lay life, such as maternal love, paternal love, filial love, affection for the son, and so on. The trouble arises from this. That these are obstacles to the path to Nibbāna. These verses contain a vast wealth of meaning; if we analyze them further, it may not be immediately understood by someone.

"Ayoge yuñjamattānaṁ"

Ayoge means that which should not be applied to. When taken in the dispensation's sense, it is unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*)—unwise reflection. There is a method of reflection belonging to the ordained, which is wise reflection. What is here is unwise reflection. If someone applies himself to what should not be applied to, if there are wrong reflections, only then do all other mistakes happen. Because of the attachment toward his parents, even that boy was ultimately unable to continue his ordained life. Likewise,

"yogasmiñca ayojayaṁ"

One does not apply oneself properly to what should be done in application (*yoga*). 'Yoga' or practicing application in this Dhamma actually means the proper way of reflection highlighted by the Buddha, which is wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). When any defilement arises, instead of looking outward, one must look inward: "Where did these start?" They started from within. That is what is meant by *yoniso*. One must look at the place of origin, the place where it arose. It is by looking in that way that one understands one's shortcomings properly. If one engages in unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) and abandons wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), likewise,

The meaning in the dispensation of "abandoning the good" (*atthaṁ hitvā*) is the development of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), and the realization of Nibbāna. Abandoning those, and *"piyaggāhī"*—grasping the dear thing. What is the dear thing? Mother and father. For the parents, it is that child. Because of grasping that dear thing, they abandoned the idea of Dhamma. Because they grasped what is dear, and abandoned the good, what must have ultimately happened to them is stated by the Buddha even in the final line of that very sermon:

"pihayattānuyoginaṁ"

This means that at some point when those three are back home, and they get to know that the bhikkhus with whom they associated even for a short time have meditated, become Arahants, and are experiencing the great supramundane bliss, envy will arise in them. Along with envy, they will have to regret: "Alas, we lost this opportunity. A valuable opportunity was received but slipped away, didn't it?" That is what is expressed by the final word.

Having said this, what does the Buddha declare in conclusion? "Therefore, *mā piyehi samāgañchi*—do not associate with the dear. *Appiyehi kudācanaṁ*—never associate with the undear." The reason is stated at the end: *piyānaṁ adassanaṁ dukkhaṁ, appiyānañca dassanaṁ*—separation from the dear is suffering (*dukkha*), and seeing the undear is suffering (*dukkha*). Finally, He says: *tasmā piyaṁ na kayirātha*—therefore, do not make anything dear. Because when one has to separate from the dear, even though it is suffering (*dukkha*) to oneself, one has to bear it. It is with the final two lines that He presents an eternal principle:

Ganthā tesaṁ na vijjanti, yesaṁ natthi piyāppiyaṁ

For whomsoever there is no distinction of dear and undear, they have no knots (bonds).

Thus, He uttered those few valuable verses. Through this, we see that because they could not overcome their affection for their son, even though those parents entered the ordained life, they could not benefit from it. However, there is an exemplary story regarding this in this discourse.

Once, there was a monk named Venerable Saṅgāmajī ordained in the Dispensation. That Venerable Saṅgāmajī went to a distant region, meditated, became an Arahant, and returned to Jetavana Monastery to pay respects to the Blessed One. Venerable Saṅgāmajī's former wife came to know that the monk had arrived. 'Former' means his previous wife; she came carrying their child. When she came to see Venerable Saṅgāmajī, Venerable Saṅgāmajī was seated in meditation under a tree. This woman brought the child and said to Venerable Saṅgāmajī, "I am a mother with this child. You are the father of this child. Please support me." The monk did not even look. He remained seated in meditation. She said it a second time. Still nothing. She said it a third time. Still, he remained silently in meditation. Then what did this woman do? Placing the child in front of him, she said, "Here, monk, support your child then!" and turned and walked away. After going a short distance, she turned and looked. She saw that Venerable Saṅgāmajī was neither looking at the child nor speaking, remaining just as he was. Then this woman came back, said, "These monks do not even have affection for their child," took the child back, and went away.

The Buddha was watching this with His divine eye. Having watched, it is said He uttered a certain verse of solemn utterance (*udāna*). What was that solemn utterance?

Āyantiṁ nābhinandati, pakkamantiṁ na socati,

Saṅgāmuttaṁ tamahaṁ brūmi, brāhmaṇanti.

"Seeing his former wife arriving, he did not rejoice; when she departed, he did not grieve. Saṅgāmajī, who is freed from the bond—him I call a true Brahmin, an Arahant." The Buddha declared this solemn utterance. There is a great example there. Affection for the son, past attachments and bonds—there is none of that. There is neutrality, equanimity (*upekkhā*). That is the conduct appropriate for the ordained life.

Now next, let us also reflect upon the matter of the Buddha's advice to abandon both the dear and the undear. Actually, as a starting point, what we have to think is that it is bad to make the word "dear" dear, and it is bad to make the word "undear" undear. Escaping from both, one must reach a state of neutrality. There is a fondness for dear things. There is an aversion for undear things. Instead of those two, one must develop equanimity (*upekkhā*). Why was it said that knots are tied? It is mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, where the terms *piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ* (dear nature, pleasant nature) are shown. Whatever is of a dear nature and of a pleasant nature, it is precisely there that craving (*taṇhā*) lodges. Craving (*taṇhā*) is born and craving (*taṇhā*) lodges in what one thinks of as dear. That is why, although normally everyone is fond of dear things, the Buddha points out that it is a dangerous thing. Within this state of being dear, the bonds of saṁsāra are knotted.

How are they knotted? Craving (*taṇhā*) is described as a seamstress. It is by this craving (*taṇhā*) that knots are tied. Next to craving (*taṇhā*) is grasping (*upādāna*). Regarding things of a dear nature, craving (*taṇhā*) arises. Through craving (*taṇhā*), grasping (*upādāna*)—which is called holding—arises. It is through that holding that the knots of becoming (*bhava*) are tied. Now, just as in sewing, a knot is tied. It is pulled, isn't it? In sewing, there is a pulling of the thread by the needle, and behold, a knot is formed there. It is something of that sort. That is why craving (*taṇhā*) is called a seamstress. Knots are tied not only regarding the dear; they are also tied regarding the undear. You devotees have heard about the enmity between Devadatta and the Bodhisatta in the Serivāṇija Jātaka. The ill-will developed by the merchant Serivāṇija over the golden bowl, thinking "I must take revenge." Even from an undear thing, a knot is tied in the form of revenge; there too, a knot is tied. Thus, knots are tied by the dear, and knots are tied by the undear. What is to be understood is that knots are tied through both lust (*rāga*) and hatred (*dvesa*).

Therefore, the Buddha, on various occasions, expounded to the Sangha the methods to stop this tying of knots. Even though it was expounded to the Sangha, there are certain things to be taken even by the lay devotees. On one occasion, the Buddha says that because of the dear state, one develops a desire for those things. Because of the undear state, one develops a state of disgust, a feeling of aversion. The path to overcome this is shown as follows: "Monks, a certain monk must from time to time generate this kind of practice, this kind of thought. What is it? From time to time, let him dwell perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive (*appaṭikūle paṭikūlasaññī*). Let him do it as an exercise: 'At this moment, I dwell with the perception of the repulsive in the unrepulsive.' At another time, let him practice generating the perception of the unrepulsive in the repulsive (*paṭikūle appaṭikūlasaññī*). Next, thirdly, it is shown: let him generate the perception of the repulsive in both the unrepulsive and the repulsive. Fourthly, it is shown: let him generate the perception of the unrepulsive in both the repulsive and the unrepulsive. Finally, it is shown: avoiding both the repulsive and the unrepulsive, let him dwell with equanimity, mindful, and clearly comprehending (*upekkhako vihareyya sato sampajāno*)."

Of those matters mentioned, some might be difficult to understand. Let us understand them in this way. Why is it said to generate the perception of the repulsive in the unrepulsive? Because lust (*rāga*) and hatred (*dvesa*) arise in someone regarding a dear, pleasing thing. That is not repulsive. A dear form, a beautiful form—that is not repulsive. But there, one diligently develops the perception of the repulsive (*paṭikūla-saññā*). What is the reason? The aspiration: "May my mind not be overcome by lust (*rāga*)!" There, indeed, the Buddha says this for a practical purpose. The Buddha expounds this as a discipline to be practiced by the Sangha to overcome such situations when they arise in their lives. Why do we attribute repulsiveness to that unrepulsive thing? You devotees have heard about the perception of the foul (*asubha-saññā*), haven't you? What is called meditation on the foul (*asubha-bhāvanā*). In the present times, we often hear some people saying—perhaps out of fear that the world will cease because of the concepts of developing (renunciation) in this existence—that developing the perception of the foul (*asubha-saññā*) will cause great disgust. But the Buddha states that to subdue and thin out that lust (*rāga*), one must develop the meditation on the foul (*asubha-bhāvanā*). That is what He says. Next, what is the second point? *Paṭikūle appaṭikūlasaññā*—the perception of the unrepulsive in the repulsive. Sometimes people say, "I do not even want to see those things." You know those words, don't you? In such situations, one develops the perception of the unrepulsive. That means, because knots are tied through hatred (*dvesa*) as well. That is why. The others are mixed situations.

There are situations where one must perform such exercises. Generating the perception of the repulsive toward both the repulsive and unrepulsive. Generating the perception of the repulsive toward both the unrepulsive and repulsive. When we show examples, it will be understood at some point. The final state is the most important thing. That is, discarding both attitudes of repulsive and unrepulsive, and dwelling with equanimity (*upekkhā*), neutrally, mindful, and with wisdom. What is its benefit? It helps to eradicate lust (*rāga*), it helps to eradicate hatred (*dvesa*), and it helps to eradicate delusion (*moha*). Thus, all three—lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dvesa*), and delusion (*moha*)—are eradicated in that final state mentioned.

If we look to clarify this a bit more, we can say, regarding the first point, that meditation on the foul (*asubha-bhāvanā*) and the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) are shown as the path that helps to generate the perception of the repulsive in the unrepulsive. By meditation on the foul (*asubha-bhāvanā*), one can generate a perception of the repulsive in the unrepulsive, and one can also do so by the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). "Even though they look beautiful now, how many days will they remain like this?" There is no need to say more than that. By applying that to the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), one can stop the mind from wandering far and keep it right there. That is how the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) also helps.

Next, regarding the unrepulsive in the repulsive, let us think about a person. There, loving-kindness (*mettā*) is what helps. The highest state of loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*) is the perception of the beautiful (*subha-saññā*). Everything one looks at is beautiful. Then, when one takes that undear person and thinks, "May he be well!",

through the reason that he too desires happiness, one turns them into something unrepulsive. There, it is an eradication of hatred (*dvesa*). Likewise, there is another method: resolving to the perception of elements (*dhātu-saññā*). "The very same four elements (*dhātu*) present here are present there as well." In that way, one brings the mind to neutrality.

Two methods that help to overcome hatred (*dvesa*) are shown there. Sometimes, an insect might have fallen into the plate of rice one is eating. Sometimes, one might shout at that. There, one generates a perception of the unrepulsive regarding that repulsive thing. It could be a strand of one's own hair that has fallen into the plate of rice. When it falls, it is not dear. One does not go to shout about that undear thing. One sets it aside. One generates a perception of the unrepulsive regarding that repulsive thing. Or else, some dead insect is lying there. One does not develop a disgust out of hatred (*dvesa*) for it. One puts it aside, unless it is to the extent of stopping the meal. In this way, one sometimes has to stop the occasions where the mind goes into hatred (*dvesa*). We can imagine, now, for doctors in relation to their profession, when examining patients, they sometimes have to protect their minds from both sides. There could be patients who are outwardly very beautiful in form. There, too, one must protect the mind. Likewise, in surgeries required for the illness, a feeling of aversion can arise there too. Generally, it is not only for the ordained life. Depending on the situation, in that way, one generates the perception of the repulsive in the unrepulsive, in order to remove lust (*rāga*). One generates the perception of the unrepulsive in the repulsive. With the good intention of curing that person, surgeons have to touch things that an ordinary person would not even like to lay hands on. Behold, when we reflect in this manner, whether dear or undear, the Buddha pointed out that within both dear and undear are precisely those knots. The Buddha declared to be freed from them.

You devotees might have heard. When speaking about Dhamma and meditation for lay devotees, there is a discourse called the *Abhiṇha-paccavekkhitabba Sutta*, which expounds five facts that must be frequently reflected upon and contemplated by everyone, whether lay or ordained, woman or man. One is:

“Sabbehi me piyehi manāpehi nānābhāvo vinābhāvo”

"I must undergo change and separation from all that is dear and pleasing to me." He says to frequently contemplate this thought. What is the reason? What does the Buddha point out as its benefit? People have a desire-and-lust (*chandarāga*) toward dear ones. Because of the excess of that desire-and-lust (*chandarāga*), beings sometimes engage in misconduct through body, speech, and mind. What helps to prevent them from exceeding that limit is frequently contemplating the thought: "I have to be separated from all that is dear and pleasing." The Buddha has declared that this must be practiced by everyone, without distinction of lay or ordained.

Now, since you devotees have a greater preference for hearing stories, let us tell another short story. Perhaps it is one that is frequently heard. Visākhā is known as Migāramātā. One day, that great female lay disciple Visākhā came to see the Buddha during the

daytime with wet garments and wet hair. The Buddha asked, "Why, Visākhā, are you in this state?" Then she said, "Venerable Sir, my very dear and pleasing granddaughter has died." She had come in great grief indeed. When such a death occurred, it might have been a custom at that time to bathe and go directly in those wet clothes. Then the Buddha asked, "Would you like it if all the people in this city of Sāvatthī were to become your children and grandchildren?" "Oh yes, Venerable Sir, I would like that very much," she said. Then the Buddha asked, "How many people die in Sāvatthī in a single day?" "On some days, about ten, nine, or eight. There is never a day when not even one person dies." "In that case, Visākhā, you would never be without wet hair and wet clothes mourning for your children and grandchildren!" Behold, then Visākhā said, "I do not want that many children!" At that moment, the Buddha uttered a very valuable verse; mentioning just its meaning is sufficient.

He said, "Whatever diverse sufferings (*dukkha*) arise in the world, all of them arise through the concept of the dear." Various manifold troubles arise because of the word "dear." Thus, it is through this very word "dear," which we all make dear, that manifold sufferings (*dukkha*) arise. The Buddha concludes it with the idea: for whomsoever there is no dear or undear, they have no suffering (*dukkha*) at all. They are sorrowless, free from grief.

In other instances, quarrels, disputes, slanders—all such sufferings (*dukkha*) that exist—arise through being attached to something as dear. On one hand, there are conflicts arising from the loss of that dear thing, or from someone stealing it. On the other hand, by being unable to control the sorrow arising from separation from dear ones, one falls into various kinds of troubles. In that way, the Buddha expounds the danger (*ādīnava*) of the dear state, meaning that craving (*taṇhā*) becomes established because of regarding something as dear. If one has no dear or undear, he has no knots. That is the final lesson.

The Buddha showed that the meditations helping to neutralize the mind according to the situation are indeed the perception of elements (*dhātu-saññā*) and the meditation on the foul (*asubha-bhāvanā*). These are not things that do not exist, but the reality. Normally, it is the foul nature of a body that exists. But at first glance, what appears is a dear nature. Even there, we specifically speak of a conscious body as foul. This living body, the body of a living person with consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—that too is foul. But if the mind is not directed to it, it is not seen. Hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, and so forth are called parts of filth because they are filthy. These are filthy not because the Buddha said so. Not a single one of these is fragrant, nor is it something that can be kept for a long time. When taken separately, these are not dear. But there is a dear nature in the body projected by these—the living body.

Likewise, you devotees know well the deceased body shown as the meditation on the foul (*asubha-bhāvanā*). Applying it to oneself:

“Yathā idaṁ tathā etaṁ, yathā etaṁ tathā idaṁ”

(As this body is, so is that; as that is, so is this.) One does not need to wait until one dies. In those days, there were charnel grounds. In charnel grounds, dead bodies were cast away. Seeing that, one contemplates: "I too am subject to this state, am I not? One day, I will come to this, won't I? This body too is of the same nature. That body too is of the same nature." Behold, in this manner, for a person who has systematically developed the mind attitudinally through this training, the mind that has gone toward lust (*rāga*) can be controlled. Likewise, the sorrow and grief arising from attachment to these—some are tempted to commit suicide when a dear, pleasing person is suddenly lost. What is shown by this is that they had been thinking of them as immortal. After death, that beautiful world they had projected slips away.

Now, dear devotees, we hear a vast amount of talk about positive thinking (or optimistic thinking). Holding hands with the material world, huge crowds are drawn toward positive thinking. In a short while, you devotees will not even get to hear this noble message of crossing over from this world, which the Buddha preached to us. Instead, they look at the "beautiful" (optimistic) side of everything. The Buddha declared: "There is a side of gratification (*assāda*); I do not say there is not. But the gratification (*assāda*) is little; the danger (*ādīnava*) is much more." It is precisely because of that danger (*ādīnava*) that the Buddha says this saṁsāra is a fearful place. Life cannot be maintained forever. Amidst how many illnesses and troubles is this life maintained! And only the person who maintains this daily knows the heap of filth inside it. Indeed, that is why it is called a walking toilet. Such is the body. However, it is apparent that a stream of thought is spreading, covering up those aspects and training people toward optimistic thinking. One must reflect on this. Through this, what arises are indeed those kinds of dangerous crimes, suicides, sexual crimes, and such things. Things we do not even think of happen. When we look at the animal world, like dogs and cats now. That is what will be seen on the streets in a short while as we walk along; restraint is lost. We showed that this training declared by the Buddha is important even for the lay life.

Let us think: if a doctor, without this training, starts to act regarding his patients, what kind of things would happen? That is why the Buddha declared this. Ultimately, protecting the mind depending on the situation through the perception of the repulsive in the unrepulsive and the unrepulsive in the repulsive. Finally, even higher than that, as its supreme purpose, by transcending both—surpassing them—and discarding both the repulsive and unrepulsive, dwelling with equanimity (*upekkhā*), neutrally, mindful, and with wisdom. Where the mind has taken to equanimity (*upekkhā*), there indeed is complete liberation. That is what is called sorrowlessness. That must be done with effort.

It is by bringing out that equanimity (*upekkhā*) at least to some extent that one actually has to develop the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*). That is why, devotees, in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, there are a few words shown as a basic qualification when a meditator (*yogāvacara*), whether a bhikkhu or a layman, enters into the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*). Some present various analyses on:

“vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṁ”

(having removed covetousness and displeasure in the world). To develop mindfulness and clear comprehension—which means being mindful and clearly comprehending (*sato sampajāno*)—the primary requirement shown is *"vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṁ"*. There, it is not ignorance (*avijjā*); what is called *abhijjhā* is extreme greed, intense attachment. It is by controlling both that intense attachment and displeasure that one must develop the Satipaṭṭhāna. Because what is called the reality, seeing things as they are (*yathābhūta*), is understood only in the state freed from those two mentioned factors. It is when the mind is withdrawn from the dear and undear, from lust (*rāga*) and hatred (*dvesa*), that the realization of things as they are (*yathābhūta*) can be achieved. Therefore, having removed both intense clinging and displeasure, one dwells contemplating the body in the body. One dwells contemplating feelings (*vedanā*) in feelings (*vedanā*). One dwells contemplating mind in the mind. Regarding the objects that come to the mind, one can see those objects simply as objects. Because there, a neutral mind is required. Some might think that *abhijjhā-domanassaṁ* means the abandonment of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). One does not need to think that far. Because the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) are developed precisely for the abandonment of the hindrances. The hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) mean those respective factors of sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*), which obstruct meditation and concentration. There is no need to go that far here. Because if so, there would be nothing new to say about those hindrances in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*).

At the very least, at a minimum, one must start seeing things as they are (*yathābhūta*) after removing that intense greed and displeasure. One must have the ability to look at one's body neutrally. Neutrally. Without separating it as "this is my body" or "this is another's body", looking at this as internal (*ajjhatta*)—that which is with me—and that as external (*bahiddhā*)—that which is outside. Inside and outside. Now, in this day and age, using the word "scientific" is also somewhat risky. But we can say there is something of this sort here: "internal and external." It is not a matter of "mine" and "another's." It is the body present here, and the body present outside. That is why:

"Yathā idaṁ tathā etaṁ, yathā etaṁ tathā idaṁ, ajjhattañca bahiddhāca kāye chandaṁ virājaye."

"As that is, so is this; as this is, so is that." In that manner, the Dhamma points out to eradicate the desire (*chanda*), the attachment, regarding the body internally and externally. It begins, indeed, with a neutral mind. The final, highest state of that neutrality is equanimity (*upekkhā*). It is in the highest state of equanimity (*upekkhā*) that one is freed from everything. When we look at that training in the end, we cannot even separate it as inside and outside. The conflict in the entire world—the conflict between oneself and others, the conflicts among various nations, tribes, and within households—when analyzed, what is here is something like the conflict between the internal and the external.

Or else, to say it in another way, we can also call it a battle between the grasped (*upādinna*) and the ungrasped (*anupādinna*). What is called "grasped" (*upādinna*) is this consciousness (*viññāṇa*), mind, and body that we brought from the mother's womb. What is outside, which we prey upon for this, is "ungrasped" (*anupādinna*). It appears like a battle between those two. It tries to prey on external things for this, to protect this body. Within that, attachments and conflicts arise. But the Buddha points out, and also the Great Arahant Sāriputta points out, that what is present here are the four elements (*dhātu*)—earth, water, fire, and wind—and what is outside are the very same four. Contemplating them as elements in that manner is what is called the perception of elements (*dhātu-saññā*). Through the attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*), the mind can be brought to neutrality. Through loving-kindness (*mettā*), without generating faults towards people, and with the perception of beings, based on the premise that "everyone desires happiness," it is through "May they be well!" that we overcome hatred (*dvesa*). But deeper and more in the domain of wisdom (*paññā*), what brings this mind to neutrality is the perception of elements (*dhātu-saññā*). What is present here is earth, water, fire, and wind; what is present there is also those same four. The values given to them are changed. According to likes and dislikes, according to dear and pleasing qualities. Some think in this way: "The four elements of the person I deeply love are not like the ones here." Or they might think, "The body of another animal is not that valuable; mine is highly valuable; I can make that animal my food." What is done here is the pacification of that distinction, bringing the mind neutrally to reality: "Here, there are only four elements (*dhātu*)."

All this is done for the sake of transforming the mind. The Buddha declares: "If wholesome states arise in a certain way, reflect in that way. If unwholesome states arise in a certain way, do not reflect in that way." Therein lies the distinction between wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) and unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) that we mentioned earlier. Wise reflection, meaning wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), is: if reflecting in a certain way removes the internal unwholesome states of lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dvesa*), and delusion (*moha*), that is called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) means: if reflecting in a certain way increases lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dvesa*), and delusion (*moha*), that is unwise reflection. The method of separating from those two is present within all these meditations. We must apply it according to the situation. It cannot be done just as we please. One must apply oneself. That is why one is called a meditator (*yogī*). 'Yoga' means application. Without applying oneself, it cannot be done suddenly in an instant. Because in this saṁsāra for a long time, having sometimes been animals, demons, various defiled habits might have become deposited within our mental continuum. It is only through the systematic development called meditation that one can be freed from them. That is why the Buddha points out the path in that way.

Within the word 'yogī' is "application." How should the person who applies himself do so? *Yoniso*—by applying the mind to the very source, to the very place where something arises, not by applying the mind to the far end. "To this place, these start from here," is what the Buddha declared. Lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dvesa*), and delusion (*moha*)—all of

them. One cannot purify the minds of humans by destroying all the fancy, luxurious things in the external world. This is the place that must be corrected. We cannot say, "Let us destroy all enemies in the external world, and on that day we shall live in peace and comfort." Here is where the entanglement lies. The Buddha declared: "Lust (*rāga*) is here, hatred (*dvesa*) is here, and delusion (*moha*) is here." Then He declared the path to eradicate them. To say further, especially within neutrality—therein lies hidden this wisdom (*paññā*).

You devotees might have heard of a seesaw ride between suffering (*dukkha*) and happiness. Such a seesaw ride is what exists between the dear and undear. We like the dear thing; we dislike the undear thing. We seek to acquire the dear thing; we seek to remove the undear thing. There too lies a seesaw ride. That is why the Buddha declares to separate from both dear and undear and come to the middle. When one comes neutrally to that place, what is there? Just as going according to the aforementioned perception of elements (*dhātu-saññā*), there is nothing to be taken as "I am" (*asmi*). Here there is only a heap of elements (*dhātu*). One understands that all those divisions made to separate a person are things attributed according to our own defilements. What is the Buddha declaring so much? The question of suffering (*dukkha*). That is why the Buddha, in the incident of Visākhā as well, declared: "Whatever sufferings (*dukkha*) arise in the world, whatever sorrows arise, all of them arise because of the dear state."

Because of regarding them as dear, one develops attachment to them. When one cannot keep that attached thing in that way, when it is obstructed, hatred (*dvesa*) arises. Within that indeed does the entire world exist. The Buddha declares to apply the mind to the "Dhamma-nature" of these. When the mind is applied to the Dhamma-nature, what is there is peace. What is ultimately expected through the Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) is that these are merely phenomena (*dhammatā*) existing relative to each other. It is by dividing these with fences and gates that we have created a mass of suffering (*dukkha*). Even if we look at ourselves, what is taken in from one end goes out from another. Taking it as a single unit, we grasp it as "mine, mine". Taking a breath thinking "I", having taken it, even that has to be exhaled. Even in that situation, though taken with a perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) as "mine", there is no possibility of taking it as a single unit. It is to the person who sees through insight (*vipassanā*) that this begins to be understood little by little.

Because ordinary worldly people need to conduct daily life conventionally, they forget those rapid changes, arisings, and passings-away in practical terms. Therein lies ignorance; therein lies delusion. It is within that delusion that worldly people lead their lives. Saṁsāra itself is entirely a delusion. If one wants to develop saṁsāra, one must nourish delusion. The Buddha declares the crossing over from this saṁsāra, crossing over from the world. To cross over from the world, it is not delusion, not *moha*; where there was delusion, one must bring forth wisdom (*paññā*). It is for the purpose of bringing forth wisdom (*paññā*) that the mind is brought to neutrality. Only then can the reality of the world, that truth as it is, be seen. You devotees know very well that through virtue (*sīla*), separating from those coarse levels of harming and troubling others to satisfy one's own wants—physical and verbal actions of violence—and separating from

(harmful) thoughts, one tries to become neutral to that extent. Next, in concentration (*samādhi*), the mind is gradually released. Without the mind going after unnecessary views, releasing the mind from the defilements flowing into it that destroy the value of the present moment, one places and unifies the mind on some object. That is what is called cutting off the defilements. Next, attention—wise reflection—is carried out. Through wise reflection, one sees those things that were held onto until now, things taken with the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), things thought to be real. What is here is a flow of arisings and passings-away. A continuity (*santati*), a flowing river. Inhalation and exhalation too are a flow, a flowing river, a continuity, not a single thing. Inhalation and exhalation are not two either. Inhalation is not one thing either. There too exists a heap of ripples. A heap of ripples. There is a vast number of breath-waves. Other things are also like that.

What we take as "this body". From eating food and all other activities, what is seen is impermanence (*aniccatā*). The Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) preached by the Buddha and revealed to the world. Because of impermanence (*aniccatā*) itself, because of being harassed by both arising and passing-away, there is suffering (*dukkha*). Some try to generate a perception of the beautiful (*subha-saññā*) within this impermanence. Someone might say: "Now we get a headache. When that headache ceases, it is pleasant, isn't it? So that headache is good." Someone is said to have said so. There are some in the lunatic asylum who go on banging their heads against the wall continuously. Why? Because when they stop banging their heads, it is pleasant, isn't it? Based on that logic, such madmen also exist. In that way, even within the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), some see a pleasure—an optimistic way of thinking. Such a thing also goes on. Regarding impermanence (*aniccatā*), it is an outright rejection of the Buddha's word, a rejection of the Three Characteristics. The Buddha declared:

“Yad aniccaṁ taṁ dukkhaṁ, yaṁ dukkhaṁ tad anattā”

(What is impermanent is suffering, what is suffering is non-self). Whatever is impermanent (*anicca*) is suffering (*dukkha*). Whatever is suffering (*dukkha*), there it is non-self (*anattā*). There is nothing to be taken as "I." The Buddha declares that everything is afflicted by impermanence (*aniccatā*). There is a word of the Buddha: "Pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) is pleasant while it persists, and painful when it changes. Painful feeling (*vedanā*) is painful while it persists, and pleasant when it changes." But the logic is: nobody invites suffering (*dukkha*) saying "it is pleasant when it changes", do they? Only those foolish individuals invite it in that way. It does not remain in that way either. Even in what is called neutrality, there are defilements. The Buddha points to Nibbāna far above the kind of neutrality the world thinks of. The seesaw ride between pleasure and pain, as well as between dear and undear—it is when one comes to the middle of this seesaw that it is caught. What is it? How is this seesaw constructed? The underlying value is caught. What is that value? The conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*). That is why the Buddha points out that ultimately, where the conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*) is completely eradicated, there indeed is Nibbāna. There is the end of becoming (*bhava*). There is the halting. There is rest. There is peace.

You devotees, at this moment, must have gained some understanding of the supramundane values highlighted by the Buddha. Whether lay or ordained, the ultimate goal belonging to every Buddhist is Nibbāna. Therefore, even if something that belongs to everyone is preached on certain occasions addressing the bhikkhus, we cannot cast it aside saying "it does not belong to us." Hence, you devotees must take what should be taken from these and be energetic.

On this valuable day, you devotees started with virtue (*sīla*), having undertaken a very valuable virtue (*sīla*) early in the morning. Seated on the stage prepared by that virtue (*sīla*), you must have had an opportunity to unify the mind with a meditation familiar to each of you. If this Dhamma was understood deeply in some insight-oriented way by that unified mind, I believe it helped you, using that as support, to develop your wisdom (*paññā*). Without saying "it is impossible", but generating the perception of "it is possible", I aspire that this mass of merit accumulated may definitely be a supportive condition (*upanissaya*) to eradicate this saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) in this very life, before this Dispensation declines.

Likewise, may whatever beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who wish to rejoice in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, by thus acquiring it, find peace in the supreme deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi! Recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #74

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.144)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Pheṇapiṇḍūpamaṃ rūpaṃ, vedanā bubbulūpamā;

marīcikūpamā saññā, saṅkhārā kadalūpamā;

māyūpamañca viññāṇaṃ, dīpitādiccabandhunā.

Yathā yathā yoniso upaparikkhati, rittakaṃ tucchakaṃ hoti,

yo naṃ passati yoniso.

Imañca kāyaṃ ārabbha, bhūripaññena desitaṃ;

pahānaṃ tiṇṇaṃ dhammānaṃ, rūpaṃ passatha chaḍḍitaṃ.

Āyu usmā ca viññāṇaṃ, yadā kāyaṃ jahantimaṃ;

apaviṭṭho tadā seti, parabhattaṃ acetanaṃ.

From:

Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN 22.95, Pheṇapiṇḍūpama Sutta)

Dear Listeners,

Today is this Vesak Full Moon day, the day that commemorates the rare event of the appearance of a Tathāgata Fully Enlightened Buddha to the entire world. It is the day the deathless medicine of Nibbāna, which cures the disease of saṃsāra, was discovered through a noble quest. It is the day the light of wisdom dawned upon the world.

Today, let us try to see the Buddha through the Dhamma preached by the Teacher of the Three Worlds Himself. The Buddha has declared: *"Yo dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati"*—"He who sees the Dhamma sees me." Therefore, on this noble day, by directing

our minds to the Dhamma, let us strive to see the Buddha. The verses we presented as our theme contain the summary of a very special discourse delivered by the Buddha.

On one occasion, the Buddha, along with a group of monks, journeyed to the city of Ayodhyā near the river Ganges. The residents of Ayodhyā provided lodging facilities for them. While residing there, utilizing the river Ganges as an object, the Buddha addressed the monks and delivered a discourse concerning foam. Why? Because the perception of a self is the most severe defilement in the world. To assist in removing it, the Buddha presented five similes to the monks on that occasion. It begins like this:

"Just as, monks, a great lump of foam is carried along by the river Ganges, and a person with physical sight, as well as the eye of wisdom, sees that lump of foam, reflects upon it, and thoroughly investigates it with wisdom. As he reflects and investigates with the eye of wisdom, that lump of foam appears to him—to that person with eyes—as empty, hollow, and insubstantial (*anattā*). What essence, monks, could there be in a lump of foam?

In the same way, monks, whatever aggregate of form (*rūpa-kkhandha*) there is—here, aggregate of form means a heap of form—and how does the Buddha describe that heap? In eleven ways. Whatever form there is: past, future, present, internal or external (that is, concerning oneself or others, which we may call inside or outside), gross (rough) or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near; in this manner, it is shown in eleven ways. A person with the eye of wisdom investigates all that aggregate of form with wisdom. To that person with the eye of wisdom who thus investigates, it appears as empty, hollow, and insubstantial (*anattā*). What essence, monks, could there be in form?

Next, in the same manner, another simile is shown regarding feeling (*vedanā*). Just as, monks, in the autumn season, when rain with large drops is falling, bubbles of water rise and burst in rapid succession on the water, and a person with the eye of wisdom who sees those water bubbles rising and bursting, reflects upon them, and investigates them with wisdom, those water bubbles appear to him as empty, hollow, and insubstantial (*anattā*). What essence, monks, could there be in a water bubble?

In the same way, monks, whatever feelings there are—past, future, present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—a wise monk investigates all those feelings with wisdom and reflects upon them. To that monk who looks thus, they appear as empty, hollow, and insubstantial (*anattā*). What essence, monks, could there be in feeling?

Next, He speaks about perception (*saññā*). Just as, monks, in the last month of the hot season, at midday, a mirage is seen. A person with the eye of wisdom looks at that mirage, reflects on it, and investigates it with wisdom. To him who reflects and investigates with wisdom, that mirage appears as empty, hollow, and insubstantial (*anattā*). What essence, monks, could there be in a mirage?

In the same way, monks, a monk directs his eye of wisdom to investigate whatever perceptions there are—past, future, present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior

or superior, far or near—indeed, that entire aggregate of perceptions. To that monk who looks thus, perception appears as empty, hollow, and insubstantial (*anattā*). What essence, monks, could there be in perception?

Just as, monks, a man seeking heartwood goes into a forest taking a sharp axe. He sees a large, straight banana trunk. He cuts it down at the root. After the tree falls, he cuts off the crown. Having cut it, he peels away the outer skins of that banana trunk in search of heartwood. As he finishes peeling it in that manner, he realizes that there is not even sapwood in this banana trunk, let alone heartwood. But a person who has not only physical sight but also the eye of wisdom, looking at this banana trunk, understands that this banana trunk is hollow, empty, and insubstantial (*anattā*). What essence, monks, could there be in a banana trunk?

In the same way, monks, whatever preparations (*saṅkhārā*) there are—past, future, present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—a monk reflects upon those preparations. He investigates them with the eye of wisdom. To that monk who looks thus, preparations appear as empty, hollow, and insubstantial (*anattā*). What essence, monks, could there be in preparations?

Next, fifthly, the Buddha points out concerning consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Just as, monks, a magician—or to put it in modern terms, an illusionist or a magician—or his apprentice, performs a magic trick at a crossroads. A person with the eye of wisdom who sees that magic trick reflects upon it and investigates it with the eye of wisdom. To him who looks thus, that magic trick appears as empty, hollow, and insubstantial (*anattā*). What essence, monks, is there in a magic trick, in an illusion? What heartwood?

In the same way, monks, whatever aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*) there is—which is taken as that collection of thoughts, consciousness—past, future, present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, a monk investigates it with the eye of wisdom. To that monk who looks thus, the aggregate of consciousness also appears as hollow, empty, and insubstantial (*anattā*). What essence, monks, could there be in consciousness?"

Having declared this, the Buddha then said: "Monks, if a noble disciple possessing knowledge of the Dhamma looks at and investigates these five aggregates of grasping (*upādāna-kkhandha*) with the eye of wisdom, and engages in meditation on them, through such engagement he becomes disillusioned with form. He becomes disillusioned with feeling. He becomes disillusioned with perception. He becomes disillusioned with preparations. He becomes disillusioned with consciousness. Through that disillusionment, dispassion (fading of lust) arises. Through dispassion comes liberation; the mind is liberated. Once liberated, he understands that it is liberated. Through that very liberation of the fruit of Arahantship,

he then understands: birth (*jāti*) is ended, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been completed. He attains the direct realization of Arahantship." In this way, He concludes the discourse by culminating it in Arahantship.

Next, the very essence of that discourse is presented there as the word of the Buddha. It has been presented in verses. A few of those are what we presented as our theme.

Pheṇapiṇḍūpamaṃ rūpaṃ, vedanā bubbulūpamā,

Saññā marīcikūpamā, saṅkhārā kadalūpamā,

Māyūpamañca viññāṇaṃ, dīpitādiccabandhunā.

What is meant by 'Ādiccabandhu' is the Kinsman of the Sun, which is used as an epithet for the Buddha. The Buddha, the Kinsman of the Sun, has preached in this manner using similes. Form has been compared to a lump of foam. Feeling has been compared to a water bubble. Perception has been compared to a mirage. Preparations have been compared to a banana trunk. Consciousness has been compared to a magic trick. That He has shown similes in this manner is the essence of it.

Yathā yathā yoniso upaparikkhati, rittakaṃ tucchakaṃ hoti,

Yo naṃ passati yoniso.

Next, it is stated: in whatever way one reflects upon it and investigates it with radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), to him who thus investigates with radical attention, this appears as empty and hollow.

Imañca kāyaṃ ārabbha, bhūripaññena desitaṃ,

Pahānaṃ tiṇṇaṃ dhammānaṃ, rūpaṃ passatha chaḍḍitaṃ.

Next, 'bhūripaññena' means the Buddha of great wisdom. If one correctly understands what was preached by Him concerning this body, it means that when three things are removed from this body, this form (the physical body) is seen as something abandoned and cast away. In other words, look at it in that manner.

Āyu usmā ca viññāṇaṃ, yadā kāyaṃ jahantimaṃ,

Apaviṭṭho tadā seti, parabhattaṃ acetanaṃ.

Then, finally, it points out what those three factors are: vitality, warmth, and consciousness. When these three things abandon this body, at that moment, this body lies cast away like a discarded object. *'Parabhattaṃ acetanaṃ'*—without volition, without the power of intention. *'Parabhattaṃ'* means food for animals, a meal for beasts. So, the story of the body and the story of these five aggregates have been told through those verses. Let us try to understand these briefly presented similes in somewhat greater detail.

These are things seen in our daily lives, things everyone has seen to some extent. However, through these, the Buddha directs us toward the Dhamma. Using those very things, the Buddha highlights and shows through these similes the emptiness,

hollowness, and insubstantiality (*anattā*) of these five aggregates of grasping (*upādāna*), which have not been seen with the eye of wisdom until now.

Form is compared to a lump of foam. Let us first direct our minds to this lump of foam. In a place like a river, due to the speed of the flowing water, the rubbish and debris in the water gather together. When they go and hit against something like a log, after a considerable time, a lump of foam is formed there. As it goes further and further, it becomes a large lump of foam. Looking at it from afar, it might even look like a white stone. But even if someone is deceived by such an appearance, when looking at it closely and investigating it with wisdom, one cannot do things with this lump of foam as one would with a stone or a solid, strong object. It is full of holes. Moreover, it rises and falls; it is fragile, liable to break at any moment. That is exactly how this physical body of form is. When we hear the word 'form' (*rūpa*), what immediately comes to our minds—especially in this age where visual media is highly emphasized—is this body of ours, presented in various forms with beautiful colors, even more than the actual color of the physical body.

What we have to take as 'form' is just an impression that falls upon our mind. But what lies beneath it? When we think about this cage of a body, it is not the beautiful form seen on the outside. It may look very beautiful. But inside, just as was said about that lump of foam, in this saṃsāric stream, at the moment of our conception in a mother's womb, we began by depending on that embryonic form (*kalala-rūpa*), that stain of mud. Subsequently, this physical body of form is built up from milk-foam, gruel-foam, rice-foam, and so on. Furthermore, it breaks down moment by moment. Even if we forget that fact, this body changes moment by moment. Likewise, it goes on breaking and disintegrating. The final breaking is what is called death. Yet, for a long time, an attachment to this form and the concepts of 'mine' and 'I am' have arisen in worldly beings because they look at it from afar, without investigating with the eye of wisdom, but relying only on physical sight. It is also due to the craving (*taṇhā*), etc., they have for it. The Buddha presented the true nature in this way.

Similarly, comparing feeling to a water bubble is also not difficult to understand. It is raining heavily. When it rains heavily like this, through that force, momentarily combining with air and perhaps aided by dust and sand, a small water bubble is formed. No sooner is it formed than it bursts; very rapidly, water bubbles keep forming and bursting. Looking from afar, it may appear as a single continuous thing or as something substantial. But when looking closely, it does not remain the same even for a single moment. It is in the same way that those eleven kinds of feelings are called 'my feeling'. One goes to the physician and says, "Doctor, since last night I have had a feeling of pain in such and such a place." But it is not a single feeling. It is a stream of feelings that is arising, ceasing, and disintegrating very rapidly. We take this as one. Taking it as one, just as we take photographs and develop pride and attachment, we think 'I' and 'mine' of feeling as well. This is because of the 'perception of compactness' (*ghana-saññā*) in the world; the tendency of worldly beings is to consider everything as a solid, compact unit. To break that perception of compactness regarding feeling, the simile of the bubble arising in water has been shown.

You, devout laypeople, have heard much about mirages, haven't you? When speaking of perception (*saññā*) here, you must reflect that it is not merely the ordinary perception spoken of in the common world that is meant. There is a deep meaning here. When we say 'the mirage of the perception of form,' we immediately think of the perception of form. But the Buddha has compared the entirety of perception to a mirage. Therefore, we must reflect that it is not only the perception of form. The perception of sounds, the perception of smells, the perception of tastes, the perception of touch (which is felt by the body), and finally, the perception of mind-objects (*dhamma-saññā*) felt by the mind. This entire aggregate of perception (*saññā-kkhandha*)—all these perceptions are indeed like a mirage. Why? Because, although they exist as a collection of many things, they appear to us as one.

You have heard about mirages, haven't you? A mirage is called *'mṛga-tṛṣṇikā'* (deer-thirst) because it creates craving (*taṇhā*) in a thirsty deer. To a thirsty animal looking at a mirage, in the midday heat of the summer season, there appears a shimmering that looks like a flowing river or a lake in the distance. Perception is exactly like that. Through perception, it deceives us, saying 'this is blue, this is yellow, this is red.' This perception has a deceiving nature. When looking closely at that perception, there is no such reality. Due to some defect of the eye, or perhaps because of the structure of the eye, taking hold of those aggregates of perception, worldly beings create pride, thinking 'I' and 'mine' within them.

Next, concerning preparations (*saṅkhāra*); this word *'saṅkhāra'* is not a very commonly used word. It is a wonderful word that cannot be easily translated. But to get a general idea, there is a term used technically in modern times: 'activities' (*kriyākārakam*). It is not a very elegant word. A human being is prompted to activity through perception, corresponding to that intention, as a responsible agent, through body, speech, and mind. Therefore, bodily preparations (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), verbal preparations (*vacī-saṅkhāra*), and mental preparations (*mano-saṅkhāra*)—relying on these three doors, one is prompted to some activity due to ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*). Through these, even kamma is accumulated. That is why the word *'saṅkhāra'* is very close to kamma. It is the activity present within that person.

Now, if we thought that form is the physical body, the feeling concerning it, the perception formed due to that feeling, and because one expects pleasure in accordance with that perception, one is prompted to various activities—whether wholesome, unwholesome, and so on—all of that can be considered as the aggregate of preparations (*saṅkhāra-kkhandha*). That too is not a single thing; although we take it as 'I' and 'mine', there too is a multitude, like a heap of plantain sheaths. That is why the banana trunk is used as a simile. At first glance, this appears like a unit, like a single thing. As if it has some heartwood or core. The term 'insubstantial' (*anattā*) is used to show that it has no heartwood or core. Empty, hollow, and then insubstantial. The perception of self has arisen within because, even though it appears as a heap, one thinks there is a core or heartwood beneath it. Relying on that, one says 'I' and 'mine'. One says there is an eternal essence, that these things exist around something permanent. But from the

simile of the banana trunk, it is clear that even these preparations, even that intention, are constructed by gathering a multitude of factors. Yet, due to ignorance, a concept, reckoning, or designation (*saṅkhā*) has been made, thinking 'I do it'. Preparations are also of this nature.

Next, the deepest simile of all is the comparison of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to a magic trick or illusion. When a magician or an illusionist displays these tricks, anyone is deceived. There is such a deceptive nature in consciousness. That is what is shown by that simile: *'māyūpamañca viññāṇaṃ'*. When a magic trick is performed at a crossroads, the spectators are deceived by it. But if someone is able to clearly see the tools of the magic trick shown by that magician, the things shown stealthily, by hiding somewhere, then that person understands this. Although people are prompted to various activities based on them, a realization arises in that person that 'here is a falsehood, an empty thing, an illusion.' Similarly, regarding this mind, in this era, many people are heard speaking about consciousness. This is the deepest matter. The Buddha also declares this. Addressing the monks on one occasion, He declared the difficulty of understanding this consciousness.

"Monks, it is easy for worldly beings to develop disillusionment toward this physical body of form. Why? Because how this physical body of form is made, how the body gradually grows, and how it wears away is easily visible to someone. How the body of form is grasped and how it is abandoned are well-known to the world. Therefore, it is easy for worldly beings to break the perception of self regarding form. But, monks, that which is known in the world by the names mind (*citta*), intellect (*mano*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—(these are words used for the mind according to the occasion)—it is towards these immaterial, formless things that worldly beings have a stronger perception of self."

Then the Buddha declares: "Worldly beings grasp that which is called mind, intellect, and consciousness, thinking: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self' (*etaṃ mama, eso 'hamasmi, eso me attā*). It is difficult to break that grasping." But the Buddha then declares the true state: "However, monks, it would be better for an untaught ordinary person to take this body composed of the four great elements as the self. Why? Because this body is seen to persist without change for a year, two years, three years, or even more. But as for that which is called mind, although it is taken as the self, here the Buddha points out a deep idea: day and night, it arises as one thing and ceases as another. It arises as one thing and ceases as another. It is so rapid that it is not even possible to give an adequate simile." As He stated: *'Upamāpi na sukarā yāva lahuparivattaṃ cittaṃ'*—"It is not easy to find a simile to describe how rapidly the mind changes and turns."

On that occasion, the Buddha brought a simile somewhat close to this: Just as a monkey jumping from tree to tree in a great forest, running very fast, lets go of one branch and grasps another, very rapidly; in the same way, this mind goes on grasping objects after objects, rapidly. Indeed, the Buddha declares that one should by no means hold a view of self (*atta-diṭṭhi*) regarding the mind. But because worldly beings have no understanding

of the immaterial mind, when they are unable to grasp those other things, they go and settle down in the view of self within the mind. There is a reason why everyone speaks about consciousness in this era. For, the Western scientists, who held the view of self and did not break the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) in their search for the true nature of matter, in trying to understand the physical phenomena of form, gradually realized at the end of their research that there is a mind underlying this. Although they do not have a correct understanding of that matter concerning the mind, an understanding has come from that direction that there is some secret here, that consciousness must be understood.

Similarly, to the Western psychologists who also held the view of self, at the end of the understanding obtained through various kinds of research on the mind, there are still parts they cannot understand—especially where this consciousness goes after death. That is exactly what the Buddha expressed in that final verse.

Such things are also mentioned in the Dhamma. On one occasion, a minister spent several days enjoying himself with a dancing girl. One dancing girl did not eat properly, thinking she must dance well. However, while dancing, her final dance ended in death, right there. The one who was dancing beautifully was next a corpse. In that manner, it speaks of three things leaving that place at some point. That too is a deep matter that many people forget. As soon as vitality, warmth, and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) leave this body, the body becomes like a log, a corpse that is food for others. It is when vitality, warmth, and consciousness are gone that a person is said to have truly died. That is why they also check whether there is warmth in the body.

Earlier, didn't the Buddha explain how form is formed, how the parts of form gather together, and how form gradually forms like that foam gathering—worldly beings can see this somewhat. They can also see how form wears away. How it is grasped, how it is abandoned; these too are clear to the world. But how does the mind gather? Where does this mind gather? Where does it grow? How is it abandoned? The moment of abandonment is death. At the moment of death, where does this consciousness go? All these have become problems for the world. That is why, just as the physicist is trapped within existence/becoming (*bhava*), the modern psychologist is trapped within the intermediate state (*antarābhava*). Because they do not look at it from a Buddhist perspective. The solution to everything expressed here is shown by the Buddha to be the law of Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). According to the Buddha's Dhamma, nothing stands alone. Especially concerning consciousness, the Buddha declares that consciousness exists because of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), and Name-and-Form exists because of consciousness.

In a certain discourse, in response to a question asked by a monk, the Buddha declared the causes and conditions for the five aggregates of grasping. A certain monk asked the Buddha: "What, Blessed One, is the condition for form?" Since we previously said that form is not a single unit, when asked what the condition for form is, the Buddha declared: "The four great elements." The four great elements mean the four elements: earth (*paṭhavi*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). What we take as various kinds

of food contains just that, doesn't it? Thus, this is built up relying on the great elemental phenomena of earth, water, fire, and wind, which cannot stand alone or be identified individually. Therefore, the four great elements are shown as the cause and condition for the aggregate of form. Next, when asked what the cause for feeling is, the Buddha declared: "Contact (*phassa*)." It is owing to contact that feeling arises. It does not arise without cause. Likewise, for perception too, the cause and condition shown is contact. For preparations too, the cause and condition shown is contact. Lo and behold! When asked what the cause and condition for consciousness is, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is shown.

This term Name-and-Form may not be very familiar to you. Insight meditators are used to hearing it, and different people explain it in various ways. But the Buddha has analyzed Name-and-Form. What is shown as 'Name' (*nāma*) are the five phenomena: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Next, 'Form' (*rūpa*) is explained as the four great elements and the form derived from those four great elements—the form and perception of form that arise through grasping them; so, Name-and-Form. Let us try to understand this further. We said consciousness is an illusion. There is no reality in what the magician displays. Yet, it has the appearance of truth. It is because of that appearance of truth that one is deceived by the magic trick, the illusion. In the same way, in Name-and-Form, which is the condition for consciousness, there is also such a displayed thing. A false thing. Form is not real. It is the same with the mental phenomena called feeling, perception, preparations, and consciousness.

Now, when we say 'Name' (*nāma*), it is a name. But what a person calls a name, he identifies as a form. Now, when we say 'clock,' a certain form is conjured in the mind because it has a name. But originally, one identifies it as a name through those mentioned phenomena: feeling, the perception that follows feeling, the intention created through perception, the contact caused by intention, and then attention (reflecting). Those five factors are shown as Name-and-Form. In short, it is merely of the nature of a name. It is not a conventional name of the world.

Next, even though we consider form as solid, what is it but a shadow falling on the mind? A perception of form, relying on the elemental phenomena of form. Thus, the Buddha has declared that there is a constant relationship between Name-and-Form and consciousness. The mind grasps objects very rapidly, and at every moment of grasping, the mind also changes. It is exactly like a whirlpool. When the mind grasps an object and lets it go, its value changes. That is why the rapid rotation between consciousness and Name-and-Form was called *'lahuparivattaṃ'* (rapidly changing). The mind rotates rapidly, very rapidly. But consciousness is not a rotation on its own. Consciousness does not exist alone.

But Western philosophers think of consciousness as something existing alone, like a soul. The Buddha declares: *"Aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavo"*—"Apart from conditions, there is no origination of consciousness." Without conditions, there is no arising of consciousness. Just as a fire does not arise alone without fuel, in every case:

dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises; dependent on the ear and sounds, ear-consciousness arises; dependent on the nose and smells, nose-consciousness arises... and finally, dependent on the mind and mind-objects (*dhamma*), mind-consciousness arises. In this way, the Buddha points out six kinds of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, and mind-consciousness.

Is even one of those consciousnesses stored up anywhere? Due to causes and conditions, in a dependently arisen manner, consciousness arises and passes away. It arises with the help of something else. Just as a fire does not arise alone, but a wood-fire or a straw-fire arises by grasping some specific material; in the same way, eye-consciousness arises due to the eye and forms. It is in this manner that the Buddha has described consciousness. It is not something that arises on its own.

The Ven. Sāriputta, the Great Arahant, also illustrated the constant relationship between consciousness and Name-and-Form, showing how they support each other, using the simile of two sheaves of reeds. Not two reed-sticks, but two sheaves of reeds. There is also depth in the term 'sheaves of reeds'. Is there any heartwood in reeds? They are not things with heartwood. Ven. Sāriputta could have taken something else. He could have taken a wood with good heartwood. See how well this simile fits. Two sheaves of reeds. There is no heartwood in a reed. Even in a sheaf, there is no heartwood. Now, one sheaf of reeds is leaned against the other at the top. Think about it: a sheaf of reeds stands upright with the support of the other. In this very manner, Ven. Sāriputta has shown that in the law of Dependent Origination, with consciousness as condition, Name-and-Form arises; with Name-and-Form as condition, consciousness arises.

Let us present a simile that helps to understand the relationship between these two to some extent. It may not be a simile found in the Dhamma. There is a Greek myth, a somewhat tragic story. A certain beautiful Greek youth had never seen his own form. Perhaps he did not look into mirrors, maybe because there were none in those days. But one day in the forest, suddenly needing to drink some water, as he bent down to look at the pond, he saw his own face. However, because this Greek youth had never seen his own face before, he was deceived, thinking this was a goddess. Thinking it was a nymph living in the pond, he tried to embrace it. With every attempt to embrace it, it was covered by ripples of water.

On the first day, he tried very hard; when the water settled, he tried to catch it again. Trying and trying like this, going home and coming back, trying again and again, he spent several days in the same spot, and finally, Narcissus died of that very grief of separation. The story mentions that to commemorate the death of Narcissus, a highly fragrant flower plant nearby was named Narcissus.

What we have to take from this is the story of self-love. Narcissus grasped his own form, thinking it was someone else. Actually, when we reflect upon it, what we grasp as our form is a reflection. Think of the other side of it. He grasped it thinking it was someone else, a goddess. What Narcissus did is exactly what we have done in this saṃsāra for a

long time. At the moment of death too, we do the same thing. When whoever it is dies, because the craving within the concepts developed throughout that person's lifetime is not yet ended, when those aspirations are activated through the power of kamma, some sign comes to the mind. Grasping that sign as 'I' and 'mine', lo and behold, another form arises. We have done the very same thing Narcissus did.

But here, one must understand the phenomena of feeling, perception, intention, contact, and attention that are within it. The youth Narcissus experienced a pleasant feeling through that sight. Because of that, a perception was formed; because of the perception, he formed an intention to grasp; and according to that, he paid attention. Now, that simile will help to understand those factors of Name-and-Form. In this era, everyone comes and asks about consciousness—the point where physicists got stuck and the point where psychologists got stuck. It cannot be understood in that way.

This question of consciousness is not a question of today or yesterday. The sages who wrote the Vedas and Vedānta, or the philosophers, also had the view of self within them. They saw things like form arising and passing away. But consciousness has no visible path. When one dies, where does consciousness go? This became a great problem: how to understand consciousness. There is a certain simile to show their inability to understand it. Finally, they decided that trying to understand consciousness is like trying to grasp a fingertip with that very same fingertip—a futile effort. One cannot grasp a fingertip with that very fingertip, can one?

Using these fingers as an aid, let us next try to understand consciousness in accordance with the Dhamma, and see what solution the Buddha has given. We said consciousness does not arise on its own; it is something that arises due to causes and conditions. It arises due to Name-and-Form. Let us try to take these Name-and-Form phenomena onto the fingertips themselves, using a simile. It is only a simile given to understand something.

When we think about the five fingers of this hand, there is the smallest one, isn't there? He is the reckoner/troublemaker. He is the troublemaker; although he is small, he always looks to hurt. And why is he called the reckoner? Because when we count, we first count 'one' starting with this little finger. Think of feeling in that way. Let us compare feeling to the little finger for a moment.

Next, perception (*saññā*). Next to the little finger is the ring-wearer (the ring finger). Just as there is a troublemaker, there is the ring-wearer, referring to various people who wear rings. Like wearing a ring. That second finger is perception. Perception is the ring-wearer. Perception is about identifying, while the other is about experiencing (feeling).

Next, let us think about the middle finger. He is the stubborn one (wilful one). When raising the five fingers up, he is the most prominent, the tallest one. Also, when tapping on something like a table, we use the middle finger, as it stands out more than the others. We thought of the little finger as feeling for a moment, and the ring finger as perception; and the stubborn one, intention (*cetanā*)—that is the middle finger.

Next, there is a quarreler (the index finger). The world also recognizes the index finger as such. He is the one who threatens. He has a lot of work. He always comes to quarrel. He is designated as contact (*phassa*).

Next, there is a giant (the thumb). If we speak of him directly in Dhamma terms, he is the attention-maker (*manasikāra*). Attention means reflecting. This thumb has two names; nicknames have been attached to him. The one who acts like the leader can be called attention (*manasikāra*). It is this attention-maker who, gathering the other four as well, has brought us along in saṃsāra for so long.

It brought us in the manner of unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). Unwise attention means reflecting in a wrong way. That wrong way of reflecting is seeing the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, the painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant, the foul as beautiful, and the not-self (*anattā*) as self. That behavior of showing things in a wrong way, we designate as a crime. That crime is these five taking us along in this saṃsāra.

What did the Buddha do to reveal the secret within this consciousness? As those philosophers say, consciousness is something not easily understood. To use a simile, it is like a court case without a witness. A murder has taken place, but there are no witnesses. The case would be dismissed, wouldn't it? Instead, there is a certain tactic in the legal field: one of the defendants is pardoned. Having pardoned him, the story is extracted.

The Buddha had to do a similar thing. That is what is called the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). The Middle Path is something extremely deep; generally, people think it is only the ethical aspect mentioned in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. But there is something much deeper in the Middle Path. Dependent Origination itself is a Middle Path. Although worldly beings take each thing individually, the Buddha showed through causes and conditions that nothing exists alone. Everything exists upon causes and conditions. In accordance with that very story of causes and conditions, the Buddha shows that what is to be done is not trying to grasp the fingertip with that same fingertip.

The truth must be understood. That attention-maker we spoke of, gathering the troublemaker and all the others, has dragged us into saṃsāra for a long time; he has trained us to grasp (*upādāna*). Grasping means taking hold of tightly. But the Buddha shows that here, the thumb maintains relationships with all the other fingers. The thumb and the index finger associate very closely. That is contact (*phassa*). We missed mentioning that. The index finger is contact. If we name those five, they are: feeling, perception, intention, contact, and attention. The phenomenon closest to attention is contact. Reflecting in this way, the Buddha shows that to get the secret of this, we must first change our attitude through radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). We must remove that distorted view.

One must understand how to see the impermanent as impermanent. One must correctly understand the word of the Buddha. One must take the painful as painful, the foul as foul, and the not-self as not-self, removing those wrong attitudes. It is through that vision that radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) develops. Unwise attention means

forgetting the place where something arose and arriving at a conclusion based only on what appears from afar. Now, when reflecting on a mirage, this can be understood. It is the person who does not know how the mirage arises, but only how it appears from afar, who runs after the mirage. Instead, investigating how it arises according to causes and conditions,

one tries to understand feeling as feeling, not as 'my feeling', but feeling simply as feeling. Perception as perception. That is what is in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: seeing things as they really are, as they exist. Seeing them as not-self (*anattā*), without projecting a view onto them. The dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) means taking them as 'I' and 'mine'.

Instead, seeing them in accordance with reality, as they are—feeling as feeling, perception as perception, intention as intention. When looking in that way, one eventually understands gradually how the senses clash with objects, just like the thumb and index finger coming together. That moment of clashing is what is called contact (*phassa*). Finally, what is caught is the mind and mind-objects (*dhamma*). That is the deepest place. It is called *'dhammārammaṇa'* (mind-object). Here, 'dhamma' does not mean the Dhamma as understood in the ordinary world. It means the objects that come to the mind. The Buddha shows that each sense faculty has its objects: the eye has forms, the ear has sounds, the nose has smells, the tongue has tastes, the body has contact, and finally, the mind has mind-objects (*dhamma*). By 'dhamma' here, we mean 'things'. This is an extremely deep matter indeed.

It is from there that the Dhamma begins in the Dhammapada, which we constantly remind you of: *"Mano-pubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano-seṭṭhā manomayā."* The answer is right there. The Buddha declares that things did not exist first and then were thought of. Mind is the forerunner. Mind itself is chief; things are made of mind. Finally, it says *'manomayā'*—these things are mind-made. But worldly beings do not realize that they are mind-made, due to ignorance. Radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means recognizing the object right at the point where it arises.

But because worldly beings lack radical attention, they proceed in an unwise manner, allowing thoughts to go into conceptual proliferation (*papañca*), making it into a 'thing', and through that, they fall into defilements. But the Buddha shows that when one reflects in a subtle manner through radical attention—not in a wrong way, but reflecting on the painful as painful, the impermanent as impermanent—the secret of this consciousness is gradually understood.

It is revealed when, at whatever moment, if one catches the place where the mind and the object clash, through that very catching, the foundation of consciousness is shattered. Worldly beings think of this mind-consciousness as a self. But in reality, the Buddha declares that consciousness arises only with causes and conditions. What is the cause? The object that comes to the mind. That object is none other than *'manomayā'*—something constructed by the mind itself. Through forgetting that it is something constructed by the mind itself, we are then prompted to think about it. That is the nature

of the world. But in insight meditation, through gradually sharpening one's reflection, if at some point one understands the moment a thought clashes with the mind, then Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is correctly understood. Without letting it go towards the side of feeling, without letting it go towards the side of perception, without letting it go towards the side of intention. Finally, what is left is the clashing point of the mind and the object, like the clash between the index finger and the thumb. If the trick is caught right at the moment the mind and the object clash, immediately consciousness loses its place. For, consciousness is an illusion. Consciousness finds its place only within ignorance.

It is stated: *"Avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṃ"*—"With ignorance as condition, preparations arise; with preparations as condition, consciousness arises." It is as a result of that preparation, that collection of activities arising through ignorance, that there is a division as consciousness and Name-and-Form. Within that Name-and-Form, in the feelings, perceptions, etc., that belong to it, consciousness itself is naturally trapped.

But just as the youth Narcissus, by forgetting the reflecting nature of water, thought it was someone else, there is a reflecting nature in consciousness, which is called reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*). That is where the trick lies. What does consciousness reflect? It reflects Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Therefore, these are not entirely different things. Nor are they the same thing. These exist on causes and conditions. That must be understood insightfully, through the reflection of meditation as described. When reflecting with a concentrated mind, at some moment, the feeling aspect is abandoned, the perception aspect is abandoned, the intention aspect is abandoned, and finally, the mind and the thought are abandoned. The Buddha declared that mind-consciousness is also something that arises and ceases extremely rapidly. Even that concept of what we call 'things grasped', the Buddha declares as *'manomayā'*—something made by the mind itself. The Buddha shows that through forgetting that it is something made by the mind itself, worldly beings fall into both extremes.

We expressed this matter not as an argument. This is not to be found in the way many people search for a solution. According to the word of the Buddha, according to the Middle Path, these mental phenomena must be understood. That is why the Buddha declared: if at any point consciousness is understood, Name-and-Form is understood. If Name-and-Form is understood, consciousness is understood. But Name-and-Form has to be understood not by bringing someone from outside. We must pardon the attention-maker who stands at the end of these mental phenomena; though he has brought us through saṃsāra in an unwise manner until now, we must remove the unwise aspect of unwise attention and make him behave in a radical manner. Then, through radical attention, he reveals the crimes he committed in association with the other four. Finally, what is revealed is how the mind arose concerning the clashing of mind with that index finger (contact). That is why the entire noble Dhamma of the Buddha is contained within the two lines: *"Mano-pubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano-seṭṭhā manomayā."* This can be called the Middle Path.

The Buddha declares that it is only when all three—vitality, warmth, and consciousness—are removed that a person dies. Yet, sometimes, when pointing out the state called the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), someone who has entered the attainment of cessation ceases consciousness, but still lives. When the reason for this was asked, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that the Buddha declared that even vitality and warmth support each other. Because of the preparation of vitality (*āyu-saṅkhāra*), warmth exists. Because of warmth, the preparation of vitality exists. Neither exists alone. It is compared to a burning lamp: because of the flame, light exists; because of the light, the flame exists. Because of vitality, warmth exists. Because of warmth, vitality exists. There too, there is a relationship of cause and condition. Neither exists alone.

That is what becomes a problem for some. A person is on the verge of death, yet there is still warmth in the body. Thereafter, through surgery, etc., life returns. Meanwhile, it appears to that person that consciousness went somewhere. That person thinks consciousness went alone. No, that is only what appeared to that dying person at that time. It is seen from that person's point of view. There are not two people there. That state occurs relative to consciousness. Such is the situation there.

Because many people ask, we have merely brought the solution to this question to maturity. This is a deep matter. On this valuable Vesak day, we try to escape from saṃsāra by grasping only a very light portion of the Dhamma. Yet, we think about big questions. To compare these two, one must enter this path of meditation. Today, on this valuable Full Moon day, you have made a beginning—like starting with the alphabet—by starting with virtue (*sīla*). Likewise, you also tried to develop concentration (*samādhi*) to the extent of your ability. As mentioned, some of you are also walking on the path of insight (*vipassanā*). Especially for them, this sermon would have been helpful. In that way, we have made a small beginning. We must understand deep Dhamma for the sake of escaping from this saṃsāra.

Due to unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), we constantly go on doing exactly what Narcissus did in this saṃsāra. To eliminate this, we must understand the true nature of consciousness. The cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇa-nirodha*) is what is called Nibbāna. It is the direct realization of the cessation of consciousness. It is the escape from that illusion. One escapes from that illusion at the moment wisdom arises. The Buddha has declared: *"Viññāṇaṃ pariññeyyaṃ, paññā bhāvetabbā"*—"Consciousness is to be fully understood, wisdom is to be developed." But consciousness is correctly understood only at the moment wisdom arises. The seed of wisdom is what is called radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)—wise reflection. Therefore, reflecting that the seed of wisdom is within us, we must proceed on this journey.

May this beginning made by you today, this virtue observed today, the meditation practiced today, and this insight-oriented sermon heard today, serve as an aid to your liberation! With the help of association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), having succeeded in your Dhamma practice and meditation as quickly as possible, transcending the suffering of saṃsāra such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and through the realization of the stages of the path and fruit such as Stream-entry, Once-returning,

Non-returning, and Arahantship, may this power of merit and the hearing of the Dhamma today lead to the realization of the supreme, deathless Nibbāna!

May whatever beings there are from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, including your own relatives, by rejoicing in all these merits of delivering and hearing the Dhamma, and through rejoicing in these merits, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! Having aspired thus, recite these verses and share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #75

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.166)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Adhigatamidaṃ bahūhi amataṃ,

ajja pi ca labhanīyamidaṃ;

yo yoniso payuñjati,

na ca sakkā aghaṭamānena.

From:

Sumedhātherīgāthā (Verse 515)

Dear Listeners,

To conquer the forces of Māra that pull us into *saṁsāra*, a powerful strength of renunciation (*nekkhamma*) is necessary. Deeply contemplating the groups of discourses preached by the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Enlightened Buddha, regarding the terrifying nature of *saṁsāra*, helps to cultivate such a strength of renunciation. The story and biography of the Arahant Therī Sumedhā, who conquered the forces of Māra by relying on her own knowledge of the Dhamma, is an excellent illustration of this.

On this Vesak Full Moon Poya day that has dawned today, we can find a valuable biography in the *Therīgāthā* of the Arahant Nun Sumedhā, which helps us develop faith in this manner. It is a certain stanza among them that we have chosen as our theme today.

This Therī Sumedhā, having accumulated powerful wholesome potential under previous Buddhas, was born during the time of this Buddha in the city of Mantāvatī as the daughter of the regional King Koñca. After she reached youth, her parents decided to marry her to King Anīkadatta of the city of Vāraṇāvatī. However, by that time, Sumedhā, having visited the bhikkhunī monastery since her childhood along with royal princesses of her own age and maidservants, and having heard the Dhamma, had developed great

faith in the Dispensation and a deep sense of urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding *saṁsāra*. Therefore, she did not agree to that proposal.

When the day approached for King Anīkadatta to come and see Sumedhā (perhaps something like the *svayaṁvara* custom of the past), Sumedhā went to her parents and said, "I have no expectation of staying in the household life enjoying the fivefold sensual pleasures. I am inclined towards Nibbāna; I remain loving Nibbāna. Therefore, grant me permission to go forth as a monastic." Furthermore, she declared the impermanence (*anicca*) of this becoming (*bhava*), and the impermanence (*anicca*) that exists even in the heavenly worlds, showing how this becoming (*bhava*) is entirely impermanent (*anicca*). "One who has correctly understood the Four Noble Truths preached by the Blessed One does not wish even for the pleasures of the heavenly worlds. This becoming (*bhava*) is impermanent (*anicca*) everywhere, and sensual pleasures are extremely bitter; though they yield little satisfaction, they bring abundant suffering (*dukkha*) and trouble—this is the nature of the fivefold sensual pleasures. Therefore, I do not like this marriage proposal. Grant me permission to go forth (*pabbajjā*)."

Then, at the same time, she declared: "This body is entirely like a leather bag filled with excrement and carcasses. Why give this to someone else? This is a body filled with worms. At any moment, as soon as consciousness (*viññāṇa*) departs from this, one's own relatives will carry it to a cemetery and discard it. Why give such a body of this nature to anyone?" She further declared to her parents: "If you do not grant me permission to go forth, I will meet my death. I will take no more food as a layperson." Saying so, she lay down on the floor of the palace. Then her mother and father came, and the mother, weeping, said, "Rise, my child." Addressing her daughter, she said, "You are extremely beautiful. You are to be the chief queen of King Anīkadatta; you are still young. Enjoy these sensual pleasures." Thus, they tried to encourage her further regarding the proposal.

But she firmly insisted: "No, these fivefold sensual pleasures are not for me. This becoming (*bhava*) is impermanent (*anicca*) from every aspect. If one day the inside of this body were turned inside out, even one's own mother would detest it, unable to bear the stench. At any moment, as soon as consciousness (*viññāṇa*) departs from this body, it is cast into the cemetery, and the relatives return and bathe. Such is the nature of this body. Therefore, what I need is liberation from this becoming (*bhava*). Decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) follow closely behind me. In the heavenly worlds, the animal realms, or the hells, there is no opportunity to go forth as a monastic. A Buddha is born only very rarely; therefore, in this rare opportunity, on this occasion when the rare wealth of the opportune moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*) has been obtained, grant me permission to go forth." Thus she declared repeatedly.

"If you do not allow me, I will take no more food. Right here, I will meet my death," she said, and lay down on the floor. At about that same moment, King Anīkadatta arrived in the city of Mandāvatī. On hearing this news, what Sumedhā did was cut off her hair, enter her chambers, lock the door, and, focusing on her cut hair, entered the first absorption (*jhāna*). Having emerged from the first absorption (*jhāna*) and while

developing the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), the king arrived. When her parents and the king were standing by the door, Sumedhā came and opened the door. She saw her parents weeping. Finally, the king said to Sumedhā, "These parents are in great sorrow. You are very young. Sensual fortune is extremely rare. I will hand over all this royal wealth to you. All pleasures and fortunes are here. Going forth is difficult." In this way, he tried to persuade her to accept the proposal.

At that moment, Sumedhā declared the unsatisfying nature of sensual pleasures. King Mandhātā, who ruled over the four great continents and was foremost among all enjoyers of sensual pleasures, passed away completely unsatisfied. Even if it rained the seven kinds of gems, human beings would not attain satisfaction. Sensual desire is something that leaves humans unsatisfied. In particular, she briefly recalled for the king the ten similes mentioned in the Blessed One's discourses regarding the fivefold sensual pleasures.

The Blessed One has declared this regarding sensual pleasures. If we explain these similes briefly and in a detailed manner so that you, virtuous friends, can understand: in a slaughterhouse, a butcher throws a bone scraped of flesh and blood to a dog. The dog gnaws at it. While gnawing it, it ultimately meets with suffering (*dukkha*); there is no essence in it. You, virtuous friends, have heard this simile of "the fleshless bone".

Next, another simile given by the Blessed One to show the nature of sensual pleasures is that they are like a pit of glowing embers. Two strong men drag a person and throw him into a pit of embers, and he is burnt right there. Or, like holding a burning grass torch while walking against the wind—if one does not let go of that grass torch, one's hand will be burnt. Sensual pleasures are just like that. Furthermore, when a hawk flies up into the sky clutching a piece of meat, other birds and crows pursue and peck at it in order to snatch and eat that piece of meat. If that hawk or crow does not let go of the piece of meat, it will have to face death or deadly suffering (*dukkha*). This is common to all. Therefore, everyone fights over them and ultimately meets with destruction. Other similes are given: sensual pleasures are like borrowed goods. They are temporary; one never knows when one might lose them.

Next, these sensual pleasures are like a dream. They are deceptive, illusory. It is something that appears real only for a brief moment. Another simile shown in detail by the Blessed One is the simile of the tree fruit (*rukkha-phala*). It is a simile about fruits on a tree. Someone, seeing fruits on a tree, climbs it to pluck them. Meanwhile, someone else who cannot climb the tree begins to cut it down from the base. If the climber does not descend, he will fall along with the tree and meet with death. Just like that, due to the nature of these sensual pleasures, people fight for them in both lawful and unlawful ways. Because of that struggle, many fall into suffering (*dukkha*).

Furthermore, these sensual pleasures are compared to a serpent's head, showing their dangerous nature. This lady declared many such similes to the king. Not only that, she briefly reminded the king of the terrifying nature of this long *saṁsāra*, its extremely long nature, based on the discourses delivered by the Blessed One in the *Anamatagga*

Saṁyutta. Perhaps during that era, the Buddha's discourses were more well-known than today. Thus, you, virtuous friends, may also have heard the Buddha's discourses found in the *Anamatagga Saṁyutta*. The Blessed One declared that if someone were to cut down all the trees and foliage in this entire Jambudīpa into four-inch pieces, and set them aside one by one saying, "This is my mother, this is my mother's mother, this is that mother's mother," even if all those trees and foliage were exhausted, one could not bring to an end the line of those who have been one's mother in this *saṁsāra*. That discourse is meant to show that one has been born in this *saṁsāra* for such a long period of time.

Similarly, if one were to make clay pellets the size of jujube seeds from the soil of the great earth, and count them saying, "This is my father, this is my father's father," and so on, that lineage of fathers would not come to an end even if the soil of the great earth were exhausted. This was declared to clarify that one has been wandering in this *saṁsāra* for an inconceivably long, *anamatagga* (without discoverable beginning) period of time.

Similarly, the Blessed One has declared, in relation to the four great oceans, that during this long period, in this long *saṁsāra* whose beginning is not apparent, if one were to collect the tears shed by a single person weeping when separated from the loved and agreeable, and united with the unloved and disagreeable, they would be greater than the waters of the four great oceans. That is, the tears shed due to the death of one's mother, the death of one's daughter, the death of one's son, and so on, as well as due to the loss of wealth and disasters of illness—these tears are greater than the four great oceans. Likewise, if the breast milk one has drunk from mothers in this long *saṁsāra* were collected, it too would be greater than the four great oceans. This is not presented as an exaggeration by the Blessed One; that quantity of milk is indeed greater than the four great oceans. Next, it is shown that if the blood shed by a person having their throat cut throughout this long *saṁsāra* were collected, it would be greater than the four great oceans.

On one occasion, the Blessed One declared to a group of about thirty forest-dwelling bhikkhus, as a sermon sufficient for them to attain Arahantship, this very discourse about blood: how the blood shed when having one's throat cut after being born as cows, buffaloes, goats, sheep, and chickens over a long period of time is greater than the four great oceans, and so on. Drawing from such sutta discourses that arouse urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding this wheel of *saṁsāra*, Sumedhā explained the terrifying nature of *saṁsāra* to King Anīkadatta.

Then she said: "While my head is on fire, and decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) follow closely behind me, there is no help for me from others. I must strive to bring this decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) to an end. I need no help from others. Go, I do not wish to marry you. You must go!" She declared in this manner. Finally, perhaps because the king was somewhat softened by her declarations, he rose, bowed to Sumedhā's father, and pleaded: "Grant Sumedhā permission to go forth to put an end to the suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṁsāra*." Thus, Princess Sumedhā, having overcome the opposition of both her

parents and the king who had come to marry her, and having obtained permission to go forth, was ordained in the Dispensation and ultimately attained Arahantship.

Furthermore, after attaining Arahantship, in the final days of the Arahant Therī Sumedhā, she declared the powerful wholesome deed (*kusala*) that helped her attain this great gain, as recorded in the *Therīgāthā*. During the time of the Buddha Koṇāgamana, she, along with two of her female friends, had built and offered a dwelling (*āvāsa*) to the Buddha. Those two friends are identified in this Buddha's Dispensation as the brahmin lady Dhanañjānī and the Therī Khemā. It was through associating with Buddhas over a long period and contemplating the deep aspects of the True Dhamma (*saddhamma*) that Princess Sumedhā ultimately chose to become a bhikkhunī instead of becoming a queen consort or chief queen. She ended her life as an Arahant nun. Among the heroic characters in this Dispensation, Therī Sumedhā occupies a unique place. Indeed, as the longest stanza group in the *Therīgāthā*, the story of Therī Sumedhā is mentioned last. For many, especially lay women devotees, this biography can be a source of great encouragement.

Now, the stanza we have taken as our theme actually appears right at the end of the collection of *Therīgāthā*, which consists of about seventy poem groups. The stanza that precisely reflects the occasion that caused the king's mind to change—the very one that led to it—is what we have cited as our theme on this occasion:

> *Adhigatamidaṁ bahūhi amataṁ, ajja pi ca labhanīyamidaṁ,*
>
> *Yo yoniso payuñjati, na ca sakkā aghaṭamānena.*
>
> *Adhigatamidaṁ bahūhi amataṁ*

– This Deathless Nibbāna, has been attained by many. *Ajja pi ca labhanīyamidaṁ* – even today this Nibbāna can be obtained. *Yo yoniso payuñjati* – if one strives with wise attention (*yoniso*). *Na ca sakkā aghaṭamānena* – but it cannot be attained by someone who does not make a firm, strenuous effort.

"The Nibbāna obtained by many in the past can be obtained today if one strives; but for one who cannot strive, this Nibbāna cannot be obtained," the Blessed One declared. It was upon hearing this declaration that the king's views completely changed. Therefore, in accordance with these words of the Buddha, we must reflect on the possibility of attaining Nibbāna within this Dispensation today as well, in keeping with the occasion. That is why we said that this stanza is exemplary. As Therī Sumedhā declared, if someone strives, they can escape from this decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) to what is called the "Deathless" (*amata* / *amṛta*). That is why Therī Sumedhā said her head was on fire, and that decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) were chasing after her. Having been born again and again in various ways in this *saṁsāra* for an infinite time, one has had to face death—often termed *ghāta*, being slaughtered. It is because of such a nature of this *saṁsāra* that those who heard the Buddha's discourses in the past developed a sense of urgency (*saṁvega*) and strove to realize Nibbāna swiftly.

It is the long duration as well as the terrifying nature of this *saṁsāra* that the Blessed One depicted through those similes of blood, tears, and breast milk. Through the explanations of the terrifying nature and long duration of *saṁsāra*, the Blessed One endeavored to make us understand the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) within the Four Noble Truths, as well as to cultivate disenchantment (*nibbidā*) towards *saṁsāra*.

However, nowadays, the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) has often been reduced to a very simplistic level. One frequently hears people talking about daily disappointments or mental stress and anxiety as if they represent the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*). But if one is to develop such a deep strength of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), one must contemplate the terrifying nature of *saṁsāra*, the long duration of *saṁsāra*, and its inconstant (*anicca*) nature, as found in the Buddha's discourses.

Now, one cannot say where one might be born next in *saṁsāra*. That is why Therī Sumedhā said that a person overwhelmed by the fivefold sensual pleasures, by engaging in bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct and unwholesome deeds, will be born in hellish realms and similar lower planes. Once born in such places, for another extremely long period, there is nothing but suffering (*dukkha*), and one cannot derive any benefit from this Dispensation of the Buddha.

Therefore, as the Blessed One declared, while there are eight inopportune moments (*aṭṭha akkhaṇā*) where one cannot practice the path of the Dispensation, if one has obtained birth during the arising of a Buddha, obtaining the wealth of the opportune moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*), one must strive to escape from these conditions of birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), and death (*maraṇa*).

You, virtuous friends, may have heard the inspired utterance (*udāna*) declared by the Blessed One after attaining Supreme Enlightenment. The inspired verse beginning with *"Aneka jāti saṁsāraṁ..."* speaks precisely about this problem of rebirth (*punabbhava*). *Aneka jāti saṁsāraṁ, sandhāvissaṁ anibbisaṁ* – "Through many births (*jāti*) in *saṁsāra* I have wandered, searching but not finding the builder of this house." *Dukkhā jāti punappunaṁ* – "Painful is birth (*jāti*) again and again." It is this very condition that the Blessed One pointed out as the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*).

We usually consider only daily disappointments, the inability to fulfill one's expectations, and such things as suffering (*dukkha*). But the nature of this *saṁsāra* is something far deeper than that. The Blessed One declares: *"Anamataggoyaṁ, bhikkhave, saṁsāro, pubbākoṭi na paññāyati, avijjānīvaraṇānaṁ sattānaṁ taṇhāsaṁyojanānaṁ..."* and so forth.

A first beginning of this *saṁsāra* cannot be seen, because the Blessed One has declared that there is no such beginning of ignorance (*avijjā*) where one could say that ignorance (*avijjā*) did not exist before and then arose. That is why it is said to have no first beginning, spanning such an immense duration of time. *Avijjānīvaraṇānaṁ* means covered by the hindrance of ignorance (*avijjā*), and *taṇhāsaṁyojanānaṁ* means fettered

by the bond of craving (*taṇhā*); the Blessed One has declared that for a long time, beings have thus been wandering in *saṁsāra*.

Therefore, on a day like this, we must reflect: if we are asked what our goal as Buddhists is, we should be able to say without fear, "It is to see the end of *saṁsāra* in this very life." Although the word Nibbāna is used for this, Nibbāna is defined in very strange ways. Many describe Nibbāna in a way that actually increases craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). Many assume Nibbāna to be a special, separate world; they define Nibbāna as a novel world. However, the Blessed One has shown, *"Dukkhā jāti punappunaṁ"*—"Suffering (*dukkha*) is birth (*jāti*) again and again." Birth (*jāti*) occurs very easily, meaning as long as ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) exist, one will certainly undergo birth (*jāti*) in various places and in various levels of becoming (*bhava*). That is why Sumedhā too said that this becoming (*bhava*) is essence-less. Whether in heavenly worlds or the human world, impermanence (*anicca*) is everywhere. Impermanence (*anicca*) is indeed the nature of things.

Thus, if there is birth (*jāti*) within that impermanent (*anicca*) becoming (*bhava*), decay (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*) will certainly be there. One cannot obtain a birth (*jāti*) that is devoid of death. Like a shadow, decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) go together with birth (*jāti*). For this reason, the suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṁsāra* is not those minor shortcomings as the worldly people generally think. It must be considered far more deeply; it must be understood far more deeply. It is only for someone who takes this deeply to heart that the practices of this Dispensation become meaningful.

Thus, the Blessed One has summarized for us the necessary steps for liberation from this long *saṁsāra* within the Four Noble Truths. First, what is this illness called suffering (*dukkha*)? As mentioned before, it is birth (*jāti*) again and again—*dukkhā jāti*. Then, along with it, birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*). Furthermore, daily disappointments and such are also included in it: not getting what one wishes for, association with the unloved, separation from the loved, and so on—this is the nature of suffering (*dukkha*) inherent within existence. If the nature inherent in existence is suffering (*dukkha*), the Blessed One showed what lies beneath it: craving (*taṇhā*). The Blessed One declared that a being afflicted by the thirst of craving (*taṇhā*) is like one running after a mirage. No matter how far one goes in this, no satisfaction is ever found.

That is why Therī Sumedhā said that even if it rained the seven kinds of gems, no satisfaction would be gained; and why she said that King Mandhātā, who was the foremost among the enjoyers of sensual pleasures, died without attaining satisfaction. The Blessed One pointed out the unsatisfying nature of craving (*taṇhā*), which is like running after a mirage, and it is this craving (*taṇhā*) that is called the origin (*samudaya*) of this entire mass of suffering (*dukkha*). This craving (*taṇhā*) is thus generated through ignorance (*avijjā*). This ignorance (*avijjā*) is like when we think of a deer—the deer mistakes the distant shimmering vision for water, and then runs after it. It is just such a thing.

Due to the delusion arising from ignorance (*avijjā*), people run without limit after the goals they set for themselves in the world. The Blessed One has shown the craving (*taṇhā*) that arises towards things that object-ize the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind as a thirst. In some places, it is shown as an insatiable hunger. Its liberation is shown as *"taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṁ"* (the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna, and the very destruction and calming of craving (*taṇhā*) is shown as bliss. This is not something received in a special, different place. The Blessed One shows it as a state that can be experienced in this very life. For this reason, Nibbāna is sometimes designated by the name *"taṇhakkhaya"* (destruction of craving).

The path leading to that is what the Blessed One has shown as the Noble Eightfold Path. All concepts and thoughts we generate through wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) drag us back to *saṁsāra* again and again. However, the Blessed One has declared that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is for the sake of escaping from this world. Whether one performs meritorious deeds or demeritorious deeds, one is still within *saṁsāra*. Therefore, the path for the exhaustion of these karmas is the supramundane Noble Eightfold Path. Through that Noble Eightfold Path, one proceeds towards a practice that puts an end to both merit and demerit. It is that very craving (*taṇhā*) that creates the urge in worldly beings to perform both meritorious and demeritorious actions.

As long as the perception of self (*atta-saññā*), the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), and the sense of "I" and "mine" exist therein, worldly beings strive to grasp those various things as grasping / fuel (*upādāna*). In the Blessed One's Dhamma, the Three Characteristics—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—are particularly shown. Now, everyone understands impermanence (*anicca*) to some extent. However, the Blessed One saw all these things far more deeply than that. Not only everything visible on the surface, but also our sense bases—namely, the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and everything that becomes their object—change extremely momentarily; they are impermanent (*anicca*). For this very reason, one has to experience their unsatisfying nature, their nature of suffering (*dukkha*). Therefore, they cannot be kept under one's control. This inability to keep them under one's control is what is called not-self (*anattā*).

Therefore, one must practice directing one's daily thinking in such a way that the Three Characteristics of impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) are properly established in one's mind. That is what helps to develop the supramundane path. Generally, within the Blessed One's teaching, there is a mundane aspect of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which involves turning away from actions leading to lower realms and heading towards happy destinies; there is that side too. However, that is something that increases *saṁsāra* (becoming / existence).

Therefore, one must contemplate deeply. That is why Sumedhā said that even in the pleasures of the heavenly worlds, there is no end, no satisfaction. Instead, what is to be killed is death itself. What is called *"ghāta"*—what is to be slaughtered is death itself; it is the fact of having to die in those various places. Thus, that fact of having to die is brought to an end only by bringing birth (*jāti*) to an end. Birth (*jāti*) is brought to an end by

bringing death to an end, since birth (*jāti*) and death go together. The concept of birth (*jāti*) arises through grasping / fuel (*upādāna*). Through grasping (*upādāna*), there is becoming (*bhava*).

As long as craving (*taṇhā*) exists, worldly beings undergo birth (*jāti*) in hell realms, heavenly worlds, or the human world, whether through wholesome or unwholesome deeds, in accordance with the sign (*nimitta*) grasped by the mind. Within every such existence (*bhava*), decay (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*) are seen and experienced. Therefore, the Blessed One pointed out that one must understand the true nature of the world insightfully (*vipassanā*-wise), in terms of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*).

Now, what this world is trying to gratify is this skeletal cage of a body. The true nature of this body must be contemplated as unattractive (*asubha*). What Therī Sumedhā brought to light was this unattractive (*asubha*) nature of the body. Furthermore, its impermanence as impermanent (*anicca*-wise), or in terms of elements (*dhātu*). For some, even when contemplating in terms of elements (*dhātu*), the aforementioned Three Characteristics are understood. Because what exists inside this body, as well as externally, are the four great elements (*mahābhūta*) of earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*)—the four elements (*dhātu*).

Due to grasping (*upādāna*) towards them, a division has been made into internal and external. One grasps it as “this is mine.” Next, one tries to grasp external things. To catch them, one runs after them. That is why it is said to be like running after a mirage.

These six sense bases (*āyatana*) are like an octopus, trying to grasp the entire world through these six senses. That is an unsatisfying run. That is why the Blessed One declares that if someone constantly contemplates that what exists there as well as here is only earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*), that person can reduce that aforementioned craving (*taṇhā*) and oppression. If on some occasion one understands: “What is taken here as 'I' and 'mine' is merely a certain illusion. It is because of the delusion developed over a long period in *saṁsāra* that we undergo this suffering (*dukkha*).” To put it precisely, in this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) called 'mind' that we hold in such high esteem, there exists a certain deceptive quality. It is something that is caught when we look back. The Blessed One shows this as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). What is called Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) there is merely a name in appearance and a form in appearance. When this is understood as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), then this delusion is thinned out to some extent.

If someone recognizes that within everything that is seen and heard by them, there exists only a shadow cast in consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that is connected to that consciousness (*viññāṇa*), then the desire to grasp these things gradually thins out. It is in this way that one enters the path of insight (*vipassanā*). When watching a movie, our delusion arises because we glue together that rapidly running sequence of images with craving (*taṇhā*). We glue them together along the shadows falling extremely rapidly within this consciousness (*viññāṇa*), with some expectation of “I” and “mine”; through this, it

appears to us as something that truly exists. It is in this way that the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) arises. But if we practice looking closely, moment by moment, with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) through insight (*vipassanā*), we gradually realize that what exists here is only something like the aforementioned shadow. That is why the Blessed One takes Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) as merely a shadow cast in consciousness (*viññāṇa*) itself—namely, the mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*) of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*); and next, what we hold onto as form (*rūpa*), which is merely those four elements (*dhātu*) of earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*), and the perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*) derived from those four great elements (*mahābhūta*).

Then, the nature of this grasping (*upādāna*) is understood through that. What we call "the thing to be grasped" is merely an illusion. In truth, there is nothing to be grasped. Within that grasping, there is only that aforementioned feeling (*vedanā*), a perception (*saññā*) formed because of that feeling (*vedanā*), a volition (*cetanā*) applied to it, a contact (*phassa*), a place of contact, and attention (*manasikāra*)—that is all there is. Thus, in every instance, only these things exist. Once this is understood, the sense of "I" and "mine" thins out. Therefore, entering the path of insight (*vipassanā*) shown by the Blessed One occurs by establishing the good mindfulness and wisdom called mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). That is what is contained in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*). The Blessed One has shown how to recognize the body as body, feelings (*vedanā*) as feelings, the mind as mind, and mental objects as mental objects through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. That is why the Blessed One declared: "Within this very fathom-long body, I declare the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." If we contemplate with wisdom that Dhamma preached by the Blessed One in that manner and apply those practices, even today we can—if we strive as Sumedhā said—attain that aforementioned Deathless (*amata* / *amṛta*). What is called the Deathless (*amata*) is not something that exists in a strange, different world, nor is it a kind of beverage.

Generally, everyone is afraid of death. Why are they afraid of death? It is because of grasping (*upādāna*). The greater the grasping (*upādāna*), to that same extent is the fear of death. The fear or suffering (*dukkha*) that arises in us is exactly in proportion to the things we have grasped. Therefore, the Blessed One pointed out that it is through the gradually arising understanding, by gradually seeing the Three Characteristics of impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) insightfully (*vipassanā*-wise), that the dark mass of ignorance (*avijjā*) is removed.

Simultaneously, the craving (*taṇhā*) that exists along with the delusion generated through one's own ignorance (*avijjā*) is thinned out to that same extent. It is where ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) are absent that death is truly understood. Up to now, what was thought of as death was a massive fear arising at the moment this bodily

cage is destroyed, because it was taken as “mine.” But we know, one cares for one’s teeth; yet if at some point, due to some reason, it becomes absolutely necessary to extract a tooth, we allow it. We give our consent. It is the same with the other organs of our body. When contemplating in that manner, the Blessed One shows: “What exists here is grasping (*upādāna*)—holding on.” Becoming (*bhava*) is said to be the cause of this continuation. The state that arises when that is let go is what is called extinguishment without grasping (*anupādā parinibbāna*). It is simply the peace that arises at that moment of letting go; it is not some other world.

Thus, the secret lies within this very consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is trapped, narrowed down, within the six sense bases (*āyatana*). It is narrowed down within the six sense bases (*āyatana*) of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. One cannot hear with the eye; one cannot see with the ear. Within these, a world has been built: the world seen by the eye, the world heard by the ear, the world felt by the tongue. Every enterprise, commercial business, or activity contained within this concept we call “the world” is connected to these six sense bases (*āyatana*): eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The Blessed One pointed out these: it is within these six sense bases (*āyatana*) themselves that suffering (*dukkha*) lies. The entire world, too, exists right there.

The Blessed One declared a wonderful stanza:

> *Chassu loko samuppanno, chassu kubbati santhavaṁ,*
>
> *Channameva upādāya, chassu loko vihaññati.*

Chassu loko samuppanno – the world has arisen within these six. It is within these six sense bases (*āyatana*) that what is called “a world” has arisen. *Chassu kubbati santhavaṁ* – all connections and coordination in the world occur within these six; everything takes place within these six. Even the highly marvelous things considered as scientific products in this era, at one end of them lies either an eye or an ear. It is from the end of such a sense base (*āyatana*) that other things operate. This shows how true the Buddha’s word is.

Channameva upādāya, chassu loko vihaññati – grasping onto these six, the world is oppressed and weary within the six. This is the story of the six given by the Blessed One.

> *Chassu loko samuppanno, chassu kubbati santhavaṁ,*
>
> *Channameva upādāya, chassu loko vihaññati.*

> Born within the six,
>
> In the six it seeks its companionship,
>
> Grasping tightly onto the six,

Within the six itself, the world grows weary.

Accordingly, we must reflect: in our daily life, we can develop the aforementioned Three Characteristics in relation to these six sense bases (*āyatana*), using the Buddha's word as our help. Some make use of the meditation on the unattractive (*asubha-bhāvanā*) to cultivate disenchantment with this body. Others use the attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*). Yet others, through mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) regarding the objects arriving at these sense bases (*āyatana*), and by understanding their true nature, take the opportunity to escape from the aforementioned delusion in accordance with the Buddha's word. By understanding that this is a mirage according to the Buddha's word, we get the opportunity to free ourselves from delusion.

That is exactly what the Blessed One declared: the world is trapped within these six sense bases (*āyatana*). Becoming (*bhava*) or continuation exists only within these six. How does one escape from this? What helps to escape from these six is the light of wisdom (*paññā*). The Blessed One shows that the six sense bases (*āyatana*) function within ignorance (*avijjā*). But if on any occasion one understands the true nature of that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) through wisdom (*paññā*), through that light, then at that moment, having escaped from it, there is liberation.

That is to say, through that liberation, one realizes, as stated in the Buddha's word, *"loko suñño"*—the world is empty. Because at that moment, one directly experiences that what is called "a thing" is merely something fabricated by the mind of the world. The mind is liberated. The mind does not bind itself to even one of those six. It is the attainment of that liberated mind that was called the Deathless (*amata*). Therefore, what is called Nibbāna is the escape from the concepts built up by this world—the concept of birth (*jāti*), becoming (*bhava*) caused by grasping (*upādāna*), birth (*jāti*) caused by that becoming (*bhava*), and decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) caused by that birth (*jāti*). These are severed through that very understanding shown by the Blessed One.

The secret of dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), which you, virtuous friends, have heard in the form *"avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā"* (dependent on ignorance, preparations / Preparations arise), also lies there. Within this darkness called ignorance (*avijjā*), and precisely because of that darkness—just as when one is in the dark, certain illusions or groups of uncertain feelings arise—that is what is called preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). Due to the concept of "I" and "mine" developed within that ignorance (*avijjā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arise in the form of merit or demerit. It is as a part of that very preparation (*saṅkhāra*-ing / preparing) that there is a division into two: consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*).

Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) has a reflective nature. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) has a certain capacity, and that is precisely the deceptive, illusion-like nature of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The Blessed One compared consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to an illusion; an illusion is taken as something that exists as long as it is not understood. When it is understood, the illusion ceases to deceive. That is why, when the Blessed One compared consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to an illusion, the simile he showed was that of a magician

showing an illusion at a crossroads. But ultimately, the Blessed One declares: “What essence is there in that illusion?” There is no substance in it. Showing what does not exist as if it exists is what that illusion is. Just such a thing is present within this consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This consciousness (*viññāṇa*) has a reflective capacity. When looking back, something is seen. Misunderstanding that seen thing is precisely what is called unwise attention (*ayonisomanasikāra*).

Worldly beings wander in *saṁsāra* because they misunderstand that seen thing through unwise attention (*ayonisomanasikāra*). That misunderstanding is identified in the Dhamma as the four distortions (*vipallāsa*). *Vipallāsa* means distorted—the distorted feeling, the distorted understanding. What are the four distortions?

1. *Anicce nicca-saññā* – taking what is in reality impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent; adopting the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*).

2. *Asubhe subha-saññā* – taking what is in reality unattractive (*asubha*) as attractive (*subha*). This is what Sumedhā too said. Sumedhā was a beautiful lady, yet she herself explained the unattractive (*asubha*) nature of her body to her parents. The Blessed One pointed out that taking the unattractive as attractive is a distortion.

3. *Dukkhe sukha-saññā* – what is taken as pleasure, the Blessed One showed as suffering (*dukkha*). That which is taken as pleasure was compared to a dream (*supinūpama*), because its change turns into suffering (*dukkha*). It cannot be kept forever. It changes constantly. It cannot be taken as pleasure. Taking it as pleasure is merely an illusion. Taking what is painful as pleasant is thus the third distortion.

4. *Anattani atta-saññā* – taking what is not-self (*anattā*), what cannot be grasped as one’s own, what cannot be kept under one’s control, as though it could be kept under one’s control.

Thus, the Blessed One shows that it is due to these distorted things (*vipallāsa-dhamma*) that the world has built up suffering (*dukkha*) in the darkness; suffering (*dukkha*) has arisen. To eliminate it, one must strive to see, as the Blessed One showed, the true suffering—to see impermanent (*anicca*) things as impermanent (*anicca*), painful (*dukkha*) things as painful (*dukkha*), unattractive (*asubha*) things as unattractive (*asubha*), and not-self (*anattā*) things as not-self (*anattā*). The Blessed One pointed out that this cannot be done with the instruments found in the world. Nowadays, we use various instruments for everything in the world. If the eye cannot see properly, we get glasses to see a bit better. If that is still not enough, we get a telescope. Yet, the Blessed One declares that the world of worldlings (*puthujjana*) is blind.

Why was it declared so? Not to disparage us. It is because until that Eye of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakkhu*) arises, until the Eye of Wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*) arises, the world is merely groping in the dark. Generally, when we think of a blind person, we think, “Oh, that person is just groping around.” But to the Blessed One’s Eye of Wisdom, it was clear that what the world is doing—including the scientists—is merely a groping in the dark.

At that point, the Blessed One points out: “The world is trapped within these six sense bases (*āyatana*).” They say they see, they say they hear, they say they feel. All of this takes place within that narrow limit grasped as “I” and “mine”; it is within that that a world exists. It is like a sacrifice performed inside a gourd. Our ancestors may have heard of this “sacrifice inside a gourd”—the Blessed One declared something of that nature on a certain occasion to the Brahmin Verañja.

“Brahmin, I am the very first chick in this era to break through the eggshell and come out.” One must contemplate the depth of this statement. What then is this eggshell? The Blessed One has shown it to be ignorance (*aviijjā*). Therefore, everyone—including these scientists—remains inside this eggshell. It is this breaking through the eggshell that is called the arising of wisdom (*paññā*).

That is why Nibbāna is sometimes designated by the name “cessation of the six sense bases” (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*). Breaking through the eggshell is compared to the cessation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*). Where the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*) cease, it is not death. Where the six sense bases cease, the Eye of Wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*) opens. To the Eye of Wisdom, things that previously appeared to exist are seen not to exist. Therein lies the secret. But the world does not like this. They want to keep everything, but they also want to eliminate suffering (*dukkha*). The Blessed One shows that this is impossible, because of the craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*).

Now, Therī Sumedhā said from the very beginning, “I have no desire for this becoming (*bhava*).” She said directly to the king too: “My head is on fire. Decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) follow me. Why do they follow me? I have no use for those things. Go!” Thus, the most important thing is eliminating the attachment to becoming (*bhava*). But in the world, there exists a strong craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). They want to remain in becoming (*bhava*) but also want to be free of suffering (*dukkha*). Both cannot be done. Because what is called becoming (*bhava*) is the sense of “I” and “mine.” The Blessed One shows the opposite. The Blessed One shows that the false notion existing within this world, this wrong grasping of “I” and “mine”—right there lies entire suffering (*dukkha*). Beings have thus been trapped within the sense bases (*āyatana*) in this *saṁsāra* for a long period of time.

The Blessed One has shown the simile of a dog bound to a post in relation to the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). The dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) is the assumption that this group/body actually exists. Each of us has a name given by our parents. To that name, various titles and statuses added by society are joined. Accordingly, we identify ourselves as a person. We, too, say “I, I.” But this skeletal cage of a body also changes constantly. Everything changes. Forgetting this, we grasp it as “a thing” through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*). It is the same regarding other things too.

However, if on some occasion the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) is developed to the highest level, at that moment, an inability to grasp in that manner arises. That is called the perception of a heap (*rāsi-saññā*). The meditator on insight

(*vipassanā*) understands this step by step. What was grasped compactly as one thing, as a unit, is at some point seen by the eye of insight (*vipassanā*): "Here exists only a certain kind of illusion." An illusion—that is, merely an image falling in consciousness (*viññāṇa*). What actually exists here is a set of mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*) associated with a consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—namely, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*); there is merely a name for a name there. Next, a perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*) that we adopt in relation to the four great elements (*mahābhūta*) of earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*), which we cannot identify separately. Thus, it is through the understanding that this is only Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that one is gradually able to understand.

That is why it is said that in insight (*vipassanā*), as one proceeds forward from the understanding of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), this perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) becomes very clear. What is present there is not the impermanence usually thought of by the world. It is understood extremely deeply that everything changes moment by moment, with extreme rapidity. Everything changes, at every single moment. Even within the in-breath and out-breath, in every single thing, the perception of not-self (*anattā-saññā*) gradually grows. One realizes that there is no basis for what was grasped as "I." Proceeding in this manner, at some point, one is liberated from the darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*).

Generally, when enjoying a movie, we do not think for even a single moment, "We are enjoying this movie thanks to the surrounding darkness." At that time, we do not think, "It is because of this darkness." If the thought of the darkness were to cross our mind for even a moment, we could not enjoy that movie. But because of that delusion, the delusion (*moha*) present in the world, our mind rests on that screen—the unstabilized screen. Relying on that unstabilized screen, a strange continuation of becoming (*bhava*) is conjured up, whether in the teledramas or films of this era, in every single one of them. Furthermore, we do not realize that this functions within a certain frame. That frame is what is called the prepared / conditioned (*saṅkhata*)—something fabricated. The Blessed One designates this frame as the prepared (*saṅkhata*).

It is something we ourselves have fabricated, but we do not see it. Thus, the world remains within the prepared (*saṅkhata*) that they themselves have constructed. It is within that that all this birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), and death (*maraṇa*) occur. If this skeletal cage of a body had a beginning in a mother's womb at some point, it was not due to our mother's skill. This is said to occur because of grasping (*upādāna*). Thus, at the moment a being passes away in *saṁsāra*, in accordance with the sign (*nimitta*) that comes to the mind—as stated in *"kammaṁ khettaṁ viññāṇaṁ bījaṁ taṇhā sineho"* (karma is the field, consciousness is the seed, craving is the moisture)—as long as the seed of consciousness (*viññāṇa-bīja*) has the nature to sprout, the seed of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is deposited, and the moisture of craving (*taṇhā*) is present. At that moment, a conception occurs in a mother's womb as a child. This being, this child, who emerges bringing joy to the mother and father, ultimately does not know, nor do the parents

know, that what is present here is simply that very delusion, that same ignorance (*moha*) that has come along for a long time in *saṁsāra*. As long as the body called "I" and "mine" grows from that point, one calls it "I" and "mine." And so it is regarding other things in this world. As ignorance (*avijjā*) is eliminated through true understanding, the delusion present here is understood. Indeed, if there is no measuring viewpoint, there is no measurement either. Where there is measurement, there is narrowing. If at some point the primary peg that helps to measure is uprooted—that is what is called in the Dhamma the conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*), the peg that says "I am."

That is to say, the most fundamental, extremely subtle part of continuation is the conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*). The moment that is removed, things that appeared due to ignorance (*avijjā*) and darkness are no longer seen; things that were heard are no longer heard. Yet, one has not become blind; one has not become deaf. At that moment, the light of wisdom (*paññā*) arose. Just as mentioned regarding the cinema, the moment the light comes on, the things on the screen fade away. In the same way, there comes a moment when the world fades away. That very fading away is indeed liberation. Then, if someone has experienced that, it is registered in consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as a unique experience. What was prepared in consciousness (*viññāṇa*) at that point was a state of having died without dying.

What is called the Deathless (*amata* / *amṛta*) is therefore not some strange beverage. It is a moment when that wrong notion taken as "death" is directly and personally eradicated; that is, one understands that one is being held by the mind. If that existence (*bhava*) grasped by the mind, which was taken as "this is I," is let go at some point, at that moment, instead of suffering (*dukkha*), there arises peace—a sense of liberation, an escape. That bliss of liberation is what is called Nibbāna. The other side directly realized right here is that if it was previously a prepared consciousness (*saṅkhata-viññāṇa*) present in consciousness (*viññāṇa*), it was holding onto Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*); the delusion regarding Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) was present. Therefore, when one is liberated from Name (*nāma-vimutta*), that person has no sign (*nimitta*) to undergo birth (*jāti*) again.

You, virtuous friends, have heard that it is in accordance with the sign (*nimitta*) developed at the final moment—such as the sign of karma (*kamma-nimitta*) or the sign of destination (*gati-nimitta*)—that one undergoes birth (*jāti*) in a hell realm, a mother's womb, or an animal womb. Thus, if such a sign (*nimitta*) is not grasped at any moment, and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is liberated, that person has no further becoming (*bhava*). Therefore, it was because the direct realization of "no further becoming (*bhava*), no further birth (*jāti*)" was obtained that the Blessed One declared that aforementioned inspired verse (*udāna-gāthā*)—the valuable inspired verse that everyone has heard. Why did he, upon obtaining this direct realization, not declare anything else but present only this account of birth (*jāti*) and decay (*jarā*)?

Aneka jāti saṁsāraṁ, sandhāvissaṁ anibbisaṁ – and so forth. "For a long time in this *saṁsāra*, I did not see the builder who constructed this house, this skeletal cage, this

Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), for all this time. Because I did not see him, I ran searching for all this time."

Gahakārakaṁ gavesanto – "Running, seeking the house-builder."

Dukkhā jāti punappunaṁ – "Painful is birth (*jāti*) again and again," because every house that is built collapses.

But the Blessed One declares:

Gahakāraka diṭṭhosi – "O house-builder, you are seen!" Who is the builder of this house? Consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Puna gehaṁ na kāhasi – "You shall not build a house again." That refers to the liberated consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) liberated from Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) when the light of wisdom (*paññā*) was obtained. That is why there is no further birth (*jāti*).

Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā, gahakūṭaṁ visaṅkhitaṁ – "All your rafters are broken, the ridgepole is shattered." This is the moment when everything is freed, because the house-builder has been understood.

Visaṅkhāragataṁ cittaṁ, taṇhānaṁ khayamajjhagā – "The mind has reached the un-prepared / unconditioned (*visaṅkhāra*), attaining the destruction of cravings (*taṇhā*)." This is exactly what the Blessed One points out: ultimately, one who has attained that peace, the peace of Nibbāna. It is because of such a state that one does not undergo birth (*jāti*) again.

Thus, it is that very state of the Deathless (*amata*) attained in this very life that the Blessed One has declared. The person who has obtained that direct realization knows with certainty that they will not be born again. That itself is the peace belonging to that person. Therefore, through the bliss experienced in this very life during the attainment of the Fruit of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samāpatti*), that person knows directly and surely that there is no further *saṁsāra* for them.

Thus, through the story of the Arahant Therī Sumedhā, we have explained the fear of *saṁsāra*, which is a highly important part of the Four Noble Truths shown by the Blessed One. We must constantly reflect that we have traveled in *saṁsāra* for an immense period of time. Furthermore, on this extremely rare occasion of a Buddha's arising, possessing the wealth of the opportune moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*), we must not limit ourselves to mere backbone-breaking physical routines, but understand deeply and, without letting this opportunity for escaping *saṁsāra* slip away, strive as much as possible to attain that aforementioned supramundane state.

Therefore, today, you, virtuous friends, established in virtue (*sīla*), have listened to a Dhamma sermon that helps towards your Nibbāna. May all these wholesome deeds serve as a cause, a condition, and a strong support (*upanissaya*) for you to realize the

supreme, deathless Great Nibbāna as swiftly as possible, before the decline of the Dispensation, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship! Thus you should wish.

Likewise, may whatever beings there are, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including one's own relatives, who wish to rejoice in the merit of this giving and hearing of the Dhamma, by doing so, find peace in the supreme, deathless Great Nibbāna through their own respective bodhi (enlightenment)! Wishing thus, recite these stanzas and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #76

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.11)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Dūraṅgamaṃ ekacaraṃ, asarīraṃ guhāsayaṃ;

ye cittaṃ saññamessanti, mokkhanti mārabandhanā.

From:

Dhammapada 37 (Cittavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Beings in this world travel from country to country to see marvelous and wonderful things. They construct spacecraft and travel to other planets. By inventing instruments like microscopes and telescopes, they reveal wonderful details about things close at hand and things far away. But, pious friends, more wonderful than all of these things is this mind of ours. It was our Buddha who properly demonstrated to the world the way of the mind, the nature of the mind, and the great power of the mind. Our Buddha revealed to the world that it is because of this running mind that we wander in this *saṃsāra* for such an extremely long time, and that the place where the mind is brought to a halt is Nibbāna. Precisely by seeing the way of this running mind, we are able to bring forth a systematic program of practice that helps to halt the mind. The background story related to the stanza we have taken as our theme is indeed an excellent illustration of the behavior of a running mind.

In the city of Sāvatthī, there lived a good young man from a certain family. Having heard the Dhamma from our Buddha, that young man went forth and ordained under the name Saṅgharakkhita. Within a few days of ordaining and receiving higher ordination, he attained Arahantship. This venerable monk had a nephew. To remember the venerable monk, the nephew's parents also named him Saṅgharakkhita. Society knew him by the name 'Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita'. 'Bhāgineyya' means nephew; thus, he was known as 'Nephew Saṅgharakkhita'. After this boy reached youth, he too went forth and ordained under his maternal uncle, the venerable monk.

Thus, he ordained as the novice monk Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita. Having ordained and received higher ordination, he went to a village monastery to observe the rainy season retreat. At the end of the rainy season, from the offering made—the *vassāvāsika* offering—this monk received a piece of cloth seven cubits long and another piece of cloth eight cubits long. When he received this offering, this monk thought: "I must offer this eight-cubit piece of cloth to my preceptor, my teacher monk. I will use the seven-cubit piece of cloth." Having formed this great intention, after the rainy season, he set out to see his teacher monk. On the way, he went for alms, and while the teacher monk had gone to the village for alms, he entered the monastery, swept the venerable monk's cloister walk and chambers, performed the familiar duties, prepared water, and waited for the venerable monk to return.

Then, when the venerable monk arrived, he went forward to meet him, took his bowl and robes, performed those duties with great respect, made a seat ready for him, and having brought that eight-cubit piece of cloth, placed it at the feet of the venerable monk, saying, "Venerable Sir, please accept and use this offering." Offering it thus, he took the palm-leaf fan and stood fanning the venerable monk. The venerable monk said to his pupil, "My robes are complete. I have no need of this cloth. You may use this yourself." Monk Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita said, "Alas, Venerable Sir, from the moment I received this, my only intention was to offer it to you. Please use it." Even though he said so, the teacher monk did not wish to accept it. "It would bring great blessings to me if you would use this, Venerable Sir," Monk Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita pleaded repeatedly, but the preceptor refused it. And then, this monk's mind became displeased.

"Alas! In lay life, this venerable monk was my maternal uncle. Even though he is now my teacher monk, he does not wish to accept or use what I offer. Therefore, what is the use of this monkhood to me? I will return to the lay life," he thought. Then he wondered, "When I become a layman, what livelihood will I pursue? Maintaining a household is not easy; what job shall I do?" Then a way occurred to him: "I will sell this eight-cubit piece of cloth and buy a she-goat. Goats breed very quickly. I will sell the offspring as they are born and make money. Having earned money, I will take a wife. To that wife, a son will be born. Then, seating my wife and son in a carriage, I will come to visit my teacher monk, having named that son 'Saṅgharakkhita'. Then, while coming along the way, I will say to my wife, 'Give that child into my hands.' But the wife will say, 'You drive this carriage; I will look after the child.' Saying so, before they go far, due to the wife's negligence, the child falls right in front of the moving carriage wheel. The wheel runs over the child. Then, in anger, I will strike that wife with the goad, saying, 'When I asked for the child, you could not give him, and now you could not even protect him!' and I will beat her with the stick." Whom did he strike? He struck the head of his teacher monk, the Arahant! What did he strike with? The palm-leaf fan!

This venerable monk possessed supernormal powers (*abhiññā*). He was a great Arahant. He could see how another person's mind was working. Reflecting on it, he thought, "Why did my pupil strike my head with the palm-leaf fan like this?" Then he saw the thoughts that had been working in his mind. Thereupon, the senior monk said: "Saṅgharakkhita,

you could not strike your wife, but what is the fault of this old elder?" At that moment, a great sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) arose in this young monk. "Alas, I am ruined! My teacher monk saw how my mind was working." Out of great shame, he dropped the palm-leaf fan right there and began to run. A group of novices ran after him, caught him, and brought him before the Buddha. Seeing them from afar, the Buddha asked, "Why are you bringing this monk by force?" They replied, "This young monk, having become dissatisfied with the monkhood, started to run away. We caught him and brought him here." The Buddha asked, "Why, monk, having ordained in such a Dispensation (*Sāsana*), do you wish to return to the lay life like this?" Then, this monk recounted the entire sequence of events, the way his mind had been working. The Buddha then comforted his mind: "That is the nature of this mind. Do not let your mind be weakened by this. The mind is something that wanders far like this. Such is the nature of the mind." Giving a discourse, he uttered the Dhamma stanza we mentioned at the beginning:

Dūraṅgamaṃ ekacaraṃ,

asarīraṃ guhāsayaṃ,

Ye cittaṃ saññamessanti,

mokkhanti mārabandhanā.

In this stanza, four characteristics of the mind are mentioned—four aspects of the nature of the mind. *Dūraṅgamaṃ* means wandering far; *ekacaraṃ* means traveling alone. The nature of the mind is to wander far, and it also travels alone. *Asarīraṃ* means bodiless (having no physical body). *Guhāsayaṃ* means dwelling in a cave—hiding inside a cave. Those (*ye*) who restrain (*saññamessanti*) the mind (*cittaṃ*) which has this kind of nature, will be freed from the bond of Māra (*mārabandhanā*)—the bond of defilements of Māra, the bond of *saṃsāra*. That is to say, they realize Nibbāna. Thus, he taught a stanza of such profound meaning.

As mentioned in that story, having heard this stanza and the sermon, even that monk Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*), precisely by seeing the peril (*ādīnava*) of how his own mind had operated. For many people, understanding arises based on their own downfall. When one sees the peril, from then on, a keen interest arises to develop energy, mindfulness, concentration, and faith. Perhaps for this reason, and due to his past merit, that monk attained Stream-entry, and it is mentioned that a large number of others also realized the Paths and Fruits.

Now let us try to understand the meaning of this valuable stanza a little further. It is worthwhile to consider the lessons we can extract for our lives from this stanza and story. Every single point mentioned about this mind is extremely deep.

Dūraṅgamaṃ (wandering far) is said because, according to the object the mind takes, it can travel very fast and very far. When we think of the Akaniṭṭha Brahma world, the mind goes to that Akaniṭṭha Brahma world. It travels that far, and with such rapidity. The Buddha declared, "I do not see any other thing in this world that changes,

transforms, or turns as rapidly as the mind." So, this mind spins and turns extremely quickly, faster than any wheel. Just as it turns rapidly, it also goes very far—*dūraṅgamaṃ*. Scientists say that light is the fastest thing in the universe. Be that as it may, there is nothing as fast as the mind. The mind travels far with such immense speed.

Next, *ekacaraṃ* means traveling alone, according to its own whim. "Traveling alone" means that, while the physical body of monk Saṅgharakkhita was right next to his teacher monk, his mind wandered off all alone. It conjured up many dreams about the future, like daydreaming. It went very far into the future. The mind has a nature of wandering aimlessly at its own whim. Next, *asarīraṃ* (bodiless). We recognize a person based on their body. We recognize someone by their color, signs, and so on. But the mind has no body by which to recognize it. Moreover, when we think of a journey, there is a body associated with it. But the mind has no body. Therefore, when the mind wanders, it is difficult to grasp where it went—*asarīraṃ*.

Guhāsayaṃ (dwelling in a cave): the "cave" refers to this very cage of a body. This is indeed a cave. A cave is a place where one can hide. The primary elements (*mahābhūta*) of earth, water, fire, and wind are called *dhātus* (elements) or *mahābhūtas* (great elements). To put it briefly, this body is almost like a place haunted by "great ghosts"—that is, the great elements (*mahābhūta*). Every one of us has a body created from these four elements, known as the great elements. The mind is hidden inside this body. It is not easy to point out and say, "The mind is in such-and-such a place." Thus, all four terms—*dūraṅgamaṃ*, *ekacaraṃ*, *asarīraṃ*, *guhāsayaṃ*—indicate the subtlety of the mind. The mind travels very far. It also wanders alone according to its whim. Furthermore, this mind has no physical body for us to run after and catch. When that monk started running, four or five people went and caught him. But when the mind starts running, even twenty or thirty people running cannot catch it. The nature of the mind is such that the more you chase it, the further it runs. Thus, all of these show the subtlety of the mind—traveling far, wandering alone, having no body, and dwelling inside a cave. The stanza declares that whoever restrains, tames, or trains a mind that is so mysterious and incomprehensibly subtle, will be freed from the bond of Māra.

Just as he revealed the nature of the mind, the Buddha also showed the way of taming and taming this mind—the manner of taming indicated by the word *saṃyama* (restraint). In some instances in this Dhamma, this mind is compared to a wild bull. Indeed, like a wild bull, this mind is something ready to run wild without submitting to any control. It breaks loose and runs away. What then is the method shown in this path of Dhamma pointed out by the Buddha? Just as a wild bull is tamed by being tied to a post with a rope, the mind must be tamed. What is this post? The post is shown as the *kammaṭṭhāna* (meditation subject). Pious friends, *kamaṭahana* means *kammaṭṭhāna*. The meditation subject is a certain topic chosen for meditation. This is called *kamaṭahana*. *Ṭhāna* means place. *Kamma* means work or action. In modern terms, it is like a workplace or workshop. The workplace of the meditation practitioner is the topic of meditation—some specific subject. If it is loving-kindness meditation, it is "May they be well." If it is recollection of the Buddha, it is a word like "Araham" or "Buddho"—some

meditation topic. This is the *kamaṭahana*, or the post. On this post, one must tie it with a rope. What is the rope? The Buddha has pointed that out too: *sati*. *Sati* means mindfulness. This wild bull must be tied to that post of the meditation subject with the rope of mindfulness.

What is done by that? It dispels the unwholesome states (*akusala*) that flow into the mind. It also has the nature of preventing future unwholesome states from flowing in, a state of not getting caught up in them. We can easily understand this through an illustration or a sight commonly seen even in this area. Sometimes, near a paddy field, we see a bull tied to a post. Why is it tied? If by chance the bull eats the paddy crop in the field, trouble will come to the bull from the owner of the field, and trouble will also come to the bull's owner. Therefore, it is tied to a post. But because a bull is a bull, what does it do? It goes on grazing on the grass and gradually, almost unconsciously, starts eating the paddy in the field. Right then, when the rope by which it is tied tightens around its neck, it becomes aware. Through this awareness, the bull is pulled back toward the post. Again and again, it grazes on the grass and wanders back toward the field, and again it is pulled back this way by the rope. Pious friends, it is exactly like this that mindfulness operates. Through this mindfulness, the mind is kept from wandering into unsuitable areas, allowing it to roam only within its proper domain.

In the Dhamma, a word that goes hand in hand with *sati* is *sampajañña*. Usually, *sampajañña* is translated as "clear comprehension." But a better word is "awareness" or "attentiveness" (being aware). In society, a word like "reminding" is used. But that is done by others; this is not like that. This is a self-awareness. Imagine someone faints and loses consciousness. After this unconscious person is taken to a hospital, let us say they regain consciousness. As soon as they regain consciousness, they look around, asking, "Where am I?" and search for an answer. That means they are trying to become aware. In the same way, it was without mindfulness that Monk Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita was building daydreams about the future. Thus, the moment his teacher monk spoke those few words, he became aware. Mindfulness returned. That is what is called *sampajañña*. The terms that assist the meditator, therefore, are mindfulness and awareness (*sati-sampajañña*), which go together. Along with mindfulness, due to the application of mindfulness, awareness arises, and through that, defilements are suppressed.

In this way, the Buddha has pointed out a path of Dhamma based on this mindfulness and awareness. It is called the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). We call the Buddha "Buddha," which implies that we are his children—the children of the Buddha. Not only the Sangha, but anyone who has gone to the Buddha for refuge with faith, when they call him "Buddha," it signifies that they are children of that Buddha. The Buddha on one occasion declared: "Monks, wander in your father’s domain, your ancestral pasture. If you wander in your father’s domain, Māra will not find an opportunity." What is this father's domain? "Father" refers to himself. The Buddha points out the pasture as the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Here, the four foundations of mindfulness are shown: contemplation of the body, contemplation of feeling (*vedanā*), contemplation of the mind, and contemplation of mind-objects. What

are these four foundations of mindfulness shown by the Buddha in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta? It refers to a very simple form of awareness. The method employed by the Buddha is indeed wondrous.

Contemplation of the body is a certain kind of awareness regarding the body. That is, the activity of the body. In maintaining postures and so on, when walking, one walks with the understanding, "This is walking, this is walking." Next, when sitting, lying down, or reclining, one gives that understanding to the mind: "This is reclining." What is achieved by this? The scattering nature of the mind is halted. The mind gets scattered due to delusion. It was because he forgot that he had a palm-leaf fan in his hand while fanning his teacher monk, and forgot that he was standing behind his teacher monk—due to lack of mindfulness or delusion—that he behaved in that manner. If that monk had thought even slightly, "I am fanning, fanning, I am fanning here," if he had that awareness that "this in my hand is the palm-leaf fan," then that scattering of his mind would have been prevented. But what happened was the exact opposite.

That is why the Buddha points out, at a very basic level, to conduct oneself with a certain awareness of what one is doing and saying. The primary postures of the body—going and coming, sitting and standing—every one of them is reflected upon as, "I am going, sitting, standing." That awareness comes through reflection. "Reflection" means maintaining mindfulness that "the body is in such and such a posture." So much so that the Buddha points out that not only going and coming, but however the body is disposed, one knows it as it is. One constantly directs the mind to the way the body is disposed. In that way, regarding the body.

Next is the contemplation of feeling (*vedanā*). How feeling (*vedanā*) comes and goes. Pleasant feeling, painful feeling, and neutral feeling which is called equanimity. One is aware of how every single feeling arises and passes away. Through this understanding, the scattering nature of the mind is eliminated. When there is a rubber coating on an electric wire, the electric shock does not strike. In the same way, through understanding, when one proceeds with understanding, the mind does not scatter. That is the kind of thing the Buddha points out.

Contemplation of the mind means that due to various attachments, or due to hatred, or delusion, the mind takes on different colors, as it were. In other words, the mind changes. According to the way it changes, one recognizes it: "Lust has arisen in me, hatred has arisen in me, delusion has arisen in me"—thus recognizing the state of the mind. Next, the thoughts running and working within the mind. One understands those thoughts as just thoughts. If that monk, while all these thoughts were arising, had thought, "This is only a thought, this is only a thought. No trade or other activity of mine is actually taking place. Here, it is only the mind that is at work"—if he had that understanding, such a great upheaval would not have occurred. From this, it is clear that the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) pointed out by the Buddha are what belong to all of us who are children of the Buddha.

That is the pasture (*gocara*). *Gocara* means the area where cattle roam—the domain belonging to cattle. In the ordinary world, there is the term "pasture." But its basic idea—the word "pasture"—is often derived from cattle, referring to the area belonging to cattle where they are meant to graze. In the same way, the Buddha points out the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). He shows that the mind must constantly be made to wander within the four foundations of mindfulness. Within that wandering lies precisely that awareness which goes hand in hand with mindfulness and clear comprehension. Through this awareness, the scattering nature of the mind is prevented.

Anupassanā means "contemplating" or "seeing in accordance with." In this body, it is a contemplation of the body in the body. Looking at the body in the body, one understands the nature of the body. "This is the nature of the body; this is how the body functions." Next, "this is the nature of feeling (*vedanā*)." One understands each of these conditions. That is what is called contemplating. Or else, to explain the word *anupassanā*, we know that after a carpenter planes a piece of wood, he casts a peculiar look at it. He lets the piece of wood speak for itself, as it were, to see whether it is perfectly level or not. He casts a special glance at it like that. Similarly, one directs one's own attention towards all these things.

Not thinking, "this is beautiful" or "this is strong," but if there is something in the body, one understands it just as it is. It is the same with feeling (*vedanā*), and the same with the mind. Whether the thoughts that enter the mind are good or bad, one reflects on each of them in that manner. Through this reflection, understanding grows, wisdom grows. It is through understanding, when wisdom is developed to a high level, that one is able to realize Nibbāna one day. It is with such wisdom that one is able to be freed from all defilements and realize even that noble state of Arahantship.

Likewise, the Buddha has pointed out that breathing in and breathing out—which we constantly do unconsciously—is a very wonderful thing. Every Buddha attained Buddhahood through this mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). *Ānāpāna* means breathing in and breathing out. That a Buddha emerges through this is a wondrous thing when one thinks about it; it is the simplest thing in the world. From the day of birth until death, this flow of breath back and forth is what takes place. Yet, within this lies the way to attain that highest wisdom. From this, we can see what an invaluable thing the Buddha has pointed out to us. Normally, inhaling and exhaling, the breath going up and down, happens unconsciously. Practicing to do that consciously is what is called *ānāpānasati*. In *ānāpānasati*, *sati* means mindfulness. One establishes mindfulness on the two processes: breathing in and breathing out.

Through this, a great understanding arises. To put it briefly, the lack of understanding of this in-breath and out-breath is a primary cause for the persistence of the notion of "I" and "mine," the view of self, which strongly holds onto the view of "I" and "mine." What we call life or vitality is indeed just this breath. But if one knows its true nature, one would think, "Where is an 'I' here?" Because we are constantly drawing in a portion of the wind blowing in the world. Sometimes it is clean air that we draw in. Then, we expel it along with the waste inside, like a bad toxic gas. Yet, within this process, we construct

an "I." The foolishness of this is understood precisely when one develops mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). This is a process that happens naturally, and it is an effort to perform this natural process with awareness. It is indeed something that must be practiced gradually.

Through the process of inhaling and exhaling, one understands that in this breath, there is only the drawing in of external air, letting it operate inside, and then expelling it. Then, to engage in this with attention, reflection is helpful. By applying reflection to each of these, and by focusing one's attention, one understands its true nature. When the nature of this in-breath and out-breath is understood in this very manner, one sees impermanence (*anicca*) through this itself. Every bit of it is impermanent (*anicca*).

Likewise, when directing the mind to the in-breath and out-breath, one realizes that what we think of as an easy thing is actually a great suffering (*dukkha*), a great trouble. That is, with what great difficulty we inhale and exhale! This is understood when its subtle aspect is revealed. Furthermore, it is only for a very short moment that we can live on an inhaled breath. We must exhale it and take another. No matter how fragrant—even if we inhale the scent of flowers or air filled with perfumes—we cannot hold it in. Such is the nature of this body that after a short while, we must expel it. Because of this, the understanding of suffering (*dukkha*) also arises.

Next, if something is impermanent (*anicca*) and of the nature of suffering (*dukkha*), there is nothing here that can be taken as "I" or controlled. "I cannot control this inhaling and exhaling. This too is of a highly unsatisfactory nature." Thus, the notion of "I" and "mine" gradually slips away, revealing not-self (non-self / *anattā*).

In this way, what the Buddha points out through the four foundations of mindfulness is to reflect wisely on the bodily processes, going and coming, and all other activities. Not in a wrong way, but wisely. That is called radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Not according to one's own wishes, but according to how they actually occur. One develops the understanding: "In this way, this occurs; in this way, this occurs." Through developing such understanding, there emerges the realization that everything has a nature of arising, persisting, and passing away. Every single one of these—postures, going and coming, standing and sitting—has a beginning, a middle, and an end. It begins, there is a middle phase, and then it ends. Actually, there is only a beginning and a wearing away. Between this beginning and wearing away, or between arising and passing away, we construct a "persistence." What we call "persistence" is actually a state of impermanence between arising and passing away. This is called *ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ* (the alteration of that which persists); what is called "persistence" is constantly changing. Within it, there is a subtle alteration. It does not remain, yet we regard it as persistence.

This fact is understood in an increasingly subtle manner if one practices that mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). When breathing, it is nothing complex; one simply inhales mindfully, and exhales mindfully. That is the basic training, the primary taming. Through this, the Buddha has specifically pointed out that, as a benefit of this mindfulness of breathing, the meditation of *ānāpānasati* especially cuts off thoughts

(*vitakka*). Pious friends, *vitakka* means thoughts. How much time in daily life is wasted if one spends it building castles in the air about the future, or regretting the past! Preventing both of these, bringing the mind back, and living in the present moment is what a meditator does in the true sense. That is a great saving, a great economy. Think about yourself in daily life. How much do we waste time thinking about the past? How much do we ruin and waste time building castles in the air about the future? Thus, if someone makes an effort through these meditations to live in the present moment, it is a great saving for them. It is a saving, and as mentioned earlier, Māra the defilement cannot enter.

Because, like the rubber insulation of an electric wire, there is understanding in everything and through everything. Due to that understanding, the mind does not scatter in that brief moment. Through that, concentration (*samādhi*) emerges. It is to keep the mind from scattering that the Buddha has employed this method. This is a very subtle method, a method employed for living in the present moment. "When walking, one knows: 'I am walking.' When sitting, one knows: 'I am sitting.' When standing, one knows: 'I am standing.' When lying down, one knows: 'I am lying down.' In whatever way the body is disposed, one knows it in that way." Next, when inhaling, one inhales with the very understanding, "I am inhaling." When exhaling, one exhales with that understanding.

When practiced in this manner, one might think, "This is something that requires special dedication; therefore, it can only be done by monks." No, pious friends. Sometimes, lay devotees came to the Buddha and said, "Venerable Sir, although we lead household lives, if at certain times we live with our minds established in the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), we experience and realize a great solace during those times." Similarly, the Buddha told the monks, "Monks, if you have compassion for your friends, companions, and relatives, you should teach them the four foundations of mindfulness, establish them in them, and explain them to them." Thus, the Buddha gave his permission.

This also shows that these four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) are common to all of us. Everyone who says "Buddha" should understand that their father's domain/pasture is indeed the four foundations of mindfulness. The "pasture" also means true nourishment. We consume so much food. With this food, we only increase *saṃsāra*. But it is through this nourishment of the four foundations of mindfulness, pointed out by the Buddha, that we can one day end the suffering of *saṃsāra* and realize the supreme Nibbāna. Therefore, one should especially maintain mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) regarding one's daily activities, as well as practicing this mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*).

Let alone other things, the Buddha states in this Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta that not only major postures, but walking forward, returning, bending and stretching limbs, looking ahead, looking aside, and all other activities should be done with mindfulness and clear comprehension. Nay, even in passing stool and urine. When even the smallest things of

daily life are done with mindfulness and wisdom established, through that, wisdom grows.

It is because of the lack of correct understanding of our body, the lack of correct understanding of sensations/feelings (*vedanā*), the lack of correct understanding of the mind, and the lack of understanding of the thoughts that enter the mind, that we wander in this *saṃsāra* for such a long time. Therefore, what the Buddha brings out through the four foundations of mindfulness cannot be taught by another, nor can it be shown by another. To see the true state of things in the world, some have invented microscopes—microscopes, telescopes, and so forth. Placing a very subtle thing under a microscope, they look at its interior. But, pious friends, the real microscope is not the one invented by science; it is this "contemplation" (*anupassanā*). If we were to approximate a Sinhala word for *anupassanā*, we might say "contemplating" or "seeing in accordance with." It is like the carpenter inspecting the knots in wood, looking at it to understand its true nature. When looked at, it is not something complex. It is simple. To reveal the true nature of everything, one looks at it with equanimity. Not thinking "it is mine" or "how can there be a fault in it?" but "this is of the body, this is of the physical frame," not "my body." Regard it as just a body.

That is why, when the Buddha preached on the four foundations of mindfulness, he did so not only regarding oneself, but also regarding others. Sometimes, we learn not only from our own body. There are things to be learned also from what happens to the bodies of others. A person who thinks their own body is beautiful may experience a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) when they see the decaying state of another's body. That is why the Buddha sometimes showed the condition of others' bodies to those who possessed pride and intoxication, thereby opening the way for their understanding. In whatever way, taking both one's own body and others' bodies as objects, one understands the true nature of this body.

Next, the contemplation of feeling—the true nature of feelings, and the nature of the mind. Even regarding the nature of the mind, sometimes when intense anger arises in us, we do not see its perilous side. But when someone else is angry, we see how distorted their face becomes due to that anger. From that, we see its perilous side. We think, "Look how distorted someone becomes due to anger."

In this manner, what is done by the four foundations of mindfulness is to bring about a true understanding of one's body and one's life as it wanders in *saṃsāra*. Primarily, by applying the mind to this inhaling and exhaling, those thoughts (*vitakka*) are cut off, and thoughts are not allowed to arise. Thoughts generally arise because of not being aware that this process of inhalation and exhalation is taking place. If one keeps the mind focused on just that, then during that brief time, there is no room for the mind to scatter. That is how it is.

Next, through this mindfulness, concentration (*samādhi*) arises. Concentration (*samādhi*) means one-pointedness—the unification of the mind. *Ekaggatā* means one-pointedness. Therefore, the opposite of the mind's scattering nature is one-pointedness.

Once the scattering mind is restrained, the mind gradually becomes calm. Let us say a wild bull, having pulled this way and that, and tried as much as possible to escape, pulls here and there. In the end, when it cannot escape, it goes and lies down right next to the post. Or, let us consider the bull tied near the field; it always tends to wander toward the crop. It drifts there almost unconsciously. Then, the rope reminds it. It is reminded by the rope called mindfulness. Thereupon, it returns to the post of the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

In this way, let us understand the practical value of these teachings through those similes. These things pointed out by the Buddha can be put into practice in daily life, each according to their own level. A point comes when the bull realizes, "I cannot go beyond this. This is my portion," and grazes freely within that area. Similarly, if someone has chosen a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*)—say, recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), using the word "Buddho, Buddho"—upon hearing the word "Buddho," a person of faith experiences a profound feeling. So much so that, during the time the Buddha lived, even Brahmins who were accustomed to associating with past Buddhas, when they heard, "There is a Buddha!" experienced a immense, wondrous concentration (*samādhi*), a wondrous transformation, solely through the faith that arose from that. Similarly, through the very word "Buddha," when one constantly reflects on it—this constant reflection is called *anussati*, *buddhānussati*. The meditation of *buddhānussati* means mindfulness that follows after the Buddha. Just like "contemplating" (*anupassanā*) or the "microscope", here it is the mindfulness that follows—mindfulness that follows after the Buddha.

Then, if one constantly brings to mind even one quality of the Buddha in that way, the result is that the scattering nature of the mind is prevented. Whenever the mind tries to scatter, one implants this word "Buddho" into the mind. It is like a mantra. However, it is not something recited without meaning like a magical formula. With faith, contemplating and recollecting the Buddha, one constantly gives the word "Buddho, Buddho" to the mind. Sometimes, at the beginning, one may have to say it silently. When thoughts come breaking in, to suppress them, one may have to repeat it almost verbally for a short while. After doing this for a considerable time, almost automatically, whenever the mind starts wandering far, the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) presents itself. After some time, once one is accustomed to it, without one even knowing, when defilements arise, the necessary weapon presents itself.

Similarly, let us say someone starting loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*) constantly reflects on a phrase like "May they be well." If necessary, they may even say that phrase—not by shouting, but in the mind, saying "May they be well"—constantly giving it to the mind. This is done in alignment with the heart; it is not just a mechanical repetition. When that feeling is maintained for a long time, there is no opportunity for those defilements to enter, as there is no room left for them.

What then is accomplished by this *satipaṭṭhāna* method? Dispelling arisen defilements and preventing unarisen defilements from arising. It is through this that the mind is made calm. The scattering nature of the mind. The Buddha has pointed out that the

mind scatters in five ways. These are called the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). The mind scatters due to sensual thoughts. Next, the mind scatters due to thoughts of hatred. Then, due to the sluggish nature of the mind, such as sloth and torpor, the mind's workability is lost. Due to restlessness and worry, one regrets things one could not do in the past. In that way, due to various regrets, the mind scatters. Or else, due to doubt, the hesitation that wonders, "Is this right or wrong?" Because of these scattering tendencies of the mind called hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), and because of the mind's unworkability, the mind does not become concentrated or one-pointed. Just like a turbulent reservoir, no useful work can be derived from it.

The Buddha shows that in order to concentrate this, one should take up a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*)—some meditation topic suitable for one's temperament. If one is of a hateful temperament, then loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*). If of a lustful temperament, contemplation of foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*). If faith is lacking, develop recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). If a sense of urgency is lacking, mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*), constantly reflecting on some short phrase like *Maraṇaṃ niyataṃ, jīvitaṃ aniyataṃ* (Death is certain, life is uncertain). If one practices this constantly, it is a great protection for them.

The cause for all the crimes and things that happen due to sudden anger in daily life can be clearly seen from the behavior of that monk Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita we mentioned. Due to the displeasure that arose in that monk—displeasure toward that Arahant—it was not actually a matter of revenge, but because of it, thinking "I am leaving, I am returning to lay life," and then, from that point, thoughts of lust and so forth arose, and he spent the rest of his time wandering in a dream world. Indeed, like falling from the sky, a great sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) arose in him in the end when he realized that his teacher monk knew his state of mind. From this, we can see that in daily life we must constantly monitor how our mind is working. We look after this body in so many ways. We bathe it, feed it, and give it drink. In addition to setting up whatever protective measures we can, we even employ others for this purpose. But another person cannot protect this mind in that way. One must protect it oneself. It is something one must protect oneself. One must do this oneself. That is why the Buddha declared: *Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ, akkhātāro tathāgatā* (You yourselves must make the effort; the Tathāgatas are only teachers). Even the Buddha cannot grant us our Nibbāna. He can only point out the path to it. For that, we ourselves must do what needs to be done. What needs to be done is what is pointed out there: namely, the development of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).

According to the leisure one gets in daily life, perhaps by taking some time off if possible, or on free days, on a Poya day. Although there are ordinary observances of precepts, many people do not have much interest in meditation. After observing precepts, they spend their time talking about household matters or about what is happening in the country and the world. Instead of doing that, on such an occasion, one should actually withdraw, thinking, "Now I have received a good opportunity to develop the four foundations of mindfulness." Working quietly and alone, directing the mind to one's

postures, inhalation and exhalation, and observing them, one begins to understand their nature of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / *anattā*). Insight (*vipassanā*) means a special kind of seeing.

Looking through microscopes, scientists obtain various insights. Those are kinds of knowledge obtained in relation to certain external things. That is mere knowledge, not wisdom. No matter how vast a store of knowledge scientists gather, no matter what series of academic degrees they hold, their daily lives are often unsuccessful. They have no strength to overcome the problems of daily life. They have no strength to control the mind. Falling into grave dangers and crimes, they ruin their lives. What is the use of accumulating that vast store of knowledge when, if you look at the library, it is full of books, but indeed no wisdom has accumulated within? That is why only the Buddha points out the path to this wisdom. This wisdom is a light that illuminates the inside.

The Buddha has pointed out wisdom as a light. There are four lights in this world. The Buddha points out these four lights as: the light of the moon, the light of the sun, the light of fire, and the light of wisdom. Whichever of these lights there may be, the light that is superior to all of them is the light of wisdom—the radiance of wisdom. It is to develop this radiance of wisdom that, by reflecting and gradually through awareness of one's own activity, one develops understanding. As that understanding increases, mindfulness is developed. Next, concentration is developed. Next, its true nature (*yathā-bhūta*). "True nature," pious friends, refers to the impermanent nature of all these things. As one understands impermanence deeper and deeper, one sees that everything has an arising and a passing away. Between those two, there is something like a "persistence." Although we call it persistence, it is just a semblance of persistence. It is within that that we think so highly of "I" and "mine."

But when one realizes, "This is indeed the world; in this entire *saṃsāra*, what is actually taking place here is a kind of performance, or rather, something like an illusion," a disenchantment arises, recognizing, "There is nothing here to be taken seriously." It is through that disenchantment that one can one day be liberated from this *saṃsāra*. Generally, when people hear the words "disenchantment with *saṃsāra*," many pull a sour face. Nowadays, some very wealthy people, even when they go to a house of mourning, are often terrified. When they see it, they do not even like the word "death." That they will have to leave their wealth behind and depart one day is something most people dislike. But, pious friends, one day we will have to face this truth. Therefore, the Buddha states: do not wait until it is too late, but make an effort to become aware of this truth. Not making others aware. There is no liberation for oneself by making others aware. It is only by becoming aware oneself that one attains liberation.

That very awareness is called *sampajāna—sampajañña*. By reflecting in accordance with mindfulness, one understands: "This body grows, this body persists, this decays. These feelings arise—pleasant or painful feelings arise, persist, and pass away." Next, through these, one gains a deep, profound understanding. It is through that that one understands the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / *anattā*), and attains the Paths and Fruits known as Stream-entry, Once-

returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship. Understanding means the turning of that Wheel of Dhamma within one's own mind-stream (*citta-santāna*). Through the understanding of impermanence, the understanding of arising and passing away, when this is deeply understood, a genuine disenchantment regarding these things arises. What causes one to go on far in *saṃsāra* is craving (*taṇhā*). Gradually, the power of this craving (*taṇhā*) decreases. Next, through this disenchantment, one realizes, "There is nothing in any of this to be grasped. There is nothing to be taken as 'I' or 'mine'." It is at that very moment, at some point through insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), that one gets the strength to attain that noble fruit of Stream-entry and be freed from the four woeful planes. Thereafter, by further turning that Wheel of Dhamma within one's mind-stream, through the realization of the Paths and Fruits of Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, one can free oneself from this entire mass of *saṃsāric* suffering—such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death—and find solace in the supreme, great deathless Nibbāna.

Therefore, we must bring forth the path to this from that very running mind we spoke of earlier. Precisely by seeing the peril and the undesirable results of a running mind, we are able to bring forth some effort, some course of action, to halt this running mind. Perhaps the reason why Monk Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita attained Stream-entry on that occasion was because he saw the perilous side. Understanding that "because my mind ran wild, I ended up in such a situation," he must have engaged in that activity with mindfulness, at least while the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma.

Therefore, you, pious congregation, should think about this occasion of listening to the Dhamma. Usually we say, "May we realize Nibbāna by the merit of listening to the Dhamma," and everyone says "Sādhu." It is far more valuable if we direct our minds to what we actually did during this listening to the Dhamma. Pious friends, through this listening to the Dhamma, we gained the strength to bring forth several valuable virtues within our mind-stream. Faith. Now, when everyone listens to the Dhamma of the Buddha, faith is present there. Next, due to that very faith, there is an application of energy. Dispelling sleepiness, with energy, keeping the mind awake, one engages in this listening to the Dhamma. Thereby, faith is developed. Next, energy is developed. Likewise, when listening awake and alert, from that comes mindfulness, attentiveness. The mind following along with this Dhamma—that is the development of mindfulness. Not unmindfulness, but mindfulness. Thus, having developed that mindfulness, some people, while listening to the sermon, feel a good concentration, a one-pointedness of mind, a deep calmness right on the seat they are sitting on. A concentration.

Next, through that concentration, while the Dhamma is being preached, even if it is a sermon heard a hundred times, a profound understanding arises. That is what is called wisdom. Indeed, "such is the nature of *saṃsāra*, the nature of my body, the nature of life—it is impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / *anattā*), isn't it? If so, there is nothing in this to be grasped. There is nothing here to generate craving (*taṇhā*) for"—when such a deep understanding arises within oneself, it is through that understanding that, even while the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma, people

penetrated the Paths and Fruits such as Stream-entry. Therefore, one should understand that, as a benefit of this listening to the Dhamma, what we can experience at this very moment is faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

Among the requisites of enlightenment pointed out by the Buddha, these are shown as the spiritual faculties that assist in reaching Nibbāna. It is not through the external faculties of eyes, ears, nose, and so on that one sees Nibbāna. It is by generating and developing those qualities of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom that one is able to realize Nibbāna. Therefore, you should bear in mind that today, on this valuable Poya day, you, pious congregation, have been able to develop those very benefits for yourselves through this listening to the Dhamma—namely, faith, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Developing them further, and as far as possible according to the time you get, by devoting some leisure or taking time off if possible to engage in meditation activities along this path of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), you should make the aspiration: "May this listening to the Dhamma, and the strength of determination accumulated through it, help us to escape from this extremely fearsome suffering of *saṃsāra* as quickly as possible and realize the supreme, great deathless Nibbāna!"

Furthermore, it is not only we who seek the realization of Nibbāna; every being in the heavenly worlds who has not yet seen Nibbāna, and every wise person in this entire universe, is looking to escape from this suffering of *saṃsāra*. Therefore, we do not merely reap the benefits of this listening to Dhamma for ourselves; there is also the custom of sharing the merit. Accordingly, you should reflect: "May whatever assembly of Sasana-protecting deities and Brahmas there be, as well as all the guardian deities and spirits presiding over this place—may all these deities, having rejoiced in this merit of our Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening, realize the supreme, great deathless Nibbāna through their own aspired Bodhi!" Thus you should aspire. "May whatever relatives who have passed away in our name, and whoever from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha Brahma world who desires merit and seeks Nibbāna—may every one of them, having rejoiced in this merit of listening to and preaching the Dhamma, find solace in the supreme, great deathless Nibbāna!" Aspiring in this manner, recite the stanzas and transfer the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #77

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.76)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Natthi rāgasamo aggi,

natthi dosasamo gaho,

natthi mohasamaṃ jālaṃ,

natthi taṇhāsamo nadī.

From:

Dhammapada 251 (Malavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Listening to the True Dhamma is pointed out in the teachings as something extremely rare. It is considered rare not only because the arising of a Buddha in the world who expounds the True Dhamma is rare, but also because those who have the capacity and the corresponding inclination to listen to the Dhamma with full attention are rare in this world. Various saṃsāric weaknesses obstruct the hearing of the Dhamma. When one is overcome by those weaknesses, even if the sound of a Dhamma sermon strikes the ear, that Dhamma does not enter the mind or the inner ear. Now, in the background story related to the verse chosen as today's theme, a relevant incident is mentioned.

One day, five lay devotees came to the Jetavana monastery to listen to the Dhamma. Having arrived, they paid homage to the Buddha and sat down to one side. The Buddha commenced the Dhamma sermon. While this Dhamma sermon was being delivered, one of these five fell into a deep sleep. The second sat scratching the ground with his finger. The third sat shaking a nearby tree. The fourth sat gazing at the sky instead of listening to the sermon. Only the fifth person listened to the Dhamma with keen attention. While this was going on, Ven. Ānanda, who was standing fanning the Buddha, observed this and asked: "Venerable Sir, when the Blessed One is preaching the Dhamma so wonderfully, what is the reason (for this behavior)?" When asked, the Buddha inquired:

“Ānanda, do you know who these people are?” When Ven. Ānanda replied, “No, Venerable Sir,” the Buddha then revealed their saṃsāric habits in this manner: “This person who has fallen asleep has been born five hundred times in the animal womb of serpents, as a cobra or a snake; he has taken birth (*jāti*) so for five hundred lifetimes. Due to that habit, he is now fallen asleep, as if coiled up with his head tucked in.” Ven. Ānanda asked: “Venerable Sir, when you say five hundred births (*jāti*), was it consecutively or intermittently?” Thereupon the Buddha declared: “Ānanda, the number of times they were born intermittently in the human world, deva world, animal world, etc., cannot be told even by a Buddha. What was declared here is that he was born consecutively without interruption for five hundred births (*jāti*). It is due to that saṃsāric habit that he has fallen asleep.” The Buddha declared the same regarding the others as well: “This person who keeps scratching the ground was born as an earthworm for five hundred births (*jāti*). This person who is engaged in shaking the tree was a monkey for five hundred births (*jāti*); he has repeatedly obtained monkey existences. The one who is gazing at the sky has taken birth (*jāti*) as an astrologer for five hundred lifetimes. The one who is listening to the Dhamma so well was born as a Brahmin versed in the Three Vedas for five hundred births (*jāti*). It is according to that habit that he listens so well.”

Then Ven. Ānanda asked again: “Venerable Sir, the Dhamma is being preached in such an extremely sweet manner. Despite this, why is it that these people do not listen to the Dhamma in this way?” Thereupon the Buddha declared: “Ānanda, do you think this Dhamma is sweet? That it is always a pleasant thing to everyone?” When Ven. Ānanda asked, “Why, is it not? Is it not pleasant?” the Blessed One replied: “Ānanda, for these saṃsāric beings, even the hearing of the three words ‘Buddha’, ‘Dhamma’, ‘Saṅgha’ is obtained only after millions of aeons (*kalpas*). For a longer time than that, they have spent their time engaging in various kinds of animal talk—that is, useless stories—and enjoying themselves in taverns and theaters. While those things are very pleasant to them, listening to this Dhamma is not a pleasant thing for many people.”

Next, he declared what the defilements are that dominate their minds for a long time. Pointing out the state of affairs in this *saṃsāra*—burning with the fire of lust (*rāga*) which surpasses all other fires in the world, suffering within the grip of hatred (*dosa*), entangled in the net of delusion (*moha*), and being swept away in the flowing river of craving (*taṇhā*)—the Buddha uttered the verse we cited as our theme:

> *Natthi rāgasamo aggi,*
>
> *natthi dosasamo gaho,*
>
> *natthi mohasamaṃ jālaṃ,*
>
> *natthi taṇhāsamo nadī.*

There is no fire like lust (*rāga*). The Buddha points out the fire of lust (*rāga*) as a far more severe fire than other fires, arising from within and burning.

There is no grip like hatred (*dosa*). When pythons, crocodiles, demons, and monsters seize, they catch one at a time. But the grip of hatred (*dosa*) can seize even a vast number at once; they are caught by hatred (*dosa*).

There is no net like delusion (*moha*). Delusion (*moha*) is an amazingly entangled net from which it is impossible to escape.

There is no river like craving (*taṇhā*). While other rivers dry up from time to time, this river of craving (*taṇhā*) flows continuously and at all times.

The Buddha preached that verse to show that *saṃsāra* is indeed of such a nature.

Now, this story is a very short story, an incident. But let us see what can be drawn from this. Principally, we see the act of listening to the True Dhamma. The Buddha specifically showed here that beings incline towards various things according to the nature of their minds. The Buddha possessed a special power to declare such things. That is called the knowledge of inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*). The Buddha possessed six extraordinary knowledges not shared by other disciples. One of them is the knowledge of inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*). Through this, the past state regarding the temperaments of beings is well understood. Specifically, the things relevant to that knowledge of inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*) are shown as temperament (*carita*), inclination (*adhimutti*), and capability or incapability (*bhavya-abhavya-tā*). Temperament (*carita*) refers to the wholesome and unwholesome actions (*kamma*) performed by beings in *saṃsāra*. Inclination (*adhimutti*) refers to the saṃsāric bent of beings. Particularly, the degree to which the mind is directed towards the wholesome or unwholesome side in this life, the Buddha sees as their bent, their flexibility. That is what is meant by inclination (*adhimutti*). Next, capability or incapability (*bhavya-abhavya-tā*) means that whether one can attain a noble path and fruit (*ariya-magga-phala*) in this very life or not is also visible to the Buddha. Even today, when looking for qualifications for someone's job or position, it is often these very factors that are brought forward: how is the person's character and behavior? Next, their flexibility, bent, and inclination—towards which side? Next, capabilities. Capability or incapability (*bhavya-abhavya-tā*) refers to these capabilities. In this way, the complete file of a person is understood by the Buddha the moment he directs his mind to it. It is according to this that the Buddha understood the character traits of these five individuals.

Then someone might ask: "If so, why did the Buddha continue to preach without stopping, even while that group was behaving in that manner?" We have to think that if even one person would benefit, the Buddha preaches targeting that individual. Thus, in that manner, the fifth person listened to the Dhamma properly. Not only that, it is mentioned in that story that after the Buddha gave this analysis, having heard it, that person who had listened to the sermon well even attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). Through that, through the analysis given by the Buddha, he must have understood the danger of *saṃsāra*. In any case, for the first four, their saṃsāric habits obstructed their hearing of the Dhamma. For the fifth person, who had been a Brahmin,

that habit assisted him in listening to that Dhamma. Through that, he also attained Stream-entry. So, from this, one aspect we can understand is about that very listening to the Dhamma—in what manner listening to the Dhamma should be done. The Buddha himself on many occasions has pointed out four benefits of listening to the Dhamma. Almost everyone may have heard of these.

By hearing the Dhamma, it is said, *assutaṃ suṇāti*: "one hears what has not been heard before." One gets to hear something one has not heard previously. When listening well to the Dhamma, sometimes one gets to hear a point of Dhamma that one has never heard up to that time. Not only that, if one has heard it before, one gets an opportunity to hear it more clearly: *sutaṃ pariyodapeti* (purifying what has been heard). An opportunity is received to purify it. Likewise, one gets the opportunity to dispel one's doubts: *kaṅkhaṃ vitarati*, the opportunity to remove doubt is obtained. Next, *diṭṭhiṃ ujuṃ karoti* means that if there are shortcomings in one's right view, an opportunity is obtained to straighten them out. Therefore, reminding us of those four benefits of the Dhamma, the Buddha advises that one should listen to the Dhamma with wisdom and complete attention.

Likewise, on the flip side, he indicates what kind of attitude prevents a person from benefiting from a Dhamma sermon. Five factors are pointed out. The Buddha has declared that if someone, while listening to the Dhamma, disparages the Dhamma talk, insults it, blames it, or blames the Dhamma expounder, or blames themselves, or looks at their own shortcomings and regrets them, or listens to the Dhamma with a distracted, non-concentrated mind, or reflects on the heard Dhamma in an incorrect manner—then that person cannot derive any benefit or fruit from the Dhamma. Therefore, according to this, we must realize that indeed, listening to the Dhamma must be done with great respect for it. In short, respect for the Dhamma is something far greater in this Dispensation than respect for individuals. In the past, Buddhists paid homage even to books, to Dhamma books, based on that respect for the Dhamma. We say "we pay homage to the Dhamma preacher," but in reality, that preacher receives it through the Dhamma sermon, through that very act. That is why, no matter how many senior people are present, if even a young novice monk is preaching the Dhamma, he is given the high seat. From that, we see that the Buddha has given the primary place to respect for the Dhamma, even above respect for individuals. The Buddha himself declared this on one occasion from his own life.

In the fifth week after his Enlightenment, while residing at the foot of the Ajapāla banyan tree, the Buddha related that a thought, a reflection, arose in him: "He who lives without showing respect and deference to anyone lives in suffering (*dukkha*). To whom should I now live showing respect and deference?" Thus, the Buddha stated that he reflected upon himself. Looking thus, when reflecting on the entire world including devas and brahmās, he saw no one in the world superior to himself in virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Then he thought: "In that case, to whom shall I show respect and deference?" Next, he thought: "If there is a Dhamma that has been realized by me, I must dwell for the remainder of my time honoring and respecting that very Dhamma." The

Buddha made such a determination. Knowing that thought, Sahampati, the king of Brahmās, arrived there at that moment and, in approval of the Buddha's thought, declared: "Whatever Blessed, Fully Enlightened Ones existed in the past, those Buddhas too followed this very custom; that is, they dwelt respecting and honoring the Dhamma. Future Buddhas too will likewise show respect to the Dhamma. May the Blessed One also dwell likewise respecting the Dhamma." Thus, it is said that he approved that thought. This is the matter concerning respect for the Dhamma. Thus, it is extremely clear from the Buddha's life itself. The Buddha himself has set the prime example regarding respect for the Dhamma.

Likewise, there are seventy-five training rules in the Vinaya Piṭaka, known as *Sekhiya*, in which both monks and novices must train themselves. Among those seventy-five training rules, sixteen are specifically about the preaching of the Dhamma. These also highlight this very aspect of respect for the Dhamma. If we consider them briefly, they mention those individuals to whom the Dhamma should not be preached. However, in almost all of them, a special concession is mentioned for a sick person. One can understand it in this way: It is said: "The Dhamma should not be preached to one who is not sick and is holding an umbrella in hand." This Vinaya rule is laid down for the Sangha. When it is said "to one who is not sick and is holding an umbrella," if there is sickness, there is an excuse. Otherwise, one must listen to the sermon after placing the umbrella aside. That is a custom that Buddhists have observed since ancient times. Next, it is also mentioned that the Dhamma should not be preached to one who is holding a staff in hand—something like a walking stick or a cane. If one is sick, there is allowance for it. Likewise, regarding a weapon (a weapon, a sword), the Dhamma is not preached to a person holding such a thing in hand. Next, it is similarly mentioned that if someone is wearing footwear—slippers, shoes, etc.—the Dhamma should not be preached to them either. It is because that custom is still followed that, leave alone other times, even when going to a sacred place, and especially during a Dhamma sermon, you, faithful devotees, remove your footwear. Likewise, it is mentioned regarding headwear: the Dhamma should not be preached to someone wearing a turban or a head covering. Through all of these, what is demonstrated is respect for the Dhamma. Next, it is said that the Dhamma should not be preached to someone who is lying down, unless they are sick.

Likewise, to one who is mounted on a vehicle, a person standing outside the vehicle should not preach the Dhamma. Next, there is a habit of some sitting on shop-fronts clasping both knees with both hands; there is a certain way of sitting when gossiping. That is not a decorous way of sitting. Sitting in that manner is called "binding with clasped hands." The Dhamma should not be preached to one who is sitting in such an improper manner, clasping the knees with both hands or binding them with a cloth.

Next, it is specifically mentioned regarding sitting: if one is sitting on the ground, the Dhamma should not be preached to one seated on a seat, unless they are sick. Sitting on a low seat, one should not preach the Dhamma to one on a high seat. Likewise, suppose two people are walking along talking. If the one behind wants to say a point of Dhamma, they must come forward to the same level and speak. That is, there is a rule that while walking behind, one should not preach the Dhamma to one walking ahead. Similarly, let

us suppose there are two roads—the main road on one side and a side path. It is also laid down that walking on a side path, one should not preach the Dhamma to one walking on the main road. When looking at these, it is amazing. To us, they seem like very trivial things. But through every single one of these, the Buddha highlighted that very respect for the Dhamma. The Dhamma should be preached to one who is prepared and ready to receive it with proper respect. Such is the matter.

But it becomes a question as to how far these matters regarding respect for the Dhamma are observed in this day and age. That is precisely why the discussion about directing full attention arises. Especially nowadays, there are loudspeakers and various other devices in the homes of faithful devotees, allowing them to listen to sermons whenever they wish. Likewise, because preaching sermons is now so common, this is an era where the value, excellence, and pricelessness of Dhamma preaching is being forgotten. Indeed, rather than listening to the Dhamma, now it is merely heard. Listening to the Dhamma is active; but now it has become something passive that is just heard. That is where it has gone. It is no longer something to be listened to attentively, but has turned into something heard automatically. Even at home, while songs, news, etc., are playing on devices, people engage in other chores. If, according to that habit, one goes on to do the same with listening to the Dhamma, sometimes a wrong, distorted understanding of the Dhamma can result. You, faithful devotees, may know in common parlance we say "songs and news are playing (going on)." In the same way, we say "the sermon is playing (going on)." So, that is the state to which home Dhamma preaching has arrived.

Indeed, although Dhamma sermons are abundant and the Dhamma is common, listening to the Dhamma is becoming rarer and rarer. That listening to the Dhamma is rare means that those who come forward to listen with full attention are fewer now, just as in the past. In the past, according to the story mentioned earlier, only one out of five listened to the Dhamma properly. Today as well, it could be the same, or perhaps even less than one percent. In that manner, there is a sign of decline. We must understand this. We cannot drag all those ancient lifestyles of the past back. But in everything, we must understand that there are two sides: benefits and drawbacks. We are compelled to use these loudspeakers and such things due to various reasons. But if respect for the Dhamma declines through that, we must be mindful of that too. At home, that can happen very often. Someone might ask: "Then, is it worse than not listening at all to listen to the Dhamma while doing some work?" The shortcoming in that is just this: sometimes, something not uttered by the Sangha is understood as having been said. Not only that, they go and tell others, "Look, such-and-such monk said this." What is the reason? It was not heard properly. They were doing some other work, or they were in a different line of thought. That is why this Dhamma is something extremely rare. The Buddha said that even the three words 'Buddha', 'Dhamma', 'Saṅgha' are heard by beings only after millions of aeons (*kalpas*). In the same way, the Dhamma, the preaching of the Dhamma, is extremely rare. Only as long as a Buddha's Dispensation exists will you, faithful devotees, get to hear the teachings that show the path to Nibbāna. Therefore, respect for the Dhamma must be cultivated within. These matters were indicated as Vinaya rules for the Sangha. To you, faithful devotees, these might sometimes seem like

outdated things in this day and age. Someone might ask, “How can we observe these when we go to foreign countries?” But the Buddha highlighted these to protect the Dhamma, the True Dhamma. He himself remained respecting the Dhamma. He instructed his disciples to respect it in the same way. When saying “disciples,” the fourfold assembly of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen is included. From that story, we see that through such behavior, one becomes unable to reap the fruits of that Dhamma. Many such instances are mentioned in the Dhamma.

Next, looking at the other side, the Buddha indicates the manner in which this Dhamma should be listened to. A certain valuable passage is mentioned regarding how the Dhamma should be listened to: *aṭṭhikatvā, manasikatvā, sabbacetaso samannāharitvā ohitasoto dhammaṃ suṇāti*. What this means is: “This Dhamma sermon is of benefit to me. This is useful for my life. This is helpful for my Nibbāna.” Intending to benefit from it, one must listen. *manasikatvā* means reflecting word by word, listening to it by reflecting well on each and every point. *samannāharitvā* means gathering the entire mind, directing full attention to it. If, while working in the kitchen or doing other chores, one lets the sermon play in that manner, the sermon merely “plays on,” but it does not come to oneself. It does not enter one’s ear. Just as the Buddha declared, for four out of those five, it merely struck the ear, but did not enter the ear. That is exactly how it happens most of the time now. Dhamma sermons become abundant, but listening to the Dhamma becomes rarer and rarer. That is the reason. So, *sabbacetaso samannāharitvā ohitasoto* means listening to the sermon with ears inclined. In those days, the term “inclining the ears” was used with the meaning of full attention. Even today, “give ear” or “listen” is used. Why? It is said because the ears are given elsewhere. The words “give ear!” and “listen!” have to be specifically said because the ears are directed to other directions. In that manner, one must be ready to listen. It is when these factors are fulfilled and one listens to the sermon that one can derive results from this. Not only that, as mentioned earlier, if one insults the preacher or the Dhamma, one becomes unable to reap results from it.

The Buddha not only highlighted those matters. Next, in one place, he also mentioned three specific types of persons who listen to the Dhamma. Those three persons are introduced as follows: *avakkujja-paññā*, *ucchanga-paññā*, and *puthu-paññā*. *Avakkujja-paññā* means the person of upside-down wisdom. We will explain that later. *Ucchanga-paññā* means the person with lap-wisdom. *Puthu-paññā* means the person of broad wisdom. The Buddha explains these three in this manner: “Suppose someone goes to a monastery and frequently listens to the Dhamma from the Sangha. And these monks preach this True Dhamma which is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, and beautiful in the end. Beautiful in the beginning, middle, and end; whether viewed in terms of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), or wisdom (*paññā*), it is beautiful. While such a Dhamma, beautiful in every sense at the beginning, middle, and end, is being preached, that person does not reflect on its beginning, middle, or end. While sitting there and even when rising and leaving, he does not reflect on the beginning, middle, or end. Such a person is compared to a pot placed upside down. No matter how much water is poured onto an upside-down pot, it does not retain any of it. It is just like that. That is

why he is called *avakkujja-paññ*a. He is the person of upside-down wisdom. Regarding the second, it is said: 'Suppose someone comes in the same way and listens to the Dhamma. While sitting, he reflects well on the beginning, middle, and end. But after rising, he remembers nothing.' The simile given for this by the Buddha: 'Suppose someone is eating sweetmeats or fruits kept in his lap. All of a sudden, without mindfulness, he stands up quickly. The moment he stands up, all of those things are scattered. Just like that, while sitting he reflects well on the beginning, middle, and end. But after rising, that person remembers nothing.' That is the second person. The third person is spoken of: 'While sitting, that person reflects well on the beginning, middle, and end. After rising, he also remembers that Dhamma well. His reflection is clear; his attention is perfectly pure. He listened to the sermon well.' That person is described as *puthu-paññ*a (broad-wisdomed). Even though called 'one of broad wisdom', there too the Buddha employs the simile of the pot. If a pot is placed upright, then water remains in it; it does not flow out. That person is just like that." Thus, the Buddha points out three distinct types of persons regarding the hearing of the Dhamma. This, then, is the exposition regarding human beings who can understand the Dhamma.

In addition, it is mentioned in our Dhamma literature how even animals—who cannot reap the flavor of the meaning of the Dhamma and can only benefit from the flavor of its sound—attained various results by listening to this Dhamma attentively. Most extraordinary stories are mentioned. One is the story of Maṇḍūka Devaputta (the frog-deity). On one occasion, the Buddha was residing on the banks of the Gaggarā lake, preaching the Dhamma to the citizens of Campā. At that moment, a frog that came out of the lake was listening to the voice of the Buddha. You, faithful devotees, may have heard that the Buddha's voice is extremely special. It is referred to as the "brahmā-voice endowed with eight factors." Just as with other attributes, this applies to the Buddha's voice as well. That frog remained listening to that voice. Meanwhile, a cowherd who came there stuck his staff into the ground and, leaning on it, began to listen to the sermon. The staff went straight into the frog's head. The frog died right there and was immediately born (*jāti*) in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven as a deity named Maṇḍūka (which means 'frog') in a golden mansion. It is mentioned in the Dhamma that he came to the Buddha at that very moment and revealed this news. Thus, even that frog obtained the benefits of listening to the Dhamma. It was only the sound. Yet, the supremacy of the Dhamma is seen from this. Even nowadays, even if you, faithful devotees, do not know the Pali language, when a protection chant (*paritta*) is recited, a truly faithful person experiences an extraordinary fascination when the Karaṇīyametta Sutta, etc., are chanted, because the meaning and the tone of the Dhamma are so wonderfully blended.

Likewise, another story is mentioned, which was declared by the Buddha himself to Ven. Ānanda. On one occasion, while walking for alms, the Buddha saw a young sow. He asked Ven. Ānanda: "Ānanda, do you see this young sow?" He replied: "Yes, Venerable Sir." Then, the Buddha mentioned the past history, the past births (*jāti*), of that young sow. It is a story involving many births (*jāti*), a long story. But let us extract the part we need. The Buddha declared: "In the time of Kakusandha Buddha, this young sow was a young hen near an alms hall where the Sangha partook of meals. That young hen got to

hear a meditating monk chanting a subject of insight meditation. While she sat listening to it, a hawk came, carried the young hen away, slit her neck, and ate her. But dying right there, the Buddha declared her next birth (*jāti*): she was born in a royal family as a princess named Ubbirī. But we can infer that, perhaps due to the benefit of listening to that subject of insight meditation even without understanding it, the following is mentioned regarding that princess: On one occasion, when that princess went to a toilet and saw maggots there, she brought to mind the perception of a worm-infested corpse (*puḷuvaka-saññā*)—meaning, meditating by reflecting on the impurity of a corpse infested with worms. This is a special subject of meditation, an insight meditation subject that can even yield Nibbāna. Directing her mind to that subject of meditation, it is mentioned that she attained even the first absorption (*paṭhama-jhāna*) right there in the toilet." It was shown how that very royal princess has now obtained the existence of this young sow. Not only that, in that story, after passing through numerous births (*jāti*), taking human and other existences, she came to Sri Lanka during the time of King Duṭugāmuṇu. Ultimately, at the time of her final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*) as an Arahant nun, she declared her past history, as recorded in the books. So, the portion we require: see how even that young hen obtained some benefit by listening to the Dhamma, or rather, by listening to the insight meditation chanted by those meditating monks. Subsequently, she became strong enough to obtain a human existence. Through this, we must understand that we should develop respect for the Dhamma. Only then is the Dhamma properly understood.

Likewise, you, faithful devotees, may have often heard that when the occasions of realizing the paths and fruits are shown, it is mentioned there too that one can attain the realization of the paths and fruits on five occasions: while listening to the Dhamma, while preaching the Dhamma, while chanting a portion of the Dhamma, while reflecting on a portion of the Dhamma, and lastly, while cultivating a sign of concentration (*samādhi-nimitta*). That is: while listening, while preaching, while chanting the Dhamma, while reflecting on the Dhamma, and next, while cultivating some special sign of concentration—on all these five occasions, one can even attain the supramundane paths and fruits (*lokuttara-magga-phala*). Just because it is said so, we must not think that if one listens in a casual way, letting the sermon "play on," such a person can attain the paths and fruits.

The manner of listening that leads to the attainment of the paths and fruits is also mentioned right there in the Dhamma: "If someone listens to the Dhamma by directing complete attention in the manner described, at that moment he is *atthappaṭisaṃvedī* and *dhammappaṭisaṃvedī*—he experiences the meaning of the Dhamma, and he experiences the Dhamma itself." That person receives a great joy from both the meaning and the Dhamma. Even while listening to the Dhamma, he receives a state of composure and calmness from it. When thinking about its meaning, and when reflecting on that meaning, he receives calmness. In the end, that calmness and joy gradually lead directly to concentration (*samādhi*). Within that, it is shown in this way: "While listening to the sermon experiencing the flavor of the meaning and the flavor of the Dhamma, a great delight (*pāmojja*) arises in that person"—what is called joyful delight. A great happiness

arises. Next, that delight turns into rapture (*pīti*). A great rapture arises in his mind. Next, when the mind is rapturous, the body becomes tranquil (*passaddhi*). The mind also becomes tranquil. Through that bodily tranquility, a unique kind of unworldly happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*) is received by that person. From that happiness (*sukha*), concentration (*samādhi*) next arises; the mind becomes concentrated. He can even enter certain meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). With that concentrated mind, next, he contemplates the very Dhamma preached by the Buddha as insight meditation (*vipassanā*), by way of the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). It is in that manner that the realization of the paths and fruits is obtained. It is not said here that the realization of the paths and fruits is attained by merely hearing the Dhamma. If one listens in the manner one ought to listen, by directing full attention as described, then if one's merits have matured, that person can even attain the realization of the paths and fruits. Such is the nature of listening to the Dhamma. Likewise, the Buddha has demonstrated to us on various occasions, also through those very Dhamma stories, in what manner the true result of a Dhamma sermon should be obtained. Therefore, if one listens to these casually, the Dhamma is also liable to be distorted.

In another place, the Buddha points out several factors that lead to the disappearance, the vanishing of the True Dhamma. There, it is specifically spoken regarding the monks. It says that if somehow the monks do not listen to the Dhamma properly, do not learn the Dhamma properly, do not bear the Dhamma properly, do not reflect on the Dhamma properly with wisdom—by way of radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)—and do not lead their lives in accordance with the Dhamma, then this True Dhamma will disappear. From this, we see that this Dhamma is not merely about listening at that moment and conceptualizing it in words, nor is it merely about memorizing it. It is by living within it that the True Dhamma is protected. This is a profound matter to be taken to heart.

In the Dhamma, the learned person (*bahu-ssuta*) is often mentioned. The learned person is someone of great value. Nowadays, there are various computers and similar devices where the Dhamma is stored. Because of their existence, some might think, "Why trouble ourselves to memorize? It is not necessary in this age. If there is a device, we can retrieve all this whenever we want." Even if one gets other things from them, the Nibbāna that should be attained through them can never be harvested from a computer, no matter how advanced computers become. Therefore, if one expects Nibbāna, there is a series of terms mentioned regarding the learned person, just as was said in the past: *sutā, dhatā, vacasā paricitā, manasānupakkhitā, diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā*. *Bahu-ssuta* means one who has heard much. Not only does he listen to the Dhamma, he also bears it (*sutā, dhatā*). He listens to the Dhamma and bears it. Having borne it, because there is a possibility of forgetting it, he practices it verbally (*vacasā paricitā*): he recites it constantly, chants it constantly.

In the past, the Sangha thus constantly held entire sections of the Dhamma in memory—sometimes so extremely long that it is even unimaginable—such as the entire Nikāya texts. Because they might forget, they chanted them again and again: *vacasā paricitā*. Next, not only that, but to make it useful, *manasānupakkhitā* means they examine it,

reflecting on them constantly as to what their meaning is. It is at that point that it becomes something of one's own—something that is not done by computers: contemplated with the mind (*manasānupakkhitā*). Next, by developing deep understandings of the Dhamma in that manner, *diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā*: he penetrates it well with his right view. It was the Buddha who declared this. "This is the literal meaning of this; this is its deep meaning; this point was made by these words." In that way, he has properly understood the Dhamma.

If the Dhamma is not understood in that way, it is merely a collection of words. That is what will happen in the future. This Tripiṭaka Dhamma will be preserved in words in that manner. It will be preserved even better than it was preserved in ancient times on ola-leaf manuscripts. But the flavor of their meaning, the fruit and benefit that should be derived through them, is liable to be lost to the future public, or rather, to the future generations. Because they will become enslaved to those aforementioned machines and shape their thinking accordingly. Therefore, we are compelled to remind you of these things at least occasionally. In all these modern things we have received, as you, faithful devotees, know, there are two sides: benefits and drawbacks. To many, it is understood only later. Sometimes, even those who manufactured the machines realize at some point, "Although we manufactured these on a large scale, they have such-and-such drawbacks." Not only in destructive things, but even in the things we use daily, there is an aspect of drawbacks.

In short, you, faithful devotees, must realize that the most supreme knowledge among all mundane knowledges in this world is what is called the knowledge of drawbacks (*ādīnava-ñāṇa*). The moment when the side of drawbacks of everything—the wrong side, its shortcomings—becomes visible, that is the highest point of one's mundane knowledge. Until then, only the side of benefits is visible. Just like that, now in all these machinery and devices, there is both a side of benefits and a side of drawbacks. They arise in this civilization. But as wise individuals, we must understand that there is not only a side of benefits but also a side of drawbacks in this. While utilizing the benefits, we must protect ourselves from the drawbacks. Otherwise, we will be subjugated by those machines and eventually turn into mechanical human beings. That is indeed what is happening. A time is coming in the future when heartless humans will be born in the world. Such is the situation. Likewise, not only heartless, but brainless humans will also be born, because that too is now done by those iron brains. The next generation is liable to be born as those having such distorted physical and mental states. The reason for that is spending one's life in a servile and wretched manner, being subjugated by them without properly reflecting on both sides—the benefits and the drawbacks. Therefore, through this matter of respect for the Dhamma highlighted by the Buddha, we must take what should be taken, without thinking of them as outdated.

In accordance with the present era, various things might appear to you, faithful devotees, as benefits of the Dhamma: passing examinations, obtaining various degrees, and various other things. By learning this Dhamma, by learning it as a subject, one can derive these benefits—by-products. But if we consider the ultimate purpose of the Buddha, it is for none of those. A Buddha is born and preaches the True Dhamma in the world so that

human beings—who have traversed this infinite time, who are subjugated by the stream of defilements in an extremely long and amazing way, who are subjugated by lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), craving (*taṇhā*), etc., and are bent towards those lives—can emerge from them, shatter them and move forward, or enter the path to Nibbāna, cross over this becoming (*bhava*), and bring an end to *saṃsāra*. It is for this that the Dhamma has been preached.

Indeed, that craving (*taṇhā*) is compared to a river. But the Buddha has declared a going in the opposite direction. This Dhamma is against the current (*paṭisotagāmī*). This Dhamma is like going upstream. It is such an amazingly unique Dhamma. Now, the river of craving (*taṇhā*) flows simply downwards. Beings are caught in it and swept away. There is no end to this. But the Buddha points out the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*). The destruction of craving (*taṇhā*) is a name for Nibbāna itself. It is that path leading to Nibbāna that is shown through this Dhamma. That, indeed, is a journey to be traveled with effort, energy, and faith. What is required for that, first of all, is listening to the True Dhamma. Indeed, the Buddha also points out on one occasion a certain important thing that comes even prior to listening to the True Dhamma. Where is this hearing of the True Dhamma obtained from? We think that at some moment it is obtained from a machine. But the Buddha has pointed out that the real True Dhamma is heard from virtuous persons. It is through associating with virtuous persons that the True Dhamma is heard. Accordingly, on one occasion, the Buddha declared a discourse (*sutta*) thus: "When association with virtuous persons is fulfilled, one gets to hear the True Dhamma. When there is listening to the True Dhamma, through that, radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) (grows)."

Prior to that, let us remind ourselves of this matter: Now, the Buddha points out four factors necessary for Stream-entry, known as the factors of Stream-entry (*sotāpattiyanga*): *sappurisasaṃseva, saddhammasavana, yoniso manasikāra, dhammānudhammappaṭipatti*—these four factors are pointed out as assisting one in attaining Stream-entry. *Sappurisasaṃseva* means association with virtuous persons. Next, *saddhammasavana*: the Dhamma heard next from virtuous persons, the opportunity to hear the True Dhamma. Next, *yoniso manasikāra* means reflecting with wisdom. Not in an unwise or wrong way, but reflecting in the correct manner is radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Next is *dhammānudhammappaṭipatti*: living in accordance with the Dhamma. These four factors are necessary to realize the paths and fruits, to attain Nibbāna.

Next, that matter is mentioned in more detail in the discourse (*sutta*) we are prepared to present now: "When the factor of association with virtuous persons (*sappurisasaṃseva*) is fulfilled, when it is filled up, it flows over and, through that, listening to the True Dhamma is next obtained by that person. When listening to the True Dhamma is fulfilled, that very reflecting with wisdom called radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) emerges through it. When reflecting with wisdom called radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) emerges, mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*)—meaning mindfulness and great wisdom—grow in that person. When mindfulness and

clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) grow, that person's restraint develops—the restraint of the senses (*indriya-saṃvara*). That person's good conduct of body, speech, and mind—the threefold good conduct—grows. When that threefold good conduct grows, the four establishments of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*) grow within that person. As the four establishments of mindfulness are being fulfilled, the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅgā*)—namely, mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), rapture (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*)—grow in this person. After those factors of enlightenment have grown, the Noble Eightfold Path is fulfilled, and one can attain true knowledge and liberation (*vijjā-vimutti*)—such as insight knowledges, paths, and fruits. In that manner, matching Dhamma factors one to another like the links of a chain, the Buddha preaches in that discourse (*sutta*) how the journey starting from the association with virtuous persons goes ultimately to Nibbāna, along with a simile for it."

The Buddha always employs a simile to instill a Dhamma point deeper into the mind, to engrave it more firmly in the heart. The simile given on this occasion: "Just as when it rains heavily—when there are heavy rains on a mountain with drizzling and heavy downpours—they flow down the mountain slopes, fall into clefts and gullies, and flowing through them, fill up the small rivers. The small rivers flow and fill up the large rivers. The large rivers flow and next fill up the great ocean. Just in that way, when association with virtuous persons is fulfilled, listening to the True Dhamma is fulfilled. When that is fulfilled, reflecting with wisdom called radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is fulfilled. When that is fulfilled, mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), mindful wisdom, is fulfilled. From that, restraint of the senses; from that, next, good conduct of body, speech, and mind; as that develops, the four establishments of mindfulness; as that develops, the seven factors of enlightenment; as that develops, in the end, leading up to Nibbāna, the paths and fruits of Nibbāna are also obtained. In that manner, the Buddha declares in that discourse (*sutta*)."

In all of this, we must reflect: why is it said that this True Dhamma indeed comes from a virtuous person? Who is that virtuous person? We might sometimes think that what is called a virtuous person is something that comes from these devices. But in the truest manner, the True Dhamma—the True Dhamma that helps one go towards direct realization—is received only through a virtuous person. The term "virtuous person" (*sappurisa*) is used in the Dispensation specifically for those who have attained noble states, or rather, who have well engaged in that aforementioned practice in accordance with the Dhamma (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipada*) by way of the penetration of the paths and fruits, and have seen the Dhamma through themselves. He is the real virtuous person. The True Dhamma received from that very virtuous person is what genuinely helps towards Nibbāna. Therefore, we must understand that this listening to the True Dhamma is an extremely valuable thing. The True Dhamma is an extremely valuable thing. If we are to protect it, we should not protect it in that manner through external machines and devices. Not by writing in books or writing on palm leaves and burying them under the earth. One must deposit it in the depths of one's own heart, bring it up constantly, and reflect on it with wisdom in the manner described as radical attention

(*yoniso manasikāra*), etc. Experiencing the flavor of its meaning and the flavor of the Dhamma, and concentrating the mind through that, one must then develop insight meditation (*vipassanā*) on impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*), and properly understand the meaning of this Dhamma.

This Dhamma preached by the Buddha is an amazingly profound Dhamma. This cannot be understood by becoming enslaved to words alone. It is when one lives in accordance with it that the Dhamma becomes meaningful. You, faithful devotees, can read the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in a matter of minutes. But the establishment of mindfulness is not fulfilled through that, if one does not engage in it. Likewise, this Dhamma preached by the Buddha indeed becomes meaningful only to the one who engages in it practically. For one who does not, just as it is said, *gopo gāvova gaṇayaṃ paresaṃ*: a cowherd counts the cows of others, but does not receive the five products of the cow himself. Thus, if one is to obtain those five products of the cow, one must engage in that Dhamma. Otherwise, it is merely looking after the cows. In that manner, by merely memorizing the Dhamma like parrots or by merely recording them on devices, neither this True Dhamma nor the Dispensation is protected. One must listen to that Dhamma properly and, according to it, apply reflection in that manner and make it directly realized to oneself. It is in that manner that the True Dhamma is protected. So, that is the respect for the Dhamma that the Buddha highlights.

Indeed, the specialty of the True Dhamma preached by the Buddha is revealing the causal relationship called dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), which is an extraordinarily profound Dhamma not found in any other religion. Speaking of that Dhamma, the Buddha says on one occasion: “Whether Tathāgatas arise or do not arise, whether Tathāgatas appear or do not appear, this Dhamma-nature, this truth, always exists in the world.” What Tathāgatas do is make it directly realized and understood within themselves, and demonstrate it to the world by way of preaching. Therefore, we must reflect that what is embedded in this True Dhamma is this eternal Dhamma-nature.

That is precisely why these Buddhas did not pay respect and deference to other external ascetics and brahmins. In this way, there is no ascetic, brahmin, or brahmā in this entire world-system who can be compared to the Buddha. Yet, the Buddha, as well as all Buddhas, respected that very True Dhamma. That is to say, it is that profound Dhamma-nature regarding this world that is present in this True Dhamma. That Dhamma-nature cannot be obtained by merely memorizing a word. Sometimes, it cannot be obtained by merely passing examinations either. Having properly understood that Dhamma, experiencing the flavor of the Dhamma and the flavor of its meaning as described, and next, shaping one’s life in accordance with it, one must directly realize that Dhamma for oneself. That is why we constantly remind ourselves of the six qualities of the Dhamma: *svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo, sandiṭṭhiko, akāliko, ehipassiko, opanayiko, paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*. That this Dhamma is well-expounded (*svākkhāta*) is said not merely because it was spoken in beautiful words, but because of the ultimate purpose promised by it. It is well-expounded because it has the power to yield Nibbāna. Likewise, that it is

directly visible (*sandiṭṭhika*) is said because these ultimate purposes can be obtained right before one's eyes in this very world, in this very life. It is likewise immediate (*akālika*). Simultaneously with fulfilling the necessary practice for this, the result is right there. That is immediate (*akālika*). Likewise, inviting one to come and see (*ehipassika*) means that this Dhamma has a power that leads one step by step. As we are mentioning now, if someone draws close to the association with virtuous persons, through that they are automatically directed towards listening to the True Dhamma. Through that, automatically to those other aforementioned factors like radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). In that manner, there is a nature of pulling one factor after another, a nature of interconnectedness, a causal relationship in this Dhamma. That is precisely why it is *ehipassiko*—it comes and takes one along, saying, "Come and see this Dhamma." Where does it take one? Not to some external place. It takes one right inside, into one's own heart—that is why it is called *ehipassiko*. Next, *opanayiko* (leading onwards) means, just as it is said "to lead towards," it brings it in. That is what is meant by bringing the Dhamma into oneself. That is, the nature of the Dhamma is such that when one factor is fulfilled, the next grows through it.

You, faithful devotees, may have often heard as a well-known matter regarding the Noble Eightfold Path: when right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) grows, right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) grows. Right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) means that when good thoughts grow, good words emerge through them. When good words grow, when one keeps practicing good words, one is automatically inclined to perform good actions. When performing good actions, it becomes the cause for establishing right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*)—meaning a good way of living. When a good way of living is established, next, through that, right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*)—meaning the energy that brings wholesome states close and removes unwholesome states—emerges well. Through that, right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), clear awareness, emerges. Next, through that is right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). Thus, from whichever side one takes it, whichever section of the Dhamma one takes, the most unique characteristic you, faithful devotees, can see through these teachings leading towards Nibbāna is the causal relationship. That is precisely why it is *ehipassiko*. It has a nature of calling one towards it. Then, this goes and demonstrates to oneself alone. That is what is said at the end as *paccattaṃ veditabbo*. This is not something that goes and demonstrates to someone else. The Buddha himself says: "Not even I can do it. I am only a teacher. You themselves must travel on this path: *paṭipannā pramokkhanti jhāyino mārabandhanā* (those who have entered the path, meditators, will be released from the bond of Māra)." That is, the Tathāgatas are merely those who point out the way. If one is to be freed from this bond of Māra, one must walk on the practice of this very path. If one is to walk on the practice, what helps is that very causal relationship mentioned earlier. It is not that someone else sits and pushes you. There is an amazing kind of push within this Dhamma itself. That is what is meant by *opanayiko*. It leads from one to another. We must benefit from that. When the utilization of it is fulfilled, then indeed *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhīti* (to be personally realized by the wise). The wise person can make this Dhamma directly realized to themselves and see it through themselves. That state is called *dhammabhūta* (become the Dhamma). That person has become a treasure-house of the Dhamma, or

rather, has become the Dhamma itself. It is mentioned regarding the Buddha: although we consider the Buddha as a person, in reality, he became the embodiment of the Dhamma. In that manner, the respective Arahants also become embodiments of the Dhamma to their respective extents.

Next, simultaneously, we must reflect that it is to conquer those saṃsāric weaknesses shown here that the Buddha has pointed out three trainings: virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). In every single person—not only in those four mentioned earlier, but in everyone—there are saṃsāric weaknesses due to lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), craving (*taṇhā*), etc., which obstruct the hearing of the Dhamma. To conquer them, at this moment when our understanding has come, we must conquer those old saṃsāric habits by applying virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*), etc. Virtue (*sīla*) means taming, by directing oneself to something. If we thus direct ourselves to good things, a good virtue (*sīla*), a state of being virtuous, is established. Otherwise, that wildness arises. Comparing the mind from the wild state of an animal to the virtuous, or rather, disciplined state, we see that the Buddha first showed how to conquer saṃsāric weaknesses through virtue (*sīla*). Next, to develop it further, the mind is composed through what is called concentration (*samādhi*), by removing the distracted state. With that composed mind, ultimately, wisdom (*paññā*). It is through the power of understanding that, in the end, having conquered those saṃsāric weaknesses, and by penetrating the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship, one can cross over this ocean of *saṃsāra*—which has been filled with saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) like birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*) for an infinite time—be freed from the bond of *saṃsāra*, and attain that liberation of Nibbāna.

You, faithful devotees, must reflect with wisdom: on a Poya day like today, having undertaken a certain virtue (*sīla*) at your own level, you listened to the Dhamma at this moment, meditating on a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Today, this Dhamma sermon is indeed a Dhamma sermon about listening to the Dhamma. As we say on other days, the benefits of listening to the Dhamma are indeed to be reflected upon in the manner described as faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). If one listened to the Dhamma properly, faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom grow within that person. It is according to the level of that growth that, as mentioned in the Dhamma, some individuals attained the penetration of the paths and fruits at the very moment of listening to the Dhamma.

Reflecting in that manner, through this store of wholesome merit accumulated up to now, through the association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), meditating, may these benefits of listening to the Dhamma definitely be a supportive cause for crossing over all saṃsāric suffering as quickly as possible and attaining this noble, great, deathless Nibbāna which is the supreme goal expected by each of you! Likewise, may all beings, including the assembly of deities and brahmās protecting the Dispensation, and our saṃsāric relatives from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, rejoice in this store of wholesome merit accumulated by us through preaching and listening to the Dhamma. Through that

power, may they at some point be freed from unhappy states, reach happy states, develop meditation through association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), and as quickly as possible, realize the great, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired state of enlightenment (*bodhi*). Aspiring thus, recite this verse:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #78

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.112)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Pupphāni heva pacinantaṃ,

byāsattamanasaṃ naraṃ;

suttaṃ gāmaṃ mahogho va,

maccu ādāya gacchati.

From:

Dhammapada 47 (Pupphavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Just like a florist who enters a flower garden and walks about gathering beautiful flowers, a human being who is infatuated with the treasures of the fivefold sensual pleasures is lost in a world of flowers. That person has no correct understanding of the reality of life, or the *Anicca* (Impermanent) nature of life. Suddenly, Death (*Māra*) comes and drags him away, shattering the sweet dreams of that person who had fallen into the sleep of negligence.

Now, this verse we have taken as our theme was preached by the Buddha on an occasion when a group of people, who had fallen into the sleep of negligence while dreaming sweet dreams of victory, were swept away by a great flood and fell into the jaws of death.

King Pasenadi of Kosala once thought that if he could establish a blood relationship with the Buddha, the Saṅgha would come to the palace more often for alms. To make himself more trusted by the Saṅgha, he devised a plan to marry a princess of the Sakyan clan. Thinking thus, he sent a message to the Sakyan kings asking them to send a princess. So, those Sakyan princes gathered in their assembly hall and discussed: “Now, this king is not of equal clan to us; how can we give him a Sakyan daughter? If we do not give her, since this king is powerful, he might think to destroy us.” While discussing this problem, Mahānāma the Sakyan came forward and said, “I have a daughter named

Vāsabhakhattiyā, born from the womb of a maidservant. Let us give her and save ourselves."

So, the Sakyan kings sent a message saying they were ready to give a daughter of a son of the Buddha's uncle. King Kosala, very pleased, sent a delegation to bring her. However, King Kosala also had a suspicion. He told his men, "These people called Sakyans are very crafty; they might even give a slave's daughter. Therefore, tell them to send a daughter who dines from the same dish as her father." When this condition was mentioned, Mahānāma the Sakyan used a trick: he adorned Vāsabhakhattiyā beautifully, showed a demonstration of her eating together with him, and handed her over to the royal emissaries. Thus, having taken her back, King Kosala made her the chief queen, putting her at the head of the five hundred women of the harem, and consecrated her.

In the course of time, a son was born, and this son was named Viḍūḍabha. With the aim of becoming even more trusted by the Buddha, King Kosala appointed Prince Viḍūḍabha as the commander-in-chief in his childhood. In fact, nominally, he was designated as commander-in-chief from his early childhood. Also, when this prince was seven years old, he asked his mother, "Other princes of my age receive gifts and presents from their mother's side. Why is it not so for me? Doesn't mother have relatives—parents and others?" Then she deceived him, saying, "They live very far away; that is why they do not send anything."

Next, when Prince Viḍūḍabha turned sixteen, he asked for permission, saying, "I would like very much to see my mother's relatives; please give me permission to go." She tried to prevent him, saying there was no use going there, but failed. Having no alternative, she allowed him. A message was also sent to the Sakyans: "Prince Viḍūḍabha is coming." So, this was a problem for the Sakyan princes as well. Gathering again in the assembly hall, they thought: "Now when Prince Viḍūḍabha comes, if we are to perform the custom of salutation, the younger princes will have to bow to Prince Viḍūḍabha." To prevent this, they used a trick: they sent all those who were younger than Prince Viḍūḍabha to the countryside, as if sending them on some business. When Prince Viḍūḍabha arrived with his retinue, the elders introduced the relatives to him, saying, "This is your uncle, this is so-and-so." Prince Viḍūḍabha bowed to all of them, but when he looked around next, there was no one bowing to him. He asked, "Why is there no one to bow to me?" They told another lie there: "We have sent the younger princes to the countryside on an urgent matter." So, after showing great hospitality and honor to them, they sent Prince Viḍūḍabha and his retinue back.

After they departed, a certain slave woman, while washing the wooden bench where Prince Viḍūḍabha had sat with milk-water, muttered and cursed: "This is the bench where the son of the slave-woman Vāsabhakhattiyā sat. What a nuisance!" While she was washing it with milk-water, an incident occurred. One of Viḍūḍabha's soldiers, having forgotten his weapon, came back to fetch it and heard her cursing Prince Viḍūḍabha. When he investigated and inquired into this, he found out through gossip that Vāsabhakhattiyā was indeed the daughter of a slave woman. That soldier went and told the rest of the army. It became a huge uproar among the army: "This Vāsabhakhattiyā is

a slave's daughter!" and the story spread. Hearing this, Prince Viḍūḍabha developed intense hatred and malice, forming a firm determination and grudge: "Very well! This lot washed the bench where I sat with milk-water. On the day I become king, I will cut their throats and wash this bench with their blood!"

Having harbored this, after the group returned, the members of this soldier group revealed this secret to King Kosala. King Kosala became extremely angry, thinking, "They have given me a slave's daughter!" and conceived intense rage against the Sakyans. Right then, he stopped all the hospitality and special privileges previously given to Queen Vāsabhakhattiyā and Prince Viḍūḍabha, and began treating them in the manner of slaves. He completely suspended the hospitality and benefits given to them up to that point.

A few days later, when the Buddha visited the palace, King Kosala complained, "Blessed One, your relatives have given me a slave's daughter..." Then the Buddha stated, "That is a very unjust thing the Sakyans have done. To say the least, they should have given someone of their own clan. Even so, Great King, I tell you this: Vāsabhakhattiyā, when looked at from the father's side, is after all the daughter of a king, and she has also been consecrated as the queen of a king. Similarly, Viḍūḍabha too, from the father's side, is a royal prince." Next, he said, "The mother's clan is secondary; the father's clan alone is sufficient." To support this, he cited a Jātaka story—we do not intend to relate that Jātaka story at this moment. Recounting the *Kaṭṭhahāri Jātaka*, where in the past a similar event occurred where a child was born due to a connection between a wood-gathering woman and a king, yet eventually received the kingship, the Buddha consoled the King. Consoling his mind with that, King Kosala restored Vāsabhakhattiyā to her former status and Prince Viḍūḍabha to his previous position. But Viḍūḍabha's hatred did not cease.

We are telling this long story in brief. At a certain point, King Kosala was over eighty years old, quite aged. Because King Kosala was extremely faithful, when the Buddha was staying in a village near the Sakyan country, he went to see the Buddha, handed his royal insignia to his commander-in-chief named Dīghakārāyana, and went alone to see the Buddha, entering his chamber. Meanwhile, the commander-in-chief Dīghakārāyana took those royal insignia, went with the army, and made Prince Viḍūḍabha the king. He did so to settle an old grudge. On a previous occasion, King Kosala had put the commander-in-chief named Bandhula to death. This Dīghakārāyana was a nephew of that commander-in-chief Bandhula. Because he harbored that anger, he took the royal insignia and installed Prince Viḍūḍabha on the throne. Meanwhile, when King Pasenadi of Kosala came outside and looked, there was only a horse and a certain maidservant near that horse. After hearing this story, King Kosala, extremely angry and with the intention of seizing back the kingdom from Viḍūḍabha, went to Rājagaha seeking the help of his nephew, King Ajātasattu, riding that horse, with only that woman as his follower. On that occasion, as he could not reach there before the city gates were closed, King Kosala ended up passing away helplessly during the night in an open hall.

The story of King Kosala ends there. Now, Viḍūḍabha was indeed the king. A few days after becoming king, he remembered the hatred he had harbored in the past. Thinking, "Now is the time for revenge," he set out with a large army, determined to destroy the entire Sakyan clan. On the morning of that day, when the Buddha surveyed the world with the Attainment of Great Compassion, he saw the impending mass slaughter of his relatives. Seeing this destruction, and with the intention of preventing it, the Buddha traveled through the air. On the border of the Sakyans, in the portion belonging to the Sakyans, there was a tree that did not have much shade. He had gone for alms, partaken of his midday meal, and then departed. He traveled through the air in the afternoon. Thus going, the Buddha sat under that tree which had little shade. Beyond that, within Viḍūḍabha's territory, there was a large banyan tree with plenty of shade. Now when Viḍūḍabha arrived with his army, he saw the Buddha, paid homage, and asked, "Blessed One, the banyan tree on my side of the border has good shade, why are you sitting like this in this hot sun?" Then the Buddha replied, "The shade of relatives is indeed cool." From this, Viḍūḍabha understood that the Buddha had traveled this far for the protection of his relatives. Thinking so, he returned with his army. In the same way, for a second time, Viḍūḍabha's mind urged him: "I must take revenge somehow." So, when he went the second time, the Buddha was there. He came a third time as well. Even when he came the third time, the Buddha was there.

Thus, having gone three times, on the day he set out with his army for the fourth time, the Buddha investigated the past *kamma* (action/deed) of the Sakyans. This *kamma* of the Sakyans had now reached a point where it could not be prevented. What had these Sakyan princes done in the past? Collectively, through a certain conspiracy, they had put poison in a river. Perhaps with the intention of destroying the people of a kingdom downriver, they had committed the evil *kamma* of putting poison in a river, and that was now manifesting in an unpreventable manner. For this reason, the Buddha did not travel there on that day. So, Viḍūḍabha went with a huge army, and it is said that they did not even fight a proper battle with the Sakyans. They surrendered completely, as it were. Prince Viḍūḍabha commanded his men to kill everyone who said "I am a Sakyan," but to spare the life of Mahānāma the Sakyan (who was his mother's father) and the retinue with him. According to that command, almost the entire Sakyan clan, including infants at the breast, were massacred, and Viḍūḍabha had that wooden bench washed with their blood.

Having finished all that, while this army was returning, it became night by the time they reached the river called Aciravatī. So, the army camped there. Although that river Aciravatī was a large river, during the dry season it was completely a bed of sand; it dried up entirely. Due to such a situation, some of that group prepared to sleep on the riverbank, and some on the sandy bed in the middle of the river. After they lay down to sleep, some insects—let us say a type of small creatures like winged termites—emerged from the ground. Among those on the sandy bed in the middle of the river, there were some who had not committed the evil *kamma*, and among those on the bank, there were those who had committed the evil *kamma*. Those who had not committed the evil *kamma*, sleeping in the middle of the river, were troubled by the insects. Therefore, they

got up and came to the bank to sleep, saying, “Because of these creatures, we cannot sleep here.” Likewise, those on the bank who had committed the evil *kamma* were troubled when the insects emerged, so they went to the middle of the river and slept on the sandy bed—those who had done wrong. Look how *kamma* operates! Meanwhile, suddenly, as if a thick, dark cloud gathered—perhaps at the upper reaches of the river—a massive rain fell unexpectedly, and a flash flood rushed down, sweeping away the entire army and drowning them in the sea. Thus, just as they had destroyed the Sakyan clan, Viḍūḍabha and his entire host met their destruction in the very same way.

After this event, a discussion arose among the general public: “Alas! This Sakyan clan, the Buddha's own relatives, were needlessly and blamelessly destroyed in this way by Viḍūḍabha, weren't they?” When the monks mentioned this talk to the Buddha, the Buddha stated, “No, monks, although the Sakyans did not commit such wrongs in this life, in the past they committed that unwholesome deed of putting poison in the river. It is because that could not be prevented that it happened in this way.”

Next, on another day in the Dhamma assembly, the monks gathered and were talking about Viḍūḍabha: “Having committed such a great sin, he did not even get the chance to return and rule as king; they were swept away by the river water.” It was on that occasion that the Buddha uttered the verse we presented at the beginning. Now, let us look at the meaning and the exposition of that verse.

“Pupphāni heva pacinantaṃ, byāsattamanasaṃ naraṃ,

Suttaṃ gāmaṃ mahogho va, maccu ādāya gacchati.”

The meaning is: “Just as a great flood sweeps away a sleeping village, so Death comes and carries off the human being who gathers only flowers, who is infatuated with flowers, and whose mind is attached to gathering flowers.” Thus, although it is a four-line verse, the more we analyze it, the deeper the meaning we can extract. In all of this, there is a profound meaning within this verse that goes far beyond the mere historical event. Indeed, the Buddha did not merely utter this verse; he must have preached a major sermon related to it. It is recorded that upon hearing it, people even attained the Fruits of the Path.

If we reflect on this story, we can see how much disaster can occur due to clan conceit (pride of birth). Because of the clan conceit of those Sakyans, they employed such tricks. When those crafty tricks were exposed, Viḍūḍabha conceived intense hatred. It was like King Kosala also developing hatred and aversion. Even more so, Viḍūḍabha harbored a grudge over the insult done to him, and even though the Buddha tried three times, he could not prevent it. So strong was the thought of hatred and revenge that Viḍūḍabha came for the fourth time and, as they say, seemed to have fulfilled his heart's desire—the thing he hoped for. But just as the Buddha said, in the end, having fulfilled it, he did not get the chance to rule as king; he met his death.

However, from this we can realize how much heartbreak and destruction occur due to clan conceit. On the other hand, that aversion, the thought of revenge, is such a massive

crime. Viḍūḍabha intended to destroy the entire Sakyan clan, including young infants at the breast. And it is mentioned that he did so to a great extent. There are various historical records regarding this. Some say that certain groups escaped. At any rate, that thought of revenge became the root of an astonishingly massive destruction. Furthermore, even though the Buddha saw the destruction coming to his Sakyan clan, and though there were so many who had gone forth into homelessness from the Sakyan clan, without even a trace of agitation in them, he peacefully tried to save that Sakyan clan using his own Buddha-power. But when it was impossible, he left it to *kamma* itself. This cycle of *kamma* is something that even Buddhas and Arahants cannot prevent. Allowing it to take its course, the Buddha accepted the truth. So, that too is an example for us. To protect his clan, the Buddha employed a peaceful and very subtle method to indicate that he had come to save his relatives. Apart from that, he did not make any great appeal to Viḍūḍabha. So, at any rate, that is how it was.

Next, there are many things we can draw from this. Now, although this Viḍūḍabha, intoxicated by royal power and wealth, and by the pride of possessions and all that, acted high and mighty, thinking "I can do all of this," in the end, he had to experience the results of his *kamma* (actions) in this very life (*diṭṭhadhammavedanīya*). Next, we can understand why the Buddha declared that the domain of *kamma* is unthinkable (*acinteyya*). *Kamma* operated in such an astonishing manner. See how those small insects emerged from the earth, as if to give results to those who had done wrong, and to save those who had not done wrong. Meritorious friends, even today you can recall such events. In various severe disasters—not only floods but also tsunamis (sea-water flooding) and other destructive events—how certain individuals escaped in miraculous ways. When looking at it from a worldly perspective, when we hear how even some who had led good lives somehow ended up there, we are amazed. Since we are not Buddhas, we cannot say definitively, but we can understand through the Dhamma what lies underneath. Some people have the idea that there is no influence of *kamma* beneath such collective destructions, and that these are things that happen automatically by nature. But leave aside other things, even these four elements—*paṭhavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*—the four elements in our body, as doctors well know, undergo disturbances of wind, bile, and phlegm. These disturbances mostly occur within the underlying forces of *kamma*. It is the same with the disturbances of the four external elements. At certain times, amazing forces of *kamma* connect with them too, because the attraction of *kamma* is that powerful. That is indeed the fearsome nature of this *saṃsāra*, which is shown as "owners of their *kamma*," "heirs to their *kamma*," and so forth. Similarly, there is "the order of *kamma*" (*kamma-niyāmatā*); there are incomprehensible, amazing karmic energies. One is drawn to them. Even the four great elements assist them at times. The Buddha has illustrated the karmic results that affect beings in this *saṃsāra* with the simile of "a tangled ball of string." When we think about *kamma*, we can understand that idea. For instance, because of you meritorious friends, even if one person does a small offering, others share that merit by saying "Sādhu! Sādhu!!" and rejoicing in it. That is regarding merit. Many do not know that one can also participate in demerit (sin). You meritorious friends get to know through various media channels that a certain enemy of yours has died, or let us say, an enemy army has been killed. This is a

common thing during times of war. When it is announced that such a number of enemy soldiers have died in this war, how many people rejoice over it, jump with joy, and even light firecrackers in the end? But even if one rejoices in that manner, what is done by it? Behold, one participates in the unwholesome deed. One must guard against that. There is no need to explain to you meritorious friends about sharing/rejoicing in merit. If, when someone does a good thing, one can share that merit by saying "Sādhu! Sādhu!!", then demerit can also be shared in the same way. It must have been such a sharing that the Sakyans did. Putting poison in a river is something even one person can do. But a large group conspired, gathered collectively, and put that poison in the river.

Such things happen even today. Even according to ordinary law, if a group gathers, the responsibility or the guilt is shared by the entire group. Even more than the legal aspect, there is a cosmic law in the world; that is what is called "the order of *kamma*" (*kamma-niyāmatā*). According to that, everything is contained within the Buddha's word: *"Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi"* ("Monks, intention is what I call *kamma*"). If one shows solidarity or rejoices in it through intention, then indeed, one is caught. So from this, we have to reflect on how terrifying this *saṃsāra* is. That is why we spoke of a tangled ball of string. If you give a tangled ball of string to a cat and say, "This is tangled, untangle it for me," it will pull it this way and that, tangling it even further. A person who does not know the Dhamma, who lacks right view, interacts with the world in just that manner. When such an event occurs, he rejoices and leaps with joy, happy that the enemy is destroyed. But just like what happened to Viḍūḍabha, he too accumulates that *kamma*.

There are such terrifying things in the world. People tangle these up, gathering others' things to themselves. They get entangled with them. That nature of entanglement is present in the world. One can get entangled in good, and one can get entangled in bad. You meritorious friends have often realized the *Dukkha* (Suffering) that ultimately lies even in those entanglements you thought were good. Even in the entanglements done thinking they are good, in the course of time, one realizes how many drawbacks (*ādīnava*) there are in this entanglement. You must understand what I am saying. It is the same with bad entanglements on the other hand. Right there lies the terrifying nature of *saṃsāra*.

We mentioned a word, 'ogha', which is found in these verses. *'Mahogha'*, 'a great flood/torrent'. In fact, as it appeared to us, up to now we thought of *'mahogha'* as a flood of a river. Starting from inland, the flood sweeps down to the sea. That was the greatest flood. Now, however, there is a new concept. A new word has also come to us—where the sea itself comes, sweeps over, and drags things back into the sea. There is such a flood too. That is what everyone is talking about now. But four floods far more terrifying than that are mentioned in this Dhamma. They are called the *'cattāro oghā'*. Now we are coming to the deep aspect of the Dhamma. In this Dhamma, there are the *cattāro oghā*, four floods. The Dhamma mentions these four floods that drag one into this ocean of *saṃsāra*. What are these four floods? They are: *kāma-ogha* (flood of sensuality), *bhava-ogha* (flood of existence), *diṭṭhi-ogha* (flood of views), and *avijjā-ogha* (flood of

ignorance). Briefly described, they are as follows. *Kāma-ogha* refers to being infatuated with the fivefold sensual pleasures, just like the infatuation we mentioned earlier. Being dragged towards the fivefold sensual pleasures is the most manifest and powerful one—the flood of sensuality. One is dragged into that torrent of sensuality.

Next, *bhava-ogha* (flood of existence) is in a subtler sense. Beyond the fivefold sensual pleasures, there is a deeper aspect of the mind called attachment to form and formless realms (*rūpa-arūpa-rāga*). In accordance with those, one is born in the *rūpa* and *arūpa* Brahma worlds. The desire to be born in the Brahma worlds is a form of *Taṇhā* (Craving) for *Bhava* (Becoming)—it occurs through craving for existence. Similarly, what is called *jhāna-nikanti* is the attachment to *jhānas* (meditative absorptions). We consider *jhāna* to be a good thing. Even the yogis of the past took *jhāna* as a great thing. The Buddha pointed out that even there, craving for existence is present. Entering into a *jhāna* is just like a spinning top. You know how when spinning a top, you wind the string around it tightly and cast it with force. As long as the top has that speed, it keeps spinning on and on. Although the top stands straight, and it appears to stand straight due to the speed it has gathered, in the end, it falls over. It is just like that with the power of *jhāna*; no matter how hard you work to develop them, the top spun by those *jhānas* is what keeps spinning in the Brahma worlds. Having spun in the formless realms for aeons, it falls, and it falls back into *saṃsāra* itself. That is the terrifying nature of the craving for existence. Those who think only of *samatha* (tranquility) think highly of these things like *jhānas*. There is a good side to them; calming and unifying the mind is good. But if you form an attachment to them, it is called *jhāna-nikanti* (attachment to absorption). If you develop an unlimited attachment to *jhāna*, or if you specifically target birth in the Brahma worlds as your sole goal, this is what happens. Because in the end, you are dragged into the ocean of *saṃsāra*, and the problem is not resolved there.

Next, *diṭṭhi-ogha* (flood of views) refers to the sixty-two wrong views, which the Buddha has specifically declared as wrong views. Once one is overcome by them, it is not easy to escape from them. After the mind is dragged into them, nothing else is seen. One is blinded by the guise of views.

Next, likewise, what is called *avijjā-ogha* (flood of ignorance) is the non-knowing of the truth. That is the subtlest problem existing at the highest level. Failing to understand the truth does not mean the mere reciting of words from memory. It is the failure to understand that this entire existence is *Dukkha* (Suffering), the failure to understand that this fivefold aggregate is entirely *dukkha*. What does it mean to say that *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) arise due to ignorance? Because of not understanding that this fivefold aggregate is *dukkha*, those preparations, arrangements made to bring about another fivefold aggregate—those are indeed what are called *saṅkhāra*. In short, it can be regarded in this way. It can be said that our effort to accumulate those *saṅkhāra*, and our engagement in them, is due to the lack of understanding of the Four Noble Truths. Because in the end, everything is shown to be *dukkha*. So, the lack of deep understanding of that is indeed what is called *avijjā-ogha*. Ignorance, the flood of non-knowing. So that is the explanation regarding those floods.

Next, another aspect of this, regarding the floods mentioned in the Dhamma, is that the Buddha speaks of crossing over these torrents. That is what is meant by *'oghassa nittharaṇāya'*, crossing over. It speaks of crossing the flood (*ogha-taraṇa*). It is mentioned that the Buddha crossed over all four torrents. The Arahants too are said to have crossed over those four. Now, why is it applied in this way? There, this concept of the torrent goes much deeper. In the exposition of crossing over this torrent, it is mentioned in certain places:

"Pañca chinde, pañca jahe, pañca cuttari bhāvaye,

pañca saṅgātigo bhikkhu, oghatiṇṇoti vuccati."

The Buddha uttered this verse in reply to a question asked by a certain deity. The deity's question was as follows:

"Kati chinde, kati jahe, kati cuttari bhāvaye,

kati saṅgātigo bhikkhu, oghatiṇṇoti vaccatīti."

A deity comes and asks the Buddha, "How many are to be cut? How many are to be abandoned? How many more are to be developed? A monk who has surmounted how many ties is said to have crossed the flood?" Such riddles and catechism-like verses on Dhamma points are mentioned in the Dhamma. So, the Buddha's reply to the question asked by that deity was: *Pañca chinde*—five must be cut. *Pañca jahe*—five must be abandoned. *Pañca cuttari bhāvaye*—five more must be developed. *Pañca saṅgātigo bhikkhu*—a monk who has surmounted five ties. *Oghatiṇṇoti vuccati*—is indeed said to have crossed the torrent.

Beings in the world are bound to *Bhava* (Becoming) by fetters (*saṃyojana*). Those fetters are ten in number. They are divided into two: the lower (*orambhāgiya*) and the higher (*uddhambhāgiya*). Out of these, five are forces that pull downwards. They are: *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body), *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* (adherence to rules and rituals), *kāma-rāga* (sensual lust), and *paṭigha* (repulsion/anger). These are known as the lower fetters. These are the five that are to be cut. The simile given for this is as follows: if a bird is tied by its feet, even though it tries to fly, it cannot, can it? Then, the bond tying its feet has to be cut. It is said to be just like that with the lower fetters.

Next, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*) are the subtle bonds known as lust for form (*rūpa-rāga*), lust for the formless (*arūpa-rāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). Now, what is the simile mentioned for them? When someone is hanging onto a tree, he cannot let go of that branch, can he? There, on that branch, there is an upward pull. Hanging onto a branch is an upward pull. That is why it was said here: five are to be cut, and five are to be abandoned. The forces pulling downwards must be cut. The forces pulling upwards must be abandoned. Having understood their true nature, once those that pull one towards the Brahma worlds, such as lust for form and lust for the formless, are removed, only then are the five abandoned.

Next, what is helpful for this? *Pañca cuttari bhāvaye*—those to be developed are the five: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). It is through the development of these five that the cutting and abandoning of those fetters can be accomplished. Next, *pañca saṅgātigo bhikkhu*—there are various attachments (clings). The attachments known as lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), conceit (*māna*), and views (*diṭṭhi*) must also be abandoned. Such a monk is indeed called *oghatiṇṇa*—one who has crossed over the torrent. In this manner, the flood, the torrent, is mentioned.

Similarly, if we analyze further and explain this verse, there is *'suttaṃ gāmaṃ'*, which speaks of a sleeping village. It is said that just as a sleeping village is swept away, Death comes and carries one off. Let us talk and reflect a bit on this sleep as well. Regarding this sleep, too, there are similar catechism-like verses. It is mentioned in the Dhamma that a deity comes and asks:

> *"Kati jāgarataṃ suttā, kati suttesu jāgarā,*
>
> *katībhi rajamādeti, katībhi…"*

Among those who are awake, how many are asleep? Among those who are asleep, how many are awake? When asked thus, the Buddha declares: *Pañca jāgarataṃ suttā, pañca suttesu jāgarā*. That means, among those whom ordinary worldlings think are awake, five are asleep. What are those five? The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) known as sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*). The five hindrances are things that put a person into the sleep of defilements. Thus, among those who are awake in the world, those who have these are asleep. That is how we have to understand it. These riddle-like verses, riddle-stanzas, are presented as riddles concerning Dhamma points.

Pañca jāgarataṃ suttā—among those who are awake, five are asleep. Next, among those who are asleep, five are awake. Although they appear to be asleep in the ordinary sense, if they possess those qualities of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), they are awake. Those who have the hindrance-factors of sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt are asleep. But those who have faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—these are called the wakeful factors (*jāgariya-dhamma*)—are awake. Let me tell you a good illustration of this. Saccaka the Niganṭha was someone who debated much with the Buddha. On one occasion, while debating with the Buddha, Saccaka asked the Buddha, "Do you remember, Blessed One, sleeping during the daytime?" "Yes, Saccaka, in the last month of the summer season, during the day, after my almsround, I lay down on my right side in the lion's posture, mindful and fully aware (*sati-sampajañña*)." Then he said, "The ascetics and brahmins say that is a deluded sleep." The Buddha replied, "I do not call it a deluded sleep merely because of that. If someone has the defiling taints (*āsava*) and other things that lead to future rebirth, that indeed is the deluded sleep. But the sleep of the other (one who is free) is not a sleep at all." That is what we have to take in this sense. While ordinary people in the world are awake, when they possess the

hindrances of sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt, it is like being asleep. But even if someone is asleep, there—where mindfulness and full awareness are also mentioned—if they have developed those virtues of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, they are awake even while sleeping. So, we can draw such deep meanings from this.

Next, let us consider why flowers were mentioned. It is the fivefold sensual pleasures that were compared to a flower garden. There are, especially in this era too, various kinds of optimistic attitudes in the world. Even though so many disasters occur, to the world deluded by defilements, only happiness is seen everywhere.

So let us think about production now. In the commercial world—we call it commercial. What is in it? Within the competitive commercial world, there are pleasing objects (*subha-ārammaṇa*). Brand new, latest fashions and designs are presented to consumers at a highly competitive level. Thus, there is a competition among manufacturers to present the most luxurious fashions and consumer goods in a newer way than others. Likewise, on the consumers' side too, there is that competitiveness, the desire to enjoy the fivefold sensual pleasures at a level far higher than one's neighbor.

So, even though everyone pursues happiness in that manner, if we look at it from the perspective of this life, at some point they are swept away either by a flood coming from inland like that, or by sea-water coming from the ocean. In this life, there are such disastrous things. If we look at it from the perspective of the next life, from the perspective of *saṃsāra*, they are overcome by those aforementioned *kāma-ogha*, *bhava-ogha*, *diṭṭhi-ogha*, and *avijjā-ogha*, and are dragged into the ocean of *saṃsāra* nonetheless.

That is indeed what is meant in that verse by *"Pupphāni heva pacinantaṃ, byāsattamanasaṃ naraṃ"*—going about seeking only flowers, seeking flower after flower. When one falls into that flower garden of the flowers of the fivefold sensual pleasures, one falls into the sleep of negligence and goes on gathering them. One does not understand the reality of life. What is that reality? That is what we highlighted at the very beginning here: first, the terrifying nature of this *kamma*. In fact, why is *saṃsāra* considered an extremely terrifying place? The Buddha has declared that this (unwholesome action) never passes away without giving its result. It never passes away without giving its result!

Next, the Buddha has shown a way to break the power of their results. At the highest level, it is broken by the supramundane paths (*lokuttara-magga*). It is through the supramundane paths that this cycle of *kamma* is broken at some point. Short of that, it is broken by the person who lives according to a certain right view, having separated himself from those wrong views—which is called *kammassakatā-sammādiṭṭhi* (right view that one is the owner of one's actions). At the very least, without falling into woeful states, escaping from the path of the planes of misery which are regarded as terrifying abysses and indicated by words such as *apāya, duggati, vinipāta, niraya*, one can obtain at least those good human existences, good living conditions, lives that can assist in

realizing Nibbāna. If one lives according to right view, on one hand, it is possible to make an effort to break that power of the force of *kamma*. More than that, what is to be done during the period of a Buddha's appearance is, as we mentioned at this time, in order to become *oghatiṇṇa* (one who has crossed the flood), to cut five, abandon five, and then develop another five, as said before. We must think specifically about the five to be developed: the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) known as faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Now, ordinary worldlings, those who walk inside that aforementioned flower garden, use only the five sense-faculties received along with our *Jāti* (Birth). But those mentioned in this Dhamma are spiritual faculties. Five faculties. They are things pertaining to the mind. Now, these five physical sense-faculties are common even to ordinary animals. But it is only a human being or a deity who can practice the Dhamma who is able to develop these faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. It is when one attains their value that these faculties are said to arise properly.

So, next, that they are helpful is what is mentioned in the *Ālavaka Sutta* and elsewhere: *"Saddhāya taratī oghaṃ"*—it is by taking faith as one's support that one can cross over these four torrents. To cross over the four torrents, over the ocean of *saṃsāra*, faith is helpful as the primary factor.

Next, if one receives encouragement from faith, what is done through faith? One is ready to bring forth even the energy hidden within oneself. Let us imagine that after a heavy rain, a great torrent is flowing. At first glance, looking at this flowing torrent, it seems: "Leave aside crossing to the other side, one cannot even think of it." But from the other side, the Buddha demonstrates with the gesture of fearlessness (*abhaya-mudrā*): "I have crossed over, it is possible to cross over. If you practice in this way and that, you can cross over." Behold, then faith arises. It is in accordance with that faith that one leaps into the water. Otherwise, saying, "Oh, how cold it is!" one would remain standing with arms folded. Instead, the faithful person, deciding "death or crossing," enters into these dispensational practices to cross over this torrent. There is such a great commitment within this faith. That is why faith is called resolution (*adhimokkha*). Through that faith, energy is released. Otherwise, one keeps it hidden. The capacity is there, but it does not come out. It comes out through that faith when the perception (*saññā*) arises: "This can be done." He can go there. There are people who have gone there. He sees that through the Buddha. That is what is called faith in the Teacher. Through the faith that arises from that, one generates physical and mental devotion/faith. Up to now, how much effort does a human being make to increase the heap of *dukkha* in daily life? How much suffering and hardship does he undergo? Hundreds and thousands of times more energy must be exerted to cross over this ocean of *saṃsāra*. That is what the Buddha declares regarding that energy. The Buddha applied energy at the highest level. What is called the fourfold-factored energy (*caturanga-samannāgata-viriya*) is: "Let only skin, sinews, and bones remain! Let flesh and blood dry up! If I am making this effort for a certain goal, without reaching that level, I shall not give up this energy." Applying it at that supreme level, the

Buddha attained Buddhahood. So, even if we cannot do it at that level, we can apply an energy close to it only when we have that kind of faith.

Next, although we say "energy," it is not agitation that is there; it is not the arising of restlessness (*uddhacca*), but something that must be done mindfully. It must be done with mindfulness (*sati*). It is the energy applied with mindfulness that actually succeeds. Accordingly, in applying that energy, one has to use mindfulness so that the energy is not wasted.

Next, likewise, when these come together, mindfulness becomes strong, and at some point, concentration (*samādhi*) comes. What is called a more stable concentrated mind is this: up to now, the capacities of the scattered mind could not be fully brought forth, but once it is unified, a power comes to see what was previously unseen. That is indeed what is called wisdom (*paññā*). One can understand the true nature of things as they are through wisdom. All of these are shown as spiritual faculties (*indriya*). These are things to be developed; through development, these must be brought forth. They are not things received for nothing from within. Through engaging in them itself, these faculties must be brought forth.

It is by bringing forth faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) that, at some point, one is able to cross over that flood. So we must constantly reflect on life. This reality is very quickly forgotten by most people. Once they are overcome by the fivefold sensual pleasures, they forget the true nature of the world, and leave aside other things, they even forget the *Anicca* (Impermanent) nature of their own lives. Life is a very short time; we live for less than a hundred years. Yet within this, embracing the entire world, just like Viḍūḍabha did, one tries to perform all the exploits one can. But one never knows when or from where Death (*Māra*) will emerge. When past karmic forces gather together and operate at some moment, all of those become dreams. Life is a dream! In the end, the entirety of life is a dream!! Now, some think that at the final moment, they will be able to rejoice because of the exploits they performed in life. None of those are what will be presented before them in the end; an unexpected sign (*nimitta*) of some murder, theft, etc., which they kept hidden, might emerge. As the sign of destination (*gati-nimitta*), a thought regarding such a place as a plane of misery (*apāya*) or the animal world finally arises. When being swept away by seawater or a flood, it is not the success of this life up to now, nor the many experiences called successful in this life that are remembered at that moment. That becomes just a dream, and in the end, what is remembered in its place is the mind-produced form (*cittaja-rūpa*) presented in accordance with the karmic energy that brings about the next *Jāti* (Birth). It is according to that that the next form is created, a body is created. Such is the way of *saṃsāra*.

Thus, our lives have been spent in this manner for an infinite time. It is only during the period of a Buddha's appearance that one can cross over from this ocean of *saṃsāra*, from these four floods called *saṃsāra*. You lay meritorious friends know better than us how daily lay life is spent. Life is overcome by and drawn to various amazing forces, and within that aforementioned commercial civilization, there are amazing situations in

society where the mind completely enters a state of madness. To avoid being caught in them, we must develop from within those spiritual faculties of faith, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. One must apply oneself at least in an effort to develop those faculties. Likewise, turning towards a simple life rather than those various fashions and designs mentioned, on an occasion like this of observing precepts, you meritorious friends get to recognize the true value of that Dhamma. It is not those fashions and designs in the world. Those are things that exist temporarily and then vanish. What can be regarded as eternal values is the recalling of the values of those virtues such as virtue (*sīla*) pointed out by the Buddha, and maintaining one's life in accordance with them. It is through that that one can establish real peace in life. Both in the past and in the present, even for those lay meritorious friends who led good lives, at least some peace could be established only by that kind of success—which we do not consider successful in this ordinary world, but is for those who led righteous, blameless, and virtuous lives in accordance with the Dhamma. It is only for those who listened to the Dhamma and meditated.

Having understood that with wisdom, according to what is said in this verse, since we do not know at what time that Death (*Māra*) will come in accordance with *kamma*, we must be ready for it at any time. That is why we say in certain instances, in this disastrous and calamity-prone era we have now, everyone should actually live with the “near-death mind” (*āsanna-citta*). We usually consider that when our aged parents or other relatives are close to death, we should bring a monk, preach a sermon, and think: “We must set this person's mind right”—thinking of the near-death mind, we make an effort for that. But a person who constantly has the fear of death, who has the awareness of the power of death, always tries to remain in a near-death state of mind. Why? Because he does not know at what moment death will come. Not only from external disasters, but from illnesses and ailments coming from within the body, in an completely unexpected manner—one can be talking like this, and suddenly one's speech can stop. Such things are present in this life. Therefore, that is why we are constantly, as the Buddha declared, said to be “prepared to die.” One can say one is prepared to die, at least to some extent, only if one has led a life in accordance with the Dhamma. Yet the Buddha does not say that one should be satisfied even with that. Why? No matter what kind of state in the Brahma worlds one is born into, or even if one is born in the deva worlds, they too have to pass away (*cuta*) one day. They have to pass away from there once that *kamma* is exhausted. That top spins only as long as its energy is there, only as long as the force applied to it is there; next, having spun and spun, it slowly falls over. Such is the situation in the Brahma worlds and the deva worlds too. That is what the Buddha pointed out to the world.

Therefore, we must reflect: to resolve this fundamentally, we must bring forth that wisdom, insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*). We must always direct the mind towards the *Anicca* (Impermanent) nature of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). That is the reality of life. The Buddha has declared that reality in three words: *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self). Even though we take all of this as “this is me, this is mine,” what is here is merely a heap of efforts made to survive. In reality, there is no

such thing as a life. Although we call it a “life,” there is only an attempt to survive here. At times, it is merely a multitude of futile efforts. To use a simile, it is like trying to sleep on a brand new reed mat. When you unroll the new mat and try to lie down, behold, it curls up again. All the works we do are like that; just when we think they are well finished, behold, they curl back the other way.

That is what happened to Viḍūḍabha too. Having tried and made an effort four times like that, he fulfilled his heart's desire. He destroyed that entire Sakyan clan and tried to return after fulfilling his heart's desire by washing the bench he sat on with their blood as he had hoped. They lay down to sleep, whether in the middle of the river or on the bank, and were simply swept away by the water. It is just like that with our life-goals; just when we think we have attained each of them in a big way, sometimes due to various things they can be destroyed. Even if not, at the very least, at the moment of *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death) we have to abandon them. A moment comes when we have to leave behind all obtained positions, accumulated wealth, gathered and raised children, and finally depart. At that time, preparing the mind for that is indeed what one should do. So, the moment of conquering that is what is called the Deathless, the deathless Nibbāna. It is the moment when the mind can be detached from this fivefold aggregate. That Deathless means: one dies, but there is no fear of death. The state where one can die without the fear of death is indeed what is called *Nivīma* (Extinction / Extinguishment).

What is called the deathless Nibbāna is not some strange food, nor a drink, nor something like a food found in the deva worlds. The deathless Nibbāna means, if at some moment, one can die without any fear of death. The fear of death is indeed what is present in the world, in everyone. If there is a state where one can die without a fear of death, it is the attainment of that. The noble ones who attained that state in this very life enter into those attainments—that is what is called the attainment of the Fruit of Arahantship—and having entered the attainment of the Fruit of Arahantship, they enjoy that peace (*nivīma*). That is not some strange world either. What is there is liberation from the world. There is the crossing over of *Bhava* (Becoming). There is the crossing over of the flood (*ogha*). That is what is called *Nivīma*, called Nibbāna. The terrifying nature of *saṃsāra* is indeed that one is born and dies again and again, born and dies. Born, dies. Born, dies. Thus, even though we rejoice when born, we are born only to die. Therefore, because of such a state, escaping from death is indeed the ultimate, highest, and most skillful thing to be done in the world. That is indeed Nibbāna, called the deathless Nibbāna. Even when that word is used, you meritorious friends might think of it as a world.

But for one who has developed those aforementioned faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), as their ultimate result, he is able to experience that strength to face *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death) without any fear of death. That is what the Buddha and the Arahants experienced. It is with that goal in mind that today you meritorious friends have observed the valuable precepts and listened to this Dhamma. Therefore, if everyone, if every Buddhist, aspires

for Nibbāna, this is indeed what they aspire for. It is liberation from that aforementioned ocean of *saṃsāra*, from the flood.

Therefore, in order to attain that capacity, if you have accumulated any wholesome energy (*kusala*) through observing precepts, listening to sermons, and meditating up to now today, may that wholesome energy, with the help and assistance of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) in this very life, succeeding in sermons and meditation, assist you in quickly obtaining that! May the wholesome energy of Dhamma-preaching and Dhamma-hearing be a supportive condition! Thus, make your aspiration. Including the deceased relatives who have passed away in your names, may whatever living beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who wish to rejoice in this wholesome deed of Dhamma-preaching and Dhamma-hearing, by doing so, realize the supreme and great Deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their choice! Aspiring thus, recite these verses and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #79

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.134)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Apārutā tesaṃ amatassa dvārā,

ye sotavanto pamuñcantu saddhaṃ;

vihiṃsasaññī paguṇaṃ na bhāsiṃ,

dhammaṃ paṇītaṃ manujesu brahmeti.

From:

Ariyapariyesana Sutta (Majjhima Nikāya 26), Vinaya Piṭaka (Mahāvagga), Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN 6.1)

Dear Listeners,

The Esala Full Moon Poya Day reminds us of the occasion when the Fully Enlightened Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, delivered the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* at the Deer Park in Isipatana, Varanasi. It was the moment the Wheel of Dhamma was set in motion. According to the history of the Sasana, today we have chosen as our theme a stanza that highlights certain important factors that formed the background to that miraculous event of setting the Wheel of Dhamma in motion.

While addressing a group of monks gathered at the hermitage of the Brahmin Rammaka in Savatthi, the Buddha, expounding a certain phase of His life story—disclosing it—brought to light a series of events related to this stanza. The Buddha declared that after attaining Supreme Enlightenment, having spent several weeks experiencing the bliss of liberation (*vimutti-sukha*), while He was staying at the foot of the Ajapala Banyan tree, a thought of this nature occurred to Him:

“This Dhamma I have discovered is extremely deep. It is very difficult to explain to others. It is peaceful, refined, beyond mere logic, the deep Dhamma of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), the Dhamma of Nibbāna. It is difficult to understand for

those who are trapped in attachment, who remain with *Taṇhā* (Craving) within attachment. Even if I preach the Dhamma, if they cannot understand it, it will only be a weariness and fatigue for me." Thus the Buddha expressed His hesitation to preach the Dhamma. But knowing that the Buddha was disinclined to teach, Sahampati Brahma of the Brahma world felt deep compassion and, knowing the thought of the Buddha, realized:

"The world is perishing, the world is being destroyed, if the Tathagata, the Fully Enlightened One, does not preach the Dhamma to the world!" At that very moment—as quickly as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm—he appeared before the Buddha, paid homage, and made an invitation: "May the Blessed One preach the Dhamma to the world! May the Sugata preach the Dhamma! There are those in the world with little dust in their eyes who have the capacity to understand the Dhamma." He then made this invitation to the Buddha in three stanzas.

"In the past, in this Varanasi, the Dhamma has been presented by various teachers with defilements. But may the Blessed One preach this pure Dhamma! May He open the doors of the Deathless!" he invited. The Brahma also presented a simile: "Just as a man standing on a rocky peak would look upon the people all around, may the Blessed One, the Tathagata, who has ascended the palace of Dhamma, look down upon the world of beings who are sunk in this samsaric *Dukkha* (Suffering) such as *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, and so forth." Then, as a special invitation in the final stanza, he declared:

> *"Uṭṭhehi vīra vijitasaṅgāma satthavāha anaṇa vicara loke;*
>
> *Desassu bhagavā dhammaṁ, aññātāro bhavissanti."*

"Arise, O Hero, victor in battle (who has conquered the battle of defilements)! O Caravan leader (*satthavāha*), wander in the world debtless. May the Blessed One preach the Dhamma to the world! There will be those who understand!" Thus the Brahma made his supplication and invitation.

At that moment, the Blessed One declares that, taking into account both the invitation of the Brahma and the Great Compassion for the world which He had cultivated throughout samsara, He surveyed the world with the Eye of a Buddha (*buddha-cakkhu*). When He surveyed with the Buddha-eye, He saw: those with little dust in their eyes, those with much dust in their eyes, those who have developed spiritual faculties such as faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), those who have not developed them, the good, the bad, and also those who have fear of the next world, those who can easily understand the Dhamma, those who cannot, and so on—the Buddha explained to the monks that these various levels of understanding appeared to Him.

Then, to illustrate this, He declared a simile. Just as in a pond of blue, red, or white lotuses, some blue, red, or white lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water, and remain nourished entirely under the water. Some blue, red, or white lotuses rise to the

surface of the water and stand level with the water. Yet other blue, red, or white lotuses rise completely out of the water and stand undefiled by the water. In the same way, the various levels of understanding among the people of the world appeared to the Buddha through the simile of the lotus pond. Seeing this, in acceptance of the Brahma's request, the Buddha uttered this stanza. This is the stanza we chose as our theme today:

"Apārutā tesaṁ amatassa dvārā, ye sotavanto pamuñcantu saddhaṁ;

vihiṁsasaññī paguṇaṁ na bhāsiṁ dhammaṁ paṇītaṁ manujesu brahme ti."

"Open to them are the doors of the Deathless. For whom? Let those who have ears release faith. I open those doors to those with ears, those with hearing." Let those who have ears release faith. Let them direct their faith towards it. *Vihiṁsasaññī paguṇaṁ na bhāsiṁ, Dhammaṁ paṇītaṁ manujesu brahme.* "O Brahma, thinking it would be a mere weariness, I did not initially preach this refined Dhamma to the world, but now I open the doors of the Deathless to those who have ears, let them release faith!" Thus, with this stanza, the Buddha made the decision to preach the Dhamma, saying He had opened the doors of the Deathless. Thereupon, the Brahma King, being delighted, circumambulated the Buddha and returned to the Brahma world.

The Buddha then contemplated: "To whom shall I preach the Dhamma first?" according to their levels of understanding. First, He thought of Alara Kalama, who had been a teacher to Him, or rather, who had met Him during the Noble Quest (*ariya-pariyesana*) and had helped Him to a certain extent. This Alara Kalama was wise. He was someone who had suppressed defilements for a long time. He had the capacity to understand things quickly. He was capable of realizing this Dhamma very soon. Just as He thought of preaching the Dhamma to Alara Kalama, deities came and said: "Venerable Sir, the teacher Alara Kalama passed away a week ago." Then the Buddha thought: "A great loss has occurred. If Alara Kalama were alive, he would have understood this Dhamma quickly." Next, He contemplated: "Who else?" and remembered the other teacher, Uddaka Ramaputta. Just as He thought: "This Uddaka Ramaputta is also wise, capable of understanding the Dhamma quickly," deities came and informed Him: "Last night, Uddaka Ramaputta passed away." At that moment too, the Buddha thought: "That too is a great loss. If Uddaka Ramaputta were alive, he would have understood the Dhamma quickly."

Then, thirdly, He contemplated: "To whom shall I preach this Dhamma?" He then thought with gratitude: "When I was practicing extreme self-mortification (*dukarakiriya*), these five monks were of great help to me. They are capable of understanding this Dhamma quickly." Next, He looked to see where they were residing. He saw that they were staying at the Deer Park in Isipatana, Varanasi. Then the Blessed One set out from there to preach the Dhamma to them. On the way, between Gaya and the Bodhi tree (Bodhgaya), the Blessed One declared that He met an Ajivaka named Upaka. This Ajivaka Upaka saw the extremely serene manner of the Blessed One, saw the purity of His complexion, and questioned Him: "Friend, your faculties are so pure, so serene. Your complexion is bright. Whose Dhamma do you follow? Who is your

teacher?" Then He replied: "I have no teacher." The Buddha then uttered a series of stanzas: *Sabbābhibhū sabbavidūhamasmi*... ('I am the conqueror of all, the knower of all...'), declaring that He had attained Supreme Enlightenment and Buddhahood.

Furthermore, *"Na me ācariyo atthi, sadiso me na vijjati"* ("I have no teacher, my equal is not found in the world. I am the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One in this world"), thus He introduced Himself. However, for some reason, this Ajivaka Upaka asked, "Then, according to what you say, you are the Infinite Victor (*anantajina*)?" and having heard this, said, "It may be so, friend," shook his head, took a different path, and departed.

Next, the Blessed One, journeying by stages towards Varanasi, finally approached the Deer Park in Isipatana. The five monks saw Him from afar and made an agreement among themselves: "Friends, here comes the recluse Gotama. The recluse Gotama is coming, having abandoned his self-mortification. Having reverted to a life of abundance (*bāhulika*), a life of luxury, he is coming in search of us. Let none of us stand up for him. Let us not pay him the respect of receiving his bowl and robe. If he wishes, let us merely set out a seat for him to sit on." Thus they agreed. But the Blessed One expressed to the monks that as He drew closer and closer, they were unable to abide by their agreement. Spontaneously, as it were, one of them came forward and received My bowl and robe. Another from among the five prepared a seat. Another prepared water to wash My feet. However, although they performed these hospitable services, they addressed me with the term "friend" (*āvuso*) and by my name.

Then the Blessed One declared: "I told the five monks: 'Monks, do not address me by name or as 'friend'. I have discovered the nectar of Nibbāna. I have realized the Dhamma. I have attained Supreme Enlightenment. Therefore, it is not proper to address me in this manner. Lend your ears, bend your ears, I shall preach the Dhamma to you. By listening to this Dhamma, you will realize that purpose for which you went forth into homelessness.'" But the five monks did not believe it at first. "How can that be, recluse Gotama? When you could not achieve it even after practicing such severe self-mortification, now that you have abandoned that effort and become a *bāhulika*, or rather, turned towards a life of luxury, how could you have found it?" Thus they did not believe it. Even when the Blessed One declared it a second and a third time, the five monks did not accept it.

Finally, the Buddha said: "Monks, have I ever spoken to you in this manner before? Monks, have I ever made such a statement to you before?" As soon as they heard this, the attitude of the five monks changed, and they replied, "No, indeed, Venerable Sir." The five monks, who had addressed Him as "friend" (*āvuso*) until then, now said, "No, indeed, Venerable Sir." From this, we must learn something. What the Blessed One used there was nothing other than the miracle of truth (*saccā-pāṭihāriya*). Through the miracle of truth, those five monks were subdued. Being subdued, from that moment on, they were ready to bend their ears. It was on that occasion that the Blessed One said, "Then, monks, give ear. I shall preach this Dhamma," and delivered the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* discourse we mentioned.

In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, within this matter of setting the Wheel of Dhamma in motion, there are valuable points. We will try to bring out briefly only the main points as appropriate to the occasion. Actually, the Buddha directed this sermon to these five monks. Their view (*diṭṭhi*) was *attakilamathānuyoga*—the idea that liberation can be attained through self-mortification, by giving pain to the body. To help remove this, the Buddha presented the Noble Eightfold Path which He had discovered as the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). Right at the beginning of that discourse, He said: "Monks, there are these two extremes that should not be pursued by one who has gone forth. What are they? *Kāmasukhallikānuyoga*—which is being attached to and immersed in the pleasure of the five cords of sensual desire. It is low, vulgar, common (*pothujjanika*), fit for worldlings, ignoble (*anariya*), and unbeneficial (*anatthasaṁhita*). It is something that does not bring welfare, but leads to harm." Introducing it thus, He called *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* one extreme. Then, as the second extreme, *attakilamathānuyoga* (self-mortification). This is not low and vulgar, but it is *"dukkho, anariyo, anatthasaṁhito"*—it is *Dukkha* (Suffering), ignoble, and unbeneficial.

So, having bypassed those two extremes, the Tathagata has awakened to the Middle Path. It is described as *cakkhukaraṇī, ñāṇakaraṇī*—giving rise to vision, giving rise to knowledge, leading to understanding, wisdom, and liberation (*vimutti*). Then, that Middle Path is the Noble Eightfold Path. You all know this: Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*), Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). This Noble Eightfold Path was then presented as the Middle Way.

Next, the Buddha briefly pointed out the truth. That is the Noble Truth He discovered, the Noble Truth of *Dukkha* (Suffering). You have heard many times of the Four Noble Truths: *Dukkha*, Samudaya (Origin), Nirodha (Cessation), and Magga (Path). It is here, for the first time, that the Buddha introduces them to the world. Each of these is introduced with the designation "Noble" (*ariya*). The Noble Truth of *Dukkha*, then Samudaya, the cause for the arising of *dukkha*. Then, the cessation of *dukkha*, which is Nibbāna. Then, the path, the practice leading to it. That itself was shown as the Middle Path.

The Noble Truth of *Dukkha* was introduced as: *jātipi dukkhā, jarāpi dukkhā, vyādhipi dukkho, maraṇampi dukkhaṁ, appiyehi sampayogo dukkho, piyehi vippayogo dukkho, yampicchaṁ na labhati tampi dukkhaṁ, saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*—thus was *dukkha* described. *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, death, association with the unpleasant, separation from the pleasant, not getting what one wishes. In short, in brief, the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*)—namely *rūpa* (form), *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā* (perception), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness)—these five aggregates of grasping are *dukkha*. Thus He introduced the mass of suffering, the Noble Truth of *Dukkha*. Next, as the second, the Truth of Origin (*samudaya-sacca*), He declared the nature of *Taṇhā* (Craving). *Yāyaṁ taṇhā ponobhavikā*—this *taṇhā* is what causes renewed *Bhava* (Becoming).

Nandīrāgasahagatā—accompanied by delight and lust. *Tatra tatrābhinandinī*—seeking delight now here, now there. He then showed it to be threefold: *kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā*, and *vibhava-taṇhā*. *Kāma-taṇhā* is the craving for the five cords of sensual pleasure; *bhava-taṇhā* is the desire for becoming, to wander in samsara; and *vibhava-taṇhā* is the craving associated with the view of annihilation (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*), which runs counter to *bhava-taṇhā*, moving along with the concept of a self (*atta-saññā*) towards self-annihilation. Just as *bhava-taṇhā* is connected to the view of eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*), *vibhava-taṇhā* is bound up with the view of annihilation.

To escape this existence, they seek a practice like suicide. But the Buddha does not approve of such things. As you know, within the Middle Path, there is a complete transformation of one's personal identity, starting from Right View and leading up to Right Concentration. The Buddha declared that it is along such a path of liberation that one gives rise to vision, knowledge, and wisdom. So, He declared the nature of that craving. Next, as the Truth of Cessation (*nirodha-sacca*), He showed: *tassāyeva taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho*—the remainderless fading away and cessation of that very craving, its giving up, its relinquishment, which is the Truth of Cessation. That is what was shown as Nibbāna. Then, the path to it is the aforementioned Middle Path. As the Truth of the Path (*magga-sacca*), there are the eight factors starting from Right View and leading up to Right Concentration.

Having thus briefly introduced the Four Noble Truths, He then presents another unique analysis. Regarding each of these truths, the Buddha declares: concerning this Noble Truth of *Dukkha*, first there arose in Him the initial realization, "This is the Noble Truth of *Dukkha*." Next, "This Noble Truth of *Dukkha* is to be fully understood" (*pariññeyyaṁ*). The world has only a partial, incomplete understanding of this. It must be fully understood. Therefore, the word used regarding the Noble Truth of *Dukkha* is: the Noble Truth must be fully understood (*pariññeyyaṁ*). That realization arose in the Buddha.

Then, thirdly, it is said: "I have achieved full comprehension (*pariññātaṁ*)." These three phases are what is called the "three rounds" (*tiparivaṭṭaṁ*). Finally, the Four Noble Truths are mentioned as having three rounds and twelve aspects (*tiparivaṭṭaṁ dvādasākāraṁ*). For some, this has been a puzzle: a Dhamma Wheel of three rounds and twelve aspects. How do these twelve aspects come about? Now, concerning the Truth of *Dukkha*: first, "This is the Truth of *Dukkha*." Finding out something anew is itself a turn. The first turn is identifying, "This is the Noble Truth of *Dukkha*." Next, the realization that this can be overturned from within one's own mind-stream, that this can be put into practice, is *pariññeyyaṁ*—'it must be fully understood.' When that full understanding is completed, the wheel has turned and is complete: *pariññātaṁ* ('it has been fully understood'). There, indeed, you have the three rounds (*tiparivaṭṭaṁ*) or three revolutions.

Next, regarding the Truth of Origin (*samudaya-sacca*) as well: the origin is identified as craving (*taṇhā*), as mentioned earlier. First, the realization arose, "This is the Noble

Truth of the Origin of *Dukkha*." Regarding this, there is "abandoning" (*pahāna*): if it is craving, it must be abandoned, dispelled, removed. So, those three words are mentioned regarding the Truth of Origin: "This is the Noble Truth of the Origin of *Dukkha*"; next, "This Noble Truth of the Origin of *Dukkha* is to be abandoned" (*pahātabbaṁ*); and finally, "It has been abandoned by me" (*pahīnaṁ*)—it has been expelled from the mind-stream.

Next, regarding the Truth of Cessation (*nirodha-sacca*): cessation is what comes about through the destruction of that craving. That cessation is the cessation of *Bhava* (Becoming), the cessation of craving. Regarding this, it is mentioned as something to be realized, to be personally experienced. He understood that cessation is something to be realized, and then He realized it: *sacchikātabbaṁ* ('to be realized') and *sacchikataṁ* ('realized'). Here too, there are three: "This is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of *Dukkha*"; "This Noble Truth of the Cessation of *Dukkha* is to be realized"; and "It has been realized by me." Thus, that aspect too is complete.

Next, the Truth of the Path (*magga-sacca*). When these are done, the path is already developed. So, regarding the path, it is said: *bhāvetabbaṁ*—the Truth of the Path is to be developed. It can be developed. And "It has been developed" (*bhāvitaṁ*). Now, there you have the four—the Four Noble Truths. If you divide each into three in this way, there are twelve aspects (*tiparivaṭṭaṁ dvādasākāraṁ*). The Blessed One declares to the five monks: "Monks, as long as my knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana*) regarding these Four Noble Truths in their three rounds and twelve aspects was not completely purified, I did not claim to be Fully Enlightened (*sammā-sambuddha*). Only when it was purified did I make that declaration." Thus He convinced the monks.

From this, what we have to understand is—and some of you might know this—that initial vision is obtained during the path-knowledge of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*). Although a general understanding of the Noble Truths is obtained in that manner, it was when they were fully put into practice and perfected that the Buddha attained Arahatship or the aforementioned Supreme Enlightenment. That is what is meant by saying "it was purified". In this way, the Buddha declared: "When my knowledge and vision of the three rounds and twelve aspects was complete, I set in motion this Wheel of Dhamma, which cannot be turned back by any deity, Mara, Brahma, or anyone else in the world." That indeed is what is called *dhammaccakkappavattana*. He set the Wheel of Dhamma in motion there. Having set that Wheel of Dhamma in motion within His own mind-stream, He also introduced it to the world. It is mentioned that by the time the Buddha finished preaching, from among the five monks of the human world, Venerable Kondañña attained the Path of Stream-entry. This is indicated there by the words: *"yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ."*

So, we can understand that the realization within the Fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*), if expressed briefly, can be described by those few words: *"yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ."* "Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease." That is the principle of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). So there too is a wheel. There is a wheel concerning arising and

ceasing. You know that even though the twelve-fold Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) was not explicitly mentioned here, even laywomen chant it in forward and reverse order (*anuloma-paṭiloma*). Within that too, there is a wheel: due to ignorance (*avijjā*), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) arise, and so on, until finally this mass of suffering called the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) is built up. At whatever point ignorance is abandoned, the five aggregates of grasping cease. That is what was briefly mentioned here.

So, looking at this sutta, we might not understand how Venerable Kondañña became a Stream-enterer. But once they abandoned the view (*diṭṭhi*) they had held, once they abandoned the extreme of *attakilamathānuyoga* (self-mortification)—and they had already abandoned the extreme of *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* when they entered the ascetic life—then, when the Buddha presented the Middle Path in terms of Right View and so forth, the strength of the path-factors (*maggāṅga*) developed within the ascetic Kondañña, and he obtained that realization. The very principle of Dependent Arising is what is found within the Four Noble Truths. *Dukkha*—if there is suffering, there must be a cause for it. When the cause is abandoned, suffering is abandoned. There too, a circular nature (wheel-like nature) exists.

If anything exists in the world, there is a cause for it. When the cause is removed, by the cessation of the cause, that suffering also ceases. Thus, in every aspect, there is that wheel. It was by the turning of that Wheel of Dhamma within the ascetic Kondañña that there arose the realization: *"yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ."* What is meant by "whatever" (*yaṁ kiñci*)? It is the very five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) mentioned earlier. If it is due to ignorance that one grasps these five aggregates of grasping, then, at the point where ignorance ceases, where misunderstanding is replaced by understanding, where the view of self (*atta-diṭṭhi*) is abandoned, where the view of self that caused *kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā*, and *vibhava-taṇhā* is removed—there, indeed, that realization comes to a person. It was because this was realized internally that the Eye of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakkhu*) arose in Venerable Kondañña. It is said, *cakkhuṁ udapādi, ñāṇaṁ udapādi* ('the eye arose, the knowledge arose…')—this is what is called the arising of the Eye of Dhamma. It is mentioned that after this Eye of Dhamma arose in the ascetic Kondañña, the Buddha granted him ordination by the formula of *ehi bhikkhu* ('come, monk').

After this event occurred, at that very moment, the Buddha uttered an inspired utterance of joy (*udāna*): *"Aññāsi vata bho Kondañño, aññāsi vata bho Kondañño"* ("Kondañña has indeed understood, Kondañña has indeed understood!"). It is because of this that he received the name "Aññā Kondañña" from that day onwards. When we consider how the Wheel of Dhamma that had turned within His own mind-stream was successfully set in motion within one of those five, we can call it a transformation that occurred not only within this human world. It was at that moment that—as many like to hear in protective chants (*paritta*)—the news of the Wheel of Dhamma being set in motion spread from heaven to heaven, from Brahma world to Brahma world. When we speak of the Wheel of Dhamma rolling, it is an upward rolling that takes place here. An upward rolling.

Starting from the earth-dwelling deities (*bhumma devas*), it rolled through the six devalokas, and then to the Brahma worlds. It rolled onwards as the reverberating sound of this event. The news that the Blessed One had set the Wheel of Dhamma in motion in the Deer Park at Isipatana spread up to that point. So, that is the essence of what is contained in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.

Now, if we think a bit more about this Wheel of Dhamma, many things in the world exist as a wheel. The wheel of time (*kāla-cakka*). If we think about the wheel of time, let us first think about a day. At the end of the daytime, there is the night. At the end of the night, there is the daytime. This is how the wheel of time operates within a day. Thus it goes on through days, weeks, months, and years. Finally, in terms of aeons (*kalpa*). Even if we look at aeons, there too, the Dhamma mentions aeons of contraction and expansion (*saṁvaṭṭa-vivaṭṭa kalpa*). There is a cyclical form concerning this world. A wheel of time operates in that manner.

It is the same with the wheel of authority (*āṇā-cakka*). The wheel of authority is—like in ancient times, by the beating of drums, or let's say when a rebellion arose in a neighboring province, a king would send his ministers and generals to suppress it, and after they returned, they would report back. Then they would be given gifts and rewards. That reporting back. There too, the wheel rolls out and returns. It is a similar thing here. So, how was this reported back at the end of the Wheel of Dhamma? That is what is mentioned at the end of this sutta: *"ayañca dasasahassī lokadhātu saṅkampi sampakampi sampavedhi, appamāṇo ca uḷāro obhāso loke pāturahosi atikkammeva devānaṁ devānubhāvaṁ"*—so the sutta concludes. Just like that reporting back, through the shaking of this entire ten-thousand-fold world system and the spreading of this boundless, magnificent light, it became evident to the world that this Wheel of Dhamma had been set in motion. The wheel of authority is also like that.

There is another matter. You may have heard about kings in the Dhamma stories—in this day and age, some people might not believe it. But if we speak of the Buddha's words, for example, there is the *Mahāsudassana Jātaka*. The Buddha speaks of a Wheel-turning Monarch (*cakkavatti*) named Mahāsudassana in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* as well. Mention is made of a kingdom called Kusāvatī. Wonderful, miraculous things are mentioned there concerning the Wheel-turning Monarch Mahāsudassana of the past. The Wheel-Treasure (*cakka-ratana*) that arises for such a king. It is said that the Wheel-Treasure appears to a Wheel-turning Monarch on a Uposatha day, when he has ascended to the upper terrace of his palace and is observing the eight precepts of the Uposatha. It is with the help of this Wheel-Treasure that he conquers the four quarters, the entire world. This is how it is mentioned in the Dhamma. A Wheel-turning Monarch is described as *dhammiko dhammarāja*—a righteous king. There is a concept of a righteous reign. The Wheel-Treasure is one of the seven treasures that arise for such a highly meritorious king. In the account of King Mahāsudassana, it is mentioned that since he had heard previously that such a Wheel-Treasure arises only to a Wheel-turning Monarch, he sprinkled water on the Wheel-Treasure from a ceremonial vessel and made a determination: "May this Wheel-Treasure roll forth." That Wheel-Treasure rolled forth

to the four quarters, and the kings of those various countries accepted the sovereignty of this Wheel-turning Monarch and became his subjects. They became subjects not through war, as is mentioned there. Even though he went with a fourfold army, how did the Wheel-turning Monarch subdue them? By establishing them in the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*).

“Do not destroy life. Do not steal. Do not commit sexual misconduct. Do not lie. Do not drink intoxicants. You shall rule your own territory which belongs to you.” It is through these instructions that he subdues them. This is the kind of story mentioned regarding the Wheel-turning Monarch. But there too, it was said that the Wheel-Treasure is a highly miraculous Wheel-Treasure. It is described as *sahassāraṁ sanābhikaṁ*—that is, with a thousand spokes (*ara*), a rim, and a central hub. A great wheel with a thousand spokes, a rim, and a hub in the center. That wheel rolls forth, and the king and his army follow it. Sometimes, rolling even across oceans, having conquered the kingdoms of the four quarters, it finally returns and stands as if planted firmly in the capital city. There too, it is a turning. Just like the turning of the wheel of authority.

In accordance with that concept, you might remember the prophecy uttered by the ascetic Asita during the Bodhisatta's infancy. “If he remains in the lay life, he will become a Wheel-turning Monarch. If he goes forth, he will become a Fully Enlightened One (*sammā-sambuddha*).” So, you can understand what this Wheel of Dhamma means in relation to that concept of Supreme Enlightenment. That is why the Wheel of Dhamma is said to have three rounds and twelve aspects (*tiparivaṭṭaṁ dvādasākāraṁ*). The Wheel-Treasure of a Wheel-turning Monarch has a thousand spokes, a rim, and a hub, being complete in every way (*sabbākārasampannaṁ*). Similarly, this Wheel of Dhamma of the Tathagata, the Fully Enlightened One, concerning the Four Noble Truths, is *tiparivaṭṭaṁ dvādasākāraṁ*—three rounds, three revolutions, and twelve aspects according to the Four Noble Truths. So, that is the setting in motion of the Wheel-Treasure.

What is meant by *dhammaccakkappavattana*? Instead of the Wheel-Treasure of the Wheel-turning Monarch which crossed the ocean to other lands by the power of its motion, the Buddha’s Wheel of Dhamma rolled upwards. The Wheel of Dhamma set in motion within His own mind-stream finally rolled upwards from the earth-dwelling deities through the heavens to the Brahma worlds, up to the Akanittha Brahma world. Next, it was that sound, reverberating as a great noise, through which light and other wonders spread throughout the world. In the same way, we can understand the value of this concept of the Wheel of Dhamma. Within the mind-stream, just as everything exists in a single wheel, within this Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) too, there is this *yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ*—whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease. This cyclical nature of the world shown by the Buddha is also expressed here through the setting in motion of the Wheel of Dhamma.

Thus, we can understand the transformation that took place in the world due to the setting in motion of the Wheel of Dhamma. The transformation in the mind-streams during the Buddha’s time, and also through the spreading of the Dhamma across lands, the entire essence of the Dhamma is summarized within these Four Noble Truths.

Everything can be gathered into the Four Noble Truths. Within it lies the law of Dhamma (*dhamma-niyāma*) related to Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), namely: *yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*. Therefore, due to this setting in motion of the Wheel of Dhamma, we especially commemorate the Esala Full Moon Poya Day as the occasion when the greatest transformation in the world took place.

In the world, there is the extreme that "everything exists". There is the extreme that "everything does not exist". There are two extremes called the view of eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*) and the view of annihilation (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*). Bypassing both, the Buddha showed the path. Due to ignorance (*avijjā*) in their mind-streams, worldlings build up this mass of suffering called the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*), remaining trapped within them for a long time in this samsara. If at any point this ignorance is removed, then the preparations (*Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) caused by ignorance—the preparations arising through the view of self—are removed. It is due to those *saṅkhāra* that there arises the concept of two: "this world" and "this is I" (*so loko, so attā*).

Through that, a cycle of *viññāṇa* (consciousness) and *nāmarūpa* (name-and-form) is formed. It rotates like a whirlpool within the mind-stream. As a result of this, it proceeds through *Taṇhā* (Craving) and *upādāna* (grasping/holding/fuel) towards *Bhava* (Becoming). It is a transformation leading to Nibbāna—which is the cessation of *bhava*—that the Buddha presented through this Dhamma. Many people consider this Wheel of Dhamma merely as an ordinary symbol. But one must contemplate the depth within it. The Buddha had the capacity, through the powers He possessed, to become a Wheel-turning Monarch.

On one occasion, when a Brahmin named Sela saw the Buddha, he uttered a series of stanzas in wonderful praise of the Buddha. This is mentioned in the Dhamma as the *Sela Sutta*. As soon as the Brahmin Sela heard the word "Buddha"—that a Buddha had appeared—such great faith arose in him that he asked Keniya, the ascetic who had told him the news: *"Buddhoti bho Keniya vadesi?"* ("Did you say 'Buddha', Keniya?"). *"Buddhoti bho Sela vadāmi."* ("'Buddha', indeed, I say, Sela."). After repeating this, great faith arose, and seeing the thirty-two marks of a Great Man (*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*) on the Buddha's body, out of deep devotion, the Brahmin Sela said: *"Rājā arahati bhavituṁ"* ("You are worthy to be a king, a Wheel-turning Monarch, and as a Wheel-turning Monarch, you should subdue the entire world to yourself"), expressing this out of his faith. At that moment, the Buddha replied: *"Rājāhamasmi Sela."* ("I am indeed a king, Sela.") *"Rājāhamasmi Sela, dhammarājā anuttaro."* ("I am a king, Sela, the supreme King of Dhamma.")

Consider this: some might think that when the Buddha says this, referencing the concept of kingship, it might lead to a reduction in respect towards the Buddha. But the Buddha introduced Himself: "I am the King of Dhamma." Not a Wheel-turning Monarch of that sort. He told the Brahmin Sela: *"Rājāhamasmi Sela, dhammarājā anuttaro."* The supreme King of Dhamma. "I indeed am the king." Next, the Brahmin Sela did not stop

there. He asked: “Then who is your general?” “My general is Sariputta.” “Sariputta rolls the wheel after me.” That is why the chief disciple, Venerable Sariputta, is called the *Dhammasenāpati* (General of the Dhamma). That we refer to the Buddha as *Buddharāja* or *Dhammarāja*—the King of Dhamma—is according to His own words. Similarly, referring to him as *Dhammasenāpati* is also according to that concept of kingship. From this, we can understand that the alternative path available to our Lord of the Triple World was to become a Wheel-turning Monarch. Instead, He became a *Dhammarāja*.

So, the status of a Wheel-turning Monarch is what the worldly consider to be the highest position. Thinking from a worldly perspective, in an era when a Buddha does not appear, a Wheel-turning Monarch enjoys the highest pleasures in the world. These are mentioned in the Dhamma in a way that is unbelievable to some—pleasures lasting eighty-four thousand years. It shows that they lived a righteous life at the lay level, but with a wonderful luxury that would make those who live luxurious lives today feel ashamed. Thus, it is the highest concept of the lay world. One can easily think of a lay person as a king who conquers the entire world, subduing the whole world merely by establishing them in the five precepts—there is a wonderful concept within the Wheel-turning Monarch concept.

Yet, it is due to a great mass of merit (*puññakkhandha*) that on a Uposatha day, while observing the precepts on the upper terrace of the palace, these seven treasures, including the Wheel-Treasure, arise for such a king. The Buddha, however, attained the supramundane (*lokuttara*), supreme state of a King of Dhamma, which surpasses that. That is what He declared to the Brahmin Sela: “I am the King of Dhamma, the supreme King of Dhamma. My general is Sariputta. This Wheel of Dhamma that I have set in motion, Sariputta rolls it further.” Also, you can think of another sutta among these discourses which serves as a reason, namely the *Saccavibhaṅga Sutta* of the Majjhima Nikāya. On one occasion, the Buddha assigned the chief disciple, Venerable Sariputta, to analyze this sutta which He had preached in brief—the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Venerable Sariputta presented a detailed analysis of it. The Buddha approved of this. Then we can understand from Dhamma literature that the General of Dhamma rolled that Wheel of Dhamma further, in accordance with what the Buddha had set in motion.

Accordingly, we must understand that what we have to roll now is this very Wheel of Dhamma within our own mind-streams. To roll that Wheel of Dhamma, we must bring about that aforementioned transformation. Nowadays, everyone talks about attaining Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) and ending samsara. Everyone who comes to us says: “I do not want to be born again.” But some have mistaken the path to it. There are those who say that if someone keeps the five precepts properly, by that alone they are a Stream-enterer. In defining certain states, sometimes its essential basic requirements are mentioned, along with ancillary factors. Ancillary means not directly, but additional matters are also pointed out by the Buddha. Taking hold of such parts, some people think that if someone keeps the five precepts properly, they have become a Stream-enterer by that alone. But from this very *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, we can see

the transformation that occurred, expressed in a few words regarding Venerable Kondañña: *yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*. Therefore, attaining the Fruit of Stream-entry is a major transformation that occurs internally, within the mind-stream.

How does that happen? If we contemplate according to the Dhamma, not only from this sutta but also with the help of other Dhamma discourses, it happens through a deep disillusionment (*nibbidā*), a disgust towards this suffering we are grasping as the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*). This is called *nibbidā*. On certain occasions, the Buddha declared the fundamental principle to distinguish between Dhamma and non-Dhamma. If something is non-Dhamma, non-Vinaya, the Buddha makes this statement: *"Netaṁ ekanta-nibbidāya, virāgāya, nirodhāya, abhiññāya, sambodhāya, nibbānāya saṁvattati"* ("This does not lead to complete disillusionment, to fading away (dispassion), to cessation, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Nibbāna").

From this, we can understand that if it is the Dhamma, it must lead to that *nibbidā*—samsaric disillusionment. It must lead to dispassion (*virāga*). That is the principle to identify whether something is Dhamma or non-Dhamma. Accordingly, we can understand—just as it arose within the ascetic Kondañña at that moment—there was absolutely no question regarding the pleasure of the five cords of sensual desire. There was only the question of *attakilamathānuyoga* (self-mortification). He must have realized, by hearing the words *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā*, that this too was based on the view of self (*atta-diṭṭhi*). We cannot comprehend the capacity of their understanding. We can only give a slight hint. Such noble ones were complete with merit. But as far as we can see according to the law of Dhamma, without clinging to such narrow viewpoints, the insight (*vipassanā*) taught by the Buddha is presented in three special words. For us Buddhists, it is familiar to the tongue. Even if it is unfamiliar to the heart, it is familiar to the tongue. Whatever happens, we say: *"aniccaṁ, dukkhaṁ, anattā"*. We are used to it almost like a song. But this must sink deep into that depth, so that samsaric disillusionment is completed. If some things are done partially, that transformation does not take place.

Now, we also spoke about this Dhamma: through the attainment of Stream-entry, which is called the state of a trainee (*sekha*), the initial vision is obtained. What is meant by *sotāpanna*? We often hear even those words being explained in a distorted manner. *Sota* does not mean "ear"; *sota* means a stream, a current. If a log of wood falls into the water of a river, it flows down to the ocean and stops there. The state of having entered that stream of Dhamma so firmly is what is called *sotāpanna*. One has joined the stream of Dhamma. Going outside the stream of Dhamma, or going against it, is the momentum of the world. That is what happens within the pleasure of the five cords of sensual desire. The stream of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) caused by ignorance—whether meritorious or demeritorious—builds up these five aggregates of grasping. That indeed is what is called *Taṇhā* (Craving). It arises again and again. At the moment of death, the grasping (*upādāna*) caused by that unabandoned craving presents karma: *"kammaṁ khettaṁ,*

viññāṇaṁ bījaṁ, taṇhā sineho"—in the manner that karma is the field, *viññāṇa* (consciousness) is the seed, and *Taṇhā* (Craving) is the moisture; sprouting thus, we go on this samsaric journey.

If we are to end that, according to the hints given by the Buddha, one must follow that line of thought that leads to *nibbidā*, samsaric disillusionment, and dispassion (*virāga*) which is non-attachment. Yogis would know that these three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) are shown in various ways of contemplation: sometimes as three, as eleven, as eighteen, or as forty-odd, depending on how these three characteristics are understood by each individual. Where they are shown as eleven, they are: *aniccatoti, dukkhatoti, rogatoti, gaṇḍatoti, sallatoti, aghatoti, ābādhatoti, paratoti, palokatoti, suññatoti, anattatoti*—and so on. This shows how it is understood by each individual. The five aggregates of grasping—each aggregate must be contemplated as impermanent (*anicca*), as suffering (*dukkha*), as a disease, as a tumor, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as empty, as non-self (*anattā*), in various ways so that a turning away arises.

What is shown through various meditations like the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*) is the method to generate that aforementioned *nibbidā*. Why should we generate *nibbidā*? Complete disillusionment. It is when complete disillusionment (*nibbidā*) arises that non-attachment (*virāga*) comes about. Through non-attachment, dispassion is attained. Liberation, which is close by, is revealed through dispassion. It is through dispassion that the door to liberation is opened. Through liberation, there is the letting go of these five aggregates of grasping. It is not an active letting go, but it gets let go of to some extent. If a dead rat snake carcass or a dog carcass falls onto the shoulders of someone who likes to be well-dressed, they do not make an effort—spontaneously, as it were, they shake their shoulders and throw it off. In the same way, if the mind, through those methods of meditation, personally experiences the five aggregates of grasping as impermanent, suffering, and non-self—if each of these is understood as a great suffering, a trouble, a dart, a tumor, a disease, an affliction, as belonging to others, as something that breaks, as empty, as hollow—then, at that moment, a great disillusionment arises through direct experience, and the five aggregates of grasping are let go of. It is by that letting go that one touches liberation. That is what is called touching Nibbāna, personally experiencing Nibbāna.

What is meant by extinguishment? If those are the burnings, where that burning is absent, there is extinguishment (Nibbāna. Many people have made a plaything of this word Nibbāna. Thinking of it as some other world, they conceptualize Nibbāna in a way that increases the craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). But within the Dhamma, the Truth of Cessation (*nirodha-sacca*) is the very destruction of that craving: *tassāyeva taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho*. The remainderless fading away and cessation of that very craving, its abandoning. It is nothing other than that.

That matter is found within the Four Noble Truths themselves. If this becoming (*bhava*), these five aggregates of grasping, arise due to certain causes and conditions, then, where those causes and conditions are absent, there indeed is Nibbāna. That is what we have to

understand. The path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path. Even there, it is not a matter of developing it marginally or retail-wise; it is the occasion when it is completed in depth at the moment of the Path and Fruit (*magga-phala*). At that single moment, all eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path—just like a path that was crooked until then becomes straight—arise powerfully from Right View to Right Concentration, in a single moment, in a single mind-moment. That Truth of the Path is what arises in that mind at the stage of the Path of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahatship. The Noble Eightfold Path, which was developed little by little until then, becomes straight and emerges as a powerful Noble Concentration (*ariya-samādhi*) in a single moment. It is through that Noble Concentration that the five aggregates of grasping are let go of. Through that letting go, one experiences a state of cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) in this very life (*diṭṭheva dhamme*). There indeed is liberation. That is liberation. So, we must understand that this is what we should target. We must remove those wrong concepts. Stream-entry is not a story about *sota* falling into the ear or eye. A simile is given: like a log of wood that has fallen into a river going to the ocean. If that direct experience is obtained, that is the trainee (*sekha*). From then onwards, the completed state is called the non-trainee (*asekha*). When this Wheel of Dhamma is turned four times in four stages on the path leading to Arahatship—when those three characteristics are powerfully developed and turned four times—there indeed is Supreme Enlightenment.

At that stage, the Buddha said He was purified. Although that state is not as all-encompassing as Supreme Enlightenment (*sammā-sambodhi*), the history of the Sasana is proof that one can realize it within Arahatship through one's own capacity. You, on a day like today, must recognize that Wheel of Dhamma. You must know where to turn it. Not from country to country, from land to land, as the Wheel-turning Monarch turned it. It must be turned within one's own mind-stream, in four ways, in four manners, at four stages. Then, the reverberation of that—the supremacy of that Wheel of Dhamma—spread up to the Akanittha Brahma world at that moment.

Thus, on this valuable day, we commemorated the core meaning, the essence within the preaching of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* in Isipatana, Varanasi. We must renew that today. In accordance with that Wheel of Dhamma, to shape our lives, may the virtue (*sīla*) observed, the meditation practiced, and the Dhamma heard up to this point, definitely serve as a cause and support (*hetu-upanissaya*) for all of you. I wish.

May all beings from the Avici hell up to the Akanittha Brahma world rejoice in the mass of merit accumulated through this preaching of Dhamma and listening to Dhamma. By rejoicing in it, may they make it a support to realize the supreme, great, deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration. Likewise, to maintain this Sasana for a long time, may you all, with a correct understanding of this Wheel of Dhamma, by fulfilling virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*), if you have those aspirations, realize the supreme, great, deathless Nibbāna in this very life through the realization of the paths of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahatship, and be released from all samsaric suffering! May you be free from suffering! Chant this stanza.

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #80

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.178)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Bahūni loke vicitrāni asmiṃ paṭhavimaṇḍale,

mathenti maññe saṅkappaṃ subhaṃ rāgūpasaṃhitaṃ;

rajamūhataṃca vātena yathā meghopasammaye.

Evaṃ sammanti saṅkappā yadā paññāya passati,

sabbe saṅkhārā aniccāti yadā paññāya passati;

atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā.

Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhāti yadā paññāya passati,

atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā.

Sabbe dhammā anattāti yadā paññāya passati,

atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā.

From:

Dhammapada 277–279 (Magga-vaggamu)

Dear Listeners,

The honor of being the first member of the Sangha community established by the Tathāgata, the Fully Self-Awakened One, belongs to the Great Arahant Aññā Koṇḍañña. For this very reason, the Buddha bestowed upon him the chief position (*etadagga*) among the monks of long standing (*rattaññū*). "Monk of long standing," devotees, means a monk who has spent many nights, many days—that is to say, a long period of time—in this Dispensation. The oldest monk. Furthermore, as you have heard, the honor

also belongs to the Great Arahant Aññā Koṇḍañña as the monk who was the very first among human beings to realize the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*) upon listening to the Buddha's first Dhamma sermon.

According to the Theragāthā Commentary, this Great Arahant Aññā Koṇḍañña was one who had fulfilled the perfections (*pāramīs*) in the dispensations of past Buddhas in order to achieve this chief position. Thus, even before our Buddha appeared in the world, Ven. Koṇḍañña was born into an eminent family in the Brahmin village named Doṇavatthu, close to the city of Kapilavastu. By his clan name, he was known as Koṇḍañña. Later, when the Bodhisatta passed away from the Tusita heaven and was born as the son of King Suddhodana, on the auspicious occasion of the naming ceremony, one hundred and eight Brahmins were invited to the palace. Among them, by that time, the Brahmin Koṇḍañña had mastered the three Vedas and the science of physiognomy (body marks) to their absolute limit. Not only was the Brahmin Koṇḍañña included among those one hundred and eight, but out of those, only eight were assigned the task of examining the prince's bodily marks and giving him a name. The eight Brahmins assigned to this important task were Rāma, Dhaja, Lakkhaṇa, Mantī, Koṇḍañña, Bhoja, Suyama, and Sudatta. Among these eight, the Brahmin Koṇḍañña was the youngest. Then, as described there, after examining the marks, all the other seven Brahmins raised two fingers and declared: "If he remains in the lay life, he will become a Wheel-turning monarch (*cakkavatti*). If he renounces, he will become a Buddha." However, the Brahmin Koṇḍañña raised only one finger and said: "This prince will definitely attain supreme self-awakening (*sambodhi*)."

So, after those auspicious ceremonies were over, those seven Brahmins went to their respective homes and told their children: "By the time this prince attains Buddhahood, we will not be alive. Therefore, when a Dispensation is established, you at least must ordain in the Dispensation of that Buddha." Having said this, it was not long before they passed away. Then, as we have all heard, at the age of twenty-nine, Prince Siddhartha made the Great Renunciation. Having renounced and gradually making his way, by the time he began practicing self-mortification (*duṣkarakriyā*) in the Uruvelā district, the Brahmin Koṇḍañña went to the homes of the other Brahmins and told their children: "If your fathers were alive, they would ordain at this moment. Therefore, I have now resolved to ordain following that Great Being, that noble prince. If you also wish, join me." Only four of them came forward. Accordingly, in addition to the Brahmin Koṇḍañña, the other Brahmins—Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma, and Assaji—who are known to everyone as the "Group of Five Monks" (*pañcavaggiya*), set out and went to the Uruvelā district, where they attended upon our Bodhisatta for six years during his practice of self-mortification.

Next, as you may have also heard, when the Buddha practiced self-mortification and realized its futility, he entered upon the Middle Path, abandoned those painful austerities, and inclined toward a balanced life. Accordingly, unlike how he had previously rejected food, he then went for alms in search of solid food. Seeing this, the group of five monks became disillusioned. They thought, "Now this ascetic Gotama has

abandoned effort and has turned to a life of abundance," and having become disillusioned, they abandoned him and went to Isipatana in Varanasi (Benares).

Meanwhile, as everyone has heard, on the full moon day of Vesak, the Buddha attained supreme self-awakening in this manner, spent the seven weeks at the foot of the Bodhi tree, and due to the invitation of Brahma and other matters, made the determination to teach the Dhamma. He then contemplated to whom he should first preach this Dhamma. First, the ascetic Āḷāra Kālāma came to his mind. You have heard that when the Buddha first went in search of teachers, he first took Āḷāra Kālāma as his teacher. When he thought about it, unfortunately, the ascetic Āḷāra Kālāma had passed away a week earlier. Next, he thought of the ascetic Uddaka Rāmaputta. He too had passed away the previous night. It was only after that that the Buddha thought, "I must go in search of the group of five monks who were of great help to me. They will be able to understand this Dhamma." From that point onward, many of the details are mentioned in a wonderful way in the Buddha's own words in the *Ariya Pariyesana Sutta*.

The Buddha says: "When I set out and approached Isipatana in Varanasi, the group of five monks saw me from afar and made an agreement among themselves: 'Here comes the ascetic Gotama, who abandoned his striving and has now turned to a luxurious life. Let us not pay homage or show respect to him. Let us not go forward to receive his bowl and robes, but let us only set out a seat; if he wishes, let him sit.' Despite making such an agreement," the Buddha declares, "as I came closer and closer, those five monks were unable to keep to their agreement. Some came forward and received my bowl and robes. Another prepared a seat. Another prepared water to wash my feet." However, those five addressed the Buddha using the term of address *'āvuso'* (friend/brother). "They addressed him by name as 'Avuso Gotama' and in the manner of 'Avuso'." Then the Buddha said to the group of five monks: "Monks, do not address the Tathāgata by the name *'āvuso'*. I have attained supreme self-awakening (*sammā sambodhi*), I have attained the Deathless—Nibbāna. Therefore, listen, I shall teach the Dhamma."

Then those five said: "When you did not attain Buddhahood through such severe austerities, how can you attain it through this lax lifestyle?" and they did not accept it. A second time the Buddha spoke. A second time the group of five monks rejected it. A third time he spoke. But a third time too they rejected it. At that moment, the Buddha did not perform any other miracle, but rather the miracle of truth. He asked: "Monks, did I ever speak to you in this manner before?" At that moment, faith arose in the group of five monks, and addressing him as "Venerable Sir" (*bhante*), they accepted it. It was after that, as you have heard, that he preached the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* not only to the group of five monks but also to the devas, Brahmas, and others. At the end of that sutta discourse, because the monk Koṇḍañña attained the fruit of Stream-entry, you will find a passage in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* where the Buddha uttered an inspired utterance (*udāna*): *"Aññāsi vata bho Koṇḍañño, aññāsi vata bho Koṇḍañño!"* That means, "Koṇḍañña has indeed understood, has comprehended, has realized the Dhamma." It was through this that Ven. Koṇḍañña received the name "Aññā Koṇḍañña."

Then it is mentioned that at one time, the Buddha bestowed upon Ven. Koṇḍañña the chief position (*etadagga*) among the monks of long standing, as mentioned before. However, as the nature of Ven. Koṇḍañña is shown to us, he was extremely humble. The chief disciples, such as Sāriputta and Moggallāna, would constantly pay homage and respect to him as an elder. He rejected all of this, and in order to dwell devoted to meditation, he lived for twelve years in a solitary place in the Himalayas known by the name Chaddanta, receiving service from elephants, as recorded in the books. It is said that even Sakka came to him during that time to engage in Dhamma discussions. The verses we have taken as our theme, according to what is stated in that book, were uttered by him while residing there, having observed how the minds of worldlings (*puthujjana*) behave, and demonstrating the Dhamma method and the Dhamma path to conquer them. Let us look at their meaning.

Bahūni loke vicitrāni asmiṁ paṭhavimaṇḍale

Mathenti maññe saṅkappaṁ subhaṁ rāgūpasaṁhitaṁ

"There are many variegated things, variegated objects in this world, or rather, on this earthly sphere. These—I think—agitate the lustful intentions and thoughts (*saṅkappa*) arisen due to the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*)." Then he says:

Rajamūhatāñca vātena yathā meghopasammaye

Evaṁ sammanti saṅkappā yadā paññāya passati

"Just as the dust raised by the wind is calmed by a great rain cloud, so too do those defiled thoughts and intentions (*saṅkappa*) calm down at whatever time one sees with wisdom." Having said this, next, the method of seeing with wisdom is mentioned by quoting the three very famous verses related to the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), which you have heard so often.

Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccāti yadā paññāya passati

Atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā

"At whatever time one sees with wisdom that every *saṅkhāra* (formation) is *Anicca* (Impermanent), at that moment one becomes disillusioned with *Dukkha* (Suffering). This itself is the path to purity." In the next verse, there is only a slight difference:

Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhāti yadā paññāya passati

Atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā

"At whatever time one sees with wisdom that every *saṅkhāra* (formation) is *Dukkha* (suffering), at that moment one becomes disillusioned with this *dukkha*—that is to say, the *dukkha* of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). 'Nibbindati' means to become disillusioned. This is the path to purity." Now, the third verse is slightly different from this:

Sabbe dhammā anattāti yadā paññāya passati

Atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā

"At whatever time one sees with wisdom that all *dhammas* (all things / phenomena) are *Anattā* (not-self) , then one becomes disillusioned with this *dukkha* of the five aggregates of grasping. This is the path to purity." Thus he uttered these three verses. Now, these Dhamma points are worth discussing a little. Here, he indicates the Three Characteristics through these three verses. He declared that it is precisely by means of the Three Characteristics that those defiled thoughts and intentions can be conquered. At the same time, some people raise a question: "Why did the Brahmin Koṇḍañña not believe when the Buddha attained self-awakening, even though he had predicted in the past that this prince would definitely become a Buddha?" Someone might raise such a question. But what we have to understand is that the idea prevalent among most people at that time was that in order to realize Nibbāna, one must subject the body to pain—self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). That is why they became disillusioned and left. They did not know anything about a "Middle Path". However, we can understand that the Buddha must have preached the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* in that manner precisely to dispel this wrong view of the group of five monks. Because, as you know, the most fundamental point of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* is the showing of two extremes: devotion to sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) and devotion to self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). Without going to either, the Buddha presented the Noble Eightfold Path at that time, stating, "I have discovered a Middle Path." Therefore, among the five, the monk Koṇḍañña attained the fruit of Stream-entry because he understood before the others that the prediction he had given in his childhood had indeed come true.

Later, the Buddha himself once made this amazing statement: "During the remaining days, this is how I trained these five for Arahantship. I did this: I would instruct two of them, while the other three went for alms. On the food brought by those three, all six of us would survive. The next day, I would instruct three of them, while two went for alms. On the alms-food brought by those two, all six of us would subsist." In this way, the Buddha trained all five of them, and then, as you have heard, it was when he preached the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* that all five of them attained Arahantship. Therefore, the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* helps us to understand these Three Characteristics. For that reason, we will present it briefly on this occasion, because it is very closely connected to the life of Ven. Koṇḍañña. He became an Arahant by listening to this *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*.

The meaning of the words "Anatta Lakkhaṇa" is the characteristic of *Anattā* (Not-self). So, the word *Anattā* (not-self) was placed at the forefront by the Buddha in that discourse. The Buddha began it in this way. Straight away, the Buddha says to the five: "Monks, form (*rūpa*) is *anattā*. If form were self, this form would not lead to affliction. We should be able to say to form: 'Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus,' according to my wish. But this cannot be said, and form cannot be tamed in this way. Therefore, monks, form is *anattā*."

Then the Buddha declared the same concerning form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). Then he asked those five:

"Monks, is form permanent (*nicca*) or impermanent (*anicca*)?"

"Impermanent, Venerable Sir," they replied.

"If something is impermanent, is it ease (*sukha*) or suffering (*dukkha*)?"

"It is suffering, Venerable Sir," they replied.

"If something is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, is it fit to conceptualize it in terms of craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and views (*diṭṭhi*) as: *'etāṁ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā'*—'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?"

Then those five said: "No, Venerable Sir."

Accordingly, the Buddha made them realize the Three Characteristics, and showed them what ought to be done. Concerning the five aggregates of grasping—an "aggregate" (*khandha*) means a heap or collection, and eleven factors are gathered into this heap: past, future, present, internal, external, gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far, and near. In these eleven ways, one can think about this aggregate of form. Thoughts can arise, and this is what is grasped by the mind as "my aggregate of form." Therefore, one should contemplate all these eleven aspects through comprehensive investigation (*sammasana*) in this manner:

"Netāṁ mama" — This is not mine. *"Nesohamasmi"* — This I am not. *"Na meso attā"* — This is not my self.

When the Buddha declared that it must be seen with wisdom in this manner, it is seen that at the conclusion of this discourse, those five attained Arahantship.

From this, we can understand the great wonder contained within these Three Characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*. First, let us raise a problem that many people have. In the first two verses, it was said: *"Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā"* (All preparations are impermanent) and *"Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā"* (All preparations are suffering). But in the third verse, it says: *"Sabbe dhammā anattā"* (All *dhammas* are *anattā*). This is a big problem even for scholars. It says all preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are impermanent. By seeing them as suffering, one develops disillusionment (*nibbidā*) toward the five aggregates of grasping; this is the path to purity. Next, it speaks of them as suffering—the suffering of preparations (*saṅkhāra-dukkha*). Thirdly, it says: *"Sabbe dhammā anattā."* What is meant by "dhammā" there is a problem for many. We can get a clue about this. You might have heard of the *Girimānanda Sutta*. In it, the Buddha points out ten perceptions (*saññā*): the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), the perception of *anattā* (*anattā-saññā*), the perception of unattractiveness (*asubha-saññā*), the perception of danger (*ādīnava-saññā*), and so forth.

The Buddha explains the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) in terms of the five aggregates of grasping: form is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, etc. But the perception of *anattā* (*anattā-saññā*) is explained there in terms of the six sense bases (*āyatana*). What are the six sense bases? The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The eye is *anattā*, forms are *anattā*; the ear is *anattā*, sounds are *anattā*; in that manner, the perception of *anattā* is structured. The last one to come is: *"mano anattā, dhammā anattā"* — the mind is *anattā*, and mind-objects (*dhammā*) are *anattā*. There is a deep point here. Because, in the end, what has to be regarded as *anattā* is the very object that comes to the mind. This is a very deep place in the Dhamma. Because, as the Buddha has shown in certain places, the Middle Path in this Dhamma does not consist merely in being free from the two extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification. In many places, the Buddha's Middle Path is shown with much deeper meanings than that. We have pointed out the reason for this on many occasions. The Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) is its depth. Underneath lies the law of Dependent Arising. Thus, according to Dependent Arising, ultimate liberation lies in not grasping anything. So, in certain places, the Buddha points out: *"nissāya nissāya oghassa nittharaṇā"* (crossing the flood by depending on one thing after another). This means: "One has to cross over this flood of Saṁsāra by using certain things as support." That is to say, one crosses over using them as support, but one does not take them along, grasping and clinging to them, to Nibbāna.

For this, even though it does not belong to the Buddha's time but to the later *Visuddhimagga* and other texts, there is a simile. Since we spoke of a rapid current of water, here is an appropriate one. Sometimes, during the rainy season when the water of a stream flows rapidly, if there is no way to cross, there is one method: one clings to a creeper hanging from a tree on this side and swings well. Having swung back and forth and gained the necessary momentum, as soon as one reaches the other side with that momentum, one does not keep holding onto it. One lets go. When one lets go, one lands on the other side. It is such a thing that is found in this Dhamma. That is its deepest side. Indeed, scholars of the past point out that there is a wonderful Middle Path in this Dhamma. That is, one makes use of tranquility (*samatha*). "Samatha" means utilizing concentration (*samādhi*) as a support. But one does not grasp concentration either. One does not cling to it. If one develops craving (*taṇhā*) for it, one gets stuck there too. Similarly, in insight (*vipassanā*), one makes use of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). As we said, in tranquility, one attains concentration. Using that concentration as a support, one develops insight, and in the end, just like breaking through concentration, this Nibbāna is something that penetrates through that as well.

Next, what are called preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in insight: every time one directs the mind to the five aggregates of grasping, something comes to the mind. Whether it is regarding forms or regarding feelings, every such moment is like something bubbling up. These are called preparations. Because they perform the function of preparing and conditioning. Thus, the word *saṅkhāra* is described in some places in this manner: *"saṅkhataṁ abhisaṅkharontī ti saṅkhārā"* (they prepare and condition the prepared, hence they are called preparations). "Saṅkhata" means that which is prepared or conditioned. Then, it is

the preparations that bring the prepared to the state of being prepared. This is the important point there. Thus, what is done by preparations is that through preparations, something is prepared; it is brought to the state of being prepared (*saṅkhata*). The Buddha points out: "Behold, all preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are impermanent." Ordinary worldlings regard all these preparations as permanent. But they are impermanent. Likewise, they are fraught with suffering (*dukkha*).

Next, finally, he points out the objects that come to the mind. In passages like *"manopubbaṅgamā dhammā"* (mind precedes all phenomena), we see that mind is the forerunner. It is by the mind itself that these *dhammas* (phenomena) are prepared. Therefore, even the *dhammas* have to be abandoned. Now, as a matter of common parlance, we say "Nibbāna," "going to Nibbāna," or "one must journey quickly to Nibbāna." But there is a wonderful thing in this Dhamma. In the end, one does not grasp even the concept of Nibbāna—the term "Nibbāna". There is an extremely deep sutta called the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*, which points out that one does not tightly grasp any concept, not even Nibbāna, but only uses it as a support.

We can understand this point through *"Sabbe dhammā anattā"* (All *dhammas* are *anattā* - not-self). There are various other similes for this. You might have heard of a highly valuable simile used by the Buddha in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*—the simile of the raft. The Buddha declares: *"Kullūpamo bhikkhave mayā dhammo desito"* — "Monks, I have taught this Dhamma as comparable to a raft." *"Nittharaṇatthāya no gahaṇatthāya"* — "For the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping (carrying it on one's back)." The Buddha presents the simile there in a wonderful way. A person comes to a stretch of water, which could be a large river, with the intention of crossing over. But there is neither a boat nor a bridge. Then what does this person do? He collects grass, twigs, branches, and leaves from the trees around, binds them together with creepers to make a raft, and making an effort with his hands and feet, somehow crosses over to the other side. Once he has crossed, the purpose of the raft is over. He abandons it and goes on. In the same way, the Buddha presented this Dhamma. We make use of these concepts, words, etc., as support. But in the end, we are told to abandon them too. This is a wonderful thing. In this journey, one thing has to be used to support another. One cannot abandon everything all at once.

Nor can one grasp it. Right there lies the depth of this Dhamma. This is where it differs from all other religions. One cannot grasp everything, nor can one abandon everything. Abandoning everything is what is found in *attakilamathānuyoga* (self-mortification). Clinging to everything is what is found in *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* (sensual indulgence), looking at it from that perspective. But if one contemplates more deeply, this journey to Nibbāna is presented in the structure of that simile of crossing the river.

On another occasion, a valuable point raised through a discussion among disciples, which is a highly valuable sutta showing this idea of crossing over by using various things as support, is the *Rathavinīta Sutta* of the Majjhima Nikāya. The simile in it is that of King Kosala when he had to make an urgent journey from Sāvatthī to Sāketa. In those days, there were horse chariots—but one could not travel with a single chariot. The

horses would get tired. Therefore, for an urgent journey, horse chariots were kept ready at various stages for the king's urgent travel. So, King Kosala leaves the inner palace and gets onto the first chariot. Having traveled to where the second chariot is, he leaves the first chariot. He gets onto the second chariot. Next, when he reaches the third chariot, he leaves the second and gets onto the third. Traveling in this manner, in the end, when he arrives at the city of Sāketa, if his relatives ask which chariot he came by, the king cannot say "by the first chariot," nor "by the second chariot," nor "by the third chariot." He has to tell the entire story. One supported the other. Finally, he has to alight even from the seventh chariot. That is the kind of thing the simile shows.

The disciples point out another seven stages of purification (*visuddhi*) for the realization of Nibbāna: purification of virtue (*sīla-visuddhi*), purification of mind (*citta-visuddhi*), purification of view (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*), purification by overcoming doubt (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*), purification by knowledge and vision of what is and is not the path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*), purification by knowledge and vision of the way (*paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*), and purification by knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*). This purification of virtue is solely for the sake of purification of mind. Purification of mind is solely for the sake of purification of view. Purification of view is solely for the sake of purification by overcoming doubt. Purification by overcoming doubt is solely for the sake of purification by knowledge and vision of what is and is not the path. Purification by knowledge and vision of what is and is not the path is solely for the sake of purification by knowledge and vision of the way. Purification by knowledge and vision of the way is solely for the sake of purification by knowledge and vision. In this manner, seven stages of purification are shown. What is shown in the end? One does not grasp even the final purification by knowledge and vision. For what purpose does one develop purification by knowledge and vision? *"Anupādā parinibbānatthāya"* — for the sake of final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*) through non-grasping (without fuel / holding / grasping).

This shows us that the ultimate goal of this Dispensation is not like joining with some substance, as in many other religions. It is not joining with a deity or some mystical substance of that sort. It is liberation (*vimutti*) itself. Therefore, for liberation, that Middle Path is necessary. Because, as we see from the simile of the chariots, what is needed from the chariots is momentum. In the end, these are employed solely to generate this momentum. If we call the strength and power developed through purification of virtue a momentum, that is purification of mind. From purification of mind to purification of view in that manner, this can be well understood through the simile of the chariots. Such is the nature of what is in this Dhamma. Therefore, looking at the final chapter, even those *dhammas* are abandoned. "Dhamma" means what we conceptualized as Nibbāna. Ordinary worldlings think of Nibbāna as a strange, new world where there is no birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), and death (*maraṇa*). But what the Buddha shows here is not such a thing. All of these—birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarā-maraṇa*), and so forth—exist within Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). All of these have arisen through causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*). Therefore, to be freed from these, what is to be done is—one cannot abandon everything at the beginning

either. First, the Buddha points out the arising of conditions (*paccaya-samudaya*). The Buddha has highlighted both the causal arising that leads to bondage and the causal arising that leads to liberation. If these things go on, one supporting the other, it will finally end in *Dukkha* (Suffering). If one goes on in this way, these things coming together will finally end in liberation. Such a wonderful Dhamma is this.

Therefore, it is difficult for some people to understand when it is said that everything is abandoned. But the Buddha points out that these have a value like that of a raft, or like chariots running stage by stage. If one grasps something, within that grasping (*upādāna*), there is becoming (*bhava*). *"Upādāna-paccayā bhavo"* — with grasping as condition, becoming arises. It is through grasping itself that becoming is prepared. Therefore, it is when there is letting go and abandoning that there is the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*). The cessation of becoming is then what is called Nibbāna. The Buddha has shown on many occasions that the cessation of becoming itself is Nibbāna. Therefore, from the simile of the raft and the simile of the chariots, what we have to understand is that letting go itself leads to the cessation of becoming.

On another occasion, the Buddha has shown this Middle Path. That too is related to the simile of crossing a stream, called the *Oghataraṇa Sutta*. "Ogha" means the sweeping flood. The Buddha points out this entire Saṁsāra as the flood of sensuality (*kāma-ogha*), the flood of becoming (*bhava-ogha*), the flood of views (*diṭṭhi-ogha*), and the flood of ignorance (*avijjā-ogha*). One is swept away in these four sweeping floods. The question is how to cross over this. There too, struggling blindly does not work. Striving wildly is *attakilamathānuyoga* (self-mortification). The Buddha did that first. He struggled to cross this flood. That did not succeed either. Standing still, one is swept away. Therefore, there is a Middle Path. One can understand that in the case of such a sweeping flood, one has to cross over little by little, step by stage, using that very current to gain some momentum. Such is the way.

Next, the most special part of this sutta is the aforementioned Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*). How to apply these Three Characteristics practically in daily life is a question for many. This is shown as the Buddha's own words in many ways—this aggregate (*khandha*). What we call the heap of form, the aggregate of form, the aggregate of feeling, etc., which we grasp, was shown in eleven ways. Similarly, the Buddha has shown the way one should look at each aggregate in a manner that helps in developing the Three Characteristics: as impermanent (*aniccato*), as suffering (*dukkhato*), as a disease (*rogato*), as a boil/tumor (*gaṇḍato*), as a dart (*sallato*), as a calamity (*aghato*), as an affliction (*ābādhato*), as alien/other (*parato*), as disintegrating (*palokato*), as empty (*suññato*), and as not-self (*anattato*). Within these eleven modes is contained the very same Three Characteristics.

When it says "as impermanent" (*aniccato*), its meaning is: contemplate each aggregate, such as form and feeling, as impermanent (*anicca*). Investigate it. Next, there is "as suffering" (*dukkhato*). The aspect of disease also falls under the category of suffering; see it as a disease. Not only form, but even feeling, perception, etc., and including consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—everything. We usually think that this applies only to form

when we speak of these eleven modes. But indeed, the Buddha asks us to apply this comprehensive investigation (*sammasana*) in eleven modes to all of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*): form, feeling, perception, preparations, and consciousness. Why? For the sake of developing disillusionment (*nibbidā*) toward them—it is through that disillusionment that comprehension and liberation arise.

Now, in these verses too, it was said: *"yadā paññāya passati"* — when one sees with wisdom. At whatever time one sees these as impermanent and as suffering through wisdom, then disillusionment (*nibbidā*) toward the suffering of the five aggregates of grasping arises. Therefore, as impermanent (*aniccato*), as suffering (*dukkhato*), as a disease (*rogato*)—disease too can be taken as suffering. A boil (*gaṇḍato*) too can be taken as suffering. *"Aghato"* means a wound—some people have festering wounds. Similarly, affliction (*ābādhato*) is directly suffering (*dukkha*). Next, there is "as alien" (*parato*)—which means to look at it as if looking at someone else's property. He asks us to look at it as if looking at another's thing, as alien (*parato*). "As disintegrating" (*palokato*) means as things that break; there too, impermanence (*aniccata*) is present. Damage/decay. Alien (*parato*), disintegrating (*palokato*). Next, "as empty" (*suññato*) relates to the vision of *Anattā* (Not-self). In many places, the Buddha has chosen the word "empty" as: *"suññamidaṁ attena vā attaniyena vā"* — empty of a self or of what belongs to a self. That vision is "empty" (*suññato*). Finally:

"As not-self" (*anattato*) — look at them as *anattā*. These are the eleven modes. The eleven modes mentioned earlier are for understanding what each aggregate is. It is so broad. It is broad in terms of past, future, present, etc. And the way to look at them is what was just mentioned.

If one gets used to applying that comprehensive investigation (*sammasana*) as impermanent (*anicca*) and as suffering (*dukkha*) based on the things one experiences in daily life, gradually that turning away (*nirveda*) and disillusionment (*nibbidā*) will grow. As a result of that, one can attain liberation. For those who have practiced this for a long time in past Saṁsāra, even a single sermon of the Buddha might be enough. But for others, they must practice and train in these Three Characteristics in daily life. One must see those things that are seen as impermanent, as suffering, and as *Anattā* (Not-self) according to the clues given by the Buddha. In some places, it is shown in an even broader manner—not just eleven, but in eighteen ways, in forty ways. This is called comprehensive investigation (*sammasana*). What the world does is misapprehension and clinging (*parāmasana*)—grasping tightly. Instead of that, one investigates (*sammasana*): "This is of such a nature." If one practices that in daily life, one can largely conquer those concepts in the mind. Concentration (*samādhi*) also helps with that in daily life.

So, you must make an effort regarding all of these during the brief period of time received in this life. From all sides, the floods (*ogha*) and so forth are constantly flowing. In such an era, it is up to each individual, based on these clues highlighted by the Buddha, to develop disillusionment (*nibbidā*) toward the five aggregates of grasping, and accordingly develop concentration (*samādhi*) and other qualities that support it.

Through that, one can realize those supreme goals in this very life. I expect to conclude a bit briefly today.

You should consider taking advantage of at least this much that was said. Now, having understood in a broader manner that advice given by Ven. Aññā Koṇḍañña by looking at our own thoughts and wishes, if we develop insight (*vipassanā*) based on the things we encounter, meet, and experience in daily life, then at a moment when we least expect it, we can attain the realization of the Path and Fruit we hope for. Indeed, that noble state is often attained when one does not expect it.

Because as long as expectation is there, during that time, the aforementioned insight (*vipassanā*) does not operate. Expectation is necessary, and determination is also necessary. But one must be engaged in the work. When one is engaged in the work, if those factors have matured, at some point, one will be able to realize them through that very state of direct experience. Therefore, consider this briefly and shape your lives accordingly. So far, having observed virtue and practiced meditation to some extent, may you take what is to be taken from this Dhamma sermon, and may you gain the strength and power to realize those expected states as quickly as possible! This is my wish.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #81

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.24)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Ko nu hāso kimānando, niccaṃ pajjalite sati;

Andhakārena onaddhā, padīpaṃ na gavesatha.

From:

Dhammapada 146 (Jarāvagga)

Dear Listeners,

According to the Dhamma expounded by the Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, darkness and light remind us of two things: ignorance (*avijjā*) and wisdom (*paññā*). The Blessed One declared that the reason why beings in this world have been caught up, entangled, and enmeshed in a great heap of *Dukkha* (Suffering) in this saṃsāra for an endless period of time—a heap of *dukkha* whose beginning and end are invisible—is because their eye of wisdom has been blinded by the darkness of ignorance. That is why the Blessed One has illustrated that realization of life, the realization of Nibbāna, and the seeing of Nibbāna, as the arising of the Dhamma-eye, as the dawning of a light. Beings in this world do not realize that their eye of wisdom is blinded because they have fallen into a state of grave negligence (*pamāda*). Worldly beings do not understand the darkness of ignorance they are in; they spend a long time in saṃsāra groping about in this darkness. Due to various reasons for falling into this negligence, and because of being subject to many forms of intoxication, worldly beings do not understand the dangerous situation they are in. Therefore, the Great Compassionate Blessed One on certain occasions had to arouse spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) in his listeners through various skillful means. An incident of this nature is mentioned in the background story of the stanza we have taken as our theme today.

During the time of the Buddha, five hundred householders of Sāvatthī, wishing to see their wives live diligently and with love for the Dhamma, entrusted them to Visākhā, the great lay female disciple, like a group of pupils. These five hundred female lay disciples would always go to the monastery and the park together with the great lay disciple

Visākhā. In this way, they remained highly obedient. However, a certain occasion arose—a drinking festival in Sāvatthī. A festival of drinking alcohol. It was held for seven days; such customs, like social festivals, existed in those cities. When such a drinking festival was held, those wives had to prepare alcohol for their husbands. After those seven days had passed in that manner, a large amount of alcohol was left over. These lay women thought, "We too should at least taste a little of this." However, they were afraid to do so in a way that their husbands would find out. Therefore, as a clever ruse, they went and asked for permission from Visākhā, saying, "We would like to go to the park; we had a desire to go to the park." Visākhā also took them along. After going to the park, what happened? Those lay women secretly got the alcohol brought there—since they were a large group, they managed it by some means. Next, they secretly drank it and became intoxicated. Being intoxicated, they behaved badly, in the various ways an intoxicated person behaves. Visākhā felt a great sense of spiritual urgency and dismay (*saṃvega*), thinking, "This will cause a bad rumor among the non-Buddhist ascetics (*tīrthakas*) that Visākhā, the chief female lay disciple of the Ascetic Gotama, also drank alcohol; a great blemish has been cast upon us due to an incident of this nature." Visākhā then admonished those lay women.

She also said to those lay women, "You will also have to undergo punishment from your husbands. What are you going to do now?" The lay women said, "We will go home and feign illness, showing that we are sick." Visākhā said, "Very well then, try and see," and sent them on. Similarly, when they went home and went to a separate room as if they were sick, and when the husbands came to know of this, they understood the reason. Having understood, they beat and punished them thoroughly.

After some time passed, another drinking festival came, just like before. On that occasion too—and this is the danger of alcohol and intoxication: once someone acquires a taste for it, they continue to go along with it—so, in the same way, after their husbands had finished drinking, for the second time a thought arose in those lay women, "We must go hide somewhere and secretly use this alcohol." Perhaps it was due to thriftiness, or perhaps due to a reluctance to throw it away. For whatever reason, they came to Visākhā again and presented a proposal to go to the park. Visākhā said, "Once we went and got such bad publicity," and when she rejected that idea, they next presented it under a different guise, saying, "We want to go perform offerings to the Blessed One; we have such an intention." "Ah, very well," said Visākhā, and took this group along. In an unbelievably clever way, while taking flowers, incense, and other offerings, they also carried alcohol in vessels. Having taken it, they drank the alcohol before entering the monastery, and came into the presence of the Blessed One drunk and intoxicated. Visākhā, unaware of this, invited the Blessed One to preach Dhamma to them. Not long after the Blessed One started the Dhamma sermon, so great was the danger and peril of that alcohol that these women felt like dancing and singing songs right in front of the Blessed One.

Along with that thought, now, generally it is said here that when one is in a state of mindlessness, there are various forces in this world and the universe that can possess us—forces that are opposed to the Dispensation (*Sāsana*), opposed to the Dhamma, and

pull us back into saṃsāra, preventing our journey to Nibbāna. In the same way, it is mentioned here that deities belonging to Māra's retinue (*māra-kāyika devatā*) possessed that group and made them clap, laugh, dance, and sing in front of the Blessed One. When the Blessed One reflected on what this was, he understood it. It is mentioned that next, in order to arouse spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) in them, the Blessed One at that moment emitted a great darkness from his eyebrows. Due to that dense darkness, the intoxication of those lay women vanished because of the fear of death. With the arising of the fear of death, their intoxication vanished. Next, the Blessed One declared to them as advice: "It is not proper to come to me fallen into negligence in this manner. That is why you are possessed by various forces of Māra. Now, with diligence and having aroused great spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), you must make an effort to escape from this fire." Saying so, he uttered the stanza we have taken as our theme:

Ko nu hāso kimānando niccaṃ pajjalite sati

Andhakārena onaddhā padīpaṃ na gavesatha

"When there is constant burning, what laughter, what joy? Enwrapped in deep darkness, do you not seek a lamp?"—this is the meaning of that short stanza. It is mentioned that after listening to that sermon by which the Blessed One aroused spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), that group of women attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), based on the spiritual urgency they had developed. Be that as it may, next Visākhā, the great lay disciple, specifically said to the Blessed One: "Venerable Sir, what a dangerous thing this alcohol is, giving rise to sinful, unwholesome states (*akusala*). Was it not due to this alcohol that a group like this began to behave in this manner in front of someone like the Blessed One?" The Blessed One replied, "Indeed, Visākhā, in the past too, many people experienced various troubles due to alcohol," and at that moment he also related a Jātaka story.

From this, we have to reflect on the challenge the Blessed One presented to the world in this stanza. From the music heard from all directions, we can see that in this world, people always try to remain constantly submerged in an ocean of entertainment. But the Blessed One poses a highly powerful challenge to us through this stanza. We like to spend our time laughing, singing, enjoying ourselves, and dancing. Yet the Blessed One asks, "When there is constant burning, what laughter, what joy? Enwrapped in deep darkness, in dense darkness, do you not seek a lamp?" It is worth reflecting on why the Blessed One presented such a challenge to us.

In the world today, there are fires everywhere to the extent that even the word "fire" truly evokes fear in a person. It is not only those visible fires. Because the Blessed One knew very well that this world is burning with many invisible fires, he often described the world as burning with eleven fires, or often as three fires—namely, the fires of lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*/*dvesha*), and delusion (*moha*). On other occasions, he describes them as eleven fires: *rāga*, *dosa*, *moha*, and then *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (aging), *maraṇa* (death) (the latter two making up *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death)), *soka* (sorrow), *parideva* (lamentation), *Dukkha* (Suffering), *domanassa* (grief), and *upāyāsa* (despair).

The three defilements (*kilesa*) that constantly burn within the minds of beings in saṃsāra, burning other things and other people connected to those respective beings, are lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Accompanying them is *Jāti* (Birth), which is also a fire. Birth too is a fire. What is meant here is a fire of *Dukkha* (Suffering).

It is because of *Jāti* (Birth) that all other sufferings flow in. Along with *jāti*, next comes *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death). Along with birth, there is *jarā*, which is aging/growing old, then death (*maraṇa*), sorrow, and lamentation. Accordingly, there are sorrows, crying, lamentations, physical and mental suffering, and intense struggle and exhaustion. The Blessed One declared that beings are constantly burning and running about due to each of these. Since we are burning with these eleven fires in this manner, we must reflect that this entire saṃsāric existence is a terrifying *Dukkha* (Suffering). Many people think of *dukkha* as if existence is one thing and suffering is something inside it. But the Blessed One declared: *dukkhe loko patiṭṭhito*—the world is established in *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is established in the world. Just like two shutter-doors that fit each other perfectly, *dukkha* and the world are identical, to the extent that there is nothing to be separated from one another. In these times, when explaining the Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*), even when explaining the Dhamma, many people just mention a few things like birth is *dukkha*, aging is *dukkha*, sickness is *dukkha*, a heap of *dukkha*, and then stop there. But because there is no end to listing them in that way, the Blessed One ultimately declared, *saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*—in brief, the entire five aggregates of grasping are *dukkha*.

Having shown separately that *Jāti* (Birth) is *dukkha*, aging is *dukkha*, illness is *dukkha*, etc., he finally declares that this entire five aggregates of form, *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness), which we grasp as "I" and "mine"—in brief, the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)—are *dukkha*. In short, this body of ours is a heap of *dukkha*. That is why the Venerable Vīdāgama Maitreya has stated in the *Lō Väḍa Saňgarāva*:

Dara räsa gini äviluṇu kala nibandē

Gini misa darayäyi yana nama noyedē

Ema lesa ek koṭa vadahaḷa muniňdē

Duka misa kayakäyi yana nama noyedē

"When a heap of firewood is constantly ablaze,

It is called 'fire', the name 'firewood' no longer applies;

In the same way, as expounded by the Sage,

It is only *dukkha*, the name 'body' no longer applies."

A beautiful simile is shown there. "When a heap of firewood is constantly ablaze"—when a pile of wood is continuously burning, "it is called 'fire', the name 'firewood' no longer

applies." We refer to it as fire; we do not call it a pile of firewood anymore. Once the entire pile of wood has caught fire, nobody refers to it as a pile of firewood. That is what that Venerable Thero is reminding us of. "In the same way, as expounded by the Sage, it is only *dukkha*, the name 'body' no longer applies." Likewise, the Blessed One has shown *dukkha* and the body together. Therefore, rather than calling this a body, it is better to call it *dukkha*. But worldly people do not like to use such terminology, nor do they do so. Yet, according to the word of the Buddha, according to the true state of affairs, this entire body, the very acquisition of a body—that is why birth (*jāti*) is said to be *dukkha*. In the world, the statement "birth is *dukkha*" is generally explained—and even we usually explain it for convenience—only as the pain caused to the mother and the child due to birth. However,

If we reflect more deeply, *Jāti* (Birth) means the acquisition of a bodily cage made of the four great elements (*mahābhūta*): earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). From the very moment of acquiring this, because of past ignorance (*aviijjā*), the dense darkness of ignorance, one accumulates *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) or *kamma*, merit and demerit, because of the craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*). Everyone likes to remain in this existence. Because of the wrong understanding of "I" and "mine", because of ignorance (*aviijjā*), there is an unquenchable, endless, and extraordinary *Taṇhā* (Craving) in worldly beings to maintain this "self" and to increase "my" possessions—a grave craving. We spend our entire lives trying to satisfy that *Taṇhā* (Craving). Through the wholesome and unwholesome *kamma* performed for its sake, *Bhava* (Becoming) is brought about for us.

Bhava (Becoming) means it grants another birth (*jāti*), a subsequent existence somewhere. The initial stage of that existence is *Jāti* (Birth). Birth means a bodily cage is formed, made of those elements mentioned earlier. Next, from the very moment of its arising, the fire element (*tejo-dhātu*) within it becomes active and produces something called hunger. For this, one must provide food. As soon as a little child is born, they are born crying. Thus they ask for milk. In that way, there is *Taṇhā* (Craving) for food. The fire element in this bodily cage operates and hunger is produced. This is the fire that no one can bear. This is common to everyone. One is burned by this hunger. In this way, this bodily cage is like a burning pile of firewood. One must put firewood into it again and again—that is, food. Next, there is thirst. That too is a fire. It is called the fire of hunger. The painful fires of hunger and thirst. Those two are common to everyone.

In addition to that, there is the fatigue of satisfying and preparing them. Next, due to various disturbances concerning those elements—*paṭhavī*, *āpo*, *tejo*, and *vāyo*—in that cage, and because of those very defilements, it is said that the three humors of wind, bile, and phlegm (*vā, pit, sem*) become deranged. Due to these various causes, and due to external and internal afflictions, illnesses and diseases flow in—sickness (*vyādhi*). Next, even if there are no such illnesses, this bodily cage begins to decay from the moment of birth. It gradually undergoes decay. We make a certain distinction between youth and old age, and we look upon one part of it favorably, thinking, "We are young." But in reality, from the very day of birth, decay begins. This decay is hastened by sickness, by

illnesses and diseases. That too is indeed the derangement of these four elements, or of wind, bile, and phlegm, arriving according to one's *kamma* through various other external and internal afflictions. Thus, a life is spent in the midst of such a heap of *Dukkha* (Suffering). Yet we think we possess good health. We now generally express wishes for "long life and the blessing of health" (*āyur-ārogya-sampatti*). That wish or blessing is good. But its fulfillment actually depends on the *kamma* of each individual; otherwise, in terms of worldly nature, no one can say they spend even a single day in perfect health.

The Blessed One once declared that if anyone, carrying around a bodily cage like this, proudly says, "I am healthy," there is no greater foolishness than that. Not even for a single moment is there real health in this body. What is here is a heap of diseases. It is called a cage of diseases—a fragile cage of diseases. When this heap of diseases manifests outwardly, that is when we say, "I have fallen ill." Thus, there is a whole heap of illnesses and diseases that come along with this bodily cage. Next, we also try to escape from decay (*jarā*) and old age. No matter how much effort is made through various medical treatments and medical research, these two—*Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death)—cannot be prevented. At some point, one must submit to them. The Blessed One has declared: *na hi so upakkamo yena jātā na mīyare*—"There is no device by which those who are born do not die." *Jarāmapi pāpuṇitvā maraṇaṃ, evaṃdhammā hi pāṇino*—"Even after reaching old age, there is death; such is the nature of living beings." In the end, even after reaching old age, one has to die.

Thus, within us there is generally a desire to be ageless and immortal; within worldly beings, there is a desire to escape decay, escape death, and obtain a certain happiness, a permanent state. But the Blessed One declared that death is something that goes hand-in-hand with birth (*jāti*). Birth and death are a tethered pair, something bound together. Therefore, we cannot accept only birth and reject death. Death arises along with birth. That is why the verses on mindfulness of death (*maraṇānussati*) that you often use state: *uppattiyā sahevedaṃ maraṇaṃ āgataṃ sadā*—"This death has arrived together with birth itself." "At all times, death comes along with birth." In that way, because these tethered things cannot be separated, as soon as a person takes birth, sickness, decay, and death—all of these—belong to them. Such a dangerous situation exists along with this body. In addition to being burned by those defilements (*kilesa*), next, as a result of the unwholesome *kamma* one performs, one has to be born in the realm of hungry ghosts (*peta-loka*) and undergo suffering for a long time, burning with extremely severe fires of hunger and thirst, and various other such miseries.

Likewise, we can see how animals suffer in the animal realm. In the ghost realms, and next in the planes of misery (*apāya*), and in the even more terrifying hells (*niraya*). There are places where the Blessed One himself from his own sacred mouth preached the details of the Great Hell and other such places, showing how terrifying the sufferings of hell are. In the Lohakumbhī hell, molten metal is poured into the mouths of some. There are extraordinary details about this. According to one's *kamma*, one has to drink molten metal. Sometimes, instead of that alcohol which was drunk with great relish, one has to

drink molten copper. Otherwise, the Blessed One points out instances of beings undergoing suffering without dying, according to their *kamma*, boiling in metal cauldrons of the Lohakumbhī hell, going up and down. The Blessed One declares that the suffering endured by worldly beings in those hells cannot be fully described.

In the Great Hell, inside a hall with burning, blazing walls where even the floor is ablaze, those beings run up and down. There are four gates; they try to escape through these gates. Then, the gates supposedly open suddenly. But while they are opening, there are descriptions of how long they spend running about like this, undergoing the results of the sinful *kamma* they have committed. Likewise, they sometimes have to walk on burning, blazing mountains. They have to swallow red-hot iron balls. The Blessed One has declared that through the medium of fire, various terrifying retributive sufferings and miseries exist in those planes of misery (*apāya*) and hells (*niraya*). That is why the Blessed One has illustrated this entire saṃsāra as a place that is burning and blazing with fire. Therefore, the Blessed One has told us to constantly reflect on these subjects of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*) in order to prevent the negligence (*pamāda*) that generally arises within us.

The world is fallen into negligence. Various things cause this. We all know the negligence of sleepiness. In addition to that, there is the desire to get intoxicated. The negligence that arises due to addiction to alcohol is extremely dangerous. Due to that intoxication, one sometimes behaves in this very world like an animal, a hungry ghost, or a demon, performing various sinful deeds. *Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā*—there are places in these times where this is explained as a joke in various ways. An era has now arrived where those jokes are sometimes taken as the truth. But drinking alcohol is called *pamādaṭṭhāna*—the ground for negligence. A cause for negligence. Drinking alcohol is specifically shown as a cause for negligence.

Many other causes of negligence are shown in the Dhamma: the intoxication of health (*ārogya-mada*), the intoxication of life (*jīvita-mada*), the intoxication of wealth (*bhoga-mada*)—in this way, there are various forms of intoxication. One thinks about one's health, gets intoxicated by conceit, and falls into negligence. Next is the intoxication of life (*jīvita-mada*). In that way, regarding life, one has a notion that one will not die. The intoxication of youth (*yobbana-mada*) means thinking about one's youth and forgetting that one will grow old. Thus, through forgetting all these things, it is through mindlessness (loss of mindfulness) that these intoxications occur.

Therefore, we can understand: what must we arouse to overcome these intoxications? Mindfulness (*sati*), awareness. The Blessed One declares that we must always try to live with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). That is why, as the primary task in the Blessed One's path of meditation, it is shown that while guarding virtue (*sīla*) and other qualities, and established on that virtue, one must constantly reflect on some wholesome object through a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). By constantly reflecting on a meditation subject such as loving-kindness (*mettā*), recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), foulness (*asubha*), or mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*), one unifies the scattered mind and thereby calms the mind. Next, on the

basis of that established mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration (*samādhi*), one can gain true understanding of the world by way of insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). What helps to awaken all of this is spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). That is why they are called subjects of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*).

Regarding the cultivation of this *saṃvega*, worldly people think and believe that being entertained is the way, that by being entertained they can escape from these things. We try to remove this *dukkha* by bringing about various forms of entertainment. All that does is make us forget the suffering; the medicine is not truly applied. It is like applying a plaster, covering up the disease. It is just like when a house is on fire: instead of fleeing from the house, someone might drink alcohol and sleep inside the house. They will sleep well, but before long, they will be burned to ashes. In that very way, worldly beings try to solve the problem of *dukkha* through shortcuts. But what did the Blessed One try to make worldly beings understand, after striving and fulfilling the perfections (*pāramī*) for four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand eons? It is the path of practice (*paṭipadā*) that helps to completely escape from this saṃsāric suffering.

That is why the Blessed One asks that question: *Ko nu hāso kimānando niccaṃ pajjalite sati?* In this way, even in this world, you are burning with this fire of hunger, and next with this fire of illness, and with various other fires arising in the mind such as lust, hatred, and delusion—you are burning with a multitude of such fires. Next, we must also remind ourselves of the factors shown as subjects of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*). Even if we are not burning at this very moment, as a result of the *kamma* performed during our long saṃsāra, at least until one is freed from the four planes of misery (*apāya*) through the knowledge of the path of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*), everyone must be prepared to burn with the fires of hell.

Thus, it is not only when we have jumped into the fire, but rather the understanding that there is a fire ahead into which we might have to jump, or into which we might fall—that is the understanding the Blessed One tries to cultivate within worldly beings. Until one is freed from the four planes of misery, those fires of hell belong to oneself. One does not know at what moment they will be felt. After this life is lost, if a grave past *kamma* arises, sometimes in the four planes of misery, one will have to undergo terrifying suffering such as burning in those fires which the Blessed One himself described as "impossible to fully detail." Or else in the ghost realms or the animal realm. It is in the midst of such a heap of fire that we sing songs, dance, and chant. Scholars of these times level various accusations, saying that the Blessed One preached an absolute pessimism. Now, this is a challenge. But this is the true state of affairs. Like a doctor, one cannot treat an illness without diagnosing it. The illness must at least be indicated to some extent. Otherwise, the patient will not agree to the required treatment.

That is why the Blessed One reminds us of these illnesses as subjects of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*). Various kinds of *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (aging), *vyādhi* (sickness), *maraṇa* (death) (i.e., *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death)), *soka* (sorrow), *parideva* (lamentation), and so on—there is no need to separately explain birth, aging, and next, death. One must reflect on the saṃsāric *dukkha* endured in the past. One must reflect on the suffering to

be endured in the future. One must reflect on the suffering of the planes of misery. Next, the suffering regarding what we have to do for hunger, for food in this life. By constantly reflecting on these various matters, the desire for this *Bhava* (Becoming) must be removed.

Something called *bhava-taṇhā* (craving for existence) exists within all beings. The desire for *bhava*. Everyone likes to carry on this existence. But how we demonstrate what this existence is, according to the Dhamma, is like this: the wheel of a moving chariot touches the ground for only an extremely brief moment. But if we do not consider that the wheel is constantly moving, it is as if this wheel goes on scraping and scraping. It is upon a perception (*saññā*) of that nature that worldly beings have formed a perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*), and have developed the feeling, "I exist," "I" and "mine". But there is constantly a rolling-over in this. Existence (*pavattana*) means rolling over. Even if we look at the literal meaning of the word *pavattiya* (occurrence/rolling on), it is a rolling over. We treat this rolling-over as something permanent, saying, "I exist," and we use the terms "I" and "mine". Worldly beings do not understand the nature of ignorance (*avijjā*) in this, the delusion (*moha*) in this. It is so profound that it cannot be expressed in words. Why can it not be expressed in words? Because words themselves have been formulated based on this delusion. The language accepted by the world, which exists by way of convention (*sammuti*) and is used by worldly beings, also consists of a multitude of symbols constructed according to the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). Such is the deep state of affairs.

That must be why the Blessed One was initially hesitant even to preach this Dhamma. "How am I to explain this to the world using the language developed by the world?" How can I explain this to worldly beings in the language they themselves have created? All of this, this existence, which is a rolling-over—when worldly beings talk of existence, they regard it as something permanent, but in reality, there is only a rolling-over there. It is because of this rolling-over that all this *dukkha* flows in. *Yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ tad anattā*—the Blessed One has briefly illustrated the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) in this way. Whatever is *Anicca* (Impermanent) is *Dukkha* (Suffering). *Anicca* means *anicca-vipariṇāma-dhamma*—subject to change and impermanence. It is *anicca* because it is not permanent. What is not permanent is *anicca*. And that *anicca* means, next, there is a rolling-over right there. There is a change right there. It is called *vipariṇāma-aññathābhāva*—change, turning into something else. Within that turning, there is a vibration, a rolling-over. And because of that rolling-over, it is *dukkha*, because it does not remain in one way.

Why do worldly people change their postures? Why is it that one cannot remain sitting in one position? When one sits in one way for a little while, even in a highly comfortable seat, a *Vedanā* (Feeling) is felt. A pain is felt somewhere. Be it a wind-pain or some other kind of pain, a *vedanā* is felt. Then, because of that *vedanā*, we change postures to cover up that *dukkha*. It is through things of this nature that we try to cover up this *dukkha*, just like the person who drinks alcohol to forget their suffering. Such a nature exists within worldly beings. Thus, worldly beings do not want to face the problem. They do not

want to face the problem. That is exactly why this problem drags on and on. But the Blessed One, like a skilled physician, like a teacher, like a guide, had to introduce this problem. That is why the Blessed One reminds us to constantly reflect on those subjects of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*). Moreover, just as in the story where he conjured a great darkness to cause pain and created a great fear and terror (*santrāsa*) within them, it is when such terror and fear arrive that a person's eyes are opened.

Many people know from Dhamma points and stories what helped Paṭācārā to attain Arahantship. There is no need to explain the story of Paṭācārā anew. Everyone knows this. For Paṭācārā, her present was lost with the loss of her husband. Next, her future was lost with the loss of her two children. Her past was also lost when she went in search of her home and found her parents had also been burned to ashes. So she understood, "There is nothing more to be wished for in this. Such is the present, such is the future, and such is the past." In that way, through the *dukkha* that has come upon oneself, one must try to realize this truth. One should not wait until such a situation arrives. The wise person, the person who applies mindfulness and wisdom, the person who makes use of that spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), understands that fear before it comes to them and prepares for it.

What is called the supreme bliss of Nibbāna is the complete liberation from all this saṃsāric *dukkha*, the liberation from that craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*). As long as this *bhava-taṇhā* exists, because worldly beings wish for *bhava*, Māra says, "Here, take it," and gives it to them. What does he give, saying "Here, take it"? It is this very bodily cage mentioned earlier. That cage which is said to be pure *dukkha*. "Well, you asked for it, so I am giving it," says Māra, and gives it. He gives it like a tethered thing. He gives this only to pull it back. Māra pulls this bodily cage in that way. Under the force of that pulling, and because of that vibration, illnesses and all those things mentioned earlier come along. Māra always looks to—as said in "this death has arrived together with birth itself"—he gave this body only to take it back, to pull it back. This is like a game of tug-of-war.

This was given only to be pulled back. Along with that, seeing the suffering, fatigue, terror (*santrāsa*), and torment (*santāpa*) that the person undergoes, Māra rejoices. Such is the nature of Māra. What is the easiest solution to this pulling? Letting go. That is the solution the Blessed One offers. One must let go of it from Māra. Otherwise, being dragged along with it, one falls into *dukkha*. This letting go is what the Blessed One shows for the destruction of the craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*). There is a nature within worldly beings to desire existence. The solution offered by ordinary worldly beings is that, to satisfy those desires, they seek and provide whatever they want—be it food, drink, wealth, positions, etc. But none of these can ever fill the void. It is like the great ocean.

This thirst of *Taṇhā* (Craving) can never be quenched. Instead, what is the path of training shown by the Blessed One? He shows a certain method precisely to quench this craving, this thirst of *taṇhā*. The method shown for that is the destruction of ignorance (*avijjā*). It is by thinning out ignorance that the thirst of *taṇhā* can be destroyed. To thin

out that feeling of "I" and "mine", which is called ignorance (*avijjā*), the Blessed One points out: "Constantly reflect on the fact that this state you are in is *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self)." The Blessed One makes us understand through wisdom that there is nothing here that can be taken as "I" or "mine".

"Is this form permanent? Is *Vedanā* (Feeling) permanent?" Is even one of them permanent? If it is not permanent, if something is *anicca*, he asks, "Is it happiness or suffering (*dukkha*)?" One has to say, "It is *dukkha*." It is a state of suffering. If something is of a nature to change, of a nature to roll over, if it is something that must constantly be reconstructed and prepared, then this is a great *dukkha*. *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) means a heap of preparations. Now, the word *saṅkhāra* is frequently used. What is here is entirely a heap of preparations. This entire existence is a heap of preparations. For these preparations, a certain effort is required. That itself is *dukkha*. Thus, when it is said *saṅkhārā paramā dukkhā*—that the heap of preparations is the ultimate *dukkha*—it means that worldly beings have to undergo great suffering just for the sake of this preparing. However, this is not visible; it is not understood.

It is precisely by the stilling of this heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that the Blessed One points to true happiness. It is called *sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha* (the stilling of all preparations). What instigates the arising of these preparations is *Taṇhā* (Craving), the force of craving. Based on those two ideas of "I" and "mine" derived from ignorance (*avijjā*), there is a grave craving in worldly beings to increase the measure of what belongs to them. It is for its sake that one has to undergo all this suffering. But that craving is never quenched. To escape from this *Taṇhā* (Craving), as mentioned earlier, one must arouse the eye of wisdom, the light, the lamp, in the form of insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). It is described as the light of wisdom (*paññā-āloka*). It is described as the lamp of wisdom (*paññā-padīpa*), the lamp of knowledge (*ñāṇa-padīpa*).

It is only when that eye of wisdom is aroused that the true nature of the world is understood. On such occasions, that craving mentioned earlier naturally understands that this is a futile thing, a baseless thing, without any foundation. Through that realization, that craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) is destroyed. Ignorance (*avijjā*) is fundamental here—the view of "I" and "mine" is an opinion derived from not knowing. To quench this great thirst of *Taṇhā* (Craving) born from that, one has to remove the darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*). To remove that, one has to arouse the mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) called heedfulness, having freed oneself from those intoxications.

This cannot be done through the ways of entertainment available in the world. Therefore, if we were to openly declare some of the Blessed One's discourses in these times, we might perhaps face serious accusations from certain quarters. There is one short passage where the Blessed One declared—to say it in Sinhala: "Monks, in the Noble Discipline, singing is a form of crying." The Blessed One declares that music, what is called song, heard from all directions, is a form of wailing. This is a severe challenge. This entire world exists completely enmeshed and entangled in song.

However, the place the Blessed One gives to this song and music might sometimes cause some people to feel displeased, at least to some extent, even towards the Blessed One. They talk about "this music." But we can realize this for ourselves: even the sweetest music in the world—if placed inside a machine like this, by turning a small key or screw here and there, that sweet music can be turned into a sound of crying. In that way, one can understand that this music is indeed a form of crying. In truth, some music is indeed crying. That is why, in a more recent era, a certain Western poet stated that the sweetest songs in the world are those of saddest thought. Everyone knows this.

Why do these sad songs become sweet songs? Within the minds of these beings in saṃsāra, there are deposited fear, terror (*santrāsa*), and sorrow. Due to these, there is a great heap of accumulated *Dukkha* (Suffering). That heap of *dukkha* is recalled by worldly beings. Through that, even from that, worldly beings derive a kind of gratification (*assāda*). That is why these sad songs are regarded as the most pleasant songs in the world. Sometimes we say that a dove, a cuckoo (*kokila*), or a koel is singing a very sweet song. But in truth, that could be a cry of wailing due to separation from the beloved (*piya-vippayoga*), due to the loss of their young or their mates. We call this a song. Thus, we can understand the word of the Blessed One accordingly.

Next, there is also another declaration by the Blessed One when speaking of ways of entertainment: *ummattakaṃ idaṃ, bhikkhave, naccaṃ*—"Monks, in the Noble Discipline, dancing is a form of madness." This drama, this dancing, is madness. If we declare this to the world today, some might present strong counter-arguments: "Why call dancing a form of madness?" If society accepts as a convention that the way an insane person dances is to be regarded as a tradition, then that becomes a great drama. Seeing an insane person dance, if we create a tradition out of it and establish a convention that "this is the highest form of drama," from that day on, it is considered a drama.

Otherwise, let us think of it in another way: someone beautifully dressed is placed on a stage that is extremely hot. Because she is burning, she jumps here and there. She leaps up; unable to stand on one foot, she shifts to the other, and in this way she can be seen shifting feet and dancing. But perhaps a foreigner might record this, saying, "This is the dramatic tradition of this country." This dancing is indeed like dancing in madness. Yet, we construct a "tradition" within it and employ a method to derive gratification (*assāda*) from it. It must be for this reason that the Blessed One, according to the Noble Discipline, declared dancing to be a form of madness.

In the same way, the Blessed One has declared that laughing excessively, showing one's teeth, is a low thing. It is called *komārakaṃ*—something fit for children (childish). Now, while a small child is crying very intensely, someone shows a very trivial thing and begins to make that child laugh. Then, without even remembering that they were crying, that child begins to laugh continuously. Such is the way of the world. That is exactly why the Blessed One raised that question, "What laughter, what joy?" We must remind ourselves of this at least once in a while.

If not every day, at least once in a while, even on an occasion like this, we should reflect on the truth of this word of the Blessed One. Until we understand this truth, until we direct our minds according to those subjects of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*), we cannot realize this true Dhamma and dispel ignorance (*avijjā*). We cannot quench the thirst of craving (*taṇhā*). We can never escape from this. Therefore, the word of the Blessed One might sometimes be unpalatable. It might be unpalatable to society. It might be unpalatable to the present day, when considered from a contemporary perspective. Looking at contemporary things, someone might say that although these statements belonged to the Blessed One's time, they are not applicable to the present. But, pious devotees! In the Blessed One's time as well as in this time, the very same heap of fire is blazing. It was the fires of lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) that blazed then, and those same fires are blazing now.

The only difference is the firewood that is thrown into them. If it is blazing with whatever firewood, it is called a fire; there is no need to speak of the fire in terms of the firewood. This is a heap of fire. That is why this, which belonged to the Blessed One's time, is indeed called the eternal truth (*sanātana-dhamma*). The Blessed One has declared regarding this Dhamma: *satañca dhammo na jaraṃ upeti*—"The Dhamma of the virtuous ones (the Buddhas and Arahants) never undergoes decay." It never becomes obsolete. Worldly people imagine that this is obsolete. But this truth is applicable to the life of anyone in this world, then, now, and forever.

Therefore, we must reflect, at least once in a while, on this matter declared by the Blessed One—this true state of affairs. This is called "knowledge and vision of things as they really are" (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*). The Blessed One expounds the actual state of the world. It may be unpalatable. Nothing can be done about that. Even though it is unpalatable, it is the truth. Some things are unpalatable. As soon as you put a myrobalan fruit (*nelli*) into your mouth and bite it, a highly astringent and bitter taste is felt. Do we throw it away just because of that? The myrobalan fruit is a highly valuable medicine, like nectar. But as soon as you bite it, it tastes astringent. Yet, once you begin to suck on it for a while, the real sweet taste of the myrobalan fruit emerges.

It is just like that when showing the insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) in this Dispensation: danger (*ādīnava*) and weariness (*nibbidā*). Danger-knowledge (*ādīnava-ñāṇa*) means, among the insight knowledges, one must gain an understanding of the disadvantages and dangers in this world, in this life, in this existence, and in these five aggregates—their nature of *dukkha* and the nature of having to endure suffering. The culmination of all mundane knowledges (*lokiya-ñāṇa*) in the world is the knowledge of danger (*ādīnava-ñāṇa*). You know that as scientific inventions are developed further and further, what is regarded as the highest stage? It is the stage where the defects and shortcomings of that product become visible. In the same way, the knowledge of danger is the highest end of mundane knowledges. If one has understood danger in that way, what arises next? *Nibbidā*. *Nibbidā* means disenchantment/weariness with saṃsāra.

Worldly people are afraid of the term "disenchantment with saṃsāra" (*nibbidā*). If someone develops disenchantment with saṃsāra, people look at that person with a

strange gaze. They think, "Either this person is insane, mad, or something like that"—as if they have an abnormal mind. But if someone tries to escape from this madhouse, the inmates of the madhouse do not like them leaving. That is why the Blessed One declared: *sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā*—"All worldlings, everyone who has not attained the state of a Noble One (*ariya*), are insane." The Blessed One has declared that all worldlings, everyone who has not attained Noble status, exist in a state of madness. Such is the situation in the world.

Thus, that disenchantment (*nibbidā*), the weariness with saṃsāra, is like the myrobalan fruit. Through disenchantment with saṃsāra, what does that person arouse? Based on that dispassion (*virāga*) or non-attachment arising from disenchantment with saṃsāra, they attain liberation—liberation from saṃsāra. The strength to realize that supreme, deathless Nibbāna is obtained through that knowledge of disenchantment (*nibbidā-ñāṇa*). This is just like an iron door that separates the entire saṃsāra from Nibbāna.

Pious devotees, you know that sometimes in various tea factories and similar places, there are areas where great furnaces are blazing. But there is an iron door in them; they are separated as if by an iron door. In the same way, once this knowledge called *nibbidā* arises, there emerges an opportunity to escape from saṃsāra. Because it is only by saying goodbye to this saṃsāra that one can go to the other side. One cannot cross over while clinging to this. What is present here is also like that tethered thing mentioned earlier. One can never go to Nibbāna while clinging to saṃsāra. Therefore, a certain moment arrives, specifically when those insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) mature. This is a natural thing. It is not an unnatural thing; the Blessed One points it out by way of natural laws (*dhammatā*).

When one first deeply reflects on the impermanence of this world, the law of impermanence (*aniccatā-dhamma*), what is understood is an arising and a passing away. It is that realization of arising and passing away. That is what is called the "knowledge of arising and passing away" (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*). Within this arising and passing away, just like the first two leaves of a plant emerging from a mango seed or some other seed—just like those first two leaves, the beginning of seeing this arising and passing away is a valuable state. From then on, as that state and the insight knowledges develop, then next, the other insight knowledges also emerge. One begins to understand how passing away occurs with extreme rapidity; this is called dissolution (*bhaṅga*). Everything is breaking and dissolving; this is called the "knowledge of dissolution" (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). These are seen breaking and dissolving with rapidity. Because of that breaking and dissolving, next there arises a fear: "Is it not something that is breaking and dissolving that I am holding on to, that I am clinging to?"

Having experienced that fear and terror (*santrāsa*), next the aspect of danger (*ādīnava*) in it is understood. The realization comes: "If this is something that breaks, and if I hold on to it, I too will be overturned, broken, and destroyed along with it." Therefore, the realization comes that one must escape from this. What helps in that realization of the need to escape is the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self) pointed out by the Blessed One. When looking

in every direction of this world, the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā-yogī*) sees only these three signs. There are various other road signs, advertisements, and other signs. But to the practitioner of insight, through all of these, through the trees and plants, and through the existence of their own body, what must be seen are those three signs: *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*.

Not a single thing is permanent. Not a single thing can truly be taken as happiness (*sukha*). Likewise, as the realization gradually arises that there is not even a dream of a possibility to maintain things under one's control as "I" or "mine", the other insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) mature within that person. They arrive at the point of that disenchantment with saṃsāra (*nibbidā*), which is like the iron door, and next, at some point, they are able to see that light precisely through that disenchantment with saṃsāra. That is the path of liberation (*vimutti-magga*) shown by the Blessed One. Every other teacher in the world sought to solve this problem by other means—by methods similar to applying plasters. Or through some kind of nectar-like drink to become ageless and immortal. Now, it is said that those deities drink some nectar to avoid death; that is an absolute myth. Neither for deities, nor for Brahmās, nor for anyone else, is it ever possible to escape from this saṃsāra through any other nectar than that supreme Nibbāna shown by the Blessed One—the nectar of the supreme, deathless Nibbāna obtained through the stilling of all preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*). Such is the state of affairs in the world.

Therefore, all of you, pious devotees, must reflect on a valuable Poya day like today, having abstained from those forms of intoxication—especially when a year ends and a new year begins, how many people in this society, in this world, try to use intoxicants to forget that their lives have been depleted by a year? Intoxicants flow freely. The ending of a year and the dawning of a new year is an occasion when alcohol flows freely. In that way, through highly trivial entertainment, worldly beings try to forget the truth declared by the Blessed One. Therefore, especially as a disadvantage of this alcohol, not only does it cause various sicknesses, premature deaths, and other forms of mental derangement and madness, but even if one obtains a subsequent birth (*jāti*), one has to be born with a weak mental state due to addiction to alcohol. In that way, its dangerous disadvantages (*ādīnava*) must also be understood through this background story. What we must do is make an effort to constantly arouse mindfulness and wisdom, just as the Blessed One declared.

Not only from alcohol, but we must also protect the mind from various other intoxications, such as the intoxication of youth (*yobbana-mada*), the intoxication of health (*ārogya-mada*), the intoxication of life (*jīvita-mada*), and the intoxication of wealth (*bhoga-mada*). Reflecting even more deeply, it is only when the mind is turned away from those terrifying defilements (*kilesa-dhamma*)—namely greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), or lust (*rāga*), hatred, and delusion—that one can gain a good understanding of the true state of affairs in the world, the true nature of life, and ultimately be liberated from this entire saṃsāric *dukkha*, realize the supreme deathless Nibbāna, and find peace from this terrifying saṃsāra.

Therefore, by listening to the Dhamma on a day like today, what do you, pious devotees, generate? If we consider the benefits in this world, you must reflect that you have made a certain effort to develop or bring about the five faculties (*indriya*) and five powers (*bala*) pointed out by the Blessed One, namely faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Generally, the benefit of listening to the Dhamma is not a benefit obtained merely by sitting there and somehow listening to it while feeling sleepy. One listens to the Dhamma with faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem, by applying one's mind to the Dhamma. While there are various forms of worldly entertainment such as sweet music, the reason you come to a place like this and spend an hour listening to this Dhamma is because you possess an unshakeable and deep faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem.

It is also because of the energy (*viriya*) that follows that faith that you were able to sit in one posture, with difficulty, directing your mind to one point, removing it from various scattering tendencies, and listen to it. It is through the energy associated with that faith. Next, when the mind is unified in that way, what arises is mindfulness (*sati*), awareness. You removed mindlessness and aroused mindfulness. While listening to it with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) during that brief period, next, concentration (*samādhi*) is produced. Within oneself, even for a brief moment, the mind becomes calm and composed. When directing the mind to this Dhamma-listening, without paying attention to the surrounding sounds, a certain concentration (*samādhi*) is established. Through that concentration, certain matters might be understood which were never understood before, no matter how much you had read books.

Even things you have heard or read a hundred times begin to be understood well at a moment when that faith, energy, mindfulness, and concentration are developed. We do not understand merely because it is in books. We do not understand merely by going to libraries. We do not understand worldly things merely by seeing them. We understand only when our minds are prepared in the necessary way to understand them. We can see this fact: it must have been due to the spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) aroused through the miracle performed by the Blessed One—to the extent of making Visākhā's lay women sober up—that they obtained some realization of the Dhamma. They were not without merit. In that very way, we must reflect that although there are various shortcomings in the lives we all lead, if on an occasion like this one directs the mind to the Dhamma and arouses faith, energy, mindfulness, and concentration, realizations of the Dhamma can be achieved on such occasions.

We should rejoice that in this manner, on this valuable day, we listened for an hour to a valuable Dhamma, a Dhamma that follows a discourse of the Blessed One. The group of wholesome volitions (*kusala-cetanā*) generated within one's mind is what we consider here as merit (*puñña*). That mass of merit can also be shared with others through their sharing in it (*anumodanā*). There are many in the world who wish to share in merit—those who have fallen into distress, and next, those who have understood the value of Nibbāna.

Reflecting on such beings, may all, especially the guardian deities of the Dispensation, along with the deities presiding over this place, share in this store of merit accumulated by both parties of us through the giving and receiving of this Dhamma sermon at this moment. Having shared in it, may they realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi they have aspired for, and may they provide protection to the Dispensation and to us—with such wishes and blessings we must conclude. Likewise, may our departed relatives, and all beings from Avīci hell up to the highest plane of existence (*bhavāgra*) who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, share in this store of merit accumulated from preaching and listening to the Dhamma, and as quickly as possible, be liberated from various saṃsāric *dukkha* such as *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, and so forth, and find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna. With this wish in mind, please recite this stanza.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #82

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.44)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Santassa manaṃ hoti,

santā vācā ca kamma ca;

sammadaññā vimuttassa,

upasantassa tādino.

From:

Dhammapada 96 (Sahassavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The word "peace" (*santi*) is a word dear to us all. Many people seeking peace perform peace-rituals (*shanthikarma*). They make offerings to deities. The ultimate goal of the path of practice taught in the Dhamma of our Supreme Teacher, the Buddha, is also peace. That is why that supreme, great Nibbāna is referred to as "*paramam santam*"—the ultimate peace. However, devotees, that peace is not something that can be obtained from the outside. It is a sublime state that must be brought forth from within, by calming the mind, body, and speech. Nibbāna——is the extinguishment of internal lust, hatred, and delusion that occurs through that calming. One who has realized Nibbāna uses patience and equanimity (*upekkhā*) to free the mind from the entanglements of kamma that prolong *saṃsāra*. It is the wonderful strength of patience and equanimity of a seven-year-old small Arahant novice (*sāmaṇera*) who became fully stilled (*upasanta*) that is presented as the story behind the stanza we have chosen as our theme.

In Kosambi, a certain person ordained and received higher ordination under the Buddha and came to be known as Elder Tissa of Kosambi. This Elder Tissa received an invitation from a lay supporter in Kosambi to spend the rains-retreat in a monastery there. Soon after the Elder entered the rains-retreat, the lay supporter brought three robes, ghee, honey, and other requisites for medicinal drinks, and placed them at his feet to offer them. This venerable monk asked, "What is this, lay disciple?" The lay disciple replied,

"This is an offering I make to everyone who spends the rains-retreat in this monastery, to every venerable monk whom I invite for the retreat." The venerable monk said, "But lay disciple, this is of no use to me. I do not need it." When asked why, the venerable monk stated, "I do not even have an attendant novice with me." Then the lay supporter said, "Venerable sir, if you do not have an attendant lay-supporter, I will ordain my child under you." The venerable monk agreed to this. The lay supporter brought his seven-year-old small child and handed him over to Venerable Tissa to be ordained.

Venerable Tissa wet the child's head and gave him the "fivefold skin-group" (*taca-pañcaka*) to ordain him. You may have heard, and even seen in ordination ceremonies, that the very first subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) given to someone being ordained is the *taca-pañcaka*. That is, to bring to mind the five parts from the thirty-two parts of the body—hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, and skin—by reciting "*kesā, lomā, nakhā, dantā, taco*" in forward and reverse order. This is how the first step of ordination is done. Most of you know that the Buddha has declared this foul nature of the body. However, worldly people generally are not inclined to regard these externally visible parts—hair, body hair, nails, teeth, and skin—as loathsome. Far from seeing them as loathsome, these are things people are eager to show off outwardly. Combing, styling, applying scent, powder, perfumes, and dyes to display them outwardly—such are these parts that appear on the surface: hair, body hair, nails, teeth, and skin.

Many people think that only the things inside the body are loathsome. But, devotees, while these five parts were being explained and the small child's head was being shaved, that child, who possessed great perfections (*pāramī*) and was highly meritorious, attained the state of a great Arahant with the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*). The reason for this must be that he had cultivated the meditation on loathsomeness (*asubha bhāvanā*) in past *saṃsāra*. In any case, the teacher monk did not know about this change. The teacher monk was an ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*). Thus, half a month—that is, two weeks—after the ordination, this venerable monk somehow felt, "I must go with this young novice to see the Buddha." Then, having the Sāmaṇera carry his belongings, he set out toward Savatthi. While traveling in this way, on a certain evening, as it was getting dark, they arrived at a monastery to lodge.

This small venerable novice obtained a dwelling for his preceptor and cleaned it. By the time he finished cleaning it, night had fallen. He was unable to prepare a place for himself. In the evening, the teacher monk asked, "How is it, is there a place for you to stay?" "No, venerable sir. I did not have time to do that." "Ah, then it is difficult to stay separately in an unfamiliar place like this. Stay in this very room," said the preceptor. He lay down on the bed due to the fatigue of the journey and fell asleep immediately. This small Arahant novice reflected, "Now for three nights I have stayed in the same dwelling with the venerable preceptor. There is a disciplinary rule (*Vinaya*) for monks that one who is not higher-ordained (*anupasampanna*) should not sleep under the same roof with an ordained monk for more than two or three nights. Therefore, if I sleep here tonight, the virtue (*sīla*) of that venerable monk will be breached." Thinking thus, the

small novice sat down in the cross-legged posture near the bed and meditated the whole night to protect the elder monk's discipline.

At the dawn watch of the night, the elder monk woke up and must have remembered the disciplinary rule. According to that procedure, when dawn approaches, that disciplinary rule is implemented by the unordained person leaving that place. Therefore, this venerable monk took the palm-leaf fan that was near the bed and tapped the mat, saying, "Novice, leave this place." As he raised the palm-leaf fan, it struck the eye of the novice who was sitting there. It is said that the eye was completely broken and injured. The eye was damaged to the point of being unusable. However, this novice did not say anything about such an injury having occurred. The elder monk told him to go outside, so covering his eye with one hand, he left the place. He did not just stay idle outside the room, nor did he go looking for medicine. What did he do? He performed all the duties and services due to his preceptor, sweeping with one hand while covering his eye with the other. He swept the toilet, brought the water needed for the toilet, placed water for washing the face, and swept the monastery. Having done all this, the moment came to offer water to the elder monk. He offered it with one hand. At this, the teacher monk felt a bit displeased and became dejected. He scolded him mildly, saying, "This novice is quite undisciplined. He offers water to his preceptors and teachers with only one hand!"

At that moment, the novice said, "Venerable sir, I know that such a way of performing duties is improper. However, my other hand is not free." When asked "Why?", he then revealed what had happened. Hearing this, Venerable Tissa was overcome with deep spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). "Alas! How could I have spoken such words to someone of such outstanding virtue?" Thinking thus, he knelt down right there on his haunches, worshipped him, and begged, "Noble sir, please forgive me." Then this small venerable novice said, "No, venerable sir, I did not disclose this with such an expectation. I revealed this matter only to protect your mind. This is neither your fault nor my fault. This is a fault of *saṃsāra*. I did not mention this earlier because I thought it would cause you regret." Thus he consoled him and tried to comfort him. However, the remorse felt by the teacher monk was so great that when they set out from there to see the Buddha, he carried the belongings and the bag of his pupil himself. Carrying his pupil's bag and belongings, he set off to see the Buddha. The Buddha, too, was waiting for the arrival of these two. We can understand that beneath all these phenomena, the great compassion of the Buddha was extended through his attainment of great compassion.

These two venerable ones approached the Buddha. Having approached, as was custom, the Buddha engaged in friendly conversation. That is, asking how they were, and about their journey. When asking about the journey, it was not about various worldly things, but whether they travelled comfortably without trouble. Then that venerable monk said, "Oh, venerable sir, we had no trouble. But such an event took place. I have never seen a person of such great virtue as this young novice of mine. Such an event occurred." He related the details: "Even after such a thing happened, and even after I spoke to him in that manner, he did not harbor any anger or hatred toward me, but instead tried to console me." It was then that the Buddha declared, "Indeed, monk, those who have destroyed the taints (*khīṇāsava*) are peaceful—their minds are peaceful, their speech is

peaceful, and they are stilled in that manner. They are those who are fully stilled." Declaring this, he uttered the verse mentioned earlier:

Santassa manaṃ hoti,

santā vācā ca kamma ca

sammadaññā vimuttassa

upasantassa tādino.

It is mentioned that upon hearing this Dhamma preached along with the verse, the elder monk, Venerable Tissa, attained Arahantship with the four analytical knowledges. The general meaning of this stanza is that the mind of the one who is liberated by fully understanding with right wisdom, who is fully stilled, and who is of steadfast quality—or in other words, the Arahant—is peaceful. His speech is also peaceful. His physical action is also peaceful. This is the meaning of that stanza.

Now, with reference to this story and the stanza, let us go a bit deeper and reflect on what kind of example we can take from this for our lives. In truth, what we have here is, as we mentioned earlier, a form of "playfulness" or "loveliness" (*huratalak*). When we speak of playfulness, we know that when a small child performs some work like an adult, parents are very pleased to see that playfulness. Similarly, here, a seven-year-old small novice, at the very moment of his ordination, just as his hair was being shaved, attained that supreme and most noble state of a great Arahant in the world due to the power of his perfections (*pāramī*). Furthermore, one must reflect on each of those qualities of virtue. Although he was such a small child, in order to protect the disciplinary rule of his preceptor, without any prompt or request, he made a self-sacrifice, as it were, and resolved to stay awake the whole night. Moreover, he did not harbor any resentment, anger, or displeasure at the mistake made by the elder monk or the scolding he received. Instead, in an extremely peaceful and stilled manner—even though his eye was ruined—he acted in a way that could open the Dhamma-eye, the eye of wisdom, of the elder monk. What an incredibly exemplary conduct this venerable novice possessed! Even his name is not mentioned in the history of the Dispensation (*Sāsana*). He is referred to only as the pupil of Elder Tissa. If we need to give him a name, we can only call him a "nameless mass of virtue." We can see such a wondrous treasury of virtues in that small character.

Next, even if we reflect on Venerable Tissa, despite his having the shortcomings of an ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*), at the right moment, he very humbly accepted the mistake he had made and begged for forgiveness, worshipping the small seven-year-old novice. Those virtues—that is, though he was senior in years, the respectful thought he developed toward that small novice who was senior in asceticism and virtue—and his carrying the novice's belongings himself, as if performing a duty or undergoing a punishment for the mistake he made. Such things must have assisted this venerable monk to become an Arahant the very moment he heard this stanza. From this, we can understand that this peace of Nibbāna can be attained through a complete revolution of

one's mind. Through the very spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) that arose in that venerable monk, he realized Nibbāna.

Then we must reflect on these stories of the past. Some might ask whether these can be believed. Several seven-year-old novices are mentioned in the history of the Dispensation who became Arahants and not only taught the Dhamma but even displayed psychic powers. Most of these seven-year-old Arahants are mentioned as having completed their meditation and attained Arahantship through the cultivation of the meditation on loathsomeness (*asubha bhāvanā*) the moment they were told: "hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin." From this, we have to understand that for those who had meditated for a long time in the past, even a slight reminder was sufficient. Even in childhood, they possessed such a power. Next, among the qualities of virtue of that venerable novice, we can understand that especially his quality of equanimity (*upekkhā*) and patience can be regarded as the most sublime virtues of a person. Ordinary worldly people do not even try to practice the word "*upekkhā*". This is because the Buddha himself has declared that worldly people live between feelings (*vedanā*) of pleasure and suffering (*dukkha*). He states: "The ordinary worldling, untaught in the Dhamma, when touched by painful feeling, yearns for pleasant feeling. Why is that? Because the ordinary person does not see any escape from painful feeling other than pleasant feeling."

But it is the Buddhas who point out that the entire existence in *saṃsāra* lies between these two—attraction and repulsion (attachment and aversion) between pleasure and suffering (*dukkha*). To be liberated from *saṃsāra*, one must come to a neutral state, to equanimity (*upekkhā*). This is called "neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling" (*vedanā*). For the ordinary worldling to understand this, it is explained through an illustration found in the ancient books. If there is a rock in the middle of a sandy area, and a deer runs over the rock from one side to the other, its footprints are visible on the far side and on this side, but the part where it ran over the rock is not visible. Similarly, the ordinary worldling recognizes pleasure and recognizes suffering (*dukkha*), but the ordinary worldling cannot even conceive of the neutral state. Equanimity (*upekkhā*) is sometimes thought of as a "sitting-on-the-fence" policy, wavering, or just saving one's own skin. But if we look at it truly, equanimity (*upekkhā*) is the final winning post.

You may have heard of the ten perfections (*pāramitā*), which are presented as the qualities that make a Buddha:

> *Dānaṃ sīlaṃ ca nekkhammaṃ*
>
> *paññā viriyena pañcamaṃ*
>
> *khantī saccamadhiṭṭhānaṃ...*

As summarized in this verse, the ten perfections are giving, virtue, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness, and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Here too, the final winning post is equanimity (*upekkhā*). When we reflect on each of these, we see that in every perfection, such as giving and virtue, this equanimity

(*upekkhā*) is connected in some small way. To speak the truth, the noblest quality that is filtered and refined from these perfections is equanimity (*upekkhā*). Because to be liberated from this *saṃsāra*, the mind must be brought to the state of equanimity (*upekkhā*). This equanimity (*upekkhā*) is the neutrality required to realize the truth. Only after bringing the mind to neutrality can one realize the truth. Therefore, this equanimity (*upekkhā*) occupies a primary place in many categories of the Dhamma. A "primary place" means it is the ultimate thing. When these are developed, equanimity (*upekkhā*) is mentioned at the very end in many places.

The texts even mention ten kinds of equanimity (*upekkhā*). Let us take just a few of them. We mentioned the perfections earlier. Similarly, there is "six-factored equanimity" (*chaḷaṅgupekkhā*). Six-factored equanimity refers to equanimity regarding restraint of the senses. When we speak of sense-restraint, you have heard of our six senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Six-factored equanimity means freeing the mind from attachment and aversion toward the objects that come to these six senses, and bringing the mind to a neutral state of equanimity (*upekkhā*). Without generating attraction or repulsion toward pleasant and unpleasant objects, keeping the mind neutral toward desirable and undesirable objects, and without grasping their signs and features—without taking anything strongly and thereby growing defilements—remaining neutral is what is called "six-factored" regarding sense-restraint. It is mentioned that Arahants in particular have perfected this.

Furthermore, there is mention of "divine-abiding equanimity" (*brahmavihāra upekkhā*). There are four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*), which you have often heard of: *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā*—loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Loving-kindness (*mettā*) is the general wish for all beings to be well and happy. Compassion (*karuṇā*) is directed toward those who are suffering (*dukkha*). Sympathetic joy (*muditā*) is applied to those who are happy, rejoicing by thinking, "How wonderful!" It is the quality of being happy in the happiness of others without envy, which is a valuable quality since envy is a bad trait. It is after all these qualities are perfected and filtered that equanimity (*upekkhā*), neutrality, comes. It is neutrality toward all. This is sometimes illustrated by a comparison: loving-kindness is like milk, compassion is like butter, sympathetic joy is like curd, and equanimity is like ghee, which is a heavy substance. Similarly, it shows calmness, gravity—"gravity" meaning weightiness, respect—and here too, equanimity is mentioned at the very end.

Next, there is also mention of the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*). "*Bodhi*" means awakening, realization. Seven factors that assist this realization are mentioned: *sati* (mindfulness), *dhamma-vicaya* (investigation of states), *viriya* (energy), *pīti* (rapture), *passaddhi* (tranquility), *samādhi* (concentration), and *upekkhā* (equanimity). *Sati*, as everyone knows, is mindfulness. Through that mindfulness, one investigates states (*dhamma-vicaya*), bringing to light the understanding of wholesome and unwholesome states, good and bad. Next, in accordance with that, one exerts energy (*viriya*) to develop the good and abandon the bad. Through that energy, a certain rapture (*pīti*) arises. By calming that rapture, a peacefulness called tranquility

(*passaddhi*) arises. Through that tranquility, a certain stilled state of mind, concentration (*samādhi*), one-pointedness, arises. After attaining that concentration, in order to protect it, a certain neutral state of mind called equanimity (*upekkhā*) arises. There, it assists that awakening, that realization, to understand things as they really are, bringing the mind to neutrality. The importance of equanimity (*upekkhā*) is present there as well. That is *bojjhaṅga-upekkhā*.

Next, there is also equanimity regarding insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). In attaining Nibbāna, one must pass through a series of knowledges before realizing the state of Nibbāna. There are knowledges such as: rise and fall (*udayabbaya*), dissolution (*bhaṅga*), fear (*bhaya*), disadvantage (*ādīnava*), disenchantment (*nibbidā*), desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatā*), *paṭisaṅkhā*, and conformity (*anuloma*). There, a special equanimity is mentioned. It is called "equanimity towards preparations" (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*). This is a very important turning point in that succession of insight knowledges. From the stage where arising and passing away are seen, fear arises, followed by disenchantment. Due to that disenchantment, a desire for deliverance arises. According to this desire for deliverance, one then cultivates the three characteristics—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self/unsubstantial (*anattā*). Having cultivated them, one arrives at a certain calm state: *saṅkhārupekkhā*, equanimity toward preparations (*saṅkhāra*). At that stage, a neutral, stilled state arises in the mind of the one who is about to be liberated, realizing: "All these are preparations, there is nothing to be taken as I or mine." An illustration is given for this: just as a drop of water on a lotus leaf remains without clinging. Indeed, that illustration is used for the state of Arahantship. This shows that the value of equanimity (*upekkhā*) is present there as well. Similarly, in the descriptions of the *jhānas* (meditative absorptions), in the fourth *jhāna*, having removed the defects of the initial *jhānas* and the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), once the mind is one-pointed, it is mentioned that one is free from both pleasure and pain, and free from joy and grief. Without going to either side, there is *upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhi*—the purity of mindfulness brought about by equanimity, a neutral state in the fourth *jhāna*.

Indeed, the fourth *jhāna* is used as the basis for obtaining the great psychic powers called direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). Thus, we see in all of this that the Buddha, too, goes up to equanimity among the perfections. Next, in the divine abidings, there is that equanimity—the neutral, unshakeable state regarding all beings, like a pot full of ghee. Such is that state. Next, there is equanimity toward preparations (*saṅkhārupekkhā*). Likewise, among the *jhānas*, in the fourth *jhāna*, after the mind is completely stilled and has reached one-pointedness, what is present there is also a neutral state. From this, we can understand the importance of this quality of equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Ordinary worldly people, instead of equanimity and neutrality, always have a tendency to grasp one side or the other, between attraction and repulsion. The entire *saṃsāra* exists within these two—attraction and repulsion. It is when one is freed from attraction and repulsion that the world is seen as it really is. This is why, in relation to Nibbāna, the recollection of peace (*upasamānussati*) is mentioned. Peacefulness, stillness is

mentioned there. In this stanza too, the word *upasanta* is used. *Upasanta* means stilled or calmed. The sign of this calming is Nibbāna. Regarding Nibbāna, a passage is mentioned: *Etam santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhākkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ*. This passage says: "This is peaceful, this is sublime, namely, the stilling of all preparations (*saṅkhāra*), the relinquishment of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*), dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna." Thus, that calming, that neutrality, bringing the mind to that state is Nibbāna. That is true peace. We explained why Nibbāna is identified as the ultimate peace. We can understand the necessity for this. This *saṃsāra* is a great tangle of kamma. All the kamma we have done in the past is stored in this consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and through the objects we collide with at various times, those kammic forces emerge.

Due to those emerging kammic forces, because of ignorance, because of craving (*taṇhā*), and because of the feeling of "I and mine," we fail to recognize them as results (*vipāka*). We clash with them and thereby generate more kamma. That is how we prolong *saṃsāra*. That is when the small novice spoke a great Dhamma sermon in those few words: "This is neither your fault, venerable sir, nor my fault. This is a fault of *saṃsāra*." What he called the "fault of *saṃsāra*" is precisely this: this entanglement of kamma. For a long time in this *saṃsāra*, we struggle as with a tangled ball of thread. If a ball of thread is given to a cat, or to someone who does not know how to untangle a tangled ball of thread, they tangle it even more. Similarly, because of ignorance, because of the ignorance that grasps things as "I" and "mine," worldly people gather more kamma through that entanglement of kamma and create a great web of suffering (*dukkha*) for themselves. Instead of that, what must be done at every possible opportunity, as quickly as possible, is to bring in patience and equanimity (*upekkhā*) to calm that kammic force, that kammic impulse, just like that small great Arahant novice did.

For an ordinary person, even such an accident would be enough to start a major fight. Due to the elder monk's lack of awareness at that moment, the corner of the palm-leaf fan struck him. But the elder monk said: "I did it to my eye" (or rather, the novice did not say 'you broke my eye'). If someone were to blame him further after that, and when offering water with one hand, they could have argued back in anger: "After doing this to my eye, you still speak to me like this!" But that novice, in a very humble, obedient, and gentle manner, explained the nature of the entanglement of kamma to his preceptor: "It is not your fault, venerable sir. This is the nature of kamma, the nature of *saṃsāra*." Therefore, that understanding is what was meant in that stanza by "*sammadaññā vimuttassa*"—liberated through right wisdom. That is right wisdom. For a long time, worldly people revolve on preparations (*saṅkhāra*) because of ignorance. This ignorance, this lack of knowledge, is purely a heap of suffering (*dukkha*). Without understanding that this is a heap of suffering, grasping it as "I" and "mine"—grasping this fivefold group (*pañcakkhandha*) of form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—and even misunderstanding the various mishaps that come in accordance with kamma, generating hatred toward those people, thinking "such and such a person did this," they create various entanglements that prolong *saṃsāra*.

Instead, just as that Arahant did, what we have to think here is: "Beneath this, for whatever reason, there must be our own kamma." Some kamma must have been the cause for that monk's eye to be broken. What he did there was to cover his injured eye and perform the other duties that had to be done, without letting his mind be defiled. His eye of wisdom was developed to that extent. When we bring to mind the treasury of virtues of that small novice—his courage, energy, and so forth—we can see this. At that moment, as we recall how that small novice, covering one eye, performed all those duties and services, we realize: "We cannot get things done even with a minor ailment, and we also ruin our minds with them." What a valuable example he gave to the world there! That is indeed:

Santassa manaṃ hoti santā vācā ca kamma ca

Because his mind was peaceful, his speech was peaceful, and his action was peaceful—because everything was done peacefully—the opportunity was created for the elder monk to open his Dhamma-eye, his eye of wisdom. Next, another word is mentioned in this stanza. If we were to speak about each and every word mentioned in a single stanza, there are things valuable enough to write a huge book. A very important word mentioned there is *tādī*. The word *tādī* is usually translated as "of steadfast virtue" or "suchlike". The ordinary meaning of the words *tādī* and *tādiso* is "such" or "like that", which is used in society today. We say "such a person." "Such a person" means that person has a certain stability. We say, "It was such a person who said this." But what is this "suchness" (*tādibhāva*) of the Arahant?

In the ordinary world, most people are "this and that" (*esemese*) sort of people. When we say "this and that," there is a certain fickleness. This Arahant is not just an ordinary "this and that" person. He is a person who is "just so" (*esemavū*). That is why he is called "such" (*tādī*). Because his supramundane liberation is stable. His supramundane liberation, the realization he obtained through his Arahantship regarding the nature of *saṃsāra*—which is dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*)—how things arise through causes and conditions, which he realized in that brief moment—the nature of impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self/unsubstantial (*anattā*)—that is stable. It is in that that the Arahant is established. That is why he is called "such". The Arahant is such a person. He is not an ordinary person. If he were an ordinary person, he would change according to the objects that come. To be an ordinary person means being drawn toward the form that comes to the eye, being drawn back into *saṃsāra*. One gets caught in the tangle of *saṃsāra* again according to the sound that comes to the ear. That is the way of the ordinary person. It is an ordinary thing, because that person's mind changes according to the object that comes.

The Arahant is steadfast, sometimes described as being like a stone column (*indakhīla*). This word *tādī* is analyzed in various ways in the texts. But when we reflect deeply, what we have to take is that "suchness" is what is meant here. Steadfast virtues. That steadfast virtue comes through realization, through right wisdom. The realization of the Four Noble Truths, that everything occurs through causes and conditions, that everyone has a tangle of kamma, a heap of kamma gathered in *saṃsāra*. That these emerge at various

times due to various causes. That emergence also occurs according to a natural law, according to the cycle of kamma. Its operation is so powerful and so complex that the Buddha has declared: "The field of kamma is unthinkable (*acinteyya*)." If one tries to think about it, one will go mad. To that extent, these cannot be analyzed one by one. This state of affairs is visible to the Buddha's knowledge. An ordinary person cannot untangle the tangles of kamma through logical reasoning. Only a hint is needed here. Except for someone who understands this as a principle through a hint, it is so wonderfully chaotic that one cannot say with certainty how or for how long a single kamma will stretch into the distant future.

But Arahants, according to their own capacity, understand this as a natural law: "What we call 'I' and 'mine' here is a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) gathered in *saṃsāra* due to ignorance." It is through this heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that we have constructed these phenomena of name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*), taken them as "my body" and "my mind," and through this delusion, got entangled with a world, thereby prolonging *saṃsāra*. This realization, even if momentary, is received by the Arahant. It is established in this that the Arahant's conduct is shaped. That is why, at every moment, they make an effort to bring the mind to equanimity (*upekkhā*). Even if we think of the divine abidings, we see that what is present there is also that neutrality. What we called "six-factored equanimity" (*chaḷaṅgupekkhā*) is also a nature of remaining unshaken and uncaught by sensory objects in their presence. Because of this liberation, that nature is present in the liberated mind.

That is what is called "the water drop on the lotus leaf." This is why the lotus flower is a valuable symbol in this Dispensation. The Buddha has pointed out a lotus in this swamp of *saṃsāra*, in this swamp of *saṃsāra* of ordinary worldly people:

Yathā saṅkāradhānasmiṃ, mahāpathe padumṃ tetha jāyetha, suci manoramaṃ...

It is shown in this manner in some places of the Dhamma. Suppose there is a dirty pit by the roadside, a pit of dirty water where rainwater has collected. Somehow a lotus seed falls into it, a lotus plant grows, and a lotus flower blooms. But the lotus flower is not like that dirty water. It is *suci manoramaṃ*—pure and fragrant, beautiful to look at. That is what supramundane virtues are like. That is why the Buddha describes the Arahant as being like a lotus flower on the one hand. From another perspective, the drop of water that falls on the petal or the leaf of the lotus does not wet the leaf or the flower. Also, the lotus remains unsullied by the surrounding mud and water (*vāriṇā toyena anupalittaṃ*). That is what supramundane virtue is. That is the supramundane liberation that Buddhas introduce to the world. That mind of the one who is liberated is what is shown to us in this story through the conduct, the action, and the speech of that small Arahant.

Therefore, from this we must reflect: what is the root of this? The root, as mentioned earlier, is not something to be obtained by performing peace-rituals or praying to deities. It is the guarding of these very three doors that we have close to us, which we use in our daily lives—the mind, body, and speech. It is the restraint of these three doors. It is the

calming of these three doors. Now, some among this group of devotees have undertaken the ten precepts, others have undertaken the eight Uposatha precepts, and still others have undertaken the eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). Through all of of these, what one does is restrain body and speech. Although we say "restraining body and speech," within that, the mind is also quickly restrained. Because it is the mind, the thought, that is used to restrain body and speech. Establishing oneself in a certain determination, voluntarily accepting that determination—this virtue, each training rule—thinking "today, or during this period, I will live according to these principles," one restrains body and speech. Through that, restraining the mind as well, without being agitated by the objects that come into life, the day of undertaking precepts is a day for leading a calm life.

It is that very journey, when started, that becomes a great journey of perfections (*pāramī*) through which a Buddha arises, a Paccekabuddha arises, or an Arahant arises. One must reflect in this way. Then, the calming, or the peacefulness, or the extinguishment of these three doors is what is called Nibbāna. The ultimate purpose of all these perfections is to bring the mind to equanimity (*upekkhā*) in order to realize this ultimate truth, the Dhamma of the Four Noble Truths. The conduct that assists this is what is present in this virtue (*sīla*) as well. Next, the purpose of virtue is concentration (*samādhi*). Virtue is the foundation. Through that foundation, we expect to make the mind still. "Making the mind still" means precisely that. The reason the mind is not still, the reason it scatters, is within those two—attraction and repulsion. At every moment, through what is called sense-restraint, one looks to bring the mind to neutrality. Having brought the mind to a neutral state in this way, by the time one reaches the fourth *jhāna*, the mind's neutrality and one-pointedness are extremely powerful.

Next, that is what is used by those who possess direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) to perform great psychic powers and feats. Next, some use that very thing to assist them toward Nibbāna. Through that, they see the three characteristics of impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self/unsubstantial (*anattā*). There too, what assists is equanimity (*upekkhā*), which is called "neither-painful-nor-pleasant." Ordinary worldly people spend their lives between pleasure and pain. But in this Dhamma, it is declared that through that equanimity (*upekkhā*), the *tādī* quality arises. That "suchness" arises. In that way, after concentration is strengthened, what is then spoken of is the meditation on the three characteristics of impermanent, suffering, and non-self/unsubstantial. Through insight (*vipassanā*), what we expect is to realize the impermanent nature, the suffering nature, and the nature of being unable to say "I" and "mine" of this fivefold group, which we have taken as "I" and "mine" throughout this long *saṃsāra*. For that, too, the aforementioned equanimity (*upekkhā*) is required. That is why it was called "equanimity toward preparations" (*saṅkhārupekkhā*)—one sees all these as preparations. Everything that was taken as "I" and "mine" is seen as preparations. What is present here is a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). As long as this heap of preparations exists, *saṃsāra* grows.

In fact, why are these called "preparations"? As mentioned, when something arises due to past kamma, through some kammic force, the ordinary worldling is inclined to make many preparations out of ignorance. Instead, what must be done is to calm it right there. "Stilling of preparations" (*saṅkhāra-samatha*) means refraining from making preparations, calming the power of making preparations, the nature of making preparations. It is there that the ultimate supreme peace, liberation, lies. But as long as worldly people took all this as "I" and "mine," they grew this world, and by acting, they tried to escape from *saṃsāra* through attraction and repulsion. Only the Buddha pointed out that what is present here is a relationship of cause and effect. There is nothing to be taken as "I" and "mine." It is due to a series of kammic forces coming from past *saṃsāra* that this life, this existence/becoming (*bhava*), has been obtained.

Today a human, tomorrow an animal, next a deity—in this way, various kinds of existence/becoming (*bhava*), states of being, have arisen. That existence/becoming is carried on through what is called grasping/holding (*upādāna*)—the firm holding done through craving (*taṇhā*). Next, because there is no limit to that craving, due to that very craving, one makes more preparations along everything that presents itself, and thereby grows craving. Those preparations are made in order to satisfy craving. But this is not something that can ever be filled and satisfied. It is not something that brings satisfaction. So, worldly people look for peace by fulfilling daily needs and wants; everyone expects: "If I obtain what my neighbor has obtained, then I will have true peace." But even after obtaining them, there is no satisfaction. There is more, even if one spends a hundred years in this life. It has been said in the past that even great wheel-turning kings (*cakkavatti*), having conquered countries and kingdoms, having conquered the whole world, still found it insufficient. Even then, they were not satisfied. There was no contentment. That is what this craving (*taṇhā*) is like. Therefore, peace is not found in obtaining the things dictated by craving. There is never any comfort or calming in that. Instead, what the Buddha points out is the calming of that very craving. It is the calming of that very thirst. It is bringing the mind to a state where that thirst that runs through *saṃsāra* does not arise. That occurs through realization.

There, there is nothing to be taken as "I" and "mine". These five groups (*pañcakkhandha*), these five groups of form and so forth that have arisen in accordance with kamma, exist for a certain period of time and then pass away. As long as it exists, the greatest work to be done with it, while remaining neutral, is to realize Nibbāna. According to the Buddha's philosophy, the purpose of human life must be especially the realization of Nibbāna. Other needs and wants are only things done for carrying on daily life. They are things that grow *saṃsāra*. That is why the Buddha has declared: "*na siyā lokavaḍḍhano*"—do not be a grower of the world. Growing the world is not what must be done. It is to grow the world that those wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) present themselves and give various teachings. But what the Buddha teaches is liberation from this world. The Buddha points out: "Within this fathom-long body, I declare the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world."

Therefore, it is within this fathom-long body that those three doors are present. It is there that those six doors are present. What we called the three doors are the mind, body, and speech, which instigate actions. What we called the six doors are these six: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Therefore, within this cage of a body, which has six doors or three doors, lies this suffering (*dukkha*), the cause of suffering, the calming of suffering which is Nibbāna, and the path to it which is the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path is right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Understanding the real nature of this world with a neutral mind is right view, and according to that right view, one generates right thoughts (*sammā-saṅkappa*). According to those right thoughts, one uses right speech (*sammā-vācā*). Acting according to that right speech, one refrains from those actions called killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and so forth. Next, through right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), one rectifies one's life with a truly righteous livelihood. Next, through that livelihood, one exerts a certain energy, an effort, to bring close what is good and remove what is bad, which is called right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*).

Next, through that very energy of right effort, one establishes a certain mindfulness, a right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), which is a mindfulness established in the mind. After maintaining that mindfulness for a long time and making it one-pointed, it is called concentration (*samādhi*). This is what is called the Noble Eightfold Path. That Noble Eightfold Path is the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) declared by the Buddha. Or in other words, the path to Nibbāna, the middle way. This is why it was called the Middle Path. In it, there is nothing to be taken as "I" and "mine." What is present here is a succession of phenomena (*dhamma-paramparā*). This succession of phenomena is connected to one another through cause and effect. When fertilizer is given to one, another emerges from it. That is what the Buddha declares: "For one who has right view, right thought develops. For one who has right thought, right speech arises. One who has right speech directs himself toward right action. One who is engaged in right action perfects right livelihood. When right livelihood is perfected, right effort develops in that person's mind. Through that right effort, right mindfulness emerges, and that very right mindfulness reaches completion and a stable state under the name of right concentration." That is the Middle Path declared by the Buddha.

Thus, without the grasping of "I" and "mine," we must analyze and understand this, and guide our mind, body, and speech accordingly. It is through that that those qualities of virtue—the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), the four right endeavors (*sammappadhāna*), and so forth, the factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*)—all these develop in our mind-stream. Even if one has not learned each of these from books, when one cultivates this properly with the guidance of a teacher, all those qualities of virtue develop within that person. When one takes a vitamin pill, whether one looks at its qualities or not, the qualities are present in that vitamin pill. In the same way, through that, what is needed for oneself is completed. Similarly, when one takes a proper meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) and cultivates it, those qualities of virtue arise naturally: right view, right thought, right speech, and so forth. Next, even if one does not know about the things spoken of in big words such as the four foundations of mindfulness and the four

right endeavors, these Dhammas are completed in the mind-stream through that very meditation subject. Having been completed in that way, at a certain moment, one is able to bring the mind to that noble, stilled, *tādī* (such) state declared by the Buddha, through the realization of the Four Noble Truths.

We can never find peace merely by saying that this entire saṃsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*), that the existence of this fivefold group, this very existence/becoming (*bhava*), is entirely suffering. What must be done is to calm the craving (*taṇhā*) within our mind that repeatedly causes suffering, through right realization—through realizing the true state of affairs. That is why we contemplate all these as impermanent (*anicca*). When this impermanence is understood more clearly, then the suffering (*dukkha*) nature of this is understood. Its fearful nature—that it is because of grasping this very thing that suffering and pain come to us. Because of that fearful nature, one realizes the non-self/unsubstantial (*anattā*) nature—that this cannot be maintained as "I" and "mine" in a permanent way. It is when these three characteristics are realized to some extent that one enters that noble supramundane state called the fruit of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). By turning that very wheel of Dhamma once more, one enters the state of a once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), to return to this world only once. Likewise, after developing it once more, the state of a non-returner (*anāgāmi*), and finally, through that noble state of Arahantship, one is liberated from the entire suffering of *saṃsāra* and is stilled in the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna through this Dhamma, through the aforementioned path.

Therefore, now, you must reflect that it is through the Dispensation's playfulness of that seven-year-old son, the Arahant novice, through a nameless mass of virtue, that we delivered today's Dhamma sermon. We must reflect that there are various deep Dhammas in the world, but in truth, what calls a person to the path of Nibbāna is an exemplary character. What the Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and great Arahants of the past leave behind for the world is an exemplary character, that treasury of virtue. It is along that fragrance of virtue that the world joins the path of Nibbāna, not through logic. Therefore, we must reflect that we must use the character of that small Arahant novice to correct the shortcomings of our lives. Next, we must also reflect on the conduct of that teacher monk regarding humility. Through all of this, we must reflect that in order for that true, stilled peace to arise, we must guard those three doors, or guard those six doors, and by walking on that path of Dhamma, cultivating virtue, concentration, and wisdom, realize as quickly as possible those noble stages of the Aryas declared by the noble Buddha—stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and Arahantship—and be stilled in the deathless, great Nibbāna. Indeed, may the practices of virtue and so forth that you practiced today, the hearing of the Dhamma, and the performing of duties and services, assist in this; may they be a strong supportive condition.

Furthermore, whatever heap of merit we have gathered so far through hearing the Dhamma and preaching the Dhamma, may all those who yearn for Nibbāna, including the deities who protect the Dispensation, and our relatives from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, rejoice in this heap of merit. May they all be liberated as quickly as

possible from the extremely terrible *saṃsāra*, from all saṃsāric suffering such as the highly terrifying birth (*jāti*), decay and death/aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death, and may they find peace in the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna. Praying thus, share the merits by reciting the stanzas in this manner:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #83

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.158)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Ārabhatha nikkhamatha,

yuñjatha buddhasāsane;

Dhunātha maccuno senaṃ,

naḷāgāraṃ va kuñjaro.

Yo imasmiṃ dhammavinaye,

appamatto vihessati;

Pahāya jāti saṃsāraṃ,

dukkhassantaṃ karissati.

From:

Dhammapada 326 (Nāgavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The news of the turning of the Wheel of Dhamma, set in motion by the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Enlightened One, on an Esala Full Moon Poya Day like this through the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, reverberated and broadcasted from deva-world to deva-world, and from brahma-world to brahma-world. From this, we can imagine that there was a marvelous kind of broadcasting in that Wheel of Dhamma, far superior to the broadcasting media of the modern world. That there is a certain spiritual splendor of the Dhamma spreading throughout the universe is also apparent from the Sutta discourses that our Buddha preached on various occasions regarding the ancient Dispensation. The background story relevant to the two verses we have chosen as our theme today is also a good proof of this. On one occasion, when the Buddha was residing

at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī, he addressed the Sangha and presented an event from a past eon in this manner:

"Monks, in the extremely distant past, there was a king named Aruṇavā. His kingdom was known as Aruṇavatī. The Blessed One, the Fully Enlightened One of that past era (Sikhī Buddha), lived in dependence on that kingdom of Aruṇavatī. That Sikhī Buddha had two chief disciples named Abhibhū and Sambhava. One day, the Sikhī Buddha addressed the chief disciple Abhibhū—it appears that in those times, the Buddha addressed his disciples as 'Brahmin'—and said, 'Brahmin, until the time for alms arrives, let us go to a certain Brahma-world and return.' 'Very well, Venerable Sir,' he replied. Then, the Sikhī Buddha and the chief disciple Abhibhū disappeared from the kingdom of Aruṇavatī and appeared in that Brahma-world, as quickly as a strong man might stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm."

After arriving in the Brahma-world, the Buddha said to the chief disciple Abhibhū, "May a Dhamma talk occur to you, Brahmin, to deliver to this Great Brahma and his retinue!" Replying, "Yes, Venerable Sir," the Venerable Abhibhū endeavored to generate joy and spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) in the Brahma king and his retinue through an extraordinary Dhamma discourse. However, that Brahma and his retinue began to speak in a critical tone, saying, "What a strange thing! How wonderful and marvelous! The disciple is preaching the Dhamma in the very presence of the Teacher." Thereupon, the Buddha said to Venerable Abhibhū, "Brahmin, this Brahma king and his retinue are criticizing you, saying such-and-such. Therefore, preach the Dhamma even more intensely to arouse spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) in them."

Next, this Venerable One began to preach the Dhamma while performing psychic miracles. Sometimes making himself visible, sometimes invisible, sometimes making only a part of his body visible—either the upper half of his body or the lower half of his body—he preached the Dhamma in various ways, blending it with psychic powers. This assembly of Brahmas was struck with spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) and amazement, thinking, "This is wonderful and marvelous, that even a disciple possesses such psychic power!" At that moment, Venerable Abhibhū said to Sikhī Buddha, "Venerable Sir, I recall making a statement in the midst of the Sangha on one occasion: 'Friends, standing in the Brahma-worlds, I can make my voice heard throughout a thousandfold world system.'" Then the Sikhī Buddha said, "Brahmin, now is the moment! Now is the time! Fulfil that statement of yours. Make your voice heard throughout a thousandfold world system." When invited by the Buddha, the Venerable One proclaimed to the assembly of Brahmas the very two verses we have chosen as our theme today:

Ārabhatha nikkhamatha,

yuñjatha buddhasāsane;

Dhunātha maccuno senaṁ,

naḷāgāraṁ va kuñjaro.

Exert yourselves! Go forth!

Engage in the Buddha's Dispensation!

Destroy the army of Death,

as an elephant crushes a reed-shed!

Yo imasmiṁ dhammavinaye,

appamatto vihessati;

Pahāya jāti saṁsāraṁ,

dukkhassantaṁ karissati.

He who shall dwell diligently in this Dhamma and Discipline,

Abandoning the round of birth (*jāti*) and saṁsāra,

will make an end of suffering (*dukkha*).

Having delivered that discourse and aroused spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) in the assembly of Brahmas, Sikhī Buddha and Venerable Abhibhū returned, appearing instantly in the kingdom of Aruṇavatī, as quickly as a strong man might stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm. Upon their return, Sikhī Buddha asked the Sangha: "Monks, did you hear our monk Abhibhū proclaiming verses from the Brahma-world?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." "How did those verses sound? Relate them." They recited the two verses exactly as they had been spoken. Thereupon the Buddha said, "Sādhu, sādhu! Excellent is it that you heard the Dhamma discourse of the monk Abhibhū." This was the narrative proclaimed by the Buddha.

From this, we can see that these two verses reverberated throughout the universe in a past eon, during the time of an ancient Buddha. Next, let us delve into these two verses to understand their meaning. The three main words here, as you must have understood, are *ārabhatha* (exert), *nikkhamatha* (go forth), and *yuñjatha* (yoke/engage). Through these three terms, one fact the Buddha revealed to the world is that the power to make an end of the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra exists within each and every one of us. On certain occasions, he declared of himself: "I am one who asserts action (*kammavādī*), who asserts efficacy of action (*kiriyavādī*), and who asserts energy (*viriyavādī*)." Nowadays, when people speak of karma, some think, "If it is karma, there is nothing to be done about it." The Buddha did not speak in that sense. He regarded the human being specifically as an individual possessing action, active energy, and virile effort. Therefore,

according to that principle, the three terms *ārabhatha*, *nikkhamatha*, and *yuñjatha* represent what the Buddha analyzed on various occasions. In one Sutta, he declares: "Monks, for the non-arising of unarisen sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), and for the abandonment of arisen sloth and torpor, there is one quality. What is this one quality?" He referred to those three elements: the element of initiative (*ārambha-dhātu*), the element of launching (*nikkama-dhātu*), and the element of exertion (*parakkama-dhātu*). In any analysis, fundamental elements are called *dhātus*.

Thus, within an individual, there is an initiating power—the power to start something. There is a launching power to carry it forward. By the element of exertion (*parakkama*), it means the valour to overcome the obstacles that arise in the process and forge ahead; there is a power to conquer them. It is to denote these three aspects that *ārabhatha*, *nikkhamatha*, and *yuñjatha* are used. Moreover, these three terms are especially helpful for increasing one's energy (*viriya*). *Ārabhatha, nikkhamatha, yuñjatha buddhasāsane; dhunātha maccuno senaṁ*—demolish the army of Death. Next, the simile is given, which is a powerful one: "like an elephant destroying a reed-house." There is a hut made of reeds. Is it difficult for an elephant to break it? As soon as it steps on it, it gets crushed with a crackling sound. This simile illustrates the power of energy (*viriya*). Destroy the army of Māra like an elephant crushing a reed-house. What then is this army of Māra? We can see the army of Māra described in the Buddha's own words in the *Padhāna Sutta*. When the Buddha was cultivating that great energy (*viriya*) which we call the "Great Struggle" (*mahā-padhāna*), it is recorded in the texts that Māra came and tried to tempt him to abandon this energy. Then the Buddha addressed Māra: "Māra, here is your army!" What is called his army? It is the defilements (*kilesas*) in our minds. Ten defilements are listed there in a sequence of verses in the *Padhāna Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*:

"Sensual pleasures (*kāmā*) are your first army; the second is called discontent (*arati*)..." and so on. Sensual pleasures are the first army. The second army is called discontent (*arati*), which is non-delight in the monastic practices of the Dispensation. That is to say, *arati* means a lack of interest or aversion towards the spiritual practices of the Dispensation, towards wholesome qualities (*kusala dhamma*). "That too is your second army." Next, the third army is hunger and thirst (*khuppipāsā*). Neglecting spiritual work on the pretext of hunger and thirst. Next, craving (*taṇhā*) is the fourth army. The fifth army is sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*). The sixth army is fear (*bhiru*). The seventh army is doubt (*vicikicchā*), indecision. The eighth army is disparagement and obstinacy (*makkha-thambha*). Next, the ninth army is gain, honor, and renown (*lābha-sakkāra-siloka*), and whatever false fame or retinue one acquires—all that is the ninth army of Māra. The tenth army is self-exaltation and disparaging others (*attukkaṁsana-paravambhana*), that vice. These are the ten armies of Māra that the Buddha presented as the Māra of defilements (*kilesa-māra*). When analyzed further, the vast host of defilements belonging to this army is sometimes counted in the thousands. A massive army belongs to the army of Māra. It is against these defilements that we have to wage war.

What then must we fight with? Now, when talking about this battle, what weapon do we possess to fight these? There are thirty-seven weapons, known as the Thirty-Seven Factors of Awakening (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). Thus, organizing the army means lining up these Thirty-Seven Factors of Awakening. What are these thirty-seven? There are seven groups here. The army can be divided into seven battalions: the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), the Four Right Efforts (*sammappadhāna*), the Four Bases of Spiritual Power (*iddhipāda*), the Five Faculties (*indriya*), the Five Powers (*bala*), the Seven Factors of Awakening (*bojjhaṅgā*), and the Noble Eightfold Path. These seven are the battalions of the army. How then is this initiated? How is the army organized? How is the army led forward? To understand how the enemy army is broken and victory is achieved through the power called exertion (*parakkama*), one must put these Thirty-Seven Factors of Awakening into practice in one's own mind-stream. Roughly speaking, the yogic warrior receives basic training on the terrain of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), sometimes carrying a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) as a weapon. The four things belonging to the practice of that noble person on the terrain of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness are the Right Efforts (*sammappadhāna*)—the fourfold energy (*viriya*). You must have heard of this frequently.

If we explain just one in detail, the Buddha illustrates the side of energy (*viriya*) with a series of terms in this long phrase: "...for the non-arising of unarisen evil, unwholesome qualities, he generates desire (*chandaṁ janeti*), makes an effort (*vāyamati*), arouses energy (*viriyaṁ ārabhati*), exerts his mind (*cittaṁ paggaṇhāti*), and strives (*padahati*)." "Generates desire" means he rouses a keen interest. "Makes an effort" means he exerts himself. "Arouses energy" means he initiates energy. "Exerts his mind" means he positions his determination foremost. Finally, "strives" means he puts forth supreme effort, disregarding body and life, in the form of the ultimate struggle. How does this sequence of terms become fourfold? Consider it briefly: for the non-arising of unarisen unwholesome states, for the abandoning of arisen unwholesome states, for the arising of unarisen wholesome states, and for the maintenance, stabilization, and complete development of arisen wholesome states. This is what is called the fourfold Right Effort (*sammappadhāna*). Just these four.

From that very practice, the four qualities called the Bases of Spiritual Power (*iddhipāda*) emerge. What are the Bases of Spiritual Power? Desire (*chanda*), energy (*viriya*), mind (*citta*), and investigation (*vīmaṁsā*). As mentioned earlier, "one generates desire." Developing a keen interest or willingness is the first step in applying energy. Next, the effort and energy indicated by the two terms *vāyamati* and *viriyaṁ ārabhati*—that is the base of spiritual power of energy (*viriya*). The term *citta* relates to that determination—*cittaṁ paggaṇhāti*, strengthening the mind, the power of determination. Next, although investigation (*vīmaṁsā*) is not directly mentioned in the phrase, we can understand that as one systematically puts forth energy, an investigative intelligence regarding it arises, an understanding of how it should be done; *vīmaṁsā* is something related to wisdom (*paññā*). Now, depending on the strengths each individual brings from past saṁsāra, some attain Nibbāna——by making desire (*chanda*) their

primary vehicle, thinking, "If I develop the desire and willingness, I will definitely complete it." Another, through energy (*viriya*), thinks, "If I put my hand to a task, I will never abandon it," and rouses intense energy. Another, making mind (*citta*) foremost, thinks, "If I resolve, I will surely accomplish it." Yet another focuses on investigation (*vīmaṁsā*), wishing to investigate whether the result of this is true. These are the Bases of Spiritual Power (*iddhipāda*). Base of spiritual power does not mean flying through the air. You can understand that this is relevant to some extent even to worldly life for achieving success in any task. The four Bases of Spiritual Power—desire, energy, mind, and investigation—are necessary not only for supramundane Nibbāna but also for obtaining mundane direct-knowledges (*abhiññā*). Even if we do not speak of lesser achievements, you can assume they apply to them as well. These, then, are the Bases of Spiritual Power.

Next, as the practitioner carries this out, an understanding of five extraordinary faculties arises, replacing the five ordinary physical senses they had thus far. These are: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). These are listed as the faculties (*indriya*) in the Dhamma. It is not through the five physical senses that one realizes Nibbāna—. Not through those five, dear devotees, but by developing the faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—by developing these five spiritual faculties. Through their development. What does developing them mean? It does not mean keeping them idle; rather, one utilizes them as powers (*bala*) to repel that army of Māra. Some are repelled by the power of faith (*saddhā-bala*), others by the power of energy (*viriya-bala*), power of mindfulness (*sati-bala*), power of concentration (*samādhi-bala*), and power of wisdom (*paññā-bala*). These very five are shown as the Five Powers (*pañca balāni*) among the Thirty-Seven Factors of Awakening in the Dhamma. When these are lined up, they become the Five Powers.

Next, the "Seven" refers to the seven factors that help in awakening (*bodhi*), which are lined up towards the end. You must have heard of these: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), rapture (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Mindfulness (*sati*) is the foundation. When mindfulness is established foremost, the investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*)—the ability to identify wholesome and unwholesome states, the ability to deeply understand the meditation subject—emerges. Based on that, the energy (*viriya*) to abandon the unwholesome and cultivate the wholesome arises. Within that energy, the practitioner naturally experiences a certain spiritual, non-material rapture (*pīti*). This aids concentration. It is to the one who exerts energy that this extraordinary, spiritual rapture occurs. Next, calming down that rapture, one develops inner tranquility of body and mind (*passaddhi*) through that energy. Subsequently, concentration (*samādhi*) is raised from that. Following that, to protect and stabilize that concentration, equanimity (*upekkhā*) is developed. These seven, this sequence, is what is known as the Seven Factors of Awakening (*bojjhaṅgā*). This is second only to the Noble Eightfold Path. The Seven Factors of Awakening form such an important category of the Dhamma.

Now, the final exertion is carried out through the Noble Eightfold Path, which is presented as a single unit. The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*) is an integrated military organization. They are so interconnected that they cannot be separated from one another. Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) leads directly to Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), and accordingly Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) are wonderfully connected to one another. Thus, it is this integrated, final military organization, the invasion, and ultimately the exertion—the final step—that is taken by the Noble Eightfold Path. Having cultivated this Noble Eightfold Path at a certain mundane level, it is said that in the supramundane moment, all eight factors arise simultaneously in a single mind-state. The mind-state that arises then is extremely unique. It is not like taking each factor individually. When all eight come together as one, it is through that that one leaps from the mundane to the supramundane side. It is marvelous. This is a highly wondrous natural principle (*dhamma-tā*) that only a Buddha can bring to light. That Path-mind (*magga-citta*) is a concentration (*samādhi*) attained in an instant. The Dhamma states that there is no concentration equal to that concentration: *samādhinā tena samo na vijjati*. It is known as the "immediate concentration" (*ānantarika-samādhi*). Immediately following that concentration is the Fruit (*phala*). Path...

A special aspect relevant to that concentration-mind (*samādhi-citta*) is that during the Path-moment, these factors provide protection to one another. These are the three factors: Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), and Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*). The Buddha reveals a highly wondrous natural principle here. Right View becomes the forerunner; it goes in front. Right Effort pushes from behind, providing momentum and protection. Right Mindfulness stands close at hand, performing the service of attendance, supplying whatever is needed at that moment. To illustrate this with a simile—something frequently seen nowadays, which you will easily understand: how do high state officials travel? First, a security officer goes in front with all necessary equipment, clearing the way and showing the path. Next, a group follows behind. Another security battalion or individual, perhaps a bodyguard, follows behind for protection to ward off threats from the rear. Furthermore, other officers sometimes walk alongside the person for security. According to this simile, Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) goes in front in that supramundane moment. Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) pushes from behind. Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) performs the service of attendance close at hand.

In this way, that supramundane mind is something highly wondrous. The Noble Eightfold Path can be mundane and prepared (*saṅkhata*). Yet, through that mundane path, as the Buddha pointed out, in a highly marvelous manner, all eight factors are united in a single moment, and it is through that power that one leaps to the other side. This is the moment of leaping into Nibbāna——which is called the Unprepared (*asaṅkhata*). Thus, the military organization available to the practitioner, and the

methods of invasion and exertion through that military organization, have been brought to light by the Buddha through this Dhamma.

"Exert yourselves! Go forth! Engage in the Buddha's Dispensation! Destroy the army of Death!" This refers not only to those defilements; you must have also heard of the ten fetters (*saṁyojana*) by which we are bound to saṁsāra. Severing those fetters systematically through the Path-minds of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, one breaks through those bonds and advances to supramundane attainment, bringing an end to the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra to realize Arahantship, Nibbāna—. This is what the Buddha illustrated through this verse. If one dwells diligently in such a Dhamma, where "Dhamma-Vinaya" does not mean mere doctrine, but the discipline (*vinaya*) that is the practical application of the doctrine; the Buddha's Dispensation was known in ancient times by the name *Dhamma-Vinaya*. It is not a mere heap of books or theoretical learning (*pariyatti*). Within the term *Dhamma-Vinaya*, there is both the teaching (*dhamma*) and the discipline (*vinaya*). *Yo imasmiṁ dhammavinaye*—if anyone dwells diligently in this Dispensation of Dhamma-Vinaya, then what is the result? *Pahāya jāti saṁsāraṁ*—abandoning this saṁsāra of repeated birth (*jāti*), they make an end of suffering (*dukkha*). These two verses are indeed two highly majestic verses.

Just as these two verses preached in the Brahma-world by Venerable Abhibhū broadcasted throughout a thousandfold world system, even up to the present day, practicing monks conclude their chanting of the *Vatta Piritha* with these two verses. We can imagine how valuable these two verses are for developing one's energy (*viriya*). There is a valuable historical narrative revealing that these verses were used with great devotion even in ancient Sri Lanka. Some of you might have heard the story of Venerable Milakkhatissa. For those of you who like to listen to stories, here is a good opportunity. The story goes like this:

In ancient Sri Lanka, near a village where the monks of the Gāminda vāla monastery in the Ruhuna province went for alms-round, there lived a hunter from a hunter family—those who kill animals are called hunters. After reaching youth, this hunter married and supported his wife and children by setting hundreds of traps, killing the animals caught in them, eating some, and selling the rest. One day, leaving his home, he took fire and salt with him. Among the animals caught in the traps overnight, there was a deer. He killed the deer, butchered it, roasted it, and ate it. When he had finished eating, a highly strange, intense thirst arose in him. To quench this thirst, he entered the Gāminda vāla monastery and went to the shed where the water pots were kept. Although the water pots were full of water, due to this man's unwholesome, sinful karma, the water pots appeared empty to him. Thereupon, he began to criticize: "In a place where so many monks reside, there is not even a drop of water to drink!"

Hearing the man shouting, Venerable Cūla Piṇḍapātika Tissa, who was in the monastery, came out and saw that the pots were indeed full of water. Wondering what was wrong with this man, the Elder realized: "This man has become a living hungry ghost (*peta*) right now, which is why he cannot see the water." Out of compassion, the Elder lifted a

water pot and poured water into the hunter's hands. The hunter drank as much as ten pots of water, but the water he drank was like water poured onto a red-hot iron pan; his thirst was not quenched even after drinking all of that. Thereupon, the Elder said, "Understand, lay devotee, how severe your karma is. You have become a living hungry ghost (*peta*). What kind of retribution will you receive in hell?" Hearing this, a great spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) arose in the hunter. Immediately, he dismantled the traps he had set, ran back home, released the captive animals at home into the forest, explained the situation to his wife and children, destroyed his weapons, and returned to request ordination from the Elder.

Then this Elder said, "Lay devotee, ordination is very difficult. How can I ordain you?" He replied, "Having witnessed such a direct, tangible proof, how can I *not* ordain?" When he expressed his strong desire for ordination, the Elder ordained him and gave him the meditation subject of the skin-pentad (*taca-pañcaka kammaṭṭhāna*). From that day on, he was known as Venerable Milakkhatissa. *Milakkha*, dear devotees, means barbarian (*mleccha*). You know the word *mleccha*. There is no need for another word for *mleccha*. A despicable man who kills animals is a barbarian. You are familiar with the name Aṅgulimāla; for some reason, no other monk who was ordained was ever given the name Aṅgulimāla besides Venerable Aṅgulimāla himself. Even though it was not given to others, his character stands out particularly due to that power and diligence (*appamāda*) spoken of by the Buddha. The name Milakkhatissa is just like that. Venerable Milakkhatissa's character became so noble because of that kind of background. Let us relate what followed his ordination. Having been ordained, how did he spend his life compared to before, when he had spent day and night setting traps, killing the animals caught in them, exerting immense energy just to support his wife and children as his livelihood?

Next, what did Venerable Milakkhatissa do? Applying that same energy (*viriya*), he began to energetically perform monastic duties at the shrines and the services for the Sangha during the rains-retreat. While practicing meditation, he performed these duties. He also learned the word of the Buddha from that Elder. On one such occasion when he was learning, Venerable Piṇḍapātika Tissa explained the *Devadūta Sutta*. According to the *Devadūta Sutta*, the Buddha has declared that the wardens of hell inflict unimaginable, extremely severe tortures and punishments on a sinner who falls into hell, and then cast him into the great hell. As soon as he heard this, Venerable Milakkhatissa asked, "Venerable Sir, is this not a highly strange thing? After undergoing so much torture, the person is cast again into the great hell. What kind of suffering (*dukkha*) must there be in the great hell?" "Indeed, the great hell is a highly terrifying place." "Can we see it?" he asked.

"You cannot see it directly, but I can demonstrate something similar," the Elder replied. He instructed Venerable Milakkhatissa to ask the novice monks to pile some green firewood on top of a rock. Venerable Milakkhatissa, together with the novices, gathered a pile of green firewood on top of a rock. Thereupon, the Elder entered into concentration (*samādhi*) and, through psychic power, brought a tiny spark from the Avīci great hell—

the text says it was as small as a firefly—and dropped it onto the pile of firewood while the monks watched. Instantly, all the green firewood was reduced to ashes. From this, he understood the terrifying nature of hell.

Next, Venerable Milakkhatissa asked, "Is there only the reading of books in this Dispensation?" The Elder explained—though at that time there was a convention of classifying them as the duty of meditation (*vipassanā-dhura*) and the duty of texts (*gantha-dhura*), though it was not an absolute division. Then, he said to the Elder: "I was ordained out of faith. I want to realize Nibbāna——quickly. Please give me a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*)." Thereupon, the Elder considered and gave him a meditation subject in a way that utilized the physical energy (*viriya*) he had been accustomed to practicing. He gave Venerable Milakkhatissa a certain meditation subject that allowed him to practice insight meditation (*vipassanā*) while performing his monastic duties at the temple.

Then, Venerable Milakkhatissa practiced in a highly marvelous manner, staying awake through the night. The historical accounts of that time record the places associated with Venerable Milakkhatissa. As we see from the texts, the Gāminda vāla monastery was located between Sithulpawwa and Kataragama. Thus, on some days, Venerable Milakkhatissa would perform duties at the shrine room and for the Sangha at Sithulpawwa. On other days, he would perform duties at the Gāminda vāla monastery, staying awake through the night. On some days, at the Kiri Vehera in Kataragama. In this manner, keeping awake through the night at all three locations, when drowsiness overcame him, what did he do? He would wet a straw ring, place it on his head, and place his feet in water. While cultivating energy (*viriya*) in this manner, it is recorded that on one occasion at Sithulpawwa, having practiced thus through two watches of the night, intense drowsiness came upon him towards dawn. While Venerable Milakkhatissa was sitting with the wet straw ring on his head, he heard a novice monk reciting those two verses: *Ārabhatha*, etc. Hearing these verses, Venerable Milakkhatissa reflected: "This discourse was preached for me, for a monk of initiated energy (*ārabdha-viriya*) like me!" Generating joy through that, and attaining absorptions (*jhāna*), it is said that he attained the fruit of Non-returning (*anāgāmī-phala*) at that very moment. Subsequently, by cultivating even more energy, it is recorded in the texts that he attained Arahantship.

That this story was present not only in recent literature but also in the ancient Sihala commentaries (*Sīhala-aṭṭhakathā*) is demonstrated by the verse of solemn utterance (*udāna-gāthā*) he proclaimed after attaining Arahantship and realizing the path-fruits: "With a straw ring on my head, I walked up and down. Now I have no doubt whatsoever; I have realized the fruits of the path." Thus, through the biography of Venerable Milakkhatissa, we can understand that his life was intimately connected to those two verses. He had put forth such great energy even without knowing those verses. After hearing the two verses, he thought, "This teaching was indeed preached for me." Through that rapture, he attained the path-fruits.

Let us now contemplate the present day. The Buddha delivered the first Dhamma sermon through the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. We mentioned that the Wheel of

Dhamma was set in motion. But in the end, what remains of that turning Wheel of Dhamma now? Only the symbol of the Wheel of Dhamma. Why is that? Because today, Nibbāna——has been declared obsolete. Nibbāna is considered impossible in this era. Now, only the symbol of the Wheel of Dhamma is left for us. "There is no use in putting forth energy; it is enough to do some minor wholesome deed to accumulate perfections (*pāramīs*) in this day and age." This is the common talk. Thus, the biographies of Venerable Milakkhatissa, Venerable Soṇa, and other Elders who cultivated such energy are viewed merely as ancient legends; they are not considered relevant to this day and age. Such a view is widely held.

We must reflect wisely on the rains-retreat (*vassa*), which was a highly special period even during the Buddha's time. In the Buddha's day, even the monks residing in various cities would seek out remote villages when the rains-retreat drew near. On their way, devout lay disciples would offer them alms-food and ask, "Venerable Sirs, where are you traveling?" "To a suitable place." "Then, there are suitable forest tracts and quiet places here. We shall support you with the four requisites. Please reside here." Thus, the monks spent their rains-retreat in those places not with material motivations in mind. Not with material targets, but with spiritual, non-material targets—with Nibbāna——foremost. Because of that noble target, while they lived devoted to meditation, some of the lay devotees who came to know of it, even those who had not known the Dhamma previously, followed their path. Having done so, they too made significant progress on the path to Nibbāna, as you must have heard, as illustrated by the story of Mātika's Mother (*Mātikamātā*). At this moment, even if you would like to hear it, I cannot repeat that story. We have preached it on previous occasions. Mātika's Mother is a highly famous and noble character among lay women.

While serving those monks, the laywoman Mātika's Mother developed absorptions (*jhāna*), path-fruits (*magga-phala*), direct-knowledges (*abhiññā*), and all other achievements, becoming a Non-returner (*anāgāmī*). From this, we can see that lay devotees in the past, taking the spiritual determination and spiritual goal of the monks as their model, also walked the path to Nibbāna by utilizing that opportunity. Therefore, that is the highest meritorious deed of the rains-retreat. But that rains-retreat merit may not be considered suitable for this day and age if Nibbāna is declared obsolete. Therefore, we must reflect that the Dhamma presented by the Buddha, the Wheel of Dhamma, is indeed something that must be turned within one's own mind-stream. Conquering the army of Māra is not something the Buddha completed on our behalf. The Buddha has conquered Māra. "So now we only have to enjoy Nibbāna, which will come to us automatically"—some think in this way. It is not so. That army of Māra is the very army of Māra residing within ourselves. For that, the essential elements required for the battle within you are the element of initiative (*ārambha-dhātu*), the element of launching (*nikkama-dhātu*), and the element of exertion (*parakkama-dhātu*). Furthermore, the Buddha has shown how to organize the army through the Thirty-Seven Factors of Awakening. Not only the Elders of the past who experienced this, but even barbarian (*mleccha*) hunters, as mentioned, attained world-renowned nobility.

If we contemplate accordingly, just like that Wheel of Dhamma, the inner strength within us—the spiritual strength—gradually declines when we degenerate in virtue. A sign of this spiritual decline is the emergence of a cult of devotion (*bhaktivāda*) in place of the system of energy (*vīriyavāda*), looking to achieve this through someone else's help. But this Dhamma cannot be practiced in that way. The Buddha has declared:

Tumhehi kiccaṁ ātappaṁ,

akkhātāro tathāgatā;

Paṭipannā pamokkhanti,

jhāyino mārabandhanā.

"You yourselves must make the effort; the Tathāgatas are only teachers. Those who enter the path and practice meditation (*jhāyino*) are freed from the fetter of Māra."

Thus, according to that word of the Buddha, and also diligence—*appamatto na vihessati* (he who is diligent will not suffer). This word "diligence" (*appamāda*) is the very alphabet of this Dispensation.

You have heard of: *Appamādo amatapadaṁ* (Diligence is the path to the Deathless). You also hear and know that this path to the Deathless is now being interpreted in various other ways:

Appamādo amatapadaṁ,

pamādo maccuno padaṁ;

Appamattā na mīyanti,

ye pamattā yathā matā.

To help you remember, we have translated this intoEnglish:

Diligence is the path to the Deathless;

negligence is the path of Death.

The diligent do not die;

the negligent are as if already dead.

This indeed is the word of the Buddha.

Next, regarding the Buddha's Dispensation, the Buddha himself has proclaimed it. On many occasions, the Buddha highlights the concept of the "opportunity of the moment" (*khaṇa-sampatti*). There is a general concept among worldly people: *khaṇakicco loko,*

khaṇakicco loko—"the world is busy with the moment." The world operates on time. Not only today or yesterday, not only in this era of clocks, but even in those days, the world was a place that worked on time. But although the world speaks of the moment, they do not recognize the true moment. Although they say that the world functions in the instant (*khaṇa*), they do not know what the instant actually is. Therefore, the Buddha goes on to define the "moment." The eight unfortunate opportunities (*attha akkhana*) are the unsuitable states of existence in which a human being can be born. Although I do not explain them in detail—occasions when a Buddha does not arise, or even if he arises, one is unable to hear the Dhamma or practice accordingly—you must have heard of them. The Buddha points out that the most precious moment we have now is the one free from those eight unfortunate opportunities. There is only one such moment: the period when a Buddha has arisen and the Dhamma is present.

If one does not take advantage of that moment while the Dhamma exists, then: *Khaṇātītā hi socanti, nirayamhi samappitā*—"Those who miss the moment will sorrow when they are consigned to hell." If that moment is missed, one has to go to hell and undergo suffering (*dukkha*). If Venerable Milakkhatissa had missed that moment, how much hellish suffering (*dukkha*) would he have had to undergo? Moreover, it was not only from hell that he was liberated, but from the entire suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra, of repeated birth (*jāti*). With that energy (*viriya*), what do we do today by putting wet straw rings on our heads and placing our feet in buckets of water? We do it merely to pass mundane exams. One cannot escape from saṁsāra by passing mundane exams. But if we apply that very energy towards escaping from saṁsāra, the character of Milakkhatissa is a wonderful invitation and model. There is a certain energy (*viriya*) within us. If we direct it correctly to this side, with right understanding and right view, we can succeed. The Buddha declared that as long as the Thirty-Seven Factors of Awakening are practiced, the world will not be empty of Arahants. "Being practiced" does not mean being in books. It is not about being in books; it is about putting them into practice, living in accordance with them. At the time of his Parinibbāna, the Buddha summarized the entire True Dhamma, saying: "The teachings I have preached during these forty-five years are indeed these thirty-seven."

Therefore, we must contemplate that we should not merely remain cozy within theoretical learning (*pariyatti*). Once we have gained understanding through it, along with a clear comprehension of how it should be put into practice, we must translate it into practice (*paṭipatti*). It is through realization (*paṭivedha*), the understanding of the path-fruits, that we can make an end of the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra. If that moment is missed, the Buddha concludes that series of verses with a simile drawn from society: just as a merchant who misses an opportunity to buy goods cheaply laments, "Ah! The time has passed!" after the opportunity is gone, so too will it be for one who, having been born during the appearance of a Buddha, fails to solve the problem of their journey in saṁsāra.

That is why the Buddha declares: *Khaṇātītā hi socanti* (Those who miss the moment will sorrow). Based on this, the Buddha has set forth the motto: *Khaṇo ve mā upaccagā*—

"Let not the precious moment pass you by!" Guided by this motto, the monks of the past entered the rains-retreat. Upon concluding the rains-retreat, many of them, having spent those three or sometimes four months, would bring to the Buddha their final offering, which is called the declaration of Arahantship (*aññā-paṭivedha*). They would declare, either directly or indirectly, that they had attained Arahantship. They would report to the Buddha the realization they had achieved during that period of quietude. The Buddha would express approval by saying, "Sādhu!" Other monks, at the end of the rains-retreat, would travel in search of the Buddha. Such accounts are found in the Dhamma. The Buddha would wait for them to arrive. Sometimes, based on various things they witnessed along the way, once the Buddha purified their meditation subjects, they would immediately attain Arahantship.

Thus, these were not accidental events. The precise manner in which they cultivated that energy (*viriya*) is not explained everywhere in the Dhamma books. It is simply recorded that a banker's son or a prince was ordained, went to the forest, and shortly thereafter returned as an Arahant—that is all we are given to know. How they lived in the forest, what they did, and how they conquered is often not explained. However, that details are precisely what is contained within the Thirty-Seven Factors of Awakening. During that quietude, they aroused spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) and used it to propel their monastic journey towards Nibbāna—. Spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) is, so to speak, the fuel and the velocity. The eight bases of spiritual urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*) are listed as: birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), disease (*vyādhi*), death (*maraṇa*), the suffering experienced in past saṁsāra, the suffering to be experienced in the future if one continues to remain in it, and the toil of seeking food and livelihood even in this present life. We utilize all of these as bases of spiritual urgency. Throughout this long saṁsāra, not only we but even an animal undergoes immense suffering (*dukkha*) just to survive for a single day to feed itself.

can escape from this has been revealed only by a Buddha. "Obstructed by the hindrance of ignorance (*avijjā-nīvaraṇa*) and fettered by the bond of craving (*taṇhā-saṁyojana*), monks, you and I have traveled for a long time, for an incalculable number of eons." The similes mentioned in the *Anamatagga Sutta* and other discourses are actually not mere figures of speech. The Buddha often remarked that it is impossible even to give a simile. When he said a simile is impossible, he offered these descriptions merely as a way to help us conceive of it slightly—descriptions of the suffering (*dukkha*) humans have undergone during a single eon, which you might have heard of from the *Anamatagga Sutta*. On one occasion, pointing to Mount Vepulla, the Buddha said to the monks: "Monks, if the skeleton of a single person during a single eon were accumulated, and if that pile of bones were not to decay, it would be larger than this Mount Vepulla." On other occasions in the *Anamatagga* discourses, as we have reminded you many times, the Buddha declared that if the blood shed by a single person—even this very individual we call a human being—when they were born in past saṁsāra as a pig, a goat, a chicken, or a buffalo and had their throat cut, were collected, it would be greater than the water in the four great oceans. And it is said that this is not even a mere exaggeration.

Similarly, the blood shed due to the torture inflicted when one was falsely accused by kings or caught as a thief in saṁsāra is said to be of that magnitude. Furthermore, on the other hand, if the tears shed over those regarded as beloved in each lifetime—relatives, parents, daughters, sons, and spouses—were gathered, the tears shed by a single person would exceed the waters of the four great oceans. From this, we can imagine how incredibly long this time has been.

That is why it is declared: *Kici karahaci loke uppajjanti tathāgatā*—"Rarely, at times, do Tathāgatas arise in the world." There are some eons in which no Buddha arises at all, which are called "eons empty of Buddhas" (*buddha-suñña kappa*). Thus, when reflecting on such vast stretches of time, we have been wandering in this long saṁsāra, taking birth in various states of existence over a period so immense that modern science cannot even conceive of it. During those wanderings, not only were we unable to hear such a Dhamma, but we also lacked the capacity, the intellectual power, and the understanding to practice accordingly. In the human state of existence, a human being is endowed with this capacity. Additionally, the rare opportunity of the arising of a Buddha, the chance to hear the Dhamma, and the inner capacity to put that Dhamma into practice are present. Therefore, if such an opportunity is missed, one will have to grieve just like the merchant who, as the Buddha described, failed to purchase goods when they were cheap. This is why the Buddha instructed us to constantly reflect on the bases of spiritual urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*).

The Buddha has described this place called "the world" as indeed the very kingdom of Māra. The kingdom of Māra means invitations to defilements (*kilesas*) from every side. However, through the Dhamma brought to light by the Buddha, we must understand what ought to be done. It is that path which the Buddha has illustrated through the Factors of Awakening (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) and other teachings. Reflecting on these during a rains-retreat like this, regardless of the various opinions prevalent in the country, one must contemplate: instead of thinking "it is impossible in this rare opportunity," one should arouse the perception of possibility and, at one's own level, strengthen one's mind to further develop whatever meditation one has practiced so far, especially during this rains-retreat. By practicing these meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*), powers of which one was previously unaware might emerge from within, just as they did in Mātika's Mother. It is through that energy (*viriya*) that they emerge. Like embers beneath ashes, some individuals possess latent power. But many do not step forward to bring it out. For that, one must make an initiative (*ārambha*).

It is not a matter of merely learning the word of the Buddha. For a long time, you have gone forth from the home life, from your households, generating a certain degree of the power of renunciation (*nekkhamma-sakti*), and have engaged in this listening to Dhamma and meditation through the undertaking of virtue (*sīla*). Furthermore, utilizing that virtue, if on some occasion you remove the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and concentrate the mind, it is at that very moment that you can enter the path of insight (*vipassanā*). Then, the true nature of this world, which the Buddha brings to light as the Three Characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*), is contained within these three words: impermanent

(*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). Regarding this impermanence, the world possesses the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). Worldly beings live within four perversions (*vipallāsa*), which are distorted views: regarding the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, the unbeautiful (*asubha*) as beautiful, the painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant, and what is not-self (*anattā*) as self. The world looks through this distorted lens. However, the Buddhist practitioner, relying on the word of the Buddha, endeavors to bring to light the true nature of the world—knowledge and vision of things as they really are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*). While constantly cultivating concentration and so forth, one can look at the world from that perspective. One should not think in the way some worldly intellectuals do. One must align one's thinking with the Three Characteristics brought to light by the Buddha. This is what is called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)—contemplating with wisdom.

In this Dhamma, two factors are listed as helpful for the arising of Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*): the voice of another (*paratoghosa*) and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). "The voice of another," dear devotees, means we must hear the Dhamma from someone else; we do not know it on our own. Whether from the Buddha or a disciple, or not only from spoken words but also from written texts, we must learn the Buddha's Dhamma. Having learned it, we must also know how to apply wise attention correctly and systematically. Even here, some make a mistake, applying unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) instead of wise attention. Due to various forms of conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and so forth, this era is one where even the word of the Buddha is distorted. You know this; these are open secrets. In an era where the Dhamma is distorted due to various reasons, reflecting beforehand and bringing to light wise attention is not an easy task either.

Identifying correctly those perversions (*vipallāsa*) brought to light by the Buddha, we must train ourselves to look at the world in an undistorted way. Meditation subjects are everywhere in the world. In the ancient Dhamma accounts, it is said that some monks attained Arahantship upon witnessing a forest fire. Other nuns attained it upon seeing water flowing, or seeing leaves falling. These did not happen by accident. To a meditative mind, when a practitioner who has cultivated insight (*vipassanā*) is presented with an illustration in a specific situation, they see the truth through it. That is how path-fruits are realized. They are not obtained for nothing. Therefore, whether we are lay or ordained, we must constantly train ourselves to look at the world from that perspective. If we train ourselves to look at the world according to the Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) brought to light by the Buddha, that is what is called insight (*vipassanā*). If we train ourselves to look with insight, with the eye of insight, then when all those virtues emerge and coalesce, the Noble Eightfold Path becomes active within one's mind-stream, arising in a single mind-moment. It is then that the Path-mind (*magga-citta*) arises.

"I am now a devotee who keeps the five precepts. The Buddha has said that a Stream-enterer possesses the five precepts. Since I keep the five precepts perfectly, I too must be a Stream-enterer"—there are some who grade themselves in this manner. But the Buddha has illustrated the greatness of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*) by taking a pinch of soil on his fingernail and asking: "Is the soil on the fingernail greater, or the soil of the entire

earth?" Through this simile, he shows that for a Stream-enterer, an immense amount of the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra has been dismantled. This does not happen automatically through the mere keeping of the five precepts. It occurs through a massive inner transformation. Even though it occurs in a brief instant, through a massive transformation, one attains that supramundane mind. Releasing the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandhā*) even for a single moment, and understanding and directly realizing the deep principle of dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) through that, one becomes a Stream-enterer. Even the term *sotāpanna*—"Stream-enterer"—is misunderstood by some who confuse it with a story about the ear. "Stream-enterer" means that just as a log of wood thrown into a river flows directly to the ocean, once one enters that stream of Dhamma (*dhamma-sota*), they are guaranteed to realize Arahantship within at most seven births. This occurs through that very realization of the Dhamma.

The direct realization obtained primarily through vision—the direct realization, albeit brief and instantaneous, regarding the true nature of the world—gradually operates within that individual, whether lay or ordained, breaking the potential for rebirth (*jāti*) in saṁsāra. Breaking it continuously as they walk that path diligently, they subsequently realize the path-fruits of Once-returning (*sakadāgāmī*), Non-returning (*anāgāmī*), and Arahantship. This is a unique internal shift, not a Stream-entry that occurs merely because the five precepts are kept. We must reflect on this wisely. There are methods in the world that treat these achievements lightly, promising to deliver them in a day or two. But if we reflect wisely, the truth is that although it occurs in an instant, it happens through that very natural principle (*dhamma-tā*). A Stream-enterer can be an extremely poor person, an uneducated person, or someone without any degrees. Yet, the Buddha describes such a person with a multitude of terms: *diṭṭhadhammo* (one who has seen the Dhamma), *pattadhammo* (one who has reached the Dhamma), *viditadhammo* (one who has known the Dhamma), *pariyogāḷhadhammo* (one who has plunged into the Dhamma), *tiṇṇavicikiccho* (one who has crossed over doubt), *vigatakathaṅkatho* (one who is free from wavering), *vesārajjappatto* (one who has attained courage). Through these various terms, he indicates that they have seen the Dhamma, reached the Dhamma, plunged into the Dhamma, and attained courage. This means that they have directly realized that Dhamma of dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) in their own mind-stream in that very instant. It is by virtue of that power that they do not go beyond at most seven more births.

Proceeding with a clear understanding of these matters is the path; if one assumes it can be done easily, abandoning meditation and thinking this is attained merely by listening to a few discourses, it is a delusion. Avoiding such pitfalls, you must walk the right path, developing virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Bringing to light within yourselves those noble elements declared by the Buddha—the element of initiative (*ārambha-dhātu*), the element of launching (*nikkama-dhātu*), and the element of exertion (*parakkama-dhātu*)—and walking that path of energy trodden by Venerable Aṅgulimāla in the past and Venerable Milakkhatissa in more recent times, you should make an end of the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra. This is what is being declared here.

Thus, what is important here is the battle cry, the war song that aids this—the true war song of Buddhists. For the Buddha has declared:

Yo sahassaṁ sahassena,

saṅgaame maanuse jine;

Ekañca jeyyamattānaṁ,

sa ve saṅgāmajuttamo.

"Though one should conquer a million men in battle, yet he indeed is the noblest victor who conquers himself."

Remembering this, recognizing these principles, bringing to light that very power within yourselves, organizing that army called the Thirty-Seven Factors of Awakening shown by the Buddha, and launching the invasion with that military organization, you must endeavor to achieve that supreme exertion.

On a valuable day like today, you have undertaken virtue (*sīla*) and must have practiced meditation. At this moment, you have had the opportunity to listen to a Dhamma discourse that supports your meditation and aids in bringing an end to the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra. By putting it into practice, may the wholesome power of this merit be a supportive condition for all of you to realize the path-fruits starting from Stream-entry, to bring an end to the terrifying suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra as quickly as possible in this very life, and to arrive at the supreme, deathless Nibbāna—. From the Avīci hell to the Akanissa heaven, if there are any beings who wish to rejoice in the merit of this preaching and listening to the Dhamma, may they, by so rejoicing, find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the Awakening they aspire to. With this aspiration, recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #84

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.164)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Abhiññeyyaṃ abhiññātaṃ, bhāvetabbañca bhāvitaṃ,

pahātabbaṃ pahīnaṃ me, tasmā buddhosmi brāhmaṇa;

Vineyya mayi kaṅkhaṃ, adhimuccassu brāhmaṇa,

dullabhaṃ dassanaṃ hoti, sambuddhānaṃ abhiṇhaso;

Yesaṃ ve dullabho loke, pātubhāvo abhiṇhaso,

sohaṃ brāhmaṇa sambuddho, sallakatto anuttaroti.

From:

Sela Sutta (Majjhima Nikāya 92), Sutta Nipāta (Sn 3.7)

Dear Listeners,

The news that a Buddha had appeared in the world spread throughout ancient Jambudīpa (India) primarily through the recital of the formula of the nine virtues of the Buddha, beginning with *Arahaṃ*. In an era when there were no diverse or colorful communication media like today, the formula of the nine virtues alone was often sufficient for the news of a Buddha's arising to spread. Furthermore, Buddhist literature makes it clear to us that even a single word among those nine virtues was sometimes capable of causing a massive psychological revolution in a person. The *Sela Sutta*, which is found in both the *Majjhima Nikāya* and the *Sutta Nipāta*, is excellent proof of this.

It is three verses from that *Sela Sutta* that we have chosen as our theme today. On one occasion, the Blessed One, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, accompanied by a large retinue of about one thousand two hundred and fifty monks, was wandering on a Dhamma tour in the region of Aṅguttarāpa in India, and arrived at the market town named Āpana. The matted-hair ascetic (*jaṭila*) named Keṇiya, who lived in that market

town of Āpana, heard: "The ascetic Gotama has arrived in our village." A glorious report concerning him had spread in this manner: "*Itipi so Bhagavā Arahaṃ Sammāsambuddho Vijjācaraṇasampanno Sugato Lokavidū Anuttaro Purisadammasārathi Satthā devamanussānaṃ Buddho Bhagavā*" (Thus indeed is the Blessed One: Worthy, Fully Enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, the Awakened One, the Blessed One). Moreover, having realized this world with its gods and Maras through his own higher knowledge, he makes it known to the world. He teaches the Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end. He proclaims a perfectly pure holy life. Having heard this news, Keṇiya the matted-hair ascetic thought, "Indeed, even the mere sight of such worthy ones is a good thing," and went to see the Buddha.

Having gone there, Keṇiya the *jaṭila* exchanged friendly greetings with the Buddha and sat down on one side, after which the Buddha gladdened him with a Dhamma talk. Although at that moment he did not yet possess enough faith to take refuge in the Triple Gem, Keṇiya the *jaṭila* invited the Sangha headed by the Buddha, saying: "O Ascetic Gotama, please accept tomorrow's meal at my hermitage together with the Sangha." Then the Buddha said: "Keṇiya, this assembly of monks is very large. Furthermore, you are one who is well-pleased with the brahmins." Even though the Buddha said this, Keṇiya insisted a second time: "The assembly of monks is indeed large, O Ascetic Gotama, and it is also true that I have faith in the brahmins. Nevertheless, I invite the Venerable Gotama and the Sangha." Once again, the Buddha reminded him: "This assembly of monks is large, and you have faith in the brahmins." Yet, when Keṇiya the *jaṭila* extended the invitation for the third time, the Buddha accepted the invitation in silence.

Understanding this, Keṇiya the *jaṭila* went back to his hermitage and said to his relatives, friends, and associates: "I have invited the Ascetic Gotama along with the Sangha for tomorrow's sacrifice here. Therefore, please perform whatever physical services you can for this endeavor." Those relatives, friends, and associates gathered together; some set up stoves, others chopped firewood. Some prepared water vessels, others washed dishes, and some prepared seats. Keṇiya the *jaṭila* himself was busy preparing the large hall of his hermitage.

At that time, there lived in Āpana a brahmin named Sela, who had reached the further shore of the Three Vedas, and was teaching mantras to about three hundred young brahmin pupils. It is mentioned regarding this brahmin that he was accomplished not only in the Three Vedas but also in history, poetics, prosody, as well as the science of body characteristics known as the marks of a Great Man (*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*). This Brahmin Sela was a close friend of Keṇiya the *jaṭila*. Keṇiya also had great confidence in Brahmin Sela. In the evening, Brahmin Sela, surrounded by his group of pupils, came to this hermitage to see Keṇiya the *jaṭila* as a form of light exercise.

Upon arrival, seeing some building stoves, others splitting firewood, and such a grand preparation underway, he asked Keṇiya: "What is this, Keṇiya? Is there a festival such as a marriage or a wedding feast? Or are you preparing for a great sacrifice? Or have you invited King Bimbisāra along with his army for tomorrow?" Then Keṇiya replied: "No, Sela, it is not a marriage celebration, nor have I invited King Bimbisāra. Rather, I have invited the Ascetic Gotama together with the Sangha for tomorrow." And concerning that Ascetic Gotama, such a report of fame has spread, and he recited the aforementioned passage, starting with *Itipi so Bhagavā*. When he said this, Brahmin Sela asked: "Did you say 'Buddha', Keṇiya?" Then Keṇiya the *jaṭila* replied: "Yes, I said 'Buddha'." A second time he asked: "Did you say 'Buddha', Keṇiya?" — "Yes, I said 'Buddha'." A third time he asked: "Did you say 'Buddha', Keṇiya?" — "Yes, indeed, I said 'Buddha'."

At that point, Brahmin Sela remarked: "Even the hearing of the word 'Buddha' is extremely rare." Then he thought, "In our mantras, it is mentioned concerning Buddhahood that if a person is born with the thirty-two marks of a Great Man, only two paths lie open to him in life. If he leads a household life, he becomes a Wheel-turning Monarch (Cakkavatti). If he goes forth from home into homelessness, he becomes a Fully Enlightened One (Sammāsambuddha)." Thinking thus, he next asked: "Where is the Venerable Gotama staying at this moment?" Then, pointing with his right hand, Keṇiya the *jaṭila* declared: "Over there, in the direction of that blue forest grove seen in the distance."

Next, Brahmin Sela went together with his group of disciples to see the Buddha. On the way, out of respect, he said to his pupils: "Walk quietly, step by step. These Fully Enlightened Ones are supreme like lions. Furthermore, do not interrupt while I am speaking." Thus, with a certain degree of faith, he went to meet the Buddha, sat down on one side, and exchanged friendly greetings.

Then, this Brahmin Sela looked closely for the marks of a Great Man on the Buddha's body. When certain doubts arose in him regarding this, it is mentioned that the Buddha, through his psychic powers, made even the hidden parts of his body visible. Once he was freed from doubt about them, Brahmin Sela wondered whether this was indeed a Buddha or someone who could attain the status of a Wheel-turning Monarch. Thereupon, Brahmin Sela thought, "We have heard from our teachers and teachers' teachers in our mantras that when Buddhas are praised in laudation, they reveal their true nature. Therefore, I should recite a series of verses to the Buddha by way of praise and extolling his virtues." Then, as mentioned in the suttas, a long series of verses follows: "There are such wondrous marks on your body. You are fit to be a king. You are worthy even of gaining sovereignty. Why lead this ascetic life, what use is it to you? You are worthy of attaining even the wheel-turning sovereignty of Jambudīpa" — in this manner, he praised him.

Then the Buddha declared: "Sela, I too am a king. I am the King of Dhamma (Dhammarājā). And I turn the Wheel of Dhamma solely through the Dhamma." In this way, he declared, "I am the King of Dhamma." Then Brahmin Sela asked: "Who is your general (*senāpati*)?" The Buddha declared: "Sāriputta is the one who turns after me the

Wheel of Dhamma that I have turned." Next, the Buddha uttered the three verses which we have placed as our theme, declaring his own Buddhahood:

Abhiññeyyaṃ abhiññātaṃ, bhāvetabbañca bhāvitaṃ,

Pahātabbaṃ pahīnaṃ me, tasmā buddhosmi brāhmaṇa.

"What is to be known by higher knowledge (*abhiññā*) has been known by me through higher knowledge. If there are things to be developed (*bhāvetabbaṃ*), they have been fully developed by me. What is to be abandoned (*pahātabbaṃ*), such as defilements, has been abandoned by me (*pahīnaṃ me*). *Tasmā buddhosmi brāhmaṇa* — therefore, O brahmin, I am a Buddha."

Then he declares: "Dispel your doubt in me, O brahmin (*vineyya mayi kaṅkhaṃ*); resolve with faith in me, O brahmin (*adhimuccassu brāhmaṇa*). Rare indeed is the sight of the Fully Enlightened Ones (*dullabhaṃ dassanaṃ hoti sambuddhānaṃ abhiṇhaso*)." Next he declares:

Yesaṃ ve dullabho loke, pātubhāvo abhiṇhaso,

Sohaṃ brāhmaṇa sambuddho, sallakatto anuttaro ti.

"I am such a fully enlightened Buddha, whose appearance in the world is extremely rare. I am an incomparable surgeon (*sallakatto anuttaro*)." After his Buddhahood was declared in this manner, Brahmin Sela developed great faith and, presenting further praises of the Buddha to his pupils in verse, said: "I am going to go forth as a monk under this Ascetic Gotama. I will live the holy life. Anyone who wishes to take the step I am taking may join me. Let the others leave." Thereupon, all three hundred disciples said to their teacher: "We too shall take the step that you are taking." Subsequently, the entire group requested the going forth (*pabbajjā*) and higher ordination (*upasampadā*) from the Buddha. It is then mentioned that the Buddha granted them all the going forth and higher ordination.

Now, we return to the hermitage of Keṇiya the *jaṭila*. After preparing everything there for the "sacrifice" (which was the term they used rather than "meal offering"), and when the preparations for the great sacrifice were complete, they sent a message to the Buddha. The Buddha arrived along with the Sangha, and after Keṇiya the *jaṭila* had respectfully served the Buddha with delicious food and other offerings, and the meal was finished, it is mentioned that the Buddha uttered two verses of appreciation (*anumodanā*). The meaning of those verses is nothing other than the Buddha expressing the pre-eminence of sacrifices in this way: "Among sacrifices, the fire sacrifice is foremost. Likewise, regarding the poetic meters in which the Vedic mantras are composed, for which the word *chandas* is used, the Sāvitrī meter is foremost among meters. Among humans, the king is foremost. For flowing rivers, the great ocean is foremost. For stars, the moon is foremost. For shining objects, the sun is foremost. Likewise, for those who sacrifice seeking merit, the Sangha is foremost." Having given this appreciation, the Buddha departed.

What is told next is that Brahmin Sela, along with his group, put forth strenuous and firm effort in meditation, and within seven days, the entire group attained Arahantship. Furthermore, with deep faith, that group along with the pupils went before the Buddha and, with several verses of praise, offered their gratitude to the Buddha. "The Blessed One is the Buddha who has defeated all Māras, destroyed defilements, and removed all acquisitions (*upadhi*)" — paying homage in praise, they finally said: "O Blessed One, please stretch out your feet so that we may worship them." With that, the account in the *Sela Sutta* comes to an end.

Next, what we have to examine is the importance of the formula of the nine virtues as mentioned earlier. You, virtuous devotees, can appreciate the value of this sutta. When Keṇiya the *jaṭila* made the invitation for the sacrifice, the Buddha remained impartial and declined three times. He gave Keṇiya the opportunity to change his mind. Yet, Keṇiya the *jaṭila*, with a certain faith, extended the invitation for that offering. Next, concerning Sela: even with such a large group of pupils, Brahmin Sela came and first developed faith in the Buddha based on his external bodily characteristics. Secondly, during the discussion that ensued, he recognized the Buddha and obtained that ordination.

If we direct our minds to the formula of the nine virtues of the Buddha mentioned earlier, all of you virtuous devotees are familiar with the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) as a meditation practice based on the nine virtues, starting with *Itipi so*... Although we say everyone knows it, even though they pronounce that formula in Pali, the meaning is not clear to some. That is natural for many people in this day and age who lack an understanding of the language.

Itipi so Bhagavā — "Thus indeed is the Blessed One." There, at the beginning, some word is necessary to refer to the Buddha. In those days, a word most commonly in usage was *Bhagavā*. Even today in India, many people say "Bhagavān Gotama Buddha" in that way; the word *Bhagavān* is the primary term, just like *Buddha*. That is why this word was used first to introduce the Buddha: *Itipi so Bhagavā* — "Thus indeed is that Blessed One." From there onwards we have: He is *Arahaṃ* (Worthy). We will explain each word simply hereafter. *Arahaṃ* (Worthy), *Sammāsambuddho* (Fully Enlightened), *Vijjācaraṇasampanno* (Perfect in True Knowledge and Conduct), *Sugato* (Sublime), *Lokavidū* (Knower of Worlds), *Anuttaro Purisadammasārathi* (Incomparable Leader of Persons to be Tamed), *Satthā devamanussānaṃ* (Teacher of Gods and Humans), *Buddho* (The Awakened One), *Bhagavā* (The Blessed One). It is only at the end that the term *Bhagavā* is mentioned as belonging to the nine virtues.

You, virtuous devotees, have studied these in various ways. The recollection of the Buddha is practiced in many different ways. We too have expressed some thoughts on this here on previous occasions. On this occasion, regarding its practical application as a formula of the nine virtues, we have previously shown a method that is truly simple and suitable for regular use. To state it now according to our understanding: certain meditation methods that existed simply during the Buddha's time became highly

complex in later times, and by the attempts of scholars to analyze them at an academic level, it appears that their practical value was lost.

Here, if we take the word *Arahaṃ* itself, if you ask many people today, they might not give the true meaning of the word *Arahaṃ* but tell you other things instead. They might say it means "because he does not commit sin even in secret." Or "because he has cut the spokes (*ara*) of the wheel of saṃsāra." Or "because he has destroyed the enemies (*arī*) which are the defilements." What has happened here? It appears that scholars have dissected the words this way and that, highlighting foreign meanings not relevant to the original sense of the word, and have assigned meditators to keep expounding on them at length. Frankly speaking, although the idea of "not committing sin even in secret" has been mentioned in various books for ages, it is actually a word that is almost like an insult to the Buddha. The meaning of the word *Arahaṃ* is "worthiness of receiving offerings." Being worthy of offerings is what is meant by *Arahaṃ* or *arahato*. One can understand that he is worthy of offerings due to those virtues. But what those scholars have done to the word *Arahaṃ* is to break it this way and that. Removing the letter 'a' (අ) and taking 'rahaṃ' (රහං), they dragged in a story about "secrets" (*rahas*). Taking the idea of the spokes of a wheel (*ara*) in the wheel of saṃsāra, they removed 'haṃ' and took 'ara'.

So, not only do those stories about spokes and secrets suppress the relevant meaning, but instead of keeping the mind established on the virtue of the Buddha, the mind runs after the etymologies and derivations of the word. The mind runs after unnecessary things. Just consider for a moment: you virtuous devotees know of the eight-faceted gem (octagonal gem). Looking at its faceted form, you can imagine it as an octagon. In such an eight-faceted gem, whichever of the eight sides you look at, you only see the gem. Similarly, if we think of the formula of the nine virtues as a nine-faceted gem, if it is a nine-faceted gem, whichever side we look at, we should be reminded of the Buddha. Instead, if our mind is dragged away to those unnecessary details, that is not suitable.

Another word that has been heavily dissected in this way is *Bhagavā*. Extremely strange meanings have been attributed to it. Scholars have presented these as the meditation on the virtues of the Buddha. This caused the practical values that existed during the Buddha's time to slip away. Only the scholars can understand it. Those who do not understand simply keep reciting the Pali words somehow. To one who understands, however, it is truly apparent that those stories about secrets are completely external to the word *Arahaṃ*. Therefore, one must consider that the word *Arahaṃ* is also mentioned in the phrase *Namo tassa bhagavato arahato*. There is no story about secrets there at all. It means the Blessed One, and then: "worthy of offerings" due to the greatness of his virtues. Thus we have: *Itipi so Bhagavā Arahaṃ*.

Next, *Sammā* (Perfect / Rightly); you virtuous devotees can also contemplate this. Added to the word *Buddha*, we get *Sambuddha* or *Sammāsambuddha*. If we take the comprehension implied by *Sammāsambuddha*, many people today use it to mean that he realized the truth by himself, perfectly through self-attained knowledge (*svayambhū-*

ñāṇa). To convey the idea that the Buddha realized it entirely from within himself, without any teacher's instruction, through his own higher knowledge, the term *Sammāsambuddho* is used. Next, the word *Sampanno* (endowed with) is also analyzed in various ways. Constantly analyzing these can be an obstacle to meditation. If we define it briefly, we can say that *Vijjā* (knowledge) and *Caraṇa* (conduct) represent two aspects of a person's life. We now have two eyes that can see. Even if our eyes can see, if we cannot walk—if we are lame—we cannot go on a journey. Even if we have two legs, if our eyes cannot see, we still cannot go on a journey. *Vijjā* refers to that understanding, which is like the two eyes. Next, *Caraṇa* refers to behavior in accordance with that understanding; virtues such as moral virtue (*sīla*). Through *Vijjā*, the accumulation of knowledge within a Buddha, such as insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) related to Buddhahood, is indicated. Next, *Caraṇa* refers to virtues such as moral virtue. Being complete in both of these is what is meant by *Vijjācaraṇasampanno*.

Thus, it is precisely due to being perfect in knowledge and conduct (*vijjācaraṇa-sampanna*) that he is called *Sugato* — meaning "well-gone." It is a very short word, but if we make it meaningful, we should think that because of being complete in both the aforementioned vision and conduct, he went to the very end of the path that had to be traveled. He went exceedingly well, hence *Sugato*. Because of that going, he is *Lokavidū* — meaning he realized all that should be known regarding the world, both internally and externally.

Thus, precisely because he has a clear understanding of everything internal and external, he is *Sugato Lokavidū Anuttaro Purisadammasārathi*. Regarding that taming, even in the pronunciation of the word *Purisadammasārathi*, it is not *Purisadhamma* but *Purisadamma*, with an unaspirated 'da'. Nowadays, there is no regard for unaspirated or aspirated letters; everything has become a tangled mess. *Purisadammasārathi* means being like a skilled charioteer in taming persons fit to be tamed. That is *Purisadammasārathi*. That is to say, because of the aforementioned virtue of *Lokavidū*, the inner potentials that a person has brought along through saṃsāra are visible to him. Furthermore, the exact moment, place, and manner in which that person should be tamed are all visible to the Buddha because of his quality of *Lokavidū*. He possesses that supreme ability to tame: *Anuttaro Purisadammasārathi*.

For this very reason, he is the teacher not only of humans but also of gods (*Satthā devamanussānaṃ*). You have heard of Baka Brahmā and others; similarly, it is often mentioned in the Dhamma that deities came and engaged in Dhamma discussions and asked questions of the Buddha, even though some people in this day and age do not believe these things. If we believe this passage, we must accept that the Buddha was a teacher not only to humans but also to gods — *Satthā devamanussānaṃ*. Next, at the end, it says *Buddho*. Here, in this sutta, the Buddha himself directly gives a definition, an introduction, for the word *Buddho*:

> *Abhiññeyyaṃ abhiññātaṃ, bhāvetabbañca bhāvitaṃ,*
>
> *Pahātabbaṃ pahīnaṃ me, tasmā buddhosmi brāhmaṇa.*

"Things to be known through higher knowledge have been known by me through higher knowledge. Next, the virtues to be developed for Buddhahood have been fully developed. The defilements and so forth to be abandoned have been abandoned. Because of this, I am a true Buddha." One can say he has awakened from the sleep of defilements, or that he has attained that full realization — *Buddho*.

Next, *Bhagavā*. The word *Bhagavā* carries the meaning of "fortunate" or "blessed," which is still commonly used today. Thus, that brahmin first looked at the blessed nature of the Buddha externally, such as the marks of a Great Man. Next, his internal virtues. The Buddha was fortunate from both sides — externally and internally. Due to training for a long time in saṃsāra, through his power of merit, and through the power of his perfections (*pāramī*), all the qualities gathered within a Buddha are, in short, encapsulated in the word *Bhagavā*, as if it were the sum total of the other eight virtues. Even today in India, many people refer to the Buddha as "Bhagavān," the Blessed One. Similarly, in the sutta discourses, the faithful devotees often refer to the Buddha not only as "Buddha, Bhagavā, the Buddha," but also as "the Blessed One" (Bhāgyavatun-vahanse). So that is regarding the nine virtues.

In addition, a unique phrase was mentioned in the verses uttered by the Buddha. Let us say something about that too: *Sallakatto anuttaro*. What does that mean? He says, "I am an incomparable surgeon." In this day and age, too, there are doctors who perform various kinds of heart surgeries, such as bypass surgeries. Yet, whatever they do, one cannot escape Death (Māra) thereby. Escaping from Māra—though everyone must die, those surgeons cannot cure this journey of being born and dying repeatedly over a long time in saṃsāra. But what did the Buddha do? The poison arrow, or the dart, of craving (*taṇhā*) is pierced in the heart. And the poison is the poison of ignorance (*avijjā*). The Buddha has analyzed it in various places in this way as *avijjā-visadoso* (the poison of ignorance). The dart of craving, dipped in the poison of ignorance, is pierced in the heart. It is because he pulled that out that he is called the incomparable surgeon: *Sallakatto anuttaro*. Anyone can develop faith even by reflecting on this. Thinking of it from another angle: as you virtuous devotees know, when an occasion arises to undergo heart surgery, and one's friends and relatives gather and ask where to get treatment, they say, "So-and-so is good, that doctor has such-and-such degrees." Saying so, they often choose the surgeon who possesses a series of qualifications that inspires confidence.

Now consider this: the removal of that dart of craving is not like a bypass surgery. The qualification list suitable for performing that surgery which completely liberates one from Māra is found within the formula of the nine virtues. *Arahaṃ*, *Sammāsambuddho*, *Sampanno* — we can think of these as the surgeon's qualifications. We can choose to look at it that way to inspire faith. In any case, why is the meditation on the virtues of the Buddha given a primary place among meditations? We must reflect on that too. One must walk this path of practice with faith (*saddhā*) in the forefront. Some people nowadays, those who call themselves "rationalists" or "intellectuals," seem to think that faith is unnecessary. They believe everything can be done through logic alone. But faith is absolutely essential to walk the path of practice shown by the Buddha. It is said,

Saddhāya tarati oghaṃ — "By faith one crosses the flood." To cross over this torrential flood, faith is necessary. Primarily, one must have faith in the Teacher. It was because of that faith, indeed, that Brahmin Sela, along with such a large group, abandoned all his Vedic mantras and went forth under the Buddha. Therefore, because developing faith in the Teacher is absolutely essential, the value of *buddhānussati* (recollection of the Buddha) meditation is shown in the sutta discourses. The Buddha himself points out on certain occasions that some beings, some humans, attain purification even through the recollection of the Buddha.

How this is shown is as follows: if a person establishes their mind on the virtues of the Buddha, through that constant establishment—at that moment, whether constantly keeping the mind on the entire formula of the nine virtues or on one of them—that person's mind does not go towards lust (*rāga*). It does not go towards hatred (*dosa*). It does not go towards delusion (*moha*). Likewise, it does not go towards things related to the five cords of sensual pleasure; it does not go into the mud-swamp. Therefore, at that moment, the mind is freed from those hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and draws close to concentration (*samādhi*). The Dhamma heard during such a concentrated state is understood insightfully, leading to the realization of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). Even now, many people raise this question: "How does someone realize the paths and fruits, such as Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), especially while listening to the Buddha's discourses?" At that time, it is because of that faith that the mind becomes unified. Otherwise, the mind gets scattered. Just like wondering, "Is this doctor really going to cure me?" as mentioned earlier, while listening to the Buddha's sermon, distorted streams of thought might run through one's mind, such as, "No, so-and-so over there said this, he is far more learned."

One who has faith in the Buddha listens to him at that moment, and as you virtuous devotees know, the way he presents the Dhamma is truly wondrous — he presents the Dhamma in a way that suits each individual and fits the occasion. Then, it strikes the faithful one directly. Right at that moment, their mind does not go to those defilements; it does not go to the hindrances. When the mind is pure and clear, the Dhamma points declared by the Buddha enter the heart; the Dhamma strikes the mind, and subsequently, one is able to attain direct realization through it. This is how the paths and fruits are realized. Therefore, we should understand the value of the recollection of the Buddha; the formula of the nine virtues is shown as a meditation precisely because it is absolutely essential for the practice.

In suttas like the *Caṅkī Sutta*, it is specifically mentioned concerning the Teacher:

> *Saddhā-jāto upasaṅkamati* — "One in whom faith has arisen approaches."
> *Upasaṅkamanto payirupāsati* — "Approaching, he associates closely."
> *Payirupāsanto sotaṃ odahati* — "Associating closely, he lends an ear."
> *Ohitasoto dhammaṃ suṇāti* — "Lending an ear, he hears the Dhamma."
> *Dhammaṃ dhāreti* — "He retains the Dhamma." Rather than just listening or recording it with machines, he personally retains it well within his heart.

> *Dhātānaṃ dhammānaṃ atthaṃ upaparikkhati* — "He examines the meaning of the retained teachings." He examines the Dhamma he has retained in terms of its meaning at that moment.

The intellectual capacity of some brahmins who had studied and retained the Vedas was extremely high and powerful. These capacities emerged at that moment through faith. When they examine the meaning (*atthaṃ upaparikkhati*), *chando jāyati* — next, when the meaning is understood correctly, a great desire (*chanda*), an eagerness, arises. It is because of faith indeed that a powerful eagerness called *chanda* arises. *Chandajāto ussahati* — "Filled with desire, he exerts effort." After that, he makes an effort and puts forth energy. *Ussahitvā tuleti* — "Exerting effort, he scrutinizes." Next, having scrutinized and balanced his mind, *tūlayitvā padahati* (scrutinizing, he strives), and only thereafter does he realize the ultimate truth (*paramattha-saccaṃ sacchikaroti*). In this way, through a gradual practice, the realization of the paths and fruits is obtained. Therefore, it is impossible without faith. Faith itself is fundamental.

So, through the recollection of the Buddha—and as you virtuous devotees have heard, also through the recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*), the recollection of the Sangha (*saṅghānussati*), and so forth—these too are shown as meditation practices. By constantly keeping the mind established on them, there is no room left for those hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). That is why we say that when speaking about meditation, the terms *āsevati* (associates with), *bhāveti* (develops), and *bahulīkaroti* (practices frequently) are often used. Not only with the recollection of the Buddha, but also in developing meditations like loving-kindness (*mettā*), one constantly associates with the meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*) or theme like a close friend — *āsevati*. Likewise, one develops it — *bhāveti*, developing it gradually to a level where one can say tomorrow is better than today. Next, one practices it frequently — *bahulīkaroti*. In practicing this, especially when practicing frequently, with a meditation like the recollection of the Buddha, some people are indeed capable of keeping their mind on the entire formula of the nine virtues. That too should not be done like a constant chanting that is heard from the inside out, but internally, if possible. But for one who does not have that much leisure, choosing one of them—a suitable one—and in making that choice, as we have shown on many occasions, one can choose one that suits that person's mind. According to one's temperament, among these virtues of the Buddha—the virtues we briefly expressed—some might prefer the virtue of *Sambuddha*, some might prefer the virtue of *Sugata*, and another might prefer the virtue of *Purisadammasārathi*. For whatever reason, even a single virtue that grasps one's mind is sufficient. By constantly keeping the mind established on it as a meditation in that manner, no room is left for other unwholesome states (*akusala*). That is how concentration (*samādhi*) is brought about through the recollection of the Buddha.

Likewise, the Buddha often points out the value of faith in that a great eagerness called *chanda*, and energy (*viriya*), must indeed be aroused; such is faith. So, if there is no faith in the Teacher, there is every possibility of falling into wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). Therefore, we must constantly remember that the recollection of the Buddha is shown as

an auxiliary meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*), especially to guard practices like mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). Look at people like Meghiya. Some have the desire to meditate, but they lack faith. Without faith, one cannot go far. One cannot go very far in this meditation. For, this path of practice is an extremely strenuous one. To guard virtues like moral virtue, one must develop faith in the Teacher. That faith eventually leads to realization at some point. Why do many people dislike faith? There is indeed one aspect where this is true; sometimes it is mentioned in the Dhamma: *Susaddahitaṃ pi hoti tañ ca hoti micchā* — "It may be well-believed, yet it may be false." There can be something in which one has deep faith, yet it is false. And some things in which one lacks faith might actually be true. However, in order to establish that faith correctly, one must examine that person properly.

Reflecting according to the mantras when it was said that a Buddha had arisen, Brahmin Sela first examined the Buddha according to his external physical marks. Thereafter, through that discussion, he became free of doubt concerning the Buddha. In that way, although we cannot see the Buddha now, if we see the Buddha through the Dhamma he taught, it is just like seeing the Buddha himself. For some people who have trained in these in saṃsāra, even a very short word like *Buddho* is sufficient to arouse faith in the Buddha. One must understand that this is the purpose of the recollection of the Buddha. It is not merely praising the Buddha. Nowadays, the meditation on the virtues of the Buddha has been transformed into gathering a long list of Pali words that one does not even understand, and reciting them like a rote chant. There is no mysterious, mystical power in that. It must draw close to one's own heart. That is why we now explain these in a simple manner. If one can see the Buddha, that is why we called it a "nine-faceted gem." If one can see the Buddha through a single word, there is no need to keep constantly analyzing it.

One does not need to repeatedly ask about someone one already knows. Similarly, if one has recognized the Buddha correctly, even the single word *Buddho* is enough. Even the single word *Sugato* is enough. When uttering that word, just as if one were filled with the fivefold joy, a great faith and clarity (*prasāda*) arise within oneself, just like in Sela. Clarity is something that goes hand-in-hand with this faith. It is often mentioned in the Dispensation: *Saddho pasanno hoti* — "He is faithful and well-pleased." The quality of faith is like what is sometimes described in ancient books as the water-clearing gem (*udaka-prasādaka-maṇi*). A water-clearing gem is something that—though nowadays we may have various electrical filters to remove mud and purify water—in ancient times, there was a certain gem which, when placed in muddy water, made the mud settle at the bottom, leaving clear water on top. In the same way, through faith—which is called the water-clearing gem—the turbid mud of defilements in the mind settles down, and the mind becomes clear. Clarity (*prasāda*) is necessary. It is through clarity that realization comes. That is why the two words *saddhā* and *pasāda* go together. It is often mentioned as *saddho pasanno*. It refers to the clarity of one who has developed faith in the Triple Gem. Therefore, through the recollection of the Buddha, on one hand, concentration is established, and on the other hand, the energy required to walk this path of practice is generated.

You have heard that when people speak of "senses," they refer to the external eyes, ears, nose, and so forth. But in the Dhamma, when the "five faculties" (*pañcindriya*) are mentioned, they are often: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Even there, faith is placed at the very beginning because it is through faith that energy emerges. That powerful eagerness called *chanda* is indeed what turns into energy. If one does not have faith in the work one is doing, one does not apply full energy toward it. We apply energy in proportion to the growth of that faith. The Buddha declared:

Saddhāya tarati oghaṃ, appamādena aṇṇavaṃ,

Viriyena dukkhamacceti, paññāya parisujjhati.

This was declared to Ālavaka the yakkha: "By faith one crosses the flood, by diligence the ocean, by energy one overcomes *Dukkha* (Suffering), by wisdom one is purified." It is by faith indeed that one is able to cross over this torrential flood of defilements—or what is shown in this Dhamma as the fourfold flood (*ogha*), which is the mass of defilements. If one asks whether it is possible to cross a stream flowing very rapidly during the rainy season, some might stand there folding their arms, saying it is too cold. Another, an energetic person, leaps into it without fear, swims across, and goes to the other bank. That is what is meant by *Saddhāya tarati oghaṃ*; it is the faithful one who leaps into the water, determined to cross over.

You virtuous devotees might have heard in various Dhamma talks the truly wondrous similes the Buddha uses to show the value of this faith. In the *Gopālaka Sutta*, it is shown through the simile of the cowherd. A cowherd crosses the river Ganges during the rainy season. When the skilled cowherd drives the herd of cattle to cross at a watering place, he first drives the lead bull across, and then the next cow goes, thinking, "I too can do it." Next, in that manner, even the newborn calf born that very day crossed the river because of that faith. This shows the power of faith. Because the big one went, "I too can go." — "The next one too can go." Having developed faith row by row in this manner, it is said that even the newborn calf born that very day crossed over. That is a demonstration of the strength of faith. Therefore, faith is necessary to generate the perception of capability (*haki-saññā*) instead of incapability (*barikama*).

Why do we emphasize this so much? Nowadays, many people try to understand who the Buddha is by relying solely on logic. Consequently, they think that faith is unnecessary. They contemplate in that way. In that case, they cannot walk the path of practice. Why? Because for the practice, one must develop energy. A massive commitment is required, like leaping headlong into the water. One does not make that commitment if there is no faith. That is why faith is essential. These become faculties (*indriya*) at one stage as one travels along this path of Dhamma. As you virtuous devotees know, in the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*), faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are mentioned. You have heard about these five. It is in accordance with that faith that energy arises. Through that energy, next comes mindfulness (*sati*); mindfulness is established. Next,

that is strengthened up to concentration. Only after that is wisdom (*paññā*) attained. One cannot jump straight to wisdom (*paññā*). One can jump to intellect (*buddhiya*), but by jumping, there is also the risk of being ruined.

But real wisdom (*paññā*)—even those words have been highly distorted nowadays. Those aforementioned people think that intellect (*buddhiya*) is the same as wisdom (*paññā*). There are those who believe there is no difference between intellect and wisdom. However, according to the Dhamma, the Buddha has pointed out that there is a certain path here, a practice. To walk the path of practice, these are indeed the most essential factors. It is only the faithful one, the one who has faith, who can bring forth the full energy for one's commitment. That is why meditations such as the recollection of the Buddha are necessary.

Although exaggerations regarding the supreme excellence of the Buddha's physical body might have been added in later times, it is mentioned in several suttas—though some Western scholars mock these physical characteristics of his body. Not in one place, but in many places, it was to such an extent that the monk named Vakkali could not be driven away by the Buddha, so much was he gazing at the Buddha. Likewise, the Brahmin Māgandhiya came to offer his daughter, whom he had refused to marry off even to kings, in marriage to the Buddha. This demonstrates that he possessed an extraordinarily magnificent physical form. Regarding these, various exaggerations might have been added in later times. Yet, regarding those characteristics, it is mentioned in the Dhamma itself that a brahmin named Bāvarī, who also had a large group of disciples, possessed three marks of a Great Man. In this way, some people developed faith based on those aspects that arose through the Buddha's power of merit, and they gained faith through that. Next, hearing the Dhamma of the Buddha. This faith is something that grows gradually by proceeding towards wisdom. As you virtuous devotees have heard, as one walks along this path of Dhamma, which is described as *sandiṭṭhika* (to be seen here and now), *akālika* (timeless), *ehipassika* (inviting one to come and see), and so forth, faith grows step by step. That is precisely what is shown in suttas like the *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*: like people who go searching for and catching elephants in a forest, they do not make a final decision merely by seeing the footprint of an elephant at once. Yet, they do not stop their journey either; they go forward. As they go further, they see more and more signs that the high-class elephant they are expecting is there.

In the same way, when one develops faith in the Buddha at one's own level and begins to walk the path of practice, faith grows more and more. That is what is shown in the Dhamma. To bring forth the energy potentials within a human being, faith is necessary. Having shown the qualities of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), the Dhamma then describes them as powers (*bala*). When defilements arise, some put forward faith, put forward energy, and with the help of the strengths they have developed, such as mindfulness and concentration, they finally complete even the Noble Eightfold Path.

Something that is fundamental to this faith is this recollection of the Buddha. Many people have experienced this in their daily lives. They say that it possesses a protective

quality. When reflecting on the virtues of the Buddha, one is reflecting on the most sublime person in the world. That is it. Our mind becomes great or small based on the object it takes. Based on the object our mind takes, our mind becomes great or small, exquisite or coarse, noble or low. Therefore, when we reflect on the person who has developed himself to the highest possible state among all humans in the world, our mind becomes great. That is how we must understand it. At that moment, our mind is awakened. That is why the Buddha declared that there is no room for lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), or delusion (*moha*) to enter.

The person who constantly reflects on the Buddha is, as mentioned in ancient books, just like someone staying near the scented chamber (*gandha-kuṭi*) of the Buddha. Ven. Ānanda constantly stayed near the scented chamber, attending to the Buddha. Although he was only a Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), he was a monk of wondrous energy and power of merit. In the same way, one who develops the recollection of the Buddha is, as shown in the Dhamma, just like someone staying near the scented chamber of the Buddha, constantly developing the virtues of the Buddha. So, this is said to encourage practicing it simply, not to disparage it; if one keeps the mind established on the virtues of the Buddha with truly pure faith, even a single word is sufficient.

Often, if we think of childhood, various symbols are used because they help a young child develop faith in the virtues of the Buddha, even though some people reject them. We can think that for those who cannot use the language or do not know about it, a statue of the Buddha sometimes helps to arouse faith. Just as someone develops faith through verses composed about the virtues of the Buddha by a skilled poet, or through a piece of writing, by seeing a Buddha statue carved out of a lifeless stone by a skilled sculptor, not only uneducated people but even some Westerners considered learned in this day and age have developed faith merely by looking at a carved statue that represents the highest expression an artist can offer regarding the Buddha.

Therefore, even if one does not have external symbols, what one can generate from within the mind is that formula of the nine virtues. That is why we said that in ancient Jambudīpa during the Buddha's time, those brahmins and others were waiting for a Buddha to appear in the world. For a long time, this was called the "Buddha-clamor" (*buddha-kolāhala*) — not in the sense of a riot as the word is used today. "Buddha-clamor" means that a rumor was going around: "A Buddha will appear very soon; it is during this era that Buddhas arise." Such a feeling existed in ancient India. Therefore, everyone was watching carefully to see if such a person would appear. Under such circumstances, once the Buddha had appeared, and in connection with that glorious report, it is mentioned in many places—not just one—that brahmins who had mastered the Three Vedas developed faith in the Buddha, sometimes by becoming free of doubt regarding his powers through discussions and so forth.

Therefore, we must reflect that as we walk on this path of Dhamma, even if there are various arguments and thoughts put forward by rationalists, in order to practice this path—that is, to guard virtues like moral virtue—we must develop faith in the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. That is why the Buddha is called the

King of Dhamma (*Dhammarājā*), and why it is called the Wheel of Dhamma (*dhammacakka*). As Brahmin Sela said earlier: "Since you possess the physical characteristics of a body fit to be a Wheel-turning Monarch, why lead this ascetic life? Become a Wheel-turning Monarch!" — thus he invited the Buddha. It was then that the Buddha replied: "I too am a king. I am the King of Dhamma. The wheel I turn is the Wheel of Dhamma. The one who assists in this, who turns it after me, is my general Sāriputta." The *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* reminds us of that concept of a Wheel-turning Monarch. That is also why the Buddha is called the King of Dhamma. Instead of the worldly concept of kingship, we use the term "Buddha." The King of Dhamma turned the aforementioned Wheel of Dhamma.

Similarly, a Buddha is an extremely rare person in the world — the Buddha himself declared that a Buddha is someone who is exceedingly rare. We must understand that he is no ordinary person. The Buddha himself declared in the *Aggappasāda Sutta* that if one develops faith in such a person, it is highly fruitful and of great benefit. In that sutta, the Buddha declared in a truly wondrous manner:

Yāvatā, bhikkhave, sattā apadā vā dvipadā vā catuppadā vā bahuppadā vā, rūpino vā arūpino vā, saññino vā asaññino vā nevasaññīnāsaññino vā, Tathāgato tesaṃ aggamakkhāyati arahaṃ sammāsambuddho. Ye buddhe pasannā, agge te pasannā. Agge kho pana pasannānaṃ, aggo vipāko hoti.

"To whatever extent there are beings — footless, two-footed, four-footed, many-footed; with form or formless; percipient, non-percipient, or neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient — the Tathāgata, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One, is declared to be the foremost among them. Those who have faith in the Buddha have faith in the foremost. For those who have faith in the foremost, the result is foremost." Thus, the Buddha has declared that if one develops faith in the foremost person, it brings about the foremost result and benefit.

In that way, those virtuous devotees who constantly engage in such practice can draw close to the Buddha. Although we might speak of him as someone who lived in a distant era, he is extremely close to the faithful one. That is indeed what the Buddha declared; the *Aggappasāda Sutta* especially shows that when clarity and faith arise towards the Dhamma and the Sangha, a great transformation occurs in a person. You virtuous devotees have all heard and read from those Dhamma stories how, after gaining clarity regarding the Buddha, not only ordinary people but even great philosophers among various brahmins, and even kings, had their entire lives transformed. In order to bring about such a transformation within oneself, we must explain to those self-proclaimed "intellectuals"—who in this day and age push faith aside and regard it as something belonging only to simple, uneducated lay devotees—that without this faith, it is impossible to walk this path of practice. Therefore, if one expects Nibbāna, if one truly expects to undergo that aforementioned surgery, one must have unwavering confidence in that surgeon's qualifications.

Therefore, we wish that the hearing of this sermon related to the recollection of the Buddha today may assist you virtuous devotees in your meditation and other practices. Putting forward that faith, developing energy, and cultivating virtues like mindfulness and concentration, *paññāya parisujjhati* — indeed, purification is attained through wisdom. One cannot simply jump to that wisdom. It must begin from that very starting point. Thus, by developing the recollection of the Buddha in a simple manner according to these explained points, one can develop it constantly, even in all four postures. When the hindrances are removed and one reaches a concentrated state through it, that is when the depth of the Dhamma is understood. Developing insight (*vipassanā*) through the meditation on the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), and through insight-knowledges, one can quickly realize the noble goal of penetrating the paths and fruits starting from Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*).

Therefore, by means of the moral virtue guarded today, and the meditation practiced, and with the help of today's sermon, you virtuous devotees must resolve to achieve what can be achieved from this Dispensation of the Buddha as quickly as possible. With the help of the Dhamma sermon, by putting forth energy, gaining the assistance of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), and bringing your meditation to fulfillment, you must wish that it may serve as a supportive condition to escape as quickly as possible from the suffering of saṃsāra—such as *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decay/aging), sickness, and death—and to attain the sublime, supreme deathless Nibbāna. If there are any beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who wish to rejoice in this merit of teaching and hearing the Dhamma, may they, through that rejoicing, find peace in the sublime, supreme deathless Nibbāna through their aspired state of awakening (Bodhi). With this aspiration, please recite this verse.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #85

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.182)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Na idaṃ anayena jīvitaṃ, nāhāro hadayassa santiko;

Āhāratthitiko samussayo, iti disvāna carāmi esanaṃ;

Paṅkoti hi naṃ pavedayuṃ, yāyaṃ vandana-pūjānā kulesu;

Sukhumaṃ sallam durabbahaṃ, sakkāro kāpurisena dujjaho ti.

From:

Itivuttaka (It 93), Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN 17)

Dear Listeners,

The lion's roar is a fearless, heroic sound that puts to flight the roars of all other animals. The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Self-Enlightened One, who is the Lion of the Sakyans, compared His Dhamma teaching to a lion's roar. Likewise, He instructed His disciple Sangha to utter lion's roars that would silence other sectarians. Accordingly, among the Sangha of monks who uttered lion's roars, Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, the Great Arahant, attained the foremost position (*etadagga*). The two verses uttered by him, as found in the *Theragāthā*, are what we have chosen as our theme today.

According to what is stated in the *Apadāna Pāḷi*, the cause for Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja to receive the foremost position among those who roar the lion's roar was a wholesome deed done during the time of Padumuttara Buddha. Having been born as a lion king, he saw the Buddha who had entered his cave and sat in the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*). After the Buddha emerged from that attainment of cessation, the lion king offered a lotus flower and roared a lion's roar. It is mentioned in this manner. In this Buddha-dispensation, he was born in the city of Kosambī as the son of King Udeni's chief Brahmin priest and was known by the name Bhāradvāja. Upon reaching youth, he taught the Vedas and other sciences to other young Brahmins. However, he had a certain weakness. Due to his craving (*taṇhā*) for food—an excessive craving

(*taṇhā*) to eat—he was subject to weakness. Because of this, it is said he incurred the displeasure of his students. Later, this Brahmin Bhāradvāja went to the city of Rājagaha and saw the gains and honors (*sakkāra*) received by the Buddha and the Sangha of monks. He then ordained in the dispensation, yet because of his greed and craving (*taṇhā*) for food, he became known by the name "Piṇḍola" (the alms-seeker), and that tendency affected him for a long time.

However, gradually submitting to the advice and instruction of the Buddha, and practicing the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*) such as forest-dwelling (*āraññaka*) and alms-seeking (*piṇḍapātika*), he developed the virtues of fewness of wishes and contentment. Having conquered the aforementioned weaknesses, he practiced insight meditation (*vipassanā*) and became a great Arahant endowed with supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*). Having attained this—it is mentioned that Arahants sometimes declare their Arahantship in the presence of the Buddha—Bhāradvāja Maha Arahant told the Sangha of monks that besides declaring his Arahantship before the Buddha, "If anyone has any doubt regarding the supramundane path (*magga*) or fruit (*phala*), let them question me." Because he roared such a lion's roar, and due to this trait of his character, the Buddha declared Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja foremost among the monks who roar the lion's roar.

The occasion for preaching these two verses is recorded in the texts as follows: Out of compassion for a miserly, wrong-viewed Brahmin whom he had associated with during his lay life, Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja on one occasion preached a sermon on giving (*dāna-kathā*). That miserly Brahmin thought, "He is preaching to destroy my wealth." With his mind corrupted in this way, he nevertheless said, "I will give you a single meal of rice, a single offering of alms." Then, Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja said, "Give it not to me, but to the Sangha." At this, the Brahmin thought, "See that! He is directing me to give alms not just to himself, but to a large crowd." He corrupted his mind there too. However, as it is stated here, the next day, upon hearing Ven. Sāriputta explaining the benefits of an offering dedicated to the Sangha (*saṅghagata-dakkhiṇā*), he cleared away his displeasure.

Furthermore, Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja uttered these two verses to show this Brahmin that he did not preach with any such personal motive:

> *Na idaṃ anayena jīvitaṃ, nāhāro hadayassa santiko;*
>
> *āhāratthitiko samussayo, iti disvāna carāmi esanaṃ.*
>
> *Paṅkoti hi naṃ pavedayuṃ, yāyaṃ vandana-pūjanā kulesu;*
>
> *sukhumaṃ sallaṃ durabbahaṃ, sakkāro kāpurisena dujjaho.*

He uttered these two verses. Let us first give the brief meaning.

Na idaṃ anayena jīvitaṃ: This monastic life I lead is not one followed to seek requisites through wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). "Anaya" means "I am not leading this life by illegal or unrighteous methods"; it means "do not think in that manner."

Nāhāro hadayassa santiko: "Food is not close to my heart." Taken in several senses, food is not something that is close to the heart.

Āhāratthitiko samussayo: "Samussaya" refers to this body, this cage of aggregates, or this form-aggregate (*rūpakkhandha*); this is something that exists and subsists because of food.

Iti disvāna carāmi esanaṃ: "Seeing this fact, I wander in search of alms."

Paṅkoti hi naṃ pavedayuṃ, yāyaṃ vandana-pūjanā kulesu, sukhumaṃ sallaṃ durabbahaṃ: That is, the wise ones like the Buddhas declare that the homage and offerings, the worship and respect received from lay households, are a swamp, and likewise a subtle arrow that is difficult to extract.

Sakkāro kāpurisena dujjaho: Honor, gains, and respect (*sakkāra*) are difficult for a low, unworthy person (*kāpurisa*) to discard—this is the idea contained in these two verses.

However, if we analyze these verses deeply, many points can be brought out. Now, this must have been said in a way that does not get caught up in wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). When Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja preached the Dhamma to that miserly Brahmin, the Brahmin thought, "He is preaching expecting something from me." When the Brahmin said, "I will give you a single meal of rice," the monk declined it, saying, "Do not give it to me, give it to the Sangha." He rejected it. That is indeed a noble quality. Next, he declared this to show that there was no mind within him of seeking requisites in the wrong way of livelihood (*ājīva*). Furthermore, in the saying "food is not close to the heart" (*nāhāro hadayassa santiko*), many valuable points are contained.

In the *Theragāthā* and elsewhere, and also the Buddha Himself, has preached about this food in a wonderfully deep manner, especially about the craving (*taṇhā*) for taste. In the *Theragāthā*, speaking of the craving (*taṇhā*) for taste, it says: *"rasataṇhāya gadhito hadayaṃ nāvabujjhati"* (one who is bound by the craving for taste does not awaken the heart). There too, the heart is mentioned. One who is greedy, bound by taste, does not awaken the heart. That is to say, they do not awaken to the realization of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*), to Nibbāna. Likewise, *"rasesu anugiddhassa ñāṇe na ramati"* is also found in the *Theragāthā*. The mind of one who has greed for tastes does not delight in wisdom and concentration. These are the defects in the craving (*taṇhā*) for taste.

Likewise, this craving (*taṇhā*) for food is a powerful force within beings. Furthermore, to eliminate the weakness of over-eating in Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, the Buddha preached the Dhamma on many occasions. Not only for him, but for the sake of the Sangha of monks. On one occasion, the Buddha declared: "How, monks, does a person become moderate in eating (*mattaññū*), knowing the proper measure in food?" There, the Buddha gives wonderfully amazing similes. He declares: "Monks, just as a man applies

an ointment to a wound or sore on his body only until that wound heals, in that same way, one should take food considering it merely as medicine."

There is another simile: when someone is carrying a load with a vehicle, like a cart or chariot of those times, they apply a lubricant, a kind of grease, to the axle where it rubs against the wheel. Food should be taken thinking of it like applying that grease. That is to say, on the journey of carrying this bodily cage, this burden of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), towards Nibbāna, one should use this food as the oil and grease that helps the wheel turn.

Next, there is an occasion where the Buddha spoke to Ven. Nālaka regarding taste, saying: *"khuradhārūpamo bhava"*—that is, *"khuradhārā"* means the blade of a razor (the edge of a razor). There, that simile is a wonderfully amazing one. Honey is smeared on the edge of a razor. One has to eat the honey. Must one not do so while protecting the tongue? The Buddha has spoken of such highly sensitive things. To protect the mind from the craving (*taṇhā*) for taste, one should bring that simile to mind: *"khurūpamaṃ madhunālittaṃ"*—how carefully must one lick the honey smeared on the edge of a razor, without cutting the tongue! Having said that, the Buddha declares: "Think of it in that way, and to cross over this desert of *saṃsāra*, consume food just as one applies oil and grease to a chariot."

Next, many might have heard to some extent a wonderfully amazing simile, producing the deepest sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), given by the Buddha. Indeed, to convey the idea that food is something that makes the heart tremble, the Buddha on one occasion addressed the Sangha and told a long story-like illustrative simile: "Monks, suppose a husband and wife, along with their only beloved son, prepare to travel a long desert road, taking a small portion of rice or some small provisions for the journey. When they had gone some distance into the desert, their food ran out. Then this husband and wife thought: 'Now our food is finished. We still have a long way to travel. Rather than all three of us dying, it is better that we kill this child, prepare his jerky and dried meat, and eating that, let us cross the desert.' Thus, this husband and wife killed their beloved son, made food-provisions from his flesh, and went on that desert road." Having said this, the Buddha asks: "How do they travel, how do they eat that food?" The Buddha explains this in a deeply moving, sensitive manner: beating their breasts, crying "Where is our only son?", beating their breasts they eat that food.

Then the Buddha asks: "Monks, do that husband and wife eat the flesh of their only son for play, for fun, or for entertainment? Or to increase bodily intoxication and pride? Or to beautify the body? Or to make it fair-skinned?" The Sangha of monks declare, "No, venerable sir, not for any of those." "Is it not solely for the purpose of crossing over the desert?" The monks say, "Yes, indeed, Venerable Sir." "In the same way, monks, should you consume food: solely to cross over this desert of *saṃsāra*." Thus, here, the Buddha has given a heart-trembling, wonderful simile.

Unfortunately, the commentators, in a highly uncritical manner, added a novel prolific conceptualization (*papañca*) to this story, thereby reducing its urgency-inducing

(*saṃvegajanaka*) aspect. What many get to read in Vinaya-compilation books is that when the food ran out, this husband and wife sat under a tree and started a discussion. The husband says to the wife, "Kill me, and the two of you go on." The wife says, "Kill me, and the two of you go on." Understanding that this cannot be done properly, the mother then sends the child to the father saying, "Oh, I cannot kill him, you kill him." The father sends him to the mother, saying, "I too cannot kill him." While going back and forth in this manner, the child gets exhausted, dies naturally on his own, and then the mother and father eat his flesh. What a foolish thing to do! Without understanding the meaning of that valuable simile taught by the Buddha, they tried to modify this story in a non-violent way. Through that, the deep meaning given by the Buddha was suppressed. What is mostly found is that meaning imported from the commentaries.

Yet, how deep is that which is in the words of the Buddha! It is not an encouragement of killing (*pāṇātipāta*). Rather, what the Buddha demonstrated there is the gravity and severity of this *saṃsāra*. Now, perhaps you virtuous friends might think that this is an attack launched by the Buddha against meat-eating. No, virtuous friends. Even regarding vegetarian food, if a single grain of rice on our plate could speak, it would tell a heart-trembling story. That rice grain would tell us through how much blood and tears it was born. Therefore, as a whole, there is no meat or vegetarian issue here; as a whole, this food—indeed, this simile is applied to what is called physical food (*kabaḷīkārāhāra*). Four kinds of food are shown in the Dhamma, and among them, this is to show the urgency-inducing state of this physical food (*kabaḷīkārāhāra*) which beings consume in the form of morsels to maintain life.

Therefore, one must take that simile exactly as it is, without trying to embellish it with new decorations. In that way, the Buddha gave various kinds of similes to eliminate the craving (*taṇhā*) for food. What we have to understand from those similes given regarding the craving (*taṇhā*) for taste is that they were meant to prevent excessive eating like that of Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, which occurs due to the lack of the virtue of moderation in eating, of knowing the measure in food (*bhojane mattaññutā*). Furthermore, regarding becoming intoxicated with taste, being greedy for taste through food, the Buddha says that if at any point one conquers that craving (*taṇhā*) for taste, one has abandoned the attachment to the five cords of sensual pleasure (*pañca-kāmaguṇa*). Next, if one removes the craving (*taṇhā*) for food and understands food correctly, the Buddha declares that there will not remain any defilement (*kilesa*) for that person to return to this world. They become a Non-Returner (*anāgāmī*), because through that, the lust for the five cords of sensual pleasure (*pañca-kāmaguṇika-rāga*) is conquered. Food, therefore, goes that far. That is why the Buddha has shown it so deeply.

Next, "food is not close to the heart" (*nāhāro hadayassa santiko*) can be understood in this way. As said in that broad, heart-trembling manner, this food is prepared and comes to us. Therefore, we must understand that fact. But the point told to us is *“āhāratthitiko samussayo”*. "Samussayo", virtuous friends, means the Buddha looked at this as just something piled up. In the word "samussaya" is the meaning of a pile. In some places, another phrase is used to describe the body: *“mātāpettikasambhavo*

odanakummāsūpacayo cātummāhābhūtiko”—born of mother and father, made of the four great elements, and nourished and accumulated by boiled rice and bread-crumbs/gruel. This means it is a heap, an accumulation, a gathering of those things. Thus, with the arising of food, this body arises. From another perspective, since it is stated that it is subject to saṃsāric food, Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja declares: *“samussayo iti disvāna carāmi esanaṃ”*—because the body needs food, because it subsists on food, I wander in search of alms, walking for alms. Thus it is regarding food.

Now, in the next verse: *“paṅkoti hi naṃ pavedayuṃ - yaṃ vandana-pūjanā kulesu”*, the worship and respect received from lay households is a swamp. Regarding this gain, honor, and respect (*sakkāra*), the Buddha has wonderfully explained its danger in many discourses in the *Lābhasakkāra Saṃyutta*. For, when one is overcome by gain, honor (*sakkāra*), and fame, those virtuous qualities are suppressed in a most dangerous manner. Instead, one might even go to states of misery and hell (*apāya*). Here, Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, since he spoke this after attaining Arahantship, declares it in this way. This too is indeed a teaching of the Buddha. The Buddha has taught that this is a swamp. It is something in which one can sink. Likewise, it is a subtle arrow. Once this arrow pierces, one does not know that the arrow has pierced. It is such a subtle arrow. It is difficult to extract too. *“Sakkāro kāpurisena dujjaho”*—it is said that for a low person (*kāpurisa*), discarding this honor (*sakkāra*) is difficult. Although he preached thus, on one occasion, even he faced severe censure from the Buddha, even after he had attained Arahantship.

That is a different story, found in the Vinaya *Cullavagga*. In the commentaries, it has been greatly elaborated in various ways with many novel things added. Let us now tell the story briefly as mentioned in the Vinaya *Cullavagga*. It is stated there as follows: On one occasion, the financier (*seṭṭhi*) of Rājagaha received a sandalwood knot—you can imagine, from a large sandalwood tree, a knotted portion—this financier received it. Having received it, the financier thought: "Now, I will have a sandalwood bowl turned from this sandalwood knot. I will use the sandalwood powder produced during the turning for my own consumption." Thinking thus, he had a bowl turned by someone from that sandalwood knot. After that, an idea came: "Now I must offer this bowl to someone." Thinking so, what did this financier do? He put the bowl in a bag, hung it on a bamboo pole, and raised it high into the sky using several bamboo poles. Then, he declared as a challenge: "If there are Arahants in this world, if there are those with supernormal powers (*iddhi*), let them go through the air and take this bowl."

Then, having heard this—the Vinaya book records it as follows. You know that during the Buddha's time, there were six teachers. All six of them are mentioned. Pūraṇa Kassapa went to meet this financier and said, "I am an Arahant. I too have supernormal powers (*iddhi*). Give that bowl to me." Then the financier said, "No, go through the air and take it." Next, Makkhali Gosāla said in the same way, "I too am an Arahant, endowed with supernormal powers." "If so, go and take it." They too could not. In this way, all six teachers—Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta,

Niganṭha Nātaputta, and Ajita Kesakambalī—came and asked for the bowl. But they could not display supernormal wonders (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*) and take it as requested.

The next event mentioned is this: One day, during that time, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna and Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja were walking for alms in Rājagaha. Having heard of this matter, Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja said to Ven. Moggallāna, "Venerable Moggallāna, you are an Arahant, and also endowed with supernormal powers (*iddhi*). That bowl belongs to you. Rise into the air and take it." Ven. Moggallāna said to Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, "Bhāradvāja, you too are an Arahant. You too have supernormal powers (*iddhi*). You do this." So, in the end, what did Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja do? He rose into the air, took that sandalwood bowl, and flew through the air three times around Rājagaha. While he was flying, the financier, coming outside with his wife and children, saluted him with clasped hands raised to his head, saying, "Oh Bhāradvāja, please descend to our house." Once Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja descended, the financier of Rājagaha filled that bowl with very valuable delicacies and offered it.

Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, taking that bowl, walked back to the monastery. While he was walking, the townspeople heard about this and, shouting and making an uproar—don't you know, when such a thing happens, even nowadays, if someone rises even six inches, not to say that high, what a big deal it would be! Everyone is just waiting to see. So, in those days too, a huge crowd followed him as he walked to the monastery. The Buddha asked Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, what is this shouting and uproar?" Then Ven. Ānanda explained the matter.

Then the Buddha, having assembled the Sangha of monks, spoke in their midst. Imagine: when a mistake is committed by someone like Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, the Buddha does not use the words He uses when censuring others—He does not say *"mōgha purisa"* (foolish man) or "empty man". Instead, He often addresses them either as "Brahmin" or by name. On this occasion, He asked, "Bhāradvāja, is it true, Bhāradvāja, that you did such a thing?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." Then the Buddha censured him thoroughly. He censured him severely: "How can you do such an improper thing, Bhāradvāja, which is unbecoming of ascetics? Why do you perform such an ugly act as displaying supernormal wonders (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*) to laypeople for the sake of this miserable sandalwood bowl?" Thus, the Buddha uttered words of censure so grave that they cannot even be spoken on this occasion, and finally, what did He do as punishment? "Monks, break this sandalwood bowl. Smash it into pieces and give it to the monks to prepare eye-ointment." Likewise, He banned it: "From today, displaying supernormal wonders (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*) as superhuman states (*uttarimanussadhamma*) to laypeople is prohibited. It must not be done. If anyone displays supernormal wonders, they commit an offense of wrongdoing (*dukkaṭa*)." According to Vinaya rules, it becomes an offense. He also laid down another rule declaring wooden bowls as improper. He told the Sangha of monks that they should not use wooden bowls. Such was the severe censure received by this Arahant monk, Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja. Now, one might think, why was this?

We can think about it at least slightly in this way: In Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja's character, there was that lion-like quality of accepting challenges. But what he did was a wrong act. The Buddha—not to mention others, but even to the two chief disciples, Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Moggallāna—on certain occasions, when a mistake occurred, He would find fault with them. Here too, He censured him strongly. So, through that matter, we can understand the meaning of that verse. It must be because he learnt that lesson that Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja—now indeed it is clear—told his old friend in that way: "This gain and honor (*sakkāra*) is a swamp. It is a very subtle arrow." Because it is a bad example for this dispensation, the Buddha censured him in that manner on that occasion and banned it.

Next, as a reason for this, we can also point out that on one occasion, when the Buddha was staying in the Pāvārika Mango Grove in Nālandā, a householder's son named Kevaḍḍha came to the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, this Nālandā is very prosperous. Also, there are many here who have great faith in the Blessed One. To increase those who have faith, please appoint some monk to display supernormal wonders (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*). Then, many more will gain confidence." Then the Buddha rejected it: "Kevaḍḍha, I do not teach the monks in this way: 'Go and display supernormal wonders (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*) as superhuman states (*uttarimanussadhamma*) to laypeople.'" A second and a third time Kevaḍḍha made this request. On that occasion, the Buddha declared: "Kevaḍḍha, there are three kinds of wonders (*pāṭihāriya*). What are they? The wonder of supernormal power (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*), the wonder of mind-reading (*ādesanā-pāṭihāriya*), and the wonder of instruction (*anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya*)." The Buddha then explains each one of them.

"Kevaḍḍha, suppose a certain monk"—first He explains what the wonder of supernormal power (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*) is. There is a whole series of supernormal powers called *iddhividha* often mentioned in the discourses, extending finally up to the Brahma-world. Flying through the air, walking on water, and such wonderfully amazing series of supernormal powers are explained by the Buddha. "Suppose a certain monk displays a wonder of supernormal power, and a layperson who has faith and confidence goes to someone who lacks faith and confidence and says, 'Such and such a monk showed supernormal powers in this and this way.'" The Buddha explains: "Then that other person might say: 'There is a charm and science called Gandhārī. Through that science, too, such wonders of supernormal power are displayed. This is not such a great thing.'" Having explained this, the Buddha says: "That, Kevaḍḍha, is the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) I see, because of which I am disgusted by supernormal powers. I do not regard the wonder of supernormal power highly." The Buddha explained this with reasons.

Next, He explains the wonder of mind-reading (*ādesanā-pāṭihāriya*). The wonder of mind-reading means that certain people have the power to look into other people's minds. Seeing the way thoughts and reflections (*vitakka*) arise in someone's mind, they reveal them: "At this moment, these and these things are in your mind." To demonstrate its disadvantage, the Buddha explains: "Suppose a person with faith sees a monk performing the wonder of mind-reading in that way, and goes to someone without faith

and says, 'So-and-so has such a power to read people's minds.' Then that other person says, 'There is a charm called Maṇikā. Those who know that charm can also read people's minds in that way. This is not a great thing.'" Therefore, the Buddha pointed out: "Because of that disadvantage, I do not regard mind-reading highly."

Instead, the Buddha declares the wonder of instruction (*anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya*). What is the wonder of instruction? It is briefly shown in this way. A deep meaning is contained in it as well:

"Evaṃ vitakketha, mā evaṃ vitakkayittha, evaṃ manasikarotha, mā evaṃ manasākattha, idaṃ pajahatha, idaṃ upasampajja viharatha."

In this way, the wonder of instruction is shown in six phrases.

Its meaning: *"Evaṃ vitakketha"*—think thoughts and reflections (*vitakka*) of this kind. *"Mā evaṃ vitakkayittha"*—do not think thoughts in that and that way. *"Evaṃ manasikarotha"*—attend to things in this and this way. *"Mā evaṃ manasikarotha"*—do not attend to things in that and that way. *"Idaṃ pajahatha"*—abandon this. *"Idaṃ upasampajja viharatha"*—attain and dwell in these and these qualities. Thus, the two sides of what should be done and what should not be done. That is what the Buddha calls the wonder of instruction (*anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya*). The Buddha explains this wonder of instruction at greater length. The entire training and practice (*paṭipadā*) of the Dhamma, which contains those mentioned points, belongs to the threefold training of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

You virtuous friends have heard of the six qualities of the Dhamma. We have expressed on many occasions that what is contained within *"svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko opanayiko paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi"* is indeed this same wonder of instruction. It is a wonder; it is not something that someone else displays and about which one makes a doubtful conclusion. The wonder of instruction is something that one realizes oneself, understands, and becomes free from doubt. A very deep saying is contained within those few phrases. The Buddha invites—rather than the Buddha inviting, as we have stated on many occasions, it is the Dhamma itself that challenges there. That is why the Dhamma is called "come and see" (*ehipassika*). That is what *"ehipassika"* means. This is a well-expounded (*svākkhāta*) Dhamma. It is for an ill-expounded (*durakkhāta*) teaching that wonders and miracles of that other kind are needed to inspire faith in someone. By showing strange and novel things, making people watch with mouths wide open, they might think, "It is indeed so," and sometimes there is also room for doubt. Those are the wonders mentioned earlier.

The wonder of instruction (*anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya*) means that one enters that path oneself and realizes it oneself. That is *svākkhāta* (well-expounded). *Durakkhāta* is a wrongly preached teaching. The Buddha declared on some occasions that in a dispensation with a wrongly preached teaching (*durakkhāta*), the person who does not exert effort is the one who lives happily. The one who exerts effort suffers, because no benefit can be derived from that teaching. But in the well-expounded Dhamma

(*svākkhāta*), it is the energetic person who lives happily. The energetic person obtains those results. The one who lacks effort lives in suffering (*dukkha*). What does that difference show? An ill-expounded teaching (*durakkhāta*) is not leading-out (*na niyyānika*). If they teach certain things saying "do these," it is called *durakkhāta* because one cannot reach the intended goal through them. But in the well-expounded Dhamma (*svākkhāta*), this is the expected goal, and what is called leading-out (*niyyānika*) has the power to lead to that expected goal. That is its quality. Because it is well-expounded (*svākkhāta*), we have explained this in detail on a previous occasion.

"Sandiṭṭhiko" means in this very life. There are two words: *sandiṭṭhika* and *samparāyika*. Sandiṭṭhika means something that can be experienced in this very life. Samparāyika is its opposite—in the next world, meaning "go and see" (after death). In those teachings that are *samparāyika*, it is "go and see". In our Dhamma, it is "come and see!". Come and look. Therefore, it is *sandiṭṭhika*. There is no need to go to the next world and see; if one walks on this path properly, it can be realized in this very life. That is what *sandiṭṭhika* means. Then, one can realize it oneself right before one's eyes in this very life. Because there is no such thing as waiting for the next birth (*jāti*) or after death, it is *akālika* (timeless / immediate). The quality of giving results without delay. You virtuous friends have heard of these: *sandiṭṭhika*, *akālika*. Then there is *ehipassika*: "come and see!" Then each person can see for themselves. *Opanayika* means that step by step, this Dhamma, this practice (*paṭipadā*), has the power to lead the one who enters it onward.

That is, the Buddha has given similes for this on various occasions. For example, the *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta* shows that when someone who goes to catch elephants enters the forest, seeing a small footprint or sign of the elephant they are looking for, they do not make a conclusion based solely on that. As they go further, they find more and more signs. Having gone in that way, only when they see the elephant with their own eyes do they know the difference. Likewise, this Dhamma is step by step, through the aforementioned direct realization. That direct realization itself is there. Sometimes in this Dhamma, it is mentioned as *sappaṭihāriya* (with wonders) and *appaṭihāriya* (without wonders). On some occasions, the Buddha speaks of the teachings of other sectarians and gives a strange simile like this: someone declares, "I am in love with the beauty queen of this country (*janapada-kalyāṇī*). I love her very much." Then someone asks, "What kind of person is this beauty queen? Is she dark? Fair? Tall? Short? Do you know any of these?" "No, I don't know anything." Then, it is something without cause or evidence. It is loving a beauty queen whom one does not know. That is a meaningless act.

Likewise, another simile is shown. Suppose a carpenter is making a ladder, or building a staircase. Then someone comes there and asks, "For which mansion is this staircase?" He does not know of any such mansion. He is just building a staircase. He cannot show: "I am building this for such and such a mansion." That is indeed the simile the Buddha gives regarding a non-leading-out (*aniyyānika*), sectarian teaching. But in this Dhamma, one can show: "It is for this." It is for this Nibbāna. This fact has been shown on many occasions with a very simple point, a simple simile, or a simple illustration. Now,

suppose a Brahmin comes and asks the Buddha, "What is this sandiṭṭhika, akālika quality of your Dhamma?" Then the Buddha asks, "Brahmin, when greed is present in you, is there not some restlessness, some defilement in your mind?" "Yes, there is." "Once that greed is eliminated, is your mind not peaceful?" "Yes." There itself it is. Likewise with hatred and delusion. This Dhamma does not need those other strange wonders. One can directly realize its wonder from within, because this Dhamma exists based on those very factors of greed, hatred, and delusion. Thus, one can directly realize it.

To whatever extent greed is present, to that extent there is suffering (*dukkha*). To whatever extent greed is less, to that extent there is peace. In that way, through a simile and a brief illustration, the Buddha demonstrates that this Dhamma is *akālika*. No one else needs to come and say so; everything is contained within *ehipassika*, *opanayika*, and *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*. Thus, carrying it out step by step, through *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*, the wise can see this within their own minds and directly realize it.

Let us return to those few passages mentioned earlier. It can be said that the entire Dhamma is contained within those first few words: *"Evaṃ vitakketha, mā evaṃ"*. Within the world, there are various thoughts of sensual desire (*kāma-vitakka*), thoughts of ill-will (*byāpāda-vitakka*), thoughts of harmfulness (*vihiṃsā-vitakka*) etc. Do not think in accordance with them. Do not maintain thoughts in that way. Maintain thoughts in this way—the opposite. Maintain thoughts of loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), etc. That is the training regarding thoughts (*vitakka*). Next, going deeper: *"Evaṃ manasikarotha"*—attend to things in this and this way. Not in a way that defilements (*kilesa*) arise, but in a way that defilements do not arise—this is radical attention and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Do not attend to things in a way that defilements arise: *"Mā evaṃ manasikarotha"*. Next, He tells directly about what should be done and what should not be done, just as shown in the virtues of *sīla* and so on: *"Idaṃ pajahatha, idaṃ upasampajja viharatha"*—abandon these and these things; attain and dwell in these and these things. Instead of the aforementioned unwholesome states, attain and dwell in jhānas and so on. Thus, the entire True Dhamma is within those phrases. From there, the Buddha explains this practicing path of instruction step by step.

Then, that is the wonder within the Buddha's Dhamma. It is not that story of flying through the air as mentioned earlier; indeed, because this Dhamma must be seen from within one's own heart, or through one's own direct realization, that is why *"paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi"* means each person must realize this for themselves. In this way, the Buddha demonstrated His path of practice (*paṭipadā*).

What we have to consider is that the aforementioned acceptance of challenges was a saṃsāric strength of Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja. However, because he acted without reflection in an improper manner, he received censure in that way. Yet, in the Dhamma itself, there is also the Buddha's praise of him. Likewise, on certain occasions, it is recorded in the *Udāna Pāḷi* as follows: Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja was sitting in meditation near the Buddha. While he was sitting with body erect, in concentration, the Buddha uttered an inspired utterance (*udāna*), a joyful declaration. It is mentioned there that he

was forest-dwelling (*āraññaka*), alms-seeking (*piṇḍapātika*), rag-robe-wearing (*paṃsukūlika*), practicing those ascetic qualities (*dhutaṅga*), and endowed with the virtues of fewness of wishes and contentment. Thus, his character is an example for us from one perspective.

The character of Aṅgulimāla is an example from one side. Within the word "Aṅgulimāla" itself, a side of his character is shown. Regarding Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja too, within the word "Piṇḍola" is the greed for alms-food, the lack of the quality of moderation in eating. Yet, at a certain point, he developed those ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*), fewness of wishes, and contentment to such an extent that the Buddha even uttered a certain verse as an inspired utterance of joy on that occasion.

There was another occasion mentioned regarding Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja. On one occasion, after he attained Arahantship, he went and declared in the presence of the Buddha, while the Sangha of monks was listening, "Now all taints (*āsava*) within me are destroyed; there is no further rebirth." Then the monks asked, "Seeing what benefit did the Venerable Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja make such a declaration to the Blessed One?" The Buddha declared on that occasion, "This monk Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja achieved this through the development of three faculties. What are they? Mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)." There, the Buddha declares, "If mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are developed to the utmost limit, it ends in the destruction of taints (*āsavakkhaya*), which is Arahantship itself." There are such instances where Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja received the praise of the Buddha.

On one occasion, the Buddha declared, when Ven. Ānanda was also present: "Monks, this gain, honor, and respect (*sakkāra*) is an obstacle even to Arahants—that is, even to those whose taints are destroyed (*khīṇāsava*)." Then Ven. Ānanda asked, "How, Blessed One, is it an obstacle to Arahants?" Then the Buddha explained: "Ānanda, I do not say that it is an obstacle to the unshakable liberation of mind (*akuppā cetovimutti*), which is the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samāpatti*). But apart from that, if those Arahants, being energetic and resolute (*ātāpī pahitatto*), have attained certain pleasant abidings of concentration (*jhāna*), which are called 'pleasant abidings in this very life' (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*)..."

"Diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra" means dwelling in happiness in this very life. So, that happiness experienced by those Arahants as pleasant abiding in this very life is lost because of gain, honor, and respect (*sakkāra*). Next, He says: "Ānanda, therefore, this gain, honor, and respect (*sakkāra*) is extremely dreadful and harsh. Resolve, Ānanda, to remain unsubdued by the gain, honor, and respect (*sakkāra*) that arise." In that way, on certain occasions, the Buddha has declared.

From this, we can understand that, according to the Buddha's teaching, if one is overcome by the world's gain, honor (*sakkāra*), and praise, one's virtuous qualities will be entirely suppressed. Not only that, even if one is an Arahant, one's seclusion (*viveka*) is lost. To set an example for this, on certain occasions, the Buddha—now, someone might think, "The Buddha has finished doing everything that had to be done; why should

He go into seclusion?"—on certain occasions, the Buddha directly declares: "Monks, I wish to go into seclusion for three months." On that occasion, He expresses His love for seclusion in this way: "This life spent crowded with kings, great ministers, sectarians, sectarian disciples, laymen, and laywomen is troublesome and full of suffering (*dukkha*)." That is to say, there is no pleasant abiding in this very life (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*). "I am going into seclusion for three months. Let no one come to meet me, except the single monk who brings alms-food."

There, the Buddha gave an example through His own life, by His love of seclusion, for both of those aforementioned matters. It was to show the lack of attachment to the gain and honor (*sakkāra*) arising from mixing with people, and the lack of being subdued by them, that the Buddha went into seclusion in that manner. It was as a lesson to the world. For, there are those subtle bonds within them. Sometimes, that arrow is not visible to many after they are subdued by them. The virtuous qualities are suppressed. Likewise, it is a bad example to the world. Those things related to the monastic life, such as the virtue of seclusion, are lost. One gets caught up in the current of the world.

Regarding gain, honor (*sakkāra*), and praise, the Buddha has given wonderfully amazing similes on certain occasions. He said that getting caught in them is just like a bird flying in the sky getting caught in a Vērambha wind. A Vērambha wind must have been something like a whirlwind in those days. When a bird is caught in a Vērambha wind, its two legs go in one direction, its feathers in another direction, and its head in yet another direction. "Such a thing happens, it becomes like a bird caught in a Vērambha wind, if one is subdued by gain, honor, and respect (*sakkāra*); that is what happens to a person, to a monk." For, next, someone takes away his robes, another takes his bowl, and in the end, his monkhood is also lost. In this way, he goes to ruin. That is why the Buddha said that this gain, honor, and respect (*sakkāra*) is a swamp. It is easy to sink into them, but it is not visible from the outside. It is an extremely subtle thorn. Thus, through being subdued by fame and so on, the virtuous qualities—not only of a monk journeying towards Arahantship, but as mentioned there, it was shown as an obstacle even to Arahants.

When the Buddha says *"kāpurisena"*, the word *"kāpurisa"* is used for a low, unworthy person. Especially, the character of Devadatta is a good example of this. Even before Devadatta went to ruin, and also afterwards, the Buddha uttered a prophecy about the future through a certain valuable series of similes, which you virtuous friends must have heard:

> *Phalaṃ ve kadaliṃ hanti, phalaṃ veḷuṃ phalaṃ naḷaṃ;*
>
> *sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanti, gabbho assatariṃ yathā.*

"Phalaṃ ve kadaliṃ hanti"—when the bunch of fruit arises on a banana tree, the tree is finished. *"Phalaṃ veḷuṃ"*—you have heard "if bamboo, reeds, or bananas blossom/fruit, they go to ruin," that is how it has come into Sinhala too. When bamboo or reeds blossom—"veḷu" means bamboo, "naḷa" means reed—their fruit is their ruin. *"Phalaṃ*

veḷuṃ phalaṃ naḷaṃ”. Likewise, *“sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanti”*—gains and respect (*sakkāra*) destroy the low, unworthy person. One final simile is given: *“gabbho assatariṃ yathā”*—"assatarī" means a she-mule. When the she-mule conceives her offspring, she dies. In this way, through similes, the Buddha showed: although this appears to the world as a great thing, in the end, it causes one's own ruin. There is a separate section called the *Lābhasakkāra Saṃyutta* where the Buddha, in various ways, demonstrates the dangerous nature of this gain, honor, and respect (*sakkāra*).

For, it is natural that ordinary worldly people are drawn towards those offerings and worship, and through that, without even knowing it, the monastic purpose becomes distant. If one is subdued by them, one forgets what journey one is on. That is precisely why many monks discarded all of that and went into seclusion. One cannot recognize the happiness of seclusion once one is subdued by those things. Therefore, the censure that the Buddha directed at Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja was not, indeed, a censure made personally to him, but we have to think that He gave a great example to the world through it. Performing such censure even to an Arahant was so that the monks would remember it.

Likewise, because it was an improper thing, that sandalwood bowl was broken into pieces—that is how some big cases are resolved; the Buddha has laid down rules in a wonderfully amazing manner. In that way, by breaking into pieces that which was obtained in a wrong manner—it is specifically shown in the Vinaya books that when luxury items or improper things are received, they are not even given to someone else. They must be broken and discarded. Here too, it was the same. He ordered these to be broken into pieces and given to make eye-ointment. Next, He completely banned even the display of wonders, because it does not lead to the progress of the dispensation. The Buddha-dispensation values only the wonder of instruction (*anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya*). That is why the Buddha told the householder Kevaḍḍha: "I am ashamed by those other two wonders." He uses that word. He had obtained both of those wonders by His own super-knowledge (*sayaṃ abhiññā*). Yet, "I am even ashamed to use them," because a person without confidence and pleasure might corrupt their mind regarding them in the manner mentioned.

This wonder of instruction (*anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya*) can be spoken by anyone without fear; starting from the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*), it becomes directly realized by them. That wonder of the Dhamma is what was called "come and see" (*ehipassika*). "Come and see" is through the Dhamma. Therefore, through these things we must understand the value of the dispensation. This is an era where a wonderfully strange distortion regarding the value of the dispensation is occurring. You virtuous friends can reflect on this: Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, on one hand, conquered his weaknesses and reached a state where he received great praises and inspired utterances (*udāna*) from the Buddha. Along with that, if even Arahants have certain weaknesses, the Buddha brings them out and demonstrates the true path of the Dhamma to the world.

Now, in this present era too, one must reflect in accordance with that. Everyone is running here and there, looking for those common wonders: "Who has become an

Arahant? Who is displaying supernormal powers?" Having lost the opportunity to directly realize this wonder from within themselves—which is the work they have to do—if they hear of something even slightly, even a tiny bit, they fly there like a crow. Having eliminated that tendency, we must recognize the true value of the Dhamma, and through this wonder, this Dhamma—this *sandiṭṭhika*, *akālika*, *ehipassika*, *opanayika* Dhamma—it is this wonder-endowed (*sappaṭihāriya*) Dhamma whose wonders we must directly realize for ourselves. Through this sermon, we can add many things to our lives. We must add to our practice those various points mentioned about the craving (*taṇhā*) for taste.

So, for this long, you virtuous friends have indeed dedicated your lives to these qualities of virtue (*sīla*) and so on, walking this journey of the Dhamma, solely to end this suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra* through that noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna, which is the discarding of all that is expected. Taking the essence that can be derived from this sermon, as quickly as possible, before this lamp of the dispensation is extinguished, may this sermon also be a supportive condition (*hetu-vāsanā*) for you to realize the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna through those paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmī*), Non-returning (*anāgāmī*), and Arahantship, which are your highest goals! May whatever living beings there are, from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, rejoice in this meritorious deed of sharing the Dhamma, and through that rejoicing, may they realize the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Enlightenment (*bodhi*)!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #86

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.25)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Sabbaso nāmarūpasmiṃ yassa natthi mamāyitam,

Asatā ca na socati sa ve "bhikkhu"ti vuccati.

From:

Dhammapada 367 (Bhikkhu-vagga)

Dear Listeners,

There are no other two words in the world as pleasing and dear to a person as these two: "I" and "mine." How many times a day do we use these two words? How often are we compelled to use them? In fact, it is difficult to even maintain a life without using these two words, "I" and "mine." Yet, despite this being so, the Buddha points out that deep within these two words, "I" and "mine," lies a grave ignorance (*avijjā*) and Craving (*taṇhā*). The Buddha declared that it is precisely due to this ignorance and Craving (*taṇhā*) that beings in this world wander for a long time, suffering in saṃsāra. Therefore, even though we use these two words, "I" and "mine," the Buddha declared that if we can somehow remove this ignorance within them and dispel Craving (*taṇhā*), we can escape from this terrifying saṃsāra. And He also proclaimed the path to achieve that.

It is indeed a Dhamma verse containing a teaching that helps remove that sense of "I" and "mine" which we have taken as our topic today. The Buddha uttered this verse to a certain Brahmin who lived in Sāvatthī, known by the name "Pañcaggadāyaka." Even though this Brahmin held wrong views, he received the name "Pañcaggadāyaka" (giver of five first-portions) because he had a habit of giving alms at five distinct stages of his agricultural work. When the paddy ripened, while it was still in the field, he would give an offering called "the first-share of the field." Whether to Brahmins whom he held in high esteem, or to the poor, travelers, and beggars, he would give this first-share of the field. Next, after bringing it to the threshing floor, he would give what is called "the first-share of the threshing floor." After converting it into grain at the threshing floor, as a third offering, he would give "the first-share of the grain." Next, when the rice was

boiling in the pot, he would offer the first portion at that stage too, called "the first-share of the cooking pot." Finally, when the food was served into his own plate—the vessel from which he ate—he would give a portion, the first share, from that as well. Such was the Brahmin, endowed with this noble quality.

One day, when the Buddha, having arisen from His attainment of Great Compassion, surveyed the world, He saw that both this Brahmin and his wife possessed the spiritual potential and supporting conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*) to attain the fruit of Non-Returning (*anāgāmi-phala*). Seeing this, the Buddha went to the Brahmin's house for alms on that day. At that moment, the Brahmin was eating his food right at the doorway of the house, facing the wall. The Brahmin woman was serving him food. Therefore, the Brahmin did not see that the Buddha had arrived and was standing there. The Brahmin woman saw Him. Upon seeing Him, she thought, "This Brahmin is someone who observes such a practice of giving. The moment he sees that the Ascetic Gotama has arrived, if he gives this food to the Venerable Gotama, I will have to cook again." Thinking thus, what did she do? She stood behind the Brahmin, blocking his view so that he could not see the Buddha. She hoped that the Buddha, after waiting for a while, would leave. She glanced sideways. Yet, the Buddha was still standing there. What did she do next? She was afraid to say anything loudly lest the Brahmin should hear. There was a certain word used at that time, "apiccha" or "apicchaka bhante," which means "venerable sir, please move on to another place," indicating that nothing will be received here, or rather, a way of saying "we have nothing to give." So, she felt unable to even say that word properly. What did she do then? She retreated backward a little and softly muttered the word "apiccha."

What was the Buddha's response? The Buddha shook His head, as if to say, "I will not depart from here." Seeing this, the Brahmin woman smiled. She laughed a bit out loud. At that very moment, the Buddha emanated Buddha-rays. They fell upon the wall, and the Brahmin saw this too. Seeing the Brahmin woman laughing and noticing that sign, he turned around and saw the Ascetic Gotama standing there. Then, rebuking his wife, saying, "When a son of a king is standing at the doorway, why did you not tell me?", he took the plate from which he was eating, came forward, and said, "Venerable Gotama, I have a custom of giving food at five stages. Furthermore, when I am eating, if someone arrives, I do not eat without sharing. However, I have eaten one portion of this food, dividing it from the middle. I intend to offer you the remaining portion."

Then the Buddha declared in a verse: "These sages, if someone offers a portion of food from the first, the middle, or the remainder—whichever portion it may be—they accept it; they do not engage in any praise or blame regarding it."

Yadaggato sesato vā, piṇḍaṃ labhetha paradattūpajīvī;

nālaṃ thutiṃ no pi nipaccavādī, saṃ vāpi dhīrā muniṃ vedayanti.

Thus He uttered a certain verse describing the sages. Whether it is from the choice part, the first portion, the middle, or the remainder, the sage who lives dependent on others

("paradattūpajīvī" meaning living on what is given by others) receives his alms food from any of these three parts without discrimination, and does not engage in praise or the like. That is what is meant by calling such a person a sage. Hearing this verse, the Brahmin was highly pleased, thinking: "Even though He is a king's son, He is ready to partake of food left over by another." Then he asked further, "Venerable Gotama, you refer to your disciples as 'bhikkhus'. What is the meaning of this word 'bhikkhu'?" Thus he asked the meaning of the word "bhikkhu."

At that moment, the Buddha thought: "In the time of Kassapa Buddha, this Brahmin and Brahmin woman had heard about Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*)—a certain important category of the Dhamma. Therefore, even though I am preaching to them for the first time in this life, I must preach the Dhamma in a way that reminds them of these Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas." It was with this in mind that He preached that Dhamma verse which we took as our topic.

Sabbaso nāmarūpasmiṃ yassa natthi mamāyitaṃ,

asatā ca na socati sa ve "bhikkhū"ti vuccati.

If a person has no sense of ownership (*mamāyita*), no taking as "I" or taking as "mine" in any way regarding Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), and if they do not grieve over the absence of any such thing, it is such a person who is called a "bhikkhu." This is the very brief and simple meaning that appears on the surface. Yet, there is a profoundly deep statement hidden there.

We must understand the primary meaning of this verse uttered by the Buddha before we analyze it in detail. The term Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) might be a word that many people do not understand. In fact, according to the Dhamma taught by the Buddha, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is the term used in accordance with the Dhamma for this physical frame which we call "I" and "mine," or for these two which we conventionally refer to as "mind" and "body." When one says "name" (*nāma*), one naturally thinks of an appellation or a name. However, there is a certain depth here when considered as mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*). If we consider it simply, the dhammas belonging to the category of "Name" (*nāma*) are shown as five dhammas: Feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), Contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Feeling (*vedanā*) means experiencing. Perception (*saññā*) is the recognition that arises based on that Feeling (*vedanā*). Based on those recognitions, certain volitions or expectations arise; this is known as volition (*cetanā*). Next, Contact (*phassa*) means striking or impingement. Attention (*manasikāra*) is the act of bringing to mind. These five dhammas are considered as Name-dhammas.

Next, what is considered as "Form" (*rūpa*) is not merely the common, coarse idea of visual forms seen by the eye. As Form (*rūpa*), if we consider anything that impinges upon the eye or the body as material substance, the primary elements contained in all of them—or how they are constituted—are the four primary elements: earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*), representing hardness, cohesion, heat, and

motion. What is pointed out by the category of Form (*rūpa*) is that which is derived from or dependent on these four elements. In truth, the five factors shown as Name-dhammas are what assist in "naming" or designating something. Feeling (*vedanā*), the experiencing of something; perception (*saññā*) derived from it; volition (*cetanā*) produced accordingly; a certain point of impingement directed toward oneself; and the attention directed to it—all these are maintained. It is this collection of dhammas that we take as "I" and "mine" in our daily life. Similarly, with these Form-dhammas, what lies beneath those forms are the four elements mentioned above. The Buddha pointed out these basic factors to highlight the mutual relationship between the two. Name exists dependent on Form; Form exists dependent on Name. In some places in the Dhamma, a simile is given for this. The journey of life, this journey of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), is compared to a sighted lame man riding on the shoulders of a blind man who can walk, traveling together.

The one who can walk is blind; the lame man who cannot walk has sight. It is like a journey where these two assist each other. This means that Form-dhammas are just like the blind man. The moment the mind is withdrawn—when a person dies, faints, or loses consciousness—the body just lies there like a log of wood. It is passive and inactive. These dhammas like Feeling (*vedanā*) and so on, have to be understood in relation to those elements like earth (*paṭhavī*) and so forth. For though we speak of water, fire, and wind as elements, we recognize the earth element (*paṭhavī*) by its hardness. There is a nature of experiencing whether something is hard or soft; in relation to that, one recognizes it as the earth element, just as a blind man goes and bumps into something. Once there is a collision with something, the Name-dhamma then declares, "This is such-and-such." Similarly, the water element (*āpo*) refers to that which has the nature of trickling or flowing. The nature of heating up, getting hot or warm, is called fire (*tejo*). The blowing, moving nature is called wind (*vāyo*). All of these are recognized in association with those Name-dhammas. That is why it is said that this is like a journey where the lame man and the blind man travel together. If these two assist each other, there is a certain unstable, contingent nature here. We cannot firmly grasp any of these as "I" or "mine." Taken separately, both are helpless. Such is their nature. Now, even though this is stated in words and similes in this manner, it is something that one must realize directly. It is something that each individual must realize directly in daily life. It is a Dhamma to be directly realized. It is through this direct realization that, even though the two words "I" and "mine" are used in daily convention, they do not affect one's mind-stream. This is due to that understanding, due to direct realization. Therefore, what is the path of Dhamma shown by the Buddha? In daily life, one must understand these aforesaid Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas through one's own direct experience.

If we take a simile for those Name-dhammas, we can compare Feeling (*vedanā*) to our little finger. Though small, it is with this Feeling (*vedanā*) that all activities begin. Next, perception (*saññā*) can be compared to the ring finger. Volition (*cetanā*) can be compared to the middle finger. Contact (*phassa*), which gives the idea of striking or impingement, can be compared to the index finger. Attention (*manasikāra*), which is bringing to mind, can be compared to the thumb. If taken thus, the Buddha declares that

the chief factor that helps in understanding these Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas is not just anything. We know that the thumb stands apart from the other four fingers. It stands away from them, yet this thumb can touch and identify all other four fingers, and works in coordination with them. To use an analogy of standing apart and giving evidence: in certain court cases, when there is no one to give evidence, one of the criminals themselves is pardoned and used to give state evidence. By the time that person finishes giving evidence, he too is caught and exposed, but somehow the case is proven. Similarly, these Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas cannot be understood through something external. That is why the Buddha, in a most marvelous way as a middle path, singled out this attention (*manasikāra*)—bringing to mind—as the primary factor. It is through this attention, through insight-attention (*vipassanā-manasikāra*), that these Name-dhammas can be understood in daily life.

In the ordinary world, this attention is applied in an unwise manner (*ayoniso*). Attention is applied wrongly, in a way that increases defilements. The ordinary worldly person brings things to mind in a way that prolongs the journey in saṃsāra and brings ignorance to the forefront. The Buddha pointed out to apply this as Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), to bring things to mind in the correct manner. Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means that if this tangle of saṃsāra arises in some way, one directs attention right to the place where it arises, to its headquarters, and reflects upon it. Where do they arise? From this very mind, not from external things. We know that when a snake bites, we do not run after the snake. We treat the spot where the venom entered before it spreads. Similarly, in our daily life, when something strikes our body or impinges on our mind, what is done in the external world—as in physical sciences today—is that they pursue their ends in an unwise and incorrect manner, seeking their outer limits. One can never escape saṃsāra in that manner. What the Buddha points out is *yoniso* (wise and radical). One must direct the mind to the very place where they arise, look backward, reflect, review, contemplate, and comprehend their Dhamma nature. If one comprehends the Dhamma nature in any place, what arises there is equanimity (*upekkhā*). Based on that equanimity, one can gain the realization of things. That is where the secret lies. This attention, or rather Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), is like the operation of that thumb. Next, applying that attention, one recognizes how Feelings (*vedanā*) come and go in their respective ways. Not a single Feeling (*vedanā*) can be taken as "I." In daily life, one can realize that no matter what pleasant Feeling (*vedanā*) or painful Feeling (*vedanā*) arises, when one keeps watching it, it is seen to arise and pass away. It is the same with perception (*saññā*). It is the same with volition (*cetanā*). It is the same with Contact (*phassa*). And in the end, attention (bringing to mind) too. Only at the very end is that caught. It is a profoundly deep matter, a subtle matter. To understand this subtle matter, in meditation, one is instructed that this bringing to mind must be done in an extremely pure and rapid manner.

In our daily life, there are six places where we have to apply this bringing to mind. There are six doors or gateways: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind (*mana*). "Mana" means the mind, the intellect. There are objects that come to these: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and ideas (*dhamma*). Tangible objects are referred to as "phoṭṭhabba"—

things to be touched. Next, things that come to the mind are called "dhamma." We call them mind-objects. The object of the eye is form; the object of the ear is sound. Viewed in this way, the object of the mind is the thought. This is an extremely subtle thing. A thought comes to the mind. One constantly sees that there is something subtle here. What came to the mind was a thought, a state of mind. Thus, if one wishes to realize this fact directly, what must be done at every presentation: if one aspires for Nibbāna in daily life, it is done in one way; if one intends to remain in saṃsāra, it can be done in another way, by continuing to bring things to mind in that ignorant manner. What does the meditator (*yogāvacara*) who aspires for Nibbāna do? In brief, upon seeing something, instead of letting the mind run along its details, its color patterns, and the gratification to be derived from it, he brings it to mind as "a form, a form." What assists in that bringing to mind is mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*)—mindful wisdom.

In daily life, what is shown in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*)—mindful wisdom. Mindfulness and awareness; an awareness that goes hand-in-hand with mindfulness. One understands the Dhamma nature, realizing "this is this." One understands it very rapidly, in brief, in summary. Thus, "a form, a form." No matter how much one analyzes it, no matter how much the mind runs around it, what is here is only a form. Merely a simple color configuration. In fact, it is like a picture projected on the screen of the eye. The form seen by this eye is like a projected image on a screen. Even when thought of in terms of medical science, the image falling on this eye, the shadow, is actually cast upside down. In whatever manner, it is an image falling on the screen of the eye.

Next, in the ear. When thinking of this ear, everyone knows there is something called the eardrum. We listen to the sounds of drums, but we very rarely listen to the sound coming from our own eardrum. We consider the drum sounds coming from around us as highly pleasing and we listen to them. However, there is a most valuable drum in this ear to which we should actually direct our attention. If we listen to this eardrum, all we have to apprehend there is just a sound. A series of vibrations, a series of movements arising with the assistance of the wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*). This, then, can be sweet or harsh. Be it sweet or harsh, it is merely a sound. So, the insight meditator brings it to mind briefly as "a sound, a sound" and stops the mind right there. If the mind runs far, then indeed there is the entanglement—the entanglement of saṃsāra. Then, the faint shadow that barely arrived is painted well and begins to be perceived as an object, something to be firmly grasped with Craving (*taṇhā*). The mind creates all of this. This is a wondrous thing. That is why the Buddha declared: "Mind precedes all dhammas, mind is chief, they are mind-made." Mind is the forerunner of all things. Mind is supreme. It is by the mind itself that these are created. The ordinary worldly person does not consider that these are created by the mind itself. They consider Form-dhammas as things existing entirely separately in the world.

Yet, just as we spoke of the lame man and the blind man, we comprehend these Form-dhammas through the mind as well. Therefore, the Buddha gives foremost place to the mind. For it is when we direct the mind to the very place where these arise, in association

with this mind, that we can escape from this dense darkness of ignorance and free ourselves from that terrifying bond, the fetter called Craving (*taṇhā*), and attain liberation from saṃsāra. Thus, to the meditator who has begun this attention in this manner, as he brings it to mind rapidly, again and again, what is understood here? That all these things are of a nature to break up and disintegrate. Things that have the nature of arising and passing away. That is what is meant by "udayabbaya" (arising and passing away). They arise and pass away, like the sun rising and setting. Every single thing, whether a sound or a form, has this nature of arising and passing away. When this is rapidly brought to mind, it is understood more clearly that these are things that are breaking up, moment by moment.

Within things that are continuously breaking up, there is nothing to grasp anymore. There is nothing worthy of taking as an object. When that is understood, what does the meditator do next? He refines that bringing to mind even further, making it more subtle. To designate the things we encounter in daily life, we constantly use the words "I" and "mine." Among these things, there are things we can grasp with our hands, and things we can grasp with our mind. And those things grasped by the mind are sometimes far more difficult to let go of than those grasped by the hand. In truth, every single thing is grasped by the mind. Then, to the things that assist in this mental grasping, we apply the name "things." That is what is called "objects." To the insight meditator who brings this to mind rapidly, it is finally realized directly that if things are breaking up moment by moment, they cannot even be considered as "a thing." Next, he brings to mind: "Here, there is only a seeing." Instead of a "form," there is only a seeing, or a registering of sight on the screen of the eye; a vision, in that manner.

Similarly, instead of saying "a sound," he notes it as "a hearing." A seeing, a seeing. A hearing, a hearing. There is no sound here; just a hearing. Here, there is only a sound striking the eardrum. Similarly, with the body, tongue, and nose, it is just "a sensing." Very briefly, what comes to the body, tongue, or nose is regarded as just a sensing. Next, what comes to the mind is just "a thinking." There is no basis to take them as two things like "mind" and "thought." It is just a thinking. In this way, here there are only bare activities. In the end, this transforms into bare activities, like the flowing of a river. These are all minds arising and passing away; by that stage, this person's level of ignorance is largely removed. In that way, the tendency to firmly grasp in terms of Craving (*taṇhā*) and Grasping (*upādāna*), which was in the mind, carried over through saṃsāra, has dried up to a great extent. It is to the person who develops the mind in this manner that, gradually, through the stages of insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), the mind is developed, and even the paths and fruits such as Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmitā*), and Non-returning (*Anāgāmitā*) can be directly realized.

When reflecting in this manner, even someone who has not directly realized the Dhamma in daily life can understand that, according to the Dhamma, this is a causal process, something based on causes. Now, regarding this understanding of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas, one might wonder: how did that Brahmin and his wife, who held wrong views, understand this in the context of giving alms? Although we

cannot fully explain the depth of this in every aspect, we can appreciate to some extent its causal validity. One reason is that since the time of Kassapa Buddha, those two had been fulfilling wholesome qualities (*kusala-dhamma*) and traveling together. At this particular moment, the Brahmin woman's mind experienced a certain disturbance. Because she would have to cook again, she wanted to turn the Buddha away from there. Yet, if these two had cultivated the habit of giving alms from their harvest at five stages in this manner, those alms too were foremost offerings. Generally, it is the nature of worldly people to keep the first portion for themselves. For a long period, they had trained themselves to give the foremost portion of what they claimed as theirs to others at five stages. This is a great saṃsāric strength.

It must have been on the basis of the mind that arose at that moment that the Buddha preached this Dhamma. Indeed, you devotees must also realize that this has given us a wonderful opportunity to reflect deeply on the meritorious deeds we perform in our daily lives. This giving of alms, serving of food, and so forth, are things that all of you devotees know and perform. In daily life too, you practice generosity to a greater or lesser degree. However, when making those offerings, what is often done? You think of the benefits of that giving in a very superficial way, such as: "We will receive a hundred-thousand-fold of what we give, or we can gain heavenly pleasures." But when the Buddha spoke of the benefits of giving, in the truest and deepest sense, He stated: *"cittālaṅkāraṃ cittaparikkhāratthaṃ dānaṃ deti"*—one gives alms for the adornment of the mind, and for the requisite equipment of the mind. "Parikkhāra" (requisites) refers to the things necessary for the growth of the mind. Alms should be given to provide the requisites for the mind.

That is how the benefits of giving, or the ultimate purpose of giving alms, is expressed in its deepest sense. The mind is adorned through concentration (*samādhi*). It is explained in the Dhamma that when the mind becomes tranquil through serenity (*samatha*), that state of composure, by becoming concentrated, adorns the mind. Just as before applying varnish to a wooden plank, one must first plane and smooth it properly; otherwise, that varnish is of no use. In the same way, the mind is adorned by becoming tranquil and concentrated. What is to be done here is that at the moment of giving, one must look—one must actually turn back and look at one's own mind. If one directs the mind back to the object given, and if there is still some desire for it—even a fraction of desire—one might regret it, sighing, "Ah! If only I had used this in another way, it would have been more useful." Then, the mind falls and sinks. Or else, one directs the mind to the resident monk who accepted it, or to various other things, letting the mind wander externally. Instead of that, what must be done is to look at the mind itself.

What happened at the moment of giving? Something that had been thought of as "I" and "mine"... perhaps something that was thought to be completely impossible to give away. It might be the food on which one was to survive after being hungry for several days. Or it might be a possession acquired with extreme difficulty. When giving something that is generally difficult to give, or when describing a miser, there is a worldly saying: "It is like breaking a bone from one's body when letting go of something." Breaking a bone from one's body is no small matter. There are people who regard giving in that way. That is

how it appears to a miserly mind. But to one filled with the wholesome volition of giving and generosity, it is something that can be done with great ease. What takes place there? That notion of taking as "I" and "mine" can be let go of very easily. That strength to let go instantly—this must have been the habit that these two Brahmins, the Pañcaggadāyakas, carried over from saṃsāra.

What the Buddha did was to introduce that term Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) through that very habit. Since they also had the habit of having heard it before, these two looked next not at the Buddha, but at their own minds. The Brahmin woman must have seen her own mind. Now, in giving alms, that is something that commonly happens, something that has happened to worldly people. A falling and sinking of the mind occurs. There is a nature of the mind flipping over. The mind is something that constantly flips. It is easier for it to flip toward the unwholesome. For a long time in saṃsāra, it is this flipping toward the unwholesome that has occurred. Therefore, this is something that must be done with great care. When serving this alms food, you devotees are very careful to serve it in a way that it does not spill on the body or go to waste. That is good, but in the same way, one must mindfully consider with care: "Is my mind scattering? Is my mind flipping to one side?" One must think in that manner. It is when one trains in that manner that even Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas can be understood in association with it.

In the way that was thought of as breaking a bone from the body, let us say one was eating this delicious food just now. There is Feeling (*vedanā*) there. The food touching the tongue—it was a portion of that which the Brahmin offered to the Buddha. Accordingly, that sense of "mine" was present there. Regarding the food taken for one's own consumption, for eating, it is seen as: "This is the food that is soon to go into my stomach. This is indeed me"—that is how it is taken next. We go to take this food. Next, we return having taken food. What happens within that? "It was I who went to take food; it was I who returned after taking food." Even if we weigh the difference in between, the only difference is that compared to the weight when going, the weight has now increased by the added food. This means, "Now this is my weight." What does that mean? The food that was taken has become "me." Therefore, it is a part of "me" that is being let go here. The Brahmin offered half of the plate of food he was eating to the Buddha. This is no small thing.

This is something performed frequently not only by that Brahmin but also by you devotees. However, one must comprehend its Dhamma nature. This is not about thinking: "This is a custom, a custom observed by other neighbors; if we do not give, they will be angry; through this we can go to heaven." There is something far deeper that must be done at the moment of giving. What is it? This is indeed a highly valuable opportunity to witness the moment when the ownership (*mamāyita*), the taking as "I" and "mine" regarding those Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas, is broken. If one looks at the mind: "What I had taken as 'I' and 'mine' up to now, I have now given away with great ease." To the devotee who has developed wholesome qualities such as faith and that spirit of generosity, the realization of the paths and fruits can be easily attained through this very opportunity, by watching the flipping mind and correcting it so that it does not flip.

The mind at three points: before giving, at the moment of giving, and after having given. Through each of these, one prepares and tranquilizes the mind. Without letting the mind scatter, one concentrates it. Developing faith regarding the Saṅgha, or in the case of a Buddha-pūjā, regarding the Buddha. Through those, one cultivates concentration. What is done next is attention (*manasikāra*). There, one applies attention. One applies bringing to mind with wisdom—wisely, in a Wise (*yoniso*) manner. One looks back. Within this thought, or rather, what is present here—one reflects upon its Dhamma nature. One allows that thumb to touch and examine the little finger. Next, to touch the ring finger. Then, the middle finger, the index finger—one reflects on these and understands their nature. Then, it is seen that the perception of pleasure (*sukha-saññā*) that was previously there regarding the food has now departed. It has turned into equanimity (*upekkhā*). Having turned it into equanimity, one gave it. Similarly, if there was a perception regarding them, such as "To whom am I giving my packet of rice?", that pleasure departed. The volition ceased. The pleasant Contact (*phassa*) associated with it—every single one of them was removed.

Through that, this person experiences a spiritual joy (*nirāmisa-pīti*). Within that spiritual joy, the mind becomes stilled and composed. Next, to gain the correct understanding of something based on that Dhamma nature, on that equanimity, the mind must be brought to a state of equanimity. Removing it from attraction and repulsion, bringing it to the state of equanimity. Reflecting on the Dhamma nature is extremely helpful for that. What is here in this Feeling (*vedanā*) is not something to be taken as "I" and "mine." Among the Name-dhammas, this is seen in Feeling (*vedanā*). What is called Feeling (*vedanā*) is sometimes present as pleasant Feeling (*vedanā*). Sometimes as neutral Feeling (*vedanā*). Sometimes as painful Feeling (*vedanā*). Flipping to either side of these, the middle state is called equanimity. It is always mostly between pleasure and pain. It is exactly the same with regard to the others as well.

It is by dividing up these Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas, grasping them as "I" and "mine," and through this ignorance, that worldly beings prolong saṃsāra. Then, another point right here is that, as we mentioned, when insight meditation is developed, particularly if indicated in terms of knowledges (*ñāṇa*), it proceeds by way of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*), dissolution (*bhaṅga*), and so forth. "Udayabbaya" means the wisdom that sees arising and passing away. When that is developed and understood rapidly, what is next understood most clearly is dissolution (*bhaṅga*) itself. Here there is nothing to grasp anymore. Once things begin to break up and dissolve, there is nothing to be regarded as "a thing."

Next, one brings this to mind as bare activity (*kiriyā-mātra*). As "a seeing," "a hearing," "a sensing," "a thinking," and so on. What happens by doing so? If we reflect deeply, all this while in saṃsāra, as we said before, we have been taking things in the world as "a thing." Just as we say "I" and "mine" in daily life, we cannot avoid using the term "a thing." These things are not always things we can grasp with our hands. Often, they are things grasped by the mind. Even more difficult for many than letting go of things grasped by the hand, is letting go of things grasped by the mind—such as views (*diṭṭhi*).

In that way, various things are difficult to let go of. We refer to them as "things." The "thing-ness" of those things we call "things" must disappear. That is called the signless (*animitta*). Signs (*nimitta*). Another word for mind-objects is signs. It is said "taking signs." A sign. One takes a sign in everything.

That sign is a perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). It goes hand-in-hand with perception. A perception of permanence in everything. Thus, there is this taking of signs in the world. It is precisely this taking of signs that turns out badly for us even at the moment of death. Something, such as a sign of kamma (*kamma-nimitta*) or a sign of destination (*gati-nimitta*), comes to the mind at that final moment. Ignorance and the sense of "I" and "mine" are present. Craving (*taṇhā*) is present. The desire to grasp is present. Next, one firmly grasps whatever is presented according to kamma. At that moment of death, wherever that grasping occurs—be it a mother's womb, the flames of hell, or the womb of an animal—because one wants to continue this "I" and "mine" continuously, the mind grasps it. One turns it into "a thing." Behold, there is this nature of grasping signs in the mind. This must be broken. It is precisely to break this that the Buddha preached the teaching of the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), which we briefly consider as Impermanent (*anicca*), Suffering (*dukkha*), and Non-self (*anattā*).

What is meant by Impermanent (*anicca*), Suffering (*dukkha*), and Non-self (*anattā*)? The sign of permanence is broken right there by contemplating it as Impermanent (*anicca*). Generally, the impermanence of all these things remains hidden. The mind is not directed toward it. For throughout a long time in saṃsāra, what we have done is watch the sun rise; we do not like to watch the sun set. We buy new clothes, but we do not think about what happened to the old clothes. We eat fresh food, but we do not think of the fate of the food eaten yesterday. Worldly people have a nature of covering all of that up. Craving (*taṇhā*) is always "ponobhavikā"—meaning, leading to renewed existence. It looks at new arisings again and again; it constructs and reconstructs Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), but does not like to look at what is decayed. Such a nature exists in the world. Therefore, impermanence is hidden. The breaking-up nature is hidden. We easily forget the fact of disintegration. Therefore, one must look at this nature of arising and passing away in an impartial, objective manner. The mind is trained for that.

It is through bringing to mind the nature of arising and passing away that one sees impermanence. As the bringing to mind increases, gradually this disintegration begins to be seen at an extremely rapid pace. When it is seen thus, one begins to clearly understand how the mind operates within these, in a way that helps the maturity of those insight-knowledges. At that point, the things taken as objects dissolve away. They dissolve. They are no longer registered by the mind. Even though others, the worldly people, take them as "things," to one's mind they are felt only as rapidly dissolving processes, bare activities. It is by training the mind in this manner that the defilement of ignorance, accumulated over a long time in saṃsāra, can be broken at four stages.

A fact mentioned regarding the Stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*) is... Without the wise reflection called Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), what have we done through

unwise attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*)—unwise reflection—over an extremely long period in saṃsāra? We have gathered five massive heaps, so large that they cannot be exhausted. A heap of Form, a heap of Feeling (*vedanā*), a heap of perception, a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), a heap of Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). That is what is called the Five Aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). The five heaps that are grasped are called the Five Aggregates of Grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). These five heaps were formed precisely because that bringing to mind was done incorrectly. Instead of perceiving them in accordance with the Three Characteristics of Impermanent (*anicca*), Suffering (*dukkha*), and Non-self (*anattā*), what has happened to us through looking at the world with the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*), the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*), the perception of pleasure (*sukha-saññā*), and the perception of self (*atta-saññā*) is that those heaps accumulated.

If these heaps are to be thinned out, they must be seen as Impermanent (*anicca*), Suffering (*dukkha*), and Non-self (*anattā*). In their being seen thus, gradually, it is realized that there is nothing in the world worthy of being regarded as "a thing." In the end, the emptiness of the world—generally, if one says this to someone, they might laugh. "When there are so many things to see and hear in the world, how can you say the world is empty, a void (*suñña*)?" Worldly people are afraid of even the word "void" (*suñña*). Yet, as the Buddha declared, this is not something that can be shown to another through various exhibitions. It is something to be known and realized directly by each person, according to their own wisdom. What the insight meditator does by directing that beam of light called attention (*manasikāra*) is like bringing light to a dark place, whereby darkness disappears. Similarly, due to that darkness, when we grope in the dark, whatever we touch, we take as "a thing." Later, when we look, it is not what we thought it was. In the same way, due to groping in this manner for a long time in saṃsāra, a massive heap of "things" has accumulated within the mind.

It is this attention (*manasikāra*) that helps break down even those concepts (*paññatti*) conventionally taken as "things." When that beam of light is applied, through that attention, these are seen to have holes and gaps—a multitude of arisings and passings away. A lamp flame appears to us from afar as a single continuous thing. Or when looking at a waterfall from afar, it appears like a silver wall. Yet, when looking closely, there is an extremely rapid activity, a state of constant breaking-up. This is what must be understood, what must be realized directly. Through such direct realization, gradually those insight-knowledges mature, and even the dawning of Stream-entry takes place. Up to then, the Dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) was held. "This form is mine. Or, I am inside form. Or, I am one who possesses form. Or, form is inside me." In these four ways, worldly people take this form as a self. It is the same with Feeling (*vedanā*). "This Feeling (*vedanā*) is mine; this Feeling (*vedanā*) is I; Feeling (*vedanā*) is in me; or, I am in Feeling (*vedanā*)." In that very way, they think about the mind too—Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). "This Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is I. Or, I am inside Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is in me. Or, I am one who possesses Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)."

In this way, as we said at the very beginning, "I" and "mine" are two words extremely pleasing to worldly people. Two words they cannot avoid using. Within that lies the secret of the entire saṃsāra. Therefore, we do not need to go home today and, just because we cannot use those words, stop saying "I" and "mine" and instead say, "The Five Aggregates have arrived; I shall feed the Five Aggregates." Or say, "Two Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas have arrived..." Rather, one must apply the attention necessary to break the concept one has formed within. It is something that each person must realize directly through the beam of light of attention. That is what is meant by recognizing those Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas.

This is not something to be learned in daily life merely by listening to a sermon or reading a book. With one's own effort, directing and linking these to daily life, one must understand these six sense bases called the Six Sense Bases (*saḷāyatana*). There may be people here who work in various conventional institutions (*āyatana*), thinking about those institutions and their salaries. Yet, there are six bases (*āyatana*) in which every single one of us has to work. Those are what are called the Six Sense Bases (*saḷāyatana*): eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Everyone performs work in these six bases. Insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) is the proper understanding of the work done within these six bases.

Upon seeing a certain form, letting oneself get entangled by thinking in complex ways with attraction and repulsion along its color configurations, and creating a massive web of confusion—that indeed is messing up the work in the eye-base. Instead, what does the insight meditator do? He brings it to mind as "a form, a form" and stops right there. Even in an office, we know that if a manager tries to pursue every incoming matter to its ultimate conclusion, he cannot remain in that seat. Instead, he signs what is necessary, approves it, and files that folder away. The document folder is filed. In the same way, bringing this seen thing to mind once or twice as "a form, a form," he files it and puts it aside. If a sound is heard, without pursuing it far by asking "Where did this sound come from? Whose song is this? Who said this?", the meditator files it as "a sound" and puts it aside. In that very manner, without getting attracted or repelled by a smell or fragrance, it is just noted as something sensed by the nose.

Similarly, when considering them as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas, what is present here is some Feeling (*vedanā*)—this is that little finger. Next, this is the ring finger; this is the middle finger; this is the index finger—and the thumb is what does all of this. In the end, as we said, in a case of murder where there is no evidence, one of the murderers themselves is pardoned by the state, pardoned by the court, and his evidence is taken. Finally, when the case is proven, if the truth is spoken, it is revealed that he too was involved in it. In the same way, what is revealed in the end is this attention (*manasikāra*). At the point where we divided attention, mind, and thought, there is a wondrous subtlety. When looked at in the end, there is nothing to be taken here. It is understood as void and empty.

The Impermanent (*anicca*), Suffering (*dukkha*), and Non-self (*anattā*) are shown in another way in the Dhamma as the gateways to Nibbāna. The meaning of this is the

doors of liberation (*vimokkha-mukha*) that help realize Nibbāna—meaning, deliverance or freedom. The word "freedom" is used in various senses in this day and age. But we know that the true liberation is liberation from saṃsāra. The Buddha has pointed out three gateways that assist in this liberation from saṃsāra, which may differ according to the temperament of each individual. Whichever gateway one enters through, one arrives at Nibbāna.

What are those three gateways? They are shown as the signless (*animitta*), the desireless (*appaṇihita*), and the void (*suññata*). We mentioned "the sign" (*nimitta*) earlier too. Taking signs is done in accordance with the perception of permanence. Where that perception of permanence is broken, reflecting as Impermanent (*anicca*) culminates in the signless (*animitta*). The Buddha declared that the person who develops the perception of impermanence over a long time and develops insight along that path, as he approaches Nibbāna, arrives there through the gateway called the door of liberation of the signless (*animitta-vimokkha-mukha*).

Similarly, Suffering (*dukkha*). Reflecting on the suffering of the world, of this saṃsāra, can vary according to the individual. It can differ based on saṃsāric habituation. To some, suffering is understood more clearly. To some, the impermanent nature is understood more clearly. To another, the non-self nature is understood. Then, to the person who reflected on attention in accordance with suffering, as he approaches the door of Nibbāna, it is designated as the desireless (*appaṇihita*). For "pranidhi" (directed resolve) means aspiration or prayer. It is like saying one made a resolve for Buddhahood. We have some aspiration or directed resolve for something. We direct our mind toward something. Directing the mind toward something with Craving (*taṇhā*) and desire is called "pranidhi." So, the more one looks at its painful and unsatisfactory nature, the less room there is here for Craving (*taṇhā*). There is no room for desire, no foundation for it. That is what is meant by "appaṇihita" (the undirected or desireless). Thus, in that manner, that is the other gateway to Nibbāna.

Next, similarly, to the one who reflects on the non-self nature, this is understood as empty, as void, as Non-self (*anattā*). Those with abundant wisdom usually contemplate the aspect of Non-self (*anattā*). In whatever way, what helps all of them is reflecting on those aforesaid Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas in a manner suited to each meditator in accordance with the Dhamma.

Now, based on this, for you devotees—this is indeed a deep verse, we cannot hide that fact. Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) dhammas are a profound matter. Yet, even a matter of this nature, that Brahmin and Brahmin woman who held wrong views, by hearing just that one verse—or perhaps the Buddha preached a few more explanatory words related to that verse—understood. About non-attachment to this Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Yet, it could not have been a very long sermon. By listening to it, they did not merely become Stream-entrants, nor Once-returners; they went all the way to the state of Non-returning (*Anāgāmī*). Therefore, we must consider that these potentials may exist not only within that Brahmin and Brahmin woman, but within us as well. This is an era where the decline of the Sāsana is occurring, in a way that makes us think it is the final

era of this Dispensation. However, without letting the mind grow weak by that alone, you devotees must strive to gain the maximum results and benefits from insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) through these Dhamma matters, before this Buddha Sāsana comes to an end.

Therefore, even at the moment of serving alms, in the manner said as "giving for the adornment of the mind," one must perform it without defiling the mind by thinking about the money spent on that alms-giving, or that we gave more generously than others, or that "through this, I must go to heaven." If, in association with that alms-giving, one can rejoice: "The ignorance and craving that had arisen in my mind have been thinned out in this manner at this moment of giving." "I saw the impermanence of these dhammas. I understood that the notion of 'I' and 'mine' has no foundation here"—if you devotees can find joy in that, Nibbāna is right there in that spoonful of rice.

You devotees, then, listened to this Dhamma for about an hour on this valuable Poya day. Generally, at the end of a Dhamma sermon, when transferring merits and indicating the beneficial aspect of these deeds, we easily say, "Through the benefit of listening to the Dhamma, may you realize the deathless noble Nibbāna!" It would be far better if you devotees reflect, as was said regarding the giving of alms, on what benefits were received at this moment. Faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are the dhammas that assist in Nibbāna. Among the Thirty-seven Requisites of Enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*), you have secured opportunities to arouse or develop these dhammas within your own mind-stream, which are shown as the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and spiritual powers (*bala*). With faith toward the Triple Gem, sitting faithfully in this Bodhi-court, you listened to the Dhamma with faith. Accordingly, energy was present in directing the mind to this. Various defiled thoughts could have flooded in. Dispelling them and listening to this Dhamma, you utilized energy. Next, if you listened to it while bringing it to mind word by word, mindfulness was developed thereby. Next, through that, by reflecting on the Dhamma as Dhamma-contemplation (*dhammānussati*), gladdening the mind with faith, if a certain level of concentration arose, then concentration was established. Next, it was a Dhamma verse accessible to your own wisdom that we analyzed. In association with that, utilizing the wholesome practices of giving, virtue, and meditation (*dāna*, *sīla*, *bhāvanā*) that you have developed up to now, and utilizing your supporting conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*), if anyone experienced deep Dhamma understandings through this sermon, that assists in wisdom (*paññā*). Furthermore, this is a wonderful opportunity to develop those spiritual faculties. If, through the benefit of listening to the Dhamma, someone can attain this noble Nibbāna not in the future, but at this very moment, that indeed is something extremely valuable. Therefore, by traveling on this path of Dhamma, we wish that you devotees may gain the strength and power to escape from this terrifying saṃsāra in this very life—at least by escaping the four planes of misery at the stage of Stream-entry, or otherwise by escaping the entirety of saṃsāra, eradicating all defilements through the knowledge of the Path of Arahatship, and finding peace in the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna.

Similarly, we must now reflect that although invisible to us, the assembly of deities and Brahmas who protect the Dispensation lend a hand to these Sasana activities of ours. Reflecting in that manner, with the aspiration that we may continue to receive protection and organization from them for our Sasana activities in the future, and that if those deities and Brahmas aspire to any Enlightenment—whether as a Buddha, a Pacceka-Buddha, or an Arahat—they too may utilize these benefits of listening to the Dhamma in that very manner, let us share these merits with the deities. Furthermore, from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, including all our departed relatives such as parents, whoever desires Nibbāna or desires merits, may all of them rejoice in these merits. Having rejoiced, may they be delivered from this terrifying saṃsāra and find peace in the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna. With that aspiration, let us share the merits by reciting the verse.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #87

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.36)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Gāme vā yadi vāraññe, ninne vā yadi vā thale,

Yattha arahanto viharanti, taṃ bhūmiṃ rāmaṇeyyakaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 98 (Arahantavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Today is the Duruthu Full Moon Poya day. You all know that there is a special significance to this Duruthu Poya. The beginning of the year, exactly on the first of January, coincides with this Poya day. Looking at the year, this is one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine (1999). It is the year that marks the end of a century. Considering it from all aspects, we can regard this as a decisive year. Whether we look at it as the end of a century or consider the various decadent forces affecting our lives, this is in a way a decisive year. For, despite advancements in various sciences and technologies, when we think of the mental atmosphere of man, when we think of the mental environment, various decadent forces have come forward, making us think that this era is one in which the entire human race is heading towards a precipice of decline. There is a common saying in society about "escaping by ninety-nine" (a narrow escape). Likewise, at the very least, it is good for you all to make a resolution on this valuable day that we must escape from these forces of decline, even by ninety-nine.

Generally, when worldly beings, ordinary worldly beings, think about their own well-being, protection, and the smooth running of their lives, we see that they pay great attention to the physical environment. Now, especially in this era, there is a great awakening regarding the environment, and we often hear society talking about environmental protection. However, most of these people talk only about the physical environment. Now, to assist in protecting this environment, there is what is called environmental science, environmental engineering, and so forth. In those fields, much attention is focused on trees and plants, geographical features, the general atmosphere, and such matters.

But the Buddha presented a novel concept to this environmental science: the mental environment, the mental atmosphere. That is the very point mentioned in the *Maṅgala Sutta*, which you frequently practice and recite: *"Patirūpadesavāso ca"*—dwelling in a suitable locality. How this suitable locality is measured in terms of geographical features is something that any ordinary worldly person can easily understand. But what the Buddha meant here by *patirūpadesavāsa* is the mental atmosphere. The Buddha declared in the *Maṅgala Sutta* that a righteous atmosphere, an environment suitable for maintaining righteous thoughts and aspirations, is what is fit for human habitation.

In that manner, in the verse we have chosen as our theme, the Buddha presents an important concept regarding this environmental science. That is, how a certain land becomes delightful. This is something that all of us Buddhists should ponder upon. It is a matter worthy of attention. Because when we consider the mental atmosphere, this is an era where various adverse forces and toxic fumes of wrong views are flowing in. In such a situation, we must direct our minds to a verse preached by the Buddha regarding this mental environment on a decisive day like today. The incident, the story, the background story (*nidāna-kathā*) that led to the preaching of this verse is very exemplary. All of you know about the chief disciple, Ven. Sāriputta. After he was ordained, he also gave ordination in the Dispensation to his three sisters, Cālā, Upacālā, and Sīsūpacālā. Next, he ordained two other brothers, Canda and Upasena. Finally, only the young child named Revata was left in the family. Then, the mother, a brahmin woman—this was a non-Buddhist family—thought, "This Upatissa has gone forth; not only did he ordain himself, but he also got my three daughters ordained. He also got my two sons ordained. Only Revata is left. If this child is also ordained, this lineage will be destroyed. Our wealth will also be confiscated by the king." Thinking thus, she resolved that somehow, while he was still at a tender age, she must bind him through household bonds and marriage bonds.

Anticipating this matter, as if by hint, the highly wise Ven. Sāriputta had issued a directive, like a command, to the Sangha beforehand: "If at any time this Revata comes with the intention of ordaining, there is no need to trouble yourselves by asking his parents again. Ordain him immediately. There is no use in asking those heretical parents; I myself am that child's father and mother." He had made such an announcement and notification to the Sangha. Meanwhile, that mother arranged a marriage proposal for this seven-year-old boy, this seven-year-old young child. You all know well that even up to this day, child marriage is something that happens very often in India. Having selected a girl of similar age and similar caste for this seven-year-old child, and having fixed a date, they dressed this child in wedding attire and took him to the wedding. At the wedding ceremony, as part of the proceedings during the blessings, the relatives blessed the young bride saying, "May you be like the grandmother, may you obtain the grandmother's wealth of experience, and may you have a long life; may you live for a long time." Then, this child Revata asked, "Who is this grandmother you speak of?" Then the relatives pointed out, "Why, can't you see? There she is, about a hundred and twenty years old, completely weakened by decay and aging (*jarā*), with wrinkled

skin, gray hair, bent body, bent like the rafters of a roof—don't you see that motherly figure? That is the grandmother."

Then this child asked, "Will my bride here also become like this in the future?" "Yes, child. If she grows old like that, she will become just like that." Then this child thought, "It is because he knew this fact that my brother Upatissa must have gone forth. Now, therefore, I must escape this very day." Thus he made a firm resolution. After the wedding festival, the party put the young child-couple in a chariot and was bringing them back home through a forest. While they were being escorted, in the middle of the forest, this child said, "I need to perform bodily functions"—meaning he had a need to use the toilet—and got down from the chariot. Having got down, he stayed near a bush for a short while and got back in. Having gone a little further, he pretended to be unwell in the same manner and did this several times. The relatives thought it must be some kind of indigestion and did not get too worried about his getting down from the chariot. After a while, this bridegroom child said, "You all go ahead quickly with the chariot. I will follow behind."

Having let the chariot go ahead in that manner, what this child did was pretend to go behind a bush, and then ran swiftly to a nearby forest monastery where about thirty monks resided, and running up to them, said, "Venerable Sirs, Venerable Sirs, please ordain me." "How can we ordain you, child? How do we know if you are a royal child or a minister's son, dressed in such expensive clothes and ornaments?" When they said this, he replied, "Why, don't you recognize me? I am Upatissa's younger brother." Then they asked, "Who is Upatissa?" Then this child said, "You Venerable Sirs call our elder brother 'Sāriputta'. That is why you do not know the name Upatissa. I am Upatissa's youngest brother." Then those monks said, "If that is so, come, we will ordain you. That Venerable Sir has given us permission beforehand." Saying this, they removed his wedding garments, shaved his head, and ordained him.

After ordaining him, they sent a message to Ven. Sāriputta about this matter. Hearing this, Ven. Sāriputta went to the Buddha and asked for permission, saying, "I received news that Revata has been ordained in this manner; I too should go and visit that area." The Buddha said, "Do not be in a hurry, Sāriputta, wait a little." After a few more days, Ven. Sāriputta again asked the Buddha for permission. The Buddha stated on that occasion too, "No, no, we too are intending to go. There is no need to go right now." While delay was being made in this manner, what did the young novice Revata do? He thought, "If I stay here, my relatives will come searching for me and drag me back. Therefore, I must flee." That is, not simply flee, but go to a distant region. So, taking meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and obtaining instructions from those monks to guide him all the way to Arahantship, he set out on tour and traveled many leagues (*yojanas*) away to an Acacia forest (Khadiravana). Having arrived, he spent the rainy season (*vassa*) in that forest. Within those three months of the rainy season, this young novice attained the state of a great Arahant possessing the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*) and great psychic powers (*iddhi*). Such was the power of his past merit.

Meanwhile, once the rainy season was over, Ven. Sāriputta again went to the Buddha and asked for permission, saying he wished to go and see Revata. Then the Buddha said, "We too are coming," and prepared to go to the Acacia forest where the young monk Revata was, taking five hundred monks along. After traveling some distance, Ven. Ānanda came to a junction where the road split in two and said to the Buddha, "Blessed One, the road going this way is a long road. That is, it goes through human habitations, through villages and market towns. It is sixty leagues (*yojanas*) long. There is also a short road, which goes through the wilderness. By which path do you wish to travel?" The Buddha asked Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, is Sīvalī in this assembly?" "Yes, Venerable Sir," he replied. "Ah, then, if Sīvalī is here, let us go by the short route," he said. Even if others do not know the reason, you, devout listeners, know Ven. Sīvalī. You know the reason. Often, in households, sometimes even more prominence than the Buddha's image is given to Ven. Sīvalī. You know the reason for that too. Ven. Sīvalī was foremost among those who receive gains. This was an occasion for the fruit of that monk's past merit to mature. The Buddha does everything only when the suitable opportunity presents itself.

Now, at the time when those merits were to manifest, the Buddha, allowing room for those fruits of merit, decided to travel by that wilderness path. It is mentioned that while traveling, the deities brought divine food and drinks to entertain Ven. Sīvalī, and through those provisions, comfort was provided to the entire five hundred monks, including the Buddha. It is also stated that league by league, monasteries and other facilities were created through psychic power (*iddhi*) to make the journey easy for them. Next, in the meantime, the young monk Revata, that Arahant, also heard that the Buddha was arriving with the assembly of monks. He likewise created, through psychic power in that Acacia forest, the dwellings, night-quarters, day-quarters, and perfumed chambers (*gandhakuṭi*) necessary for the Buddha and the monks. The Buddha also arrived at that place.

While staying there, two elderly monks thought: "Now, the Buddha has arrived at a place that is complete in every aspect. Only one monk lives here. It is this one monk who has built all these buildings. This shows that there is no meditation going on here. The Buddha has traveled to a place where someone is busy building structures and doing construction work (*navakamma*), just because he is Ven. Sāriputta's brother. This is a biased act, like showing favoritism." Thus, those two elderly monks corrupted their minds. The Buddha understood this. Then, after staying in this monastery in the Acacia forest for about a month, on the day of departure, the day of returning, the Buddha made a resolution: "May those two elderly monks forget their water strainer (*dabarāva*) and their pair of sandals." After they had gone some distance, they remembered that they had forgotten them. After the Buddha had departed from the monastery and withdrawn the psychic power (*iddhi*), they turned back to find them. When they came back to find them, in the meantime, Ven. Revata had withdrawn the psychic creation. Since the Buddha and the Sangha had departed, he let go of that psychic creation. When he let go of that psychic creation, it became an Acacia forest once again. Now these two elderly monks came looking for their belongings. When they arrived, those buildings were nowhere to be seen. In the end, getting pricked by thorns and wandering here and there, they barely

managed to see their belongings hanging on a tree, took them, and went away. That is indeed how the incident took place.

Then that entire group of monks returned to Sāvatthi and arrived at Pūrvārāma, which is the monastery built by Visākhā, the monastery built for the Buddha. The next morning, those two elderly monks went to Visākhā's house to partake of rice gruel. At that time, the great lay-disciple Visākhā asked, "How was it, Venerable Sirs? Did you also travel to that Acacia forest?" When they said yes, she asked, "How was it, is that forest delightful?" "Oh, what delight! It is a forest full of Acacia thorns, full of Acacia trees. There is no delight in it whatsoever," they said. A short while later, two other young monks came to partake of gruel. The lay-disciple asked them too, "Did you travel to that place?" When they said yes, she asked, "How was it, is it delightful?" Then those two monks declared, "Oh, there is nothing more to say about it. It was a wonderful, beautiful, delightful place, as if created by psychic power." Since Visākhā was a highly wise woman, she understood: "This must surely be the difference between the sight seen when the psychic creation was present, and the sight seen after the psychic creation was withdrawn." Later, when the Buddha arrived for the almsgiving, after offering the food, Visākhā stated, "Now, such a thing happened. When I asked the two elderly monks how the place they visited was, they spoke in this way. The other two monks spoke in that way. Why is it like this?" and she inquired from the Buddha about the reason.

On that occasion, the Buddha pronounced this verse:

> *"Gāme vā yadi vāraññe, ninne vā yadi vā thale,*
>
> *Yattha arahanto viharanti, taṁ bhūmiṁ rāmaṇeyyakaṁ."*

Whether in the village or in the forest, in the vale or on the hill, wherever the Arahants dwell, delightful is that place. It is mentioned that upon hearing the Buddha's sermon, many attained the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). Now you know this story and the verse. What we have to do now is to draw from this some lessons as examples for our lives, especially for this decisive year as we have mentioned. First, let us reflect a little on this story. In this story, there is a wonderful kind of playfulness within the Dispensation (*sāsanika huratalayak*). A seven-year-old child—when viewed from the perspective of worldly life, this is somewhat of a joke. A seven-year-old child—here we are talking about a marriage between two children of an age when they would normally play at cooking sand-rice. We can see from this incident how much worldly people are eager to keep the world going, to expand the world, and to protect this *saṁsāra* (round of rebirths).

So they dressed that seven-year-old child in wedding garments, took him, and performed something like a drama. But the power of conceptualization is truly wonderful. Even though this seven-year-old child was young in age, he understood that decay (*jarā*) like a great wise pundit. From that incident, from the very sight of the grandmother, a very deep understanding arose in him about this *saṁsāra*. That is why Prince Revata resolved, "Now, I must escape." Now, when speaking of escaping, there are various kinds of escapes in this day and age. This is a special escape. This is a truly wonderful escape.

There is an escaping to get caught in bonds, and there is also an escaping to be freed from bonds. This was an escaping to be freed from bonds.

Through that skill-in-means (*upāya-kosalla*), this child, in the middle of that forest, somehow escaped and obtained ordination. This is a good example for those who lead a life within the Dispensation. Through this incident, we can see the way the world thinks about worldly values and evaluations, and on the other hand, how the Buddha, the Arahants, and those who followed their path think about this life and the world. What this child did can be described as a very precious, playful triumph within the Dispensation. There are lessons we must learn from this. Especially about *saṁsāra*, as we have expressed on many occasions before, there are three lessons to be learned in *saṁsāra*. Indeed, we can call them three classes: gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*).

Within worldly intelligence (*saṁsārika buddhi*), there are three levels of intelligence. The side of gratification (*assāda*) is the aspect where worldly beings lean towards the pleasures of the five cords of sensual desire. Next, bringing out the danger (*ādīnava*) aspect is an awakening—seeing that there are faults such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death / aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and such in these things. Understanding that aspect of danger represents a matured stage of worldly intelligence. Next, getting freed from it is called escape (*nissaraṇa*), which is actually jumping out of *saṁsāra*, out of the wheel of *saṁsāra*, out of the cycle of *saṁsāra*. The seven-year-old young novice Revata was able to achieve that too.

Thus, from those, we see the qualities of this Dispensation such as being visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*), timeless (*akālika*), inviting one to come and see (*ehipassika*), and so forth. We see from this power of the Dhamma how those with past merit, even in their childhood, even at the age of seven—a time when others are playing at cooking sand-rice—could bring an end to this great suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) and attain the state of a great Arahant with the power to perform psychic miracles. Therefore, this is a good story to incline the mind towards Nibbāna, to bring out those values regarding Nibbāna, and to understand their worth.

Next, let us reflect on this verse. Regarding a land becoming delightful, or being a good place, a wholesome place to live, we have already mentioned that in the Buddha's teaching, an aspect is brought out which ordinary worldly people do not think of, through the word *patirūpadesavāsa*. *Patirūpadesavāsa* means dwelling in a suitable locality. Before mentioning *patirūpadesavāsa* in the *Maṅgala Sutta*, as you may know, the preceding verse mentions:

> *"Asevanā ca bālānaṁ, paṇḍitānañca sevanā,*
>
> *Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṁ, etaṁ maṅgalamuttamaṁ"*

as blessings (*maṅgala*). Generally in the world, in this day and age, when the word 'foolish' (*bāla*) is used, it brings to mind young children. But according to the Dhamma,

the word *bāla* is applied to the fool. The word *bāla* is mostly applied to denote a fool. If *asevanā ca bālānaṁ* referred to young children, we wouldn't even be able to keep children in our homes. That is not what is meant here. *Asevanā ca bālānaṁ*—not associating with fools is shown here as one blessing. Not associating with ignorant people, foolish people, because by associating with them, one also falls into decline. *Asevanā ca bālānaṁ*—that itself is a blessing.

Next, *paṇḍitānañca sevanā*—associating with the wise. Next, *pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṁ*—honoring those worthy of honor. The ground where all three of these factors exist is what is called *patirūpadesavāsa*, a suitable locality.

That is to say, when it is an area where the Buddha, the Arahants, and the Sangha reside, there is association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). Those three aforementioned factors are fulfilled. In that manner, even though he appeared as a young novice, he was a great Arahant. Through his dwelling there, that place became a *patirūpadesa*, a suitable locality. Thus, regardless of other facilities for those monks, the Buddha declared that even a thorny Acacia forest becomes delightful when an Arahant resides there. There is an important point there, especially. The reason why a land becomes delightful due to the dwelling of an Arahant. You now know that there are Buddha-lands (*Buddha-bhūmi*) and sacred lands (*suddha-bhūmi*). The lands touched by the Buddha, and especially the places where he dwelt having entered the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*), became sacred lands, Buddha-lands. The places where the Buddha dwelt in India, and even in this country, such as the sixteen sacred sites (*solosmasthāna*) and other places where Arahants resided—the Buddha specially visited those places and dwelt in the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*) so that in the future they would become stupas (*caitya*) and delightful places, thereby giving that land an attractive power to draw hundreds of thousands of people.

Then, the energy present in that land due to that attainment of the fruition of Arahantship cannot generally be measured in terms of years. Sometimes they last for the entire interval between two Buddhas (*buddhantara*). That is why it is said that all Buddhas are born in the Middle Country (*Majjhima-desa*) of India. A wonderful energy is added to that land by that supramundane concentration (*lokuttara samādhi*). Now we see that the highest concept regarding a land becoming delightful is the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship. Because someone dwells in the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship, a great power of attraction is added to that land. Moreover, it is the concentration of Nibbāna. Through that concentration of Nibbāna, a great peace and tranquility is added to that land. Even today, you know that in places like Anuradhapura, Mihintale, etc., even if you walk on such a path, you feel a wonderful coolness because those lands have received that sacred quality. Therefore, even when we think at that level, what the Buddha has expressed here is how an environment becomes delightful through those virtues.

When we say 'general environment', we think only of the physical environment. We think only of physical health. But here, mental health is primary. No matter how much physical health there is, if there is no environment suitable for mental health, there is no

use in it. That place is good not for a human being, but for a beast. Now, let us say someone, according to environmental engineering, selects a good piece of land, and then, having created a beautiful environment with trees and foliage, and if desired, having built a superb house according to the highest architectural standards, attempts and resolves to live a good life in comfort.

But if the surrounding land is daily drenched in the blood of animals slaughtered for meat, if it is a place teeming with dens of thieves, darkened by immorality, and foul-smelling with alcohol consumption—such a place cannot be considered a good environment. No matter how large a bungalow that person builds, they will not be able to live in peace. Because there is no mental atmosphere there; there is no mental atmosphere suitable for the mind. On the other hand, let us assume a poor person lives in a small hut on a piece of land that is generally unattractive and lacks a beautiful appearance, yet around it there is that good mental atmosphere we mentioned earlier. They live peacefully with the bliss of Nibbāna, living in tranquility. This is exactly what you should think about, especially in a decisive year like this. Because when talking about the environment generally now, people speak much of the toxic fumes and pollution caused to the world by science and scientific progress. But there are many other invisible toxic fumes coming through heretical concepts of wrong view. There are thorns of wrong view everywhere; next, toxic fumes of wrong view. One must make an effort to protect oneself from these. Otherwise, one's life will not be a human life; in the end, without even knowing it, it will be transformed into the life of a beast, a hungry ghost (*peta*), or a demon (*yakṣa*).

What is the use of living beautifully in a large bungalow, in a luxurious bungalow of that kind in a place with good geographical features, if one undergoes internal degeneration? Therefore, we can understand that matter through the description of the delightful land preached by the Buddha. It is the same in daily life; if we speak of the highest level, it is the state of the Arahants. Short of that, if we consider, if there are virtuous people, those who lead virtuous lives around us. In this manner, you have now undertaken the *Ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (eightfold virtue with right livelihood as the eighth). Likewise, it is a place where virtuous people (*satpurusa*) dwell, who lead good lives by constantly directing their minds to wholesome practices (*kusala-dhamma*) like giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*). In such a place, in case of an emergency or crisis, one can find someone as a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) or even for assistance. Moreover, looking at their virtues, looking at their exemplary lives, one can shape one's own life too.

If one creates that kind of mental environment, one can make one's life fortunate. Also, we mentioned here *patirūpadesavāsa* when talking about the blessings (*maṅgala*). Several other blessings are also mentioned along with it: *"Pubbe ca kata-puññatā, attasammā-paṇidhi"*. If one has secured a good place like *patirūpadesavāsa*, then within that person, *pubbe ca kata-puññatā* means having performed meritorious deeds in the past. None of you can know whether you have past merits or not. But we have not traveled through this long *saṁsāra* solely committing sins, nor solely doing meritorious

deeds. These merits and demerits go mixed together. However, whichever it may be, we have the ability to bring them to the surface—whether merit or demerit—according to the life we lead. Sin adds to sin; merit adds to merit. Sinners gather around those who commit sin; those who do merit gather around those who perform merit.

The Buddha has declared this as: *"Dhātuso sattā saṁsandanti samenthi"* (Beings associate and come together according to their elements/nature). There is a nature where beings of similar temperament gather together. Likewise, when one inclines towards evil, more and more evil deeds, past evil deeds, support it, like Māra drawing one in. For a person performing merit, it may appear as something difficult, like swimming against the current of a river, but once one starts with merit, behold! Those merits hidden in the past can be brought to the surface, like sparks of fire under ashes.

To kindle a fire even from sparks under ashes, one has to blow on them a little. Similarly, one must exert great effort, endeavor, and energy (*vīriya*) to bring merit to the surface. So, the blessing called *pubbe ca kata-puññatā* is indeed present in all of us; we must bring it to the surface. It becomes a blessing (*maṅgala*) only when it is brought to the surface. Having performed meritorious deeds in the past. Therefore, if one has obtained *patirūpadesavāsa*—an atmosphere and environment suitable for such a life—then next, one must be keen to bring those merits of one's own to the surface. Past merit, the power of merit. One must bring the past power of merit to the surface by turning towards faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem and wholesome qualities (*kusala-dhamma*) such as giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*). This is *pubbe ca kata-puññatā*.

Why do we do all of this? Because *attasammā-paṇidhi* is also a blessing. Devout merit-seekers, *attasammā-paṇidhi* means directing one's mind rightly. In leading this life, if we do not direct our mind rightly, to what dangerous disasters might we be subjected! Through the decisions we make daily, our lives are liable to be destroyed. If we are not controlled by virtues such as morality (*sīla*) due to giving in to sudden anger, sudden emotions, and so forth, into what a dangerous precipice will we fall? That is why we referred to it earlier as a precipice of decline. According to this mental atmosphere, everyone is keen not on bringing to the surface past merits as mentioned, but on bringing past sins to the surface and using them to build up their economy as much as possible. Even if I do not describe this in detail to you, everyone knows that this is an era where righteousness is declining due to methods used for building up the economy.

If there are past demeritorious deeds, if there are skills in killing, stealing, etc., or capabilities in drinking various kinds of alcohol—this is an era that brings those energies to the surface. It is an era that fosters and supports them. An era where even various kinds of assistance are received. In such an era, everyone is trying to bring those past sins to the surface, and after eating, drinking, or squandering in this life, they die and pass away. When we say "die and pass away," speaking of the next world, they go to places like the realms of hungry ghosts (*peta*), demons (*yakṣa*), and hell (*niraya*). In any case, because of those short-term practices that think only of this world, leading to a precipice of decline, such is the thinking that prevails in the world.

Making an effort as Buddhists, reflecting wisely, protecting oneself from those forces of wrong view and their toxic fumes, one must develop a clear understanding of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), the correct vision, of good and bad, merit and sin, wholesome and unwholesome, and the path declared by the Buddha. Why are Buddhas born in the world? It is to first rescue beings who have been suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) in this *saṁsāra* for an infinite time from the path to woeful states, and direct them towards the path of happy destinations. Next, by gradually granting them the path and fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), they close the door to the woeful states. Next, by developing that mind even further, developing the mind on the supramundane side, they reveal the path to escape from the entirety of the suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of *saṁsāra*; that is why the Buddhas fulfill perfections (*pāramitā*) for four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand cosmic cycles (*kalpas*). It is not to introduce a new sociology to the world, nor to introduce political science, nor to present a novel economic philosophy—a Buddha is not born in the world for any of those. Those are incidental things. Some teachings about them may exist in the Buddha's discourses. But that is not the essence. The essence of the Buddha's discourses is the escape from, the liberation from, this entire suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of *saṁsāra*.

That should be the ultimate goal of a human life too. In this short human life, which is less than a hundred years—nowadays it is over by the time one is seventy or eighty. During such a short lifespan, we run after targets like what we call our education, degrees, and so on. Next, after obtaining them, we run after targets regarding employment. Next, there is no end to that either. We remain engaged in earning wealth, etc., right up to death, and finally after dying, behold, next one suffers the consequences in states like that of hungry ghosts (*peta*). Because this is such an era, at least a few of us should reflect wisely; not making it our primary goal to provide noble friendship (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) to the world, but shaping our own lives—that is what is meant here by *attasammā-paṇidhi*. Establishing oneself on the correct path. One's own mind. When one's own mind is established rightly, other things also fall into place. For, as understood from the verse preached by the Buddha, *"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā..."* (Mind precedes all phenomena), the mind is chief to everything.

Now, according to physical science, matter is primary. But the Buddha declares, *"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā"*—mind is primary. It is based on the mind that this material world we see behaves. The material world operates based on the mind. Going to the moon and doing everything else—all of these. We misunderstand it through science, saying these are the forces of matter. But it is the force of the mind. Behind every single one of these is the mind. Grounded in that fundamental principle, the Buddha placed before the world the objectives of fixing the mind, building the mind, purifying the mind, and liberating the mind from worldliness and making it supramundane. Therefore, a Buddhist is not merely someone who goes for refuge to the Triple Gem in the manner described, and knows the Pali phrases for taking the five precepts. Right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is not completed by that alone. Now you know that right view is shown as a wholesome act called *diṭṭhijukamma*—rectifying one's view. Thus, in these meritorious

deeds, the ten wholesome courses of action (*dasa-kusala*), it is finally shown as *diṭṭhijukamma*—rectifying one's own view.

If the view were already straight, there would be nothing to straighten. Therefore, we have to think that our views are not yet straight. Actually, that state is attained only when one reaches the stage of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). It is only when one obtains a deep understanding of the Four Noble Truths preached by the Buddha in a supramundane sense that one's view becomes straight. Until then, the view bends this way and that. What is the reason for that? It is those forces of wrong view mentioned earlier. Because of those forces of wrong view and also various other influences received from the rest of society regarding this life, the view sometimes gets crooked. Most Buddhists have a view with many crooks and bends. Therefore, one must make an effort to straighten one's view as shown in the Dhamma. It is to straighten that view that one must rightly establish one's mind through virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Through virtue, one disciplines one's body and speech. Through that, one is freed from those low behaviors that are akin to animal life. That, too, is a sacrifice.

You think of giving (*dāna*) as sacrificing a possession belonging to you. That is indeed a beginning. The feeling of giving is familiar to all Buddhists. In almost every religion, in fact, there is the concept of letting go. Giving starts with articles of use and consumption. With one's external possessions. As an aspect of that same thing, one can think of virtue (*sīla*) also as a kind of sacrifice. In controlling one's body and speech, one has to make a certain sacrifice. The mind desires to manipulate that body and speech in the wrong direction to obtain some gratification (*assāda*) or gain. Instead of that, as you know well now when thinking about livelihood, when thinking about one's livelihood and the problems concerning it, there are very easy ways where one can become a multi-millionaire overnight. Through various acts of theft, or through what is very common in this day and age—killing animals, breeding animals for meat, next the trade in intoxicants and poisons, the weapon trade—through such things, one can become rich very quickly.

If we consider it in that way, regardless of one's mind, it is to protect the body in that manner that most people exert themselves. This cage of a body is a temporary cage. We have a cage of a body received due to past merit. We will have to abandon this and go. The next cage is created by our mind. It is by our mind that the next cage is created. So, when abandoning this cage in this manner, if the mind has become a hungry ghost (*peta*), one receives a hungry ghost cage. If it has become a demon (*yakṣa*), one receives a demon cage. Rarely is someone meritorious enough to become a deity (*deva*), to obtain a divine cage. But most people fall into the aforementioned precipice. If someone attempts to direct their entire life to evil deeds in order to protect this cage, that person is not a Buddhist. They have succumbed to those inappropriate forces. What those forces showed was a temporary, or short-term prosperity and progress. We see them dragging this society along in various guises. That is why we said we are heading towards a precipice of decline, and that we must try to escape, even by ninety-nine.

You should think in that way about your daily lives, regarding the blessing (*maṅgala*) called *attasammā-paṇidhi*. When speaking of blessings, you think in terms of the word 'wedding/blessing' (*maṅgala*) used in daily life regarding children and so on. But the Buddha used this word *maṅgala* in a much deeper sense. Blessings are not just the marriage ceremonies in this world. It is about developing one's worldly state (*saṁsārika* state), wearing out *saṁsāra*, and quickly reaching the highest blessing, the supreme blessing. You might have heard the words "supreme blessing" used to denote that peaceful bliss. The bliss obtained by escaping from the entire *saṁsāra*, which is called Nibbāna. That is indeed what we mentioned earlier, that the Buddha and the Arahants, in the attainment of the fruition of Arahantship, subdue their minds and project that wonderful power of Nibbāna into that land, into that atmosphere, into the surroundings, so that it lasts for centuries, or even for a *buddhantara*.

Then, you know that if we employ and maintain good virtue (*sīla*) and good, virtuous thoughts, through that too, a wonderful energy, peace, and comfort is added to our surroundings. When maintaining thoughts of loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*), and developing them to a state of absorption (*jhāna*), not only can one obtain a wonderful peace for oneself, but one also obtains the power even to calm the restless minds of others through the qualities of loving-kindness and compassion. Thus, the Buddha showed that within every such Dhamma, within every virtue, there is something that brings peace to a large number of people.

Let us think about giving (*dāna*). Sometimes only one person offers that gift. Yet how many people rejoice in it saying "Sādhu, Sādhu" and purify their minds! In that brief moment, a great opening is created in their minds. If one also adds virtue (*sīla*) into that opening created by rejoicing in the almsgiving, then it becomes even stronger. If at that moment one resolves, "I can generate a great comfort and happiness like this if I control these wrong actions and wrong thoughts of mine," then through virtue, that power is further established.

Taking it even further than that is what is called meditation (*bhāvanā*). Meditation means waging a face-to-face battle, as it were, against this scattered nature of the mind. In daily life, our mind is distracted by the objects that come to the five sense-faculties, due to things flowing in through these gates. Our minds are often polluted and soiled according to the low, worldly habits practiced in the past. Just as we spoke of environmental pollution, here the mental environment is polluted. So, to free the mind from this, taking some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) like the recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*), recalling the ocean of the Buddha's virtues and taking a single word like *Arahant* or *Bhagavā* and keeping the mind on that single word—in that brief moment, a great uplifting, a great clarity, a clarity through faith (*saddhā*) is produced in that mind. Faith (*saddhā*) is said to be like a water-clearing gem (*udaka-prasādaka-māṇikya*). There is a certain gem put into turbid water called the water-clearing gem. When that gem is put in, the turbidity of the water is settled, and clarity arises. Just like that, the mind becomes clear through *Buddhānussati*. The mind of loving-kindness is also like that. Discarding ill-will from that mind, a very wonderful, peaceful state arises

in the mind. Acknowledging one's own wish for the peace and well-being of the world, one aspires: "May all beings be well and happy." At that moment, a wonderful energy is added to the world. Similarly, what is done through other meditations like the contemplation of foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*)? The mind that was subject to defilements like sensuality, and had suffered / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) in woeful states for a long time due to those five cords of sensual pleasure—that meditation on foulness gives some power to free the mind from them.

Next, mindfulness of death (*maraṇasatī*) means reminding oneself of the shortness of this lifespan. As something highly astonishing in the world, even Westerners say that everyone who dies forgets that they themselves will die. No matter how many funerals we attend, the feeling "we are alive" remains deep down in the mind. To that extent, mindfulness of death is not easy to develop. No matter how many deaths occur around us, it does not sink into the mind. To that extent, there is craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) for becoming / existence (*bhava*) in worldly beings. There is a desire for existence. There is delusion, ignorance, and craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). It is exactly like a feeling present in everyone that they will live permanently, eternally, along with the group they have gathered around them. The thought that "I will have to abandon this and go, I will have to abandon my relatives and go" does not enter their minds even for a moment, especially in the minds of the wealthy. Even the word "death" is unpleasant to many. The Buddha declares the reality. The word "reality" is present in today's society; reality means the truth as it is.

So, the truth as it is was indeed seen beforehand by that seven-year-old Prince Revata. That when his bride reaches one hundred and twenty years, she will come to that very state. This is far-sighted wisdom. Far-sightedness. Similarly, in our daily lives, if we reflect and abandon this short-term agenda and work on the most important thing we have not done so far—escaping from *saṁsāra*, liberation from *saṁsāra*—what is relevant to that is indeed what is called the path of meditation. Without putting it off, we must realize that a completely perfect environment for this will never be obtained. There can be various shortcomings. There may be a lack of holidays. So, instead, even by taking leave—leave is not something given by the government, nor is it something received from outside; it is something one obtains oneself. Some of you who practice these things know that one can obtain leave to engage in those virtues, to practice Dhamma and meditation, according to one's own effort, interest, and mental desire (*chanda*).

No matter how much work there is in between, if one gets used to paying homage to the Triple Gem for five, ten, or fifteen minutes right after waking up in the morning, calming the mind through some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and then going to daily work; next, after returning from work and before going to sleep at night, even in secret, calming the mind in that manner for a brief moment and reflecting on the daily budget—by budget we mean a balance sheet of merit and sin, of wholesome and unwholesome—and trying to bring out that blessing (*maṅgala*) called *attasammā-paṇidhi*, applying some effort to build one's mind, then day by day, as one day, two days, three days, a week, a month passes by, a certain meditative development will arise within that mind.

Next, instead of spending even the little holiday one gets in daily life on other things, that person goes to a meritorious place, a sacred land, goes to associate with someone who can give meditation instructions, receives advice from them, and gradually first practices at home as much as possible even amidst various obstacles, using them as aids to remind oneself of the nature of *saṁsāra* and to remain diligent (*appamāda*). They start to implement it. Practically shaping one's daily life and proceeding in that manner, a time may come when one is able to let go of things that one previously thought could never be let go of. Things that one previously claimed were absolutely impossible to let go of, one sees slipping away without even knowing it. One does not need to forcefully detach them. Even those that appear as great bonds—the Buddha has declared regarding the attachment to children and wealth—regardless of wealth, the attachment to one's relatives is even more powerful. It is not easy to break them. They are like iron chains. But even those gradually slip away because one is interested in protecting the mind. It is by doing so systematically that in the past, the Buddha's disciples, as well as lay-disciples (*upāsaka-upāsikā*), donors and benefactors, practiced Dhamma and meditation and attained those states. From those Dhamma stories, we can bring these lessons close to our own lives, take them as examples, and generate energy / effort (*vīriya*) saying "we too must shape ourselves in this manner." Because, as mentioned earlier, this lamp of the Dispensation is about to go out.

A lamp does not just go out. Before going out, there is a nature, a law of nature (*dhammatā*), where it emits a bright, radiant light. Therefore, without being saddened that this lamp is going out, keeping in mind the feeling that some light can be emitted before it goes out, in this year of one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine, in this year that ends a century, you must try to escape, even by ninety-nine. You must establish that resolution in your minds on this valuable Duruthu Poya day.

Now, for this much time, you have listened to a Dhamma sermon having undertaken the valuable *Ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*. Listening to a Dhamma sermon is indeed an application of one's mind. What is done there is also the development, to a certain extent, of certain spiritual faculties present in one's mind, namely faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Although there were various other daily activities at this time, you abandoned them; although there were various entertainments for amusement, you abandoned them and listened to this Dhamma for about an hour with faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem. Next, even to remain in a single posture, a certain energy / effort (*vīriya*) is required. Through that, applying mindfulness (*sati*) and attentiveness, you listened to this Dhamma. Through that, one can experience a certain concentration (*samādhi*) at least for a short while. It is indeed to such a concentrated mind that the true nature of the Dhamma, deep things, become clear. That understanding is what is called wisdom (*paññā*).

In that manner, you should rejoice and be glad that even within this brief hour, certain special energies have been deposited in your mind as the benefits of listening to the Dhamma. You should rejoice in it. Likewise, this listening to the Dhamma itself is shown as a wholesome act (*kusala*). In any case, may the accumulation of merit gathered by both parties through the preaching of the Dhamma and the listening to the Dhamma, be

rejoiced in by the deities who protect the Dispensation, including the assembly of Devas and Brahmas, and whatever kings of Devas and Brahmas there are who direct their minds towards this Dispensation and are keen on its behalf! Having rejoiced, while granting us and this Dispensation the strength and power to proceed on this journey in the future, may they realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration—thus you should aspire.

May all departed relatives of yours, and all beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, rejoice in this wholesome merit of our preaching and listening to the Dhamma. Having rejoiced, escaping from this highly fearsome *saṁsāra*, may they be comforted by the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna—with this thought in mind, recite these verses and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi*....."

Pahankanuwa Sermon #88

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.37)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Anavaṭṭhitacittassa, saddhammaṃ avijānato,

Pariplavapasādassa, paññā na paripūrati;

Anavassutacittassa, ananvāhatacetaso,

Puññapāpapahīnassa, natthi jāgarato bhayaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 38–39 (Cittavagga)

Dear Listeners,

In this Dhamma, the idea of wishing to escape from Saṃsāra is often expressed by the word *nekkhamma* (renunciation). It is called the concept of *nekkhamma* (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*). Generally, if we look at the simple meaning of the term *nekkhamma*, it carries the idea of departing from the lay life, of departing from sensual pleasures. However, when considered deeply, the ultimate goal of *nekkhamma* is Nibbāna. It is the liberation from Saṃsāra.

You, listeners, know that whether lay or ordained, the path to be traveled, the program of work to be done by a Buddhist devotee is the development of the Noble Eightfold Path. The first step of that Noble Eightfold Path is Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which means right seeing. Next is Right Thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right thoughts and aspirations. One of the aspects belonging to Right Thought is this concept of *nekkhamma*. Right seeing means the understanding of the truth. If one understands to some extent these facts—that this Saṃsāric existence is *Dukkha* (Suffering), that its cause is *Taṇhā* (Craving), that the cessation of *taṇhā* is Nibbāna, and that the path to Nibbāna is the Noble Eightfold Path—it is based on that understanding that the concept of *nekkhamma* arises in a person. According to the degree of that understanding, if that understanding is insufficient, the concept of *nekkhamma* does not firmly establish itself in that person.

In such instances, even if such a person ordains, or otherwise abandons the lay life, they cannot remain long in that state. It is the concept of *nekkhamma* that makes it possible to complete the work of Nibbāna. What helps most in this is faith (*saddhā*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

The two verses we have taken as our theme today are those in which the Buddha demonstrated this point. From the background story (the origin story) provided for these verses, we can see an instance where the concept of *nekkhamma* was weakened and hindered due to the lack of faith (*saddhā*) in the mind, and the lack of such virtues and devotion. According to the story, it is as follows: A certain poor man lived in the city of Sāvatthī. One day, because a cow from his herd went missing, he entered the forest and searched for the cow until midday. Somehow, he found it and reunited it with the herd. By that time, because he was hungry and felt starvation, he went to the Jetavana monastery. Having arrived and paid respects to the Saṅgha, the Saṅgha understood that this man was hungry. The Saṅgha told him to take some of the food left over after they had eaten.

While eating this food, this man thought: "Such delicious food is received here; how is this? Did the Saṅgha receive such exquisite food due to a special invitation?" Having finished eating, he asked the Saṅgha: "Venerable Sirs, did you go to a special invitation today?" They replied, "No, we always receive good food like this on our alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*)." Then he thought, "Even though I toil and exhaust myself the whole day, I cannot obtain food like this. Therefore, let me ordain." Having thought so, he obtained permission from the Saṅgha and ordained.

Having ordained, he performed the duties and observances (*vata-pili-vata*) for the Saṅgha very well. But this person had no interest in meditation (*bhāvanā*). Furthermore, since the four requisites were received without lack in various ways during the time of the Buddha, when this person received food and drinks that were unavailable in his poor life, he ate as much as he wanted without any restraint, and very quickly became fat. As his body grew fat, his mind became thin. His mind subsequently became weak. He began to think about his home and household. Because of this, becoming disillusioned with the ordained life, he then returned to the lay life.

Having become a layman, while doing his habitual farming activities, he fell back into that poor life. While doing those tasks, his body once again became emaciated. Next, he thought once more, "I must ordain." In this manner, he ordained again. Again, after a few days, he became a layman. In this way, this man disrobed and returned to the lay life six times. By the time the desire to ordain arose in this person for the seventh time, his wife was pregnant. On the day he formed this intention, he brought his plow and other equipment from the field, stored them somewhere in the house, and entered the bedroom to take his under-robe (*aṅdanaya*). It appears that he had kept these in his house as keepsakes to remind him of ordination. When he went to take them, his wife, exhausted from household chores, was sleeping flat on her back. Her clothes were disheveled. Saliva was drooling from her mouth, which was wide open, presenting a highly unsightly appearance like a corpse.

By this time, the Saṅgha had given this man the nickname "Cittahattha" (ruled by his mind). Because he disrobed repeatedly under the sway of his mind, he had the name Cittahattha. The moment Cittahattha saw this, his mind was again directed toward ordination, because from this sight, the foulness of the bloated corpse (*uddhūmātaka-asubha*) was recalled. Devout devotees, *uddhūmātaka* means that even our own body, after death—the body we could not fatten even with a lifetime of effort—becomes bloated within two or three days. Thus, a bloated foulness was recollected from the sight of his wife. Next, saying "*Aniccaṃ*" (*anicca*: impermanent / inconstant), a great disillusionment, a disillusionment with Saṃsāra arose in him, and he left the house, hastily putting on his under-robe. His mother-in-law, who had gone to the neighboring house, became suspicious, thinking: "Why is he heading toward the monastery? There must be some reason." When she entered the house, she saw her daughter sleeping, woke her up by hitting her, and said, "Wake up, you miserable wretch! Having seen the way you lie there, your husband has left. You will not see him again." Then this woman said, "Oh, even though you say that, he will return. Where else would he go?"

No matter what she said, while going along, practicing insight meditation (*vipassanā*) in a way that made sense to him by reciting "*Aniccaṃ*" (impermanent / inconstant), it is mentioned that that man, Cittahattha, attained the stage of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*) on the way. Having attained Stream-entry, he went to the Saṅgha and requested ordination. The Saṅgha said, "What ordination for you? How many times have you ordained already? Your head is like a whetstone used to sharpen razors. There is no point in ordaining you," expressing their displeasure. Because this man pleaded, "Oh, please ordain me just this once," they ordained him. A few days after ordaining, this Cittahattha practiced meditation and very quickly, within a few days, became an Arahant possessing the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*). However, the Saṅgha did not know of this attainment. They joked with him as usual: "Isn't it time to go home now? Why are you staying so long this time?" To this, Cittahattha replied: "Venerable Sirs, previously, during the time when I had connections and attachments, I went home. Now, I have no such thing. They have all been cut off. Now, therefore, I cannot go back home." By these words, he signaled to the Saṅgha that he had attained Arahantship. Hearing this, the Saṅgha did not believe him, and they went to the Buddha and stated: "Cittahattha is saying such things." Then, on that occasion, the Buddha declared: "It is true, monks. When my son Cittahattha's mind was restless and fickle, when he did not rightly understand the Dhamma, and when faith (*saddhā*) and devotion (*pasāda*) were not properly established, he was unable to attain that supramundane wisdom (*paññā*). Now, having transcended both merit and evil, he stands in the noble state of Arahantship." Expressing this idea, he uttered the two verses we presented earlier. If we look at the meaning of those two verses:

Anavaṭṭhitacittassa saddhammaṃ avijānato, pariplavapasādassa paññā na paripūrati.

"*Anavaṭṭhitacittassa*" means a restless, fickle mind—a mind that is not properly established in one place.

"*Anavaṭṭhitacittassa saddhammaṃ avijānato*": one who has such a restless mind, and "*saddhammaṃ avijānato*", one who does not rightly understand the True Dhamma; "*pariplavapasādassa*" refers to floating faith, a devotion that is swept this way and that. For such a person, "*paññā na paripūrati*", wisdom does not fulfill. For a person whose mind is not firmly established, who has such a fickle mind, who has not properly understood the True Dhamma, and whose devotion, confidence, and faith are pulled this way and that, wisdom does not become fulfilled. Next, the other side is stated—namely, that good side, what is said regarding the state after becoming an Arahant:

Anavassutacittassa ananvāhatacetaso, puññapāpapahīnassa natthi jāgarato bhayaṃ.

"*Anavassutacittassa*" means possessing a mind moist-free of lust, having a mind undefiled by lust; "*ananvāhatacetaso*" means possessing a mind unassailed by hatred; "*puññapāpapahīnassa*" means one who has abandoned both merit and evil—shown as the nature of Arahants who are liberated from both merit and demerit; and "*natthi jāgarato bhayaṃ*", *jāgarato* means for the vigilant (awakened) person, there is no fear. There is no fear of Saṃsāra. "Awakened" or "vigilant" there refers to the qualities of wakefulness (*jāgara-dhamma*). These five qualities are described as faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). In this Dhamma, these are presented as qualities of wakefulness (*jāgara-dhamma*). They denote wakefulness. The five qualities that assist in remaining awake in accordance with the Dhamma are faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. For one who possesses such qualities, such virtues, there is no such fear.

So, this Dhamma verse was declared. A few days later, while the monks were gathered together talking, they discussed as follows: "Even though this Cittahattha possessed such supportive conditions (*hetu-sampatti*) to become an Arahant, isn't it amazing that he disrobed six times and returned to lay life in this manner?" Then the Buddha arrived there. When he asked, "Monks, what are you discussing?" and was told of this news, he said: "Monks, not only Cittahattha, but during the time I was fulfilling the requisites of enlightenment (*bodhi-sambhāra*), a similar thing happened to me as well." Thus, he related a similar event that happened to himself, detailing it through the Kuddāla Jātaka (Uddhālaka Jātaka).

To state it briefly, in many past lives, he lived as an ascetic, cultivating absorptions (*jhāna*) and meditation. On one such occasion, the Bodhisatta was known by the name Kuddāla Paṇḍita (the wise Kuddāla). "Kuddāla" means a spade. As a custom, that ascetic went to the Himalayas to meditate for eight months. During the four rainy months, he would return to his hut, sow a certain type of bean, a grain-like bean, live on it, and when returning to the ascetic life, he would leave the spade blade and half a measure of beans at home. He would return after practicing asceticism for eight months. In this manner, he spent his life between the ascetic life and lay life six times. Having lived thus, when heading back to the Himalayas for the final time, he thought: "The obstacle to my ascetic life six times was not some grand thing, but this spade blade and these few beans. I must get rid of this." With this thought, he wrapped the measure of bean seeds in a piece of cloth, hung it on the spade blade, and took it to the riverbank. There, closing his eyes, he

swung it three times around his head and threw it away. Why? Because if he saw where the spade blade fell, he might feel like picking it up again, as it was such a dear and pleasing object to him. Having thrown it in a way that he could not see where it landed, when he opened his eyes and looked, he could not tell where it was; it had fallen into the river water.

Then, this Kuddāla Paṇḍita uttered a great shout of joy: "Jitaṃ me! Jitaṃ me!" (I have won! I have won!). At that moment, King Brahmadatta, having conquered his enemies, had come there and was bathing near the river. Hearing this, he approached Kuddāla Paṇḍita and asked: "Why are you shouting 'I have won'?" Then the Bodhisatta said to the King: "O King, you have conquered external enemies. I have conquered the internal enemy, the enemy of greed. Conquering external enemies is not the real achievement; in that, defeat is also possible. My victory is indeed supreme." Then, as described in that story of the Dhamma, gazing at the water of that river, he attained the absorptions (*jhāna*) through the water-kasina (*āpo-kasiṇa*), rose into the air, and preached the Dhamma. Consequently, the King, his retinue, and the kingdom abandoned their worldly life and became ascetics. Seven other kings also came in like manner, and thus a vast assembly of ascetics practiced Dhamma and meditation under Kuddāla Paṇḍita, and were reborn in the Brahma-world, as the Buddha narrated in that Jātaka story.

Now we have here two stories: this contemporary story and the Jātaka story. We also have two verses. Let us try to extract points from these that can help our Dhamma life. When we look at the story of Venerable Cittahattha, we must say that it was so during the time of the Buddha, and it is so even today. Ordaining and disrobing are very common occurrences. Why? All of this happens because of the nature of the mind. In everything, we should look through *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), not merely at external events. These events show us how our minds behave. When we look at the life of Venerable Cittahattha, he was a poor man. Indeed, if we consider it, Cittahattha ordained the first time with a certain degree of disillusionment with Saṃsāra. For a poor man, the extent of *Dukkha* (Suffering) visible to him is the *dukkha* of poverty. One part of that *dukkha* of poverty is the difficulty of searching for food. You, devout lay devotees, know that the last of the objects of emotion (*saṃvega-vatthu*) which the Buddha showed us to contemplate frequently is "the search for current food" (*idāni āhāra-gavesana*), which means the *dukkha* we undergo in searching for food in this life. The others, as you know, are presented as *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decaying / aging), *vyādhi* (sickness), and *maraṇa* (death) (the process of *jarāmaraṇa*: decay and death / aging and death), the *dukkha* endured in the lower realms in the past, and the *dukkha* to be endured in the future if we remain in Saṃsāra. Lastly, it refers to this life's...

...Next, when considering the *dukkha* of poverty, only that small portion of the truth was understood by that person as *dukkha*. Therefore, after a few days, when his body grew fat, he thought: "Now, this is fine." Next, his mind became weak. Because he did not apply his mind to the Dhamma in the proper manner, he thought that merely by fattening his body, that *dukkha* had gone, that *dukkha* had ceased. If we consider what

the suitable meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) for this temperament is, it is mentioned in the texts as follows:

For a person who is attached to the fleshy, well-nourished parts of the body, a good and suitable (*sappāya*) meditation subject—the word *sappāya* is used to mean a good, fitting, or appropriate subject—is taught in the Dhamma as the *uddhūmātaka-asubha* (the foulness of a bloated corpse). *Uddhūmātaka*, as we mentioned earlier, means a body bloated after death. Within a few days, the body swells up in a highly surprising manner. It is such a bloated body. From this, we can understand that in reality, the reason Cittahattha disrobed six times was also because of his wife, due to his attachment to his wife. However, in the end, it was also his wife who provided him with the meditation subject to become an Arahant. That subject was the recollection of the bloated corpse (*uddhūmātaka-asubha*) through that sight. Similarly, when describing these meditation subjects, for instance, the perception of bones (*aṭṭhika-saññā*), the foulness of bones (*aṭṭhika-asubha*)—the contemplation on the skeleton—is said to be suitable (*sappāya*). It is said that for a person who is highly attached to teeth and bones, the skeleton is a suitable meditation subject. In this manner, it is described in the texts regarding meditation subjects that depending on each individual's temperament, a particular subject is more appropriate.

In whatever manner, for Venerable Cittahattha, that sight helped him break both his attachment to fattening his own body and his attachment to his wife, and ultimately, to shatter the bonds of Saṃsāra and attain Arahantship. In this society, we encounter not only such sights but many other sights in our daily lives. The benefit we must derive from them in accordance with the Dhamma is to gain an understanding of the vanity (futility) of our journey in this long Saṃsāra. That is how we must reflect. Moreover, regarding Cittahattha, although at first glance here it seems his ultimate goal was just to feed his belly (livelihood/nourishment), that was indeed underlying it. That is to say, why did he ordain several times? When his body became weak, he remembered the exquisite food eaten by the Saṅgha, and then went back to fatten his body in that manner. When we look at it, in the end, it appears that Cittahattha regarded this Dispensation (*Sāsana*) as an institution for filling the stomach, and ordained whenever his body became weak.

Now, this ordination is described in this Dhamma in its true sense; for a true ordination, there must be a good aspiration of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). A strong aspiration of renunciation. That strong aspiration of renunciation is described in the Dhamma as: *appaṃ vā bhogakkhandhaṃ pahāya, mahantaṃ vā bhogakkhandhaṃ pahāya*—abandoning either a small mass of wealth or possessions, or abandoning a large mass of wealth, whether it is a single spade or a vast fortune, and then ordaining. Similarly, *appaṃ vā ñātiparivaṭṭaṃ pahāya, mahantaṃ vā ñātiparivaṭṭaṃ pahāya*—abandoning either a small circle of relatives or a large circle of relatives, breaking those bonds, and departing liberated from them; only then can one lead this ordained life and make it successful.

However, we know that in some Buddhist countries, there is the practice of ordaining as a social custom. It is difficult to consider that as highly wise. When one ordains as a

custom, that aforementioned concept of renunciation does not properly operate. Without the power of renunciation, one cannot travel on this path to Nibbāna. It is precisely to gain that power—just as we can only move forward based on the very force with which we kick off from something—that the Buddha indicates we must abandon those things and depart. The example of this idea is also seen in this story. The Buddha's throwing away of the spade blade in the past is such an example. We can physically throw away some things, like the spade blade. But some things cannot be thrown away by hand; they must be removed by the mind. Those are the most difficult, because everyone holds onto the world with the mind. Yet, those too must be broken. Chiefly, at the beginning of renunciation, one must free oneself from the mass of possessions belonging to oneself. Only when one is freed from them can the mind subsequently be liberated. Otherwise, if this is done as a custom, or if one ordains with the motive of filling the stomach, or with other social requirements such as obtaining certificates, it does not become true renunciation.

Nevertheless, the effort made by Venerable Cittahattha is seen in the end through a multitude of experiences. The futility of his efforts to fatten his body, and all of these things, were understood through that sight. He understood their futility. We can understand that it was in this manner that he attained Arahantship. He must have been someone who had cultivated meditation and possessed meritorious power in the past. In this way, we can extract several points from that story.

Similarly, concerning food and other things related to the four requisites, the Dhamma states that we should consume and use them only after wisely reflecting and reviewing (*paccavekkhaṇa*), because otherwise, defilements (*kilesa*) will be generated through them. It appears that Cittahattha did not do this at the beginning. As soon as his body became fat, he went back; he ordained as if that were his ultimate goal. The Buddha has pointed out that food should be consumed or partaken of not for the purpose of fattening the body, as one eats in ordinary lay life, but with the wise reflection known as *paccavekkhaṇa*. First, regarding the purpose of this food: "I do not take this food for amusement, nor for beautifying, adorning, or fattening the body. I take this food merely for the maintenance (*yāpanā*) of this body, for its survival, for the realization of Nibbāna, and for the practice of the holy life (*brahmacariya*)—to sustain the body and lead this noble life." One must think in this manner at the time of taking food; this is the reflection on food. The other part is a meditation. That is, "This food is something made of the four great elements: earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). No matter how beautiful it looks, once it enters this filthy body, it becomes repulsive." It is through eating food while reflecting in this way that one can shatter the defilements that arise like that. It must be because he did not follow this method that Venerable Cittahattha's ultimate goal of Arahantship was delayed. In whatever way, we receive certain lessons from this story as well. For one who aspires to Nibbāna, the opportunities we receive in our daily lives must not be wasted. That is, at respective levels, not only through these sights, but also in this Saṃsāra where we travel for a long time, even the distinction between male and female does not belong to us. All of this is constantly changing. Furthermore, poor, rich, educated, uneducated—not only these, but not even a

single human existence has been written down as guaranteed for us in this Saṃsāra. Saṃsāra is indeed a vast number of births and deaths occurring in an extraordinarily frightening and karmic manner.

Therefore, the ultimate benefit to be derived from this entire Saṃsāra, the highest target, should be the strengthening of this renunciation (*nekkhamma*). Even when speaking of the disposition (*ajjhāsaya*) of Bodhisattas, the disposition toward renunciation (*nekkhamma-ajjhāsaya*) is mentioned first. Renunciation is placed at the forefront everywhere. Why? Because what is the ultimate result of all the myriad experiences in this entire Saṃsāra? It is the liberation from Saṃsāra. That must be the ultimate result. Because when Saṃsāra is understood, automatically, to that same extent, the desire to escape from it must arise in a person, provided that person has intelligence, wisdom, and a brain. Thus, in that manner, we can derive something from those stories.

Next, in these verses declared by the Buddha, as you know, even in a single word there are very deep meanings. We can use them to nourish our Dhamma-knowledge in our daily lives. Here, it is mentioned: "*Anavaṭṭhitacittassa saddhammaṃ avijānato*." "*Anavaṭṭhitacittassa*" was explained as some people's mind being like—to use a simile—if one plants a post in a heap of chaff, it will not stand firm. It is not stable; it is unstable. The mind of some people is just like that. It is not properly established in one place. It is unstable and fickle. Or else, if a dwarf is placed on the back of a running horse, he cannot remain still in one position. In this manner, various similes illustrate that the mind is not properly established, but is restless and fickle. This refers to a person with such a mind, and "*saddhammaṃ avijānato*", a person who has no real understanding of the Dhamma. "True Dhamma" (*Saddhamma*) here is not explained as merely memorizing the Dhamma found in books. The Dhamma, we can say on one hand, is the Four Noble Truths. As mentioned earlier, that is the essence of the Buddha's Dhamma. On the other hand, it is presented as the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*sattis-bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). That is a series of teachings starting from the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*). If we reflect on Venerable Cittahattha here as well, it was a meditation subject belonging to those Four Foundations of Mindfulness that helped him attain Stream-entry and Arahantship.

In that way, "True Dhamma" (*Saddhamma*) does not mean simply reading a huge pile of books, memorizing them, and repeating them like parrots. To truly understand the True Dhamma means to compare it with one's own life and understand it deeply. When there is no such understanding in a person with a fickle mind, and likewise for one who is "*pariplavapasāda*"—such a person has no proper devotion. The word *pasāda* (devotion / clarity / confidence) goes hand in hand with faith (*saddhā*). Depending on the faith within a person, a devotion arises in the mind. It is according to that devotion that the person walks on that path, acts, and is inclined to practice Dhamma and meditation. Therefore, if a person's devotion is pulled this way and that, if it is drawn after this or that teacher, if there is no unwavering faith (*acala-saddhā*), pure and clear faith and devotion toward the Triple Gem, then that person cannot travel on this path to Nibbāna.

If Venerable Cittahattha also had a deep faith and devotion toward the Dispensation at the beginning, then in that manner, the lay life...

Similarly, you know that even in these times, there are many who run after various teachers. Sometimes they are Buddhists by name, claiming to have gone for refuge to the Triple Gem. But despite saying so, they go after various other teachers and philosophers, thereby delaying their journey to Nibbāna. They fall into delay. Wisdom does not fulfill in such minds. That is what is stated in the first verse. Wisdom means supramundane wisdom (*lokuttara-paññā*). Now, Venerable Cittahattha, relying on the meritorious power he had in the past, through his experiences, and by properly practicing what is called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), ultimately reached that noble state in that manner. It is mentioned that while staying at home, having seen that sight and putting on his under-robe, Venerable Cittahattha attained Stream-entry on the way—something that some cannot achieve even after being ordained for forty or fifty years. Next, it is said that having gone, he became an Arahant in a few days.

Therefore, we must think that such potentials may exist not only within Venerable Cittahattha but perhaps within us as well. If we utilize the events and experiences we encounter in our daily lives as needed, it may be possible for us too. Because understanding this Dhamma deeply occurs very instantly in this mind, and what helps most in that is the disillusionment with Saṃsāra. The word might be bitter, it might not be very pleasing. But to realize Nibbāna, one cannot cling to Saṃsāra. If there is, to some extent, the disillusionment with Saṃsāra called *nibbidā*, to that extent the door to Nibbāna is opened for that person.

You have heard about the great Arahant Mahā Kassapa. Even though they lived as husband and wife during their lay life, they traveled the path to Nibbāna together from that time, and only at the final moment, upon ordaining, did they take two separate paths. No matter how many tasks they had to perform in their daily lives, wise people like them make the ultimate goal of their lives—when deeply considering children, other duties, and their relatives—the understanding of that *Dukkha* (Suffering) of Saṃsāra and the attainment of that state, which is the duty one has to fulfill for oneself in this Saṃsāra. Great, noble, highly meritorious beings like Venerable Mahā Kassapa, even when they lived as husband and wife, the result of the effort they made for Nibbāna was that in their final life, both attained Arahantship.

In that manner, what we should consider as the true core of this Buddhist life is not those mundane goals. It is not about thinking that whatever our neighbor gets is supreme and that we must somehow acquire the wealth they acquire, or that we must educate our children like others' children and secure high degrees or positions, or that we must gain offices because others have gained them. Such various mundane goals are not what we should set for our lives. It is that supramundane goal which has been abandoned and neglected for so long in this Saṃsāra. This is not for telling the world, but if one lives by cultivating such goals within one's own mind-stream and discussing them with one's admirable friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), then for those individuals, in the

aforementioned manner, this Dhamma realization can emerge from within, even at an unexpected moment.

In that manner, one must develop the perception of capacity toward these supramundane qualities. Next, similarly, there must be a firm, unwavering faith (*acala-saddhā*). There must be unwavering faith toward the Triple Gem. No other teacher should be considered superior to the Buddha, nor superior to the Dhamma he declared. Neither scientific knowledge nor the views expressed by other mundane philosophers should be taken as superior to this Dhamma. Next, one must recollect the collection of virtues of his Saṅgha of the eight noble individuals (*aṭṭha-ariya-puggalā*). In short, the virtues of the Triple Gem mean the Teacher, the Dhamma he declared, and those eight categories of individuals who, having put the Dhamma into practice, successfully obtained the fruits, or who demonstrate the leading-out (*niyyānika*) nature of the Dhamma. That is why they are called the Saṅgha of the eight noble individuals. It is based on this that one can build faith and devotion (*pasāda*). One must understand its value. Next, "*Anavaṭṭhitacittassa*"—accordingly, without that devotion, that clarity, one cannot travel on this path of Dhamma.

Devotion (*pasāda*) is a quality that goes hand in hand with faith (*saddhā*). Through faith, doubt and hesitation are removed from the mind, the darkness of the mind is dispelled, and a certain light comes. A certain kind of invigoration arises in the heart. When devotion also arises through that invigoration, only then can one exert energy from that point onward and accomplish those other tasks. The Buddha declared there that such people are able to approach wisdom. In this Dhamma verse, "*Anavassutacittassa*" was said to mean a mind *not* wet with lust, *not* defiled by lust. A person with a mind that is defiled cannot realize this Dhamma of Nibbāna. Similarly, "*ananvāhatacetaso*" refers to a mind unassailed by hatred. It is within these two—lust and hatred—that the world lives for a long time: attachment and aversion. The cause for both this attachment and aversion is delusion (*moha*), the illusion of "I" and "mine". These are indeed the three unwholesome roots that the Buddha declared must be removed in Saṃsāra.

Therefore, the destruction of those defilements (*kilesa*) of greed, hatred, and delusion is what is called Nibbāna. So, here it was specifically said: those who have minds not wet with lust, and minds not hardened by hatred, and next, "*puññapāpapahīnassa*" refers to those who have abandoned both merit and demerit. How is liberation from both merit and demerit achieved? One can consider that a bit deeply. As long as we travel in Saṃsāra, no matter how hard we try, we cannot go on doing only merit. Both merit and demerit get done. We accept that merit is better than demerit. But even that, all of these are *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). Liberation from this Saṃsāra means the stilling of all *saṅkhāra* (Preparations). Through accumulating *saṅkhāra* and karma, *Bhava* (Becoming) is brought about again and again. Rebirth is brought about. Even if one attains heavenly worlds or Brahma-worlds, they are not eternal. When falling from them, next, one might even go to the planes of misery (*apāya*). Because such a dangerous state

exists in Saṃsāra, Buddhas have declared that this *Dukkha* (Suffering) cannot be ended by any other means than complete liberation from the entire Saṃsāra.

Other teachers might point to various other goals because there is such a thing as *bhava-taṇhā* (craving / thirst for becoming) in the world. The desire for existence is highly subtle. The very cause of the desire for existence is delusion (*moha*). The feeling that there is someone who is "I" and "mine". All other teachers, even if they do not say it directly, in some devious or indirect way, give the idea that there really is an "I", that there is a soul (self). Only the Buddha, in accordance with the teaching of *Anattā* (Not-self), declared that there is nothing here but a mere mass of *dukkha*, a mere mass of *dukkha*, and there is no such thing as an "I" here. The Buddha indicates that "I" is a conceit (*māna*), an illusion—that is, that idea is merely a deluded view of foolish people who constructed it.

However, that task must be realized by oneself. Even if one speaks in words, saying "there is no person called 'I'" and talks in various ways, if the idea of "I" remains inside the mind in the same way, one has not escaped from it. But that escaping, that breaking of the feeling of "I", has to be done stage by stage. What assists in that is wisdom—the weapon of wisdom. Then, when one attains that supramundane stage of Stream-entry, as you have heard, that rigid portion of taking "I" and "mine" which exists as a view—known as *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body)—is severed. It is as a direct benefit of this that a Stream-enterer is born at most seven more times in this Saṃsāra. Because in that mind, there is no power to perform those deep karmas that lead back to the planes of misery (*apāya*). The result comes in exact proportion to the degree to which we grasp something tightly as *Upādāna* (Grasping). Due to wisdom, the feeling of "I" and "mine" is not rigid in that person; it does not rigidly hold sway. That is why they do not go to the animal realm. That is what is meant by escaping from the four lower realms of misery. A Stream-enterer does not have the kind of feeling "I" and "mine" that an animal has. Therefore, they cannot go to the animal realm. They do not go to bad places like the hells. Furthermore, if there were past karmas that would cause birth there, they too are destroyed by that supramundane wisdom.

It is because of this that the Buddha praised that supramundane state in a highly marvelous manner. That karmic force cannot be broken in any other way. Thus, the wheel of karma (*kamma-cakka*) is broken by the wheel of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakka*). One can never escape from the wheel of karma by any other means. It is a highly marvelous wheel. As long as one remains in this Saṃsāra, karma is accumulated automatically. One cannot avoid it. One cannot live by closing eyes, ears, and nose either. In whatever manner, through the mind, these karmas are accumulated. According to those accumulated karmas, we are forced to be born and suffer in respective places as their result again and again. Even if there is no other *dukkha*, we are subjected at least to *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decaying / aging), *vyādhi* (sickness), and *maraṇa* (death) (the process of *jarāmaraṇa*: decay and death / aging and death).

While such a dangerous Saṃsāra exists, what is the solution presented by the Buddha? He gradually stills those *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) which cause that aforementioned

karmic force. What assists in that stilling is that wisdom, that understanding. So, in the initial stage, in that manner, the power of those *saṅkhāra* (Preparations) is broken to a certain level. Next, going further, when finally attaining Arahantship, a state is established in that person's mind where they can no longer accumulate karmas that construct a *Bhava* (Becoming) again in Saṃsāra. An Arahant does not accumulate karmas that construct a future *bhava*, but in daily life, they undergo the results of those past karmas; they experience their fruits and results. Similarly, in a highly subtle manner, minds that yield results only in this life—described as qualities of past impressions (*vāsanā-guṇa*)—are mentioned in various places. But those minds do not bring about a full karmic result. As we have seen, some flowers turn into fruits and become large fruits. Some flowers fall off while still in bud. Some fall off just as they begin to mature. In the same way, those thoughts do not have the power to weave karma, due to the light of wisdom.

It is because of ignorance (*avijjā*), not knowing, and delusion (*moha*) that these *saṅkhāra* (Preparations / volitional activity) and karmas are accumulated. When delusion is removed from a mind-stream, the ability to accumulate karma is also shattered; it gradually breaks. The Buddha presented the solution to this problem of escaping from Saṃsāra—which no one else could do—in this manner. Through the four stages: Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship, the tendency of being subjected to the wheel of karma through accumulating karma under the temptation of Māra is removed from our mind-stream. That is why it is shown regarding the Arahant as "*puññapāpapahīnassa*"—liberated from both merit and demerit. They cannot perform merit or demerit of the kind that yields birth in Saṃsāra. In that mind-stream, the power to do so has been severed; it has dried up. It is said to have been dried up by wisdom. It is called the fire of knowledge (*ñāṇaggi*). By the light of wisdom, just as once light is brought to a dark place, one can no longer commit the follies done in the dark, that power which existed in the mind due to delusion and ignorance is gone.

Now, you know that for a person who has properly applied their mind to this Dhamma, they either do not feel like committing certain sinful deeds, grave sins that great criminals can commit, or even if they try to do so, they cannot do them. In that very manner, the Buddha gradually subdues and disciplines this mind through the virtues of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), and ultimately presents the liberation of the entire Saṃsāra. That is what was declared as "*puññapāpapahīnassa*." Next, "*natthi jāgarato bhayaṃ*": for the vigilant (awakened) person, there is no fear. There is no fear of Saṃsāra. There is no fear of rebirth. What is this wakefulness? As we mentioned earlier, the five virtues of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are described in the Dhamma as qualities of wakefulness (*jāgara-dhamma*). We mention this frequently in these sermons because, although various other Dhamma points are mentioned, in daily life, it does not matter if you consider these—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—as the five fingers of your right hand. To that extent, they are things you can see within your mind in daily life. Even at this moment,

you are sitting here. If you were to think about the economy of your daily life, or about the other chores of your daily life, not a single one of you could remain here for even a moment. So vast are the chores of lay life; yet, leaving all of them aside, you are here at this moment because of that faith in the Triple Gem. Due to that faith, a certain devotion and clarity (*pasāda*) arose. The power generated within that is what is called energy (*viriya*).

Because of that faith, a mental power to remain like this was created: energy (*viriya*). Next, to listen to this Dhamma sermon, mindfulness (*sati*), awareness. If a state of tranquility is maintained properly so as to apply mindfulness, through that mindfulness, a power of concentration (*samādhi*), a one-pointedness of a kind not felt on other days, can be experienced. It is to that concentrated mind that various understandings regarding the Dhamma can subsequently come. These things we have expressed are not fabricated by us. They are found in many books, and perhaps you have heard them in various sermons on "Nibbāna" and so forth. However, even if the Dhamma is heard a hundred times, it is understood by each person in their own way, which is based on the preparation of each person's mind. If the mind is prepared and attuned to listen to the sermon, by observing some morality (*sīla*), being virtuous, and concentrating the mind on it, then deep understandings are received by that person. It is described in the Dhamma regarding those virtues like faith. Opposed to faith, on the opposing side, is doubt. In society, this exists as doubt, hesitation, and skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), thinking: "Is this right? Is this wrong? Is this useful? Is this of no use?"

Suppose someone starts to meditate. Even after starting to meditate, if they doubt their meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), thinking "Will this work? Can this be done as they say?" and remain in such hesitation, they can never succeed in that meditation. It is the same with other things as well. Instead, faith (*saddhā*) means not thinking in two directions like "Will it happen or not? Will it succeed or not?" but placing faith right in the middle, thinking "This can happen, this is definitely leading-out (*niyyānika*), this will surely succeed," and only then can one do the work properly. It is mentioned regarding faith that it removes the dryness (unpalatability) toward the object one takes. For Venerable Cittahattha, the ordained life became unpalatable, and he recalled the taste of the lay life. For a person with faith, a certain taste is felt toward that life in the Dispensation, toward that life of meditation. A desire for it arises. A power is generated to completely give one's mind to it and do it. That is what is called faith. It is a power that comes from the heart as well. It is not only for the intellect, not only within the scope of the intellect. Even if we look at the meaning of the word *saddhā*, it means placing the heart, surrendering the heart. Surrendering the heart to the Buddha. You know that when a meditator dedicates their life to the Triple Gem, or dedicates it to the teacher, what does that mean? They surrender their heart to the Buddha, as if taking it by hand and giving it.

Once done in that manner, it is not something that is in excess. One does not have two hearts. Thus, once it is given to the Buddha, there is nothing left to give to other teachers. But many people do not think in that way. Their faith is also like that—unstable, a faith that is pulled this way and that. In such a state, one cannot achieve progress. That is the

quality of faith. Faith is fundamental. The Buddha has shown that faith is a seed (*bījaṃ*). For the entire life in the Dispensation, for the cultivation of virtues, the seed for cultivating virtues—like seed paddy—is faith. Because only where there is faith do all other virtues gather around it.

Next, relying on that special power, that devotion (*pasāda*) cultivated in the heart according to faith, what is the function performed by energy (*viriya*)? Suppose an object is the object of a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). To apply oneself to that object, there was a power of energy that uplifts that object. It lends a hand to something, or has an uplifting nature. Through that energy, interest is generated. In that manner, interest is generated in the meditation subject. When energy comes, the mind tells us to do it, to apply effort to it. There is no need to explain physical energy; you know it very well. Mental energy is also like that: when drowsiness and such things arrive, only when some arouse energy is their strength seen, thinking: "It is not that I cannot do these; I can." It is said that where there is no energy, the meditation subject hides. The meditation subject, the mind, has a tendency to hide. Removing the shrinking nature of the mind and awakening it, invigorating it—that is the nature present in this energy. When the power of energy is joined in this way, all of these are presented in the Dhamma as controlling faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*).

Because we derive certain benefits from our eyes, ears, nose, and so forth, they are called faculties (*indriya*). For seeing, the eye is chief. For hearing, the ear is chief. Similarly, to develop these virtues of the Dispensation, faith is also a faculty (*saddhindriya*). One arouses faith in instances when skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*) and hesitation arise, thinking: "Didn't I surrender my heart to the Buddha at the beginning?"—in that manner. Likewise, energy. In instances when the mind shrinks like that, when drowsiness comes, one practices energy. Next, *sati* means mindfulness. Perhaps you think of mindfulness in terms of the moments of forgetfulness in daily life. But the virtue of *sati* in the Dhamma indicates being constantly established near oneself, helping in understanding—this is called presence (*upaṭṭhāna*). Being properly established near oneself, like a servant standing close to you, the ability to keep the mind always on that object. The ability to pay attention to something is mindfulness. Only a person with established mindfulness can proceed forward on this path of Dhamma.

To such an extent that where there is no mindfulness, one falls into negligence (*pamāda*). Everything is brought to light by mindfulness. Now, what do we mean when we say, "Oh, I forgot"? It is the place where mindfulness was absent. Similarly, the meditation subject is sometimes lost where mindfulness is insufficient. This demonstrates that it is mindfulness that always brings things to light for us, presenting it to us, saying "Here is this." Next, it is through further cultivation of this very mindfulness that concentration (*samādhi*) is reached—a certain collected state of the mind, which is the nature opposite to the scattering and agitation of the mind. Our mind is often distracted and agitated. Our eyes, ears, and nose drag us this way and that. To concentrate the mind means to release the mind from those external objects that help it scatter, and to establish it in some wholesome object: establishing the mind in a mind of loving-kindness (*mettā*), or in the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), or within

some meditation subject, without letting it go elsewhere. While remaining in that state, we can also test some power of the mind. Then, we get the feeling: "While there is so much power, what a small fraction of the mind do we use in our daily life!"

Not only that, when the mind is collected, through that, a marvelous physical ease—a certain happiness because of that very collectiveness—is received. That is the virtue of concentration (*samādhi*). All of this is done ultimately for the sake of wisdom (*paññā*). Because the Buddha declared: "Wisdom is the treasure of humans" (*paññā narānaṃ ratanaṃ*). The greatest treasure, the most valuable thing humans have, is wisdom. This capacity of wisdom exists within us. Now, even though Venerable Cittahattha committed such foolish acts, the things required for wisdom had existed within him. He did not read a big book on his way. Yet, it is said that he understood the True Dhamma. His wisdom developed. It was because he had the wisdom of insight (*vipassanā-paññā*), and by arousing it, that he attained Stream-entry and subsequently achieved other paths and fruits. Therefore, we must reflect that we have spent various long lives—as male, female, gods, or Brahmas—perhaps being inclined to the Dhamma, and meeting Buddhas. All of these are deposited within our minds. To such an extent that everything we have done in this entire Saṃsāra is preserved in a highly subtle manner; some are surprised when thinking about modern computers. But an even more marvelous power exists in our *viññāṇa* (consciousness), in our mind. All of this, not a single thing is lost. None of this disappears without yielding its result—both good things and bad things.

Therefore, if there are Dhamma practices and meditations we performed in the past, their meritorious power exists within us as supportive conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*). However, it must be aroused through effort. It is through that wisdom—coming to us from places we did not expect—that sometimes young children, or those considered uneducated, or those thought of as fools, or those without ordinary mundane intelligence, in the end are seen to attain that noble supramundane state. Why? Because they aroused that wisdom. That wisdom is indeed the light. In the Dhamma, wisdom is often described as "light has arisen" (*āloko udapādi*), like a state where light appears. To show the difference between knowledge and wisdom through a simile: suppose we want to beautify a certain brass tray. One method is to apply various colored paints to it. Another method is that we can bring out the natural luster of that brass tray by removing the layers of rust with a rust-removing substance. Between these two, we can see that the knowledge of the world is like applying paint. There is no end to it. Layers of paint are applied. What is meant by developing the knowledge of the entire world? It is applying layers of paint to this tray of ours. The layer applied today is not the layer of tomorrow. They keep on applying it, yet none of these brings out the true beauty and luster. The natural, inherent luster does not arise. Instead, what has to be done is the removal of that layer of rust. That is wisdom.

The Buddha declared: "*Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ, tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ. Taṃ assutavā puthujjano nappajānāti, tasmā assutavato puthujjanassa cittabhāvanā natthīti vadāmi.*" "Monks, this mind is luminous. Luminous means there is a power to radiate light within it. But what has happened to it?

It is defiled by visiting defilements (*āgantuka-upakkilesa*). It is like leaving that tray aside without caring for it, and letting rust form on it. The person who does not know the Dhamma does not understand this fact. That is why that person has no interest in meditation."

On the other hand, it is shown: "*Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ, tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vippamuttaṃ. Taṃ sutavā ariyasāvako yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, tasmā sutavato ariyasāvakassa cittabhāvanā atthīti vadāmi.*" "Monks, this mind is luminous. But suppose someone has released it from visiting defilements, completely liberating it from them. When liberated, a certain luminosity emerges; the person who possesses Dhamma-knowledge understands this fact at their respective level. They realize it. Therefore, there is mental cultivation (*cittabhāvanā*) for that person; that person becomes interested in meditation." Now, one does not need to wait until the supramundane state arrives. You can reflect that if you had been engaged in various tasks in your respective homes in daily life, how vast a mountain of defilements (*kilesa*) would have had the chance to flow into the mind at this moment! Instead, while being in this state, to some extent, a luminosity of the mind, and perhaps that light of wisdom we mentioned, might have arisen. As the saying goes, "If it is so much for that, how much more would it be for this?" Based on this, when reflecting on supramundane wisdom, you can think that the layers of defilements in our mind—these defilements are shown by the Buddha to be much more subtle than what we generally think of as defilements.

Sometimes, even what we assume to be knowledge, what we assume to be education, is also demonstrated to be defilements. Because underlying these is conceit (*māna*), within every single one of them. Next, much more subtle, even more than that, are the lust for form (*rūpa-rāga*), the lust for formlessness (*arūpa-rāga*), and so forth—even those desires to be born in heavenly worlds or Brahma-worlds, all of these are presented by the Buddha as defilements. Therefore, rejoice that at this moment, you have generated the power to develop those faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*): faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

May all deities, including the divine and Brahma assembly who protect the Dispensation, if they wish to realize and attain Nibbāna, share in these merits accumulated so far. Having shared in them, may they realize the noble, supreme Nibbāna through whichever of the three states of enlightenment (*bodhi*) they aspire to. Making that wish, similarly, may all departed relatives who have passed away, and likewise all beings from Avīci up to the highest plane of existence (*bhavāgra*) who desire merit and Nibbāna, share in these merits! By the mass of merit accumulated through this preaching and hearing of the Dhamma, may they realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! Similarly, maintaining our lives in a way that these virtues we have developed, such as faith and energy, mature within this very life, may we have the strength and power to be consoled by the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Non-returning, and so forth, without delay in this very life! Wishing thus, recite this verse and share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #89

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.91)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Pāmojja-bahulo pasanno, Buddhasāsane;

Adhigacche padaṃ santaṃ, saṅkhārūpasamaṃ sukhaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 381 (Bhikkhuvagga)

Dear Listeners,

If we consider the cultivation of dispensation virtues as a form of agriculture, faith (*saddhā*) is taken as the seed-paddy. The reason why faith receives such a fundamental place is that when there is no clarity or devotion towards the Teacher, the necessary energy to walk the path of practice shown by Him does not arise. The disciple with strong faith receives the strength to act according to the word of the Buddha with supreme commitment. Today, we hope to present the verse that expresses this, along with the story that serves as evidence for it.

There lived a young Brahmin named Vakkali in the city of Sāvatthī. One day, seeing the Buddha walking for alms, this young Brahmin Vakkali felt an extraordinary fascination with the beautiful physical form of the Buddha. To such an extent that, not being satisfied with just following behind Him, he thought, "How good if I could keep seeing the Buddha every day!" and for that very purpose, he was ordained in the dispensation. Even after being ordained, what he did was not Dhamma discussion, meditation, or chanting, but gazing continuously at the Buddha. At every possible opportunity, he kept gazing at the Buddha. This was like a great nuisance to anyone. But the Buddha patiently endured it. He waited until the wisdom and understanding of Elder Vakkali developed a little. Having watched thus, waiting for the right time, at one point He admonished Elder Vakkali: "Vakkali, what is the use of gazing at this foul body? He who sees the Dhamma, sees me." He gave that advice.

Even though He said so, due to the faith that Ven. Vakkali had, there was a situation where he could not remain without seeing the Buddha. So, when the rainy season

(*vassa*) approached, the Buddha journeyed to the city of Rājagaha. Needless to say, Ven. Vakkali also went. On the day of entering the *vassa*—which is the starting day of the three months of the rainy season—the Buddha thought, "Now indeed, I must do something to arouse spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) in Vakkali," and dismissed him saying, "*Apehi, Vakkali*"—"Depart, Vakkali!" and sent him away.

Then Ven. Vakkali was filled with great grief. "Alas, how can I live for three months without seeing the Buddha?" Abandoning even the desire for life, he climbed the Vulture's Peak (*Gijjhakaṭa*) and planned to commit suicide. Thinking thus, when he was on the very verge of jumping from that cliff, the Buddha realized this situation, thinking: "If he does not receive some consolation from me now, Vakkali will miss the opportunity to attain the fruits of the Path." As Vakkali was preparing to jump, the Buddha uttered the verse which we have set as today's theme:

Pāmojja-bahulo bhikkhu, pasanno buddhasāsane;

adhigacche padaṃ santaṃ, saṅkhārūpasamaṃ sukhaṃ.

What this short verse says is that the monk who is dedicated to this Buddha's dispensation and is abundant in joy and delight, attains that auspicious, blissful, peaceful Nibbāna,, which is called the calming and stilling of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Such is the message contained within it.

Having said that, He did not stop there; the Buddha manifested His physical form to Vakkali through psychic power. Next, the Buddha invited Vakkali to come, saying "*Ehi*" ("Come!"). Although He had driven him away earlier saying "*Apehi*", on this occasion He said, "Come, Vakkali, do not be afraid," and then it is mentioned that He uttered three verses. "Vakkali, do not be afraid. Look at me. Come. I shall pull you up from this mud-mire. Just as the sun caught by Rāhu is freed from Rāhu, or the moon caught by Rāhu is released from Rāhu, I shall protect you." He uttered verses declaring that He would be his refuge.

As it is described there, Vakkali got to hear this just as he was preparing to jump. According to the explanation, Ven. Vakkali, who was in deep grief and spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), experienced a tremendous joy and rapture, a great happiness. "The Buddha drove me away before, but now the Buddha is inviting me!" Because the Buddha had shown Himself through psychic power as if standing right before him, he jumped solely out of that faith. Yet, without meeting with disaster, he next appeared right beside the Buddha. What is shown to have happened in the interim is that he deeply realized the subtle meaning expressed in that verse, and it is mentioned that he attained Arahantship together with the analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*).

Indeed, there are instances in the Dhamma where instantaneous realization of this kind is mentioned, such as attaining Arahantship even while falling from the top of a bamboo tree. But this is a special event. To show the power of this faith, after all these events took place, the Buddha, as was His custom to declare those with special skills in various areas to be chief, declared Ven. Vakkali as the chief among the monks who are liberated

through faith (*saddhādhimiutta*). He declared that among the monks in the entire dispensation who are excessive in faith and inclined towards faith, Ven. Vakkali is the foremost, the chief.

This story is found in various books with diverse differences. Now, if we consider this event as something that occurred in accordance with the Dhamma, we can present its deep meaning in this way. You, devout listeners, may already know that seeing Nibbāna,, is not something that can be done with these eyes, ears, nose, and so forth. Rather, it is by developing five internal spiritual faculties (*indriya*) within oneself that Nibbāna,, can be attained. These faculties are identified as follows: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

These very faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom must be developed within oneself to see Nibbāna,. Not only must they be developed, but these faculties must also be balanced. For some individuals in saṃsāra, those with high faith find their faith becoming excessive, crossing the limit. For those with high wisdom, sometimes that faculty can also become excessive. For those where it is excessive, the Buddha sometimes has to balance it, to bring it to a state of equilibrium, just as He balanced Ven. Soṇa's energy by giving the simile of the lute.

Ven. Vakkali's faith became excessive. However, the Buddha patiently endured that matter until the right opportunity arrived. That matter means: Ven. Vakkali went behind Him wherever He went. Having gone thus, only after his intellectual capacity had matured to a certain extent did He say: "What is the use of looking at this foul body? If one sees the Dhamma, that is all there is." That is why He said it is equivalent to seeing Me.

Next, at the final moment, what we have to understand is that through the very revolution of mind that arose in Ven. Vakkali, he realized Nibbāna,, which is called the calming and stilling of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Such things are within the domain of Buddha-knowledge (*Buddha-ñāṇa*). The Buddha sees what is called *puggala-vemattatā*, the diversity of individuals. According to their diversity, the Buddha sometimes tames that disciple through gentle methods, and sometimes through harsh methods, by virtue of His quality of "charioteer of men to be tamed" (*purisadhamma-sārathī*). In the beginning, He drove him away harshly: "Why should Vakkali keep looking at this foul body?" and sent him away. Next, He dismissed him harshly, saying "Depart!" Then He invited him to come. Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are things we construct with this mind, aren't they? So, when the attachment created towards the beauty of the Buddha's form went beyond limits, when he was told to separate from it, a great grief arose: "There is no use in my living anymore."

In this world, we hear many such stories regarding mundane things. What we have to consider here is that the beauty of the Buddha's form is not a beauty of form that increases defilements; it is a beauty of form that stilled defilements. That is the only difference. Therefore, following behind the Buddha is like reading a Dhamma book; associating constantly with the Buddha is of the same nature. The Buddha is one who

speaks as He acts and acts as He speaks (*yathāvādī tathākārī*): "How He speaks, so He acts; how He acts, so He speaks." Thus, the Buddha's conduct, posture, movements, everything is like a Dhamma book. That is why He told him to wait until his wisdom matured. Ven. Vakkali did not simply follow behind Him. The Buddha knows that when a faithful person associates with Him, there are things to learn from Him.

What we have to think, even if it is not explicitly written in the books, is that during that period of time, while following behind the living Buddha, Ven. Vakkali, through being fascinated by that beauty of form, recognized who the Buddha was through his faith—the very things we learn from the Buddha's biography. Having recognized Him, that was why he became bound to such a degree. In that situation, the Buddha sought to direct that extreme faith towards the side of wisdom, saying: "What is the use of looking at this foul body? One sees Me only if one sees the Dhamma." So, that too must have struck his heart.

Finally, there is a deep meaning in that verse. Giving space to faith, He expressed the value of abundance of joy; what is shown there is the necessity of faith for Nibbāna,. Devotion (*prasāda*) and joy (*pāmojja*) are things that arise through faith. They may not be accessible to intellectualists in this day and age. However, there is a special quality in faith: it instills virtuous qualities in the heart and gives the strength to act in accordance with the Teacher's word. To such an extent that the jump he intended as a useless sacrifice of life—as a suicide—he jumped instead towards the Buddha. Yet, there was no disaster. The Buddha, with His psychic power, supported his power of perfections (*pāramī*), and no harm befell Ven. Vakkali. We must understand that in the interim, while in the supportless sky, he realized that noble state of Nibbāna, which is the calming of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). This is the explanation we can see in this Dhamma story.

Be that as it may, what we primarily have to contemplate is the value of this faith. How valuable is faith? Now, you devout laymen know, what is the chief organ of the animal called the elephant, the organ it puts forward? The trunk. Thus, in one place in the Dhamma, where the organs and parts of the elephant are compared to various aspects of the Dhamma, the Buddha has shown: "*Saddhā-hattho mahānāgo*"—"Faith is the trunk of the great elephant (the Dhamma-bodied elephant)." When we think about the trunk, you know that any task requiring strength and power, like uprooting trees and rolling rocks, the elephant does with its trunk. Likewise, the tip of the trunk is so delicate that it can even pick up a needle fallen on the ground; it can perform that feat as well.

So, here we have to understand that when Ven. Vakkali's faith was directed towards the side of wisdom, he realized Nibbāna, which is called the calming and stilling of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). He must have understood that all of this was a conflict arising within his own mind. First, he was in deep grief, and then a great joy arose. Underlying all of this is a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) constructed within himself. Therefore, where preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are calmed and stilled, that is what is called Nibbāna,. He must have realized this.

Thus, as mentioned, some people have excessive wisdom and low faith. So, in one way or another, the Buddha reveals the necessity of faith according to the occasion. The supreme, leading place given to faith among virtuous qualities is also revealed by the simile of the elephant. Similarly, in many other places, the value of faith is revealed, just as the seed is primary in farming. Next, the application of one's energy is mentioned. In another place, in the *Āḷavaka Sutta*, a question asked by the yakkha Āḷavaka is about the four torrents of saṃsāra—sensual desire, becoming (*bhava*), views, and ignorance—sometimes shown as a single torrent. He asked the Buddha: "*Kathaṃ su taratī oghaṃ?*"—"How does one cross over the flood?" How does one cross over this torrent of saṃsāra? The answer given by the Buddha to that was: "*Saddhāya taratī*"—"One crosses over the flood by faith."

Now, think about this a little, devout laymen. In the rainy season, a certain stream flows very strongly and rapidly. The opposite bank is visible. A person sitting on this bank keeps thinking, "This water must be cold, this water is flowing very fast. If I jump into this..." He keeps reasoning in this manner. He does not even step into the water. Can he cross over? No. If someone jumps into this, with a sacrifice of life, with the determination of "death or crossing"—if they have that much of a desire to go to the other side—jumping with the resolution "death or crossing", then, with great difficulty, cutting through that rapid torrent, they can cross over. That is the power of faith. Within faith, there is maximum commitment.

Indeed, the Buddha has shown another good, valuable simile for this. In the *Cūḷagopālaka Sutta*, there is a simile of a cowherd, which is a highly valuable simile. The Buddha narrates it as a story: There was a certain wise cowherd in the country of Magadha, in the last month of the four months of the rainy season—when you can imagine that those streams and rivers are flowing heavily—who drove his herd of cattle across the Ganges river. Not from an unsuitable place, but being wise, with an understanding of the other shore as well as this shore, he drove them from the ford (*panthota*). A ford means a crossing point, a shallow place. He did not drive the cattle through a deep place, but through a shallow place.

Next, the method of driving the cattle is also shown. First, he made the leader bulls cross over. So, the leader bulls went forward, cutting through the rapid current. Next, looking at the leader bulls, the strong, untamed, playful, young-bull-like cattle went behind them. They too cut through the rapid current in that manner. Having watched this, thirdly, the heifers and young steers were crossed over. Next, the weak calves crossed over, cutting through the rapid current. To such an extent, the Buddha declares, that finally even the calf born that very day, following its mother—you know how a cow makes a certain sound when searching for her calf, "lowing" (*gōrāva*), which is the sound cattle make—making that sound, that newborn calf also crossed the rapid current.

The Buddha did not stop by just stating the simile; next, He presented the meaning of the simile. What the Buddha presents here is the manner in which He crosses the world over. Like those leader bulls are the Arahants. Thus, the Arahants were crossed over. Looking at that, those playful, young cattle are the Non-returners (*anāgāmī*). Watching

the Non-returner cattle go, next are the Once-returners (*sakadāgāmī*), represented by those heifers and young steers. Next, as the weak calves, are those who are Stream-enterers (*sotāpanna*). Finally, as that calf born that very day, the Buddha shows a specific class of persons called the Dhamma-followers (*dhammānusārī*) and Faith-followers (*saddhānusārī*). That is, there are some people with excessive wisdom who gain impetus from that and cross over with that momentum. Faith-followers are those who have excessive faith; these two types of persons, the Dhamma-followers and Faith-followers, are given in the simile as the calf born that very day. In the Dhamma, they are shown as those who have entered the path to obtaining the fruit of Stream-entry.

So, how were all those feats accomplished? In a systematic manner. He crossed them over from the right place, from the right ford. Having declared so, how does the Buddha finally conclude it? "Monks, like the cowherd, I have good skill and understanding of this world, and good understanding of the world beyond; I have a good understanding of the territory belonging to Māra, and a good understanding of the territory not belonging to Māra; further, I know the ford (*panthota*) exactly. Therefore, if anyone thinks it is fit to listen to my word, if anyone thinks it is fit to establish faith in me, it will be for their welfare and happiness for a long time." Thus, the Buddha showed the value of faith in association with that story.

So, when we focus our mind on the way those cattle went, we see that through that example—the example of the cattle going in front—the next cattle received the perception: "We can go to the other side." Seeing them go, the next ones went, and in this manner, even the calf born that very day crossed over. This is the kind of thing that is present within faith. The power of faith: without folding one's arms and staying back saying, "It is cold, how can one cross over from this?" one must jump. One must jump with the resolution "death or crossing." Only if one jumps and swims with such commitment, maximum commitment, can one reach the other shore. For that, what is needed is faith. Intellect is also needed, indeed, but without faith, none of that can be done.

So, from that, the momentum one receives from faith is visible. That is why the Buddha declared that one crosses over by faith. How does one cross over this rapid torrent? It is with faith as the forerunner. The other things follow. It is in accordance with faith that energy (*viriya*) emerges. Now, there is a certain relationship among those five faculties we mentioned. Without faith... no. It is in the quality of energy that mindfulness (*sati*) emerges. Next, it is mindfulness itself that, when maintained for a long time, becomes concentration (*samādhi*). It is to a concentrated mind that the right understanding, which is called true wisdom (*paññā*), arises. What is spoken of here is not an intellectualism done by reasoning and so on; the true understanding, the understanding accompanied by the true Dhamma, comes from wisdom. For that, one must develop these five faculties.

For some people, due to various causes in saṃsāra and due to associating with Buddhas, faith becomes strong. Now, it is said that Ven. Vakkali had in the past made an aspiration to become the foremost disciple in faith. It was because of such strong faith that he

followed behind the Buddha in that manner. As we have shown, it was not a mere following. Gazing at the Buddha does not mean increasing defilements, but calming and stilling them. The Buddha possessed a beauty of form that calmed and stilled defilements. Not only that, His maintenance of postures and everything else was like a Dhamma book. During the time Ven. Vakkali followed behind Him, wisdom must have developed naturally, in such and such a manner. From this story, we can understand that its final result was the Buddha helping him by means of that miracle and providing refuge. This is a miraculous story. There are many such things in the Dhamma.

Next, if we contemplate further on this, among the things the Buddha declared about faith, another question asked by that very yakkha Āḷavaka was: "*Kiṃ sūidha vittaṃ purisassa...*"—"What is a man's best wealth in this world?" There too, the Buddha brought faith to the forefront: "*Saddhīdha vittaṃ purisassa...*"—"Faith is a man's greatest wealth in this world." Why did the Buddha do so? You, devout laymen, have heard about the noble wealth (*ariya-dhana*) of a Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*).

Saddhā-dhanaṃ sīla-dhanaṃ, hiri-ottappiyaṃ dhanaṃ;

suta-dhanaṃ ca cāgo ca, paññā me sattamaṃ dhanaṃ.

In some places, it is shown as seven kinds of wealth. In others, as five. Shown as seven, they are: faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), shame (*hiri*), fear of wrongdoing (*ottappa*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Next, when shown as five, it is not that shame and fear of wrongdoing are discarded, but because they are naturally implied when virtue is mentioned: faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Thus, the five noble wealths are faith, virtue, learning (which is Dhamma-knowledge), generosity (which is the quality of relinquishment), and wisdom. There is such a classification of Dhamma.

If we analyze that wealth of faith (*saddhā-dhana*) a bit further: the wealth of faith is such that, in this day and age, taking refuge in the Triple Gem in this dispensation has also become a great problem for some people. A problem they cannot resolve. Intellectualism has become distorted to such an extent. They do not even properly know the meaning of "*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*." What is meant by this? Now, we know that all of us in this world, in saṃsāra, are helpless. We must accept that. It is natural for helpless people to seek a refuge, a shelter. Before the Buddha appeared, those who had fallen into this suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra, when parts of that suffering (*dukkha*)—the loss of their loved ones, destruction of property, onset of illness, loss of employment, in various ways—gradually surfaced from underneath, what did we do to cover it up? We went to trees, rocks, and shrines.

The Buddha declared that if any help is received from those, it is only a limited help. A true security, a true refuge and shelter, cannot be obtained through trees, rocks, and shrines. The true refuge is taking refuge in the Buddha, taking refuge in the Dhamma, taking refuge in the Saṅgha. So, what is contained within that? By taking refuge in the Buddha, one has made the Buddha-jewel one's own. By taking refuge in the Dhamma,

one has made the Dhamma-jewel one's own. By taking refuge in the Saṅgha, one has made the Saṅgha-jewel one's own. Thus, regarding the Triple Gem, it is said in the blessing verses:

Yaṃ kiñci ratanaṃ loke, vijjati vividhā puthū;

ratanaṃ buddhasamaṃ natthi, tasmā sotthī bhavantu te.

How is an act of truth (*sacca-kiriyā*) performed? "Whatever jewels exist in the world, diverse and manifold, there is no jewel equal to the Buddha-jewel. By this truth, may there be well-being for you!" Thus, it declares a truth strong enough to say this.

What is meant by this is that the person who seeks the shelter and refuge of the Buddha-jewel, through taking refuge in the Triple Gem, deposits that very Triple Gem in his heart, which no one can steal. Furthermore, all other deposits are lost when banks collapse. But this faith cannot be stolen by anyone. For one who has strong faith, even if one cuts open his chest, that faith cannot be pulled out. It is that wonderful. Therefore, through that faith, the Triple Gem becomes one's own (*māmaka*). One becomes able to say: "The Triple Gem is mine." *Māmaka* means "mine": "The Buddha-jewel is mine, the Dhamma-jewel is mine, the Saṅgha-jewel is mine." That itself is a great strength. That itself is a great wealth. That is why it was called the wealth of faith (*saddhā-dhana*) there.

For that very reason, devout laymen, in answering the question, "To what extent is one a lay disciple (*upāsaka*) in this dispensation?" the Buddha replied that by merely taking refuge in the Triple Gem, saying "*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*," one becomes a lay disciple (*upāsaka*). Observing the precepts is an additional thing. To be an *upāsaka*, taking refuge itself is sufficient. Not only that, to this day, when ordaining a novice monk (*sāmaṇera*), although a precept is given, a ten-fold precept is given indeed, it is called "*saraṇāgamana-pabbajjā*." Even today, it is declared that one is established in the monkhood by the mere act of taking refuge. Therefore, taking refuge is such a powerful thing; it is not something to be taken lightly. Though said easily, if one said "*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*" and made a mistake the first time, one might refrain from saying it the second time. If it went wrong the second time, one might refrain from saying it the third time. But why is it said three times? It is because it is that much realized by oneself. From this too, it is clear that faith is such a fundamentally important thing. That is why it was called the wealth of faith (*saddhā-dhana*).

This faith arises in various ways for each individual. Today, more than two thousand five hundred years have passed since the parinibbāna (extinction/extinguishment) of the Buddha. Even in this day and age, one is fascinated by a description of the Buddha's virtues by a talented poet from the East or West. One is fascinated by a prose description of the Buddha's virtues by a talented writer. One is fascinated by a statue by a talented sculptor. In this modern era, such sculptors may sometimes not be found, in an age

dominated by material gain of rupees and cents. But when we visit places like Anurādhapura and Polonnaruwa of the past, we see how those internal strengths we mentioned—faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—were applied to the chisel to carve such wondrous statues. Not only ordinary people from East and West, but great scholars, scientists, and various kinds of philosophers even in this day and age have been fascinated upon seeing those statues. Such is the Buddha statue. This is not just a stone. What is called a Buddha statue is something capable of softening a heart of stone. It is not something to be taken lightly. If one takes it as just a stone, that is a misunderstanding.

So, the matter is true. The Buddha transcends all praise (*vaṇṇanā-visayātikkānta*). No writer can ever exhaust the praise of the Buddha. Similarly, no sculptor can fully represent the form of the Buddha. However, taking the Buddha's virtues into the heart at each level, and employing faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) as guides—not as something done for money, but if one performs that task with complete dedication—upon seeing that statue carved in stone, even a heart of stone will soften. In the same way, seeing a Buddha image drawn by a talented painter, faith arises in another. Thus, we can understand that Ven. Vakkali's following behind the Buddha was not a journey undertaken out of a mere shallow thought. If one is so fascinated by the Buddha's virtues merely by seeing a stone-carved Buddha statue, a painted Buddha portrait, or by reading a poem, a eulogy, or a book, we can imagine how it must have been to see the living Buddha!

Therefore, in accordance with that, we must understand that there are things for us to learn even from the faithful Ven. Vakkali. Perhaps even intellectualists have much to learn. For, that maximum commitment emerges from correctly recognizing the Teacher. At another time, the Buddha declared this, calling it a "fourfold declaration" (*catuppada-veyyākaraṇa*)—an exposition consisting of four statements. On a certain occasion, the Buddha declared the value of this faith as a four-phrase declaration. "Monks, regarding the faithful disciple who has entered this dispensation and practices the path, it can be said in this way. The faithful disciple is recognized in this manner." Next, the words used by that disciple are shown.

"The Blessed One is the Teacher, I am the disciple. The Blessed One knows, I do not know." Now, perhaps there are scholars who know more than even the Buddha in this day and age. But look at how the true, faithful disciple thinks: "The Blessed One is the Teacher, I am the disciple. The Blessed One knows, I do not know." This is what must be brought to the fulfillment of practice in this dispensation. Only such a person can jump in that manner, just as he jumped from the cliff, thinking, "The Buddha will surely catch me," without thinking, "This is cold," but cutting through the great rapid torrent. Only one with such faith can jump with the resolution "death or crossing" and cross over. That is the first one mentioned. What is the disciple's attitude? That very one mentioned.

Next, in the second phrase, the Buddha shows: what is the second quality of the faithful disciple who has entered this dispensation and practices? For that disciple, this dispensation is supportive of growth. There is a certain word used for that:

ruhamanīyaṃ (nourishing/conducive to growth). Likewise, another word is used: *ojavantaṃ*, meaning sapful/rich. In the simile, it is shown that if the soil is fertile and moisture is present, the fallen seed sprouts well. We can also recall what was said about the seed of faith (*saddhā-bīja*). Thus, for the faithful disciple, this dispensation is a suitable ground for growth. A fertile soil. A soil with moisture. Not some dry, hard ground. That is what is said there, which is another characteristic by which the Buddha recognizes a faithful disciple.

Next, thirdly, He shows how to recognize the faithful disciple. Regarding the faithful disciple, this is the state; how? That disciple begins with the firm determination: "Let only skin, sinews, and bones remain! Let the flesh and blood dry up! Whatever goal can be achieved by manly strength, manly energy, and manly effort, until that state is reached, there shall be no relaxing of energy." One must enter the task with this strong resolution. This is called the four-fold energy (*caturaṅga-samannāgata-viriya*). The Buddha also finally sat at the terrace of enlightenment (*Bodhi-maṇḍala*) in that manner. That is what must be present within a faithful person. "Let only skin, sinews, and bones remain! Let the flesh and blood dry up! Whatever goal can be achieved by manly strength, manly energy, and manly effort, without attaining it, there shall be no turning back or relaxing." This is the third characteristic.

The final characteristic is shown: for the faithful disciple in this dispensation, there are two fruits that can be obtained. If there is a remnant of grasping (*upādāna*), of defiled holding and so forth, he becomes a Non-returner (*anāgāmī*). If not, the fruit of Arahantship. That is all. For the faithful disciple, the true result is either Non-returning or Arahantship. Nothing less than that. The Buddha has shown the value of faith there to such an extent.

Next, we must contemplate that they did so upon seeing the Buddha's form. Not only that, some recognized the Buddha—not to mention other things—even by the Buddha's voice, and not only humans. There is a Dhamma story: when the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma near the banks of the Gargarā pond, a frog did not understand the Buddha’s words. However, the Buddha's voice is said to be a truly wonderful voice. It is called the "eightfold Brahma-voice" (*aṭṭhaṅga-samannāgata-brahmasara*), described as a Brahma-voice possessing eight characteristics. Hearing the Buddha preaching in that voice, that frog came out of the pond; a cowherd who came there, perhaps an old cowherd, accidentally placed his walking stick on the frog’s head and stood on it. Then, that frog died, and was eventually born in the heavenly world by the name of Maṇḍūka Devaputta (the frog deity-son). Later, in divine form, he came to see the Buddha, listened to the Dhamma, and it is shown that he became a Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). See, even a frog became a Stream-enterer! With the help of faith, even a frog became a Stream-enterer. So, there is that story of Maṇḍūka Devaputta. Regarding that voice, there are lengthy explanations and reasons given for why it is "endowed with" (*samannāgata*) those characteristics. It was extremely sweet, and also a deep voice that made the meaning clear. The Buddha possessed a wonderful wealth of voice that resonated and echoed.

Next, other scholars of that time were the Brahmins who had mastered the Three Vedas. How did they develop faith in the Buddha? They did so by looking at books. When looking at books, it is stated in their texts that if someone appears in the world with the thirty-two marks of a Great Man (*dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*), there are only two destinies or paths for that person, that man. If he remains a layman, he becomes a wheel-turning monarch (*cakkavatti*). If he goes forth into homelessness, he becomes an Arahant, a Fully Enlightened Buddha (*Sammā-Sambuddha*) in the world. Since it was so stated in their books, those Brahmins who believed in the books recognized the Buddha by the thirty-two marks of a Great Man.

There are many such stories. The Brahmin named Brahmāyu sent his disciple Uttara Māṇavaka, a young Brahmin, to see whether these thirty-two marks of a Great Man were indeed present on the Buddha. So, it is said that Uttara Māṇavaka, the young Brahmin, followed behind the Buddha like His shadow for seven months. Just like detectives follow behind in this day and age, this young man Uttara Māṇavaka followed behind the Buddha for seven entire months to see if these things were true. He saw those marks of a Great Man, and not only that, in the end he came and gave a very long description to the Brahmin Brahmāyu. Not only that, he described the way the Buddha eats, how He walks for alms, how He preaches the Dhamma, how He remains silent, and the uniqueness shown in each of His postures. Having given a very long description, how does this Uttara Māṇavaka finally conclude? "It is in such and such a manner. Venerable Gotama, indeed, is even more than this." He ends with "even more than this," which means He transcends praise: "It cannot be fully contained." Hearing that, the Brahmin Brahmāyu developed great faith right then and there, and it is mentioned that he subsequently went and finally became a disciple.

Similarly, it is mentioned that the Brahmin Bāvarī, who had a large group of disciples, also recognized Him through the marks of a Great Man in the same way. The Brahmin Sela was also like that. Especially, we can also contemplate the news about the Brahmin Sela. Here too, a certain matted-hair ascetic (*jaṭila*) named Keṇiya—*jaṭila* means a Brahmin who performed various vows to such an extent that his hair grew long enough to be entwined with his flesh—even though that *jaṭila* was not a disciple of the Buddha, had developed some faith towards the Buddha and went to invite the Buddha and the congregation of about two hundred and fifty monks for an alms offering. He gathered his relatives and prepared the alms at his hermitage. They built fireplaces, chopped firewood, washed vessels, and prepared seats in the alms-hall.

While doing these things, the Brahmin Sela, a friend of the *jaṭila* Keṇiya and a master of the Three Vedas, arrived with three hundred disciples to visit his friend. Seeing the massive preparations, he asked: "What is this, Keṇiya? Is there some wedding celebration? Or is there a sacrifice (*yāga*)? Or is there an invitation to King Bimbisāra along with his royal army for a feast tomorrow? What is this preparation for?" "No, no, it is none of those. I have invited the Tathāgata, the Fully Enlightened Buddha, I have invited the Venerable Gotama." The moment that word "Buddha" was uttered, that word itself was sufficient. "Did you say 'Buddha', Keṇiya?" "Yes, Sela, I said 'Buddha'." "Did

you say 'Buddha'?" Asking thus three times, out of the faith that arose therefrom, the Brahmin Sela also eventually went in search of the Buddha and became a disciple. Thus, we see that the educated people of that time also developed faith from the physical marks of the Buddha—that unique, wonderful beauty of form which belongs only to a Buddha in accordance with the power of perfections (*pāramī*), which was unseen by others.

Next, various other educated people, seeing the power of the Buddha's wisdom, the depth of His teachings, the way He presented facts during debates and arguments, discarded their pride, became humble, and developed faith in that manner too. For those highly proud individuals who could not be bent otherwise, like the Kassapa brothers, the Buddha broke and destroyed their pride by performing miracles in competition. Why did He generate faith in these people in various ways? Not for anything else, but for their own liberation. That is the Buddha's duty. The quality of "charioteer of men to be tamed" (*purisadhamma-sārathī*) is visible here; we can see it through these events. He possesses that special skill, like a charioteer, in taming individuals who can be tamed. His Buddha-knowledge and miracle-working power were all applied not for anything else, but to remove the darkness of delusion, to remove defilements like pride, and to establish them on the path to Nibbāna,.

In those days, the world utilized various objects to develop faith in the Buddha. The beauty of His form; some hearing His voice; seeing the meaning in the words He preached; making use of wisdom-powers of reasoning and conceptualizing, and thoughts. Some through those marks of a Great Man. In various ways like this, they developed faith in the Buddha, because faith is fundamental. Without faith, one cannot walk this path. When speaking about faith, there are a few other words related to it, such as *adhimokkha* (determination/decision). The meaning of the word *adhimokkha* is "releasing" or "letting go". It is with the help of faith that energy is released. Otherwise, one holds back a part for oneself. Now, those of you who meditate know that one performs a dedication of life (*jīvita-pūjā*) to the Triple Gem. What is the meaning of that? One offers one's life to the Triple Gem. That is that commitment. Without rejecting the invitation made by the Buddha through those verses—"Come, Vakkali, do not be afraid. Look at me. I shall save you"—Ven. Vakkali accepted it, jumping with the thought: "This must be true." That is indeed commitment.

Just as a person going to war commits himself for his country, one who expects Nibbāna,, dedicates his life to the Triple Gem. "May my life be offered to the Buddha-jewel! May my life be offered to the Dhamma-jewel! May my life be offered to the Saṅgha-jewel!" This is done through faith. Thus, taking refuge contains the pledge of faith. It is because of the pledge of faith that this taking of refuge is necessary. Without it, one cannot proceed. In another place, the Buddha shows—sometimes presenting His dispensation program with a simile—that just as the great ocean gradually becomes deeper, in my dispensation too, there is a gradual journey. There are three terms used for that: gradual training (*anupubba-sikkhā*), gradual action (*anupubba-kiriyā*), and gradual practice (*anupubba-paṭipadā*). "In my dispensation there is a gradual training, a gradual course of action, and a systematic path of practice that proceeds step-by-step." Next, He explains what it is.

There too, what is taken at the beginning is faith (*saddhā*). Only when faith arises in a person does he approach the Teacher. It is said: "*Saddhā-jāto upasaṅkamati*"—"Having born faith, he approaches." Having approached, he does not just stand there; he performs what is called *payirupāsana*—sitting close by. He prepares to listen to the Dhamma. Sitting down, he listens to the Dhamma with faith. With faith, he came to the Teacher. Next, he sits down to one side—"sat down on one side." While sitting thus, what does he hear? The Dhamma of the Buddha. Sitting there, he gets to hear it. When he gets to hear the Dhamma, without putting it into devices like machines to take home in order to win, he retains that Dhamma in his mind right there. Having retained it, he does not stop there. This is not a retaining done to pass exams. Next, what does he do with that retained Dhamma? Like taking out gold and gems from one's pocket to look at them, he examines its meaning from time to time. Even without looking at books, those are recorded in his mind. Taking them out, he examines the meaning: "What is this Dhamma declared by the Buddha? What is its meaning?" While examining the meaning, here is the next step: a state of being able to agree with those teachings arises (*dhamma-nijjhānakkhanti*).

After a certain understanding of the Dhamma arises, next a great desire (*chanda*) is born. The understanding arises that one must act according to it. A great desire (*chanda*) means a strong need. It is not the "vote" (*chanda*) one hears about in the country. What is called *chanda* in the Dhamma is zeal/desire. That great desire arises. According to that desire, one must make an effort. One exerts effort, applies energy (*viriya*). Next, while exerting that effort, next it is said that one "weighs/balances" (*tulanā*). That refers to the idea of balancing, balancing the spiritual faculties. Sometimes, when doing something new, one might apply excessive energy. A moment comes when one realizes this and balances that too. In a long-distance running race, if one runs the very first lap at excessive speed, one cannot win. One must pace oneself. Having gone well thus, when the right time comes, only then does one make that final sprint. Similarly, there is a weighing/balancing. Having done so, in the end, with a sacrifice of life, applying the four-fold energy as mentioned before, one obtains Nibbāna,.

That is the very process the Buddha refers to as gradual training (*anupubba-sikkhā*), gradual action (*anupubba-kiriyā*), and gradual practice (*anupubba-paṭipadā*). There are many factors there, but at the beginning is faith. If one does not approach the Teacher with faith, let alone bowing down, he will not even sit down. Then, having sat down, next is listening to what the Teacher declares, isn't it? A proud person will not do that either. Sitting down, next he tells the Teacher what he knows. He goes to teach the Blessed One. Then, he cannot proceed to the path of Arahantship. He lends an ear to what the Blessed One says. He does not speak of other things, but talks on Nibbāna,, doesn't he? He contemplates in accordance with that. Next, he retains it well.

Without saying, "I know more than that, I have read it in books, I have such and such degrees, what is being said is what we already know," he retains well what was said by the Buddha. Having retained it, without thinking, "I have understood it merely by retaining it," it is something that must be thought over and brought out again. Just as a gem is cut and polished from the right angles to bring out its value, so too one examines

the meaning of the Dhamma. When examining, then it becomes visible: "Indeed, what was said here is no small matter. Nibbāna,, is contained within these few words!" Behold, realization arises.

Only after that, thinking "there is nothing else to do but this task," does he generate desire (*chanda*) and apply effort. So, from this too, we can understand the value of this faith. These five wealths are demonstrated in one instance by the simile of a tree. That a growing sal tree is indeed a sal tree is recognized early on by its leaves. There is an old saying of ours, which you may have heard: "A growing tree is known by its two cotyledons." When a seed germinates, from those two seed-leaves of that seed, one can recognize whether it is a growing one or not. If those two cotyledons are healthy, that tree grows. Similarly, if the foliage is healthy, it shows richness. Faith is compared to that healthy foliage. The wealths are faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Next, virtue is the bark (*paṭṭā*) of that tree. Bark means the outer skin. Like bark to a tree is virtue. The bark of the tree develops in accordance with that foliage. The sapwood (*eḷaya*) is compared to generosity (*cāga*). Finally, there is wisdom (*paññā*). Wisdom is the heartwood (*araṭuva*). The heartwood does not grow on its own, does it? There are those who come looking only for the heartwood of the Dhamma. They do not need any other practice. Will those who go looking only for the heartwood obtain any heartwood?

Next, we must understand, what was the meditation Ven. Vakkali performed through the vision of the Buddha? It was recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*). In this day and age, we recollect the Buddha by organizing the vast heap of the Buddha's virtues into nine words. In those days, in an era without media like we have now, the news that a Buddha had appeared went out to the world through that very passage of Buddha-virtues which you recite, starting with: "*Iti pi so bhagavā arahaṃ...*" "Thus indeed is the Blessed One: accomplished (*arahaṃ*), fully enlightened (*sammā-sambuddho*), endowed with clear vision and virtuous conduct (*vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*), sublime (*sugato*), knower of the worlds (*lokavidū*), incomparable leader of men to be tamed (*anuttaro purisa-damma-sārathi*), teacher of gods and men (*satthā deva-manussānaṃ*), enlightened (*buddho*), blessed (*bhagavā*)." Behold the nine virtues.

The news that a Buddha had arisen spread in that way. Then, merely upon hearing it, some associated with Buddhas. Nothing much more was needed. Merely upon hearing that passage, they came in search of the Buddha. Within those nine virtues lies the strength of the Buddha. We spoke of the quality of *purisadhamma-sārathī*—the power of taming individuals. The Buddha Himself declares it. We refer to the Buddha as the Great Compassionate One. Yet, in some places, the Buddha took harsh courses of action; what was the reason for that? It was according to the occasion. It was indeed out of compassion. To use a simile, just as a mother or father, when a small child puts a pebble or something else in his mouth, pulls it out even if it causes bleeding—that indeed is done out of compassion. The Buddha Himself declares: "I tame through gentle means (*saṇhena pi vinemi*), I tame through harsh means (*pharusena pi vinemi*), and I tame through both gentle and harsh means (*saṇhapharusena pi vinemi*)." Sometimes I tame

through gentle courses of action, sometimes through harsh courses of action, and sometimes by connecting and combining both of them.

On other occasions, the Buddha declared to Ven. Ānanda: "I do not train disciples like a potter carefully moving wet, unbaked clay pots. I do not train disciples with fear and hesitation." Next, a few words are used there: "*Niggayha niggayhāhaṃ, Ānanda, vakkhāmi paggayha paggayha*." Even without the direct translation, when spoken it is understood: "Repressing again and again, Ānanda, I shall speak, and supporting again and again." What is its meaning? He explains next: "*Yo sāro so ṭhassati*"—"Let only those who have heartwood, who have essence, remain. I do not need mere heads (numbers), I do not need crowds. It is enough for me to have those who have the true heartwood and are dedicated to the task; with this thought do I train disciples." That is indeed a place where the Buddha spoke according to His quality of *purisadhamma-sārathī*. "Not like a potter touching unbaked clay vessels with fear and care do I train these disciples." In that manner, harshly, through harsh courses of action. Repressing (*niggayha*), and supporting (*paggayha*), what is the idea? May they take only the heartwood, may they become the heartwood. Only when the heartwood is taken does one become the heartwood. Thus, from this too, the vast heap of virtues of the Buddha is visible. Through all of this, it is recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*) that grows within us.

Where recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*) is spoken of, the Dhamma shows what the benefits of *Buddhānussati* are: when a noble disciple develops the meditation of recollection of the Buddha based on those nine virtues or even on one of them, such as "*Iti pi so bhagavā...*", at that time the disciple's mind is not overwhelmed by lust (*rāga*), not overwhelmed by hatred (*dosa*), not overwhelmed by delusion (*moha*). "*Rāga-dosa-moha-pariyuṭṭhitaṃ*." Next, it is said that the mind becomes upright. Further, it is said that the mind rises above the mud-mire of the five-fold sensual cords (*pañca-kāma*).

Shown as the benefits of *Buddhānussati*: when one develops *Buddhānussati*, one's mind temporarily departs from those mentioned states of lust, hatred, and delusion. Similarly, departing from the five-fold sensual cords, it becomes as if risen from a heap of mud, a mire. Not to mention other things, you may have heard it said of the disciple who develops *Buddhānussati* that his mind becomes like the perfumed chamber (*gandha-kuṭi*) of the Buddha. The one who constantly develops the Buddha's virtues is just like the perfumed chamber where the Buddha dwells. For, when the Buddha is beside oneself, at a moment of associating with the Buddha, is there any room for the mind to go towards a defilement? When the Buddha is watching from behind, is there room for defilements? As we said of that beauty of form, it is not a beauty of form that increases defilements; it is one that stills the mind. Even today, why does one become devoted, why does one develop clarity and faith upon seeing a peaceful, beautiful statue, a form, or a painting created according to those Buddha-virtues? It is because of its nature of calming and stilling defilements.

So, the power of faith is described as devotion (*prasāda*), clarity. That is why it is said to be like the water-clearing gem (*udaka-prasādaka-māṇikya*). Turbid water is cleared,

and the mind becomes pure. Close to turbid water lies negligence (*pamāda*). Turning happiness and joy into rapture (*pīti*), and rapture into tranquility (*passaddhi*), which is calm, elevating it from there to concentration (*samādhi*), and next proceeding to insight (*vipassanā*)—there lies Nibbāna,. Behold, those are the benefits of *Buddhānussati* spoken of through this.

Through the short verse we quoted today, just as we pledged, the value of faith is demonstrated. The value of its strength is demonstrated. We have much to learn even from Ven. Vakkali in this age of intellectuals. Therefore, through all of this, you devout laymen must contemplate that on this valuable Poya day, we should resolve with a feeling like "death or crossing" on that path of practice. Only if we enter this path of practice can we see and recognize the Buddha—not through reasoning. May today's sermon be supportive in walking that path! Successfully conducting your Dhamma studies and meditations, through the power of this sermon, may this wholesome strength and the benefit of hearing the Dhamma be a supportive cause for you to cross over all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) including birth (*jāti*) and decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) expected in this very life, and be stilled in that noble, deathless Nibbāna,! Similarly, if there are any parents, deceased relatives who have passed away in your name, and any classes of beings (*bhūta*) from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who desire merits and desire Nibbāna, may they all, by rejoicing in this wholesome deed of Dhamma preaching and Dhamma hearing, cross over all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) through whichever of the Enlightenments (*bodhi*) they aspire to, and be stilled in the noble, deathless Nibbāna,! With this thought, with this aspiration, we must recite these verses and share merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #90

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.105)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Appamādaratā hotha, sacittam anurakkhatha;

Duggā uddharathattānaṃ, paṅke sanno va kuñjaro.

From:

Dhammapada 327 (Nāgavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Diligence (*appamāda*) can be considered as the very beginning (the letter 'A') of the practice leading to Nibbāna taught by the Lord Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds. There is a depth within this concept of the Dispensation (*sāsana*) that is absent in the word "diligent" as we use it in ordinary daily life. Being diligent in guarding the mind from defilements is what is considered diligence in this Buddha-Dispensation. Today, we hope to present a Dhamma verse and its related story that clarifies this. The Lord Buddha preached this Dhamma verse at the Jetavana monastery, based on an incident concerning an elephant named Bhaddaka belonging to King Kosala.

In his youth, this elephant named Bhaddaka was extremely powerful, but as time went on, he grew weak with decay and death / aging and death (*jarā*) and, one day, descended into a large lake and got stuck in the mud. As he lay there, stuck in the mud and unable to get out, people began to talk, saying, "Alas! Even such a strong elephant has now fallen to this state." When the King heard of this talk, he ordered the elephant trainer to rescue the elephant. What did that wise elephant trainer do? Within the sight of the elephant, he displayed the likeness of a military battalion marching out to war. Next, he had the war drums beaten. At that moment, the elephant thought, "This is indeed the time to go to war," and with great haste, he arose from that mud heap. When the community of bhikkhus saw this and reported it to the Lord Buddha, the Lord Buddha said, "Yes, bhikkhus, it is so. That elephant pulled himself out of the swamp by his own efforts. In the same way, what you must do is make a proper effort, arouse energy, and pull yourselves out of this swamp of defilements." Declaring thus, he uttered this Dhamma verse in relation to it:

Appamādaratā hotha — Delight in diligence!

Sacittam anurakkhatha — Guard your own mind!

Uddharathattānaṁ paṅke sanno va kuñjaro — Just like an elephant stuck in the mud, lift yourself out of this difficult terrain of defilements. This is the meaning contained in that verse.

Now, when we reflect on this verse and the story here, the skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*) employed by this elephant trainer is especially important for this era; it is highly valuable and exemplary for us. Furthermore, it shows how that elephant, despite being so weak, rescued himself through effort and energy, motivated by the battle scene presented according to the situation. Why do we say this is relevant to this era? We must reflect on the decline of the virtues of the Dispensation among both the laity and the clergy.

Let us take a simile for a moment: let us identify this Dispensation as the "Sāsana Elephant". This Sāsana Elephant is currently stuck in a vast swamp, unable to get out. About two thousand and several hundred years ago—around two thousand five hundred years ago—this elephant was extremely powerful and majestic, endowed with a great store of spiritual virtues, namely virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). But now, due to various reasons, it is stuck in the swamp of defilements, unable to get out. In truth, we all know that everything is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*). Our bodies are impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*). The Dispensation too is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*). Yet, how much do we spend and how hard do we strive just to keep this impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) body—which is subject to decay—alive for even one more day to enjoy the pleasures of the five senses? We spend millions, replace wearing parts, and undergo marvelous surgeries just to devise ways to live for one more day, do we not?

Therefore, if we spend so much to keep this bodily cage alive for a single day for the sake of the pleasures of the five senses, how much more effort should we make to keep the Buddha-Dispensation alive for even one day—the very Dispensation that helps one to be liberated forever from birth / arising (*jāti*), decay and death / aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and the like? There is no room to remain indifferent, saying "it is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*)." If we are to think about keeping it alive, what steps must we take? In these times, various slogans come to the forefront regarding the preservation of this Dispensation. However, if we recall a valuable verse used not only by our Buddha but even by the Buddhas of the past, we will find the true slogan. What is it?

> *"Ārabhatha nikkhamatha,*
>
> *yuñjatha buddhasāsane;*
>
> *Dhunātha maccuno senaṁ,*
>
> *naḷāgāraṁ va kuñjaro."*

"Begin! Go forth! Apply yourselves to the Buddha's Dispensation! Destroy the army of Death, like an elephant crushing a reed hut!"

So, with whom is this battle fought? It is fought with the mass of inner defilements within one's mind. Therefore, it is by battling this mass of defilements that the Dispensation is preserved. What is the reason for this? Now, we generally think of the Dispensation as temples, monasteries, statues, and stupas. But these are merely symbols of the Dispensation. What is symbolized by them? What do they represent? They represent the three virtues of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). These virtues exist within a person's mind. Thus, protecting these virtues is what is called preserving the Dispensation. It is said here, "*Ārabhatha yuñjatha buddhasāsane*". Through this, we see that the Lord Buddha highlighted the strength within us to preserve this Dispensation.

There is a latent power within us to initiate something. Similarly, to a certain extent, we all possess the power to execute and sustain that course of action once initiated. Furthermore, we have the power to move forward, overcoming thousands of troubles, dangers, and obstacles in implementing it. In the Dhamma, these are identified as the element of initiation (*ārambha-dhātu*), the element of launching (*nikkama-dhātu*), and the element of exertion (*parakkama-dhātu*). The element of initiation is that very power to begin. We have that within us, as well as the power to initiate and carry it out. Next, what is called the element of exertion (*parakkama-dhātu*)—valour or persistence—is the ability to overcome the obstacles that arise in the course of applying oneself to it. That is exactly what we must understand. When it says "*Yuñjatha*" (apply yourselves), it means that without applying oneself to the Buddha-Dispensation, one cannot protect it. The Buddha-Dispensation cannot be protected by handing it over to others, or to those external symbols. To protect the Buddha-Dispensation, one must apply oneself to the Buddha-Dispensation. That is why it says "*Yuñjatha buddhasāsane*". Only then can we rout the army of Māra and protect this Dispensation. Now, if we reflect on this Buddha-Dispensation, everyone knows a valuable verse—one that almost everyone has heard, and some even use as a protective mantra—which was uttered even by the Buddhas of the past:

> *“Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṁ,*
>
> *kusalassa upasampadā;*
>
> *Sacittapariyodapanaṁ,*
>
> *etaṁ buddhāna sāsanaṁ.”*

"To avoid all evil, to cultivate the wholesome, to purify one's own mind—this is the instruction of all the Buddhas."

This is the Dispensation of all Buddhas. If this is the Buddha-Dispensation, what is implied by it? "To avoid all evil" refers to virtue (*sīla*). "To cultivate the wholesome" refers to concentration (*samādhi*). Sometimes, it is written in books that one "attained

the first absorption (*jhāna*) and dwelt in concentration." The word "attained" (or entered upon) is used there. So, one attains the wholesome, approaches it. Having restrained the body and speech, the mind, free from remorse, is released from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), and at some point, concentration is established through a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). That is why it says "to cultivate the wholesome." Next, "to purify the mind"—

In truth, the mind is purified at the highest level through wisdom (*paññā*). That is why, in response to the question asked by Ālavaka the Yakkha, the Lord Buddha stated: "*Paññāya parisujjhati*"—one is purified through wisdom. It is through wisdom that the mind is purified. Therefore, what is called "*Sacittapariyodapanaṁ*" here is indeed that purification of the mind, the purification of one's own mind. It is through this purification that the Buddha-Dispensation is completed. Ultimate purification is, in truth, through wisdom—through insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*). Because of these matters—virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—we can understand that if we hope to take any step to preserve this Dispensation, the initial step is personal example. One must be an example oneself. That is why it was said that without an example, without applying oneself to the Buddha-Dispensation, one cannot preserve the Buddha-Dispensation.

Then, if we look back at history, we must indeed remember Emperor Dharmashoka (Asoka) of India (Jambudīpa), even if we do not call him one of our own kings. No matter what we think, pious people who have deeply studied world history have made marvelous statements about King Dharmashoka. They say that in the royal chronicles of the world, which mention tens of thousands of kings, the name of Great King Dharmashoka shines uniquely and peerlessly like a star, and none can come close to him. What is the reason for this? Having won a war, he abandoned warfare and made a sincere effort to beat the drum of Dhamma instead of the war drum. The stone pillars and inscriptions discovered up to this day reveal how sincere and humble King Dharmashoka's efforts were. Moreover, he made known to the world the internal revolution and remorse he felt due to the destruction of hundreds of thousands of people in the Kalinga war, sincerely recording it on rocks and inscriptions as if asking for forgiveness from his subjects, promising never to do such a thing again. Thus, he made an effort to avoid evil at a state level. It is the view of historians that there is no one else in history who strove so greatly and made such an effort at a state level to bring about social reform and social transformation through an internal revolution of his own mind as King Dharmashoka did. If we consider this further, those inscriptions marvelously record how he, previously known as Candashoka (Asoka the Fierce), sent ministers (*mahāmātra*) throughout the country, advising people of various religions and the righteous to live in accordance with the Dhamma, presenting relevant rock inscriptions and Dhamma edicts, making an astonishing effort.

Not only that, today we usually hear people talk about human compassion, about humanity. King Dharmashoka went a step further. He made a sincere effort to practice not just human compassion but universal compassion (*karuṇā*). Those inscriptions

reveal that he banned the slaughter of animals for sacrifices, for entertainment, or for food. He also advised against harming even domestic creatures. Next, the program of giving safety (*abhaya-dāna*) was initiated from the royal palace itself. In a certain inscription, showing the sincerity and humility of King Dharmashoka, it is written as follows: "Before this inscription was carved, hundreds of thousands of animals were slaughtered in the royal kitchen. But by the time this inscription is being carved, that number of slaughtered animals has been reduced and reduced, so that now only two peacocks and one deer are killed. And even that deer is not killed every day. My hope is to stop the slaughter of even these three animals in due course." What a sincere statement!

When carving on stone, if someone wanted to show off their pride to people living centuries in the future, they could have written, "Today, not a single animal is killed." Instead of that, while traversing the path and practice of giving safety (*abhaya-dāna*) by his own strength, he had this recorded as an encouragement to others. While pulling himself out of the pit he had fallen into, he also tried to lift others out. This is what we call "exemplary character". An exemplary character is indeed a silent sermon.

If any success occurred during the reign of King Asoka, as it is said, that transformation took place after twelve years. If something occurred within ten or twenty years, the secret lay in the effort to incline society towards the Dhamma through an exemplary character arising from an internal revolution of the mind. That is the lesson we must take. As historians also point out, that is indeed the most valuable example. We read about the Wheel-turning empires (*cakkavatti*) in ancient texts and feel pleased, regarding them as having marvelous comforts that are impossible to implement practically. Even if we, as Sinhalese, think so, a certain king in Jambudīpa made such a sincere effort. Therefore, a certain lesson from that is helpful to this era. If we think about the Dispensation, that king offered his own son and daughter to the Dispensation so that he might gain the right to be an inheritor of the Dispensation. Not only that, we all know from historical accounts that he made a great effort to preserve the Dispensation in his own land as well as to spread the Dispensation to other lands.

In short, everyone knows that we received the heritage of the Dispensation through those two children. When we think in this manner, we can understand that it is through such exemplary characters that we must undertake the task of rescuing the Dispensation from the swamp.

The Lord Buddha once declared to Venerable Mahā Cunda that one who is himself sunk in a swamp cannot pull another out of the swamp. In the same way, the Lord Buddha stated that one who is himself untamed, undisciplined, unextinguished, and unrestrained cannot tame, discipline, extinguish, or restrain another. According to this advice of the Buddha, we can understand that, at whatever level, whether lay or ordained, it is only through an exemplary character that the Dispensation must be rescued. This is the matter revealed to us by the story of Dharmashoka. But if we reflect on this society, and the biographical stories that emerge in society, the youth mostly get to hear and read about the stories of defeated characters. Novels, short stories, and plays

about fictional, defeated characters are highly popular and widespread in society. However, just as that elephant trainer reminded the elephant of his heroic youth, what we must do is recall the characters of the heroic elders (*theras* and *therīs*) of the past, and the heroic lay disciples (*upāsakas* and *upāsikās*), and focus our minds on them. We must take examples from them. It is through this that one can bring forth the perception of capability. Although that elephant was so weak, it was through the perception of capability that he gathered his strength. Generally, there is no instrument to measure a person's energy in daily life. Energy—that energy mentioned as the element of initiation (*ārambha-dhātu*), the element of launching (*nikkama-dhātu*), and the element of exertion (*parakkama-dhātu*)—emerges only when other necessary conditions are gathered together.

Now, to rescue this Sāsana Elephant, to bring forth that energy, what is needed first is faith (*saddhā*). Next, mindfulness (*sati*). Next, the four kinds of supreme effort/energy are mentioned in the Dhamma, which you may have heard of: restraint (*saṁvara*), abandonment (*pahāṇa*), cultivation (*bhāvanā*), and preservation (*anurakkhana*). Preventing the defilements, or the unwholesome thoughts flowing towards oneself, is restraint and so on. Next, expelling the unwholesome thoughts already present within oneself; arousing the wholesome thoughts not yet present within oneself; and stabilizing the wholesome thoughts already present within oneself through cultivation (*bhāvanā*)—these are the four kinds of energy contained within the concept of energy. Thus, mindfulness (*sati*) and faith (*saddhā*) assist energy. If the perception of capability is not aroused, that elephant would not have been able to climb out. His own task—now, a military battalion is ready to go to war, and the war drums are heard. Then, that past was remembered. Remembering his majestic past, he stood up.

In that way, if one can arouse the perception of capability within oneself, there is a strength to bring forth that majestic state once again. What is this? It is virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). "Avoiding all evil"—that is the first step. If such a beginning is made, next within it are the qualities of virtue and so on. You know very well that within the undertaking of virtue (*sīla-samādāna*) itself, that voluntary, self-exerted effort to rise is embedded in the word "*samādiyāmi*". "*Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi*"—not because someone else said so, but of my own accord, I undertake the precept of refraining from destroying life, and I will observe this practice. So, there lies self-exertion. It is something done voluntarily. It is not something done under compulsion. Taking this as a determination, and established in that determination, one restrains body and speech. In that way, if someone has aroused that perception of capability, that person is able to rise from the swamp in which they are stuck. Some are stuck in killing; others are stuck in theft. Some are stuck in sexual misconduct. Others are stuck in lying. Still others are stuck and immersed in intoxicants.

In such a situation, one must reflect that one has to rise from the very place where one fell. For that, the Lord Buddha has pointed out the concept of the perception of capability. What is needed for that is faith (*saddhā*). Now, those stories of the elders (*theras* and *therīs*), and the stories of the lay disciples (*upāsakas* and *upāsikās*)

mentioned in Dhamma literature, do not seem to be given much place in these times. Leave aside other things, even in the Jātaka stories, when reading them, they sometimes give the impression that there were animals with more noble virtues than the humans of today. Therefore, it is by arousing such a perception of capability that one must rise from this. The first step for that is these practices of virtue (*sīla*) to restrain body and speech. Whether it be the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*), Right Livelihood Eightfold Precepts (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*), the Eight Uposatha Precepts (*uposatha-aṭṭhaṅga-sīla*), the Ten Precepts (*dasa-sīla*), or the monastic virtue (*bhikkhu-sīla*)—undertaking some precept or system of precepts, taking it to heart, and correcting one's behavior accordingly, automatically provides an example to the world, even without shouting out loud.

Furthermore, the Lord Buddha declared that if someone observes the precept of refraining from destroying life, it is equivalent to giving infinite and boundless safety (*abhaya-dāna*). That was the kind of thing King Asoka also tried to do. We too must think in that way. Through our practice, we should impress upon our minds the set of ideas presented by King Dharmashoka, especially regarding the hundreds of thousands of lives taken daily on this "Island of Dhamma" (*Dhammadīpa*). If one implements these on a personal level, then automatically, whatever one's position may be, those who see, hear, and associate with one will imitate it as an example. We have all heard the saying, "Example is better than precept." What is the reason for this? Precept is what is heard by the ear; example is what is seen by the eye. No matter what kind of things are heard by the ear, if what is seen by the eye is not in agreement, what is heard by the ear is not believed. This is such an era.

Instead of shouting to be heard by the ear, if one corrects one's behavior to be seen by the eye—not for show, but sincerely—and if one strives to protect one's behavior in those institutions and homes, at least at a minimum level through the aforementioned virtues of virtue (*sīla*) and so on, through the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*), then that too will spread like an epidemic. However, unlike a disease, it is not something that brings bad results. This is precisely what is called the "fragrance of virtue", the "scent of morality". The Lord Buddha declared this to Venerable Ānanda. On one occasion, Venerable Ānanda asked, "There are various kinds of fragrances such as the scent of flowers, the scent of roots, and the scent of heartwood. All these fragrances go only with the wind. Is there a fragrance that goes against the wind?" When asked, the Lord Buddha declared, "Ānanda, there is such a fragrance. If in any village, hamlet, or city, a woman or a man is devoted to the practice of observing the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*), and is likewise generous and has faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem, the renown of that woman or man's virtue spreads not only among humans but also among the gods. It is just like a fragrance that goes not only with the wind but also against the wind."

That is how we must understand the story of exemplary character. Here, there is no one who has not heard of the story of Angulimāla. Everyone has heard of it to that extent. But rather than understanding the depth within that story, some merely enjoy its narrative flavor. Now, we have a custom in our Dispensation—which we too have to perform when ordaining a new monk—of discarding the lay name and giving a monastic name, a new name. Thus, by giving names in this manner, there are plenty of Kāśyapas, Ānandas, and

Rāhulas. But in this entire Dispensation, there is only one Angulimāla. No one wants to take that name, and we do not want to give it either. We do not give it thinking they might feel hurt. Yet, what an exemplary character Angulimāla is!

Even though his name did not change, within that character of Angulimāla, there was a marvelous transformation just like that of Candāśoka to Dharmāśoka. If we briefly bring that story to mind—we have mentioned it on previous occasions, and you have heard it often in the media—I will only recall what is necessary to bring it to mind. So, how did the Lord Buddha tame Angulimāla? He had killed hundreds of thousands—they say more than a thousand—and sometimes, when he cut off the fingers and hid them, they rotted, and he forgot to count them. Perhaps he killed more than a thousand people. Having killed in this way, when he was preparing to kill his own mother, the Lord Buddha arrived. Then, Angulimāla saw the Lord Buddha and ran after him. The Lord Buddha walked at his normal pace. Then Angulimāla said, "Stop, monk, stop!" What did the Lord Buddha say? "I have stopped, Angulimāla." Now, although we call Angulimāla a bandit, in modern terms, he was like a university graduate; therefore, he understood the deep meaning of those words. Next, he asked what was meant by "I have stopped." "I have stopped by refraining from destroying life. You are still running along this path of destroying life. That is why I said so."

Understanding the deep meaning within that, he threw away his weapons right there, and that is when Angulimāla, whose name in the past had been Ahimsaka (The Harmless One), truly became harmless in the full sense of the word. But despite his becoming harmless, the rumors about Angulimāla in society were so great that after the Lord Buddha ordained him and brought Ven. Angulimāla back to Sāvatthi, to Jetavana monastery, King Kosala, unaware of this, prepared his army to search for Angulimāla. When the king came to visit the Lord Buddha before setting out, the Lord Buddha asked him, "Where are you going?" The king said, "Such a dangerous bandit is destroying villages and market towns. I am going to capture him." The Lord Buddha extended his right hand and said, "Great King, this is Angulimāla." At that, the king became extremely terrified. Even though Angulimāla was ordained and in the form of a monk, King Kosala trembled with fear. If so, how would ordinary people have treated Ven. Angulimāla when he went for alms (*piṇḍapāta*)? Would he have received alms?

It is said in the Dhamma literature that when Ven. Angulimāla came, we can imagine that people would shut their doors as if saying, "Look, the killer is coming!" He did not receive alms properly. In the beginning, Ven. Angulimāla faced various kinds of harassment. Moreover, it was not just the harassment regarding alms. When he went to meditate, what came to Ven. Angulimāla's mind? He began to visualize the way people cried out and wailed, begging for their lives when he was killing them. Consequently, because he could not concentrate his mind, Ven. Angulimāla was unable to attain concentration (*samādhi*). In such a situation, one day, while walking for alms, Ven. Angulimāla noticed some commotion in a house and realized, from the behavior of the people there, that a pregnant mother was in a grave condition trying to give birth. He went and reported this distress to the Lord Buddha, and when he expressed his feelings about this suffering, the Lord Buddha realized, "The time has come to treat Ven.

Angulimāla." What was the medicine given? He said, "In that case, Angulimāla, go and perform an Act of Truth (*sacca-kiriyā*) for that sister in this way: 'Since I was born, I have never intentionally destroyed the life of a living being. By this truth, may you and the child in your womb be well!'"

When this was said, Ven. Angulimāla said, "Blessed One, how can I say that? Would that not be a deliberate lie (*sampajāna-musāvāda*)? Is it not telling a conscious lie?" Then the Lord Buddha declared, "Very well, Angulimāla, change that Act of Truth slightly in this way, make a small amendment: 'Sister, since I was born in the Noble Birth (*ariya-jāti*), I have never intentionally destroyed the life of any living being.'" "Ah, that is possible!" he said. Not only did he say so, but he accepted it, went to that house, and as soon as he performed that Act of Truth for that pregnant mother, her childbirth was completed safely and without any danger. Even today, in homes, parents recall Ven. Angulimāla during such times because of his compassionate quality. It is by remembering the monk named Angulimāla that some blessing can be obtained in dangerous situations like childbirth.

Now, at that point, people generally think: "How great was the Lord Buddha's compassion towards mothers, that he taught Ven. Angulimāla such an Act of Truth and gave us great relief!" This is the view of the world, the view of mothers. But in truth, the Lord Buddha gave this medicine to Ven. Angulimāla. The two difficulties he had previously faced were averted. The tendency of people to run away in fear at the mere sight of him ceased. Furthermore, until then, Ven. Angulimāla had identified his "self" with the behavior he had carried out ever since he was born from his mother's womb. He thought of that as his life. He came to understand the realization that through his ordination he was born anew, through the phrase "*ariyāya jātiyā*". Once it was said "born of the Noble Birth", a boundary was drawn there. Now, we are showing the secret contained within the determination of virtue (*sīla-adhiṭṭhāna*). What does one do through the determination of virtue? It places a certain limit, a boundary, in our mind to prevent remorse and other things that can arise in our mind. That is why in Dhamma literature it is mentioned that after this incident, the monk retired into solitude and soon, very quickly, attained the fruit of Arahantship.

Through this, we can understand that the Lord Buddha employed a highly marvelous device, what we might call a skillful means. Through the power inherent in the All-Compassionate One, a unique strategy was employed here. While bringing welfare to mothers, he simultaneously resolved two problems that Ven. Angulimāla had. It was not about using popularity in an improper way; rather, he became dear to people through it. Moreover, the flowing into his mind of those past terrible events of his life, which had been an obstacle to his meditation, ceased at that point. This was because he realized directly through the Act of Truth the value of virtue (*sīla*). The value of undertaking virtue (*sīla-samādāna*) is what we have to take from the story of Angulimāla. I believe you understand this. That is, he used that precept as an Act of Truth. If Ven. Angulimāla, having killed so many people, ordained at some point in his life, and during the short period he observed the precept of refraining from destroying life, could present that to perform an Act of Truth which brings welfare and peace even to this day, then if you,

pious devotees, observe even a single precept properly for a year, two years, ten years, or a lifetime—whether you perform an Act of Truth or not—how much peace can you bring to the world? In that way, we can understand that it is through personal example, by rising from this swamp of defilements through one's own efforts, and through an internal revolution of the mind, that we can preserve this Dispensation.

One cannot pull others out while remaining sunk in the swamp oneself, no matter how much effort is applied. That is the kind of matter we have here. Therefore, the Lord Buddha preached the greatness of Angulimāla's character in a certain verse, the meaning of which you may have heard. Reciting verses constantly might distract some minds, so to give the meaning of the verse: "If someone, having previously fallen into negligence, subsequently releases their mind from negligence, that person illuminates the world like the moon freed from a dark cloud."

It is mentioned in the Dhamma that a similar verse was uttered at the time of Ven. Angulimāla's final passing (*parinibbāna*). Due to the meaning of the word "Angulimāla" and the past of his character, there were bhikkhus at that time who did not even believe that Ven. Angulimāla had become an Arahant, as revealed by an account in the Dhamma literature. That is, when the Great Arahant Angulimāla passed away, a discussion arose among the bhikkhus, and they asked the Lord Buddha, "Where has Ven. Angulimāla been reborn?" Then the Lord Buddha declared, "Angulimāla is not reborn anywhere; he has ended life (*parinibbuto*)." Thus, even those bhikkhus had not believed until then that Ven. Angulimāla had become an Arahant. In the verse preached on that occasion, it is said: "Whosoever's previously committed unwholesome deed, evil, or sinful action is covered by subsequent wholesome deed—no matter how many sinful actions were committed before, if one has made a transformation of life by inclining towards the wholesome afterwards, that person's unwholesome is covered by the wholesome." The Lord Buddha demonstrated this idea there too using the same simile mentioned earlier: "just like the moon freed from a black cloud."

Thus, such exemplary characters exist in our Buddhist literature. Instead of those defeated characters, what we must bring forward, and what we must direct our attention to—and where the youth must direct their attention—is these. There are numerous undefeated characters in the ancient stories of both the laity and the clergy. Even if we think of the character of the Lord Buddha, in certain instances mentioning Māra, it is said: "*Saṅgāme me mataṁ seyyo, yañce jīve parājito*"—"It is better for me to die in battle than to live as a defeated one." That is it.

Therefore, what we have to think of is not taking defeated ones as our example, nor living as a defeated person. No matter how much we have fallen into defeat, even if we are defeated a hundred times, we must try to win at least once. The beginning of that winning is what is called the practice of virtue (*sīla*). Because of this, as mentioned before, only you know the swamps in which you are stuck. If one is stuck in the muddy water of destroying life—breaking the first precept through killing animals, harming living beings, and craving the taste of meat—one can rise through making some sacrifice, by giving safety (*abhaya-dāna*). If one makes an effort to rise from the swamps of theft,

sexual misconduct, lying, drinking alcohol, and so on in which one has fallen, then while making that effort in daily life, one must strive to strengthen them further through the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*). In this way, separating oneself from domestic problems and strengthening these virtues is what is called observing the precepts on this full-moon day (*poya*). Let us consider what the lay disciples (*upāsakas*) of the past did, who undertook the precepts twice a month: if their virtue (*sīla*) became soiled amidst various unexpected troubles, obstacles, sufferings, and hostile dangers in lay life, they would wash it on the poya day, just like washing a soiled garment.

Indeed, that is why we wear this white garment; if the white garment symbolizes anything, that is what it should symbolize. If there are any stainings of our virtue (*sīla*) in daily life, the full-moon day (*poya*) is the opportunity to restore them, to strengthen them. It is the pious person who gradually strengthens them in this way who can experience a highly marvelous happiness unknown to the world, called the blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*). A lay devotee who lives observing these virtues of virtue (*sīla*) and so on enjoys that blameless happiness—a wonderful happiness and comfort that others cannot even imagine. We have met such people at least occasionally. Pious devotees who have observed virtue (*sīla*) so purely that they can perform Acts of Truth through the power of their virtue are able to spend their daily lives very lightly, free from mental distress. Not only that, if one hopes to—whether lay or ordained—one can also proceed to the second step through a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

In doing so, as you may have heard, what stand as hindrances to the one-pointedness of mind and concentration are those called the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). These are sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, sloth and torpor, remorse regarding the past, restlessness regarding the future, and doubt or skepticism—things that scatter the mind. If one detaches the mind from these and establishes it on some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), then, just as it is said, "cultivating the wholesome (*kusalassa upasampadā*)", one gains the strength to enter and dwell in some wholesome state such as the absorptions (*jhānas*). That is the level of concentration (*samādhi*). Next, the practice of purification that was initiated: the body and speech are purified, and by temporarily removing the hindrances, the mind is purified to a certain extent.

But the Lord Buddha declared, "Ignorance is the ultimate stain (*avijjā paramaṁ malaṁ*)"—the rust of action. The greatest rust is ignorance. A Buddha is born precisely to remove that rust. Until then, no matter how much one strives, and whatever other paths or practices are shown, this rust of ignorance cannot be removed. Only a Buddha reveals to the world the necessary understanding of the Four Noble Truths, along with the deep Dhamma such as Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) underlying it. If one understands those, and at some point cultivates insight (*vipassanā*) through the three characteristics of impermanence / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*) in this world—it is at such a moment that the rust of ignorance is removed. Having brought forth those insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) through a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and by cultivating them, one attains purification through wisdom, as stated by

"*paññāya*". That is what is called liberation from the suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra. Therefore, we must understand that we cannot delegate the preservation of this Dispensation to anyone else. If we hope to preserve the Dispensation, we must establish the Dispensation within ourselves. We must develop it. We must attain it. In inclining this society towards the Dhamma, as mentioned before, it is not precept but example that is primary there.

If we reflect according to these matters, the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha holds the potential for a person to develop such a grand life. The Lord Buddha did not cast anyone aside. For, in this long saṁsāra, we did not come all this way merely committing sins and doing bad things. Just because someone, according to social standards and as a result of past kamma, is born with physical or mental weaknesses, we cannot cast that person aside. It is the All-Compassionate Lord Buddha who reveals these things to us.

Why is it said that individuals from whom it was least expected attained Arahantship or achieved the fruits of the path after hearing just one sermon of the Lord Buddha? Because the Lord Buddha knew the kammic force of each individual, their wholesome strength at those moments, and the turning of their wheel of merit. He could see the dispositions and latencies / underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) of those individuals; the Lord Buddha possessed such special knowledges. He also possessed the knowledge of skillful means. If a man or a woman had cultivated a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) in past saṁsāra, then regardless of what else they had done, when given an instruction close to that meditation subject or when a verse was uttered to direct them in that direction, then, with the help of faith (*saddhā*) in the Lord Buddha and other relevant factors such as mindfulness (*sati*), that man or woman was able to attain even the fruits of the path. Therefore, it is mentioned that some attained this penetration of the fruits of the path even while a sermon was being preached. There are numerous such occasions, known as the bases of liberation, through which liberation can be attained: while listening to the Dhamma, while teaching the Dhamma, while discussing the Dhamma, while reflecting on the Dhamma, or while cultivating a specific concentration (*samādhi*).

Therefore, instead of thinking that this comes merely by listening to sermons for convenience, one must arouse a fair amount of strong energy within oneself to bring forth the latent power within. One must bring it forth. That energy is what we called the element of initiation (*ārambha-dhātu*), the element of launching (*nikkama-dhātu*), and the element of exertion (*parakkama-dhātu*). When we reflect in this way on the stages of exercising that energy—as virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—we see that we should not delegate this Buddha-Dispensation to those external symbols. Sometimes those symbols may exist, but if the people live lives like beasts to such an extent that they cannot even recognize them, we cannot say that the Dispensation exists on that land merely because those symbols are present. If preserving the Buddha-Dispensation means only the piling up of such symbols, then we would have the opportunity to say that there are plenty of Buddha-Dispensations. Looking at the current buildings and so forth, they are more advanced than in the past. There are buildings, stupas, and Buddha statues—wonderful things that might amaze even foreigners.

But if foreigners visiting this country get close to a person here and, upon associating with them, find that in terms of virtues they have degenerated to the point where it is hard to tell whether they are human or beast, can we say there is a Dispensation existing on that land? That is what we must reflect upon. Without any distinction between laity and clergy, if we reflect on this, that is how the aforementioned Sāsana Elephant—the Sāsana Elephant stuck in the mud—must be rescued.

Therefore, on such a valuable day, we all must reflect. These things are not said to insult anyone; they are said because these are things that must be remembered and reminded to others. Placing one's own character at the forefront, and reflecting on the slight transformation that has occurred in one's life through turning to this path of Dhamma—just as we say, "if that much led to this, how much more would this lead to?"—we should resolve within our own minds: "if we make more effort, how far can we go, and how great a service can we render to others?" You know very well that a pious person who has developed meditation such as loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*) can sometimes perform marvelous things. That is through developing and purifying the mind, not in some indirect way, but through such mental power. In that way, as we constantly remind, the ways of helping someone in the world are not sufficient at an economic level alone; they must also be done at a righteous (*dhammic*) level.

One cannot always be a help and refuge to someone merely by lending a hand or giving money. No matter how much wealth is given, there are situations where one cannot help them. One must develop within oneself the strength to offer a "change of heart" (*hita-māruvak*). The strength to offer a change of heart comes from being a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). To be a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), one must possess within oneself the strength to rise from that aforementioned swamp. In that way, when one becomes a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) to society through virtues, then those unrestful conditions and seemingly unresolved problems in society might automatically resolve themselves, or at least the way to resolve them may be revealed. Pious devotees, you must then realize that in this time of the decline of the Dispensation, it is our great fortune to turn to virtues and, during today, even within this short time or few hours, to understand the value of practice, and that practice is more valuable than birth / arising (*jāti*).

Reflecting on how even those like Angulimāla, or those who had births we might consider even lower, became so noble through practice, we must use this full-moon day (*poya*) to bring forth the strengths within us. Pious devotees, by determining and observing some valuable virtue (*sīla*)—whether the Ten Precepts, the Eight Poya Precepts, or the Right Livelihood Eightfold Precepts—you have obtained the opportunity today to reflect upon any shortcomings in your virtue and strengthen them, just like washing your garments. Furthermore, through applying yourselves to meditation and listening to this sermon we have delivered, every one of us as Buddhists, whether lay or ordained, should hold the aspiration—the target—of escaping from this dangerous saṁsāra of repeated birth / arising (*jāti*), from this wheel of kamma, and elevating our minds to what the Lord Buddha declared to us: "*Natthi dāni punabbhavo*"—"Now there is no more repeated becoming / existence (*bhava*)."

This saṁsāra is a dangerous place. Even though we have met spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) at this time, next, in some country or land, we might be born among those of wrong view, born among beasts, born among yakkhas, born among hungry ghosts (*petas*), and turning again to unrighteousness, some may suffer / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) for countless eons. Because saṁsāra is so dangerous, the Lord Buddha showed the only way to escape from this wheel of kamma. What is there to do? As stated by "*paññāya*", we must, through this wisdom (*paññā*), suppress, thin out, eliminate, and cease the ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) that we carry through saṁsāra, and understand them in this very life. If we remove the attachment to this pile of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of the five aggregates and, at some point, attain the noble state of Nibbāna, that realization is experienced in this very world. That is what is called the noble state. There is no more birth / arising (*jāti*). The fear of death is ended right there. The Lord Buddha has shown us the way to experience such a state. Such an peerless, marvelous, and noble Dhamma we have received.

If we do not take advantage of the Dhamma on such occasions, we will have to regret it at the moment of death. No matter how much wealth, grain, and resources we have, at the time we have to leave them behind, we will regret: "Alas! I did not train my mind. I trained my body by giving it various exercises, but I did not train my mind." Then, following that thought, there is no knowing where one will be born / arising (*jāti*). Therefore, you must strengthen your minds to take the maximum—not the minimum, but the maximum—advantage of this valuable and rare opportunity, and to make the greatest sacrifice.

If you have obtained some help and support in generating those qualities of faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), energy (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) through listening to this Dhamma—which are the path leading to Nibbāna—aspire that: "By further developing these, and by associating with spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), may this wholesome power surely be a strong support for realizing the noble deathless, the noble Nibbāna through the penetration of the fruits of the path namely Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship." Likewise, if your departed relatives and all beings from the Avīci hell to the Akanistha heaven hope to escape from this suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra, and hope to rejoice in this Dhamma sermon, may they rejoice in this merit and be comforted by the noble, great Deathless Nibbāna through the Bodhi of their aspiration. Keeping this aspiration in mind, recite these verses and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #91

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.33)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Cutiṃ yo vedi sattānaṃ, upapattiñca sabbaso;

Asattaṃ sugataṃ buddhaṃ, tamahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ;

Yassa gatiṃ na jānanti, devā gandhabba-mānusā;

Khīṇāsavaṃ arahantaṃ, tamahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 419–420 (Brāhmaṇavagga)

Dear Listeners,

There has always been a great curiosity among the people of the world regarding birth (*uppatti*) and death, which are considered the beginning and the end of a life. Many people seek answers to the questions: "From where did we come to this world?" and "Where do we go after death?" Especially after our own relatives and friends pass away, many of us desire to know the place of their rebirth. For yogis who developed the special, supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*) through serenity meditation (*samatha bhāvanā*)—even those outside the Buddha's dispensation—there existed a certain limited ability to state where someone was born after death. However, it was the Supreme Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, who presented the deepest and purest vision of birth and death to the world. It is two verses related to that supreme vision that we have placed as our topic. From the background story related to them, we can also gain some understanding of that supreme vision.

During the time of the Buddha, there lived a Brahmin named Vaṅgīsa in the city of Rājagaha. This Brahmin was capable of tapping on the skull of a deceased person and stating where that person was reborn. He was able to say whether they were reborn in hell, the realm of hungry ghosts, the animal realm, the human world, or the deva world. Seeing this ability, other Brahmins gathered and thought, "We can use this man to make

a living off the entire world"—meaning, they could obtain the gains and honor of the world. They dressed this man in red robes, gave him a strange appearance, and took him from village to village, market town to market town, and province to province, saying to the people, "Pay a certain fee and ask this man about the place of rebirth of your deceased relatives." Thus, a large number of people found out the place of rebirth of their relatives in this manner.

In this way, this group gradually came to different regions and lodged in a place close to the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthi. The next morning, seeing the faithful lay people going to listen to the Dhamma from the Buddha, they asked, "Where are you going?" When the lay people replied, "We are going to listen to the Dhamma from our Teacher," the Brahmins tried to persuade them, saying, "What is the use of that Teacher? Our Brahmin Vaṅgīsa has such a special power, make use of it instead." However, these faithful devotees debated with them, saying that their Teacher was far superior to this Vaṅgīsa. Finally, the Brahmin Vaṅgīsa and the group of Brahmins went to the Buddha to determine who indeed was the more clever of the two.

Knowing this matter beforehand, by the time they arrived, the Buddha had brought the skulls of a person reborn in hell, a person reborn in the deva realm, a person reborn in the human realm, and a person reborn among animals, along with another skull of an Arahant. In this manner, he prepared and placed five skulls there. When the Brahmin Vaṅgīsa arrived, the Buddha asked if he could perform such a feat. When he replied, "Yes, I can," the Buddha said, "Very well then, tap on this skull and say where this person is reborn." He correctly stated the rebirth of the one who was born in hell. The Buddha praised this with "Sādhu" and said, "Very good." Next, he gave correct answers regarding the ones born in the animal realm, the human realm, and the deva world, for each of which the Buddha expressed appreciation. Fifthly, when asked where the person was reborn after tapping on the Arahant's skull, the Brahmin Vaṅgīsa was utterly speechless.

While he stood there without an answer, the Buddha asked, "What is it, do you not know the place of rebirth?" He replied, "I cannot understand it." Then the Buddha said, "But I know." Hearing this, the Brahmin Vaṅgīsa invited the Buddha, "Then please teach me that mantra. If only I could know that!" Vaṅgīsa said this thinking that if he could acquire that knowledge as well, he could bring the entire Jambudvīpa (India) under his sway. The Buddha replied, "We do not give out mantras in that way. We only teach that mantra to those who ordain under us." "Ah, in that case, I shall ordain," he replied.

With the intention of obtaining the mantra, the Brahmin Vaṅgīsa ordained. Having ordained, he received higher ordination. Devout devotees, when one ordains, the first meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) given is the *tacapañcaka* meditation—the five parts of the body ending with skin, which belong to the meditation on foulness (*asubha bhāvanā*). To this Brahmin, the Buddha gave the meditation on these thirty-two parts of the body, starting with the *tacapañcaka*. It was indeed a perfect fit. It was also like a mantra. For, these devotees, even the lay mothers, everyone knows this recitation: *atthi imasmiṃ kāye: kesā, lomā, nakhā, dantā, taco*... Reciting this in this manner is what is done initially. Especially at ordination, they are made to recite these parts in forward and

reverse order (*anuloma-paṭiloma*): *kesā, lomā, nakhā, dantā, taco; taco, dantā, nakhā, lomā, kesā*. In this way, forward and backward—from beginning to end, and from end to beginning. They are made to recite this to accustom the mind to that meditation subject. In this manner, this meditation subject was given.

While this Brahmin was practicing this meditation subject, from time to time, his friend, the other Brahmin, would come and ask, "How is it? Have you learned the mantra?" "I will learn it soon and come," this Brahmin would reply. As he went on reciting and practicing in this manner, to put it in ordinary terms, he became an Arahant without even realizing it. That is to say, he attained Arahantship. This means that this Brahmin was also not an ordinary person; he must have practiced these things in past saṃsāra. The meditation subject struck a chord. He had a great eagerness; there was desire (*chanda*); there was commitment. Thus, as he went on meditating, he gradually attained Arahantship. After attaining Arahantship, when the other Brahmin returned and asked, "How is it, have you learned the mantra? Are you joining us again?", he replied, "Now, I cannot leave this monkhood." Hearing such a statement, the other bhikkhus who associated with him generally understood that this bhikkhu had attained Arahantship.

Thinking so, those other bhikkhus went to the Buddha and said, "This Brahmin claims to have attained something he has not attained." The Buddha declared, "Not so, O monks. This son of mine has destroyed all defilements and attained Nibbāna. This son of mine named Vaṅgīsa has obtained the purest vision regarding passing away (*cuti*) and rebirth (*paṭisandhi*)—that is, death and birth." Expressing this, he uttered the two verses mentioned earlier:

Cutiṃ yo vedi sattānaṃ,

uppattiñceva sabbaso,

asattaṃ sugataṃ buddhaṃ,

tamahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ.

"He who knows in every way the passing away and rebirth of beings, unattached (*asatta*), well-gone (*sugata*), awakened (*buddha*)—him I call a Brahmin." Here, 'Buddha' means one who has realized the Four Noble Truths. To such a person, I say he is a true Brahmin. In this dispensation, the word 'Brahmin' is applied to an Arahant, not to one born of a certain clan. It is the Arahant who is called the true Brahmin. Next, the other verse states:

> *Yassa gatiṃ na jānanti,*
>
> *devā gandhabbāmānusā,*
>
> *khīṇāsavaṃ arahantaṃ,*
>
> *tamahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ*.

"He whose destination (*gati*) is unknown to gods, gandharvas, and humans, with taints destroyed (*khīṇāsava*), an Arahant—him I call a Brahmin." These are the two verses the Buddha declared on that occasion. It is recorded that some bhikkhus attained path and fruit (*magga-phala*) upon hearing them. Thus, from this story and these verses, we can extract important points necessary for shaping our lives and walking the path to Nibbāna.

Now, it is stated in this very verse that the Arahant has obtained a most pure understanding regarding both Birth (*jāti*) and death. Furthermore, after an Arahant passes away, the place where he has gone cannot be stated by anyone—not even by gods or humans. What is the reason for this? Devout devotees, you know well that attaining Arahantship, which is Nibbāna, means bringing this saṃsāric existence to an end. There is no room to be born anywhere else. Like a lamp that has gone out, that person does not take birth (*jāti*) anywhere again. That is why they cannot be seen.

Moreover, that liberation is attained by understanding Birth (*jāti*) and death in a very deep manner. It is through that very understanding that it is abandoned—the concept of Birth (*jāti*) and death. Now, when we speak of 'birth' in the world, it refers to coming forth from a mother's womb, or from eggs, or in various other ways; there are also beings like devas and hungry ghosts who undergo spontaneous birth (*ōpapātika*). The Buddha has declared that this Birth (*jāti*) occurs because of the ignorance (*avijjā*) and Craving (*taṇhā*) within a being. If we consider ignorance very briefly, it can be explained as the feeling of 'I am' (*asmi-māna*) that exists in everyone, even in animals. Based on the physical body one gets, or rather based on the five aggregates—Form (*rūpa*), Feeling (*vedanā*), Perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—the feeling of 'I' and 'mine' arises. It is taken as 'I'. To reinforce that taking as 'I', one grasps it as 'mine'.

Here lie ignorance and Craving (*taṇhā*). If taken as 'I', that defines ignorance; next, the feeling of 'mine' is associated with Craving (*taṇhā*). It is, in truth, the Grasping (*upādāna*) of these five aggregates. The Buddha gave a new etymology and definition even to the word 'being' (*satta*). If we take the basic meaning of the word *satta* (being), it means 'one who exists' or 'the real one'. *Sat* means that which exists. Therefore, *satta* means 'the one who exists'. We often say 'this person' or 'that person' using the word 'existent'. But the Buddha analyzed the word *satta* on one occasion. The reason for this was that a venerable monk named Rādha asked the Buddha, "Venerable Sir, the world speaks of a 'being, a being' (*satto, satto*). To what extent and in what manner is one called a 'being'?" What was the Buddha's answer to that?

"Rādha, whatever desire (*chanda*), lust (*rāga*), delight (*nandī*), and Craving (*taṇhā*) there is for Form (*rūpa*)—it is in the sense of being attached (*satta*), strongly attached (*visatta*) to that Form that one is called a 'being'."

Desire (*chanda*) means liking. Lust (*rāga*) means attachment. Delight (*nandī*) means rejoicing. You have heard of Craving (*taṇhā*); it means the idea of longing or desire. Thus, a being is found where there is attachment, liking, and longing for Form (*rūpa*).

The same is said of Feeling (*vedanā*). Form, Feeling, Perception (*saññā*) meaning recognition. Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) mean the intentions, aspirations, etc., that arise as various constructs in the mind; the collective of various activities is called Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Next, Consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the mind. Thus, according to the Dhamma analysis, a 'being' (*satta*) exists because of taking these five as 'I' and 'mine', or because of being attached within them. In this way, we can understand why the first verse stated *asattaṃ*, which means 'unattached'. It means one who is unattached. The first verse declared, "him I call a true Brahmin who is unattached (*asattaṃ*), who has walked the path of practice, and realized the Four Noble Truths." There too, *asattaṃ* is used in the sense of being unattached. Therefore, viewed according to the Dhamma, a 'being' (*satta*) is a person who is attached to these five aggregates. If one is to be freed from this state of being a 'being', from this existence, that attachment must be broken. That attachment must be turned into non-attachment. What helps to turn attachment into non-attachment? Disgust (*nibbidā*) towards that existence, especially towards this body, helps. That is why the Buddha gave the meditation on foulness to that Brahmin. The Brahmin had performed feats by tapping on other people's skulls. Except for tapping on others' skulls, this person had not bothered to tap on his own skull to hear its hollow, empty sound.

What did the Buddha do? Now, when reciting the thirty-two foul parts of the body, the eighth part is bone (*aṭṭhi*). *Kesā, lomā, nakhā, dantā, taco, maṃsaṃ, nahāru, aṭṭhi.* Thus, here, the word *aṭṭhi* (bone) would have naturally stood out to the Brahmin Vaṅgīsa. Without his even knowing, this became a meditation subject. He had used it as a trick to deceive the world and receive the world's status and honors. The Buddha, utilizing that very thing, gave him this meditation on foulness in accordance with his character. We are trying to understand how the Brahmin Vaṅgīsa, through the Buddha's skill in means (*upāya-kosalla*), attained Arahantship according to a marvelous method of the Buddha's great compassion. We can understand the reason for this. While reciting these thirty-two parts of the body, the Brahmin Vaṅgīsa must have gained a deep realization regarding this *aṭṭhi*—this skeleton.

This is something we too can reflect upon—this skull. Within the very things we discard as useless, worn-out things, there lies a power that can bring us Nibbāna, a power that gives the taste of liberation. When looking at a skull, when looking at the skull of a deceased person, one develops a wonderful sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding this existence, regarding this life we take so seriously. When looking at a skull—even if it belonged to someone who spent their entire life looking at beautiful things in the world, once they die and only the skull remains, where the two eyes were, there are no eyes. Even for one who spent their entire life listening to fine music, performing as a musician, once they die and become a skull, where the ears were, there are no ears. Next, when looking at men and women who went about seeking pleasant scents and perfumes, when the skull is left, where the nose was, there is no nose. Next, even for those people who went about seeking delicious food, holding dinner banquets and seeking tasty things, once they die and the skull remains, where is the tongue? Not a trace of it. In this way, no matter how beautiful a body was molded, smeared with various paints and ointments,

presented to the world, and entered into great beauty contests as a beautiful form—once it becomes a skull, where is that flesh, skin, and delicacy? There is nothing. So, there lies the skull, helping to understand the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*)—Impermanent (*anicca*), Suffering (*dukkha*), and Not-self (*anattā*).

He tapped on others' skulls but did not think of his own skull. In truth, for a meditation subject to be complete, one must either start from the external and complete it internally. 'External' means looking at others' skulls and, based on that, reflecting on one's own skull as well. Otherwise, starting from one's own skull, from one's own body, one must complete it with others' bodies. This must be understood as a universal law of nature (*dhammatā*). The foulness of this body is a natural law of the body. If one thinks only of one's own body as foul, some might feel like committing suicide. But liberation is found when one understands this as the nature of the world, as a natural law (*dhammatā*).

In this way, using this, we can train it as our own daily meditation. For, this is the meditation on foulness given by the Buddha; even when the word is spoken, we feel a sense of disgust. But when viewed practically, a wondrous thing takes place here. To escape from the state of a 'being' (*satta-bhāva*) mentioned earlier, to eliminate attachment, to eliminate that rejoicing (*nandī*), lust (*rāga*), attachment, Craving (*taṇhā*), desire, and thirst, one must develop disgust towards the body. Relinquishment is not grasping the body and throwing it away. It is not suicide. Grasping is also done with the mind. Grasping is aided by thoughts (*vitakka*); it is grasped with the hand of thoughts. The nature of this mind is to think (*vitakka*) about something and grasp it. Taking signs (*nimitta*) in regard to things that arise as Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in one's mind as attraction and aversion, it develops attachment towards them. Towards Form (*rūpa*), and then towards the experience of Feeling (*vedanā*) that comes based on that Form. Towards those feelings as perceptions (*saññā*), recognizing them as a woman, a man, a house, a door, etc. Then, according to those perceptions, all the intentions, aspirations, desires, and activities that arise in our mind. In this way, finally, by separating one from another, we give them names, and they are recorded in our mind in some way in Consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

In this way, these are merely five heaps. But they appear to us as one due to the perception of solidity (*ghana-saññā*). The world takes them as one, calling it 'Form'. "This is my form, my feeling, my perception"—based on these, one gets the feeling that "I exist." This is merely a conceit (*māna*). In truth, there is no existence. What exists here is a series of arisings and passings away. To realize this, one must arouse insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). It is merely a multitude of arisings and passings away. Because this happens extremely subtly and rapidly, the world does not see it. Now, even in flowing water, when looking at that water, it looks like a silver stream. Going near a waterfall, it looks like a silver wall. When going a bit closer to that waterfall and looking at it, when the water hits the rocks and scatters, dispersing as droplets, then the feeling of a 'multitude' arises at least to some extent. Even more subtly, to the insight meditator, the perception of a multitude (*rāsi-saññā*) arises regarding these. The perception of

solidity (*ghana-saññā*) is broken. When the perception of a multitude is thus established, and a deep understanding of arising and passing away arises, the mind's attachment to these is naturally broken—not because anyone said so, not because of anyone's words, not because the Buddha said so, and not because others forced one to do it. By seeing this true state as it really is (*yathā-bhūta*), which is Suffering (*dukkha*), disgust (*nibbidā*) naturally arises within oneself. One becomes disgusted with what is worthy of disgust. If one becomes disgusted with something not worthy of disgust, then the world can blame them.

This state has always been thus. The nature of the body in the world is just this. But due to ignorance (*avijjā*), the world does not see it. By the time it is seen, by the time that moment arrives, one has decayed and grown old. When that stage is reached, the mind is weak. There is no strength to realize it. That is why the thought of 'existence' or what we think of as the saṃsāric journey takes place again. Now, as long as the attachment to these five aggregates, or rather to our parts starting with Form, is not thinned out, the world takes them with the feeling of 'I' and 'mine' and only seeks to reinforce this Becoming (*bhava*). Throughout the entire life, even at the moment of death, when Māra is pulling, one somehow seeks to remain, to maintain this life.

Next, what is called passing away (*cuti*)—after slipping away from there, due to that very attachment, one grasps whatever becomes manifest according to kamma as 'I' and 'mine'. One settles down there again, taking root. This is what is called the saṃsāric journey. But instead of the feeling that 'we are traveling in saṃsāra', what did the Buddha present as a deep vision? The Buddha declared that after an Arahant dies, they are not born anywhere. One might feel sad: "While there are deva worlds and brahma worlds, why did this Arahant take such pains to put an end to birth?" But the Buddha declared that this entire Becoming (*bhava*), this existence, is like a fire. Now, to truly understand the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) does not mean removing one part, discarding it like a department, and taking the rest as pleasant (*sukha*). At some point, the realization must come that the entire existence, these five aggregates themselves, are Suffering (*dukkha*). Until that realization comes, one has to use that special seeing called insight (*vipassanā*) to assist oneself. Once such disgust (*nibbidā*) arises, this is abandoned naturally. Just as if a highly repulsive dog carcass were placed on someone's shoulder, a natural revulsion arises and it is pushed away. It is something done effortlessly. In the same way, when someone sees through wisdom (*paññā*) at some point, they realize there is no substance in this existence. This is Impermanent (*anicca*). It has no nature that brings relief or happiness; it is Suffering (*dukkha*). Likewise, there is no soul (*atta*), no being (*satta*), no 'I', no person (*puggala*) settled within this to be taken as such.

Although in worldly convention we speak of a 'being' or a 'person', in truth there is no such person. There is only a belief that such a one exists. What exists in the world is only a conceit (*māna*) regarding existence. This is the deepest point of this vision. Eliminating that, removing that delusion (*moha*) and ignorance (*avijjā*), is what is expected through Arahantship. It never really existed. The Buddha declared: "Only suffering arises when it arises; only suffering ceases when it ceases" (*dukkhaṃyeva uppajjatī uppajjamānaṃ,*

dukkhaṃ nirujjhati). What is born is suffering; what ceases is suffering. There is nothing to be known here as a 'person' except suffering. The Buddha explains this suffering, this fire of suffering, more clearly on some occasions using the metaphor of fire. Let us think about how a fire spreads. A fire breaks out in one part of a forest. After it is burnt out, let us assume the other part of the forest is on the other side of the road. How does the fire catch the other part? We say the fire catches. For that fire to catch, the wind assists it. Blown by the wind, the embers catch the other forest, and immediately it too catches fire. We say the fire spread there, or the fire went there. This existence is a similar thing. There is that Craving (*taṇhā*), the thirst of Craving (*taṇhā*). There is the delusion called ignorance (*avijjā*). As long as that is present, what happens? There is Grasping (*upādāna*). It is on this Grasping (*upādāna*) that Becoming (*bhava*) depends.

Now, we know that often in dramas, according to what is grasped—let us say someone comes limping, holding a walking stick, we call him a beggar, a pauper. It is according to that manner of grasping. Next, when they brandish it, we think of them as a bandit, when shown in a drama. When someone comes onto the stage brandishing that same piece of wood, we call them a great bandit, a murderer. In the same way, this being is designated solely according to what is grasped. But in truth, what exists here is a fire. The spreading of this fire is what is called Becoming (*bhava*). It is also shown as eleven fires in terms of Birth (*jāti*), Aging and Death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, etc. The extinguishing of this fire is what is called Nibbāna.

Nibbāna means extinguishing. This extinguishing comes from the correct understanding of this. If at some point this is realized, there is nothing to be taken as 'I' or 'mine' within these five aggregates. If the realization comes that every single one of these changes very momentarily, very rapidly, moment by moment—at that moment, it slips away. It slips away from the mind; it is abandoned. The path leading up to that is shown as the practice—virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*), etc., or the Noble Eightfold Path. It is training the mind to this, training the mind to this vision. It is through this that one gains this deepest understanding of Birth (*jāti*) and death. Transcending the perception of a being or a person, there is only a certain conceit here, a worldly conceit, or rather a convention (*sammuti*). We separate this birth—just as one would build fences in flowing water to separate a portion—in this long saṃsāric existence, we say "behold, it has started" at such a state as being born from a mother's womb or conceiving in a mother's womb. Next, after dying, we say "behold, the end."

We see this beginning and end in a very limited sense. But to the Buddha-eye, what appeared here was a great mass of suffering (*dukkhakkhandha*), a flowing torrent of suffering. What is it? Grasping (*upādāna*) various things. Being overwhelmed by the very thing grasped, being tormented by it, and finally falling down. Falling down, and grasping another. When looking at the existence of one's own life, this becomes clear to you, even when looking at the history of one's own life. In childhood, when parents brought a new thing, a toy, with what Craving (*taṇhā*) and desire did we grasp it! Similarly, when a good dress was received, we wore it with great pride. But as one's body grew and the mind matured, those things were abandoned naturally. In the same way,

the Buddha, like this toy metaphor, has also used the metaphor of playhouses (*kīḷā-geha*) on some occasions to help develop disgust towards the five aggregates. This is mentioned in a certain discourse preached to this very Venerable Rādha.

"Rādha, when boys and girls—meaning children in their childhood—build playhouses, they build sandcastles, playhouses of clay. They are attached to them in that childhood stage of playhouses. When they grow up and reach adulthood, when they mature in age, they kick those playhouses, scatter them, and prepare for the work that lies ahead." This metaphor—even in daily homes, dolls that were cradled with great love, later when those children grow up, they break their legs, discard them, and scatter them. The same is true of playhouses.

Based on that metaphor, the Buddha next says something profound: "In the same way, O monks, just as one would kick, shatter, and throw away those playhouses, one scatters Form (*rūpa*). One scatters Feeling (*vedanā*). One scatters Perception (*saññā*). One scatters Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). One scatters Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)." That means, regarding that too—scattering is not done by hitting anyone, or by hitting one's own body, or by committing suicide. As a vision that penetrates through wisdom, one sees through insight (*vipassanā*) that what exists here is indeed something that scatters, just as those playhouses were scattered. What exists here is a scattering nature. That scattering state is not visible. This body too scatters. Form scatters. Feeling scatters—just as a stream of water scatters. Even when we reflect on this flowing stream of water that is heard, though it looks beautiful, the moment it hits a rock, it scatters. Similarly, Form scatters. This is seeing the scattering nature. 'Scattering' does not mean kicking and throwing away here; it means seeing that scattering nature. In the same way, every single thing is understood by insight wisdom as the perception of a multitude. No matter how much we grasp this as one, just as when one takes a handful of sand in a desert and it slips through the fingertips and scatters, not a single one is caught by wisdom. Ultimately, as wisdom develops further and further, there is nothing of these to be grasped. Where it is grasped, it is abandoned naturally.

When a handful of hot sand is taken into the fingers, it flows through the fingers. In the same way, when the mind is directed towards insight wisdom, when it is directed towards penetrating wisdom, one gains an understanding regarding Form: here lies only a multitude of arisings and passings away occurring extremely rapidly. Feeling is also like that. Perception is also like that. The same is true of the mind. The mind too is something that arises and passes away extremely rapidly in this manner.

Now, this journey leading up to that realization is called insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*). Next, through everything such as the meditation on bones (*aṭṭhika*), what we especially do is address the heavy attachment within a being towards this body. The senses of eye, ear, nose, etc.—the sense organs are located in this body-cage. Accordingly, the sensory objects coming from the sense organs of animals—the things caught by the senses—are used by animals as attraction and aversion to maintain a life. Similarly, humans consider the things within the range of their senses as beautiful or ugly (*subha-asubha*). But as the Buddha declared, in the end, what must arise in every instance is the

perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*). What was taken as beautiful (*subha*) is understood as foul (*asubha*). What was taken as permanent is understood as Impermanent (*anicca*). The nature of what was taken as pleasant turning into Suffering (*dukkha*) is understood. What was taken as 'I' and 'mine' is understood as Not-self (*anattā*)—its worthlessness, hollow nature, and emptiness are realized. This is what is called coming from the distorted vision to the undistorted vision. 'Distorted' (*vipariṭa*) is just like the way things appear when turned upside down, or when looking with the head down. Then he is in such a state. He considers the Impermanent as permanent. He considers the foul as beautiful. He considers that which is painful as pleasant. He considers the Not-self as self. It is to eliminate this vision that insight meditation is used. There too, objects come through these five senses. Objects flow into the mind. In walking this path, the colorful nature of these objects, their nature of pulling the mind, must be destroyed by some device—by an insight device.

That is, the Buddha declared it as Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). What exists in the world is unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). The world does not reflect on something in the way it is caught at the point where the object begins. Enslaved by those objects, dragging along them further and further, in a way where a limit cannot be found, where the thread cannot be untangled—that is how the world reflects. That is called unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). This worldly being is dragged away by the object. Going to a city, there are so many things to catch the eye. There are so many things to catch the nose, to catch the ear. Thus, going into these, they are deluded and finally entangled in a great mass of Suffering (*dukkha*). Instead, the insight meditator attempts to subdue, to reduce, as much as possible, that mind-agitating nature of the object through the very method of attention (*manasikāra*). That is called Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). It returns right to the birthplace where those thoughts arise. It is not leaping out of it and running far away; it is not running after a mirage.

What helps with that? We said earlier that we grasp an object through thoughts (*vitakka*). Through thoughts. Thoughts are woven about them day and night. You know that if you think about someone you are attached to, or something you are attached to, or a possession, you spend sleepless nights in this web of thoughts, daydreaming endlessly, and dreaming at night as well. Such is the nature. That is what is called Becoming (*bhava*). That is what is called the fire. This fire of Suffering (*dukkha*) is kindled, blown and kindled, by thoughts. What is the path to be taken to subdue these thoughts?

The Buddha has shown a very beautiful metaphor there too, as a metaphor that helps in taming the mind. We know that when looking at a tortoise, when a danger comes to the tortoise, what the tortoise does is draw its four limbs and head inside its shell. According to that metaphor, the Buddha has shown: "Just as that tortoise draws in its four limbs and head, tuck in the mental thoughts (*manovitakka*), the thoughts that arise in the mind." "Tuck them inside." Tucking in thoughts means not letting thoughts wander far. To do that, one must reflect. One must reflect with wisdom. One must reflect diligently. For, this mind acts extremely rapidly. The moment a form falls on the eye, immediately, if ignorance and delusion are present, extremely rapidly, one is in a dream world. There, one is lost. Otherwise, one has already committed many other terrible crimes. The same

is true when a sound is heard by the ear. The dangers coming from these need not be said anew. When reflecting on the lives of animals and human lives in the world, according to the incidents we hear of, we can understand that the mind acts extremely rapidly and gets entangled in terrible crimes. One gets entangled even in grave kammas that cause rebirth in planes of misery, in hell.

But what is done to suppress this? In insight attention (*vipassanā manasikāra*), it is not following after the form seen, not following after the signs (*nimitta*) and features (*anubyañjana*) of that form. 'Sign' (*nimitta*) means some basic characteristic. 'Feature' (*anubyañjana*) means the minor, additional details that follow that characteristic. If we see someone coming from afar, we think, "Ah, it must be so-and-so." When they come closer, looking at the other limbs and parts, we confirm, "Yes, it is indeed that person." Such is the nature. One feels that it is difficult to maintain life without that. But to assist in escaping from this saṃsāra, as a special training, without taking those signs and features of what comes to the eye, realizing: "This is a form, a form; in whatever way it is taken, this is a form." Now, we are sometimes deluded by a painting painted on the wall of some art gallery. Looking at that painting, it is sometimes perceived as three-dimensional. One even feels like walking through the middle of this wall. If a beautiful house and its doorway are painted on the wall, one might go wrong. One might even go and crash into the wall, perceiving it as three-dimensional. Similarly, because of the way our senses are constructed, because of a collection of saṃsāric habits we have developed by traveling in saṃsāra for a long time, when we see a form, it appears to us like something created. What is shown to the world is only the part presented forward through painting, washed with great difficulty in various ways, or through various fashions. The feeling and understanding that "inside this lie those thirty-two parts" does not arise.

Instead, one thinks of this as three-dimensional and gets attached to it. This is so regarding Form. It is the same regarding Sound. Very sweet music—now, if some music is fed into this machine, when that machine operates in a certain way, it can be turned into outright wailing. That is why the Buddha has declared, "I call music a wailing." In truth, music is close to wailing. In this way, when considering everything subtly, we can say that what exists here is either only a multitude of arisings and passings away occurring extremely rapidly. There is nothing here as a 'thing'. A multitude of arisings and passings away. When a firebrand (*alāta-cakka*) is whirled around, it appears as a circle. Such is the state. To gain this understanding, such attention (*manasikāra*) is utilized. Instead of letting the mind fall into a state of attachment through thoughts, reflection is done instead. It is briefly considered as "this is this." Briefly considering, or rather taking it as "this is merely a form," the mind is brought to equanimity (*upekkhā*). Even if it is sweet music, taking it as "it is merely a sound-measure, merely a sound," the mind is brought to equanimity there.

It is through this training that the mind-agitating nature of that object is gradually broken. That has to be done according to the occasion, stage by stage. Then it is understood that what exists here is merely a collective of active processes (*kriyā-mātra*). In truth, merely a collective of active processes. Now, those scientists, regarding that

material world, the physical world, through their various scientific instruments and mathematical sciences, are heard to have arrived at a certain conclusion. In truth, there is no such 'thing' as a thing. What exists here is actually some bundle of energy, a mass of energy. They do not even have words to describe these. To that extent, the understanding regarding the external world has come.

Even more subtly, the Buddha declared the state of this mind and the state of this body: these are extremely rapid arisings and passings away, a heap of arisings and passings away, and there is nothing to be taken as a 'thing'. Whether it is a mass of energy, or rather the word Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) is what is applied there. Under such a condition, because there is no essence in this Becoming (*bhava*), there is nothing here to be taken as happiness. There is nothing to be taken as 'I' and 'mine'. That is why the Buddha has shown the scattering nature of these. To say "scatter these" means to understand their scattering nature. The same is true of the mind. The final trump card to make this existence permanent is this Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is by arriving here that other philosophers were deluded, thinking that the soul resides in Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is true that Form is Not-self (*anattā*). It is true that Perception is Not-self (*anattā*). It is true that Feeling (*vedanā*) is Not-self (*anattā*). The same is true of Perception and Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). But Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—this which we call the mind—they think, "this indeed is the soul." This is the greatest delusion.

That is why the Buddha compared Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to a magic show shown by some magician. One is deluded by this. For, enveloped within this very delusion in the mind, one tries to unravel the delusion. For someone who is enveloped within delusion, it is absolutely impossible to be freed from that delusion if they do not have the proper attention (*manasikāra*). Thus, through those wrong reflections called unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), one can never escape from this delusion. Proper reflection is what is called insight attention (*vipassanā manasikāra*). Grasping (*upādāna*) an object is what is called Becoming (*bhava*). Grasping (*upādāna*) an object, hugging it, standing within it, and settling down in it—that is what is called Becoming (*bhava*). Instead, what is done here? Without letting the object enter inside, it is expelled from there itself. Recording: "this is a form." That is ended right there. By that training—saying twice "a form, a form" or "a sound, a sound" etc.—the mind-agitating nature of that object is eliminated. For, it is within the object that an existence arises. Becoming (*bhava*) means existence. Then, Nibbāna means the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*). The stopping of existence. The Buddha declared existence as a fire. Accordingly, the stopping is the extinguishing. If existence is the fire, the stopping is the extinguishing. This is what is called Nibbāna. It is not some other world, nor is it a great place where one can consume the deathless like a delicious food. It is this freedom from death. Now, ordinary worldly people think we expect to make this life eternal. When that is impossible, we try to become eternal by going to some other place. But the Buddha, as a true physician, declares: here lies the non-understanding of the cause of the disease. A wrong analysis exists here. It must come back to the word we mentioned earlier. It is upon an absolute delusion that one tries to reinforce this existence called 'I'. There is no 'I' here. There is nothing to be taken as a person here.

What exists here is that fire. Just as it was said about the forest fire spreading, this is merely the spreading of a fire. That is what that Venerable Thero who wrote our *Lōväḍa Saňgarā* in the past beautifully expressed:

Dara räsa gini äviluṇu kaḷa nibaňdē,

gini misa dara yäyi yana nama noye dē.

Ema lesa ekkoṭa vadahala muniňdē,

duka misa kayakaäyi yana nama noye dē.

"When a heap of firewood has caught fire, continuously, the name 'firewood' no longer applies; it is called only 'fire'. In the same way, the Lord of Sages declared that when brought together, it is only Suffering (*Dukkha*); the name 'body' no longer applies."

After a heap of firewood catches fire, one does not go to call it a pile of wood again. It is indeed a heap of fire. "When a heap of firewood has caught fire, continuously, the name 'firewood' no longer applies; it is called only 'fire'." It is no longer called firewood; it is called only fire. "In the same way, the Lord of Sages brought them together" and showed: "it is only Suffering (*Dukkha*); the name 'body' no longer applies." This cannot be called a body; it is a heap of suffering. Using this, adjusting to this, feeding, watering, bathing, and protecting this is indeed suffering. Moment by moment, breath by breath, this is suffering. Thus, it is to understand that nature of suffering deeply that insight (*vipassanā*) is directed. This fire—the nature of fire is always to grasp. When a fire catches a heap of wood, we say the fire grasps the wood. On the other hand, it can also be said that the wood grasped the fire. When the fire grasps the wood, the wood grasps the fire.

This is, as was said, like a forest fire spreading; there is a small push. This push is what is called Craving (*taṇhā*). It is through this push, this thirst of Craving (*taṇhā*), that we grasp. The Craving (*taṇhā*) that arises in our minds regarding something. That is where it must be broken then. That is why it is said that the destruction of Craving (*taṇhā*) is Nibbāna. That is why it is said that Craving (*taṇhā*) is the cause of Suffering (*dukkha*). There is an unquenchable thirst within us. Especially the thirst for Becoming (*bhava*). The thirst for sensual pleasures (*kāma*). That is an obvious, coarse part. More subtly, there is the Craving (*taṇhā*) for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). There is a great desire for this existence. But the deepest disgust towards existence arises only when one realizes that those who obtained brahma-existence or deva-existence go and wander there for aeons (*kalpa*). This is a monotonous existence. "Behold, you asked for it, so here it is given"—as if saying so, an existence for aeons is given in the brahma worlds. That is the danger of the Craving (*taṇhā*) for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*).

But the world desires existence. "Somehow I must exist." As that maintenance of 'I', what is grasped in the end when groping in the thirst of Craving (*taṇhā*) within the darkness of ignorance? Not what one expects, but a Becoming (*bhava*) that presents itself according to the kamma one has done. If one lived as a hungry ghost, no matter how much one asks

for the pleasures of the deva world, it is the ghost-existence that is received. If one lived as an animal, a beast-like human, no matter how much one expects to be a good king or a deva-like state, according to those actions done, an animal existence, two animal eyes, ears, a nose—that is what is received. Thus, in hell and other even more terrifying places, kamma accumulates according to one's actions. "Behold, if you are asking for it, I shall give it to you"—so it is given. That is what is called Māra.

Then, what we do with Māra is a long tug-of-war. To win a tug-of-war in the ordinary world, we must pull harder than the person pulling from the other side. But to escape from this saṃsāric suffering, a completely opposite strategy is what the Buddha has told us to adopt. The time when Māra pulls is what we call gasping for breath (literally: "pulling life"). Māra pulls there; we pull here. So, our last thread is the thread of life. Like the last thread of a rope. After all other threads are pulled, the other relatives also gather and pull this person, to establish the existence of the world. They chant pirith around the bed, preach the Dhamma, to keep them alive for another hour. But in the end, after all those pullings—the relatives' pullings and other doctors' pullings—fail, what does one pull? One gasps for breath. One pulls that thread of life. No matter how much one pulls this, because it is merely a thread of life, it is Māra who wins. When Māra pulls to that side, where does one go and fall? Seeing some sign (*nimitta*) that one expects, one is born there. That is why the Buddha declared, "Die before you die." Die to Form (*rūpa*), die to Feeling (*vedanā*), die to Perception (*saññā*), die to Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), die to Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). That dying is what is called cessation (*nirodha*), ceasing.

The Arahant realizes this. The moment of letting go of these five aggregates is called the concentration of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala samādhi*). At that moment, those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are stilled, and that momentum, that sign (*nimitta*), becomes signless (*animitta*). What is taken as a sign is some object. The sign-nature of that object is erased in that insight. This becomes signless (*animitta*). Next, if we took some sign of something, we try to stand upon it. We try to grasp it. We expect a support, a footing. In the end, there is no place to establish oneself. That is called unestablished (*appatiṭṭhita*). Next, having established oneself, what does one do? One expects an existence. One expects a soul-nature. Instead, this is understood as void (*suñña*), empty, hollow, and worthless.

In this way, it is through three gateways to liberation (*vimokkha-mukha*)—namely, the Signless (*animitta*), the Desireless (*appaṇihita*), and the Void (*suññatā*)—that one reaches Nibbāna. What helps to attain that state is that subtle insight wisdom. The beginning of that wisdom is attention (*manasikāra*)—Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Through proper reflection, a deep understanding of the world gradually arises within someone. According to that arising, at some point, the Form which one had embraced, grasped, and taken ownership of naturally slips away from the mind. It is grasped with the mind; it slips away from the mind. It must be abandoned from the very place where it is grasped. That is indeed how the fire of Suffering (*dukkha*) is extinguished. Grasping (*upādāna*) this is Suffering (*dukkha*). Where it is grasped, next lies bondage (*bandhana*). Subject to that, and then according to that—if we grasp some

object, some possession, we burn according to the harm done to that possession. The same is true if we grasp a person. It is so everywhere. Such is the way.

Therefore, as the Buddha declared, the one who walks the path of the Dhamma understands not only that this entire existence is Suffering (*dukkha*), but also that this is a fire. One is caught in this fire moment by moment. This is what is called Grasping (*upādāna*), in a very subtle manner. The existence in which these are burnt within this multitude of graspings is what we call existence. Now, once a fire starts, if firewood is given to it, it blazes up. This existence is just like that. For a long time in saṃsāra, due to defilements, according to desires, according to cravings, according to that Grasping (*upādāna*), we have received an existence. If we want this existence to continue, we can take it further. We can give more and more firewood. We must decide for ourselves whether we are going to add firewood to this, or whether we are going to pull out and remove the firewood that has been put, and somehow extinguish it.

There, if we consider the Four Noble Truths declared by the Buddha in brief, what exists here is that the entire existence is Suffering (*Dukkha*). The five aggregates themselves are Suffering (*Dukkha*). We usually stop at saying "birth is suffering, aging is suffering." The entire existence is Suffering (*Dukkha*). Underlying this is Craving (*taṇhā*). The state where this Craving (*taṇhā*) is stilled, where this thirst is quenched, is the extinguishing. That extinguishing is Nibbāna. The path to that extinguishing is shown as the Noble Eightfold Path in terms of Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), etc.—correct seeing, correct thoughts and aspirations, correct speech, correct action, correct livelihood, correct effort, correct mindfulness, and correct concentration. That is the Four Noble Truths, the vision presented by the Buddha. That is the deep vision of life and death.

Therefore, instead of tapping on others' skulls, before we die, before this becomes a skull, we must tap on this, and see with these very eyes our state when we have no eyes. Similarly, the state when we have no ears. Will not this body-cage of ours reach that state? Therefore, in the manner of "as this is, so is that; as that is, so is this" (*yathā idaṃ tathā etaṃ, yathā etaṃ tathā idaṃ*), develop that meditation subject regarding the external and apply it to oneself. Reflecting on one's own body and projecting it onto others' bodies, in whatever manner, arouse insight (*vipassanā*), and it is through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship (*Arahatta*) that someone realizes the noble fruit of Arahantship.

Realizing that the true benefit of the birth of a Buddha for that vision is obtained at such a moment, you too have listened to the Dhamma on a valuable Full Moon day like today, this valuable Full Moon day that marks the end of the rains retreat (*vassa*). Even during this moment, the qualities that assist in Nibbāna—namely, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—must have developed, even in a small measure, within your minds.

As the benefit of that—not merely as the general benefit of listening to the Dhamma, but through the growth of such fundamental virtues in the mind—may you gain the strength and power to escape from all saṃsāric Suffering (*dukkha*) and realize the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the realization of the paths and fruits even in this very life! Furthermore, we must share these merits with the protective assembly of devas and brahmas who are acting tactfully at this moment to protect the Dispensation (*Sāsana*) and to allow this noble Dhamma of Nibbāna to be revealed to the world. May their Dhamma-aspirations also be fulfilled. May their paramis develop and may they realize Nibbāna through one of the three forms of enlightenment (*bodhi*)!

Similarly, if there are any beings from Avīci hell up to the Akanitā heaven, including deceased relatives who have passed away in your names, who are waiting to rejoice in the merits of this Dhamma-sermon and Dhamma-listening, may all of them, through this sharing of merits, end all saṃsāric Suffering (*dukkha*) as they wish and be comforted by the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna! With that aspiration, recite these verses and share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #92

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.103)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Na attahetu na parassa hetu,

na puttaṃ icche na dhanaṃ na raṭṭhaṃ;

na iccheyya adhammena samiddhimattano,

sa sīlavā paññavā dhammiko siyā ti.

From:

Dhammapada 84 (Paṇḍitavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The world seeks paths of progress with the expectation of prosperity. It is with a beautiful dream of a prosperous future that people exert themselves day and night, regardless of fatigue. Especially, with the dawning of a new year according to worldly convention, many people direct their thoughts in this manner. Now, in this stanza we have chosen as our topic today, the Buddha presents a certain vision regarding prosperity. This stanza was spoken by the Buddha concerning a Thera named Dhammika. The story is related as follows: There lived in the city of Sāvatthi a lay disciple (*upāsaka*) known by the name of Dhammika. There were many lay disciples named Dhammika during the time of the Buddha. Now, this is a story about one such person.

That lay disciple was a virtuous person who lived in accordance with the Dhamma, having abandoned unrighteous behavior and practicing righteous conduct (*dhamma-cariyā*) and harmonious conduct (*sama-cariyā*). While living in this manner, on one occasion, due to the maturing of his thoughts, he felt a weariness towards the household life. While talking quietly with his wife on one occasion, he said, "I feel like ordaining." Then his wife said, "Please wait a little until this child in my womb is born." So, this lay disciple actually waited until the child was born and reached the age of walking. That means he postponed his idea of ordination. When he asked his wife again, she said,

"Wait until this child grows up a bit." Then this lay disciple Dhammika thought, "Whether I get her permission or not, I will go and ordain." Since it is from parents that one must normally get permission, and perhaps thinking thus, he went and ordained without her permission. Having ordained, he practiced diligently, meditated, and in due course attained Arahatship.

After attaining Arahatship, Ven. Dhammika returned to the city of Sāvatthi and visited his former home. He went to be of help to his wife and child. Having arrived there, he preached the Dhamma to his son. Perhaps the son was a somewhat grown-up boy by then. So, the aspiration for Nibbāna arose strongly in that child too, and he went and ordained. Not long after ordaining, he attained Arahatship. Now, only the former wife remained at home. In the Dhamma, such persons are referred to as *purāṇa-dutiyikā*—the former companion (literally, "former second"). So, this Thera's former companion sat at home and thought, "The ones for whose sake I remained in this household life have both ordained now. There is no use for me in this life anymore. I too will ordain." Thinking so, she also went and ordained, and before long, practicing diligently, she attained Arahatship. Behold what happened to that family!

Then, a discussion arose among the Bhikkhus that because this lay disciple Dhammika was established in the Dhamma, he fulfilled his monastic duties, realized the Dhamma at the highest level, and also became a refuge to his child and wife. While they were discussing this, the Buddha arrived there and asked, as was customary, "Monks, what are you discussing?" When the matter was explained, the Buddha said, "Indeed, monks, a wise person (*paṇḍita*) does not desire a son, wealth, or a kingdom for his own sake or for the sake of another. He does not desire his own prosperity through unrighteous means (*adhamma*). He does not seek to build his prosperity through unrighteous paths. Such a person is the one who can be considered virtuous (*sīlavant*), wise (*paññavā*), and righteous (*dhammika*)." This is the meaning of that stanza.

Now, at first glance, although we do not have many details, we can see that the person who is the subject of this story, the lay disciple Dhammika, was righteous both as a layman and as a monk. This will perhaps become clear as we go on explaining. Therefore, let us first direct our attention to how one lives righteously as a layman. You have heard about this often. When speaking of acting righteously in lay life, we all know that the very fundamental principle the Buddha pointed out to the young novice Rāhula is what applies to us all—one must have an understanding of wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) actions. In this Dhamma, the analysis of wholesome and unwholesome actions is based on that fundamental principle which follows the Middle Path. That is, from a far-sighted perspective, an unwholesome action (*akusala*) is something that leads to one's own downfall, to the downfall of others, and to the downfall of both. A wholesome action (*kusala*) is something that does not lead to one's own downfall, nor to the downfall of others, nor to the downfall of both. This is how the Buddha analyzed wholesome and unwholesome actions in this Dhamma. It is within this framework that a righteous life proceeds.

Next, you often hear about the *Parābhava Sutta* when discussing progress and downfall. The Buddha preached it in response to a question by a deity. At the very beginning of that discourse, in the very first stanza, the Buddha stated the most fundamental factors regarding a person's downfall and progress—which can be called the guiding principle or the core fact.

Suvijāno bhavaṃ hoti, suvijāno parābhavo

Dhammakāmo bhavaṃ hoti, dhammadessī parābhavo

According to the Buddha, one's progress is very easy to understand, and downfall is very easy to understand. That is, the Buddha states that the cause of progress and the cause of downfall are very easy to understand. What is the cause? *Dhammakāmo bhavaṃ hoti*—he who loves the Dhamma progresses. *Dhammadessī parābhavo*—he who hates the Dhamma meets downfall.

Generally, you might have doubts about this. However, that is indeed how the Buddha preached. Having preached thus, in the *Parābhava Sutta*, he went on to expound many factors that lead to personal and social downfall. We will not discuss them in detail at this moment because we have other matters to explain briefly. So, that is one aspect. When speaking of downfall and progress, a person progresses only if they love the Dhamma. One who loves the Dhamma attains progress in the true sense. One who hates the Dhamma will fall into ruin at some point. As we mentioned earlier, there were several great lay disciples named Dhammika in this Dispensation. One such lay disciple—not the gentleman in our story, but another—asked the Buddha about the proper course of practice to be undertaken by the Sangha, and the course of practice to be undertaken by laypeople. This is called the lay duty (*gihivata*). He questioned the Buddha regarding the lay duty. Let us bring that up here now.

The Buddha gave an answer to what the lay duty (*gahaṭṭha-vatta*), the practice of laypeople, is. That sutta reveals that the foundation of the lay life's practice is the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*). The Five Precepts are the foundation. This is stated in that sutta in great detail, more detailed than we usually think, in the form of stanzas. I believe expressing the meaning would be sufficient. If we take the first precept, one should not kill a living being, nor cause another to kill, nor approve of killing or slaughter. Furthermore, one should abstain from harming all beings, whether great or small. The Buddha expresses this idea regarding the first precept in the very first stanza. In the same manner, he describes the second precept. That lay devotee who wishes to progress in accordance with the Dhamma in this Dispensation and society, does not take what is not given—what we generally call theft. In short, he neither steals, nor causes others to steal, nor encourages theft. That is the second precept. The third precept is mentioned briefly there. Everyone knows this is committing adultery, going to another's wife. One should abstain from committing adultery. On Uposatha days, when observing the Eight Precepts, one practices celibacy (*brahmacariya*). On other occasions, in ordinary lay life, one abstains from committing adultery in accordance with the precept of *kāmesu micchācārā*.

Next, regarding telling lies, the same is stated. One does not tell a falsehood, a lie, whether in an assembly, in the midst of a crowd, or even when conversing with a single individual. One does not speak lies, nor cause others to speak lies, nor approve of lying. Next, regarding the fifth precept. Here, it is stated as that which causes intoxication, whether it is a drink or anything else that assists in becoming intoxicated. One does not take it oneself, nor does one cause others to take it, nor does one encourage it.

The reason given here is that because of intoxication, one is tempted to commit evil deeds oneself, and it also tempts others to commit evil deeds. In short, the Buddha refers to intoxicants there strictly as an *apuññāyatana*—a source of generating demerit (an "evil-manufacturing institution"). Intoxicants are indeed a source of generating demerit. The Buddha says to boycott them completely. In short, everyone knows it causes downfall in both worlds. That is why the Buddha describes it as something that causes madness, delusion, and insanity, drawing in the foolish (*bālatantant*). In this way, the perils of intoxicants are shown there using various terms.

In this manner, at the very least, as a minimum standard, one must protect at least these Five Precepts. Next, in addition to that, you have heard about livelihood. Here too, one must abstain from wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) which is related to an unrighteous life. Five factors of wrong livelihood are generally mentioned: trade in weapons (*sattha-vaṇijjā*), trade in living beings (*satta-vaṇijjā*)—which is generally explained as slave trade, selling living beings into slavery or servitude; and next, selling for meat goes without saying. Next, trade in flesh (*maṃsa-vaṇijjā*) is separately shown, as an improper thing, something that should not be done regardless of who killed the animal. Next, trade in intoxicants (*majja-vaṇijjā*), and trade in poison (*visa-vaṇijjā*). If one only thinks about oneself, according to positive thinking about one's own progress, these are indeed what one would do. No matter what anyone else says, if one's goal is to become a millionaire—especially in these times when state assistance might even be provided for such things—it is to these unrighteous methods of trade that one must turn to achieve one's goal. Yet, for some reason, the Buddha forbids them. What is the reason?

The Buddha possessed a far-sighted understanding of our life that no one else had. Although we think we have come out of a mother's womb as someone belonging to parents according to ordinary society, the Buddha states that we have been coming through a long Samsara, undergoing birth (*jāti*) and death (*maraṇa*). We did not come for nothing; we accumulated various kinds of kamma. Therefore, we go prepared to experience their results (*vipāka*) too. If we commit more and more evil deeds while traveling on such a journey, even if we achieve progress at some point, those achievements will eventually be washed away, swept away. They are destroyed by floods or fire. Just as the goal is succeeded, the four elements (*cattāro mahābhūtā*) become provoked—either the internal elements become provoked and one becomes a patient, with bile or phlegm being provoked, and one has to experience the results of those evil deeds. One cannot even take a little food, no matter how much one has earned. Otherwise, the external four elements become provoked, and through droughts, floods, and various other disasters such as fear of fire, the accumulated wealth and that person

are swept away. It is because of such dangers that the Buddha tells us to depart from those unrighteous trades and turn to other righteous methods. From a far-sighted perspective, it is because those unrighteous trades lead to harm both to oneself and to others. It is with this in mind that we used the word "far-sighted."

When reflecting accordingly, you may have heard that according to the Buddha's vision of the world, there are three types of persons. Who are these three? The blind, that is, the one without two eyes. The blind person (*andha*) is defined by the Buddha as someone who does not know how to acquire unacquired wealth and resources, lacks understanding of economic principles, and has no skill in that area. At the same time, he has no understanding of good and bad, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*), merit (*puñña*) and demerit (*pāpa*). That person is a blind person. He has neither progress in this world nor progress in the next world. The second is the one-eyed person (*ekacakkhu*). That person is one who understands those economic principles, perhaps a highly educated graduate. Having studied all the paths of progress according to worldly convention and understood their principles, he secures progress economically, whether through righteousness (*dhamma*) or unrighteousness (*dhamma*), even by killing others, or out of jealousy in a competitive world, defeating others, and living according to those unrighteous ways. Yet, one of his eyes is blind; he is one-eyed. According to the Buddha's word, he has no understanding of good and bad, right and wrong, or higher and lower qualities of Dhamma. That is the one-eyed person.

Next, the two-eyed person (*dvicakkhu*) is defined as one who righteously, through the sweat of his brow, not through theft or deceitful means, nor through deceitful means that seem easy, but by working very hard through the sweat of his brow, righteously accumulates wealth. For this, the Buddha has given various similes on different occasions.

If we look closely at the world—how sweet is honey? Did the bees make it easily? No, with great effort. It is very strong. Who built it, engineers? No, that tiny creature, with how much effort? Even though we do not see its sweat flowing. Thus, the Buddha states that wealth acquired and earned righteously, through hard work and the sweat of one's brow, is as sweet as honey and as stable as an anthill. Thus, in this way, that person is capable of achieving progress in the world economically in accordance with the Dhamma—even if it is not a rapid progress, it is a gradual, imperishable progress. Moreover, he does not merely hoard the wealth he has acquired; knowing that he has to go further in Samsara and knowing that there is something more valuable than this, he uses it properly, engaging in acts of generosity (*dāna*) and meritorious deeds, in a righteous manner that also helps him in the next world.

We know that food is necessary for us. Not only is it necessary, we can even say it is essential. One cannot live without food. But who lives for the sake of food? Living for the sake of food is a base thing. Can any of you lay devotees live without wealth at all? Can you live being poor? No. Wealth is necessary. There are various problems and issues. Wealth is needed for them. Children must be educated, houses must be built. How many other tasks are there? Wealth is necessary. But do we live for the sake of wealth? Should

wealth be the ultimate goal? No. The Buddha has stated things relevant to laypeople in many other suttas; we cannot state all of them in this short time. Mentioning them generally gives you ample opportunity to look into them.

On one occasion, the Buddha expounded in great detail to the Koliyan son Dīghajānu how a layperson can achieve dual welfare—that is, making a success of both this world and the next world. If we briefly take some of those points, for progress in this world, the Buddha declared four practices: *uṭṭhāna-sampadā* (achievement of persistent effort), *ārakkha-sampadā* (achievement of protection), *kalyāṇamittatā* (good friendship), and *sama-jīvitā* (balanced livelihood). That *uṭṭhāna-sampadā* means the capacity to acquire wealth through persistent effort and the sweat of one's brow. *Ārakkha-sampadā* means protecting the wealth thus acquired, without squandering it, preventing it from falling into the hands of thieves or enemies, or being destroyed in wrong ways. One employs righteous protection—not unrighteous, but righteous protection. Next is *kalyāṇamittatā*. Everyone has heard that wealth can be destroyed through bad companions. If one associates with someone addicted to intoxicants, adultery, or vice, that wealth will be destroyed in a day or two. Therefore, *kalyāṇamittatā*—good friendship—is indeed a blessing (*sampatti*) because approaching and associating with good friends can assist not only in one's physical comfort but also in mental comfort, mental problems, and not just in lending a hand, but in soothing the mind.

What is contained in *sama-jīvitā* (balanced livelihood) is living with a certain balance regarding income and expenditure, rather than hoarding all this wealth and living in an extremely miserly way like the stingy millionaires of the past, who would not even consume food and drink but would live in great pride thinking only of their wealth, and then die leaving it all behind. It refers to consuming wealth like weighing income and expenditure on a scale, without letting expenditure exceed income, nor letting expenditure rise excessively high. Moreover, wealth that is merely accumulated without being of use to anyone is said to be like a pond possessed by demons. No one benefits from it. It sometimes lies buried somewhere and is completely destroyed, of no use to children or anyone else. Instead, *sama-jīvitā* means systematically using a certain portion for one's daily consumption, or doing those deeds that help other friends—fulfilling one's duties. One saves what needs to be saved. One applies it to meritorious deeds. But one does not hoard them excessively and become inflated with pride as a "multi-millionaire." What is meant there is eliminating the imbalance between income and expenditure. It is not spending beyond limits, but understanding this. These four practices were shown as leading to progress in this world.

Next, things regarding the next world are specifically shown. The factors regarding the next world are presented as *saddhā-sampadā* (achievement of faith), *sīla-sampadā* (achievement of virtue), *cāga-sampadā* (achievement of generosity), and *paññā-sampadā* (achievement of wisdom). These are not things that can be touched by hand. They cannot be kept in chests. They are things that can be deposited in the heart. The achievement of faith (*saddhā-sampatti*). Explaining faith further on suitable occasions, everyone knows that *saddhā* means faith in the Triple Gem. Or specifically, through the

faith we generate in the Enlightenment of the Tathāgata, generating faith in the Triple Gem. That is a blessing (*sampatti*).

Next, likewise, is the achievement of virtue (*sīla-sampatti*). Now, you devotees are also fulfilling that achievement of virtue. Virtue is a blessing; everyone knows that. It is the blessing that brings the happiness of blamelessness (*anavajja-sukha*). Similarly, the achievement of generosity (*cāga-sampatti*)—relinquishing or letting go—that too is a great blessing. Next, the achievement of wisdom (*paññā-sampatti*). If we reflect deeply as described in the Dhamma, wisdom is defined as analyzing and understanding this life and the world in terms of insight (*vipassanā*). What is known as *udayabbayagāminī paññā* is the wisdom that deeply penetrates the nature of arising and passing away. Why is this wisdom a blessing? Because it is through this that one can bring an end to all the suffering (*dukkha*) of Samsara. It is analyzed there in that manner as *paññā-sampadā*.

The Buddha has declared the real wealth belonging to a lay devotee as the seven noble treasures (*ariya-dhana*). The ones mentioned earlier also belong to these. He shows seven in this manner as noble treasures: *saddhā* (faith), *sīla* (virtue), *hiri* (moral shame), *ottappa* (moral dread), *suta* (learning), *cāga* (generosity), and *paññā* (wisdom). These seven are called the Seven Noble Treasures (*sapta ariya-dhana*). There is the real wealth belonging to laypeople. If there is positive thinking, here is noble positive thinking. This is what should be targeted. They do not fail; they lead on the right path. So, if we practice according to what the Buddha has declared, let us analyze "endowed with faith" briefly. Faith, as expressed earlier, refers fundamentally to believing in the Enlightenment of the Tathāgata. Through that, we also believe in the Dhamma and develop faith. We also develop faith in the Sangha who practice according to that Dhamma. In this way, the faith we generally speak of is faith in the Triple Gem. We all use the term "Triple Gem." Reflect then on the change that occurs in a person when they deposit the Triple Gem in their heart—the difference between a person who has faith and one who does not. Because of those three gems deposited in the heart of the person who has faith, that person does not take external things so seriously.

He knows that the valuable thing is internal, spiritual virtues. Not only that, from the moment the treasure of faith is properly deposited in the mind—from the moment that noble treasure is deposited—the value of that person's thoughts increases, their worth increases. The value of their words increases. The value of their actions increases. Now, you know how the value of a currency note increases according to economic principles. The value of these notes depends on the value of gold or gems deposited. Thus, from hearts devoid of the treasure of faith, there arise only those kinds of worthless, valueless thoughts, words, actions, and behaviors. But from a person of faith, noble and valuable things emerge. That is why faith is a treasure. Next, it is by making faith one's refuge that one protects virtues such as *sīla*. A person without faith cannot do this.

What is meant by virtue (*sīla*)? It is the training of body and speech. What happens if body and speech are not trained? As the Buddha sees it, it is like how difficult it is for a mother to train her child at home during that young, mischievous age, when they run after snakes, or when they run after youths. The fire in the hearth looks beautiful, and

they run to catch it. They run after serpents. Why is that? They do not know how to train body and speech according to those principles. Similarly, a person who has no regard for virtue engages in misdeeds that lead to their own downfall, destroying both their wealth and themselves. That is why virtue is a treasure. Next, those qualities that help to stabilize and protect that virtue are presented together as *hiri* (moral shame) and *ottappa* (moral dread). In society, *hiri-otappa* is referred to as shame regarding evil. A deeper meaning is found here than ordinary worldly shame; it is the quality of the mind not bending towards committing sins or unwholesome deeds—a shrinking away. That is a strength. Nowadays, shamelessness is considered a cleverness in society. However, that shrinking of the mind towards evil deeds shown by the Buddha is a strength and a protection for oneself. That is what *hiri* means. Let us think of it as a disgust. One develops a disgust towards evil deeds. Next, *ottappa* means developing a fear towards sins. Just as a child who has been burnt once does not touch the fire again, even without being burnt, one knows according to the Buddha's word that if we go along these paths we will get burnt, because of one's faith in the Buddha's word.

Ottappa is fear. One does not commit sin. Therefore, shame and fear of wrongdoing—that is why the Buddha calls them the world-protecting qualities (*loka-pālaka-dhamma*). We think the world is controlled by the police and the military. That is in a very limited sense; those who cannot even control themselves are controlling others. But the Buddha, in an eternal sense, calls these two the world-protecting qualities. If one voluntarily develops these within oneself, there is no need for police or military. You have heard those stories about Buddhists of the past, and not only in the ancient past, but during the times of the ancient kings. Perhaps that was partly due to punishments. Yet, this was so deeply ingrained in the Sinhalese that even in the recent era of foreign rule, various reports mention that foreigners themselves were amazed by their adherence to precepts and discipline. The reason for this was those virtues of *hiri* and *ottappa* practiced since ancient times. That is why they are called world-protecting qualities. They too are treasures. Then next is the treasure of learning (*suta-dhana*), which means knowledge of the Dhamma.

We have expressed this on many occasions. The Buddha explains this word *suta* through a long passage. In those days, it was mostly by listening, what we call "having heard much." It was by listening that they knew the Dhamma. Today, there are many books. Yet, it specifically refers to the Dhamma-knowledge developed through hearing. That too is a strength, a treasure. It becomes a strength—that passage goes on as *sutā, dhatā, vacasā paricitā* and so forth. Having heard it, retained it, practiced it verbally, memorized it, and reflected on it deeply, drawing something from it. Likewise, next it is described as *bahu-ssuta*—greatly learned, having heard and accumulated much, knowing many things deeply regarding the Dhamma.

Likewise, *suta-dharo*—one retains what has been known. Not in machines. If some question is asked and one says, "Behold, it is in the machine. I cannot answer now, it is in the machine," or "There is a big book at home, I must go and look at it"—if that is the situation, that person does not truly possess the treasure of learning. Thus, *sutadharo, sutasannicayo* is like a walking library. So, that state of being greatly learned is a

treasure to a person. When a question arises, one does not need to search for others, to search for great scholars. One can find the answer through the Dhamma—a righteous answer. That understanding according to the Buddha's word: "At this moment, this is what should be done, this is what should not be done." There, that state of being greatly learned becomes a treasure, a saving. What is mentioned next is the very result of being greatly learned. What is the Buddha saying here? From beginning to end, he tells a story of letting go. He states that in this entire Samsara, what keeps us bound is *Taṇhā* (Craving), *upādāna* (grasping/holding/fuel), and holding on. Therefore, letting go. Thus, generosity (*cāga*). That too is defined in ordinary words in relation to lay life. It is defined in a long passage. Even a devotee living a lay life dwells at home with a mind free from the stain of stinginess (*vigata-mala-macchera*). That means having removed the stain of stinginess. Even the term "stain of stinginess" (*macchera-mala*) is a word to be contemplated deeply.

You devotees know that in a place where metal objects are kept, if they are not cleaned from time to time, they become entirely a pile of rust. Similarly is the place where money and wealth are accumulated. There too, the stain of stinginess exists. That is why in society, a stingy person is sometimes called a "rusty one" (*malakaḍayā*). To that extent, stinginess is a dangerous thing. So, living with a mind from which the stain of stinginess has been removed. Next, relinquishing is mentioned again—understanding the value of relinquishing. With hands ready to give generously, finding even delight and happiness through letting go, without regret such as "I gave this to someone, oh dear, I lost this," but being able to rejoice, thinking, "How wonderful, I let go of my *Taṇhā* (Craving) and gave this." One can rejoice in letting go. Next, there is also the word *yācayogo*—meaning that beggars can approach that person without fear, knowing that he is a giver, a generous person.

Next, the word *dāna-saṃvibhāgarato* is mentioned—delighting in sharing gifts, having a nature of distributing to others. It is through this that the quality of generosity, of giving, grows. When you reflect on the benefits of letting go, you have indeed heard of the benefits of wealth and giving. How letting go becomes a benefit can sometimes be a question. "Giving" (*dāna*) is what is visible on the outside—the act of giving. That giving can be done without letting go. One can give to someone while holding on to it in the mind. That is how it is done in trade and business transactions. So, in return, one must be given money; it is given while holding on in the mind. Instead of that, the ability to give by completely letting go in the mind is what is called *cāga* (generosity). That strength helps when, at some point, while one is away, news comes: "Behold, the house has burnt down!" or "The bank where my money was deposited has collapsed!" or "My house, land, or estates have all been nationalized or confiscated by the state!" Upon hearing that news, that person either faints and falls, or their heart fails and they die right there.

What is the use of that wealth? If that quality of *cāga* (generosity) has not been developed, that person cannot bear it. They cannot console their mind. Similarly, you must have seen many examples of this. Situations arise where one must decide which to

save between one's own life and the wealth one has been holding on to so far. In places where great fires occur, or floods, or tsunamis, if one holds on to what one has held on to so far, that person is swept away. The one who let go wins. Such matters can be understood by you too from the events happening in these times. That strength is not something that arises only at that moment; it is the one who has long practice who lets go in that manner. The strength to let go of what must be let go when the time comes is what is called *cāga*.

Thus, for one who is accustomed to such letting go, when entering deep meditation at last, it becomes clear: "What I am holding on to is not merely these few external things; I am holding on to the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*): form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)." Because of holding on to them, due to my *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion / view of existing body), they appear as things. Yet, what is here is, as was said, "form is like a lump of foam"—a pile of things arising and passing away. What I take to be so great as "form," what appears on the outside and is beautifully presented, changes internally moment by moment with an unimaginable speed. It decays, and undergoes various other transPreparations. Seeing this arising and passing away is what is meant. It is called *udayatthagāminī paññā* (the wisdom of arising and passing away). That wisdom mentioned earlier is what is shown here. Wisdom is ultimately one's treasure, nothing else. It is not just about the arising and passing away of external objects; they all disappear and dissolve. Clothes get soiled and decay; those are external things. But when one directs one's mind to the changes occurring within this body that one is holding on to, and observes according to *satipaṭṭhāna*, then one understands that these five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)—all these five heaps declared by the Buddha—which is why they are called heaps (or aggregates)—contain a multitude of arisings and passings away. Thus, just as form is like a lump of foam, feeling (*vedanā*) is like a bubble of water, perception (*saññā*) is like a mirage, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are like a banana trunk that can be peeled, and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is a completely deceptive illusion—this understanding arises at some point through insight (*vipassanā*) even to laypeople. That is the treasure of wisdom (*paññā-dhana*). According to the Buddha's assessment, the greatest treasure in the world is wisdom. That is why it is said, *narānaṃ ratanaṃ*—wisdom is the gem of human beings.

That is indeed what is shown in the *Ālavaka Sutta* on a certain occasion: "by wisdom one is purified." Real purity comes through wisdom, through understanding, through penetrating wisdom. That wisdom is the ultimate treasure. Whether one is a layman or a monk, that is the treasure. Thus, let us suppose that a person drowns in water; when that person drowns, although the body goes down, the mind goes up if wisdom has been developed. On one occasion, the Buddha shows through a simile: when a jar of ghee is drowned in water, the shards of the jar, the clay, go down, but the ghee comes up to the top. Similarly, the Buddha shows that when a lay devotee who has developed the mind through absorptions (*jhāna*) and realized the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) dies, or drowns in the sea or somewhere, the body goes to the bottom, but the mind goes up. But let us suppose he is someone who did not develop the mind, who lived committing great

sins, killing animals, living unrighteously through trade in meat, and leading others toward unrighteousness—if such a person dies, what happens? The body will go to the bottom, and the mind will go even further, splitting the earth and going to hell. Then one can understand the difference, the value of these treasures. The treasure of wisdom is such a noble thing. It was due to the systematic development of that very treasure of wisdom that the lay disciple Dhammika felt the urge to ordain.

At first, we might think that what he did was a very wrong thing. Even though the lay disciple Dhammika listened to his wife's words and waited until the child was born, he only waited until the child could walk a little. But how much work is there regarding a child? The child has to be sent to school, and then to university. While all of that was there, this lay disciple Dhammika went and ordained. But he did not forget them after attaining Arahatship. Having finished his work, the task of ordination, he came and first of all gave that Dhamma-heritage to his son. Now you can recall what the Buddha gave to Prince Rāhula—you have heard that story many times. When the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu and was being offered alms at the palace of his father, King Suddhodana, Queen Yasodharā said to Prince Rāhula: "Son, there is your father. Go and ask for your inheritance." This child also went and said, "Ascetic, even your shadow is pleasing to me. Give me my inheritance." After partaking of the alms, the Buddha took Prince Rāhula and gave him the inheritance. What was it? We can understand that. That is exactly what Ven. Dhammika also did.

Thus, as a Bhikkhu, the noblest gift he could give to his relatives is what Ven. Dhammika gave. We should contemplate this. First he gave it to his son. After that, the son also ordained. Next, let us also reflect on how the wife thought, on her way of thinking. How did she think? "The ones for whose sake I carried on this lay life have both ordained. Why should I remain a laywoman?" It was not because she had no other place to go. You know what is meant by "finding another place to go." That laywoman might have had other options. But instead, what did she think? She understood the values. The husband set the example. The son set the example. This is all there is to do. "It was for their sake that I spent this lay life. Why should I remain?" In the end, what happened? There were three Arahats! Therefore, we must reflect on values in accordance with the Dhamma. Food is not the purpose of life. Nor is wealth the purpose of life. Through those noble treasures we have just mentioned, when wisdom finally matures, a weariness (*nibbidā*) with life naturally occurs.

Now, is it not with a certain degree of that weariness (*nibbidā*) that you devotees have come here to spend the day? Leaving behind household problems, perhaps the husband handing over the child to the wife, saying, "I will observe precepts (*sīla*) this time, you look after the child. Next time, I will stay and you go observe precepts"—even negotiating in that manner, you tread this path of precepts with difficulty, keeping a thousand other problems aside. Understanding that "this is a great suffering (*dukkha*), like playing the drum we have slung over our shoulders," we are currently connected in these various ways due to various causes and the results of kamma (*kamma-vipāka*). But in Samsara, we are all alone. As we often remind ourselves, family relationships are like people

gathered at a resting-hall (*ambalama*), if we look at it according to Buddhist philosophy. According to social philosophy, they might seem different.

If we reflect in a deep, far-sighted manner according to those terms: *kammasako'mhi, kammadāyādo, kammayoni, kammabandhu, kammapaṭisaraṇo*—we own only our kamma. Even the child does not belong to us. Neither father nor mother belongs to us. One has only one's own kamma. The heritage one has is not the heritage received from parents, but kamma itself. One's relative is kamma itself. One's refuge is kamma itself. When reflecting in that manner, it is when you understand that amazing loneliness in this world that you are motivated to isolate yourselves from your households with difficulty and spend a day in a place like this. That is the beginning of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). The end of that beginning is when, at some point, one feels like the lay disciple Dhammika: "There is no use in doing this halfway, bit by bit. There is no point in throwing a washed cloth back into the mud. I must bring this to an end. Practicing wisdom in a superficial way is not enough. Therefore, I must obtain the environment necessary for that." This gives rise to a deep thought. That is when, even in the past, Bhikkhus ordained. That is why the purpose of ordination is called *pabbajita-kicca*—the duty of ordination, the goal of ordination. That is, having destroyed all defilements, becoming an Arahat. Or, having understood the five aggregates as they really are, escaping from this Samsara. It is only such a liberated person who can support the world in the highest sense through the Dhamma. It is only then that one can support through the Dhamma, not through unrighteousness. That is why we said earlier that the life of Ven. Dhammika is highly exemplary; that he lived righteously as a layman is briefly mentioned here, and we can understand it. Next, the proof of his living righteously as a monk is that after ordaining and attaining Arahatship, he did not assist his wife and son to acquire wealth or secure jobs in some indirect or improper way. Through the Dhamma, he directed them to the very path he had trodden.

Its ultimate result was that three individuals attained Nibbāna. They ended the suffering (*dukkha*) of Samsara. Thus, if the culmination of wisdom is the ending of all Samsaric suffering in the manner of *sammā dukkhakkhaya*, then there is no treasure more valuable than that. Therefore, in accordance with this, you devotees must reflect that we live in an era where various kinds of opinions prevail in the world. No matter how much their correctness or incorrectness is spoken of or read in books, sometimes one does not understand.

But certain events happen in the world which are called "objects of urgency" (*saṃvega-vatthu*). There are times when things get hot. It is when it is hot that you must strike. It is only when it is hot that even in a smithy, iron can be beaten. Behold, a hot time has arrived now. Therefore, you devotees must reflect on what the real values in the world are. Even if there are many kinds of thinking, such as positive thinking, cultivate Noble Positive Thinking. If a way of thinking is needed, incline toward Noble Positive Thinking. Without making wealth the ultimate goal, you must train yourselves to consider that very noble treasure (*ariya-dhana*) declared by the Buddha—which helps in this world, the next world, and Nibbāna, namely, *saddhā, sīla, hiri, ottappa, suta, cāga, paññā*—as your real wealth. It is not the wealth in banks, nor houses, lands, estates, or vehicles. All

of those can be swept away by a wave. But this cannot be taken by a thief, nor can it be destroyed by any flood.

On one occasion, the royal minister named Ugga came to the Buddha and said, as if in great amazement, "Venerable Sir, the householder Migāra Rohaṇeya is a person possessing truly amazing wealth. The value of his gold alone is hundreds of thousands. There is no limit to what can be said about his silver." Then the Buddha stated, "Ugga, there is indeed such wealth in the world. But Ugga, that wealth you speak of is common to fire, floods, kings, thieves, and unloved heirs; they can take ownership of it. It is something one cannot keep as indeed 'mine.' But Ugga, there are seven treasures that no one can steal, which cannot be confiscated by kings, and cannot be affected by fire or water." That is what we have just declared: the Seven Noble Treasures (*sapta ariya-dhana*).

Next, finally, he declares that if any person, whether a woman or a man, possesses these Seven Noble Treasures: *sa ve mahaddhano loke*—he is indeed, let us say without hesitation, that person is the wealthiest in the world. *Sa ve mahaddhano loke, ajeyyo*—likewise, unconquerable, undefeated (*aparājita*), a great undefeated one, a greatly wealthy one. Undefeated. Many wealthy people and millionaires are defeated. Even if they appear as winners in society, at the moment of death on their sickbeds, they scream in fear at the dreams they see, as the evil deeds committed in the past appear to them, and the manner in which they accumulated that wealth appears. Behold, such a person is defeated. But the one who has the Seven Noble Treasures, as was said, is like that jar of ghee: even if the body goes down, the mind goes up.

Therefore, you devotees must reflect on these with wisdom, not thinking of them as just another sermon, but comparing them with your own direct experience (*paccakkha*). The Buddha's Dhamma is like that; it is not accepted merely because it was said. Nor is it accepted solely by limiting it to logic or being logical. One compares it with one's own experiences and accepts it on that basis, seeing whether these stated matters are true or not.

According to worldly convention, this is the beginning of a year. According to our convention, the Duruthu Full Moon Poya Day is also considered the first Poya day for that reason. Even otherwise, we must reflect everywhere that in this wheel of time, we ourselves must mark a starting point. In a rotating wheel, if we want to change at some point, we make a small mark and say: "Behold, a year has dawned," "Behold, a month has started," "Behold, a week has started," "Behold, a day has started." The sun and the moon helped us in this. But we must know how to make use of that dawning year and week.

Therefore, those matters must be reflected upon with wisdom. It is to draw closer to that noble treasure (*ariya-dhana*) that at this moment, you devotees have left your homes, specifically having undertaken a higher virtue (*sīla*), or at least as a minimum standard, having undertaken the *Ājīva-aṭṭhamaka Sīla* (virtue with pure livelihood as the eighth factor), and remain inclined towards virtue in that manner. Next, through a Dhamma

sermon, the knowledge born of learning (*sutamaya-ñāṇa*), and thereby the opportunity to develop wisdom, was acquired by you during this brief period, this time of about an hour. The Buddha describes all of these as wholesome (*kusala*). Wholesome means those things that help to draw closer to that target—to bring an end to all this Samsaric suffering (*dukkha*). Therefore, rejoice in that.

Rejoicing in and sharing this, may these wholesome qualities accumulated so far—the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—help at some point to bring an end to this Samsaric suffering (*dukkha*), and to realize the Dhamma of Nibbāna through the realization of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). Through those developed spiritual faculties, and with their help, inclining towards the association with good friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), and through that association, completing the practice of Dhamma and meditation, and having this wholesome energy as a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*), may this wholesome deed of listening to the Dhamma lead to the swift escape from all the suffering (*dukkha*) of Samsara, such as birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), disease (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*), and to the realization of the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! Likewise, if any beings, including our relatives from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, are ready to rejoice in this merit of preaching and listening to the Dhamma, may all of them, by rejoicing in this merit, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through whichever of the three Bodhi states they aspire to! Aspiring thus, please recite this stanza.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #93

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.115)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Asataṃ bhāvanamiccheyya, purekhārañca bhikkhusu;

āvāsesu ca issariyaṃ, pūjā parakulesu ca;

mameva katamaññantu, gihī pabbajitā ubho;

mameva ativasā assu, kiccākiccesu kismici;

iti bālassa saṅkappo, icchā māno ca vaḍḍhati.

From:

Dhammapada 74 (Bālavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The disposition of being unable to tolerate the happiness and prosperity of others is known as envy. Along with envy, other vices such as conceit, ingratitude, and avarice travel together. The skillful means employed by the Blessed One to discipline a monk who had fallen prey to these vices will be revealed today through the verses we have chosen as our theme, and the background story related to them.

On this Duruthu Full Moon Poya day, which marks the beginning of a new year, you will be able to extract certain lessons from this Dhamma discussion to gather into your minds. These verses were expounded by the Buddha at the Jetavana Monastery in Sāvatthi, concerning a monk named Sudhamma. However, this story began in the town called Macchikāsaṇḍa. In the town of Macchikāsaṇḍa, there lived a wealthy, virtuous, and wise householder named Citta. One day, Venerable Mahānāma, one of the first group of five great Arahants, arrived in that town. Inspired by seeing his serene posture and demeanor while walking for alms, the householder Citta invited him to his home, escorted him there, and offered alms-food. At the end, having listened to the Dhamma expounded by him, he attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*).

Due to the intense faith that arose at that very moment, with the intention of offering his park named Ambaṭaka Forest as a monastery for the Saṅgha, he poured water over the hands of Venerable Mahānāma and dedicated it. This monastery in the Ambaṭaka Forest became renowned as a place with spacious dwellings where monks arriving from any direction could reside. A senior monk named Sudhamma resided there as the resident monk.

In the course of time, hearing of the reputation of the householder Citta, the two chief disciples, Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Moggallāna, journeyed to Macchikāsaṇḍa with the intention of favoring this householder with the Dhamma. Hearing of their arrival, the householder Citta went forward about half a league to meet them, welcomed those venerable ones, escorted them back, and after performing the duties of host to the guests, invited the great Arahant Sāriputta saying, "Venerable Sir, please deliver a brief Dhamma talk to me." The great Arahant Sāriputta said, "Lay follower, we are weary from this long journey. Nevertheless, listen to a brief sermon," and delivered a short Dhamma discourse. Hearing that Dhamma, the householder Citta attained the fruit of Non-returning (*Anāgāmī*).

Next, he invited the two chief disciples and a retinue of about a thousand monks to his home for the following day's alms-meal, saying, "Please visit my home tomorrow." After inviting the chief disciples, the householder Citta also said to the resident monk, Ven. Sudhamma, "Venerable Sir, you too may please visit my home tomorrow along with the chief disciples." Then, the monk Sudhamma became angry. Thinking, "He invited me, the resident monk, only after inviting these visiting monks," he rejected the invitation. Even though he was repeatedly requested several times, he refused. The householder Citta said, "Venerable Sir, the good or bad of this will be understood by your own course of action." Saying so, he went away and prepared a grand alms-meal and other requirements for the chief disciples.

The monk Sudhamma also woke up early the next morning and thought, "I must go and see how the alms-meal has been prepared for the chief disciples." Thinking so, taking his bowl and robes, he departed and arrived at the home of the householder Citta, where the householder invited him to sit. He replied, "No, no, I will not sit, I am going on alms-round." Having said so, looking around at the vessels with the intention of insulting the householder Citta on account of his clan, he said, "Householder, your alms preparation is indeed magnificent. However, one thing is lacking." When asked, "What is it?" he replied, "Sesame cakes are lacking." This was done as an insult. In the lineage of the householder Citta, there had been someone who traded in sesame and sold sesame cakes. This was done as a caste-based insult.

The householder Citta also spoke a fitting illustrative story in response. He told a sarcastic story, "Just like a young crow that tries to crow like a rooster, but in the end can produce neither the rooster's sound nor the crow's sound." Enraged by this, the Elder Sudhamma said, "Householder, here is your monastery; I am leaving," and departed. Traveling many leagues, he arrived before the Blessed One and reported the incident. The Blessed One rebuked the Elder Sudhamma himself, saying, "Monk, you have

wrongfully insulted this faithful and devoted householder. Go now and ask his forgiveness."

As seen in this text, a special disciplinary act called *paṭisāraṇīya-kamma* (the act of reconciliation) was enacted. This concerns asking for forgiveness if one has inappropriately insulted a layperson endowed with faith and devotion. Until that disciplinary matter is settled, certain privileges of the accused monk are temporarily suspended. Thus, this monk named Sudhamma had to return and ask for forgiveness from the householder Citta. However, he was unable to do it properly, and the householder Citta did not grant him forgiveness. When he returned and informed the Blessed One that the householder Citta did not forgive him, the Buddha amended that disciplinary act by adding another part: if the householder does not grant forgiveness at once in such a situation, a monk should be appointed as a companion messenger to go along, and that monk should ask for forgiveness from the householder on behalf of this monk. Otherwise, a certain Vinaya rule was laid down to confess the offense within the sight of the householder. The verse preached by the Blessed One as an admonition to the monk Sudhamma on that occasion is what we have set as our theme.

A member of the Saṅgha should not do such things. One should not develop a sense of possessiveness, thinking, "this monastery is mine, these lay donors are mine." Showing that doing so causes conceit and envy to grow, and along with that Dhamma-principle, he uttered this very verse we mentioned earlier:

Asataṃ bhāvanamiccheyya: "May people think that I possess virtues that are not actually within me!"

Purekhārañca bhikkhusu: "May I be placed at the forefront by the monks! May I have a large retinue!"

Āvāsesu ca issariyaṃ: "May I obtain ownership over the best dwellings! May I have lordship over the monasteries!"

Pūjā parakulesu ca: "May I receive offerings from other families who are not my relatives!"

Mameva katamaññantu, gihī pabbajitā ubho: "May both laypeople and monastics know that this and that—this monastery, this temple, this Uposatha hall, and everything—was built by me alone!"

Mameva ativasā assu, kiccākiccesu kismici: "May both laypeople and monastics be dependent on me in every matter, big or small! May I alone be the leader!"

Iti bālassa saṅkappo, icchā māno ca vaḍḍhati: "Such are the thoughts of the foolish monk; thus his desire and conceit increase."

The Blessed One expounded these admonitory verses in this manner.

The monk named Sudhamma, with great humility, traveled a long distance and grew weary, but was unable to obtain forgiveness. This time, he went with a companion monk authorized by the Saṅgha and asked for forgiveness. The householder Citta finally forgave him. He said, "Very well, Venerable Sir, I forgive you. If I too have committed any fault, please forgive me." He asked for forgiveness, and forgiveness was granted. Furthermore, it is mentioned there that due to the spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) that arose within him, Ven. Sudhamma made great effort and attained Arahantship in that very monastery. Similarly, regarding the householder Citta, he is recorded in the history of the Dispensation as a highly valuable lay donor. After that incident, the householder Citta thought, "Without even seeing the Blessed One, the Teacher, I have attained the fruits of Stream-entry and Non-returning. Now I must go and see the Blessed One." Driven by the desire to see the Blessed One, he announced, "If there is anyone who wishes to go and see the Blessed One, let them come with me."

Along with a large gathering of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, loading 500 carts with goods and alms provisions, he set out for Sāvatthi. It is recorded that during this journey, they received miraculous assistance from both devas and humans. It is mentioned that they received such extraordinary help that it became unnecessary to even use the items carried in those carts. In the history of the Dispensation, a great praise of the householder Citta is recorded, stating even that a shower of flowers fell when he paid homage to the Blessed One.

Moreover, when the Blessed One was appointing chief positions (*etadagga*) to his lay and monastic disciples, he designated the householder Citta as the foremost among laymen who expound the Dhamma. So, that is the extent of the story of the householder Citta. Reflecting on the behavior of the monk Sudhamma through this story, we can see that the reason the Elder faced such difficulties was that instead of bathing in the river of virtues of the visiting chief disciples, he developed envy regarding their virtues and the hospitality shown to them, alongside a conceit regarding the monastery where he resided. All these complications arose due to this. Underlying this is the vice of envy. Thus, this envy is a vice that acts like a parasite in both monastic and lay society.

As you all know, the Blessed One has taught four categories of Dhamma known as the four sublime states (*cattāro brahmavihārā*): loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), altruistic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). There, loving-kindness expresses the wish: "May all beings be well and happy!" It conveys the desire to bring about the welfare and happiness of others. Next, compassion expresses the intention to remove the harmful *Dukkha* (Suffering) that confronts beings. Altruistic joy is the nature of rejoicing and sharing in appreciation—saying "Sadhu, Sadhu"—wishing that the happiness obtained by beings may continue in that very manner. Bringing the mind to a state of neutrality, understanding that—according to the situation—good or bad actions (*kamma*) are one's own property, is known as the quality of equanimity. Therefore, the Blessed One has emphasized in various places the value of radiating these sublime states in all directions, strengthening the mind, and building these attitudes of loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity.

Now, it is indeed the lack of these qualities that is visible in society. Even in these times, in many instances, we hear of various kinds of adverse news even within lay society. This is because, through competitive and selfish thinking, the tendency to advance oneself even by bringing down or killing another is visible in society. In the monastic order, many of these conflicts often occur precisely due to the aforementioned vices of envy and conceit, as well as stinginess (*macchariya*) regarding things, and the feeling of "this is mine, this is mine." So, having briefly mentioned these vices, we can next compare this with another valuable story.

In the Dhamma text called the Saṃyutta Nikāya, an event is recorded which also occurred in that very Ambaṭaka Forest monastery in the town of Macchikāsaṇḍa. We present this account to you because it is an event from which we can take many valuable and exemplary lessons. At the end of that story, a certain riddle is presented. Please listen closely to see and try if you can think of the answer to that riddle. There are no prizes to be given. However, it is a story worth listening to carefully. It is in this manner:

On one occasion, many senior monks were residing in the Ambaṭaka monastery in the town of Macchikāsaṇḍa. As was his custom, the householder Citta came and invited the chief elder and the community of monks to partake of an alms-meal at his home the next day. After they had arrived and were seated, the householder Citta asked the chief elder a Dhamma question. We will not pursue that Dhamma question at this moment, because we intend to point out a much more important matter. When the question was asked, the chief elder remained silent. He asked again. Still, he was silent. He asked a third time. Still, he was silent. Then, the most junior monk in that gathering of Saṅgha, the youngest monk named Isidatta, said to the chief elder, "Venerable Sir, may I answer that question for the householder Citta?" "Yes, very well, Isidatta, you may answer," he said. And so, Ven. Isidatta beautifully explained the answer, saying, "Householder Citta, you are asking this question, and here is the answer to it." Thereupon, the householder Citta was delighted, and after offering the alms-meal, the monks returned to the monastery. Upon returning, the chief elder said to Ven. Isidatta, "Friend, the way you answered that question was indeed excellent. I did not understand it. Therefore, if such a question arises another day as well, may the venerable one yourself come forward and answer." That was the first incident.

Now, the second incident was similar. On another occasion, the householder Citta invited another group of monks. Just as before, the monks went and sat there. This time, the householder Citta asked an even deeper question regarding views (*diṭṭhi*). On that occasion too, the chief elder remained silent the first time, silent the second time, and silent the third time. Once again, Ven. Isidatta asked the chief elder, "Venerable Sir, may I answer the householder Citta?" "Very well, Isidatta, you may answer," he said. And he answered it thoroughly and correctly. The householder Citta was so pleased with Ven. Isidatta that he asked, "From which region has this Ven. Isidatta arrived?" "Householder, I came from the city of Avanti." Then the householder said, "In Avanti, there is a friend of mine whom I have never seen, named Isidatta. An unseen friend, what they call a pen-friend these days. I have heard that this clansman went forth as a monk. Do you know

him, do you recognize him?" Ven. Isidatta remained silent. Then he asked, "Are you that clansman, Venerable Sir?" "Yes, householder." The householder Citta was exceedingly joyful. Now, not only had he answered the Dhamma question, but as it turned out, he was an old friend!

Then, the householder Citta made a great invitation, "This Ambaṭaka Forest is extremely beautiful. I shall support you in every way with the four requisites." Thereafter, having served the alms-meal generously to the monks, the monks returned to the monastery. After returning, the chief elder again approached Ven. Isidatta and said, "Venerable friend, the way you answered that question was indeed excellent. I did not understand the answer to that question. If such a question arises another day as well, please come forward and answer it yourself." Now, here is the riddle. Ven. Isidatta has received a great delegation of authority from the chief elder to come forward at any time and answer any questions asked. And as it turns out, the great lay donor, the householder Citta, is his old friend.

Now, what does Ven. Isidatta do? What do you think he will do? Everything one could possibly hope for has been received. In truth, Ven. Isidatta is the most junior monk among the community. For such a junior monk, a delegation of authority from a senior monk does not easily come. Nor does such a grand invitation come from such a prominent, great lay donor like the householder Citta. Now, what does Ven. Isidatta do? Here is what he did; see for yourselves if your answer was correct. The concluding sentence of that Sutta is as follows: we will try to translate that Pali passage into Sinhala as closely as possible. "Thereupon, the Venerable Isidatta, having put his lodging in order, taking his bowl and robes, departed from the town of Macchikāsaṇḍa. Having thus departed, he never returned again." That is what Ven. Isidatta did. See if what you thought was correct. When there was such a delegation of authority, and such an opportunity for gains, offerings, fame, and praise, why did Ven. Isidatta leave?

Therein lies the lesson, merit-seeking friends. One does not receive ordination in this Dispensation for the sake of such things. They are a quagmire. They lead increasingly to one's downfall, and to the growth of those aforementioned defilements. Knowing this, Ven. Isidatta departed from that place. Moreover, there is another valuable aspect of that event. Look at the behavior of that chief elder. It is far more wonderful than the character of Ven. Sudhamma. With what profound respect for the Dhamma did that chief elder give permission to that young monk! Not only did he grant him permission to answer the householder, but he praised him and delegated the task for future occasions. Even though he had been delegated with this task, Ven. Isidatta, on the second day as well, did not say to the gathering, "Ask me any question, for the task has been delegated to me." Ven. Isidatta, in his humility, remained silent until the question was asked a third time. And only after systematically and customarily obtaining permission from the chief elder did he answer. Thus, on both sides—there was a wonderful respect for the Dhamma and humility on the part of the chief elder, whose specific name is not even mentioned in the book. And likewise was the humility of Ven. Isidatta.

Thus, we have to understand that with deep respect for the Dhamma, Ven. Isidatta answered the question, not with any intention of standing out, but as a service of Dhamma to the world. That was all; nothing beyond that. Normally, one would expect that upon meeting an old pen-friend, one would say, "I am so-and-so." There was nothing of the sort here. Ven. Isidatta did not go to prove his identity to the householder Citta. Even when it was suddenly revealed, he remained silent. Such is the example Ven. Isidatta shows us. Most of all, what did he do when gains, offerings, fame, and praise began to flow in? He put his lodging in order, and without telling anyone, took his bowl and departed. Having gone, he never returned. There is a most valuable exemplar for the entire community of Saṅgha within this Dhamma story. If the story of Ven. Sudhamma deals any kind of blow to the Dispensation, this story is more than enough to completely erase it. Whether they are laypeople or monastics, it is virtue that we must bring to light. That is why, in the complication that arose with the householder, the Blessed One did not take sides, but laid the blame squarely on the monk Sudhamma. A wrong is a wrong, no matter who commits it. Whoever does it, a fault is indeed a fault. Thus, within that are those aforementioned vices.

We now have to consider that whether in lay society or monastic society, a dangerous hazard that leads to downfall is this very thing called envy. In this day and age, we constantly hear beautiful words being used, such as prosperity, advancement, development, and progress. Similarly, millions are spent to uplift people's lives. Yet, it is like pouring water into a leaking vessel; something goes wrong, and no real progress is visible in society. One reason for this is precisely the aforementioned envy. Because of envy, one cannot feel happy about another's well-being. As you all know, there is a practice known as sharing of merit. Even among this gathering, we know that a few individuals join together to offer alms to this group, and others rejoice in it. There is such a custom of sharing and rejoicing in merit.

If one can acquire merit by rejoicing in another's merit, then by rejoicing in the happiness that another receives, one can bring happiness to oneself and become virtuous. The world does not know this. Instead, one sees a great race in the world and in society to secure positions through irregular and unrighteous means. There are people in that race. However, that way of thinking is a journey undertaken by forgetting the four sublime states preached by the Blessed One, namely: loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity. In contrast, a person endowed with the quality of altruistic joy can look at another's happiness and rejoice. Without such joy, if one envies instead, what happens? Because it is a distorted mental state, as a consequence, one might be born blind, cross-eyed, mute, deaf, or crippled in the next life, as a result of that distorted mental retribution. Due to envy, even more serious and harmful things occur in society. If someone else reaches a goal that one could not reach, the tendency to destroy that person is seen in both lay and monastic societies. It was so then, and it is so today. The reason is the lack of that aforementioned quality of altruistic joy. One must think of another's happiness, rejoice in it, and share in that happiness.

But now a question may arise in your minds: "Then is there no room for competition in society? People sit for examinations, there are competitions on the sports field. What are

these competitions in society? They exist even in the form of examinations." Next, we have to consider that competition is merely an opportunity to sharpen one's skills and talents. For someone who does not understand this properly, mental distortions can arise within it. It is as a result of these that symptoms of depression are said to arise in today's youth. They aim for the highest targets but cannot reach them. Why can't they reach them? Because of that aforementioned envy, instead of developing themselves, they seek to bring down the one around them who is progressing. Therefore, even in an examination, if one violates the rules, casts them aside, and tries to obtain success through various wrong and improper ways, the standard of that progress will only decline; it will never rise.

Thus, examinations exist to measure skill. Sports competitions exist to measure talent. The sports field becomes an arena of conflict, a battlefield, precisely due to the vice of envy. Instead, if one cultivates altruistic joy—though competition may be unavoidable for one's own preservation, and may be a social necessity for developing those skills and talents—to eliminate the harm that arises from it, one must strive to develop the quality of altruistic joy. Through this, the loser can praise the winner. Likewise, the winner can regard the loser as the one who enabled this victory, thereby building mutual goodwill. Instead of a combative environment, a truly friendly, peaceful, and genuine sporting attitude will arise on the sports field.

Then, giving the right place to the deserving person and respecting skill will take place. Indeed, if our goal is to develop human skills, setting records means simply rejoicing in whoever sets them. It is not a matter of "he defeated me and won." One must rejoice in the fact that, using me as a support, making me a competitor, that person achieved success. Similarly, the strength to sincerely rejoice upon seeing another's progress is obtained only by cultivating the quality of altruistic joy within oneself. None of these are present in the economic theories we mention. They pour millions into them very rapidly, yet it flows out of a leaking, perforated vessel. It flows away due to these very adverse mental states.

Sometimes we hear that some wealthy neighbors give books and support the education of poor children who are in difficulty. That is good. However, when those children complete their education and attain high positions, they are looked upon with a strange gaze. They say, "These kids who grew up eating and drinking from us are now trying to fly in the sky." Or sometimes, they even regret the help they gave, saying, "It is because we failed to crush them while they were still in the egg." Even if not in these exact words, you, merit-seeking friends, know what happens in society better than we do. In a highly dangerous manner, whether in lay or monastic society, such attitudes arise within those societies due to looking at things in a wrong way. Sometimes one might think these things are necessary for society; that without such competitive and adverse forces, society would not develop.

A person who thinks so only needs to look at their own home. How do mothers and fathers in a home look at their children? These qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity are visible within the mother and father at home. That is

why the Blessed One said, *"Brahmāti mātāpitaro"* (Mothers and fathers are called Brahma). You have heard much about looking after parents. That is why the mother and father are referred to as "Brahma." If this is successfully active within the family unit, how much progress will take place in a family? How much harmonious coexistence and happiness will arise?

Now, looking at such a family, a mother who has carried a child in her womb, cleared its excrement, and done everything, does not develop envy when the child succeeds. She rejoices, saying, "My son is clever!" Yet, when a neighbor, having received one's help in that manner, attains a high position, one looks at it with a strange gaze. What is the reason? That "Brahma-hood" is confined only to the home. It is a sublime state restricted solely to the household. However, the Buddha shows that these four sublime states are to be radiated in all four directions, describing them as *'appamaññā'*—virtues that must be cultivated boundlessly. Therefore, boundless radiation means: whether it is mine or not, if someone becomes happy in this way, looking at it, it becomes a cause of joy for me, and I must share in that joy. This valuable quality is called altruistic joy.

On other occasions, even if these are not analogies found in the texts, we present certain analogies so that they may strike the heart. Now, this quality of loving-kindness is a gentle quality, just like the mother's milk which is easy to digest as soon as an infant is born. Developing the thought, "May all beings be well and happy!" is the basic, starting quality. Thus, we see a wonderful relationship and growth within these four sublime states. Why did the Blessed One preach them in this manner? If he wished, the Blessed One could have placed equanimity at the beginning, compassion in another place, and altruistic joy elsewhere. He did not create such a confusion. He presented them systematically. It is this systematic order that we are trying to show. Thus, loving-kindness is like the mother's milk given to a small child. They say there is no food as delicious, nor any food as nourishing. They also say it is easy to digest. Similar is the thought: "May all beings be well and happy!"

By radiating loving-kindness boundlessly, it is oneself who grows. One grows through that aforementioned soft, gentle quality, the quality of loving-kindness. Next, compassion means that in relation to that child, according to the situation, on occasions when the child falls into *Dukkha* (Suffering) and needs help, one tries to make the child comfortable through various means and offers assistance. Thus, it is the nature of delivering from *Dukkha* (Suffering). Thus, we take this as a general analogy, though it may not match one hundred percent. There is a saying in society, "My heart melted like a lump of butter." Thus, just as we spoke of milk, let us compare butter to compassion. Next, let us look at altruistic joy. We started with that. If we are to use the same milk analogy, what analogy can we give for altruistic joy? When looking at a vessel of curdled milk (*dhi-kiri*) which is very good, settled, and pleasant—representing the pleasant appreciation of another's happiness—does that thought not arise? Very calm and pleasant. Let us call curd altruistic joy.

Next, what remains is equanimity. That is the deepest one. It is difficult even for an ordinary person to understand. One might think equanimity means looking away. It is

not such a thing, but something far deeper. It is within equanimity that those very parents, who held the child close when it was small, rejoiced when it crawled and somehow stood up, saying, "My son is clever!" Then the child attained higher and higher social positions and developed. Next, at some point, they had to separate. By that time, the parents' hair and beards have turned gray. Now, they are indeed like Brahma-kings. Now, with the highest quality of equanimity, they maintain neutrality, thinking: "If their kamma is good for them, what is it to us?" That is the deepest quality, the quality of equanimity.

As we said at the beginning, why did the Blessed One not place equanimity first? If equanimity were placed first, it would seem very easy. One would not even need to look at another. We could just go about our own work and bring it to an end. If we are to use an analogy for this, here is what we can say. We compare equanimity to ghee (*gitel*). Ghee is a very heavy substance. If you turn a pot of ghee upside down, it does not pour out; it is that solid. But can you milk ghee from a cow? You cannot milk ghee. It is only milk that can be milked. Therefore, the milk thus obtained is subjected to certain processes like churning, and in the end, ghee is produced. In the same way, equanimity is not merely closing one's eyes and ears. It is something far deeper. When loving-kindness matures, compassion matures, and altruistic joy matures, finally a profound understanding arises within the mental continuum.

No matter how much we help, in the final analysis, the rest has to be done by each person themselves. Why? Because the Blessed One has declared: *'Kammasakā, kammadāyādā, kammayoni, kammabandhu, kammapaṭisaraṇā'* (beings are owners of their actions/kamma, heirs to their kamma, born of their kamma, related to their kamma, and have kamma as their refuge). Beyond this, there is nothing we can do. Kamma alone is one's inheritance, kamma alone is one's relative. Not us, but kamma. *Kammabandhu, kammapaṭisaraṇā*. No matter how much we try to be a refuge, we cannot go beyond that; kamma alone is one's refuge. It is by thinking in this manner that one develops equanimity. We understand the value of the four sublime states. It is thanks to the four sublime states practiced by parents that children are able to reach such heights. It is because of these four sublime states that a child can grow up receiving protection from parents, instead of being fed poison or exposed to various hazards. Therefore, think of it as an individual unit and as a social unit. If that is the situation within the family unit, we must understand that society is the same. The development and progress of society, and the development of the individual within society, proceed by passing through those four stages.

Therefore, if each of us cultivates these virtues, what will exist there is not that aforementioned social competitiveness, but altruistic joy. There is a competition. However, if one is overwhelmed by it, becomes competitive, and in an irregular manner violates the rules—be it in an examination or on the sports field—and tries to jump into a position that does not belong to them by undermining others, one can never truly progress. The record of that progress will only decline; one can never progress as a nation or as a society. Therefore, we must close those deficiencies, those leaks. This cannot be done through economics alone. In this era that applauds material progress,

some insult these teachings, saying, "The era of preaching sermons is over; now is the time of going to the moon." If one makes an effort to understand the value of these words of the Buddha and lives in society accordingly, then no matter what kinds of conflicts arise in one's life, by applying one of those four states, one develops the ability to prepare the mind, even to the point of realizing, "In the end, this kamma is my own property, it is not something done by another."

Thus, we must contemplate the value of altruistic joy. Generally, we have to accumulate wealth to live. We acquire education. We must practice sharing them. We must practice sharing generously with our neighbors, fellow citizens, and the people of the world, according to our ability—both that wealth and the knowledge—without stinginess or possessiveness. We must reflect: by the help of how many people did we receive this wealth of knowledge accumulated over generations? The essence received from this earth, everything we have built with it—all of these are the final results of a great struggle for survival over generations, which we enjoy during this lifetime.

To use an analogy, the life we spend having built a house in this long journey of saṃsāra should be considered like a life spent in a temporary wayside rest-house (*ambalama*). The travelers who gather at night in a rest-house pool the things they have brought—one person has rice in their bag, another has dhal, and another has coconut. Instead of separating it saying "this is my portion," if they combine these, put them in a vessel, cook, eat, and then depart on their separate ways—only in such a manner can we proceed in this society. Otherwise, like the story of the hypocrites who clenched their fists and pretended to drop their handful of rice, if everyone does the same, they will have to drink water instead of eating a pot of rice. That is precisely the situation in society. If, instead of thinking about what we can give to society and to others, our ultimate goal becomes scraping away and consuming even the little they have, we will never be able to achieve true progress.

Let us think about this falling rain. If we do not look at the rain carefully, there is one thing we will fail to see. It is something that always happens in this society and in this world. Ants have a custom: during the dry season, they work day and night to gather food. They carry it away. If we look closely, we can see how defensively organized they are as they carry it into their nests. Suddenly, an unseasonal rain falls. When the unseasonal rain comes, what happens? The gathered food, the eggs carried in their mouths—everything is washed away. Such is the situation of events occurring in the world. If we were to take a movie with a camera that magnifies small things, it would not be much different from the videos and pictures of the tsunami you saw in the media recently. Therefore, the very same condition of the ant world exists here in the human world as well. Instead of trying to catch the sun and the moon during these few days we spend without knowing at what moment the next tsunami will hit, what should we do? If we step onto the Noble Eightfold Path shown by the Buddha to bring an end to the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, and so forth, and if we practice these valuable qualities like the four sublime states which help prepare the mind for that path, that indeed is the maximum valuable benefit we must derive from our lives. We can be happy in our final moments because of that too.

The thing that no one can eliminate, no matter what strategies are employed, is rebirth. Even if one can control another's birth, one cannot control one's own birth. One cannot control arising (*jāti*). It is this control that the Buddha declared after attaining Buddhahood: *'Natthidāni punabbhavo'*—now there is no more *Bhava* (Becoming) or rebirth. Only a Buddha, only an Arahant, has the strength to make that declaration. Until then, what we have to do... currently there is much talk about the tsunami coming from the sea. But in the ocean of saṃsāra, there are three tsunamis: decay/aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*). No one can escape from these three tsunamis. To escape from these three tsunamis, we must eliminate the aforementioned *Jāti* (Birth). Only when birth is eliminated can we eliminate decay, sickness, and death. Therefore, the path to escape those three tsunamis is what the Buddha has shown through the Noble Eightfold Path. Likewise, that liberation is the noble state of Nibbāna, referred to by names such as "the island" and "the cave." Therefore, if a human being has Nibbāna as their ultimate goal, aspiration, or target, the true peace that surpasses all other targets is that noble Nibbāna, attained by escaping the aforementioned decay, sickness, and death, and thereby escaping *Jāti* (Birth).

The merit-seeking person walking on that noble path of Dhamma must contemplate: although there is a convention among the Saṅgha regarding the four requisites, one does not live for the sake of the four requisites. Alms-food, robes, lodging, and medicine are merely things used to help fulfill the noble purpose of life. They are not the ultimate goal. However, those who run along with the economics of the ordinary world think that this is the ultimate goal. They make these aforementioned requisites their ultimate goal, neglecting other virtues. Why does a human being live? Why do we keep this body alive? Why do we sustain it for so long, like an old vehicle with various pieces patched together and welded using modern medical methods? If we think merely about living a long time, the crow is far above us. They say it lives for a hundred years. But is merely keeping a human alive for a longer time the goal? That is why the Buddha declared that living even a single day in accordance with the Dhamma is what is valuable. You know there is a series of verses in the Dhammapada stating that rather than living a hundred years without seeing arising and passing away—that is, living without seeing *Anicca* (Impermanent)—living a single day beholding impermanence is far more valuable. That indeed is the true essence of virtue.

In an era where people talk about 'core values' or 'essential virtues,' if we are to use that term, this is what we must contemplate: why do we need these essential virtues? Precisely to escape from those three tsunamis. No one else can escape from them. We spend time thinking, talking, and dreaming up various concepts through prolific conceptualization about the tsunami that comes from the great ocean. But before that, we are overwhelmed by those aforementioned tsunamis—be it decay, sickness, or death. This is the reality of saṃsāra. Therefore, we must protect that Dhamma, the message declared by the Buddha to escape from it. We protect it not for any other reason, but so that if there is anyone anywhere capable of understanding it, they can make use of this Dhamma, realize it, and secure the opportunity to end this *Dukkha* (Suffering) of saṃsāra.

That is why we said that we must generously give the wealth and knowledge we acquire for the sake of the beings of the world. In doing so, just as we mentioned regarding those competitions, our ultimate goal should be to raise our life goals from a low state to a higher state. Day by day, they are degenerating into a lower state. When considering this world of fashion, what is it that these young men and women regard as great? What do they target? Whether it comes from the West or is bred internally. Yet, this is a precious life. Why is it called a precious life? Animals do not have that capacity; animals cannot cultivate virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Only a human being possesses that capability. The Buddha has declared to us how extremely rare it is to obtain a human existence. If we have obtained such a rare human existence, and if life is so beset with disasters, and if there is no certainty about tomorrow, we must wisely contemplate what we ought to do at this very moment, today.

Therefore, just as each of us contemplates these things, we must definitely attain that realization. It is mentioned there regarding the Buddha that he initially felt hesitant to expound the Dhamma. In truth, a Buddha attains Buddhahood through both great compassion and great wisdom. Then, to that great wisdom, it was clear: "Who will understand a Dhamma like this? Who is capable? How will the world, bound by defilements, comprehend it?" That is why it is recorded in the scriptures that the Blessed One hesitated to expound the Dhamma. It is mentioned that on that occasion, Mahābrahma arrived and requested him to teach. In any case, when the Buddha looked out of great compassion, he saw that among the buds in a lotus pond, some flowers were ready to bloom. With that realization, just like thinking of the flower buds waiting for the sunlight, the Buddha expounded the Dhamma. Recalling that story, what we must do is—if there are any obstructive factors in realizing those aforementioned truths, or if there are deficiencies in our virtues like *sīla*—to correct them and develop concentration (*samādhi*). We cannot say what our past meritorious power is like.

In the Dhamma stories of the past, it is mentioned that the beggar on the street who lacked even a single meal, the leper Suppabuddha, attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*) after listening to the Dhamma from the Blessed One. The Blessed One did not expound the Dhamma solely for the wealthy treasurers or princes seated in the front rows, but for that poor leper seated at the very edge who was capable of understanding the Dhamma. In this manner, we must realize that our Dhamma cannot be restricted by classes, statuses, caste divisions, class divisions, or clan divisions. We must consider the entire world to be like a school without divided classrooms.

Thinking thus, even though there were many other things you could have done on this valuable Duruthu Poya day, you have observed this highly noble virtue (*sīla*), spent the day in meditation, and listened to this Dhamma sermon. If there is anything to be taken from it, you must take it and strive diligently. Before the lamp of the Dispensation goes out, we must aspire: "May the power of this wholesome merit serve as a supportive condition to realize in this very life the noble, deathless Nibbāna which delivers us from the three tsunamis, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Non-returning, and Arahantship."

Likewise, may all beings in this universe, including devas and brahmas, who are capable of sharing in the merits of expounding and hearing the Dhamma, rejoice in this merit of Dhamma-sharing! And may they all attain peace through the noble, deathless Nibbāna by whichever Bodhi they aspire to! With these aspirations, let us recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #94

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.122)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yāvadeva anatthāya, ñattaṃ bālassa jāyati;

hanti bālassa sukkaṃsaṃ, muddhamassa vipātayaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 72 (Bālavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Blessed One points out to us that no matter how much knowledge and education one possesses, one does not become a wise person (*paṇḍita*) by that alone. If someone falls into ruin because of their very knowledge and education, that person is described in the Dhamma as a fool (*bāla*), an ignorant person.

Today we present a stanza and a story illustrating how a person lacking the eye of wisdom to distinguish between good and bad, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*), benefit and harm, falls into destruction precisely due to the knowledge they have acquired. The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Blessed One, expounded this stanza at the Veḷuvana monastery in Rājagaha, concerning a hungry ghost (*peta*) named Saṭṭhikūṭa. On one occasion, the great Arahant Moggallāna and the Arahant Lakkhaṇa were residing on the Gijjhakūṭa (Vulture's Peak) hill, descending daily to Rājagaha for alms. One day, while descending Vulture's Peak for alms, the great Arahant Moggallāna smiled slightly at a certain spot. Venerable Lakkhaṇa asked him the reason for this, to which he replied, "I will not say now. I shall speak of it in the presence of the Blessed One."

When both of them, having partaken of their almsfood, approached the Blessed One, Venerable Lakkhaṇa inquired about the reason for the great Arahant Moggallāna's smile. On that occasion, the great Arahant Moggallāna declared: "While descending Vulture's Peak, I saw a hungry ghost (*peta*) with a body about three leagues (*gavu*) in size. Upon that hungry ghost's head, sixty thousand blazing, glowing iron hammers were falling. As

they fell and rose, his head split apart, yet it repeatedly reformed. I smiled because I thought to myself: 'I have never seen such a wondrous event, such a being, before!'"

The Blessed One then said: "Monks, I too saw this very thing at the terrace of enlightenment (*Bodhimanda*). However, I did not declare it, thinking that those who did not believe my words would accumulate unwholesome deeds (*akusala*). Now, since Venerable Moggallāna stands as a witness for me, I declare that this matter is true." Then the Sangha inquired about the past history of that hungry ghost. The Blessed One related that in the past, there was a cripple (*piḷā*) in Benares. Dear devotees, a cripple is one whose legs are so deformed and bent that he cannot walk, sometimes called a 'sokara'. That cripple lived under a banyan tree near the city, where people would bring him daily and place him. This cripple was highly skilled in slinging pebbles, in the art of slinging pebbles. When the village children came and asked, he would sling pebbles through the leaves of the banyan tree to trace the shapes of elephants, horses, and so on. In return, the children would give him food and drinks. This was the cripple's livelihood.

One day, when the king was heading to the pleasure garden, the children saw him approaching the banyan tree and quickly placed the cripple among the roots of the banyan tree and ran away. When the king arrived under the tree, since it was midday, the shadow cast through the holes in the leaves fell on his body, and he looked up. Seeing the shapes of the animals, he asked, "Whose work is this?" The royal officers replied, "This is the work of this cripple." Summoning the cripple, the king said, "My chaplain (*purohita*) Brahmin has the defect of being excessively talkative—that is, loquacity. Whenever I ask him something briefly regarding state matters, he has a habit of reciting a massive monologue. Can you sling goat dung into his mouth?" The cripple replied, "I can do that, Your Majesty. If you bring goat dung and seat the chaplain with me behind a curtain, I shall do the rest." The king arranged it accordingly. The cripple made a hole in the curtain with the point of a pair of scissors, and the king began a conversation. Every time the Brahmin opened his mouth, the cripple slung a goat-dung pellet inside. It is said that he slung about a measure (*naḷiya*) of goat dung. When he finished slinging the goat dung, the cripple shook the curtain as a signal (*saññā*). The king understood from this that the goat dung was finished. The king then said, "O teacher, you were talking so much that you did not even realize you have swallowed this much goat dung!"

Thereupon, the Brahmin felt highly ashamed and, from that day on, gave up his talkative habit. The king, feeling great relief, presented the cripple with what kings call a *Sabbaṭṭhaka* reward—eight of every kind of item as a gift of appreciation. He also granted him four villages at the four gates of the city. Thus, the cripple received great wealth due to his skill in slinging pebbles. Seeing this, a certain man in that city thought: "How valuable this craft must be, that this person has received such wealth! I too must learn this craft." Approaching the cripple, he said, "Teacher, please teach me this." The cripple refused. However, for a long time, this man attended to the cripple, massaging his hands and feet, and repeatedly pleaded with him to teach him the art.

Finally, thinking, "This man has been so helpful to me," the cripple taught him the art. When the training was completely finished, the cripple asked, "Now, what will you do?"

The man replied, "I will test this art." The cripple asked, "What will you test, and how will you test it?" He said, "I will shoot at a cow or a person and kill them." The cripple warned, "My son, if you do that, you will incur a debt you can never repay. Because if you kill a cow, the fine is a hundred; if you kill a human, the fine is a thousand," stating the law as far as he knew it. "Therefore, if it is someone who has no father or mother, it is alright to do something to demonstrate your skill." So, this man went and waited at the city gate. At that time, a Paccekabuddha named Sunetta lived near the city. When He was entering the city for alms, this man saw Him and thought, "Now I have found someone without a father or a mother." Carrying pebbles in his pocket, he went and slung a pebble into the right ear of the Paccekabuddha. So skilled was he in his art that the pebble went right out through the left ear. The Paccekabuddha experienced intense, indescribable sensation (*vedanā*). Unable to continue His almsround, He flew through the air back to His hut, His monastery, and upon arrival, attained final Nibbāna.

The people were waiting to offer almsfood. Since He did not appear, they went to investigate and, upon finding what had happened, began to weep and wail. This man also went to see what was happening. There, in a boastful manner, he let slip: "I did this just to test my target, to demonstrate my skill on the Paccekabuddha." All the people gathered and cried, "Because of this sinner, we have lost our Paccekabuddha!" and beat him to death on the spot. According to the texts, that man was boiled in hell for an exceedingly long time, for many aeons (*kalpas*). As a residual result of that evil karma, he obtained this state of a hungry ghost (*peta*) with a body three leagues (*gavu*) in size. The Blessed One explained this matter, and in connection with it, expounded this stanza.

"Monks, the knowledge and intellect acquired by foolish people are solely for their own destruction." Conveying this meaning:

Yāvadeva anatthāya, ñattaṃ bālassa jāyati,

anti bālassa sukkaṃsaṃ, muddhamassa vipātayaṃ.

The knowledge a fool acquires is only for his own ruin. It is purely to his detriment that the fool gains knowledge. It destroys his wholesome portion, severing the very head of his wisdom. This is the meaning contained in this stanza. Now, in connection with this story and the stanza, let us see if we can draw out certain points of the Dhamma.

The first part of the story reveals the weakness of the Brahmin chaplain. When the king inquired about state affairs, the speed of his talking was such that he did not even realize he was being slung with so much goat dung. That was the Brahmin's weakness. Yet, due to the skill of the cripple, the Brahmin learned a lesson, for better or worse. Next, we have the cleverness of the cripple's pupil. This is what became the subject of the stanza. He thought to show off his skill. At first, he thought of shooting either a cow or a human. The cripple pointed out the law. But that is only worldly law. One cannot do everything merely with legal expertise in worldly law. There is a far more serious, universally valid law of karma. According to this law of karma, the retribution for slinging a pebble at the motherless and fatherless Paccekabuddha is indeed what is described in the Dhamma.

From this, we can understand the value of the Dhamma, and the difference between material value and spiritual value. Nowadays, many people question these things. Indeed, they might even mock this story: "Are there really hungry ghosts (*peta*) with such huge bodies? Who has seen them? How can such things be?"

Dear devotees, in the past, wise people referred to karma as the 'machine of karma' (*kamma-yantraya*). It is truly wondrous; the Blessed One has declared that a karma is not exhausted without yielding its results. *Nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, katānaṃ upacitānaṃ kammānaṃ abyantīkiriyaṃ vadāmi*... "Monks, I do not say that there is an ending of deeds (*kamma*) done and accumulated without experiencing their results." That is why, as that body is broken down again and again, it is reformed. This is also the case in hell. In hells and other purgatories, one might wonder: "How do the beings in hell endure such intense, blazing heat?" It is solely due to the momentum of karma, dear devotees. It is a highly wondrous thing. Because people of this era do not understand these events, which fall within the range of Buddha-knowledge and are visible to those who have attained higher knowledges (*abhiññā*), they use intellectual logic to subject them to ridicule.

However, there is a wondrous order of karma (*kamma-niyāma*) operating in the world, which is universally applicable and from which even Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Great Arahants cannot escape. This is what demonstrates its terrifying nature. Even if we reflect on our present era in this light, nowadays, everyone considers a new discovery as something extraordinary. Whatever the field may be, research is given a high place in this era. Most of that research exists precisely for the aforementioned self-destruction—not only of oneself but of the entire society and the entire world. When we think of how the lives of helpless animals are sacrificed for some of these new discoveries, we realize that they do not consider the side of karmic consequences. They exploit animals in their products to prove their own cleverness.

Next, consider weapons of war. They wait for a war to measure the power of those weapons on the battlefield. Then, in this day and age, they talk about environmental pollution. The entire atmosphere has become toxic. Trees, plants, and vegetation are being destroyed. All of this is due to that fool (*bāla*)—though in this era, we might hesitate to call them fools. If someone holds a string of degrees, calling them a fool seems somewhat awkward. Yet, according to the Buddha's word, we cannot call them wise (*paṇḍita*) either. Fortunately, there was another word used for this in the past: 'overly wise' (*ati-paṇḍita*). People whose cleverness has run amok. We can indeed call such people 'overly wise.' Thus, due to such excessive cleverness, and by giving prominence to material things while ignoring the spiritual aspect, research is taken so seriously by the world that it leads to self-destruction and suicide. Its consequence is seen only in terms of this world. In truth, it is like the vision of a one-eyed person. Their plans are only for this world. Even when we think of this world, because of this path to hell that has been trodden for centuries, this universe has become entirely incompatible with human life. One day, at some point, it may even be destroyed by these very research projects. Everyone makes this prediction. Therefore, we can reflect on this in this light.

In the past, too, there were such 'overly wise' teachers. There were heretical teachers even during the Buddha's time. Among them, the teacher who faced the most severe criticism from the Blessed One was Makkhali Gosāla. To such an extent, the Blessed One declared: "Monks, I do not see any other person born for the detriment of many people, for the suffering (*dukkha*) of many people, like Makkhali, that foolish man (*moghapurisa*), or anyone who teaches such a practice and doctrine." The philosophy of Makkhali Gosāla is compared to a net placed at the mouth of a river for the ruin of many fish. Likewise, this foolish man Makkhali casts a net over people and traps them. What, then, is contained in Makkhali Gosāla's philosophy? It is fatalism (*niyati-vāda*), also called 'purification through transmigration' (*saṃsāra-suddhi*). He does not accept that the defilement or purification of beings occurs through causes and conditions. Furthermore, he asserts that there is no individual effort, strength, or power for these beings to achieve liberation. Both the fool (*bāla*) and the wise (*paṇḍita*) travel through this round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) without distinction, running along until one day their suffering (*dukkha*) comes to an end on its own. It is viewed as something that happens spontaneously, by necessity.

The simile he offers is that of a ball of thread thrown: just as it goes on unwinding until it is completely unrolled, so too both the fool (*bāla*) and the wise (*paṇḍita*) run through the world, through this round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), and finally come to an end. He gives no place to karma. There is no understanding of causes and conditions. This is a perverse philosophy, a doctrine of fatalism (*niyati-vāda*). Not only that, another philosophy that the Blessed One frequently criticized in a similar manner was the doctrine of non-action (*akiriya-vāda*) taught by the teacher Pūraṇa Kassapa. His philosophy also claims that there is no such thing as merit or demerit. By killing living beings, stealing, committing adultery, lying, and so forth, no sin is committed. By giving alms and so on, no merit is acquired. He claims that even if one were to slaughter and mince all the living beings on this earth with a razor-sharp wheel into a single heap of flesh, no demerit would come to anyone. Giving alms, self-taming, and self-control are useless activities; none of these yield any fruit. That is the way of the doctrine of non-action (*akiriya-vāda*), which is a rejection of karma. This, too, is a form of being 'overly wise'.

Not only that, in another place in the Dhamma, it is mentioned that on one occasion, Venerable Ānanda pointed out to the wanderer (*paribbājaka*) named Sandhaka. Nowadays, logic or reasoning (*tarka*) is something that many people hold in high esteem and worship. However, in accordance with the Dhamma, Venerable Ānanda pointed out that logic can be consistent with reason, or it can be contrary to reason. It may look right through logic, but the actual fact is wrong. Such things exist. Yet, we have arrived at an era where people use logic itself to reject the very word of the Buddha. Therefore, logic is like a double-edged sword. It is not an absolute criterion for measuring the truth of something. In such an environment, the Blessed One on certain occasions revealed a wondrous principle of Dhamma (*dhamma-niyāma*) which can be of great use to the intellectuals of today.

When He visited the Brahmin village of Sālā, and the householders came to see Him, the Blessed One asked: "Householders, do you have any teacher whom you prefer, whose teaching you can accept with faith (*saddhā*) and practice?" They replied, "We have no such teacher." The Blessed One did not say, "Then, here I am." Instead, He declared: "Then, householders, I shall teach you a principle of Dhamma (*dhamma-niyāma*). It is called the 'unquestionable teaching' (*Apaṇṇaka Dhamma*), also known as the unquestionable practice." It is an unusual word. It is explained in various ways. The core meaning is this: *apaṇṇaka* means a principle by which one can arrive at a definitive conclusion without any hesitation, after weighing the matter comparatively. In short, it has the meaning of being 'free from doubt.' It is a principle of Dhamma that one can practice without any issue. In common worldly parlance, there is a saying: "Whether it turns out right or wrong, it fits either way." Rather than just stating it this way, it is better to explain it using the similes given by the Blessed One Himself.

The Blessed One then introduces what this 'unquestionable teaching' (*Apaṇṇaka Dhamma*) is. You have heard of the ten-fold right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Opposite to that, there is the ten-fold wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). It is this wrong view that is mentioned here. It consists of ten points saying 'there is not, there is not.' As in the Pali terms: *Natthi dinnaṃ, natthi yiṭṭhaṃ, natthi hutaṃ, natthi sukatadukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko...* "There is no fruit or result of almsgiving, sacrifice, or oblation; there is no result of good or bad deeds; there is no obligation to mother or father; there is no this world, no other world; there are no spontaneously arisen beings (*opapātika*, such as hungry ghosts or deities); there are no ascetics and Brahmins in the world who, through their own higher knowledge, understand and describe this world and the next." This is the wrong view of negation ('there is not, there is not') encompassing these ten points, which the Blessed One is speaking of here. He then explains it according to the unquestionable (*apaṇṇaka*) principle. Now, if someone hears this view of negation, they may feel inclined toward it. They might feel like holding onto it. But the Blessed One asks them to investigate it in this way:

If indeed the opposite view—namely, the right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) that there are results of almsgiving, sacrifice, and good or bad karma—is true, then this opinion of theirs becomes wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). If the former is the actual reality, then this presentation of 'there is not, there is not' is their wrong view. Furthermore, thinking in accordance with that wrong view becomes wrong intention (*micchā-saṅkappa*). Declaring that wrong view to others becomes wrong speech (*micchā-vācā*). Moreover, presenting this view directly clashes with and opposes the teaching of those Arahants in the world who possess understanding of the other world, creating a completely contradictory view. Proclaiming this wrong view to others also constitutes the preaching of false doctrine (*asaddhamma*). These are the drawbacks (*ādīnava*) of this position. Furthermore, because of this very view, they will not be inclined to cultivate virtues such as moral conduct (*sīla*). The Blessed One points out that there are numerous drawbacks in valuing immoral behavior within such a wrong view.

Next, He explains how a wise person (*viññū-purisa*)—one who is considered wise by societal standards—should reflect on this. How? "If this philosophy taught by these people is somehow correct, then they do not have to worry about a next life. No matter how they live, they will face no trouble in the next world. There is no issue there. However, if the opposite right view is true, then these people will go to a state of misery (*duggati*)." Then they think from the other side: "Even if we assume their philosophy is correct, during their lifetime in this world, wise people will condemn them as immoral nihilists. They will be censured in this world, and if there is a next world, they will also fall into a state of misery (*duggati*)." Thus, the Blessed One states that one must weigh the good and bad sides comparatively and make a decision.

In the same way, He speaks about the affirmative view. The wise person reflects: "Now, there is also this philosophy: there are fruits and results of almsgiving and sacrifice; there are fruits and results of good and bad karma; there is this world; there is the next world; there is mother; there is father." Next, He speaks of this right view of the ownership of action (*kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi*). Regarding this view, the Blessed One states that if it is indeed so, then that person's view is right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). The thoughts formed in accordance with it are right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), and the words spoken in accordance with it are right speech (*sammā-vācā*). The stance taken is aligned with the view of the Arahants who know the next world, and attempting to convince others of it is right action (*sammā-kammanta*). Thus, a positive side of benefits (*ānisaṃsa*) is demonstrated there. They make an effort to live a good life, endowed with virtue (*sīla*). Even if, in some way, that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is true or not, the person who spends their life in this world according to that right view receives praise as a virtuous person. At the very least, they are praised in this world as a virtuous, affirmative-minded person. Moreover, if that right view is true, they will obtain a happy destination (*sugati*) in the next life.

Thus, comparing the advantages—what we call benefits or blessings (*ānisaṃsa*) in modern terms—and deciding after investigating with wisdom is what is known here as the unquestionable practice, the unquestionable teaching (*Apaṇṇaka Dhamma*). This is an extremely valuable matter. In this day and age, it is very difficult for many people to establish faith (*saddhā*) in any person. Everyone has various kinds of doubts, thoughts (*vitakka*), and numerous such problems. When they cannot even generate faith in the Blessed One, how could they establish faith in others? Therefore, they proceed solely with logic. Very well, if one is to use logic, here is the principle: the unquestionable (*apaṇṇaka*) principle. One must weigh the side of drawbacks (*ādīnava*) against the side of benefits (*ānisaṃsa*). If the side of benefits is greater, then one should follow that. That is why we said: "Whether it turns out right or wrong, or wrong or right, one can find peace either way." There is no room for regret. This is what is introduced as the *Apaṇṇaka Dhamma*. Since these points about the *apaṇṇaka* principle might be somewhat complex, it is difficult to present them in a way that is immediately clear to everyone in a sermon of this kind. However, our ancient poet Alagiyavanna Mukaveti, in his work *Subhāṣitaya*, has presented this matter in a very simple verse:

"O virtuous ones, whether there is a next world or not,

It is best to abandon evil deeds from the mind.

If there is no next world, no harm will arise from this;

But if there is, disaster awaits him who sinned believing there is none."

It is not difficult for you, dear devotees, to understand this. Whether there is a next world or not, it is best to abandon evil deeds. Giving up evil deeds is good because even if there is no next world, no harm comes of it. Not only does no harm come of it, but one also receives some praise in this society, like: "Ah, this person is living a good life." However, if there indeed is a next world, disaster will befall the one who committed sins under the view or logic that "there is none." This is exactly what we have been saying all this time. This is the essence.

Thus, the Blessed One continues this discourse into deeper aspects as well in the *Apaṇṇaka Sutta*. Some people in this era are not even inclined to think about these things. Many people nowadays—specifically those who adhere to pure logic—only talk about this world of sensory desires (*kāma-loka*) and have no faith in higher knowledges (*abhiññā*). As we mentioned in previous sessions, modern science has developed devices that mimic what can be attained through higher knowledges, such as the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) or divine ear (*dibba-sota*). Because of this, those who worship modern science do not believe in the ancient three-fold knowledge (*tevijjā*) and similar attainments. Yet, the Blessed One has pointed out the form realms (*rūpa-loka*) and formless realms (*arūpa-loka*) that transcend the realm of sensory desires (*kāma-loka*). Not only our Blessed One, but also ancient noble sages who attained absorptions (*jhāna*) pointed out the states of mind-made fine-material meditative attainments (*samāpatti*) that transcend this world of sensory desires. Even beyond those are the formless states. At the time of the Buddha's appearance, ancient yogis had attained these states. The pleasures of this world of sensory desires are incomparable to them; when compared to the bliss of meditative absorption (*jhāna-sukha*), the pleasures of the realm of sensory desires are likened to a small child playing with excrement and urine. This is the matter the Blessed One speaks of here.

Certain teachers claim that formless worlds do not exist. They do not say fine-material worlds (*rūpa-loka*) do not exist, but they deny formless worlds (*arūpa-loka*). They say that these formless, non-perceptual states do not exist. Another group says that formless worlds do exist. Next, the Blessed One explains how to resolve this doubt using the unquestionable (*apaṇṇaka*) principle. The wise person reflects: "If I adopt the view that only fine-material worlds exist, while formless worlds actually do exist, I will not be able to go beyond fine-material existence; I can only exist in mind-made fine-material forms. But if the view that formless worlds exist is true, and I act accordingly, I can attain much higher formless meditative attainments (*samāpatti*), such as the sphere of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*), the sphere of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*), the

sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*), and so forth. I can attain these superior meditative states."

Furthermore, that wise person reflects: "It is indeed because of this form (*rūpa*) that the taking up of weapons, and various quarrels and disputes occur. Many drawbacks (*ādīnava*) in the world are rooted in this form. Therefore, by transcending and overcoming form and obtaining the formless, the mind is freed from these troubles." Therein lies the benefit. Hence, that person does not grasp either extreme. The Blessed One points out that because one has no personal direct experience (*paccakkha*), one cannot declare that the first view is absolutely true. One cannot arrive at the dogmatic conclusion, "Only this is true, everything else is false," since one lacks direct knowledge. What is it? That "formless worlds do not exist." Similarly, one cannot say, "The view that formless worlds exist is the sole truth, and everything else is false," because one does not possess that direct experience either. Instead, keeping an open mind, investigating comparatively based on the benefits and advantages (*ānisaṃsa*), one reflects on the stance to be taken. Rather than remaining in doubt, one reasons: "If only mind-made fine-material worlds exist, then asserting that formless realities exist and acting in accordance with that will yield greater benefits." Thus, one gives more weight to the second option.

Next, this unquestionable (*apaṇṇaka*) principle rises even higher. There, the two sides are described thus: One says that the highest a human can reach is only the formless realms, the formless perceptual states. A certain teacher declares that one can only reach the formless meditative absorptions (*jhāna*) up to the sphere of infinite consciousness and the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. They claim that one cannot go beyond that. Another person declares that it is possible to transcend this and realize the cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*). The cessation of existence, dear devotees, is Nibbāna.

Now there is a doubt: "Should I adopt the view that one cannot go higher than the formless states, or should I adopt the philosophy that there is a way to transcend the formless states, transcend the suffering of this round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), cross over existence (*bhava*), and attain the cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*), which is Nibbāna?" This is the next doubt. There, the wise person reflects: "Even this world is something that belongs to existence (*bhava*). Even the formless worlds exist within attachment and grasping—what are called lust (*rāga*) and grasping (*upādāna*). There are subtle attachments even in them. However, if there is such a thing as the cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*), I can realize final extinguishment here and now, in this very life." Thinking thus, the wise person does not adopt the stance that only the formless worlds exist, but accepts the teaching that one can transcend them and cross over this existence (*bhava*).

There too, the stance that the wise person should adopt was shown. Understand this—it is a long discourse, and I have only presented the summary to you. Reflect accordingly. In short, how does this discourse end? The Blessed One did not say to those householders who came to Him, "If you do not have a teacher, here I am. Go to my

refuge saying *Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*." It had a wondrous conclusion fitting for those wise people. At its conclusion, those householders took refuge in the Triple Gem through understanding. This is a highly valuable discourse for this era. For those who cannot place faith (*saddhā*) and trust in a teacher, this is the medicine. For them, the Blessed One pointed out this unquestionable practice (*apaṇṇaka-paṭipadā*) so they could live in a way that assists their progress and well-being, by comparing, analyzing, and weighing logical arguments that are consistent with reason, rather than contrary to it. Dear devotees, now is not the time to relate long Jataka stories about this word *apaṇṇaka*. You have heard of Jataka stories. The very first Jataka story in the Jataka book is the *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka*. The *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* also contains this very same principle.

To state it briefly, when the Bodhisatta merchant and the merchant Devadatta were traveling through a desert, the demons (*yakkhā*) in the desert, with the intention of killing and eating them, approached looking as though they had just bathed and come from a place with plenty of water. Devadatta was deceived by this and threw away the water carried in his carts. The Bodhisatta merchant reflected: "Very well, this may be true or it may be false, but let us carry our water with us." Thereby, they were saved; they did not throw away their water. From this too, you can understand the word *apaṇṇaka*. It refers to a decision that can be made with absolute certainty, without fear or hesitation, in a situation of doubt. If we reflect according to the *apaṇṇaka* principle, even if the Blessed One did not state it explicitly, we can make various decisions all the way up to Nibbāna by thinking in accordance with this unquestionable practice.

It does not mean throwing everything away just because it is not visible to our eyes. Rather, it is about considering their benefits and shaping one's philosophy of life, for the Blessed One has declared that we can achieve great things during this short lifespan of ours—even realizing the cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*), which is Nibbāna, as mentioned before. However, the basis for this is view (*diṭṭhi*). If one cannot even straighten one's view, how will the rest of the path unfold? Even in this day and age, in some places where the Dhamma is presented as Buddhism but is merely a shadow of it, that same wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) is found. They do not accept almsgiving and merit. They say: "Almsgiving and other meritorious deeds are later additions, and virtues like moral conduct (*sīla*) were created later for society. These are outdated things." There is such an era, a trend, a bent of mind among many people. "Where are those hungry ghost (*peta*) states? We cannot see them anywhere." The Blessed One compares our rejection of everything we cannot see to blind men claiming there is no sun or moon—should we accept that? Those without eyes cannot see them. Yet, there are in the world—we cannot say how many, perhaps a small number, which is why room is left in right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)—ascetics and Brahmins who have attained such states and know that there is another world.

Therefore, if one arbitrarily takes up one's own opinion and rejects, ridicules, attacks, and disparages all of this through faulty logic, one is merely cutting off the head of one's own wisdom. That is why it is said that one’s knowledge, wisdom, and degrees can

sometimes lead to one's own ruin. Perhaps, if one writes a doctoral thesis on such a subject, they might receive a degree according to the current intellectual trends. The book might also sell well. But just as in the story of Makkhali Gosāla, where a vast number of fish are caught in a net cast by villagers, numerous helpless humans are trapped in wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), influenced by the book of that so-called scholar. In this way, on one hand, we often talk about environmental pollution due to the material-scientific bias—about external environmental pollution. But not many talk about mental environmental pollution. That is what we are highlighting here.

The cause of mental environmental pollution is indeed heretics (*micchā-diṭṭhi-gatā*) of that sort. Because heretics like Makkhali Gosāla and Pūraṇa Kassapa set themselves up as teachers and presented such false philosophies to vast audiences, millions of people must have gone to hell. Following them, using logic that is contrary to reason, saying "this is not visible to our eyes, how can it happen?", ridiculing and dismissing these realities, attacking the Buddha's Dhamma, and adopting views like 'there is no other world' also result in mental environmental pollution. Indeed, as a result of this, we see in the field of modern education that future generations are not even ready to accept the basic premises of the Blessed One's Dhamma. In those fields, prominence is given to new opinions, new discoveries, and new products under the name of a "critical attitude." Something cannot be accepted solely because of its novelty. We cannot discard something merely because it is old, nor can we accept it merely because it is new. The course of action that a wise person must take is the unquestionable (*apaṇṇaka*) way we have shown.

Some people reflect, carrying in mind not wisdom but that 'overly wise' attitude, that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) means only absolute truth. This is also something many have confused. It is clear right here that there is a place for the right view of ownership of action (*kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi*). If one is to wander in the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), if one is to continue in the round of rebirths, and if one adopts nihilism, one will end up dwelling in hell and similar places. *Kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi* is the right view that actions (*kamma*) are one's own. It refers to the course of action taken by accepting the premises that there are fruits and results of almsgiving, of serving mother and father, and of good and bad deeds, and that there is this world and a next world. It is through living according to right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) that one can avoid states of misery and go to happy destinations in this round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*). Therefore, the analysis of the wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*), the analysis of merit (*puñña*) and demerit (*pāpa*), as taught by the Blessed One, must be reflected upon with wisdom. If we take the ordinary meaning of the word *kusala*, it means skill. Worldly skill, however, is close to cunning.

Now, the skills of that cripple and his pupil were in reality not significant things. Similarly, the cripple's legalistic knowledge was limited only to that scope; he did not understand the terrifying consequences of that nature in the end. Therefore, we must reflect that this *kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi* is an important thing. By shaping our behavior according to it, and by fulfilling virtues like moral conduct (*sīla*), the door to

concentration (*samādhi*) is opened. It is by developing concentration, and by being established in concentration, that wisdom (*paññā*) can be developed. If, at the very beginning, one abandons right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and adopts a nihilistic view, claiming "there is no this world, no other world, no merit or demerit," there is no progress for them. You, dear devotees, have frequently heard the analysis of the wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) in the Dhamma. The unwholesome roots are greed, hatred, and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*). The wholesome roots are non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion (*alobha, adosa, amoha*). This does not mean that greed is entirely eradicated right away. These are the two sides. The actions that follow from these are described as the five sins, the ten unwholesome actions, the ten wholesome actions, and so on. There is room for those analyses within that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). However, at a deeper level, there are the Four Noble Truths—suffering (*dukkha*), the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering—in a supramundane (*lokuttara*) sense. Yet, both of these were taught by the Blessed One Himself; they are not later additions. One should not misunderstand this. As long as one is within existence (*bhava*), the ten-fold right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), the *kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi*, helps to remove the path to states of misery and lead to the path of happy destinations.

As long as the stance 'I' and 'mine' exists, one is prompted to perform actions (*kamma*). This must be accepted. One has to answer for the responsibility one has taken. One has to experience the results of things done with the thought of 'I' and 'mine.' Therefore, simply rejecting it will not do. There is a stage where this is transcended in a supramundane (*lokuttara*) sense—the deeper part of it. But if one remains established in self-identity and abandons that mundane right view prematurely, one cannot reach that supramundane stage; it is like throwing away the ladder before climbing it, or pushing the ladder away before one has even ascended.

Therefore, we must reflect so as to avoid falling into such dogmatic views. This is exactly what we analyzed on previous occasions regarding the Blessed One's teachings. This ten-fold right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is described as *sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā* (affected by taints, siding with merit, ripening in the assets of existence). It is affected by taints; that is true. Yet it is *puññabhāgiyā*—it leans toward the side of merit, not demerit. That is good. It is *upadhivepakkā*, which means it ripens in good states of rebirth in existence (*bhava*). To live one's life without such hardships, even for a member of the Sangha... as mentioned in the past, Venerable Losaka, due to a certain unwholesome karma, did not even receive almsfood properly until his final moments. What assists one to live without such hardship is the view that is *puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā*. It yields the results of rebirth, providing favorable states of rebirth. One who travels through existence (*bhava*) cannot reject these. However, the state that transcends this is found within the Four Noble Truths: *ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggaṅgā* (noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path). It is noble. It is taintless, without taints (*anāsava*). It is supramundane (*lokuttara*). It demonstrates the state of crossing over the world. It belongs to that path, which is called the supramundane path-consciousness. Thus, if one grasps only what belongs to the

supramundane path and, remaining established in that view, rejects the *kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi*, that is where they go wrong. Therefore, we must reflect that when we analyze the various points in this Dhamma, instead of the foolish person's state, we should analyze and understand things case by case, as indicated by the Blessed One for a wise person (*viññū-purisa*). If a devotee possesses that capability, it is highly to be praised. If someone considers faith (*saddhā*) to be a weakness, the Blessed One declares that they should reflect with wisdom, weigh things in this manner, and adopt a stance. Generating faith (*saddhā*) upon hearing the Dhamma from someone like the Blessed One is possible only for those who have some suitable preparation in this round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*). Not everyone can do it. There must have been so many who met the Blessed One. Even after the Blessed One introduced Himself, Upaka the Ajivaka merely said, "Yes, it may be so," shook his head, and went away, didn't he? It was only after being humbled in the end that he returned.

The Blessed One had to introduce Himself on several occasions, yet they did not accept Him. Well, if someone developed such faith (*saddhā*) upon hearing a discourse from the Blessed One's teaching, things are easier for them, because they established faith (*saddhā*) in the right place. Indeed, if one establishes faith (*saddhā*) in the wrong way in an unworthy person, they are ruined right there. Yet, faith (*saddhā*) is not something to be discarded. What is the reason for this? It is in accordance with faith (*saddhā*) that energy (*viriya*) arises. In accordance with energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*) is established. As mindfulness (*sati*) is consolidated, concentration (*samādhi*) arises. Assisted by concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*) comes. Therefore, if one hopes to develop the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) of energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*), one must establish faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem. Even though it was not explicitly said to the Brahmin householders of Sālā, by the end of the sermon, they recognized the Blessed One and established faith (*saddhā*). This is exactly what we have to say to you, dear devotees. This is an era where various opinions, doctrines, and heretical views are spreading.

In the name of the Dhamma, in the name of the Dispensation (*sāsana*), many fish are caught in the net of various heretical views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). However, reflecting with wisdom and in accordance with the unquestionable (*apaṇṇaka*) principle pointed out by the Blessed One, we must strive to free ourselves from being fools (*bāla*) and become truly wise (*paṇḍita*). Today, on this valuable day, this gathering of devotees, reflecting with wisdom and discarding all their self-importance, understood that virtues like moral conduct (*sīla*) are the very starting point. With the purpose of fulfilling these virtues, many have observed the eight precepts or ten precepts on this Poya day. They spent their valuable day in this manner. Therefore, if you, dear devotees, hope to cross over this round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), which is filled with the suffering (*dukkha*) of existence (*bhava*), birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), disease, and death (*maraṇa*), you must travel along the path of moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*).

Thus, if you have been able to gather certain points from this sermon, may they assist to some extent in building the spiritual faculties and powers (*indriya-bala*) of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*), which aid in one's Nibbāna, through the moral conduct observed, the meditation practiced, and the Dhamma heard today. Utilizing all of these as a strong support (*upanissaya*), and relying on the association with good friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), may you, as quickly as possible before the disappearance of the Dispensation, be freed from this terrifying suffering of the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra-dukkha*). May this Dhamma sermon also assist you in realizing the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship! Let us make this aspiration. Furthermore, may all beings in the universe, from the Avīci hell to the Akanaiṭṭha heaven, who wish to rejoice in the merit of this Dhamma teaching and Dhamma listening, by rejoicing in it, end their suffering in the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) according to their noble aspirations for the Dhamma, and realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi! Making this aspiration, let us recite the stanzas in this manner:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #95

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.179)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Na gaṇe care vimano hoti samādhi dullabho,

nānājanasaṅgaho dukkho, iti disvāna gaṇaṃ na rocaye;

Na kulāni upabbaje muni, vimano hoti samādhi dullabho,

so ussukko rasānugiddho, atthaṃ riñcati yo sukhāvaho;

Paṅko ti hi naṃ pavedayuṃ, yāyaṃ vandanapūjanā kulesu,

sukhumaṃ sallaṃ durubbahaṃ, sakkāro kāpurisena dujjaho ti.

From:

Itivuttaka (It 93)

Dear Listeners,

Today, this Vesak Poya day, is generally recognized by Buddhist devotees as the day of the threefold festival (*Te-maṅgula*). It is an occasion when three memorable events in the life of the Tathāgata Fully Enlightened Buddha—namely, his birth, Supreme Enlightenment (*Sammā-Sambodhi*), and Parinibbāna—naturally come to our minds. Of these, if we are to speak of today in particular, as we celebrate this Vesak Poya day dawning in the Buddhist Era 2555 as the 2600th Sambuddhathva Jayanthi, the Supreme Enlightenment comes to our minds in a very special way. For that very reason, today we hear much in the country about "lining up in practice" (*paṭipatti*). Indeed, in terms of lining up in practice in this Dispensation (*Sāsana*), the greatest example to the world was set by the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. Praise, eulogy, and honor of a kind that no other disciple received was bestowed upon the Great Arahant Mahākassapa by the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Blessed Buddha. To put it briefly, he was the ultimate exemplar, the very personification of the practice in the Dispensation. He is specifically mentioned in this way: on various occasions, the Buddha declared various eminent

monks as foremost (*etadagga*) in different categories. Among the monks who observed the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅgadhara*), the position of foremost was awarded to the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. Ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*), dear devotees, are thirteen rigorous practices in this Dispensation. Thus, as he was exceptional in fulfilling these thirteen, the foremost position among those who observed ascetic practices was awarded to him. It is mentioned in the scriptures that he fulfilled the perfections (*pāramī*) for a long period in the dispensations of past Buddhas to attain this position.

In the time of our Buddha, he was born as the son of the Brahmin Kapila in the Brahmin village of Mahātittha in the Magadha country, and was known by the name of Pipphalī youth (*Pipphalī Māṇavaka*). At the age of twenty, due to the compulsion of his parents, this Pipphalī youth had to marry a Brahmin maiden named Bhaddā Kāpilānī of the city of Sāgala in the Madda country. However, since both of them possessed minds in which the inclination for renunciation (*nekkhamma*) was highly matured through saṃsāric practice, they lived a celibate life (*brahmacariya*) in the lay home. After the passing of their parents, both of them unanimously and inconspicuously adopted the garb of ascetics, left the lay life, and took to the road. Upon reaching a fork in the road, Pipphalī youth reflected, "It is not proper for the two of us to travel together on this single journey," and they parted ways, taking two different roads. As this Pipphalī youth was proceeding forward, some sources mention that the Buddha, perceiving this journey through his spiritual power, went forward to meet him. In any case, Pipphalī youth got the opportunity to see the Buddha. He saw the Buddha seated at a place called Bahuputtaka Cetiya on the road leading from Rājagaha to Nālandā. Seeing him, he recognized: "This is my Teacher, the Blessed Fully Enlightened Buddha." Falling at his feet with utmost faith, he declared his discipleship: "The Blessed One is my Teacher; I am your disciple." Even there, it is specifically mentioned that the Buddha—seeing the spiritual strength in Pipphalī youth (whom we shall call Pipphalī youth for now)—declared: "If anyone were to falsely claim before such a disciple that he possesses knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*), etc., that person's crown would split, his head would split." At that point, there is also something unique. From then on, the Buddha addressed Pipphalī youth by the name 'Kassapa'. This has been a puzzle to scholars. Some think that 'Kassapa' must have been the clan name (*gottanāma*) of this Pipphalī youth.

Thus the Buddha, addressing Kassapa—as we shall call Venerable Kassapa from here on—gave three instructions, saying: "Kassapa, you should train yourself in this way." The first instruction: "You should establish a keen sense of moral shame and moral dread (*hiri-ottappa*), or rather, respect, towards all members of the Saṅgha, whether elders (*thera*) or newly ordained (*navaka*)." The second instruction: "Whatever Dhamma you listen to, you should listen with attentive ears, reflecting on its meaning associated with the wholesome (*kusala*)." The third instruction: "Mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*), which brings happiness, should never be abandoned from the mind under any circumstances and should be cultivated." These are the three instructions. The unique nature of these three instructions is explained later in those books. It is said that by means of these three instructions, the Buddha conferred higher ordination

(*upasampadā*) on Venerable Mahākassapa. This is designated as a unique higher ordination known as *ovāda-paṭiggahana* (acceptance of instruction); by the mere acceptance of these three instructions, Venerable Mahākassapa received higher ordination.

Next, as the description is brief, some parts are difficult to follow. We have to assume that the Buddha, having given those instructions, arose from his seat and departed, and Venerable Kassapa followed behind him. After walking a certain distance, the Buddha wished to sit at the foot of a tree. As he approached the foot of a tree, Venerable Kassapa folded his double-robe (*saṅghāṭī*) made of fine silk into four folds, prepared a seat, and requested the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, out of compassion for me, please sit upon this double-robe of mine." Having sat upon it, the Buddha touched it and said: "Kassapa, this double-robe of yours is very soft." Then Venerable Kassapa said: "Venerable Sir, out of compassion for me, please accept this double-robe." Then the Buddha asked: "Kassapa, are you able to wear this rag-robe (*paṃsukūla*) made of coarse hemp that I am wearing?" After he replied, "I can, Venerable Sir," the Buddha exchanged his double-robe with Venerable Kassapa's double-robe of fine silk. At the same time, according to the texts, the faith he developed through receiving and wearing an extremely rare object that had touched the Teacher's body was so great that, at that very moment, he resolved to observe all the thirteen ascetic practices (*teles-dhutaṅga*). He undertook the thirteen rigorous practices such as forest-dwelling (*āraññika*), alms-food-gathering (*piṇḍapātika*), rag-robe-wearing (*paṃsukūlika*), and three-robe-possessing (*tecīvarika*). Later on, on one occasion, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa himself revealed all these personal details to Venerable Ānanda. It is based on that account that we are stating this.

Thus, we have to assume that he either walked right behind the Buddha or stayed in some quiet place. The Great Arahant Mahākassapa later declared: "For only seven days did I eat the alms-food as a non-arahant," which means eating the alms-food as a debtor. He declared that on the eighth day, he partook of alms-food free of debt, as an Arahant who had attained the analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*). Thus, to a monk of such virtuous qualities, the Buddha on a later occasion in the presence of the Saṅgha declared that foremost position: "Foremost among my disciples who observe ascetic practices is this Mahākassapa." So, that was an introduction we made about the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. Because of his virtuous qualities, he lived in a way that praised the practice and served as an exemplar to others. It is mentioned in the texts that on one occasion, he uttered those three verses we mentioned earlier as an admonition to the monks. Now let us look at the meaning of those verses. Looking at them, there is not much of an aesthetic sweetness of sound. There is a sweetness of meaning. There is not much acoustic flavor, but there is a flavor of meaning.

Na gaṇe purakkhato care: This is an admonition given to monks. "One should not wander about surrounded by a crowd."

Vimano hoti samādhi dullabho: The mind of one who wanders surrounded by a crowd becomes distracted/deranged. Concentration (*samādhi*) becomes difficult for them to attain.

Nānājanasaṅgaho dukkho: Associating with and entertaining various people of diverse tastes is suffering (*dukkha*). Saying it is *dukkha* means it is a hindrance to one's practice.

Iti disvāna gaṇaṃ na rocaye: Seeing this fact, understanding this matter, do not delight in gathering a following. That is the first admonition. Next, he says:

Na kulāni upabbaje muni: "The sage should not frequent lay families." He should not draw close. This means association with householders is not good.

Vīmano hoti samādhi dullabho: Here too, it is said that by living in association with householders, the mind becomes distracted, and likewise, concentration deteriorates.

So ussukko rasānugiddho: Why does one go near lay families? Desiring flavorful food, etc. Therefore, by being eager for flavorful food, in the end,

Atthaṃ riñcati yo sukhāvaho: One neglects the true spiritual goal (*attha*), which brings true happiness—namely, the qualities of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), etc.

Paṅko ti hi naṃ pavedayuṃ, yāyaṃ vandanapūjanā kulesu; sukhumaṃ sallaṃ durubbahaṃ: "For that which is honor and worship among lay families has been declared as a mire, a subtle dart difficult to extract."

Sakkāro kāpurisena dujjaho: "Honor is difficult for a base person to abandon."

This is the admonition contained in those verses. What has been summarized there is the fundamental purpose of his practice in the Dispensation, as well as his advice to the Saṅgha.

From there on, we can find a large number of extraordinary discourses (*suttas*). There is a large section of the Dhamma dedicated specifically to him in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, which one can find under the name *Kassapa Saṃyutta*. From those connected discourses, it is clear how much respect and consideration the Buddha showed towards the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. He showed a level of respect that was not even shown to the chief disciples. Why? For no other reason than his dedication to the practice. Thus, there is an excellent *sutta*—in a way, we cannot say it is very popular, but it is extremely valuable—called the *Candūpama Sutta* (The Moon-Simile Discourse). With a beautiful simile, the Buddha explains it like this:

Candūpamā, bhikkhave, kulāni upasaṅkamatha, apakasseva kāyaṃ, apakasseva cittaṃ, niccanavakā kulesu appagabbhā.

We brought this up because of the excellent words in it. Addressing the monks, the Buddha declares: "Monks, approach lay families like the moon, keeping both body and mind drawn back." Next, *niccanavakā* means that the moon is always new. The moon is always new; similarly, although it appears close, it is far away and cannot be touched. *Niccanavakā* (ever-new). The simile is used in that manner. *Kulesu appagabbhā*—the Buddha declares that when visiting lay families, one should behave like the moon,

without engaging in impudent activities or words, and without behaving in a coarse manner.

Then, along with that, the Buddha gives further similes. "Just as, monks, a man might look down into an abandoned well, or into a mountain cleft (*pabbata-visama*) or a mountain precipice, or at a broken riverbank (*nadī-vidugga*)—how would he look down? Keeping his body and mind drawn back, drawn back in fear of falling in." He gives two such similes there as well. Having given these similes to show how monks should associate with householders, he then says: "Monks, Kassapa is just like that. Kassapa is an exemplar for this. Kassapa behaves in that manner."

The Buddha carries that discourse further. He asks the monks: "Monks, what kind of monk is suitable to approach lay families?" When asked thus, on many occasions the monks would answer: "We can only learn this Dhamma from the Blessed One, for we do not understand it ourselves. If the Blessed One explains it to us, we shall bear it in mind." When they expressed their lack of knowledge, what did the Buddha do? He raised his hand and waved it in the air. Like a true teacher, to draw their attention, he raised his hand and waved it in the air. Then he declared: "Monks, just as this hand does not stick to the air, does not get bound to it, and is not caught by the air, so too should one approach lay families—without the mind sticking to those lay families, without being bound to them, without being caught by them." He declared this, which perfectly fits the moon-simile mentioned earlier. In that manner, keeping the mind drawn back, one should approach lay families. "Furthermore, one should go with the thought: 'May those who wish to make merit, make merit!'—as a benefit to others. Without any envy towards others receiving gains." The Buddha declared that one should behave in this way, adding: "Kassapa approaches lay families in this manner." Having said that, the Buddha gave him such wonderful honor by saying: "If I am to give you an admonition, the one who is suitable is Kassapa, or someone like Kassapa."

On another occasion, the Buddha asked the monks: "What kind of monk's teaching of the Dhamma is impure? What kind of monk's teaching of the Dhamma is pure?" Then too, the monks said: "O Blessed One, we do not understand; please explain it to us." Thereupon, the Buddha declared: "If any monk teaches the Dhamma with the thought, 'Oh, if only they would listen to my Dhamma teaching! Having listened, if only they would gain confidence! Having gained confidence, how wonderful if they would offer me gains and honor in accordance with it!'—such a Dhamma teaching is impure." Next, he explained what is pure: "If any monk teaches the Dhamma to lay people thinking, 'This Dhamma is well-proclaimed (*svākkhāto*), visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhiko*), timeless (*akāliko*), inviting to come and see (*ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*opanayiko*), and to be personally experienced by the wise (*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*)—it possesses these six qualities. Oh, may this audience listen to this Dhamma! Having listened, may they understand it! Having understood it, may they practice accordingly!'—and if he teaches thus, reflecting on the excellence of the Dhamma (*dhamma-sudhammatā*), and out of compassion (*kāruñña*), empathy (*anuddayā*), and sympathy (*anukampā*) for that audience, then that is a pure Dhamma teaching." He added: "Monks, Kassapa teaches the Dhamma in this manner." There too was praise. There are many such *suttas*.

Next, in another *sutta*, it is stated as follows: Suddenly, the Buddha asks the monks, "What kind of monk is suitable to be *kulūpaga*?" We have to explain this word. *Kulūpaga* means one who approaches families—that is, one who visits lay homes. We have to understand that, although detailed descriptions are lacking, in the past, some monks, while on their alms-round, went right inside houses and some partook of food there. There are such faithful donors who say, "Venerable Sir, please come inside; this alms-food is ready." Or some donors are prepared to offer alms-food and distribute alms-food daily. They are always ready to serve alms-food. Such are the ones we must think of as *kula* (families). Thus, a *kulūpaga* monk is one who associates with such lay homes, or rather, a monk who frequently goes to lay homes for alms-food.

Then, regarding the monk with improper thoughts, the Buddha declares: "If a monk goes to lay homes thinking: 'First of all, they must give to me. They cannot fail to give me alms-food. They must give a lot; they cannot give a little. They must give choice food; they cannot give coarse food. They must give quickly; they cannot delay. They must give respectfully; they must bow well and offer it respectfully, they must not offer it disrespectfully.' If a monk goes to lay homes with such thoughts, and for whatever reason does not receive alms-food that day, he gets angry. His mind becomes upset. Or if he receives only a little, he feels the same. Or if he receives coarse food, or if they offer it disrespectfully, without proper bowing and worship, then that monk becomes displeased. He falls into sorrow and displeasure because his expectations were shattered. Such a monk is unsuitable to be *kulūpaga*."

Then the Buddha declares: "What kind of monk is suitable to be *kulūpaga*, to frequently approach families? If a monk thinks: 'How can it be that one should receive from others' homes exactly as one wishes? Let whoever wishes give in a suitable manner,' and goes to lay homes without any such special expectations—to such a monk, it is all the same whether he receives or does not receive; nothing of that sort occurs in his mind." Having said this, there too the Buddha declares: "Kassapa is just like that. Kassapa approaches families in that manner." Truly, there are many such diverse *suttas*.

Furthermore, if we are to mention other instances where he received praise from the Buddha, there is another *sutta* where the Buddha declares to the monks: "Monks, as I wish, whenever I wish, I enter and dwell in the first absorption (*jhāna*). Kassapa, too, enters and dwells in the first *jhāna* in the same way. In the same way, the second *jhāna*, the third *jhana*, the fourth *jhāna*. The other formless absorptions, then the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), then the knowledge of recollecting past lives (*pubbenivāsanussati-ñāṇa*), the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), the divine ear (*dibba-sota*)—he mentions all of these. I too enjoy them, and Kassapa too..." Look at how wonderfully the Buddha placed the Great Arahant Kassapa on an equal footing with himself.

Next, there are many other *suttas* revealing the Buddha's care that you, dear devotees, must have heard; for instance, in the Book of Parittas, there is the *Mahākassapa Sutta*. When the Great Arahant Mahākassapa was observing such rigorous practices, it was not that he never fell ill. On one occasion, he was extremely sick. He was residing in the place

often mentioned by its ancient name, the Pipphalī Cave. He lived in the Pipphalī Cave. Thus, on one occasion, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa was dwelling there extremely afflicted, suffering, and gravely ill (*ābādhito dukkhito bāḷhagilāno*). The Buddha visited him there, asked about his well-being, and said, "Then, Kassapa, listen to this," and expounded the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*). It is mentioned that upon hearing this, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa's illness was cured.

Similarly, another occasion is mentioned—perhaps right after this—in the *suttas*: on one occasion, as soon as the Great Arahant Mahākassapa recovered from being so gravely ill, he thought of going for alms. At that time, five hundred deities prepared to offer him alms. They thought, "Let us gain merit by offering alms-food to this Venerable One who is going out after recovering from illness." For it is the deities who know the value of merit; humans often do not know it. When the deities reflect, they understand that all these luxuries they enjoy are due to merit. Thus, they scramble to perform those meritorious deeds. However, since the Great Arahant Mahākassapa possessed the divine eye, he saw this. Rejecting the alms-food that the five hundred deities were trying to offer, where did he go? To the poor street of the city, the weavers' street. He went for alms on the street where the poorest people lived. There are many such instances.

On another occasion, there is also a certain incident. It is mentioned in the Dhamma that when the Great Arahant Mahākassapa arose from the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), the alms-food offered to him brings great fruit and great benefit; offering the first meal after seven days of fasting is a major wholesome act. On that occasion, regardless of the deities, he reflected—nay, he would look to see who is the most suitable person to be blessed with this merit. In such instances, it is mentioned that he saw a very faithful female lay devotee guarding a paddy field, who was making puffed rice. Venerable Mahākassapa walked to that place. With great faith, that woman offered the puffed rice and made a wish: "May this be a supportive condition for me to attain the Dhamma that the Venerable One has attained." That is a long story. In the end, what is said is that as she was walking along the ridge of the field, she was bitten by a snake and fell dead on the spot. But where did her mind go? To a celestial mansion in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven. She was known as Lājā-devadhītā, and she had a mansion decorated with garlands of puffed rice. Then she reflected: "How did I get this merit?" She saw that it was by offering a small alms-gift to Venerable Mahākassapa. What did she do next? She came secretly at night, and towards dawn, she would sweep and clean the area around Venerable Mahākassapa's hut. For two or three days, Venerable Mahākassapa thought it must be some disciple doing this. One day, looking through the keyhole, he saw a light. It was a goddess doing this. Venerable ones like Mahākassapa, who are highly dedicated to the practice, would never allow even room for gossip, such as "a woman is coming here to sweep." So he turned her away. Even though she pleaded, "Oh, please let me perform this meritorious deed," he snapped his fingers. Snapping fingers has a certain power, like saying, "Go away!" It is said that after he snapped his fingers, she went up to the sky and wept, and the Buddha even uttered an inspired utterance (*udāna*) about this incident. At the end of that incident, the Buddha, having perceived it, uttered an inspired utterance of joy, showing how exemplary he was.

Next, let us explain step-by-step, even if not everything. Next, we hear of the time when the Great Arahant Mahākassapa had become worn out by old age. The Buddha said to the Great Arahant Mahākassapa: "Kassapa, you are worn out by old age. You are now advanced in years. That rag-robe made of coarse hemp is heavy. Therefore, begin to use robes offered by householders. Also, abandon that rigorous practice of gathering alms-food and accept the invitations of householders. Instead of living always in the forest, come and reside near me." The Buddha made this gentle request to the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. What did he say? "Venerable Sir, for a long time I have been a forest-dweller (*āraññika*), and I speak in praise of the forest-dwelling practice to others. For a long time I have been a rag-robe wearer (*paṃsukūlika*), and I speak in praise of the rag-robe practice to others. In the same way, I possess only three robes (*tecīvarika*). In this same manner, I have observed the quality of contentment, living in secluded solitude, etc." Mentioning these virtuous qualities one by one, he said: "I have not only been practicing these all this time, but I also speak in praise of these qualities to others."

Thereupon the Buddha asked: "Kassapa, seeing what benefit do you do this?" The Great Arahant Mahākassapa replied: "Venerable Sir, seeing two benefits I do this. One is for my own pleasant dwelling in this very life (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*), for happiness in this world." You, dear devotees, might wonder: what is the happiness of living in the forest? What is the happiness of going for alms? Because his true happiness is concentration (*samādhi*), and these practices are conducive to concentration. He explained it this way: "I find delight in the practices I observe as a pleasant dwelling in this very life. Furthermore, my hope, my intention, is to be an exemplar for future generations (*pacchima-janatā*)—meaning the future lineage of monks. By way of *diṭṭhānugati* (following what is seen), they will take it as an example. Thinking, 'Those disciples observed such practices for a long time,' and out of compassion for the future generations, the future lineage, I observe this practice." Then the Buddha declared: "Sadhu, Sadhu, Kassapa! You are practicing well for the welfare of the multitude, for the happiness of the multitude (*bahujana-hitāya bahujana-sukhāya*). You observe this practice for the benefit and welfare of many, including the world of devas." Having uttered words of approval, he said: "In that case, Kassapa, continue to wear those robes of coarse hemp. Continue to live on alms-food. Continue to dwell in the forest." See how the Buddha gave pride of place to the practice!

Thus, the character of the Great Arahant Mahākassapa was a truly wonderful one. Next, let us proceed step-by-step to another significant event in the life of the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. Indeed, one might think, would even the deities come near someone wearing such coarse hemp rags? But they are drawn to the fragrance of virtue. There are several beautiful incidents of this kind. Calling them beautiful means they are both miraculous and illustrative of the value of Mahākassapa's character. Next, we turn to the events in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*. You, dear devotees, have heard many of them. We have also mentioned them in our books. Seven days after the Buddha passed into Parinibbāna, amidst various offerings by deities and humans, the Malla princes prepared a funeral pyre for the physical remains of the Buddha at the place called Makuṭa-bandhana Cetiya, and placed the Blessed One's body upon the pyre. Having prepared

everything in the manner explained to Venerable Ānanda, they placed the body on it. By this time, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa was traveling from the city of Pāvā to Kusinārā along with about five hundred monks.

While traveling in this way, they sat at the foot of a tree for a short while. At that time, an Ājīvaka ascetic was coming on the road from Kusinārā to the city of Pāvā, carrying a Mandārava flower that had fallen from the sky as a rain from the deities at the site of the Parinibbāna—a rare thing indeed. Seeing him coming from afar, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa asked: "Friend, do you know anything about our Teacher?" Then this Ājīvaka replied: "Yes, friend, I know. It has been exactly seven days today since the Ascetic Gotama attained Parinibbāna. It is from there that I picked up this flower." It is said that among the followers of the Great Arahant Mahākassapa, the monks who were not yet Arahants wept, raising their clasped hands to their heads, and lamented, saying: "Too soon has the Blessed One attained Parinibbāna! Too soon has the eye of the world vanished!" Uttering such laments, they wept.

Meanwhile, there was a monk named Subhaddha, who was a *vuddha-pabbajita*—one ordained in old age. Such people are sometimes difficult to discipline. In any case, while the others were lamenting, this Subhaddha said: "Do not weep, do not lament! We are now free from that Ascetic Gotama. For so long we were harassed by him saying, 'This is allowable, this is not allowable.' Now we can do whatever we want. Whatever we like, we can do." The monk Subhaddha spoke thus, and it struck a blow to the heart of the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. Yet, he did not say anything at that moment. Instead, to comfort the other monks, he said: "Friends, such is the nature of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). They do not last forever. As the Buddha frequently declared, we must part from all that is beloved and pleasing; that is the nature of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)." In this way, he consoled them.

Now, we go back to the site of the Parinibbāna, at Makuṭa-bandhana. By that time, the physical remains had already been placed upon the pyre. Four Malla princes, full of devotion and selected for the task, tried to light the pyre. But the fire would not catch. When such issues arose, whom did they consult? There are many such incidents recorded there—they consulted Venerable Anuruddha. For he was the foremost among monks possessing the divine eye. Thus, they asked Venerable Anuruddha: "Why is this?" Venerable Anuruddha replied: "Your intention is one thing, but the intention of the deities is another." "What is the intention of the deities?" "The intention of the deities is this: the Great Arahant Mahākassapa is currently traveling with five hundred monks from Pāvā to Kusinārā. Until he arrives and pays homage to the feet of the Buddha, this pyre will not catch fire." When that was said, the next events unfolded as follows: a short while later, having arrived near the place, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa stepped forward. From that point, the incident is described like this:

Arranging his robe over one shoulder, he circumambulated the pyre three times, and having the feet of the Buddha's body revealed, he paid homage to them. Similarly, after the other five hundred monks circumambulated and paid homage to the pyre, the pyre caught fire on its own. From this we can see how great was the power of the virtue of the

Great Arahant Mahākassapa; until he arrived, the Buddha's pyre would not ignite. If we are to speak further in this manner, on many occasions, the Buddha would say to the Great Arahant Mahākassapa: "Kassapa, preach the Dhamma to this group." Then the Great Arahant Mahākassapa would reply: "Venerable Sir, I cannot teach the Dhamma to them. They are highly undisciplined." This was not said out of disrespect to the Buddha, but rather meaning: "These people are like this; there is no use in preaching to them now, so to speak." This is recorded on several occasions.

On many occasions, the Buddha would say: "If anyone is to admonish these monks, it is either I or this Kassapa." Such was the wonderful consideration the Teacher showed to the Great Arahant Kassapa. Why he did so—exchanging his robe and showing such great respect—is explained by some in the texts as having been done by looking into the future. It was done with the future of the Dispensation in mind, thinking of the refuge that would arise for the Dispensation after the Buddha's Parinibbāna. An incident related to this is mentioned in the texts.

Thus, after the Buddha attained Parinibbāna and all the funeral rites were completed, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa addressed the monks present—specifically, the Arahants, of whom there were many—and related that incident: "While I was traveling from Pāvā to Kusinārā, as I sat under a tree, an ascetic came carrying a flower." Having related the entire incident mentioned earlier, he said: "At that time, while all the other non-arahant monks were weeping, that Subhaddha, ordained in old age, said such-and-such a thing. This is not a good sign. Therefore, friends, before this Dhamma and Vinaya decline, and before the non-Dhamma and non-Vinaya shine in their stead, let us rehearse the Dhamma and Vinaya." When he proposed this, those Venerable Ones invited Venerable Mahākassapa himself, saying: "Then, Venerable Sir, select those who are required for this." He appointed—or rather, nominated—four hundred and ninety-nine Arahants.

Then, the other monks made a request: "Although Elder Ānanda is not yet an Arahant, he is not one who would go astray out of favoritism, malice, fear, or delusion (the four biases). Moreover, he has memorized all the Dhamma and Vinaya under the Buddha's guidance. Therefore, let us appoint him as well." Thus, allowing room for this, Venerable Mahākassapa did not appoint him directly by himself; for if he did, someone might think, "Why appoint a non-arahant when there are so many Arahants present?" Allowing the group itself to propose it, Venerable Mahākassapa then appointed Venerable Ānanda. We have described the subsequent events on other occasions; what was done by Venerable Ānanda is recorded in detail in the books containing the history of the Dispensation.

Thus, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa went to King Ajātasattu and requested: "During the first month, let us carry out *khaṇḍaphulla-paṭisaṅkharaṇa*—repairing the broken and dilapidated temples—and in the next month, prepare a place for us to hold the rehearsal. Construct a pavilion at the entrance of the cave near the Vebhāra mountain, for these five hundred to hold the Council." King Ajātasattu prepared all of this at the highest level. Then, on the very day before the Council was to be held—which can also be

considered a miracle, because the Buddha had previously declared, "Ānanda, you are a person of merit, you will surely become an Arahant"—Venerable Ānanda, although he had been selected, did not possess what we might call in modern terms an "Arahant certificate." Thus, he felt a sense of inadequacy, thinking: "It is not proper for me to attend the Council as a non-arahant."

It is described in the texts that he spent the entire day practicing meditation with strong determination, focusing on mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*). Then, after washing his feet, he went to his bed. It is said that as he was bending down to lie down, before his head even touched the pillow—that is, being freed from all the four postures (as you know, the four postures are sitting, standing, walking, and lying down)—at that moment of being freed from the four postures, his mind, which had some restlessness due to excessive effort, became tranquil. In a most wonderful way, his mind was freed from the taints (*āsava*), and he became an Arahant.

Thus, with him too as an Arahant, when all five hundred held the rehearsal, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa held the chief position. To put it briefly, acting as the questioner (*pucchaka*), Venerable Mahākassapa first questioned Venerable Upāli regarding the Vinaya and, having asked the questions, established the Vinaya. Next, he questioned Venerable Ānanda regarding the Dhamma, asking about various aspects and suttas of the Dhamma, and brought those points to light. Looking at it from this perspective, it is because of the Great Arahant Mahākassapa that we can understand today why the Buddha showed him such great consideration by looking into the future. It was because of him that the First Council took place. If any prosperity of the Dispensation arose from it, we must think of the Great Arahant Mahākassapa and particularly offer him our gratitude (merit) for it.

Based on the strength of his practice—we are not going to relate everything—Venerable Mahākassapa stepped forward during various issues that arose at that time. Some questions arose—I am not saying all—and he, looking into the future, decided: "Let us preserve this so that further decline does not occur, otherwise lay devotees will say to us: 'Even before the Blessed One's funeral pyre has cooled down, look at how these people are behaving as they please!'" It is mentioned that by taking decisions in various instances in that manner, they rehearsed the Dhamma and the Vinaya.

Therefore, in this regard, we must reflect on the virtuous qualities of the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. For we usually think: "These are impossible things," or, "Why undergo so much suffering?" But, dear devotees, the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*) in this Dispensation are not self-mortifying vows like those performed by the Niganṭhas (Jains); they are highly relevant to the monastic life—all of those practices we mentioned.

Nowadays, as you know, it is quite different. It is not like what is described in those verses. In one way or another, it is all about gathering a following. Thus, in contrast, what is shown in these verses is what happens to someone who gathers a following: *vimano*—the mind becomes distracted/deranged. Because one has to please those lay followings. *Nānājanasaṅgaho dukkho*—by following the tastes of this and that person, in

the end, the virtue (*sīla*), etc., of the monk are gone. There is no concentration (*samādhi*), nor anything else. On top of that, when gains and honor begin to pour in, the Buddha has given various wonderful similes for them. The Buddha described what happens to a bird caught in a Verambha wind: its wings fly in one direction, its legs in another, and its head in yet another direction. Such things happen due to being caught in that wind. These matters are clearly personified in the life of the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. It must be because he demonstrated these through his own example that the Buddha showed him such wonderful respect and consideration everywhere. He held him up, saying: "Here is the exemplar."

On one hand, he might not have been popular. But regarding that too, we have related a very wonderful story in other sermons. We have told you, dear devotees, before. On one occasion, the Buddha was walking for alms along with a large group of monks. You can imagine it was a large crowd. But keeping away from that crowd, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa was walking far behind. For he had undertaken the practice of gathering alms-food (*piṇḍapātika*) and wandering alone. Therefore, he was far behind. Meanwhile, some children—carrying boxes of oil-cakes (*kāvum*) to go and enjoy themselves in some garden—passed by. It is mentioned that instead of offering the oil-cakes to the group led by the Buddha, they paid homage with great respect to the Great Arahant Mahākassapa and offered them to him. Such a story is also recorded. One might wonder:

But those little children possess an attraction towards virtue that adults lack. They must have sensed the value of these Venerable Ones. They do not measure by clothes, nor by other things. Such stories are truly miraculous. Therefore, when reflecting on the teachings of the Dispensation, we must realize that the value of qualities like ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*) lies in their helpfulness to the Dhamma. Solitude is especially necessary. These practices, like forest-dwelling, exist not merely in name, but for the purpose of developing one's qualities of virtue (*sīla*), etc., and concentration (*samādhi*), without being entangled with householders (*asaṃsaṭṭha*). It is these that the Great Arahant Mahākassapa called "pleasant dwelling in this very life" (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*). How do people think of "pleasant dwelling in this world" nowadays? They think of comfortable, luxurious things. But in the past, what the Buddha and those Venerable Ones referred to as *diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra* was that wonderful happiness attained through concentration (*samādhi*)—a happiness that transcends the fivefold sensory pleasures. Thus, what is most conducive and suitable for that happiness is solitude, a quiet environment, dwelling in seclusion, and being unassociated (*asaṃsagga*)—the solitude of being away from crowds.

If one wishes to preserve virtuous qualities, and similarly, if one wishes to understand what the Buddha declared in the Dhamma from within—to understand it deeply from within—then one must realize that Dhamma. One must see the Dhamma. It is said, *jānaṃ passaṃ*—knowing and seeing. Knowing correctly. Furthermore, when speaking of this Dhamma, the Buddha often declared it as *sātthaṃ sabyañjanaṃ*—with meaning and with phrasing. Today, mostly only the phrasing (letter) is valued in the Dhamma. Only the letter. If it is not beautiful enough, they add tunes to it. Now, in these verses we

quoted, there is no tune. No music has been infused into them. Yet, the letter too is important. For the letter can be distorted through that music.

That is why the Buddha declares: *Dunnikkhittassa padabyañjanassa attho pi dunnayo hoti*—if the phrasing and words of a sutta discourse are placed incorrectly, their meaning also becomes difficult to understand. Let us consider a *paritta*. If songs or tunes are added to a *paritta* chanting, the words are chanted in a distorted manner so that the meaning of the words is corrupted. It is very beautiful to listen to, but what happens through that? A person who does not know the Pali language, who does not even know the grammar, attributes other meanings to them, combining words in strange ways. For that very reason, first of all, we must protect the Dhamma in order to be protected by the Dhamma. But how do we protect the Dhamma? By multiplying books through technological media? Not in that way. In this Dhamma, we must preserve both the phrasing (letter) and the meaning. We must preserve the phrasing. Then, if one does not know the meaning, how can one preserve the phrasing? One cannot preserve the phrasing without knowing the meaning. Sometimes, the meaning is not what one thinks it is. In the past, the monks, as far as possible, realized that taught Dhamma and preserved the phrasing as well. Sometimes we can see how deep the meaning of a brief verse uttered by the Buddha is when monks who are expert in clarifying the meaning, like the Great Kaccāna, explain the meaning of a small verse in a wonderful, highly profound manner. The Buddha approves of those explanations. Today, one cannot even imagine such things.

What do they do now? To understand a verse, they place dictionaries on both sides. They look up the meanings of words: "This is the meaning." From that perspective, one must know the meaning of a word. Next, merely knowing it is not enough. One must make it meaningful to one's life. To make the Dhamma meaningful, one must practice the Dhamma, one must see it. That is why the Buddha taught even those rigorous practices which are disregarded in modern times. It is for no other reason. Generally, those who enter the monastic life were previously householders. At that time, in the lay world, they sought beautiful clothes, beautiful ornaments, and such things. Therefore, to break those attachments, sometimes rigorous practices are needed. Wearing that rag-robe (*paṃsukūla*), wearing discolored robes—these are done for no other reason than to discipline one's own mind.

It is mentioned in a wonderful way how a person coming from a lay background of various fashions and styles gets accustomed to those rag-robes (*paṃsukūla*). In modern times, one cannot even imagine it. While walking on the alms-round, he sees a discarded piece of cloth. Stepping on it with his left foot, tearing it with his right foot, he picks it up, puts it in his bag, and brings it back to stitch it onto his robe. Why is this? Through this, he trains himself to remove from his mind the attraction to the fashions of the lay world, in order to discipline his mind—not to show off to the world. That is the point. The same applies to other things. To eliminate greed for food, there are corresponding ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*). Next, to increase energy, there are rigorous ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*) where one hardly sleeps at all. These are not done to tell the world; rather, if

one recognizes certain shortcomings in oneself, the Buddha has shown how to resolve them by undertaking and observing these rigorous practices. They help in attaining one's Nibbāna, and those absorptions (*jhāna*) and attainments (*samāpatti*). Therefore, simply talking about their value is not enough.

Even in his worn-out old age, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa demonstrated to the world in a wonderful way those two aspects mentioned earlier: first, his own pleasant dwelling in this very life (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*), because those practices helped him preserve the qualities of virtue (*sīla*), etc., which he had observed with a desire for concentration (*samādhi*); and second, by thinking of the future of the Dispensation. There are certain suttas that speak of the future. Seeing certain signs of that time, it is mentioned in those very suttas that in the past, monks enjoyed great respect in such-and-such a way. In later times, monks who abandon these practices and follow those fashions receive great respect: "Oh, with how much compassion for people do these monks behave! They do all the work we have in our homes, don't they? They do all the work of our children, don't they?" There, the path is lost.

That is precisely what the Great Arahant Mahākassapa meant: the mind becomes distracted (*vimano*), and concentration (*samādhi*) is lost. Pleasing householders is not done in that way. One pleases householders by setting an example for them. By setting an example for householders, inspired by those who lived in the past, there arose wonderful lay disciples like Citta the Householder, who had realized the Dhamma. So much so, they could engage in meaningful Dhamma discussions on an equal footing with the monks—not mere arguments. They saw that Dhamma within to that extent. Lay disciples like Citta the Householder, who could expound those teachings, are mentioned in a wonderful way. Thus, in the past, both the laity and the clergy preserved the Dhamma in that manner, with its meaning and its phrasing (*sātthaṃ sabyañjanaṃ*); they preserved both the phrasing and the meaning. They integrated it into their lives and made their lives meaningful. They realized their ultimate goal (*sadattha*), the noble meaning, which is the noble, deathless Nibbāna.

Today we spoke at such length because we are talking about a practice (*paṭipatti*). Everyone speaks about the practice, urging to "line up in practice." You, dear devotees, should consider what kind of lining up this is: is it a gathering of followings in that manner, carrying banners to gather crowds, or is it a lining up through practice by properly listening to the Dhamma and practicing accordingly?

In any case, we have seen a large number of people observing the precepts today. We rejoice in their turning towards the practice in that regard. We pray that this sermon may be an encouragement to proceed further on that path of practice. May these people, becoming stronger through the virtue (*sīla*) they have observed, the meditation they have practiced, and this Dhamma they have heard, not think of the future dispensation of Maitreya Buddha before the lamp of this Dispensation is extinguished. The Dhamma is still present in this Dispensation; it can still be practiced by those who are able. Therefore, making such a determination and continuing these efforts, may this Dhamma teaching be a supportive condition for successfully practicing the Dhamma and

meditation to escape from this saṃsāra, which is filled with various sufferings (*dukkha*) such as the extremely terrifying birth (*jāti*), decay/aging (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*), and to realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits starting from stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). Furthermore, if there is anyone in the universe who wishes to share in the benefits of this wholesome deed of Dhamma teaching, may they, by sharing in it, realize this noble, deathless Nibbāna through the Bodhi of their choice. With this wish, please recite this verse:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #96

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.7)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano seṭṭhā manomayā;

Manasā ce paduṭṭhena, bhāsati vā karoti vā;

Tato naṃ dukkhamanveti, cakkaṃva vahato padaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 1 (Yamaka-vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Today is the Nikini Full Moon Poya day. Today marks the completion of the first month of the rain-retreat (*vassa*) of the Maha Sangha. The three months of the rain-retreat is a special period of time for the Sangha who strive with energy to bring an end to the suffering of samsāra. Diverse Dhamma stories reveal how the Sangha during the Buddha's time, having received meditation instructions from the Buddha, meditated with firm determination and rousing energy (*uṭṭhāna-vīriya*) during those three months, attaining the noble fruit of Arahantship even before the retreat ended.

The gargantuan effort to escape the suffering of samsāra can be described as a great conflict between the wheel of kamma (*kamma-cakka*) and the wheel of Dhamma (*Dhamma-cakka*). It is by subduing the retributive power of countless terrible evil deeds committed in past samsāra, and by turning the wheel of Dhamma within one's own mind-stream with energy and firm determination, that one is able to escape the suffering of samsāra.

The background story relevant to the verse we have chosen as our theme is about a venerable monk who, by acting with such firm determination and rousing energy, activated that wheel of Dhamma and shattered the kammic force within his own mind-stream. During the time of the Buddha, there lived a certain wealthy merchant family in the city of Sāvatthī. In this family, there were two householders named Mahāpāla and

Cullapāla. After the demise of their parents, the two of them inherited the immense wealth of the merchant family.

Of these two householders, one day, the householder Mahāpāla joined a crowd going to Jetavana monastery to listen to the Dhamma, and listened to the sermon delivered by the Buddha. In the Buddha's method of teaching, there is what is called a graduated discourse (*anupubbikathā*). That is, first of all, he declares the discourse on giving (*dāna-kathā*), virtue (*sīla-kathā*), heaven (*sagga-kathā*), the drawbacks, lowliness, and impurity of sensual pleasures (*kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ okāraṃ saṅkilesaṃ*), and the advantages of renunciation (*nekkhamme āniśaṃsaṃ*). In this manner, he first proclaims the benefits of giving as a good practice. Next, the side of virtue and its advantages—how virtue must be fulfilled. Next, as its benefit, how one can be reborn in heaven and enjoy heavenly pleasures.

However, he does not end there. Next, he points out that even in heaven and the human world, the sensual pleasures of the five chords of senses (*pañca-kāma*) are extremely low and defective, *okāraṃ saṅkilesaṃ*. He teaches that they have many drawbacks, defects, and shortcomings; they are very low and have the nature of generating defilements. Having thus created a sense of disenchantment towards sensual pleasures, he then proclaims the advantages of renunciation (*nekkhamma-āniśaṃsa*)—the value of leaving the household life, ordaining, and practicing the Dhamma of a monk—before presenting the deep discourse on the Four Noble Truths.

When the discourse reached this point of renunciation, explaining the benefits of leaving the household life, the householder Mahāpāla reflected: "When going to the next world, I cannot take these children or wealth with me. Let alone anything else, I cannot even take this body with me. What is the use of these household riches to me? I must ordain." Having made this determination, at the end of the Dhamma sermon, he approached the Buddha and requested permission to ordain. The Buddha asked, "Do you have any relative to whom you should inform this matter?" "Yes, I have my younger brother," he replied. "Then, go and inform him."

This householder Mahāpāla went home, spoke to his younger brother, and said, "Brother, from today, all this wealth is handed over to you. Use them as you wish." Then the brother asked, "But brother, what about you?" He replied, "My intention is to ordain." "Oh, what are you saying? After our mother passed away, you were like a mother to me. After our father passed away, you were like a father to me. Please do not go to ordain. We have plenty of wealth; we can perform meritorious deeds while remaining in the household life," the younger brother pleaded, opposing the idea.

Once again, Mahāpāla said, "I have heard the teaching of the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) from the Buddha, which is beautiful in the beginning, middle, and end. To fully perfect it, the thought came to me that I must ordain. Therefore, I will ordain." Again, the brother said, "Oh, you are still young. You can do those things after you grow old." Then the householder Mahāpāla replied, "When one is old, one's limbs are no longer functional. How can one then fulfill the duties of a monk? Therefore, I will

certainly ordain." While his brother was weeping and wailing, he received ordination and higher ordination (*upasampadā*) in the presence of the Buddha.

Having received ordination and higher ordination, according to the monastic customs, he spent five years under his teachers and preceptors (*ācariya-upajjhāya*), learning the things pertaining to the life of a monk. Having spent five years in this manner, and as the next rain-retreat approached, he approached the Buddha and obtained permission to spend the rain-retreat in a remote forest hermitage, practicing meditation. Having obtained permission and received instructions for meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) up to Arahantship from the Buddha, he set off with a group of sixty other monks, passing through villages and market towns, searching for a suitable place many leagues away.

When this group of monks arrived at a certain remote village, the faithful laypeople of that village, having come to know the intention of the monks, built and prepared a monastery and invited them to reside there. The monks agreed and resided there, taking up their lodgings. The next day, while they were walking for alms, a physician of that very village said to the Venerable Mahāpāla, "Venerable Sir, in places where many people reside, illnesses are frequent. Should such an occasion arise, please tell me. Please let me know," thus placing himself at their service.

Then came the day of entering the rain-retreat, the start of the *vassa* period. On that day, Venerable Mahāpāla gathered the other sixty monks, and during the discussion at the start of the retreat, he asked, "Venerable sirs, in how many postures do you intend to spend these three months of the rain-retreat?" There are four postures: standing, sitting, walking, and reclining. "Out of these four postures, in how many postures do you intend to spend these three months of the *vassa*?" The monks replied, "We expect to spend these three months of the rain-retreat in all four postures."

Then Venerable Mahāpāla declared, "We have received our instructions directly from the living Buddha. Friends, do not be negligent. For the negligent person, the four woeful states are like one's own home." Next, the monks asked, "Venerable Sir, in how many postures do you intend to spend these three months of the *vassa*?" The Venerable monk declared, "As for me, I intend to spend the three months of the rain-retreat in only three postures: standing, sitting, and walking. I have no intention of stretching my back on a bed or reclining during these three months." Then the other monks said, "Sādhu, sādhu, very well, Venerable Sir, please act diligently."

This Venerable Mahāpāla meditated intensely day and night, without sleep. When one month of the rain-retreat had passed, around the time of a Poya day like this, the Venerable monk contracted a severe eye disease. One night, tears began to stream from his eyes like water flowing from a leaking pot. The next morning, when it was time to go for alms, the other monks came and said, "Venerable Sir, it is time for alms-round." Then he said, "In that case, take my bowl and robe."

As he was preparing to go to the village with the monks, they saw the tears streaming from his eyes. Seeing this, they asked, "What is it, Venerable Sir?" and he replied, "I have contracted a wind-ailment (*vātābādha*)." Then they said, "In that case, Venerable Sir, a

physician has put himself at our service. Shall we inform the physician?" He agreed, saying, "Very well."

When the monks informed the physician of the matter, the physician prepared a certain medicine to be administered through the nose (*nasya*). Normally, nasal medicine must be administered while lying down. However, when Venerable Mahāpāla received the medicine, he administered it while sitting up, as he did not wish to break his determination.

The next day, when he went to the village for alms, the physician met him and asked, "Venerable Sir, we heard that you are unwell. We prepared and sent some medicine; did you receive it?" "Yes, I received it." "Did you use it?" "Yes, I used it." "How is the illness now?" "It still hurts, doctor," he replied.

The physician thought, "According to the nature of the medicine I sent, it should have been cured instantly. What is the reason for this?" and asked, "Venerable Sir, did you administer this nasal medicine sitting up or lying down?" The Venerable monk remained silent. The physician asked again and again, but received no answer. The physician then said, "Very well, Venerable Sir," and decided to go and see for himself. He went to the monastery, walked around the hut, and looked. He saw the place where the Venerable monk practiced walking meditation, and he saw the place where he sat, but there was no bed. There was no place to recline.

The physician understood the situation, and when the Venerable monk returned, he said, "Venerable Sir, do not practice in this manner. It is only as long as this body is in good health that one can fulfill the duties of a monk. Therefore, please administer this medicine only while lying down," pleading with him repeatedly. Then, finding no way to escape the physician's pleading, the Venerable monk said, "Very well, lay devotee, you may go. We shall discuss and see about it." After the physician left, the Venerable monk held a discussion. With whom did he discuss? With himself. With his own body.

"What do you say, Pālita? Are you looking after your two eyes, or are you looking after the Dispensation of the Buddha? In this samsāra, you must have been born blind countless times. Similarly, you have met hundreds of thousands of Buddhas. Yet, you have not associated with even one Buddha properly, nor have you derived any benefit from a Buddha; you have not done the real work. That is why you have remained in samsāra for so long. You have made a firm determination that you will meditate without sleeping during these three months of the rain-retreat, and that you will not stretch your back on a bed. Therefore, if the two eyes are destroyed, let them be destroyed; if they shatter, let them shatter. Direct your mind only toward the Dispensation of the Buddha. Think only about that!"

Having firmly resolved in this manner, he administered the nasal medicine while sitting up on that day too, and continued his meditation intensely. The next day, when walking for alms, he met the physician again, who asked, "Venerable Sir, how did you use the medicine?" "Yes, I used it." "How is it now?" "It still hurts, doctor." The physician asked

again, "Venerable Sir, did you use this medicine sitting up or lying down?" Again, the Venerable monk remained silent.

Then the physician, somewhat displeased, said, "Venerable Sir, in that case, since you do not live in a way that is compatible with this medicine, from today, please do not tell anyone that I prepared and sent this medicinal oil. And I too will not tell anyone that I treated you." Thus, he rejected him; he refused to treat him. Having said this, the physician left. The Venerable monk returned to his hut and admonished himself again: "Now, Pālita, even the physician has rejected you. Now you must prepare for death. There is no more time to be negligent!" Having made a firm determination, he stepped down to the walking path and began to meditate.

On that night, as the middle watch of the night was passing, at the very same moment, at the very same time, both his eyes and his defilements shattered. That is to say, simultaneously with the loss of his sight, his mind was established in the noble fruit of Arahantship, liberated from all defilements. Then, the Venerable monk, realizing the change that had occurred within him, came off the walking path, entered his hut, and sat on the bed.

The next morning, when it was time to go for alms, the other monks came and informed him, "Venerable Sir, it is time for alms-round." "Ah, is that so? If so, you venerable sirs may go for alms," he said. "And what about you, Venerable Sir?" "My two eyes are lost," he replied. He did not speak of the other thing he had attained.

Then the monks were filled with great sorrow and said, "Venerable Sir, we shall perform all the duties and attend to you. We shall look after you," and they went to the village for alms. The faithful lay devotees in the village, noticing that the elder monk had not arrived that day, asked, "Where is the chief Venerable monk today?" The monks explained the matter.

Hearing this, the faithful laypeople were deeply moved. They quickly brought the alms-food, fell prostrate at the feet of the Venerable monk, weeping and wailing, and said, "Venerable Sir, we shall perform all services and look after you." Having made arrangements, they departed.

During the remaining period of the three months of the rain-retreat, this Venerable monk constantly purified the meditation instructions (*kammaṭṭhāna*) and gave advice and admonitions to the other sixty monks, urging them to act diligently. Established in those admonitions, all sixty monks attained the noble fruit of Arahantship even before the end of the rain-retreat.

At the end of the retreat, these monks thought, "Now we must go to see the Buddha." They came to the chief monk and asked for permission. Their intention was to take the chief monk along with them, but Venerable Mahāpāla, thinking that it would be a trouble to the others, did not go with them. He arranged for the other monks to go to Jetavana first, and for himself to go later.

After Venerable Mahāpāla arrived at Jetavana, he began to reside in a separate hut. Because the story about Venerable Mahāpāla's eyes became famous, he was given a nickname: Venerable Cakkhupāla. It was due to this circumstance that he became famous as Venerable Cakkhupāla.

Then, one day, some monks from that region came to see the Buddha, and thinking of visiting Venerable Cakkhupāla as well, they set out to go to his quarters in the evening. Just then, a heavy rain fell. Therefore, the monks thought, "We shall go and see him in the morning. Now it is raining, and it is too late in the evening," and they turned back.

That night, during the middle watch, a very heavy rain fell and then cleared up. Next, in the early dawn, Venerable Cakkhupāla began to meditate, practicing walking meditation. After the rain, as you virtuous friends know, a type of insect called winged termites (*meru*) usually emerges from the earth with wings. Insects like winged termites came out on the walking path and were spread all over it. Since Venerable Cakkhupāla was blind, he did not see this. As he practiced walking meditation, those insects were killed.

The next morning, while those monks were coming to visit Venerable Cakkhupāla's hut, they looked at the walking path and saw the dead insects. They asked the other monks who were there, "Who is it that has practiced walking meditation here?" The monks replied, "This is our preceptor."

"Look at the deed of this monk! Doing nothing when his eyes were functional, sleeping well, and now, claiming to do walking meditation, he has put to death such a large number of insects!" Making a huge outcry and criticism, they went to the Buddha and reported the matter.

The Buddha asked those monks, "Monks, did you see this monk killing the insects?" The monks replied, "No, Venerable Sir, we did not see it." "Just as you did not see it, so too that monk did not kill them intentionally. In an Arahant, even the volition (*cetanā*) to kill living beings does not arise." When this matter was declared, the monks inquired, "Venerable Sir, if Venerable Cakkhupāla had the fortune and merit to become an Arahant, why did he become blind?"

Then the Buddha declared, "That too is due to a certain evil deed committed in the past." When the monks asked about that story, the Buddha related it.

In the past, in the city of Benares (*Bārāṇasī*), there was a certain physician, a traveling doctor, who used to go from village to village treating people. He practiced this profession. One day, while traveling, he met a woman with an eye ailment and asked, "What is the matter?" She replied, "I can barely see with my eyes." He asked, "Shall I treat you?" "Yes, very well," she said.

Then the physician asked, "In that case, what fee will you give me?" The woman said, "I, along with my children, will become your slaves." "Very well," said the physician, and he prepared and gave her a certain medicine. By using that medicine just once, the woman's eye ailment was completely cured.

However, she thought, "If I tell the truth that I am cured, I will have to fulfill my promise. Therefore, I must deceive the physician." When the physician came again and asked, "How is your eye ailment?" she replied, "Oh, previously I could see at least a little, but now I cannot see at least a little, but now I cannot see at all. Now it is extremely painful."

The physician understood her motive: "This woman is trying to deceive me. I will teach her a good lesson." (Even nowadays people say such things, "I will teach a good lesson".) Thinking "I will teach her a good lesson," he went home, told his wife, and prepared another medicine. It was a medicine that would cause blindness.

He brought it and told the woman, "Use this again," and made her apply it right there. As soon as she finished applying it, just like a lamp-flame going out, both her eyes went blind.

In this manner, having declared the past kamma, the Buddha said, "Monks, my son Cakkhupāla has been pursued by that evil deed committed in the past up to this very day." He explained that the evil deed committed by someone follows him just as the wheel follows the hoof of the ox bound to the cart, and then the Buddha proclaimed the Dhamma verse we chose as our theme today:

Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano seṭṭhā manomayā;

Manasā ce paduṭṭhena, bhāsati vā karoti vā;

Tato naṃ dukkhamanveti, cakkaṃva vahato padaṃ.

"Mind precedes all phenomena, mind is their chief, they are mind-made." This mind precedes all mental states (*cetasika*) and thoughts that arise in the mind. To whatever extent thoughts arise in the mind—feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), etc., which are called preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—the mind precedes every single phenomenon that arises in the mind.

Likewise, "mind is their chief" (*mano seṭṭhā*)—the mind is supreme to them. "Mind-made" (*manomayā*)—they are processed and fashioned by the mind itself. Because of this fact, this law of nature, "if with a corrupt mind one speaks or acts" (*manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karoti vā*)—if one speaks or acts with a corrupt mind, a defiled mind, "suffering follows him, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the ox" (*tato naṃ dukkhamanveti cakkaṃva vahato padaṃ*)—because of that, suffering follows that person. Suffering pursues him closely, just as the wheel of the cart follows the hoof of the ox drawing the cart. The Buddha proclaimed this verse which is placed at the very beginning of the Dhammapada.

This verse is an extremely helpful and valuable verse for shaping one's life and philosophy of life. That is why, although there are countless verses, it is placed at the very beginning of the Dhammapada. Let us contemplate further on this verse.

The arising of a thought is something directly experienced by you virtuous friends. A thought arises regarding some object. That arising thought can sometimes be an unwholesome thought, or a wholesome thought. Here, it speaks about the unwholesome side. Unwholesome means it can be a thought of greed (*lobha*), a thought of hatred (*dosa*), or a thought of delusion (*moha*). In this manner, a thought arises.

Let us say, upon seeing something in one's house or in some place, greed arises immediately. Along with that thought, the feelings (*vedanā*) or sensations experienced regarding it, the perceptions (*saññā*) as recognition of it, and the actions to be taken regarding it—all these arise in accordance with that very greed. In that manner, when a thought of greed, hatred, or delusion arises, because other phenomena arise in accordance with it, if a person speaks or acts with a corrupt mind, the things done with such a corrupt, defiled mind are what are mentioned even in the virtue with livelihood as the eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*): lying, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous talk, which occur due to greed, hatred, and delusion.

If one uses words in that manner, or, as deeds done by the body, actions such as killing living beings, stealing, and sexual misconduct; and furthermore, there are things thought by the mind without controlling it—unwholesome states generated by the mind itself as mental kamma (*manokamma*). Bodily kamma, verbal kamma, mental kamma. These are covetousness (*abhijjhā*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), and wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). In accordance with covetousness, seeing another's prosperity, one thinks, "Oh, if only I could get this!" Or, generating hatred toward someone, one has angry thoughts instead of thoughts of loving-kindness. Or, holding wrong views, one thinks various thoughts according to a wrong understanding.

In this way, a person can commit all ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala-kamma*) due to this corrupt mind. Because of the things thus accumulated, the results of those unwholesome actions will later cause that person to experience severe physical and mental suffering (*dukkha*) in this long samsāra—in the four woeful states: in hell, the animal realm, the peta world, and the asura world—or even in the human world itself. Just as an ox bound to a cart has its neck squeezed when pulling the cart, and its leg is struck by the wheel when it moves backward, so too these evil deeds are a massive, heavy burden for a person. That law of nature must be understood—the supremacy of the mind in all this, and the law of nature between the action and its result.

We must think about the lesson to be drawn from this narrative. There is a lesson to be drawn from such a story. The verse too is exemplary for leading our lives. When we think about this narrative, the conflict between the wheel of kamma and the wheel of Dhamma, which we mentioned earlier, is evident here.

Venerable Cakkhupāla's determination to meditate intensely and severely during those three months of the rain-retreat succeeded; he became an Arahant. Yet, at the same time, an evil deed that pursued him from behind was activated. From this, we see the terrible connection between kamma and its result. Kamma and its result go together inevitably, in an unavoidable manner.

To say nothing of others, even for a Buddha, this law of nature—how powerful the wheel of kamma is—is such that even after attaining Arahantship, one has to experience its results. However, there is one consolation: after attaining Arahantship, there is no further birth (*jāti*). There is no force left in the performed kammas to bring about a new birth. The seed-potential of kamma is destroyed. That is what attaining Arahantship means.

Yet, even Arahants have to experience certain retributive results in this very life. It is mentioned that even the Arahant Angulimāla had to experience the results of kamma (*kamma-vipāka*) after becoming an Arahant. The same is said of the Chief Disciple Arahant Maha Moggallāna. Those Arahants too had to experience the results of kamma. From this, we can imagine how powerful the wheel of kamma is. Yet, at the same time, the important thing we see is the path of liberation from this. By ending birth, which means bringing it to a close there, the power of kamma to yield results is deactivated. This is what is called Nibbāna.

It is only during the period of a Buddha's appearance in the world that we are able to do this—to travel on this path to Nibbāna in accordance with such a philosophy of life, to attain that peace of Nibbāna, and to escape from this wheel of kamma. Therefore, we must contemplate deeply on this Dhamma verse.

When we look at this present era, almost everywhere in the world, human beings give priority to material things. The materialist perspective is what stands out in the world today. Due to giving prominence to things seen by the eye and heard by the ear, the mind, which is the precursor to everything, has been forgotten. The Buddha has highlighted this fact: *Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā mano seṭṭhā manomayā*. We must constantly recollect these extremely valuable words.

No matter how many external things there are in the world, you virtuous friends know that whatever bad things happen in the world, the mind is at the root of them all. It is through the mind that one is told, "Do this and that." Likewise, the mind is at the root of good things too.

Because of this, the most valuable lesson we can draw from this verse and this story is to keep a close watch over our own mind. If we do not guard this mind, if we do not protect the mind, and consequently commit unwholesome actions with a corrupt mind, or by using bad words, doing bad things, committing evil deeds—sometimes the retributive result of an evil deed committed in a single fraction of a second, in a single moment, has to be paid for in hell for aeons (*kalpas*). Evil deeds that cause suffering for aeons can sometimes occur in a single moment. The Buddha has declared that the mind is supreme in all of this:

Cittena nīyati loko, cittena parikassati;

Cittassa ekadhammassa, sabbeva vasamanvagū.

The Buddha declared: "The world is led by the mind; by the mind it is drawn away. Under the sway of this one state, the mind, all have come." Here, "the world" refers to the beings of the world. It is by the mind itself that the beings of the world are led to various states. *Cittena nīyati loko*—the mind alone leads them. "Come, let's go to heaven; come, let's go to hell; come, let's go to the animal realm"—in this manner, the mind alone speaks. We do not know it, but this is what lies in those wholesome and unwholesome actions we perform. It is the mind itself that takes us, that leads us.

Next, *cittena parikassati*—the mind drags us hither and thither. Constantly, when going to the city, people go searching for various things according to their minds; therefore, the mind is supreme in every single thing. *Cittassa ekadhammassa sabbeva vasamanvagū*—the entire world is subject to this single thing called the mind. Only the Buddha has made such a fearless declaration regarding the mind.

The ordinary world is deluded by things seen by the eye and heard by the ear. Giving prominence to these, they make their long journey in samsāra terrible, experiencing their retributive results. The Buddha also declared: *Cittasaṅkilesā, bhikkhave, sattā saṅkil ब्ढ़ती santi; cittavodānā sattā visujjhanti.* "Monks, by the defilement of the mind, beings are defiled; by the purification of the mind, beings are purified."

No matter how well one bathes in scented water, applies perfumes and powders, and remains clean, if that man's or woman's mind is defiled—defiled with greed, lust, hatred, and delusion—at that moment, all that external cleanliness is gone. It is in such a state. The Buddha declared that it is through the defilement of the mind that everyone becomes defiled. Thus, the necessity of guarding the mind is evident to us.

The mind acts with extreme rapidity. The Buddha declared that nothing in the world revolves as fast as this mind. It is called *lahuparivattaṃ* (swift to change). Nothing is seen in the world that acts as fast as this mind; it is extremely swift. Therefore, to control a mind that acts so rapidly, a certain systematic program is necessary. That is what is called meditation (*bhāvanā*). Meditation means development—the development of the mind.

The world is extremely enthusiastic about the development of the body, because it is something visible externally. But the development of the mind, this invisible mind—its development is what the Buddha has shown as meditation. If this is not properly controlled, one cannot say whether one will get caught in the terrible evil deeds of samsāra and have to experience their results.

To escape from these evil deeds, some people climb high into the sky, some go to the middle of the sea, and others go into the clefts of mountains. The Buddha declared that one cannot escape by any of these means:

Na antalikkhe na samuddamajjhe,

Na pabbatānaṃ vivaraṃ pavissa;

Na vijjati so jagatippadeso,

Yatthaṭṭhito muñceyya pāpakammā.

In a verse in the Dhammapada itself, it is stated: "Not in the sky, nor in the midst of the sea, nor by entering a cleft in the mountains; there is no place found on earth where staying, one may escape from the consequences of an evil deed." If the consequences of these evil deeds are so terrible, then a special effort must be made to guard this mind.

When we consider the effort to guard this mind, the first thing to be understood is this division of wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala* and *akusala*). Here, the talk is about the unwholesome side. The ordinary world mostly remains on the unwholesome side. The Buddha has shown what the roots of these unwholesome states are: greed, hatred, and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*).

Next, the wholesome roots are shown as the effort exerted to remove these unwholesome roots. If one generates a thought through the effort to eliminate greed, that is non-greed (*alobha*). Next, the opposite of hatred is non-hatred (*adosa*). The thought opposite to delusion is non-delusion (*amoha*). Contemplating in this manner, selecting and distinguishing between these wholesome roots and unwholesome roots is extremely necessary for a person. Every time a thought arises, one must immediately investigate and see what it is.

There is also someone who takes charge of watching over this mind. That person resides within this very mind. The Buddha has introduced that as mindfulness (*sati*). *Sati* means memory or attentiveness. The Buddha has shown *sati ārakkhāsārathī*—mindfulness is the guardian and the charioteer. When driving a chariot, it is the driver who controls and protects it there. The importance given to the word *sati* is evident from this: *sati ārakkhāsārathī*—mindfulness is the guardian soldier.

This mindfulness, this guardian soldier, also has an operation. The operation here is attention (*manasikāra*)—reflection or pondering. Therefore, what is expected here is reflecting with mindfulness. Along with this mindfulness, another factor is employed. That is called clear comprehension (*sampajañña*)—wisdom, thorough wisdom. Mindfulness and clear comprehension go together. The two words *sati-sampajañña* are often used together. The reason for this is that mindfulness brings the matter to the forefront, and clear comprehension, with thorough wisdom, understands that matter and gains a correct comprehension of it.

Now, let us say a thought has arisen regarding something. Turning back immediately, one directs one's reflection to see: "What is this thought? Is it a thought of greed? Is it a thought of hatred? Is it a thought of delusion?" and remains watchful over it. In that manner, employing mindfulness, and through the operation called attention (*manasikāra*) in accordance with mindfulness, one must quickly recognize that thought. If it is an unwholesome thought, it must be nipped in the bud. If instead of nipping it in the bud, one gives way to that thought, then consequently bad words will be uttered and

one gets bound to evil deeds; or wrong actions are committed, the body acts accordingly, and one gets bound to evil deeds.

Therefore, the Buddha has pointed out that one must be diligent in this reflection: *sati-sampajañña*. The grand plan for this is what the Buddha has shown as the four establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)—establishing mindfulness on this body, on feelings (*vedanā*), on the mind, and on the mental phenomena that arise in the mind, and living mindfully regarding them. This is what *satipaṭṭhāna* means. It is through this that, in terms of insight (*vipassanā*), one can bring to light even the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*): impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). With the thorough wisdom employed alongside mindfulness, the true nature of things is revealed. Mindfulness is applied, and at the same time, clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) explains its meaning there. This is what *sati-sampajañña* is.

Thus, by means of this *sati-sampajañña*, during the period of a Buddha's appearance in the world, a person is able to ultimately break the wheel of kamma. Breaking the wheel of kamma, as mentioned before, means drying up the retributive power of kammas. Kamma possesses a power to create various existences (*bhava*) and yield results. That retributive power is dried up by wisdom.

You virtuous friends have heard: *avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*—due to ignorance, preparations (*saṅkhāra*) accumulate. Therefore, if it is due to not knowing that preparations—these kammas—accumulate, when wisdom is added, their kammic power is diminished. That is why, through the path to Nibbāna shown by the Buddha, one is ultimately able to dry up the seeds of kamma and attain liberation from samsāra. Why do we undergo suffering, being born again and again for such an extremely long time? It is to pay off these kammas. The severity of kamma is evident from this.

It is by these kammas alone that these physical cages are fashioned. Although we say "I" and "mine", this is something received as a result of kamma itself. The Buddha has shown this as "heirs to kamma" (*kamma-dāyāda*), etc. The mind is supreme in all this. Guarding this mind is the function that the Buddha has shown as meditation.

The deepest idea regarding this is the path to Nibbāna shown by the Buddha, which is the middle path called insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*). Insight meditation is the realization of the true nature of the world as impermanent (*anicca*) and non-self (*anattā*). It is for this that correct mindfulness and thorough wisdom are helpful. Through this reflection, one can realize the true nature of everything. It is not that a Buddha shows it, but as *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi* (to be personally realized by the wise), the Buddha has declared that the wise can realize this Dhamma, this law of nature, by themselves.

The path that helps in this is the Noble Eightfold Path. There too, *Sammā-diṭṭhi, Sammā-saṅkappa, Sammā-vācā, Sammā-kammanta, Sammā-ājīva, Sammā-vāyāma*, and *Sammā-sati* represent the bringing of this life onto the correct path according to a plan. It is steering it from the wrong path onto the right path. *Sammā-diṭṭhi* means right

view. Within right view is the understanding of good and bad, the understanding of wholesome and unwholesome, as well as the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths: suffering (*dukkha*), the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering which is Nibbāna, and the path thereto, the Noble Eightfold Path. The understanding of the Four Noble Truths is contained within this *Sammā-diṭṭhi*.

The vision of life gained through this *Sammā-diṭṭhi* makes a very powerful change in a person's life. Because this mind operates with extreme rapidity. The stream of the mind is extremely swift. If one is unable to control it, it is just like taking the steering wheel of a vehicle without a proper understanding of its control panel. One does not know where it will end. Therefore, right view is extremely necessary.

Even if one does not have an understanding of those deep and vast teachings at one's own level, it is like having an understanding of good and bad, an understanding of black and white. The Buddha has shown "the dark and the bright states are contrastive" (*kaṇha-sukka appaṭibhāgaṃ*), as mentioned in the Dhamma. He points out black and white to the world. At the very least, a person must know: "This is black, this is white."

In the same way, the Buddha has pointed out what is unwholesome and what is wholesome. Greed, hatred, and delusion are unwholesome. Non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion are wholesome. If a person understands at least this much, they can shape their philosophy of life to a great extent accordingly.

A greater depth comes with gaining some degree of understanding of the Four Noble Truths, which correctly display the nature of this samsāra and the nature of life. This entire samsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*). From this very incident, it is clear that even after becoming an Arahant, Venerable Cakkhupāla had to experience such retributive results. Similarly, other Arahants and even the Buddha had to experience the results of kamma. So terrible is kamma and its retributive aspect. Having understood that matter, what must be done is to escape from this samsāra.

The Buddha reminds us: "Why remain in such a risky place?" He urges us to act diligently and escape from this samsāra. Indeed, Nibbāna means the ending of this suffering, the escape from samsāra. A person must have a great sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding this, in order to cultivate a good philosophy of life.

Therefore, one must develop a deep understanding of suffering to some extent. Next, at the root of this suffering lies craving (*taṇhā*). It is because of craving that the world acts, speaks, and thinks in this manner. That fact must be understood. This craving is like an endless thirst. What must be done is to completely quench this thirst. Normally, quenching a physical thirst is completed by drinking water. But quenching the thirst of craving is not an easy thing. No matter how many things are given to it—it is only the fuel (*upādāna*) given to this greed, hatred, and delusion that has changed between the Buddha's time and this time.

More than two thousand years ago, what existed was greed, hatred, and delusion. Today, too, the very same things exist. Some might say that this Dhamma is something obsolete.

The Buddha has declared: *Satañca dhammo na jaraṃ upeti*—the Dhamma of the virtuous, of the Buddhas and other noble ones, never undergoes decay or becomes obsolete. The only difference is in the fuel given to greed. They have changed. Instead of the fuel given for greed in the past, in this era, different fuel is given. Similarly for hatred: instead of the weapons used in the past, in this era, different weapons are used. For delusion, it is the same. Even so, it is these three that exist in the world forever.

Thinking in this manner about the thirst of craving, the calming of this craving itself is Nibbāna, the escape from this samsāra. Indeed, that itself is that peace. Next, one must also develop some understanding of the Noble Eightfold Path which helps in this.

In that manner, if right view (*Sammā-diṭṭhi*) is established, right thoughts (*Sammā-saṅkappa*) arise in that person. If right thoughts are developed, right speech (*Sammā-vācā*) comes out of that person. The person who uses right speech then directs himself toward right action (*Sammā-kammanta*)—the correct path of action. By perfecting those paths of action, that person becomes a person with right livelihood (*Sammā-ājīva*), a correct way of living.

Within the person who leads such a good and correct livelihood, there is a great effort and energy called right effort (*Sammā-vāyāma*). Through that effort, right mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*) arises in him in the correct manner. Through the power of establishing that mindfulness for a long time, he develops right concentration (*Sammā-samādhi*), a correct one-pointedness of mind. It is through this that one is able to personally realize this Dhamma of Nibbāna.

It is to a concentrated mind that the three characteristics of the world—impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*)—can be understood. In the Dhamma, we call this the arising of the eye of Dhamma (*Dhamma-cakkhu*). This Venerable monk did not sacrifice his eyes for some trivial thing. Having sacrificed his eyes, he became blind. Simultaneously with becoming blind, what arose was that eye of Dhamma. It was for this eye of Dhamma that he made this sacrifice.

Indeed, it is not the physical eye in the world that is important, but the eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*). The eye of wisdom, which is the *Dhamma-paññā-cakkhu*, is the realization of Nibbāna. By means of that eye of wisdom, to say nothing of others, even a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*)—a person who has seen Nibbāna through the first path-knowledge—attains immense relief.

That is why the Buddha, taking a tiny bit of soil on his fingernail, declared regarding the portion of samsāric suffering that the stream-enterer has brought to an end: "The suffering remaining for him is like this tiny bit of soil on the fingernail. The suffering he has ended and extinguished is like the soil of the great earth." In this manner, the stream-enterer is freed from the four woeful states. Due to stream-entry, because of the change that occurred in his mind, he will never again go to a woeful state. The power of actions leading to the woeful states is broken. One must contemplate how much relief is obtained from that first path-knowledge alone.

Next, it is when one becomes an Arahant that the greatest relief is obtained. Even the stream-enterer is born up to seven times. The Arahant is not born again in this existence (*bhava*). Samsāra is ended. That indeed is the supreme liberation. It is through that state that one is forever liberated from that terrible wheel of kamma.

To attain such a noble state, something the Buddha constantly declared, as if it were the first letter of the alphabet, is diligence (*appamāda*)—the factor of diligence. The Buddha declares that this period of a Buddha's appearance is extremely rare. It is recorded that daily, as the advice of the Sugata (Buddha), he admonished the monks: *Dullabho Buddhuppādo lokasmiṃ*—the appearance of a Buddha in the world is extremely rare. There are some aeons (*kalpas*) that are void of Buddhas (*suñña-kappa*), times when there is no Buddha. One can imagine how dark those times are.

Just as when a great city, shining brightly with electric lamps, suddenly falls into pitch darkness, and what a miserable feeling arises in a person—in the same way, one must imagine the difference between the period of a Buddha's appearance and the period of a Buddha's non-appearance.

Thus, the birth of a Buddha is extremely rare. Equally rare is human birth (*manussatta*). Indeed, one can say that a human birth obtained during the period of a Buddha's appearance is even rarer. Because during that period of a Buddha's appearance, if one is elsewhere, that opportunity is lost.

Next, having obtained a human birth, and then having the intellectual capacity to understand the Dhamma, without being deformed in limbs or organs, being born in a region where one can hear the Dhamma and practice it—these are pointed out as the opportune moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*). That too is equally rare.

Next, having obtained that opportune moment, receiving the ordination that correctly leads that Dhamma life is even rarer. Next, even if one receives that ordination, hearing the Dhamma (*dhamma-savana*) which helps toward Nibbāna is even rarer. Next, even if one gets to hear the Dhamma, the association with spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*)—the company of the virtuous—who advise and help one to practice that Dhamma, is even rarer.

Thinking in this manner about the rare appearance of a Buddha, the human birth, the opportune moment, the hearing of the Dhamma, and then the association with the virtuous (*sappurisa-saṃseva*)—to use a simile, these are like the concentric colored circles on a target board. The rarest thing in the very center is finding someone who can give meditation instructions (*kammaṭṭhāna*) and advise one on how to practice according to the Dhamma and meditate.

Thinking in this manner, during the period of a Buddha's appearance, one must act diligently. Because even the deities say that the human world is the best place to realize Nibbāna. Even the deities refer to this human world as the happy destination (*sugati*). Human beings do not know this.

Sometimes, those who have passed away and gone to the next world, having understood their suffering and trials in accordance with kamma, express their weeping and wailing, saying: "Alas, we lost that opportunity! Having obtained that rare human birth during the rare appearance of a Buddha, we were unable to bring an end to this suffering of samsāra," thus testifying to the truth of the Buddha's words that samsāra is suffering.

Therefore, having diligently directed oneself toward this path of Dhamma, and having established within oneself the philosophy of life expressed in this verse—reflecting that the mind precedes everything, that the mind is supreme, that everything is fashioned by the mind itself, and that we have to experience the retributive results of the things done and spoken with this mind, even for aeons—and having thus generated a sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), if one is to travel on this path of Dhamma, one must make an effort to embark on that journey of the Noble Eightfold Path as declared by the Buddha. One must make a firm determination.

Likewise, employing mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), and that attention (*manasikāra*) of meditation, and traveling on that path of Dhamma, one must make a determination to realize that noble, deathless Nibbāna which liberates one from all samsāric suffering such as birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*).

Thus, during this short period of time, you virtuous friends have listened to a highly valuable Dhamma sermon and a Dhamma verse declared by the Buddha, as well as the story relevant to it, and have generated faith (*saddhā*) and spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) at this moment. The wholesome thoughts (*kusala-citta*) we generate by listening to this Dhamma are no trivial thing. Although we call them wholesome thoughts, what actually arise within us that help toward Nibbāna are faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

The Buddha has declared the faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) that help a person realize Nibbāna, among the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). They are faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, vīriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*); these are what exist as faculties and powers that help toward Nibbāna. Therefore, if even for a brief moment faith arose within you virtuous friends, and along with that faith, a mental energy (*cetasika-vīriya*)—a resolve in the mind that "we must travel on this path of Dhamma, we cannot remain as before, we must practice in this manner"—if such energy arose, that is a great thing. Likewise, while directing the mind to the Dhamma, if a certain mindfulness (*sati*) arose, that too is a valuable thing.

Next, the concentration (*samādhi*) developed during the time of listening to the Dhamma, by directing the mind to it and making it one-pointed—that too is a great wholesome thought. In the same way, if you thought deeply about this Dhamma and gained some understanding in terms of wisdom (*paññā*), that too helps toward Nibbāna.

In this manner, during this hour, many wholesome thoughts must have arisen within the mind-stream of you virtuous friends. Reflecting on them, and directing our lives solely

toward the wholesome side, steering away from the unwholesome, we must make an effort to spend our time.

To that end, we must put into use the weapons introduced by the Buddha. The Buddha has pointed out all those guardians and weapons that can be used for this battle against defilements, for this operation. We must realize that this is our real battle. We spend our time in this samsāra with a great responsibility. Because the ones we are responsible for are not others, nor are we responsible for our temporary relatives; ultimately, we are responsible for the various existences (*bhava*) that arise according to kamma, in accordance with the actions we perform. This kamma gives us those births again and again. We are responsible for them.

Therefore, if we lead bad lives and are born in those miserable peta-existences, or yakkha-existences, or in places like hell, then we will have to blame only ourselves, thinking, "Alas, we did not take advantage of the opportunity we had." From this, it is clear that this responsibility, indeed, lies primarily with oneself. *Attā hi attano nātho*—oneself indeed is one's own savior. *Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ, akkhātāro tathāgatā*—the effort must be made by yourselves; the Tathāgatas are only teachers—thus the Buddha has declared. Therefore, what needs to be done must be done by oneself. The Tathāgatas are only teachers.

Understanding these matters, may this multitude of wholesome thoughts generated in your mind-stream up to this moment be a supportive condition (*upanissaya*) and a blessing for the personal realization of the noble, deathless Nibbāna through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Sakadāgāmī, Anāgāmī, and Arahantship!

Likewise, may the deities who protect the Dispensation, and any deities presiding over this place, rejoice in this collection of merits accumulated by us up to this moment through this Dhamma sermon and Dhamma listening! Having rejoiced, may they escape from this extremely terrible suffering of samsāra and realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi (awakening) they have aspired to! In this manner, share the merits.

Likewise, may the relatives who have passed away in your names, and all beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha Brahma realm who are desirous of merit and Nibbāna, rejoice in this merit of Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening! Having rejoiced, may they realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi they have aspired to!

Make your aspirations in this manner, recite the verses, and transfer the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #97

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.53)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Appamādo amatapadaṃ, pamādo maccuno padaṃ;

Appamattā na mīyanti, ye pamattā yathā matā;

Etaṃ visesato ñatvā, appamādamhi paṇḍitā;

Appamāde pamodanti, ariyānaṃ gocare ratā;

Te jhāyino sātatikā, niccaṃ daḷhaparakkamā;

Phusanti dhīrā nibbānaṃ, yogakkhemaṃ anuttaraṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 21–23 (Appamādavagga)

Dear Listeners,

There is a vast difference between how the ordinary world understands the word *appamāda* (heedfulness) and how the Buddha explains it. In worldly convention, *appamāda* means doing any kind of work—whether good or bad—on time, in order to sustain this life. However, the *appamāda* taught to us by the Buddha possesses a far more profound and far-sighted meaning. Dhamma-oriented *appamāda* is the undertaking of what must be done to shorten, or completely bring to a halt, this journey of saṃsāra—which is in itself pure negligence—even at the cost of one's own life, without delaying it for a single moment. It is a few verses in praise of that very *appamāda* that we have selected as our topic for today.

These verses were expounded by the Buddha concerning the exemplary and virtuous life of Queen Sāmāvatī, the consort of King Udena of Kosambī. When the Buddha visited Kosambī, Queen Sāmāvatī's maid, a lay woman named Khujjuttarā, went to the Buddha, listened to the Dhamma, and attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). Upon her

return, she preached that Dhamma to Sāmāvatī and her five hundred companion women in the manner of a true Dhamma preacher. Hearing this, that entire group of women attained Stream-entry. Queen Sāmāvatī was so filled with gratitude that, because Khujjuttarā had helped her attain this supramundane state, she freed her from her status as a maid and placed her in the position of a mother and a teacher from that day onward.

Furthermore, regarding this lay woman Khujjuttarā, her actual name was Uttarā. "Khujja" means hunchbacked. Since she was hunchbacked, she was known by the name Khujjuttarā. This lay woman Uttarā would regularly listen to the Dhamma from the Buddha and return to preach it to Sāmāvatī and her retinue in the manner described. In this way, she gradually became a highly skilled, widely learned, and eloquent preacher of the Dhamma. So much so, that on one occasion the Buddha declared her foremost (*etadagga*) among his widely learned lay female disciples who retain the Dhamma.

Queen Sāmāvatī too spent her life with an extraordinary degree of faith and devotion toward the Triple Gem. Moreover, her mind was highly developed in the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*). Because of this, the Buddha made a similar declaration regarding Queen Sāmāvatī, stating: "Sāmāvatī is the foremost among my lay female disciples who dwell in loving-kindness." Queen Sāmāvatī's power of loving-kindness became manifest due to the hostile and jealous attitude of Queen Māgandiyā, another consort of King Udena. Queen Māgandiyā had developed a deep-seated hatred toward the Buddha because He had, on a previous occasion, disparaged her physical beauty.

On that earlier occasion, because Māgandiyā was exceptionally beautiful—so much so that even kings sought her hand in marriage—her parents wished to give her in marriage to the Buddha. At that moment, the Buddha, having in mind the parents' potential to attain Arahantship, disparaged her physical beauty. Because of this, she harbored a deep grudge.

Unable to take revenge directly on the Buddha, she prepared to take revenge on Queen Sāmāvatī, who was one of the Buddha's most devoted disciples, to satisfy her long-standing hatred. Sāmāvatī was one of King Udena's consorts, and Māgandiyā was another. In such situations, jealousy is natural. Thus, driven especially by her hatred toward the Buddha, Māgandiyā employed various cunning plots to make the king lose faith in Queen Sāmāvatī.

On one occasion, when King Udena was preparing to spend several days at Sāmāvatī's palace, he took with him his famous elephant-charming lute (*Hatthikanta-vīṇā*), which possessed the extraordinary power to summon elephants. The king carried it wherever he went. What Queen Māgandiyā did was to have a snake, whose fangs had been extracted, inserted into a cavity of the lute. In all of these schemes, she was assisted by her paternal uncle, the Brahmin Māgandiya. With his help, she executed this cunning plot. Having inserted the fangless snake into the lute, and after the king had gone to Sāmāvatī's palace, she arranged for the snake to slide out of the lute, thereby provoking the king's wrath against Sāmāvatī.

The king became so furious that he took a poisoned arrow, lined up Sāmāvatī and her five hundred companion women, and prepared to shoot them. In that moment, Queen Sāmāvatī advised her group: "We have no refuge at this moment other than loving-kindness. Radiate loving-kindness equally to the king, to Queen Māgandiyā, and to ourselves." Just as the king released the arrow, instead of flying toward them, it turned back. It reversed its direction and aimed itself directly at the king's own chest. The king was struck with intense emotion (*saṃvega*), fell at Sāmāvatī's feet, and begged for forgiveness. Sāmāvatī seized that very opportunity to inspire faith in the Buddha within the king. She urged the king to go to the Buddha for refuge. Subsequently, with the king's assistance, Queen Sāmāvatī secured permission to regularly attend to and serve the Saṅgha. We are summarizing a very long story here; there are numerous nested narratives connected to this event. As the Queen became increasingly devoted to serving the Buddha and the Saṅgha, Māgandiyā plotted an even more severe and treacherous scheme to harm or destroy Sāmāvatī.

When the king was preparing to go to the royal pleasure gardens, what did Māgandiyā do? She told her uncle, the Brahmin Māgandiya, to go to Sāmāvatī's palace in the king's absence, open the storehouses of cloth and oil, soak the cloths in oil, wrap them around the pillars of the palace, and set them on fire. While the king was away in the pleasure gardens, the Brahmin went and prepared to set the palace on fire as instructed. Sāmāvatī and her retinue realized what was about to happen. What did the conspirators do next? They locked the women inside and set the palace on fire.

In that critical moment, Queen Sāmāvatī spoke to her companions as if delivering a Dhamma sermon: "In this long saṃsāra, even the Buddha may not be able to count the number of times we have burned and died in houses in this manner. Therefore, be heedful (*appamattā hotha*)!" Thus, she made a profound request and gave deep advice to her group. The palace caught fire. As the palace burned, what did this group do? In that moment of intense peril—which is referred to as the comprehension of feeling (*vedanā-pariggaha*), a highly advanced meditation subject—they took the bodily sensation (*vedanā*) itself as their meditation object and developed insight (*vipassanā*).

In this manner, that group of women, who were already Stream-enterers, contemplated the intense sensation (*vedanā*) arising in their bodies as the palace burned down around them. Through this insight, they attained the higher paths and fruits (*mārgaphala*), many of them realizing the states of Once-returner (*sakadāgāmī*) and Non-returner (*anāgāmī*).

In the subsequent events, people came and informed the Buddha: "O Blessed One, while the king was in the pleasure gardens, the inner palace caught fire, and Sāmāvatī along with her large retinue of five hundred women met their death. Where have they been reborn?" The Buddha then declared: "Monks, many of those lay women attained the higher paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, and Non-returning. They acted heedfully (*appamatta*). None of them met a death that was in vain (*anipphalā kālakatā*)." Declaring that they had met a fruitful death, He uttered a profound verse of solemn utterance (*udāna*) on that occasion:

Mohasambandhano loko, bhabbarūpova dissati;

upadhibālo tamasā parivārito, sassatova khāyati, passato natthi kiñcanaṃ.

The Buddha uttered a profound verse of solemn utterance there, expressing the voidness and emptiness of the world: "The world, bound by delusion (*moha*), appears as if it is real and substantial. The fool, grasping onto the substrates of existence (*upadhi*), is enveloped in darkness. It appears as if it is eternal; but to one who sees truly, there is nothing there." The Buddha expressed this truth in connection with that event. We can reflect on how a grand palace, home to a large retinue of women including Sāmāvatī, was reduced to ashes in a single moment, destroying everyone inside. Thus, the Buddha uttered a verse that demonstrates the impermanent (*anicca*) and unsubstantial (*anattā*) nature of everything in the world. But the story does not end there.

Next, it is said that the king, having heard that the palace was on fire, rushed back as fast as he could. But by the time he arrived, it had already burned to ashes. After extinguishing the remaining embers, he was overcome with immense grief and began to contemplate who could have done this. He suspected that Māgandiyā might have been responsible, but resolved to trap her using a ruse. The king summoned his ministers and, in their presence, said: "For a long time, I lived in constant anxiety, wondering when this woman (Sāmāvatī) would harm me. Now, at last, I can sleep in peace." The king expressed joy over Sāmāvatī's death in the presence of Queen Māgandiyā, who was standing nearby. The ministers then asked, "O King, who could have done this?" The king replied, "It must have been someone who has immense love and affection for me." Hearing this, Māgandiyā stepped forward and revealed the secret: "O King, it was I who did this through my uncle!"

The king did not reveal his anger even then. He said, "I am exceedingly pleased. No one has as much affection for me as you do. Let us summon all your relatives so that I may grant them rewards." Māgandiyā sent messages to her relatives, urging them to come quickly as the king was highly pleased and wished to bestow favors. To the first relatives who arrived, the king gave special gifts and rewards. Seeing this, even those who were not her relatives bribed others to claim, "We too are relatives of Queen Māgandiyā," and came to the palace. Once the entire group had assembled, the king had them all seized. He had pits dug in the palace courtyard, buried them up to their waists, covered them with straw, and set them on fire. As they were burning and trying to escape, he had them plowed over with iron plows, crushing their bodies to pieces and putting them to death. It is recorded that Queen Māgandiyā was subjected to an even more horrific torture: her flesh was sliced from her body, fried in a pan of hot oil, and she was forced to eat her own cooked flesh until she died.

Thus, the king punished them in an extremely horrific manner. While these events were unfolding, a discussion arose among the monks in the Dhamma Hall. They remarked that such a tragic death was highly unsuitable for a lay woman of such great faith as Sāmāvatī. The Buddha arrived and asked, "Monks, what are you discussing?" When they related the conversation, the Buddha explained: "Monks, from the perspective of their

conduct in this life, the death of Queen Sāmāvatī and her retinue indeed appears unsuitable; but from the perspective of their past kamma, it is completely fitting." The monks then begged the Blessed One to reveal their past kamma, and the Buddha related the story of the past.

This event took place during an interval between Buddhas, before the appearance of the present Buddha, during a time when Paccekabuddhas lived. When King Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, eight Paccekabuddhas regularly visited the palace for alms. Seven of them, having finished their meal, would fly back to the Himalayas through psychic power. One of them, however, would remain and enter meditative absorption (*jhāna*) in a clump of grass near the riverbank. The five hundred women of the king's harem used to attend to these Paccekabuddhas. One day, after the Paccekabuddhas had departed, the king went to play in the water with these women. Having played in the water the entire day, the women felt very cold by evening. They decided to warm themselves by a fire. Looking around, they saw the clump of grass and set it on fire, unaware that the Paccekabuddha was inside. As the grass burned down, they suddenly saw the Paccekabuddha sitting there. They were terrified, thinking, "This is the king's respected Paccekabuddha. If the king finds out, he will surely put us to death." They decided to burn him completely to cover up their deed. They gathered more firewood, piled it up, and set the Paccekabuddha on fire.

However, that Paccekabuddha was in the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*). According to the law of kamma, the women accumulated unwholesome kamma through their intention (*cetanā*), even though the Paccekabuddha was not physically burned. He emerged from his concentration after seven days and walked away unharmed. But because of their grave unwholesome intention, those women—who were Sāmāvatī and her retinue—suffered in hell for hundreds of thousands of years. Furthermore, as a residual result of that kamma, in a hundred subsequent lifetimes, they died by being burned to death inside buildings. The Buddha declared that this was their final birth, and this was how that kamma bore its last fruit.

On that occasion, wishing to clarify other details, the monks asked another question, as is common today, regarding the lay woman Khujjuttarā. They asked why she was born hunchbacked. Since she was a highly prominent disciple whom the Buddha had placed in the foremost position (*etadagga*), they wondered why such a meritorious person was born with a physical deformity. That was one question. The second was: what past merit made her possess such vast wisdom? Third: what past merit led to her Stream-entry? And fourth: what past kamma caused her to be born as a maid servant? The Buddha then related the past stories connected to these questions.

First, regarding her hunchbacked condition: this too was connected to the same Paccekabuddha. The Paccekabuddha who meditated near the clump of grass happened to have a slightly bent, hunchbacked body. One of the harem women—who was none other than Khujjuttarā in a past life—mocked him. She draped herself in a robe, took a golden vessel in her hand, and mimicked his hunchbacked walk to make the other

women laugh, saying, "This is how our Paccekabuddha walks." The Buddha explained that due to this unwholesome kamma of mockery, she was born hunchbacked.

Next, regarding her great wisdom: this too was connected to the same period. When the Paccekabuddhas first visited the royal palace, the five hundred women served them hot milk-rice in their bowls. Because the milk-rice was extremely hot, the Paccekabuddhas were passing the bowls from hand to hand to avoid burning themselves. Seeing this, this particular woman wisely took eight ivory bangles she was wearing and offered them, saying, "Please place the bowls on these bangles." The Paccekabuddhas did so, easing their discomfort, and later tried to return the bangles. She insisted, saying, "No, venerable sirs, I have offered them permanently."

The Buddha explained that because of this wise act of service, which she performed with wise reflection, she was blessed with great wisdom, becoming widely learned (*bahuśruta*) and a holder of the Dhamma (*dhammadhara*). Her Stream-entry was also supported by the very service she and the others rendered to the Paccekabuddhas—for serving those who have realized the paths and fruits and touched the peace of Nibbāna assists one in attaining the same realization. Finally, regarding her being born as a servant: this occurred during the dispensation of Kassapa Buddha. Khujjuttarā was then the daughter of a wealthy merchant (*seṭṭhi-dhītā*). An Arahant bhikkhunī came to visit her in the evening while she was dressing and putting on her ornaments. Having no servant nearby, and needing her ornament box which was out of reach, she told the Arahant bhikkhunī, "Noble lady, please hand me that box," speaking with a lack of respect, as if treating her like a maid.

The Arahant bhikkhunī reflected: "If she harbors anger toward me, she will be reborn in hell. But if she performs this service for me, she will merely be born as a servant. Being born as a servant is far better than being reborn in hell." Thus, she handed her the box. The Buddha explained that because she made an Arahant bhikkhunī serve her like a maid, she was born as a servant. From this, we can comprehend the precision of the fruit of kamma. Furthermore, it is said that the discussion among the monks in the Dhamma Hall continued to reverberate regarding this entire event—how Sāmāvatī and her large retinue died in the fire, how Māgandiyā's relatives were executed by the king, and how Māgandiyā herself was subjected to horrific torture. They debated on who in this world is truly alive and who is dead.

It was on that occasion that the Buddha approached and asked, "Monks, what are you discussing?" When they related the conversation, the Buddha declared: "Monks, in this world, those who are heedful (*appamatta*) are truly alive. Whether they live or die, they are to be considered alive. Those who are negligent (*pamatta*), even if they are physically breathing, are as if already dead." He then uttered the three verses from the *Appamāda Vagga* of the Dhammapada, which we took as our opening topic.

> *Appamādo amatapadaṁ, pamādo maccuno padaṁ;*
>
> *appamattā na mīyanti, ye pamattā yathā matā.*

As you know, the Deathless (*amata*) is a name for Nibbāna. Once the Mind Stilled is realized, there is no more birth (*jāti*). When there is no birth, there is no aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*). Heedfulness (*appamāda*) is the path to the Deathless. Negligence (*pamāda*) is the path to death. The heedful do not die. The negligent are as if already dead; even though they are alive, they are like the dead.

Etaṁ visesato ñatvā, appamādamhi paṇḍitā;

appamāde pamodanti, ariyānaṁ gocare ratā.

Knowing this distinction clearly—that those who are heedful do not die, while the negligent are as if already dead—the wise (*paṇḍitā*) delight in heedfulness, rejoicing in the pasture of the Nobles (*ariyānaṃ gocara*). On one occasion, the Buddha defined the "pasture of the Nobles" as the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*). The four foundations of mindfulness are the pasture, the rightful territory, of the Nobles and of all those who seek Nibbāna. The wise, residing in this pasture and practicing mindfulness, rejoice in the path of heedfulness.

The next verse speaks of a deeper aspect:

Te jhāyino sātatikā, niccaṁ daḷhaparakkamā;

phusanti dhīrā nibbānaṁ, yogakkhemaṁ anuttaraṁ.

These wise ones, constantly meditating (*jhāyino*) and possessing firm endeavor (*daḷhaparakkamā*)—which refers not to physical warfare, but to the battle against defilements—touch and realize the supreme security from bondage (*yogakkhema*), which is Nibbāna. *Yogakkhema* is another name for the Mind Stilled. "Yoga" here refers to the four bonds: the bond of sensuality (*kāma-yoga*), the bond of existence (*bhava-yoga*), the bond of views (*diṭṭhi-yoga*), and the bond of ignorance (*avijjā-yoga*). These are the four bonds that drag one through the length of saṃsāra. The wise, who possess such practice and constantly meditate, touch and realize the supreme Nibbāna, which is the liberation from these bonds. Thus did the Buddha expound these verses.

We have now heard the story and the verses. It is now up to us to reflect on these teachings in a calm and composed manner, extracting the practical lessons and deeper Dhamma principles that we can apply to our own lives. First, when we reflect on this story, we see that Queen Sāmāvatī holds an exceptionally noble position among the female disciples of the Buddha's dispensation. We have just heard the account of her life. Although we do not have exhaustive details, we can appreciate the immense spiritual development her mind had achieved.

When we consider her power of loving-kindness, she harbored not a shred of ill-will toward Māgandiyā, who hated her so intensely. When the king was about to shoot them with the poisoned arrow, she instructed her companions to radiate equal loving-kindness to the king, to Queen Māgandiyā, and to themselves. Her mind had developed such a powerful degree of loving-kindness. In the practice of the meditation on loving-kindness,

there is a highly advanced stage known as the deliverance of mind through loving-kindness (*mettā-cetovimutti*). It is a powerful spiritual force capable of radiating loving-kindness to all beings without any discrimination. Within that concentration (*jhāna*), there lies a power that can even perform miracles. It was by the power of that very miracle that the arrow turned back. It is said that the king was struck with deep emotion (*saṃvega*), thinking, "Even this lifeless arrow recognizes her virtue, yet a human like me did not," and fell at her feet in worship.

Thus, we can see how powerful the concentration (*jhāna*) of loving-kindness is, capable of deflecting a poisoned arrow. However, some might argue and raise a question based on the benefits of loving-kindness preached by the Buddha in the *Mettānisaṃsa Sutta*. One of those benefits is: *nassa aggi vā visaṁ vā satthaṁ vā kamati*—"neither fire, poison, nor weapons can harm" one who has developed the deliverance of mind through loving-kindness.

Yet, in this instance, they could not prevent the danger of the fire due to the sheer gravity of their past kamma. The momentum of kamma was far more powerful. Sāmāvatī, however, did not despair in that moment. She immediately directed her companions toward the practice of insight (*vipassanā*). There is a profound and valuable lesson in this. The palace was burning and collapsing around them. In that moment, Sāmāvatī gave her advice in just two words: *appamattā hotha*—"Be heedful!" Here too, we find the word *appamāda*. In the ordinary world, if a large building catches fire, people panic, wail, and die in agony. We frequently hear of such tragedies occurring in the world.

What did Queen Sāmāvatī do? She realized that the doors were locked and there was no way out. She understood that crying and lamenting would serve no purpose. She did what had to be done in that very moment. That is *appamāda*. What she did was this: while being burned by the external fire, she extinguished herself with the internal cooling of Nibbāna. That is what she achieved. She let the external fire burn the physical body, but she extinguished the inner fire through the realization of the Mind Stilled. This was achieved through the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*). She utilized the power of Stream-entry she had already attained, and by further developing insight (*vipassanā*) through the comprehension of feeling (*vedanā-pariggaha*), she took the intense sensation (*vedanā*) arising in her burning body as her meditation object. Ordinarily, the natural tendency of worldlings is to fear pain and try to flee from it. What is the marvelous method shown by the Buddha here? It is to look directly at the sensation (*vedanā*) itself, applying wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) with a concentrated mind, and reflecting that "this feeling is not mine, this is not self." The Buddha compared sensation to a water bubble: *vedanā bubbulūpamā*. When rain falls, water bubbles form rapidly on the surface, only to burst and vanish in an instant. Sensation is just like that.

Why do we get agitated by sensation? It is because we grasp it as "my feeling." We grasp it, develop aversion toward it, and engage in an internal conflict, thereby burning ourselves. In contrast, the insight method taught by the Buddha is to observe that very sensation, that very pain, objectively as a meditation subject. Through that observation, one perceives its impermanent (*anicca*), painful (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature.

It was by profoundly realizing this truth that Sāmāvatī and her companions attained the higher paths and fruits. The Buddha declared that they met a death that was not in vain (*anipphalā kālakatā*)—a highly successful death. This is the very meaning expressed in the verse: *appamattā na mīyanti, ye pamattā yathā matā*—"The heedful do not die; the negligent are as if already dead." This is a great lesson for our lives today. None of us can predict with certainty when, where, or under what circumstances death will come. We too might find ourselves in a situation where we are trapped in a burning building with no escape. In such a moment, our only refuge is the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) we have practiced.

In Sāmāvatī's life, we see how she utilized her developed concentration (*jhāna*) of loving-kindness to secure her own peace and to bring about a profound change in the king, turning the crisis into a victory of the Dhamma (*dhamma-vijaya*). When a tragedy occurs, the worldly response is to harbor hatred, thinking "who did this to me?" and thus burn with both the external fire and the internal fire of hatred and delusion. What did Sāmāvatī do instead? She understood it as the force of kamma. She advised her companions: "In this vast saṃsāra, we have burned to death in this manner countless times, beyond the scope of even a Buddha's knowledge. This is a minor thing. What we must do now is elevate this experience into insight (*vipassanā*) and escape from this existence (*bhava*) immediately."

For the Buddha, true *appamāda* (heedfulness) is not merely escaping from a burning building. Indeed, in that situation, physical escape was impossible. Yet, the ordinary worldling would spend their last moments wailing and screaming, hoping someone would open the door and save them, and thus meet a miserable death. In contrast, Sāmāvatī accepted the reality. The Buddha highly praises those who, in such moments, strive to escape from the cycle of existence (*bhava*). That is precisely what Sāmāvatī and her companion women achieved. In another discourse, the Buddha asked the monks: "Monks, if a person's clothes or head were on fire, what should they do?" The monks gave the natural reply: "O Blessed One, they must make a great effort, using mindfulness and energy, to extinguish the fire immediately." But what did the Buddha say? "No, monks. In such a moment, disregarding one's burning clothes or head, one should strive to realize the Noble Truths of suffering (*dukkha*), its origin, its cessation, and the path. Extinguishing the internal fire of defilements is far more urgent than extinguishing the external fire." The story shows that Queen Sāmāvatī and her companions acted in perfect accordance with this instruction of the Buddha. This is extremely valuable for our own lives. While the world thinks of worldly savings and protection for times of crisis, in the ultimate helpless moment, one's only refuge is the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) one has developed. A mind trained in loving-kindness can neutralize intense hostility, and if kamma brings an unavoidable tragedy, one must view it as an opportunity to escape from existence (*bhava*) through insight (*vipassanā*). That is the practice of heedfulness (*appamāda*).

All these profound meanings are perfectly demonstrated in the life of Queen Sāmāvatī. We have much to learn from this. Furthermore, from the other events in this story, we can appreciate the terrifying ocean of kamma in which we live. Through the Buddha-eye,

it became clear that Sāmāvatī's death was not ultimately caused by Māgandiyā; Māgandiyā was merely an instrument. The real cause was their own past intention (*cetanā*) to burn the Paccekabuddha. The Buddha declared: *cetanāhaṁ bhikkhave kammaṁ vadāmi; cetayitvā kammaṁ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā*—"Intention, monks, is what I call kamma. Having intended, one performs kamma through body, speech, and mind."

One might argue that the Paccekabuddha was not physically harmed. But those women had already burned him in their minds. That unwholesome intention was the kamma that produced such severe results. If the Paccekabuddha had actually been harmed, the consequences would have been even more horrific. We must always reflect on the kammic consequences of our daily actions. We must realize that we live as if on a ground made of kamma. We are born upon the massive heap of kamma we have accumulated over the vast span of saṃsāra, and this life is spent wearing away that kamma. Until we eradicate the seed-potential of kamma (*bīja-sakti*) that leads to rebirth through the supramundane paths and fruits, we have no choice but to swim in this ocean of kamma.

The power of wholesome kamma was also demonstrated in the life of the lay woman Khujjuttarā. First, the monks asked about her physical deformity. The unwholesome kamma responsible for it was something that might be considered minor in the ordinary world—a simple act of mocking the posture of a Paccekabuddha. By draping herself in a robe and mimicking his hunchbacked walk to make others laugh, she accumulated the unwholesome kamma that caused her to be born hunchbacked. Many of our physical illnesses and deformities are rooted in such past actions. Today, even through limited worldly investigations, some of these truths are being uncovered. But this is an absolute reality. Every small action of our body, speech, and mind has a long-term kammic momentum.

Her great wisdom was also the result of a seemingly simple act. Seeing the Paccekabuddhas passing the hot bowls from hand to hand, she wisely offered her ivory bangles to use as stands. This is a valuable lesson for us. When we perform services or duties, we should not view them as a burden or a chore; rather, we should perceive them as a precious opportunity to cultivate wholesome kamma. The Paccekabuddhas did not ask for the bangles, but she wisely used her intelligence to facilitate their comfort, and that wise act of service made her a person of great wisdom, widely learned (*bahuśruta*) and a holder of the Dhamma (*dhammadhara*).

Similarly, her Stream-entry was supported by her service to those who had realized the paths and fruits. Serving those who have realized the Dhamma helps one to realize the same truth. Lastly, her being born as a servant was due to a single instance in a past life under Kassapa Buddha when, as a merchant's daughter, she treated an Arahant bhikkhunī like a maid by asking her to hand her an ornament box. Though it seemed like a minor incident, it carried a significant unwholesome result. Living in saṃsāra is indeed a terrifying affair.

If you are driving a vehicle at high speed, and you are a skilled driver, you might not feel afraid. But you never know when an animal might jump onto the road, or when a minor mechanical failure might cause the vehicle to overturn. Our minds are just like that; they function at lightning speed, and if the mind slips even slightly, the resulting kammic momentum can trap us in saṃsāric suffering for an immensely long period. This is why the Buddha always emphasized true heedfulness (*appamāda*). In the ordinary world, heedfulness is understood as catching a bus or a train on time, arriving at the office on time, and managing one's daily affairs efficiently.

The worldly expectation is to achieve success by hook or by crook, through Dhamma or non-Dhamma, and to secure financial stability. But from the perspective of the Buddha's word, such a life falls into negligence (*pamāda*). True heedfulness (*appamāda*), as defined by the Buddha, is escaping from this terrifying saṃsāra as quickly as possible—escaping from this cycle of existence (*bhava*). It is this escape that is demonstrated in the life of Queen Sāmāvatī, and it is the same truth that is revealed in the Buddha's discourse about one's head being on fire.

The story also illustrates the danger of saṃsāra and the cruelty of Māgandiyā. Although Māgandiyā was exceptionally beautiful—sought after by kings throughout India—she lacked virtue, which led to her horrific end in this very life. This helps us distinguish between true progress and decline, and between true heedfulness and negligence. We must reflect on these Dhamma principles and strive to apply them to our daily lives.

The path of the Dhamma consists of Virtue, Concentration, and Wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*), which summarize the entire dispensation of the Buddha. Virtue is the essential foundation. Sāmāvatī's humble, respectful life and her gratitude—freeing her maid and treating her as a teacher—demonstrate her immense virtue. Virtue is what enables the mind to achieve Concentration (*samādhi*). One cannot expect to concentrate a mind that is filled with remorse. We observe precepts in order to live a life free of remorse, establishing a firm foundation for concentration.

Today, you have observed the eight precepts of Right Livelihood (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). For lay disciples, the Buddha has prescribed the five precepts and the eight precepts to restrain body and speech. This restraint, however, is directed by the mind (*cetanā-sīla, cetasika-sīla*). The physical body is not an autonomous machine; it is driven by the mind. Therefore, though virtue is described as the restraint of body and speech, this restraint is accomplished by the mind through the power of resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*).

One might ask if it is sufficient to undertake the precepts once. In practical terms, however, the precepts we have undertaken must remain at the forefront of our minds so that they can guide our behavior when the need arises. This is why we regularly undertake the precepts. We must make a daily resolution: "Today, I will live within the boundaries of these five pillars (the five precepts) or these eight pillars (the eight precepts), and I will not cross them." When an opportunity to perform an unwholesome deed arises—such as an urge to kill an animal or to steal—our wisdom steps forward and warns us: "This is contrary to the resolution you have made. Do not do it." The mind

then refrains from the action. This is known as "refraining upon encounter" (*sampatta-virati*).

The word *veramaṇī* means refraining or abstaining. When we recite the precepts, we must focus on the word *veramaṇī*: *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi*—"I undertake the precept of refraining from destroying life." This act of refraining is of utmost importance, for it is here that the mind takes the lead. When there is every opportunity to commit a sin, the virtue we have undertaken steps forward and restrains us. Refraining from the act generates immense spiritual strength, which subsequently brings great joy and relief when we reflect: "I have escaped from committing an unwholesome deed and from the future suffering it would have brought."

This is why we say that when we harm an animal, the harm we cause to our own mind through defilements is hundreds of thousands of times greater than the physical pain the animal suffers. The world thinks we should avoid harming animals merely because it is bad for the animal. But there is a deeper truth: by harboring hatred and harming another being, we corrupt our own minds, and we will have to pay for that corruption with suffering that is vastly greater than the pain felt by the animal. In the past story, the Paccekabuddha was completely unharmed by the fire; he simply brushed off the ashes and flew away. Yet, the unwholesome kamma of the women remained intact because of their unwholesome intention (*cetanā*). Unwholesome kamma is rooted in greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*).

We can identify these unwholesome roots within our own minds if we apply mindfulness (*sati*). Although they are often masked by deceptive mental states, we can perceive them if we reflect wisely. We can understand: "Underneath this action lies greed, hatred, or delusion." The Buddha declared greed, hatred, and delusion as the roots of all unwholesome deeds. Wholesome (*kusala*) means skillful, and unwholesome (*akusala*) means unskillful. If we live unskillfully in this saṃsāra, we will experience suffering; if we live skillfully, we will experience happiness and realize Nibbāna swiftly.

Thus, "kusala" in its primary sense means skillfulness. Wholesome thoughts arise from non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). Every moment we make an effort to distance ourselves from greed, hatred, and delusion—even for a single moment—we plant a wholesome seed. Because our minds have been habituated to these defilements for a long time, any effort to step away from them, even briefly, marks a wholesome turning point. This is what is meant by *alobha*, *adosa*, and *amoha*—the prefix "a-" denotes stepping away from greed, hatred, and delusion. We cannot eradicate them all at once, but we can push them aside for a moment through the mental factor of refraining (*virati-cetasika*).

For instance, when an urge to kill an animal arises—perhaps driven by a desire for its meat or by anger—and we immediately suppress that urge, preventing it from translating into action, we perform a powerful wholesome deed. If we do not suppress it, it remains as unwholesome mental kamma, burning within us like a hot coal. The Buddha compared unwholesome thoughts to hot coals. A child might touch a hot coal out of

ignorance, but the moment they feel the heat, they drop it immediately. They do not hold onto it because it looks attractive. Similarly, the moment we realize a thought is rooted in greed, hatred, or delusion, we must discard it immediately. If we hold onto it, it will translate into speech and action, trapping us in saṃsāric suffering for aeons. The wholesome path, therefore, is the power of refraining.

Some might argue: "What are we actually doing when we undertake precepts? It is all about not doing things; there is no positive action involved." However, refraining is in itself a powerful wholesome action. Once we remove the unwholesome actions, the remaining actions naturally become wholesome. Refraining from unwholesome deeds is not a passive state; it requires active effort and mental skill. That mental skill is what we call "kusala." This is why we undertake the precepts beforehand, training the mind to refrain when temptation arises. Based on established virtue, we develop concentration (*samādhi*) through meditation subjects such as loving-kindness, recollection of the Buddha, the foulness of the body, or the mindfulness of death.

When the mind achieves concentration, it experiences a physical and mental peace that is thousands of times superior to any sensual pleasure. Based on that concentration, one contemplates the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), developing insight (*vipassanā*) to realize the noble paths and fruits.

Through this sermon, we have extracted numerous Dhamma principles. By listening with deep faith and establishing ourselves in virtue, we can experience a sense of concentration. May the power of the Dhamma we have cultivated help us walk the path of heedfulness, complete our wholesome qualities through the association with noble friends, and practice generosity, virtue, and meditation. May this listening to the Dhamma support us in escaping from this terrifying saṃsāra and realizing the supreme peace of Nibbāna. May all guardian deities, and all beings from the lowest Avīci hell to the highest heaven (*Akaniṭṭha*), rejoice in these merits and attain the supreme peace of the Mind Stilled according to their own aspirations. Let us now transfer these merits by reciting the verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #98

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.100)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Duppabbajjaṃ durabhiramaṃ,

durāvāsā gharā dukhā;

Dukkho 'samānasaṃvāso,

tasmā na caddhagū siyā,

na ca dukkhānupatito siyāti.

From:

Dhammapada 302 (Lokavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, declared that the happiness of ordination is superior to lay happiness. By forgetting the vast amount of suffering (*dukkha*) and hardship that lies beneath lay happiness, one might sometimes perceive lay happiness as superior. Because of such a misunderstanding, the force of renunciation (*nekkhamma*) that brings a person to the ordained state might also diminish. Therefore, on many occasions, the Buddha highlighted the vast amount of suffering (*dukkha*) and hardship that lies beneath lay happiness and lay life. The Buddha expounded the stanza we have taken as our theme as advice to a certain monk who was facing such a problem.

While the Buddha was residing at the Gabled Hall in the Great Wood near Vesālī, this monk, who was a Vajjiputtaka (a prince of the Vajjians), lived devoted to meditation in a forest grove. One night, while he was practicing walking meditation, he heard the sounds of an annual festival being held in the city. The sounds of various musical instruments, songs, singing, dancing, and the beating of drums began to be heard. Then, this monk recalled how, during his lay life when he enjoyed royal pleasures, he used to dress up in beautiful clothes and ornaments to enjoy himself on such occasions. Reflecting on this, a great sadness arose in him, and as a form of lamentation, he uttered a certain stanza:

"We live alone in this forest like a piece of wood cast away in the jungle. On a night like this, who is more unfortunate than us?" It is said that he expressed his grievances through this stanza. Hearing this, the deity presiding over that forest grove, wishing to arouse spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) in the monk, turned the same stanza around and declared: "Indeed, you live alone in this forest like a discarded piece of firewood. Yet, laypeople look up to you with great respect and high esteem, just as those destined for hell look longingly up to those who have gone to heaven." After hearing that stanza, the monk's desire for lay pleasures vanished. On the following day, when this monk went to see the Buddha, the Buddha, understanding the situation, uttered the very stanza we have chosen as our theme, in order to help the monk further eradicate his lingering attachment to lay happiness.

Every word in this stanza carries an extremely profound meaning:

“Duppabbajjaṁ durabhiramaṁ, durāvāsā gharā dukhā;

Dukkho’samānasaṁvāso, tasmā na caddhagū siyā, na ca dukkhānupatito siyā.”

Duppabbajjaṁ: going forth is difficult. It is difficult to transition from lay life to the ordained life. *Durabhiramaṁ*: even after going forth, it is difficult to find delight in the ordained life; it is difficult to develop a love for the monastic way of life. *Durāvāsā gharā dukhā*: living in the household life is a mountain of great suffering (*dukkha*), a heap of suffering (*dukkha*). *Dukkho’samānasaṁvāso*: here, although the Sinhala script might read *samāna* (equal/same), the true grammatical meaning intended is *asamanasaṁvāso*—living together with incompatible people is suffering (*dukkha*). It is said because of the nature of society. Next, *dukkhānupatito addhagū*: this journey through saṁsāra is a journey that drags suffering (*dukkha*) along with it. *Tasmā*, therefore; *na caddhagū siyā*: do not be a traveler who continues to drag suffering (*dukkha*) along endlessly in saṁsāra. *Na ca (dukkhānupatito) siyā*: do not act in a way that suffering (*dukkha*) follows close behind you. In this manner, the Buddha delivered the stanza as advice.

If we reflect a bit more carefully on each of these words, why is it called *duppabbajjaṁ*? According to the concept of ordination in the Buddha's time, a layperson went forth with a deep intention, driven by genuine renunciation (*nekkhamma*), and not merely because they had robes and requisites. As mentioned in ancient texts, they went forth after abandoning a small or large accumulation of wealth, and abandoning a small or large circle of relatives. Departing from the home life and going forth in that manner is extremely difficult for a layperson. Most of the time, there are plenty of excuses not to ordain. To that extent, the bonds of lay life cannot easily be untied and brought to an end. Here, there is a wondrously complex web of interconnected attachments. This is why it is called *duppabbajjaṁ*—ordination is a state that is achieved with great difficulty.

Furthermore, even if one manages to ordain with difficulty, once entering the monastic sphere, it is hard to adapt to the monastic lifestyle due to deeply ingrained lay habits. Depending on alms food, living in seclusion, going to the forest to live alone devoted to

meditation, withdrawing from crowds, and observing the relevant Vinaya training rules—all of these are unfamiliar things. To develop a delight, a keen interest, and a desire (*chanda*) for these things, and to act accordingly, is difficult for one who has ordained. This is precisely what happened to that Vajjiputtaka monk. According to the texts, among the Vajji princes of that era, there was a confederacy in which seven thousand seven hundred and seven princes reigned in turn. This monk is described as someone who abandoned his turn at the kingship to ordain. Yet, upon hearing the sounds of the festival, his mind turned back to kingship. His mind drifted toward royal luxuries, weakening his resolve, and he expressed that stanza lamenting his situation.

Durabhiramaṁ: in the Dispensation, there is a term called *abhirati* (delight). Without a special delight in the ordained state, one cannot sustain it. When that delight is lost, it is called *anabhirati* (non-delight/discontent). As soon as discontent arises, one becomes "apathetic" (*ukaṭalī*, weary/bored). Then, one keeps thinking about lay life, wondering, "When will I escape this trouble and go back?" In this way, due to these saṁsāric weaknesses, it is difficult for a layperson to cultivate and sustain a delight in renunciation. Similarly, *durāvāsā gharā dukhā*: next, the nature of lay life is further described. Living in the household life involves immense suffering (*dukkha*) and troubles. Because living the lay life means one must toil to gather the necessary wealth and resources. According to ancient similes, balancing income and expenses in a household is an extremely difficult task. Often, disputes over income and expenditure arise between husbands and wives, leading to quarrels and conflicts. In the texts, this is compared to pouring water into a leaking pot. The mouth of the pot is small, but there are many holes. Similarly, income is small, but expenses are many. It is extremely difficult to resolve this entanglement in lay life, and as a result, one gets trapped in a mountain of great suffering (*dukkha*). One can never fully satisfy the responsibilities concerning spouse and children, and social duties.

Another simile is given to show the difficulty of satisfying lay needs, comparing them to the great ocean. No matter how many rivers flow into it, the ocean can never be filled. Similarly, no matter how much the desires of a layperson's mind are fulfilled, there is no satisfaction; there is no end to their needs. Because of this, household life is described as *durāvāsā gharā dukhā*.

Next, *dukkho samānasaṁvāso* (or *asamanasaṁvāso*): living with incompatible people is also suffering (*dukkha*). Society is crowded with diverse and discordant individuals. Among them, there is an extraordinary degree of competitiveness, jealousy, association with bad friends, and so forth. Because of these factors, living in a society filled with discordant people is no easy matter. Having to live together with incompatible people is a great suffering (*dukkha*).

Next, *dukkhānupatito addhagū*: similarly, lay life means wandering further and further in saṁsāra. Wandering further and further in saṁsāra means a journey where one continues to prolong and experience the momentum of kamma created through attachments and conflicts. This is why it is called "expanding saṁsāra." Within lay life, saṁsāra is expanded. That is what is meant. In this very manner, one travels this long

journey carrying saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) along. Indeed, five points are presented here in this manner. Next, *tasmā na caddhagū siyā*: therefore, do not be a traveler who wanders endlessly in saṁsāra. *Na ca (dukkhānupatito) siyā*: do not go searching for suffering (*dukkha*). This is the meaning of that stanza.

As we mentioned earlier, at first glance, the ordained life might seem like a heap of great suffering (*dukkha*)—living alone in the forest like a discarded piece of wood. Lay life, on the other hand, seems to be a fashionable, attractive, colorful, and luxurious lifestyle. So why did the Buddha show this lay life as suffering (*dukkha*) and ordination as happiness? The Buddha demonstrated this to the world on several occasions through his own example.

Such an incident is recorded, a very valuable one. Once, the Buddha spent a night in an Alavi forest of *aṭṭēriya* leaves on a path frequented by cattle. He slept on a bed of *aṭṭēriya* leaves. Rising in the morning, while he was seated there in meditation, the prince Hatthaka Āḷavaka, who was out for a walk, saw the Buddha sitting on the bed of leaves. He realized that the Buddha must have spent the night there. So he asked the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, did the Blessed One sleep in comfort?" The Buddha replied: "Yes, Prince, I slept in comfort. Of those in the world who sleep in comfort, I am one."

Then the prince said: "But Venerable Sir, the night in this winter season is cold. This is the time of the severe winter frost. Furthermore, the ground here is rough, trampled by the hooves of cattle. The bed of leaves is very thin, and the leaves on the trees are sparse. The Blessed One's robes are cold, and the biting wind blowing from all four directions is cold. Yet the Blessed One says, 'I slept in comfort'!"

Thereupon the Buddha said: "Well then, Prince, I will first ask you a question. Answer as you please. Suppose there is a wealthy householder or a householder's son living in a luxurious gabled mansion, plastered inside and out, on a comfortable couch spread with fine woolen covers, soft pillows, and mattresses. A lamp is burning, and he is attended by four highly pleasing wives. Would that householder or householder's son sleep in comfort?" Then the prince replied: "Yes, Venerable Sir, he would be one of those in the world who sleep in comfort."

Then the Buddha asked again: "Well then, please answer this question too. Might not that householder or householder's son have to lie down in discomfort, tormented by lustful thoughts that cause bodily and mental distress?" To this, the prince had to say: "Yes, Venerable Sir." Next, the Buddha declared: "The defilements of lust and so forth that burn that householder or householder's son have been completely abandoned by the Tathāgata. Cut off at the root, like a palmyra tree uprooted, made non-existent, these defilements of lust and hatred are rendered incapable of future arising. That is why I said I sleep in comfort. Similarly, whatever thoughts of hatred might arise in that householder or householder's son, causing him to spend the night in discomfort—that hatred too has been abandoned by the Tathāgata. Whatever delusion might torment that person in that luxurious mansion—none of those hardships exist for the Tathāgata, who is free of delusion." That was how the Buddha replied on that occasion.

Likewise, there are valuable accounts concerning the Buddha's great disciples. Another such incident occurred when the Buddha was residing in the Anupiya Mango Grove. A monk named Bhaddiya, whether he went to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house for meditation, would constantly exclaim: *"Aho sukhaṁ! Aho sukhaṁ!!!"*—which translates to, "Oh, what happiness! Oh, what happiness!" Hearing this, many other monks thought: "Without a doubt, the Venerable Bhaddiya is reflecting on the royal pleasures he enjoyed before, and out of desire for those royal pleasures, he has become dissatisfied with the ordained life, which is why he is crying out *"Aho sukhaṁ! Aho sukhaṁ!!"*." Thinking thus, the monks went to the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, our Venerable Bhaddiya has become dissatisfied with the ordained life and is constantly exclaiming *"Aho sukhaṁ"* in this manner." The Buddha instructed a monk: "Go and summon the monk Bhaddiya."

When that monk conveyed the message, Venerable Bhaddiya came. The Buddha asked him: "Is it true, Bhaddiya, that whether you go to the foot of a tree, an empty place, or a forest, you exclaim *"Aho sukhaṁ"*?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." "For what reason do you say so?" Then Venerable Bhaddiya said: "Blessed One, in my lay life when I was in the palace, there were security arrangements both inside and outside the inner palace. There were security forces inside and outside the city, and guards inside and outside the district. Thus, surrounded and trapped by guards, I lived in great fear, agitation, and terror during my time as king. But now, Venerable Sir, whether I go to the forest, the foot of a tree, or an empty house, I live alone without any fear or suspicion, in complete peace, spending my life as serenely as a wild deer belonging to the forest. That is why I exclaimed *"Aho sukhaṁ, aho sukhaṁ"*." So, we have such inspiring examples.

From this, we can understand that the Buddha declared the happiness of ordination with a very deep meaning. The happiness of ordination, dear devotees, is referred to in some places as the happiness of renunciation (*nekkhamma-sukhaṁ*), the happiness of seclusion (*paviveka-sukhaṁ*), and the happiness of peace (*upasama-sukhaṁ*). The happiness of renunciation (*nekkhamma-sukhaṁ*) means that escaping from these lay bonds is itself a great happiness. Some of you might understand what a hassle lay life is. Especially those who have a strong desire to dedicate time to the Dhamma and engage in meditation often realize that this lay life is a mountain of great suffering (*dukkha*), and some even regret, saying, "What foolishness made us get entangled in these things?"

In the past, there was a common sentiment that "the home life is a burning house." When we contemplate the mountain of suffering (*dukkha*) in that life, you too, dear devotees, are enjoying a small measure of that happiness right now by escaping it. What a relief it is to be able to detach from those things even for a single moment, an hour, a day, or half a day! That indeed is the first happiness: when one completely breaks these lay bonds and develops a liking for living in seclusion. Reflecting on this, one rejoices, thinking, "What a massive bond this was! It is like being released from prison." Next is the happiness of seclusion (*paviveka-sukhaṁ*). There are many accounts of monks living in that seclusion—which often frightens ordinary people—among wild beasts, dwelling in loving-kindness (*mettā*) with those very animals.

If you can walk on roads where highly dangerous, high-speed vehicles travel, then it is no wonder that a monk who loves seclusion can live in a forest hermitage populated by wild animals. Sometimes, animals possess a kind of sensitivity that even humans lack toward monks who live harmlessly in this manner. Even if that is not the case, there are monks who live valuing seclusion, cultivating mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*) regarding the dangers of their surroundings. This is the happiness of seclusion (*paviveka-sukhaṁ*).

Next, the concentration and meditation developed through that happiness of seclusion lead to the happiness of peace (*upasama-sukhaṁ*). The happiness of peace (*upasama-sukhaṁ*) is the happiness obtained through the stilling of lust, hatred, and delusion, as declared by the Buddha. When it is said that the Buddha slept on a bed of *aṭṭēriya* leaves on such rough ground in the freezing cold—he slept in comfort. One can only say this when the happiness of peace (*upasama-sukhaṁ*) is fully realized. This is what the happiness of ordination means. Furthermore, on certain occasions, the Buddha has described the suffering (*dukkha*) and hardships of lay life in even greater detail. There is a discourse (the *Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta*) where the Buddha points out, one by one, a massive mass of suffering (*dukkha*). In that discourse, he systematically reveals the dangers of sensual pleasures (*kāma*) as the hardships and sufferings (*dukkha*) one has to endure in lay life.

First, it is described as follows: For a young man of good family to live in the household life, he must strive hard to fulfill massive responsibilities: securing employment, earning a livelihood, maintaining himself, looking after his spouse and children, and performing social duties. Striving is necessary to earn wealth, for a lazy person cannot do so. If he has learned a certain craft, he engages in a job based on it. It is mentioned there—to use modern terms—that he does his job in the midst of a mountain of great suffering (*dukkha*): scorching in the sun, getting wet in the rain, enduring and suffering from cold and heat, and even dying of hunger and thirst. This is shown as the first suffering (*dukkha*).

Next, it is said that despite putting in so much effort, when he does not receive an income from his work, when losses occur, when businesses collapse and are destroyed, this person weeps, laments, and beats his breast. He falls into confusion, crying out: "Alas! The effort I exerted so hard has been ruined, lost. My labor is in vain!" Next, it is said that if, by some means, his efforts succeed and he acquires wealth, he then lies awake in the midst of great suffering (*dukkha*) and distress, thinking: "Oh, may kings not confiscate this wealth I have earned! May thieves not steal it! May it not be destroyed by fire! May it not be swept away by floods or deluges! May these things not perish!" Thus, he organizes extensive security measures and lives with suffering (*dukkha*) and distress.

Next, the subsequent suffering (*dukkha*) is described: even if he has set up all those security measures, if kings confiscate his wealth, or thieves come and plunder it either secretly or by force, or if it is burnt by fire, or swept away and destroyed by floods, then on that occasion too, he weeps, laments, and beats his breast in the same manner. He laments, beating his breast, saying: "What was mine is no longer mine" (*yampi me ahu tampi me natthi*). "Whatever we had, that too is gone." That is the next suffering

(*dukkha*). Not only that, but within the lay life they have obtained, because of their desires for accumulated possessions and issues of distribution, kings dispute and fight with kings. In homes, disputes arise between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, starting in this manner with insults and abuse, and then, taking up sticks, clubs, and weapons, they harm one another and ultimately kill each other. The Buddha declared that such a mountain of suffering (*dukkha*) is associated with lay life. If we consider all of this as a whole, the Buddha has used a valuable simile in the *Muni Sutta*.

In the *Muni Sutta*, the Buddha explains the value of the life of a genuine, practice-observing, meditative monk, referred to as a sage (*muni*) cultivating absorption (*jhāna*) in the forest. In the concluding stanza of that discourse, a wonderful simile is presented. The more you think about it, the more profound the simile used for the layperson becomes. This is how that stanza reads: "Just as the blue-necked peacock, in its speed of flight through the sky, can never equal the swan, so the layperson can never equal the sage (*muni*) meditating in the forest." We should reflect a little on this simile of the peacock representing the layperson. Everyone knows the peacock. Its blue neck is very beautiful. It is even more beautiful when it spreads its feathers. How beautiful is the peacock when it dances with its train spread out! Yet, once it folds its feathers, it cannot fly easily even when necessary, or even when another animal comes to attack it. Why? Because of the weight of its train. It has to drag it behind like a trailer; it is a massive burden.

Thus, despite its beauty, the peacock cannot fly freely like the swan. The Buddha has used the simile of the swan in other places too to describe the sage (*muni*). It is the nature of the swan that if it is on a lake and decides it is no longer suitable, it flies away to another lake immediately, without any attachment. The peacock cannot do this. Even jumping from tree to tree is done with great difficulty because of its heavy train of feathers. I will not analyze this further, as it might upset you, dear devotees. However, I leave it to you to contemplate the depth of the simile given by the Buddha. Outwardly, how beautiful is the peacock! Not only its blue neck but also its train is extremely beautiful. Yet, it has that minor weakness. This is precisely what the Buddha pointed out when contrasting the value of the happiness of ordination with suffering (*dukkha*).

When we contemplate these matters, we see that within lay happiness, there is nothing for a practice-observing monk to envy, covet, greed for, or compete to win. Yet, it is due to the force of defilements that the mind turns back to those things. This is a saṁsāric weakness. Indeed, that Vajjiputtaka monk must have ordained with a great aspiration for renunciation (*nekkhamma*), abandoning his turn at the kingship. However, overcome by a surge of defilements, his mind drifted momentarily to that festival. In this way, there are various festivals in society at different times. If one goes to join these festivals, one abandons the happiness of ordination and acts like someone chasing a mirage. One falls back.

Thus, abandoning the happiness of ordination to seek lay happiness once more is described in ancient texts as eating one's own vomit. That is why the Buddha declared

the sufferings and hardships of lay life to the world beforehand. This was not done out of disparagement. The hope of everyone is to realize Nibbāna; whether one is a layperson or a monk, that is the ultimate goal. But to achieve it, one must cultivate the vast array of virtues required.

There is a certain aspect of gratification (*assāda*) in lay life. However, its danger (*ādīnava*) is hundreds and thousands of times greater. Only when that aspect of danger is properly understood does the escape (*nissaraṇa*) known as renunciation (*nekkhamma*) arise—the departing from it. Departing from lay life, joining the ordained life, becoming devoted to secluded living and meditation, and from there cultivating meditation and insight (*vipassanā*)—it is through this that one can bring this saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) to an end. Strictly speaking, the goals of a layperson—wealth, status, titles, positions—should not be the goals of ordained ones. The Buddha has pointed out a far more valuable goal, the ending of suffering (*dukkha*), known by the name Nibbāna. That is the goal of the monastic side. It is as a path toward this goal that most of you, dear devotees, have today observed the Uposatha Eight Precepts according to your capacity and in the appropriate manner.

If we reflect on this, the Buddha has presented the observance of these Uposatha precepts as an effort to draw closer to the practice of the Arahants. This is specifically described on one occasion when the great lay devotee Visākhā came to see the Buddha at the Eastern Monastery during the midday of a Uposatha day. When the Buddha asked: "Why, Visākhā, are you here in the middle of the day?" she replied: "Venerable Sir, today I have observed the Uposatha Eight Precepts." From there, the Buddha delivered a long discourse on the value of keeping the eight Uposatha precepts. Regarding each training rule, it is said: It is true that a layperson always observes the training rule of abstaining from taking life as a permanent precept (*nicca-sīla*). However, on the Uposatha day, they do not observe it merely at the level of everyday lay life, but at the highest level, just like the Arahants. There, it is said that to fulfill this training rule in the manner of the Arahants, it is not merely about nominally abstaining from killing; rather, many other terms are used along with it—such as laying aside the rod and the sword, and living with compassion toward all living beings. This is what it means to fulfill the first training rule at the level of an Arahant.

That is why you, dear devotees, set aside a day to observe the Uposatha Eight Precepts. In the past, the concept of ordination was a life-long commitment. One ordained with a great resolution: not to return, but to cross over or die trying ("death or crossing over"). That is why, as mentioned, they left behind even a small or large accumulation of wealth, and a small or large group of relatives. The Buddha has shown in the Dhammapada and elsewhere that this is not an easy thing to do. If there are bonds in this world made of iron, wood, or hemp, all those bonds are nothing compared to the attachment to gold, jewels, pearls, gems, and spouse and children in this life. Those physical bonds can be broken, but this emotional attachment is not easy to break. That is why that ordination is a life-long ordination. Indeed, even though some disrobe due to various reasons like a weakening of the mind, genuine ordination is entered into with a profound intention,

abandoning everything in that manner, and it is that initial momentum of renunciation that leads to success.

Thus, the life-long concept exists on that side. How then can a lay devotee, while remaining in lay life, develop that same momentum? The answer to this is what the Buddha highlighted through the Uposatha. In the past, the brahmins interpreted the word "Uposatha" in their own way, which was still something valuable at their brahminical level. In those days, the calendar in lay life was prepared based on the moon. Based on the phases of the moon, certain days were set aside, and "Uposatha" meant spending that day according to a unique set of practices, as if living with the gods. In the Noble Uposatha (*Ariya-uposatha*) that the Buddha explained to Visākhā, he presented it as an idea of living close to the Arahants: "By keeping these precepts in the highest manner, just as the Arahants keep them, I draw closer to the path of the Arahants." This is the concept.

"Today, this night and this day, just as those Arahants abstain from eating at improper times throughout their entire lives, so during this day and night, I too will abstain from it. Just as those Arahants observe celibacy (*brahmacariya*), so during this day, I too will observe it." Similarly, regarding "dancing, singing, music, and unseemly shows" (*nacca-gīta-vādita-visūka-dassana*): in today's world, the moment you turn a knob or press a button on some device in your home, all the dancing, singing, music, and unseemly shows of the entire world stream in. Likewise, if one has money, as soon as one goes to the shops, one can acquire "garlands, perfumes, cosmetics, ornaments, and adornments" (*mālā-gandha-vilepana-dhāraṇa-maṇḍana-vibhūsana*).

Yet, despite having the ability to do so, you, dear devotees, spend this day understanding the value of drawing closer to the practice of the Arahants, as explained by the Buddha. The other training rules are just the same. You know well the training rule of celibacy (*abrahmacariya-veramaṇī*), and then the one on abstaining from eating at improper times (*vikāla-bhojana*), and then the one on dancing, singing, and music, and then the one on high and luxurious beds and seats (*uccāsayana-mahāsayana*). When you step away from the comfortable seats and beds of your homes to live a simple life suited for ordination—remembering that Prince Siddhartha, who lived in palaces suited for each of the three seasons, spent his nights on a bed of *aṭṭēriya* leaves after becoming the Buddha—you can understand. One should not view lying down or sitting on the ground on this day and night, abandoning those comforts, as a hardship. Instead, we should contemplate the immense value of that Arahant practice.

Understanding its true value and purpose with wisdom, we practice all of this to slowly, step-by-step, break the long-standing attachment to the five-fold sensual pleasures of saṁsāra. For someone who has tamed their mind to a considerable extent by keeping the Uposatha precepts over a long period, transitioning to the ordained life becomes easy. In that case, one can indeed say it is as simple as changing one's clothes. However, ordination is not achieved merely by changing one's clothes; one must prepare the mind. This is the opportunity the Buddha presented through the Noble Uposatha. Understanding this is highly helpful. Yet, many people keep lay happiness as their

ultimate target. The reason is that, at first glance, one sees multi-millionaires living in massive, luxurious mansions, traveling in ultra-luxurious, high-speed vehicles, and enjoying various kinds of entertainment like the festivals mentioned earlier. But if one forgets how much they live in a bonfire of a mountain of great suffering (*dukkha*) deep down in their minds, only then do these things appear as happiness. This is what the Buddha pointed out.

Therefore, it was the Buddha, who had practiced these virtues as perfections (*pāramī*) in saṁsāra over a long period, and the great disciples of that era, who gave the most sublime example. What remains for others is to respect that example. When you read the biography of the Buddha and his disciples, you can understand what a great sacrifice is required to escape from saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*). Without making this sacrifice, one cannot break these bonds of saṁsāra. One should not think of this as self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). This is because ordination or going forth (*pabbajjā*) means preparing the body, mind, and environment in a manner suitable and conducive for meditation.

To use another simile: in the past, those who had long harbored the aspiration to end saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) but could not see a path, upon hearing that a Buddha had appeared in the world and that a Community of Monks (Saṅgha) had been established—just as in the story of King Mahākappina—went forth and ordained simply by hearing the words, "A Buddha has arisen." Kings abandoned their kingdoms and ordained; queens did the same; ministers left behind their lay pleasures and ordained. With what intention did they ordain? There is a phrase used there: *pabbajitaṁ anupabbajiṁsu*—"they went forth in imitation of those who had gone forth." A common custom in the world is following examples and imitation. In that imitation, bad imitation or a bad example is not good; we must adopt the correct example.

Thus, when those kings set the right example—if kings went leaving behind such immense wealth, of what value is our ministership?—the ministers also left their posts and went forth. Following them, others went too. It is said that in this way, kingdoms became empty, simply upon the news that a Buddha had arisen. If we try to understand this mental process through a simile: suppose in ancient times, a herd of cattle was penned in a stable all night long. They wait until dawn, watching for the first light of day. The moment the herdsman goes and opens the gate, those cattle rush out, running as if seeking freedom. The word *pabbajjā* is closely related to this concept. *Vaja* or *braja* means a cowpen. Escaping from this saṁsāric cowpen is what is meant by *pabbajjā*. The power required for this is the power of renunciation (*nekkhamma*).

Therefore, one who has long cultivated virtues like morality (*sīla*) in this wilderness of saṁsāra according to the Dhamma taught by the Buddha, and who has wisely contemplated the dangers of lay life, preparing a meditative mind suitable for it, abandons kingdoms and departs the moment they hear a Buddha has arisen. This is renunciation (*nekkhamma*). Furthermore, once they have gone forth, they realize: "From what an immense mountain of suffering (*dukkha*) have I escaped!"

That is that happiness. Subsequently, using that happiness as a support—as you, dear devotees, often mention and complain about—it is difficult to meditate while staying at home, since there are obstacles on every side. That is why the monks of old went to deep forests inhabited by wild beasts to meditate; because the mind becomes serene and enters deep concentration (*samādhī*) only when one withdraws from human society and goes to a secluded place. Using that concentration (*samādhī*) as a support, they freed themselves from suffering (*dukkha*). Indeed, it is said that every Buddha attained Buddhahood in a natural environment, in accordance with nature. In any case, it is only with a mind stilled by developing a love for that secluded dwelling that one can ultimately realize the deepest understanding of the Four Noble Truths, which ends this saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*). That is the most suitable and conducive environment. The change one makes to obtain that environment is called ordination. However, if one ordains but ends up in an environment unsuitable for it, then there is some deficiency.

Therefore, one must strive to secure such a secluded dwelling and complete this task. For we have spent a long time rolling in these lay bonds and heaps of lay suffering (*dukkha*) in saṁsāra. Yet, liberation is not obtained merely by wishing for it. That is why the Buddha declared in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* and other discourses: "not to get what one wants is suffering (*dukkha*)" (*yampiccha̍m na labhati tampi dukkha̍m*). What is it that one wishes for? "If only I could be free from this suffering (*dukkha*) of birth (*jāti*)! If only I could be free from this saṁsāric state of decay (*jarā*)! If only I could be free from this terrifying illness and death (*maraṇa*)!"—such is the aspiration. But the Buddha declared: "This is not to be achieved by wishing" (*na kho pana eta̍m icchāya pattabba̍m*). These are not obtained merely by wishing, without taking the necessary path of action. The path of action to be taken is none other than the Noble Eightfold Path, known as the Middle Path, as declared by the Buddha. We have reminded, clarified, and explained this to you on many occasions.

Indeed, everything necessary is contained within it. One must cultivate right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). If we consider the simpler aspect of right view, it is the basic understanding of wholesome and unwholesome, good and bad. At the minimum level, understanding what is wholesome and unwholesome, good and bad, helps direct our saṁsāric journey away from states of deprivation (*duggati*) and toward happy realms (*sugati*). Yet, the task is not finished with that. The deepest and highest level of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is the Four Noble Truths. This is the mountain of suffering (*dukkha*) connected with the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) and with this saṁsāric existence (*bhava*). It is right there that birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), illness, and death (*maraṇa*) exist.

Thus, only the Buddha clearly declared that saṁsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*). Others tried to segment it, separating it into "this part is happiness, that part is suffering (*dukkha*)." That is not in accordance with the Dhamma. This is why the Buddha declared that, let alone other places, there is no real happiness even in the Brahma worlds. It is said that when the lion king roars his lion's roar, the animals living in small hollows in the forest retreat into them; those living in the water plunge into the water; and those

that fly take to the sky. Not only that, but even royal elephants in palaces break their iron chains and flee upon hearing that roar. Similarly, when the Buddha declared to the world the Three Characteristics—the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature of all things—showing that there is suffering (*dukkha*) and impermanence (*anicca*) everywhere, even in the Brahma worlds, it is recorded in the Dhamma that even the Brahmas residing in those worlds became terrified, saying: "We had thought all along that we were permanent, but now they say we are impermanent (*anicca*)!" Thus, they fell into fear and terror. This is compared to royal elephants breaking their iron chains in their stalls and fleeing in terror upon hearing the lion's roar; in the same way, even the Brahma kings are struck with spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) and terror. Such is the nature of this Dhamma. Therefore, bringing this saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) to an end is the ultimate goal belonging to every Buddhist, whether lay or ordained. On the path to that goal, one must, at the very least, cultivate that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

If we are going on a journey, we must have some understanding of the destination. If we turn our head in the opposite direction instead of the way we need to go, where will we end up? This is why the Buddha placed right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) at the very beginning. Even cultivating that vision of life is a precious thing. Once that is developed, the journey undertaken in accordance with it is what is called the practice (*paṭipadā*).

All other paths and roads in the world, including high-speed expressways, are said to be inferior to this Noble Eightfold Path. However, this path cannot be found outwardly anywhere in the world. It is something to be developed within oneself as virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The first step of that path is right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). When one establishes right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and spends a day cultivating virtues like morality, the thoughts and intentions that arise are indeed right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*)—namely, thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*), thoughts of non-ill will (*avyāpāda-saṅkappa*), and thoughts of harmlessness (*avihiṁsā-saṅkappa*). By using wholesome speech in accordance with these good thoughts, one prepares for a complete transformation in one's life. When one acts in accordance with that speech, it is right action (*sammā-kammanta*). When this conduct is not limited to a day or two but is integrated into one's entire livelihood, it is right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Through the effort to establish right livelihood, by being mindful of one's mind, recognizing its unwholesome tendencies, expelling existing unwholesome states, preventing new unwholesome states from arising, encouraging the wholesome thoughts already present, and removing bad thoughts, the effort one exerts is right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*).

Proceeding in this very manner, by maintaining the mind on an object for a long period with right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) and clear comprehension, if the mind were indeed a weapon, it is sharpened to the highest degree. Then, by deeply penetrating and seeing the Three Characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) is established. Next come right knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and right liberation (*sammā-vimutti*). It is at the culmination

of this path of practice that one can arouse insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), understand the suffering (*dukkha*) and empty (*suñña*) nature of this saṁsāra, cross over saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*), and directly realize the sublime, deathless, great Nibbāna.

Therefore, today, just as you have engaged in good practices, you have also listened to the Dhamma at this moment. We can understand that this Dhamma sermon has helped you arouse, to some extent, those qualities that assist in realizing Nibbāna, namely the faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). If there is any store of merit (*puñña*) accumulated by both of our parties through the giving of this Dhamma sermon and the listening to this Dhamma sermon related to Nibbāna, may all those wholesome merits be shared by all beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, whoever wishes to rejoice in these merits. May all of them, including your relatives, according to their own aspirations, be freed from this saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) as quickly as possible and find peace in the sublime, deathless Nibbāna. May we also aspire that, by fulfilling these practices, we too may have the strength to realize the sublime, deathless, great Nibbāna as quickly as possible, in this very life, during the existence of this Dispensation, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship. Let us recite the stanzas in this manner:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #99

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.118)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Abhivādanasīlissa niccaṃ vuḍḍhāpacāyino,

cattāro dhammā vaḍḍhanti: āyu vaṇṇo sukhaṃ balaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 109 (Sahassavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Human beings employ various strategies and seek many methods to accomplish the qualities of lifespan (*āyu*), beauty (*vaṇṇa*), happiness (*sukha*), and strength (*bala*), which support the existence of a life. The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Supreme Buddha, declared that these things, which everyone desires, can be obtained even through paying homage to elders and showing them respect and honor. It is this matter that we hope to present to these devotees today, on this Bak Full Moon Poya Day, which coincides with the New Year, by means of the stanza that declares this and the story that serves as an illustration of it. The Buddha preached this Dhamma stanza concerning a child named Dīghāyu. The story unfolds as follows.

In the city of Dīghalambika, there lived two brahmins who practiced asceticism for forty-eight years. They practiced the asceticism of the holy life (*brahmacariya*). After forty-eight years had passed, one of them had a thought that since his lineage would end after him, he should live a lay life. Thinking so—as mentioned in the books, he sold his ascetic merits to another, or did something of that nature—to put it briefly, he took a wife along with a hundred *Kahāpaṇas* (gold coins) and a hundred cows. While living such a lay life, one day, when his old ascetic friend visited the city, this couple took their child and went to receive blessings from that ascetic. Having gone there, first, the brahmin handed the child to the mother and paid respects. The mother then handed the child to the father and paid respects. To both of them, the ascetic said, "May you live long!" Then they made the child pay respects. At that moment, the ascetic remained silent. So, the brahmin asked: "Venerable Sir, when both of us paid respects, you said 'May you live long,' but

why did you say nothing when our son paid respects?" Then the ascetic said: "I see a life-threatening danger for this son." When asked how long he would live, he replied: "This life will only survive for seven days." When asked if there was any way to prevent it, he said: "I do not see any such way. But perhaps the Ascetic Gotama might know." Then the brahmin said: "But if I go to the Ascetic Gotama, the asceticism I have practiced for so long will be lost." The ascetic replied: "If you have affection for your son, you must go. You will have to go and meet the Ascetic Gotama and ask." Thereupon, the brahmin, his wife, and the child went to the Blessed One.

Having gone there, just as before, when the brahmin paid respects, the Blessed One said, *"Dīghāyu hotu"* (May you live long). When the wife paid respects, He also said, *"Dīghāyu hotu."* But when the child paid respects, He remained silent. When asked why, the Blessed One in the same manner declared, "There is a life-threatening danger for this child. He will only live for seven days." When asked, "Is there a way to prevent it?" He replied, "There is. If you wish to do it, practice in this way." "What is it, Brahmin? You must erect a pavilion in front of your house, place a small chair or seat in the middle, arrange eight or sixteen seats around it for the Saṅgha, and conduct a chanting of *Paritta* (protective verses)." Then the brahmin said, "I can construct the pavilion and do those things. But from where will I get the Blessed One's disciples?" The Buddha replied, "I will take care of that." When the pavilion was made and the brahmin came and reported that everything was prepared, the Blessed One directed the Saṅgha to go there.

After the Saṅgha arrived, they seated the child on the small chair in the middle and conducted the chanting of *Paritta* continuously for seven days. On the seventh day, the Blessed One also arrived there. When the Blessed One arrived, deities from all the world-systems assembled there. Next, it is mentioned what this life-threatening danger actually was. It was like this: a *yakkha* named Avaruddhaka (not *avurudda* meaning "year", but his name was Avaruddhaka) had served the Yakkha King Vessavaṇa (Vesamuni) for twelve years and obtained a boon. What was the boon? It was to take that child. He was not taking the child to cuddle him, of course. So, he received the boon to take the child. This *yakkha* was waiting for the right moment to come. However, the Saṅgha were chanting *Paritta* there. Furthermore, after the Blessed One arrived, the *yakkha* could not even get close, because when that assembly of deities gathered, there was a custom among the deities that when highly powerful deities arrive, the lesser deities must step back. They moved further and further back, and in the end, the *yakkha* Avaruddhaka could not even get near.

Then, that fatal hour passed. When dawn broke on the eighth day, the child was still alive. So the parents brought the child, placed him at the feet of the Blessed One, and made him pay respects. The Blessed One said, *"Dīghāyu hotu."* On that occasion, He wished long life for that child. "Venerable Sir, how long will this child live?" they asked. He replied, "He will live for one hundred and twenty years." That was a marvelous thing. Then, the story continues as follows: When that child grew up and reached the age of understanding, he went about performing meritorious deeds with great faith (*saddhā*) accompanied by another five hundred lay devotees (*upāsaka*). The Saṅgha discussed this

in the Dhamma assembly hall: "How wondrous! This child, who was destined to die in seven days, has now obtained a lifespan of one hundred and twenty years and is moving about with such a crowd." While this conversation was going on, the Saṅgha also thought, "There must be some method for prolonging lifespan, and that is why this happened."

The Blessed One, having arrived there, asked what topic they were discussing. When the monks told Him the news, He said, "Yes, monks, there is a way to prolong one's lifespan," and uttered the stanza we have taken as our theme. It is a stanza that these devotees are constantly accustomed to hearing—one we usually recite at the end of a Dhamma sermon as a blessing for these devotees, which we have brought to the beginning today. He uttered that stanza:

Abhivādanasīlissa niccaṃ vuḍḍhāpacāyino,

Cattāro dhammā vaḍḍhanti: āyu vaṇṇo sukhaṃ balaṃ.

For one who is habituated to bowing down, constantly honoring the elders, four qualities increase: lifespan, beauty, happiness, and strength. This is the meaning of this stanza. So, in this story, we see on one hand the act of paying homage which leads to the increase of lifespan, which is highly appropriate for this occasion. In the homes of these devotees, perhaps even today, during the time called the "auspicious period for meritorious deeds" (*puṇya kālaya*), which is also referred to as the "non-asterism period" (*nonäkatha*), in many households, as a New Year custom, they offer a sheaf of betel leaves to elders and pay respects. When we look at this in connection with our theme, the passing of a year shows us the waning of our lifespan. A certain turning point where one's lifespan expires is the birthday. Here, the concept of a collective New Year in the cycle of time can be thought of as everyone's birthday, so to speak.

In the past, the ancient Sinhalese, on this day in the month of Bak which they regarded as the New Year, designated a period of pause called the *nonäkatha*. It is a novel thing, a cycle that does not stop spinning. Pausing this cycle for a moment in one's mind, they create a "non-asterism period" (*nonäkatha*) with the help of those astrological calculations. It seems that since those engaged in various daily activities had no time even to perform meritorious deeds, they designated the time without an auspicious asterism (*näkatha*) as the "period for meritorious deeds" (*puṇya kālaya*). In any case, during that period of meritorious deeds, one must resolve to obtain a new vigor, a new life, by offering a sheaf of betel leaves to one's elders, bowing to them, and asking for forgiveness. There is a custom of paying homage and showing respect to parents, clan elders, and also to the Saṅgha, who are like clan deities, and to all elders. Consider its meaning. Furthermore, it is mentioned in this story that although the ascetic saw that the child's life would last only seven days, he did not see a way to prevent it. Yet, he honestly declared, "Perhaps the Ascetic Gotama can," and directed them in that direction. Next, since the Blessed One also saw that this fatal danger could not be averted by the mere paying of respects alone, He put forward the idea of a chanting of *Paritta*.

What is meant by the word *paritrāṇa* is protection from all sides. What is the deep meaning of this word *paritta* or *pirit*? It is providing protection from all sides. How is this protection provided? These devotees know very well how it is done during these *Paritta* ceremonies. A blessing is performed through an assertion of truth (*saccakiriya*) regarding the veracity of the Triple Gem. There, by saying *"saccena suvatthi hotu"* (by this truth may there be well-being) and so forth, they recollect the all-pervading power and the strength of virtues of the Buddha-gem, the Dhamma-gem, and the Saṅgha-gem, and make an assertion of truth based on them. There is a great power in that word. There is a great energy in the word that spreads throughout the universe. Along with the word goes this power of blessing, the assertion of truth, and what follows it. Just as the child was seated in the middle and the *Paritta* ceremony was held on that occasion, today, in this era, we see that the vessel of *Paritta* water and the *Paritta* thread are placed in the middle while the Saṅgha sit around and chant *Paritta*. That is the concept behind treating *Paritta* water and *Paritta* thread as being endowed with great power.

Thus, we can understand that, on one hand, just like that act of paying homage, the chanting of *Paritta* also helps to prevent dangers and accidents—here, a *yakkha* named Avaruddhaka is mentioned. There are certain invisible forces, such as non-human afflictions and so forth. The strength and power of the Triple Gem help to dispel them. That is what is specifically mentioned in this story on this occasion. When we think about lay life in the ordinary world, even when we look among parents and relatives, we usually consider those who are older in age as elders. But when we think about the Dispensation (*Sāsana*), the concept of an elder is different. These devotees have heard that even a young child who is ordained on that very day receives homage and offerings from laypeople. Similarly, one must pay respects to those who are senior in ordination. There is a monastic custom of paying respects according to the number of rains retreats (*vassa*) since higher ordination (*upasampadā*). A situation where one can witness a miracle of the Dispensation is when a mother, who has carried her child in her womb for ten months, nourished him with milk made from her own blood, scolded and punished him in various ways during his mischievous childhood, offers him to the Dispensation—even if he is a seven-year-old child—and then she pays respects to that child. When she pays respects to that child, the child does not bend down and pay respects to the mother saying *mātupādaṃ namāmahaṃ* (I bow to my mother's feet) as before. Instead, as declared and taught by the Blessed One, the supreme way a monastic can minister to parents is by helping them grow in faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*). In terms of offering that assistance, with that determination, and recollecting the majesty of virtue (*sīla-teja*) associated with the monastic life, they bestow this blessing: *Abhivādanasīlissa...* and so on.

In one way or another, he blesses the mother. Then, even though her child, her darling child, had paid respects to her until then, the mother sheds tears of joy seeing him accept her homage unflinchingly, now as a darling of the Dispensation. She does not feel hurt thinking, "My child paid respects to me all this time, but today he does not." Regarding him as a darling of the Dispensation, the mother wipes away her tears of joy and steps aside. Through that miracle of the Dispensation, we see that the order of seniority in the

Dispensation is different. However, this concept of the order of seniority did not exist at the very beginning. There is a story mentioned in the Dhamma about how it came to be. We can imagine how much chaos arises in society when there is no such order of seniority. In the Vinaya Piṭaka, which outlines the history of the Dispensation, the following incident is recorded:

On one occasion, when Anāthapiṇḍika the householder had prepared Jetavana monastery and constructed all the dwellings, he sent a messenger to the Blessed One. At that time, the Blessed One was traveling back from the city of Vesālī to accept the offering of Jetavana. Meanwhile, a group of unruly monks known as the group-of-six (*chabbaggiya*), who constantly violated Vinaya rules, arrived early and claimed ownership of the lodgings and dwellings of Jetavana, saying, "This is for our preceptors, this is for our teachers, and this is for us." Thus they took possession of them. Then, the Blessed One arrived there. In the meantime, the Venerable Sāriputta, the Chief Disciple, was traveling somewhat behind. Although the Blessed One and the retinue of monks managed to get dwellings, there was no dwelling for the Venerable Sāriputta; there was not even a place for him to sleep. So, he spent that night under a tree. In the early morning, the Blessed One got up and coughed. As a signal, He cleared His throat slightly. Then, the Venerable Sāriputta also coughed to indicate his presence. "Who is there?" the Blessed One asked. "Venerable Sir, it is I, Sāriputta," he replied. "What are you doing there?" He asked. Thereupon, the story came to light: because the group-of-six monks had arrived early and seized the lodgings, we had to step back. That was the situation.

The next morning, when daylight broke, the Blessed One assembled the Saṅgha and asked if that story was true. "How could these foolish men (*mogha-purisa*) do such a thing? If they behave in this way, what will happen in the future? How could they do this, showing no regard for seniority, to the extent of leaving no room even for the Chief Disciple?" Then, the Blessed One asked the monks: "Who is worthy of the best seat (*aggrāsana*), that is, the first seat? Who is worthy of the best water (*aggrudaka*), that is, to receive water first? Who is worthy of the best alms (*aggapiṇḍa*), to receive alms-food first?" When asked, some monks said, "Those ordained from the brahmin caste." Others said, "Those ordained from the householder (*gahapati*) caste." Some said, "To the Suttantikas who have well-memorized the Suttas." Another said, "It is proper for those versed in the Vinaya (*vinayadhara*)." Another said, "To the Dhamma preachers (*dhammakathika*)." Yet another said, "The first seat should be given to those who have attained the first absorption (*jhāna*)." Others said, "The second, third, or fourth absorption." Other monks answered, "Those who have attained the paths and fruits—Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship—or those who have attained direct knowledges (*abhiññā*)." Because those monks did not have a proper understanding, they gave various answers of this sort. Then, the Blessed One first presented an exemplary story. That story is mentioned not only in the Vinaya Piṭaka but also in the Jātaka Book under the name Tittira Jātaka, with minor variations. According to the facts mentioned in the Vinaya, it is as follows:

The Blessed One declared: "Once upon a time, near the Himalayas, there stood a large banyan tree. In association with that banyan tree, a partridge, a monkey, and an elephant lived in great friendship. These three thought: 'It is not proper for us to live like this without showing respect and honor to one another. Let us somehow identify who is the elder among us, and live paying respect and hospitality to that elder, and following that elder's advice.' To find out, 'How shall we know our age?' the partridge and the monkey asked the elephant what was the oldest event he could remember. The elephant said: 'I remember when this banyan tree was just a sapling; when I walked over it, its topmost tender shoot rubbed against my belly. I remember even that time.' Next, the elephant and the partridge together asked the monkey: 'What is the furthest past you can recall?' The monkey said: 'When I was small, as a baby monkey, sitting on the ground, I used to nibble the tender shoot of this banyan sapling.' Next, the elephant and the monkey asked the partridge: 'What is your past memory regarding this banyan tree?'

'Over in such-and-such a place, there stood a large banyan tree. Having eaten a fruit from that banyan tree, I voided my excrement here. It is from that seed that this banyan tree grew. Although I am just a partridge, even at that time I was of considerable age.' Thus, the partridge was the eldest. If one looks at physical size, how massive is the elephant? The monkey is also large. Yet, this small partridge was senior in age. So, what follows is that—having identified the elder—the elephant and the monkey lived showing respect and honor to the partridge, abiding by the partridge's advice. Next, the Blessed One says that the partridge established the other two in the five precepts (*pañcasīla*). He himself also kept the five precepts. Having kept them and fulfilled that noble custom of showing respect and honor to the elder, it is mentioned in the Vinaya book as a unique holy life. The term used is *Tittiriya Brahmacariya* (the holy life of the partridge).

For the well-being of those three, the Dhamma uses the term *Tittiriya Brahmacariya*. *Tittira* means partridge. The Blessed One declared that by practicing this unique holy life initiated by the partridge, those three animals were reborn in happy realms (*sugati*). Having declared this, He said, "Monks, even those animals understood the importance of seniority and acted accordingly. Why then do you, who are ordained in this well-expounded (*svākkhāta*) Dhamma and Vinaya, not show respect to elders?" He also declared the benefits of paying homage to elders through a certain stanza. The story concluded by stating that if someone fulfills the custom of paying respects and showing honor to elders, they are praised in this world and reborn in a happy realm.

When that same story is mentioned in the Jātaka Book, the identification of characters is also given. Here, an elephant, a monkey, and a partridge were mentioned. Who were these three? In the past, the elephant was Venerable Mahāmoggallāna, the monkey was Venerable Sāriputta, and the partridge was the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha himself. This is how they are identified in the Jātaka Book. So, this exemplary story was presented to put forward the monastic concept regarding the order of seniority, the line of succession. Along with that, the Blessed One declared that in this Dispensation, the one ordained first, the senior monk, should receive homage and respect from the one ordained later, and He detailed at length in the Vinaya Piṭaka who is worthy of homage and who is not. Drawing from this story, if we relate this to society, these devotees had a

good custom in the past that went hand-in-hand with village life, among villagers. Instead of just treating everyone the same, they respected elders based on age, and even if they were not from the same family, they regarded the entire village as one family, addressing others as elder brother (*ayyā*), younger brother (*mallī*), younger sister (*naṅgī*), elder sister (*akkā*), mother (*ammā*), and father (*tāttā*). It was very pleasing to the ear. There was such a practice in the past. Thus, in agricultural and other work, it was like a family working together. They all bore the burden together. That sense of seniority helped to maintain the bonds of unity.

Indeed, even if we reflect on that banyan tree, a banyan tree itself is a miracle. It is a tree grown from a tiny seed. Looking at a massive banyan tree, one can learn many things. As revealed in the previous story, this banyan tree grew from a banyan seed in the excrement voided by that partridge. We can imagine that the excrement might have fallen between a stone or two. Yet, enduring great storms and various hot seasons, the tree grew gradually and became a great banyan tree providing shade to everyone. Thus, even by looking at a banyan tree, we see we can learn something from its long existence. It is the same with a human being. Even if they do not have a high education or high positions, through many experiences in the university of life, an elder, to a certain extent, becomes someone worthy of respect and honor. Now, many young children sometimes have a habit of making fun of elderly people. One should not think in that way. One must look at elders just as one looks at that banyan tree. By living up to that point amidst various life troubles, being subject to the eight worldly conditions (*aṭṭha-loka-dhamma*), the vast store of experience they gain can be of help to oneself as well. But that help can only be received if one conducts oneself in that manner—showing proper respect and hospitality without making fun of them. Therefore, that is also the custom of the New Year. If one lives according to that concept of seniority, not only towards parents and elders at home but also towards neighbors, then with mutual cooperation, the home becomes a village. It is when we relate it to lay life in this way that the value of this story lies.

At the same time, we must constantly contemplate another aspect revealed by this story. If we orient this towards Nibbāna, it was mentioned at the beginning of the story that one of the two ascetics decided to return to lay life to protect his lineage. This is called inheritance or ancestry (*praveṇiya*). That was in agreement with his ascetic doctrine, because in Brahminism there is a teaching about four stages of life (*āśrama*). Life is divided into four stages. During childhood and youth, one must study. During youth, one must enjoy the fivefold sensual pleasures. In the third stage, one should incline towards the religious side, the practice of a sage (*muni-vṛtti*). In the final stage, when approaching death, one must die as a yogi. In this way, dividing the mundane (*lokiya*) and the supramundane (*lokuttara*) fifty-fifty, some people in Brahminism spent their lives. The other concept is that even for an ascetic, that was an accepted practice in Brahminism; there was nothing strange about it. Why did those brahmins return to lay life after keeping the holy life (*brahmacariya*) for forty-eight years? It was to carry their family lineage forward. Although that side is not directly mentioned in the story, it is worth considering. This is because the concept of Nibbāna in this Dispensation of the

Blessed One is different from that Brahmin doctrine. It is for this reason that when the Blessed One ordained even seven-year-old children, when large crowds joined the Buddhist Dispensation, leaving behind their wives and children, causing a huge social transformation, some people accused the Blessed One: *"Aputtakattāya paṭipanno samaṇo Gotamo, vedhavyāya paṭipanno samaṇo Gotamo, kulupacchedāya paṭipanno Gotamo"*—"The Ascetic Gotama is bent on making families childless; the Ascetic Gotama is bent on making women widows (for when husbands leave, they become widows); Gotama is bent on destroying clans." Yes, they said it is a practice that destroys the clan, the lineage, ending the lineage right there. Such accusations were leveled against the Blessed One. The Blessed One, however, told the monks that this noise would not last long, and to dispel that noise, He asked them to recite a certain stanza. That stanza declares that the Ascetic Gotama guides this crowd through Dhamma, not through non-Dhamma (*adhamma*). Therefore, there is nothing wrong with this.

Next, there is another account mentioned in the Vinaya Piṭaka, which we will mention only briefly because it is somewhat related to this. In the Vinaya Piṭaka, there is the first *Pārājika* training rule concerning sexual intercourse, which is the practice of laypeople. Even if we look at the story of the monk that led to the formulation of this training rule, we can see that the values and virtues of our Dispensation are different from Brahminism. There, it is said that the monk named Sudinna Kalandakaputta had ordained with great faith (*saddhā*). However, he had ordained after living a lay life, and while he was married and had a wife, his wife's mother came and made an inappropriate proposal: "Because there is no child, the wealth belonging to our family might be confiscated by the king. Therefore, we need a child." She made such an improper proposal. Agreeing to that, the monk Sudinna Kalandakaputta compromised his virtue (*sīla*). Due to that wrong conduct which later led to deep regret, the Blessed One rebuked the monk Sudinna Kalandaka, calling him a foolish man (*mogha-purisa*), and laid down the first training rule concerning abstaining from the *Pārājika* of sexual intercourse. From this, we can see that the doctrine of the Brahmin era was like trying to save both the porridge and the beard (wanting to have it both ways)—one must protect this world and at the same time realize Nibbāna, or rather, obtain liberation according to their views.

The Blessed One's Dhamma is not like that. According to the Blessed One's Dhamma, this entire world is a hospital. Therefore, as quickly as possible, at whatever age, if the thought of renunciation (*nekkhamma*) arises in someone, it is proper to put it into practice. It is not about those ideas of social, economic, or physical values. Considering the rarity of the Buddhist Dispensation and the rare opportunity for realizing Nibbāna, He gave permission to ordain even young children. Although not explicitly stated in this story, what is being discussed here is something opposite to that Brahmin doctrine. Next, the chanting of *Paritta* was mentioned here. We must understand the value of this *Paritta* chanting. In the Ratana Sutta and other discourses, what is specially described are the virtues of the Buddha-gem, the virtues of the Dhamma-gem, and the virtues of the Saṅgha-gem. Similarly, there are certain *Parittas* like Mahāsamaya and Āṭānāṭiya where it is described how the entire universe, even the *yakkhas*, bow down to the

majestic power of the Blessed One's virtues. That is why these *Parittas* are said to be endowed with great power.

For what do we employ all of these? It is to protect our lifespan, and along with that lifespan, to protect beauty, happiness, and strength. If the lifespan increases to some extent, it is parallel to that that the qualities of beauty, happiness, and strength increase. Generally, everyone wishes for these four qualities. However, what is more valuable, more valuable than all of these, is wisdom (*paññā*). Lifespan, beauty, happiness, strength, and wisdom. Thus, to obtain this wisdom, we cannot be satisfied with mere listening to *Paritta* or mere paying of respects. Thinking even more deeply, at whatever age, if one has understood the value of this Dhamma, by practicing it, one must personally realize this liberation from Saṃsāra, which is an extremely rare thing. If that determination to make an opportunity for this arises, anyone has the space to walk that path of Dhamma in this Dispensation.

In walking that path of Dhamma, we know that once it is completed, as said before, even a young child becomes worthy of receiving homage from his parents. This is because it is an extremely difficult thing. For a long time in this Saṃsāra, we have come enjoying the treasures of the five cords of sensual pleasure (*pañca-kāma*), staying within lay houses, subject to lay values. Similarly, at this moment, these devotees, by keeping the eight precepts (*aṭṭhasīla*) on this Poya day, separate themselves from certain comforts and luxuries belonging to their daily life until now, and habituate themselves to a simple life. Yet, for a long time in this Saṃsāra, we lived submerged in various things belonging to sensual pleasures that cause negligence (*pamāda*). In renunciation (*nekkhamma*), one has to gradually abandon all of that. That is why, as soon as he is ordained, even that young child becomes worthy of receiving homage from his parents.

Indeed, we must reflect that to maintain a life, we obtain the qualities of lifespan, beauty, happiness, and strength through paying respects to parents and so forth, and through listening to *Paritta*. But for what do we maintain a life? For what do we obtain a lifespan? For what do we obtain strength? We must do all of this for the sake of escaping from this Saṃsāra. For that, then, one must strive to obtain that wisdom (*paññā*). Wisdom is a Dhamma in this Dispensation that must be understood by each according to their own capacity (*ñāṇa*). There is a path to be traversed for that, namely, virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*). It is on that path that these devotees are traveling now, practicing Dhamma and meditation as spiritual practitioners (*yogāvacara*). One must reflect: if on a New Year's day like this, one has obtained a lifespan through certain meritorious deeds related to that period of meritorious deeds, and has obtained the parallel beauty, happiness, and strength necessary for a life, then next, one must ask oneself the question: "For what purpose do I live?"

During the pause that presents itself, in which direction should we steer our lives? Is it towards that world-prolonging practice of being born and dying in Saṃsāra over and over again? We call it *lokavaḍḍhana*—that is, the expansion of the world. The Buddha declared that going on being born and dying in this Saṃsāra over and over again is a practice. Expanding the world means expanding the cemetery. On one occasion,

speaking about Mount Vepulla—isn't this Mount Vepulla?—the Blessed One said that if the skeletons left behind by a single human being during a single eon (*kappa*) were gathered together, they would be larger than this Mount Vepulla. Thus, we have gone on leaving behind skeletons in this way for an infinite time, which also decay in time; such research has been carried out extensively. There is no end to this.

Only a Buddha shows the end, through the Noble Eightfold Path. Through the Middle Path, He showed the world the most valuable thing in this life: *paññā narānaṃ ratanaṃ*—wisdom is the supreme gem for human beings. Earlier, only lifespan, beauty, happiness, and strength were mentioned. But these devotees have heard that sometimes five qualities are shown: lifespan, beauty, happiness, strength, and wisdom. One must obtain wisdom by walking on the path proper for it. That begins with virtue (*sīla*). Thus, on a day like today, this New Year is not only for young children; both children and elders regard this day as a rare opportunity to fulfill customs and duties related to the New Year, mostly related to lay life, and spend the day for that purpose. Yet, even on such a day, this group of devotees, contemplating wisely, should ask: what is the truly rare thing? Is it just a New Year's day that comes once a year, or is it a day obtained in this rare human life? The Poya day. Thus, which is more valuable—the New Year or the Poya? You must resolve this yourself. If the New Year is valuable, if the sound of firecrackers is more valuable, one is pulled towards that side. If the Poya is valuable, if the sound of Dhamma is more valuable, one is pulled towards this side.

Different individuals behave in various ways according to their own concepts of values. Likewise, if avenues of entertainment are what is desired for the New Year, they are drawn to them. Instead, if spending a peaceful, more simple life is the valuable opportunity to be gained from a New Year, one must contemplate that this Bak Poya which came along with this New Year is a good opportunity to understand one's own inclination and comprehension of values. Thus, we are pleased that these devotees, having entered upon this path of virtue, have undertaken the eight-factored Uposatha precepts (*uposatha aṭṭhaṅga-sīla*), and some have even undertaken the ten precepts (*dasa-sīla*), thereby understanding the value of virtue. Furthermore, within that virtue is a training, a preparation for monastic life. It has been pointed out on many occasions: why was the layperson told to observe precepts on the four Poyas? It is to gradually incline from lay life towards monastic life, to provide an opportunity for dwelling in seclusion, meditation, and so forth. Similarly, as directly mentioned in the Dhamma, one observes the eight precepts on Poya with the determination: "For this one day and one night, I shall observe the practice that the Arahants perform and follow every day." There is such a deep meaning in undertaking the precepts.

Reflecting in that way, on this valuable day, these devotees should rejoice that they spent today on the most valuable thing. Next, systematically coordinating these is up to you. Based on this wealth of virtue (*sīla-sampatti*) that has been obtained and gathered, or the virtue that is kept, each one must develop the aspects of meditation called serenity and insight (*samatha, vipassanā*), as pointed out by the Blessed One, by unifying the mind around a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Lay life does not merely

consist of things related to the five cords of sensual pleasure (*pañca-kāma*) going towards various objects. In this era, with various machines and instruments, these devotees spend a highly restless day, day in and day out. There is no peace even at night, spending the day agitated amidst a deluge of globalized news that comes with relentless noise and clamor. That is the kind of situation that exists.

While on one hand it appears that such a highly dangerous situation is arising, on the other hand, some people rejoice: "In this era, what the brahmins and monks of the past did by going to the Himalayas and deep into difficult forests with so much toil, we can now easily obtain as 'divine eye' and 'divine ear' if we have money." Indeed, we see those devices placed in many people's ears, don't we? They have "divine eyes" and "divine ears." Next, traveling through the sky is also possible if there is money, just like boarding a bus. What is lacking then? Direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). There is no need to toil for them. If we look at the world according to modernized physical concepts, spending a lay life of that sort seems to have a good side. But along with that, these devotees know that we are gradually moving towards the side of the brute beast. It is a journey towards a beastly society. This is because, departing from those practices of virtue (*sīla*) and so forth, forgetting those virtues such as showing respect and honor to elders, listening to them, and listening to their advice, giving place instead to external showiness, to a showy and self-indulgent life, we see in society a life spent respecting only wealth, status, office, and so on.

In the past, there were various concepts such as *vayovuḍḍha* (senior in age), *guṇavuḍḍha* (senior in virtue), and *tapovuḍḍha* (senior in asceticism). In the ordinary world, "senior in age" is the concept. In the Dispensation, there are concepts like "senior in virtue" and "senior in asceticism"—senior in ascetic practice, senior in virtuous qualities. That is why we pay respects even to that young child. However, instead of such a concept of seniority, society goes towards those offices, wealth, and so on, and pays respects to them. They pay respects to wealth, they pay respects to status. But we must reflect that through a life of that sort, a terrible decline in human ethics takes place. It moves towards a beastly society. That decline can spread to a point where one cannot even walk on the streets. Therefore, at least a few of us must think mindfully about these things. Indeed, what the world needs is example. Today, we constantly hear that Dhamma is preached endlessly. Perhaps because of that, we also hear criticisms about preaching the Dhamma. But that is not the point. If at least a few who listen to the Dhamma present an example through their own lives, that is what is valuable. Thus, it is not the preaching of the Dhamma, but the way of listening to the Dhamma and the lack of enthusiasm to practice it that is the cause of this decline. Therefore, irrespective of the country's situation, each one must reflect wisely: no matter how long this short lifespan we have received is—it is said that the child lived for one hundred and twenty years. Although it was one hundred and twenty years, we see according to the Dhamma that he did not spend that time on bad things. He gathered another five hundred lay devotees. Recollecting that he obtained that lifespan by being saved from the *yakkha* Avaruddhaka due to the power of the Buddha, the power of the Dhamma, and the power of the Saṅgha,

that child was later known as Prince Āyuvaḍḍhana. It is mentioned that he spent a life in accordance with the Dhamma accompanied by a group of five hundred lay devotees.

We too must reflect that because of the virtuous life we lead day by day during this year, this lifespan we have received, perhaps various unwholesome kamma (*akusala-kamma*) destined to ripen in our lives are worn away naturally through leading good lives; or we hear of situations where one escapes with just a scratch. We must reflect that we were fortunate enough to face another year because of the good life we spent. Taking that as a foundation, what we must do is to be further enthusiastic about it. Thus, as said before, in terms of virtue (*sīla*)—the one who had no interest at all in the permanent five precepts (*nicca-pañcasīla*) must strive to keep the permanent five precepts. Next, not being satisfied with that, one must try to undertake the eight precepts (*aṭṭhasīla*) on at least one Poya. The one who has undertaken them on one Poya must, in this way, gradually conduct their life and existence on that side so that there is growth in their virtue over two or four Poyas. Next, regarding one's values, one's virtues, in accordance with the concept of "simple living and high thinking" as mentioned earlier, instead of unnecessary lives, one must understand the true virtues pointed out by the Blessed One, and through such a light life, strive to unify the mind, establishing the mind in concentration (*samādhi*) with the help of a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

What is there to do next with that concentrated mind? It is not to direct the mind towards this entire world or other worlds, searching and seeking after them. The Blessed One declared: "It is in this very fathom-long carcass, endowed with perception and mind, that I declare the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the way leading to the cessation of the world." Recollecting that word of the Buddha, if one has correctly understood one's own five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), it is the same with the five aggregates of others. One must train oneself to look at them in terms of the method of the establishment of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna-naya*) from the four aspects of contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*), contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā*), and contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*), internally and externally (*bahiddhā*). Our understanding of the four establishments of mindfulness (*cattu-satipaṭṭhāna*) becomes deep. As it becomes deeper, next, gradually, one's understanding of those thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*sattatisa-bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) such as the right strivings (*sammappadhāna*), bases of spiritual power (*iddhipāda*), faculties (*indriya*), powers (*bala*), and so forth, also develops. Through that, in the end, one enters the Noble Eightfold Path.

Today, we see various highways and expressways being constructed in the world. Those expressways might sometimes be a shortcut to bring about a quick death. All of those expressways are defeated by this Noble Eightfold Path, known as the Middle Path, which the Blessed One introduced to the world. Concerning this Noble Eightfold Path, the Blessed One declared: *"Eso maggo natthañño, dassanassa visuddhiyā"*—this is the path, there is no other, for the purification of vision. Therefore, entering upon that path is ultimately the purpose of this training that begins with the four establishments of

mindfulness. It is through that path, at some point, with the systematic development and complete transformation of personal character through right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*), that one gets the ability to finally end this suffering of Saṃsāra (*saṃsāra-dukkha*) through those supramundane paths of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship.

These devotees must contemplate that on a valuable day like today, the goals they should set are not to gather even more material wealth in the coming year than the personal wealth gathered so far in this year to lead a luxurious life. Understanding deeply this unsatisfactoriness of Saṃsāra (*saṃsāra-dukkha*) shown by the Blessed One, one must firmly establish in one's mind the determination to make an effort in the coming year that is hundreds and thousands of times stronger than the effort made so far to end this suffering (*dukkha*).

Until then, by undertaking this valuable virtue, next by listening to this Dhamma, and during that time developing meditation to the best of one's ability, this group of devotees has gathered a vast store of merit (*kusala-sambhāra*) in every aspect of giving, virtue, and meditation (*dāna, sīla, bhāvanā*). Providing alms (*dāna*) to this virtuous group is also no small task. These devotees fulfilled that too, participating in those activities themselves. Thus, many valuable virtues of giving, virtue, and meditation were gathered today. Moving forward with this very power that has been gathered from all of this, as quickly as possible, before this lamp of the Dispensation is extinguished, with the help and support of one's spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitta*), succeeding in Dhamma and meditation, accomplishing the meditation subjects, and through the realization (*paṭivedha*) of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, being released from all this suffering of Saṃsāra (*saṃsāra-dukkha*), may this benefit of listening to the Dhamma be an absolute support and decisive condition (*upanisraya*) to attain the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna. Wish for this.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #100

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.138)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

No bhāsamānaṃ jānanti, missaṃ bālehi paṇḍitaṃ;

Bhāsamānañca jānanti, desentaṃ amataṃ padaṃ.

Bhāsaye jotaye dhammaṃ, paggaṇhe isinaṃ dhajaṃ;

Subhāsitadhajā isayo, dhammo hi isinaṃ dhajo ti.

From:

Itivuttaka (It 105)

Dear Listeners,

The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, highlighted on many occasions how the preaching of the Dhamma is the fundamental foundation for the longevity of the Buddha's Dispensation (*Sammā Sambuddha Sāsana*). He also explained the method of preaching the Dhamma in such a way that a life, a life's journey, is completely transformed. Certain members of the Sangha who preached the Dhamma in an exemplary manner even won the praise of the Buddha. The two verses chosen as today's theme were uttered by him on such an occasion. While the Buddha was residing in the Gabled Hall (*Kūṭāgāra Sālā*) in the Great Forest (*Mahāvana*) near Vesālī, the Venerable Visākha Pañcālaputta was giving a Dhamma instruction to the Sangha in the assembly hall. Several special words are mentioned regarding the manner of that Dhamma instruction: *"dhammiyā kathāya sandasseti, samādapeti, samuttejeti, sampahaṁseti"*. *Sandasseti* (instructing) through a Dhamma talk means making the points one is explaining clearly visible, demonstrating, and clarifying them by using various similes and examples. Similarly, *samādapeti* (instigating) means thoroughly convincing them of those things. Just as taking upon oneself (*samādāna*) generosity and virtue (*dāna*, *sīla*) means making oneself accept them. *Samuttejeti* (encouraging) means inspiring effort. *Sampahaṁseti* (gladdening) means making them happy.

Thus, the characteristics of a good Dhamma sermon involve demonstrating those points through similes and illustrations, thoroughly convincing the listeners of those points, inspiring effort, and bringing joy. Those words are employed there. Furthermore, several other terms and phrases are mentioned there concerning the style of speech and style of preaching. Regarding that language, five terms and phrases are mentioned: *"poriyā vācāya, vissaṭṭhāya, anelagalāya, atthassa viññāpanīya, anissitāya"*. *Poriyā vācā—paura* means the language of the citizens or townspeople. Generally, *poriyā vācā* implies that the sermon is delivered in an eloquent, polite, and refined language. *Vissaṭṭhāya* means pronouncing the words and letters very clearly and smoothly. *Anelagalāya* means flowing faultlessly. *Atthassa viññāpanīya* means preaching in a manner that makes the meaning perfectly clear. And *anissitāya* means delivering the Dhamma sermon not in a way that fosters attachment to this becoming (*bhava*), but in a way that helps one gain release from becoming (*bhava*). Thus, endowed with these characteristics, he delivered the Dhamma sermon to the Sangha in the assembly hall.

That evening, the Buddha arose from his seclusion, came to the assembly hall, sat on the prepared seat, and asked the Sangha, "Monks, who is it that inspired the Sangha in this assembly hall with a Dhamma talk, using such and such vocabulary?" Then the Sangha replied, "Venerable Sir, it was the Venerable Visākha Pañcālaputta who inspired the Sangha with a Dhamma talk." Then the Buddha, addressing Venerable Visākha Pañcālaputta, said, "*Sādhu, sādhu, Visākha*. Very good, Visākha, to inspire the Sangha with such pure vocabulary!" Having praised him thus, he uttered the two thematic verses on that occasion.

"No bhāsamānaṁ jānanti, missaṁ bālehi paṇḍitaṁ." As long as the wise man mixed among fools does not speak, others do not recognize him. *"Bhāsamānaṁ ca jānanti, desentaṁ amataṁ padaṁ."* When he speaks, when he teaches the deathless state (*amataṁ padaṁ*) which is Nibbāna, others recognize him. The next verse preached by the Buddha is like a challenge. If we state its general meaning, it is as follows: *"Bhāsaye jotaye dhammaṁ"*, let him preach this Dhamma, let him illuminate it. *"Paggaṇhe isinaṁ dhajaṁ"*, let him raise and hold up the banner of the seers. *"Subhāsitadhajā isayo"*, seers have well-spoken words as their banner. *"Dhammo hi isinaṁ dhajo"*, indeed, the Dhamma itself is the banner of the seers. If we attempt to present that challenging character through a translation, we can say:

> Preach, illuminate the True Dhamma;
>
> take up and raise the banner of the seers!
>
> Seers have well-spoken words as their banner;
>
> the Dhamma itself is the banner of the seers.

The Buddha uttered those verses. Next, regarding that Venerable Visākha Pañcālaputta, there are some brief descriptions of his life story and biography in the Dhamma commentaries. He was from the country of Magadha. What is understood from the name "Pañcālaputta" is—as mentioned in some places—that he was the son of a queen named

Pañcālī, but he was actually the son of a regional governor. When the Buddha visited that area, he listened to the Dhamma, gained confidence, ordained, went to Sāvatthī, and became an Arahant endowed with higher spiritual powers (*abhiññā*). Subsequently, he returned to his native village and preached the Dhamma to the local people. On that occasion, those people asked what characteristics a true expounder of the Dhamma (Dhamma preacher) should possess. The answer he gave is recorded in his *Theragāthā*. That verse is as follows:

"Na ukkhipe no pi pare na okkhipe,

pāragataṁ na eraye;

na cattavaṇṇaṁ parisāsu byāhare,

anuddhato sammitabhāṇi subbato."

"Na ukkhipe" means not exalting oneself. Within a Dhamma sermon, one does not inflate oneself and talk about one's own greatness, in terms of caste or education. *"No pi pare"* means not belittling others by way of criticism. *"Na okkhipe"* means not looking down on others. *"Pāragataṁ na eraye"* means not disparaging the Arahants who have gone to the further shore. *"Na cattavaṇṇaṁ parisāsu byāhare"* means not praising oneself in the midst of assemblies. *"Anuddhato"* means being un-excited/not haughty, and *"sammitabhāṇi"* means speaking measuredly, weighing one's words to the right proportion. *"Subbato"* means being of good, pure conduct. In this manner, it is mentioned that he preached even the component characteristics of a true expounder of the Dhamma.

From these, what we can gather is that the Buddha's call to "raise the banner of the Dhamma" was meant to highlight the value of the Dhamma. Because in this Dispensation (*Sāsana*), as you lay devotees have heard, respect for the Dhamma is greater than respect for individuals. The Buddha himself declared on one occasion that he spent his life respecting the Dhamma. "Monks, newly awakened, while I was staying in seclusion under the Ajapāla Banyan tree on the banks of the Nerañjarā River in Uruvelā, this thought occurred to me: 'To live a life without showing respect and without relying on a teacher is painful (characterized by suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*)). Under what recluse or brahmin should I live, honoring and respecting him?'" Thus, he considered and reflected with wisdom. Even though he searched the entire world, including the devas and brahmās, the Buddha did not see anyone superior to himself in virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*), or liberation (*vimutti*). It is said that he then thought as follows:

Then, this thought occurred to me: "What if I were to live honoring, respecting, and relying on this very Dhamma which I have fully awakened to?" No sooner had this thought arisen in the Buddha than Sahampati Brahmā, understanding his thought, appeared there, sat to one side, paid homage, and said to the Buddha, "So it is, O Sugata (Happy One), so it is, O Sugata! All those Buddhas, those Tathāgatas who existed in the past, all of them lived honoring, respecting, and relying on the Dhamma itself. All those

Buddhas who will arise in the future will also do the same. Therefore, let the Blessed One also live honoring and respecting the Dhamma itself!" It is mentioned there in two verses that "this is a natural law (*esā buddhāna dhammatā*): respecting the Dhamma is the natural way of the Buddhas." It is in accordance with this that, as you lay devotees have often seen, even if a seven-year-old novice monk (*sāmaṇera*) is preaching the Dhamma, a high seat is offered, in order to express respect for that Dhamma.

Next, on one occasion, the Buddha addressed the Sangha and declared, "Monks, as long as the Sugata or the Discipline of the Sugata (*Sugata-vinaya*) remains in the world, it will bring welfare, happiness, and benefit to the world, including devas and humans." First, he defines who the Sugata is. The Sugata is the Tathāgata, the Fully Self-Awakened One (*Sammā Sambuddha*). What is the Discipline of the Sugata? The Discipline of the Sugata refers to the Dhamma preached by the Tathāgata, which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, with the correct meaning and phrasing—"phrasing" (*vyañjana*) meaning complete in letters and words—proclaiming the pure holy life (*brahmacariya*). Having declared that as long as the Sugata or the Discipline of the Sugata remains in the world, immense relief is brought to the world, including devas and humans, the Buddha simultaneously stated four factors that lead to the disappearance of this True Dhamma and its being forgotten by the world. The first factor is that monks study this Dhamma incorrectly. They grasp and learn the Dhamma in a wrong way, with incorrect words, phrasing, and letters. Then the Buddha states that due to incorrectly grasped letters and words, the meaning also becomes distorted. Thus, studying the Dhamma incorrectly is shown as a cause for the decline of the Dhamma.

Secondly, he shows that in the future, monks will arise who are very undisciplined, disobedient, and who do not listen to Dhamma instructions. That attitude of the Sangha also leads to the disappearance of the True Dhamma. The third factor is that monks who are keepers of the Dhamma (*dhammadhara*) and keepers of the Discipline (*vinayadhara*) do not properly teach the Dhamma to the subsequent generation, to other monks, or to their disciples. Because of this, those discourses (*sūtrānta* Dhamma) disappear. Lacking a refuge—meaning there is no one to accept those discourses. We have all heard how in those days, particularly through the lineage of reciters (*bhāṇaka*), this Dhamma was preserved by word of mouth from teacher to disciple; that is the point. The fourth factor shown is that the way of life of the elder monks changes. When elder monks arise who lean towards luxury, have very loose conduct, do not delight in seclusion, do not delight in Nibbāna, and do not strive for Nibbāna, then the subsequent generation, namely their group of disciples, will also conform to that way. This, too, is declared in that discourse as a cause for the disappearance of the True Dhamma.

Even better, in another valuable discourse, the Buddha demonstrates how the True Dhamma gradually declines, presenting it as a future danger (*anāgata-bhaya*) and a prophecy. You lay devotees yourselves must see to what extent this has come true. In that discourse, the Buddha first presents a certain simile. "Monks, a group of Kṣatriya kings called the Dasārahas had a ceremonial drum. That drum was known by the name 'Āṇaka'." There is also a story about this crab-claw drum called Āṇaka. It is more likely

that it was a drum frame constructed by joining together wooden pegs or splints. In any case, that drum had a very loud sound, a sound that could be heard from afar. When one splint of this drum decayed or fell off, the owners plugged it with a peg made of some good, valuable material. When another splint fell off, they plugged it with another peg. Plugging it with pegs in this manner, eventually, the old drum frame disappeared, and only a collection of pegs remained. The Buddha presented this description as a simile.

"In the same way, monks, in the future, monks will arise who, when the profound, meaningful discourses connected with supramundane emptiness (*suññatā*) preached by the Tathāgata are being recited, will not listen. They will not strive to learn them. They will not consider their meaning. They will not strive to study and master them. Instead, if there are discourses composed by outsiders, which are poetic, with ornate letters and ornate words, they will listen to them attentively. They will be eager to learn them. They will hold them in high esteem. In that manner, the True Dhamma is liable to disappear in the future." Then, the Buddha advises the Sangha, "Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves in this way: 'Let us strive to learn, study, and understand these discourses uttered by the Tathāgata that are supramundane and connected with emptiness.' You must train yourselves thus," the Buddha declared.

From this, we understand that preserving the True Dhamma is a serious responsibility. Similarly, preaching the True Dhamma is also a serious responsibility. Another story revealing this is mentioned next in the Dhamma, concerning a monk named Udāyī in this Dispensation. As shown in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the monk Udāyī frequently broke disciplinary rules and often received the epithet *"Mogha Purisa"* from the Buddha. *"Mogha Purisa"* means a hollow man / foolish person. The Buddha often blamed this monk Udāyī for his behavior, his conduct with laypeople, and his falling into many offenses—he was a strange character indeed. Yet, this monk Udāyī was very popular.

One day, this monk Udāyī was preaching the Dhamma surrounded by a large crowd. Venerable Ānanda saw this. Having seen it, he went and said to the Buddha, "Venerable Sir, I saw the Venerable Udāyī sitting in the midst of a large crowd and preaching the Dhamma." Thereupon, the Buddha declared, "Ānanda, preaching the Dhamma to others is no easy task. One who preaches the Dhamma to others should do so having established five things within himself, having firmly resolved upon five things. How so?" He then points them out one by one as the practices to be observed when preaching: *"Ānupubbikathaṁ kathessāmīti paresaṁ dhammo desitabbo."* That is, one must conduct the Dhamma sermon with the intention: "I will speak a gradual discourse"—this is the first factor.

The second factor: *"Pariyāyadassāvī kathaṁ kathessāmīti paresaṁ dhammo desitabbo"*. *Pariyāya* means that the Dhamma should be preached with reasons and examples. Next: *"Anuddayataṁ paṭicca paresaṁ dhammaṁ desessāmīti"*. One must preach with the point established in mind: "I will preach the Dhamma out of kindness and compassion towards the listeners in the world." Next: *"Na āmisantaro kathaṁ kathessāmīti paresaṁ dhammo desitabbo"*. That is, one should not preach the Dhamma with material gain in view, thinking, "May I receive offerings of the four requisites by

their listening to this sermon." The fifth factor: *"Attānañca parañca anupahacca dhammaṁ desessāmīti"*. Preaching the Dhamma without harming oneself or others. "Harming oneself" refers to speaking in self-praise and the like. "Harming others" refers to criticizing others and thus denigrating their virtues. Avoiding that as well, one must preach this Dhamma. In this way, five factors are pointed out there.

To explain this briefly, you lay devotees have often heard of the "gradual discourse" (*anupubbikathā*), which is frequently mentioned in connection with the Buddha's preaching style. His path of exposition as recorded in books usually proceeds as: talk on giving (*dāna-kathā*), talk on virtue (*sīla-kathā*), talk on heaven (*sagga-kathā*). He starts first with the talk on giving, followed by the talk on virtue, and the talk on heaven. Then, the danger of sensual pleasures (*kāmānaṁ ādīnavaṁ*), their degradation and defilement (*okāraṁ saṅkilesaṁ*), and the benefits of renunciation (*nekkhamma-ānisasaṁ*). This is what is chiefly included in the gradual discourse. He preaches the benefits of giving, and that giving is a good practice. The Buddha explains that virtue is a valuable practice. For the people at that level, that is a great thing. Just like a gentle shower falling on young paddy crops, their minds are awakened regarding giving, keeping precepts, and so forth. Thus: talk on giving, talk on virtue. Next, that by giving and keeping precepts one can be reborn in heaven: talk on heaven. Since this occurs in accordance with the Dhamma and in line with *kamma*, the Buddha highlights that as well. By then, great joy is created in those listeners. Next, like descending a mountain: talk on giving, talk on virtue, talk on heaven, and then the danger of sensual pleasures (*kāmānaṁ ādīnavaṁ*)—the disadvantageous side of the five strands of sensual pleasure for those dwelling in the human world or the heavenly worlds. This is how he inclines them towards Nibbāna. Their dangers (*ādīnava*), their degradation and defilement (*okāraṁ saṅkilesaṁ*), their lowliness, and their nature of generating defilements. Right after that, he preaches the benefits of renunciation (*nekkhamme ca ānisasaṁ*), showing the advantages of leaving the household life to ordain.

By that stage, if the minds of any among the listening crowd have become prepared and suited for ordination, the Buddha had the ability to know that. The state of the prepared mind of the listeners is described using terms such as *"kalla-cittaṁ, mudu-cittaṁ, vinīvaraṇa-cittaṁ, udagga-cittaṁ, pasanna-cittaṁ"*. When the mind is systematically prepared, softened, free from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) for that moment, gladdened, and ready to accept the Dhamma, that is when the Buddhas present the instruction unique to themselves (*yā buddhānaṁ sāmukkaṁsikā dhammadesanā*), which they revealed and raised up for the world: the Four Noble Truths—*Dukkha* (Suffering), its arising (*samudaya*), its cessation (*nirodha*), and the path (*magga*). This is what is generally referred to as the gradual discourse.

Even otherwise, if a certain Dhamma sermon is delivered systematically, step-by-step in sequence, it can be called a gradual discourse. Instead of expending all the coconut oil of the lamp on the introductory homage (*namaskāra*), preaching the facts in order, clearly and sequentially, is what is meant by preaching in a gradual order. Next, *"pariyāyadassī kathā"* means presenting the Dhamma sermon in a way that convinces the listeners, by

adducing causes and examples appropriate to the occasion. *"Anuddayataṁ paṭicca"* (out of compassion) can be understood as preaching with kindness: "May a word of mine help to free these beings sunk in this Saṁsāra from suffering (*dukkha*)." *"Na āmisantaro"* (not for material gain) means preaching not with the thought, "By their listening to this, may my donation bowl be filled," but with the thought, "May their minds be fulfilled, and may this help them realize Nibbāna one day." Lastly, *"attānañca parañca"* means preaching without praising one's own virtues or denigrating the virtues of others. The Buddha points out those five factors there as qualities that must especially reside in Dhamma preachers.

Furthermore, there is a valuable discourse concerning the Buddha's own style of preaching the Dhamma. The way a Buddha preaches the Dhamma is not in expectation of anything, making no distinction whatsoever; whether to a king, a wealthy merchant, or the poorest beggar, he preaches in the very same manner. There is a valuable discourse mentioning this. The Buddha first presents the simile: "Monks, in the evening, the lion emerges from his cave, stretches his back, and yawns. Then, he looks in the four directions. Having looked, he roars the lion's roar three times. Having roared the lion's roar, he sets out in search of prey. When that lion sets out for prey, whether he attacks an elephant, he strikes with absolute precision, without any deficiency. Whether he attacks a wild buffalo, he leaps upon the wild buffalo with the same speed. Whether he leaps upon a cow, it is the same. Whether he leaps upon a leopard, it is the same. Even if he leaps upon a hare or a cat, the lion leaps with the very same effort. Why does he do so? For the lion, missing his target is a disgrace. The lion's leap, the leap he takes when hunting for prey, is something special. He leaps in that manner with the thought, 'May I not miss my target.'"

Next, the Buddha explains this through the application of the simile: "Monks, the lion is a designation for the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Fully Self-Awakened One. The lion's roar is a designation for the preaching of the Dhamma." Then he declares: "Whether the Tathāgata preaches the Dhamma to monks, he preaches it carefully. Proclaiming this holy life (*brahmacariya*) which is good in the beginning, middle, and end, with the correct words, phrasing, and letters—even when preaching to monks, he preaches it carefully. Whether he preaches to nuns, he preaches it carefully and properly. Whether to laymen or laywomen, it is the same. Even if he preaches to a beggar or a hunter, he preaches it carefully. Why? Because," as shown there, like the lion's target, "the Tathāgatas are respecters of the Dhamma (*dhamma-garu*). They act out of respect for the Dhamma, respecting the Dhamma, not out of respect for material gain (*āmisa-garu*). If they were respecters of material gain, they would look only at the person's face and preach just to please them with words."

But the Buddha, whether to a king, a merchant, or an extreme pauper, preaches the Dhamma in that manner, just as the lion leaps. This is the Buddha's style of preaching. Although we say so, even in the Buddha's time, there were certain critical people who looked for flaws in the Buddha's preaching. Such a story is revealed when he was residing in the Pāvārika Mango Grove in Nālandā. A headman named Asibandhakaputta—*gāmiṇī* means headman—came to the Buddha, paid homage, sat to

one side, and asked a question. He asked this with the intention of criticizing the Buddha: "Is the Blessed One compassionate towards all living beings?" The term used there is *"sabbapāṇabhūta-hitānukampī"*. "Is the Blessed One compassionate and concerned for the welfare of all living beings?" Then the Buddha said, "Yes, Gāmaṇi, the Tathāgata"—the Buddha used the word "Tathāgata" when speaking of himself—"the Tathāgata is indeed compassionate and concerned for the welfare of all living beings." "If so, why does the Blessed One preach the Dhamma carefully to some, but not carefully to others?" He must have noticed that the Buddha spent a lot of time and preached with great care to those members of the Sangha who had a special interest in the Dhamma, which prompted this question.

Let us see the Buddha's reply to this. The Buddha asks, "Very well, Gāmaṇi, I will ask you a question in return. Answer as you please. Suppose a farmer has three fields, three paddy fields. One field is of the highest grade, with excellent fertile soil—a supreme field. The second field is of medium quality; it is not as fertile, but it is good. The third field is completely infertile—a barren land, a barren land with salty clay soil. Out of those three fields, when that farmer sows his seed, in which field does he sow first? In the first field, the second, or the third?" Thereupon, it was Asibandhakaputta's turn to answer, and he explained it in detail.

"Venerable Sir, that farmer would sow first in the first field, that supreme field mentioned. Having sown there, if there is still seed-paddy left over, he would sow in the medium-quality field. Having sown there, if there is still something left over, he would sow in that infertile land of salty clay. With what intention? Thinking, 'At the very least, may this yield something as food for the cattle. Even if there is no grain harvest, let me at least get some straw from it.'"

When he said that, the Buddha connected it to this Dhamma talk. "In the same way, Gāmaṇi, I too…" applying the very same simile, "Just like that first field, like that fertile field, are the monks and nuns to me. Why? Because…" several words are mentioned there to show why he was most affectionate towards them, *"mamaṁdīpā mamaṁtāṇā mamaṁleṇā mamaṁsaraṇā"*—because they live making me their island, making me their shelter, treating me as their protection, and taking me as their refuge. That is why I show them this special favor. Therefore, they are like the first field. Like the second field are the laymen and laywomen to me. Because they too hold me as their island, shelter, protection, and refuge, I show them that favor as well. But like the third field, that infertile land of salty clay, are the recluses and brahmins of other sects (*aññatitthiya*) to me.

To both of those first-mentioned groups, the Buddha shows, "I preach the Dhamma that is good in the beginning, middle, and end, with the correct meaning and phrasing, proclaiming the pure holy life (*brahmacariya*)—this is what I do for everyone." And thirdly, he shows, "To this third group as well, I preach in the very same way. But this is the thought I have: 'If they should understand even a single sentence of this, it will lead to their welfare and happiness for a long time.'"

See how beautiful and fitting the simile given for this is. Asibandhakaputta Gāmaṇi had criticized the Buddha, claiming he made distinctions when preaching the Dhamma. The Buddha replied to that. He did not stop there. He gave a second simile. “Gāmaṇi, suppose a man has three water vessels. One water vessel has no holes; it does not leak, and water does not flow out. The second vessel has no holes, but water leaks and flows out. The third vessel has holes; water leaks and flows out. Into which of these three water vessels would that man first bring and pour water?” When asked this, Asibandhakaputta again answered in this way: “Venerable Sir, that man would first pour water into the vessel that has no holes, does not leak, and from which water does not flow out. If there is still water left over, he would pour it into the second vessel which has no holes but leaks and flows out. If there is still something left, he would put it even into the third type of vessel which has holes and leaks water. With what intention? Thinking, ‘At the very least, let it be useful to me for washing utensils, such as plates, and for similar purposes.’”

After Asibandhakaputta Gāmaṇi had said that, the Buddha connected it to the preaching of the Dhamma. “In the same way, Gāmaṇi, like that first-class vessel which has no holes, does not leak, and from which water does not flow out, are the monks and nuns to me. As mentioned before, they treat me as their shelter, protection, and so forth. Therefore, to them, I preach the Dhamma of the fundamental holy life, which is good in the beginning, middle, and end. Like the second category are the laymen and laywomen. Reflect on the simile mentioned: the second category has no holes, yet water leaks and flows out. The third category has holes, water leaks, and flows out. Just like that are the recluses and brahmins of other sects. To them too, I preach the Dhamma, with the thought: ‘At least may a single sentence be a supportive condition and of help to them.’” That is the answer the Buddha gave on that occasion.

Thus, we also know there are many things we can learn from the Buddha’s life and his style of preaching. In this era of conducting various novel researches, you lay devotees can extract valuable principles of educational science from the Buddha’s preaching style. You know how important a place the simile and the parabolic story occupy in a Dhamma talk of the Buddha. There are the “simile” (*upamā*) and the “thing compared” (*upameyya*). You know what a simile is. The “thing compared” is the subject matter represented by the simile. Often, if there are ten aspects to the simile the Buddha uses, the ten aspects of the Dhamma point taken as the thing compared also correspond and align with it beautifully. Thus, preaching the Dhamma through similes and things compared is something that penetrates a person's heart deeply. Moreover, it can be retained in the mind very easily. It has practical value. It touches the very depth of the mind. In particular, we can see how wonderfully the Buddha presented similes drawn from the daily life of that environment—from cattle farming, the farmer's life, the river, and trees. Furthermore, those similes and things compared match each other perfectly. The Buddha declared the natural principle regarding this: *“Upamāyapi idh'ekacce viññū purisā bhāsitassa atthaṁ ājānanti.”* He presents it as a Dhamma principle, which can even be taken as a general educational principle of the world: “Some wise men

understand the meaning of what is said even by means of a simile"—according to that principle.

Similarly, on some occasions, the Buddha presents Dhamma points numerically. Even when telling things to children in a school, when one says, "Here are five points," they are ready to count them on their five fingers. Just like that, when the Buddha says, "Monks, now I shall declare these ten factors," they listen to them one by one with curiosity and attentiveness. Then, beautifully and often in an ascending order, starting from a minor point, saying "this is the first factor, this is the second factor," and going higher and higher, the final factor mentioned is the one that serves as the true climax and is the most valuable. In many places, you lay devotees can clearly observe and understand how he analyzed the Dhamma in that manner and presented those Dhamma sermons in such a valuable way.

In that way, the Buddha also answered the questions asked by certain individuals on the spot, according to the situation. There are deeply profound matters in them. To mention briefly, he did not say "yes" or "no" to every question. That, too, is something the world and preachers should know. There are certain questions that, when the inquirer asks "is it yes or no?" can be answered directly with "yes" or "no". But there are some questions that must be clarified by questioning the inquirer in return before giving an answer. The former is called *"ekaṁsa-vyākaraṇīya"* (to be answered categorically). The second category is *"paṭipucchā-vyākaraṇīya"* (to be answered with a counter-question), where one must ask questions back, clarify them, and then answer. Similarly, there are other matters called *"vibhajja-vyākaraṇīya"* (to be answered analytically), which must be analyzed and examined before answering. There are still other questions that, if their premise is wrong, are *"ṭhapanīya"* (to be set aside)—they are put to one side and not answered, because answering them would lead to a trap. A preacher must also possess this understanding. We can extract such points from the Buddha's preaching style. In his sermons, there are no extraneous matters apart from Dhamma points; they are entirely the Dhamma. Furthermore, on some occasions, the Buddha created opportunities for Dhamma sermons because he could read others' minds; just like in this story of Visākha Pañcālaputta, he asked the Sangha as if he himself did not know.

The Buddha must have heard that Dhamma sermon beautifully with his divine ear (*dibba-sota*). Having heard it, he raises this question to the Sangha, "Who is this?"—just like that. Similarly, on some occasions, as is frequently mentioned in the Dhamma, while the monks are sitting and talking, he arrives at the right moment and asks what conversation they were engaged in. If the monks were engaged in low conversation (*tiracchāna-kathā*)—meaning the thirty-two kinds of worldly talk, bad talk—he preaches in a way that is suited to correct that. Otherwise, if there is some Dhamma point relevant to that day's situation, he takes that as the basis and objective, and then delivers the sermon. The Buddha possessed such styles of preaching. Then, he convinces them of it through the concluding words of the sermon, building up curiosity and leading them to a clear explanation of the matter.

Not only that, we can also understand how he, as the Teacher, trained his group of disciples through that style of Dhamma preaching. On certain occasions, such as on an Observance Day (*Uposatha*), the Buddha would preach the Dhamma to the community of monks almost the entire night. After a watch of the night had passed, after a long time, the Buddha would say, "Sāriputta, the community of monks is free from sleepiness and well awake. My back is aching slightly. I wish to lie down a bit. I need to stretch my back." Saying this, the Buddha would sometimes lie down right there—not to sleep, but listening closely to the Dhamma sermon. While the Buddha was lying down there, Venerable Sāriputta would preach the Dhamma. After he had preached, the Buddha would often praise him, saying, "*Sādhu, sādhu!*" Not only regarding the Arahant Venerable Sāriputta, but also concerning Venerable Ānanda and others in these Dhamma talks—why did he do that? He gave the opportunity to his disciples. He also observed the way they preached the Dhamma. Having observed, he then expressed his praise.

You lay devotees know of many other such occasions mentioned in the Dhamma, and those who read the Dhamma would have seen them. Particularly, as a means of providing opportunities for those monks who were capable of explaining the Buddha's teachings in detail, the Buddha employed a certain skillful means—a strategic method. He would deliver a short sermon, like a riddle, to the Sangha, to the community of monks. Having delivered it, the Buddha would arise from his seat and enter his dwelling. Then, that group of monks would be left bewildered, wondering, "Alas, how can we understand in detail what the Blessed One has stated in brief?" Thereupon, they would talk among themselves, realizing, "Now we cannot go back to find the Blessed One again."

Next, some of them think of Venerable Sāriputta, some of Venerable Mahākaccāyana, and some of Venerable Ānanda. Speaking of such an occasion, concerning Venerable Ānanda, the monks say, "Ah, this is a person praised in this manner by the Blessed One. We must invite Venerable Ānanda." Having gone, they invite Venerable Ānanda, saying, "May the Venerable One explain to us in detail what the Blessed One preached in brief." But Venerable Ānanda does not accept immediately. He states very humbly—often mentioned with a simile—"Friends, this is just like leaving behind the root and trunk of a sal tree and searching for heartwood in its leaves; such is your coming to search for me. The meaning of what was said should be asked from the Blessed One himself." Thereupon, the monks plead again, "Now that opportunity has passed, and Venerable Ānanda is skilled in this. Therefore, may the Venerable One preach this to us." When they urge him repeatedly, Venerable Ānanda says, "Very well, friends, I shall tell you as it appears to me." After saying that, and after the Buddha approves it later, Venerable Ānanda gives an exposition on it. Having heard that exposition, and when the monks clarify this matter to the Buddha during a quiet moment, the Buddha approves it, saying, "*Sādhu, sādhu!*" and praises him, saying, "Monks, had you asked me, I too would have explained it in the very same way." It is those very expositions that are ultimately seen in those discourses as the utterances of the disciples (*sāvaka-bhāsita*).

Thus, from this too we see that, in his effort to carry forward the Buddha's Dhamma as a teacher, he gave that strength to his disciples, sometimes even while he himself was present. In particular, they are highlighted as those who aspired to illuminate this Dispensation and this Dhamma in various aspects, or as those who had made such resolutions in Saṁsāra. You all know that the Arahant Venerable Sāriputta was of great wisdom, foremost in wisdom (*paññā*). He could not be compared to the Buddha, of course, but secondarily, he was foremost in wisdom. Similarly, the Arahant Venerable Mahākaccāyana received the foremost (*etadagga*) position for explaining in detail what was preached in brief. Just like awarding degrees in modern times, the Buddha, according to their resolutions made in Saṁsāra and their corresponding skills, awarded foremost positions (*etadagga*) to those skilled ones on various occasions. He declared the Arahant Venerable Mahākaccāyana as foremost among those monks who could explain in detail what was preached in brief. Similarly, among those of beautiful articulation (*kalyāṇa-vākkarāṇa*) in pronouncing the words of the Dhamma sermon very well, Venerable Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa was foremost. Among those who could preach the Dhamma in a sweet voice—not in the form of singing, but according to a certain vocal strength endowed by birth—Venerable Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya was foremost. Next, Venerable Ānanda was foremost among those of great learning (*bahu-suta*). Among the expounders of the Dhamma (Dhamma preachers), Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta was foremost.

In that manner, he awarded foremost positions to those respective Venerable Ones. Thereby, the Buddha introduced to the disciple Sangha those Venerable Ones from whom assistance could be sought in various aspects for carrying this Dhamma forward. From this too, we can extract valuable points. As shown in the previously mentioned similes, the monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen lived treating the Buddha as their island, shelter, protection, and refuge. But who is there when the Buddha is no more? That question arises automatically. That is why it was said earlier that as long as the Sugata or the Discipline of the Sugata remains, the welfare of the world is ensured. It is that very point that you have heard the Buddha mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*: “Ānanda, after my passing away, it might occur to you: ‘The Dispensation has no Teacher.’ You should not think so, Ānanda. Whatever Dhamma I have preached and whatever Discipline (*vinaya*) I have laid down, that will be your Teacher after my passing.”

Thus, this shows us that when the Buddha is no more, it is that very Dhamma and Discipline that holds the position of the Teacher for us. That is why we must understand how, as a future danger, that Dhamma and Discipline should be protected; just like the removal of those pegs, if we start removing those pegs, eventually a time will come when this Dhamma stops functioning altogether. In fact, the Dhamma has also been compared to a drum. The Buddha declared to Upaka the Ājīvaka, “I am going to the city of Kāsī to deliver the first Dhamma sermon,” and on his way he said, *“āhacca amata-dundubhiṁ”—dundubhi* means drum—“I go to the city of Kāsī, to beat the drum of the Deathless.” On that occasion, this Dhamma is referred to as “amata.” You know that the Deathless (*amata*) is Nibbāna. Therefore, the sound of Nibbāna, the sound of

extinguishment, must come from the drum. That is what must happen in a Dhamma sermon. Often, in the Buddha's discourses, even in that gradual discourse mentioned, it must ultimately reach its climax in Nibbāna through the Four Noble Truths. Otherwise, only a hollow sound is heard.

The true sound of the Deathless drum is the sound of Nibbāna. Instead of that, a hollow sound can arise. In that manner, by putting new and beautiful splints on each decaying splint, the drum frame eventually becomes an entirely different drum frame. Therefore, we must reflect that this is a duty towards the Dhamma to be performed by both parties—both the Dhamma preacher and the listener. That is why the Buddha speaks of "respect for the Dhamma" (*dhamma-gāravatā*). Respect for the Dhamma must be greater than respect for individuals. To cultivate that respect for the Dhamma, the Buddha points out three kinds of preaching. There is one kind of preaching where the preacher is *"atthappaṭisaṁvedī"* and *"dhammappaṭisaṁvedī"* regarding the Dhamma he preaches. He experiences the meaning of the Dhamma he preaches, and he also experiences the Dhamma therein. But the listener does not experience it. In the second kind of preaching, the preacher does not experience either the taste of the meaning or the taste of the Dhamma of the sermon he delivers, but the listener experiences it. In the third kind of preaching, both the preacher and the listener experience both the taste of the meaning and the taste of the Dhamma within that teaching.

What is this taste of the meaning (*attha-rasa*) and taste of the Dhamma (*dhamma-rasa*)? You lay devotees can consider this: when listening to a Dhamma sermon, some people may listen to it with the intention of academic study. Thinking, "This is just another Dhamma sermon," and then listening with a critical attitude—not to gather something for one's life, but to find the flaws mentioned, or comparing it with another sermon they have heard in order to arrive at certain conclusions. In that case, that person might indeed experience the meaning as described, but they do not experience the taste of the Dhamma. They do not get to experience the taste of the Dhamma contained within it. Therefore, if one is to experience this taste of the Dhamma as well, there is a way in which those listeners should listen to the Dhamma, as described in the past. Regarding everything they hear, in the manner described as *"atthikaṭvā, manasikaritvā, sabba-cetaso samannāharitvā, ohitasoto dhammaṁ suṇāti"*—thinking "this is of benefit to me," reflecting upon it, directing the entire mind towards it, and listening with attentive ears. It is through this reflection that one becomes a true listener. It is from Dhamma heard in that manner that the taste of the Dhamma can be experienced. If the preacher also does this on certain occasions, it is when the listener hears it in that way that they attain the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). It is mentioned in the Dhamma that sometimes the preacher, too, upon finishing his sermon, also attains the paths and fruits. Such stories are mentioned in the Dhamma.

There was a monk named Khemaka who, at a time when some doubt arose regarding his realization—he was a non-returner (*anāgāmī*)—sent a message to the other monks, declaring, "I do not regard any of these five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) as self, yet I am not an Arahant." When this message was sent back and forth two or three times, the group of sixty monks in the other monastery doubted it. They thought, "This does not fit;

it is contradictory." Finally, this Venerable One said, "Then I shall go and explain it myself." Taking a walking staff, he went and explained to those monks using two similes: "What I said is entirely true. For although I do not perceive this fivefold aggregate of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) (grasping / holding / fuel) as a single entity, as self, or as mine, I still have some defilements remaining." He gave two similes. What were those similes? "Just as with the scent of a flower, I cannot say whether the scent comes from the petals, the pollen, or from which part of the flower. Yet, there is something called the scent of the flower. I do not know where it comes from. In the same way, I do not regard any single aggregate as self. Yet, the subtle conceit 'I am' (*asmi-māna*) still remains within me."

Next, he gives another simile. "Suppose a washerman cleans a dirty cloth using a certain substance that was used in those days instead of soap, referred to as 'gomiya'—which might have been some cleaning substance mixed with cow dung. He removes the dirt by applying that substance. Although the dirt is removed, the scent of the cleaning agent applied, like soap, remains. But after the owner of the cloth takes it back and stores it in a chest for some time, that scent too disappears." What he demonstrated through that simile is: "I do not regard any single aggregate as 'I' or 'mine'. Yet, I am not an Arahant either." It is mentioned that when he finished saying this, those listening monks attained Arahantship, and the preaching monk himself advanced from the stage of a non-returner (*anāgāmī*) to the fruit of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala*), realizing Nibbāna. That is what we must understand: both the listener of the Dhamma and the preacher of the Dhamma must strive to listen as *"atthappaṭisaṁvedī"* and *"dhammappaṭisaṁvedī"*, in the manner described.

True, according to the needs of this era, these machines placed in front of us are operating on our behalf. But one day, we might have to say that if anyone is to become an Arahant, it will be those machines! Because in the coming computer age, all of these will be retained in those computer machines. Among you lay devotees who use them, this Dhamma is perhaps not stored within. Even if it is stored, it is stored only for academic purposes. Otherwise, it is based on various other unsuitable objectives.

Therefore, we must be careful; although we use these devices as requirements of the era, we must not become enslaved by them. When listening to the Dhamma, we must bear in mind: "It is a rare Dhamma that we are getting to hear." We are striving to make this rare Dhamma common and accessible for the sake of the world. That may be good in one aspect. Yet, because it is common, the value of valuable things is sometimes lost—and that is exactly what is happening now. While keeping in mind the verses uttered by the Buddha as a challenge, and just as he said, "Illuminate, raise the banner of the seers!", we must understand that while making the Dhamma common, it is not something to be disrespected or lightly estimated merely because it is common. Furthermore, when that Dhamma is studied in that manner, its words and meanings automatically fall apart. They become distorted. Because they do not study them with realization. Consequently, words are sometimes omitted. Over time, that very fate of the drum mentioned earlier will befall the Dhamma.

Therefore, this Dhamma is preserved only if the respective listeners and—just like the preachers—the listeners properly understand the Dhamma through both learning and retention. That is why it is said: *"bahu-ssutā, dhatā, vacasā paricitā, diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā"*. A series of words is mentioned in this manner concerning a person of great learning (*bahu-ssuta*). He has heard the Dhamma; he has heard much of the Dhamma. In the past, people learned these by hearing the Dhamma. In that case, along with hearing goes its retention. *"Sutā, dhatā"*—retaining what has been heard. Now, the things in books are gathering dust in libraries, or recorded things are left on discs. None of them touches the heart. However, we are not going back to the past, but we must remember the things to be taken from it through these words. *"Sutā, dhatā"*—not only having heard, *"bahu-ssutā"*—not only having heard much Dhamma, but retaining it. In the past, they used to say in a simile that it is like holding lion's oil in a golden casket.

Next, *"vacasā paricitā"* (familiarized by speech)—in the past, they not only retained those, but also committed them to speech for the next generation. Reciting them without letting them be forgotten: *"vacasā paricitā"*. Each time they recite them, their minds are purified. Next, *"manasānupekkhitā"* (examined with the mind)—when sitting idle, they mentally reflect with wisdom upon that Dhamma they possess, which they have studied, memorized, and retained. They understand its meaning deeper and deeper. Having understood, next, *"diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā"* (well penetrated by view)—they penetrate it thoroughly with right view. That was how people handled the Dhamma in the past. Now in these times, just like these machines operating instantly, a misconception is spreading in the world that we too can instantly attain the paths and fruits. Why is it called a misconception? Indeed, if this Dhamma which is directly visible (*sandiṭṭhika*) and timeless (*akālika*) is heard properly and preached properly in that manner, we see from the past discourses such as that of Bāhiya that it is not impossible for a person to attain the paths and fruits on that very occasion.

Depending on those levels of understanding, the Buddha points out four types of individuals: *"ugghaṭitaññū, vipañcitaññū, neyya, padaparama"*. Some understand thoroughly when a word or two is spoken, such as Bāhiya and others. Some need things to be elaborated a bit. Some need to be shown in greater detail, like taking them by the hand and showing them. For some, who are *"padaparama"* (one for whom the word is the maximum), they only memorize the words and cannot go beyond that. Thus, at an individual level, in whatever way, if they retain that Dhamma properly as described, and listen while reflecting upon it, that is the moment when the realization of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) takes place. Therefore, we must reflect that protecting this True Dhamma is achieved not by recording it in these machines, nor by writing it down in books, nor by writing it in golden letters and storing it away, but by both the preacher and the listener living within the Dhamma and realizing it, in the manner described.

Thus, today's Dhamma sermon is about the Dhamma sermon itself. There is nothing more. It is about the Dhamma sermon. Yet, everything is contained within this. Therefore, on this valuable day, you lay devotees must reflect today that the responsibility of the Dispensation (*Sāsana*) lies with you as well, belonging to the

fourfold assembly of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. Thus, fulfilling that duty within yourselves, and in the manner declared by the Buddha, for the long-term benefit and welfare of devas and humans—if the strength to preach that Dhamma was generated through this sermon, may this merit also be a supportive condition for you lay devotees to realize the paths and fruits! May all those from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who wish to partake in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, by partaking in it, realize the supreme, great Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi! With this aspiration, recite this verse:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #101

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.47)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Ahaṃ nāgo 'va saṅgāme, cāpāto patitaṃ saraṃ;

Ativākyaṃ titikkhissaṃ, dussīlo hi bahujjano.

Dantaṃ nayanti samitiṃ, dantaṃ rājā bhirūhati;

Danto seṭṭho manussesu, yo 'tivākyaṃ titikkhati.

Varamassatarā dantā, ājānīyā ca sindhavā;

Kuñjarā ca mahānāgā, attadanto tato varaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 320–322 (Nāgavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Today is the Vesak Full Moon Poya Day, the sacred day on which occurred the three great events of the birth, the attainment of Supreme Buddhahood, and the Parinibbāna of our Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One, who is supreme in the three worlds. This is a day when the entire Buddhist world immerses itself in the ocean of the Buddha's sublime qualities. Let us also, to the best of our strength and wisdom, strive to comprehend the depth of this ocean of Buddha-virtues. All of you devout people know very well the *Itipiso* passage, the formula of the nine supreme qualities: *"Itipi so bhagavā arahaṃ sammāsambuddho vijjācaraṇasampanno sugato lokavidū anuttaro purisadammasārathi satthā devamanussānaṃ buddho bhagavā'ti."* It is worth reflecting on why the word *Bhagavā* (the Blessed One) appears twice here. This collection of terms is introduced with the word *Bhagavā* at the very beginning. Furthermore, after declaring that the Blessed One is *Arahaṃ*, *Sammā-sambuddho*, *Vijjācaraṇa-sampanno*, and so on, it concludes with *Buddho Bhagavā'ti*.

From this, we can understand that the essence of all the other eight qualities is contained within this single term, *Bhagavā*. What is meant by this ninefold formula is that the entire vast ocean of the Buddha's qualities is encompassed in the word '*Bhagavā*' (Blessed). Everyone, when beginning a sermon—just as we did—recites the phrase, *"Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa."* The meaning there is: "Homage to Him, the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One!" In all these instances, the term *Bhagavā* (Blessed) is employed. Even among contemporary Hindus, the term *Bhagavān* is frequently used for the Buddha, referring to him as "Bhagavān Buddha." The reason why this term *Bhagavā* is so significant is that it represents the power of the *Pāramīs* (perfections) fulfilled by the Buddha over four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand world cycles. So great was that blessedness that it manifested even in his physical form, adorned with the thirty-two marks of a Great Man (*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*).

The Buddha possessed an incomparable beauty of form, unequaled in the entire world. One can understand that the entire physical body of the Buddha was a manifestation of "blessedness" created through the power of those *Pāramīs*. Even more so, this very blessedness is found within his incomparable and supremely profound Buddha-knowledge. Yet, despite the sublime blessedness of the Buddha whom we call the "Blessed One," he too had to face the eight worldly conditions (*attha-lokadhamma*) that all of us must confront. The Buddha too had to face the insults, slander, sarcasm, harsh words, and physical pain inflicted by the world. But the difference, dear devotees, lies in this: due to the wonderful quality of equanimity (*upekkhā*) and the quality of steadfastness (*tādī-guṇa*)—a resolute, unshakeable quality developed through the power of his *Pāramīs*—the Buddha possessed the strength to remain unshakeable in the face of these eight worldly conditions. The background story of the three verses we have taken as our theme demonstrates the Buddha's ability to face with equanimity all those experiences, good or bad, which we call the eight worldly conditions: gain and loss, fame and disrepute, praise and blame, pleasure and suffering (*dukkha*).

In the Kuru country, there lived a Brahmin named Māgandiya. This Brahmin had an exceptionally beautiful daughter. When the Brahmin was looking for a suitable partner to marry his daughter, even kings and wealthy merchants (*seṭṭhis*) sent marriage proposals to win her hand. However, this Brahmin kept saying, "Not a single one of them is worthy of my daughter." While things stood thus, one day in the early dawn, when the Buddha entered into the Attainment of Great Compassion (*mahākaruṇā-samāpatti*) and surveyed the world with his net of wisdom, the Brahmin Māgandiya and his wife appeared in his vision. Seeing that if he visited them, they had the spiritual potential to attain a supramundane state as high as the stage of Non-Returner (*anāgāmī-phala*), the Buddha walked to a place outside the city where the Brahmin performed his fire-worship. As soon as the Brahmin saw the Buddha, he thought: "There is no one in this world so handsome. This is indeed the perfect husband for my daughter!" He approached the Buddha and said: "O recluse, I have a daughter. Until now, I could not find a suitable husband for her. You are the perfect match for her, and she is the perfect match for you. I shall go and bring her here quickly."

The Buddha remained silent. Perhaps the Brahmin thought, "Ah, then he has consented." He hurried home and said to his wife: "Hurry, hurry! Dress our daughter quickly and bring her along. Today I have found a perfect husband for her!" Thus, the three of them—the Brahmin, his wife, and their daughter—came along. By the time they arrived, the Buddha had walked some distance away from where he was standing, to a spot somewhat out of sight, leaving behind a footprint by resolution. We know that if the Buddha wills it, even if he places his foot on a solid rock, that sacred footprint remains. Thus, when the Brahmin, his wife, and daughter arrived, the Buddha was not where he had been. As the Brahmin looked around saying, "I told him to wait right here," he saw the footprint. The moment he showed it to his wife—who, being well-versed in the Vedic texts regarding the physical marks of a Great Man (*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*), contemplated what kind of person would leave such a footprint—she realized that this footprint did not belong to someone who seeks the pleasures of the five senses. She said to the Brahmin, "This footprint does not belong to one who is attached to the fivefold sensual pleasures. Your wish will not be fulfilled."

But the Brahmin tried to silence her, saying something to the effect of "Don't talk nonsense!" (just as people say today). The Brahmin's wife replied, "Whatever you say, I maintain that this footprint does not belong to someone who seeks the fivefold sensual pleasures." Nevertheless, as they looked around, they spotted the Buddha. Going up to him, the Brahmin said, "Here, I have brought my daughter. I wish to give her to you in marriage." At that moment, the Buddha briefly stated, "I have this to say to you," and briefly recounting the events from his Great Renunciation up to his victory over Māra, he uttered a certain verse indicating that not even a trace of defilement (*kilesa*) arose in him even when the daughters of Māra came and tried to seduce him:

Disvāna taṇhaṃ aratiṃ ragañca,

nāhosi chando api methunasmiṃ;

Kimevidaṃ muttakarīsapuṇṇaṃ,

pādāpi naṃ samphusituṃ na icche.

This verse, along with a series of other verses, is recorded in the *Sutta Nipāta* of the Tipiṭaka. The meaning of this verse is: "Even upon seeing (Māra's daughters) Taṇhā (Craving), Arati, and Ragā, no desire arose in me for sexual union. What is this body, after all, but something filled with urine and excrement? I would not wish to touch it even with my foot." Hearing this, the young maiden Māgandiyā harbored a deep hatred toward the Buddha, thinking: "If he did not want me, he could have just said so instead of insulting me in this manner." Yet, such was the spiritual transformation (*citta-viplava*) wrought by this encounter that the Brahmin subsequently asked: "Well, if you do not desire such a jewel of a woman whom even kings covet, what is the virtue or vow (*sīla-vrata*) that you keep? What is your view (*diṭṭhi*)? What is your philosophy of life?" thus putting several questions to the Buddha. Reading the section of the Canon known as the *Māgandiya Sutta*, one understands that a long Dhamma discussion ensued from the

Buddha's replies, diving deeper and deeper. By the end of that Dhamma discussion, both the Brahmin and his wife were established in the fruit of Non-Returner (*anāgāmī-phala*).

Next, they developed such deep devotion and faith (*saddhā*) that, in order to make arrangements to ordain under the Buddha, they entrusted the responsibility of their daughter to the Brahmin's brother, known as Cūla Māgandiya—who was the uncle of the young Māgandiyā. They handed over those duties to his brother. Having done so, the two of them ordained in the Dispensation (*Sāsana*) and became Arahants. Thereupon, Cūla Māgandiya took his brother's daughter to King Udena of Kosambī. He presented her, saying, "This jewel of a woman is fitting only for Your Majesty." King Udena appointed her to the position of chief queen. Thus, a sequence of events unfolded. In the course of time, the Buddha received an invitation to visit the city of Kosambī from three wealthy merchants (*seṭṭhis*) named Ghosita, Kukkuṭa, and Pāvāriya. Having heard the news of the appearance of a Buddha in the world, these three merchants had loaded carts with great offerings, traveled to Jetavana Monastery to see the Buddha, offered a great almsgiving, listened to the Dhamma, attained the stage of Stream-Entry (*sotāpatti*), and then invited the Buddha to Kosambī.

Moreover, before extending the invitation, they constructed three suitable monasteries (*ārāmas*) for the Buddha and the Saṅgha. These were known as Ghositārāma, Kukkuṭārāma, and Pāvārikārāma. Thus, the Buddha journeyed to Kosambī and, residing by turns in the three monasteries of the said merchants, went on alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*) to their mansions along with the Saṅgha. By then, the young Brahmin woman Māgandiyā was a queen—the chief consort of King Udena. Through a series of reports, Queen Māgandiyā learned that the Buddha had now arrived in the city. She thought, "Now is the perfect time for me to take my revenge." Previously she had resolved, "Once I obtain a powerful husband, I will show this ascetic Gotama what I can do." That was how she had harbored hatred. Now that the opportunity had arrived, what did Māgandiyā do? She bribed the townspeople to insult, abuse, and drive away the Buddha and the Saṅgha when they went on alms-round.

Today, too, we have such things as boycott campaigns and protests. In a similar manner, she organized a campaign using the townspeople to drive the Buddha out. As this continued for several days, the Venerable Ānanda, unable to bear it, approached the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, the insults and abuse directed at us by these citizens are overwhelming. Let us go elsewhere." The Buddha asked, "Where do you propose we go, Ānanda?" "Let us go to another city, Lord." "And if the same thing happens in that city, Ānanda?" "Then we shall go to another city, Lord." "And if it happens there too?" In this way, the Buddha explained: "No, Ānanda, if we flee like that, even if we go to every city in Jambudīpa, this problem will not be settled. That is not how it should be done. When a problem arises in a particular place, it must be settled right there. This abuse will not last more than seven days. Just like an elephant that has entered the battlefield, I shall endure all insults, abuse, assault, and harsh words coming from the world." Expressing this sentiment, he uttered the three verses we have taken as our theme:

Ahaṃ nāgo'va saṅgāme,

cāpāto patitaṃ saraṃ;

Ativākyaṃ titikkhissaṃ,

dussīlo hi bahujjano.

"Just as an elephant entered into battle endures an arrow shot from a bow, so too shall I endure the abusive words of the world; for indeed, the majority of people are ill-behaved." Next:

Dantaṃ nayanti samitiṃ,

dantaṃ rājā bhirūhati;

Danto seṭṭho manussesu,

yo'tivākyaṃ titikkhati.

"They lead only a tamed, trained, and disciplined elephant or horse to an assembly. It is upon a tamed elephant or horse that even a king mounts. *Danto seṭṭho manussesu*—but among humans, he who has tamed himself to endure insults and abuse from without is indeed supreme. This is the second verse." Then, thirdly, he declares:

Varamassatarā dantā,

ājānīyā ca sindhavā;

Kuñjarā ca mahānāgā,

attadanto tato varaṃ.

"Mules (*assatarā*) born of a donkey and a mare, possessing great speed and power, are noble when tamed. Likewise, noble thoroughbred horses (*ājānīya*) capable of understanding the rider's intent are noble. Thoroughbred horses of the Sindh region (*sindhavā*) are noble. And *kuñjarā ca mahānāgā*—great tuskers of immense stature are noble. Yet, more than all of them, *attadanto tato varaṃ*—one who has tamed himself (referring here to the Blessed One himself) is the most supreme of all. Thus he spoke."

And it is said that after seven days, the hostility and abuse gradually subsided. These verses helped many people in their realization of the Dhamma. That is the background story. Let us use this story to try and understand the depth of the ocean of Buddha-virtues to the best of our ability. First, let us reflect on the skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*) employed by the Buddha. The Buddha's Great Wisdom (*mahā-paññā*) and Great Compassion (*mahā-karuṇā*) are two outstanding and noble qualities that distinguish him from all his disciples. Both of these are encompassed in his knowledge of the Attainment of Great Compassion (*mahākaruṇā-samāpatti-ñāṇa*). For it is stated in the texts that every day at dawn, the Buddha casts his net of wisdom—the knowledge of the

Attainment of Great Compassion—over the entire world. The texts mention that at that hour, those who are ready to realize the path and fruit (*magga-phala*) on that day appear within this net of wisdom. In this way, along with the knowledge arising from his Great Compassion and attainment, the precise skillful means to tame such individuals also dawns upon the Buddha.

Thus, we can appreciate the immense value of this knowledge of the Attainment of Great Compassion. This is described as an unshared Buddha-knowledge (*asādhāraṇa-buddha-ñāṇa*). "Unshared" (*asādhāraṇa*) does not mean "unjust" in the modern sense, but rather "extraordinary" or "exclusive." The Buddha possesses a wonderful, unique knowledge of the Attainment of Great Compassion that is not shared by other disciples. Relying on this, no matter how far away a person might be, or how lowly and miserable their state, the Buddha goes in search of them. He goes and, using the appropriate skillful means, leads them toward Nibbāna. Such was the wonderful net of wisdom possessed by the Buddha. Now, when reflecting on this skillful means, some of you devout people might think that there was a slight shortcoming here, because of the few words the Buddha spoke about the physical form of the young Brahmin woman Māgandiyā, which caused her to harbor deep hatred. However, what is shown here is that if a certain skillful means can help someone attain a spiritual state, the Buddha would adopt that course of action even if others might accumulate demerit as a result. As the reason for this, we can point out that the Brahmin Māgandiya and his wife had developed intense conceit (*māna*) due to their daughter's physical beauty. It was to shatter that conceit that the Buddha uttered a verse with words that disparaged physical beauty.

Therefore, even though the young woman harbored hatred because of it, the ultimate result was that the Brahmin Māgandiya and his wife attained the fruit of Non-Returner (*anāgāmī-phala*) and eventually attained Arahantship. Based on this, we can understand that the skillful means employed by the Buddha was born purely of Great Compassion (*mahā-karuṇā*). For if even one being undergoing suffering (*dukkha*) in this great Saṃsāra can be rescued, the Buddha will take whatever action is necessary. If, in the process, someone else gets upset and accumulates demerit, nothing can be done about it. That is the nature of the situation. In this manner, that net of wisdom, the knowledge of the Attainment of Great Compassion, possesses an unimaginably wonderful power. Today, we have various networks like the internet. What they mostly do is keep people spinning within this Saṃsāra. But the Buddha casts his net of the knowledge of the Attainment of Great Compassion across the world to see those who have the strength to escape from this suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṃsāra. It is in accordance with this that the Buddha approaches and helps them. Reflecting on this knowledge of the Attainment of Great Compassion, we can develop faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha's profound intellectual power and Great Compassion. Furthermore, as specifically conveyed by these verses, the noble and supreme quality of the Buddha in enduring all anger, insults, and abuse is of great significance to all of us. Everyone living in this society has to face such experiences. To varying degrees, our minds get agitated. Yet, the

Buddha's mind was never agitated by them in the least. Such was the wonderful quality of steadfastness (*tādī-guṇa*), a resolute quality, that resided within the Buddha.

We see there the noble and valuable quality of settling any problem right where it arises. Likewise, these eight worldly conditions—gain and loss, fame and disrepute, praise and blame, pleasure and suffering (*dukkha*)—are common to everyone, even to a Buddha. The difference lies in the great quality of equanimity (*upekkhā*) in enduring them, which can be regarded as belonging to the Buddha's unique quality of "blessedness" (*bhagavā*). Thus, the cause of that supreme quality of the Buddha is indeed that very state of blessedness. Today, we use the term *bhāgya* to mean luck or fortune. One might call it being "fortunate." However, there is a certain point here that needs to be clarified. It is a somewhat deep matter. It is stated in the Dhamma regarding the Buddha that he abandoned all defilements along with their residual impressions (*savāsanā sakala kilesa*).

To say that he destroyed all defilements along with their *vāsanās* means he eradicated the defilements and impurities together with their habitual tendencies (*vāsanā*). There, the word *vāsanā* is used in the Dispensation (*Sāsana*) with a completely different meaning. It is not in the sense of "luck" or "fortune" (*vāsanā*) that we frequently hear of nowadays. Here, the quality of *vāsanā* is not presented as a good quality in a person. What is called *vāsanā* here is something like a residual odor left behind by defilements. That is precisely why, diving deep into the ocean of the Buddha's qualities, the Great Thera Vīdāgama Maitreya, when describing the Buddha's virtues, stated: "He has none of the *vāsanā* qualities possessed by everyone else in this world"—meaning that the Buddha does not have the residual habits (*vāsanā*) that remain in all other worldly beings. Upon reading this, one might think, "Then, was the Buddha an extremely unfortunate person?" But the difference lies in this: the term *vāsanā* is used in the Dhamma in an entirely different sense. As you devout people know, if a corpse-flower (*kiḍāram mala*) blooms on one's land, one goes, identifies it as a foul-smelling thing, uproots the entire plant, and throws it away. Even so, the foul odor lingers for a considerable time. In the same way, even when the filth of defilements accumulated over this immensely long Saṃsāra is eradicated by the knowledge of the Noble Path (*ariya-magga-ñāṇa*)—the Path of Arahantship—the lingering odor of these defilements still remains.

This is the difference between the Arahants and the Buddha. *Savāsanā sakala kilesa* means all defilements along with their residual impressions. In the Arahants, these impurities of residual impressions (*vāsanā*) remain. Consequently, in their physical and verbal behavior, those habitual tendencies (*vāsanā*) from Saṃsāra may manifest, sometimes causing people in the world to form wrong impressions about them. But the Buddha is free even from those residual tendencies (*vāsanā*), in the second sense of the word. Not in the sense of the "luck" (*vāsanā*) that we refer to in the world today, but like the illustration of the corpse-flower: even after a filthy thing is removed, a bad smell remains there for some time. Although defilements are destroyed in the mental continuum (*citta-santāna*) by the knowledge of the Noble Path, the habitual patterns of

defilement practiced over a long period occasionally surface; this is indeed present in the Arahants. But as for the Buddha, so vast were the *Pāramīs* he fulfilled, and so sharp and deep were his concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*), that he possessed the power to completely suppress and eradicate those forces of residual tendencies (*vāsanā*). That is why it is said that the Buddha uprooted all defilements along with their residual tendencies (*vāsanā*). The Buddha possessed a supremely pure continuum, without even a trace of lingering odor. This is also why the Buddha acted without the slightest agitation when confronted by the eight worldly conditions. In this way, we must contemplate the depth of the Buddha's qualities.

Similarly, regarding the physical beauty of the Buddha: now, if ordinary worldly people possess such physical beauty, they use it to pursue the fivefold sensual pleasures. The Brahmin was taking great pains to find a suitable husband for his daughter. But the Buddha did not visit that place to fulfill that desire. Because of the course of action the Buddha took, and according to the verse he preached, since the Brahmin and his wife were wise, they perceived that within him lay a power of knowledge and wisdom far deeper than his attractive external physical beauty. A mere fraction of that vast store of the Buddha's qualities is revealed through this knowledge of the Attainment of Great Compassion. Moreover, his quality of steadfastness (*tādī-guṇa*), that resolute quality, is like an *indakhīla* (city-post) firmly planted at a city gate, or like a strong pillar sunk deep into the earth. Ordinary worldly people, indeed, are *lābhena unnato loko alābhena ca ūnato*—they inflate when gain comes, and collapse when loss comes. In that manner, the minds of many are agitated within these eight worldly conditions. The two sides of the eight worldly conditions are like the two pans of a balance scale. The Buddha possessed the quality of looking upon them with equal equanimity (*upekkhā*).

We must also contemplate the life of the Blessed Buddha. On this Vesak day, which we call the Day of the Threefold Auspicious Events, the three major events of the Buddha's life—his birth, Supreme Enlightenment, and Parinibbāna—occurred on the very same day. Renouncing the world at the age of twenty-nine and practicing severe austerities for six years, he attained Buddhahood in his thirty-fifth year. Then, for forty-five years, dedicating only a very brief time for sleep, he served as his Buddha-activity to rescue beings from the path to states of deprivation—beings who were inclined toward the path of hells, wallowing in defilements, and suffering (*dukkha*) for a long time in this Saṃsāra—and to liberate them from Saṃsāra.

We must reflect on the Buddha's life in this manner. The examples we can draw from the Buddha's life are countless. Through every single event, his Great Wisdom and Great Compassion are revealed to us. A Buddha is one who has developed the power of the *Pāramīs* over an immense period. When we say four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand world cycles, how incredibly long a duration is that! From the moment the aspiration arose in the Buddha, "Let me not cross over alone, but let me rescue as many of the worldly beings as possible," he fulfilled the *Pāramīs* specifically to attain those Buddha-knowledges, such as the knowledge of the inclinations and underlying tendencies of beings (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*), which make visible the thoughts, desires, and past kamma-propulsions of all beings. As you devout people know, ten *Pāramīs* are

mentioned: *"Dānaṃ sīlañca nekkhaṃmaṃ, paññā viriyena pañcamaṃ, khantī saccaṃ adhiṭṭhānaṃ, mettūpekkha ca ime dasa."* (Giving, virtue, renunciation, wisdom, energy as the fifth, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness, and equanimity). The Buddha developed each of these qualities to its ultimate limit. To the absolute limit of giving, to the absolute limit of virtue, to the absolute limit of renunciation—for such a long period did the Buddha sacrifice his life for this purpose. When these virtues are trained to their absolute limit in this manner, they leave behind a vast reservoir of experience within the Buddha. That is what is meant by *Pāramīs*.

One might wonder, "What is the profound meaning behind the fulfillment of these *Pāramīs*?" Through the fulfillment of these *Pāramīs*, the entire vast range of experiences gathered in this world accumulates toward the Buddha's aspiration for Supreme Enlightenment (*sambodhi-praṇidhi*). These experiences do not just disperse in vain. An aspiration (*praṇidhi*) means that once the resolution is made, "I shall become a Buddha, supreme in the three worlds, and attain Full Self-Enlightenment," all the experiences—whether good or bad—of the lives lived and fulfilled from that moment onward accumulate toward that single thought. Through all of these, that wisdom grows. Now, we know that when we try to do something or learn a craft, we learn even from our mistakes. We learn from the pressures we face. Therefore, we generally think that it was the Venerable Devadatta who obstructed his path to Enlightenment. Yet, looking at it from another angle, one could say that it was Venerable Devadatta who actually helped the Buddha to attain Enlightenment.

Saying such a thing might easily be misunderstood. During the period of fulfilling the path to Enlightenment, the most powerful obstacle presented to the Buddha was the vengeful intention born of Venerable Devadatta's hatred. Here too, Māgandiyā acted, to a certain extent, with a hateful intention. Through all of these, the Buddha's vast store of qualities was polished and shone forth. Thus, during the period of fulfilling the *Pāramīs*, he had to sacrifice his life, and give away his eyes, head, flesh, and blood. The Buddha had to face numerous other assaults and oppressions, and had to undergo suffering (*dukkha*). But what was left to the Buddha from all of this? The way the worldly mind functions, the reasons and backgrounds for such things turning toward unwholesome actions, how minds change according to various circumstances, and not only that, how his own mind might be agitated or altered in such situations, and the path to bring them into equanimity (*upekkhā*)—all these became wisdom-growing experiences for him. When it comes to the instances of giving away one's eyes, head, flesh, and blood, the texts, of course, describe that he gave those gifts without any difficulty, as if it were very easy. Yet, during those times, he was not yet a Buddha; there were shortcomings. When giving a gift that ordinary worldly people cannot give, the mind often wavers. He learned even from that—about the moments when the mind trembles.

All of these ultimately helped the Buddha develop special knowledges, such as the knowledge of inclinations and latencies (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*). From this, it is clear that the cause of the Buddha's unshared knowledges (*asādhāraṇa-ñāṇa*)—his extraordinary and highly specific knowledges—was indeed that very power of the *Pāramīs* fulfilled over

such a long period. It is that store of qualities, developed through the power of the *Pāramīs*, which we summarize and recall as the Buddha-virtues beginning with *Arahaṃ*. But no matter how we try to bring them to mind, we cannot measure their depth. The depth of that great ocean of Buddha-virtues is such that no shore can be seen. Now, when we look at the ocean, the limit of what we can see is what we call the horizon; we cannot see beyond that. Such is the vastness of the ocean of Buddha-virtues. Some might think, "Why did the Buddha act in this or that manner? Isn't there a shortcoming in this?" But there is a deep meaning behind it that we cannot see. Here too, the Buddha acted in that manner precisely to enable Māgandiyā's parents to attain the fruit of Arahantship.

Throughout the many wonderful events of the Buddha's life, he received great gains, such as the Incomparable Almsgiving (*asadisa-dāna*). Yet, on other occasions, he did not even receive alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*); he had to face various such situations. Through the power of those *Pāramīs*, the Buddha developed the quality of equanimity (*upekkhā*) to endure all of these—a supreme equanimity. So great was his power of concentration (*samādhi*) that the Buddha declared he possessed the ability to enter into the attainment of the fruit (*phala-samāpatti*) even while preaching the Dhamma. Even at the very end, in an extremely weak condition at eighty years of age, the Buddha made a declaration like a lion's roar in the *Mahāsīhanāda Sutta*: "No matter what, my power of knowledge and wisdom has not decayed; it remains steadfast." In that manner, the Buddha possessed a wonderful store of qualities. It was due to the greatness of his store of qualities that infinite and boundless beings in the world found refuge. From the epithet *"Satthā devamanussānaṃ"* (Teacher of gods and humans), we see that not only humans but even devas and brahmās in the heavenly and brahma realms, who had been waiting for the appearance of a Buddha, listened to his Dhamma and attained the peace of Nibbāna.

Furthermore, once a Buddha has actually attained Enlightenment, whom does he revere? It is mentioned regarding the Buddha that after attaining Enlightenment, when he looked to see under whom he could live showing reverence, there was no one in the world superior to him. Then he reflected on the Tathāgatas of the past. The past Tathāgatas spent their lives paying homage to the Dhamma alone, honoring the Dhamma. Therefore, the Buddha too paid homage to that very Dhamma. He placed the Dhamma in the position of the Teacher. Thus, when we say *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Saṅgha*, a Buddha is such because of the Dhamma he has realized. That is how the Buddha attained Buddhahood. The Saṅgha consists of those who have personally realized the feasibility and practical value of that Dhamma, and the possibility of attaining the supramundane paths and fruits. That is what we mean by the Triple Gem. Therefore, on this Vesak day, while we reflect on this ocean of Buddha-virtues, merely being satisfied with that alone is not sufficient. Indeed, the Buddha himself declared that there are great blessings in recollecting the qualities of the Buddha: *"Ye kho te buddhe pasannā, agge te pasannā; agge kho pana pasannānaṃ, aggo vipāko hoti."* "If anyone has developed confidence and clarity toward a Buddha, they have developed it toward the foremost person in the world. And if anyone has developed confidence toward the

foremost, the fruit thereof is also foremost and supreme," thus the Buddha declared. Thinking in this manner, even the contemplation of the Buddha's virtues as *buddhānussati* brings great peace to the world.

The very characteristics of the Buddha's quality of blessedness include his physical beauty, as we mentioned earlier, as well as his brahma-voice endowed with eight factors (*aṭṭhaṅga-samannāgata-brahmasara*). We know of instances where even wild animals were pacified by that sweet voice. Likewise, the Buddha's logical power, his Great Wisdom, and his ability to make someone understand the Dhamma by comparing appropriate similes and metaphors—all of these belong to his quality of blessedness (*bhagavā*). The Buddha utilized each of these according to the situation to enable the world to realize the Dhamma. Some are drawn to the physical form of the Buddha. Others are drawn to his voice. Yet others are drawn to his logical power and the metaphors presented in his Dhamma discourses. Some attain realization through the very influence of his Great Wisdom. Still others, through his psychic powers and miracles, shatter their conceit and draw close to this Dhamma. It was because of this great quality of blessedness that the Buddha was able to make individuals realize the Dhamma. The Buddha preached the Dhamma in a way that perfectly matched the inclinations and latencies (*āsayānusaya*)—the saṃsāric habits—active in their minds, and whatever qualities or meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) they had developed during Saṃsāra.

The Buddha possessed such a wonderfully great power. It is as a step in practicing the Dhamma preached by the Buddha that all of you devout people have observed these precepts today. Indeed, as the Buddha declared, this virtue (*sīla*) is the fundamental foundation of these wholesome qualities. Standing on the foundation of virtue, one must develop concentration (*samādhi*). Then, with a concentrated mind, through wisdom (*paññā*) and insight (*vipassanā*), one must realize the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). Whether called "giving, virtue, and meditation" (*dāna, sīla, bhāvanā*) on one hand, or "virtue, concentration, and wisdom" (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*) on the other, it is this very same path of Dhamma. Therefore, you devout people must reflect that all of these are contained within the Dhamma of the Four Noble Truths introduced to the world by a Buddha. The Dhamma of the Four Noble Truths explains that the entirety of saṃsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*), and the cause of this suffering (*dukkha*) is the uninterrupted craving (*taṇhā*) within worldly beings. The settling of this craving (*taṇhā*) is not achieved by throwing more and more of the fivefold sensual pleasures into it, which is like throwing straw onto a fire. It is by removing whatever cause there is for this craving (*taṇhā*)—that is, by removing ignorance (*avijjā*)—that this craving (*taṇhā*) is settled.

Next, that very state of a stilled and cooled continuum in which craving (*taṇhā*) has been settled is what is called Nibbāna; it is not some strange, separate world. The desire to go on and on in this becoming (*bhava*) is a highly subtle level of craving (*taṇhā*), categorized as sensual craving (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*), and

craving for non-becoming (*vibhava-taṇhā*). No matter how much suffering (*dukkha*) and trouble they undergo, even you devout people know very well that, at the final moment, one thinks: "Well, we failed to fulfill our hopes this time, so we must achieve them at least in the next life." In this way, these saṃsāric beings chase after a mirage. This was seen by the Buddha's eye. Only a Buddha can point this out correctly. The entirety of existence—consisting of form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—is suffering (*dukkha*). The entire saṃsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*). The day one eliminates the desire and craving (*taṇhā*) for this existence is indeed the day of the greatest peace. Thus, instead of merely giving water to a feverish patient, the Buddha diagnosed the true cause of the illness and treated it.

That is why the Buddha is called the incomparable Physician. We must contemplate according to the Dhamma preached in that manner. Today, many devout people have observed the noble Ten Precepts (*dasa-sīla*). Others have observed the Eight Uposatha Precepts (*aṭṭhaṅga-uposatha-sīla*). Still others have observed a higher level of virtue known as *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (virtue with livelihood as the eighth factor). Whichever it may be, one must contemplate the value of each of these training rules (*sikkhāpada*). It is only when a Buddha appears in the world that the eye of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakkhu*) arises for worldlings. Until then, the entire world is blind. Living with this eye of Dhamma, one gains the strength to discipline body and speech. It is due to not disciplining body and speech that beings suffer (*dukkha*) in these states of deprivation (*apāya*) for a long time. Thus, by keeping these virtues, and through the serenity arising therefrom, when one removes the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*)—sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, sloth and torpor, doubt and restlessness, and the wavering of indecision (*vicikicchā*)—and settles the mental continuum upon a wholesome object, that is indeed concentration (*samādhi*).

Next, relying on that concentration, one must bring to light the reality of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*) as pointed out by the Buddha, whether in regard to all beings or other things in the world. This is a Dhamma that must be understood each according to their own wisdom. Because this is something that must be personally realized, the Buddha declared: *"Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ, akkhātāro tathāgatā"*—"You yourselves must make the effort; the Tathāgatas are only teachers." Therefore, in accordance with the Dhamma taught by the Buddha, we must strive to honor him with the worship of practice (*paṭipatti-pūjā*). What you devout people aim for by observing these precepts with faith and listening to this Dhamma is to offer the highest possible worship to the Buddha—the worship of practice, which is considered far superior to material offerings (*āmisa-pūjā*). Thus, this is not merely an offering to the Buddha; it is something done for one’s own liberation, for liberation from this Saṃsāra. One must reflect that a Buddha appears in the world solely to enable us to realize Nibbāna.

Authors of the past, who contemplated the Buddha’s qualities with abundant faith, used to write: "He became Buddha for my sake alone." They referred to the Buddha as "He

who became Buddha for my sake alone." What is the meaning of that statement? "The Buddha attained Buddhahood for my sake alone." Everyone should think in this very way: "The Buddha attained Enlightenment for my sake alone." Developing such firm faith (*saddhā*) and walking along this path of Dhamma, one must not be satisfied with virtue alone, but alongside it, one must develop meditation based on some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). For this Dhamma of Nibbāna is something that must be personally realized. Everyone understands the various levels of suffering (*dukkha*)—physical suffering (*dukkha*) and mental suffering (*dukkha*). All of these are indeed suffering (*dukkha*); yet, dividing them into compartments, people say only this part is suffering (*dukkha*). And they imagine that the other part is pleasure (*sukha*). That is not what the Buddha declared. There is no need to sugarcoat this: the entire saṃsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*). Existence in the deva and brahma worlds is also impermanent (*anicca*). Indeed, as long as one remains in Saṃsāra, in becoming (*bhava*), the moment that merit is exhausted, one falls back into lower births, engages in unwholesome actions, and repeatedly goes even to the states of deprivation (*apāya*).

Such is the terrifying nature of this Saṃsāra. This is why a Buddha is the peerless Teacher of the world: because he points out the path for liberation from Saṃsāra, for escaping from the suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṃsāra. Therefore, on this day, we must contemplate that supreme store of qualities of the Buddha. In terms of the word "tribute" (*upahāra*) used in modern times, the highest tribute we can pay him is the worship of practice (*paṭipatti-pūjā*). What helps to sustain the Buddha's Dispensation (*Sāsana*) is this very store of qualities—virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*)—accumulated within us. The Buddha's Dispensation (*Sāsana*) is a message that travels from heart to heart. That message is carried by the blessing of good friendship (*kalyāṇamitta-sampatti*). Seeking the help of good friends (*kalyāṇamitta*), one also becomes a good friend to the world. Thus, the association of good friends (*kalyāṇamitta-samāgama*) can be considered the highest, widest, and greatest association in the entire world. For from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha brahma realm, there is a certain spiritual network for those who have turned toward this path to Nibbāna.

It is within this network that, as it is said, even the help of the devas is received as circumstances require. Therefore, in this Saṃsāra, we should not think of ourselves as helpless. If we have gone for refuge to the Triple Gem, that help of good friends (*kalyāṇamitta*) belongs to us; we shall receive it. The Buddha indeed is our peerless Good Friend (*kalyāṇamitta*). Likewise, we must reflect on this impermanence (*aniccata*). Having fulfilled the perfections over such an immense period—four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand world cycles—the Buddha lived for only eighty years. Within forty-five years, he completed his Buddha-activity. Then, at his final moment, he declared as his last words: *"Handa dāni, bhikkhave, āmantayāmi vo, vayadhammā saṅkhārā appamādena sampādetha."* "Behold, monks, I address you now: Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are subject to decay. Strive with diligence (*appamāda*)!" That was the final word of the Buddha. We must bring this to mind especially at this moment. This Dispensation (*Sāsana*) will not last forever. Indeed, everything is impermanent (*anicca*). Even so, we must strive to prevent the decline of the

Dispensation (*Sāsana-parihāniya*) to some extent, like propping up a collapsing building. This must be done not by other means, but by cultivating those qualities of the Dispensation within our own mental continuums.

It is by developing the blessing of good friendship (*kalyāṇamitta-sampattī*) and expanding the association of good friends (*kalyāṇamitta-samāgama*) that we can prevent the decline of this Dispensation. Therefore, regarding the decline of the Dispensation too, what we must think of is that very word of the Buddha: *"Appamādena sampādetha"*—we must accomplish it with diligence. The Vesak day is indeed an excellent day for all of you devout people to make such resolutions within your mental continuums. Devout Buddhists refer to Vesak day as the Buddhist New Year. For if a New Year is an occasion to form new thoughts, new aspirations, and new resolutions, then the best occasion for that is Vesak day, the Vesak Full Moon Poya Day—the memorable day on which the three most precious events of the Buddha's life occurred: his birth, Supreme Enlightenment, and Parinibbāna.

Therefore, relying on the beginning you have made, you devout people must resolve to go further and further forward. This Noble Eightfold Path is a path to be developed within one's own heart. No matter how many different paths there are in the entire world, the Buddha declared: *"Eso'va maggo natthañño, dassanassa visuddhiyā"*—"This is the path; there is no other for the purification of vision." To develop one's vision of life and to develop wisdom (*paññā*), there is no other path; this very Noble Eightfold Path is the only way, as declared by the Buddha. The Noble Eightfold Path consists of eight steps that bring about a complete, total transformation of a person's life. Now, you devout people can easily understand that *Sammā-diṭṭhi* means Right View. In one sense, Right View means that in conducting one's daily life, to steer clear of the path to states of deprivation, one must discipline body and speech. One must fulfill virtue and other wholesome qualities. In this, the ten-point Right View (*dasa-vatthuka-sammā-diṭṭhi*) is of assistance.

There are those in the world who hold nihilistic views (*nātthika-diṭṭhi*), having no belief in wholesome and unwholesome actions (*kusala-akusala*), or in merit and demerit. Raising various intellectual arguments, they become indifferent to wholesome and unwholesome actions, and merit and demerit. But one must reflect with wisdom: in the Buddha's Dhamma, that belief is indeed a part of Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). As long as we remain in Saṃsāra, we must face these forces of kamma (*kamma-vega*). Therefore, performing acts of giving and merit-making, and doing wholesome deeds in our daily lives, helps us suppress unwholesome states or suppress the results of evil actions. The deeper meaning, however, is that one day we must also cross over this Saṃsāra. What helps us do so is the realization and direct experience of the Dhamma of the Four Noble Truths. If one has a certain measure of understanding regarding these truths taught by the Buddha—suffering (*dukkha*), the origin of suffering (*dukkha*), the cessation of suffering (*dukkha*) which is Nibbāna, and the path thereto—that also is Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Thus, relying on this Right View, we must strive to develop Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*). These are the intention of renunciation (*nekkhamma-*

saṅkappa), the intention of non-ill-will (*avyāpāda-saṅkappa*), and the intention of harmlessness (*avihiṃsā-saṅkappa*). Renunciation (*nekkhamma*) does not mean merely leaving the household life, but leaving behind the fivefold sensual pleasures. In short, we must cultivate the thought of escaping from Saṃsāra within our minds. Likewise, loving-kindness and harmless thoughts, and consequently, words corresponding to them must issue from us. We must strive to use our speech correctly by refraining from false speech, slanderous speech, harsh speech, and frivolous talk (*samphappalāpa*), as mentioned in the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*.

Next, in our actions and work, we must strive to live by refraining from grave and obvious defilements such as taking life and sexual misconduct. We must strive to refrain from wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*)—such as trading in poisons, trading in weapons, rearing animals for slaughter, and trading in intoxicants—and seek the peace of living righteously, even if one's livelihood yields only a small income. The effort made to establish such a livelihood is indeed the fourfold effort, namely: the effort to prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome states, the effort to abandon already arisen unwholesome states, the effort to arouse unarisen wholesome states, and the effort to maintain and consolidate already arisen wholesome states. In that manner, having developed the quality of Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), through that very quality, one must establish Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) within oneself. One must establish correct mindfulness regarding the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*): body, feelings (*vedanā*), mind, and mind-objects. Not only in regard to oneself, but also concerning all saṃsāric relations in this world whom we divide and claim as "I" and "mine". One must contemplate that all of them are travelers in this Saṃsāra, and thereby gain a certain understanding.

Looking at this as something common to all, one gains an understanding of this natural law (*dhammatā*). Next, with the help of mindfulness, when one develops concentration (*samādhi*)—which is the ability to keep the mind on a single object for a long time, the full power of the mind—it is through that developed power that the true nature of this world is seen. In this day and age, many scholars and intellectuals struggle, unable to understand the difference between wisdom (*paññā*) and worldly intellect. To beautify a brass tray, someone might paint over it. But what does a wise person do? Using the necessary materials, they gradually remove the rust and tarnish layer by layer from that brass tray. Then, its shine returns so brightly that one can see their own face in it. Wisdom (*paññā*) is precisely like that. The more we remove the tarnish of defilements embedded in our mental continuum, the more our cognitive power is purified, and our wisdom (*paññā*) is purified.

If we accumulate the knowledge of great scholars and intellectuals of the world while keeping this pile of defilements intact, it is like applying paint over the tarnish. Beneath is rust; on top is a fine coat of paint. In that manner, what often arises in those intellectuals is a state of "outward shine, inward rot." Because they have forgotten this basic principle taught by the Buddha. What is required here is the removal of the defilements within oneself through virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi,*

paññā). Accordingly, we must shape our lives in line with that principle of Dhamma, and not according to any other theories.

While reflecting wisely in this manner, you devout people should rejoice today. For in this world, not only in foreign lands of wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) unknown to us, but even in this very country, countless people are heading toward destruction starting from their very hold on wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). Due to wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), there arise wrong intentions; due to wrong intentions, wrong speech; due to wrong speech, wrong action; due to wrong action, wrong livelihood; due to wrong livelihood, wrong effort; due to wrong effort, wrong mindfulness; due to wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration; and from that, terrible disasters occur. While such things are happening in the world, you devout Buddhists have gathered on this Poya day, observed precepts according to your capacity, directed your minds toward Dhamma and meditation, and especially for about an hour now, have listened to a Dhamma sermon centered on the Buddha's qualities. You must reflect on what has been left with you through this. Mention is made in the Dhamma of five valuable qualities known as the powers (*bala*): faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*). You must understand that this opportunity has helped you develop and cultivate those very powers.

Especially, when you contemplate the Buddha's virtues by way of *buddhānussati*, faith (*saddhā*) arises in you. It is through that faith (*saddhā*) that you truly recognize the Buddha. Indeed, what we must do is walk along this path of Dhamma. Then, through the faith (*saddhā*) generated by recollecting the Buddha's qualities, we must become energetic in walking the path traversed by the Buddha. Through that exertion of energy, our mindfulness (*sati*) grows. When that mindfulness is developed to a certain degree, concentration (*samādhi*) arises. Through that concentration, as mentioned, wisdom (*paññā*) dawns. These must be developed to some extent as spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and spiritual powers (*bala*) if one is to realize Nibbāna. Therefore, you devout people can rejoice that today's Dhamma sermon has helped you cultivate these wholesome qualities according to your capacity. To escape from this terrifying Saṃsāra, you must recall the Buddha's advice of diligence: *"Appamādena sampādetha"*—accomplish it with diligence. Indeed, just as expressed toward the end of the Buddha's life, when we reflect on the changes taking place in this country now, we too might feel that this is the final stage of the Dispensation (*Sāsana*). Therefore, in such circumstances, we must strive as quickly as possible to benefit from this Dhamma and achieve our own liberation from Saṃsāra.

Today, on this Vesak day which we regard as our New Year, making that resolution, seeking the association of good friends (*kalyāṇamitta*), you should make the aspiration: "May this Dhamma discourse help and serve as a support for realizing the great deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-Entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-Returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-Returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship, if possible, in this very life!" Although this Dispensation (*Sāsana*) is something that is sinking, the texts mention that devas and brahmās of Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) assist in preserving it to some extent. Likewise, our good friends

(*kalyāṇamitta*) among them rejoice, sharing in the merit of these wholesome deeds we perform, glad that the Dispensation still remains. May the meritorious deeds we perform help them fulfill whatever aspirations for Enlightenment they may have, and may they rejoice in knowing that their efforts on behalf of the Dispensation are bearing fruit! Let us share the merit with the devas in this manner, wishing: "May the store of merit we have accumulated today through giving and listening to the Dhamma be received by them, and through rejoicing in it, may they provide as much protection as possible to the Dispensation, and securing their own liberation, may they find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna!" Likewise, make the aspiration: "May all saṃsāric beings, from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha brahma realm, who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, rejoice in this merit, and through their own aspired Enlightenment, find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna!" In this manner, let us transfer the merit by reciting these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #102

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.81)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve apassaṃ dhammamuttamaṃ,

ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo passato dhammamuttamaṃ ti.

From:

Dhammapada 115 (Sahassavagga)

Dear Listeners,

In the latter part of life, parents usually cultivate a certain sense of security in the hope of receiving care and attention from their children. Accordingly, it is natural for parents with many children to feel a greater sense of security. Nonetheless, due to children who measure their parents' virtues in terms of money and material wealth, a situation sometimes arises where parents are left with absolutely no support or refuge.

Our Buddha Supreme, the Blessed One, declared this verse, which we have taken as our theme today, to help a mother who had fallen into such a helpless state through the Dhamma. In the city of Sāvatthī, there was a certain family with seven sons and seven daughters. Having reached the appropriate age, they got married and lived comfortable lives. In the meantime, the father passed away. So, this mother continued to utilize their wealth and property. The children came and said, "Mother, now that father is gone, why do you still keep this wealth? Is it that we cannot look after you?" After remaining silent several times, since they repeatedly kept saying this, she thought, "Indeed, my children will look after me," and divided all her wealth into equal portions, distributing them among the children.

However, after some days, when she went to her eldest son’s house, her daughter-in-law would say, "Look at that, it seems our mother-in-law is coming here every day as if she gave two shares to the eldest son." Next, she went to the second son's house. There too, a similar thing happened after a few days. She went to her daughters' houses; it was the same there as well. Moving from place to place like this, this mother realized, "Now indeed, there is no hope of help from these children. I must live as a bhikkhunī (nun),"

and went to the nunnery to request ordination. Those bhikkhunīs ordained this elderly lady. Regardless of her ordained name, she is introduced to us in the Dhamma by the nickname that stuck to her: 'Bahuputtikā Therī'. When looked at realistically, the only thing that mother received or inherited from her children was that name: "The mother of many children."

In any case, Bhikkhunī Bahuputtikā was ordained with her livelihood in mind. However, developing a profound sense of urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding *saṁsāra*, thinking, "Now I am advanced in age," she started to practice meditation (*bhāvanā*) with great energy, remaining sleepless day and night. She also performed the duties and services due to the other bhikkhunīs very well. It is mentioned that while doing these chores, the way she meditated was by clinging to pillars and holding onto them during the night to practice meditation. Furthermore, fearing that she might fall while walking in meditation (*caṅkamanaya*) in the dark, and to ward off sleepiness, she would hang onto branches of trees to meditate. Having meditated so intensely, when her mind reached a certain level of development at the appropriate moment, the Buddha, likely perceiving this state, sent forth a light from within His Fragrant Chamber (*Gandhakuṭī*) and addressed Bahuputtikā, delivering a sermon. He concluded it with the verse we have chosen as our theme:

Yo ca vassasataṁ jīve apassaṁ dhammamuttamaṁ

"Though one should live a hundred years, without seeing the supreme Dhamma,

Ekāhaṁ jīvitaṁ seyyo passato dhammamuttamaṁ.

Better is a single day's life of one who sees the supreme Dhamma."

The Buddha delivered a Dhamma discourse containing this verse. Hearing it, it is recorded in the story that Bahuputtikā Therī attained Arahantship together with the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*). In this short story, there is a good lesson for children as well as parents. If we contemplate the lesson regarding children in this series of events, it is evident that some children are in the habit of measuring their parents' virtues according to the proportion of the inheritance they receive. That is why they spoke in that manner: "Did you give us two shares?" But they did not contemplate that the greatest inheritance they received—the greatest gift from their parents—was the gift of life.

It is not just after a child is born, but even while in the mother’s womb, during those ten months, there was a possibility of dying a thousand times. Preventing those occurrences, making the child subsist on the very food she consumes, and undergoing ten-fold suffering (*dukkha*), the mother protects the child. Sometimes she also suffers from pregnancy cravings (*doḷaduka*), which some define as "the suffering of two hearts." Declining even the agreeable, wholesome food and drinks she herself prefers, with a wondrous sacrifice, a mother protects the child and brings the child into the world, risking her own life. Looked at in this way, even while in the mother's womb, a vast portion of that inheritance of life has already been received.

Furthermore, after birth, you all have heard the saying that she turned her blood into milk to feed the child. In that manner, mothers nourish their children during that initial period. In doing so, mothers do not perform calculations regarding their children. It must be because similar incidents occurred in this country that an ancient poet wrote a poem about this entanglement between children and parents. In that poem, there is a line that goes: "Did I measure out the milk I gave you, my son?" Those mothers do not measure when they give milk. But children treat their parents according to the ratio of the inheritance. Thus, it is mentioned in various stories that such an attitude existed not only in modern times but also in the past. These are human weaknesses, and there are places where the Buddha delivered Dhamma discourses fitting those occasions.

You all must have heard this often. When the Buddha appeared in ancient Indian society, the brahmins regarded Brahmā as supreme. Worshipping and paying homage to this Brahmā was a practice in households. Instead of that, the Buddha introduced that it is not the invisible Brahmā, but the mother and father who are the real Brahmās living in one's own home. This is why the Buddha declared, *"Brahmā ti mātāpitaro"* (Mother and father are called Brahmā) and so on. Parents are indeed the Brahmās.

The Buddha declared this with valid reasons. Because according to the Dhamma, the four qualities of loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*) are known as the *brahmavihāras* (sublime abodes). Since a mother and a father actually cultivate these four qualities directing them towards their child, the Buddha with good reason identified them as Brahmās.

Even if we consider these four briefly: in loving-kindness (*mettā*), there is the wish to care for and comfort the child in infancy. In compassion (*karuṇā*), there is skillful means (*upāyakusalatā*). In the mischievous years, it is with the help of compassion, motivated by love for the child, that a mother protects the child so that they do not fall into danger, preventing dangerous situations, sometimes through gentle ways and sometimes through strict measures. Next, as the child grows bodily and progresses in studies, the parents cultivate in their hearts the valuable quality of sympathetic joy (*muditā*), which is the opposite of jealousy—rejoicing in another's happiness. Finally, in old age, they make various sacrifices for their children. They even prepare their minds to separate from their children.

In this story, too, that mother did not resort to aggressive courses of action; she understood the nature of the world and *saṁsāra*. Realizing, "Even though I have so many children, this is all I receive," she sought the refuge of the Dhamma and was ordained to receive the support of the most supreme Dhamma. Some pious lay disciples who have many children might also think, "We can live our final days clinging to the bodies of these children." But Bhikkhunī Bahuputtikā obtained a much greater shelter and refuge, in a transcendent (*lokuttara*) sense, by meditating while hanging onto those lifeless pillars and tree branches. To realize that supreme Dhamma and to end the suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṁsāra*, that mother...

So, we must contemplate that this cannot be called a fault of the children alone. Some mothers and fathers, no matter how old they get, play with and pamper their children without limit; and after the children's affairs are finished, they spend their time looking at the faces of and pampering their children's children, and their children's children, not knowing what will happen to themselves. Likewise, children also hand over their next generation to their parents. Instead of looking after their parents, other tasks and responsibilities are assigned to them. Thus, both parties are responsible for this. There is a good example here regarding this as well. At that stage, one should cultivate equanimity (*upekkhā*), establish oneself in the Dhamma, and incline towards quiet seclusion where one can calmly understand the nature of *saṁsāra* and the nature of life through one's own body in a meditative manner. Furthermore, the care of parents has been further expounded as a duty of children—not only providing food, drinks, and so on, but also paying homage, bowing down, and doing all such things for parents as one would do for Brahmā.

On one occasion, the Buddha delivered a highly powerful sermon regarding the care of parents. Without any specific reason, but so that it would serve as an example to the world, He made this statement: "Monks, there are two persons whom it is difficult to sufficiently serve and look after. Who are the two? The mother and the father." Next, He points out three valuable matters. First, He indicates: "If a son, living for a hundred years, were to carry his mother on one shoulder and his father on the other shoulder, and for a hundred years were to attend to them, bathing them, feeding them, and even cleaning the urine and excrement voided by those decrepit parents on his shoulders, attending to them with his own hands as he carries them, he still would not have sufficiently served them or truly repaid his debt to his mother and father." Similarly, He says: "Monks, if a child, with the intention of serving his parents, were to establish them as rulers of this great earth filled with the seven treasures, even that would not be doing enough." Finally, the Buddha declares: "If a son establishes his faithless parents in the attainment of faith (*saddhā-sampadā*), establishes his unethical parents in the attainment of virtue (*sīla-sampadā*), establishes his stingy parents in the attainment of generosity (*cāga-sampadā*), and establishes his unwise parents in the attainment of wisdom (*paññā-sampadā*), that son has not only done enough, but he has served his parents more than enough."

According to that, it becomes clear that what children have to do, if their parents are living with them, is to give them sufficient leisure and quietude to practice giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*). The physical care and attention, or even granting them kingship, cannot compensate for that. Truly, while growing oneself in virtues such as giving and virtue, if there is any lack of these in one's elderly parents, providing them with the necessary quietude and comfort to develop them is the service rendered through the Dhamma. Thus, three aspects are mentioned here. It is to the service done with one's own hands that the Buddha gave that first simile—the first illustration. Next, it is with the idea of providing comfort that kingship was mentioned. Lastly, what is spoken of is the service through the Dhamma. So, even while remaining as a layperson, one can serve one's parents through the Dhamma in this manner. If

someone ordains, they can perform that supreme service mentioned above for a mother or father at an even higher level. That is one discourse. There are many such discourses.

You all must have heard it in the *Parābhava Sutta*, where when pointing out the causes of a person's ruin, the Buddha declares: "If a son or child, having the ability, does not support or look after his elderly mother and father, that is a cause of his ruin." In another similar discourse, the Buddha states: "Monks, one who behaves wrongly towards four persons is ruined as if he has dug his own grave, is censured and blamed by the wise, and accumulates immense demerit. Who are the four? One's mother, father, the Tathāgata, and the Tathāgata's disciples." Regarding these four groups, it is preached that if anyone behaves wrongly towards them, they meet destruction as if they had dug their own grave.

Furthermore, you all have heard of the five heinous crimes (*pañcānantariya-kamma*) in accordance with the Dhamma. Where the results of actions (*kamma-vipāka*) are shown in the Dhamma, the Buddha has pointed out that there are five extremely dangerous, most grave evil deeds. They are called *ānantariya-kamma* (crimes with immediate retribution). They lead inevitably to hell (*apāya*) in the very next life. Even there, the Buddha mentions the parents: killing one's mother, killing one's father, killing an Arahant, drawing blood from the Buddha's body with hostile intent, and finally, causing a schism in the Saṅgha. By listing these as *ānantariya-kamma*, the Buddha has highlighted the significance of parents.

The reason for this is that the greatest inheritance children receive from parents is the inheritance of life. In addition, the fundamental advice to steer and correct one's life is also received from parents. That is why they are called *pubbācariyo* (first teachers). *"Brahmā ti mātāpitaro, pubbācariyā ti vuccare"*—Parents are called Brahmās, and they are also called the first teachers. Furthermore, it is said: *"āpādakā posakā, imassa lokassa dassetāro"*—they bring up, nourish, and show this world to their children. Since they have done such a vast heap of assistance for their children, the Buddha has extolled the virtues of parents to such an extent. That is with respect to children living as householders.

Regarding the ordination of children, it is also mentioned in various places in the discourses, especially in the Vinaya Piṭaka. On one occasion, King Suddhodana came to meet the Buddha and said, "Venerable Sir, I would like to ask for a boon." The Buddha immediately replied, "The Tathāgatas are not in the habit of granting boons." "No, Venerable Sir, what I am asking is something allowable and extremely proper." "Very well, speak," He said. Then King Suddhodana said, "Ah, Venerable Sir, when the Blessed One went forth (ordained), it caused me immense suffering (*dukkha*). Next, when Nanda was ordained, that too caused me great suffering. When Rāhula was ordained, it caused me an unbearable, extremely vast suffering." It is a father speaking, not a mother. He further says, "Venerable Sir, love for a son is something that cuts through the outer skin, the inner skin, the flesh, and the sinews, and enters into the marrow of the bones. Therefore, I request that a rule be enacted not to ordain children without the permission and consent of their parents."

The Buddha accepted this and laid down a rule: "Monks, henceforth do not ordain anyone without the parents' permission. If you do so, there will be an offense of wrongdoing (*dukkaṭa*)." In this context, indeed, one should not think of the Buddha as having violated a rule earlier. What the Buddha saw was the necessity of saving someone from *saṁsāra*. That is not something to be censured according to the Dhamma. However, as a special privilege, as a boon to King Suddhodana, He enacted that rule in that manner.

Furthermore, it is mentioned concerning those who have ordained: though generally there is no connection with lay households, special privileges are shown regarding parents. On one occasion in the Vinaya, this kind of incident regarding the four requisites is mentioned. Once, a certain bhikkhu received many robes. For some reason, that bhikkhu felt like giving these robes, or at least the robe-cloth, to his parents. The Saṅgha reported this to the Buddha. The Buddha expressed Himself thus: "Monks, when it comes to parents, what can I say? I permit it. I allow you to give those robes to your parents. However, do not give them to inappropriate places or inappropriate people. That would cause the faith of those who offered them with faith to decline. If you do so, there will be an offense of wrongdoing (*dukkaṭa*). But I allow you to give them to your parents." Thus, He gave a special permission to ordained children even regarding robes.

Similarly, regarding almsfood (*piṇḍapāta*): if there are occasions when parents have nothing to eat or drink, there is permission to give a portion of that food one has obtained through alms-gathering to one's parents. Next, regarding medicines: if the parents do not receive medicines and have no caregiver, one can give the medicines one receives to one's parents. One can also attend to one's mother without touching her body. Next, for one's father, the Buddha allowed attending to him as one would attend to a novice (*sāmaṇera*), even performing tasks like bathing and rubbing the body.

In this manner, there are many other occasions where special favor was shown toward parents. In the Vinaya rules, the Saṅgha is forbidden from traveling during the three months of the rains retreat (*vassa*). However, seven special occasions are pointed out. Two of these are that if there is some need concerning one's mother or father, whether a message has arrived or not, permission is given to go during the rains retreat. Whether they asked to return or not, if the need is seen, there is permission to go.

From this, we can see that even in the ordained life, the Buddha gave a special place to the care of parents. Not only in that ancient Indian society but also today, as virtues decline more and more, various problems arise in households because people do not bring these Dhamma matters to mind. The Buddha highlighted those virtues largely for the progress of both parties—for their spiritual progress.

Next, as we said, there is a lesson in this for parents too. What is that? The exemplary character of Bahuputtikā Therī is what should be taken there. When her children finally stopped caring for her, that Therī might have thought, "This is a flaw of *saṁsāra*." Cultivating the equanimity (*upekkhā*) appropriate for that advanced age, thinking, "Now indeed, let them live happily, I must ordain," she ordained. Moreover, having ordained,

she did not just idle there for her livelihood. Performing her duties and observances, she meditated in that manner. Here lies the most valuable example.

Just as the Buddha declared, she obtained support through the Dhamma, meditating intensely during the night. That is a great encouragement even for the elderly. A lot of things can be learned from this very body. Old age is an opportunity where one can clearly realize through direct experience (*pratyakṣa*) the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*)—the impermanent (*anicca*) and unsubstantial (*anattā*) nature of decay (*jarā*). If there is leisure for that, and if one directs one's mind to it, one can benefit a great deal from it, generating disenchantment (*nibbidā*) towards this *saṁsāra*. Thus, the story of Bahuputtikā Therī is a fine example of this.

Next, if we contemplate this Dhamma, it was said in that verse: "even if one lives a hundred years without seeing the supreme Dhamma..." By "supreme Dhamma," what we must understand is the transcendent (*lokuttara*) Dhamma—the Dhamma of Nibbāna. Rather than living a hundred years without seeing that supreme Dhamma, living even a single day seeing the transcendent Dhamma is more valuable. That was proven by the life of Bahuputtikā Therī.

According to the Buddha's verse, if there was still some small thing lacking in that Therī, it was because the noble courage and advice were contained within that verse that she was able to attain that realization. Through that, even we can contemplate the values of life. Today, we generally value grandfathers living for a hundred years. But even a grandfather's life is of no use if spent without making even an effort to understand such a supreme Dhamma. The person who lives a single day seeing the Dhamma is far more valuable than that. What we have to contemplate from that story is that if one lives even a single day seeing the supreme transcendent Dhamma, that life is what is truly valuable. Sometimes, parents think, "I have many children, so I will live as long as I can," having the objective of a long life and longevity. But that Therī, risking her life, sacrificing sleep day and night, escaped from *saṁsāra*.

That is also what we have to contemplate. Understanding the true nature of life and *saṁsāra* in the world is the most valuable thing in a life. You, pious devotees, know that the path leading to that is through virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). If we contemplate from the perspective of insight (*vipassanā*), we must see the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*)—namely, the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and unsubstantial (*anattā*). That is why it is said, "the life of one who sees the supreme Dhamma for even a single day is valuable."

Sometimes, a person might think that insight (*vipassanā*) means chanting, "*Anicca, dukkha, anattā; anicca, dukkha, anattā*." Truly, pious devotees, insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) is not a matter of saying, but of seeing. And that seeing is not seeing with the physical eye, but seeing with the eye of wisdom. If one thinks in that way, we can go on repeating "*Anicca, dukkha, anattā*" like a mantra. That is like painting a picture. It is not like that; one must dive deep into these five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). How does one dive deep? With a concentrated mind, through the

method of attention, through radical attention / wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)—by reflecting wisely, by reflecting rapidly, one must understand the nature of these five aggregates. That is what is called "penetrative wisdom" (*nibbedhikā paññā*). One must see its true state with penetrative wisdom. Not merely with the physical eye. Sometimes, people create confusions due to a lack of proper understanding of these things.

In the past, there is an account of such a confusion being created. A certain meditation master told his disciple to practice the meditation on rise and fall (*udayabbaya-bhāvanā*). Devotees, "udayabbaya" means that in order to deeply understand impermanence (*aniccatā*), one must see both the arising and passing away. The Pāli words for arising and passing away are *udaya* and *vaya*. That is what is called *udayabbaya*. The knowledge of this arising and passing away is called the "knowledge of rise and fall" (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*). So, the disciple was sent to see this.

The disciple went to the edge of a pond. Having gone there and sat down in a secluded spot, with eyes wide open, he kept repeating, "Arising and passing away, arising and passing away, arising and passing away" (*udayabbayaṁ, udayabbayaṁ, udayabbayaṁ*). While he was repeating this, a crane landed in the water. Now, in the Pāli language, water is called *udaka*, and a crane is called *baka*. Since the mind is easily distracted, he saw this crane land in the water. Consequently, without even realizing it, the meditator who was repeating "arising and passing away, arising and passing away" started saying "water-crane, water-crane" (*udaka-bakaṁ, udaka-bakaṁ*).

Such confusions arise when one thinks that insight (*vipassanā*) is merely a matter of memory or reciting words. But, devotees, it is something seen with insight-wisdom, with that deep penetrative wisdom (*nibbedhikā paññā*) that pierces through. For that, mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) must be developed. The method of seeing this is also mentioned in the Dhamma. Generally, when speaking simply, we say: "Form is impermanent (*anicca*), feeling (*vedanā*) is impermanent, perception (*saññā*) is impermanent." We keep saying it like that.

But certain discourses show us that it is not a mere saying. In those discourses, the way of seeing the arising and passing away is stated as follows: *"Iti rūpaṁ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthaṅgamo."* "Iti" means "thus" or "such". *"Iti rūpaṁ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthaṅgamo"*—"Such is form, such is the arising of form, such is the passing away of form." It goes on in the same way: "Such is feeling (*vedanā*), such is the arising of feeling, such is the passing away of feeling."

What do we understand from that word "such" (*iti*)? It is not a chant; rather, form, feeling, etc., are captured by the attention (*manasikāra*) of insight as they arise. One reflects on them in the proper manner. It is not a mere uttering of words. A feeling (*vedanā*) has arisen: "This is such-and-such a feeling." A pleasant feeling arose, persisted, and passed away. A painful feeling arose, persisted, and passed away. A neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling arose, persisted, and passed away. The same applies to perception (*saññā*). In this way, when looking at the side of the five aggregates and contemplating, one gradually goes deeper.

In some instances, the world is introduced in the Dhamma as the world of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha-loka*). The discourses of the Buddha are described as having "manifold methods" (*nānā-naya*), presented in the Dhamma under various subjects as appropriate. In certain instances, it is called the world of the five aggregates. In another instance, it is shown as the world of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana-loka*). The six sense-bases are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Mind (*mana*) means the thought/intellect. Thus, these six doors—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—are introduced as the six sense-bases. Nowadays, we use the word "institutions" (or "departments") for the Sinhala word *āyatana*. Regardless of those institutions, these six sense-bases that every single person possesses are constantly working.

Even within these six sense-bases, the base that acts like a central station is the mind-base (*manāyatana*). All the messages brought in from the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body bases are collected and deposited in the mind-base. The world associated with these six sense-bases is called the world of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana-loka*).

You, pious devotees, must have often heard that the Buddha gave a simile for each of these aggregates (*khandha*). Form (*rūpa*) is compared to a lump of foam. Feeling (*vedanā*) is compared to a water bubble. Perception (*saññā*) is compared to a mirage. Preparations / preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are compared to the trunk of a banana tree. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is compared to a magician's illusion. These are not similes given as poetic embellishments. These are similes that must be directly experienced. Through what does one directly experience them? Through the eye of wisdom. An occasion when they are directly experienced through the eye of wisdom arrives during insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*).

When one brings those to attention (*manasikāra*) with a well-concentrated mind, the nature of the elements composed of the four great elements—earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*)—is understood. Just as a lump of foam, which accumulates when something gets stuck in a flowing river, appears from afar with the perception of solidity (*ghana-saññā*) as a solid thing, but when inspected closely is found to be just a lump of foam; in the same way, understanding regarding this body arises through insight (*vipassanā*).

It is the same with feeling (*vedanā*). Just like the bubbles of water that arise and vanish in an instant when raindrops fall during a shower, so is this thing called feeling. To one who contemplates deeply on feeling through the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*), this understanding arises as a direct experience. How true are the similes declared by the Buddha! They wonderfully demonstrate through those similes that this is merely a collection of arisings and passings away, and there is no "thing" there.

Next, the same is true regarding perception (*saññā*), which is like a mirage. In that too, there is that mirage-like nature. A mirage is something one runs toward, thinking it exists in the distance. If one lives seeing the arising and passing away of the five aggregates, an occasion arises where perception is understood. Regarding Preparations

(*saṅkhāra*), the simile of the banana trunk shows their coreless, essenceless nature—that they are just a heap of fibrous sheaths. Likewise, this stream of thoughts such as intention (*cetanā*), this formative power of the mind, this preparation (*saṅkhāra*)—this is not something done by a "self". Ultimately, one sees that instead of a "self", there is only a succession of thoughts arising and passing away extremely rapidly, like a heap of fibrous sheaths.

Next is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The nature of consciousness is compared to an illusion. Why was consciousness compared to an illusion? What does a magician do? He shows a non-existent thing as if it exists. One feels how wondrous this Dhamma is! Because consciousness (*viññāṇa*) displays a non-existent thing as if it exists, the cessation of consciousness is called Nibbāna. One experiences the cessation of consciousness in this very life. That is what is called Nibbāna. There is nothing that has been destroyed there.

The very nature of consciousness is non-existent; but because of the deceptive, illusory nature of consciousness, the ordinary world thinks it exists. That is what they grasp as a "soul" or "self" (*attā*). Even if other things are not grasped, it is consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that is grasped as "I, I, I." Yet, the Buddha compared consciousness itself to a magician's illusion. Now, if an illusion means showing a non-existent thing as existing, then what the world is holding onto is a non-existent thing. But failing to understand this non-existence is called ignorance (*avijjā*); that is why there is the entire span of becoming (*bhava*), or the accumulation of *kamma*, etc.

If at any moment one understands that deceptive nature of consciousness, it is just like a spectator of a magic show who, having been deceived up to that point, later stands behind the stage and catches the magician’s tricks, realizing: "This is empty, there is nothing in it." It is something like that. Then, the non-existent is seen exactly as non-existent. That is what is called understanding it as void (*suñña*), empty, and hollow. It is as things to be directly experienced that the Buddha pointed out those similes. They were not declared out of mere whim or as poetic ornaments. That is how He points out the nature of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*).

Next, regarding the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), those six we mentioned earlier: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Why are these called "bases" (*āyatana*)? Because a production takes place within them. *Kamma* is produced within them. Grasping the objects that come to these bases tightly through ignorance (*avijjā*), making them into two aspects as "this is I, this is the world, this is the eye, this is the form," and through the coordination established therein, *kamma* is accumulated as wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*), ultimately leading one to go on and on in this *saṁsāra*.

The Buddha declares that through insight (*vipassanā*), one must understand the emptiness (*suññatā*) of these things as they really are (*yathābhūta*). For that, there are some wonderful similes given by ancient elders of the past, similes used to realize that Dhamma. Now, when lightning flashes during a rainy time like this, the ordinary world, or some uneducated person of that past era, thought of this lightning as a real thing. But this lightning did not come from somewhere. After that lightning ceased here, it did not

go anywhere else either. It merely arose and passed away due to various causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*).

Sometimes, a person might think that lightning flashing means lightning was somewhere and came when it rained, and after it ceased, it went somewhere. That is a delusion. This thing called lightning arises due to a multitude of causes. We give it a name. We grasp it as a thing. We falsely perceive solidity (*ghana*). But in reality, just as it arose, it passes away. That is the nature of things (*dhammatā*). Thus, various similes such as lightning, a mirage, and a rainbow were pointed out in the past because their nature can be understood through them. The path leading to that is what is called insight (*vipassanā*). It is by reflecting on that impermanence (*aniccatā*), on those arisings and passings away in a more and more subtle manner, that this understanding can be obtained.

We spoke, indeed, of a production in the sense-bases of the ordinary world. The production in those bases is generally carried out in a coarse, gross manner. Behold, a form is seen. Then, an effort is made to identify it accordingly. If one thinks, "this is so-and-so, this is my friend, a person I am very fond of," a certain train of thoughts flows based on that. The moment one thinks, "this is a resentful person, an enemy," another train of thoughts goes. There, one has grasped it as two ends: "this is the eye" and "this is the form."

But in reality, if we look at it, the entire series of events here is merely a certain picture cast upon the screen of the eye. It is only a certain vision falling on the eye, on the screen of the eye. On the basis of that vision, a vast train of thoughts is generated. Having generated it, one accumulates *kamma* oneself. Beyond that, even if one thinks about a sound, it is the same. A sweet sound is heard. Something like a song is heard. Then, thinking it is a good song, one generates certain attachments and so on within. But in insight (*vipassanā*), at a certain point, one understands that all of this is a heap of movements, a heap of vibrations. Or else, it is completely like the simile of the banana trunk mentioned for Preparations (*saṅkhāra*); there is only that here. There is nothing to be taken as a "thing".

So, the journey toward that understanding is what is called insight (*vipassanā*). First, this is a form; not only that form, but one attributes to the form: "this is beautiful, this is good," and next, "it has such-and-such features." That is what is called "grasping signs"—in terms of signs (*nimitta*) and features (*anuvyañjana*). They grasp signs. Next, they further decorate those signs with secondary details. That is what is meant by saying one has recognized a person. But ultimately, it is only the shadow cast in the eye.

Just like what is cast in a camera, there is the play of the pupil in the eye. According to the shadow cast in the eye, a certain feeling or thought is generated in the mind. Next, due to ignorance (*avijjā*), it is stimulated and presented as a thing, causing the world to wander in *saṁsāra*. At the furthest end of that train of thoughts lies that kind of collection of thought-conceptions (*vitakka*). Closer to this side lies perception (*saññā*)—that recognition. Past experiences help in that recognition. It is in association with them that one generates thoughts like: "Ah, this is so-and-so, this is the person who did me

such a wrong, this is the person who did this to me." It is by relying on those past perceptions (*saññā*) that these recognitions and so forth are made.

So, the Buddha shows that a train of thoughts going in that manner is like a deer running after a mirage. Instead of that, what does the wise person do? Sitting right there, they understand the true nature of this mirage. Likewise, the Buddha declares that one should try to gain a true understanding of the objects encountered by these six doors. This is what is introduced in the Dhamma as wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).

Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means making an effort to understand by directing the mind to the very source where something arises. What that deer does is forget the place of arising. Not knowing that it arose due to a defect or limitation in its own eyes, it mistakes that far-away mirage for a real thing, as water, and runs after it.

But it is shown in the Dhamma that the root here is ignorance (*avijjā*), the lack of knowing that this is something arising due to a collection of causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*). That train of thoughts grows as quickly as possible. Once it goes into thoughts (*vitakka*), and after getting entangled in them, after getting entangled as conceptual proliferation (*papañca*), one ultimately spends one's time daydreaming.

The Buddha points out that without grasping it in terms of signs (*nimitta*), the practitioner of insight (*vipassaka*), or the meditator engaged in insight (*vipassanā*), should try to end that reflection right there by noting the seen object generally as "a form, a form." One ends it by taking it into the mind twice as "a form, a form," not letting it go beyond that. "A form, a form." Likewise, "a sound, a sound." One does not go to analyze it. One does not even try to generate thoughts (*vitakka*), generate conceptual proliferation (*papañca*), or conjure daydreams about it.

"This is merely a certain form cast on the screen of the eye, or just a vision." Next, "that is merely a sound striking the eardrum, only a certain vibration or movement striking the eardrum." In that manner, in a way that becomes wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), one directs the mind back to the place where it arose. That is an extremely difficult task. For that, one must have a highly concentrated mind. To unify the mind with a concentrated mind and break it off right there in that manner, equanimity (*upekkhā*) is truly necessary—a state of neutrality. Releasing the mind as much as possible from the two extremes of attraction and repulsion, reflecting on it right there...

Truly, these are things that come and go. But it is through holding and grasping (*upādāna*) them, and further accumulating various things on top of them, that the journey of *saṁsāra* takes place, and one gets caught in the momentum of *kamma*. Instead, the Buddha brings this sense-base as quickly as possible to a much simpler state. Although described as simple, what takes place there is a going deep.

The ordinary world says they live in that manner because living in the conventional world of daily life requires it. But what happens through that is that one keeps spinning on and on in *saṁsāra*. However, at some point, this understanding must be gained. It is

for this reason that the Buddha advises us to apply attention (*manasikāra*) subtly and bring the mind to equanimity (*upekkhā*) as quickly as possible.

So, in that manner, without even letting it proceed to perception (*saññā*), ultimately that feeling (*vedanā*), that experiencing... This feeling also has two sides. You all know them as pleasant and painful. In the middle of those two, there lies one called neither-painful-nor-pleasant (*adukkhamasukha*). The ordinary world does not even understand it, because it is of a nature that is not easily grasped by the mind. Regarding the neutral, there is mostly a lack of understanding. There is ignorance (*avijjā*) regarding neutral feeling (*vedanā*).

That neutral feeling can be revealed and recognized bit by bit when practicing the establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Applying mindfulness well to one's body, to feeling (*vedanā*), to the mind, and to the thoughts that enter the mind, living in the present moment and maintaining mindfulness (*sati*), behold, one understands: there is a thing called pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), there is painful feeling, and there is also a neutral, neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. It is in the middle of these, indeed, that we find the path to liberation (*vimutti*). That is the place for equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Equanimity (*upekkhā*) means looking with neutral impartiality. That is an extremely difficult task. But the insight-practitioner (*vipassaka*), putting in effort, releases the mind from those two extremes of attraction and repulsion and watches how they come and go right there. Now, if you are waiting on the roadside and there is a vehicle you are expecting, you look at it with great interest. But if a vehicle goes by for which you have no particular liking or disliking, you see it coming, and you see it going. If it is nighttime, you see the headlights in front, and next, you see the taillights behind—that is all.

Just like that, without grasping those strange signs, reflecting on those incoming objects right then and there to end them, the method of rapid reflection is what the Buddha points out as insight (*vipassanā*). As one goes on practicing in this way, at some point the realization dawns: "Behold, isn't this displaying a non-existent thing? Isn't this mind projecting a non-existent thing as if it exists?" That cannot be demonstrated to another; it is something one must directly experience (*pratyakṣa*) oneself, having traveled along that path of insight.

So, that is exactly why the Buddha pointed out form as a lump of foam and so forth through those similes. Ultimately, this is an illusion, something displayed by a magician. Because if we take it as "I", we recognize the things of that world beyond it, give them names, and generate attraction and repulsion regarding them. That might be helpful for life in the conventional world. But it does not help in escaping from *saṁsāra*. It is not that. That is a subordination to the physical eye.

If so, instead of that, the Buddha points out that one must gradually bring forth insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*). It is to that wisdom, as declared by the Buddha, that these five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) are understood as entirely suffering (*dukkha*). What is meant by saying the five aggregates are entirely suffering (*dukkha*)? A far broader

meaning than what the ordinary world calls suffering is conveyed in this statement. One sees its impermanence (*aniccatā*). There is only a multitude of movements here. Wherever any of these is grasped, there is suffering (*dukkha*).

Therefore, what is to be done here is to reflect on each and every thing as it comes, and firmly cultivate dispassion (*virāga*), non-attachment toward them. Going forward in that manner, ultimately, at some point, no matter which of these comes, a state that withstands them—an equanimity regarding Preparations (*saṅkhārupekkhā*)—arises. Thus, seeing the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and unsubstantial (*anattā*), one must engage in attention (*manasikāra*) deeper and deeper.

Truly, in everything, this is not the work done by that meditator who went to the edge of the pond in the story we told earlier; this is not a saying, but a seeing. A seeing with the eye of wisdom. Through that, wisdom having matured, at some point one sees in all of this...

That is a state where, even though the eyes, ears, nose, etc., exist and one is wide awake, one is not caught by the objects perceived so far; a state where their emptiness (*suññatā*) is understood. That is what is called the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*). That is to say, in the ordinary world there is the continuation of becoming (*bhava*); the cessation of this continuation is shown by the Buddha in this very manner. That is something to be directly experienced through wisdom.

So, if anyone has obtained that direct experience, they are a Stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returner (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returner (*Anāgāmi*), or at the highest, an Arahant. That very direct experience is what is called the concentration of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samādhi*) and so forth. In that concentration, that meditator can experience the liberation (*vimutti*) they have attained—liberation from *saṁsāra*. One can spend a considerable amount of time in the bliss of that liberation. That is what is called Nibbāna in this very life—*diṭṭheva dhamme*. Having attained Nibbāna in this very life means deeply understanding, through that wisdom, the voidness (*suññatā*) and emptiness of this world visible to us. The importance of that understanding truly emerges at the moment of death.

You, pious devotees, have also heard about the signs that appear to a dying person, such as the sign of *kamma* (*kamma-nimitta*) and the sign of destiny (*gati-nimitta*). When the person struggling between life and death realizes that they can no longer hold onto this side, something else is presented to the mind: "Here, then, hold onto this." Driven by the momentum of past *kamma*, something comes forward according to *kamma*.

What is meant by struggling between life and death in this life? One struggles to remain in this very world. But this body cannot withstand it. An occasion comes when one must leave this behind. Yet, due to the attachment to this, due to the attachment to the cage of this body, one struggles to remain right here because of that craving (*taṇhā*). Grasping

(*upādāna*) means holding on. When the moment comes when one clearly understands that one has to let go, another sign appears to the mind. So, one grasps that.

That might sometimes be the fires of hell (*apāya*). It might be the sign of the womb of an animal. But because of that desire for existence, that sign is tightly grasped by the mind. That is held as grasping (*upādāna*). Right there is becoming (*bhava*). Thus, nowadays many people do not talk about the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), but about something called an intermediate existence (*antarābhava*). But in truth, our attention should be focused on that very cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*).

However, that cannot be thought out at that moment. As we said before, if one is a grandfather who has lived with attachment to children, wealth, and everything, and at the moment of death thinks, "I will gain a sudden understanding and bring this life to a state of non-arising," that will not work. One must directly experience (*pratyakṣa*) it through wisdom while still alive. To the person who has directly experienced it through wisdom, at the moment of death, that mind of Nibbāna arises effortlessly.

The mind of Nibbāna is this cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*). In short, the mind comes to the voidness, the emptiness of the continuation of becoming (*bhava*). The mind comes to voidness (*suññatā*). Then, there is no attraction or repulsion there. Such is indeed Nibbāna. Those who have understood it in this very life enjoy that bliss of Nibbāna in this very life by way of concentration (*samādhi*). Its ultimate, most valuable occasion is its spontaneous presentation at that moment of death we mentioned.

In the language of the ordinary world, that Nibbāna is like dying without dying. Physically, one lives in this world. But with the mind, having understood the corelessness of this becoming (*bhava*), one lets go of these five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). One is holding onto the five aggregates with the mind. No one is holding onto the five aggregates with their physical hands. With what does one hold them? With the mind. One holds them as grasping (*upādāna*) because of craving (*taṇhā*). Where there is craving, there is grasping.

Words like "the destruction of craving" (*taṇhā-nirodha*) are used to describe Nibbāna. When that craving is destroyed, if that lack of holding is directly experienced in this very life, then at the time when this body must truly be abandoned, such a state presents itself effortlessly. At that moment, it emerges spontaneously because it has been practiced beforehand, or because one has directly experienced it. Because of the most valuable direct experience obtained in life, it presents itself effortlessly. That is the state of the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*).

It is mentioned that an Arahant sometimes passes away (*parinibbāna*) by setting fire to their own body. A person might get frightened: "What is this? Alas, what a great suffering (*dukkha*) they endured!" Even you, pious devotees, sometimes throw an abandoned set of clothing into a fire to burn it. At that moment, you do not feel that you yourself are burning. Just like that, having abandoned these five aggregates from the

mind itself, they set fire to it by entering into the attainment of the fire element (*tejo-dhātu-samāpatti*). This, indeed, cannot be understood by the ordinary world.

In that manner, the highest liberation (*vimutti*) that can be achieved with the mind, the highest equanimity (*upekkhā*), is what is called Nibbāna. The journey toward that is what is spoken of in this practice in various ways as virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*), and as calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). If you, pious devotees, have understood that goal correctly, if you travel on that path correctly, if your perfections (*pāramī*) are fulfilled, if the effort you make is correct, and if you have the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) correctly, it is still possible to directly experience these.

We must apply our wisdom and contemplate both of these lessons shown in this story. In the world, there have always been two aspects called good and bad. There are two aspects called merit and demerit, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*). What the Buddha did was make these understood. He introduced the dark side and the bright side. These members of the Saṅgha—the ordained ones—are those who come from the lay world itself. It is by developing certain virtues while in that lay world, and subsequently by their maturing, that they gradually enter the ordained life.

Even if we contemplate lay life, virtues such as gratitude are important. Through them, gradually gaining a deep understanding of one's life, at some point, whether in the ordained life like Bahuputtikā Therī or in lay life, one must cultivate that equanimity (*upekkhā*). Cultivating equanimity, one must understand this nature—the nature of decay (*jarā*) and unsubstantiality (*anattā*)—which means that none of these can be kept under one's control. One must understand this.

Using old age as an aid, as one loses attachment to this body, recognizing it as something that must be abandoned, something that one will have to abandon, one becomes able to directly experience through wisdom the state of destroying or letting go of that craving (*taṇhā*) which remained unappeased in this mind for so long. If at any moment one has abandoned these five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) from the mind itself, the bliss received at that moment is what we point to as the supremely peaceful bliss of Nibbāna—it is called "unfelt bliss" (*avedayita-sukha*). Every other pleasure obtained in the world in connection with feeling (*vedanā*) was pointed out by the Buddha as suffering (*dukkha*). That painful feeling is suffering (*dukkha*) needs no special explanation. That pleasant feeling is suffering is understood when it changes. Neutral feeling is not felt at all. The Buddha points out a vision of not grasping even a single one of these.

For that, starting with the neutral feeling (*vedanā*) mentioned at the beginning, as one gradually goes deeper, at some point the corelessness and impermanence (*aniccatā*) of these are understood. There, within the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), without letting them proceed to thoughts (*vitakka*) and so on, one sees them as quickly as possible at the minimal level. All of this occurs due to the collision between the two divided aspects: the eye and the form. Next, creating two aspects as the ear and the sound, all of this occurs due to their collision.

Now, people play games by dividing into two sides. It is because the two sides are divided that the entire game exists. Just like that, one creates two sides: "this is the eye" and "this is the form." This can be understood from the story of the deer. Thus, thinking "this is the eye, this is the form," one runs after it. Thinking "this is the ear, this is the sound," next one goes after it. At some point, escaping from that kind of situation is what is called the stilling of Preparations (*saṅkhāra-upasama*). The Buddha points out that these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are indeed the greatest suffering (*dukkha*).

There is an occasion when this very preparation taking place in the mind is deeply understood as suffering (*dukkha*). It is that cessation of Preparations (*saṅkhāra-nirodha*) that the Buddha points out. If there is no such preparation, there is no aspect of their result (*vipāka*) either. It ends right there. Now, why are they called *kamma*-born Preparations? It is because these *kamma* accumulated by us over a long period are what, moment by moment, through our consciousness (*viññāṇa*)... if one turns every single one of them to equanimity (*upekkhā*) and lets them go, they pass away without being grasped; right there is liberation (*vimutti*).

So, there is an instruction in this verse necessary for traveling on this path of Dhamma, which says that living even a single day seeing that supreme Dhamma is enough. Even if one does not become a grandfather or a grandmother, it does not matter; if one lives even a single day and directly experiences (*pratyakṣa*) that, one must understand that as the truly valuable life. Thus, today, this pious group of people has undertaken virtue (*sīla*) to some level that supports this path, and it is by establishing yourselves in that virtue that you perform all of this. Next, you have also practiced meditation (*bhāvanā*) according to your capacity.

Indeed, if there is a listener who listens with the attention (*manasikāra*) of meditation even during a Dhamma-hearing, one can even generate knowledges (*ñāṇa*) through that, if the power of one's perfections (*pāramī*) is present. In that very manner, you have listened to a Dhamma sermon that supports your life and supports this Nibbāna.

If through this, any powers such as faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—which assist Nibbāna as mental powers—have arisen, may this wholesome deed of hearing the Dhamma (*dhamma-savana-maya-kusala*), by relying on those powers and with the support of the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), definitely be a supportive condition for this pious group to attain, as quickly as possible during this era of the decline of the Buddha's dispensation (*Buddha-sāsana*), before the dispensation declines, liberation from the dangerous suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṁsāra* including birth (*jāti*), decay/aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*) through the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala-paṭivedha*) of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship, and to realize the supreme, deathless Great Nibbāna!

Likewise, may whoever wishes to rejoice in this wholesome merit of delivering and hearing the Dhamma, including our relatives from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha

heaven, by rejoicing in it, realize the supreme, deathless Great Nibbāna as quickly as possible through their aspired Bodhi (awakening)! Wishing thus, please recite this verse.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #103

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.90)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Tapena brahmacariyena, saṃyamena damena ca;

Etena brāhmaṇo hoti, etaṃ brāhmaṇamuttamaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 422 (Brāhmaṇavagga)

Dear Listeners,

According to social convention, a person's superiority or inferiority is often measured by the social environment into which they are born. The rigid caste discrimination that was prevalent in India during the Buddha's time was also based on this matter of *Jāti* (Birth). The view accepted at that time was that one becomes an outcast (*vasala*) or a brahmin solely by *Jāti* (Birth). However, the Supreme Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, demonstrated to the world that instead of *Jāti* (Birth), it is practice (*paṭipatti*) that should be the yardstick for measuring a person's high or low standing. Moreover, he provided a living example of this.

The verse we have taken as our theme was delivered on such an occasion. There lived in the city of Rājagaha a very poor man named Sunīta, who was born into an extremely low caste, a despised clan, and worked as a scavenger. His occupation was collecting the street sweepings and refuse of the city. One morning, as the Blessed One surveyed the world with his Attainment of Great Compassion (*mahākaruṇā-samāpatti*), he saw that Sunīta possessed the spiritual potential and supportive conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*) for attaining Arahantship. Seeing this, the Blessed One, accompanied by the community of monks, went on his alms-round to the street in Rājagaha where Sunīta was sweeping refuse. Seeing the Blessed One approaching, Sunīta felt a certain devotion, put aside his carrying-pole of refuse, came near the Blessed One, and paid homage. The Blessed One asked: "Sunīta, what is the use of this miserable life? Would it not be better to ordain?" Sunīta replied: "Who would ordain someone like us? If such ordination is possible, may the Blessed One ordain me." Then the Blessed One said: "Come, monk!"

(*Ehi bhikkhu!*). This was the special method of higher ordination (*upasampadā*) that the Buddha granted to exceptional individuals. Through those two words alone—by the mere utterance of "Come, monk!"—the higher ordination was granted to that scavenger Sunīta, born of a low caste. The Buddha then took him along and gave him meditation objects (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Not long after, Venerable Sunīta retired to the forest, practiced absorption (*jhāna*) and meditation, attained the five higher knowledges (*pañcābhiññā*), the eight meditative attainments (*aṭṭha-samāpatti*), and realized Arahantship. He realized Arahantship during the last watch of the night. At that moment, Sakka, the devas, and the Brahma kings came to pay homage to Venerable Sunīta, the great Arahant. Witnessing this with his divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), the Blessed One smiled. It is mentioned that the Blessed One would smile under special circumstances. Smiling, he uttered this very verse that we have taken as our theme:

"Tapena brahmacariyena, saṃyamena damena ca;

Etena brāhmaṇo hoti, etaṃ brāhmaṇamuttamaṃ."

By spiritual burning (*tapas*), by the holy life (*brahmacariya*)—that noble way of life—by restraint (*saṃyama*), by the self-control developed through moral virtue (*sīla*), and by sense-restraint (*indriya-damana*); it is through these that one becomes a true brahmin. *"Etena brāhmaṇo hoti, etaṃ brāhmaṇamuttamaṃ"*—this true brahminhood, this state of being a brahmin, is indeed supreme and noble. This is the meaning contained in the verse.

Perhaps the Blessed One smiled because, looking at it from one perspective, Sunīta the scavenger had performed the ultimate act of scavenging. What is that? He washed away all the dirt and filth of defilements (*kilesa*) that had accumulated in his mind-stream over a long journey in *saṃsāra*. We can draw the meaning that Sunīta, who had been cleaning the physical refuse of others in the city, had now eradicated his own mental defilements, thus bringing the scavenger's occupation to its true consummation. If the term "brahminhood" is used to denote superiority, it is because he fulfilled these virtues—spiritual burning, the holy life, restraint, and self-control. It was by completing these that he became a true brahmin. The Blessed One preached this verse to show this and to set an example for the world.

The past karma underlying this event is also recorded in the texts. In the past, Sunīta was a person of great merit, but on one occasion, during a period when fully enlightened Buddhas did not arise but Paccekabuddhas dwelt in the world, he was born into a wealthy, high-caste family. While wandering through the village for amusement with youths of his own age, he saw a Paccekabuddha walking for alms and insulted him, saying, "Why is he walking for alms wrapping a cloth all over his body? Is his body covered in sores?" As a bad consequence of this, he suffered in hell for a very long period and was subsequently born in poverty in low and despised castes for hundreds of human lifetimes. Despite these social conventions, we can clearly see from this that the Blessed One did not accept social conventions regarding high and low distinctions.

This matter is very clearly expressed in a discourse preached to Pahārāda. On one occasion, the Blessed One delivered a discourse to Pahārāda, the chief of the Asuras, comparing this Dispensation of the Buddha (*Sambhuddha-sāsana*), this community of monks (*Saṅgha-sāsana*), to the great ocean. He compared eight wonderful and marvelous qualities of this Dispensation to eight wonderful and marvelous qualities of the great ocean. The fourth of these was presented as follows: Just as the great rivers, such as the Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Aciravatī, Sarabhū, and Mahī, upon reaching the great ocean, discard their former names and lineages, and are simply designated as the great ocean, so too, those of the Khattiya, Brāhmaṇa, Vessa, and Sudda castes, when they leave the household life and go forth into homelessness in this Dispensation, no longer use their former caste designations. Instead, they are known simply as "Sakyaputtas" (ascetics of the Sakyan son). In this way, the practice of the Dispensation was clearly stated. The Buddha's stand against caste discrimination, which appeared as a sort of social revolution, sometimes brought various insults upon the Buddha himself from the brahmins.

A special discourse mentioning this is the *Vasala Sutta*. Many of you may have heard of it to some extent. One day, the brahmin Aggika Bhāradvāja was performing a fire-sacrifice at his house. At that time, the Blessed One, walking in sequence for alms, arrived at the brahmin's house. Seeing this, the brahmin said: "Stop right there, bald-headed monk, you outcast (*vasala*)!" Then the Blessed One asked: "Brahmin, do you know what an outcast is, or what makes one an outcast?" "I do not know. If possible, let Master Gotama teach me," he invited. Thereupon, the Blessed One delivered a lengthy discourse. Without mentioning every single detail, in brief, he touched upon all the prevalent evils, corruptions, immoralities, and vices of society, presenting each one of them as a quality that makes one an outcast. Having done so, he delivered the concluding verse, which almost everyone has heard:

> *"Na jaccā vasalo hoti, na jaccā hoti brāhmaṇo;*
>
> *Kammanā vasalo hoti, kammanā hoti brāhmaṇo."*

One does not become an outcast by *Jāti* (Birth), nor does one become a brahmin by *Jāti* (Birth). By karma one becomes an outcast, by karma one becomes a brahmin. Since the word "karma" is used here, some might misunderstand it. Because we mentioned a past story earlier, one might assume that "karma" here refers to past karma. However, there is no room for such an interpretation because, immediately after uttering this verse, the Blessed One provides an illustration to show what is meant by "karma." He says, "Here, I will give an illustration to show that it is by karma that one becomes an outcast or a brahmin." What is this illustration? It is connected to a Jātaka story.

The outcaste named Mātaṅga, though born as a Caṇḍāla, practiced absorption (*jhāna*) and meditation, developed direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), and acquired the power to perform great wonders and miracles. He received service and honor from kings and brahmins alike, and even devas and Brahmas came to serve him. After death, he was reborn in the Brahma world. This is shown as the conclusion, indicating that *Jāti* (Birth)

is no barrier to birth in the Brahma world. At the same time, the opposite side is also shown.

If, on the other hand, brahmins engage in evil deeds, they will be censured and blamed as a consequence of those evil deeds, and they will go to a state of misery. Their *Jāti* (Birth) as a brahmin is not capable of preventing censure or rebirth in a state of misery. From this, it is abundantly clear to us that what is meant here is one's course of action. "Karma" means one's course of action, one's practice. It is according to one's course of action that one becomes an outcast or a brahmin, and not by *Jāti* (Birth). In this way, the Blessed One expounded that fundamental principle.

Furthermore, another valuable discourse mentions many points relevant to this, concerning two young brahmins. One youth was named Vāseṭṭha, and the other Bhāradvāja. While walking along the road conversing, chatting, and discussing, a topic of dispute arose between them: "How does one become a brahmin?" In this regard, the young brahmin Bhāradvāja said: "If one is of pure *Jāti* (Birth) on both the mother's and father's side back for seven generations, with no reproach or slur cast upon one's *Jāti* (Birth) or lineage, then one is called a brahmin." But the young brahmin Vāseṭṭha said: "No, one becomes a brahmin through virtue (*sīla*) and conduct. One who possesses virtue and vows is a true brahmin." The two of them argued, but they could not come to a decision. Later, Vāseṭṭha suggested: "The ascetic Gotama is staying over there. A great report of good reputation has spread concerning this ascetic Gotama: 'Indeed, he is the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Awakened One...' Let us go to the ascetic Gotama, and however he explains this matter, so shall we accept it." They went to the Blessed One and presented their dispute, saying: "There is this debate between us."

Then the Blessed One said: "Very well, Vāseṭṭha, I will explain this to you in due order, systematically." In an astonishingly comprehensive manner, he presented points that broke down the foundation of caste discrimination. Grass, plants, trees, and creepers—all of these assume various forms according to their origin, their *Jāti* (Birth). There, a distinction of species (*jāti-bheda*) exists. They exhibit diversity based on their *Jāti* (Birth). When we speak of trees and creepers, there is a distinction of species. Similarly, among small insects, quadrupeds, birds, snakes, and fish in the sea, there is diversity in their bodily features. This is so among animals. But among human beings...

...among human beings, there is no such significant difference. When we consider human beings, to classify them into castes or show diversity, there is no substantial difference in their limbs, ears, noses, hands, or feet. The Blessed One points out that human beings constitute a single species (*jāti*). Thus, based on facts that can be described in biological terms, the Blessed One declares that there is no such diversity among human beings as there is among animals, trees, and plants. Therefore, there is no room for the kind of racism or casteism based on *Jāti* (Birth) that the brahmins put forward.

Furthermore, he shows that a difference is not determined by *Jāti* (Birth). Now, in the world, there is a conventional way of showing diversity. How? One who makes a living by

farming should not be called a "brahmin," but a "farmer." Even if a brahmin does farming, he should be called a "farmer." One who lives by various crafts should be called a "craftsman." One who engages in trade, whether born as a brahmin or an outcast, should be called a "merchant." One who lives by warfare, as his livelihood, is called a "soldier." One who steals should be called a "thief," not a brahmin or an outcast, but a "thief." One who performs priestly duties is called a "sacrificer" (*yājaka*)—*yājaka* means one who prays or petitions; that is the proper designation for him, not "brahmin." One who rules is called a "king." This is the true sense of how conventions exist in society: it is according to the karma one performs. Here we see that "karma" refers to the course of action, the process of activity. However, many people think of this as past karma. In reality, karma is a present-moment thing connected to intention (*cetanā*). Now, in our ordinary daily usage, what we refer to as "karma" is often "karmic result" (*kamma-vipāka*). We loosely refer to the result of karma as "karma." But we must understand that karma is always a present-moment phenomenon. After showing these facts regarding *Jāti* (Birth) to the young brahmin Vāseṭṭha, the Buddha further declared: "If the term 'brahmin' truly means 'noble,' then that word should only be applied to an Arahant." Having thus described the vast qualities of an Arahant, he finally presented a short but extraordinarily profound principle as a cosmic law (*niyāma-dhamma*):

"Kammanā vattati loko, kammanā vattati pajā;

Kammanibandhanā sattā, rathassāṇīva yāyato."

Since that verse is highly meaningful, we highlighted it in particular. *"Kammanā vattati loko"* — the entire world proceeds by karma. *"Kammanā vattati pajā"* — all generations of beings proceed according to karma, with karma as their fundamental principle. *"Sattā"* — beings are bound to karma in one way or another. Here is the simile for that: *"Rathassāṇīva yāyato"* — like the linchpin of a moving chariot. We can gather many insights from this.

The linchpin of a moving chariot is what allows the wheel to turn. If we think about society in this way, nowadays words like "progress" are used to describe forward movement. The Blessed One highlighted a principle that allows for such progress. What if, instead of karma, we took *Jāti* (Birth) as the linchpin? The journey would come to a halt. One cannot change one's *Jāti* (Birth). But one can change one's karma. A person who was a thief can abandon theft and do good things; a farmer can become a merchant. Thus, because karma is a process of action, a person can change. Instead of the rigid, unbending principle of *Jāti* (Birth) or origin that existed in society, the Blessed One highlighted a flexible, adaptable principle that leads to progress. This principle is important sociologically regarding occupations, and ethically regarding actions such as theft. Ethics refer to matters of good and bad. These, too, fall under the broad term of "karma." Each of these is like that linchpin. The development and existence of the entire society are connected to it. The Buddha presented this special principle in this manner.

Similarly, matters related to this karma are mentioned in other discourses. Another instance is shown where a brahmin insulted the Blessed One. One morning, the brahmin

Sundarika Bhāradvāja was performing a fire-sacrifice, making burnt offerings, by the river Sundarikā. The Blessed One saw that the brahmin Sundarika Bhāradvāja possessed the supportive conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*) to attain Arahantship. Therefore, the Blessed One went to that place beforehand and sat meditating at the foot of a tree with his head covered. The brahmin, having offered the milk-rice to the Great Brahma, thought of giving the remainder to some other brahmin. Since brahmins consider themselves sons of Brahma, he thought: "Having offered to the father, I must now give the remainder to a son," and looked around. He saw someone sitting with his head covered. Thinking, "Perhaps this is a brahmin meditating through the night," he approached. As he came close, the Blessed One uncovered his head. Seeing him, the brahmin exclaimed, "Alas, this is a bald-headed ascetic!" and turned to go back. Then he thought, "Even though his head is shaved, he might still be a brahmin. In any case, I should go and ask about his birth, his *Jāti* (Birth)." He went up and asked: "Sir, what is your birth? What is your *jāti* (birth)?" Then the Blessed One declared: "I am neither a brahmin, nor a king's son, nor a merchant, nor of any other caste. Having departed from the household and social affairs, I live unattached to the world, observing virtues." Through the conversation that followed, a certain faith arose in the brahmin Sundarika Bhāradvāja. He then invited the Blessed One: "Then let Master Gotama tell me who is worthy of receiving the remainder of this sacrificial milk-rice, the one to whom it should be given to gain the true benefit." At that moment, the Blessed One declared: "In that case, brahmin, abandon the habit of asking about *Jāti* (Birth). Do not ask about *Jāti* (Birth). Ask about conduct." He uttered the principle: *"Mā jātiṃ puccha, caraṇaṃyapi puccha"* — "Do not ask about *Jāti* (Birth); ask rather about conduct."

In those days, there was a practice that you, dear devotees, might not be familiar with. Today, we strike a match from a matchbox and instantly get fire. In ancient times, producing fire was not that easy. One had to rub two dry pieces of wood together for a long time to generate fire. This is the simile used here: no matter what kind of wood is used, there is no difference in the fire produced. Whatever the type of wood, when rubbed together, the fire that springs up from them has no difference. That is the simile given here. Analyzing it further, he declared that just as there is no difference in the fire regardless of the wood from which it arises, so too there is no difference when a person of a low caste, having cultivated those virtues, reaches the noble state—that is, becomes a true brahmin. In that context, in a manner that broke the foundation of caste discrimination, he described at length the qualities of an Arahant, and specifically of the Tathāgata. The Blessed One delivered a sermon stating: "The Tathāgata is one who possesses such and such virtues, such and such merits; he indeed is the true brahmin. It is to one with such virtues that the remainder of the sacrificial milk-rice should be offered." It might seem as though the Blessed One was praising his own virtues. However, he did not say this to obtain the milk-rice. Having heard all this, the brahmin Sundarika Bhāradvāja felt great faith and said: "Then I am indeed fortunate to have seen the Blessed One. Please, may the Blessed One accept this milk-rice." The Blessed One rejected it, saying: "Milk-rice obtained by chanting verses is not suitable for me. Buddhas reject such food. Offer it to some other Arahant who has destroyed the cankers (*khīṇāsava*)." The Blessed One preached the Dhamma on that occasion solely to guide

the brahmin to Arahantship; he did not praise his own virtues for the sake of a little milk-rice. This is the custom of the Buddhas. He rejected it, saying that they do not accept what is obtained by chanting verses. In the end, the brahmin Sundarika Bhāradvāja did not merely take refuge in the Triple Gem as a lay disciple (*upāsaka*), but ultimately requested ordination and even attained Arahantship. Thus, in this instance too, the Buddha's view on caste discrimination is clearly demonstrated.

On another occasion, while King Pasenadi of Kosala was having a Dhamma discussion with the Blessed One, he asked a question: "If people from the four castes—Khattiya, Brāhmaṇa, Vessa, and Sudda—ordain and exert intense energy (*viriya*), practicing meditation and striving hard, is there any difference in the result they achieve based on their castes?" The Blessed One declared: "No, the liberation (*vimutti*) they attain is one and the same. Whether one is an outcaste or a brahmin, after ordaining, if one exerts sufficient energy, there is no difference in the liberation they achieve." In that context, the Blessed One presented the simile of fire in greater detail: "Just as, O Great King, if a fire is produced by rubbing two pieces of Sal wood, another by rubbing two pieces of Mango wood, and another by rubbing two pieces of Fig wood, is there any difference in the color or the light of the fires?" "No." "In the same way, from whatever caste one goes forth, if one fulfills the Dhamma, there is no difference in one's liberation." This practice of the purity of all four castes was put into effect against the Brahmin view.

It is called "purity of the four castes" (*catuvaṇṇi-visuddhi*). The Buddha's stance was that all four castes are pure. "Pure" means that people of all four castes can attain purification. Among the brahmins, there was a dogmatic view that only brahmins could attain purification, and those of other castes could not. The Blessed One showed that regardless of one's caste, if one fulfills the necessary conditions, one can attain purification. The Blessed One declared that this truly wonderful, liberating practice, which allows purification for all four castes, exists within this Dispensation.

These statements of the Blessed One caused great displeasure among the brahmins. So much so, that brahmins from various regions gathered in the city of Sāvatthī and held a large meeting, like a symposium. On that occasion, they discussed: "The ascetic Gotama has put forward this principle of the purity of the four castes, which goes against our brahminical views. Who among us is capable of debating with the ascetic Gotama on this?" In Sāvatthī itself, there lived a sixteen-year-old young brahmin named Assalāyana. He was a young scholar (*māṇava*) well-versed in the Vedas. Deciding that he was the most suitable person to debate with Master Gotama, they went to meet the young brahmin Assalāyana and invited him, saying: "You are highly skilled. You are capable of debating with Master Gotama regarding his view that all four castes are pure and capable of attaining purification." But Assalāyana said: "The ascetic Gotama speaks according to the Dhamma. It is not easy to debate with someone who speaks according to the Dhamma," and he refused. They invited him a second and a third time, urging him strongly. When he refused the third time, they said: "Why admit defeat even before going to battle? Go and do it." Thus, Assalāyana said: "Since you all insist, I shall go." Accompanied by a large crowd of brahmins, he went to the Blessed One and presented the brahminical view: "Our brahmins say this: 'The brahmins alone are the highest caste.

Only brahmins can attain ultimate purification. Brahmins are the true children of Brahma, born from Brahma's mouth, created by Brahma...'" In this way, he presented the brahminical dogma.

At that moment, the Blessed One refuted the arguments presented step-by-step. First, he pointed out: "These brahmins claim to be born of Brahma, yet they know very well that brahmin women give birth to children. Knowing this, to make such a claim is not logical." He also pointed out that this caste distinction is not a universally applicable classification, because in regions like Yona and Kamboja, you all know that there are only two classes: masters (*ariya*) and servants (*dāsa*). These are not proper names; there are masters, and there is a class of servants. The *ariyas*—meaning noble or superior—are the bosses, and the *dāsas* are the subordinates. Let us think of it like that. The Buddha added: "However, a change can occur there. One who was a master becomes a servant, and one who was a servant becomes a master." We can imagine a war or conflict where the masters are defeated and the servants come to the forefront. Then the servants become masters, and the others become servants. Through this example of masters and servants, the Blessed One demonstrated that this caste system is a meaningless thing, not something to be taken as permanent in society.

Next, he pointed to the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*), such as killing and stealing, which you have all heard of, committed by body, speech, or mind. "If brahmins engage in those unwholesome actions, can their brahminical *Jāti* (Birth) prevent them from going to a state of misery? Can they escape their wrongdoings merely by their *Jāti* (Birth)?" The young brahmin Assalāyana had to admit that they could not. This means that if one commits evil deeds, whether one is a brahmin or an outcaste, one must go to a state of misery. Conversely, if one performs wholesome deeds, whether one is a brahmin or an outcast, one goes to a happy destination. The Blessed One declared that from this too, it is clear that the theory of *Jāti* (Birth) is useless and meaningless.

In this way, the Blessed One expounded a wonderfully liberating principle for everyone in the world. Whatever one's *Jāti* (Birth) may be, they may possess the potential to achieve that state. Just as we call the Buddha "Lord Buddha," we also sometimes call him "the Teacher of the Three Worlds." When the Blessed One looks at the entire world, it appears to him like a school with no partitioned classrooms. Now, we have various terms for the alphabet and so on. In this school, who is at the kindergarten stage and who is in the higher grades is not determined by the way society thinks. The way it appears to the Buddha-eye is entirely different. It was in this manner that Sunīta became visible to him. When the Blessed One entered into the Attainment of Great Compassion, he saw the very person who needed to come to the front of the class, the one who needed to be given the lesson on that day, the one worthy of receiving the special lesson.

Yet, the world sees him only as a scavenger or an outcast. This is the wonderfully tangled nature of karma. There is a karma that brings about a certain *Jāti* (Birth), and the world measures a person by that. However, hidden within that person are valuable meritorious potentials from the past. Bringing these to light is the most special and wonderful Buddha-activity (*Buddha-kicca*) that the Tathāgata can perform for a person. What is

the reason for this? The Blessed One possesses not only the knowledge of the Attainment of Great Compassion but also the knowledge of the inclinations and latent tendencies (*āsaya-anusaya-ñāṇa*), which indicate underlying tendencies (*anusaya*). You all may have heard to some extent of the knowledge of recollecting past lives (*pubbenivāsa-anussati-ñāṇa*). It allows one to see the sequence of past aggregates, past lifetimes. Other members of the Sangha, other Arahants, and those Arahants who have attained direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) possess this to some extent. However, the Blessed One possesses it in its utmost purity. An even deeper knowledge than that is the knowledge of inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsaya-anusaya-ñāṇa*). A person's inclinations, internal strengths, hidden potentials, and what we call innate abilities—all of these become apparent to the Blessed One the moment he directs his mind. It is based on this that the Blessed One refuted caste discrimination. This is a superficial, illogical, pride-driven construct. Caste is merely a convention (*sammuti*). It is a division, an analysis born of the world's ignorance. The Blessed One rejected the brahminical view as merely a social construct.

Instead, he highlighted that karma is a present-moment phenomenon. The statement *"Cetanāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kammaṃ vadāmi"* (Monks, intention is what I call karma) implies that karma is always connected to intention. It is a present-moment thing. Some think of this as past karma. It is true that past karma has results. However, a person can bring about a transformation in their life based on what they do in this present moment. It is to assist in that transformation that the Blessed One came forward in that manner. Whether by covering his head, receiving the epithet of "outcast," or enduring the insult of "bald-headed monk," the Blessed One had to use his skill-in-means (*upāya-kosalla-ñāṇa*) to tame that person according to the situation, with the sole intention of helping him. Through this, there are many lessons for us and for this society to learn. Even if we think about our society today, not only in India but even in our own country, people are trapped within the narrow perspectives of caste discrimination. What grows out of this? Pride (*māna*) on one hand, and envy (*issā*) on the other. Why? Because when those from castes deemed low or inferior achieve high status, educate themselves through effort, and receive high offices, envy arises in the neighbors who consider themselves of high caste. They harbor envy, thinking, "Those who received help from us in such-and-such ways are now living in large bungalows like this." Instead, if we had understood the Dhamma correctly, we would think: "That person has, through effort, brought to light the innate potential within him."

On one occasion, the Blessed One stated that when we see a poor person—for instance, when we walk along a city street and see destitute people on the pavement who are missing limbs—if we have something to give them, it is best to give. Even if we do not, we should at least think: "I too must have been like this." We must take this word of the Blessed One to heart. From the perspective of *saṃsāra*, this is equality. Because it is by tangling this ball of thread called "karma" that worldly beings have wandered in *saṃsāra* for so long. Therefore, we should not tangle it further with unwholesome thoughts such as envy. When someone, even having received help from us, educates themselves and eventually reaches a high status, instead of envying them, the very first benefit we can

gain from that person is to cultivate empathetic joy (*muditā*) instead of envy. Many of you might not have heard the word *muditā* very often.

The four sublime abodes (*brahma-vihāra*) are *mettā* (loving-kindness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (empathetic joy), and *upekkhā* (equanimity). Among these, loving-kindness and compassion are heard frequently in society, whether practiced or not. But *muditā* is hardly ever heard. It is something the world has forgotten. Instead, envy (*issā*) is what is prevalent. Envy is what manifests. *Muditā* is the opposite of envy. It means that when someone succeeds, one feels happy about it. One rejoices: "Oh, how wonderful that this person has succeeded! He has shown the world by example the truth of the saying: 'The energetic and effortful person wins.'" Thus, by looking at that successful person and rejoicing, one reaps the first benefit oneself. Let us say someone of a low caste received help from you and achieved a high position. Even if you cannot ask him for a loan in an emergency, the first benefit you can derive from him is the cultivation of the virtue of *muditā*. You can reflect with joy: "Indeed, I too lent a hand to this person's effort and energy, did I not? I too helped. How wonderful! He has set an example to the world that the energetic person wins, the effortful person wins. Through effort, he brought to light a certain wholesome potential (*kusala-sakti*) from the past." In this way, one has the capacity to rejoice. Instead, if one harbors mental stress and narrow envy, thereby accumulating unwholesome karma (*akusala*), one will fall into a miserable state, just as happened to Sunīta in the past.

Moreover, insulting virtuous ones—such as insulting a Paccekabuddha—is done due to pride (*māna*). It was because of this that Sunīta fell into that low condition. Similarly, due to wrong views and wrong concepts such as envy in the present, one falls into extremely dangerous states in *saṃsāra*; one falls into poverty. Instead, we should properly adopt the attitude highlighted by the Blessed One. To the Buddha-eye, everything is visible at a glance, like a school with no partitioned classrooms: "This particular person is in this position; their *saṃsāric* wisdom has matured to this level." He might be uneducated. He might be poor, destitute, and born into a low caste, but if he possesses meritorious potential, it was to such a person that the Blessed One first gave assistance, and not to those with high offices and titles. The Blessed One did not preach the Dhamma specifically to the king or the wealthy merchant sitting at the front of the audience. It might be a person sitting at the very back of the crowd, considered low-born and despised by society, insulted and censured by others, who nevertheless possesses internal meritorious potential and is capable of realizing the Dhamma. It was such people that the Blessed One helped.

From this, we see that the Blessed One presented practice (*paṭipatti*) as the fundamental principle instead of *Jāti* (Birth). As for the linchpin of a chariot, if that linchpin is oiled, the wheel turns smoothly. If not, the wheel cannot turn; that is the end of it. *Jāti* (Birth) is something that cannot be changed. But karma can be changed. Whether through one's course of action or through what are considered ethical practices of wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) actions, one can bring about a transformation in one's life. Through this, the Buddha gave society the capacity and the perception (*saññā*) to

transform one's life. Thus, from the arguments presented by the Blessed One regarding caste discrimination or birth, we can extract many important Dhamma principles. Even in today's society, many people engage in mutual conflicts or turn to terrible crimes precisely because of that envy and pride. Envy and pride go hand in hand. The cause for them is that one boasts: "I belong to a high caste," or "I am in a high position." This does not last forever. Even regarding *Jāti* (Birth), the Blessed One pointed out that it is merely a fabricated pride. On certain occasions, the Blessed One answered the brahmins' arguments regarding birth in an even more biting manner. Can these brahmins truly claim that they were born of pure brahmin families back for seven generations? Were there no crossings of boundaries during that time? When thinking about the realities of society, you, dear devotees, can understand this for yourselves.

On another occasion, the Blessed One states: "Suppose a man of a Khattiya family marries a Brahmin woman. What would you call their child? He is equal to the father and equal to the mother. He could be called of the Brahmin caste, and he could be called of the Khattiya caste." The Blessed One presented arguments in this manner to shatter the pride of the brahmins. Through this, he demonstrated that *Jāti* (Birth) is merely a convention (*sammuti*) created by human beings. It has no real essence. Furthermore, in the effort to attain Arahantship, instead of caste, what is essential is the energy (*viriya*) one exerts. It is called striving (*padhāna*), the great power of striving. This power can exist in everyone. Whether they are brahmins, Vessas, or Suddas, if they ordain in this Dispensation and make that effort based on their past meritorious potential, they can attain even Arahantship, worthy of receiving homage from devas and Brahma kings. Therefore, as declared in this verse, the true brahmin is a fully enlightened Buddha, a Paccekabuddha, or an Arahant who has perfected those spiritual virtues. It was such a person that the Blessed One presented as the true brahmin.

The Blessed One presented to the world a completely new perspective, a novel definition, regarding the concepts of "outcast" and "brahmin," replacing what was previously tied to caste. If one does not like the word "outcast," or considers "outcast" an insult, then he clearly explained in the *Vasala Sutta*: "Keep in mind that these are the qualities of an outcast." To help one understand whether one is an outcast or not, the Blessed One lined up and pointed out all of one's own evil deeds, bad conduct, and corruptions: "Know this: if you do these things, you are an outcast." Conversely, he showed: "If one cultivates such virtues, leading to a noble conduct that eradicates defilements, that person is indeed a brahmin." In this way, using both terms commonly used in society, the Blessed One presented an analysis that assisted the spiritual progress of the world. The Blessed One declared that ignoring a person's inner strength because of distinctions of *Jāti* (Birth) or caste is an obstacle to social progress. In that regard, even from a sociological perspective, the Blessed One can be considered a person who brought about an extraordinary revolution. Through his view on caste discrimination, the Teacher of the Three Worlds showed that everyone has the opportunity for liberation. When we say "liberation" (*vimutti*), various meanings might come to mind, but what is meant here is liberation from *saṃsāra* (*saṃsāra-vimutti*). By keeping the Dispensation open to all

castes, the Blessed One demonstrated to the world that whoever they may be, regardless of caste, they have the opportunity to attain liberation from *saṃsāra*.

Just as the waters of various rivers flowing into the great ocean are simply called "ocean water," whoever ordains in this Dispensation receives the title "Sakyaputta Samana" (ascetic son of the Sakyan). A Sakyaputta Samana means a son of the Blessed One. He becomes a son of the Blessed One. This is why the term "son of the Buddha" (*Buddha-putta*) is used for the community of monks (*Saṅgha*). Regardless of which caste they come from, once they ordain, they become sons of the Buddha. Within every individual, there may lie certain internal capabilities. One must develop the capacity to look at a person as an uncut gem. Instead of revulsing against a low-caste or inferior person, one should first think: "I too must have been like this for an endless time in *saṃsāra*." Next, within this person, too, there may be many good qualities that assist liberation, though they remain hidden. It was to bring these to light that the Blessed One utilized his skill-in-means and his Attainment of Great Compassion. The Blessed One demonstrated this not to insult the brahmins, but to expose the errors of the false views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) held by the world. It is clear that some brahmins accepted this. That is why the young brahmin Vāseṭṭha declared on that very occasion: "One endowed with virtue and vows is indeed the true brahmin." Gradually, this view spread among the brahmins as well.

Due to his comprehension of *saṃsāra*, the Blessed One did not classify the world in that superficial way but opened the door of liberation to everyone. He opened the door of this Dispensation for anyone to ordain, bring forth their mental potentials, and attain liberation from *saṃsāra*. Because among the things accumulated over a long time in *saṃsāra*, there are results of evil deeds as well as the potential of wholesome deeds. Not knowing this and denying someone the opportunity to develop them is a cause for the decline of society. Just as there is no difference in fire regardless of the wood from which it arises, so too, whatever our caste, there can be special potentials within us. Even those who committed grave evil deeds, like Aṅgulimāla, upon attaining the noble state of Arahantship, became worthy of receiving homage from devas and Brahmas. Conversely, even if one obtains a high *Jāti* (Birth), if one commits evil deeds, one's rebirth in a state of misery is certain. This is shown according to the doctrine of karma (*kamma-vāda*). Indeed, the word "karma" is used here in a very broad sense. Most people refer to the result of karma (*kamma-vipāka*) as "karma," saying, "This is my karma." That, however, is a barren philosophy (*vañjha-dassana*).

We should not resign ourselves to it, saying, "This is my karma." The Blessed One declared: "I am a teacher of karma (*kamma-vādī*), a teacher of action (*kiriya-vādī*), and a teacher of energy (*viriya-vādī*)." To some, this might seem contradictory. When he says "I am a teacher of karma," those who confuse the result of karma with karma itself might think: "Ah, if the Buddha is a teacher of karma, where is there room for energy? We must simply resign ourselves to it." But that is not how we should think. When the Buddha says this, he is highlighting the power of intention (*cetanā-sakti*) to the world. Within the intention of every individual—within their present-moment intention—lies the opportunity to steer this vehicle in whichever direction they choose. In the analysis of

"Cetanāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kammaṃ vadāmi", this is what we must contemplate. Why did the Blessed One say he is a teacher of karma? It is precisely because of that that he is a teacher of action (*kiriya-vādī*); hence there is active function. That is why he is called *kiriya-vādī*. Next, *viriya-vādī* means developing that active energy to its maximum.

Through terms like *chanda* (desire/will), *vāyāma* (effort), *viriya* (energy), and *padhāna* (striving), the Blessed One explained how one can gradually increase that energy. A keen interest or desire arises for something. One makes an attempt for it. Next, one instigates energy. Then, regardless of life itself, one exerts intense effort to fulfill one's aspiration. The Blessed One introduced to the world, through the word "karma," the existence of such wonderful mental power. But nowadays, many people misunderstand it: "This is our karma, so we cannot change it; it is my karma, I cannot go beyond it." In truth, one must turn the very understanding of karma into a source of strength. "This is the result of a past karma. Yes, it is so, but even so, I possess the power to shape this present moment. I have that power of intention (*cetanā-sakti*). I have the power of energy." On certain occasions, the Blessed One used powerful words such as "human strength" (*purisa-thāma*) and "human energy" (*purisa-viriya*). It means that everything can be accomplished through human energy and human valor (*purisa-parakkama*). Thus, what we have here is not a barren philosophy. Those religions of creation by Brahma or creation by God contain a barren philosophy, because they deny the spiritual power (*adhyātma-sakti*) within the individual. There, liberation is something to be obtained by praying to someone else. This is not like that. The power is within the individual. Even in the most despised person, that power can exist. If it is applied properly, one can bring forth liberation. It shows that one can apply it freely and independently, not dependently.

When we consider it from all sides in this way, it is clear that the Blessed One did not speak about caste discrimination to attack the brahmins, but to introduce true core values to the world. He brought to light the true potentials within the individual. Today, we began this sermon with the story of Sunīta, the scavenger. In truth, Sunīta, whom the world called a scavenger, became a scavenger in the highest sense. He removed the dirt and filth of defilements that had accumulated in his mind-stream for a long time, since time immemorial. That is why he attained Arahantship. It was for this very reason that the Buddha called Venerable Sunīta, the great Arahant, a true brahmin.

Gathering these thoughts presented by the Blessed One regarding the internal potentials that can exist in our mind-streams, and looking at the world with an open and enlightened mind free from things that lead to envy and pride, may we shape our conduct. Paying attention to conduct rather than to *Jāti* (Birth) and lineage, may this Dhamma sermon we have conducted for about an hour help us live our future lives accordingly. May this meritorious deed of sharing the Dhamma be a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for purifying our own practices of meditation, virtue, and other qualities, so that we may realize the noble and supreme deathless Nibbāna, which is liberated from *Jāti* (Birth), aging (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*)—which comprise *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death) that we all aspire to escape! Furthermore, if there are any beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who wish to rejoice in

this merit of sharing and hearing the Dhamma, may they, by so rejoicing, find peace in the supreme and noble deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi they aspire to! With these wishes, please recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi*....."

Pahankanuwa Sermon #104

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.121)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yesaṃ sannicayo natthi, ye pariññātabhojanā;

suññato animitto ca, vimokkho yesaṃ gocaro;

ākāseva sakuntānaṃ, gati tesaṃ durannayā.

From:

Dhammapada 92 (Arahantavagga)

Dear Listeners,

There are two things in this world: gathering and clearing away. For an infinite length of time in this *Saṃsāra*, what we have done is gathering—the gathering of karma. It was the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Supreme Buddha, who first explained to the world the method of clearing away karma. On a Full Moon Poya day of Esala like today, the Buddha explained this method of clearing away karma to the group of five monks through the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Today, we have chosen as our theme a stanza of the Dhamma relevant to this very matter.

The Buddha preached this stanza at the Jetavana monastery concerning the Elder named Belaṭṭhisīsa. This great Arahant Belaṭṭhisīsa was the preceptor of Venerable Ānanda. His past account is recorded as follows: you may have heard the story mentioned in the Dhamma where the Buddha, through psychic powers, tamed a group of one thousand matted-hair ascetics, led by the three brothers: Uruvela Kassapa, Gayā Kassapa, and Nadī Kassapa. This Venerable Belaṭṭhisīsa was one of those who belonged to the retinue of the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa. Having listened to the preaching of the *Ādittapariyāya Sutta*, all one thousand of them attained Arahantship, including this Elder Belaṭṭhisīsa.

This Elder Belaṭṭhisīsa was a monk who greatly loved solitude and was of few wishes. He mostly lived in the forest. While living in the forest in this manner, on one occasion a thought occurred to him: "Going to the village daily for alms-round is a nuisance." So he devised a method for his alms-round. What was it? Having gone for alms in one street

and obtained the food necessary for the day, he would go to a certain place and consume it. Having finished eating, within that same period, he would go for alms in another street, collect only plain rice, take it to his hut in the forest, dry it in the sun, and then remain for several days enjoying the happiness of dhyāna (meditative absorption) and the happiness of fruition attainment (*phala-samāpatti*), such as the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*). Upon emerging, to merely appease his hunger, he would moisten that dried rice with water and consume it. What he achieved by this was that, by regarding entering the village as a disturbance to that spiritual/unworldly happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*), he went on alms-round only once every few days.

Seeing this behavior, the monks asked: "Why, friend, do you go for alms only occasionally?" When he explained the details, the monks criticized it. "How can a monk store food and eat it? That is not proper, is it?" saying so, they complained to the Buddha. The Buddha too, while expressing a certain level of rebuke—meaning, usually when something that leads to an offense of this nature occurs, the Buddha rebukes the monks who did wrong as "foolish men" (*mogha-purisa*)—did not do so on this occasion. Addressing him by his name, "Belaṭṭhisīsa," and looking at the future of the Dispensation, saying, "This is not for the benefit of non-believers, nor for the increase of clarity in the believers," he laid down a special training rule (*sikkhāpada*). He instituted a disciplinary training rule stating that if any monk stores and consumes any edible foodstuff for more than a day, or beyond the proper time for eating, it constitutes a disciplinary offense of *Pācittiya* (expiation).

However, the Buddha preached this particular stanza. Through it, he subtly showed that while a normal person hoards food due to great desire—due to an excess of wishes and wanting—this Venerable Belaṭṭhisīsa did so out of fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*). It was due to his fondness for the happiness of dhyāna. Moreover, because he did this before the training rule was laid down, he was blameless in that regard. Thus, through this stanza, linked to a deep Dhamma principle, the blamelessness of the Elder Belaṭṭhisīsa is demonstrated in a profound sense. Now let us try to understand the meaning of that stanza.

Yesaṃ sannicayo natthi, ye pariññātabhojanā,

Suññato animitto ca, vimokkho yesaṃ gocaro,

Ākāseva sakuntānaṃ, gati tesaṃ durannayā.

Those who have no hoarding, who have fully understood the true nature of food, whose resort is the liberations called the empty (*suññata*) and the signless (*animitta*)—their mental process, or rather their path, to translate it literally as stated in the stanza, their path is untraceable like that of birds in the sky. It is difficult to comprehend; it cannot be found.

This is a stanza with a very deep meaning. We have to analyze this stanza step-by-step, gradually moving deeper. Now if we take that first line, *yesaṃ sannicayo natthi*—"for whom there is no hoarding/gathering"—that hoarding can be shown in two senses. Now,

what is shown in the stanza is the gathering of karma. What is shown in the story is the gathering of requisites, the hoarding of the fourfold requisites. Thus, hoarding in the world is twofold. However, what is deeply meant here is the accumulation of karma. Arahants have no accumulation of karma. They have no gathering of karma of the sort that yields a new birth (*jāti*).

Just as there is no hoarding, next is *ye pariññātabhojanā*—they have thoroughly understood food. This thorough understanding is described in the Dhamma in three ways: as *ñāta-pariññā*, *tīraṇa-pariññā*, and *pahāna-pariññā*. Thus, in accordance with the Dhamma, three levels of understanding regarding food are shown. *Ñāta-pariññā* is the understanding that ordinary worldly people have regarding food—knowing that "this is gruel, not rice" or "this is rice, not gruel." It is the understanding of food as it appears at first glance. *Tīraṇa-pariññā* means bringing to light the perception of elements (*dhātu-saññā*) and the perception of repulsiveness (*paṭikūla-saññā*) regarding that food by subjecting it to reflection (wise review), and by making it an object of meditation, bringing to light its impermanent (*anicca*) and not-self (*anattā*) characteristics. Considering the repulsiveness of food is called the perception of the repulsiveness of food (*āhāre paṭikūlasaññā*). Lastly, *pahāna-pariññā* is shown—the understanding of abandoning. Abandoning means dispelling the desire and attachment, the lustful desire (*chanda-rāga*) for food. The ultimate result of consuming food in this manner is performing that eating as a meditation itself, with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). What is its final limit? The removal of craving (*taṇhā*) for taste. Then, it is like four elements entering into another four elements. That is *pahāna-pariññā*. Worldly people have a greediness, a covetousness for food. The deepening of understanding to the extent that this greediness and covetousness are eliminated is what is ultimately called *pahāna-pariññā*. Those are the three levels of understanding.

Next, *suññato animitto ca vimokkho yesaṃ gocaro*—now we come to the deep part. Three gateways to Nibbāna: are shown. We have all heard that to realize Nibbāna:, one must cultivate the Three Characteristics in terms of the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). When this characteristic of the impermanent is cultivated deeply to its very end, what is the result? The sign (*nimitta*) disappears. No sign is grasped by the mind. It is on the basis of the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) that signs are grasped by the mind. Therefore, in the fruition attainment (*phala-samāpatti*) of Arahants, there exists that signless state. No signs are grasped by the mind. Due to this very reason, a state of stillness, a state of liberation is brought about in the mind. That is called the signless liberation (*animitta-vimokkha*). Next, regarding the empty (*suññata*)—if we consider the Three Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and not-self—the end of the characteristic of impermanence is the signless (*animitta*); the end of the characteristic of suffering is the desireless (*appaṇihita*); and the end of the characteristic of not-self is the empty (*suññata*). It is within the characteristic of self that we get the notion of existence (*bhava*). When it is understood as empty, when voidness is understood, there is no existence there either. That too is a liberation. That *appaṇihita* is the end of the perception of suffering (*dukkha-saññā*). Although it is not explicitly mentioned in words here, it can be taken as implied, meaning it is something to be

understood as belonging to this context. "Desireless" (*appaṇihita*) means that when craving (*taṇhā*) is removed, nothing is perceived by the mind as aims or targets. Then, the mind is liberated from signs on that side too; there are no targets or the like. Likewise, there is no perception of self, no feeling of "I" or "mine." Such a wonderful kind of liberation is this state of fruition attainment (*phala-samāpatti*). It is enough to generally understand that Nibbāna: itself is referred to by these three terms. *Suññato animitto ca vimokkho*—those liberations are their resort (*gocaro*). That is their resort. So, we must understand here that for those who have that resort—which is a resort of the mind—when the mind moves in that resort, the path the mind takes cannot be found. That is why the line says, *ākāseva sakuntānaṃ gati tesaṃ durannayā*.

Their path, or rather their mental conduct, the way their mind behaves, is like the path of birds in the sky. There are no tracks, it cannot be found. It is a wonderful movement of the mind where one cannot say, "it went this way, it went that way, or it came from this side"—that mind which is called empty (*suññata*), signless (*animitta*), and desireless (*appaṇihita*). At one level, we can explain this stanza in this manner. Next, we intend to analyze this very stanza in a way that goes deeper step-by-step.

In the discussion on the accumulation of karma, indeed, even the ancient yogis and sages who existed before the advent of the Buddha understood that in *Saṃsāra*, even though one is born again and again, in the end, one keeps dying. The question was, "how do we stop this?" They also saw how births are formed according to karma. But they did not understand how to eliminate this karma. That is precisely why those Nigaṇṭhas (Jains) and others held the wrong stance that by inflicting suffering (*dukkha*) on the body, past karma could be exhausted, and by not accumulating new karma, all karma could be worn away. However, it is recorded that after attaining Supreme Enlightenment (*sambodhi*), the Buddha discovered the method of clearing away karma. In a certain important sutta, four types of karma are mentioned as follows.

There is one type of karma: dark karma with dark results (*vipāka*). Next, bright karma with bright results. The third category is dark-and-bright karma with dark-and-bright results. What is the fourth category? Neither-dark-nor-bright karma with neither-dark-nor-bright results. The Buddha has pointed out in a certain sermon that this fourth category helps to destroy karma, to eliminate karma. The first category, called dark karma with dark results, refers to certain evil deeds which, as their result, yield birth (*jāti*) in hells where there is absolute suffering (*dukkha*). Bright karma refers to karma that yields birth in the Brahma-worlds, such as the Subhakinha, which are of an absolutely pleasant nature. Dark-and-bright karma refers to karma that yields birth (*jāti*) in human existences, certain heavenly existences, and certain ghost or demon existences, which possess both pleasure and suffering. Those are mixed karmas. The fourth category is shown as the eradication of all these three categories. It is the intention/volition (*saṅkhāra*) developed to eliminate the karma of these three categories.

To put it another way, it is identified as the Noble Eightfold Path. Then it becomes clear. That wonderful path mentioned in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* under the name of the Middle Way, which is the Noble Eightfold Path, is indeed the path for the

destruction of karma. That is why we said at the beginning that it was the Buddha who first discovered the method of clearing away karma. Until then, it remained a problem for the world. Indeed, even the Bodhisatta in the beginning, as if led astray by the views accepted in that era, practiced self-mortification for six years, as we have all heard. According to the views of that time, he thought, *dukkhena ve sukhaṃ adhigantabbaṃ*—"happiness must be attained through suffering"—and so he inflicted manifold pain on his body. He intentionally brought about suffering (*dukkha*). Through various vows, as well as the reduction of food, he performed wonderful acts of self-mortification. In short, you must have seen pictures of those self-mortifications, where the skin of the abdomen clung to the spine. The Buddha states in a sutta on one occasion: "I have practiced bitter and difficult vows, inflicting pain on my body to an extent that no other ascetic has ever borne in the past, present, or future. Yet, when the realization came to me that despite practicing such difficult mortifications, I was unable to attain Nibbāna:—which is a state beyond ordinary human capacity—I fell into reflection: could there be another path to Supreme Enlightenment (*sambodhi*)?" That was the decisive moment.

At that moment, there came to the Bodhisatta's mind the memory of the occasion during his childhood, at his father the King's royal ploughing festival, when he entered into the first dhyāna under the cool shade of a rose-apple tree. That first dhyāna is mentioned as a state born of seclusion, free from sensual desires and unwholesome qualities, and accompanied by spiritual happiness. He remembered that happiness. Then, the Bodhisatta thought: "Ah, could this be the path to Supreme Enlightenment? Why should I fear? Why should I fear a pleasure that is aloof from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states?" He also realized that while not clinging to such pleasure, he must utilize it. There lies the Middle Way. This, indeed, is the path to Supreme Enlightenment.

Many people generally think that the teachers of the Bodhisatta were Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. That is what they believe. But that view is incorrect. Because we know that when the Buddha met the Ājīvaka Upaka while walking to preach the Dhamma after his Supreme Enlightenment, he declared his Buddhahood to him in a certain stanza. There he declared: *na me ācariyo atthi*—"I have no teacher." Did the Buddha then tell a lie when he said "I have no teacher"? In truth, it is clear that Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta cannot be called his teachers. Why? Because the moment those two teachers merely moved their lips to speak of those dhyānas, the Bodhisatta had already attained those dhyānic states. That is why those two teachers handed over the discipleship to him, saying, "let both of us look after this group." The teacher made the student his equal. You have heard those stories.

In fact, if we are to say that the Bodhisatta had a teacher, we would have to say that his teacher was Prince Siddhārtha—that young child. The young Prince Siddhārtha was his teacher. What is the meaning of that? Ultimately, it was the power of the perfections (*pāramī*) cultivated by the Buddha over a long period that came to his aid. That is how we must understand it. Due to some karmic obstruction or due to the wrong views prevalent at that time, the Bodhisatta practiced self-mortification for six years. However, remembering the power of the perfections brought from his past, that occasion when he entered dhyāna in his early childhood was the decisive moment. There he understood:

"this is the true path." The view of the Nigaṇṭhas was that all pleasure and suffering experienced by beings are due to past results (*vipāka*) alone, and therefore what we must do is remove our clothes, abstain from food, intentionally inflict manifold suffering on the body, exhaust past karma through that, and conduct ourselves in such a way that no new karma arises.

The Buddha pointed out that karma is volition/intention (*saṅkhāra*) itself. It is connected with the present. Not everything occurs due to past karma; it can be changed in the present moment. Not only that, but that pleasure which is aloof from unwholesome states and sensual desires—the happiness of dhyāna—must be used as an aid. The happiness of dhyāna cannot be rejected; it is used as an aid. But without getting drowned in it, using that happiness of dhyāna as an aid, one must cultivate insight (*vipassanā*). All of these are used as aids for the sake of liberation. The Nigaṇṭhas and others thought until then that they could clear away karma through inflicting pain on the body. Instead, the Buddha showed an extremely subtle method through the Middle Path, which is the Noble Eightfold Path. Through it, after a certain great transformation takes place in the individual's mental continuum leading up to right concentration (*sammā-samādhī*), and by utilizing that dhyāna without clinging even to that dhyānic happiness, turning it towards insight and understanding the Three Characteristics, one can realize Nibbāna:. The first part can be analyzed to some extent in that manner.

Next, we spoke of the complete understanding, the full comprehension of food. This can often be helpful to meditating devotees as well. The Middle Path regarding food is also extremely important. The Buddha has expressed this on a certain occasion as follows: *āhārasambhūto ayaṃ kāyo*—"this body is born of food"; however, *āhāraṃ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo*—"dependent on food, food is to be abandoned." There is the Middle Path. When you look at it, it seems like a great riddle. How does one do that?

One does this through the reflection on food. As we mentioned earlier, the full comprehension of food does not mean the general understanding that "this is gruel, this is rice." Rather, it is done by knowing it through *tīraṇa-pariññā* as impermanent (*anicca*) and not-self (*anattā*), and acting in a way that removes the lustful desire (*chanda-rāga*) within it. What ultimately happens through that action? One cannot live without eating food. Food is used as an aid, with reflection and careful consideration. Some of you may know that meditators, and especially the monks, consume food by reflecting on it wisely. This is what is called "consuming with wise review" (*paccavekkhaṇā*). It is not for fun, nor for beautifying the body. Merely—and that word is important—merely for the maintenance of this body, for its sustenance. For the survival and upkeep of the body. Furthermore, it is as an aid to this holy life (*brahmacariya*), the holy life of the Dispensation. Likewise, food should be consumed with the reflection: "I consume this food to dispel the past painful feeling of hunger, to prevent new painful feelings from overeating, and to carry on life blamelessly and in comfort."

Not only that, at the time of taking food, one contemplates in terms of elements (*dhātu*): only the four elements of earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*) are

present in this food, and those same four elements are present in this body. Once this food, which appears clean, enters this unclean, decomposing body, it becomes unclean. Thus, it is turned into two kinds of meditation: the attention on elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*) and the attention on repulsiveness (*paṭikūla-manasikāra*). By turning eating into meditation in this way, what ultimately happens? Food is abandoned. Worldly people think of food as prey to be swallowed. You see how beasts swallow prey. Through reflection, that perception (*saññā*) disappears. When the practitioner's craving (*taṇhā*) for taste is eliminated, it is seen as though four elements are merely merging with another four elements. In a wonderful way, that itself becomes a state of concentration (*samādhi*). That is why ancient texts mention that some practicing monks attained Arahantship while sipping gruel in the alms-hall, at the very moment of consuming food. That itself is a meditation—a powerful meditation—because it represents the arising of insight (*vipassanā*) concerning the sensitivity of the tongue. It is the moment of conquering the craving (*taṇhā*) for taste. Then, it is no longer "food"; it is merely a part of meditation. Arriving at such a state is indeed the full comprehension of food. It is also what we referred to as *ye pariññātabhojanā*—they have thoroughly understood food.

The Buddha called this very thing the Middle Way: abandoning food by utilizing food. Just as we discussed regarding karma, a Middle Path is shown there too. Thus, when going to the extreme of self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*) yielded no results, the Bodhisatta began taking food in a moderate measure, bringing comfort and ease to the body. Once he adopted that practice, the group of five monks became displeased, thinking: "This ascetic Gotama has returned to a life of luxury." They departed in disappointment. That is precisely why, in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the Buddha declared to the world that there is a Middle Way to be followed, avoiding both the extreme of sensual indulgence (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) and the extreme of self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). It was to remove the wrong views of those five monks. The term "Middle Way" indeed carries an extremely deep and broad meaning. Ordinary people think that the Middle Way lies merely between the two extremes of giving too much pleasure or too much pain to the body. Not only that, but just as with karma, there are other extremely deep meanings, which we will not bring up at this moment. A wonderfully profound meaning exists within this concept of the Middle Way. However, in this context, regarding the story of removing the wrong views of the five monks, we see that he pointed out a path for the destruction of karma as well as a Middle Way regarding the consumption of food.

The Buddha allowed the monks to consume food in a way that avoids attachment, by turning it into a meditation. He gave them the opportunity to use robes and food with fewness of wishes; he did not ask them to go naked like the Nigaṇṭhas. Thus, regarding food: *ye pariññātabhojanā*. Next, *suññato animitto ca vimokkho yesaṃ gocaro*—now we come to the deep part. We have already mentioned this discussion of Nibbāna:. It is so profoundly deep that it is beyond thought, and one might even fear to say anything about it. However, in accordance with the Dhamma, we can show that it is a matter connected with the behavior of the mind. We often use the term Consciousness

(*viññāṇa*) to refer to this mind of ours. Indeed, if we look at it fundamentally, Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is a division. What is this division? It is the duality of "myself" and "the world." On this side am I, and on that side is the world. Thus, according to the Buddha's analysis, this division is Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is on one side. The object called Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is like a shadow falling on that Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—like a reflection. Taking this shadow to be real, getting attached to it and immersed in it, worldly people carry this very thing along throughout *Saṃsāra*. This is being deceived by the shadow. That is why Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is said to be an illusion.

However, on some occasion, through the cultivation of the Three Characteristics, that perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) is thinned out. The cultivation of the Three Characteristics is necessary because worldly people have taken up the perception of permanence. To ordinary worldly people, due to the perception of permanence, everything they grasp appears permanent at that moment. As one goes deeper into insight (*vipassanā*), that perception of permanence thins out. It begins to be seen, in a subtle way, as a flux of arising and passing away. This is not at a level that can be shown to another; rather, it is directly realized by oneself as that permanent sign (*nicca-nimitta*) fades away—gradually. What seemed permanent is seen as impermanent (*anicca*), as a flux of arising and passing away. Gradually progressing, the state where those signs disappear brings a great freedom to the mind. As long as signs exist, it is a great trouble for Consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

We know that when walking in a city, not only so many people, but various objects also strive to captivate our eyes and minds. Through that, our mind becomes distracted. The Buddha has shown the entire world to be like that—as a heap. A king tells his executioners to pierce a condemned man with three hundred spears in the morning, three hundred spears at noon, and three hundred spears in the evening. In that manner, the Buddha has declared the painful nature of Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). What are the spears? Those very objects of the mind. Those objects come and fall upon the mind—all those faces and sights. This, indeed, is the danger within Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). However, when that perception of permanence is removed, it is understood as signless (*animitta*). No sign whatsoever is grasped by the mind. There is a great freedom. Although it is often left unsaid for the sake of the poetic meter of the stanza, let us speak next of the desireless (*appaṇihita*). Through craving (*taṇhā*), many people construct desires and targets, but here, no target is presented to the mind. To say there is a desire implies future expectations. Here, there are no expectations. There is no place for the mind to establish itself—desireless (*appaṇihita*). Next is the empty (*suññata*). "Empty" means that when the perception of self—the grasping of things as "I" and "mine"—is destroyed, a sense of voidness is felt by the mind everywhere. There itself is liberation. That is called empty liberation (*suññata-vimokkha*).

Normally, there is a nature in Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to record everything. However, in that non-manifestative Consciousness (*anidassana viññāṇa*), the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) are not recorded. Likewise, in references to that state, it is

mentioned that the elements of earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*) have no footing there. These four elements are identified in the Dhamma as the great elements (*mahābhūta*). They show their presence—making themselves felt as "I am earth"—only when they are in disparity. When the four elements are in equilibrium, there is no way for them to stand out. They exist in complete blend. What we call the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind based on qualities like hardness, are not some fundamental elements that exist eternally in the world, like atoms in the way physics analyzes them. Rather, they are named according to how they are perceived by the mind: based on hardness or softness, it is called earth (*paṭhavī*); based on the flowing nature, it is called water (*āpo*); based on heat or coldness, it is called fire (*tejo*). Contemplating them in this way is a recognition. That recognition is made when those elements are in disparity. When the mind is established in equanimity (*upekkhā*) and the elements are perceived as balanced, there is no way for them to stand out. Because of that very reason, they are not recorded.

The markings arising based on the four elements are shown. There are divisions in this world such as long and short, beautiful and ugly, and we perceive everything as a duality. Here and there. This end and that end. Long and short, beautiful and ugly, large and small. In this way, the people of the world are trapped between two extremes. All measurements exist between two pegs, between two extremes. Thus, to speak of the liberated mind, which has no such state—let us imagine for a moment someone going far out to sea in a canoe, a boat, or a ship. Here, what is seen in the distance is like the sky and the sea merging. No matter how much further one goes, it remains the same—like a mirage. In that manner, there is this end and that end. Such is the nature of ordinary Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Now, when it is said "it is not here," it means it is not there, nor is it here, nor is it in the middle. This is the wonderfully liberated state of the mind, which is the nature of the Arahant's mind, the mind of fruition (*phala-citta*). That is the little portion that has been declared here.

Suññato animitto ca vimokkho yesaṃ gocaro. Here, the word *gocara* (resort) is also very important. Dear devotees, if we look at the word *gocara* etymologically, it means the place where cattle graze. We translate it into Sinhala as *godura* (prey/food). When we say *godura*, yes, the prey of a snake is also a *godura*. But the primary, original meaning of that word is the pasture ground of cattle. We still use the term "pasture village" (*gocara-gama*) even today in reference to the monks. In the past, when monks arrived at a monastery or a forest hermitage, they would ask, "where is the pasture village?" The pasture village refers to the village where they go for alms-round. Monks too have to collect "pasture" (nourishment). The pasture village is the village for alms-round. Now, why is this word *gocara* important? We mentioned the story of the Elder Belaṭṭhisīsa at the beginning. Ordinary people think, and at first glance in this story it appears, that the great Arahant Belaṭṭhisīsa's collecting and storing of food to consume later was a great wrong. But he did so out of fewness of wishes. What his true pasture ground (resort) was is contained in this stanza. His resort was not that village; it was that Arahant-fruition attainment (*arahattaphala-samāpatti*) mentioned earlier. Therefore, it was because of his desire to enter into his true resort that he did not even go for alms-

round. That is how we must understand it. The pasture of ordinary worldly people is that tasty food and so on. Now, what this Venerable Belaṭṭhisīsa stored and consumed was just plain rice—dried rice. Can you even imagine? It was because it was far more delicious that he would enter the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), sometimes for seven days. After emerging from the attainment of cessation, there is a great hunger—it is generally said, when one remains without food for seven days, how great a hunger must there be in the body? How is that hunger appeased? With a highly delicious food? With luxurious food? No, with that dried rice brought seven days ago, moistened with water. There you can understand the vast difference between material happiness (*āmisa-sukha*) and spiritual happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*).

Therefore, that Arahant Belaṭṭhisīsa had such an attachment to spiritual happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*) that he used only that dried rice brought from the village for the mere survival, sustenance, and maintenance of this bodily cage. He enjoyed a far more delicious food through the happiness of dhyāna in the forest. Also, an important point regarding his conduct is mentioned in a stanza concerning him in the book called *Theragāthā*. That stanza is an utterance of joy (*udāna*) expressing his experience of that spiritual happiness. I will state only its meaning at this moment, even without the Pali stanza. There, he gives a simile: "Just as when a strong, energetic ox is yoked to a plough, when such an ox is ploughing a field, it drags the plough back and forth with great ease. There may be various roots; there may be bushes. Ignoring all of them, it drags it this way and that. For me, day and night pass with similar ease. Because *sukhe laddhe nirāmise*—as the last line states, 'since I have obtained spiritual happiness,' for me the remainder of this life, day and night, passes just like that strong ox pulling the plough from one end of the field to the other, without any concern or burden." There you can understand the great gulf between material happiness (*āmisa-sukha*) and spiritual happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*). Now, therefore, understand the value of these precious Dhamma truths, such as Nibbāna:, through this itself. What are the values and evaluations we speak of in our world? If there are luxurious things in foreign countries that do not exist in this country, these poor people target them. Looking in that direction, everyone is prepared to obtain them, wondering: "When will we ever live a luxurious life?" However, we must recollect as our models the lives of those Arahants who developed within their inner continuum a spiritual joy (*nirāmisa-pīti*) so great that they could consume even dry rice as if it were delicious food.

In that way, we have been able to extract many deep meanings from this. In the Buddha's Dhamma, there is especially a treatment of the cause (etiology/root) of the disease. Worldly people think of solving this problem of suffering (*dukkha*) by treating the symptoms of the disease. That is what the Niganṭhas expected too. They treated the symptoms. What is the symptom? Suffering (*dukkha*). They inflicted pain on the body. Because of that, they thought they must destroy it through suffering itself, by inflicting pain. The Buddha treated the root cause of the disease. The Buddha gives a good simile for that on one occasion. That simile might be very interesting to you devotees. The Buddha gives very unusual similes. Having explained to the Niganṭhas and others that suffering (*dukkha*) definitely does not have to be destroyed through suffering itself, when

relating that story to the monks, he states: "There are certain pains where, considering the root cause of that pain, one must destroy that pain by putting forth a special effort." Let us assume that even for monks, if certain defilements (*kilesa*) arise intensely, they are permitted to contemplate wisely and apply certain strict practices called dhutanga—not mere vows, but strict practices—according to the situation, to shatter those defilements. Such occasions are indeed shown. That means treating the root cause of the disease. The most fundamental thing in this Buddhist Dhamma is to engage in radical attention/wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Radical attention/wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), dear devotees, means going to the very root of something and reflecting on it according to the cause that produces it. It is reflecting according to the source where it arises. When a problem comes, one reflects in that way. What is the medicine for this illness? For certain illnesses, there can be occasions where one makes a special effort, applying a special practice as mentioned.

The Buddha states that on some occasions, a person may face a problem, and to solve it, they must utilize equanimity (*upekkhā*). Equanimity means neutrality—looking on with neutrality. The Buddha presents here a story about an occasion where that equanimity is utilized. He clarifies it through a question-and-answer format with the monks: "Now, monks, suppose a man has lust, a lustful mind, and an attachment towards a certain woman. That man sees that woman staying with another man, talking, laughing, and laughing out loud. When he sees that, monks, do sorrow, lamentation, pain, and grief arise in that man?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." "Why, monks, does that arise when he sees it? Monks, that man has developed a lustful mind, an attachment towards that woman. To use an old term, a mind of lust has arisen. That is why such sorrow and grief arise in that man. Well, monks, suppose that man reflects: 'Seeing this woman behave in this way brings me suffering (*dukkha*). Why did this arise in me? Because I have an attachment to that woman. I must eliminate this attachment. I must remove this attachment and turn my mind to equanimity.' Thinking thus, suppose that man at some point removes his attachment, his lust, his thoughts regarding that woman. Then, what is the situation? No matter whom that woman talks with, or laughs and chuckles with, would suffering (*dukkha*) arise in that man, monks?" "No, Venerable Sir." There, the Buddha obtains the answers from the monks themselves.

These, after all, are things that happen in society. But when some people see such a thing, they do not think according to its root cause. They do not think: "Where is the disease? It is due to this attachment that has arisen within myself." It is to think deeply in this manner that we are urged. The teachers of the past illustrate the Buddha's method with a simile: the Buddha is like a lion, while the Niganṭhas and others are like dogs. Why is this said? Not to insult, but to make room for a simile. If a hunter shoots an arrow at a lion from afar, does the lion bite the arrow? Instead, what does that wise animal do? It looks to see where the arrow came from and leaps at the hunter. But if you throw a stick at a dog? If you throw a stick at a dog, the dog keeps biting the stick. Treating the symptoms of the disease is just like that.

Sometimes, some people treat the effect, leaving out the cause. One must treat the root cause of the disease. That is what was expressed by that lion simile. Thus, the Buddhas

are like lions. Or rather, like skilled physicians, they consider the root cause of the disease. That is precisely what is in the Buddha's True Dhamma. We have all heard that the Buddha described himself as *sallakatto anuttaro*—the supreme surgeon—and also as *bhisakko sallakatto*—the physician and surgeon. Why is he called a supreme physician? Because if one is a physician, a true physician, one treats the cause of the disease, not its symptoms.

Dear devotees, the essence of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* is the Four Noble Truths. The entire Dhamma is contained within it: suffering (*dukkha*), the cause of suffering, the cessation of the cause, and then the path to it. Thus, it is the same even with a physician: first, he observes the condition of the illness. Next, he finds its underlying cause, its reason, how it arose. Then, he treats it—not by merely applying ointment to an itch on the skin, but by treating the blood impurity that caused it. In that manner, he treats the root cause of the disease. Next, by treating it, he shows that health can be attained. Health comes third. Next, the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to it is described by us on some occasions as being like a decoction—like a herbal decoction boiled down from eight parts to one. When one drinks those four doses, all illnesses are completely cured, prevented. That is how we must understand suffering (*dukkha*).

The cause of suffering (*dukkha*) is craving (*taṇhā*). That is exactly what was shown in the story of the man and the woman. That man did not get angry because that woman talked to someone else. When we look in the end, the cause was within himself: that lustful mind, that attachment. In that manner, the Buddha declares that this suffering is *ponobhavikā*—leading to renewed existence. Through craving (*taṇhā*), renewed existence (*bhava*) is brought about; craving (*taṇhā*) is also called *ponobhavikā*. The very nature of craving (*taṇhā*) is that it is always leaning forward. That is why it leads towards a new birth (*jāti*). Craving (*taṇhā*) leans precisely towards grasping/holding/fuel (*upādāna*). Craving (*taṇhā*) is inclined in that direction. To give another simile, when a donkey is yoked to a vehicle—a heavily loaded vehicle—what is the easiest way to make that donkey run? Hanging a carrot from something like a hook and showing it in front of the donkey's tongue. It keeps stretching its tongue and moving forward. As the carrot moves, it also moves forward. Such indeed are the things that happen in society. What does that show? It shows the nature of the worldly person, or rather, the nature of craving (*taṇhā*). It always goes forward, leaning ahead. In the stories mentioned in the past about kings like Mahāmandhātu, those Wheel-turning Kings (*cakkavatti*) enjoyed wonderfully luxurious comforts and pleasures for about eighty-four thousand years—comforts that would make the people of modern luxurious countries feel ashamed—yet died unsatisfied, with a craving (*taṇhā*) leaning forward. As a result of that, they obtained a new birth (*jāti*).

The Buddha declared that a new birth (*jāti*) is obtained because of that craving (*taṇhā*). *Yāyaṃ taṇhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatratatrābhinandinī*—that craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, finding delight here and there, goes forward, delighting here and there. It creates a new birth (*jāti*). It is for the eradication of that craving (*taṇhā*) that everything is shown throughout the Buddha's

Dhamma. One must consider wisely, "where and to what extent does it exist?" and apply the remedy to that very place. That Middle Way is what we discussed earlier regarding the destruction of karma. Here, regarding food and the other fourfold requisites, what is shown to the monks is meant to remove the defilements (*kilesa*) that may arise in the course of utilizing those fourfold requisites. That is called "restraint through wisdom" (*ñāṇa-saṃvara*). Restraint through wisdom means utilizing wisdom on those occasions. One cannot live without food. One cannot live without robes.

Yet, those are utilized to develop restraint through wisdom regarding them. Restraint through wisdom is indeed that reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*). That reflection is the consideration of the true purpose of this food. "This is not for fun, nor for amusement. Merely as an aid to the holy life (*brahmacariya*), for the sustenance of the body, do I use this." Not only does one impress this well upon the mind, but one also brings to light the true nature of this food. What we called *pahāna-pariññā* is this: when considered in terms of elements, this is not something towards which attachment should be formed—here are four elements, and there are four elements. Within that, without becoming a slave to those flavor-enhancers, whether artificial or natural, bringing to light the understanding that "this is merely four elements" is what is contained in that meditation on taking food. Thus, if that is done correctly, there is the Middle Path. That is why it was declared: *āhāraṃ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo*—"dependent on food, food is to be abandoned." A wonderfully profound Middle Way exists regarding that too.

We are obliged to bring up again and again a sublime declaration made by the Buddha. That is why he declared: "Within this very fathom-long body, endowed with perception (*saññā*) and mind, I declare the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." Then, we must reflect: we run searching for this liberation. We run searching for satisfaction. These humans put forth a wonderful effort to fulfill those targets, those various aspirations. Considering our lives in terms of those virtues and ultimate goals spoken of in these times, in accordance with the ancient Dhamma literature, and looking back at our own lives, now is the best opportunity to make decisions according to that Middle Way. Because by running after this mirage, many people have become exhausted. Now they look in every direction, wondering: "How can this be solved? Where is the solution?" This solution is not found in other philosophical systems, nor in books of other foreign lands. This path of liberation lies within the Middle Way presented to the world by our Buddha two thousand five hundred and fifty years ago through the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. That is exactly what we have declared. The character of Venerable Belaṭṭhisīsa is also exemplary for us in that regard. Although it appeared as an offense, indeed, when considered wisely, it was not an offense; rather, out of fewness of wishes and due to his attachment to spiritual happiness, he followed such a practice regarding food.

However, because future monks would not be like Venerable Belaṭṭhisīsa, and if they too were to begin storing food saying, "even Venerable Belaṭṭhisīsa did such a thing," they would drift back towards the lay life. For this reason, certain rules regarding food were laid down for higher-ordained monks (*upasampadā bhikkhu*). The daily noon meal, or

rather the food taken before the sun passes the meridian, is called temporary (*yāvakālika*)—meaning it can be stored only during that period. After that, it cannot be kept. It does not belong to them. It must be handed over to a novice (*sāmaṇera*) or to a lay-attendant (*kappiyakāra*). Next, what is called *yāmakālika* refers to certain beverages, such as those made from mango, rose-apple, banana, etc., to alleviate illness, which are allowable beverages for those who observe the precept of abstaining from food at improper times (*vikāla-bhojana*). What is shown as permissible for use is called *yāmakālika*. *Yāmakālika* means they can be used until the final watch of the night of the following day. That too is abandoned; it is for one day. That too must be relinquished. Next, there are other medicines like ghee, honey, etc., which the Buddha allowed for the convenience of sick monks, such as sugar, ghee, jaggery, cane-sugar, and the like. Such food can be kept by a higher-ordained monk for only seven days (*sattāhakālika*). If he goes beyond that, he falls into the training rule called hoarding (*sannidhikāraka*). Finally, *yāvajīvika* is shown. There are certain things like yellow myrobalan (*araḷu*), belleric myrobalan (*buḷu*), emblic myrobalan (*nelli*), black hellebore (*kaṭukarosana*), and such substances, which once accepted by the monks, can be kept for the rest of their lives and utilized whenever necessary.

In that manner, the Buddha has declared four levels regarding the foodstuffs to be utilized. Why were such various training rules (*sikkhāpada*) laid down? By storing them in abundance, the life of the Sangha would become like lay life. Through gathering (hoarding), clearing away (de-hoarding) is forgotten. That is why we must understand in what way true peace arises: not by the measure of what is gathered, but by developing within the mind the capacity to clear away. When we consider wisely, we understand that the Buddha laid down a training rule regarding this with a very deep consideration—that Venerable Belaṭṭhisīsa's action might create a wrong impression for future monks.

At any rate, on a day like today, this exposition was made regarding the Middle Way, which is a certain profoundly deep aspect of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Dear devotees, if we are to briefly point out the path to Nibbāna:, it is the threefold training of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhī*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Now, at this moment, on a precious day like today, just as many of you have engaged in observing the precepts, which we regard as a worship of practice (*paṭipatti-pūjā*), you have also inclined towards concentration through some experienced concentration at your own levels. Likewise, we hope that this sermon will help you in your insight (*vipassanā*) to understand the Three Characteristics of the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). Its culmination is that wonderfully marvelous state of fruition attainment (*phala-samāpatti*) called the signless (*animitta*), the desireless (*appaṇihita*), and the empty (*suññata*). Once that state is reached, there is no longer any sign there to lead to a new birth (*jāti*); there is no grasping/holding/fuel (*upādāna*), no attachment, no craving for existence/becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). Right there is liberation. That is what we call Nibbāna:. One must understand that. Nibbāna is not a world with some unusual eternal pleasure that increases the craving for existence/becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). It is the very end of this suffering (*dukkha*) we have spoken of.

The peace that arises when suffering (*dukkha*) is ended is experienced by Arahants in this very life (*diṭṭha-dhamma*) through the happiness of concentration, and since their final mind-moment is also a mind of fruition attainment (*phala-samāpatti*), as a result, no birth (*jāti*) occurs anywhere again. That is why the Buddha, through the stanza beginning with *anekajātisamsāraṃ*, declared that in this extremely terrifying *Saṃsāra*, being born again and again occurs whether one makes a special effort or not. One must strive to eliminate birth (*jāti*). The effort to be made is what is contained within this Middle Way, which is the Noble Eightfold Path.

Through the power of merit accumulated today, and through the practice you have maintained, cultivating the Noble Eightfold Path in its supramundane aspect, may this Dhamma sermon definitely serve as a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for the realization of the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna:, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship. Guided by the power of merit accumulated so far through listening to the Dhamma, may it be a supportive cause for you devotees to realize that noble, deathless, great Nibbāna: before this Dispensation fades away! Likewise, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, if there be anyone, including our departed relatives, who wishes to share in this merit of preaching and listening to the Dhamma, may they, by sharing in it, realize the noble, deathless, great Nibbāna: through their own aspired Bodhi (Enlightenment)! Thinking thus, recite this stanza now.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #105

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.154)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Passāmi loke sadhane manusse,

Laddhā dhanaṃ na dadanti mohā;

Luddhā dhanaṃ sannicayaṃ karonti,

Bhiyyo va kāme abhipatthayanti.

Rājā pasayha pathaviṃ vijitvā,

Sassāgarantaṃ mahimāvasanto;

Oraṃ samudassa atittarūpo,

Pāraṃ samudassapi patthayetha.

Rājā ca aññe ca bahū manussā,

Avītataṇhā maraṇaṃ upenti;

Ūṇā va hutvāna jahanti dehaṃ,

Kāmehi loke nahi atthi titti.

From:

Itivuttaka (It 26)

Dear Listeners,

It is apparent to us that *Taṇhā* (Craving) is the cause of the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *saṃsāra* (the round of rebirths), since the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering has

been introduced as *taṇhā*. It is also stated in the Dhamma that the conduit of *Bhava* (Becoming) which pushes *bhava* forward is *taṇhā*. Likewise, on certain occasions, the Buddha has declared that the destruction of *taṇhā* itself is Nibbāna.

The few verses we have chosen today as our theme also form a set of verses that demonstrate the disadvantageous aspect of *taṇhā*. These verses are found in a series of verses delivered by the great Arahant Raṭṭhapāla. The Venerable Raṭṭhapāla is the monk who attained the foremost position among the monks in this Dispensation who went forth out of faith. His life story is one that demonstrates the power of the thought of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*). Even during his lay life, he was known as the clansman Raṭṭhapāla. The Kuru country was one of the most prosperous regions in India. Raṭṭhapāla was the son of the chief householder Brahmin of the village named Thullakoṭṭhita in the Kuru country. On one occasion, while the Buddha was wandering in the Kuru country accompanied by a large community of monks, He arrived at this market-town, the village of Thullakoṭṭhita. At that time, having heard that the Tathāgata, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Awakened One, had arrived, and having previously heard His ninefold virtues, that group of Brahmins came to listen to the Buddha's Dhamma sermon, considering it a great gain to see such Arahants. Simultaneously, the clansman Raṭṭhapāla also arrived there. While the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma, it occurred to the clansman Raṭṭhapāla: "According to how this Blessed One preaches the Dhamma, it is not easy to lead this pure holy life (*brahmacariya*) of the Dispensation while living the household life. Therefore, I must go forth from the home life, shave off my hair and beard, don the yellow robes, and practice these observances." He made this firm resolution. After the Dhamma sermon, having waited until the other people had left, the clansman Raṭṭhapāla approached the Buddha and said:

"Venerable Sir, Blessed One, if I have correctly understood the Dhamma preached by the Blessed One, according to that, it is not easy to protect that pure holy life while living this household life. Therefore, please let me go forth, please give me the higher ordination (*upasampadā*)."

The Buddha asked, "Raṭṭhapāla, have you obtained the consent of your parents?" When he replied that he had not, the Buddha declared, "The Tathāgatas do not ordain anyone without the parents' consent." Then the clansman Raṭṭhapāla said, "In that case, Blessed One, if I can obtain permission in some way, I will act accordingly." With great determination, he went home and spoke to his parents:

"Mother, Father, according to the Dhamma preached by the Blessed One, as far as I understand, it is impossible to protect this pure holy life within this household life. Therefore, I wish to go forth. Please give me your consent for ordination; give me permission." Then the parents said, "You are our only dear and beloved son. We have brought you up without any pain or trouble. We do not wish for you to be separated from us even by death. How can we give you permission to separate from us while you are still alive? We will certainly not give our consent." Three times the clansman Raṭṭhapāla asked for permission from his parents in this manner. Three times they refused. Then

the clansman Raṭṭhapāla lay down right there on the floor. Saying "either ordination or death," he began a hunger strike in that manner. Then the parents did not know what to do. Even though the parents came again and again to implore the clansman Raṭṭhapāla, who had been without food for several meals, he did not get up.

With the parents' consent, the friends and companions of the clansman Raṭṭhapāla came and made a request on behalf of the parents: "Raṭṭhapāla, you are the only dear and beloved son of your parents. Therefore, while enjoying these fivefold sense-pleasures, remain in the household life and perform whatever meritorious deeds you can. Get up and act in the way your parents expect." They implored him. But the clansman Raṭṭhapāla remained completely silent. Since making the request three times was of no use, these friends got together and thought, "If he remains like this, Raṭṭhapāla will die right here." They went to the parents and presented it as an accusation: "If this continues, Raṭṭhapāla will face death due to starvation. If you two give permission for this clansman Raṭṭhapāla to go forth, at least after he has gone forth, you will be able to see him. If in any way he becomes dissatisfied with the life of a monk, where else can he go? He will come back home." When they presented these reasons to the parents, the parents said, "In that case, we give our consent. But after he has become a monk, he must come to see us." Then, on behalf of the parents, those friends went and told him, "Now your parents have given their consent."

Then the clansman Raṭṭhapāla got up, took food and drink, restored strength to his body, and went to the Buddha and declared, "Now I have received the consent of my parents." The Buddha ordained the clansman Raṭṭhapāla and gave him the higher ordination. About two weeks after ordaining and giving him the higher ordination, the Buddha, along with the community of monks including Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, returned to Sāvatthī. After arriving at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī, the clansman Raṭṭhapāla dwelt solitary, secluded, and by meditating diligently, he soon attained the fruit of Arahantship. Although the exact time is not directly mentioned in the Sutta after he became an Arahant, after a certain period of time had elapsed, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla approached the Buddha and said, "Blessed One, I wish to go and see my parents." Then the Buddha, having looked into Venerable Raṭṭhapāla's mind and understanding that he could not be turned back to the household life in any way, said, "Very well, Raṭṭhapāla, do as you wish." Then Venerable Raṭṭhapāla put his lodging in order and wandered back to the village of Thullakoṭṭhita.

Upon arriving, he did not go straight to his parents' house. Having arrived on the previous day, he stayed at the Migāsīla park of King Koravya of the Kuru country. Having stayed there, the next morning he entered the village of Thullakoṭṭhita for alms. He went towards his father's house. At that time, the father of the clansman Raṭṭhapāla was having his hair cut by a barber in the middle hall. Seeing a monk passing by, he said loudly enough to be heard, "These bald shavelings were the ones who took my son away." Hearing this, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla knew that his father was displeased. However, in accordance with his state of having few wishes, as he went to the back of the house, the maidservant of that house—that is, the maidservant who had looked after and raised the

clansman Raṭṭhapāla during his childhood—was preparing to throw away some stale rice, the stale rice from the previous night. Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said, "Sister, if you intend to throw away that rice, put it into this bowl." While the maidservant was putting the rice into the bowl, she recognized Venerable Raṭṭhapāla's hands, feet, and voice, and realized, "This is our young master." Realizing he was the master, she ran and told Venerable Raṭṭhapāla's mother, "Do you know what has happened? Venerable Raṭṭhapāla has arrived!" The mother went and told the father. By the time the father came running, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, as mentioned in the Sutta, was eating that stale rice near a wall. Then the father said, "Raṭṭhapāla, is this how you eat? Shouldn't you have entered the house?" When he came to his own house and said this, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla replied, "Householder, where is a house for us? Where is a house for those of us who have gone forth into the homeless life? We have no home. Furthermore, when we came, you did not give us alms, nor did you say there was none. Instead, you insulted and scolded us." Then the father said, "No, no, please come inside to eat." Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said, "Today my meal is finished with this." "Then please accept an invitation for tomorrow's meal," the father invited. Venerable Raṭṭhapāla accepted the invitation through silence.

The next day, along with preparing the alms-food, this householder, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla's father, did something: he gathered all the gold and treasure belonging to him and his wife, as well as the gold and treasure inherited through generations from father to son, in a hall and covered it with mats. Furthermore, in that part of the story, it is revealed to us that Venerable Raṭṭhapāla had two or more wives. As mentioned there, he also told those former wives to dress up in the manner they used to when they pleased the clansman Raṭṭhapāla during his lay life. Having prepared everything, he sent a message saying, "The meal is ready." After Venerable Raṭṭhapāla arrived at the house and sat down, the father removed the mats, showed the treasure, and said, "This is the gold and treasure from your father's side. This is the gold and treasure from your mother's side. This is the gold and treasure inherited from our ancestors. You can take charge of these, return to the lay life, and perform meritorious deeds while living the household life." Then Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said, "Householder, if you will do what I say, load all this gold and treasure onto carts and dump it in the middle of the River Ganges. Why? Because due to this gold and treasure, you will experience a great deal of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair." While he was saying this, his former wives—referred to in the Dhamma as *purāṇa-dutiyikā*—came, worshipped Venerable Raṭṭhapāla's feet, and asked, "Our lord, of what kind are the celestial nymphs for whose sake you are practicing this holy life in the Dispensation?" The common belief was that ordination was practiced to go to heaven. Then Venerable Raṭṭhapāla replied, "Sisters, we do not practice this holy life in expectation of celestial nymphs." Hearing the address "Sisters," it is mentioned that those two women fainted and fell right there. When such a entanglement and commotion arose, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said in a firm voice to his father: "Householder, if you are giving us alms-food, give it. Otherwise, do what must be done." When he spoke in this way, the merchant offered the alms-food.

It is said that after finishing his meal, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla stood up and uttered a series of verses. In that collection of verses, he first described the worthlessness of those women's adornments. This body, which is bound together by skin, flesh, bones, and sinews, has open wounds that are decorated with clothes, gold, silver, pearls, and gems; they are painted in red and other colors and beautified, which is good for deceiving fools. But for those who seek the further shore of Nibbāna, these are of no use. Finally, he gave a simile: some deer-hunters set a bait to catch animals. Applying that very simile, he said, "The hunter set the bait, but we, having eaten the bait, go away without getting caught in the trap." Although it is not mentioned in the Sutta, in the commentaries, it is said that he departed through the air. The father had hoped, perhaps, to forcibly make him disrobe, and that is why he was sorrowful. In any case, what is mentioned in the Sutta is that after reciting those verses, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said, "We have eaten the bait, but we go away without being caught in the hunter's trap," and he went to the Migadhīra park of King Koravya.

This King Koravya said to his park-keeper, "Today I intend to go to the park for amusement; go and clean the park." While the park-keeper was cleaning the park, he saw Venerable Raṭṭhapāla sitting under a tree meditating for his day-abiding. Having seen him, he went and told King Koravya, "Your Majesty, that clansman Raṭṭhapāla who went forth from this region, whom you often praise, has arrived and is sitting under a tree over there." The king said, "In that case, I do not need the park amusement today. Put that food and drink aside. Today I am going to attend on Venerable Raṭṭhapāla." The king went and offered the seat on which he would sit on his elephant to Venerable Raṭṭhapāla. When Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said, "My seat is here; you may sit there and speak," the king addressed Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, and from their discussion, the matters of the Dhamma indeed came forward.

Because the ordination of the clansman Raṭṭhapāla was a question for the king, the king asked several questions. The king said, "In the world, a person goes forth due to four reasons—due to four kinds of loss. It is only when one falls into four kinds of loss that one goes forth." This must have been a prevalent concept at that time. What are they? Loss through aging, sickness, wealth, and relatives. First, he said, "Some people go forth when they are worn out by old age. This is explained as loss through aging (*jarā-pārijunñatā*). Some people, after growing old from youth, think: 'Now there is no use in my living to accumulate new wealth or to protect what I have. I must go and become a monk.' Prompted by the loss caused by aging, they take that as a basis and go forth. But, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, you have no such problem. You are young, with black hair. Therefore, why did you go forth? Having heard what, having known what, did you go forth?" He stated this as the first point. Along with it, he stated the second point, namely, loss through sickness (*vyādhi-pārijunñatā*). That is, "Some people, after becoming subject to diseases and ailments, think: 'I have no way out. I cannot earn more money, nor can I protect what I have. I must go and become a monk.' Thus, some people go forth because of sickness. Why did you go forth while being completely healthy?" he asked. The third point he asked was loss of wealth (*bhoga-pārijunñatā*). "Some people, having been very wealthy, when their wealth gradually diminishes, think: 'I cannot generate

wealth anymore. Therefore, I must go and become a monk.' But Raṭṭhapāla, you are the son of the chief, immensely wealthy householder in the village of Thullakoṭṭhita. You have no problem regarding that. Why did you go forth?" The fourth point was loss of relatives (*ñāti-pārijunñatā*), due to the loss of relatives. "Some people have many relatives. At some point, when their relatives are gone, this person thinks: 'There are obstacles to my accumulating wealth and other activities. I must go and become a monk.' But, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, you have no such problem. You have a large number of relatives in this village." Then he posed the question: "If it is none of these, why did you go forth?"

Then Venerable Raṭṭhapāla declared four Dhamma summaries. "Great King, it is not because of those things that I went forth. The Blessed One has declared four Dhamma summaries (*dhammuddesa*). Having heard them, and having seen the truth of those matters, I went forth." It is mentioned in the texts that the Buddha visited the village of Thullakoṭṭhita and delivered a certain sermon, and having heard that sermon, the clansman Raṭṭhapāla conceived the idea to go forth. But the content of that sermon is not found elsewhere in the Tipiṭaka; yet within this very Sutta, through the words of Venerable Raṭṭhapāla himself, we get to know what matters the Buddha preached to the clansman Raṭṭhapāla that aroused such a great desire for ordination within him. At least a fraction of it is revealed. These are shown as the main points. Venerable Raṭṭhapāla told King Koravya on that occasion, "It is after hearing the four Dhamma summaries (*caturo dhammuddesā*) that I made the decision for this ordination."

What is the first one? *Upanīyati loko addhuvo* (The world is swept away, it is impermanent). Often, when this summary is stated all at once, it is not understood. It is understood only when it is explained. However, in order to facilitate a discussion about them, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla first gave only those four summaries to King Koravya.

What is the first summary? *Upanīyati loko addhuvo*. *Loka* (The world) is a place that is being swept away—the meaning of the word *upanīyati* is "being pushed forward." The world is a place that is being pushed forward. Likewise, *addhuvo* means inconstant or unstable. Thus, the world is an *Anicca* (Impermanent) place that is being pushed forward. The second point, what is the second Dhamma summary? *Attāṇo loko anabhissaro*. The world is a place that has no shelter, no protector, no lord. Everyone knows that "lord" (*issara*) means a god who can do everything. Thus, the world is a place with no lord, no shelter. That is the second summary. Next, the third point: *Assako loko sabbaṃ pahāya gamanīyaṃ*. The world is a place where there is nothing of one's own. Likewise, it is a place where one has to go leaving everything behind. That is the third summary. The fourth summary: *Ūṇo loko atitto taṇhā-dāso*. The world is a place where there is always some deficiency. *Atitto* means insatiable. That is, a place with no satisfaction or contentment, a place enslaved to *Taṇhā* (Craving). The world is a place that always has some deficiency, lacks satisfaction, and is enslaved to *taṇhā*. When those four Dhamma summaries were declared, it was a question for the king. The king asked, "How am I to understand this?" regarding each one. Venerable Raṭṭhapāla took them

one by one and explained them. It is within this that the valuable Dhamma emerges for us.

He asked, "How is *upanīyati loko addhuvo* to be understood?" The king asked about these one by one. Thus, he answered as the king asked. "Now, Great King, do you remember when you were twenty or twenty-five years old? At that time, in training elephants, training horses, in the art of the sword and bow, and in battle, how were your abilities?" Then the king replied, "I had great strength and ability regarding those. So much so, that at that time, during my youth, it occurred to me that I was endowed with psychic power, and that there was no one equal to me." Thus, he reminded him of his youth. Next, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla asked, "Great King, are you the same now?" "Now I am about eighty years old. Now my body is like this: when I intend to place my foot here, the foot lands over there. I have degenerated to that extent." Venerable Raṭṭhapāla presented this as a direct, experiential proof: "It is because of this that the Buddha has declared that the world is a place that is constantly being led forward by aging, and that it is *addhuvo*—inconstant, unstable. That youthfulness cannot be kept forever." When this was stated, the king also accepted it: "It is wonderful, it is marvelous! How beautifully the Blessed One has stated this matter!" and he accepted it.

Then the second point. How the king speaks about the second point is even more of a question for him. *Attāṇo loko anabhissaro* (The world is without shelter, without a lord). This was a question for the king, so the king himself asked first: "Now, how can you say this, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla? I have a fourfold army—elephants, cavalry, charioteers, and infantry. Whenever any danger comes to me, they will come forward to protect me. Why do you say this?" Then, instead of talking about war, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla asked the king another story. "Great King, do you have any chronic illness?" Then the king said, "I have a severe wind-ailment (*vātā-bādha*). Sometimes, when the wind-ailment worsens, my relatives surround me and say: 'Now, now King Koravya will die, he will pass away to the next world.' There are occasions when it becomes that severe for me." When the king accepted this, then Venerable Raṭṭhapāla asked, "Well then, Great King, can you say to those relatives: 'Please, all of you, share this severe pain of mine and experience it, so that it will be easier for me and my pain will be reduced'—is it possible to do that?" "No, no, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, I have to experience my pain myself; there is no ability to share it with anyone else." Then he said, "That is what the Buddha declared: *attāṇo loko anabhissaro*—the world is a place with no protection, no shelter, no lord. This is what the Blessed One declared." Ultimately, one has to bear one's pain by oneself; no one else can reduce this.

Then the king accepted that as well: "How wonderful, how marvelous is this thing that the Blessed One has declared!" Then the third point, which was also a problem for the king, so he first presented it with an argument: *Assako loko sabbaṃ pahāya gamanīyaṃ*. "How can you say there is nothing of one's own in the world? I have gold, treasure hidden in this earth, and so much wealth and grain. How can you say there is nothing of one's own in the world?" Then Venerable Raṭṭhapāla asked:

"Well, now you enjoy these fivefold sense-pleasures with all this gold and treasure. After you die and pass away, can you take them with you?" The king replied, "No, I have no ability to take them. I will have to go and experience according to my *kamma* (actions). This wealth cannot be taken with me. It does not follow behind me." After understanding this, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said, "It is because of this that the Buddha declared: *assako loko sabbaṃ pahāya gamanīyaṃ*—there is nothing in the world that is one's own; one has to go leaving everything behind." The king accepted that as well: "How wonderful, how marvelous is this thing that the Blessed One uttered!"

Next, the final point: *Ūṇo loko atitto taṇhā-dāso*. Venerable Raṭṭhapāla himself explained this. "The world is a place where there is always some deficiency, a place with no satisfaction, a place enslaved to *taṇhā*." He asked the king, "Great King, now you rule over this highly prosperous kingdom of Kuru. If at some point, a messenger comes from the eastern direction as your subject and says: 'Great King, I have seen a certain highly prosperous city in the eastern direction, and you can conquer that city very easily'—what would you do?" Then the king said, "I would conquer that city and that province and make it a colony of my kingdom." Next, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla asked, "Well, if a messenger comes from the western direction and says the same, that there is such a region and province, what would you do?" "I would conquer that as well." "If a messenger came from the southern direction, or from the northern direction, and said so, it would be the same." From this, it is clear that there was no satisfaction within the king, even though he was ruling such a vast kingdom. Then Venerable Raṭṭhapāla declared, "This is what the Buddha declared: the world is a place that constantly has some deficiency, a place with no satisfaction, no contentment, a place that has fallen into enslavement to *taṇhā*." He made him realize this point. Then the king accepted that as well, saying "It is wonderful, it is marvelous!" The Sutta states that the discussion ended there. From that point, there is a series of verses uttered by Venerable Raṭṭhapāla.

Now we come to the first three verses of that series of verses, which we took as our theme today.

Passāmi loke sadhane manusse (I see in the world wealthy men)

Laddhāna cittaṃ na dadanti mohā (Who, having acquired wealth, do not give it away out of delusion) — They do not give it to anyone out of delusion.

Dhanaṃ sannicayaṃ karonti — Greedily they accumulate and pile up wealth.

Kāme abhipatthayanti — They yearn for more and more sense-pleasures.

Rājā pasayha pathaviṃ vijitvā (A king, having forcibly conquered the earth)

Sassāgarantaṃ mahimāvasanto (ruling over the land bounded by the ocean)

Oraṃ samudassa atittarūpo (unsatisfied with this side of the sea) — Unsatisfied with this side of the ocean,

Pāraṃ samudassapi patthayetha (would yearn for the further shore of the ocean as well) — He wishes to acquire the country on the other side of the ocean as well.

Rājā ca aññe ca bahū manussā (The king and many other people)

Avītataṇhā maraṇaṃ upenti (meet death with craving (*taṇhā*) unexhausted) — Without removing *taṇhā*, they meet death.

Ūṇā va hūtvāna jahanti dehaṃ (They abandon the body incomplete indeed / with a sense of deficiency) — They abandon the body with some deficiency. No one abandons the body with a sense of satisfaction. At the time of abandoning the body, one feels some deficiency. The war is not yet over; it has not yet been acquired; some deficiency is felt.

Kāmehi loke nahi atthi titti — This is the principle: there is absolutely no satisfaction regarding sense-pleasures in the world.

The verses do not end there; there is another set of verses. We will state only their general meaning as the occasion demands. Next, it says that the person, having spent his life without satisfaction in that manner, at the final moment, the last breath he draws is a sigh of grief. As if saying, "I have more things to acquire," he dies in that manner with a sigh of grief. We intend to explain the meaning of these verses to these devotees, not merely as a word-by-word meaning, but a general meaning so that it is better understood. From there, it describes what the living do regarding that deceased person. Those relatives, with disheveled hair, lament, saying, "Oh, we thought he was immortal. But he is dead!" Sorrowing in this manner, they wrap that person in a single cloth—you must have heard how they treat the dead in India. They wrap him in a single cloth, take him, and finally place him on the funeral pyre, poking him with an iron poker, turning him over and over, as they cremate bodies in India. It is not like here where they cremate with great honors and respects; it is done in a very simple, detached manner. It is as if one has no right to take anything more than that single cloth. They wrap him in a cloth, take him and burn him, and because they must do it while saving firewood, they poke him with iron pokers, turning him this way and that. Experiencing those things, that person's body burns. Next, what do the heirs do? They take away those belongings, the things belonging to this person. And that deceased person goes according to his own *kamma*.

Accordingly, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla further demonstrates the Dhamma regarding that departure. One can never conquer this aging with wealth; one cannot conquer the world with wealth. Beings in the world, out of delusion, out of lack of understanding, commit various evil deeds and, just like a thief who went to break into houses is caught in the act and suffers punishment, they experience various sufferings in this *saṃsāra* according to their own *kamma*. Therefore, one can never escape from this *saṃsāra* with that wealth. But it can be subdued only with wisdom (*paññā*). Therefore, he declared as a principle: *Tasmā hi paññāva dhanena seyyo* — therefore, wisdom is far superior to wealth. It is through that that one has to bring an end to the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *saṃsāra*. Likewise, various beautiful sense-pleasures exist in the world in various attractive ways.

But ultimately, one falls into *dukkha* because of them. What is demonstrated by this is that seeking the path to Nibbāna, arising of wisdom, is what must be done in the world. This is the essence of the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta that has been declared to these devotees.

As we said before, on one hand, the power of renunciation of Venerable Raṭṭhapāla is revealed. For many, when they read the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta, there have been occasions where the spirit of renunciation has emerged from it itself. We have heard of many such instances where, having read the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta, the sense of urgency (*saṃvega*), the sense of urgency regarding *saṃsāra*, arose, and relying on the strength of his character and that noble intention, some have even entered the monkhood. That is why he is foremost in faith. Along with faith goes the desire (*chanda*), that is, the intense urge to practice these monastic duties in accordance with that faith. It is because of that strong earnestness that he conducted a hunger strike—not like the fasts conducted by some members of the Sangha in this day and age. Because he did not get permission from his parents to leave the household life and go forth, he lay down right there on the floor as a hunger strike. Saying "either death or ordination."

In the end, although his parents implored him as much as they could, saying "Stay as a layman and perform whatever meritorious deeds you can; many say fifty-fifty is possible," Venerable Raṭṭhapāla did not agree to such a thing. As we see it, these four Dhamma summaries are not found in the entire Tipiṭaka literature elsewhere. In fact, if King Koravya had not come forward, we would not have even got to hear these four valuable Dhamma summaries. From this, we have to think about how many valuable things in the Buddha's teachings we have lost. We must try to protect at least what is left. It is after hearing these four Dhamma summaries of the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta that Venerable Raṭṭhapāla understood so deeply. With the firm resolution that "according to how this Blessed One preaches, this cannot be done while staying in the household life," he came and presented such a great hunger strike to his parents, and finally obtained their consent for his ordination.

Not only that, in the next instance we see his state of having few wishes; we can imagine the way he spent his monastic life with few wishes. Coming even to his own house, he did not introduce himself according to the words spoken by his father, saying, "No, no, I am not some other monk, I am your son." As he was passing by that house, he saw that stale rice being thrown away. He accepted it with few wishes. He said, "If it is something to be thrown away, give it into this bowl." Saying so, it was possible to take it. What that Venerable monk received as his food that day, having come to his own house, was only that little stale rice.

Next, the way he addressed his father was also as "Householder." It is a word that completely demonstrates his departure from the lay life. Next, on the following day, just like a deer-hunter setting a trap, that foolish father piled up all the gold and treasure and dressed up those former wives. *Purāṇa-dutiyikā* means remnants. If we look at the monastic life, former wives are like remnants. Bringing forward those remnants and having them decorated, he tried to catch this monk. But he did not yield to them. It is said that by the very word "Sisters" used to address them, those women fainted. In any

case, he was not caught in them. Then, perhaps because he thought some suspicion or demerit would arise in his father, he said: "Householder, if you are giving us alms-food, give it. Now you have invited us. If you are giving, give it; otherwise, we are leaving." After he spoke in that manner, the father gave that food. Then, in accordance with that very power of renunciation, having freed himself from there, he went to the park. Through the Dhamma discussion held in the park, it becomes further clear to us how deep an understanding Venerable Raṭṭhapāla had regarding the disadvantageous aspect of *Taṇhā* (Craving). Having heard just one sermon, and having gone and meditated according to that sermon, he had ultimately attained Arahantship by the time he wandered back there.

Through that, we can think about the disadvantages of *taṇhā*. In our day-to-day life, various words like *Taṇhā* (Craving), desire, greed, and stinginess are used. The Buddha has shown the severe nature of this *taṇhā* as the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*dukkha-samudaya-ariya-sacca*). These devotees have heard much about the Four Noble Truths—the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) as *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decay and death / aging and death), sickness, etc. On various occasions, the Buddha has introduced this word *taṇhā* with the phrase: *yāyaṃ taṇhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā…*

If there is any *taṇhā*, there is a word *ponobhavikā* (leading to renewed existence). The word *ponobhavikā* is applied as an adjective to this *taṇhā*. Its meaning is that within this *taṇhā*, there is a nature of causing renewed *Bhava* (Becoming), of creating *bhava* again and again. At the beginning, it was mentioned that there is another name for *taṇhā*, namely *bhava-netti* (the conduit of becoming). It is called *netti* because it leans forward. Then, why does this *taṇhā* lean forward in that manner? Because of *ūṇo* — deficiency. At the moment of death, it is due to *taṇhā* that one is directed towards another birth. It is inclined in that direction. There is no satisfaction there. *Taṇhā ponobhavikā* — it causes renewed *bhava*, and likewise, *saddhiṃ* (accompanied by delight and lust), it has the nature of delighting and clinging in those various places.

That demonstrates the uneven or toxic nature of *taṇhā*. They are shown in a threefold way as *kāma-taṇhā* (craving for sense-pleasures), *bhava-taṇhā* (craving for existence), and *vibhava-taṇhā* (craving for non-existence). These devotees have heard of them. Likewise, *taṇhā* for this *Bhava* (Becoming) is extremely subtle. By taking this existence as "I" and "mine" through the arising of *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body), a being has to remain, live, and exist in some way or other to consolidate that existence. In that manner, *bhava-taṇhā* is extremely subtle. Next, due to that very momentum, when the things one expects are lost, even thoughts of committing suicide arise—which is called the view of non-existence (*vibhava-diṭṭhi*). This is a question many people ask. That is the opposite side of that firm grasping of "I" and "mine." If there is something one likes, there is clinging to it. If there is something one dislikes, there is conflict with it. In any case, this problem cannot be solved by committing suicide. Having discarded both the eternalist view (*sassata-diṭṭhi*) and the annihilationist view (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*), the Buddha, by presenting the teaching of *Anattā* (Not-self), demonstrated that there is no being or person here. Through that, gradually, in the end, there is no room for *taṇhā*.

The Dhamma of the Buddha is shown in such a way that there is no basis (*nimitta*) for *taṇhā*. The true nature of *taṇhā* is apparent to us from these.

In this day and age, something many people talk about is: when one dies here and is born in another place, what is it that goes? What goes? Some try to solve this scientifically and physically. They think that when someone who dies here is born in another world, there is actually a connection that can be understood physically. But the Dhamma principle shown by the Buddha here is *taṇhā ponobhavikā* (craving leading to renewed existence). Within *taṇhā* itself, there is that power of going to another *bhava* and creating a *bhava*. Indeed, there are deep portions of the Dhamma regarding this matter that are frequently used in certain Dhamma discussions.

On one occasion, the wanderer Vaccha-gotta came and asked directly: "When one abandons this body and arrives at another body, what is it that connects to this?" Prior to that, he had asked the Buddha for a simile. When a tree is burning in a certain forest fire, and while that fire is spreading, its *upādāna* — within the word *upādāna* there is also the meaning of firewood that assists the fire, which means fuel, grasping. What the fire grasps is what we call fuel. It is by grasping firewood that a fire burns. In the same way, the Buddha declares that at the moment of death, *taṇhā* itself becomes the *Upādāna* (Grasping). *Taṇhā* itself receives the power for that grasping. To show the manner in which it receives it, He spoke of that simile of the spreading fire. In the spreading of a forest fire, when there is one tree, what helps that fire to grasp another tree is the wind, the air. It is when the wind pushes it that the fire spreads to the other tree. In the same way, the Buddha declares that when a being abandons this *bhava* and is born in another place, the connection between the two is not through a physical thing as mentioned. It is *taṇhā* —

Thus, if *taṇhā* exists as the *netti* (conduit), it can be expected that it goes further. If there is a conduit of something, it goes forward along with it. In the same way, within *taṇhā*, within the momentum of *taṇhā* itself, there is the nature of going to another *bhava* and creating another *bhava*. If we explain this more deeply—since we have spoken about this in several Dhamma sermons, it may not be so difficult for these devotees to understand. Because many people talk about a journey of *viññāṇa* (consciousness), we showed that there is a constant rotation between *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa* (name-and-form). The object called *nāmarūpa* that falls into *viññāṇa* — it is that object that is grasped. If that object—be it a near one, a distant one, a Brahma world, or a hell—is grasped through *taṇhā* that falls into the mind, then that very conduit of *taṇhā* is sufficient. A person does not need to go from here again. In ordinary physical concepts, a journey is explained as something that was here going to another place, so that it either is seen or can be grasped somehow by means of some instrument. This is not such a thing. Through *taṇhā* which is within this mental power itself—it is said there is no river equal to *taṇhā* (*natthi taṇhāsamā nadī*). It flows in such a wonderful way. Then, that very momentum of *taṇhā* is sufficient to direct that being to another *bhava*. What is it that is grasped by that *taṇhā*? It is that very shadow, the object that falls, that is projected in *viññāṇa*. That object which comes at the moment of death—which many people these days talk about as

kamma-nimitta (sign of kamma), *gati-nimitta* (sign of destination), etc.—that arriving sign is firmly grasped through *taṇhā* by the force of *kamma*. Then, that itself is sufficient for someone to obtain a birth. That is exactly what the Buddha declared: the destruction of *taṇhā* is like the breaking of that conduit. Then it is ended right there.

The story ends there. As long as the conduit of *taṇhā* exists, it grasps that object of *nāmarūpa* (name-and-form) which falls into *viññāṇa*, whatever it may be. Because they have not destroyed their defilements, we previously described that firm grasping in beings, born of ignorance (*avijjā*) and delusion (*moha*), when discussing *nāmarūpa*, etc. Those primary great elements (*mahābhūta*) of earth, water, fire, and wind which assist this form (*rūpa*) have been wrongly grasped by us. We have no understanding of them through our wisdom. Likewise, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*) — this is what is called *nāmarūpa*. Thus, if *viññāṇa* is not freed from that *nāmarūpa*, it goes and gets trapped due to that momentum of *taṇhā*. It is in that manner, in accordance with the Dhamma, that we have to understand the way renewed *Bhava* (Becoming) is created. That is why the Buddha pointed to *taṇhā* itself as the cause of this *saṃsāric Dukkha* (Suffering), of this journey of *saṃsāra* again and again. Even in this day and age, these devotees can experience that something which has been emptied is ready to suck in something. If there is a deficiency in something, it is ready to fill that deficient place.

In the same way, due to this momentum of *taṇhā*, people wish for a *bhava*. Even if they wish for a *bhava*, it is not the *bhava* they want that they get, but the *bhava* for which they have obtained the qualification, according to their *kamma*. Even if that person was thinking of going to heaven, if what he has done are evil deeds, what he sees clearly at the moment of death is a pit of fire. Such is the situation. That is why it is called *ponobhavikā* (leading to renewed existence) regarding this *taṇhā*. This *ponobhavikā* nature, the joining of one *bhava* with another *bhava*, is something that constantly takes place in our mental continuum. That very same thing is what takes place at the moment of death as well. The difference is only the abandoning of this physical frame, yet what happens is that very same thing. It is that very rotation between *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa* that goes on. Next, having made the body one takes one's own, if one has become a human being again, through the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*) as the six bases, they again make them *nāmarūpa* and cultivate another world. Creating worlds in this manner—the Buddha demonstrates all of these as things done through this momentum of *taṇhā*. Although we speak of that appeasing of *taṇhā* in a grand way, one must try to practice it in daily life in a way that one can experience it. If any *taṇhā* has arisen in one's mind, first one must understand the agitation of the mind caused by that *taṇhā*. Generally, the difference between the state when *taṇhā* is absent and when *taṇhā* has arisen can be observed by oneself, with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*): "What has happened here?" Next, indeed, without running after the objects associated with *taṇhā*, if one reflects with a little calmness and makes an effort to appease it, that is what assists in Nibbāna. *Taṇhakkhaya* (the destruction of craving) is a name for Nibbāna. The destruction of *taṇhā*. Then, in this day and age, disputants ask: "Then, is not wishing for Nibbāna also a desire?" That is a foolish question. Why? Because

everything that people in the world wish for, the moment they get it, they dislike it and wish for another. Disliking that, they wish for another, like running after a mirage. But if someone wishes for Nibbāna, keep in mind that Nibbāna, as an equation, is understood as *taṇhakkhaya* (destruction of craving). The Buddha has declared that this cooling, which is called the word Nibbāna and is considered a goal, is none other than the appeasing of *taṇhā*. Therefore, we must understand that our target is the destruction of *taṇhā*. If the destruction of *taṇhā* is the target, then regarding what that disputant said about generating desire for it, what does generating desire for it mean? What does one do with desire for it? What is there to do? If the complete destruction of *taṇhā* is the target, then one must go step by step to destroy that *taṇhā* little by little, little by little. It is when it is destroyed little by little, little by little, that at one point it can be completely destroyed.

Ordinary people obtaining those various objects through that *taṇhā* is, to use a simile, like adding straw to a fire. As much as it is given, the fire grows. But if the destruction of *taṇhā* is made the target, the more it is reduced, the more the fire is extinguished. Now, it will be easy for these devotees to understand why the Buddha declared to the monk Rādha: *Taṇhakkhayo virāgo nibbānaṃ* (The destruction of craving, dispassion, is extinguishment). Because people in the world have made this Nibbāna into a thing, making it a part of *bhava-taṇhā* (craving for existence). For those who understand it by completely distorting the Dhamma in that manner, making it a Nibbāna of "Siyadoris" in the next world as we mentioned before, that is how they make such an argument. But the Buddha showed that it is within *taṇhā*, which is shown as the origin of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*), that one runs after this *saṃsāric* mirage. Instead, the Buddha presented a target: the destruction of *taṇhā*. Then, through that desire for the destruction of *taṇhā*, when that *taṇhā* is reduced little by little and completely finished, at some point, there lies peace. Another word for the destruction of *taṇhā*, or rather for Nibbāna, is the subduing of thirst (*pipāsa-vinaya*). After one's thirst has been subdued, even if one tries to make that person drink the most delicious beverage, it is of no use. There is no thirst.

There is a short Dhamma story preached by the Buddha on one occasion. Sometimes, the Buddha brings out a highly profound Dhamma through ordinary events that happen in the world. To say it briefly, on one occasion, when the Buddha was arriving at the Brahmin village named Thūna, those Brahmins, as a show of opposition to the Buddha's arrival, blocked the well from which the Buddha would drink water with various branches, leaves, and stones. Saying "We will not give water to this ascetic Gotama to drink." Having arrived at that village, the Buddha asked the Venerable Ānanda to fetch some water. Venerable Ānanda said, "These Brahmins have put stones into all these wells." "No, Ānanda, go and fetch it," the Buddha said. When Venerable Ānanda went, through that Buddha-power, all those stones vanished, water filled up, and the well overflowed. After Venerable Ānanda brought the water, the Buddha expressed the Dhamma matter through a verse:

Kiṃ kayirā udapānena, āpā ce sabbadā siyuṃ;

Taṇhāya mūlato chetvā, kissa pariyesanaṃ care.

Actually, He did not ask for water because He wanted water due to thirst. It seems He asked for water to teach some lesson. When the meaning of that verse is stated, these devotees will understand. The Buddha says:

Kiṃ kayirā udapānena, āpā ce sabbadā siyuṃ — If there is water always, what is the use of a well?

Taṇhāya mūlato chetvā, kissa pariyesanaṃ care — Having cut off *taṇhā* from the root, searching for what else should one wander?

There is a profound matter here. That is, the subduing of thirst; after thirst is subdued, there is no need for water anymore. People who like *bhava* expect to give various things to these Arahants and Buddhas. But after thirst is subdued, there is no further need. It was to demonstrate this matter that the Buddha uttered that Udāna verse: *Kiṃ kayirā udapānena*, if there is water always, what use is a well? Likewise, to say that thirst has been subdued means water is not needed anymore. If water is not needed, there is no need to drink. There is no need to try to make them drink anymore. That is it. Thus, when we think deeply, what the Buddha demonstrates is the matter that the destruction of *taṇhā* itself is Nibbāna.

Thus, it is through *taṇhā* that people create a renewed *bhava*. It is not enough to merely say this in words. In one's own life, one must be mindful to control, to some extent, what we identify by words such as greed, stinginess, desire, and *taṇhā*, and through that, even if we cannot do it to the extent of Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, we can gradually incline towards the right side. It is not that there are no people with strength to that extent. First, one must understand the disadvantages (*ādīnava*) of *taṇhā*. Next, one must understand the advantages (*ānisaṃsa*) of abandoning them. The final advantage is, as said to Rādha: "The destruction of craving (*taṇhakkhaya*) indeed, Rādha, is Nibbāna" — that noble, great deathless Nibbāna attained by being freed from all the *dukkha* of *saṃsāra* such as *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decay and death / aging and death), sickness, and death.

These devotees must reflect wisely on the example of Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, as well as those four Dhamma summaries preached by him, which we would never have got to hear if he had not preached them, and which we heard today. Understanding their value, may this virtue (*sīla*) you observe, this meditation you practice, and this Dhamma you listen to, definitely be a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for that aforementioned liberation from *saṃsāra*! May these devotees be able to quickly attain that noble, great deathless Nibbāna obtained through the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) starting from Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*)! One must wish in this manner. Likewise, if there is any being up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who expects to rejoice in this merit of preaching the Dhamma and listening to the Dhamma, through rejoicing, may they attain that noble, great deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi (Enlightenment)! With that aspiration, recite this verse.

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #106

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.13)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Andhabhūto ayaṃ loko, tanuk'ettha vipassati;

Sakuṇo jālamuttova, appo saggāya gacchati.

From:

Dhammapada 174 (Lokavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Supreme Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, has declared that there are three types of eyes in the world. They have been identified by the Buddha as *maṁsa-cakkhu* (the fleshly eye), *dibba-cakkhu* (the divine eye), and *paññā-cakkhu* (the wisdom eye). The fleshly eye refers to the physical eye of flesh that we all receive by birth. The divine eye refers to the celestial vision possessed by deities, or developed by a person through cultivating mental absorptions (*jhāna*) and higher knowledges (*abhiññā*), which enables them to see things invisible to the ordinary eye. And the wisdom eye, dear devotees, can be described as the eye of understanding or wisdom (*paññā*), which assists a person in seeing the world through insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*).

Even though there are three kinds of eyes in this manner, in ordinary worldly parlance, we use the term "blind" only for a person who lacks the first-mentioned fleshly eye. Seeing those who are blind from birth, or who have become blind later due to some cause, lacking this physical eye, we feel proud, thinking how fortunate we are. Likewise, we can imagine how helpless they must be. But the Buddha saw that the majority of this world, who proudly assume they have eyes and are not blind, are actually blind. The reason for this is that they lack the wisdom eye, the eye of understanding, which is necessary to see the truth in the world. They live as the spiritually blind. Just as a blind person walks here and there, colliding with tree roots and wounding themselves, the worldly human being, despite having this physical eye, lives as one who is spiritually blind due to lacking the wisdom eye, gets bound up in the five sins and ten unwholesome actions, commits various other crimes, and undergoes suffering (*dukkha*) in the four

lower realms (*apāya*) for an infinite period of time. It is seeing this state of affairs that the Supreme Buddha, endowed with great wisdom and great compassion, out of compassion for the world, declared the Dhamma of Nibbāna and the path to Nibbāna. Therefore, dear devotees, we must realize that the ultimate purpose of listening to this Dhamma is indeed to open this third eye—the wisdom eye, the eye of understanding. Generally, not everyone who listens to the Dhamma shows an interest in this wisdom eye. They are content merely with the fact that they have heard a sermon.

The Buddha uttered the stanza we have chosen as our theme with reference to a certain young lay disciple, a young girl, who understood the true purpose of hearing the Dhamma and strove to develop her wisdom eye. On one occasion, the Buddha journeyed to the city of Āḷavī. At that time, the inhabitants of Āḷavī invited the Buddha for alms and offered him food. Afterward, in the sermon of appreciation (*anumodanā*), the Buddha delivered a special instruction on mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*). He expounded the beneficial aspect of cultivating mindfulness of death. The Buddha declared that this mindfulness of death is something everyone should cultivate. "Life is unstable; death is certain. Life is impermanent (*anicca*); death is constant"—thus, one should constantly cultivate mindfulness of death by bringing this to mind. If anyone does not cultivate mindfulness of death, when death approaches, they will be terrified like a person who suddenly sees a snake; they will lament, lacking the strength to face death, and experience dread and suffering (*dukkha*) in an extremely terrible manner. On the other hand, if a person has cultivated mindfulness of death and accustomed their mind to death, they will not fear in the face of death, just like a fearless person who, upon seeing a snake, simply removes it with a stick. Therefore, the Buddha instructed that mindfulness of death must be cultivated constantly. Yet, even at that time, many people did not show much interest in this meditation on mindfulness of death.

In that gathering, there was a weaver's daughter. That is, a daughter of a cloth-weaver, who was of a very young age. She thought, "This teaching of the Buddha is highly wondrous. There must be great benefits in this." Resolving to cultivate mindfulness of death day and night to the best of her ability, she did so. The Buddha then returned to Jetavana Monastery. Three years passed. One morning, as the Buddha surveyed the world with his attainment of great compassion (*mahākāruṇikā-samāpatti*), that young girl appeared within his vision of wisdom. Then the Buddha reflected, "Why is this girl appearing to me?" The Buddha realized: "This girl has cultivated mindfulness of death for three years, and her wisdom has matured. If I go there and preach the Dhamma, she will attain Dhamma-realization, and it will also bring great relief and sublime peace to the rest of the people." Having thought thus, the Buddha journeyed to the city of Āḷavī accompanied by five hundred bhikkhus. When he arrived at the Aggāḷava temple in Āḷavī, the local residents came and invited the Buddha for alms. The weaver's daughter, that young girl, also heard that the Buddha had arrived. She thought, "A very valuable opportunity has come to me; I must go to listen to the Dhamma." But unfortunately, her father, the weaver, assigned her a task: he asked her to fill the shuttle with thread for a cloth that needed to be woven urgently. He had already gone to the weaving hall. Thus, this young girl had to attend to this task first.

Meanwhile, having offered alms to the Buddha, the gathering prepared to listen to the sermon of appreciation. However, the Buddha saw that the person for whose sake he had journeyed to Āḷavī was not present there. Therefore, he remained silent. The weaver's daughter, too, having filled the shuttle with thread, placed it in a basket and hurried along. At that moment, the Buddha raised his head and looked at the girl. Being a wise girl, she thought: "Out of such a large crowd, the Buddha is looking at me; it must be in anticipation of my arrival." Thinking thus, she set the basket aside and approached the Buddha. Straightaway, the Buddha asked her, "My daughter, where have you come from?" She replied, "I do not know, Venerable Sir." Then the Buddha asked, "Where are you going?" To this also, she replied, "I do not know, Venerable Sir." Then the Buddha asked, "Do you not know?" to which she replied, "I do know." Next, the Buddha asked, "Do you know?" and she replied, "I do not know." The gathering grew agitated. They became angry, thinking, "This weaver's girl is speaking whatever comes to her mouth with the Supreme Buddha."

The Buddha calmed the crowd and asked the girl, "Why did you reply in that manner when I asked where you came from?" The girl explained, "The Buddha knows that I am coming from the weaving hall. I thought you were asking something deeper than that. I understood it as: from which world, or from where, did I come and take birth (*jāti*) here? Since I do not know that, I replied that I do not know." At that, the Buddha uttered words of praise, saying, "Sadhu, sadhu! You have answered the very question I asked," expressing his delight. Then he asked, "If so, why did you say you do not know when I asked where you are going?" "I thought the Blessed One was asking where I would go after dying from here, where I would take birth (*jāti*). Since I do not know that, I replied that I do not know to that as well." For that too, the Buddha uttered words of praise, commending her, saying, "You have answered exactly what I asked." Then he asked, "When I asked 'Do you not know?', why did you say 'I do know'?" The girl explained: "I understood that the Buddha was asking, 'Do you not know that you will die?' Since I know that I will die, I answered that I do know." For that also, the Buddha uttered praise and approved, saying, "That indeed is what I asked." Finally, he asked, "When I asked 'Do you know?', why did you say 'I do not know'?" Then she said, "I know that I will die. But I do not know at what place or at what time I will die. Therefore, I said I do not know."

Expressing his appreciation for the answers given to all four questions, the Buddha addressed the gathering: "The reason this great crowd could not understand such a matter is because they lack the wisdom eye. Those who lack the wisdom eye are blind." And he uttered the Dhamma stanza we mentioned earlier:

> *Andhabhūto ayaṁ loko, tanuk'ettha vipassatī,*
>
> *Sakuṇo jālamuttova, appo saggāya gacchati.*

Ayaṁ loko—this world; "this world" means the worldlings, the people in this world. This world is blind. *Tanuk'ettha vipassati*—only a very few in this world possess a deep

vision, a deep wisdom by way of insight (*vipassanā*). Only a very few see the world as it really is.

Sakuṇo jālamuttova, appo saggāya gacchati.

When a bird-hunter casts a net over birds, only a very few escape from it. In the same way, only a very few people, upon dying from here, go to a happy destination (*sugati*), to heaven, to the celestial worlds. The majority take birth (*jāti*) in the lower realms (*apāya*) and such bad places. The Buddha declared that, just like being caught in the net cast by a bird-hunter, they are caught in the net spread by Māra; they lament in that manner, develop attachments to their worldly things, and upon death, are destined for the lower realms.

It is mentioned in the texts that, having heard this sermon, she attained Dhamma-realization and became a Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). She attained a certain realization of the Dhamma. Anyway, next, in order to complete the work assigned to her, she took the basket and went to the weaving hall. When she arrived, her father was sitting and nodding off, waiting for the threads. As she placed the basket containing the shuttle down, it fell to the ground making a sound. Without thinking, the weaver pulled the shuttle. At once, a sharp end of it (it is said that the weaving machines of that time might not have been like this, but had a revolving tip) struck the girl's shoulder, and she fell down dead right there in a pool of blood. Unable to bear this grief, the father went crying to the Buddha and begged him, "Please appease this grief of mine." At that moment, the Buddha said, "Lay disciple, if one were to collect the tears you have shed out of grief over the death of your daughter throughout this beginningless Saṁsāra, they would be more than the water in the four great oceans." Speaking in this manner, he appeased that man's grief. It is also mentioned that this man later ordained in the Dispensation, received higher ordination (*upasampadā*), and became an Arahant.

As the primary point relevant to our discussion, we can see that the Buddha journeyed to this place specifically for the sake of the weaver's daughter. This was no ordinary journey. The Buddha foresaw the great benefits of this journey, and also knew that, according to karma, this girl would certainly meet her death on that very day, and that no one could prevent it. Therefore, the Buddha himself journeyed there to grant her the realization of the Dhamma before her death. From this, we can understand that if someone has trained their mind in meditation, they possess a spiritual strength, an attractive force of the Dhamma, that can draw even a Buddha to their side.

Now, let us consider this mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*). Why did the Buddha emphasize mindfulness of death and give so much instruction on it—a matter we are afraid to think about, and which we are reluctant to contemplate? There must be a reason for this. Everyone around us in the world dies. Every day, we hear not only of deaths, but of sudden deaths and mass deaths occurring in various ways. But one must reflect and see: "Do I possess mindfulness of death within myself?" Even ancient sages pointed out, as one of the greatest wonders in the world, that while other human beings are dying all around them, the ordinary person lacks the awareness that they themselves

will die. What is the reason for this? Within us, there is something called "intoxication with life" (*jīvita-mada*). An intoxication due to this life. Deep down in the mind, there is a feeling like: "Even though others die, I will not die so easily." In order to subdue that, it is necessary to constantly cultivate this mindfulness of death. It is because of this intoxication with life that there arises the feeling that "I will not die," or a feeling of being immortal. It is due to this that people fall into grave sins and have to suffer their consequences.

A person who possesses mindfulness of death constantly develops a sense of urgency (*saṁvega*): "My life is short. Therefore, I must quickly perform wholesome deeds. For, I do not know what will happen when I go to the next world." In this way, a certain sense of urgency arises. Therefore, among the bases of urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*) shown as supportive factors for developing virtues in this Dispensation, one is death—contemplating death. Furthermore, there is another benefit of the meditation on mindfulness of death: it highlights the impermanent (*anicca*) nature of life. The three characteristics we have to cultivate in insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) are impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). *Anicca, dukkha, anattā*—these are the three terms declared by the Buddha. Within this lies insight (*vipassanā*). The word *vipassati* is used in the phrase *tanuk'ettha vipassatī* precisely for this reason. Thus, within mindfulness of death, there is this perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). Why does this perception of impermanence not arise within us? We have made various plans regarding life. "We will live for a hundred years, or eighty years." Deep in our minds, there is the assumption that we will not die before that. Because of this, on some occasions, the Buddha delivered special instructions on mindfulness of death, almost like taking lessons from children in a classroom.

In one discourse, the Buddha first declared the benefits of mindfulness of death. He declared: *"Maraṇasati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā mahapphalā hoti mahānisāṁsā amatogadhā amatapariyosānā."* "Bhikkhus, when mindfulness of death is cultivated and frequently practiced, it is of great fruit and great benefit; it merges in the Deathless, and ends in the Deathless." In this way, he declared the beneficial aspect of mindfulness of death, meaning it assists in realizing Nibbāna.

The Buddha asked the bhikkhus, "Bhikkhus, do you cultivate this mindfulness of death?" Then one bhikkhu declared, "Venerable Sir, I cultivate mindfulness of death." Just like when children in a class are asked, and someone speaks up first. "Good, how do you cultivate mindfulness of death?" the Buddha asked. Then this bhikkhu replied, "Blessed One, I think: if I could live for just one day and night—for one single day—and spend that lifetime practicing meditation according to the Blessed One's instruction, that would be a great thing for me." That means this monk's plan was for one day. "If I live for one day, that is enough for me." As soon as he said that, another monk declared, "Venerable Sir, I also cultivate mindfulness of death." "Good, how do you cultivate it?" "Blessed One, I think: if I could live for just the daytime—this plan is slightly shorter than the previous—if I could live properly for at least the daytime and act according to the Blessed One's Dispensation, I would consider that a great thing." At the same time, another bhikkhu declared, "Blessed One, I think: if I could live for just half a day, and during that time

practice the Blessed One's Dispensation, that would be a great thing." Another bhikkhu declared, "I think: if I could live long enough to finish eating a single meal of alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), and during that time act according to this Buddha-Dispensation, that would be a great thing." Another bhikkhu declared, "If I could live long enough to eat half of a meal of alms-food, that would be a great thing for me." Next, another bhikkhu declared, "If I could live long enough to swallow just four or five mouthfuls of rice while practicing according to the Buddha-Dispensation, I would consider that a great thing." Then, another bhikkhu declared, "As for me, Blessed One, I think: if I could live only long enough to chew and swallow a single morsel of rice, and during that time act according to the Blessed One's instruction, that would be a great thing. That is, my plan is to live for just the duration of eating one morsel of food." Finally, another bhikkhu, the eighth bhikkhu, declared, "Blessed One, I also cultivate mindfulness of death. I think: if I could live for just the brief duration between breathing in and breathing out, or between breathing out and breathing in, and during that brief moment act according to the Blessed One's instruction, I would consider that a great thing."

Regarding the answers given by all eight of them, the Buddha then pointed out who was better, and how many had "passed." The Buddha declared that the first six monks mentioned did not possess a sharp mindfulness of death. Those six were dwelling in negligence (*pamāda*). Their plans were too large. That is, the monks who thought of living for a day and night, or for just the daytime, or for half of the daytime, or until finishing a meal, or until eating half a meal, or for the duration of eating four or five mouthfuls of rice—their mindfulness of death lacked speed and momentum. It was too slow for realizing Nibbāna. Only the last two who spoke had "passed." Who were they? The bhikkhu who thought, "If I could live long enough to chew and swallow a single morsel of rice, I would consider that a great thing," and the bhikkhu who thought, "If I could live for the brief moment between breathing out and breathing in, or between breathing in and breathing out, and act according to this Dispensation, I would consider that a great thing." Only these two monks passed. From this, we must realize that no matter how big our plans are for ten, twenty, or thirty years, we do not know when our life will be destroyed. In such a moment, what comes to the final mind is like a film. The feeling arises: "I spent this entire life in an extremely useless manner, didn't I? I did nothing for the next world, or for Nibbāna, did I?" Therefore, since we do not know at what moment death will come, we must cultivate mindfulness of death to shorten these plans. We must constantly bring this to mind. The momentum that supports this journey in the Dispensation is urgency (*saṁvega*), the driving force. For such people, this urgency arises through mindfulness of death.

That is why, among the four protective meditations (*caturārakkha-kammaṭṭhāna*), mindfulness of death is shown as one meditation. The tendency to fall into negligence is removed, and diligence (*appamāda*) arises. So too is the intoxication called "intoxication with life" (*jīvita-mada*), the pride developed regarding life. Now, we go to funeral houses quite often. We constantly read and hear about death. Yet, deep in the mind, there remains the feeling: "Even though others have died, I will not die so easily." It is described as a great wonder that this intoxication with life has taken such deep root

within us in Saṁsāra. It is to break this down that the Buddha declared this mindfulness of death. And that mindfulness of death should be cultivated gradually. This breath, this thread of life, is an extremely subtle thing, so fragile that one cannot say when it will snap—even more fragile than a coir fiber. Yet we think so highly of this fragile thread of life. Therefore, we must reflect: if we take a breath in and cannot breathe it out, or if we breathe out and cannot take another breath in, that is death. That is why the eighth monk mentioned at the end had passed with the highest distinction. We must strive to cultivate mindfulness of death in that manner.

On one occasion, the Buddha delivered an extremely valuable sermon to shatter the concept that worldlings have regarding their plans for life. It was an account of the very distant past. The Buddha presented the Dhamma in such a way that it aroused the curiosity of the listeners. Only at the right moment would he reveal the deepest point of a matter. Until then, the bhikkhus would listen eagerly, wondering, "What will he say next? What will he say next?" Such was the Buddha's style of Dhamma-preaching. A highly wondrous style. Accordingly, the Buddha declared: "Bhikkhus, in the very distant past, there was a teacher named Araka..." The Buddha's eye of wisdom could see into infinite time, the events of extremely distant aeons (*kappa*). Therefore, the bhikkhus listened with great attention, knowing that this was an ancient account.

In the past, there was a teacher named Araka. Under that teacher, there were hundreds of disciples and pupils. This teacher's method of instruction was unique. Every day, this teacher would address his disciples and give an instruction using a certain passage: *"Appakaṁ, brāhmaṇā, jīvitaṁ manussānaṁ parittaṁ lahukaṁ bahudukkhaṁ bahupāyāsaṁ, mantāya boddhabbaṁ, kattabbaṁ kusalaṁ, caritabbaṁ brahmacariyaṁ, natthi jātassa amaraṇaṁ."* Its meaning is: "O brahmins"—he addressed these pupils and disciples as brahmins—"O brahmins, the life of human beings is extremely insignificant. It lasts for an extremely short, brief period. It is also full of suffering (*dukkha*), full of despair (*bahupāyāsa*), accompanied by much trouble. With wisdom (*mantāya*), this matter should be understood. Having understood it, one must do wholesome deeds (*kattabbaṁ kusalaṁ*). One must lead the holy life (*caritabbaṁ brahmacariyaṁ*), the noble life of the Dispensation. For one who is born (*jāta*), there is no such thing as not dying (*natthi jātassa amaraṇaṁ*)." In this manner, he gave daily instruction. The Buddha further declared that, after doing so, to engrave this instruction deeply in their minds, that teacher presented seven similes. You, dear devotees, have likely read these similes in books.

The first simile is the dewdrop on the tip of a blade of grass at sunrise, which dries up extremely quickly; similarly, the life of human beings vanishes. The second simile is the water bubble. That is, when it rains heavily, as the raindrops fall, water bubbles form and burst extremely rapidly. Likewise, this life also bursts in a moment; that is the water bubble simile. Thirdly, there is the simile of a line drawn on water with a stick. That is, if you draw a line on water with a piece of wood, it disappears even as you draw it. Likewise, this life also vanishes with extreme speed. It is as impermanent (*anicca*) as a line drawn on water. Next, the fourth simile is of a river flowing down a mountain;

without stopping for even a single moment, it rushes rapidly downwards. In the same way, this life flows constantly toward death. This is the simile of the mountain river. Next, the simile is given of a strong man who collects a glob of spit on the tip of his tongue and easily spits it out; this life is just as trivial. It can vanish extremely easily. Even though we think highly of it, it can disappear very quickly. This is the simile of the glob of spit. If we remember each of these in brief terms, it becomes easy to contemplate based on them. This life, which we think of as so grand, vanishes just like a glob of spit collected on the tip of the tongue and easily spat away; it is completely destroyed. Next, another simile is given: the lump of meat. That is, if a small piece of meat is thrown onto an iron pan that has been heated all day long, it burns up the very instant it is dropped. In the same way, this life is rapidly destroyed by death. The final simile is of a cow being led to the slaughterhouse. Just as a cow being led by a butcher to be killed comes closer to death with every single step she takes, we too come closer to death with every single moment, with every blink of an eye, and with every breath we take. In this way, that teacher declared to his disciples these seven similes that arouse an intense sense of urgency (*saṁvega*). It is the Buddha who points out this matter.

Having shown this, the Buddha then said, "Bhikkhus, during the time when the teacher named Araka delivered that instruction—which aroused such a sense of urgency regarding the brevity of life, its impermanence (*aniccatā*), and its painful nature (*dukkha-sabhāva*)—the lifespan of human beings was sixty thousand years." You, dear devotees, can imagine how the bhikkhus must have felt when this was said. In the era when the teacher Araka gave such instructions with seven highly urgent similes, the lifespan of human beings was sixty thousand years. Not only that, the human beings of that time had only six types of illnesses/afflictions. It is mentioned in Buddhist literature that there were such eras in past aeons (*kappa*). They had only six afflictions. What were those six afflictions, those six illnesses? Feeling cold, feeling hot, hunger, thirst, and then, because the food and drink consumed must be expelled, defecation and urination. Only those six illnesses existed in that era. Then the Buddha said, "Bhikkhus, it was in an era with such long-lived human beings, and with so few afflictions, that this teacher daily instructed his disciples on mindfulness of death with those seven urgent similes. Truly, bhikkhus, this sermon is most fitting for the present times. For in these times, bhikkhus, if someone lives, they live at most for a hundred years, maybe slightly less or slightly more." But the Buddha did not stop even there.

Even you, dear devotees, reflect on this: we think of a hundred years as a very long time. We even use a special word for it, calling it "a century." We think of a century as an immense period of time. We bless others saying, "May you live for a hundred years!" However, living for a hundred years is nothing very great. Even crows, eating scraps and offerings, live for a hundred years. Yet we think that living for this hundred years, a century, is the greatest achievement. Next, to shatter that concept and eradicate the intoxication with life, the Buddha performed a certain calculation. Nowadays, the word "calculation" (or computation) is used with a highly scientific connotation, tied to worldly things. Yet the Buddha also performed a sort of calculation for the bhikkhus. What was this calculation?

The Buddha declared: "Bhikkhus, consider a human being who lives for a hundred years. In a single year, there are three seasons: the cold season (*hemanta*), the hot season (*gimhāna*), and the rainy season (*vassāna*). Therefore, a person who lives for a hundred years lives for only three hundred seasons." He turned the hundred into three hundred. Next, the Buddha declared: "A year consists of twelve months. Therefore, a person who lives for a hundred years lives for only one thousand two hundred months." He did not stop even there. Then the Buddha declared: "If we calculate the life of that person who lives for one thousand two hundred months in terms of half-months (fortnights)—even nowadays we speak of a fortnight as half a month—if calculated by fortnights, it is two thousand four hundred fortnights. Two thousand four hundred half-months." He did not stop even there. Next, the Buddha declared: "If we calculate the number of nights spent by that human being who lives for a hundred years, they live for only thirty-six thousand nights. And likewise, normally, a human being while living consumes at least two meals a day. If calculated in terms of meals, a person who lives for a hundred years consumes seventy-two thousand meals of rice." But he did not finish even with that. The Buddha then declared: "In reality, it is even less than seventy-two thousand meals. The reason for this is that from this we must subtract the period spent drinking mother's milk, and the periods when meals were missed." For missing a meal, the term used by the Buddha is *bhattantarāya*, which means obstacles or interruptions to meals. The Buddha further analyzed the occasions when meals are missed. How does a person experience an interruption to meals? He gave the reasons: sometimes, due to intense anger, a person refuses to eat as a way of taking revenge. Sometimes, due to intense grief, being unable to bear the sorrow, a person goes without eating, like a fast. At other times, because of illness, when doctors or physicians advise them not to eat, or because they cannot digest food, they do not eat. Thus, meals are missed. And sometimes, like some people nowadays, they observe the Uposatha, the precept day, and sacrifice a meal, refraining from eating. And sometimes, a person wishes to eat but does not get any food. Thus, he lists five reasons: due to anger, due to grief, due to illness, due to observing the Uposatha, or due to not obtaining food at all. On account of anger, sorrow, illness, observing the Uposatha, or not receiving food at all, they are unable to consume meals. The Buddha declared that these must also be subtracted from that seventy-two thousand.

We have to consider: why did the Supreme Buddha take so much trouble to provide such a list? The depth of this lies in our ordinary concept that a hundred years is an immense period of time. When we think of it in terms of a season, a month, a half-month, a day, a night, or a single meal, this life that we call "ours" gradually unravels. What the Buddha did was to unravel this life which we deemed so grand. He unraveled the century. A century, when analyzed to its very end, is a number of meals even less than seventy-two thousand meals of rice, or thirty-six thousand nights. It was to make a person reflect in this manner and arouse a sense of urgency (*saṁvega*) that the Buddha provided such a lengthy analysis. We should not think of these as mere computations or statistics in the Dhamma; rather, the Buddha declared them all based on their practical, functional value. Nowadays, when scholars explain these, they often appear as mere records. But to a person who lives according to the Dhamma, these are subjects for deep contemplation.

Why did the Buddha take so much trouble? It was to shatter the concept within us of "a hundred years" or "a century." When one contemplates: "A man who lives for a hundred years lives only for thirty-six thousand nights and seventy-two thousand meals," the impermanent (*anicca*) nature of his life stands out, and the intoxication with life is eradicated.

That is how one must contemplate. In this manner, across numerous discourses, the Buddha has shown the benefits of mindfulness of death. In addition to this, he has shown various other similes. Devotees who practice meditation know the simile of the lamp flame: just as when a lamp is lit in a windy place, one does not know at what moment or from which direction a gust of wind will extinguish the flame, this life too can be extinguished from any side, whether by an internal affliction or an external hazard. This is the simile of the lamp flame. Furthermore, with every blink of an eye, this life can vanish—there are various such valuable similes. We must constantly contemplate death with the aid of these similes.

Moreover, there is another special feature in cultivating mindfulness of death. You know that we cultivate loving-kindness (*mettā*) by taking ourselves as the example, because we desire happiness. Regarding mindfulness of death, it is the exact opposite. Seeing others die, we must cultivate it thus: "This state is also my lot. This belongs to me too; someday it will come to me." Regarding loving-kindness, the texts describe it as *attūpamāya*—taking oneself as the comparison. Regarding death, it is described as *parūpamāya*—taking others as the comparison. Nowadays, even though ordinary people go to houses of mourning, often no grief is visible there. Tears are hardly seen. Instead, in the backyard, there might be various forms of entertainment, food, and drink. That is often how it is. Yet, how many people return from a funeral house carrying the realization, "I too will die"? If one is a meditator, to the credit of the deceased person, they should make it a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), wishing: "May merit accrue to that person!" and use it to arouse mindfulness of death within themselves. Instead, what is present in most people is the feeling: "Even though they died, I will not die like that." That is why the Buddha presents it in this Dhamma as *parūpamāya*—using others as the comparison, reflecting: "What has come upon others, I do not know when it will come upon me," thereby arousing a sense of urgency (*saṁvega*). This urgency is extremely important; through it, diligence (*appamāda*) is developed. An intense enthusiasm arises in a person to quickly develop virtues, observe precepts, meditate, realize Nibbāna, and put an end to this suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṁsāra. Therefore, mindfulness of death is highly significant. Even without that multitude of similes, one can practice this by constantly contemplating some simile that suits one's mind.

Nowadays, some people constantly have songs and such things on their lips—things related to the fivefold sensual pleasures that prolong Saṁsāra. Now, you, dear devotees, know those few words: *"Jīvitaṁ aniyataṁ, maraṇaṁ niyataṁ"* (Life is inconstant, death is constant). One should accustom the mind to such a phrase. If one trains one's mind in this, just like a cow being dragged to slaughter with every step she takes, if one internalizes the feeling that with every step, every breath, and every blink of an eye, one

is drawing closer to death, then within that person, the aforesaid wisdom eye develops; the eye of insight (*vipassanā*) develops. In the ordinary world, it is from things we discard as worthless that valuable items are manufactured and sold to us at high prices in shops. In the same way, within this death—which we think of as worthless, and which we fear and shrink from contemplating—there lies a profound depth. If one constantly contemplates death, they will always incline their mind toward virtues and wholesome qualities (*kusala-dhamma*), incline their mind toward sermons and meditation, and perform those tasks with diligence (*appamāda*) without procrastinating. They will not put them off, saying, "These are things to be done after retirement, in old age, or after being freed from children."

Nowadays, for their security in the world, people often make use of insurance schemes and deposits to protect their lives, or rely on insurance organizations. But Māra is not subject to any of these plans. When Māra comes, these plans vanish into thin air. If one constantly contemplates this, within such a person, that strength of the Dhamma grows, and urgency (*saṁvega*) develops. Their enthusiasm to practice these virtues, to listen to the Dhamma, and to meditate increases daily. Therefore, the Buddha declared that mindfulness of death is something that should constantly remain deep in one's mind. It is for this very reason that in numerous discourse-teachings, the Buddha expounded mindfulness of death to the bhikkhus. Not only for the bhikkhus, but when we consider how that weaver's daughter in that gathering cultivated mindfulness of death, it serves as a great example, a great inspiration for you lay devotees. Generally, a young person is not inclined to think about death. Yet, how great were the benefits of her cultivation, given that she met with such an untimely death! Before that, however, she had the fortune of the Buddha himself visiting specifically for her sake and preaching a Dhamma sermon for her to hear.

In this way, we must understand that there are things in this Dhamma that are ordinarily deemed worthless and do not attract the mind. Ordinary scholars write various descriptions about these. But the Buddha has declared this Dhamma for those who put it into practice. It is in this that the depth lies. Why did the Great Compassionate Buddha explain these matters in such detail, presenting various similes about life? It was to expose the true nature of this Saṁsāra. The opportunity to escape from this Saṁsāra is available only during the era of a Buddha's appearance. During the era of a Buddha's appearance, the human state of existence is extremely rare, an extremely precious acquisition. Similarly, hearing the Dhamma, an environment where one can practice according to the Dhamma, and the opportunity to receive instructions on them—these things are extremely rare.

Therefore, wise devotees must reflect so as to obtain the true fruit of a Dhamma sermon. Nowadays, modern science has invented various other "eyes" to enhance this fleshly eye. When these two eyes lose their sight, we put on a pair of spectacles. When that is not enough, there are further scientific devices like microscopes and telescopes. All of these are meant only for this fleshly eye. Next, the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) is developed by yogis, those who possess higher knowledges (*abhiññā*). Though these are superior, they too belong to this very Saṁsāra. But the true eye is the wisdom eye (*paññā-cakkhu*). The

wisdom eye that sees the world, that sees the nature of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*), is the true eye. That is something one must develop by practicing insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), cultivating mindfulness of death, the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), and such meditations. From the falling leaves of these trees, from flowers, fruits, and the flowing river—from everything we see around us—we can develop this insight meditation and cultivate this wisdom eye. For this, the correct view is necessary. The right perspective is necessary. That is what is called Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). There must be the proper contemplation called radical attention / wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Not in a superficial or improper way, but there must be proper, systematic reflection.

Instead of rejoicing upon seeing the death of others, thinking of them as those of the opposing side, those against us, those not of our party, or those not of our race, one must use that occasion to aid mindfulness of death, reflecting: "This death can come to me as well, through external or internal hazards." That is what is called radical attention / wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Proper reflection. If one spends one's life in that manner, like that weaver's daughter, insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) will arise within oneself without one even being aware of it, and the wisdom eye can be uncovered. Such people are not blind. It is such people who live in the world possessing eyes. Reflect in that manner.

On this Poyaday, you, dear devotees, have directed your minds during this hour toward mindfulness of death, which is conducive to meditation, based on a sermon of the Buddha. Through this, a certain meditative contemplation has arisen within you. Furthermore, you have undertaken the valuable precept of *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (morality with right livelihood as the eighth precept). Along with that virtue, you performed this task by concentrating your minds in a state of concentration (*samādhi*) while listening to the Dhamma. When one listens to the Dhamma with a concentrated mind, in a state of concentration, deep understandings that did not exist before arise by way of wisdom (*paññā*). Therefore, you should reflect that this Dhamma sermon has assisted in the development of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Furthermore, although you possess these faculties (*indriya*) such as eyes, ears, and nose, one cannot realize Nibbāna through them. What helps to realize Nibbāna is the development of the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) shown in the Dhamma: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). In that manner, you too have grown in faith, grown in energy, grown in the mindfulness called *sati*, grown in concentration, and grown in wisdom. That is the true benefit of hearing the Dhamma. Through these benefits of hearing the Dhamma, may you have the strength and power to escape as quickly as possible, in this very life, from this terrible and dreadful suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṁsāra, such as birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*), and realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! May you attain it—this is our wish!

Furthermore, we must share all this accumulated store of wholesome thoughts and meritorious deeds with the assembly of deities and Brahmas who protect the Dispensation, and with whatever deities are guardian over this place. May they all, having rejoiced in these merits, protect the Dispensation and protect us as well! Likewise, we must make the aspiration: "May they find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna by way of their desired path of enlightenment (*bodhi*)!" Similarly, let us share merits at this moment with the aspiration: "May all our deceased relatives, and not only them, but all beings from Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, rejoice in this merit of our preaching and hearing the Dhamma, escape from this suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṁsāra such as birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*), and find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna!" With these aspirations, share the merits at this time!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #107

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.45)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Akkodhena jine kodhaṃ, asādhuṃ sādhunā jine;

jine kadariyaṃ dānena, saccena alikavādinaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 223 (Kodhavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The ordinary world expects to win the battle of life through unrighteous means. In a society that is largely inclined towards unrighteousness, finding a solution to arising problems through unrighteousness itself seems to us to be the easy way. Yet, the Buddha taught that this battle of life must indeed be won, and a true victory achieved, through the path of Dhamma. To achieve victory through that path of Dhamma, sometimes one may even have to make a great sacrifice. Even if one has to make such a sacrifice, the final result, the victory obtained through it, brings a deep peace that is hundreds of thousands of times more valuable than the victory won through unrighteous means. The advice given by this verse we have chosen as our theme today, as well as the example provided by the background story related to it, will explain this very principle of victory.

In the city of Rājagaha, the financier Puṇṇa, his wife, and their daughter named Uttarā were all three devoted lay-disciples who had attained the stage of stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*)—noble disciples. In the same city of Rājagaha, the financier Sumana held wrong views. This financier proposed a marriage for his son with Uttarā. Puṇṇa was reluctant; he expressed his opposition, saying, "I cannot give my daughter to such a clan of wrong views. She cannot live separated from the Triple Gem." However, due to the pressure of many people, he finally gave his consent and married his daughter to the son of the financier Sumana on the full-moon day of Āsāḷha. From the day she went to her husband's home, she had no opportunity to see a monk or a nun, to give alms (*dāna*), or to hear the Dhamma. Since she was a very devout person, she spent about two and a half months in great sorrow because of being deprived of seeing the Triple Gem, to which she

was accustomed. By then, the rainy retreat (*Vassa*) was drawing to a close. She sent a message to her father: "Why have you betrayed me into such a prison? It would have been better if I were made a maidservant rather than being married off to a household of wrong views. I have no opportunity to perform alms-givings, to hear the Dhamma, or even to see the monks, nuns, and the Blessed One." When she sent this very sorrowful message, what did the financier do? Thinking of a solution, he sent fifteen thousand *kahāpaṇas*. He instructed her to hire Sirimā, a courtesan of Rājagaha who charged one thousand per day, hand her over to her husband, and thereby obtain permission for herself to perform acts of merit and alms-giving for a fortnight. This was a surprising proposal and idea, of a kind that a father would not normally make. Uttarā also accepted it with great joy, went to meet Sirimā, arranged this transaction, and handed her over to her husband, saying, "During these two weeks, I will be engaged in offering alms and other duties to the Saṅgha led by the Buddha, and in listening to the Dhamma. This woman will serve as your companion." Having made these arrangements, Uttarā went to the Blessed One and invited him, saying, "Please accept alms by coming to our home, to this alms-hall, along with the Saṅgha for this entire fortnight." The Blessed One, perhaps considering the great sacrifice made, consented and visited daily for alms accordingly.

Thus, as the two weeks went by, the final day approached. Right at the end of the rainy retreat, on the day before the Great Pavāraṇā day, Uttarā's husband came to the window facing the kitchen or the alms-hall and looked at what this woman was doing. He saw her covered in soot and sweat, busy organizing the alms-giving. He smiled mockingly, thinking, "Oh, what a foolish woman! Covered in soot and dirt, she is busy serving the monks, abandoning such luxury and wealth." He smiled in derision. Sirimā, who was standing nearby, saw this. She saw that when he came and looked through the window, he was smiling at Uttarā. At that moment, she forgot for a while that she was an outsider. Just as it happens in households in such situations, a severe jealousy arose in her. Anger arose. Driven by that anger, she entered the alms-hall or kitchen of the mansion, approached the pot of boiling ghee on the hearth used for frying sweetmeats, took a ladleful of ghee with a coconut-shell ladle, and came to pour it over Uttarā’s head. As she was coming, Uttarā saw by her manner that she was coming to do such a thing. What did she do? She suffused Sirimā with a mind of loving-kindness (*mettā*). "This friend of mine has done me such a great favor by giving me the opportunity to perform these alms-offerings to the Saṅgha led by the Buddha. The entire universe is not spacious enough, and the Brahma-world is not high enough, to contain her virtue. She possesses a virtue so vast that it can fill the world. If there is indeed any anger in me towards her, may this ghee burn me. If there is no anger, may it not burn me." Thus she made an assertion of truth (*saccakiriyā*), relying on that very absorption of loving-kindness (*mettā-jhāna*). Then, when that woman poured the boiling ghee, it was like cold water. Nothing happened to her. So Sirimā thought perhaps the ghee was not hot enough. When she went back to the hearth to get another ladleful, the maidservants gathered, beat her thoroughly, threw her to the ground, and as they were preparing to beat her further, Uttarā herself stepped forward to stop them, washed her with compassion, applied oil, and comforted her.

At that moment, Sirimā felt a great sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*): "Alas, what a virtuous person is this, to whom I, an outsider, have brought harm out of jealousy and hatred!" She fell at her feet and begged for forgiveness. When she begged for forgiveness saying, "My head will split if I do not ask for forgiveness from such a person," Uttarā replied, "I am a daughter who has a father. I will forgive you only if my father forgives you." Then Sirimā said, "Very well, I will ask for forgiveness from the financier Puṇṇa." Uttarā replied, "No, no. Puṇṇa is the father who gave birth to me in Saṃsāra. The father who gave birth to me on the path to Nibbāna is the Fully Enlightened One. You must ask for forgiveness from Him." When Sirimā asked, "How can I do that?", Uttarā said, "Then, tomorrow when the Blessed One visits, bring some alms that you have prepared. Then you can obtain forgiveness."

Thus, on the following day, when the Blessed One arrived with the Saṅgha, Sirimā too came with her attendant women, having prepared various alms. To participate in the alms-giving, she had Uttarā offer them to the Blessed One on her behalf. Finally, Sirimā fell prostrate before the Blessed One to ask for forgiveness. When asked for the reason, she said, "This is what happened through me yesterday. Uttarā, who possesses such a wonderful and miraculous wealth of virtue, healed me instead of retaliating for what I did. She harbored no hatred whatsoever. Then she told me to ask for forgiveness from the Blessed One." The Blessed One further questioned Uttarā about this: "Uttarā, what did you think when she was coming with that hot ghee?" She replied, "I thought in this way: regarding Sirimā's virtue—the help she rendered by providing me the opportunity to perform my alms-offerings and service to the Buddha and Saṅgha for two weeks—when considering that virtue, the universe is not spacious enough for it; it is something that rises higher than the Brahma-world." She thus explained the assertion of truth she had made. At that moment, the Buddha expressed his appreciation by saying, "Sādhu, Sādhu!" and declared: "That is how it should be done, Uttarā. This is the true practice of Dhamma, the practice of victory through Dhamma." To convey this idea, he uttered the verse mentioned earlier:

> *"Akkodhena jine kodhaṃ, asādhuṃ sādhunā jine,*
>
> *jine kadariyaṃ dānena, saccena alikavādinaṃ."*

It is very simple:

> *"Akkodhena jine kodhaṃ"* – One should conquer anger by non-anger.
> *"Asādhuṃ sādhunā jine"* – One should conquer the bad, or the unvirtuous person, by goodness or virtue.
> *"Jine kadariyaṃ dānena"* – One should conquer the stingy person through giving (*dāna*), by sharing what one owns.
> *"Saccena alikavādinaṃ"* – One should conquer the liar with truth.

It is mentioned that after listening to the sermon delivered along with that verse, even Sirimā, who was filled with remorse, despite having attempted such a grave wrong,

attained stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*) along with her attendant women and the rest of the group.

Indeed, after this event, in the Suttas we see Sirimā engaged in serving the Buddha and the Saṅgha. Thus, regardless of her profession, it is revealed that she achieved the state of stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*) and attained a great benefit in terms of the Dispensation (*Sāsana*). Looking at this story, one might think of it as a miraculous event almost impossible to believe in this day and age. In particular, we primarily see the virtue of Uttarā. How deep a faith must have existed within Uttarā and the financier Puṇṇa to propose such a scheme or to implement such a course of action! She made a great sacrifice of a kind that a wife would not normally make—bringing and handing over another woman to her own husband. It was like handing her over in her own home, while she herself stayed in the kitchen, dedicating her time to serving the Buddha and the Saṅgha. Looking at it from this perspective, we can imagine how deep a faith they must have had in the Triple Gem. Moreover, we must especially contemplate the mind of loving-kindness (*mettā*) mentioned here in relation to this incident. How deep a loving-kindness must have been present there! It is loving-kindness capable of showing such miracles that is called the liberation of mind through loving-kindness (*mettā-cetovimutti*).

You have heard the word "liberation" (*vimutti*) in various ways. Liberation means freedom, the idea of release. "Liberation of mind" (*cetovimutti*) means the freeing of the mind, the liberation of the mind. From what does it get released? When we think of loving-kindness, to achieve the liberation of mind through loving-kindness, one must remove the barriers and fences of anger. Otherwise, the ordinary world lives within the fences of anger. When that is removed, next there is the fence regarding those who are dear to us. When that too is removed, then there is the fence regarding neutral people. When that too is removed, next there is the fence regarding hostile people. It is in the midst of many such fences that an ordinary person spends life, trapped within them. There is no liberation there. Therefore, the purpose of this meditation, of the meditation on loving-kindness, the state of liberation of mind through loving-kindness, is to remove those barriers and fences, and to radiate the thought of well-being even towards an enemy, just as a mother would protect her only child, as shown in the *Karaṇīyametta Sutta*.

We see that Uttarā practically implemented this, because its benefits were received right there. In the *Mettānisasa Sutta*, the Buddha points out eleven benefits of loving-kindness. One of them is:

"Nāssa aggi vā visaṃ vā satthaṃ vā kamati" — fire, poison, or weapons do not harm the body of one who has practiced the liberation of mind through loving-kindness. That was proven by this story, by this incident. Regarding that liberation of mind through loving-kindness, in the places where it is mentioned, the way it should be developed is described. A series of terms is shown there to describe the effort to bring the mind of loving-kindness to that state:

"Mettāya, bhikkhave, cetovimuttiyā āsevitāya, bhāvitāya, bahulīkatāya, yānīkatāya, vatthukatāya, anuṭṭhitāya, paricitāya, susamāraddhāya."

This means that the mind of loving-kindness is not cultivated in a casual manner; it is frequently associated with—one constantly radiates the thought of loving-kindness, "may all be well." Likewise, it is developed (*bhāvitāya*). Next, it is practiced abundantly (*bahulīkatāya*). *"Yānīkatāya"* means making it into a vehicle. Some people travel, as it were, on the vehicle of loving-kindness; they remain in a state of loving-kindness to that extent.

"Vatthukatāya" refers to *vatthu*, which means the plot of land needed when building a house. That plot can be taken as the foundation; one makes that mind of loving-kindness the foundation for everything. *"Anuṭṭhitāya"* means being established in it, as if leaning on it, carrying out all one's activities in accordance with loving-kindness. *"Paricitāya"* means practiced, habituated. And *"susamāraddhāya"* means well-undertaken. The Buddha has stated that it is only when the mind of loving-kindness is well-cultivated in this manner that one should expect such benefits.

Thus, the benefits of loving-kindness are shown. We all know that in the *Karaṇīya Sutta*, which is regularly chanted, what can easily be recalled by anyone as a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) is the thought: "May all beings be happy!" It is mentioned in the *Karaṇīya Sutta* as *"Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā"* — "May all beings be happy at heart." How deep that concept of "all" is, is clarified by a few words and phrases preceding it in the *Karaṇīya Sutta*. The way the Buddha has presented it in the *Karaṇīya Sutta* is truly wondrous. In these times, when we cultivate loving-kindness, when we try to think of "all," we sometimes mix in the names of various nations and individuals. Through that, without our even knowing, thoughts of hatred can arise. Instead of that, the Buddha presents them all as a whole, without exception (*niravasesa*), that is, leaving none out, approaching from different aspects and saying "all beings." If we take this as an illustration: *"Ye keci pāṇabhūtatthi, tasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā..."* — that first part. Whatever living beings there are: *"tasā"* means those who tremble (the frail/fearful), *"thāvarā"* means the firm, stable, which can be taken as those who do not tremble (the strong). Thus, those who tremble and those who do not tremble—all are gathered together. If we are to divide these groups as a whole, they can be taken under these two categories, according to their respective measures: either trembling, or stable to their respective degrees. *"Anavasesā"* means without exception.

If we take an example: a frog in the mouth of a cobra. That frog is trembling in fear. The cobra is stable, firm; it does not let go. In such situations, according to what the Buddha says, we should not radiate loving-kindness only to the frog. It is not right to kill the cobra in order to save the frog. We must extend a mind of loving-kindness to that animal as well. From this, we can understand what we should do in such situations when various people ask various argumentative questions. When the pure mind of loving-kindness is lost, other thoughts (*vitakka*) arise. What is said here is that if one can save the animal in a wise way without harming it, that is a different matter. But that is the situation; we must understand. It is not appropriate to harm the cobra for that sake. *"Dīghā vā ye*

mahantā vā, majjhimā rassakāṇukathūlā..." The first classification of the whole was based on the distinction of trembling and not trembling.

Next is shown the size, the physical size: *"Dīghā vā ye mahantā vā"* — long ones, like snakes; great ones, like elephants; *"majjhimā,"* of medium size; short-bodied ones; and then *"aṇuka-thūlā"* (very minute or gross). Here, *"aṇu"* refers to those so small that they are barely visible or invisible to the naked eye, like things seen under a microscope; and *"thūla"* refers to large animals. Combining all of them according to height, weight, largeness, and smallness, this too is presented as a whole. For every animal. What is the next classification of the whole? *"Diṭṭhā vā ye vā addiṭṭhā"* — those seen and those unseen. Some people can cultivate loving-kindness only towards those they have seen; they cannot do so for those unseen. Here it speaks of combining both groups—all those seen and unseen. *"Ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre"* — those living far and those living near. Or rather, those living far and those living near. *"Avidūre." "Bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā"* — next, those who have come to birth and those seeking birth. Now, we might not harm a chicken, but we do not think or reflect much on harm regarding a chicken egg. In that way. From whatever angle we look at it, this is also shown deeply as those beings who are preparing to enter existence (*bhava*). A child in a mother's womb can also be understood in this manner. In any case, it is said that we must not harm anyone who is in existence or seeking existence. That is also said here: *"Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā"* — indeed, all these beings mentioned. From this, we can see that the Buddha did not exclude any living being.

Having presented it as an immeasurable whole in this manner, it next says: *"Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha, nātimaññetha katthaci naṃ kañci."* There too is something important. We cultivate loving-kindness. Next is the other side. What is it? *"Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha"* — let no one deceive another. *"Nikubbetha"* means let no one revile, or let there be no cheating or fraud towards another. *"Nātimaññetha katthaci naṃ kañci"* — let no one despise anyone anywhere. Next: *"Byārosanā paṭighasaññā, nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya"* — out of anger or resentful perception, let no one wish suffering (*dukkha*) upon another. There are times when we do not want to do anything to our enemy, perhaps because we would be punished, or because we would get caught by the law. But if someone else harms them in some indirect way, we rejoice, saying "Sādhu, Sādhu!" We appreciate it. There is such a tendency. Here, there is no room even for that: let no one else do it to another! There is a wonderful, deep meaning here. It is a loving-kindness so pure that not only does one not do harm oneself, but one wishes that no one else does it on one's behalf either.

Here, Uttarā used the very hostility committed against her to bring out a virtue. There is a great Dhamma-principle (*dhammatā*) in this. This might be a question for you: why did Uttarā take that as a great virtue? It was part of Sirimā's profession. Yet, Uttarā took it as a virtue at that moment in order to prevent a mind of hatred. You know the saying in our country: "One can cover a mountain with a hair." That is what often happens—a single hair of fault can cover a mountain of virtue. This is the opposite of that: with a single hair of virtue, she covered that entire mountain of fault. This is what is called

radical attention / wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). This is what the Buddha has allowed. Rationalizers may not understand this. This is what is called Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*). Right Intention means that if defilements arise in any way, the Buddha has taught us to think in whatever way that puts an end to those defilements. That is what intention means. Rationalizers might say, "What a foolish idea of Uttarā's is this? Is this even worth mentioning?" However, depending on the situation, she thought in that way to prevent the mind of hatred. "The universe is not spacious enough, and the Brahma-world is not high enough, for this virtue—such a vast mass of virtue she has done for me." It was through the very power of that mind of loving-kindness that she then turned it into an assertion of truth. After removing the hatred in her mind in that manner, she thought, "If there is indeed anger within me, let me be burned by this oil. If not, let me not be burned!" There we see the liberation of mind through loving-kindness in its true form.

A method of removing hatred, taught by the Chief Disciple Ven. Sāriputta—who possessed a wonderful quality of loving-kindness, compassion, and humility—can be cited as evidence for this. The simile given for it is *"gopade udakaṃ"* — water in a cow's footprint. The simile is as follows: suppose a person is traveling through a vast desert without a drop of water. At that moment, there is no water anywhere. Suddenly, he sees a tiny bit of water in a place where a cow has stepped. He cannot draw it with a bucket. So what does he do? He falls on all fours, laps it up with his tongue, and drinks that little water as if it were a major task, because he cannot do without drinking it due to his intense thirst at that moment. In the same way, when that angry mind arises, to remove it by any means possible, one must bring out even a small virtue. That is exactly what Uttarā did here. She covered the mountain with a hair. The difference here is that she covered the mountain of fault with a hair of virtue. That, too, is something done through wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), with wisdom. That is the result of it.

One can gain a vast and deep understanding of this loving-kindness. In addition to this, we can also bring in a Sutta preached by the Buddha called the *Āghātapaṭivinaya* (Removal of Resentment). "Āghāta" is what we call resentment or anger. There are several words for it, and there are various levels of this anger, as we all know. There is a state of slight irritation, then a higher state of intolerance, then getting angry, then wrath, then malice when it matures further, then deep-seated malice, and finally, resentment (*āghāta*). Going along that path is how, in Saṃsāra, it goes on from birth to birth, as in the stories of Serivāṇija and Kacchapuṭa, and the story of Devadatta. Thus it grows. The Buddha shows five methods of removing such deep-seated resentment in the mind in the *Āghātapaṭivinaya Sutta*. There too, a great depth is shown. There, the Buddha does not show loving-kindness alone. He points out five factors for removing deep-seated malice or resentment within a person. What are they? If there is resentment or deep-seated malice towards someone, one should develop loving-kindness towards that person. We all know that. That is the first factor.

When it cannot be done through loving-kindness, compassion (*karuṇā*) should be developed. We can understand that too in such situations. Sometimes we might think,

"Oh, this person is doing this out of ignorance, out of not knowing, due to some lack of understanding of the Dhamma, or some deficiency in Saṃsāra." One must at least be able to compose one's mind in that way. That is what compassion is. If they do not respond to loving-kindness, we try to apply compassion to conquer that hatred: "Alas, this person is helpless without the support of this Dhamma." Next, if even that fails, we apply the mind to equanimity (*upekkhā*). Equanimity means neutrality. One makes the mind neutral towards it, as if it is something that does not concern one. If it still keeps arising, what does one do next? The Buddha has shown that too: *"Asati amanasikāro"* — which means non-mindfulness and non-attention. Now, mindfulness (*sati*) and attention (*manasikāra*) mean being mindful and reflecting. In most instances in the Dhamma, mindfulness and attention are shown as good qualities. But here, the Buddha shows non-mindfulness and non-attention. That too is with reason and logic; that is, depending on the situation. Non-mindfulness means removing from the mind that enemy who constantly assails one's head. One does not direct mindfulness towards them; one directs the mind to something else.

Similarly, instead of reflecting on them, one reflects on something else related to loving-kindness or the Dhamma, and removes the mind from there. Just as we look away when a strong light comes that is blinding or disturbing to the eye, saying at that moment "I don't want this," one distances the mind from that thought. Thus, in these ways, one brings forward loving-kindness, or brings forward compassion, or brings forward equanimity, or brings forward non-attention as the fourth. A fifth factor is also shown. If all of these do not work, next one reflects on the principle of the ownership of kamma (*kammassakatā*). The Buddha has preached that everyone has their own kamma as their own property, as their inheritance, as their kinsman. What they do belongs to them; what I do belongs to me. This is something our old Buddhist parents used to say constantly. In such situations, to comfort the mind, one applies the thought of kamma—one's fate. It may even be a habit of their speech. Be that as it may, the kamma they perform is theirs.

I do not need to condone or rejoice in it. Now, for those of you who read newspapers and such, this is something that can be very helpful to protect your mind. Let them do as they do. I do not need to condone the kamma they perform; those are indeed unwholesome. How many days do we generate unwholesome states regarding various things like killings, by condoning what others do? In such situations, by means of the Dhamma, one remains neutral, seeing it as something that happens. One uses wisdom as an aid. The Buddha has shown such methods because this is such a serious unwholesome state. We all know that greed, hatred, and delusion are defilements in our long Saṃsāra. They come in various levels. Some cannot be easily scraped off and finished. We must direct our minds to a multitude of such instructions, dealing with the coarse aspect in a coarse way, and then the subtle aspect in whatever way possible, because the beneficial side of these has been shown to us through this story. We too should think, "If Uttarā cultivated a mind of loving-kindness in the midst of such financier wealth, why can't we?" In that way, we must value the quality of loving-kindness as well as faith in the Triple Gem, just like Uttarā. Also, when the maidservants were beating her, she could have just looked

away, since she herself was not striking. But instead of letting the maidservants beat Sirimā as much as they wanted, what this woman did, as mentioned there, was that when it became too much, she sat on her, stopped the maidservants, applied oil, washed her, and comforted her. That is the pure mind of loving-kindness.

What was the result of that? In the end, Sirimā too became a noble disciple. The mental transformation, the revolution that took place within her was so great that she too eventually became a noble disciple. So that is what we said at the beginning—in the ordinary world, we look to win our battle of life through unrighteousness. But what are the four principles stated by the Buddha, the four principles of victory through Dhamma?

> *"Akkodhena jine kodhaṃ"* — one conquers the angry person by non-anger.
> *"Asādhuṃ sādhunā jine"* — one conquers the bad person, the unvirtuous person, through virtue and goodness.
> *"Jine kadariyaṃ dānena"* — one conquers the stingy person through giving (*dāna*).
> *"Saccena alikavādinaṃ"* — one conquers the liar through truthful speech.

But it is the opposite of this that is found in society. We all know what the ordinary practice in society is: anger must be conquered by anger itself. Next, the person who does bad must be conquered by that very bad, in that same way. The stingy must be conquered by stinginess itself. Next, the liar must be conquered by telling an even bigger lie. What the Buddha stated in gentle words is often much harsher in practice in today's society, because society has become gross to that extent due to the decline of virtues. Generally, what was called anger exists in society as hatred, malice, and so on. Similarly, the words corruption and malpractice, which we often hear of in society, can be closely associated with this "bad." Corruption and malpractices. Thus, there is a policy of destroying poison with poison. Just like destroying poison with poison, people think that an angry person must be destroyed by anger itself. Regarding this corruption, the ordinary society thinks: "We must build the trellis in the direction the vine grows. We cannot correct this in society. This is what is found everywhere, so we must also go along with it." If there is fraud, corruption, and malpractice somewhere, they learn that method, do it even better, accumulate a substantial amount for themselves, and go to hell.

Such is the concept that exists in society. And the same applies to stinginess. When we see someone being stingy, we think, "Why should we alone give? If they do not give, why should we?" There is a good folk tale about this. If we can learn a lesson from anything, we should not discard it. It must be a story from recent times: the story of how the seven mendicants (*Āṇḍis*) drank porridge at the resting-hall (*ambalama*). Some of you may have heard it. The story goes like this: in the past, as you know, there were resting-halls by the roadsides where people traveling on foot came to spend the night. In this way, seven mendicants came to a resting-hall in the evening. Each of them had a tiny amount of rice, like a handful. But when they gathered and asked, "What shall we eat tonight?", they said, "Let's drink porridge." Now, everyone knows how porridge is put on the

hearth. But here, instead of that, a pot of water was placed on the hearth. As it was heating up, each was supposed to put in a handful of rice. Saying "Here is my handful, here is my handful," all seven mendicants pretended to put in their handful of rice and sat waiting to drink the porridge in the end. What did they drink? Hot water! You can imagine how it happened. To deceive the other, each became stingy in response to the other's stinginess. So in the end, there is the result. Even though it is a small story, there is a big lesson to learn from how the seven mendicants drank porridge. If we too become stingy like a stingy person, we will experience a similar result. Not only in this world, but in the next world too. In this Dhamma, it is shown that stinginess is a cause that leads to even the limbs becoming crippled. That is a psychological result.

It is the same regarding truth. Untruth and falsehood are of various kinds. That too exists in society in an even more severe manner. Rather than the word falsehood, today fraud is more commonly used. It exists in society in an even more acute form than the other. One feels that one must be a more clever fraudster than the other. In this day and age, it has become something that grows along with education as a form of unskilfulness in everyone, big and small, high and low. But the Buddha states the opposite of that: one conquers falsehood with truth. Why? Because in many instances in the Dhamma, the value of truth is declared—there is a wonderful power in truth. Now, it is clear from Uttarā's story above. One can show miracles through truth. There is a power in the assertion of truth (*saccakiriyā*). Today, a person who does nothing truthful cannot win by an assertion of truth. But the Buddha has shown the victory and value of truth in various ways in Sutta discourses and so on: *"Saccaṃ ve amatā vācā, esa dhammo sanantano"* — "Truth indeed is the deathless speech; this is an ancient law." Similarly, when contemplating life, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that the perfection of truth (*sacca-pāramitā*) was kept to the highest degree. During the Bodhisatta period, sometimes even things like transgression may have occurred within that stock of merit for awakening (*bodhi-sambhāra*), but it is mentioned that he consistently adhered to truthful speech. It was through the very power of that truth that when the Buddha approached the group of five monks, who were initially refusing to show him respect, and said, "Monks, give ear to the Dhamma, I have attained (awakening)," the group of five monks accepted those words. Earlier, they had thought, "If he could not attain Buddhahood even after practicing such severe austerities, how can we believe that he has attained Buddhahood just because he says so now?" When he first spoke, the Buddha did not jump into the sky to show miracles. Sitting right there, he asked only this much: "Monks, have I ever spoken to you in this manner before?" Then, through the power of the Buddha's perfection of truth, the doubt that was within the group of five monks was dispelled. From this, we see the meaning of what the Buddha said: *"Saccaṃ ve amatā vācā"* — truth is indeed the deathless speech.

In the same way, the manner in which the perfection of truth was fulfilled is mentioned in those stories. Nibbāna is a state to be realized through wisdom. Wisdom means the destruction of delusion, the destruction of ignorance. Therefore, one cannot destroy delusion by deceiving oneself. That is to say, it is a self-deception, a fraud. For that reason, the value of truthful speech is shown there. The Buddha has presented

something like a challenge to the world here. The world goes on in that way, "destroying poison with poison," "building the trellis in the direction the vine grows," in whatever way possible, even if it leads to ruin in both worlds, just to temporarily gather some position, power, wealth, and grain in this world. The inner life is severely degraded. In these times, too, what many people focus their minds on are terms we hear like social reform, social cleansing, rehabilitation, and uplifting society. Firstly, these four principles help to purify one's inner life, one's own mind. And the same applies to society. In shaping society, too, those very virtues...

Even if we think about anger, some who are very harsh and untameable have been disciplined by others in a wondrous way through gentleness and softness. The Buddha's taming of Nālāgiri, the taming of Aṅgulimāla, and so on are sufficient examples of this. Even if we cannot do it at that level, by adopting those gentle and soft policies, one sets an example for the other person. Now, in that situation, due to Uttarā's action, Sirimā was prompted to think beyond her usual limits. That is what we often have to do: we must allow them to think. By allowing them to think, that person develops a deeper appreciation of the value of those virtues. Instead of that, the easiest method for us is to destroy poison with poison. Instead of that, we must try to gradually bring these Dhamma points preached by the Buddha closer to our lives. Because we often engage in activities like listening to sermons and meditation, but various defilements (*kilesa*) remain in our minds like these weeds.

The medicine needed for them is what the Buddha has shown in these various discourses. Moreover, through the characters of the male and female disciples of the Buddha's time, we can obtain good examples for these. Today, they are regarded as miracles, but in truth, they are nothing unusual for a person who conducts themselves properly in the Dhamma. That is a part of the peace found there. Through that person's mental strength, a large number of people receive relief, an example, and a great light for their lives. In that way, to the best of our ability, we must be eager to shape our lives through this path of example.

Especially when reflecting on oneself, regarding that meditation on loving-kindness, in daily life many people say, along with the word meditation itself, that they have no time to do these things. The Buddha has shown in the *Karaṇīya Sutta*: *"Tiṭṭhaṃ caraṃ nisinno vā, sayāno vā yāvat'assa vigatamiddho..."* Although meditation is initially started sitting in a cross-legged posture, when the mind gradually gets a good hold of it, it can be done in all four postures. Now, even Uttarā turned her mind to the mind of loving-kindness in that sudden emergency because she had practiced it well. If one has not practiced it, one cannot make use of it. No matter what daily activities there are, if one has understood its value, if the desire (*chanda*) and eagerness for it have arisen, whether lay or ordained, that person, as expressed by the Buddha—in the manner of *āsevitāya, bhāvitāya, bahulīkatāya*—gradually not only associates with it and develops it, but practices it abundantly. They make it a vehicle. They make it a foundation, a plot of land. They remain established in it. They practice it. They do it having well-undertaken it. In that way, one must make an effort to cultivate that mind of loving-kindness. And the same applies to anger. Regarding other things too, and regarding

goodness and virtue, one must contemplate every day. There are various cultivations in the world. Even in these times, we hear about cultivation campaigns and cultivation battles. But in truth, whatever cultivations there are, we have clear evidence that they can be destroyed overnight where there is no cultivation of virtue. Houses with vast wealth are finished in a single moment by bringing a matchstick close with a mind of hatred. Let us consider paddy fields, and various other estates—it takes a very small thing to bring a tiny matchstick close to them. But what aided that was indeed that angry mind, hatred, revenge, jealousy, and other defilements. From this, we see that the cultivation of virtue is more important than all other cultivations. Where there is no cultivation of virtue, every other cultivation is barren. It is not by drought that they become barren, nor by floods, but by the lack of the cultivation of virtue.

Next is virtuous conduct (*sādhu-caryā*). What the Buddha uses there are the words "asādhu" (bad) and "sādhu" (good). It is a very neutral word. The word "Sādhu" is familiar even to our ears; it is very dear to us. Virtuous conduct means the very best behavior. What is known in the ordinary world today is goodness and virtue, not vice. Therefore, the cultivation of virtue. One must accumulate it. Just like collecting bit by bit in a savings pot, each one must think of collecting into one's own mind-stream those virtues grouped and shown by the Buddha, as presented in the *Karaṇīya Sutta* and elsewhere. It is by accumulating these that an exemplary person is born into the world one day. The Buddha himself accumulated in this manner for aeons (*kalpa*) and thereby gained the power, as a Buddha, to preach this Dhamma to the world and show us this path to Nibbāna. It is the same for everyone. If there is anything to accumulate in Saṃsāra, it is this—these virtues. Then, through those virtues, through their maturing, one is able to attain liberation (*vimutti*).

It is very easily said that "we must destroy this hatred and delusion." But to do that, one has to uproot those weeds mentioned earlier. Those small things must be removed. Along with that, the cultivation of virtue. If we do not cultivate a certain place, it becomes fallow. Some intellectuals argue that since there is an argument for just letting the cultivation go and remaining idle, "there is no need to cultivate what is called loving-kindness. When anger arises, we will just show loving-kindness to them. There is no need to sit for hours and practice it as meditation." But even such people sometimes spend months exerting themselves for running races and so on to win them. From this, it is clear that unless there is some practice, training, habituation, and training in various ways as mentioned, we do not have the strength to do it when the opportunity arises. That is why the Buddha shows this as an application, to be done as a yogi. The meaning of the word "yoga" is application. Therefore, it is by applying oneself in that manner and developing these virtues that one can retain a value for one's life. That is the cultivation of virtue. Therefore, if anyone wants to hold a certain purpose high in their life, they must make that purpose the cultivation of virtue. The ultimate peak of that cultivation of virtue is, in the end, the supramundane (*lokuttara*) cultivation of virtue. Starting from the mundane (*lokiya*) cultivation of virtue, and finally the supramundane cultivation of virtue. Thus, at the end of that mundaneness, along with virtue, wisdom (*paññā*)

matures. Along with virtue, those summarized as virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*) mature through those practices.

Now, many of you merit-seekers have observed the eight precepts on this Uposatha day. Some others have observed the ten precepts. Some have observed the precepts of right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*) at this moment. What is done by all of these? Just like uprooting weeds in the manner mentioned, one basically takes some steps regarding those defilements (*kilesa*) that can arise in one's mind-stream. Because one disciplines bodily and verbal actions. Now, a thought may arise. Along with the arising of the thought, if bodily and verbal actions are carried out, we fall into a terrible abyss without even knowing it. Therefore, the very first level is virtue (*sīla*).

What is done through virtue (*sīla*) is disciplining bodily and verbal actions. Thoughts do arise, but through the determination one has made: *"Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi"* — by oneself, not because anyone else said so, but declaring "I stand within this practice." This means abstaining. The determination to keep the training rule of abstaining from taking life, from killing other living beings. To project that into the light of wisdom and try to conduct one's life within it—this is what is called virtue (*sīla*). The Buddha has shown the vast amount of merit and wholesome kamma that arises when someone keeps five, eight, or ten training rules in that manner for a day. Where the Buddha speaks about the eight precepts, he describes the eightfold precept (*aṭṭhaṅga-sīla*) as *"mahajjutiko mahāvipphāro"* — of great luster, of great resonance, such is the merit of keeping the eight precepts on the Uposatha day. At the very least, even the five precepts—that too is something of wonderful power. Though we consider the five precepts as something small, if kept purely, how great a power is it! Yet, people are not inclined to keep even that. They do not know their value either. Thus, what is done through virtue is disciplining bodily and verbal actions. Next, those virtues and vices arise in the mind.

According to the statement *"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā,"* which we all know, the mind is the forerunner of all these. So, stopping what arises in this mind is not an easy task. It must be done through meditation. Having stilled the mind that scatters in that manner, one then maintains it on a wholesome object. Indeed, that is why a wholesome object is provided. The mind grasps some object. The very nature of the mind is to go on grasping objects. It goes on grasping and grasping. So, instead of a bad object, a good object is given for it to grasp. That is what is done here. To protect that good object, one must act by contemplating wisely through wise attention / radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Sometimes, even what the ordinary world considers unnecessary through logic is needed. For what? We know there are medicines for some illnesses that surprise us when we are told about them. We even wonder if that is a medicine. But the work gets done. If one gets cured even by a water injection, then that is a medicine. Likewise, there are certain things that arise in the very mind in a very subtle manner, which one can discover for oneself. That is the kind of method Uttarā used here too, by bringing out a small virtue of that woman—bringing out something the ordinary world would consider small—and through that, erasing her own hatred. In that way, we must contemplate: if

our purpose is the cultivation of virtue, and the uprooting and expelling of vice, we must try to shape our lives in a manner corresponding to that.

The next question is the one regarding values. Our values need not be the values of society. Generally, in these times, there are various feelings such as "these are the contemporary values," or "one cannot live like that in this day and age." But here, there is no time limit for kamma. There is no time limit regarding wholesome and unwholesome kamma. Whether performed in the Buddha's time or in this day and age, the results of unwholesome, sinful kamma are identical. Therefore,

regardless of those, what we must maintain is that very value we receive from the Dhamma and kamma. Especially since kamma affects our saṃsāric life. Everywhere, "unwholesome" (*akusala*) means being unskilled, in the manner of the Dhamma. Being unskilled in living in Saṃsāra is what is called unwholesome. One becomes unskilled in a bad place; otherwise, one meets with disaster right here as its consequence, as its result. "Wholesome" (*kusala*) means that very skillfulness. Those deeds that direct one to Nibbāna without going to miserable realms like hell in this Saṃsāra are what are called wholesome. Thus, when contemplating in this manner, our value must be on that wholesome side. "Kusala-chanda" means giving one's preference to the wholesome. We must give our preference to the wholesome when the question of choice arises. In that way, one must contemplate; regardless of social conventions, one must present a set of values to one's life in that manner. "My life is lived under these very values, no matter what anyone else says." When one's character grows through these, then others awaken. Sometimes, those who laughed, mocked, or called it foolishness, in the end, come to you with their problems. When a serious problem arises and there is no refuge, they come to the person who appears to the world as a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). Becoming such a valuable person is not something done in a day or two. We see that from the Buddha's life itself. But we must think: we have not done these things in this life alone. We are not making a beginning in this life. We are here today as the result of a beginning made over a long period. When contemplating in that way, we are adding to what has already come, and we should not think of this as something we are doing anew. The difference is that those two—good and bad—are always a part of its very nature.

That is what Māra is. He shows the bad to us as good. That is the nature of the world. The Buddha points out that, like water flowing downwards, the nature of minds is to be drawn towards the unwholesome. In the question of good and bad, the bad always presents itself and shows us a beneficial side, as it were. It shows it falsely. If one submits to it, then one is caught by Māra. So, at the very least, when we blame someone else, we should think, "Here is Māra. Either Māra has possessed them, or Māra has possessed me." Having a correct understanding of this, one must return to the Dhamma. One must develop a correct understanding of kamma. One must develop a correct understanding of the Dhamma. Even Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Arahants are subject to kamma. The law of kamma that operates in this Saṃsāra is that powerful. No one can override it. Therefore, one must bow one's head to it. Bowing one's head means submitting to it as a world-principle; it is not something done by anyone else—if one does it, it is for oneself.

According to the principle "as you sow, so shall you reap," one must correct one's behavior. If one corrects the mind, body, and speech, then if the results of past sinful kamma are ready to ripen, it helps to suppress those results, as is said regarding obstructive kamma (*upapīḷaka-kamma*) and so on. Similarly, it becomes supportive (*upatthambhaka*) to one's wholesome side. The wholesome deeds one performs help to further develop them. Such is it regarding kamma.

And next is the Dhamma. When thinking of the Dhamma, the Nibbāna declared by the Buddha is like that light seen from afar on a great mountain—like the Sri Pada mountain. One must think of it in that way. Whatever other things we do in our lives, whether we do jobs or hold other positions, as Buddhists, the ultimate goal of our life is Nibbāna. Therefore, it is within that light of Nibbāna that we must carry out our other activities. If that light is turned to the other side, we cannot climb Sri Pada. Therefore, we must always bear that in mind. Whether it is realized today, tomorrow, or in another aeon, it is only if we make that idea of Nibbāna our goal that we can travel this journey correctly. That itself is what is called Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), the correct vision. If there is no correct vision, the world is blind.

That is why the Buddha declared:

"Andhabhūto ayaṃ loko, tanuk'ettha vipassati."

The entire world is blind; only a very few see, declares the Buddha. Similarly, the Buddha has declared: *"Sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā"* — as long as they are worldlings (*puthujjana*), they behave like madmen in the world. He has declared them to be insane. Sometimes, someone might feel resentful towards the Buddha for saying this. But to the Buddha's knowledge, the mind of a worldling is just like a mad mind, like an insane mind. In that way. Therefore, escaping from that insanity and moving towards wisdom, getting rid of those called greed, hatred, and delusion, and purifying the mind, making it perfectly clean—the path to this is called the path to Nibbāna, the Noble Eightfold Path. When one is aligned with Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), having developed correct vision, and then correct thoughts, then using correct words in accordance with correct thoughts, performing correct deeds, correct actions, and then correcting one's daily routine in accordance with that, turning it into correct livelihood, and through that effort, bringing out correct effort, and through that very effort, bringing out that valuable quality called correct mindfulness, and by consolidating that very quality, developing correct concentration—it is in this way that the Noble Eightfold Path is completed. It is to a mind concentrated in this manner that the subtle point shown by the Buddha can be properly penetrated and seen through the Three Characteristics of Impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and Not-self (*anattā*). It is through this that one can realize the path and fruit of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and Arahantship that we all aspire to, and realize the supreme deathless Nibbāna in this very way. That indeed is our aspiration.

Indeed, let us aspire that this accumulation of merit we have gathered so far by listening to the Dhamma and observing the precepts may lead to the development of those

spiritual faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, which aid in realizing Nibbāna, and to the realization of the Path and Fruits! Moreover, if the guardian deities of the Dispensation, including the assembly of Devas and Brahmas, wish to rejoice in this accumulated stock of merit to fulfill their aspirations for the perfections (*pāramī*), may they rejoice in it and realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through whatever Bodhi state they have aspired to! May they also protect us and this Dispensation! Likewise, if any beings, from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, including our departed relatives, wish to rejoice in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, may they all rejoice, be freed from all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*), and bring an end to this suffering of Saṃsāra through the peace of supreme, deathless Nibbāna! Wishing thus, repeat this verse.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #108

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.97)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Na antalikkhe na samuddamajjhe,

na pabbatānaṃ vivaraṃ pavissa;

na vijjatī so jagatīpadesoti,

yatthaṭṭhito na ppaheyya maccu.

From:

Dhammapada 127 (Pāpavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The fear of death constantly exists within every living being. There is no effort that humans do not make, no means they do not employ, to escape death and live even for a single day. Nevertheless, when death inevitably presents itself in accordance with some grave karma, every such effort and stratagem becomes futile. Today, we intend to deliver this Dhamma sermon based on a stanza and a story that illustrate this natural law (*dhamma-tā*).

When our Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, was residing at the Nigrodharama in Kapilavatthu, he uttered this stanza concerning Suppabuddha the Sakyan. Pious listeners, this Suppabuddha the Sakyan was the Buddha's own father-in-law, the father of Princess Yasodhara, and also the father of Venerable Devadatta. Although he was his father-in-law, he harbored a deep animosity toward his son-in-law. He thought, "He abandoned my daughter to go forth on the Great Renunciation, and he ordained my son, making him an enemy." Due to this cultivated animosity, one day this Suppabuddha the Sakyan thought, "I will not allow the Buddha to walk for alms." If the Buddha had been invited to an alms-giving at a certain place, Suppabuddha started holding a drinking party on the road along which he would travel. In short, he gathered a crowd and began drinking alcohol right in the middle of the road.

As the Buddha was arriving with the community of monks at the time of alms-round, people came and said, "The Blessed One is arriving." Suppabuddha, however, said, "Tell him to go by another road; I am the elder," and did not clear the way, despite those people requesting him several times. Consequently, the Buddha turned back. Then, Suppabuddha the Sakyan sent a spy to listen to what the Buddha would say. The Buddha displayed a gentle smile. As was customary, Venerable Ānanda asked, "What, Blessed One, is the cause for displaying this smile?" Thereupon, the Buddha declared, "Do you see this Suppabuddha the Sakyan? Having committed such a grave karma, on the seventh day from today, right by the staircase on the ground floor of his palace, the earth will split open, and he will plunge into Avīci, the great hell." Having heard this, the spy went back and told Suppabuddha the Sakyan. Suppabuddha thought, "Well, even if that is so, I will not let it happen there. I must act in such a way as to accuse the Buddha of lying." Thinking thus, he had food and drinks brought up to the topmost floor of his seven-storied palace and made arrangements to spend the entire seven days on the top floor. He had the staircases removed, locked the doors on every floor, and stationed guards at the doors, instructing them, "Even if by mistake I attempt to go downstairs, prevent me."

When the Buddha heard about these precautions, he declared that even if Suppabuddha the Sakyan flew into the sky, went out to sea in a ship, or hid amidst the mountains instead of staying on the top floor of his palace, that event would happen exactly as foretold. It was this very meaning that he expounded to the community of monks on that occasion through the stanza we have taken as our theme:

"Na antalikkhe na samuddamajjhe,

na pabbatānaṁ vivaraṁ pavissa;

na vijjatī so jagatīpadesoti,

yatthaṭṭhito na ppaheyya maccu."

The Buddha declared this with absolute certainty, stating that whether in the sky, in the middle of the ocean, or by entering a mountain cleft, there is no place in this world where, abiding, one would not be overcome by death.

When the seven days were completed, at the exact time of day when the Buddha had been walking on his alms-round and that Sakyan had blocked the road, the Sakyan's state stallion—the auspicious horse used by Suppabuddha the Sakyan—suddenly went wild on the ground floor and began thrashing against the walls. Hearing this noise, Suppabuddha the Sakyan asked, "What is this commotion?" and was told that the horse had gone wild. That horse could be tamed only by Suppabuddha the Sakyan. Therefore, he felt he must go and subdue the horse. As he approached the door, it opened by itself. Next, the guards also pushed him in that direction. Furthermore, it is said that even though the staircases had been removed, they were somehow put back in place, perhaps pushed back and forth by some natural law (*dhamma-tā*), because that karma had to bear its fruit. In this manner, he was propelled down through all seven floors, and exactly

as predicted by the Buddha, the moment he reached the foot of the staircase, the earth opened up right there, and he plunged into Avīci hell. Thus it is recorded in the Dhamma.

Even when the Buddha uttered that stanza, many attained comprehension of the Dhamma based on that event. However, someone in this day and age might doubt this occurrence. At first glance, from this story of the Dhamma, we are led to believe that by blocking the path of the Buddha, that Sakyan paved the way to hell instead of Nibbāna. Thus, while others paved their way to Nibbāna by taking refuge in the Buddha, this sinful Suppabuddha the Sakyan paved his way straight to hell by preventing the Buddha from going on his alms-round. Insulting the Buddha, which is the karma of abusing the Noble Ones (*ariyūpavāda*), is shown to be a highly grave karma. Insulting Noble Ones such as Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Arahants has very severe consequences, as is pointed out.

Particularly now, some might not believe this story of going to hell. In our Dhamma literature, there are countless references to the deva worlds and brahma worlds. The pleasures and luxuries of the deva and brahma worlds are mentioned. We read about divine garments, divine food, and divine mansions with great pleasure. Even though many believe in those things, especially in this era, they are reluctant to believe in a realm of Yama or a hell, or the details concerning them. They do not even want to hear about them. Yet, that is precisely the place to which most people belong. Drawing from the Dhamma stories in our literature, we hope next to highlight several points declared by the Buddha regarding the nature of suffering (*dukkha*) in hell. On one occasion, the Buddha addressed the community of monks:

"Monks, if one were to speak of a place that is entirely undesirable, painful, and disagreeable, one would be referring to hell. So painful is the nature of this hell that it is difficult even to give a simile for it," declared the Buddha.

Then a certain monk asked, "But, Blessed One, is it possible to give a simile?"

"Very well, then, I will give a simile," he replied. Here is the simile given:

"Monks, suppose a criminal is brought before a king. The king tells the executioners, 'Take this man and strike him with a hundred spears in the morning.' They pierce him with a hundred spears in the morning. When they return after doing so, is that man still alive? 'Yes, Venerable Sir,' they say. Then the king says, 'In that case, strike him with another hundred spears at noon.' After they report that he is still alive, he is struck with another hundred spears in the evening. Monks, when asked whether that man who receives three hundred spear strikes experiences suffering (*dukkha*) and grief, they reply, 'Yes, Venerable Sir, what need is there to speak of three hundred spear strikes? Even a single spear strike is extremely painful to a person.'"

Thereupon, picking up a small pebble in his palm, the Buddha asked, "Is this pebble larger, or is the great Himalaya mountain?"

"Venerable Sir, this pebble is extremely small; it cannot even be compared to the Himalaya mountain, which is so vast."

Then the Buddha declared, "Just so, monks, the suffering (*dukkha*) experienced by this man from three hundred spear strikes is like the pebble in my hand. The suffering (*dukkha*) in hell is a vast suffering (*dukkha*) like the Himalaya mountain." That is how he expressed it on that occasion. There are further Dhamma portions related to this. In one place, the Buddha describes the nature of suffering (*dukkha*) in hell step-by-step. There, mention is made of the wardens of hell (*yamapalla*) who assist in meting out retribution to the hell-beings who are ready to receive the fruits of their evil karma. They pierce the two hands and two feet of a person fallen into hell with red-hot iron spikes, and they also pierce his chest. This is called the five-fold transfixing with red-hot iron spikes. It is that kind of suffering (*dukkha*), that kind of punishment that is described.

Furthermore, it is said that the wardens of hell lay a being fallen into hell down on the ground and slice him with axes. There, it is described that no matter how much suffering (*dukkha*) he receives, beyond what we can even imagine, as long as that karma is not exhausted, that person does not die but continues to suffer. For us, it is unimaginable. A person's life is lost with a small blow. Yet, because of the force of karma, because one has to undergo suffering, the force of karma does not disappear without yielding its fruit; so the Buddha has declared. This, then, is a way in which karma yields its fruit. Even if one dies, the body arises again. In those realms of yakkhas, realms of petas, and hells, the four elements are prepared in ways beyond our imagination to exhaust the momentum of karma. To exhaust karma, these four elements—earth, water, fire, and air—are ready.

In an unimaginable and wondrous way, those spontaneously born bodies called *opapātika* arise in accordance with karma. Having experienced that sensation (*vedanā*), they subsequently die. They are born again. Once more, bodies arise. That is how it is. Thus, just as they are laid down and sliced with axes, the wardens of hell also slice them with adzes. Next, it is shown that they are harnessed to a chariot and driven back and forth on a ground of red-hot iron. Furthermore, it is shown that they are thrown into a copper cauldron. They are thrown into a boiling, blazing copper cauldron. Burning, the hell-being goes up and down in it. Yet he does not die immediately. He undergoes suffering. He goes up and down and sideways in this manner. It is in this way, according to various evil karmas, that the Buddha has described how hell-beings undergo suffering (*dukkha*).

After enduring suffering in this manner, when they plunge into the Great Hell, it is even more severe. The Great Hell is mentioned as a place of great wonder, beyond our ability to imagine. It is described as being enclosed by iron walls about a hundred leagues (*yojana*) in length, with red-hot iron above and below, and the ground divided like rooms. The hell-being burns on this red-hot iron. A sheet of flame comes from the eastern wall and strikes the western wall. A sheet of flame comes from the western wall and strikes the eastern wall. A sheet of flame comes from the southern wall and strikes the northern wall. A sheet of flame comes from above and strikes the ground below, and from the ground upwards. In this way, there are sheets of flame from every direction. In

the midst of the flames, in accordance with their karma, crying and wailing, undergoing terrible suffering (*dukkha*), they meet with death (*maraṇa*). Then they take birth (*jāti*) once again.

While they are undergoing suffering (*dukkha*) for a long time in this manner, suddenly, it is said, the eastern door opens. Thereupon, this hell-being runs in that direction, thinking of escaping. Even as he runs, his skin, flesh, and sinews are entirely burnt. As he nears it, the door shuts again. Next, he runs in this direction toward the western door. In this way, he undergoes a wondrous mass of suffering (*dukkha*). Going from there, he next falls into what is called the Gūtha Hell. This Gūtha Hell is like a pit filled with excrement. It is said that inside it, needle-like worms with mouths like the point of a needle pierce the skin, flesh, sinews, and bones of that hell-being, and eat his bone marrow. Such is the grave suffering (*dukkha*) they undergo.

Then, leaving that place, they fall into a hell of hot ashes, called the Kukkuḷa Hell. Falling into the Kukkuḷa Hell in this manner, and going from there, you, pious listeners, may also have heard about the thorny silk-cotton tree. It is called the Simbalī forest. A forest of silk-cotton trees. Hell-beings are made to climb up and down these silk-cotton trees with thorns about sixteen inches long by those wardens of hell. Next is described the Asipatta forest. The Asipatta forest means there are trees whose leaves are just like swords. When they fall, the hands and feet of those hell-beings, those sinners, are cut, and their noses and ears are sliced off by those falling leaves. Next, mention is made of a flowing river called Vetaraṇī. They fall into it, and along its banks are sharp, cutting weapons like razor blades. While being swept away in this, the hell-wardens haul these hell-beings out with a fishhook. There it is described that when they are asked, "What do you want?" and they say, "I am hungry," red-hot iron balls are thrust into their mouths. Burning their mouths and stomachs, those balls pass out through the lower tract, taking the intestines along with them. Next, if they say they are thirsty, molten copper is poured into their mouths. It is as a place of such unspeakable, wondrous suffering (*dukkha*) and pain that the Buddha describes it in the Suttas.

That is how the Buddha describes the pain that must be endured in hell. Next, on one occasion, the lifespan in hell is also mentioned in a Sutta discourse. This is found in the Kokālika Sutta. Kokālika was the chief disciple of Venerable Devadatta. Developing a deep animosity toward the two chief disciples, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna, that disciple went to the Buddha to slander them, saying that both Sāriputta and Moggallāna had evil intentions and were wicked. The Buddha said, "No, Kokālika, do not say so. They are of virtuous character." Despite being told this repeatedly two or three times, it was not long before boils the size of mustard seeds broke out on the body of the monk Kokālika. They grew to the size of mung beans, then chickpea size, then emblic myrobalan (*nelli*) size, and then wood-apple (*beli*) size. Starting as large abscesses, they turned into massive wounds from which blood and pus flowed, and he passed away right there.

At the time of his passing, when he died, Sahampati Brahma Raja came to the Buddha that night and revealed this matter, saying that Kokālika had died and was born (*jāti*) in

the Paduma Hell. The following day, the Buddha announced this to the community of monks: "Last night, Sahampati Brahma Raja came and told me that the monk Kokālika, due to the unwholesome karma of harboring animosity toward Sāriputta and Moggallāna, finally went and was born in the Paduma Hell." Then a certain monk asked, "Venerable Sir, how long is the lifespan in the Paduma Hell?" Thereupon, the Buddha declared, "Monk, it is not easy to measure the lifespan of the Paduma Hell in terms of so many hundreds of years, or so many hundreds of thousands of years." The monk then asked, "Is it possible to give a simile?" Saying "It is possible," the Buddha then gave a simile. It must have been a simile familiar in the Kingdom of Kosala at that time: suppose there is a cart filled with a large quantity of sesame seeds, and a person removes one sesame seed once every hundred years. That cart of sesame, that sesame cart, would be emptied sooner. Yet the Abbuda Hell—even though the question was about the Paduma Hell, the Buddha first declared the lifespan of the Abbuda Hell, which is shorter than that of Paduma. Explaining this, the Buddha stated that from the Abbuda Hell onwards, the lifespan increases twenty-fold progressively through a series of hells named Abbuda, Nirabbuda, Ahaha, Ababa, and so forth, with the Paduma Hell being mentioned at the very end.

Thus, even in the Abbuda Hell, that hell-being has to live for such a long duration. Next is the Paduma Hell. In terms of time, it is an unimaginably long period; it is this suffering (*dukkha*) of hell that the Buddha points out in these Suttas. Now, in this day and age, some educated people might think these are later additions, or that the Buddha merely carried forward the mythical beliefs of the past. However, what we have to say is this: if someone believes in those divine mansions—the arising of mansions and the arising of bodies in a manner suitable to enjoy those pleasures according to the force of wholesome karma—this is actually a domain within the reach of those with direct-knowledge (*abhiññā*). Everyone has heard that three types of eyes are mentioned in the Dhamma of this Dispensation: the physical eye (*māsa-cakkhu*), the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), and the eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*). Ordinary people see only with the physical eye, the eye of flesh. Even if other instruments are used, only that physical eye is functional. To truly develop the divine eye, one must cultivate the absorptions (*jhāna*). Next, the eye of wisdom is even deeper; it is the eye that shows the actual natural law of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), which brings about Nibbāna. Only a Buddha can bring to light that eye of wisdom, the eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*). However, yogis who had developed the divine eye also existed before the time of the Buddha. In that very Dhamma, according to the words of the Buddha, it is mentioned that there were yogis who could see back into past births (*jāti*) by hundreds of thousands, even millions. Likewise, there were those with direct-knowledge (*abhiññā*) who could travel through the air.

Those with direct-knowledge (*abhiññā*) have seen those things—the deva worlds, the brahma worlds, and the nature of suffering (*dukkha*) in the plane of misery. Thus, the Buddha did not include these in the texts merely because they existed in the past; those yogis also saw them to some extent, though they did not see them with perfect clarity. When speaking of the Buddha's divine eye, it is mentioned as an exceptionally pure

divine eye. Here, "purity" means that the karma that brought about birth (*jāti*) in those deva worlds and other realms is seen with absolute clarity. Furthermore, it became directly clear to the Buddha that there is no self (*attā*) here, and that these arise solely through the momentum of karma. However, some of those other possessors of direct-knowledge (*abhiññā*) thought, "There must be a creator for this." When a spontaneously born body (*opapātika*) arose, they thought, "Perhaps Brahma or someone else must have created this." Or, concerning the infliction of suffering in the plane of misery, they thought, "This is happening because some almighty being decreed it."

But the Buddha declares that all of this happens through karma, in accordance with karma. A sight one can see in ordinary life is moths leaping into a lamp. Moths as well as grasshoppers leap into it. They see their companions dying in it. Yet they still leap. They leap into the fire. In this manner, forces that exhaust the momentum of karma operate in both animate and inanimate things. Now, in the story mentioned earlier, why did the horse go wild? The cause of the horse's frenzy was the result (*vipāka*) of that unwholesome karma generated by Suppabuddha. It was the operation of that very unwholesome karma. It was that process operating through the horse that finally dragged Suppabuddha the Sakyan down. In that manner, beyond our comprehension, even in these times, in the human world we often take seriously only the externally visible causes of what are deemed "accidents." Underlying them, there can be the karmic momentum of the individuals concerned. They are drawn into them. Even by a lightning strike, the four elements stand ready to yield the fruit of that karma, as a result of the karmic force generated by our mind. Result (*vipāka*) means ripening.

The karma committed by that Sakyan ripened over seven days. It is a comprehensible fact that at the exact moment the Buddha walked on his alms-round, at that very instant, the horse went wild and that process began. There is a certain wheel of karma (*kamma-cakka*) operating within this mind. Through this consciousness (*viññāṇa*), that wheel of karma often turns in cycles of seven—such as seven days. That is the exact point of the ripening of that karma. This did not happen due to any curse from the Buddha. The Buddha simply saw it. He saw that the grave karma committed would ripen within seven days and yield its fruit in this manner. He merely declared it as a prediction. He did not curse him. In the same way, regarding those hell-beings, we have to understand the same thing: it is because of this that the Buddha constantly emphasizes that we must avoid unwholesome deeds such as killing living beings and stealing. This is not confined to this world alone. Now, ordinary people regard only what falls within the range of their physical eye as the world, as the universe.

Only those planetary worlds visible from here are regarded as the world. Now, they are gradually realizing that this is a misconception. But there are infinite, boundless world-systems (*loka-dhātu*) that fell within the range of the Buddha's knowledge. Next, what is even deeper is the natural law (*dhamma-tā*) concerning this karma. In the statement, "Mind precedes all phenomena, mind is chief, mind-made (*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā*)," the Buddha has given the foremost place to the mind. The mind goes ahead. The mind is chief. We must also reflect upon the word *manomayā*—mind-made. These are created by the mind itself. In the word preparations (*saṅkhāra*),

along with the meaning of "putting together" or "arranging," there is also a deeper meaning associated with karma; there is a certain force or power generated through our force of intention.

In the past, perhaps even artists illustrated this with the example of a potter: before a pot is made, a thought about it arises first. It is in accordance with the thought that the pot is fashioned. Likewise, there is a certain force in this karma that arranges the four elements accordingly. That arranging is done with the help of various other things. In the human world, things are done by using other tools and materials in production. It is only those things that we regard as creations. But the Buddha points out, in this regard, the spontaneously arising bodies—though called spontaneous, what lies underneath is karma. The momentum of karma subsequently emerges as another body corresponding to it.

Now, as you pious listeners know, when speaking of the plane of misery, four planes of misery are mentioned in the Dhamma. First is the animal realm. We spoke of those grasshoppers and moths. Even more than that, consider how animals devour one another in the great ocean and in the forest. The natural food of each animal is other animals. If a creator god created this, there is no godliness in such a god. But indeed, they are born in those respective realms of becoming (*bhava*) according to the momentum of karma. The Buddha expressed this matter so deeply that on one occasion he declared, "Monks, if there is no karma to ripen in a certain becoming (*bhava*), that becoming (*bhava*) does not arise (*jāti*)." In short, it is mentioned in some Dhamma stories that when a Brahma is born, the mansion corresponding to him has already arisen. In accordance with karma, the appropriate environment—the mansion—is arranged. The body is also like that. Becoming (*bhava*) itself is of that nature. Thus, in the animal realm, various forces of karmic momentum are exhausted according to the karma committed by that being. This is something we can see with our own eyes.

Similarly, when speaking of those state of existences (*bhava*) like petas, it is said that birds like hawks, crows, and vultures also come and peck at these beings, causing them wondrous pain. Even though they are not visible to the physical eye of some, at least to some extent, one can infer the existence of these peta realms as a rational conclusion; some even get to see them in an indirect manner. Nowadays, through stories of exorcism, mesmerism, and hypnotism, these things are revealed to some extent. Spirits, peta-beings are mostly realms of petas with subtle bodies that undergo suffering (*dukkha*). That exists in close association with the human world itself. Sometimes, the Dhamma portions that speak of those peta realms where they undergo great suffering (*dukkha*) as mere skeletons are recorded in the Dhamma book called the Petavatthu. Sometimes, because of developing attachment to their homes, due to that attachment, due to craving (*taṇhā*), greed, and other evil deeds contrary to the five precepts, they are born (*jāti*) in peta existences (*bhava*) and undergo terrible suffering and hardships. Sometimes, even the bodies of those petas are described. They are called "filth-mouthed" (*asūci-mukha*), having a throat as narrow as a needle and a massive belly. This massive belly has to be nourished through a throat as narrow as a needle. Furthermore, when they go in search of food, they do not find it. Sometimes, when they go in search of food, it turns into

excrement instead of food. When they go near rivers in search of water, it becomes a river of blood, or else it dries up. In this manner, they return with cries of distress. They run in this direction, they run in that direction. Thus, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that the suffering (*dukkha*) endured in the peta realm is infinite. You pious listeners can occasionally infer the reality of these peta realms to some extent through various phenomena like spirit possession.

It is the same with the realm of yakkhas and the realm of asuras. The realm of asuras refers to beings with the traits of yakkhas and rakkhasas. They do not enjoy pleasure either. Yet they remain in those states for a long time. In accordance with the very saṁsāric habit of the cruelties they committed in the human world, they devour one another. Even as they devour one another, their bodies form again. They devour one another again, for infinite, boundless times. It seems very wondrous to us when we speak of this, but it is something that happens on the basis of these four elements. This was seen by yogis. Those with direct-knowledge (*abhiññā*) see these things. In a way beyond our imagination, they are created according to the momentum of karma. In accordance with the karmic forces present in this consciousness (*viññāṇa*), form (*rūpa*) is created. Next, they experience that suffering (*dukkha*). Having experienced suffering (*dukkha*), life continues as long as they must endure the suffering (*dukkha*) related to it. Even you, pious listeners, might sometimes see in hospitals—though it is not an absolute proof—doctors thinking, "This patient will die." Yet he does not die. He neither lives nor dies. He undergoes suffering (*dukkha*). He suffers. We call this "languishing in pain." It is that kind of natural law (*dhamma-tā*) that exists in those peta realms, yakkha realms, and so forth; they live there until that karma is exhausted. The Buddha has declared that karma does not exhaust itself without yielding its fruit (*vipāka*). The committed karma never exhausts itself without yielding its fruit (*vipāka*). It is the manner of yielding fruit (*vipāka*) that the Buddha declares there. Before it yields its fruit, or rather, before the karma is fully ripened, one can perform certain counter-actions to reduce its power, or else to make it ineffective (*ahosi-kamma*).

However, for those grave karmas that yield their fruit with absolute certainty, which inevitably yield fruit, such as certain karmas of abusing Noble Ones (*ariyūpavāda*) and the weightiest karmas with immediate retribution (*ānantariya-kamma*), no one can provide a remedy. There are karmas so grave that no one can remedy them, which are called *ānantariya-kamma*. Throughout the Dhamma of the Buddha, and what we constantly remind you of, is to practice the Dhamma diligently and to perform wholesome deeds. This is not something said to frighten anyone. The Buddha is merely describing the nature of the world. Within this world, as we believe, there exist deva worlds and brahma worlds; it is wrong to discard them as mere fairy tales. Divine mansions arise, and in such-and-such ways Brahmas come and worship the Buddha, and so forth. It was through the force of wholesome karma that they obtained those. If so, there must also be a fruit (*vipāka*) for those unwholesome deeds. Where are they experienced? Some might say they exist only in this world. But according to the Buddha's knowledge and the things seen by those with direct-knowledge (*abhiññā*), there are, as mentioned, peta realms, yakkha realms, and ultimately, hell. The most severe place is

hell. In that hell, in the manner described, that hell-being undergoes intense torment. Yet his life is preserved. He undergoes painful sensations as long as that karma is being exhausted. It is this condition that is called the fear of saṁsāra (*saṁsāra-bhaya*). Now, among the objects of spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) in saṁsāra, the fear of the plane of misery is one. Birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness, death (*maraṇa*), and next, the fear of the plane of misery. Truly, a Buddhist must take these matters to heart regarding the dangerous nature of saṁsāra—that we will have to face things of this nature.

Everyone has heard that even though Venerable Moggallāna attained such direct-knowledge (*abhiññā*), due to the unwholesome karma of killing his parents in the past, he was boiled in Avīci hell for a very long period, for aeons (*kalpa*). Likewise, there are numerous other stories. According to the evil karma, it can be for aeons, an unimaginably long time. That is why the Buddha said that even a simile cannot be given. So, if we reflect upon karma, we can see that the danger of this saṁsāra lies within this force of our intention. If we do not direct this properly, if we turn toward the unwholesome side, we cannot say how long the karma generated at every such moment will subsequently yield its fruit. It is that dangerous. Sometimes, to use a simile, having a mind arisen in us, having a mind, is like being given the steering wheel of a fast-moving vehicle. If we direct this correctly, if we direct the mind and its associated faculties properly, we can create a path that brings us closer to a happy destination as well as to Nibbāna. But if we break the five precepts, disregard other virtues like moral virtue (*sīla*), and act under the subjection of the roots of defilement—greed, hatred, and delusion—we will have to experience their fruits (*vipāka*) in those aforementioned places: in the animal realms, peta realms, asura realms, planes of misery, and hells. That is what the Buddha points out in this saṁsāra. The wheel of karma keeps on turning and turning. That wheel of karma yields its fruit even to Paccekabuddhas and Arahants in certain ways. Dhamma stories like those about Venerable Moggallāna are well known. It is said that through the Buddha-power of the Buddha, in a miraculous way, the boulder rolled down by the monk Devadatta was blocked by other rocks appearing in front of it. Yet, a splinter from it came and struck the foot of the Buddha. Thus, there is a nature in this karma to yield its fruit even if only by a scratch or graze. Karma is that severe. If karma yields its fruit even to Buddhas and Arahants, what need is there to speak of us? That is what we have to consider.

So, we did not relate all these as ordinary stories for the sake of enjoying their narrative flavor. Indeed, there is nothing to enjoy in the story of hell. As for stories of the deva worlds, everyone listens to them with desire. Not only do they believe them, but they also perform meritorious deeds with those aspirations foremost in mind. But when committing those evil deeds, most people do not even think about these planes of misery. Either they laugh at them or make fun of them, saying, "How can these things happen as described?" But the Buddha was merely declaring the actual condition existing in this universe. There are such wondrous things. There are such wondrous places where karma yields its fruit (*vipāka*). Therefore, through all of this, we must reflect that what we need is to develop that very fear of saṁsāra (*saṁsāra-bhaya*). It is through that fear of saṁsāra (*saṁsāra-bhaya*) that the Buddha declared the way to escape from this wheel of

karma. To speak of escaping from the wheel of karma—it is true that their fruits (*vipāka*) exist even for one who is an Arahant or a Buddha. However, the Buddhas presented to the world a method to dry up the karmic forces present within this mind. For this karma is a mental force that goes hand in hand with that dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), with the feeling of "I" and "mine."

That is why it is said, "With ignorance as condition, preparations (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*)." Now we turn to the deeper aspect of the Dhamma. It is because of ignorance that these preparations (*saṅkhāra*) accumulate. Within that ignorance lies that very sense of "I-ness"—the feeling of "I" and "mine." Because of this, based on greed, hatred, and delusion, one is prompted to engage in various processes of action through mind, speech, and body. Those processes are inevitably connected to the fruit (*vipāka*). It generates a certain force, almost like releasing it into the universe. That does not end without yielding its fruit; as a way of yielding fruit, name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*) subsequently arises (*jāti*) corresponding to whatever place it started, providing the sensations (*vedanā*) in accordance with it.

That is how it is. Thereupon, the Buddha explained that to be liberated from this, one must abandon that aforementioned sense of "I-ness," or the perception of a self (*attā*). When that is removed, one sees the process of this world as a mere process. It is equanimity (*upekkhā*) that assists there. One sees the condition of the world with equanimity. Now, it is because of our feeling of "I" and "mine" that greed or hatred arises, and the delusion born from them, according to which we employ mind, body, and speech. But if we see that all of these occur due to a collection of causes and conditions, we can develop equanimity, a state of neutrality, based on that. It is those instances of developing this deeply that are pointed out in the Dhamma. By walking the Noble Eightfold Path, one must withdraw the mind from that tangle of karma, realizing through this Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) that this arose due to a multitude of causes and reasons. Coming through such a long period in this saṁsāra, a multitude of karmic seeds have accumulated in this consciousness (*viññāṇa*), gathered as saṁsāric habits. Our behavior corresponds exactly to them. If we do not take sufficient countermeasures against them, they tend to become active. But if we look at every such instance with wise reflection, we can control them in the manner declared by the Buddha.

The first step in that is moral virtue (*sīla*). What is done through moral virtue is this: if someone has come with a saṁsāric existence inclined and prone to killing living beings, he easily turns to killing living beings. But without giving free rein to that karma, he uses wisdom there and disciplines himself through that Dhamma given by the Buddha. That is why we say that we use the Wheel of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakka*) to break the wheel of karma (*kamma-cakka*). Within the human mind, there is a special power called wisdom. That is what is called understanding (*paññā*). The seed of that understanding lies within this matter of wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), which means reflecting wisely. Therefore, those of you who are yogis must especially consider that the beings of the world, the beings who fall into suffering (*dukkha*) in saṁsāra, are engaged in unwise

attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), which means incorrect reflection. But if we turn it toward the correct way of reflecting, which the Buddha pointed out as wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), directing it toward the right side of reflection, then we can change our processes of action. Controlling thoughts, controlling speech, controlling actions. It is through that that we gradually escape from the path of the plane of misery and next secure some opportunity to calm our minds. From then on, it is a matter of seeing the actual condition of this world through insight (*vipassanā*). One sees every such thing with equanimity (*upekkhā*) as the fruit (*vipāka*) of a karmic momentum. One does not go to add further to that fruit (*vipāka*).

Now we usually blame others. But we do not see the karmic forces within this. Through the momentum of karma, not only external things but even human beings are put into action. Sometimes, the killer who brings about one's death (*maraṇa*) becomes like a weapon for oneself. Just like a weapon to oneself. Now, in this case too, the horse going wild—through that, karma was put into action. In that manner, some people go wild due to our own karmas. Through that frenzy, and next through our reaction to it, the tangle of karma often continues further. That is why it is said, "a tangle within and a tangle without"; these two tangles are ultimately tied together. The Buddha points out, "This is merely the wearing away of the momentum of karma." Directing the mind toward that wearing away, without adding to it, without accumulating anew, he tells us to turn it toward equanimity (*upekkhā*). It is in this way that one can gradually escape from this saṁsāra. Through that practice of moral virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) pointed out by the Buddha, without being caught by those grave forces of karmic momentum, one sees everything as a natural law (*dhamma-tā*). One maintains the mind in that natural law (*dhamma-tā*). Next, the Four Noble Truths mean that all of this is suffering (*dukkha*), and the cause of this suffering (*dukkha*) is craving (*taṇhā*). The cause of suffering (*dukkha*) means that it is because of that craving (*taṇhā*) that attraction or aversion exists among the people of the world.

Within the view (*diṭṭhi*) of "I," what goes hand in hand with it next is "mine." Thereupon, the multitude of problems that arise and spring up because of those two is what the Buddha tries to restrain through the precepts. Turning to killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and so forth, occurs because those roots of defilement—greed, hatred, and delusion—are present within. Through them, entering further and further into the tangles of karma, one can never untangle this. Instead, the Buddha declares that we should allow them to wear away through equanimity (*upekkhā*). There is no new karma; instead, one sees this as a mere process, a mere sequence of action. It is the calming of it right then and there. Going toward that calming is what is called Nibbāna here. Thereupon, if at any point that aforementioned firm grasping (*upādāna*) of "I" and "mine" is removed, along with it, that responsibility is also removed. Performing a karma means accepting a certain responsibility. That is what is called grasping (*upādāna*)—holding on. Because of grasping (*upādāna*), the responsibility of the karma performed also falls upon oneself. It is because of this that the fruit (*vipāka*) is said to be bound up with the karma itself. It ripens at some point. Sometimes it takes aeons for it to ripen.

Until then, like a being undergoing suffering (*dukkha*) in hell, one is subjected to a multitude of sensations (*vedanā*).

It is by understanding that suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra that the Buddha showed us the way to escape from this saṁsāra. This saṁsāra is of a wondrous nature—just as it is said, "a tangle within, a tangle without"—tangles on the inside and tangles on the outside. This is a mass of tangles. As a way to escape from this, by being established in moral virtue (*sīla*), cultivating concentration (*samādhi*), and developing wisdom (*paññā*), one must see its actual condition as it really is (*yathā-bhūta*). Here there is only a mere mass of suffering (*dukkha*). Truly, there is nothing to be taken as a self (*attā*) here. There is nothing to be set apart as a self (*attā*). Here there is only a multitude of causes and conditions. There is a certain process. Its results subsequently exist in accordance with it.

By seeing that condition and bringing the mind to equanimity (*upekkhā*), one is able to attain this liberation. Thereupon, the secret of that lies within the Noble Eightfold Path as right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). If taken at an ordinary level, by turning away from the unwholesome side toward that wholesome quality called the ten-fold right view, and by not allowing the mind to go toward the side of sin but keeping the mind anchored in the wholesome, one closes the door to the plane of misery. Next, within the path to a happy destination, one obtains a certain solace, a relief, to direct the mind to the Dhamma. In that manner, without stopping even there, one sees the Four Noble Truths that reflect reality—which were declared in the deepest sense by the Buddha as suffering (*dukkha*), origin (*samudaya*), cessation (*nirodha*), and path (*magga*). That a certain process concerning suffering (*dukkha*) ends in suffering (*dukkha*) is what is called ignorance (*avijjā*) there. We explain ignorance (*avijjā*) as not knowing the Four Noble Truths. What is its meaning? If one accumulates suffering (*dukkha*) due to something, that indeed is ignorance (*avijjā*).

Thereupon, at the moment knowledge arises, that suffering-producing process ends right there. That is why the beginning of such a process is called preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Due to ignorance, a process, a sequence of action based on taking the perception of a self (*attā*), is set in motion. From then on, five heaps arise which we regard as the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*): a heap of gathered form (*rūpa*), a heap of gathered sensation (*vedanā*), a heap of perception (*saññā*), a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and a heap of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The Buddha points out that this is suffering (*dukkha*). Their coming together is suffering (*dukkha*). Instead, the Buddha points out the way to untie this. He untied it by showing the actual condition. If because of not seeing, because of not knowing, one heaps them up and grasps them, then because of knowing them, one comes to let them go. Where there is letting go—now, if the result, the fruit (*vipāka*), goes hand in hand with a certain responsibility, then at the moment that responsibility is let go, one is liberated from it. It is that kind of thing that exists here.

Therefore, in conclusion, without taking this five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) as "I" and "mine," one must understand that every single one of them is due to causes and conditions. A certain monk asked the Buddha: "Blessed

One, what is the cause, the condition, for this form (*rūpa*)? The cause for form (*rūpa*) to arise." The Buddha declared, "The four elements are the cause for this. This form (*rūpa*) has arisen from the four elements: earth, water, fire, and air." There is the simple answer. He asks, "What is the cause for this sensation (*vedanā*)? The cause, the condition." "The cause for sensation (*vedanā*) is contact (*phassa*)." "What is the cause for perception (*saññā*)?" "The cause for perception (*saññā*) is also contact (*phassa*)." "What is the cause for preparations (*saṅkhāra*)?" "The cause for preparations (*saṅkhāra*) is also contact (*phassa*)." "What is the cause for consciousness (*viññāṇa*)?" That is something deep. "The cause for consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*)." You yogis might have heard that the Buddha points out that the people of this world abide within the designation of a subject-object relationship, so to speak—the designation that there is a self (*attā*) and something belonging to a self (*attā*), one who grasps and something grasped. Thereupon, the object of this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is what is called this name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*). Name and form. There, form (*rūpa*) is made up of those four elements. Name (*nāma*) means those five phenomena: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). When taken in this way, we have a battle going on within a certain duality, a pair. There is a great tangle created here by making it into two.

The Buddha has shown the reality of this. The cause for this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is this name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*). Thereupon, through this understanding, finally, if a sensation (*vedanā*) arose, its cause is not so-and-so, but contact (*phassa*). The cause for perception (*saññā*) is contact (*phassa*); the cause for preparations (*saṅkhāra*) is contact (*phassa*). One saw that right inside here. That indeed is wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) means looking at it from the other side, concerning the other person. Just as a deer sees water (in a mirage). Here, one sees that all of this is right inside. That form (*rūpa*) is due to these four elements—it is through that kind of attitude, that kind of understanding, that one is eventually able to solve the problem of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) for oneself. The path to that is the path of meditation. Attention—wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Thereupon, you pious listeners, by undertaking that moral virtue (*sīla*), have disciplined body and speech and created a certain quiet environment to concentrate the mind.

If you unify the mind within that environment, removing the scattered nature, lifting and withdrawing the mind from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), testing the mind's strength, and developing the capacity to keep the mind anchored entirely on a single object—it is by using that strength that one can fully comprehend the actual condition of the five aggregates—form (*rūpa*), sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—which is a process existing right within one's own five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*), and not something external. Though we decorate this form (*rūpa*), calling it "I" and "mine," there are only the four elements here. As for sensation (*vedanā*), regardless of external things connected to other people, this arises within contact (*phassa*), due to contact (*phassa*). Contact (*phassa*) is the most immediate condition, the cause, for sensation (*vedanā*). It is the

same for perception (*saññā*); it is contact (*phassa*). In this way, when one is able to see that with wisdom, then through that aforementioned realization of the Paths and Fruits (*magga-phala*), one is eventually able to escape from this suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra and realize the supreme, great deathless Nibbāna. What we hope for through all of this is liberation from the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra. For one who has no weariness (*nibbidā*) toward saṁsāra, Nibbāna cannot be expected. One cannot hold onto saṁsāra and also attain Nibbāna. Reflecting on karma, especially on the way those evil deeds yield their fruit (*vipāka*), helps to generate weariness toward saṁsāra; it gives rise to the fear of saṁsāra (*saṁsāra-bhaya*). That indeed is what is called the object of spiritual urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*). Without being limited to thinking only of the suffering of saṁsāra visible in the human world, and understanding through the Dhamma of the Buddha that there are other places where the fruits of this karma ripen, one must develop fear regarding what would happen to us if we went to such places, and thus escape from this dangerous saṁsāra.

Therefore, through the practice observed today, through the moral virtue (*sīla*) kept, through the meditation practiced, and through this hearing of the Dhamma, if you pious listeners have gained some strength, some spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*), may it develop the qualities of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*) that assist in putting an end to this suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra and finding peace in the supreme, great deathless Nibbāna! Relying on them as strong support (*upanissaya*), with the help of association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), may you pious listeners gain the strength and power to realize the supreme, great deathless Nibbāna in this very life through the penetration of the Paths and Fruits (*magga-phala-paṭivedha*) of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship! Furthermore, may all our relatives and friends, and whoever else from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha wishes to share in these merits, share in the merit of this Dhamma sermon and Dhamma hearing, and may they all realize the supreme, great deathless Nibbāna through whichever of the three Enlivenments (*bodhi*) they aspire to! Aspiring thus, please recite these stanzas.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #109

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.124)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yassa jito kāma-kaṇṭako,

akkoso ca vadho ca bandhanañca;

pabbato viya so ṭhito anejo,

sukhadukkhesu na vedhatī sa bhikkhū ti.

From:

Itivuttaka (It 53)

Dear Listeners,

Among the nine supreme qualities of the Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, beginning with *Araham*, the quality of *purisadamma-sārathī* (the incomparable charioteer of those to be tamed) is an extremely profound quality. Just as a skilled charioteer driving a horse-carriage directs the horses onto the correct, virtuous path, the Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, utilizing His great wisdom and great compassion, like a charioteer in taming individuals who are fit to be tamed, directed all of them onto the right path. The background story behind the Udāna verse we have chosen as our theme today is a fine illustration of this.

Once, when the Blessed One was residing in Sāvatthī, five hundred monks led by the Venerable Yasoja came to Jetavana Monastery to see the Blessed One. Having arrived as guest monks, while they were conversing with the resident monks, preparing lodgings, setting aside their alms-bowls and robes, and engaging in friendly exchanges, they created a massive uproar—a very loud shouting sound. They made a noise like a chaotic market-place. Hearing this, the Blessed One asked Venerable Ānanda, "Ānanda, who are these people shouting like fishermen scrambling over fish at a landing place, like fishmongers?" Then Venerable Ānanda replied, "Venerable Sir, Blessed One, this noise arises because these five hundred monks led by Venerable Yasoja have arrived and are preparing their lodgings in this manner." "In that case, Ānanda, go and tell those

venerable ones to come; say that the Teacher has summoned them." And so, Venerable Ānanda went to that group and told them that the Blessed One had summoned them.

After Venerable Yasoja and the five hundred monks arrived, paid homage to the Blessed One, and sat to one side, the Blessed One asked, "Monks, why are you shouting so loudly? Why this uproar like fishmongers?" When asked, Venerable Yasoja replied, "Venerable Sir, we have come from afar to see the Blessed One, and while preparing our lodgings in this manner, such a commotion arose." Then the Blessed One said, "Depart, O monks. Do not reside with me. Leave!" and dismissed them, saying, "I am dismissing you, expelling you." Thereupon, Venerable Yasoja and the five hundred monks paid homage to the Blessed One, circumambulated Him, took their alms-bowls and robes, and departed. Gradually wandering on, they arrived in the Vajjian country. By that time, the rainy season was near, and they prepared to spend the rains retreat on the banks of the river Vaggumudā, building leaf-huts thatched with leaves. Having prepared, Venerable Yasoja addressed his followers and said: "Friends, the compassionate Blessed One, who desires our welfare and is full of sympathy for us, expelled us precisely out of consideration for our own welfare. Now, let us spend these three months of the rains retreat in such a manner that the Blessed One would be pleased with our way of living." The other monks agreed, saying, "Very well." Thus, practicing diligently and putting forth strong effort, all those five hundred monks became Arahats possessing the higher spiritual knowledges (*abhiññā-lābhī*) by the end of the three months of the rains retreat.

After this rains retreat, the Blessed One gradually wandered on and arrived in the Vajjian country, specifically at the Gabled Hall (*Kūṭāgāra-sālā*) in the Great Forest (*Mahāvana*) of Vesālī, which is within the Vajjian territory. Having arrived there with His community of monks, He examined the minds of the monks on the banks of the river Vaggumudā with His own mind. He saw, through His direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), that they had become Arahats. Thereupon He said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, it is as if a light is shining from the direction where those monks on the Vaggumudā bank reside. My mind is pleased to think of that direction; there is no aversion at all. Send a messenger to those monks; tell them to come, saying that the Teacher wishes to see them." So, Venerable Ānanda assigned a certain monk who possessed higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) as a messenger to go and convey this message on behalf of the Blessed One to the monks of the Vaggumudā bank. Then that monk, though there were no modern technologies back then, surpassed all modern methods, as the ancient phrase goes, "just as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm or bend his stretched arm," he disappeared from the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest, and through psychic power (*iddhi*), appeared and stood before the monks on the Vaggumudā bank. Having appeared, he conveyed the Blessed One's message to the monks of the Vaggumudā bank. Those venerable ones, having put their lodgings in order, also disappeared from there "just as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm or bend his stretched arm," and appeared before the Blessed One at the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest.

At the time of their arrival, the Blessed One was seated in a state of concentration (*samādhi*). This is called *āneñja-samādhi*—an imperturbable concentration. What exactly it was is not explicitly stated. The Blessed One was dwelling in an unshakeable

state of concentration known as the imperturbable concentration (*āneñja-samādhi*). Those monks, having examined the Blessed One's mind and understood, "The Blessed One is dwelling in this concentration, we too must dwell in this concentration," sat right there and fell into meditation, entering into concentration. To Venerable Ānanda, this was a riddle. The Blessed One Himself had invited these monks to come. Yet, though they had arrived, why was it like this? Usually, when monks arrived from afar, the Blessed One had the habit of engaging in friendly conversation, asking, "How are you? Did you obtain sufficient alms-food? Did you arrive without much trouble?" But on this occasion, the Blessed One Himself had invited them, and here He was, sitting in concentration. By this time, it was evening. Now, until the first watch of the night had passed, the Blessed One sat in concentration on one side, and those five hundred monks sat likewise. To Venerable Ānanda, this was a puzzle. So, as the first watch of the night passed, Venerable Ānanda stood up, adjusted his robe over one shoulder, bowed down low before the Blessed One, and said, "Venerable Sir, Blessed One, those monks of the Vaggumudā bank have arrived. May the Blessed One engage in friendly conversation with the guest monks!"

In this way, the first watch of the night had passed. These monks had been sitting there for a very long time. The Blessed One was silent. Next, the middle watch of the night also passed by in the same manner, with the Blessed One and that group remaining seated. Venerable Ānanda stood up again, approached the Blessed One, and said, "Blessed One, now the middle watch of the night has passed. These guest monks have been sitting and waiting for a long time. May the Blessed One engage in friendly conversation!" The Blessed One remained silent. Then came the final watch of the night, the dawn-watch, when the sun was about to rise. Even at that time, Venerable Ānanda went to the Blessed One again and said, "Now the night has passed. The sun is rising and dawn has broken. May the Blessed One engage in friendly conversation with these guest monks who have been staying here for so long!" Then the Blessed One, emerging from His concentration, said, "Ānanda, if you had understood the matter correctly, you would not have spoken even this much. Both I and these five hundred monks have been dwelling all this time in the imperturbable (*āneñja*), that unshakeable concentration." Having said so, He uttered the Udāna verse which we have taken as our topic today:

Yassa jīto kāma-kaṇṭako,

akkoso ca vadho ca bandhanañca,

pabbato viya so thitho anejo,

sukhadukkhesu na vedhatī sa bhikkhū.

"He by whom the thorn of sensual lust, abuse, physical assault, and imprisonment have been conquered, stands unshaken like a mountain. Imperturbable (*aneja*), he is not shaken by pleasure and pain—he indeed is a monk."

By whichever monk the thorn of sensual lust, verbal abuse, physical assault, and bondage have been conquered, that monk stands unshaken like a mountain. In both pleasure and pain, that monk does not tremble. That is the meaning of that verse.

Now, through this story, let us look at its inner meaning. Here we see a highly wondrous and valuable skillful means (*upāya*) employed by the Blessed One, utilizing His great compassion and great wisdom. It was out of great compassion that the Blessed One expelled those untrained monks in order to tame them. From that moment, a valuable example was given to society by Venerable Yasoja. Nowadays, if such an expulsion were to happen, people would harbor hatred towards the Blessed One, getting angry and thinking, "Oh! Even though we came from so far, He did not speak even a single word to us." No matter how far they had come, the Blessed One expelled His disciples. Not only that, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that even His chief disciples with their retinue of five hundred monks were expelled in the same manner under the comparison of fishermen's talk—calling them like fishermen, like fishmongers. There were such instances of expulsion. Although we speak of His great compassion, we can see how, with such amazing discipline, He tamed the monks within a strict discipline according to the occasion.

Next, the most valuable point in this story is the response of Venerable Yasoja. He took the very fact of their expulsion as a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), thinking, "This Great Compassionate One expelled us out of compassion for us, to give us an example, and to teach us a lesson." Making that very event his meditation subject, he reminded his group—the other four hundred and ninety-nine monks—of this matter. All of them unanimously made a resolute effort, and in whatever way the Blessed One would be pleased, they attained that state, and finally came to see the Blessed One. Furthermore, when we consider how the Blessed One invited them, He Himself invited them saying that a light was appearing. Usually, for invited guests, the custom is to say, "Come, it is very good that you have arrived," and to engage in friendly conversation. But here, there was something else. It is something that we, the world, cannot easily understand.

Now, you all know that when a friend comes at mealtime, one invites them to eat, saying, "Pull up a chair, come close to the table," and places a plate before them. Similarly, here, although it is not explicitly mentioned, we can imagine that the Blessed One invited them to partake of the most valuable and delicious food in the world, which is likely the concentration of the fruition of Arahatship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*), generally referred to as the imperturbable concentration. When we speak generally of *āneñja-samādhi*, it usually refers to the fourth jhāna or jhāna states. However, from any of those jhānas, one can enter the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*). Thus, we can think that perhaps they were in the *arahatta-phala-samādhi*. In any case, whatever concentration the Blessed One was in, those monks also entered into that very same state. Here we see that the Blessed One welcomed them not with friendly chatter, but with silence. This story gives us a highly sublime example of welcoming guests with silence. It is a wondrous thing that the world cannot easily comprehend. Thus, the Blessed One entertained those guests with the delicious food of Nibbāna that He Himself

partakes of, with that very taste of the bliss of Nibbāna, with that spiritual peace. To understand this, Venerable Ānanda—whose duty was to introduce guests—stood waiting for the Blessed One to engage in friendly conversation. But this was the reality. That is one aspect.

Next, if we contemplate further, alongside the Blessed One's quality of *purisadamma-sārathī*, there is His power to tame even a large crowd through silence. Many examples of this are found in the Dhamma stories. There are several extremely valuable verses showing that the Blessed One loved silence. Among the verses spoken to the ascetic Nālaka, who came from the Himalayas about a week after the Blessed One preached the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, there are several beautiful verses about silence. As an analogy, it is said that small rivers, creeks, and streams flow with noise. There is noise in small puddles. Puddles near paddy fields make some kind of noise. But in the deep ocean, there is no noise at all. This point is mentioned in those verses:

Sannantā yanti kussubbhā, tuṇhī yāti mahodadhi.

"Little creeks flow noisily; the great ocean flows in silence."

In that way, the Blessed One expresses it in a beautiful verse. Those small puddles and small streams go along making noise. But the ocean, the deep ocean, flows silently. The verse that follows this point expresses it even more beautifully:

Yadūnakaṃ taṃ saṇati, yaṃ pūraṃ santam-eva taṃ,

Addhakumbhūpamo bālo, rahado pūro-va paṇḍito.

"What is deficient makes a noise; what is full is calm indeed.

The fool is like a half-filled pot; the wise man is like a full pool."

Wherever there is a deficiency, there is noise. If something is full, it is peaceful; it is silent. Next, *addhakumbhūpamo bālo*—the fool, the ignorant person, is like a half-filled water pot. *Rahado pūro-va paṇḍito*—the wise man is like a full, still lake. This very idea has entered our Sinhala folklore as the proverb everyone knows: "Water in a full pot does not shake" (*pīruṇu kaḷē diya nosalē*). The very same analogy is found here. Thus, the Blessed One showed the value of silence to the ascetic Nālaka. Those of you who have read the Jātaka stories and other texts know that when the Blessed One entered the Dhamma Assembly (*Dhamma-sabhā*)—before the Blessed One's arrival, the community of monks would already be assembled. They wouldn't just be sitting there doing absolutely nothing. You know what kinds of conversations take place when a group of people gather in the ordinary world, even if not necessarily here. In the Dhamma Assembly too, certain conversations would arise. What was the first question the Blessed One would ask? "Monks, in what kind of talk were you engaged before I arrived?" The Dhamma mentions thirty-two low topics of conversation (*tiracchāna-kathā*). You might have heard of them. Even if you do not know them by name, you might still engage in

them. "Animal talk" (low talk) does not mean talk by animals. The word "animal" (low/vulgar) is used to mean base or low. That is, conversations that are not fitting for monks who have gone forth from the home life, or for practitioners of meditation—gossip and the like. If they were engaged in such thirty-two-fold low talk, the Blessed One would admonish them, and on many occasions, He would make this statement:

"Sannipatitānaṃ vo, bhikkhave, dvayaṃ kāraṇīyaṃ: dhammī vā kathā, ariyo vā tuṇhībhāvo."

"Monks, when you are gathered together, there are two things to be done: either Dhamma talk or noble silence."

This means you must do one of the two. If you speak, let it be Dhamma talk; otherwise, maintain noble silence. This also demonstrates the high place the Blessed One gave to silence. Either Dhamma talk or the noble, sublime silence. The Blessed One's respect for silence, and the taming of His disciples within that silence, is revealed in a highly valuable story from the Buddhist literature—the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, which is one of the most precious discourses, preached to King Ajātasattu. The background story to this discourse demonstrates this noble quality of the Blessed One in an exceptionally beautiful manner.

On a full-moon night like this, King Ajātasattu, surrounded by his ministers, was engaged in a friendly conversation in the moonlight on the upper terrace of his palace. King Ajātasattu said, "This night, illuminated by the moonlight, is extremely beautiful. It is highly delightful. On such a night, by associating with what kind of ascetic or brahmin might my mind find peace and clarity?" He posed this question to find out the views of his ministers. Then, a minister who was a follower of the teacher Pūraṇa Kassapa spoke: "Your Majesty, there is a teacher named Pūraṇa Kassapa who has a large following of disciples, who is very elderly and esteemed. By associating with such a teacher, Your Majesty's mind can find peace." King Ajātasattu remained silent. In the same manner, various ministers stood up and praised the other six prominent sectarian teachers of that time—Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalī, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, Pakudha Kaccāyana, and Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta—suggesting to the king that if he were to associate with or attend to these teachers, he would find peace of mind. But King Ajātasattu remained silent.

After everyone had finished speaking, King Ajātasattu looked at the royal physician Jīvaka, who was sitting nearby, and said, "Why, friend Jīvaka, are you silent?" At that time, the Blessed One was residing in Rājagaha in the mango grove belonging to Jīvaka the physician, together with a community of twelve hundred and fifty monks. Jīvaka the physician then spoke of this matter. He recited the nine supreme qualities of the Buddha, saying, "Great King, the Blessed One who is an Arahat, fully self-awakened (*sammā-sambuddha*), of such high renown, is currently residing in our mango grove with a community of twelve hundred and fifty monks. If Your Majesty associates with that Teacher, you will be able to find peace and clarity in your mind." Immediately, Ajātasattu said, "In that case, friend Jīvaka, prepare the carriages—the state elephants!" So, Jīvaka

the physician quickly prepared the state elephants and other transport for the king and his entire retinue to go to the monastery that very night.

And so, this group set off. As they approached the mango grove, King Ajātasattu was seized by a great fear, and his hair stood on end. Trembling, he said, "Friend Jīvaka, I hope you are not deceiving me. I hope you are not betraying me to my enemies. How is it that in a place where there are as many as twelve hundred and fifty monks, not even the sound of a cough or a sneeze is to be heard?" The king was terrified by this absolute silence. We can understand from this that there is a majestic power in a silence that can terrify a king. If there is such a large crowd, how much noise ought there to be? The king was accustomed to such noise. He was brought here on the promise that the Blessed One was residing here, but seeing this silence, he thought it was an empty place. Jīvaka the physician then reassured the king, "No, no, Sire, there is no such thing. Do not be afraid, O King. Those are the lamps shining in the distance." Thus, from this story too, we can see that the community of twelve hundred and fifty monks sat in absolute silence, waiting in expectation of the Blessed One's Dhamma sermon.

Similarly, there is another excellent illustration showing that the Blessed One's special ability to quieten crowds was highly renowned even among the wandering ascetics of other sects (*aññа-titthiya paribbājaka*). While the wanderer Sakuludāyī was residing at the wanderers' park called Moranivāpa, the Blessed One, having prepared to go for alms-round in Rājagaha, thought: "It is still too early to go for alms. I should go to the Moranivāpa wanderers' park where the wanderer Sakuludāyī is residing," and He walked in that direction. At that time, the wanderer Sakuludāyī was engaged in various low topics of conversation (*tiracchāna-kathā*)—gossip—with a large crowd of wanderers. They were conversing in a very loud noise. From afar, he saw the Blessed One approaching. Seeing Him, he quietened his group, saying: (In the Pāli texts, the word often used for "be quiet" is *appasadda*, meaning "make little noise." For absolute silence, there is the precise word *tuṇhībhāva*). Often when quietening a crowd, they say, "Appasaddā hontu, bhavanto"—"Be quiet, sirs, be quiet! Do not make noise. The ascetic Gotama is coming this way. The ascetic Gotama is a lover of quietude, a lover of silence, and one who praises silence. If we remain silent, the Blessed One might think this is a suitable place to visit." Only after he had quietened the crowd did the Blessed One enter. Having entered, the Blessed One, as was His custom, asked the wanderer Sakuludāyī, "Friend, in what kind of talk were you engaged just before I arrived?"

Then this wanderer replied, "The talk we were engaged in is not something rare for the Blessed One to hear. Let that talk be. But there is a special matter I would like to report to the Blessed One," and he narrated another story. What was that story? In those days, there were places where such groups of wanderers assembled and held discussions; these were called *kutūhala-sālā* (halls of curiosity)—what we would call conference halls today. In those times, wealthy people built and donated such halls for truth-seekers wandering from place to place to gather and discuss. Those who wished to know what they were talking about could go there out of curiosity and listen.

In such an assembly hall, among a large crowd of wanderers belonging to various religious sects, a side-discussion arose. This is the report the wanderer was conveying to the Blessed One. What kind of talk was it? Those people were saying: "This is a great benefit to our two countries, Anga and Magadha. What is it? The six famous teachers and the ascetic Gotama are all residing in our city for this rains retreat. This is a grand thing." After talking in this manner, they discussed: "Among these teachers, who is highly respected and honored by their own disciples? Who is the most honored?" As soon as this question was raised, one group narrated a past incident. In the past, while the teacher Pūraṇa Kassapa was delivering a sermon to a group of his followers, one of them stood up and, addressing the others, said: "Hey, hey! Do not ask him that question. He does not know how to answer that. Ask us. If you ask us, we will tell you," thus interrupting him. At that, Pūraṇa Kassapa raised his hands and shouted: "No, no! That question was asked of me. Why are you speaking?" and thus a great confusion arose there, and that group left with agitated minds. Another group mentioned that similar discord, disputation, and dissatisfied departures occurred among the followers of Makkhali Gosāla and the other six teachers. Having related this, they said: "But on one occasion, while the ascetic Gotama was delivering a sermon to hundreds of people, a certain monk coughed. At that, a monk sitting nearby nudged him with his knee as a signal, saying, 'Venerable brother, make no noise, make no noise! Our Teacher is preaching the Dhamma.'" Since the wanderer Sakuludāyī had a great appreciation for the Blessed One, he related this incident with high praise for Him.

Next, he made another appreciative statement about the Blessed One: "Wherever the Blessed One preaches the Dhamma to hundreds of people, at that time, that crowd gazes at the Blessed One with great eagerness, listening to receive and understand that Dhamma." He then gave an analogy for this: "Just as when a man squeezes a pure honeycomb at a four-way crossroads, and people stand watching eagerly to drink that honey, in the same way, people listen when the ascetic Gotama preaches the Dhamma." Such was the appreciative praise that the wanderer Sakuludāyī offered. This is one illustration.

There is also another excellent illustration concerning the wanderer Samaṇamaṇḍikāputta. This happened in Sāvatthī. In Sāvatthī, there was a park called Mallikārāma, containing a hall built by Queen Mallikā for other religious sects to meet. While the wanderer Samaṇamaṇḍikāputta was staying at this Mallikārāma, there lived in Sāvatthī a very faithful lay disciple of the Blessed One named Pañcakanga, a master carpenter. "Basunnehe" (carpenter) is not a very polite term; in the old parlance, we would say "Mr. Carpenter"—there was a carpenter named Pañcakanga. This carpenter Pañcakanga left Sāvatthī in the middle of the day, intending to see the Blessed One. Along the way, he thought: "This midday is an untimely hour to see the Blessed One. The Blessed One would be meditating at this time." The term for this is *paṭisallāna* (seclusion)—that is, being in quiet retirement. Then he thought, "In that case, I should see the community of monks." But he thought again, "No, the monks would also be in meditation at this time. This hour is unsuitable; it is untimely. Therefore, I should spend this remaining time going to Mallikārāma to meet the wanderer Samaṇamaṇḍikāputta,"

and he turned in that direction. When he approached, Samaṇamaṇḍikāputta was also engaged in low talk (*tiracchāna-kathā*) with a crowd of seven hundred followers. Seeing him from afar, Samaṇamaṇḍikāputta quietened his crowd: "Appasaddā hontu, sirs, be quiet! Do not make noise. Here comes a lay disciple of the Blessed One, the householder Pañcakanga. Of all the white-clad lay disciples of the Blessed One residing in Sāvatthī, this householder Pañcakanga is one. These lay disciples—please remember this phrase well—even the lay disciples of the Blessed One are tamed in silence and praise silence. Therefore, if we remain silent, he might think it fit to approach our group, and he may come here." This is what the wanderer Samaṇamaṇḍikāputta did to quieten his crowd. We must remember those words. Thereupon, the carpenter Pañcakanga came and held a Dhamma discussion. Though we will not go into the details of that discussion, we mention only this event.

From these numerous examples, we can see that the Blessed One was indeed a sublime being who loved silence, and that He tamed His followers through silence. Nowadays, even if ten or twelve guests arrive, what a commotion they make! In the past, the groups coming to see the Blessed One are always described as numbering around five hundred. If groups of five hundred were allowed to talk and shout like that, what would it be like? Yet, the Blessed One, through His unique power, quietened thousands of people. Of course, in later times, some shortcomings occurred due to the swelling of numbers and the decline of the dispensation. However, in the beginning, we clearly see that a major place was given to silence through the spiritual power of the Blessed One.

Therefore, this is a lesson for us on the taming we saw in that story. It is a lesson on taming, as well as on the value of silence. Because things are done differently nowadays, perhaps you may not even know that a great place was given to silence even within the customs of the Dispensation (*sāsana-cāritra*). For example, let us say a gentleman comes and invites the Blessed One and the community of monks for the following day. How does the Blessed One accept this invitation? How is it accepted? Through silence. In silence. He does not say, "Oh! If there are donors like you, we will have no shortage!"—accepting it immediately upon the offer. In fact, in ancient times, they did not speak to accept an invitation; they consented through compassion (*anukampā*). Consenting in silence out of compassion. You know, when offering the Buddha-pūjā, you recite: "Adhivāsetu no, bhante, bhojanaṃ parikappitaṃ, anukampaṃ upādāya patiggaṇhātu muttamaṃ" — "May the Blessed One, out of compassion, accept this food prepared for Him." But the Blessed One does not say a word beforehand. This is called silence. It is a noble custom of the Dispensation. For the Blessed One does not value material offerings (*āmisa*); He values the spiritual, non-material (*nirāmisa*).

According to that custom, even an invitation to a meal is accepted in silence. The wise donor knows that the Blessed One has accepted it through His silence. Only afterwards are other arrangements made. So, that is an ancient custom. Furthermore, a high place was given to silence within the assemblies of the Dispensation. We do not need to speak of modern times; you can make the comparison. During the Buddha's time, in the meetings of the Sangha, especially in disciplinary procedures (*vinaya-kamma*) and

Sangha acts (*saṅgha-kamma*), there is a custom called *ñatti* (motion) to present a proposal for assembly approval. First, it is presented: "This is the matter before us." To obtain the consent and consensus of the Sangha, a certain formula is recited: "We are now doing such and such a thing." Those who agree to it accept it. They express their agreement through silence. Only if someone disagrees do they speak. Thus, words are used only for objection. Through silence, acceptance is shown. The approval of the assembly, the unanimity, is achieved through silence. That is the custom among the assembly procedures.

Next, we all know that the Blessed One highly praised quiet dwelling—places of little noise, little din (*appasadda, appanigghosa*). What is the reason for this? In this dispensation, meditation (*bhāvanā*) is the effort to concentrate the mind (*samādhi*). Especially in the initial stages, noise is a thorn. It is said, "Saddo kaṇṭako jhānassa"—"Noise is a thorn to jhāna." Specifically, the first jhāna (*paṭhama-jhāna*) is disrupted by the presence of noise. Therefore, to those devotees who are beginning their meditation, noise is a great obstacle and trouble. This is why the Blessed One always gave a prominent place to silence.

We must ponder on this wisely. Why is such a place given to silence? If the Blessed One did not train them by making that beginning, the monks led by Yasoja would not have been able to attain that sublime inner peace. That inner peace, as described in the verse, is the imperturbable (*aneja*) state—an unshakeable concentration that is unmoved by pleasure and pain (*sukha-dukkha*), like a mountain. It is the ability to keep both mind and body unshakeable. But to develop that, as a starting point, there must be a certain silence in the environment, a quiet dwelling. That is why the Blessed One gave so much weight to silence. One cannot reach that sublime state overnight. As preparation, many tasks must be performed in silence. There are countless illustrations in the Dhamma literature showing how sublime this ultimate spiritual peace is.

To mention a long story briefly: when the Blessed One was walking towards Kusinārā for His final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*), Pukkusa Mallaputta, a young man of the Malla clan, saw the Blessed One sitting under a tree and expressed his joy, saying, "Oh! How peaceful is the dwelling of these renunciants!" Then he related a past event concerning Āḷāra Kālāma, whom he regarded as his teacher. Āḷāra Kālāma was a teacher of the concentration state of the base of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*), whom the Buddha too had once approached as a teacher. Pukkusa Mallaputta related this past event about him as a praise. Once, when Āḷāra Kālāma was sitting in concentration near a river, a caravan of five hundred carts crossed that river. While they were passing, Āḷāra Kālāma was in concentration. After the carts had gone, a man who was following behind the caravan saw Āḷāra Kālāma sitting in concentration. There was even mud splattered on the robe of that sage. The man asked, "Did you not see this caravan of carts passing by?" He replied, "No, I did not see them." "Did you not hear the sound?" "No, I did not hear it." Pukkusa Mallaputta praised this, saying how peaceful was the dwelling of the teacher Āḷāra Kālāma that he did not even hear the noise of five hundred carts passing by. Then the Blessed One asked, "Which is greater and more difficult: to be in a concentration

where one does not hear the noise of five hundred carts passing by, or to be in a concentration so strong that one knows nothing even when a thunderbolt strikes, killing four oxen and two farmers?" At that, he admitted that the second one was indeed greater. Then the Blessed One related an event concerning Himself:

"Once, I was staying in seclusion at a place called Ātumā. At that time, during a sudden torrential rainstorm with thunderbolts crashing, a thunderbolt struck and killed four oxen and two farmers. A large crowd gathered there. When I had emerged from that concentration and was walking up and down in the open air, a man from that crowd approached me. I asked him, 'Friend, why is this large crowd gathered here?' He replied, 'Such and such an event occurred. Did you not see it, Venerable Sir?' 'No, I did not see it.' 'Did you not hear it?' 'No, I did not hear it.' 'Was the Blessed One asleep?' 'No, I was not asleep.' 'Did the Blessed One have perception (*saññā*) at that time?' 'Yes, I had perception.' At that, the man, coming from that crowd, expressed his great wonder: 'How amazing, Venerable Sir! Even though the Blessed One was not asleep, had perception, and was awake and standing, He did not hear such a massive sound!'"

From this we can see: that, dear devotees, is what is called the *arahatta-phala-samādhi* (the concentration of the fruition of Arahatship). It is the state where all the six sense-bases (*āyatana*), which have tortured us for so long, are ceased (*niruddha*). Through that power of concentration and insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), the concentration achieved by the Blessed One surpasses even the jhāna states of Āḷāra Kālāma. Having directly realized the emptiness (*suññatā*) of the world through insight, the concentration of the fruition of Arahatship where all these six sense-bases—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—are ceased must indeed be that special concentration spoken of by the Blessed One. When dwelling in that concentration, even when a thunderbolt crashes, such a sound is not heard. To that extent, that is the ultimate spiritual peace. Thus, the Blessed One frequently states: "Dhammī vā kathā, ariyo vā tuṇhībhāvo" — "Either Dhamma talk or noble silence." If we are to understand "noble silence" in its highest sense, this is how it is explained. Noble silence, in its truest meaning, is indeed that attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*) which is the supreme spiritual peace.

Although the word *āneñja* is used, we can think, as expressed in the verse, that on that day, Venerable Yasoja, his five hundred followers, and the Blessed One must have been dwelling in that very *arahatta-phala-samādhi*, which is as unshakeable as a mountain.

Be that as it may, that was the place given to silence during the Buddha's time. But, dear devotees, what is the place given to silence in present-day society? One is forced to say there is no place at all. From dawn until night, noise reigns supreme. As you all know, noise rules in society. Submerged in the clamor of globalization, caught in between sound waves, there is a massive uproar, a heap of sound waves, not only in the houses of lay people but perhaps in other places too. There is no place for silence. The environment is so overwhelmed by noise that there is no opportunity to quieten the mind, to bring forth mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration (*samādhi*) which are essential for a beginner meditator (*yogāvacara*), and thereby to develop wisdom (*paññā*). On the streets, one often sees people walking alone, talking to themselves while wearing modern ear-

ornaments that produce sound. We do not need to name what that ear-ornament is. To such an extent, the world loves noise. A situation has arisen in this society where silence has become a nuisance. Perhaps this might even be considered a necessity of the modern era.

But, swept away by this media wave, we Buddhists, at least, must wake up to the underestimation of the value of silence. This is not an invitation to protest on behalf of silence. Devotees, do not misunderstand. We must be careful to give a place to silence through our own example. This does not mean we should hold protests saying there is no place for silence; rather, it is about bringing out Buddhist values. We do not expect things to be exactly as they were in the Buddha's time. But if we desire the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna, if we desire concentration (*samādhi*), if we desire that spiritual peace, we must be keen about it. Today, our likes and dislikes are determined from all sides by the advertising media of commercial civilization. That is how our tastes are chosen. Such a strange era this is. Everyone is submerged in the media wave. But we must reflect wisely. Meditating practitioners (*yogāvacara*) who practice at home come and tell us this: "We want to meditate, but just as described, from morning till night, and even until dawn, noise reigns supreme." Yet, if we desire the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna, if we desire liberation (*vimutti*), if we desire that spiritual peace, we must not drown in that worldly wave, that wave of noise, but must understand the value of silence, just as the Blessed One declared in the Nālaka Sutta.

We know that in the past, even though the social wave was not so noisy, the monks established themselves first in virtue (*sīla*) and, to develop concentration (*samādhi*), went deep into the forests among wild beasts—perhaps thinking that the sounds of wild beasts were not such a nuisance. But nowadays, humans love noise so much that staying without noise even for five minutes is a torment. That is how far society has gone. Therefore, according to the Buddha's word, we must call this a base preference. As was said, "The fool is like a half-filled pot, the wise man is like a full pool." Only the half-filled pot shakes. The full pot does not shake. Thus, if we have a supreme goal within us to be like a still lake, we must make an effort ourselves to organize our lifestyle by reducing at least unnecessary sounds. There is no need for any external protest here. If we desire liberation (*vimutti*) in this Saṃsāra, the supreme peace, one step on that path is seclusion (*viveka*). You have heard of the three kinds of seclusion: bodily seclusion (*kāya-viveka*), mental seclusion (*citta-viveka*), and seclusion from assets/substrata (*upadhi-viveka*). Bodily seclusion means physically separating oneself from the crowd. But even if we say we are physically separated, if that noise still penetrates, it is not a complete liberation or separation.

Now, when we consider the eye and the ear: closing the eyes is not difficult. It happens effortlessly with every blink—closing of the eye. If we see something unpleasant, if we dislike something, we can close our eyes. But can we close our ears like that? That requires an artificial effort. If one plugs one's ears, it is very awkward. One cannot meditate with earplugs either, though some have tried. This is why we have the expression "kandoskiriya" (ear-tormenting noise). I do not know how that word originated, but we can think of "kandoskiriya" as having nothing else to do in the end but

to blame the ear itself. There are times when one blames the ear, thinking, "Oh, it is because of this ear that I have this trouble. I can close my eyes, but I cannot close my ears." So, one is forced to listen to this ear-tormenting din. This very matter is mentioned in the Dhamma in a valuable verse, as the Buddha's word:

Viññātasārāni subhāsitāni, sutañca samādhisāraṃ.

This is a valuable verse. *Viññātasārāni subhāsitāni*—the well-spoken words (*subhāsita*). "Subhāsita" means well-spoken. Indeed, the words of the Blessed One are entirely well-spoken. Every word of the Blessed One is considered a *subhāsita*. But what is said here? Knowing the essence of well-spoken words is their understanding. The Buddha's word, which is well-spoken, is there for us to learn. Next, a far more valuable thing is said: *sutañca viññātaṃ samādhisāraṃ*—what is the essence of what is heard and understood? It is concentration (*samādhi*), one-pointedness of mind (*citta-ekaggatā*). Now, we all struggle a lot to learn the Buddha's word. Everyone tries to memorize the Buddha's word, or record it, learn it, study it, and research it. Trying to learn well-spoken words is good, because well-spoken words are meant to be learned and retained. But after learning, *sutañca viññātaṃ*—what is the essence, the core, the heartwood, the ultimate purpose of what has been learned? It is concentration (*samādhi*), one-pointedness of mind. From this we see that the Buddha's word is an invitation, a challenge, to practice. We say the Dhamma is *ehipassiko*—"come and see." We learn the Dhamma. But we are not ready to accept the invitation and challenge of the Dhamma. If we are ready to accept it, we must cherish silent environments and seclusion. We must love them. We must reduce our greed for noise, our greed for those ear-tormenting noises.

In the texts, only thirty-two low topics of conversation (*tiracchāna-kathā*) are listed. But nowadays, there might be sixty-four or more of those gossip stories. There may be far more than thirty-two kinds of stories that we should not associate with, which we constantly hear, read, and listen to. Through them, the mind becomes increasingly defiled. Then concentration (*samādhi*) declines, and we move away from spiritual peace. A word that many of us speak of nowadays, much like "globalization," is "environmental pollution." This too is a term that has come to the forefront of modern society—environmental pollution. But many people blame physical materials for this environmental pollution.

But, dear devotees, there is no talk about mental environmental pollution. One thing that causes mental environmental pollution is that very ear-tormenting noise, those sounds—that overflowing of noise beyond limits. By yielding to it, especially lay devotees in their household lives lose the opportunity to fulfill their deep aspirations for the True Dhamma, or their aspirations for the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna. In the Buddha's time, silence was noble, practically valuable, and highly regarded individually, socially, and even where crowds assembled. We usually think of a gathering as a commotion, a shouting match. We have that kind of idea. That is like a gathering of crows. If it is a meeting of crows, it is indeed so. Nowadays, even in high places—though I will not mention names—it is just the same. There is not much difference from a gathering of crows.

But in the assembly of twelve hundred and fifty monks around the Blessed One, there was not even the sound of a cough or a sneeze. The Teacher, through His quality of *purisadamma-sārathī*, His knowledge of skillful means (*upāya-kosalla-ñāṇa*), blending His great wisdom and great compassion, tames the crowd in that manner. Sometimes, the Blessed One's own words describe how He tamed them: *"Sanhena pi vinemi, pharusena pi vinemi, sanha-pharusena pi vinemi"* — "I tame some gently, I tame some harshly, I tame some both gently and harshly." Here, it was clearly illustrated in the story of Yasoja: first, He tamed that crowd with harsh words. Later, He invited them, sending an invitation saying, "I wish to see you." In this way, we have on one side the noble quality of the Buddha in taming crowds—taming those who are fit to be tamed.

Likewise, if we squeeze this story to extract its essence, silence is what we must bring forth. We do not ignore the changes of this era. Over more than two thousand years since the Buddha's time, amid various changes, certain transPreparations have also occurred through what we think of as material progress. But we must reflect: if the end, the climax of material progress, is not to be spiritual degeneration, if the final step of material progress is not to lead to spiritual decay, we, at least as Buddhists, must understand the value of that silence. One can control the whole world with a fingertip. We can bring out everything in the world with a fingertip. We can also close it with a fingertip. Such a thing exists today. Therefore, wise devotees must think: the fingertip must be operated to hear what should be heard, and to shut out what should not be heard—that ear-tormenting noise. If you learn to use the fingertip correctly, you can solve this problem and give an example to the world without holding protests. Thus, what we have presented to you is this: sometimes, at first glance, even these words of ours in this Dhamma journey may appear outdated. But the Blessed One has declared, as mentioned in the Dhamma: *"Satañca dhammo na jaraṃ upeti"* — "The Dhamma of the virtuous never decays." It never becomes outdated. Whether Buddhas arise or Tathāgatas do not arise, this nature of the Dhamma, these Dhamma realities in the world, are always true, as the Blessed One declared. Therefore, if we, as Buddhists, aspire to those noble goals, we must be eager to prepare a suitable environment for them, at least to a minimum degree. Otherwise, if we allow that media wave, that noise wave, and submit to those designations (*paññatti*) of globalization and the like, surrendering our daily lives, the inner strengths within us to develop mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) will be blunted. They will be blunted more and more. Because, overwhelmed by those noises coming from outside, we yield to those base things, paving the way to lose that future spiritual peace.

Therefore, you must reflect wisely. Today, you have spent this valuable day undertaking a precious virtue (*sīla*), abandoning all the various activities of your daily lives, both to organize your own lives and as an example to others. Moving away at least a little from that ear-tormenting noise in your households, in an environment of some silence, focusing your mind on a familiar subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and spending the day with mindfulness (*sati*), you have entered the practice of appreciating the silence praised by our Buddha, spending your time to cultivate internal silence—silence within.

At the same time, regarding this Dhamma sermon of ours, a short while ago we told a lay devotee that today's sermon might seem contradictory, because in front of me, too, stands a loudspeaker. But there is nothing to be done; as was said, we have to make that "protest." Even through this contradiction, we are conveying this matter as a message to this audience. In such an environment, we must try at least to give ear to what should be heard. Since we cannot close our ears to what should not be heard, if we can make some effort in that direction, in a way that is not harmful to ourselves or others, we must try to secure our spiritual progress at least through that.

Thus, today, through the virtue (*sīla*) you kept, the meditation you performed, and by listening to this Dhamma sermon, you have generated some wholesome energy (*kusala-shakti*). We often explain this wholesome energy in this way: on this Dhamma journey, instead of the five sense faculties we use in daily life, we bring forth five spiritual faculties introduced by the Buddha. The world spends its life submerged in those external faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. The Blessed One brought forth five spiritual faculties (*indriya*): faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The Mind Stilled (Nibbāna is for the one who has developed these five faculties. Actually, they are fully established only after reaching the stage of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). An *indriya* (faculty) means a ruler, implying a powerful mastery within certain limits. For the one who has developed these faculties, those five also stand as powers. That is why they are called the five powers (*pañca-bala*).

To generate those faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*), and to cultivate those five powers, you have made a certain effort today, to the best of your ability, through virtue (*sīla*) and concentration (*samādhi*). We spoke these few words precisely as a support and help to that effort. Utilizing all of this, if there is anything to be gained from listening to this Dhamma, may you use it to develop what was mentioned. In this era of the decline of the dispensation, you truly understand—everyone says, "Now we understand the suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṃsāra." If that is true, some path of action must be taken.

May this accumulated heap of merit support that effort! May obstructing factors be removed! May supporting factors approach! I wish that this wholesome energy (*kusala-shakti*) may indeed become a strong support (*upanissaya*) to quickly realize those supreme goals you hope for—the realization of the noble paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahatship (*arahatta*). Likewise, by sharing this merit of Dhamma-preaching and Dhamma-listening with all beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, may all of you, through the Bodhi of your aspiration, be liberated from all the suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṃsāra, and find peace in the supreme, deathless state of the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna! Saying so, please recite the verse!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #110

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.126)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Na tena thero hoti, yenassa palitaṃ siro;

paripakko vayo tassa, "moghajiṇṇo" ti vuccati;

yamhi saccañ ca dhammo ca, ahiṃsā saṃyamo damo;

sa ve vantamalo dhīro, "thero" iti pavuccati.

From:

Dhammapada 260 (Bhikkhuvagga)

Dear Listeners,

The world is accustomed to measuring seniority and elderhood solely by external appearance. The Buddha points out to us that a gray head alone is not a qualification for receiving respect. A person who has merely matured in age, but has not grown in virtue, is described by the Buddha as one who has "decayed in vain." Regardless of external appearance, virtue itself should be the sole qualification for receiving respect and honor; this is the principle declared in the two verses we have taken today as our theme.

The Buddha preached these two verses at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī, with reference to the Elder named Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya. One day, while Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya was leaving after attending on the Buddha, a group of thirty forest-dwelling bhikkhus arrived to see the Blessed One. Having paid their respects and sat down to one side, the Buddha asked them: "Monks, did you see that Elder who just left this place?" The bhikkhus replied: "We did not see an Elder, Venerable Sir." "Why, did you not meet anyone on your way here?" "We only met a novice (*sāmaṇera*) coming towards us, Venerable Sir." "Monks, that was not a novice. He is an Elder." "Oh, he had such a small body, Venerable Sir!" "Monks, I do not call someone an Elder merely because his head is gray. If someone has realized the Four Noble Truths and is established in the Dhamma of

non-violence, it is that person whom I call an Elder." Having declared this, the Buddha uttered the two verses mentioned earlier.

"Na tena thero hoti yenassa palitaṁ siro" — One does not become an Elder merely because one's head is gray.

"Paripakko vayo tassa" — Even though that person's age is mature and seasoned,

"Moghajiṇṇoti vuccati" — he has merely aged in years, and is called one who has decayed in vain, one who has grown old in vain.

"Yamhi saccañ ca dhammo ca ahiṁsā saṁyamo damo" — But in whom there exist these virtues: the realization of the Truth, the Dhamma, non-violence, restraint, and self-control,

"Sa ve vantamalo dhīro" — that bhikkhu indeed, that wise person who has vomited and discarded the stains of defilement,

"Thero iti pavuccati" — is called an Elder.

That is how the Buddha defined an Elder on that occasion. Now, if we are to speak about this monk named Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya, the meaning of the word "Lakuṇṭaka" is "dwarf" or "short." He was extremely short—what we commonly call a dwarf. Furthermore, his body was very deformed. Because of this short stature and deformed appearance, this Elder frequently had to face insults, teasing, and jokes. It was for this reason that the Buddha constantly highlighted the great spiritual body of virtue within his dwarf frame. So much so, that several verses in the Dhammapada itself are inspired by Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya. Not only there, but in other places too, the Buddha preached several profound verses on Nibbāna as inspired utterances (*udāna* verses), keeping the Elder Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya in mind.

The reason behind another very valuable verse mentioned in the Dhammapada is recorded as follows: Whenever they saw Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya, certain novice monks would pull him by the nose and ears, teasing him, saying, "Uncle, are you disillusioned with the monkhood?" and making various jokes. Yet, Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya never harbored anger or let his mind become corrupted by any of this. A conversation arose in the Dhamma assembly among the Sangha: "Look, isn't it amazing how Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya remains in equanimity and endures even when teased so much?" At that moment, the Buddha arrived there and asked, "Monks, what are you discussing?" When they explained, the Buddha uttered this valuable and widely known verse in the Dhammapada in praise of his quality of equanimity:

Selo yathā ekaghano,

vātena na samīrati;

Evaṁ nindāpasaṁsāsu,

na samiñjanti paṇḍitā.

"Monks, this is how wise people are. Just as a solid, single mass of rock is not shaken by a storm, even so, the wise are not perturbed or shaken by blame and praise." This is the meaning of that verse. It is mentioned in this manner on many occasions. Similarly, in the Dhamma commentaries and other texts, various reasons are given for this Elder receiving such a dwarfed body. One very well-known story must be mentioned.

One story is that during the time of the Buddha Kassapa, when the relic stupa (*cetiya*) was being built, this Elder served as the chief carpenter and master builder. When the rest of the people were preparing to build a massive stupa, Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya (in that past life) planned it as a smaller one, thinking it would be easier to maintain and restore. It is said that due to that unwholesome activity (*akusala saṅkhāra*), his body became dwarfed in this life. Be that as it may, he endured all of this with equanimity.

On another similar occasion, the Buddha uttered a valuable verse prompted by the very sight of Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya. Once, while the Buddha was preaching to the Sangha, or while the Sangha was seated around the Buddha, Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya was seen coming in the distance. The Buddha then asked the Sangha: "Monks, do you see that very deformed, dwarf monk coming in the distance, who is the subject of others' ridicule?" "Yes, Bhante," they replied. "Monks, this bhikkhu is of great psychic power and great majesty. It is not easy to find a meditative attainment (*samāpatti*) that this Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya has not mastered. For whatever purpose noble sons leave the household life to go forth into homelessness, that supreme purpose of Nibbāna has been fully realized and experienced by this bhikkhu." Then he uttered two verses, the meaning of which we will state here. The meaning of those two verses is as follows:

Swans, herons, peacocks, elephants, deer, and all other forest animals are afraid of the lion. No animal's physical strength can compare to the physical strength of the lion's body. In the same way, among human beings, if someone is wise, even if they are young, it is to that person that the epithet "Great" (*mahā*) must be applied. It is to such a young but wise person that we must say "Great", and not to a foolish, ignorant person who merely possesses a large body. This is the value that the Buddha highlights. So, on one hand, while Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya received ridicule, abuse, blame, and jokes due to an extraordinary force of karma—for which past lives and karmic causes are detailed in ancient stories that we will not go into here—he also possessed an exceptionally melodious voice. So much so, that he received the foremost position (*etadagga*) in that regard. In the Dhamma literature, there is a section called the *Etadagga-vagga*. The Buddha, much like an award ceremony, introduced his disciples, declaring who was chief in each respective field.

On such an occasion, Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya was declared chief among those who have a melodious voice (*mañjussarānaṁ*), those who preach the Dhamma with a sweet, melodious voice. Yet, Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya lived with an extraordinary equanimity, harboring neither special attachment to those who praised him nor any hatred toward those who insulted him. We can understand the reason for this. In the book called

Theragāthā, the verses are often presented in a way that expresses the life story or personal reflection of the Elders and Sisters along with their characters.

A series of valuable verses about Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya is mentioned in the work named *Theragāthā*. From those verses, it appears that he often engaged in meditation in the Ambaṭṭhaka forest. He declares, "I, Bhaddiya, am meditating at the foot of a tree in the Ambaṭṭhaka forest." Having expressed this, he says, "Some people in the world entertain themselves with various musical instruments like kettle-drums, tabors, lutes, and harps. I do not need that music. Sitting at the foot of a tree in the dispensation of the Buddha, I experience that joy through the bliss of jhana." Furthermore, he says, "Some people measure me by my body, my physical appearance. Others follow me because of my voice. All of them are overcome by desire and passion (*chanda-rāga*); they do not truly know me." This is how he expresses it.

Thus, regarding this matter of the yardstick, the Buddha addressed the monks in a discourse containing sets of four, not specifically targeting Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya, but declaring it to the entire world as a true fact and a universal principle. "Monks, there are four kinds of persons in the world. Who are these four?

> *“Rūpappamāṇo rūpappasanno*,
>
> *Ghosappamāṇo ghosappasanno*,
>
> *Lūkhappamāṇo lūkhappasanno*,
>
> *Dhammappamāṇo dhammappasanno*."

These are the four. The first person is *rūpappamāṇo rūpappasanno*—one who measures by physical appearance, takes physical form as the yardstick, and is pleased with physical form.

Ghosappamāṇo ghosappasanno—one who, hearing fame, praise, and renown, makes that alone their yardstick and develops confidence in someone solely due to their reputation. *Lūkhappamāṇo lūkhappasanno*—one who, seeing those who practice austere conduct, rigid vows, and hard practices, and seeing that rough, harsh practice, becomes pleased with someone solely because of that harsh practice, thinking, "How can he do such difficult things?" The fourth category is *dhammappamāṇo dhammappasanno*—one who makes the Dhamma itself the yardstick, and develops confidence based on the Dhamma alone.

Next, the Buddha utters a series of verses there itself as an explanation of this. The Buddha declares that if someone measures by physical form, or if someone follows another merely because of reputation, they are overcome by desire and passion. They have not correctly known the person. Then, some do not understand the inner qualities of a person, nor do they look at and contemplate their external, practice-oriented life. Such people are completely obstructed, covered by delusion, and are drawn away by mere reputation. There is another who cannot see a person's inner virtues, but sees the

gains and honors received externally due to their practices. Seeing this, because their understanding is limited, they too are overcome by reputation and are drawn towards it.

But if someone sees and understands another's inner wealth of virtue, and also correctly understands their externally visible commitment to practice—such a person, with an open mind, is not overcome by mere reputation. Discerning the truth, they establish their faith. This is accepted in the world as a natural order (*dhammatā*). In the commentary, though it cannot be called the direct word of the Buddha, a certain proportion is shown. It is appropriate for us to consider this, and we mention it here. It is not that anyone did a census of the entire world to arrive at such a decision, but roughly, the commentary mentions the following proportion: Of the first category, two-thirds of all worldlings are *rūpappamāṇā*—those who are drawn to physical form, who take physical form as their yardstick. Only one portion does not make physical form the yardstick but develops faith in someone due to other reasons.

Next, regarding *ghosappamāṇa*, the commentary says that four-fifths of the world is drawn to reputation. Only one-fifth is not swept away by reputation, but wishes to think wisely, and thinks with wisdom.

Next, concerning *lūkhappamāṇa*, it says that nine-tenths of the world, seeing rough, harsh practice, are pleased with it and cling to it. Only one-tenth, not being deceived by that alone and not jumping to conclusions based solely on that, reflects deeply and develops confidence and clarity.

This is what is said about *dhammappamāṇa* in the commentary: Out of a hundred thousand people in the world, ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine measure by what is not Dhamma (*adhamma*) and find pleasure within *adhamma*. Only one out of a hundred thousand makes the Dhamma their yardstick, is pleased with the Dhamma, and has a genuine clarity of faith. These proportions were shown roughly to illustrate the worldly tendency, the nature of the world.

The most important thing the Buddha shows us here is *dhammappamāṇo*. Therefore, we must not fall prey to the first three categories. We should not take physical form as our yardstick, nor is it proper to be deceived or swept away by reputation. It is also not proper to develop confidence in someone merely because they look austere on the outside. It was said that we must establish ourselves in Dhamma-judgment and make the Dhamma itself the yardstick. Indeed, the Buddha himself has given us examples of this on many occasions. You may have heard that in places where the Buddha is described, the thirty-two marks of a Great Man (*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*) are often mentioned. It is mentioned in many places in the Dhamma that the Buddha possessed an extraordinary physical beauty that no one else had. The Elder named Vakkali's devotion to the Buddha was such that he could not bear to be without seeing him. He developed an extraordinary attachment; his faith became a strong attachment. But the way the Buddha broke that attachment was truly wonderful. It is mentioned in one place in the Dhamma that Ven. Vakkali became very gravely ill. He fell sick and sent a bhikkhu to pay respects to the

Buddha and request him to visit, saying that Vakkali was very weak and asking him to come out of compassion. The Buddha then came to see Ven. Vakkali.

Having arrived, he asked, "How are you?" As soon as the Buddha arrived, Ven. Vakkali tried to get up from his bed out of faith. "No, no, stay there, there are seats for me," said the Buddha, keeping the patient settled. "Why is this? Do you have any regret or remorse?" What was the remorse of Ven. Vakkali? Was it concerning virtue? No, he says: "For a long time I have not been able to go and see the Buddha. I do not even have enough physical strength for that." That was Ven. Vakkali's regret—that he could not see the Buddha as before. Then the Buddha made a statement that you all may have heard, an extraordinary, wonderful statement: "Vakkali, what is the use of this putrid body? *Kiṁ te vakkali iminā pūtikāyena diṭṭhena*? What is the use to you, Vakkali, of seeing this putrid body?"

"He who sees the Dhamma sees me." *Yo dhammaṁ passati, so maṁ passati*. The same is said in reverse: "He who sees me sees the Dhamma." To emphasize this, the Buddha expressed it in that manner. The Buddha does not speak words in vain. There is a deep meaning in it. Otherwise, he could have stopped after uttering the first phrase. That was said to make us think.

In the case of Ven. Vakkali, he thought: "Not being able to see the Buddha as before is a great loss to me. I cannot make my mind one-pointed; I cannot concentrate." He even had regret about it. But what does the Buddha declare? "What is the use of this putrid body? There is no benefit in clinging to it. When one sees the Dhamma, at that very moment of seeing the Dhamma, one has seen me." Next, what is the meaning of saying "when one sees me, one sees the Dhamma"? "Vakkali, all this time you have not seen me. You have not seen me; you have only seen my body, this putrid body. See the Dhamma. If you see the Dhamma, you see me." That is how it is to be understood.

The meaning of "*yo maṁ passati so dhammaṁ passati*"—"he who sees me sees the Dhamma"—was said directly targeting Ven. Vakkali. "Vakkali, though you have been looking at me for this long, you did not see me. You only saw the external putrid body. If you want to see me, you must see the Dhamma." Following that, he gave a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) for insight (*vipassanā*). The story of how Ven. Vakkali subsequently became an Arahant goes on at length, but we will mention only this much on this occasion. Thus, the Buddha himself gave a great lesson. Even though he possessed such physical beauty, the Buddha did not encourage attachment to it. Instead, seeing the opportunity, he told Ven. Vakkali: "What is the use of seeing this putrid body? The important thing is to see the Dhamma." That is seeing through *dhammappamāṇa*.

Now, there is a story that fits the description of *lūkhappamāṇo lūkhappasanno*. The wanderer Mahāsakuludāyī was someone who had great devotion to the Buddha. Although he was a wanderer of another sect, he had developed great appreciation for the Buddha due to his high reputation and various other reasons. On one occasion, as part of a long discussion, the Buddha asked this wanderer: "Udāyī, what do you think? For what reasons do my disciples revere and honor me?" Then this wanderer replied: "As I see it,

Venerable Sir, your disciples revere and honor the Blessed One for five reasons. What are these five reasons? The Blessed One is a moderate eater (takes little food). He praises the taking of little food. That is the first reason. Second, the Blessed One praises wearing simple, coarse robes, and praises the value of that practice as a *dhutanga* (ascetic practice). The third reason is that whatever food is received, whether good or bad, the Blessed One has the quality of being content with whatever is obtained; he is content with alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), and he praises this to others. The fourth reason is that the Blessed One is content with whatever lodgings (*senāsana*) are available, and he praises this. The fifth reason is that the Blessed One loves solitude and lives in solitude, and praises it. It is because of these things that these disciples have confidence in the Blessed One."

Then the Buddha declared: "No, Udāyī, it is not for those five reasons. My disciples do not revere me for those five reasons. This is the truth." The Buddha first addresses the point about eating little: "Udāyī, I have disciples who are keepers of ascetic practices; although the word *dhutaṅga* is not detailed there, we can understand that they are *dhutaṅgadhara* who subsist on very little food. But I sometimes eat even a full bowl of food. I am not so austere in that regard. If they revered me for that, then those disciples who are more restrained than me regarding food would not respect me. They could say, 'I am greater than the Blessed One.' But it is due to another reason that I am shown respect."

He said the same about the second point regarding robes: "There are those who wear much coarser robes than I do, who wear rag-robes (*paṁsukūla-cīvara*) their entire lives"—such as the Elder Mahā Kassapa, although not mentioned by name here—"and the reason the Buddha states this is that some monks keep such strict practices regarding robes. But I, on some occasions, even use robes offered by householders. If so, those monks would have no reason to respect me for that. Regarding alms-round, I sometimes even partake of delicious alms-food." Regarding lodgings, some live austerely at the foot of trees, whereas I sometimes reside in comfortable dwellings. Moreover, I do not constantly live in absolute solitude; some monks live continuously in the forest, whereas I sometimes dwell associating with kings, royal ministers, and even teachers of other sects. Thus, the Buddha shows that it is not because of austere practice (*lūkha-patipadā*) or any of those things that my disciples revere me. Then the Buddha declared five other reasons:

"My disciples revere me because of the Noble Virtue (*ariya-sīla*) within me. Next, because of my knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*). Next, because of my wisdom (*paññā*), that wisdom which is incomparable. Because of my ability to answer any question regarding the Four Noble Truths. Next, because of my ability to train the Sangha in this path of practice. It is because of these spiritual, Dhamma-based reasons that my disciples revere me." From all of this, you must consider what the yardsticks are that the Buddha highlighted in our Dhamma for developing faith in someone. Then, looking at the other side, the word "Elder" (*thera*) was mentioned. In fact, as some of you might know, if we consider the word *thera* as an ecclesiastical term in the present era,

according to current convention, a monk who has completed ten years from his higher ordination (*upasampadā*) is called a *thera*. By twenty years, he has automatically become a *Mahāthera*, whether he has the qualifications or not. That is how it is used in common parlance. But the Buddha gives a much deeper meaning to the word *thera* here.

In a discourse related to this very point, the Buddha—not because a question arose, but recalling a past event of his own, an event from this very life—expressed the following: "Monks, on one occasion, shortly after my awakening, while I was residing at the foot of the Ajapāla Banyan tree on the banks of the Nerañjarā river, very old, elderly brahmin householders and brahmins came to meet me. Some paid homage to me, while others sat down after announcing their names. Somehow or other, sitting close to me, they made this statement: 'Venerable Gotama, there is a rumor among us that you do not respect very old, elderly brahmins and elders. It is said that you do not stand up and offer them a seat, nor do you show them respect and honor. There is such a talk among our people, and that is indeed so. Now we have understood that it is indeed so. That is not proper.' That is all the brahmins said. 'When these brahmins came, the ascetic Gotama did not show respect! Now we understand that the rumor spread about the ascetic Gotama is true. That is certainly not proper.'" On that occasion, it is not mentioned that the Buddha said anything to them. Instead, it is recorded as follows:

"Monks, then this thought occurred to me"—not that he said anything to the brahmins, but this thought occurred to him—"Alas, these people do not know who an Elder is, nor do they know the qualities that make one an Elder (*therakaraṇa-dhamma*). Who is called an Elder? Generally speaking, 'elder' or *thera* carries the idea of being mature, being senior. These people do not even know who an elder is. Nor do they know the factors that help one become an elder." Having stated that this thought occurred to him, he addressed the Sangha again and said: "Monks, let me tell you how one becomes an Elder." The Buddha then gives the explanation of that concept of the Elder. Even if a person is senior in age, if that person has the following ten qualities... next, ten qualities are mentioned as follows: He is one who speaks at the wrong time (*akālavādī*); he is not a timely speaker. He is one who speaks untruth (*abhūtavādī*); he is not a speaker of truth. He is one who speaks what is useless (*anatthavādī*); he is not a speaker of what is beneficial. He is one who speaks what is not Dhamma (*adhammavādī*). He is one who speaks what is contrary to the Discipline (*avinayavādī*). He is not a speaker of words that are worth treasuring (*anidhānavādī vācaṁ bhāsitā*), words to be preserved, guarded, and remembered in the heart. Furthermore, he speaks out of season (*akālena*), not at the right time but at inappropriate moments. He speaks without reason (*anapadesaṁ*), without causes and evidence. He speaks of things that do not lead to any purpose, are of no use to anyone, and are useless for both this world and the next. That is the unwholesome side. To such an elder, I say: *bālo thero*—a foolish Elder. That is what I call such a person.

Then he declares the other side: "But if someone is young (*daharo*)"—there it says, he is very young, with black hair, a youth—"yet that person is as follows: He is a timely speaker (*kālavādī*), speaking according to the occasion. He is a speaker of truth (*bhūtavādī*). He speaks what is beneficial (*atthavādī*). He is a speaker of Dhamma

(*dhammavādī*). He is a speaker of Discipline (*vinayavādī*). He is a speaker of words worth treasuring (*nidhānavādiṁ vācaṁ bhāsitā*), highlighting things of value to be kept in the heart. He speaks in season (*kālena*), with reasons and examples (*sāpadesaṁ*), and with a clear purpose (*atthasaṁhitaṁ*). In this way, based on his manner of speaking and the matters he presents, even though he is young in age, I call that person *paṇḍito thero*—a wise Elder."

Having thus defined the word "Elder", the Buddha next declares four qualities that make one an Elder (*therakaraṇa-dhamma*). The Buddha highlights four factors that help one to be called an Elder in the true sense of the word. What are they? It is said concerning a bhikkhu: He is virtuous (*sīlavanto*)—there is a long explanation of virtue. Next, to put it briefly, he is highly learned (*bahussuto*), holding the Dhamma well. This holding of the Dhamma is not like a machine holding information; in ancient times, they held the Dhamma in the mind. It is described with a string of words: *sutā, dhatā, vacasā paricitā, manasānupekkhitā, diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā*—having heard the Dhamma, holding it in mind, reciting it verbally until it is familiar, examining it constantly in the mind (*manasānupekkhitā*), and comparing it with right view to penetrate it thoroughly (*diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā*). This is the highly learned person possessing Dhamma-knowledge. That learnedness is the second factor. Next is the four jhanas—that is, the power of concentration (*samādhi-balam*), which is considered a pleasant dwelling here and now (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*). Finally, it is declared: one who has attained that noble state, ending the suffering of *saṁsāra* (the round of rebirths) through the realization of the Four Noble Truths, achieving Arahantship. The Buddha declared that it is through these factors that one becomes an Elder in the true sense of the word.

Thus, through such Sutta discourses, we can understand that what the Buddha highlighted was *dhammappamāṇa*—we must give priority to the Dhamma. We must measure according to the Dhamma. But the nature of the world is that many people strive to beautify this decaying body with various colors, photographs, etc., and through these, they try to attract others and generate faith. But we, the wise, must reflect so that we do not go after such reputation. There is a reason why this group called *dhammappamāṇa* is indeed only one in a hundred thousand. To that extent, the world is drawn to those other things. It is not drawn to things of substance. One must reflect on the lesson the Buddha gave us through Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya. It was not merely in praise of him; he highlighted to us that even within such a body, noble and highly valuable virtues can exist. If even the Buddha had not highlighted those virtues, a great number of people would have accumulated demerit. Those novice monks pulled his ears, pulled his nose, and teased him in other ways, failing to see the wealth of virtue within him. If there had been someone with a massive body, no one would have gone to tease him, even if he were a fool.

Yet, they teased this Arahant in this manner because their yardsticks were wrong. There will be consequences for that. We must therefore reflect on these points highlighted by the Buddha. Next, in those *Theragāthā* verses, Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya expresses his love for mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*). He says: "If the Buddha were to grant

me a boon, this is the boon I would ask: May the entire world always develop mindfulness of the body! May they develop mindfulness of the body!" It was not that Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya actually expected a boon from the Buddha, but he said: "If a boon were to be given, if he were ready to give one, what I would request on my behalf is that the Buddha tell the world, tell everyone to always develop mindfulness of the body!"

Something is revealed to us through this. Although Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya did not actually get depressed over these things, but endured and bore them with equanimity, he might have felt some spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*): "Alas, it is because this world does not know the true nature of this body that they tease and ridicule me in this way. It is due to their inability to see the unseen wealth of virtue with wisdom that they tease this visible dwarf." Through that understanding, may the world constantly reflect on the nature of this body they carry around. The beautifully gathered flesh wears away very quickly. Indeed, if we are to take a photograph of ourselves, what we should take is the skeleton, which lasts much longer in our body. We must give more place to the skeleton. Other things decay very quickly as we age. We know that in childhood, during the first few months of an infant, the body seems puffed up, growing like a balloon. The limbs swell, but as middle age passes, it begins to shrink, and wrinkles appear.

Thus, that puffed-up flesh wears away just like that. It dissolves. In the end, even when one goes to the cemetery, what helps one to remember is only the skeleton. In the past, if one went to a charnel ground to see a deceased friend, what could be seen, if anything remained for long, was only the skeleton. But the world does not think about that. It must have been seeing the worldling creating values out of that putrid flesh, decorating it, deceiving the world, and deceiving themselves on their journey, that made Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya wish for such a boon on behalf of the world. We can understand this.

There are other occasions in the Dhamma that show the special regard the Buddha had for Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya. Once, while Ven. Sāriputta, the Great Arahant—we can assume—was delivering a long Dhamma talk to Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya to help his meditation, during that talk, Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya attained Arahantship. At that moment, the Buddha uttered a profound inspired utterance (*udāna*), a verse about Nibbāna, which is recorded in the book called *Udāna*. Not only that, Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya was so humble that even though he had attained Arahantship, he did not even let Ven. Sāriputta know that he had completed his task. So, Ven. Sāriputta, the Chief Disciple, kept delivering Dhamma talks again and again, thinking that the trainee (*sekha*) Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya had not yet attained Arahantship. Seeing this, the Buddha uttered another Udāna verse. That too is a profound one about Nibbāna. We are not going to quote it here; if you are interested, you can find it. In that same book of Udāna, the Buddha uttered a verse as an inspired utterance, seeing Ven. Sāriputta continuing to preach the Dhamma, thinking that Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya was not yet an Arahant.

How wonderful are these occasions where the Buddha highlighted Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya. It was not for any other reason. Using Ven. Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya, the Buddha taught a lesson to the world. Where can that which we think is great and valuable reside?

It may not be in the places where ordinary worldlings think. It could reside within such a dwarf, short body. That is why it was said: "It is not easy to find a meditative attainment (*samāpatti*) that this Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya has not mastered. He is of great psychic power and great majesty." Even though he was of such great majesty, when they teased him in that manner, he not only refrained from seeking revenge or showing off his powers, but he did not even let Ven. Sāriputta know that he had attained Arahantship. On one hand, we have to contemplate his quality of humility. At the same time, what we highlight through this sermon is the point the Buddha showed the world: *dhammappamāṇo dhammappasanno*—making the Dhamma itself the yardstick and developing confidence in the Dhamma alone. We can point out other factors related to this.

Indeed, we have stated on many occasions that in this Dhamma there is a challenge, a pulling of a person towards that far shore. How it leads to Nibbāna is shown through the word *opanayiko*. There is a truth in the Dhamma: the Dhamma itself pulls one towards Nibbāna. It is not that the Buddha simply pushes. Even though, due to his power of merit, he received a body with such wonderful marks of a Great Man and had all other attributes, on certain occasions, to convince someone of a Dhamma point, he held long Dhamma discussions with brahmins, presenting arguments to dispel their doubts. Only in extreme cases, to break someone's pride, did he employ miracles; he never tried to force the Dhamma into someone through psychic power. So much so, that a certain bhikkhu named Kevaṭṭha invited the Buddha to appoint a bhikkhu to perform psychic miracles in order to win over a large number of people to the Dhamma.

The Buddha rejected that request. "I say that is not the true miracle. The miracle of instruction (*anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya*) is the true miracle. The miracle of psychic power (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*) and the miracle of telepathy (*ādesanā-pāṭihāriya*)—the power to read others' minds—these are not the true miracles. The miracle of instruction is the true miracle." This is described in the Dhamma in this way: *Evaṁ vitakkehi, mā evaṁ vitakkayittha* (Think thus, do not think thus). The Buddha declares: "Entertain thoughts of this kind. Do not entertain thoughts of sensual desire (*kāma-vitakka*), etc. Entertain thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma-vitakka*), non-ill-will (*avyāpāda*), and non-violence (*avihiṁsā*)." In this way, he defines the thoughts to be entertained. "Think thus, do not think in this way. Focus your mind in this way (*evaṁ manasikarotha*), do not focus your mind in that way (*mā evaṁ manasikarotha*). Abandon these things (*idaṁ pajahatha*), enter and dwell in these things (*idaṁ upasampajja viharatha*)." That is what the Buddha considers the highest miracle: the miracle of instruction. It is in this very way that the Buddha points out the path of practice leading to Nibbāna. That too is something that proceeds according to causes and conditions (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). It is through a sequence of causes and conditions, where one is connected to another, that one draws close to Nibbāna.

The Buddha does not drag anyone by force. In a certain valuable Sutta discourse that explains this, it is stated as follows: A person, through some faith—not in the wrong way mentioned earlier, but in a way that can give rise to right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) by hearing

the Dhamma—applies the power of proper reflection within themselves, called *yoniso manasikāra* (wise attention / radical attention), focuses the mind on the Dhamma heard, and thereby develops faith (*saddhā*). Thus, it is expressed in this manner: Once faith has arisen, *saddhājāto upasaṅkamati*—one who has developed faith approaches. He draws close to the disciple who helped him develop faith. *Upasaṅkamanto payirupāsati*—having approached, he attends on him, which means he sits close. *Payirupāsanto dhammaṁ suṇāti*—sitting close, he gets to hear the Dhamma from that teacher. Having heard the Dhamma, *dhammaṁ dhāreti*—he retains the Dhamma well. *Dhātānaṁ dhammānaṁ atthaṁ upaparikkhati*—not being satisfied with just that, he independently examines the meaning of the Dhamma he has retained. *Atthaṁ upaparikkhato dhammā nijjhānaṁ khamanti*—as he examines the meaning and reflects, the thought arises: "This cannot but be true." *Dhammā nijjhānakkhamanti* means as he reflects and compares with his own experience, the realization comes: "This is indeed possible." *Dhammanijjhānakkhamā chando jāyati*—it is not that he immediately thinks "this is definitely so," but once the feeling arises that "this is possible," then desire (*chanda*) is born.

Desire (*chanda*) is not something that is given just like that; it arises at that stage. In the Dhamma, indeed, at some point the understanding comes: "If this is put into practice, it will be fruitful; this is possible." *Chandajāto ussahati*—once desire has arisen, effort is made. Now he exerts energy. *Chandajāto ussahati*—as he makes an effort and strives, exerting energy, a certain point comes when balance is achieved; then, *ussahitvā tuleti*—one who exerts strong energy... now, to use an analogy that helps your understanding, let us think of a big running race. In a running race, some run slowly in the first few rounds. But in the final round, they apply all their energy, running with extraordinary effort to win somehow. In the same way, exerting energy, at some point one strongly strives—this is called *padahati*, supreme effort (*padhāna-viriya*). In the Dhamma, this is described as the energy endowed with four factors (*caturanga-samannāgata-viriya*): "Let only skin, sinews, and bones remain, let the flesh and blood dry up, but as long as that which is to be attained by manly strength, manly energy, and manly progress is not attained, there shall be no relaxing of energy." Such strong energy is applied. That energy is applied precisely when the opportunity arises. There, it is said: *chando jāyati, chandajāto ussahati.* First, he makes an effort. Making an effort means he exerts some energy. But having made an effort, *tuleti*—then comes a special moment. *Tuleti* means he balances. He balances.

Whether there is excessive energy, or other excesses and deficiencies—precisely when he balances these, that supreme effort (*padhāna-viriya*) becomes fruitful. That is something to be contemplated. He balances (*tuleti*). He weighs his own strengths, the faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*). As we have expressed on previous occasions: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Sitting in the middle, mindfulness (*sati*) weighs these well. It balances faith with wisdom, and balances energy with concentration. Having balanced them and hit the target precisely—only when the target is hit—does he apply that supreme effort called extraordinary energy. That is *padahati. Padahitvā*—having applied supreme effort, he

himself sees the Dhamma, sees that this is the truth. He realizes the Four Noble Truths declared by the Buddha for himself, not merely because it was said. Thus, the Buddha pointed out the path of practice based on a wonderful conditional relationship (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), where one factor supports the next.

It is in this way that one can draw close to Nibbāna. It is not possible to take someone to Nibbāna or put them there through blind faith, as is said in some other religions, merely because they developed faith and devotion. One cannot make them go to a happy destination or lead them there by force. That is why the Buddha declared:

Tumhehi kiccaṁ ātappaṁ,

akkhātāro tathāgatā;

Paṭipannā pamokkhanti,

jhāyino mārabandhanā.

"The effort must be made by yourselves; the Tathāgatas are only teachers. Those who enter the path and practice meditation will free themselves from the bonds of Māra." From this we see that the Buddha always highlighted the Dhamma. He is only a teacher.

Not only that, there is a very exemplary saying which mentions that after his awakening, the Buddha reflected: "Is there a teacher whom I can constantly revere and honor?" Feeling the absence of a teacher, the Buddha thought, "In whom shall I dwell, paying revere and honor?" Even when looking at the entire world, there was no one. No one could be found who was superior to him in virtue. However, he saw the Dhamma. He saw the Dhamma. This Dhamma is what all Buddhas—when thinking of the past Buddhas—every Buddha lived *dhammaṁ yeva sakkaronto dhammaṁ garukaronto*—honoring and respecting the Dhamma itself. "I too shall live in this way; I too respect the Dhamma." Therefore, reverence for the Dhamma (*dhamma-gāravatā*) is the most valuable thing in this dispensation. Not those other external yardsticks we mentioned. Not physical form, not fame and reputation, not austere practice, but the Dhamma itself. For even the Buddhas live *dhammaṁ yeva sakkaronto dhammaṁ garukaronto*.

The Buddha declared this when explaining the profound Dhamma of *paṭicca-samuppāda* (dependent arising / conditional relation) using terms like *uppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ thitāva sā dhammadhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā*: "Whether Tathāgatas arise or do not arise, whether the birth of Tathāgatas occurs or does not occur, *thitāva sā dhammadhātu*—that Dhamma-element, that nature of Dhamma, always remains as it is." What is it? *Dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā paṭiccasamuppādo*. This *idappaccayatā paṭiccasamuppāda* is not something the Buddha invented or produced anew; it is not a creation. It is not a product of the Buddha. Whether Tathāgatas arise or do not arise, it is a truth that always exists in the world. That is why the Buddha immediately declared: *taṁ tathāgato abhisambujjhati abhisameti, abhisambujjhitvā abhisametvā ācikkhati deseti paññāpeti paṭṭhapeti vivarati vibhajati uttānīkaroti*

passathāti cāha. "Tathāgatas do only this: the Tathāgata fully awakens to it, penetrates it. Having fully awakened and penetrated it, he declares it, teaches it, points it out, establishes it, opens it up, analyzes it, makes it plain (*uttānīkaroti*), and says: 'Look! Behold!'"

That is how the Tathāgatas declare their task. We see everywhere, therefore, that it was the Dhamma that the Buddha revered. In this dispensation, we too must always practice reverence for the Dhamma (*dhamma-gāravatā*). You may have heard that in this dispensation, reverence for the Dhamma is superior to reverence for persons. "If this disciple sitting next to me is preaching the Dhamma, I will rise from this seat." It is not personal respect, but respect for the Dhamma. It is because of this reverence for the Dhamma that even the youngest child in the dispensation has the strength to sit on the Dhamma-seat without fear. Everyone must reflect on bringing these Dhamma-values close to our lives. It is when one lacks understanding of these that one is drawn away and swept away by those other things. It is said that the world goes with that current, just like being swept away by a vast, fierce flood. If one is to walk the path of Dhamma with a stable strength, without being caught in the current and swept away, one must bear these points in mind. On a day like today, you must resolve to become *dhammappamāṇo dhammappasanno*, without going to the side of *rūpappamāṇo rūpappasanno*, without becoming *ghosappamāṇo ghosappasanno*, and without becoming *lūkhappamāṇo lūkhappasanno*.

On this valuable day, fulfilling your virtues of morality (*sīla*) is the first step in walking the path of Dhamma shown by the Buddha. Therefore, despite having troubles and duties at home, as the first step of the Dhamma path, you undertook a valuable moral precept (*sīla*) and dedicated this day to Dhamma-hearing and meditation. At this moment, through hearing the Dhamma, you can extract certain points that support your meditation and lead to Nibbāna. As constantly highlighted, we hope this sermon has helped you to arise or develop the spiritual faculties (*indriya-dhamma*) or powers (*bala-dhamma*) that support Nibbāna—namely, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

This is a Poya day at the end of the year. One must make a strong resolution: in the midst of these changes and calamities of time, we do not know at what moment or where this life will end. The saying *animittaṁ anaññātaṁ maccānaṁ idha jīvitaṁ* ("The life of mortals here is without a sign and unknown") has become extremely true in this era. The only question is where, how, and at what time death will occur. Death is indeed certain. Therefore, may you resolve: may this sermon we delivered today help us to walk on this path of Dhamma diligently! Utilizing the power of merit you have accumulated, through the blessings of hearing the Dhamma, with the help of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), and bringing your meditation to fulfillment, may this hearing of the Dhamma support you in realizing supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the path, fruit, and penetration of stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship! If your departed relatives, and all beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, wish to rejoice in this merit of hearing and preaching the Dhamma, may they rejoice and find

peace in supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their desired path of awakening! Now recite the verses in this manner.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #111

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.16)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve, kusīto hīnavīriyo;

ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo, vīriyama-rabbhato daḷhaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 112 (Sahassavagga)

Dear Listeners,

It was on a Vesak Full Moon Poya day like today that our Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Self-Enlightened Buddha, was born, attained enlightenment, and passed away into Parinibbāna. Therefore, for us Buddhists, the most sublime and memorable day in every year must be Vesak day. That Great Compassionate One, giving away His eyes, head, flesh, and blood as charity, fulfilled the *pāramīs* (perfections) for four incalculable eons (*asaṅkheyya*) and a hundred thousand eons (*kalpas*), with the firm determination of ferrying us across the ocean of *saṁsāra*, the ocean of *Dukkha* (Suffering).

On a day like today, we must reflect upon what kind of effort He must have exerted to fulfill such difficult perfections over such a vast period of time. Not only during that long period, but also in His final birth in which He became Buddha, practicing self-mortification for six years, the Blessed One exerted a monumental effort that no other yogi or spiritual practitioner had ever borne. It was through that firm, fourfold effort—resolved as: "Let only skin, sinews, and bones remain in this body; let my flesh and blood dry up. Whatever can be achieved by human strength, human energy, and human valor, without reaching that goal, there shall be no relaxing of energy"—that the Buddha realized Supreme Enlightenment. Yet, on a Vesak Full Moon Poya day like today, our minds are drawn more towards material offerings (*āmisa-pūjā*). No matter how sky-high we perform these material offerings with oil, flowers, lamps, and incense, the Buddha considered the offering of practice (*paṭipatti-pūjā*) as the highest offering.

What is the reason for this? The very purpose, the very goal for which the Buddha exerted such a monumental effort, is fulfilled only if we walk on that path of practice.

Even though He exerted such great effort to ferry us across the ocean of *saṁsāra*, if we do not take an interest in it, if we do not walk the path of practice, we will not be able to realize that Dhamma of Nibbāna. When we reflect on the offering of practice, an essential element, an indispensable component of this offering of practice is effort. Apart from the exemplary effort the Buddha demonstrated during that long period and in His final life as Buddha, He has highlighted the value of effort in various discourses (*sūtras*). We first realize that the stanza we have chosen as our theme, and its background story, are indeed a story and a stanza that demonstrate the immense value of effort.

First of all, let us focus our minds on the occasion on which this stanza was preached, its background story (*nidāna kathā*). The texts describe it as follows: A certain young man in Sāvatthī heard the Dhamma from the Buddha and went forth into homelessness. Having gone forth, he received higher ordination (*upasampadā*). However, before long, he became dissatisfied with this monastic life and contemplated returning to lay life; he thought of disrobing. But even though such a thought and feeling arose, this monk thought: "For a son of a noble family like me, considering things like self-respect, it is far better to end my own life while remaining in this monkhood than to return to lay life." He then kept thinking of an easy way to commit suicide.

While he was in this state of mind, one day a group of monks, after having finished their morning alms-meal, returned to the monastery and found a highly venomous cobra in the fireplace room. Having caught this cobra in a basket, these monks were taking it away to discard it. The monk we mentioned saw them carrying the cobra and asked, "What is this?" They replied, "We are taking this cobra to throw it away." Then, this monk thought, "Here is an easy way to commit suicide!" and saying, "Give it to me, I will do it," he took the basket away. Going a distance away, he opened the basket, put his hand in, and tried to make it bite him. But the cobra did not bite. He put his hand inside the basket and moved it here and there, yet it still did not bite. Finally, he even put his finger into the cobra's mouth. Even then, it did not bite. So this monk thought, "This must be a rat-snake." He threw it aside and returned to the monastery. The other monks asked, "How is it, venerable friend, did you discard the cobra?" "That was not a cobra; it was a rat-snake." "Why do you say so, venerable friend?" "I tried to make it bite me, intending to end my life, but it did not bite." The other monks had no reply and fell silent. They fell into deep thought, wondering, "What is this?"

Then, on another day, a barber—to use the modern term—came to shave the monks' heads. He came with several razors, laid one razor on the ground, and began shaving the heads and beards of the Sangha with another razor. Meanwhile, that monk contemplated this razor, thinking, "Here is another way for me to end my life." He took that razor, went and leaned his neck against a tree, and placed the razor on his neck. Just as he placed it—now, generally, at the moment of death, there is a moment when one's life appears before them like a movie. Likewise, he was ready to let go of life. Just as he placed the razor against his windpipe, it suddenly occurred to him as a reflection (*āvarjana*) that from the very day of his higher ordination, he had kept an extremely immaculate, pure virtue (*sīla*). The thought suddenly came to him: "Have I not kept a virtue as spotless as the full moon?" Instantly, a great wave of rapture (*pīti*) suffused his entire body. This refers to a

certain concentration (*samādhi*) born of that rapture. This is called the recollection of virtue (*sīlānussati*). Without even realizing it, what this monk practiced was *sīlānussati*, which, as you virtuous people know, is a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

So, by reflecting on virtue through *sīlānussati*, through that contemplation, rapture spread throughout his body and his mind became stilled. Next, how does one direct the mind to insight (*vipassanā*) in such a situation? Calming that very rapture that had arisen, he then directed it through wisdom towards insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). In this manner, in a very short time, in a mere instant, this monk transcended that rapture, aroused insight-knowledge, and realized the supreme fruit of Arahantship.

Thus, it was a monk who intended to return to lay life and disrobe who had gone taking the razor. But the one who returned with the razor was an Arahant. The other monks did not know this. The monks asked, "Where did you go, venerable friend?" He replied, "I went intending to commit suicide, intending to cut my throat with the razor." "Why then are you not dead?" He made an indication: "Now indeed I have reached a state where I cannot commit suicide"—meaning a state where the mind is no longer inclined to end one's life. "Now I have reached such a state. What happened? Although I went taking the razor to cut my neck, what was ultimately done was the cutting away of all defilements (*kilesas*) with the razor of wisdom." Hearing this, the other monks thought this monk was telling a lie out of conceit (*adhimāna*), or perhaps it was a pure lie, and went to complain to the Buddha, saying, "This monk is making such a claim." Thereupon, the Buddha declared, "Monks, those who have destroyed the cankers (*khīṇāsavas*), the Arahants, do not commit suicide." Pointing out that this is a natural law (*dhammatā*), He made a statement that confirmed the monk's words. Then the monks asked, "Blessed One, if so, why did someone with such capacity to attain Arahantship think of returning to lay life? Why did he think of disrobing?" Next, they asked three questions: "And if he became an Arahant, what was the wholesome karma (*kusala-kamma*) that supported his attainment of Arahantship?" Thirdly, they asked, "In the previous instance, why did that cobra not bite him? Why did the serpent not bite?"

Out of those three questions, the Buddha first answered the last question: the reason why the serpent did not bite. As the cause for this, that cobra had been a servant, a helper of this monk in his third previous birth. Therefore, it did not think of biting its master. You, virtuous people, might sometimes understand such things through the behavior of dogs and cats. Sometimes, non-human animals have special behaviors towards those who were their relatives or friends, through a certain recognition (*saññā*). Accordingly, in later times, this monk came to be known in the Dispensation (*Sāsana*) as "Venerable Sappadāsaka"—the monk whose servant was a serpent. He began to be known by the name Sappadāsaka. But the Buddha did not stop there; He then answered the other two questions as well. That is: while having such potential (*sampatti*) to become an Arahant, why did he think of returning to lay life? Why did he think of disrobing? And secondly, if he attained Arahantship, what was the merit that supported his attainment?

As the reason for this, He related an incident from the time of Kassapa Buddha. A certain monk—not this monk, but another monk—having heard the Dhamma, went forth, but not long after receiving higher ordination, he thought of returning to lay life. He thought of disrobing. However, instead of doing it immediately, he told a companion monk, a friend of his, "Such an idea has come to me." That companion monk, explaining various matters and highlighting the drawbacks of lay life, dispelled his idea of returning to lay life. Thus, that monk settled his mind. However, during the days he was contemplating disrobing, he had neglected his requisites (*pirikara*). Therefore, taking those rusted and soiled requisites, he went to a small pool of water to clean them. While he was cleaning the razor and other items, the companion monk who had helped him with advice was standing there. The monk cleaning the requisites said to him, "Venerable friend, when I was thinking of returning to lay life and disrobing, I had intended to give these requisites to you upon my departure." Hearing this, a great greed (*lobha*) arose in the companion monk. His mind changed completely, and he thought, "Whether this monk disrobes or stays is all the same to me, let me get these requisites." Thereupon, he began to praise the advantages of lay life and speak of the disadvantages of monkhood. In other words, he tried to make him disrobe.

"What is the use of this life of ours, venerable friend? Instead of spending this life wandering from house to house for alms, if we were at home, we could have lived pleasantly engaging in friendly conversation with a wife and children." In this manner, through various lines of talk, he rekindled the idea of returning to lay life and disrobing in that monk. But that monk fell into reflection: "Why is this monk, who previously advised me otherwise, now trying to make me return to lay life?" Then it occurred to him, "Perhaps this is due to his greed for my requisites." Thinking thus, that monk made an effort on his own, dispelled the thought of returning to lay life, and remained in the monkhood. This is the past account that the Buddha revealed.

So, what we have to recognize here is: who was that monk who first helped his companion monk, and later, out of greed for the requisites, praised the advantages of lay life? It was none other than this Venerable Sappadāsaka. Now, through this, we can see the way the wheel of karma (*kamma-cakka*) operates. The Buddha declared it in this manner. Moreover, another point of interest is how he attained Arahantship in such a short time, while holding the razor to his neck. The Buddha declared that the reason for this was that this Venerable Sappadāsaka had practiced monastic duties (*samaṇa-dhamma*) for twenty thousand years during the time of Kassapa Buddha. In the era of Kassapa Buddha, the lifespan of human beings was extremely long. It was because of fulfilling those monastic duties that he was able to attain Arahantship in this life. Yet, the wondrous Dhamma-nature (*dhammatā*) here shows a great entanglement, or rather, a subtle interaction between the wheel of karma and the wheel of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakka*) through this story. Because he had tried to make another disrobe out of greed for a razor, that very razor spun back to be pointed at his own neck, along with a mind bent on suicide. But this monk, being energetic—that is where the importance lies—energetically reflecting on his practice of monastic duties and his immaculate keeping of virtue...

Next, when the monks asked how he had attained Arahantship so quickly, the Buddha declared: "Monks, for one of aroused energy (*āraddhavīriya*), for a monk of aroused energy, in raising a foot and putting it down, he can attain Arahantship even before that foot touches the ground. So rapid is this mind, and due to the qualities of this Dhamma, such as being visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*) and timeless (*akālika*), one can penetrate the Paths and Fruits extremely rapidly. But while one of aroused energy can do this so quickly, a lazy, indolent person cannot do it even if he lives for a hundred years." Having declared thus, the Buddha uttered that Dhamma stanza which we placed as our theme at the beginning:

Yo ca vassasataṁ jīve, kusīto hīnavīriyo;

Ekāhaṁ jīvitaṁ seyyo, vīriyama-rabbhato daḷhaṁ.

"Though one should live a hundred years lazy, indolent, and devoid of effort, yet better is a single day's life of one who makes a firm effort." This is the exemplary stanza of advice uttered by the Buddha. Thus, both this stanza and the story are things from which we can draw great inspiration. This monk, indeed, intended to commit suicide. But here, we must contemplate the effort spoken of by the Buddha. How can we say that this Venerable Sappadāsaka developed effort? In truth, as soon as the thought of disrobing occurred to Venerable Sappadāsaka, he could have done so. But instead, he thought that death was better than returning to lay life. Indeed, in this Dispensation, if a monk disrobes, according to the usage of the Dispensation, the Buddha has designated that as "death". Saying that a member of the Sangha has disrobed, in the terminology of the Dispensation, means he has died. The Buddha has spoken of the decline of monastic virtues to that extent. It might be because this touched his heart, or it might be due to the power of his past karma and past merit, that this monk also contemplated, "It is better for me to end my life than this."

However, based on this, no one should think that committing suicide is the best path to realize Nibbāna. That would be a misunderstanding of this story. There is a very profound point here. When we reflect on the idea of developing effort here, from the moment that monk contemplated by way of *sīlānussati* (recollection of virtue), the entire succession of insight (*vipassanā*) from that point onward was carried out entirely through effort—through intense effort. That is to say, it was through contemplation, through intense contemplation in a manner that aroused deep insight-knowledge, that the venerable monk attained Arahantship. From that point onwards, it was complete effort; his mind did not back down.

Furthermore, when we think carefully about suicide, generally in the world, a person is driven to suicide through mental conflict (*ghattana*). This monk, too, had such a mental conflict. Facing this mental conflict, what most people do is destroy their lives out of hatred/aversion (*dosa*). But the problem is not solved. Why? Because a person commits suicide because they did not get something they expected, or someone they hoped for. At the moment of ending one's life, there is self-hatred within that person. It is out of a certain hatred towards oneself that one cuts one's neck, or jumps into a river or the sea,

and does such things. Therefore, in truth, the problem is not solved by it. The problem is not solved because *Taṇhā* (Craving) remains. As long as *taṇhā* is preserved as an *anusaya* (latency/underlying tendency), as a defilement, one cannot escape the problem by committing suicide. Nowadays, sometimes people try to solve a problem either through suicide or alcohol. Either they intoxicate their minds, attempting to flee from the problem, or they attempt to flee from life itself.

Even though one attempts to flee from this life, such is the nature of *saṁsāra* that as long as defilements are not destroyed, as long as ignorance (*aviijjā*) and *Taṇhā* (Craving) are not eradicated and cut away, one is born again and again in *saṁsāra*. The Buddha demonstrated this in a Dhammapada stanza:

Yathāpi mūle anupaddave daḷhe,

chinno'pi rukkho punareva rūhati;

Evam-pi taṇhānusaye anūhate,

uppajjati dukkham-idaṁ punappunaṁ.

Meaning: Just as a tree, though cut down, grows again and again as long as its root remains undamaged and firm—that is, if it is not uprooted, even if the tree is cut, it grows again—just so, as long as the underlying layer of craving, the subtle defilements remaining as *anusaya* (latency/underlying tendency) are not removed, this *saṁsāra Dukkha* (Suffering) arises again and again. According to this Dhamma-nature, suicide is not the solution. However, there is a profound point here. At the moment of committing suicide, through this mental conflict, if one arouses the perception of self—the notion of "I" and "mine"—then indeed one loses to Māra (the Evil One).

Instead, what should be done? By subtly contemplating the true nature of this mental conflict arising within oneself, analyzing it as: "Here is merely such and such a flow of thoughts, and these are the causes for it"—through such contemplation, through wise contemplation, one arouses the perception of *Anattā* (Not-self) here. The perception of *anattā* means that nothing can be kept under one's control; one has to be separated from them, if not by other means, then by death. Some people, thinking of certain individuals, decide to commit suicide if they do not get them. But one cannot stay with them forever. Such is the nature of things. Therefore, that profound understanding, that direct realization that "nothing can be kept under one's control," which one can arouse through that very conflict, is like a blessing in disguise. Now, there is a common saying in society: "Sorrows that come are sweet." But in truth, we must say that the sorrows that come are not merely sweet; there is also the possibility of turning those sorrows into the taste of Nibbāna. You, virtuous people, have heard of many who turned the sorrows that came to them into the taste of Nibbāna, such as the female disciples Paṭācārā, Kisāgotamī, and others, who extracted the taste of Nibbāna from the sorrows they encountered.

Now, here too, this Venerable Sappadāsaka, through the mental conflict that arose in him, wisely, through what is called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention)—contemplating

with wisdom—realized the sublime Dhamma of Nibbāna. Similar to Venerable Sappadāsaka's story, we can briefly mention another parallel case mentioned in the Dhamma concerning a certain bhikkhunī. Because the oppression of defilements was so great for her, she felt the same way and thought: "It is better for me to hang myself than to return to lay life." She went to a forest, climbed a tree, made a noose out of a creeper, and just as she was about to put it around her neck, her mind was freed from defilements and she attained Arahantship. Now, these stories are not meant for anyone to experiment with. However, one must understand the Dhamma-nature (*dhammatā*) within them.

The realization of this Dhamma, the Dhamma of Nibbāna, is impossible for a lazy person even if they live for a hundred years. But for wise individuals of aroused energy—one who wisely develops virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—this can be directly realized in a very short moment, even before raising a foot and putting it down, as the Buddha declared. The reason for this is that the activity of this mind is extremely rapid. The Buddha stated that no comparison is adequate to describe this. Nowadays, perhaps, some people give comparisons like computers and so on. But the mind changes with such speed that not even one of those comparisons can come close; it is said to be *lahuparivattaṁ* (swiftly changing). That is why the mind is so rapid. This is true when it is directed towards the bad, but if it is directed towards the good, one can very quickly realize the Dhamma of Nibbāna.

Such is the valuable story contained here. Moreover, we must contemplate how the mind changed. The manner in which the mind of greed (*lobha*) arose in that monk was extremely rapid. One must make an effort, drawing from this story, to protect one's mind from such situations. Sometimes, a defilement (*kilesa*) aroused in a mere split second can extend extremely far into the future. It was because of that greedy mind that the razor was aimed at his own neck. Why did he become wearisome of monkhood and think of disrobing, despite having such a rich store of supportive causes (*hetu-sampatti*)? It was because he had caused such a flow of thoughts in another person. This shows the connection between karma and its result (*vipāka*). "What you do bears fruit"—such is the reality.

Next, let us contemplate the razor. There is much we can learn from the razor as well. The razor is largely out of common use today, even among the Sangha. But you, virtuous people, probably know that there are two ways of using a razor. That is, there are two ways of holding a razor. When shaving the head or beard, the razor is held in a certain delicate manner, almost as if preparing to cast it, allowing the hand to move back and forth very easily from the wrist. That is how the razor is held when shaving. But if someone is trying to commit suicide, how do they hold this razor? They brandish it; they hold it tightly. Corresponding to these two ideas, there are two words used in society. Likewise, there are two words used in the Dispensation as well. That delicate holding is called *sammasana* (comprehension/careful investigation), and the tight grasping, the brandishing, is called *parāmasana* (grasping/clinging). Although these words are somewhat heavy, we mentioned them on this occasion because they contain several

profound meanings. *Sammasana* refers to a kind of delicate stroking or light touching. It is enough to understand it in relation to the razor.

There is a similar situation within mental conflict as well. Mental conflict refers to the clashes within the mind. We cannot imagine that there is anyone here who does not experience mental conflicts. Various kinds of conflicts can arise: disappointments, unexpected occurrences—in short, the eight worldly conditions (*aṭṭha-loka-dhamma*). There are mental conflicts that arise when facing these. One can utilize such mental conflicts in both of the ways mentioned. Venerable Sappadāsaka initially went with the intention of brandishing that razor. But what was done through it next? What followed was an understanding of this mental conflict. In the same way, friends, a profound meaning of the word *sammasana* is contemplation. Contemplation means reflecting on whatever comes into one's mind as: "This is such-and-such; this is merely a *Vedanā* (Feeling); this is only a thought; this is like a dream; or this is a *saññā* (perception), a recognition." Considering their true nature in one's mind in this manner is called *sammasana*.

What happens through that? Through that recognition, one does not get entangled in karma with them. Because it is due to a lack of understanding and delusion regarding a mental conflict, the tremors in the mind, that a person is driven by defilements to commit suicide. If, instead, one arouses understanding, grasps their Dhamma-nature, and arouses the concept of *Anattā* (Not-self) instead of self—instead of that intense *Taṇhā* (Craving) and ignorance (*aviijjā*) which demands "this must be kept under my control," realizing: "these are things that do not remain under anyone's control; even if one wishes, they cannot be kept; either one must let them go at death, or they must be abandoned before death"—if one gains such an understanding, they can remain unsubmerged by the torrent of defilements. In short, *sammasana* means contemplating in a manner that arouses the Three Characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self). *Sammasana* is the sharpening of this razor of wisdom so that the Three Characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* become sharp. On the other hand, *parāmasana* (grasping/clinging) means raising the perception of self at a moment of mental tremor or conflict, causing great mental distress by thinking "this is happening only to me," becoming deluded, and out of that tight grasping, being driven by lack of understanding to commit suicide or turn to alcohol. Such is the situation.

Thus, you, virtuous people, apply your minds to meditation along the path of *sammasana*. This meditation is not restricted only to the Sangha. In short, you know that the eight worldly conditions—gain and loss, fame and disrepute, praise and blame, pleasure and *Dukkha* (Suffering)—are things that come in our day-to-day lives. The Buddha declared that everyone has to face these, including the Buddha Himself, as long as they are in *saṁsāra*. So, when one of these conditions presents itself, some people are driven to commit suicide because of it. That is not how one should think. One should console oneself by thinking, "This is only one of the eight; it is only a quarter (of the pairs)." Reflecting wisely that "this is only a quarter of the worldly conditions that happen to everyone," and understanding that this too is a Dhamma-nature that arises, exists, and ceases—a person who practices contemplating daily life in a manner that

yields such understanding will never contemplate committing suicide in such a violent way. In the case of that monk, it was because a heavy past karma had surfaced. Even if such a situation arises, one must contemplate in accordance with the Dhamma. It is from this very mind that we derive what is called effort. Exerting effort means remaining afloat, not submerged by the torrent of defilements. Just as when one falls into a river or the sea, one swims and tries to cross over somehow, one must arouse this wisdom with strength and strive to gain a true understanding of these. That is the exemplar we must take from such stories: the arousing of this effort.

Next, as we said about *sammasana* and the razor, in every situation that presents itself to us, there is a leaning towards *saṁsāra*; we can act in a way that expands *saṁsāra* through the various objects that present themselves. But the Buddha has also declared that within that wise contemplation called *sammasana*, there lies the path to cross over the suffering of *saṁsāra*. In that way, if one now arouses the nature of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self) in everything, and exerts effort towards that, one can reach that understanding within daily life itself. It is mentioned that in the past, not only the monks, but also lay disciples (*upāsaka* and *upāsikā*) even after the Buddha's time, well-guarding their five precepts or the eight Uposatha precepts, and established on that virtue, even during their daily work like farming or carpentry, contemplated the thoughts that arose, the flow of thoughts, exactly as they were, dissolving them right where they arose, and strove to realize the Three Characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* through them. For such persons, at a moment they least expect, sometimes suddenly by the very law of Dhamma, even the penetration of the Paths and Fruits—Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant—can be achieved.

Therefore, while everyone should be enthusiastic about maintaining this attention (*manasikāra*), one must reflect on the Dhamma-principles that lead to this according to what has been discussed. If someone walks the Noble Eightfold Path—shaping their flow of thoughts and daily life according to *sammā-diṭṭhi*, *sammā-saṅkappa*, *sammā-vācā*, *sammā-kammanta*, *sammā-ājīva*, *sammā-vāyāma*, *sammā-sati*, and *sammā-samādhi*—this path becomes straight for them at the very moment such insight-knowledges arise. Furthermore, according to the matters discussed regarding Venerable Sappadāsaka, one must constantly cultivate a deep conviction in the turning of this wheel of karma. The things that happen to oneself should not be viewed merely as things done by others in society; this karma operates in an extremely subtle manner, visible only to a Buddha or to those possessing higher psychic knowledges (*abhiññā*). These are wondrous things. We think someone else did it to us, but underneath lies the force of karma.

Therefore, a person who has developed the conviction that such a force of karma is at work here need not get agitated about these things. These are things one has to pay off. Thus, instead of accumulating further karma based on them, what one must do is apply wisdom, understanding, and effort to comprehend their true nature and turn them into blessings in disguise. In accordance with the Dhamma, there are only three grades to learn in this *saṁsāra*, or rather, to pass out of *saṁsāra*: gratification (*assāda*), danger

(*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*). Gratification (*assāda*) means pleasing the senses with the fivefold sensual pleasures and so on. The gratification class is like the kindergarten class, and that is where the majority of people are. Next, in experiencing this gratification, many people have to commit various unwholesome deeds for its sake; this is clear to you, virtuous people. Nowadays, those who are considered wise or scientists teach what kind of occupations one should do to get rich quickly. What do those who adopt such schemes do? They accumulate sin. Through accumulating those sins, while on the gratification side, they then have to suffer the consequences as the danger (*ādīnava*) of those actions without even realizing it. In the stage of suffering the consequences, a person then reflects in that class: "This *saṁsāra* is indeed not a good place; I must depart from here." It is in such instances, as mentioned in the Jātaka stories and other places, that even kings sometimes abandon their kingship, leave behind all wealth, and go to practice asceticism in places like the Himalayas.

Next, if one has understood the danger (*ādīnava*) of defilements in *saṁsāra* in this way, the peace we receive, the rare gain we obtain, is the opportunity to escape from this, provided we have attained a wise human existence during the era of a Buddha's appearance. This is called "escape" (*nissaraṇa*). Escape means leaping out of this *saṁsāra*. *Saṁsāra* is like a circular ring. When we take the two words *saṁsaraṇa* (wandering) and *nissaraṇa* (escape), we understand that wandering means spinning in the same place. If you look at a dog, you sometimes see it spinning around to catch its tail. It spins in the very same spot. It is the same here. What is to be understood from this extremely profound Dhamma called *Paṭicca-samuppāda* (Dependent Arising) is also this nature of spinning in the same place. The exhaustion and the dizziness arising from this are indeed what are called defilements (*kilesas*). Leaning towards those defilements, the world is drawn and spins in the same place due to the taints (*āsavas*) and other factors.

Due to ignorance (*avijjā*) and *Taṇhā* (Craving), ordinary worldly people see no strength or method to ever leap out of this circular ring. However, when a Buddha appears and declares the Dhamma, we can gradually understand, as Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), the correct comprehension: the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) of this entire *saṁsāric* existence, and that *taṇhā* lies lurking underneath it. If one gains an understanding of these Four Noble Truths—that on the day this unquenchable thirst called *taṇhā* is stilled, there is peace right there, and that the path to attain that peace called Nibbāna is this path of eight factors—then such a person can advance in that grade of escape (*nissaraṇa*).

Therefore, escape (*nissaraṇa*) means leaping out of this circular ring. Once caught in that circular ring, one must exert a certain effort to leap out of it. It does not happen on its own. You know that for someone spinning in circles to leap out of that ring, a special effort is required. What happens on its own is the spinning of the circular ring. That effort is what is called energy (*vīriya*). It was about that energy that the Buddha uttered this stanza, which we have chosen as our theme. Now, you, virtuous people, exert much effort in your day-to-day lives for your occupations and so on. The Buddha describes the

lay life as *khuppipāsāhi khajjamāno*—being consumed by hunger and thirst. How do lay devotees spend their lives? Being eaten up by hunger and thirst. It is just like food. To live in this *saṁsāra* is to live falling prey to what is called hunger and thirst. We think we are taking food and drink, eating and drinking. But what actually happens to us? We are being consumed by thirst and hunger. That is how the Buddha declares it. Such is the perilous state that exists in *saṁsāra*. Whether we look at *saṁsāra* or look at the way our poor human beings live, such a state of suffering exists.

Thus, such is the state of the world. This *Taṇhā* (Craving) is never something that can be satisfied. It is like a deer running after a mirage. This thirst can never be quenched. No matter how much, it cannot be filled. Instead, what must be done is the eradication of this *taṇhā*. That is why the Buddha declared that the very eradication of *taṇhā* is Nibbāna. Thus, what Venerable Sappadāsaka also did was to remove that *taṇhā* lying underneath, as well as the ignorance (*avijjā*) concerning it. A beginning for this can be aroused by everyone through the very things they do. On some occasion, you offer a spoonful of rice. You give something. Even when you offer something when we go on alms round (*piṇḍapāta*), you should reflect: "This is not done merely because this monk arrived, nor is it because we must give something by any means." At that moment, you must look closely back at your own mind. Wisely reflecting on all these things so that no conflict arises in the mind, you must use every single one of these actions to refine your own mind.

In accordance with the advice, "If one gives, one gives alms and merit; if one shapes, one shapes one's own mind," when offering oil, a lamp, or a flower, in every such act, one must look at one's own mind. That is why in stanzas and such, the impermanent nature of these is indicated. A child is very fond of a flower when they see it. But at the moment of offering it, the attitude of offering (*pūjā-buddhi*), the faith (*saddhā*) one has in the Buddha, and similarly with other things, is what matters. Wisely contemplating the value of such moments, one must strive to advance on this path of Nibbāna through them.

From this story, points regarding the exertion of effort arose. When considering day-to-day meditative attention (*manasikāra*), one can contemplate how this bodily cage decays by way of unattractiveness meditation (*asubha-bhāvanā*), or by way of attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*), reflecting that these four elements—earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*)—are what we consume as food and drink. When these external things are integrated into this body, we develop a great attachment to them, thinking "mine," or "this is my limb." But we must reflect wisely on their true nature. Furthermore, instead of submitting and yielding to the flow of thoughts rushing into one's mind, acting according to them, and going to states of misery (*apāya*), one must constantly contemplate the wholesome roots and unwholesome roots declared by the Buddha: *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (hatred), *moha* (delusion), and *alobha* (non-greed), *adosa* (non-hatred), *amoha* (non-delusion). When a certain thought comes to the mind, one must reflect: "Does this fall on the side of greed or non-greed? Does it fall on the side of hatred, or does it help to eradicate hatred? Does it fall on the side of delusion, or on

the side of understanding?" When one shapes the mind with understanding regarding whatever arises, contemplating subtly, karma does not spring up again from them.

If we may give a small comparison—these are not perfect comparisons, but we offer them because they help to understand things through contemporary examples. You know that if there is a wire carrying electricity, and it is not covered with a rubber insulation, the moment you touch it, you get an electric shock. But through that rubber insulation, one is saved from the electric shock. Just so, one must practice contemplating and attending (*manasikāra*) to the flow of thoughts passing through one's mind. What is supportive of this? The Buddha has declared it as *sati-sampajañña*—mindfulness and clear comprehension. *Sati* means mindfulness, and *sampajañña* is also described as wisdom, or rather, awareness. One begins to perform consciously what used to occur unconsciously, even small things like going and coming. Next, contemplating everything, such as the movement of hands and limbs—that is indeed what is called insight (*vipassanā*). Directing attention to each of these, one understands their true nature: that these are things that arise, exist, and cease. At the moment one gains that understanding, just like the electric wire covered with rubber insulation, defilements do not grow within oneself through that flow of thoughts. It helps one to be freed from *saṁsāra*.

This *saṁsāra* is indeed an accumulation of these five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). Through everything we do, these five aggregates—form (*rūpa*), *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception (*saññā*), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness)—are accumulated. Just like pouring water into a filter and having it strain through, through everything we do, these five aggregates grow due to ignorance (*avijjā*) and *Taṇhā* (Craving)—either on the wholesome side or on the unwholesome side. One who strives to completely escape from these, from *saṁsāra*, uses the weapon of wisdom as the supporting tool. Wisdom indeed is this very contemplation. It is the matter of *sammasana* (comprehension/careful investigation) that we have discussed so far: the understanding of, or awareness of, their true nature. One must become aware of them. We mostly try to make others aware. But that is not it; one must apply all of this to oneself. For such a long time, throughout our entire lives, we have breathed since the moment we came out of our mother's womb. Yet, we do not know the true nature of this breath, of this inhalation and exhalation. That is why the Buddha declared the meditation of *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing). If one understands the impermanence (*aniccatā*) within this inhalation and exhalation, how delicate is this thread of life! One can easily arouse the understanding of how quickly, at any moment, it can be spent and cease.

Likewise, one has no understanding of the true nature of this body, its unattractive nature, its impermanent nature, or the true nature of the food and drink we consume. In the ordinary worldly life, this is an era in which people think about them according to various ornaments and fashions. In such an era, one must reflect that by living with wisdom, one can escape from the dangerous conditions commonly seen in society, such as alcohol addiction and suicide. But this must be done systematically. Systematic practice is indeed what is called meditation (*bhāvanā*). Quieting the mind and then

practicing this attention by way of insight (*vipassanā*)—if one obtains the necessary instructions for this from the proper sources, they do not refrain from meditating on the pretext of having farming work in their day-to-day lives; they meditate along with their farming work. They plow, and at the same time, they develop a strength in the mind that can be derived from it.

One must train oneself in that kind of thinking. It was because they lived such lives in the past that it is mentioned of lay female devotees that when pounding paddy, they would not let the husk be separated from the grain without bringing it under the attention of meditation. Somehow, they saw impermanence (*aniccatā*) through it. It was through that Dhamma-reflection during their daily activities that they obtained mental relief—not from medicine or sleeping pills. Therefore, the Dispensation of the Buddha, this Dhamma, is never outdated. It is mentioned in the Dhamma: *satañ-ca dhammo na jaraṁ upeti*—the Dhamma of the virtuous never decays. Ordinary worldly things—you know, where are the things that were in your living rooms ten years ago? If the next-door neighbor has a greater fashion, you follow that. Without even knowing it, those older things go to the dustbin.

That outdated nature found in the world does not apply to this Dhamma. The Dhamma declared by the Buddha more than two thousand five hundred years ago is true even today. It is that fire of greed, that fire of hatred, and that fire of delusion that are still burning. Only the firewood thrown into them is different. In those days, what was thrown were bows, arrows, swords, and so on. Today, you know what is thrown: bombs and other such things. In this manner, the three fires called *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (hatred), and *moha* (delusion) are ever-present realities; they are always there. Therefore, the Dhamma of the Buddha never decays. Reflecting wisely according to this, no matter how the world thinks of these things, one must contemplate them with one's own wisdom and, walking on this Noble Eightfold Path, strive to become a Buddhist in reality, in truth—that is, not merely as a Buddhist by birth certificate, but through practice; not by birth, but to reach the state of being a Buddhist through practice.

The path that supports this is the Noble Eightfold Path. If we briefly consider it, translating the Pali terms: *sammā-diṭṭhi* means Right View. Even when going on a journey, we first look ahead at the road to see if we can pass, or if there are thorns and bushes. Next, we establish a certain view regarding it. *Sammā-diṭṭhi*, or Right View, refers to the Four Noble Truths: that this entire *saṁsāric* existence is *Dukkha* (Suffering); the cause for it is *Taṇhā* (Craving); and the path that leads to the eradication of *taṇhā* and supports Nibbāna is walking on this Noble Eightfold Path. If this basic understanding, this Right View, is established, then as one constantly thinks accordingly, Right Intentions (*sammā-saṅkappa*) arise.

The thought to escape from this lay life, the thought of going forth, the thought of letting go of these, the thought of detachment from *saṁsāra*; next, non-violence, and thoughts of loving-kindness (*mettā*). In this manner, a succession of thoughts arises. If Right Intentions are established accordingly, then that person's speech also avoids lying, slander, harsh speech, and idle chatter; instead, truthful words, words that unite others,

meaningful words, and gentle words are what proceed from that person. Right Speech. *Sammā-vācā* means Right Speech. Next, in accordance with this, that person strives to act as the Buddha did, who was *yathāvādī tathākārī*—He did as He said, and He said as He did. Thinking, "Therefore, I too must live according to my words," they abstain from unwholesome deeds like killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct—Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*). Through Right Speech, they arouse Right Action. That Right Action is not something done occasionally, but is integrated into their entire livelihood, which is extremely difficult in this era. How to keep one's livelihood righteous (*sammā-ājīva*) is indeed a great challenge. Nevertheless, if one hopes for Nibbāna, they have to do it, along with a certain sacrifice.

Then comes Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Through the effort applied to Right Livelihood in accordance with the Dhamma, what that person does is walk on that path of meditation. *Sammā-vāyāma* means Right Effort. *Sammā-vāyāma* does not mean exerting limbs and working until one sweats. It is a certain energy exerted within the mind. What is that energy? Preventing unwholesome thoughts from entering the mind; dispelling unwholesome thoughts already present in the mind; bringing in wholesome thoughts that should be cultivated; and consolidating the wholesome thoughts already present. This is a fourfold energy: the effort to prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome states, to abandon arisen unwholesome states, to arouse unarisen wholesome states, and to maintain and consolidate arisen wholesome states. This is the true energy. What is supportive of developing this energy? Mindfulness (*sati*), the awareness we mentioned earlier. Constantly with mindfulness, alert like a good sentry, one must watch one's own mind. One must constantly watch this flow of incoming thoughts, the flow of thoughts underlying our external actions and words. That watchfulness, that state of keeping watch, that awareness of it, is indeed what is called *sampajañña* (clear comprehension). Thus, one practices *sati-sampajañña*—mindfulness and the wisdom or awareness that follows mindfulness.

Next, accordingly, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) develop within that person: the true nature of this body—not only of one's own body but also of others' bodies—the true nature of *Vedanā* (Feeling), the behavior of the mind, and the changes in the mind during states of greed, hatred, and so on, and what lies underneath them. These four are called contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), and contemplation of phenomena (*dhammānupassanā*). These Four Foundations of Mindfulness automatically become the focus of such a person. Next, when one directs the mind for a long time towards some object, some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) in those Four Foundations of Mindfulness, that purified mind then becomes concentrated (*samādhi*). Through that concentration, a very subtle pleasure (*sukha*) is also experienced. But even if that pleasure or a great rapture arises, transcending that too, just like Venerable Sappadāsaka, one then directs it towards insight-knowledge. You know that water is collected in a large reservoir and then carried through pipes; why is that? To generate electricity, it is carried through several pipes and then through a narrow pipe to turn an iron wheel and produce hydroelectric power. Just so, all this

energy gathered and accumulated by way of concentration (*samādhi*) must next be directed towards the path of insight (*vipassanā*). It is by developing this succession of insight-knowledges in one's mental continuum, beginning with arising and passing away, that at a certain stage—when they have matured—one can penetrate the Paths and Fruits of Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant, escape this perilous ocean of *saṁsāra*, and realize supreme Nibbāna.

Therefore, on a Vesak Full Moon day like today, if you, virtuous people, aspire to worship the Buddha with the highest offering of practice (*paṭipatti-pūjā*) as He declared, you must strive from this day onward to cultivate within yourselves not only that physical effort but also mental effort—this *sammā-vāyāma* (Right Effort). The Vesak day is indeed the most valuable day to make special determinations. Contemplate in that manner. You have listened to the Dhamma very calmly up to this moment. One might think that the benefits of listening to the Dhamma (*dhamma-savana-āniśaṁsa*) are something that will manifest in the future. But most of those benefits have already been reaped right here, even if you are unaware of it. That is to say, the Buddha has declared that it is not through our physical five senses—eyes, ears, nose, and so on—that we can realize Nibbāna. We can realize Nibbāna through the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) called *saddhā* (faith), *vīriya* (energy), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom). Faith (*saddhā*) must be elevated to a faculty (*indriya*). A faculty means a ruling power; faith must be brought to a state where it is unsubdued by anyone, unsubdued by lack of faith. Energy (*vīriya*) must also be elevated to a faculty. It must rule. Ruling means reigning in one's mental continuum. *Indriya* refers to a ruler or king. Thus, faith, energy, and also mindfulness—mindfulness too must be developed in the same way. Next, concentration, the power of concentration. Next, wisdom. The Buddha has designated these both as faculties (*indriya*) and as powers (*bala*). A king is not given kingship for nothing; it is given to exercise power. Likewise, if these faculties of *saddhā*, *vīriya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* have arisen in someone's continuum, then as faculties, they possess a governing power; they can apply that power to realize the supreme Dhamma of Nibbāna.

In support of that, there are those here who have undertaken the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (livelihood-eightfold virtue), and there are also those who have undertaken an even more precious virtue, the precious eight Uposatha precepts. Grounded on that virtue, everyone has generated a good flow of thoughts at this moment—which is indeed meditation. Whether one is seated in a cross-legged posture (*pallaṅka*) or in any other way, this is something that takes place within the mind. Therefore, through this listening to the Dhamma, that meditative flow of thoughts generated develops those faculties of *saddhā*, *vīriya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. Moreover, for some, deep understanding may even arise through this. Reflecting in this manner on this heap of merit accumulated by you, virtuous people, during this hour—this heap of merit accumulated as the benefits of listening to the Dhamma—you must also share its meritorious portion. Having attained a human birth in this extremely rare era of a Buddha's appearance, this is a moment when the lamp of the Dispensation (*Sāsana*) is on the verge of going out. If one does not obtain

light from these last few drops of oil, they will next plunge into a great darkness and will have to wait for another interval between Buddhas (*buddhantara*).

Therefore, reflecting on these, one must take full advantage of such opportunities. Furthermore, may this accumulated store of merit (*puñña-sambhāra*) support our journey to Nibbāna! You must make an aspiration for yourselves: "May I, by developing meditation in this very life, escape from these perilous four states of misery (*apāya*) as quickly as possible, attain the state of Sotāpanna or go even beyond, and obtain the power, the supportive potential (*upanissaya-sampatti*), and the fortune to end all *saṁsāric Dukkha* (Suffering) through the noble state of Arahantship!" Having done so, next, aspire likewise: "May the assembly of deities and Brahmas who protect the Dispensation, and any guardian deities residing in this place who await merit, rejoice in this store of merit we have accumulated through this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening! Having rejoiced, may they realize supreme Nibbāna through a wished-for Bodhi!" Furthermore, whatever departed relatives there may be in our names, and whatever living beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who desire Nibbāna and seek merit—may all such beings rejoice in this heap of merit of our Dhamma listening and Dhamma preaching! Having rejoiced, may they realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna as quickly as possible. With this aspiration, recite these stanzas and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #112

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.30)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Na kahāpaṇavassena, titti kāmesu vijjati;

appassādā dukhā kāmā, iti viññāya paṇḍito;

api dibbesu kāmesu, ratiṃ so nādhigacchati;

taṇhakkhayarato hoti, sammāsambuddhasāvako ti.

From:

Dhammapada 186 (Buddhavagga)

Dear Listeners,

On this invaluable Esala Full Moon Poya Day, let us highlight several points relevant to a precious Dhamma discourse delivered by our Buddha. Generally, worldly people think that if they can eliminate poverty and lack, they can lead a happy life; almost everyone holds this view. However, our Buddha demonstrates that as long as Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) is present, the world cannot eliminate Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*). Why is this? Because as long as Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) exists, lack and scarcity will only grow. The root cause of the growth of lack and scarcity is indeed Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*). Therefore, it is only by eliminating Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) that Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) can be eliminated.

This is why our Buddha, even in His very first sermon—the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, delivered on the Esala Full Moon Poya Day—introduced Nibbāna by the name of the destruction of craving (*taṇhakkhaya*). Thus, it is only by eliminating Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) that one can completely free oneself from the Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) of Saṃsāra. According to worldly concepts, people imagine that if a rain of coins were to fall, they could satisfy all their needs, and the entire world could live in prosperity.

But the Buddha declared that even if a rain of *kahāpaṇas*—a rain of gold coins—were to fall in that manner, this Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) could never be brought to an end. Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) is something that grows and proliferates like a tree or a vine. Therefore, the more one receives, the more the desire arises for "yet more"; a feeling of "this is enough" never arises in Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*). It only says, "this is still insufficient." Even in this modern era, various kinds of "rains" fall in the form of lucky draws and bags of fortune. It is difficult to think that any of these can completely resolve the trials and tribulations of our lives. Indeed, the stanza we have chosen as our theme today, as well as its background story, speaks of a story concerning gold coins.

At the time when our Buddha was residing in Jetavana, a certain young man left the household life and ordained. Having ordained, under the guidance of his preceptor, he went to a distant area to study under a teacher in order to learn the Vinaya and other disciplines. During that time, this monk's father fell extremely ill and drew near to death. The father deeply wished to see his son, the disciple of the Buddha, but there was no way to send a message. Therefore, at his final moment, thinking of his son and speaking deliriously, he handed over a hundred *kahāpaṇas* to his younger son—the monk's younger brother—saying, "This is for my noble son to obtain a bowl and robes," and then he passed away.

Later, when the monk returned to Sāvatthi and visited his father's house, his younger brother fell at his feet, wept bitterly, and said, "At his final moment, our father declared this: he gave me a hundred *kahāpaṇas* for you to obtain a bowl and robes." When the brother asked what should be done with the money, the monk rejected it, saying, "We have no use for these *kahāpaṇas*." Even though he rejected it, later on, a kind of doubt and hesitation arose in this monk: "Why should I trouble myself going from house to house begging for alms? Would it not be better for me to find some employment, return to the lay life, and live comfortably? I can live with these hundred *kahāpaṇas* as my capital." With this thought, he lost interest in his studies and meditation, neglected his monastic duties and routines, and began to pass his time lazily. His physical complexion also became pale and wan. Seeing this, the other novice monks asked him, "What is the matter?" and the monk revealed his thoughts.

Those monks and novices then escorted him to our Buddha. Our Buddha asked, "Why, monk, have you become disaffected? Why are you thinking of returning to the lay life? Why are you dissatisfied with the Holy Life?" When asked, the monk recounted the story. Then our Buddha did this: "Do you think you can sustain your livelihood with these hundred *kahāpaṇas*? Very well, then, instead of those hundred *kahāpaṇas*, go and bring a hundred pebbles." The monk gathered a hundred pebbles and returned.

Our Buddha then began to calculate the accounts with them to see if this amount was sufficient to return to lay life. First, He asked him to set aside fifty of them: He told him to set aside fifty pebbles just for food, drink, and basic sustenance after returning to lay life. He set them aside. Next, He told him to set aside twenty-four *kahāpaṇas* to buy a pair of oxen if he was to engage in farming. Then, He told him to set aside such and such numbers of pebbles for a plough, spade, sickle, axe, and so forth. In the end, when they

looked, those hundred pebbles were insufficient. The hundred *kahāpaṇas* were not enough even as basic capital.

Then our Buddha declared: "Do you see now, monk? How can you satisfy your Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) with these hundred *kahāpaṇas*? Not only for you, but even for the great King Mandhātā—who possessed such immense psychic power that at the mere snap of his fingers a rain of seven treasures fell waist-deep over an area of a league, who lived for an incredibly long time, and who ruled over the heavenly worlds through the reigns of thirty-six Sakkas—even he was unable to eradicate his Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*). He passed away to the next world without being able to fulfill his Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*)." Having related this Jātaka story, our Buddha uttered these two verses at the end:

> *“Na kahāpaṇavassena, titti kāmesu vijjati;*
>
> *appassādā dukhā kāmā, iti viññāya paṇḍito.*
>
> *Api dibbesu kāmesu, ratiṃ so nādhigacchati;*
>
> *taṇhakkhayarato hoti, sammāsambuddhasāvako”ti.*

"Na kahāpaṇavassena titti kāmesu vijjati"—Not even by a rain of *kahāpaṇas* or a rain of gold coins is there any satisfaction, fulfillment, or contentment regarding sensual pleasures (*kāma*). Next:

"Appassādā dukhā kāmā"—Sensual pleasures and the objects of sensual pleasure do have a side of gratification (*assāda*), a side of enjoyment, but it is exceedingly minor. It is very little. However, when looking at their undesirable consequences and disadvantages (*ādīnava*), they entail much Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*). *"Appassādā dukhā kāmā"* means gratification is little, but Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) is abundant.

"Iti viññāya paṇḍito"—The wise person, having understood this matter,

"Api dibbesu kāmesu ratiṃ so nādhigacchati"—does not develop an attachment even to heavenly sensual pleasures. The true disciple of the Buddha does not develop an attachment even to the bliss of the heavenly worlds; the wise one does not form an attachment to it.

"Taṇhakkhayarato hoti sammāsambuddhasāvako"—In what does the true disciple of the Fully Enlightened One find delight? He finds delight in *taṇhakkhaya*, which means the destruction of craving, the exhaustion of thirst. The name *taṇhakkhaya* is used for Nibbāna itself. Nibbāna is defined in the sense of the eradication of craving. Our Buddha declared that the true disciple of the Fully Enlightened One finds delight in that extinguishment.

Therefore, this story and these verses are highly exemplary for us. There are lessons in this story and these stanzas that serve as models for our lives. When we reflect on this story, dear devotees, money is something indispensable for lay life. Indeed, our Buddha

once declared—in response to a question that arose regarding the Sangha—that if money is allowable to someone, then the fivefold sensual pleasures and the fortunes of sensual pleasures are also allowable to them. This is because money is like an invitation to the lay life.

Now, that father leaving a hundred *kahāpaṇas* for the sake of that monk was just like an invitation to become a layman. And that monk was preparing to accept that invitation. Our Buddha changed the monk's mind through a timely simile and a timely course of action. Generally, however, you devotees know that leaving the lay life, which is leaving Saṃsāra, requires getting away from gold, silver, money, and other such things that belong to these sensual objects.

According to the Noble parlance, returning to lay life from the monkhood is referred to as "death." According to the Noble parlance and monastic usage, when someone who has ordained gives up the robes and leaves, it is considered a death, a demise. Often, in monastic terms, money is referred to as a "serpent." You devotees know that when a serpent bites, death is often the result. A similar thing was about to happen to that monk. Just like being bitten by a serpent, a multitude of thoughts about the lay life arose in that monk, to the point of slipping away from his monkhood. Our Buddha removed it through a timely step. Thus, we should consider this as one of the lessons to be drawn from this story. Furthermore, our Buddha made him understand the troublesome nature of lay life through the demonstration He conducted by having that monk bring those pebbles.

You devotees know very well about a critical problem that heavily affects lay life—the great effort and immense struggle to balance income and expenditure in living a household life. The gravity of this was made clear to that monk through the question of whether these things could be done with a hundred *kahāpaṇas*. In this way, our Buddha's supreme skill-in-means (*upāya-kosalla*), His knowledge, and His wisdom are revealed to us through the story associated with these verses.

When we contemplate these verses, we see that what our Buddha has expressed here is an eternal, timeless truth. Why is it said that even a rain of *kahāpaṇas* cannot quench one's desires? Often, we do something thinking that if we obtain it we will be happy and can live our lives well. But even as we receive those things, our minds bend toward more and more luxurious things. In this era, when we look at things commercially, invitations to a luxurious life are everywhere, prompting people to spend in a way that does not match their income.

Therefore, to live peacefully and happily in such a society, even if you devotees cannot renounce everything and ordain, you must try to cultivate a simple lifestyle and noble thoughts in your lay lives. For one who does not understand the value of this simple life, accepting the invitations presented by this commercial civilization leads to falling into a terrifying abyss of debt. Among the forms of happiness necessary for lay life, "the happiness of debtlessness" (*anaṇa-sukha*) is highlighted. But this becomes extremely difficult if one's desires and Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) are intense. Therefore, it is to help even ordinary lay devotees understand the disadvantages of these desires that our

Buddha has preached here that even a rain of *kahāpaṇas* cannot bring satisfaction or contentment regarding those sensual pleasures and desires.

Similarly, *"appassādā dukhā kāmā"*—the nature of sensual pleasures is such that they bring little gratification, minor pleasure, and brief happiness, but their disadvantages (*ādīnava*) are abundant. This is the fact that must be understood by the wise. Even heavenly fortunes and heavenly bliss, though subtle, are still part of the fivefold sensual pleasures. Therefore, without developing an attachment even for those, one must strive to gradually thin out this Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*), to exhaust it, to extinguish it—which is the liberation from craving called Nibbāna. This is the message our Buddha gives.

Indeed, what many people do to quench their Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) is to give it whatever it asks for. This is like giving water to a feverish patient. You cannot satisfy a feverish patient by giving them water every time they ask for it. A true physician examines the root cause of the disease and administers medicine; then, the demand for water naturally ceases. In the same way, our Buddha shows that there is absolutely no end to be found in these desires. Even a multi-billionaire is a pauper when compared to the great King Mandhātā we mentioned. King Mandhātā was so incredibly powerful that through his psychic and meritorious power, a rain of seven treasures fell when he clapped his hands. Yet, even with such a rain of seven treasures, he could not be satisfied. Since Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) is of this nature, it is only when one removes this Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) from one's mind-stream that true peace is obtained.

When a certain householder named Potaliya came to discuss with our Buddha, the Buddha illustrated the disadvantageous side of these sensual pleasures using seven magnificent similes. You devotees may have heard some of these before.

The first simile is explained by our Buddha in this way: A dog, tormented by extreme hunger, goes to a slaughterhouse or a butcher's shop and waits for something to be given. The butcher or his apprentice takes a bone from which all meat has been stripped, leaving only a bone smeared with a bit of blood, and throws it to the dog. The dog picks it up and, because of the trace of blood, tries to gnaw it to find satisfaction. What happens? Sometimes its mouth gets cut, and in the end, it is its own blood that it drinks. In this way, the dog only gets exhausted; its hunger is never actually appeased. Following this simile, our Buddha says to the householder Potaliya: "In the same way, remember that the Blessed One has preached that the gratification (*assāda*) of these is very little, while the Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) is abundant; their disadvantages (*ādīnava*) are great, and they are full of fear." To keep this simile in mind, we can call it the "Simile of the Meatless Bone." This is the first simile.

Next, He gives another simile: A vulture or a hawk takes a piece of meat and flies up into the sky. Seeing this, other vultures and hawks chase after this bird and peck at it to snatch that piece of meat. If the bird does not let go of the piece of meat, what will happen? It will either face death or suffer grave injury and fall. Sensual pleasures are just like that, says the next simile. From this, we can contemplate deeply that every single

simile given by our Buddha is actually like a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). There is immense depth in them.

We can relate this to today's society: it is not just one person who desires these sensual objects or any given thing. There is a vast crowd competing for them. Someone snatches it and flies off like that hawk, and a crowd chases after them. If they do not let go of it, if they cling to it, they will face disaster from the others. Such is their nature. Because so many people desire them, one has to face them in a highly competitive manner and suffer thereby. This is the lesson we must draw from this simile, which we can call the "Simile of the Piece of Meat."

Thirdly, He gives a simile: A person takes a grass torch—nowadays we have flashlights, but in those days when walking in the dark they would carry a fiery torch. Here, it is a grass torch made of grass. Carrying it, they walk against the wind. What happens as they walk against the wind? The embers and sparks of that torch blow back onto their own hand. Their hand will be burnt if they do not let go of that grass torch. Sensual pleasures, too, can be compared to that grass torch. What does this show? It shows that by pursuing these sensual objects, many people end up burning their own hands. The side of their disadvantages (*ādīnava*) is that dangerous. They do not know it, but our Buddha showed that the danger of sensual pleasures is just like carrying a grass torch against the wind.

Next, He gives another simile: the Simile of the Pit of Glowing Embers. Suppose there is a person who loves life and hates death. In one place, there is a pit of glowing embers, deeper than a man's height, filled with blazing, glowing embers. Two strong men come, grab that man by his two arms, and drag him toward that pit of embers. Step by step, that man knows, "If I fall into this, I will face either death or suffering equivalent to death." But he has no choice; he is being dragged toward it. Sensual pleasures are compared to this pit of glowing embers.

Contemplating deeply, we can understand that sensual pleasures are desires. The strength of these desires is such that they drag a person along, just as if they were being dragged by someone else. When a weak man is dragged by two strong men, our Buddha explains that he twists and turns. He twists and struggles to escape from it, but he cannot. Yet he knows that if he falls, he will be destroyed. Our Buddha preached this simile to indicate that such is the nature of those desires. But in all these, our Buddha provides similes to help one develop equanimity (*upekkhā*) toward them. When these desires arise, one can reflect: "The Blessed One has preached this truth."

With this in mind, we must maintain equanimity toward them. Because of intense desire, you devotees know how often we hear nowadays of people killing others or committing suicide in various ways. Why do they do this? It is due to the force of their thoughts. It is like jumping into a pit of glowing embers. Instead of being dragged, here it is like jumping in. But why do they jump? They are dragged by their own thoughts. Being "dragged by the two arms" represents being dragged by those thoughts. If there is no control over those thoughts, one goes, falls into the pit of embers, and dies. This is the Simile of the Pit of Glowing Embers.

Next, our Buddha gives another simile: Suppose a poor person borrows fine clothes and ornaments to go to a wedding or festival—you devotees know about borrowing things, even vehicles as mentioned in the Suttas, which also happens today. They do not own a vehicle, they walk on foot, but because they want to show off at the wedding, they borrow someone else's vehicle, even if it means getting into debt. Not only the vehicle, but there must also be people to match it. Our Buddha explains this with specific reasons.

To show off at a festival, out of pride, a person borrows a vehicle, fine garments, jewelry, and even a retinue to display as their personal wealth. They travel through the middle of the city with all these fortunes. The onlookers who see this say, "Oh, how wealthy this person is! This is how a person of great fortune enjoys their wealth!" Seeing the splendor and fortune of this person, the townspeople speak in this manner. While they are saying this, the owner of the vehicle comes and demands the vehicle back. The owner of the fine garments reclaims them, or even snatches them away if they are not returned. If they have an urgent need, they will snatch them. The owner of the jewelry reclaims them. In the end, what is left for this person?

This is how the disadvantages of sensual pleasures are shown. All these are demonstrated to be like borrowed goods. The things we think of as our sensual pleasures are actually like items borrowed from others, which must be returned later. Often in today's highly competitive society, in order to appear superior to one's neighbors, people run into debt or degrade themselves to acquire these comforts and fortunes. But even though they acquire them, they live in great fear within their hearts: "If these owners suddenly come and demand them back urgently, what will happen to me?" Such is the state. That is the nature of sensual pleasures. Because of the inability to be satisfied, the inability to find contentment, and due to that competitive nature, one can fall into such Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*). That is what our Buddha demonstrates to us through this simile.

Next, He gives another simile, which is very easy to understand and is stated without much detail: Suppose a person sees in a dream a beautiful forest, lovely gardens, and exquisite ponds. They look at these in their dream. Suddenly, they wake up. Once awake, where are those scenes? Those extremely delightful scenes, those sights they were enjoying—where are they? None of them are there. In the same way, our Buddha declared that these sensual pleasures are like a dream.

We think of dreams as things seen only at night. But there are also daydreams. In this day and age, many people live on daydreams, dreaming about the future in that manner. These desires look very beautiful from afar. But when one experiences them, one has to face their disadvantages (*ādīnava*); that is what this simile indicates. Their emptiness is highlighted by this simile of a dream: "It is as false as an ointment applied in a dream." Someone comes and applies ointment to your eyes in a dream, and it feels very strong, but when you wake up and look, there is nothing. Such a simile is also shown.

Next, our Buddha declares another simile: A person enters a forest looking for fruits. In that forest, they see a tree laden with fruits. They think, "I can climb this tree," and they

climb it. Having climbed it, they eat the ripe fruits and even fill their pockets. While they are engaged in this, another person comes along also looking for fruits. This second person sees the tree, but they cannot climb it. In their hand, they have a sharp axe. Since they cannot climb, they begin to chop down the tree at its root. If the first man who climbed the tree does not climb down quickly, when the tree falls, he will fall with it and face either death or grave Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*). Our Buddha declared that sensual pleasures are just like that. This is also a simile to be contemplated.

What this shows is how many people, and in what ways, draw close to these sensual objects. You devotees know that in a competitive society, some obtain jobs, offices, and titles through right means, while others obtain them through wrong means. Sometimes, the one who obtained it through right means has to face dangers from the one who comes to obtain it through wrong means. It is because of such occurrences that this simile shows the terrifying consequences one has to experience. What one has acquired with great effort and trouble, another is waiting to snatch away through wrong means, thereby forcing one to face hazards.

In this way, our Buddha has shown through seven similes that there is absolutely no satisfaction in these sensual pleasures of the world. Although they have a side of gratification (*assāda*), it is minor, and they are full of much Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) and disadvantages (*ādīnava*). Because of this, our Buddha declared as an eternal truth that the only true peace for the world is the sublime Nibbāna, which is the destruction and elimination of Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*).

If we contemplate this deeply, what is the cause of Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*)? It is the notion of "I" and "Mine." While all other religions validate this notion of "I" and treat it as something real, our Buddha declares, according to the doctrine of Non-self (*anattā*), that although this "I" exists in conventional usage, it is not a reality; it is an illusion, the Dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). Arising simultaneously with the notion of "I" is the notion of "Mine." The moment that concept of "I" is created by ignorance (*avijjā*), Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) supports it as "Mine." Our Buddha declared that it is due to this ignorance (*avijjā*) and Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) that we wander in this Saṃsāra for a long time. As the solution to eradicate this, our Buddha states that it is only by gradually thinning out that intense Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*), and through meditation and insight, developing this power of wisdom (*paññā*) within the mind, that this Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) can be exhausted.

But short of that, lay devotees can understand this: when someone observes the Eight Precepts on a Poya day like this, and refrains from taking food at improper times—living according to the practice of the Arahants—wearing white robes and leading a simple life, showing no attachment to their comfortable lives or fine ornaments, they are gradually thinning out that Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*). They are eliminating the coarse, rough side of Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*).

Furthermore, you devotees know that this Sasana of the Buddha can, on one hand, be described in terms of giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*). Through

giving, one eliminates the attachment to the physical objects of sensual pleasure (*vatthu-kāma*). Sensual pleasure (*kāma*) is desire. Desire has two aspects: objective sensual pleasure (*vatthu-kāma*) and defilement-sensual-pleasure (*kilesa-kāma*). The attachment to objects is the coarsest level. That is something that can be done somewhat easily. That is the first lesson: giving (*dāna*). Sacrificing something, whether food or something else, to the poor, travelers, beggars, or toward the Triple Gem. Through this, one removes the stain of stinginess (*maccheramala*) that naturally accompanies the ordinary lay mind at that moment.

If metal objects are left in a place without care, in the end, you do not see the object you expected; you see only a pile of rust. The lay mind is just like that. The rust that binds the lay mind is called the stain of stinginess (*maccheramala*). This is why our Buddha declared a series of praise-titles for the lay devotee who is engaged in giving: *"vigatamalamaccherena cetasā agāraṃ ajjhāvasati muttacāgo payatapāṇi vossaggarato dānasavibhāgarato"*—living the household life with a mind free from the stain of stinginess, always ready to give, hands clean, delighting in relinquishment, and delighting in sharing gifts.

You devotees who perform meritorious deeds like giving know that after giving, a great joy and peace arises within you; that is a spiritual joy (*nirāmisa prīti*). *"Vossaggarato"* means finding delight in relinquishment. Next, *"dānasaṃvibhāgarato"*—delighting in distributing gifts, considering wisely what is appropriate for the recipient; one can derive happiness through that giving. This shows that one can develop a delight in *taṇhakkhaya*—the eradication of craving. Generally, the word for delight, *"rati"*, is used in a negative sense. But here, delight is used in a wholesome sense: delighting in the eradication of craving. It is this delight that must be practiced by the true disciples of the Fully Enlightened One (*sammā-sambuddha-sāvaka*).

At the lay level, when a person gives away items they previously held as "I" and "Mine"—things they could have enjoyed for their own comfort—to the Triple Gem, to the poor, or even to an animal, out of a mind of faith or compassion, their Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) is thinned out for that brief moment. Greed, Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*), and stinginess are cut away.

Thus, giving is the primary step toward the destruction of craving. Virtue (*sīla*) also does a similar thing. On this occasion, you devotees have observed the Eight Precepts based on Right Livelihood, and even higher precepts. Through virtue (*sīla*), one disciplines body and speech. In truth, it is through the mind itself; the mind is chief. What we do with body and speech are the things dictated by the mind. We must establish discipline over them. This is what virtue (*sīla*) does.

Worldly people gladly engage in killing animals for fun, as a livelihood, or for food. But one abstains from it. Stealing—there is nothing new to say about that. The easiest way to get rich without exerting effort is stealing; taking what belongs to others by force, stealth, or any other means. But one abstains from that too. There, too, one makes a sacrifice. By restraining body and speech through virtue (*sīla*), one makes a sacrifice, letting go of

things that are pleasing to oneself. Pleasing things mean sexual misconduct, lying, taking intoxicants, harsh speech, and so on.

Because worldly beings have done these things repeatedly throughout Saṃsāra, the mind is quickly drawn to them. To abstain from them, a special power of determination is required. This determination is what is developed through the undertaking of virtue (*sīla*). When this determination is made in front of the Sangha, it is better remembered by the mind. The effort to live within that determination is what is called guarding virtue (*sīla*). Through that guarding, the happiness of blamelessness (*anavajja-sukha*) arises within oneself—the joy, happiness, and gladness of living blamelessly. One can live peacefully without remorse.

It is in such a person that meditation (*bhāvanā*) establishes itself. Having developed the power of sacrifice through giving (*dāna*), freeing oneself from unnecessary things and accustomed to a simple life, and then disciplining body and speech through virtue (*sīla*) to establish restraint and a peaceful mind free from remorse—basing oneself on that mind, one next enters into meditation (*bhāvanā*). Meditation (*bhāvanā*) means resting the mind on a sign of concentration (*samādhi-nimitta*) through tranquility (*samatha*).

A sign of concentration (*samādhi-nimitta*), used as a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), is not the unwholesome things that the worldly mind thinks of. Even to shoot a human or an animal, a certain application of mindfulness and concentration is required to hit the target. But that is wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*) and wrong mindfulness (*micchā-sati*). There is a focusing and unification of mind on an object, but it leans toward the unwholesome side. Through that, Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) grows within Saṃsāra, leading to birth in hell and other bad destinations.

Instead, one must take a wholesome object. Either through recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) using terms like *Arahant*, *Sammāsambuddha*, or *Bhagavā*, or through loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*) wishing "may all beings be well and happy," or through the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*), impermanence (*anicca*), or mindfulness of death (*maraṇassati*) with short themes like "life is inconstant, death is constant"—bringing such a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) close to one's life and calming the mind through it. An effort is made to calm the scattered mind.

The deepest level of this Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) is called Latency / Underlying tendency (*anusaya*). It is not something easily grasped. The level of Latency / Underlying tendency (*anusaya*) is extremely subtle. The Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) visible in the external world is what we call desire, greed, attachment, and stinginess. But there is an extremely subtle layer to this. It can only be brought to light by a concentrated mind. No one else can expose this for you; it is something one must recognize for oneself. To recognize it, calming the mind in some manner is fundamentally necessary. Once the mind is calmed, then, through proper reflection according to the Buddha's word—called

Radical attention / Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)—one observes how this mind operates.

These cravings arise within the mind. No matter how exquisite things are in the world, no matter how beautiful the things displayed in shops are, or whatever advertisements are shown, Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) does not arise from those external things; it arises from deep within the mind. True, they become objects, but the secret lies in the ignorance (*avijjā*) within the mind. It is to make that ignorance (*avijjā*) grow and to feed the latent tendency of craving (*taṇhā-anusaya*) that those other things assist. Thus, identifying this is what must be done by oneself.

In this way, the meditative mind gradually keeps watch over the objects that come to the mind. Instead of letting those objects drift far away—for normally, an object is something that drags our minds away... how does it drag us? Through whatever we see, a sign (*nimitta*) comes to us.

A minor sign (*nimitta*) comes to us: "this is a woman," "this is a man," or "this is something pleasant," "this is something unpleasant." To that sign, we add more and more thoughts, becoming subservient to it and running after it. This is called accessory features (*anuvyañjana*). It is like adding curries to rice. We support the object that came to the mind and go in that very direction. The final end of that is the disaster we mentioned in the similes—succumbing to those desires. Since such is the nature of the mind, what does the meditator (*yogāvacara*) do? Instead of paying attention to those external objects, they look at their own mind, at how the mind operates. That, too, must be done properly in accordance with the subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*). It does not mean just watching the mind run.

But gradually applying that Wise attention / Radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), one must focus attention on this scattered mind that is drifting away. Next, in that object, there are features that attract our minds. There are various signs (*nimitta*). Disregarding them, one notes very briefly: "form, form," "sound, sound," "scent," or "touch," and so forth. One gradually applies that noting to suppress the mind-captivating or mind-dragging nature of the object.

By doing so, in the end, before the mind is agitated by the impact of the object and the mind, or by the objects coming through the five doors of eye, ear, nose, and so on, one develops the power to quickly remove them from the mind. In a split second, one subjects the mind to equanimity (*upekkhā*). Our Buddha has shown those seven similes precisely to assist in bringing the mind to equanimity (*upekkhā*). Anyone who contemplates deeply on each of these similes will develop a sense of equanimity (*upekkhā*) toward the sensual objects of the world.

If that equanimity (*upekkhā*) is developed, the invitations coming from all sides will not affect one intensely. No matter how the world regards them, the feeling arises: "I have no use for them." For my simple life, for my life of few wishes, these are of no use. These are forces that drag one into Saṃsāra. What I want is to escape from Saṃsāra. To escape

from Saṃsāra means to eradicate that grave ignorance (*avijjā*) called "I" and that Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) called "Mine."

The journey toward that is what is done through the Noble Eightfold Path. The Four Noble Truths revealed to the world by our Buddha on a day like today contain just this. Although we need not repeatedly state that birth is Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*), decay is Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*), illness is Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*), when we think about it carefully, every single one of them is seen to be Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*).

But in a deep sense, how does our Buddha's description of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) conclude when considered in brief? In brief, all these five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*)—called Form, Sensation / Feeling (*vedanā*), Perception, Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—which the worldly being clings to as "I" and "Mine," are themselves Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*). These are Impermanent / Inconstant (*anicca*). There is no power in them to maintain them as "I" and "Mine."

The similes given regarding those sensual pleasures demonstrate that none of these can be maintained under one's control. One cannot say they belong to oneself. They are like borrowed goods, or like things others are waiting to steal. There is a state in all these things where one cannot say they are one's own. That is the very danger and disadvantageous nature (*ādīnava*) therein.

Thus, Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) was explained. Next, our Buddha declared that the cause of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) is Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*), presented as craving for sensual pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*), and craving for non-becoming/non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*). There is an attachment to the objects met by these eyes, ears, nose, and so forth. Similarly, there is an attachment to continuing in this Saṃsāra, to remaining in Becoming / Existence (*bhava*). The reason for this is that one's desires are never satisfied. One dies with one's hopes unfulfilled. Everyone harbors certain hopes toward their final moments, thinking, "These questions will be resolved." But by the time of death, there are still a multitude of hopes.

Because of those hopes, because of that Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*)—which is called the leash of existence (*bhavanetti*)—there is a projecting forward. As a result of that projected Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*), another Becoming / Existence (*bhava*) arises. The desire to maintain this existence in Becoming / Existence (*bhava*) is because one has grasped the notion of "I." Because of grasping (*upādāna*) that "here is an I, here is something belonging to me," there is an underlying desire in the subconscious mind to be born again in Becoming / Existence (*bhava*). In accordance with that desire, at the moment of death, there is a nature of grasping onto what is presented karmically.

Next is craving for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*). Some people think that everything ends with this life, or that something must be destroyed, and that by destroying it we can

obtain happiness. But one cannot solve this problem by committing suicide. Our Buddha declares that what must be destroyed here is Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*). Many people these days consider suicide or sacrificing one's life as the solution to these problems. But the problem cannot be solved through that. It is only by properly understanding this problem and generating wisdom (*paññā*) that one can escape from it. That is why Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) is the cause, as we stated at the beginning of the sermon.

The remainderless relinquishment and elimination of that very Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) is what was introduced as Nibbāna. It is like quenching a thirst. This saṃsāric crowd of beings is like a herd of animals running after a mirage out of thirst. When the true nature of the mirage is realized, the running stops. Similarly, the state where that Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*) is stilled is Nibbāna.

The path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path consists of eight factors that help make a massive transformation in one's life. If we say it in simple terms, it is a proper vision of life, a proper philosophy of living. If we think carefully, everyone—both the thief and the good person—has some vision of life.

But what is the correct vision of life? One must think in accordance with the teachings preached by our Buddha regarding good and bad, merit and demerit, in terms of Saṃsāra, and develop a good understanding of good and bad, merit and demerit. Furthermore, in a deeper sense, one must acquire a correct understanding of the Four Noble Truths—of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*), the cause of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*), the elimination of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) called Nibbāna, and the path to it.

The thoughts generated through that Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) are Right Thoughts (*sammā-saṅkappa*). This includes the thought of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*), which is the thought of leaving the household life and realizing Nibbāna. Next, thoughts of non-ill-will (*avyāpāda-saṅkappa*), which are thoughts of loving-kindness opposed to anger. Then, thoughts of non-harming (*avihiṃsā-saṅkappa*), which are thoughts of compassion. Developing thoughts in this manner.

Using words that follow those thoughts is Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*)—which, as in the virtue we undertook on this occasion, means disciplining speech by refraining from lying, slander, harsh speech, and idle chatter. That is with regard to correct speech.

Next, to match those correct words, to practice what one preaches (*yathāvādī tathākārī*), one must strive to act in the very manner one uses speech. Abstaining from taking life, stealing, and sexual misconduct is Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*).

Next, Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) means earning a living through right means. For many people these days, livelihood is a major problem. They just want to survive somehow. If one survives just somehow, one may have to give up one's humanity and live like animals, demons, or ghosts, depending on the job one does. Since one must be careful about this, one must avoid wrong livelihoods (*micchā-ājīva*)—which were mentioned on this occasion, such as trading in animals for slaughter, weapons, meat,

intoxicants, and poisons—and accustom oneself to a good, righteous livelihood. That is Right Livelihood.

The effort exerted for that is Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), which is the correct exertion, correct effort, and correct energy regarding one's mind—expelling unwholesome thoughts that have arisen, preventing new unwholesome thoughts from arising, bringing wholesome thoughts into the mind, and protecting the wholesome thoughts already present. This fourfold effort is what actually leads one toward meditative, yogic activity.

Thus, Right Effort. Next, the person who is careful about the mind must be highly mindful; they must possess mindfulness. Through this, they develop a good mindfulness regarding the four fields: the body, feeling (*vedanā*), the mind, and the objects of the mind. Next, it is through that development of mindfulness that concentration (*samādhi*), the settling of the mind on a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) for a long time, arises. In that manner, the Noble Eightfold Path culminates in Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

Applying that concentrated mind to insight (*vipassanā*), and developing insight-knowledges called Right Knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and Right Deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*), it is through the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*)—called Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship—that one can completely remove that Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā*), free oneself from ignorance (*avijjā*), and attain the supreme, peaceful, and sublime Nibbāna declared by our Buddha.

Therefore, on such a valuable day as today, having established yourselves in virtue (*sīla*) and listened to the Dhamma for about an hour, you should consider that you have actually been engaged in meditative reflection. During this time, you have had the opportunity to generate and direct in your mind-streams those valuable qualities of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*) which belong to the factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) that assist in realizing Nibbāna.

Furthermore, a great number of valuable Dhamma points that help shape your lives for the future were contained in this Sutta discourse. Making all of these your refuge, you devotees must strive, even as we see the decline of the Sasana in this day and age, to bring the light of Dhamma close to your lives. While moving toward a terrifying abyss, using the solace received due to your being Buddhists, and taking the support of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), utilizing this rare appearance of a Buddha (*buddhopāda*) and your human birth, utilizing this opportunity of the moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*), and traveling on this path of practice presented as giving, virtue, and meditation (*dāna, sīla, bhāvanā*), or virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*), may you, as quickly as possible, free yourselves from all this saṃsāric Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) and find peace in the sublime, deathless Nibbāna! You must wish that the power of the merit generated on this occasion may assist you in this!

Similarly, when performing such meritorious deeds, there is a host of right-viewed deities and Brahma kings who rejoice in them. May all of them rejoice in this store of merit we have accumulated through preaching and listening to the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their own aspired enlightenment! May they provide protection to us and to the Dispensation! With this thought, you must share the merit with the deities. Likewise, may all your departed relatives and all beings from the lowest Avīci hell to the highest Akanitā heaven, who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, rejoice in this merit and find peace in the sublime, deathless Nibbāna! With that aspiration, now recite the stanzas and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #113

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.55)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Puttā m'atthi dhanam m'atthi, iti bālo vihaññati;

attā hi attano natthi, kuto puttā kuto dhanaṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 62 (Bālavagga)

Dear Listeners,

In the Dhamma, unlimited craving (*taṇhā*) for material objects is described as a severe rust that arises in the mind. This vice, known in society as stinginess or avarice, carries the tendency of thinking only of oneself. Reluctant to give but eager to take, reluctant to discard but eager to accumulate, this rust of stinginess leads to a person's ruin in this world and the next. This is clearly explained in the background story of the verse we have chosen as our theme today.

During the time of the Buddha, there lived a wealthy merchant named Ānanda in the city of Sāvatthi. He possessed forty crores of wealth, but despite having such immense wealth, he was an extremely stingy miser. This merchant had an only son named Mūlasiri. It was the merchant's custom once every fortnight to gather his relatives and, in their presence, preach a certain "sermon of stinginess" to his son: "Do not think that forty crores of wealth is a lot. Even if you spend just one Kahāpaṇa at a time, it will soon run out. This existing wealth must not be given to anyone; one should only accumulate more." As similes for this, he would point out that just as collyrium applied to the eye, even when put on in small amounts, soon gets exhausted, so too is this wealth depleted. Likewise, just as termites build an anthill, or bees build a honeycomb, one must spend one's time solely accumulating wealth. In this manner, living an extremely miserly life, this merchant died without even revealing to his only son the locations where his five treasures were hidden. Having died, where was he born? He was conceived in the womb of an outcaste woman in an outcaste village near the gate of that very city.

There were five hundred families in that village. From the moment of his conception, those people could not even find proper wage labor. They struggled greatly to obtain even a meager amount of food and drink, falling into severe distress. They began to think, "Some unfortunate, wretched being must have been born among us." To test this, they divided the five hundred families into two groups of two hundred and fifty. Then they divided them again. In this manner of separation, they pinpointed the family where this child was to be born. Having found them, they exiled and removed that woman from the community. With great difficulty, she gave birth to the child. The child's hands, feet, ears, and nose were not in their proper places; he was born with a body resembling a hideously deformed hungry ghost (*peta*). Yet, no matter how a child is born, a mother's affection remains. So, with immense difficulty, she nurtured the child.

So great was the child's misfortune that if the mother took him along with her to work, she could not secure even a single day of wage labor. Only when she left him at home out of sheer desperation did she manage to get something. After enduring such hardships, when the child grew old enough to beg, the mother said, "My son, we have suffered greatly because of you. Now go and find something from the places where they distribute food and drink to the poor, travelers, and beggars in the city." Placing a potsherd in his hand, she sent him away. As this child begged from house to house, he came to the merchant's mansion where he had lived in his past life. Somehow, due to the negligence of the guards, he entered unnoticed through three gates. At the fourth gate, the children of the merchant Mūlasiri—to whom the king had newly granted the title of merchant—saw this outcaste boy and began to scream in fear. Then the guards came, beat the child, and threw him onto a rubbish heap.

It was at that moment that the Buddha, accompanied by Ven. Ānanda, was walking for alms. On many occasions, when such events occurred, the Buddha would display a gentle smile to reveal a story from the past. When such a sign was made, Ven. Ānanda would inquire about the reason, and the Buddha would explain. Similarly, when Ven. Ānanda questioned Him here, the Buddha said, "Ānanda, the one lying on that rubbish heap is Ānanda, the former merchant." Then, Ven. Ānanda summoned the merchant Mūlasiri to that place. The Buddha then asked Mūlasiri, "Do you know who this is?" When he replied, "No," the Buddha said, "This is your father." The merchant did not believe it; he could not fathom that this outcaste boy was his father.

Thereupon, the Buddha addressed the outcaste child and said, "Merchant Ānanda, show your son the places where you hid the five treasures." At that moment, the outcaste boy revealed the locations where those treasures were hidden. At this, the merchant Mūlasiri believed the matter and gained faith. By then, a large crowd, including the merchant Mūlasiri, had gathered there. It was to this crowd that the Buddha preached the verse we placed at the beginning as our theme.

"I have sons, I have wealth"—thus the fool torments himself and is ruined. But what is the truth? *"Attā hi attano natthi"*—even oneself does not belong to oneself (is non-self, *anattā*). If that is so, whence sons, whence wealth? There are no sons, there is no wealth. It is a short, simple verse, yet highly meaningful. It is recorded that upon hearing this

verse, many attained the paths and fruits of liberation. Here, it is not just the verse; we can also understand that the incident itself must have caused a great sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) in the large crowd. They must have thought, "Alas, this great merchant has been reduced to the status of an outcaste boy." Through this story and this verse, we can extract many valuable Dhamma principles applicable to our own lives. From this story, we see how a multi-millionaire became a deformed, utterly poor human-ghost (*peta*) in his very next birth (*jāti*).

Generally, in society, a millionaire is known as a rich man. But, pious devotees, this richness is not something that can be measured by wealth. Richness is a state of mind. Although that merchant possessed forty crores of wealth, he was extremely poor in his mind. That is why, without spending this wealth or even utilizing it himself, he lived like a human-ghost (*peta*) even while being a wealthy merchant. Through this, we can see that no matter how much wealth is acquired, as richness of mind is gradually lost, how dangerous stinginess can be. The Buddha has shown that a person with unlimited desire, with craving (*taṇhā*) for material objects, is like the great ocean—meaning, no matter how much water flows into it, it is never filled. Similarly, in this instance, the merchant had a certain distorted mental state. Despite having so much wealth, he was poor in mind. It was in accordance with that distorted mental state that his physical body was received, corresponding to his karma.

You all must have often heard the passage preached by the Buddha regarding karma. It is highly relevant here: *"Kammassakā sattā kammadāyādā kammayonī kammapaṭisaraṇā, kammaṃ satte vibhajati yadidaṃ hīnaṃ paṇītatāya."* This is a very famous passage. "Beings are owners of their karma, heirs of their karma, born of their karma, related to their karma, and have karma as their refuge. It is kamma that differentiates beings, making them low or high." One's birth (*jāti*) is also determined by karma. Whether one is elevated or degraded is also directed by karma. In this manner, we can understand the situation here. Here, volition (*cetanā*) itself is karma. Therefore, the stream of thoughts of this merchant was entirely distorted, or rather, a narrow stream of thoughts. It was precisely because of this that he received a corresponding next state of existence (*bhava*).

Through such incidents, we see, for one, how karma leads to rebirth. Even in this modern age, many people show a great interest in past-life events revealed through hypnosis. Often, however, they merely study them without deriving any practical benefit for their lives. What we have here is something similar. Today, people are often placed into a hypnotic trance to retrieve their past. Here too, the Buddha did something somewhat similar. The knowledge that arose in this child is called the memory of past births (*jātissara-ñāṇa*). It was not a state attained by developing absorptions (*jhāna*) as a supernormal power (*abhiññā*). In many individuals, memories of past lives remain stored in consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Especially during childhood, it is easy to bring this out. Here too, it was through the track of past memory that the child, thinking of it as his own place and walking as if going to his own home, entered that merchant's mansion without fear.

Furthermore, he was also able to reveal to his son the places where the treasures were hidden. Correspondingly, the Buddha addressed the child as, "Merchant Ānanda, tell your son about the five treasures." When He said this, the contents stored in his consciousness (*viññāṇa*) were revealed. Thus, we can understand that these are not strange phenomena. These things that are frequently mentioned in modern books were pointed out countless times by the Buddha during His time. Accordingly, through the Dhamma advice presented by the Buddha, many people corrected their weaknesses, and even attained supramundane states; this is clear from those Dhamma stories. Next, let us contemplate a bit more on this rust of stinginess and how it operates in the mind. We know that even if a pile of ironware is left unused, it rusts. Eventually, only a pile of rust remains. Similarly, if wealth is not put to use, and one only looks at the income side, a rust forms within that person, which is called the rust of stinginess. The Buddha has pointed out in other instances how dangerous a weakness this stinginess is.

Here, it was not merely stinginess that caused merchant Ānanda to end up in that deformed, mutilated state, but also the "stinginess sermon" he preached to his son. What was the reason for this? In a Sutta preached to King Kosala on one occasion—when King Kosala came to the Buddha and reported the news of another miserly merchant in Sāvatthi—the Buddha declared that if anyone prevents others from giving, or creates obstacles for the gifts given by others, such individuals are born in bad destinations like hell, the animal realm, etc., and fall into states of extreme poverty without even food and drink. According to this, we can understand that in addition to his narrow, miserly mind, the advice he gave to his son and his wrong guidance was a wrong view. It was also due to this that such a fate befell him.

Similarly, the Buddha has declared to King Kosala that this stinginess is entirely an unwholesome characteristic, a mark of an unworthy person (*asappurisa*). Why is he called an unworthy person? Though that miser accumulates vast wealth, he does not use it himself. He does not give it to his children, nor to his wife. He does not give it to relatives, friends, and associates, nor does he give it to ascetics and brahmins. He leads an extremely unworthy lifestyle, and to illustrate this, a simile is given: that person's wealth is like a pond haunted by demons (*rakkhasa*). In a certain place, there is a beautiful pond, filled with clean water, perfect in every way. But it is haunted by demons. Consequently, no matter who comes, no one enters it, fearing to drink even a drop of water. In the same way, the Buddha compared the miser's wealth to a demon-haunted pond. In this manner, the Buddha has pointed out the dark side of stinginess.

Next, based on this, we can understand what is the good or worthy person's (*sappurisa*) practice. The Buddha has systematically pointed this out. Now, when all of you discuss virtues, especially the virtues of this Sasana, you speak of giving (*dāna*) first of all. Because everyone does it, many think there is no depth to it, treating it as something done casually. But what is the deep meaning within it? Through giving, what we primarily do is cultivate the volition of relinquishment (*pariccāga-cetanā*). Although there are benefits to giving, what actually happens through giving is the enrichment of the mind. Through giving and altruistic conduct, the mind expands. When these are

absent, the mind becomes narrow through jealousy and stinginess. If we want to expand this mind, we must be keen on meritorious deeds like giving. That is true wealth.

You all must have heard of noble wealth (*ariya-dhana*). Among the valuable virtues found in a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), who has attained a noble state, one is mentioned as the quality of generosity (*cāga*), the quality of relinquishment. In short, the way a good noble disciple lives in the household life is described by the Buddha in this passage: *"Vigatamalamaccherena cetasā agāraṃ ajjhāvasati muttacāgo payatapāṇi vossaggarato yācayogo dānasaṃvibhāgarato."* This means dwelling at home with a mind free from the stain of stinginess. *Muttacāgo* means practicing relinquishment, giving away. *Payatapāṇi* means hands always washed and ready for giving. *Vossaggarato* means taking delight in the release of that wealth, finding joy and pleasure in it. *Yācayogo* means being responsive to requests, someone whom beggars and those who ask can easily approach. Not like that demon-haunted pond, but instead, someone whom one can approach without fear and ask, "I have this difficulty, can you help me with this?" That is shown as a virtue of a worthy person (*sappurisa*). *Dānasaṃvibhāgarato* means not only giving gifts, but also being able to share from one's own portion, the capacity to distribute. The Buddha has pointed this out as a highly valuable virtue.

On one occasion, the Buddha pointed out that being able to share even from one's own food and drink is an extremely valuable virtue. The Buddha declared: "If beings knew, as I know, the fruits of giving, they would not eat without having shared, nor would the stain of stinginess obsess their minds. Even if it were their last morsel, their last mouthful, they would not eat without sharing it if there were someone to share it with." The Buddha declared this because He had clearly seen the benefits of giving during His time as a Bodhisatta. When one is eating, and a human or animal arrives in extreme hunger—in intense hunger—one should have the capacity to give at least a portion of the morsel of rice in one's hand. That is the depth of the quality of relinquishment.

In that way, not only giving but sharing what one has was a Buddhist custom in the past, though I do not know if it still exists. When preparing the daily meals, a handful of rice was put into a separate pot, so that it could be given to a beggar or someone in need who came to the house. Even in that instance, there is that volition of relinquishment—sharing, such valuable virtues. Today, perhaps these have disappeared because the economy alone is emphasized. The greatest example for this is the Bodhisatta ideal. We all know that in the Bodhisatta's life, the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramitā*) comes first among the perfections (*pāramīs*). The reason is that among all virtues, what seems hardest to relinquish first is one's own possessions. There is a certain craving (*taṇhā*) in the world for all those assets which one has acquired with great effort and expense, or claims as "mine." Therefore, calming that craving is not easy, even when it comes to giving away external objects.

But it did not stop there. Without stopping at the giving of external objects, the Buddha next gave away even internal assets such as His eyes, head, flesh, and blood. In making those gifts, the giver must pay special attention to one's own mind. Indeed, one should

look at one's mind, not just at the object being given. Although one is separating from the object, and is not giving it in an impure manner, while giving, one must watch one's mind. That is why the Buddha has pointed out to give with a purified mind in three stages (three minds). You all must have heard of this "threefold mind" which the Buddha indicates to complete the wholesome act (*kusala*): *"Pubbeva dānā sumano, dadaṃ cittaṃ pasādayaṃ, datvā attamano hoti."* Before giving, one must generate joy. This is called the prior mind (*pubba-cetana*). Why? Because if the mind changes at the moment of giving, it might falter. This mind changes very quickly. Therefore, one must prepare it beforehand with joy, cultivating happiness and pleasure. That prior volition is extremely important.

Next, *"dadaṃ cittaṃ pasādayaṃ"*—at the moment of giving, too, one generates a certain clarity and confidence, a peaceful joy. If giving to the Triple Gem, one can focus on the virtues of the Sangha or the Buddha, generating joy in them. If giving to the poor, travelers, or beggars, one should generate joy by thinking, "Will this not bring them great comfort?" Next, after giving, one must maintain the mind in such a way that no regret arises. In the Dhamma, illustrative stories show that many are born miserly precisely because the third factor was not fulfilled. You must be aware of the troubles that occurred even in the *Kusa Jātaka*. After running after a Paccekabuddha to retrieve a cake she had offered, she snatched it back from his bowl. Due to that unwholesome deed, her face became misshapen like a cake.

Likewise, there are accounts in the Dhamma stories where some people, despite acquiring wealth, do not feel inclined to enjoy it, and the reason is this third factor—meaning, after giving, they regret it. Instead of rejoicing, they feel regret. Due to that regret, that wholesome deed (*kusala*) becomes somewhat defiled. Its strength is diminished. That is why one must watch the mind, keeping a close eye on it. By spoiling the mind in that manner, even various physical ailments can sometimes arise.

Now, you all know that in society there are many wealthy people and millionaires. No matter how much wealth they have, due to some illness, they might only be able to eat a rough, dry slice of bread. From this, some people develop a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*), realizing, "There must be some karma behind this." You might have heard that not only in Buddhist countries but even abroad, some think about this and direct their lives onto the right path. The Rockefeller Foundation, a social service organization, was established because that billionaire became disillusioned. Why was he disillusioned? Because he could not eat anything more than a slice of bread. So he contemplated, "There must be some defect in this." In this way, wise people contemplate that even karmic illnesses might be caused by errors in our giving, and they strive to correct them.

Thus, we all practice giving (*dāna*) according to our capacities. Opportunities for this arise. Sometimes, we have to give something suddenly. That moment is an opportunity to perform an immensely great wholesome deed (*kusala*). If we hesitate and keep thinking about it, the mind weakens, and that wholesome energy is lost. When an opportunity to give arises, stepping forward and saying "I, I" (with a sense of eagerness to give), having the capacity to step forward and give, comes when one has trained the

mind for it. We must contemplate the benefits of these actions, as explained by the Buddha. Likewise, we must contemplate what Extinction (Nibbāna means. Extinction means releasing the mind from defilements like craving (*taṇhā*) or greed. That defilement is bound first with our possessions. Going a step further, it is bound with this body of ours. Why did the Buddha, during His time as a Bodhisatta, give away His eyes, head, flesh, and blood? It was with the intention of destroying the attachment to this body through that act.

Thus, giving, starting with such external objects, extends to other things as well. Not only that, giving is also shown as one of the four bases of benevolence (*saṅgaha-vatthu*). The bases of benevolence refer to the services one must render to society as a good citizen. This too is the practice of a worthy person (*sappurisa*). These are: giving (*dāna*), kindly speech, useful conduct, and impartiality. The Buddha has pointed out these four factors as the four bases of benevolence. In short, He gives a simile: just as a linchpin supports the wheel of a moving chariot, these four virtues support the progress of society. What are these virtues? Giving. Next, kindly speech—one must treat others not only with gifts but also with kindly words. Next, useful conduct means helping others for their welfare and progress through one's knowledge, understanding, or Dhamma strength. Impartiality means cultivating the capacity in the mind to share equally without discrimination. Impartiality is the ability to help everyone regardless of high or low class, considering their common humanity, according to the situation. These are shown in the Dhamma as the four bases of benevolence.

Even when we speak of giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and mental development (*bhāvanā*), and when we speak of the perfections (*pāramīs*), giving comes first. Similarly, among the four bases of benevolence, giving is prominently listed. Therefore, this generosity, this relinquishment, has been shown by the Buddha as noble wealth (*ariya-dhana*). Through that giving, in relation to the gifts given, it is often the very nature of the given object that is received as its benefit. As an example of this, the Buddha states this regarding the gift of food. Indeed, for beings, what primarily supports the continuation of life is food. The gift of food.

The Buddha says that in a single morsel of food given as a gift, there lies the power to bring five things: long life, beauty, happiness, strength, and wisdom. In this manner, the expected benefits of giving food are shown as: *"āyussa dāyi hoti, vaṇṇassa dāyi..."*—if one has given life to someone, through the gift of food, that person can expect long life in saṃsāra. Similarly, beauty, happiness, strength, and wisdom are contained in that gift of food. That very energy can be obtained as a benefit. In this way, the Buddha has pointed out, in accordance with karma, that the fruits and results correspond to the various gifts one gives. For, in the journey of saṃsāra, what prevents many from progressing is this poverty and destitution.

Therefore, it is not a matter of refraining from giving due to poverty. Rather, it is about enriching the mind to the extent that one can give properly. No matter how much is received, no matter how much wealth is possessed, that is not a limit to whether one can give or not. The story of this stingy merchant is a great lesson in this regard. It was so in

the past, and it is so in modern times. Thus, we must understand that it is not the quantity that matters; richness, which is the capacity to give, is something that must be cultivated in the mind. It is through Dhamma understanding, right view, faith, compassion, and such virtues that we obtain this richness. One sees an extremely poor person or someone without food. The heart melts, and compassion arises. It is then that the person realizes, as declared by the Buddha: "This is a morsel of rice I took to put in my mouth. Yet, I can give from this; even this is too much for me," and gives it to that person. Either one gives it completely, or at least a portion, even if one is in great difficulty oneself. Such is the wondrous nature of the mind. Therefore, regarding this giving, we often look only at the external aspect. Sometimes, large almsgivings are given, but the mind is extremely narrow.

Why does it become narrow? Either because pride is generated through it—excessive pride. Some kind of conceit is formed. Or else praise, fame, and so forth are expected. That does not lead to the true benefits declared by the Buddha. The Buddha has shown that the mind maintained at the moment of giving is what supports one as the benefit of giving in saṃsāra. In some places, it is shown in eight ways, and finally, from the deepest aspect, the way the mind should be maintained in giving is shown as follows:

"Cittālaṅkāraṃ cittaparikkhāratthaṃ dānaṃ"—meaning, "May my mind be adorned and equipped through this gift." Adorning the mind here refers to serenity (*samatha*). In that context, the Buddha speaks of the recollection of generosity (*cāgānussati*), stating that a habitually generous person can even develop concentration (*samādhi*) by reflecting on their own volition of relinquishment. If one constantly maintains the thought, "Among people bound by stinginess, I dwell constantly generous," through that, great joy and clarity arise, leading to concentration.

That is how the mind is adorned. To contemplate, "I give this gift to lighten my mind through relinquishment and bring it to concentration," is a deep thought. Similarly, *cittaparikkhāratthaṃ* means that through this gift, the bonds of craving (*taṇhā*) are broken, and for at least a single moment, my mind is freed from greed, hatred, and so forth. Furthermore, if one gives realizing that "all of this is impermanent (*anicca*)," at that moment, one can utilize that giving from an insight perspective (*vipassanā*). All of these, we must understand, are objects for fashioning our own minds. By giving to another, we fashion our own mind. Thus, it does not go to waste.

The maximum benefit we can derive from it is Dhamma realization—contemplating that giving deeply, having a pure understanding of one's ultimate goal, one's intention, and one's aspiration. That is why the Buddha declared: *"Appam pi ce saddhāyeva dadāti, tena eva so hoti parattha..."*—even if one gives a small thing, if given with faith (*saddhā*) in the mind, one's life in the next world becomes happy. There, the mind is primary. Similarly, even if we reflect on society, the environment we live in, the environment of our birth (*jāti*), we must look at this world as a resting hall (*ambalama*). For, as we travel along this long journey of saṃsāra, we received this state of existence (*bhava*) according to our past karma. Due to certain parents, we were born in a certain

environment. We must train ourselves to look at those lands, houses, and everything as a resting hall.

Now, the concept of a resting hall (*ambalama*) might also be largely lost, so I have to explain it a bit to you. A resting hall refers to small halls built by people in the past, at various locations, when most people traveled on foot. When they were tired, they would come there to spend the night. Those who gathered at the resting hall, no matter which area they came from, would spend that night sharing what they had, thinking of themselves as a group gathered for a moment, gathered for a single night. It was not a matter of living by deceiving others like the *āṇḍis* (mendicants) in the story of the seven *āṇḍis* drinking porridge. Not like that. It was about sharing one's things in complete keeping with impartiality. That is how we must think of the life we live. When we think of this entire world as a resting hall, the mind urges us to give to those in need according to our capacity. Otherwise, if we harbor pride, thinking "this land is mine, this house is mine, these are mine," and consequently cultivate stinginess over them, then, like that stingy merchant, or even worse, we might be born in animal states of existence (*bhava*) as dogs, cats, or rat-snakes, forced to live around those very houses. Especially, a state of existence as a hungry ghost (*peta-bhava*) is shown as a result of stinginess.

Instead, what we must do is cultivate that kind of attitude. When we contemplate society, that is an extremely valuable thing. What I have received is something very valuable. This is a state received due to wholesome karma performed in the past. Thus, every time we utilize these, that wholesome karma is worn away. Instead of this wearing-away karma, we must build up further wholesome karma, using this very wealth, these possessions, and these lands. Thinking thus, we must develop the capacity to help the poor, travelers, beggars, and all needy people according to the situation. If we begin to hide everything under the pretext of economic pressure or poverty, then our cultivation of virtue, our cultivation of qualities, comes to a standstill. Through that, as a result, one falls into an even more dangerous abyss. It does not even have to wait for the next world. Even in this world, for one who generally helps others, at an unexpected moment when they themselves are in difficulty, someone will come and help them naturally. There is such a natural law. Such incidents do occur in society. Whether it happens in this life or not, the Buddha has declared that their results exist as benefits in the future as well. We must cultivate faith (*saddhā*) in that word of the Buddha.

Next, when we contemplate from a social perspective, there is another deeply profound aspect within this verse. *"Attā hi attano natthi"*—which is the third line spoken by the Buddha here. First, He says the fool torments himself thinking, "I have sons, I have wealth." "Torments himself" means he is subjected to a mountain of suffering (*dukkha*) for the sake of his children and wealth. Although he thinks of it as pleasure, a mountain of suffering (*dukkha*) is involved in protecting and acquiring wealth. But due to pride—the pride of thinking "wealth is mine"—that is somewhat forgotten. Thus, although the fool holds onto these, the Buddha declares: *"Attā hi attano natthi"*—"even oneself does not belong to oneself" (or "oneself is non-self", *anattā*). A profound point is being made here: "oneself does not belong to oneself." You all must have heard that the Dhamma declared by our Buddha is a teaching of non-self (*anattā*). Here too, the statement "even

oneself does not belong to oneself" is like shattering the very foundation of craving (*taṇhā*).

Craving (*taṇhā*), as we said before, is like an ocean that cannot be filled. In other words, calling something "mine, mine" is like dealing with something bottomless. But the Buddha points out here that the ordinary person sees "I" as the bottom. "I" and "mine"—these two words go together. When asked "Who am I?", how do I identify myself? Through "my" things. Through my lands, my children, my titles, my knowledge and education—it is through these that I identify myself. Or else, through my body. In short, the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). The Buddha has shown that it is in association with the five—form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—that one considers oneself as "I." But the Buddha points out that these very things, the things taken as "mine," do not belong to oneself. How do they not belong to oneself? From here, we go straight to the teaching of non-self (*anattā*) declared by the Buddha.

The Buddha first preached the characteristic of non-self (*anattā*), the nature of non-self, to the world in His sermon to the group of five monks (*pañcavaggiya*). On that occasion, He demonstrated in a very simple manner why these five aggregates of form, feeling, etc., do not belong to oneself. The Buddha declared to those five monks: "Monks, first of all, form is non-self (*anattā*). If form were self (*attā*), form would not lead to affliction and trouble. It would be possible to keep it under one's control." If it causes trouble, it cannot be one's own. Therefore, the Buddha first says: "Form is non-self (*anattā*). If form were self (*attā*), one should be able to keep it under one's control. Likewise, one should be able to command form: 'Let my form be thus, let it not be otherwise.' But monks, we cannot control form as we wish. It gets sick, it grows old, it dies, it is destroyed. Therefore, form is not mine." In that way, the Buddha declared to those five monks. Of the five heaps we are grasping, the heap of form is not mine. Why? Because it cannot be kept under my control. From this, we see that the word "self" (*attā*) implies that which can be kept under one's own control.

Although that merchant considered his son as "my son," when he came to his house after falling into that outcaste state, what was the reception he received? He was dragged and thrown onto a rubbish heap. Even his son could not recognize him. Thus, his son was no more. What happened to his wealth? His wealth was lost after death. Even while alive, he could not properly manage his wealth or derive any use from it. Through this, we can see that although the Buddha applied the term "self" (*attā*) to that story, we must consider it deeply. Considering it deeply means that the statement "even oneself does not belong to oneself" is indeed like shattering the bottom of craving (*taṇhā*). In this notion of "I" and "mine," there is no core, no essence, no permanent foundation, no permanent nature in the things taken as "I."

Next, the Buddha asks those five monks: "Monks, is form permanent (*nicca*) or impermanent (*anicca*)?" At once they reply: "Impermanent, venerable sir." "If something is impermanent, is it happiness or suffering (*dukkha*)?" They have to answer: "Suffering, venerable sir." Why do they say so? If it is impermanent, one has to keep

maintaining it, repairing it over and over. That is great suffering. That is a great trouble. Thus is this body as well. They say directly: "It is suffering." Next, the Buddha asks: "Monks, if something is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, is it fit to regard it as: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?" Then they have to answer: "No, venerable sir." In this way, with a few simple questions, the Buddha convinced the five monks regarding form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Regarding this five aggregates, taking them as "I" and "mine," the Buddha has declared in this Dhamma that they are not some permanent thing or self residing inside our body, as taught in some other religions. Instead, what we can directly realize is that we have a physical form-part (*rūpa*) made up of earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). Next, based on this form-part, we have various feelings (*vedanā*)—a multitude of sensations. A multitude of feelings, a heap of feelings, classified as pleasant, painful, or neutral (neither-painful-nor-pleasant). Each of these is a heap. The five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) means five heaps. Each of these is a heap. It is not just one heap made by combining these five; each one of them is a heap. A heap of form (*rūpa*), a heap of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*) meaning a heap of recognitions. Next, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) meaning a heap of fabrications, volitions, aspirations, and preparations made inside the mind. How many palaces do we build in the mind before building a single house? You all know this. We build many castles in the air during sleepless nights before finally constructing a house. We do a task by accumulating such a vast number of thoughts and expectations. It is a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is why it is compared to a banana trunk. There is no heartwood inside. It is just a heap of sheaths. When you peel the sheaths away, there is nothing substantial to be found inside. Yet, it looks massive. Such is the heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*).

Next, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) refers to the mind, thoughts. It is not something you can grasp with your hands. Yet, it is directly experienced by everyone that this stream of thoughts flows rapidly. Because we do not clearly see the nature of arising and passing away in that continuity, in that stream, we say "my mind." The mind that exists now changes in the next moment. Such is the situation. The Buddha shows that it is these five heaps that a person takes as "I" and "mine."

If you contemplate each of these a bit more deeply, you will find that in Suttas like the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, they discuss this body. The thirty-two impure parts of the body. Laywomen and others often hear and utilize this for meditation. Even these thirty-two impure parts have been shown by the Buddha through a wonderful simile, in a way that reveals their impermanent (*anicca*) nature, their nature of arising and passing away. The Buddha instructs us to contemplate these thirty-two parts of the body as if looking at a bag open at both ends, filled with various kinds of grain like paddy, mung beans, etc. Laywomen and others meditate saying, *"Atthi imasmiṃ kāye..."*—within this body, there are these: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, etc., all of them. At that moment, we must realize that although we separate them to count them as if taking them out of a bag, they are like being placed into a bag open at the other end. Why did He use

such a simile? Everything within this body has the nature of arising and passing away. The breath we take, the food and drink we consume. Nay, even the things we think of as hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, etc., gradually arise and pass away. The nature in all of this is that it is received from one side and departs from the other. That is what happens. Arising and passing away. It is within this that impermanence (*aniccatā*) lies. Therefore, when the Buddha declared that everything is impermanent (*anicca*), He was referring to that very nature of the world. Arising and passing away. Filling and emptying. We must contemplate wealth in the exact same manner.

Now, if we return to the story, that miser failed to realize that this wealth, these possessions, are also meant to be spent. He only thought of the income side, not the expenditure side. If both income and expenditure are not balanced, if one does not think of both, it is like being unable to digest the food and drink one has consumed, eventually falling into a dangerous disease. For, everything that is put inside must also go out. It must be expelled. Holding onto it is like accumulating crores of wealth without enjoying it or giving it to anyone; that is how the rust forms. It is exactly like that.

Therefore, we must apply the very same natural law found in this body to society. We must look at the entire world through those eyes. That world-nature is twofold: arising and passing away. Income and expenditure. Filling and emptying. When the mind is directed to this natural law, there is nothing to grasp here. From everything, we extract the utility needed for the moment, and then we dismiss it from the mind. One's lands, houses, children—all of them. If we make them a burden to the mind, if we grasp and cling to them, then in the next birth (*jāti*) we will be born as hungry ghosts (*peta*) or in animal states of existence around those houses. Instead, we must train the mind during this state of existence received in this world-resting-hall. Those nearby are our closest relatives, then neighbors, then friends and companions, then ascetics and brahmins. In this way, the Buddha has shown them as segments of society, and everyone belongs to that entire resting hall. We must cultivate an attitude of sharing not only our wealth, but also our labor and whatever we can give to the world in this world-resting-hall according to the situation. That is how one purifies the volition of giving. One must prepare the mind for this well in advance.

The very breath we inhale in this life is what others inhale as well. We cannot separate it as "ours." It is the same with other things. Furthermore, for a single grain of rice we consume as food, how many people have shed tears of blood? We think, "We bought this from the shop with our money." If we contemplate society, you can understand this very easily. When we contemplate how many people shed their sweat and blood for the consumer goods we utilize, we cannot reduce it to rupees and cents. We must think, "A vast number of people made a great sacrifice, labor, and surrender, and as a result of that, we are eating this mouthful of rice." If we can contemplate all our resources in this way, that wise person can cultivate those bases of benevolence (*saṅgaha-vatthu*) toward society and the world: giving (*dāna*), kindly speech, useful conduct, and impartiality. Because of a philosophy of life developed through that deep vision, the devotees who lived in this country in the past led such peaceful lives. Not like today, where people

think excessively about the economy, making grand plans and living highly stressed lives. Every plan is subject to impermanence (*aniccatā*).

Therefore, we must contemplate according to the plan shown by the Buddha for our long journey in saṃsāra. What is that plan? Our volition (*cetanā*) must be pure. When volition is impure, a physical body corresponding to that volition, to that mold, is created. The four elements of earth, water, fire, and air are innocent. These four elements combine in accordance with one's thought. It is according to that thought that creations occur. When we speak of creating something, we only think of things created in the scientific age. But something far more subtle occurs. In our mind, in our consciousness (*viññāṇa*), in that mental energy, there is a great wonder. Through that mental energy, the Buddha has shown that as long as the defilements of ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*) exist, one wanders in the world of existence (*bhava*). No matter how much we think, "May existence (*bhava*) end here, this is enough for me, I do not want to be born again," though some say this when facing difficulties, when good times return, they wish to continue in existence (*bhava*). However, merely wishing does not end existence (*bhava*). If it were so, a Buddha would not be needed. Instead, we must systematically train our minds to correspond to that state.

How do we train the mind? We must strive to gradually suppress those defilements of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). It is a long journey from greed (*lobha*) to non-greed (*alobha*). It is a long journey from hatred (*dosa*) to non-hatred (*adosa*), which is a state free of hatred. It is a long journey from delusion (*moha*)—meaning foolishness—to wisdom (*paññā*). But even the longest journey starts with a single step, with what is close at hand.

Therefore, even if what is given is a small thing, at that moment, one detaches one's mind from greed. This is called abandonment by substitution of opposites (*tadaṅga-vasena*). It is by removing greed temporarily that one gives a gift. Temporarily removing the attachment and clinging to it, one gives, thinking, "May this be a help, a comfort, may it extinguish the fire of hunger." At that moment, for a brief second, like a flash of lightning, the mind catches a glimpse of the peace of Extinction (The Mind Stilled / Extinguishiment). A peace of Extinction. It is freed from greed, freed from hatred, freed from delusion, and from the feeling of "I" and "mine." It is by developing this systematically that a Bodhisatta practices it at the highest level. In short, in everything that started with the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramitā*), what is present is the giving and sacrifice performed by the Buddha for the sake of the world. Otherwise, He could have realized Extinction much earlier. Within that multitude of perfections (*pāramīs*), there is only relinquishment and sacrifice. He relinquished His energy, wisdom, mental power, wealth, body, eyes, head, flesh, and blood. When we contemplate in this way, we can extract a deep vision from this. Here, giving means departing from greed.

To put it another way, in the concept of "I" and "mine," if we take "I," it is ignorance (*avijjā*). "Mine" is craving (*taṇhā*). These two create the entire saṃsāra. As long as these exist, no matter how much we think, a next state of existence (*bhava*) is created. Why? Because due to ignorance, a force of Preparations (*saṅkhāra-vega*) or a mental impulse

is generated, which creates a physical body using the elements of the universe accordingly.

Now, it was that highly deformed human-ghost (*peta*) appearance that was granted to merchant Ānanda due to his distorted mind. Because he died with a distorted mental state, he received a distorted body with corresponding deformities. Therefore, we must strive to maintain our minds in accordance with the Dhamma so that they do not become distorted. For, we do not know at what moment death will come. When discussing a next state of existence (*bhava*), the near-death thought (*āsanna-citta*) is often mentioned. If the mind is in a bad state at the moment of death, one might go straight to a bad destination. That is why, at the moment of death, people invite monks to preach the Dhamma, and perform various other actions to prepare the dying person's mind. Thus, instead of waiting only for that moment, and instead of making one's children struggle to do it then, if one can live with the awareness that death can come at any moment, as if maintaining a constant near-death mind, that person is the one who progresses. No matter when death comes, that near-death mind remains pure. Strive to prepare your mind in that manner. That is the flavor of the Dhamma we can absorb from this story and verse.

The Buddha declared that passage precisely to strike a blow against craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*): *"Attā hi attano natthi, kuto puttā kuto dhanaṃ"*—even oneself does not belong to oneself. When oneself does not belong to oneself, whence sons for oneself? Whence wealth? Thus, we must contemplate this deeply. At first glance, it might not strike the mind as to what meaning the Buddha declared this. Everything claimed as "mine"—not only this body but everything considered as one's own possession—undergoes a multitude of arisings and passings away. They undergo this constantly, not only when we notice it. We say someone has changed, or something is lost, or has decayed. This is not something that happens in a single moment. Before we see it, it occurs extremely rapidly and instantly. It is to the extent that we see this process that we directly realize it. Direct realization of the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*) is what is called attaining supramundane states. That is why you all practice meditation. It is not visible to the ordinary physical eye. There is an aspect visible to the ordinary physical eye—we can understand the fate of food and drink, and the fate of inhalation and exhalation in a general way. But beyond that, one cannot see the nature of extremely rapid change in everything, including this body. However, to a mind developed through meditation, this becomes visible. Nay, it is visible even to the eye when the mind is stilled. It is when one has gradually developed in this manner that insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) matures to the point of liberating oneself from saṃsāra.

The Buddha points out that as long as craving (*taṇhā*) for existence (*bhava*), desire for existence (*bhava*) remains, no matter how much we think, we cannot escape from existence (*bhava*). The desire for this must be destroyed, in the proper way, and it must be directly seen as declared by the Buddha. It is by directly seeing: "This form is impermanent (*anicca*), changing moment by moment. Feeling (*vedanā*) changes.

Perception (*saññā*) is the same, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are the same, the mind is the same," that one can escape from this existence (*bhava*). It is by extinguishing the continuation called the cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*), escaping from continuation and arriving at the stilled state called Extinction (Nibbāna which the Buddha points out. No matter what is said in other religions, as Buddhists we contemplate with regard to craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) that this saṃsāra is suffering (*dukkha*). This liberation is the true happiness. The Buddha has shown that escaping from this state does not happen only when going from this world to the next, but can be directly realized in this very life.

Liberation from craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*aviĳjā*) can only be achieved by a pure, luminous mind. Not by a defiled mind of that sort, not by a rusted mind. Rust is the simile for that. Rust refers to something inactive. Rust is something that lacks luster and light. Therefore, the entire effort within this Sasana is to free the mind from the rust of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). When the mind is freed from those rusts, there exists a luminous, bright, or radiant mind; it is within that mind that all peace resides. That is what is called Extinction (Nibbāna. He who has attained that mental state, which can be directly realized in this very life, is the one who does not claim a further rebirth (*jāti*). Why? Because he has removed all those attachments and bonds. Instead, he has obtained the highest peace of calming, called the calming of all Preparations (*sabbasaṅkhārasamatha*). It is through this that the entire journey of saṃsāra can be ended. Having fulfilled the perfections (*pāramīs*) to such an extent, giving away His eyes, head, flesh, and blood, the Buddha revealed to the world this very vision of non-self (*anattā*). Therefore, through this sermon of ours, which began with stinginess, we must also strive to remove our stinginess toward saṃsāra. As long as this stinginess exists, we wander in this long saṃsāra, suffering without end. Just as you have undertaken the precepts today, you must be mindful of virtue (*sīla*). Established in virtue (*sīla*), and then developing concentration (*samādhi*) through meditation, and bringing forth that insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), one can end this suffering of saṃsāra through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, and find peace in the noble, deathless Extinction.

Thus, for about an hour today, this pious gathering listened to a valuable verse of the Buddha and the story associated with it. Through this, you can extract certain things that support your lives and the path to Extinction (Nibbāna. Not only that, I believe you were able to extract certain principles applicable to the life you lead in this worldly society. Through listening to the Dhamma for this duration, we have deposited those virtues of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) within our minds. You should rejoice that through this, you have been able to develop those virtues supporting Extinction, which can arise as spiritual powers (*bala*) at some point.

This is the first, valuable Full Moon Poya day of this year. Certain life principles or determinations made on this day affect the entire year. Therefore, if any deep understandings have arisen through this Dhamma sermon, if any novel and valuable

feelings regarding life have arisen, keep them as your principles and lead your life forward accordingly. Amidst a world heading on the path of decline, may you live in accordance with the Dhamma, with Dhamma comfort, setting an example, living as spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) to the world. Make an aspiration: "May these merits and the benefits of listening to the Dhamma support me to find peace in the noble, deathless Extinction through the realization of the paths and fruits as quickly as possible." Likewise, may the protector deities and Brahmas, and all beings from the Avici hell to the Akanittha heaven who are able to share in these merits, rejoice in this store of merits we have accumulated through this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening. Having rejoiced, may they all be liberated from all suffering of saṃsāra as quickly as possible, freed from birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*), and find peace in the noble, deathless Extinction. Share the merits by reciting the verses in this manner:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #114

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.167)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

So bodhisatto ratanavaro atulyo,

manussaloke hitasukhāya jāto,

sakyānaṃ gāme janapade lumbineyyeyya,

tenamha tuṭṭhā atiriva kalyarūpā;

so sabbasattuttamo aggapuggalo,

narāsabho sabbapajānamuttamo,

vattessati cakkaṃ isivhaye vane,

nadaṃva sīho balavā migābhibhū ti.

From:

Nālaka Sutta (Sn 683–684) Sutta Nipāta, Khuddaka Nikāya.

Dear Listeners,

Today, this Vesak Full Moon Poya Day, is known as a thrice-blessed day. We believe that during the three events of birth (*jāti*), supreme enlightenment (*Sambodhi*), and final passing away (*Parinibbāna*) of the Lord Buddha, the Sakya Sage, the teacher of the three worlds, certain miraculous and wonderful events occurred. To indicate that even the birth of that Bodhisatta destined for Buddhahood in this human world was such an auspicious event that the deities in heaven held festivals, we have chosen two verses from the Nālaka Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta as our theme today.

You, noble devotees, have heard that the father of Prince Siddhartha was King Suddhodana. The royal priest (*purohita*) of King Sihahanu, the father of King Suddhodana, was a Brahmin named Asita. Prince Suddhodana also studied arts and

sciences under this Brahmin Asita during his youth. Later, after ascending to the throne, Asita continued to serve as the royal priest of King Suddhodana. At some point, this Brahmin Asita felt inclined to renounce the lay life and become an ascetic. When he informed the King of this, the King, unable to prevent it, requested, "If so, please ordain as an ascetic and reside in my royal garden so that I may see you frequently." Ascetic Asita agreed to this, became an ascetic, and resided in the King's garden, practicing *kasiṇa* meditation and other contemplations. He would accept his alms from the royal palace. By practicing *kasiṇa* meditation while residing in that very garden, he attained the eight meditative attainments (*aṭṭha-samāpatti*) and the five higher knowledges (*pañcābhiññā*). Having attained these, Ascetic Asita would occasionally go to the Himalayas to remain in concentration (*samādhi*). At other times, he would spend his time in meditation within the celestial mansions of the heavens, such as the *Cātumahārājika* (Four Great Kings) and *Tāvatiṃsa* (Thirty-Three). On one occasion—what is called the "daytime dwelling" (*divāvihāra*), which means sitting in meditation during the afternoon after accepting alms—while he was in the *Tāvatiṃsa* heaven for his daytime dwelling, upon arising from his concentration and looking outside, he saw Sakka and the host of deities celebrating a festival in an extraordinary state of joy, waving their garments, shouting with joy, singing, playing instruments, dancing, and clapping their hands.

Then, Ascetic Asita asked the host of deities, "Why are you celebrating this festival with such intense joy and jubilation, even exceeding that of the occasion of victory in the war between the Devas and Asuras? Please tell me the reason for this." On being thus invited, the explanation given by the deities is what is expressed in the two thematic verses of the Sutta mentioned above:

"So bodhisatto ratanavaro atulyo,

manussaloke hitasukhāya jāto,

sakyānaṃ gāme janapade lumbineyyeyya,

tenamha tuṭṭhā atiriva kalyarūpā..."

"That incomparable Bodhisatta, like a peerless jewel, is born in the village of Lumbini, in the territory of the Sakyas, for the welfare and happiness of the human world. That is why we are filled with such joy and delight."

"So sabbasattuttamo aggapuggalo

narāsabho sabbapajānamuttamo

vattessati cakkaṃ isivhaye

vane nadaṃva sīho balavā migābhibhū"

"That Bodhisatta, supreme among all beings, the chief individual, the bull among men, the foremost of all people, will roll the Wheel of Dhamma in that forest named after the

sages (meaning Isipatana), just like a powerful lion roaring, having conquered the wild beasts." As soon as the deities answered in this manner, Ascetic Asita descended from the celestial world, went to the palace of King Suddhodana, and said to the King, "I too need to see the newborn prince." Thereupon, the King and his entourage brought the Bodhisatta to be shown to the ascetic.

As mentioned in the Sutta, when the prince was being brought in, it is said that the deities held a white parasol over him and fanned him with whisks. However, those holding them were not visible. A white parasol was held, and whisks were waving. It is said that such miraculous things happened at that time. Having witnessed these, Ascetic Asita was filled with great joy and took the prince into his hands. Since he was well-versed in the Vedic mantras and bodily characteristics, he examined him and declared that this prince would become the supreme one among human beings. Having made this prophecy, and because he possessed foresight, he realized that he would not be alive when this Bodhisatta attained Buddhahood and preached the Dhamma; his life would end before that. Reflecting on this, he became sorrowful and began to shed tears.

Then the King and his entourage asked if there was any danger to the prince. Ascetic Asita replied that there was no such danger, but rather that this was an extraordinary person, and told them to be gladdened at heart. "But there is this one thing: my life will not last much longer. Therefore, I became sorrowful. I will not get to hear the Bodhisatta when he preaches the Wheel of Dhamma; that is why I am sad." Having comforted the King and his entourage, Ascetic Asita went and related this matter to his sister's son, a youth named Nālaka, and made him promise: "If at any time the sound of the Dhamma spreads that a Buddha has appeared in the world, seek him out at that moment, request his teaching, and practice the holy life (*brahmacariya*) in his dispensation." Accordingly, that youth Nālaka, looking forward to that future event, lived the life of an ascetic, focusing on the restraint of the senses and other practices.

At a certain point, after the resonance created by the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* spread among deities and humans, having heard it—and as mentioned in the texts, a week after the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* was preached—Ascetic Nālaka went to see the Buddha and declared, "O Gotama, I have heard of you from Ascetic Asita. Please explain to me the proper practice of a sage (*muni*) who is dedicated to this homeless life and subsists on alms (this is known as the *moneyya-paṭipadā*)." Thereupon, the Buddha advised him, saying, "Very well, I shall explain it to you. That *moneyya-paṭipadā* is an extremely difficult, unsurpassable practice. Listen to it and make your mind firm." The Buddha then began to give basic instructions relevant to the life-conduct of a sage who dwells in solitude and subsists on alms.

"O Sage, after entering the village, receive both the abuse and insults as well as the homage you receive from the village with an equal mind. Do not let your mind be defiled by them. Furthermore, conduct yourself peacefully, in a tranquil manner. Be humble. Next, regarding the impediments and distresses that can come to the life of a sage from society, the Buddha declared that just as during a forest fire flames approach from above and below, women will try to seduce the sage; do not be caught by them. Escape from

them. Discard the wishes, greed, and other defilements that ordinary worldlings are attached to, and conduct yourself by stepping away from sensual pleasures and the fivefold sensual chords. Next, he speaks of matters specifically related to the practice of collecting alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*)."

"Ūnodaro mitāhāro appicchassa alolupo" - *Ūnodaro* means, as we understand the meaning of that word which is later mentioned in the Buddha's discourses, to consume food leaving space in the stomach for about four or five mouthfuls of rice. Next, *mitāhāro* means knowing the proper measure, eating with moderation; eating with the aforementioned sense of proportion. Next, *alolupo* means not being greedy; receiving alms-food without being greedy for food. After that, taking the alms-food so obtained, entering the forest, eating that food at the foot of a tree, and spending the time in the bliss of absorption (*jhāna*) by engaging in meditation and *jhāna*. Next, in that very Sutta, many more details regarding the alms-round conduct (*piṇḍa-cariyā*) to be observed by a sage are further explained.

After entering the village, do not behave in an unrestrained manner among the houses. Also, do not drop hints or indicate regarding food or alms, saying "I need such-and-such things." When carrying the bowl, to anyone who sees him, he should be *amūgo mūgasammato*—which means "though not mute, behaving like one who is mute." Next, it is said that when some food is received, he should not feel disgust toward it. Likewise, he should not disparage or look down upon the person who gives only a little. Next, a beautiful idea is presented in a verse:

"Yadidaṃ sādhu nālañcuṃ, kusalaṃ iti ubhayeneve so tādī... rukkhaṃva upanivattati"

If something is received on the alms-round, it is well. If nothing is received, that too is well. *Ubhayeneva so tādī*—with both, he remains "tādī" (such). There is a special word *tādī* which carries a profound meaning in the Dhamma. It means that under both conditions, in whatever manner, it is just the same; both are accepted in the same way. This word *tādī* denotes the quality of equanimity (*upekkhā*). Thus, whether alms-food is received or not, preserve that quality of being *tādī*. Remain in such a state. Next, a simile is given: *rukkhaṃva upanivattati*. The meaning of this is that someone goes to a tree hoping for fruit. Even though he went with expectation, there is no fruit on the tree. Yet, he does not scold, blame, or curse the tree; he simply returns.

Walk in that manner. When going on the alms-round, do not go with the thought, "I must receive, they must give." Whether received or not, it is the same. Behave on the alms-round with that attitude. In this manner, the details regarding the alms-round conduct are presented.

Furthermore, a special saying is mentioned regarding eating, which is also relevant to the *moneyya-paṭipadā*: *khuradhārūpamo bhava* (be like the edge of a razor). This too is a profound simile given by the Buddha. Perhaps you, noble devotees, have heard it. This is a simile given by the Buddha to free oneself from *Taṇhā* (Craving) for food while eating, and to prevent giving room to that *taṇhā*. The Buddha has given highly profound

similes on various occasions. Keep this in mind. For this phrase *khuradhārūpamo bhava*, the Buddha has illustrated on some occasions: *lippataṃ*—that is, when honey is smeared on a razor's edge, how carefully must the person who wants to taste the honey lick the blade without cutting his tongue? In that manner, *khuradhārūpamo bhava* means, according to the simile of the razor's edge, to consume food having freed oneself from the aforementioned craving for taste (*rasa-taṇhā*) and other defilements.

Likewise, it is declared, *ekattaṃ moneyyaṃ* (solitude is sagacity). Those who search for the etymology of the word *muni* (sage) point out that if we consider it according to the concept of *muni* used since ancient times, one aspect is oneness, solitude. The other is silence. That is why it is said, *ekattaṃ monamakkhātaṃ* (solitude is declared as sagacity). There are two meanings for this word *mona* or *mauna*. Generally, *mauna* refers to silence. Along with that, there is another meaning: wisdom, understanding. It is not that just by being silent one possesses wisdom. However, according to that vow of a sage (*muni-vata*), there is no unnecessary talk or loquaciousness. That is why it is called *ekattaṃ*. Thus, one aspect is solitude, and the other is speaking little.

Next, toward the end of this Sutta, the Buddha presents extraordinary similes to Ascetic Nālaka. Learn a lesson from the rivers. Also, learn something from small water channels like waterfalls and streams. What is it? *Saṇantā yanti kussobbhā, tuṇhī yāti mahodadhi*. That is, small waterfalls, streams, etc., flow making noise. But large rivers/oceans flow silently. That is the idea. Next, it is further said: *yadūnakaṃ taṃ saṇati*—where there is a deficiency, there is more noise. Empty vessels make the most noise. *Yaṃ pūraṃ santameva taṃ*—whatever is full is indeed tranquil. Next, the simile you, noble devotees, have also heard, "Water shakes in a half-filled pot, but a full pot remains still." There is another saying that goes closely with this:

"Aḍḍhakumbhūpamo bālo, rahado pūro va paṇḍito."

The fool (*bāla*) is noisy like a half-filled jar. The wise person (*paṇḍita*) is silent like a full pool. In this manner, using similes, the Buddha says: therefore, do not be talkative. Speak only what is relevant to the Dhamma, in accordance with the Dhamma. On certain occasions, even if you have understood or received, remain silent. In this way, true silence—meaning solitude for external seclusion, as well as that silence of being free from thoughts (*vitakka*) for internal seclusion—is shown. It is evident from this that the Buddha added more qualities to the ancient concept of the *muni*, presenting the value and the ideal of a sage through the Nālaka Sutta.

Also, an extremely valuable discourse related to this concept of the *muni* is mentioned in that very book, the Sutta Nipāta, under the name "Muni Sutta." That Muni Sutta is a discourse of about fifteen verses. However, unfortunately, we have to say that the commentators (*aṭṭhakathācariya*), by dividing this Muni Sutta and attempting to provide separate background stories (*nidāna-kathā*) for various groups of verses, seem to have obscured the depth of this discourse. It is a set of extremely valuable verses. They are a series of verses flowing in connection with one another. Moreover, in nine of those

verses, a refrain (*dhruva-pada*)—what is called the repetitive phrase at the end of certain verses—has been given as the refrain of the verses.

"Taṃ vāpi dhīrā muniṃ vedayanti"—the wise, the intelligent, declare such a person to be a sage. The fact that there are nine verses ending in this manner shows us that this is a highly systematic, flowing series of verses. Indeed, the very way those verses begin is amazing. It starts with an unusual verse:

> *"Santhavāto bhayaṃ jātaṃ, niketā jāyate rajo;*
>
> *aniketamasanthavaṃ, etaṃ ve munidassanaṃ."*

"Santhavāto bhayaṃ jātaṃ" - *Santhava* means associating with relatives, friends, and so forth. Thus, taking this as a word of the Buddha, *santhavāto bhayaṃ jātaṃ* means that from such associations, fear and danger arise.

"Niketā jāyate rajo" - *Niketa* means home. From homes, the dust of defilements arises. Thus, through association, various dangers, fears, and obstacles arise. From homes, the dust of defilements is born.

"Aniketamasanthavaṃ, etaṃ ve munidassanaṃ" - That means the opposite of it. *Aniketa* means being homeless; it indicates the state of homelessness (*anagārika*). *Asanthava* means the reduction or absence of those kinds of connections and associations; that indeed is the vision of a sage. Thus, it is said of the sage that those associations are an obstacle to spiritual progress. In the same way, next in that Muni Sutta, that ancient concept of the *muni* is explained by connecting it specifically to the life of an Arahant, so that the ideal of Arahantship is fully completed.

From there onwards, there are many verses. Let us state only their general meaning. If we go to analyze each one, it will take us in a completely different direction. The point mentioned there is: if we have obtained this birth (*jāti*) due to some cause, that cause must be eliminated. It must be uprooted. Also, do not accumulate actions (*kamma*) that cause further becoming (*bhava*). That is the general idea. Eradicate *Taṇhā* (Craving) which causes the accumulation of action; this is referred to as the moisture of craving (*taṇhā-sineha*). In one verse, it says: *yo jātamucchajja na ropeyya*—one who, having uprooted what has arisen, does not replant it, nor does he water things that are growing. Here, "water" refers to the moisture of *taṇhā*. If we consider the thoughts and Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arising in the mind, even an Arahant has these Preparations. But they do not add *taṇhā* to them. If they add it, it is like adding moisture to them. The end of this is the destruction of birth (*jāti*), bringing the end of birth to realization in this very life. This discussion is about Arahantship. From there onwards, that Sutta continuously speaks of the pure mind freed from attraction, repulsion, lust, and anger. Arahants are such in every way—*taṃ vāpi dhīrā muniṃ vedayanti*—they have demonstrated the state of being unshaken by the eight worldly conditions (*aṭṭha-lokadhamma*). At bathing ghats in India, there is a pillar; it does not matter who comes and rubs their back against it. Like that pillar at the bathing ghat, the capacity to bear

various insults and abuses is expressed through various such similes regarding the sage who proceeds toward Arahantship.

Next, some highly striking similes are given, which some of you might have heard. They present the vision of an Arahant who is unshaken by the eight worldly conditions and has reached perfect purity: *ekaṃ carantaṃ munimappamattaṃ, nindūpasaṃsāsu aveghamānaṃ* (the sage walking alone, diligent, unshaken by blame and praise). Next, the simile of the lion is presented: like a lion unstartled by noises; *vātaṃ va jālamhi asajjamānaṃ*—like the wind not caught in a net; like a lotus unsmeared by mud. These similes are presented to show the unshakable nature, the non-attachment, the dispassion, and the purity of the Arahants. In this manner, throughout this Sutta, the similes given by the Buddha regarding the concept of the *muni* are presented, culminating finally in Arahantship.

Thus, in the Nālaka Sutta, we showed the general practice to be observed by a monk living alone in the forest and subsisting on alms. In the Muni Sutta, through those similes, it directly indicates the person who has developed the mind up to Arahantship. In this way, the Buddha declared the depth of this concept of the *muni*. From this, what we have to reflect upon is: if this is an era in which we think about the values of this Sasana, we must consider that the Buddha praised so highly the monk who has stepped away from the crowd and its currents, dedicating himself in solitude to spiritual progress, because even bringing to mind the ancient concept of the *muni* helps to strengthen one's own path of practice. For if one travels the path of the world for spiritual progress, one will not be able to go very far. That is what is shown through the ancient concept of the *muni*.

Dwelling in solitude and living in the forest as a solitary dweller refers to seclusion (*viveka*). The Buddha pointed out the benefits of that seclusion on many occasions. Usually, when we think of a Buddha, we think of someone who has finished all work and does not need anything new. Yet, even in the life of the Buddha, as you noble devotees might have heard, at the beginning of the rains retreat (*vassa*), he would suddenly tell the Sangha: "Monks, I am going into retreat for three months, to dwell in solitude in the forest. No one should come to see me, except the monk who brings my alms-food." It is amazing to imagine a Buddha making such a statement; according to our concept, a Buddha is always surrounded by a large crowd. However, the Buddha himself sometimes said: "Being surrounded by kings, royal ministers, non-Buddhist ascetics, and lay devotees is a great hassle to me." It is called a hassle for this reason: there is no opportunity to enter into that noble dwelling in ease in this very life (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukha-vihāra*), which is the concentration of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*). Therefore, for dwelling in ease in this very life, and for mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), even the Buddha went into solitary retreat from time to time. Another reason is given for this: *pacchimaṃ janataṃ anukampamāno*—out of compassion for future generations, as an example for future generations, even the Buddha went to reside alone in the forest. Through this, the value of residing in a forest hermitage, living in the forest, was demonstrated.

Likewise, another valuable event is mentioned among the Dhamma Sutta discourses. On one occasion, while wandering on tour with a large community of monks, the Buddha arrived at the Brahmin village of Icchānaṅgala in the Kosala country. Having traveled to that area, he stayed in the Icchānaṅgala forest grove (*vana-saṇḍa*). A forest grove means a dense patch of forest. He stayed to reside in that forest grove with a large community of monks. Then, having heard the widespread fame of the Buddha's arrival—you have heard how the formulation of his nine virtues starting with *"Itipi so bhagavā..."* had spread across India at that time:

Having heard that rumor, those Brahmin householders prepared food throughout the night and, the next morning, brought the alms-food to the Icchānaṅgala forest grove where the Buddha and the community of monks were residing. Having arrived, near the entrance where the Buddha was staying, by the gateway, this group of Brahmins began to make a huge noise and clamor. It might have been their custom. They were shouting in loud voices. As mentioned there, the Buddha's attendant at that time was the monk named Nāgita. You might have heard that before Ven. Ānanda, there were several monks who attended on the Buddha. At that time, this monk named Nāgita was serving as the Buddha's attendant.

The Buddha addressed the monk Nāgita and asked: "Nāgita, who is making that noise and clamor, like fishermen scrambling over a catch of fish?" This was an expression the Buddha frequently used on such occasions: *kevaṭṭā va macchavilope*—"Who are these people shouting like fishermen ready to plunder fish?" Then the monk Nāgita replied: "Blessed One, the Brahmin householders of the Icchānaṅgala area have arrived, having prepared a great deal of food and drink for the Blessed One and the community of monks. It is they who are making this noise."

Thereupon, the Buddha made an unusual and somewhat stern statement to the monk Nāgita:

"Nāgita, I have no use for that fame (*yasa*). In short, I have no association with that fame." Fame (*yasa*), as you noble devotees know, refers to an entourage, crowds, and the renown that comes from having a following. All of this is contained within the word *yasa*. At that time, the Buddha said to the monk Nāgita: "Nāgita, I have no use for fame. I have no association with fame, nor do I go seeking fame." Next, the Buddha declared: "If someone possesses and experiences the bliss of renunciation (*nekkhamma-sukha*), the bliss of seclusion (*paviveka-sukha*), the bliss of appeasement (*upasama-sukha*, meaning the bliss of calming), and the bliss of awakening (*sambodhi-sukha*), then to such a person, that gain, honor, and praise..."—here he used an unusual term, *mīḷhasukhaṃ*. *Mīḷha*, noble devotees, means dung or excrement. Look at the word the Buddha used there! He referred to the pleasure obtained from gains, honors, and praise as *mīḷhasukhaṃ*—indicating that he does not regard it highly, treating it like excrement.

The Buddha might have said this targeting the monk Nāgita as well. When this was said, Ven. Nāgita said again: "May the Blessed One be patient. This is the time for the Blessed One to be patient. Wherever the Blessed One goes, these Brahmin householders follow

behind the Blessed One." Monk Nāgita spoke again in a manner that favored and allowed for those gains and honors. Once more, the Buddha replied in the same way:

"Nāgita, I have no association with that fame. I have no connection with that fame," and gave the same simile as before for gains, honors, and praise.

The Buddha did not stop there. Next, addressing the monk Nāgita directly, he delivered an unusual discourse: "Nāgita, sometimes I see a monk residing in a village monastery (*gāmanta-vihāra*) sitting in concentration (*samādhi*). At that moment, it occurs to me: 'Right now, some monastery attendant will come to this monk who is in the bliss of concentration, disturb him, and break his concentration. Or a novice (*sāmaṇera*) will come here, engage with him, and destroy that concentration.' Therefore, I do not find joy in that monk who sits in concentration in a village monastery, nor do I approve of that village dwelling."

"But Nāgita, at other times I see a forest monk nodding and dozing in the forest. Seeing that forest monk dozing, it occurs to me: 'In a short while, this monk will overcome this drowsiness, wipe his eyes, look around, establish the perception of the forest (*araññasaññā*), bring his mind to a state of oneness, and enter a state of concentration (*samādhi*).' Therefore, I approve of even that dozing forest monk and of the forest dwelling." Then the Buddha declared: "Nāgita, sometimes I see a forest monk residing in the woods sitting without concentration. At that moment, it occurs to me: 'In a short while, this monk will attain concentration and make an effort to protect that concentration.' Because of that, I approve of that forest monk." Next, he declared: "Nāgita, on some occasions, I see a forest monk sitting in concentration. Then I think: 'Now this concentrated monk will quickly bring about the liberation of his mind (meaning, by practicing insight, he will attain liberation) and guard that liberation.' For that reason, I find joy in that forest monk."

Next, the Buddha further declared: "Nāgita, gains and honors—the requisites of robes, alms-food, lodging, and medicinal provisions for the sick—flow toward a monk residing in a village monastery. By becoming greedy for and attached to those gains and honors, that monk has no interest in meditation. He does not turn toward forest dwelling, nor toward practicing Dhamma and meditation in forest lodgings. Therefore, because of that attitude he adopts toward those gains and honors, I do not find joy in that village dwelling."

The Buddha further declared: "The fourfold requisites of robes, alms-food, lodging, and medicinal provisions for the sick flow toward a forest monk residing in the forest. Yet, that monk, putting aside those gains, gives pride of place to concentration and meditation, and directs his mind toward solitary dwelling. For that reason, I find joy in that forest dwelling." This also shows us the values held by the Buddha: consistently emphasizing solitude, oneness, and stepping away from the crowd and its currents to focus on spiritual progress.

In this era, you noble devotees might sometimes think, regarding these matters we have discussed, that these are things necessary only for the Sangha. However, it is extremely

important for the lay devotees as well to understand these dispensational values. Mention is made of lay devotees who lived in the past, during the Buddha's time, who followed these precious portions of the Dhamma. Some of them declared to the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, whenever we were engaged in the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* (foundations of mindfulness), on those occasions we experienced an extraordinary joy"—such were the lay devotees during the Buddha's time. Instead of chasing after various other things as people do in this present day, they followed the Sangha and focused on spiritual progress. You have heard many times that the lay disciples (*upāsaka-upāsikā*) of the Buddha's time did not obtain these results casually. They must have adjusted their lifestyle to be suitable for these teachings and meditations. Here is a verse declared by the Buddha:

"Ko pana hīnena aggassa patti hoti, aggeneva aggassa patti hoti."

"Ko pana hīnena aggassa patti hoti"—how can the supreme be attained by weak effort or inferior practice?

"Aggeneva aggassa patti hoti"—the supreme can only be attained through supreme practice.

Therefore, without thinking of these paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) as something that can be purchased if one has money, like buying fruit from a shop, one must walk in alignment with that very practice declared by the Buddha, at least to some extent. Only then can one's spiritual progress be brought about.

As the Buddha frequently declared, especially at the time of his final passing away (*Parinibbāna*), the essence of this Sasana is not learning (*pariyatti*), but the portion related to practice (*paṭipatti*). The core, the heartwood of this Sasana, lies within the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*), starting from the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattu-satipaṭṭhāna*) and ending with the Noble Eightfold Path. Therefore, what is helpful for that is what one must practice as much as possible, even in one's daily life.

Sometimes, people might think that these things are impossible in this day and age. Often, it is the perception of "impossibility" that arises, is highlighted, and is heard. Nevertheless, there may be lay devotees, men and women, who have built up this habit. Yet, as mentioned before, due to turning toward fame, praise, gains, and honors, they do not make an effort to grasp the heartwood, the essence of this Dhamma. Instead, they run in other directions. Then, the essence of the Dhamma cannot be grasped. Within this Noble Eightfold Path, or this practice, highlighted by the Buddha, lies the discipline of one's own mind. To bring about that concentration (*samādhi*) and other qualities, there must be a sufficient amount of seclusion (*viveka*). One must love seclusion. Instead, if one keeps the mind bound only to ordinary worldly things, one will never be able to attain those noble states.

Therefore, without thinking of this sage's practice (*muni-paṭipadā*) taught by the Buddha as something limited only to the Sangha, one must practice it from time to time

in one's own life. Some talk of taking a break or holiday. A certain holiday or pause is necessary for everyone. However, in this day and age, lay devotees often use even that pause to further develop some aspect of lay life, or to make it even more complicated and tangled. Yet, one must reflect wisely on the nature of this life. We have only a very short time to live.

You have heard many of those discourses delivered by the Buddha. Even in times when human lifespan was sixty thousand years, it is mentioned in the Buddha's discourses that the teachers of that era had the attitude that this life is extremely short and full of suffering (*dukkha*). You have heard the similes for this life—extraordinary similes such as a dewdrop on the tip of a blade of grass, a line drawn on water, and so forth. In an extraordinary way, those ancient teachers pointed out the brevity of this life. It was so even in eras when the lifespan was thousands of years. Yet, we have a lifespan of less than a hundred years, in fact, less than seventy or eighty years. Therefore, when this Dispensation (*Sāsana*) is available, we must make an effort. Foreigners often suffer because they do not even get to hear a proper word of the Buddha.

In this day and age, in our country, people talk with a sense of possessiveness about the Dispensation, saying, "The Dhamma belongs to us, Buddhism belongs to us, the Dispensation is ours." Yet, they do not make an effort to benefit from it. Instead, many treat it as something to be exported abroad. Rather than doing that, whether lay or ordained, if one is to bring the Dhamma into oneself, one must make the necessary sacrifice. The Buddha highlighted precisely that point. By abandoning the path of material gains (*āmisa*) involving gains, honors, and praise in which the ordinary world is submerged, choose the path that must be traveled toward spiritual, non-material joy (*nirāmisa-pīti*).

Next, make an effort to cultivate the aforementioned concentration (*samādhi*). What can be obtained through meditation and other practices is non-material joy (*nirāmisa-pīti*) and non-material happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*). It was because of the bliss of appeasement (*upasama-sukha*), the bliss of seclusion (*viveka-sukha*), and the bliss of awakening (*sambodhi-sukha*) that the Buddha had, that those gains and honors were reduced to excrement; that is how the simile was given. Therefore, we must reflect. This was not something the Buddha said to insult us. We must reflect that these indeed are the true values in the world. If we look at it according to the Dhamma, we have heard that the arising of a Buddha in the world is extremely rare. Here too, as was mentioned at the beginning, why did even the deities rejoice at the birth of the Buddha? Because this is the opportunity to escape from this Saṃsāra.

Turning the Wheel of Dhamma is nothing other than this: within it lies the sole opportunity to escape from this perilous Saṃsāra. It is only when a Fully Self-Awakened One (*Sammāsambuddha*) appears. Even if a Paccekabuddha arises, though one can develop one's strength of merit to some extent by attending on and offering alms to him, a Paccekabuddha cannot show the path to Nibbāna to others. Only a Fully Self-Awakened One reveals this path to Nibbāna, the Eightfold Path, to the world through

that profound Dhamma. He is the one who correctly explained teachings such as Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) to the world.

Therefore, when such a Dhamma is present before us, if we do not make an effort regarding it, our lives will simply pass away in vain. We must contemplate the nature of what is called life even more deeply than the similes given by the Buddha. In this era abundant in illnesses, disasters, and dangers, one must reflect that the time one gets to operate with a healthy body and a healthy mind is extremely brief. When one reflects in this manner, as the Buddha pointed out, if one is to tread this path of Dhamma, a sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) is necessary. That is what the bases of urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*) are about. The devotee who has generated such spiritual urgency internally is the one who remembers those points and Sutta discourses declared by the Buddha from time to time regarding those values.

Likewise, one must look at the other side. Now, as we have mentioned on a previous occasion, many people have watered down this Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*). The Buddha preaches this Truth of Suffering against the background of this immense, long Saṃsāra. As shown in the Anamatagga Sutta and others, for beings shrouded in ignorance (*avijjā*) and bound by craving (*taṇhā*), no first beginning is discernable. On many occasions he declared, "Monks, you and I have traveled and wandered for a very long time in this Saṃsāra, shrouded in ignorance and bound by craving."

Thus, this birth (*jāti*) is easy. Escape from birth is what is difficult. Now, *jāti-khaya* (destruction of birth) is indeed the cessation of birth. That practice is extremely difficult. The world generally does not understand it, because the world is always satisfied with craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). However, within the Buddha's Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*), the results of that craving (*taṇhā*) are demonstrated. Due to craving, the world undergoes becoming (*bhava*) and is born again and again. Next, in accordance with ignorance, particularly due to the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), and based on wrong views, people perform various evil deeds and spend most of their time taking birth in hell, the animal realm, and the ghost realm. The Buddha pointed out that obtaining a human birth is extremely difficult and rare. You have heard that the Buddha on some occasions illustrated this with a little soil on his fingernail, showing that among dying beings, only a very few obtain a human birth again. He demonstrated this by comparing the soil on his fingernail to the soil of the great earth.

From that simile declared by the Buddha, we must reflect that we have obtained this extremely rare human birth, complete with sensory faculties. We possess the asset of wisdom to understand the Dhamma. At the same time, there are other things in the world, inviting us to chase after them. However, one must understand: "We have received such a valuable Dhamma, our lifespan is short, so what should we choose?" There are invitations from other sides. Yet, one must reflect wisely on what benefit should be derived from this short life.

If this opportunity slips away—let us think for a moment—a wise person can understand: quite apart from the animal realm or hell, even in this human world, how dangerous it

would be to be born among those of wrong views where one does not get to hear the Dhamma. That is one level. But an even more dangerous situation, as the Buddha declared, is when one leads a good life, yet without even knowing it, due to some heavy bad kamma committed in the past or perhaps a bad deed committed in this very life, one occasionally falls into animal births, ghost realms, or hells. Thinking about that duration of time is mind-boggling. We have obtained such a difficult and rare opportunity. That is why we say we are fortunate and blessed. The Buddha has declared that the only opportunity free from the eight unfortunate states (*aṭṭha-akkhaṇa*) is a wise human birth obtained during the period of a Buddha's dispensation. That is what must be made the foundation for fulfilling the practice.

Then, next is right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Belonging to right view is precisely the selection of true values, the selection of essential qualities (*sāra-dhamma*). One hears a lot about "essential qualities" these days. However, the true essential qualities have been highlighted by the Buddha. If one has become a human being, and the Dhamma is present before oneself, one must secure one's welfare by practicing accordingly. Otherwise, instead of living like a human ghost or a human demon, and departing to those very states after death, one should endeavor as much as possible to become a human deva, a human brahma, or even more importantly, as shown in this Sutta, to develop one's mind to achieve the destruction of birth (*jāti-khaya*).

Therefore, one must constantly try to direct the mind toward the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha once declared: "Monks, do not engage in other thoughts (*vitakka*). If you think, if you engage in thought, let it be on these four." "Venerable Sir, what are the four?" "Suffering (*dukkha*), its origin (*samudaya*), its cessation (*nirodha*), and the path (*magga*). Your thoughts should be directed toward these." Thus declared the Buddha. Other things are secondary; sometimes they are useless. Therefore, the Buddha showed how to bring out the Four Noble Truths through every thought.

Some people read Suttas about Wheel-Turning Kings (*Cakkavatti*) and their gains and honors with great pleasure. If one thinks about what the dining hall of a Wheel-Turning King would be like, it is indeed mind-boggling—groups of eighty-four thousand things. Be that as it may, how do those Suttas end? The Buddha has declared that in the end, those kings are no more, the queens are no more, the princes are no more, the children are no more; no one is left. Everything is finished. Having demonstrated impermanence (*aniccatā*) in that manner, he says: "Monks, that is enough to be disenchanted with Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is enough to free the mind from Preparations."

Through this, the Buddha shows that even though he pointed out certain things that existed in past saṃsāric lives, he concludes by urging disenchantment with them: "That is enough, monks, to be disenchanted." We must contemplate those words. In our daily lives, there may be various things that support our excitement, pride, and inflation. Yet, by bringing the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) close to them, considering their impermanent nature—that they disappear, that they are mere Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—one must try to turn back to the Dhamma through that. Everything that is heard in life, things that are considered to be one's worldly progress—the Truth of

Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) declared by the Buddha is understood precisely by starting from there. Everything regarding these Four Noble Truths is shown within the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).

Contemplation of phenomena (*dhammānupassanā*) includes the Four Noble Truths. When we say it includes the Four Noble Truths, it means that during that contemplation of phenomena, everything can be categorized under these four: "Ah, this is an illustration of suffering (*dukkha*). This is an illustration of craving (*taṇhā*)." Next, freeing the mind from it, freeing it from craving—the state of liberation—reflecting on that is relevant to Nibbāna. That very way of thinking is what is called the Eightfold Path. Thus, the Four Noble Truths are present within the contemplation of phenomena. The one who has constantly adjusted their lifestyle and way of thinking in accordance with that can easily reach Nibbāna through this Dhamma. That is the value highlighted by the Buddha. The Four Noble Truths are what we have to reflect upon. That is why the Buddha declared: "Do not think about useless things. If you think, think: 'This is suffering (*dukkha*). This is the cause of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering. This is the path.' Reflect in accordance with that."

In that manner, in our daily lives, which normally pass away just like that, we must make an effort. We must make an effort to maintain our thinking in accordance with these Dhamma points and Sutta discourses highlighted by the Buddha, and especially in accordance with the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*). Through that, the Buddha showed everything: the impermanence (*aniccatā*) of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Because they are impermanent (*anicca*), one cannot find satisfaction in them; they are full of suffering (*dukkha*). They are subject to change (*vipariṇāma-dhamma*), possessing the nature of change. One must try to turn the mind away from them. Thus: impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), non-self (*anattā*). Instead of the grasp of taking things as "This is mine, this I am, this is my self," one must make an effort at every opportunity to think: "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." Not merely as a word, but one's thinking too must be maintained accordingly. As soon as a thought arises, one must contemplate: "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." Then, that insight-oriented understanding grows within oneself little by little.

That is indeed what is called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). *Yoniso manasikāra* means the correct view. For convenience, we call it "wise reflection." Foolish reflection, improper reflection, is indeed *ayoniso manasikāra*. For a very long time in the world, we have practiced this wrong view. Furthermore, as you noble devotees have heard, there are the distortions (*vipallāsa-dhamma*): treating the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, the foul as beautiful, the painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant, and the non-self (*anattā*) as self. If one tries to step away from those distortions, and maintain one's thinking free from them, you will be able to develop your mind from the side of insight (*vipassanā*) as well.

When an opportunity for leisure is obtained, without spending it on other things, try as much as possible—even for a few days, or two or three days—to develop this concentration (*samādhi*) in solitude, as a solitary dweller, according to your individual

capacity, as taught by the Buddha. Although the sublime *moneyya-paṭipadā* declared by the Buddha was spoken addressing the monks, one must reflect that the path to Nibbāna lies within it. With the help of this Dhamma sermon you have heard, you must make more and more effort regarding the practices you observe and protect. Within this very era of a Buddha's arising, you must make an effort to escape from this extremely perilous Saṃsāra.

Through the Dhamma preached so far, today on this valuable Vesak Poya day, we hope that you noble devotees, being devoted to practice, having undertaken a higher virtue (*sīla*), have also developed along with that virtue some form of meditation, and through meditation, concentration (*samādhi*). At this moment, we wish that these Dhamma points you have heard may be helpful for concentration as well as for insight!

With the support of the accumulation of merit you have gathered so far, and this Dhamma sermon you have heard, we bless you that you may quickly gain the strength and power to attain the supreme goals you hope for! We wish that this Dhamma sermon may help you to quickly escape from all saṃsāric suffering, such as birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and illness, and to be pacified by the noble, deathless, supreme Nibbāna! Furthermore, if there be any living beings, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, who wish to rejoice in this merit of sharing and hearing the Dhamma, may they, through rejoicing, realize the noble, deathless, supreme Nibbāna through whichever awakening they aspire to! With that aspiration, recite the verses in this manner.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #115

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.173)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Virūḷhamūlasantānaṃ, nigrodhamiva māluto;

amittā nappasāhanti, yo mittānaṃ na dubbhati ti.

From:

Mūgapakkha Jātaka 538 (Verse 21), Khuddaka Nikāya

Dear Listeners,

A friend has the capacity to bring about one's welfare as well as one's ruin. Through a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*), welfare is brought about, and through an evil friend (*pāpamitta*), ruin is caused. To help understand the blessings of being a true friend, a set of verses has been included in our book of protective chants (*pirith*) under the name *Mittānisaṁsa Sutta*. The verse that comes at the end of this sutta, which you chant or have chanted to ward off misfortune and bring about prosperity, is what we have taken as our theme today.

This *Mittānisaṁsa Sutta* is actually found in the *Jātaka Pāḷi* of the *Jātaka* collection. The *Mūgapakkha Jātaka* is known to many today as the *Temiya Jātaka*. Let us briefly mention the background context regarding these verses in the *Temiya Jātaka*. At one time, our Bodhisatta was born as the son of the King of Kāsi in the city of Benares, and was named Temiya. In his infancy, Prince Temiya recollected his past births through the knowledge of recollecting past lives (*jātissara-ñāṇa*). When he recollected them, he remembered that in the distant past, he had ruled that very city for twenty years, and consequently suffered in hell (*niraya*) for eighty thousand years. Understanding this, and out of fear that he would be given the kingship again, he followed the advice of a deity and resolved to spend his future as a cripple, deaf, and mute. Although his parents made various attempts to change him, he remained steadfast in that resolution, spending sixteen years amidst indescribable suffering and hardship, even wallowing in his own excrement. Ultimately, the king became despondent about this son and ordered the

charioteer named Sunanda: “Take this unfortunate son to the forest, to a cemetery, and bury him.”

The charioteer Sunanda placed Prince Temiya in a chariot, drove him to a deep forest, stopped the chariot, and began digging a grave. While he was digging, Prince Temiya slowly stretched his limbs, and realizing that he was able to stand, walked over to the grave and said to the charioteer: “I am neither a cripple, nor deaf, nor mute.” Having said this, he added: “Even though the king, my father, ordered you to bury me, this is who I am.” However, the charioteer was skeptical. He was afraid that by not carrying out the order, he would incur the royal wrath. Seeing his hesitation, Prince Temiya declared: “Charioteer, as a subordinate servant of my father, for you to kill me is like cutting off the branch of a tree under whose shadow you stand.” He called it betraying a friend (*mittadūbhī*). It is in connection to this that Prince Temiya declared the blessings of not betraying friends in that series of verses. Those verses are very simple. You must have heard and read them many times. Let us briefly bring forward those verses at this juncture:

“Pahūtabhakkho bhavati, vippavuttho sakā gharā,

bahūnaṁ upajīvanti, yo mittānaṁ na dubhati.”

“He who does not betray his friends, when he goes far from his own home, obtains abundant food; and many depend on him for their livelihood.” That is the first verse. Next:

“Yaṁ yaṁ janapadaṁ yāti, nigame rājadhāniyo,

sabbatha pūjito hoti, yo mittānaṁ na dubhati.”

“He who does not betray his friends, whichever province, market town, or royal capital he visits, is honored in all of them.” *Nigame rājadhāniyo sabbatha pūjito hoti*—he is honored everywhere. In the next verse, it is said:

“Nāssa corā pasahanti, nātimaññeti khattiyo,

sabbe amitte tarati, yo mittānaṁ na dubhati.”

“He who does not betray his friends, thieves cannot overpower him through theft or other means—*nāssa corā pasahanti*. Likewise, *nātimaññeti khattiyo*—the king does not despise him. *Sabbe amitte tarati*—he is able to overcome all enemies.” Next:

“Akkuddho sagharaṁ eti, sabhāya paṭinandito,

ñātīnaṁ uttamo hoti, yo mittānaṁ na dubhati.”

“That person who does not betray his friends, when he goes to any assembly, returns to his home unwrathful and welcomed—*sabhāya paṭinandito*. *Ñātīnaṁ uttamo hoti*—moreover, he becomes supreme among his relatives.” Next:

“Sakkato sakkato hoti, garu hoti sagāravo,

vaṇṇakittibhato hoti, yo mittānaṁ na dubhati.”

“That friend, who does not betray his friends, by honoring others, becomes worthy of receiving honor himself—*sakkato sakkato hoti*. *Garu hoti sagāravo*—by respecting others, he becomes worthy of receiving respect; he is respectful. Then, *vaṇṇakittibhato hoti*—he is endowed with praise and fame.” That is the meaning of that verse. Next, it is said:

“Pūjako labhate pūjaṁ, vandako paṭivandanaṁ,

yaso kittiñca pappoti, yo mittānaṁ na dubhati.”

“By worshipping those worthy of worship, he himself receives worship—*pūjako labhate pūjaṁ*. *Vandako paṭivandanaṁ*—by paying homage, he becomes worthy of receiving homage in return. He also attains glory and fame—that person who does not betray his friends.” Next:

“Aggi yathā pajjalati, devatāva virocati,

siriyā ajahito hoti, yo mittānaṁ na dubhati.”

“He shines like a blazing fire; he glows like a deity—that person who does not betray his friends. Next, *siriyā ajahito hoti*—fortune never deserts him;” that is what is declared in this verse. Next:

“Gāvo tassa pajāyanti, khette vuttaṁ virūhati,

vuttānaṁ phalamasnāti, yo mittānaṁ na dubhati.”

“The cattle of the person who does not betray his friends multiply. What is sown in his field grows well. He enjoys the fruit of what is cultivated.” All of these are shown as the blessings. Next:

“Darito pabbatā to vā, rukkhato patito naro,

cuto patiṭṭhaṁ labhati, yo mittānaṁ na dubhati.”

“If a person who does not betray his friends falls from a mountain cleft, a mountain, or a tree, he finds a support, a refuge—*cuto patiṭṭhaṁ labhati*. He does not meet with disaster, due to that quality of not betraying friends.” Next, we come to our verse, the final verse:

“Virūḷhamūlasantānaṁ, nigrodhamiva māluto,

amittā nappasahanti, yo mittānaṁ na dubhatī.”

“That is, just as a storm cannot shake a banyan tree with deep-spreading and well-established roots, so enemies cannot overpower him.” In this manner, ten verses on the blessings of friendship are contained in our book of protective chants.

Directly following this in the book of protective chants, a sutta called the *Mettānisaṁsa Sutta* is mentioned. Although we have explained the sections related to this *Mettānisaṁsa Sutta* in two previous sermons, for those who are interested in listening to them, we shall mention their numbers: Pahankanuwa Sermons No. 147 and 163. On those occasions, when we explained loving-kindness (*mettā*) and the deliverance of mind through loving-kindness (*mettā-cetovimutti*), those eleven blessings of the *Mettānisaṁsa Sutta* were mentioned. Next, we specifically mentioned the blessings of loving-kindness (*mettā*) because nowadays, many people confuse loving-kindness (*mettā*) with friendship (*mittatā*). Many who write and speak about loving-kindness (*mettā*) begin by saying that “loving-kindness is friendship.” That is entirely wrong. At first glance, indeed, loving-kindness (*mettā*) and friendship (*mittatā*) seem to share a commonality. Why? Because loving-kindness (*mettā*) is also defined as the absence of hatred—the absence of aversion (*paṭigha*) and hatred (*dvesa*). However, if we look at the words, the Pāḷi word for friendship is *mittatā*, while the Pāḷi word for loving-kindness is *mettā*. Perhaps because the two words are similar, many people confuse them. Therefore, listen carefully; we hope to present the difference between loving-kindness (*mettā*) and friendship (*mittatā*) in six brief points so that you can keep them in mind:

1. Friendship is personal; loving-kindness (*mettā*) is universal.

2. Friendship is mutual; loving-kindness (*mettā*) is universally impartial.

3. Friendship is narrow; loving-kindness (*mettā*) is broad.

4. Friendship is a bond (*bandhana*); loving-kindness (*mettā*) is a deliverance (*vimutti*).

5. To develop friendship, at least two people are required; loving-kindness (*mettā*) can be developed in solitude.

6. Friendship is limited; loving-kindness (*mettā*) is limitless, immeasurable, and infinite.

Thus, we have summarized the difference between loving-kindness (*mettā*) and friendship (*mittatā*). However, this confusion is not only found among ordinary people. As far as we can see, even Ven. Buddhaghosa, the author of the *Visuddhimagga*—not because he did not know Pāḷi words, but for some reason—seems to have confused these. He has presented the foundation for loving-kindness (*mettā*) by using the concept of friendship based on: oneself, the neutral person, the dear friend, and the hostile person. It is by associating this that he has begun to analyze loving-kindness (*mettā*). We pointed out on that occasion that the true foundation of loving-kindness (*mettā*) is the desire for happiness inherent in all beings—the common aspiration. It is not a division into those who are friendly, neutral, or hostile to oneself. That division arose out of a wrong understanding. We also pointed out that some who are subservient to traditionalism are not ready to accept our statement, even though we show that this is the word of the

Buddha. But if we respect the word of the Buddha, the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*) must be developed from the very beginning in terms of radiating it in the directions (*disā-pharaṇa*). However, according to Buddhaghosa's words, the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā*) must be developed by starting and basing it on that narrow foundation of: oneself, the dear friend, the neutral person, and the hostile person.

Furthermore, a point was mentioned here for you to ponder. Since you might doubt it, we shall explain it further: the point that friendship requires two people, whereas loving-kindness (*mettā*) can be developed even in solitude. We shall give a good illustration for this. In the text called the *Sutta Nipāta*, there is an extraordinary sutta called the *Khaggavisāṇa Sutta*. It consists of forty-one verses. It highly praises a sage's life, which means, for the sake of the spiritual goal of Nibbāna, abandoning all relatives and friends, going to the forest, and living like a lion—using wonderful similes. Even today, there are very rarely such people. It is a set of verses praising such a life. Every single one of those forty-one verses ends with the same remarkable refrain: *"eko care khaggavisāṇakappo"*. *Khaggavisāṇa* means the horn of a rhinoceros. A rhinoceros has only a single horn. If we translate *"eko care khaggavisāṇakappo"* into Sinhala, it means: "wander alone like the horn of a rhinoceros!" This is the idea contained throughout all forty-one verses. However, what we are about to mention is a special point. Even those sages who lead such a solitary, wandering life are able to attain the *brahmavihāras*—loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*)—which are deliverances of mind (*cetovimutti*), as stated in the fortieth verse. That verse describes how that sage develops loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity according to the occasion.

From this, we can see that even though one is solitary, loving-kindness (*mettā*) can be developed. For friendship (*mittatā*), however, there must be two people. Simply because we have said this, one should not think that we are disparaging friendship. On the contrary, the Buddha has praised the value of friendship (*mittatā*) in a layperson's household and social life, as well as the support a monastic receives from a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*) in their spiritual life, in an extraordinary way in numerous suttas. In short, the Buddha declared: "Monks, as an external factor for a person's progress and welfare, I do not see any other single factor that is as great as spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*)." Therefore, we must recognize those teachings in their respective places and not confuse them. It is for this reason that we mentioned this.

The Buddha, as Prince Temiya, showed the blessings of not betraying friends here. Moreover, in various sutta discourses, the Buddha showed not only the blessings of not betraying friends but also the blessings one receives by having a good, true friend. He also exposed those who act as friends in the guise of a friend—called counterfeit friends (*mitta-paṭirūpaka*)—who pretend to be friends but cause ruin, and showed how to identify them. If we use a Sinhala term for *mitta-paṭirūpaka*, it is a "puppet friend" (*rūkaḍa mitrayā*). A puppet of a friend. That is, they falsely project themselves as a friend. The Buddha has analyzed how to recognize such people very clearly.

Furthermore, he has analyzed the mutual duties between two friends in a wonderful way, in a manner that is helpful even to modern sociologists. He has also shown how to identify a true friend, that is, a warm-hearted friend (*suhada-mitta*) and a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*). A short sutta mentioned in the *Sutta Nipāta* is the *Hiri Sutta*. It is not very well known. In it, too, mention is made of those who are friends in words only (*vacīparama*), who falsely pretend to help only in speech. If someone says, "I am your friend," but does not offer help that they are capable of giving, then a wise person should understand: "He is not a true friend."

Similarly, if someone speaks pleasant words saying, "I am your friend," but does not act in accordance with those words, he is an enemy. The Buddha gives a beautiful simile there: *"Na so mitto yo sadā appamatto, bheda-saṅkī randham evānupassī."* He who is constantly on the lookout for faults, expecting a split, and is engaged only in finding weaknesses, is not a friend. Who, then, is a friend? A beautiful simile is given: *"Yasmiñca seti urasīva putto, sa ve mitto yo parehi abhejjo."* It is a small simile. You can comprehend it. When a small child falls asleep on the chest of their mother or father, leaving behind the whole world, they are completely confident that the mother or father will not cause them any harm. They turn to the side on the chest and sleep. This is the simile the Buddha has given here. *"Yasmiñca seti urasīva putto"*—upon which friend another can trust, like a child sleeping on its parent's chest, such a friend is a true friend, as declared in the *Hiri Sutta*.

Instead of mentioning a bit from here and there, you might also be expecting us to speak about that extraordinary sutta which describes all of this, which lay devotees use with great affection: the *Sigālovāda Sutta*. From ancient times, it has been known as the "Layman's Vinaya" (*gihi vinaya*). Why? Because the Buddha has analyzed and presented every aspect—every facet, to use a modern word—of lay life, household life, and the social life of a layperson in an extraordinary manner. It is a sutta so valuable that it can serve as a guidebook for modern sociologists. Its background story, in brief, is as follows: At one time, when the Buddha was residing at the Veluvana monastery in Rajagaha, a householder's son named Sigālaka, as a custom, would go out in the morning with wet hair and wet clothes, and with clasped hands, worship the six directions. While walking, the Buddha saw this and asked: "Why, householder's son, do you worship these directions?" Then Sigālaka replied: "My father, on his deathbed, told me, 'Son, worship these directions.' That is why I do this."

Then the Buddha said: "According to our Noble Discipline (*ariya-vinaya*), according to the Noble training, the six directions are not worshipped in this manner." Then the householder's son asked: "Then how, Venerable Sir, is it in your Noble Discipline?" The analysis that starts from that question is what is expounded in this sutta. Actually, it is at the very end that the six directions are identified. But let us mention what those six are, according to the context. Many of you know this.

Parents are the Eastern direction: *mātāpitaro disā pubbā*. Teachers are the Southern direction: *ācariyā dakkhiṇā disā*. Wife and children are the Western direction: *puttadārā disā pacchimā*. And friends and companions are the Northern direction:

mittāmaccā ca uttarā. Remember that. Then the other two are also mentioned: servants and workers are the downward direction, and ascetics and brahmins are the upward direction. These are the six directions. Having said this, he began a long analysis, but we shall try to highlight only the portion relevant to our topic today, in keeping with the time. Indeed, this *Sigālovāda Sutta* is so extensive that it is difficult to compress it into such a short sermon. In brief, the Buddha shows that the counterfeit friend (*mitta-paṭirūpaka*), who is actually an enemy, merely wears the guise of a friend. Such people do exist. On the other hand, a true friend is called a warm-hearted friend (*suhada-mitta*). There, he describes in detail four types of counterfeit friends who wear the guise of a friend. Let us mention them briefly.

Four types of counterfeit friends are shown. *Aññadatthuhara* is the Pāḷi term. In brief, *aññadatthuhara* means, in short, an exploitative or selfish friend. That friend goes to his companion's house—you must have heard this in many sermons, but let us think about it—carrying some small thing, but expecting to return with something much larger. Or, he returns with something even without giving anything. Those who deceive in this selfish manner are called *aññadatthuhara*; they look only after their own self-interest. Next is the one called *vacīparama*—one who is a friend in words only. That is, when his friend is in need, say of money or resources, he says: "Oh, I had that money yesterday, I had it earlier. But now it is gone, it is finished. I will give it to you in the future." Or, he gives something of no value. In this way, he saves his own skin and remains a friend in words only. Next is the *anuppiyabhāṇī*. *Anuppiyabhāṇī* means one who, to please his companion, flatters him; even if the companion does a wrong deed, he says it is good. He praises him to his face but speaks ill of him behind his back. He is a person who shows friendship only through pleasant words. Finally, the one shown is the *apāyasahāya*. *Apāyasahāya* means a companion in ruin, who leads his friend to ruin by introducing him to alcohol and other intoxicants. You must have heard about this; such people are the most common in society—drunkards and other profligates, or what we would call loafers today. Such people lead their friends to ruin. They are the counterfeit friends—the puppet friends.

On the other hand, there are the warm-hearted friends (*suhada-mitta*). The Buddha describes each of these in detail. We shall mention them briefly according to the context. The first warm-hearted friend shown is the helpful friend (*upakāraka*). Indeed, if his friend is in difficulty or has fallen into negligence, he protects him. If the friend is about to lose wealth due to negligence, he safeguards it for him. When the friend is afraid, he becomes a refuge. In this way, the helpful friend is a true friend. To help in difficult situations, if there is a need for money, he is prepared to give even double what is required. Next, the *samānasukhadukkha* friend is one who, as we say, is ready to share both happiness and suffering. That is, he does not abandon his friend when the friend falls into misfortune. He would even sacrifice his life to help when necessary. Next, the *atthakkhāyī* friend (the mentor) is one who, for the sake of his friend's well-being, restrains him from evil, directs him toward wholesome deeds, teaches him the Dhamma on suitable occasions, and helps him embark on the path to a happy rebirth (*sugati*). Finally, the compassionate friend (*anukampaka*) is shown. That friend grieves over his

friend's misfortune and rejoices in his prosperity. Furthermore, if someone speaks ill of his friend, he prevents it; and when someone praises his friend, he rejoices. Such is the compassionate friend.

This is how they are described. The idea behind worshipping the directions is mutual assistance—helping one another. Indeed, you have heard of parents and children, husband and wife, teacher and pupil, and so on; in these relationships too, there are two friends. How one friend should treat another is shown by the Buddha as follows. You must have heard of the four bases of sympathy (*cattu saṅgahavatthu*): giving (*dāna*), pleasant speech (*peyyavajja*), useful conduct (*atthacariyā*), and impartiality (*samānattatā*). To this is added non-deceitfulness (*avisaṁvādanatā*). This is how a friend should treat another friend. One should treat them through giving—by giving what is needed; next, through pleasant speech; through useful conduct—by helping in a way that brings about their welfare, and by giving them advice; and next, through impartiality—by treating them as equals. Finally, *avisaṁvādanatā* means non-deceitfulness. If one treats a friend in this manner, it is said that the friend will treat one in return in the same way. In what way? In the manner of the helpful friend mentioned earlier. That is, he protects his friend when the friend is negligent. He safeguards the wealth that the negligent friend is about to lose. When the friend is afraid, he becomes a refuge. He does not abandon him when he falls into misfortune. In this manner. Not only that, it is stated there that if this friendship goes well, and the other treats one as a friend, he goes so far as to care even for his friend's descendants—*apara-pajā* means even their children—reflecting on the good qualities of their father.

In this manner, the Buddha spoke wonderfully about household life, keeping the spiritual aspect especially in mind. Moreover, many who come to us say with great sadness that they have been dominated by evil friends, trapped by those counterfeit friends—the puppet friends—and have fallen into trouble and suffered, and they say that nowadays there are no spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitta*) at all. Therefore, we too had to say that, given the way the country and the Dispensation (*sāsana*) are going, it might be easier to find black ginger (*kaḷu-nika*) than to find a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*). We mentioned this on a previous occasion as well. Now, we have spoken sufficiently about this concept of friendship in relation to lay life. As we mentioned earlier, whether in lay or monastic life, among the external factors that bring about welfare, the Buddha has declared in many instances that spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*) is supreme and foremost.

Similarly, regarding the lives of the Sangha, the life of a practitioner (*yogāvacara*) who is striving to realize this Dhamma of Nibbāna, or for lay devotees who hope for Nibbāna, the Buddha has declared the value of spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamitta-sampatti*) in various ways. On one occasion he declared: "Monks, the foremost factor that helps to arouse the Noble Eightfold Path within oneself is spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*)." The simile the Buddha used is extraordinary: "Just as, monks, the dawn appears before the sun rises—as you know, the sky turns red before the sun rises, which is called the dawn—even so, spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*) is the harbinger for the arising of

the Noble Eightfold Path." Furthermore, he told the Sangha that if there is a monk who helps one fulfill one's spiritual goals, possessing such and such qualities and virtues, one should follow him even if he drives one away—*paṇujjamāno'pi*, even when he chases you away saying "Go away!", one should somehow come back to his presence. Those seven qualities are summarized in a certain verse. Let us first recite that verse:

"Piyo ca garu bhāvanīyo, vattā ca vacanakkhamo,

gambhīrañca kathaṁ kattā, no caṭṭhāne niyojaye."

Those seven qualities are mentioned there. *Piyo* means: is that spiritual friend, that monk, endearing and pleasant? *Garu*: is he respectable? *Bhāvanīyo*: is he worthy of adoration and veneration? *Vattā*: is he capable of giving counsel and instruction? *Vacanakkhamo*: when his shortcomings are pointed out, does he have the strength to accept it with appreciation, just as Ven. Sāriputta received instruction from a novice monk and accepted it saying "Sādhu"? That is, is he patient under criticism? Next, *gambhīrañca kathaṁ kattā*: is he skilled in deep Dhamma discussions? *No caṭṭhāne niyojaye*: does he refrain from directing his friend, his pupil, or disciple, toward inappropriate and unsuitable paths? The Buddha has declared that one should follow such a teacher, a spiritual friend and teacher, even if driven away.

Furthermore, you may have heard of this incident declared by the Buddha. One day, King Kosala came to see the Buddha and said: "While I was in solitude"—the King, even though he fought wars and so on, must have engaged in meditation on certain occasions, having associated with the Buddha at least to some extent—"while I was sitting in meditation, this thought occurred to me: 'This Dhamma has been well-expounded (*svākkhāta*) by the Blessed One. This Dhamma belongs to, or can be attained by, only those who have spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitta*), spiritual companions (*kalyāṇa-sahāya*), and spiritual associates—meaning those who associate with spiritual friends, spiritual companions, and have a good disposition. It is not for those who have evil friends (*pāpamitta*) and evil companions.'"

When he expressed this, the Buddha declared: "So it is, Great King! So it is, Great King! That is indeed so," and confirmed it. One can understand the deep connection the Buddha had with King Kosala from this incident he revealed.

"Great King, at one time, when I was residing in a market town in the Sakyan country, the monk Ānanda came to me and said: 'Venerable Sir, it seems to me that spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*) is half of this holy life (*brahmacariya*).'" He was telling King Kosala what Ven. Ānanda had said to him. "I said: 'Do not say so, Ānanda. Do not say so, Ānanda. It is not half; this spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamitta-sampatti*) is the entire holy life (*brahmacariya*)!'" The Buddha made it an equation. Next, as a proof of this, it is mentioned there that the Buddha declared to Ven. Ānanda: 'Why, Ānanda, do I say so? For one who has spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamitta-sampatti*), it is to be expected that they will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path leading to Nibbāna.' That is, the eight factors—Right View and so forth—as everyone knows. On this

occasion, those eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are described in connection with four phrases: 'dependent on seclusion' (*viveka-nissitaṁ*), 'dependent on dispassion' (*virāga-nissitaṁ*), 'dependent on cessation' (*nirodha-nissitaṁ*), and 'resulting in relinquishment' (*vossagga-pariṇāmiṁ*). One who has spiritual friendship has the ability to develop each factor of the Noble Eightfold Path directed toward Nibbāna. Having declared this, the Buddha finally said: 'By relying on me as a spiritual friend, beings subject to birth (*jāti-dhammā*) are freed from birth (*jāti*); those subject to decay (*jarā-dhammā*) are freed from decay; those subject to disease and death (*marana-dhammā*) are freed from death (*marana*), sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair—by associating with me as a spiritual friend.'"

From this, we can see that the Buddha called the entire holy life (*brahmacariya*) spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*) because, by being able to associate with a spiritual friend, one can achieve even that final spiritual goal. Therefore, in accordance with this, you too must make an effort, on the one hand, to become a spiritual friend, and on the other hand, to search for a spiritual friend. The blessings of becoming a spiritual friend were mentioned in the *Mittānisaṁsa Sutta*, and the blessings of finding a spiritual friend were mentioned in suttas like the *Sigālovāda Sutta*. At the same time, why must we take special care and effort in this regard? Because the majority of people in the world are those counterfeit friends—the puppet friends. To achieve various selfish ends, they show a superficial friendship and get close to you, and in the end, that person falls into ruin. Especially those companions in ruin (*apāyasahāya*), such as those associated with drugs and alcohol. Indeed, you might know, those who have studied psychology, that it is the nature of drugs and other vices that while one is drawn to them, one also seeks to increase one's group. Many have heard that the first time someone wants to introduce a friend to alcohol, they pay for it themselves, saying, 'Today it's on me.' Even regarding other vices besides alcohol, though I do not mention them, you must have heard that such a thing exists in the world.

Once they become addicted to that drug, they increase their circle through that addiction. Through this, what is given from one's own pocket in the beginning is later taken from the other's pocket. Such a dangerous situation exists in society today. This is not something of today or yesterday; since it existed even during the Buddha's time, the Buddha pointed out the counterfeit friend, the one who wears the guise of a friend, in that manner. The Buddha described such people as: *'amittā mittapatirūpakā'*. Every word is important. *Amittā mittapatirūpakā*—enemies in the guise of a friend. Others are described, in ordinary lay life, as *'mittā suhadā'*—warm-hearted friends, friends with a good heart. Thus, the first group we mentioned is the counterfeit friends. The next group is the warm-hearted friends. Whether we think of lay life or spiritual life, in both aspects, the majority of people in society are of the former type; those who have suffered from them, fallen under their influence, and been in trouble for a long time, come to us and tell us so. That is why we said that, according to the principles and hints given by the Buddha, we must be circumspect when choosing a friend. One must try to understand their good and bad sides well. Once one falls under their influence, one eventually meets with terrible ruin. That is why we said at the beginning that a friend has the capacity to

bring about our welfare as well as our ruin. We must know this. This is an external factor. The rest is what we must develop internally within ourselves. This is something that exists in the external world, within society.

The *Khaggavisāṇa Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, which we mentioned earlier, is not very popular nowadays. We do not despise friendship; we praise it. If there are true friends, we praise them too. Now, what I am telling you is about the *Khaggavisāṇa Sutta* which I mentioned earlier. As we said, it is an extraordinary sutta of forty-one verses bearing the simile of the rhinoceros horn. That is, those who expect to see the end of the spiritual life, seeking Nibbāna in an intense manner, those ancient sages or monks, would abandon society and enter forests inhabited by wild beasts. In those verses, it is said: "unselfish friends are rare today" (*nikkāruṇā dullabhā ajjamittā*). That is, in this day and age, unselfish, altruistic friends who are not driven by self-interest are very rare. Instead, what is seen is described elsewhere as: "humans are wise only in self-interest, hence they are impure" (*attatthapaññā asucī manussā*). This is also in another sutta. The ordinary nature of humans is *attatthapaññā asucī manussā*. Its meaning is that humans are wise only for their own self-interest. That wisdom exists only to achieve selfish ends, not for the welfare of the world—*attatthapaññā*. For that very reason, they are "impure humans"—*asucī manussā*. *Attatthapaññā asucī manussā*. It is because of this that *'eko care khaggavisāṇakappo'*—when one does not find support to fulfill those noble aspirations within such a society, when one does not find spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitta*), one is told to enter the forest. Such is the situation.

This situation is not of today or yesterday; it was the same in the past. But on the one hand, one must be particularly careful not to betray friends. Prince Temiya said this. Many people forget, and do things like cutting off the branches of the very tree that sheltered them. They even do such things sometimes. Those who have read the Jātaka stories know that within the stories of Devadatta and the Bodhisatta, there are deeply moving incidents, even in animal births. Because of that deeply-held grudge, how much suffering and pain did he cause the Bodhisatta when they were monkeys and so forth? Once, he was so violent as to break the neck of the monkey who had helped him—the Bodhisatta monkey. Due to various such forces of kamma, or due to other social causes like poverty, the betrayal of friends is seen. Nowadays, only these external factors are visible; they do not care much about the results of kamma (*kamma-vipāka*). Various other external psychological reasons are presented.

In any case, in brief, if those valuable virtues of the Buddha's teaching—loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*)—are not integrated into one's character, there grows in society that type of "wisdom of self-interest" (*attatthapaññā*) we mentioned. On a previous occasion, we explained in detail in a sermon the four bases of sympathy (*cattu saṅgahavatthu*) mentioned here. The Buddha has described them as the linchpin of the social chariot, which causes the progress of the social chariot: giving (*dāna*), pleasant speech (*peyyavajja*), useful conduct (*atthacariyā*), and impartiality (*samānattatā*). Giving, pleasant speech, useful conduct—acting for the welfare of others, and impartiality. These are factors that help in

useful conduct, or generally bring about the welfare of everyone in society. It is said of those great lay disciples of the past, like Hatthaka Āḷavaka, who practiced these four bases of sympathy, and who also developed meditation and attained high stages of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*), that they gathered large followings precisely by practicing these four bases of sympathy. Similarly, for those who develop the virtues of loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and appreciative joy (*muditā*), some people may draw close to them through those very virtues.

Very bad things, like drugs and other corrupt things, spread very easily like diseases—like epidemic diseases. But virtues grow very slowly. Few are drawn to them. However, having understood what is good and bad, one must develop virtues in accordance with the word of the Buddha, the Dhamma. Selfish people must reflect that even if they gain a temporary benefit from it, they will have to pay for those terrible results of kamma (*kamma-vipāka*) in the future. *Avisāṁvadanatā* means non-deceitfulness—not deceiving one's friends. Furthermore, it is always said of good friends that they are prepared even to make self-sacrifices for the sake of their friend. As we said when describing the true friend, the *samānasukha* and others, they do not abandon their friend when the friend falls into adversity.

“True friends desire happiness and suffering alike,

They do not turn their backs like painted figures on a wall,”

as our ancient poets said. A true friend does not turn back like a wall painting. He does not abandon you even in times of adversity. This is what was said about true friends. Many people flock like bats to a fruiting tree when prosperity comes. At the slightest hint of scarcity, or when one falls into difficulty, they abandon you and leave. Instead of this, one must try to develop those virtues of warm-hearted friends shown by the Buddha. Furthermore, if those qualities shown of counterfeit friends exist within oneself, one must make an effort to discard them. The Buddha has shown extraordinary facts in the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, of which we took only one side here. We touched upon only one direction out of the six directions. We spoke of only one-sixth of the *Sigālovāda Sutta*. Yet, even within that, there is much for us to ponder for our daily lives—not only for laypeople but also for monastics and for all inhabitants of the world, because we have to live our lives within a society. That society begins at home. Starting with parents, children, and spouse, the concepts of trust and mutual care come naturally. This is the very thing that exists between friends. A good example of the spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamitta*) between two friends is how Kolita and Upatissa shared the Dhamma they had attained.

In that manner, on certain occasions, one would remain starving to help one's friend, sharing even one's plate of rice. If we believe in the law of kamma, we must understand according to the Dhamma that there are blessings in cultivating such qualities. That is why the Buddha has shown this; if we limit this to this world alone, indeed, it is the evil friend who wins, it is the counterfeit friend who wins. When we look around, it appears so. But that winning is indeed a defeat when viewed according to the Dhamma. Why?

Because it does not last long; when they fall, they fall. And when that person falls, there is no one to help him. Therefore, reflecting wisely, as we travel on this long journey of *saṁsāra*, if there is something to be learnt from the Jātaka stories, we must acquire it. That is, the conduct of the Bodhisattas, the extraordinary sacrifices they made over a long period in *saṁsāra* even for Devadatta, who came as their enemy. We do not value Jātaka stories much nowadays. But we must extract the valuable essence within them. In any case, it is not about being immersed in the narrative flavor of these stories and forgetting the rest. Here too, there is the extraordinary willpower of Prince Temiya—we did not narrate it at length because the Jātaka story is long. We mentioned the essential part. There is an extraordinary character who even gave up his kingship, and in order to abandon it, finally went to the forest and practiced the ascetic life.

Therefore, in our daily lives, we must be circumspect; to ensure our progress and development, we must avoid those counterfeit friends and evil friends, and draw close to warm-hearted spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitta*). Not only for our daily lives, but in the manner of the *atthakkhāyī* friend, to enable us to reach a happy rebirth—at the very least, to reach a happy rebirth, and at the very most, to attain the supreme goal shown in this Dispensation: to bring an end to all the suffering of *saṁsāra*, such as birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), disease, and death (*marana*). We must resolve to realize our supreme spiritual goals through the Dhamma declared to the world by that supreme Spiritual Friend (*Kalyāṇamitta*), the Buddha. Today, this virtuous gathering has experienced this to some extent according to their capacity. You have observed the precepts and spent the day directed toward meditation. At this moment, using the sermon we have delivered as a support, correct any shortcomings in your lives, and with the help of associating with spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitta*) for your journey ahead in the spiritual life, make an effort to quickly realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the realization of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*)—Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant—before the lamp of this Dispensation (*sāsana-pahana*) is extinguished. If there is anyone from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who wishes to share in the merit of this Dhamma sermon and Dhamma listening, may they, by sharing in it, find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi. Now, recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #116

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.9)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Attānañce piyaṃ jaññā, rakkheyya naṃ surakkhitaṃ;

tiṇṇaṃ aññataraṃ yāmaṃ, paṭijaggeyya paṇḍito ti.

From:

Dhammapada 157 (Attavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Our Great Compassionate Fully Self-Enlightened Buddha showed the correct path to secure safety and protection for those who seek it. Many people in this world harbor various expectations regarding this protection and eagerly look forward to seeing the signs of their fulfillment. However, they do not contemplate whether they practice the true course of action, the path of practice, to secure that protection. Consequently, they end up facing disappointment and shattered hopes in the end. This situation becomes clear to us from the background story of this very verse.

While the Buddha was residing in the Bhesakaḷā Forest, Prince Bodhirāja, an extremely wealthy and prosperous ruler of that region, had a magnificent palace built—the likes of which could not be found anywhere else on earth. He named it *"Kokanada"* and invited the Buddha to the housewarming ceremony of that palace. In preparing for this festival, they smeared the floor of the palace with various perfumes and laid down white cloths starting right from the threshold of the palace. This prince had these cloths spread not merely out of respect for the Buddha, but with another personal expectation in mind.

Although this prince possessed various pleasures and riches, he lacked the blessing of children, which is generally considered a great treasure in lay life. Therefore, he thought: "If I am to have a son or a daughter, the Buddha will walk over these cloths as a foretoken of that." When the Buddha arrived at the ceremony in accordance with the invitation, Prince Bodhirāja paid homage to Him, took the alms bowl, and invited Him to enter the palace. However, the Buddha did not enter the palace. A second and a third time the prince made his plea, yet the Blessed One did not step forward. Instead, the

Buddha looked at Ven. Ānanda's face. Ven. Ānanda understood from this that the Buddha would not enter because of the white cloths. He told the prince to remove them. Once the prince removed those cloths, the Buddha entered the palace.

After serving the almsfood and when the meal was finished, the prince paid homage to the Buddha, sat down to one side, and asked: "Venerable Sir, Blessed One, I am a very supportive lay disciple of the Blessed One. Even before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb, my mother went for refuge to the Buddha on my behalf. Later, in my infancy when I could not understand, my nursemaid went for refuge to the Buddha on my behalf. When I reached an age of understanding, I myself went for refuge to the Buddha. Yet, when someone like me spread these cloths, why did the Blessed One not walk over them?" The Buddha asked, "Prince, with what thought did you spread these cloths?" Then the prince confessed that he had held the thought: "If I have the fortune to obtain a son or a daughter, the Buddha will walk over these cloths." "It is precisely for that reason, prince, that I did not walk over those cloths." "Then, Blessed One, is there no fortune for me to obtain a son or a daughter?" he asked. "Yes, that is because of you and your wife"—meaning, it appears that Prince Bodhirāja and his wife had lived in such a way in the past. To put it simply in terms of the Dhamma, he declared that they had fallen into negligence regarding wholesome states (*kusala dhamma*). That is to say, they had committed an unwholesome karma. When the prince became eager to know the details, the Buddha revealed the story of the past.

In the very distant past, hundreds of people boarded a ship and set out to sea. In mid-ocean, the ship wrecked. Of all those on board, only a married couple, clinging to a plank of wood, managed to swim to safety and reach a small nearby island. The others drowned in the sea. This couple had nothing to eat or drink on that island. A flock of birds nested there. What did these two do? They began roasting birds' eggs in hot embers and eating them. When the eggs ran out, they began eating the young fledglings. In this manner, they spent their entire lives on that island. The Buddha declared: "During all three stages of life—youth, middle age, and old age—these two lived by killing animals. If even one of you had been diligent regarding wholesome qualities, you would have obtained a child. Or else, if during the first stage of life, or the middle stage, or the final stage, you had abandoned those evil deeds and inclined your minds toward wholesome qualities, you would have obtained a son." Next, the Buddha declared: "If one considers oneself dear, one must strive to protect oneself during all three stages of life—indeed, during all three. If somehow that is impossible, one should think of oneself and take care to protect oneself during at least one stage of life." Emphasizing this idea, He uttered that Dhamma verse found in the Atta Vagga of the Dhammapada, which we mentioned at the beginning as our theme.

"Attānañce piyaṃ jaññā,

rakkheyya naṃ surakkhitaṃ,

tiṇṇam aññataraṃ yāmaṃ,

paṭijaggeyya paṇḍito."

"Attānañce piyaṃ jaññā"—if someone considers oneself dear, if one holds oneself dear; *"naṃ surakkhitaṃ"*—then, if one holds oneself dear, one protects that beloved self very well. No one opposes that. It is a well-known fact that if one holds oneself dear, (*"rakkheyya naṃ surakkhitaṃ"*) one takes good care to protect oneself. *"Tiṇṇam aññataraṃ yāmaṃ"*—while "the three watches of the night" usually refers to three periods of the night, here it refers to the three stages of life. The wise person (*"paṭijaggeyya paṇḍito"*) must seek, watch over, tend to, and protect oneself during at least one of these three stages of life: youth, middle age, or old age. It is recorded that upon hearing this discourse delivered by the Buddha through this Dhamma verse on that occasion, Prince Bodhirāja, bringing forth the power of his past accumulation of merit, attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*).

In relation to this story, what we must think of most is the subtle force of karma described here. This mentioned karma must have been committed in the very distant past. One should not think that the only result of that evil karma of killing animals was the inability to obtain children. Often, the suffering (*dukkha*), pain, accidents, troubles, calamities, and disasters we see in this human world are merely the tail-end, the last remnants, of some past evil karma. The greater portion of heavy evil karmas is paid for in the unseen woeful states (*apāya*), or in the ghost realms (*peta-loka*), or in the animal realms and the demon (*asura*) realms. It is the remaining, residual portion of those retributions that one has to experience here. What is shown here is merely the minor residual result of an evil karma committed by this prince together with his wife in the very distant past.

If we contemplate this verse even more deeply, everyone, especially in this day and age, is concerned about security and protection. Regarding one's home, the world considers security to be locking the doors and windows properly, and if necessary, employing watchmen and guards. However, it is not this kind of protection that is being declared here.

Even those who have set up such security measures sometimes fall into the jaws of death at the hands of their own security guards due to the heavy force of karma. Otherwise, as we hear in some Jātaka stories, even a thunderbolt might strike down to cause the disaster. The force of karma is that terrifying. It is not that kind of protection that is declared here. It is not that kind of shutting of doors and windows. What is meant here is securing protection by being diligent regarding wholesome states. Whether lay or ordained, what is expressed here is diligence regarding wholesome qualities (*kusala dhamma*) such as giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*). Indeed, the wise person should be diligent in these during all three stages of life. If, unfortunately, one neglected wholesome states during youth due to various sports, entertainment, and so forth, one must practice them at least during middle age. If, during middle age, one somehow neglected them due to activities concerning one's children and did not show interest in these matters, then at the very least, in old age one must be diligent in them. The meaning of this verse is that to cultivate these virtues of giving, virtue, meditation—

or virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—one must remove any unwholesome livelihood or evil deeds and enter the path of merit. This declaration of the Buddha is applicable even to an ordained person. Even in ordained life, sometimes one is initially engaged in activities like learning and studying, but gets interested in meditation later. What is meant by this is walking on this path to Nibbāna. Crossing over this samsāric suffering (*dukkha*) is the true protection.

The fundamental reason for the Buddha's appearance in the world is to incline those traveling on the path to woeful states (*dugati*) toward the path of happy states (*sugati*). Explaining wholesome and unwholesome, good and bad, demerit and merit to the world is like introducing these as dark states and those as bright states. The Buddha declared a certain natural law of the world here: "One is dear to oneself." Now, some people misunderstand this fact. They think: "I do this because I want to, because it is good for me, because I think it is good." Similarly, "I am dear to myself." However, the Buddha declared that while accepting this natural law, precisely because one is dear to oneself, one must reflect that other people's lives are also dear to themselves. The Buddha showed this on one occasion:

"Sabbā disā anupatitvā cetasā,

nevajjhagā piyataraṃ attanā kvaci,

Evaṃ priyo puthu attā paresaṃ,

tasmā na hiṃse paraṃ attakāmo."

Even if we traverse all directions with the mind, we will never find anyone in the world dearer to oneself than oneself. Even if we search deeply with our mind, no one else is as dear to us as our own self. Sometimes we might think, "I hold so-and-so dear, I love so-and-so very much." But when we examine it, when we contemplate deeply, why do we say we love them or hold them dear? It is because of the attachment one has for oneself. It is due to the attachment to oneself, because one derives some satisfaction from it. "Evaṃ priyo puthu attā paresaṃ"—but the matter does not end there. One must reflect: just as I am dear to myself, so too are others' lives dear to themselves. "Sabbesaṃ jīvitaṃ piyaṃ"—the Buddha declared that all life is dear. Therefore, "tasmā na hiṃse paraṃ attakāmo"—since that is the natural law, one who loves oneself should not harm others. What happens if one does? This law of karma (*kamma-niyāma*) is an astonishing natural law in the world. It has a marvelous, unalterable, and terrifying law of karma that bears fruit even for Buddhas and Arahants—terrifying in terms of its retributive aspect. That is why the Buddha declared:

"Kammassakā sattā kammadāyādā kammayoni kammabandhū kammapaṭisaraṇā"

Beings are the owners of their karma, heirs to their karma, born of their karma, related to their karma, have karma as their refuge. What everyone can call their own is the wholesome or unwholesome karma they commit. *"Kammassakā kammadāyādā"*—their

inheritance; indeed, what stands as one's inheritance is the wholesome or unwholesome deeds one has performed. What can be called one's relative or kinsman is also one's own wholesome and unwholesome karma. What becomes one's ultimate refuge and support is precisely this. "Refuge" here means this very protection. Therefore, it is by abandoning unwholesome karma and engaging in wholesome states that this is achieved, not by closing doors and windows. However, there are three doors that must indeed be protected. They are not the doors found in houses. The Buddha declared three doors that one must protect: the mind, the body, and speech. These three doors. Even if houses do not have doors, everyone possesses these three doors. If one does not control or protect these three doors, one is destined for the four woeful states. When reading some sutta discourses where the Buddha describes those who have fallen into such states in this long samsāra, one's hair stands on end. It is that astonishing; it is that terrifying. Even the trials and tribulations experienced in the visible animal realm are clear to us, as we hear about them daily in the human world. It is hundreds of thousands of times worse in the animal realm, and next, in the ghost realm (*peta-loka*), which is invisible to us but known in various ways. And then, there is hell (*niraya*), which is visible to those with higher psychic powers.

As declared by the Buddha as well as the Great Arahant Moggallāna, when compared to the suffering (*dukkha*) of hell, the disasters, calamities, troubles, and fears we consider major in this human world are extremely trivial. One has to undergo a terrifying suffering (*dukkha*) crores of times greater than those sufferings in accordance with those evil karmas. This is an operative law in the world. No one can change this. No matter how many evil deeds one has committed in the past, if one walks the right path in this life, engaging in wholesome qualities and performing those deeds, the retributive side can gradually decrease, or those retributions might even be neutralized (become *ahosi-kamma*). It depends on one's effort. Just as during the period when a flower blooms and the fruit forms and ripens, the outcome or the ripening fruit can change depending on the fertilizer applied, similarly, even though one has committed an evil karma, if one walks the good path, the path of merit, and performs wholesome deeds until the time that evil karma ripens to give its result, one might receive less of the retribution of that evil karma.

Furthermore, one can increase the retributive benefits and blessings of wholesome karma if one is constantly engaged in wholesome actions. In any case, it is by reflecting on the law of karma (*kamma-niyāma*) operating in this world that the Buddha declared this protection. This samsāric journey is an extremely dangerous journey. If we think of this as a journey, what is primary in undertaking this journey is the mind. This mind is like the steering wheel of a vehicle. Whichever way the mind turns, speech turns, and the body turns. Therefore, what is primarily required is guarding the mind. The Buddha has declared:

"Cetanāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kammaṃ vadāmi. Cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā."

"Monks, I say intention (*cetanā*) is karma. Having intended, one performs karma through body, speech, and mind." Because it is only after generating an intention that one acts through body and speech, the mind is primary. Therefore, if we think of this vehicle—our life, or rather the journey of life—as driving a certain vehicle, the mind is like the steering wheel of this vehicle. Next, the direction it turns—if we turn it towards happy states (*sugati*) or turn it towards woeful states (*dugati*), what happens? There are several words declared by the Buddha: "apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ." "Apāya" (state of ruin) is like veering off the road. "Duggati" (woeful destination) is like sliding down into a ditch, and then "vinipāta" (abyss) is falling into a great precipice, and finally getting smashed to pieces in hell ("niraya"). It is in this manner that one falls into the four woeful states and experiences suffering (*dukkha*). The other side is the happy destinations (*sugati*), the heavenly realms (*deva-loka*), the brahma realms (brahma-loka), and so on. These kinds of realms exist in the world. Thus, what helps in steering this vehicle is right vision—establishing the mind correctly. The Buddha has declared, "micchā-paṇihitaṃ cittaṃ"—that a wrongly directed mind, a mind established by turning it in the wrong direction, toward the unwholesome and toward evil karma, can bring upon oneself such pain and suffering (*dukkha*) that even one's worst enemy could not inflict. One can cause oneself more harm than even an enemy could do, if one directs one's mind toward evil, toward the bad side.

On the other hand, He declares that if directed toward the good—"sammā-paṇihitaṃ cittaṃ"—if directed toward the correct side, it can do for oneself a benefit that not even one's parents could perform. Similarly, the Buddha Himself declares that some people, by doing things thinking they are dear to themselves, become their own enemies, their own adversaries. Normally, we think: "Since I am dear to myself, I perform these activities." However, foolish people, while thinking thus, actually treat themselves in the very manner that their enemies would act.

"Caranti bālā dummedhā, amitteneva attanā,

Karontā pāpakaṃ kammaṃ, yaṃ hoti kaṭukapphalaṃ."

The Buddha has declared: "Fools of poor intelligence wander about as enemies to themselves, committing evil deeds that yield bitter fruit." When contemplating the terrifying nature of this samsāric journey, the message that the Buddhas always declare for protection is guarding those three doors. They explain and show good and bad to the world. Here, we took upon ourselves the *"ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla"* (virtue with livelihood as the eighth). *"Ājīva"* means livelihood. Now, in this story as well, we find someone who lived by making a livelihood of killing birds and eating birds' eggs. When we think of the present day, everyone's biggest problem is livelihood. When thinking about security, there are various types of insurance (*rakṣaṇa*) schemes. The word "livelihood" (*rakṣāva*) itself contains the idea of security (*ārakṣāva*). In addition to that, everyone thinks of and focuses on financial insurance schemes. However, righteous insurance does not fit that way. The Buddha did not declare this out of envy toward the world earning wealth. He pointed out those things that a faithful lay disciple should not do as wrong livelihoods

(*micchā-ājīva*): trading in weapons, trading in human beings/animals for slaughter, trading in flesh, trading in poisons, and trading in intoxicants.

A righteous livelihood is now considered a huge problem for the world, for someone leading a lay life. Yet, one must reflect with wisdom and take into consideration that the Buddha declared these with good reason, even if it means a lower income. The unwholesome karma accumulated through activities like killing animals follows one very far in samsāra. Reflecting in this manner, one should gradually free oneself from them and strive to turn toward a righteous occupation. Even if one lived unrighteously during one stage of life, one must strive to live apart from those at least during the second stage; or if one lived like that during the second stage too, then at least during the third stage. It is the disregard for this Dhamma, not only in this country but in the entire world, that is the unfortunate cause of the world's current state. No matter how scientifically advanced we become, and no matter how much we try to secure protection externally, we still have to experience the retributions according to the law of karma declared by the Buddha. Therefore, we must contemplate deeply on that matter of the Buddha: "Even if one rules as a king, the deeds committed will bear fruit."

Because of this natural law of karma, one must make a strong determination to walk the path of Dhamma with a clear understanding of wholesome and unwholesome deeds, and of merit and demerit. What is expected through the path of practice consisting of giving, virtue, and meditation is the removal of the defilements of craving (*taṇhā*), greed, and various other agitations and unrestrained behaviors from one's mental continuum, and behaving in accordance with that message of guarding the three doors. Indeed, the Buddha has declared that nowhere in samsāra can one find a true form of protection. Now, sometimes someone might think that safety is secured upon going to a heavenly realm. However, even a heavenly state of existence is not permanent. Even a brahma state of existence is not permanent. Even in the brahma world, after residing there as long as the retributions of merits are experienced, one suddenly falls away (passes away/cuti). Some deities, when an angry thought arises, pass away from there immediately. Having passed away, they might become a yakkha (demon) or a peta (hungry ghost). Such is the danger present in this samsāra. No matter how high one goes, one falls down once the power of those merits is exhausted. When one contemplates the samsāric journey in this manner, there is no true protection anywhere in this samsāra.

That is why the Buddha declared Nibbāna to be the supreme solace, the supreme protection. In some places in the Dhamma, the entire samsāra is described as a desert. For someone traveling in a desert, the only hope for a little solace is the oasis (khema-bhūmi) at the end of that desert. A fertile area with drinking water and food is called an oasis. In that manner, in this Dhamma, the entire samsāric journey is sometimes shown as a journey in a desert, and Nibbāna as the oasis. "Khema" is a name for Nibbāna itself. This Nibbāna is the true protection. It is liberation from this samsāra—the liberation from this suffering (*dukkha*) called wandering in samsāric existence (*bhava*). Birth (*jāti*) in this samsāra is itself suffering (*dukkha*). If one is born, from the very moment of birth, one travels toward aging, which is called decay. We separate this into youth and old age,

but in reality, from the moment of birth, one is subject to decay. Following the stages of that decaying process, there is sickness, called disease. Then, in the end, comes the event that everyone fears, called death. It is the moment when one must abandon this cage of a body. In the meantime, there are various disasters, troubles, calamities, and the suffering (*dukkha*) of searching for food and drink; in this way, a multitude of sufferings exist in this samsāra. That is why, to free Himself from this samsāra, and not only to free Himself but also to liberate all living beings of the world, the Buddha fulfilled the perfections (*pāramitās*) for such a vast period of four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand world-cycles.

One should think: "The Buddha attained Enlightenment for my sake." In the past, devout Buddhists strengthened their minds to walk this path of Dhamma by thinking: "He became enlightened for my sake, solely for my sake." Thinking that the Buddha attained Enlightenment for oneself. When reflecting on the era of a Buddha's appearance, it is a very special opportunity. As long as a Buddha does not appear in the world, one cannot know about good and bad. In the past, there were ascetics who had attained higher psychic powers (*abhiññā*), but even they did not understand the secret of escaping this samsāra. They did not have a deep understanding of this karma either. So much so, some of them, based on their limited psychic powers, saw these retributions and arrived at wrong conclusions. Even today, there are people who arrive at such conclusions among the debaters and intellectuals in society. Some think: "Even if you talk about wrong livelihood, so-and-so lives by a wrong livelihood. They kill animals and eat them, they do various other things, yet they live wonderfully. No harm is seen, and they live comfortably in luxury." Something the Buddha declared is that just as milk does not flow immediately when milking a cow, the retribution does not occur the very instant an evil deed is committed.

Like embers covered by ashes—*"bhasmāchannena"*—burning slowly, these evil deeds follow one deep in this samsāra; the Buddha has declared this profound aspect of the Dhamma. Why do they not give retribution immediately? If it is a human state of existence, one was born as a human due to some wholesome karma. Because of the power of that wholesome karma, those evil deeds are temporarily prevented from yielding their results. However, these wholesome karmas are things that get exhausted. Just as money gets spent, as one spends this human life and enjoys comforts and pleasures, those wholesome merits also get exhausted. This is something that gets exhausted. What happens while it is being exhausted? Like embers that were covered by ashes, those evil deeds emerge. One has to experience their retributions according to those past evil deeds. That is why, no matter how high one flies in the sky, one falls and dies without even knowing why. One cannot escape this karma by hiding anywhere. The Buddha declared through this verse the way the frightened world runs in search of protection. It appears to be identical today as it was during the Buddha's time.

"Bahuṃ ve saraṇaṃ yanti, pabbatāni vanāni ca,

Ārāmarukkha-cetyāni, manussā bhayatajjitā."

Driven by fear, many people go for refuge to mountains, forests, parks, groves, and shrines, hoping for protection. In this day and age, the situation is the same. It is just like in the Buddha's time. But the Buddha declares:

"N'etaṃ kho saraṇaṃ khemaṃ, n'etaṃ saraṇamuttamaṃ,

N'etaṃ saraṇamāgamma, sabbadukkhā pamuccati."

This is not a secure refuge; this is not the supreme refuge. Having gone to this refuge, one is not liberated from all suffering (*dukkha*). "N'etaṃ kho saraṇaṃ khemaṃ"—this is not a refuge of true protection, it is not security. The Buddha declares that by going to such parks, trees, and shrines, pleading and lamenting, one cannot be liberated from samsāric suffering (*dukkha*). How, then, what is that which is called protection?

"Yo ca buddhañca dhammañca, saṅghañca saraṇaṃ gato,

Cattāri ariya-saccāni, sammappaññāya passati."

But if someone goes for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, and sees with right wisdom, with right vision, the Four Noble Truths—namely, suffering (*dukkha*), the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path, which is the Noble Eightfold Path—then such a person indeed:

"Etaṃ kho saraṇaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ saraṇamuttamaṃ,

Etaṃ saraṇamāgamma, sabbadukkhā pamuccati."

This is the secure refuge; this is the supreme refuge. Having gone to this refuge, one is liberated from all suffering (*dukkha*).

One must contemplate in accordance with those words of the Buddha. Therefore, if one has obtained a human life during the era of a Buddha's appearance, our ultimate purpose must be the realization of these Four Noble Truths. Everyone understands, at various levels, that this samsāra is suffering (*dukkha*). If you ask anyone, they will say: "We understand what this suffering is." Yet, they have not understood it at the highest level. That is why they still harbor expectations to continue further in this samsāra, in this becoming (*bhava*). Underlying this is craving (*taṇhā*). Within this, there exists deep ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). That is why the Buddha has declared: "Monks, it is through not knowing these Four Noble Truths that you and I have wandered and run in this samsāra for such a long time, an unimaginably long time. Wrapped in ignorance and bound by craving (*taṇhā*), we have come through this samsāra." One must contemplate in accordance with that natural law.

If we have obtained a human mind, an opportunity to hear the Dhamma during the era of a Buddha's appearance, and the chance to behave according to the Dhamma, along with the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), the Buddha describes that state as the opportune moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*). This human state of existence obtained during the era of a Buddha's appearance is shown as a unique auspicious moment, as an

instant, as the opportune moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*). Let alone humans, even the deities hope to be born in the human world to accumulate merit. After going to heavenly realms and experiencing the retributions of their performed merits there, they look toward this side, hoping to be born in the human world. This is because it is in the human world that a Buddha appears. It is also the best place to perform meritorious deeds and practice meditation. In the heavenly realms, because of the available pleasures and luxuries, it is difficult to unify the mind. Today, everyone exerts themselves for maximum benefit, the maximum yield in financial terms. In economic activities like trade and commerce, they are keen to gain the maximum return. Yet, very few reflect on the maximum yield that can be derived from a human state of existence obtained during the era of a Buddha's appearance.

Let alone the maximum yield, at the very least, as the minimum yield, the Buddha points to what is called Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*). Through this, one can limit this entire samsāric journey, which has gone on for an unimaginably long time, to only seven more existences (*bhava*) or seven more lives, and bring it to an end there. This does not happen through some strange miracle, but through the understanding of these Four Noble Truths—by the arising of the Dhamma-eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*). Having taken upon oneself a good virtue like the "ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla" and living accordingly, one must walk this path of Dhamma by engaging in some form of meditation to develop and calm the mind. Through that, one becomes able to understand, at a certain level, the three characteristics of the true nature of this world declared by the Buddha: impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). From that, at some point, one gains the realization of the suffering (*dukkha*) of samsāra, that the cause of suffering is craving (*taṇhā*), that the place where this craving is stilled is the true solace of Nibbāna, and that the path to be taken for that is this very path on which I am walking.

Because of that realization, a certain great transformation occurs in the mind. When ignorance is removed to a certain extent in that manner and wisdom arises, it is called the Dhamma-eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*), the eye of wisdom. When that Dhamma-eye arises, the immense relief obtained by that person is such that the Buddha, taking a little soil onto His fingernail, declared: "The amount of suffering (*dukkha*) remaining for a Stream-enterer to experience is like this soil on my fingernail, whereas the amount of suffering already exhausted and freed is like the soil of the great earth." It is like the soil on a fingernail because they will only experience seven more becomings (*bhava*), seven more lives; they will be born only seven more times in this existence. Even lay male and female disciples obtained this state of Stream-entry, which yields such solace, during the Buddha's time. They were not only engaged in supporting the Saṅgha and similar activities, but were also engaged in learning the Dhamma and in meditation. They calmed their minds by contemplating the deep aspects of the Dhamma.

That is why the Buddha declares that there were hundreds and thousands of people in those various villages who attained the paths and fruits, such as Stream-entry. These are not things that are obtained for nothing. They cannot be obtained through certificates. They must be attained by one's own effort, walking the path of Dhamma, listening to the

Dhamma, and meditating. Wholesome qualities (*kusala dhamma*) that support these might be hidden within one's mental continuum from the past. Just like evil deeds, wholesome deeds also sometimes lie like embers under ashes. However, lighting these embers does not happen on its own in the case of wholesome karma; one must blow on them a little. One must blow to remove the ashes and bring forth a light. That is the good side. Wholesome qualities also exist like embers under ashes, but they should be utilized to bring forth a light, not to burn oneself.

When we reflect in this manner, it becomes clear that to obtain the ultimate happiness and ultimate protection, one must walk this path to Nibbāna declared by the Buddha. Various economic organizations, insurance schemes, and so on, applied in mundane terms, sometimes go to waste, shattering and ruining one's expectations. Although one might prepare vast accumulations of wealth, thinking, "These will support me in my final days," sometimes one has to die amidst terrifying disasters even before those final days arrive. Even from the children one raises thinking, "These will support me," sometimes the expected help and protection are not received, and instead, destruction comes upon oneself. We hear of many such incidents. Therefore, as declared by the Buddha, the true refuge and support for a person is obtaining this peace of Nibbāna, this solace. While there is burning everywhere in this world, here the Buddha declares Nibbāna. Nibbāna means cooling down. Instead of burning, it is cooling down. Likewise, instead of destruction, it is solace; instead of agitation, it is relief. All of this is connected to this mind.

The power that takes us to woeful states, to heavenly realms, and ultimately can even make us a Buddha, a Paccekabuddha, or an Arahant, lies within this mind of ours. One must strive to bring this out. The path to this has been declared by the Buddha as the Noble Eightfold Path. On the paths in this world, what happens is physical travel. But this path is one concerning the mind. *"Sammā-diṭṭhi"* means right vision. If someone has developed this right vision regarding the Four Noble Truths, as well as regarding good and bad, merit and demerit, then that person travels the journey according to a certain goal.

The Buddha declares that this Noble Eightfold Path is a straight path, a direct path. Why is *"sammā-diṭṭhi"* (right vision) mentioned at the very beginning of this Noble Eightfold Path? Because then that person knows, "I am traveling on a journey to Nibbāna." What supports this is fundamentally understanding good and bad, merit and demerit. However, through that, one does not expect to linger in the heavenly or brahma realms. By training one's body and speech, and then unifying the mind and developing meditation, a moment comes when one realizes, as declared by the Buddha, that this entire samsāra is suffering (*dukkha*). Everyone might say, "This is suffering." Yet, most people refer to suffering by taking only a single part of it, treating it like a small department, and saying only this part is suffering. But the Buddha declares that this entire samsāra is suffering (*dukkha*). This realization must be reached systematically. That is called wise attention ("*yoniso manasikāra*")—proper contemplation. In this manner, first of all, the Buddha declared "*sammā-diṭṭhi*", which is this right vision.

The Buddha has presented this Noble Eightfold Path in an astonishingly systematic way. Following *"sammā-diṭṭhi"*—right vision—good thoughts, called *"sammā-saṅkappa"* (right intention), arise in that person. With right vision, the target of the path being traveled becomes visible. That is why right thoughts arise from within that person. Those are namely *"nekkhamma"* (renunciation), *"avyāpāda"* (non-ill-will), and *"avihiṃsā"* (non-harming)—constantly thinking about escaping from samsāra. Next, removing hatred and generating thoughts of loving-kindness (*mettā*). Instead of harming others and animals, radiating compassion (*karuṇā*) toward them. Such thoughts arise. Instead of committing those evil deeds selfishly thinking "I am dear to myself," the person with right vision also thinks of the world and lives with a broad mind of loving-kindness and compassion. Furthermore, they obtain the realization that this samsāric journey is suffering, even from a basic knowledge of the Four Noble Truths they have received, thinking: "If the Buddha's word is true, this cannot be a good place. What must be done is escaping from here." In that manner, these intentions—these thoughts—can be developed not only by the members of the Saṅgha, but even by lay devotees through the vision of the Saṅgha. Next, through the experiences encountered in daily life, one must strive to bring forth thoughts about escaping from this samsāra. What must be done is not getting stuck and immersed in this very world. In that manner, *"sammā-saṅkappa"*, which means good thoughts, are things that can be experienced in this Noble Eightfold Path. The words uttered by a person living in accordance with those good thoughts are also endowed with the quality of *"sammā-vācā"* (right speech). *"Sammā-vācā"* means abstaining from using wrong words—abstaining from lying, abstaining from slander, abstaining from harsh speech, and abstaining from useless, gossipy words that distort one's mind.

The person who uses right words next reflects: "My actions must correspond to my words." Therefore, discarding deceit, lies, and so on, that person strives to abstain from those wrong actions called killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Living apart from killing animals, stealing, and sexual misconduct is what is called *"sammā-kammanta"* (right action)—not the other industries in the world. Thus, we call this "right doing." In that manner, while there are various doings in the world, this is the true doing. So: right vision, right thinking, right speaking, right doing. All these qualities are like links in a chain, where one arises due to the other. Next, *"sammā-ājīva"* (right livelihood) means a good livelihood. Just as in this story, for some, it appears as though they cannot avoid committing sins for the sake of their livelihood. They commit sins thinking: "This is my job, I have to do this to earn a living." *"Sammā-ājīva"* means abstaining from these mentioned wrong methods of livelihood, at least with effort. The sacrifice made for that—one must make a sacrifice for everything. Great things in the world cannot be obtained without a sacrifice. To pass an examination, to earn great wealth, or to become a millionaire, it is impossible without some sacrifice. Therefore, one must make such a sacrifice for this too, if one is to travel on this path to Nibbāna, to be liberated from samsāric suffering, to live according to the Buddha's word, and to be a true Buddhist lay disciple; one has to make a sacrifice for that.

For instance, let us assume that a person who lives by wrong livelihood throughout the entire month observes virtue (*sīla*) on one *Uposatha* (poya) day. On that day, that person's right livelihood, their good livelihood, becomes established. If they observe virtue on two days of the month, then during those two days; if they observe virtue on all four Uposatha days, then during those four days. When implemented in this way, it becomes clear that these can be abandoned. Thus, reflecting on some such practical method, everyone must strive to move away from these. The Buddha does not tell us to move away from these wrongs out of envy toward our earning wealth, but having reflected on the terrifying retributions of these.

The Buddha has pointed out that a person living by wrong livelihood has to face four types of fear: *"attānuvāda-bhaya"* (fear of self-reproach), *"parānuvāda-bhaya"* (fear of reproach by others), *"daṇḍa-bhaya"* (fear of punishment), and *"duggati-bhaya"* (fear of woeful states). *"Attānuvāda-bhaya"* means one's own mind blames oneself. Some people cannot sleep once they grow old, thinking: "I earned this wealth by committing such evil deeds." Then they have to search for sleeping pills. That is the fear of self-reproach; one's own mind blames oneself, one's conscience blames oneself. Next, *"parānuvāda-bhaya"*—neighbors and wise people censure that person, saying: "No matter how he lives now, we know how he earned that money." Next, *"daṇḍa-bhaya"*—sometimes they have to face punishments; they get caught in the clutches of the law. Even if one escapes from any of these, ultimately one has to go to woeful states. In accordance with the Buddha's word, one truly has to experience the retributions of these evil deeds. One must reflect on the retributive aspect in that manner. This is not meant as harm or insult to anyone, but as a presentation of the Buddha's word. However, considering the present times, detailing these matters at length might not be timely. Yet, as disciples of the Buddha, our duty is to introduce good and bad, black and white, to the world. Therefore, a person who, even with difficulty, changes from that kind of livelihood receives immense solace. They sleep well. Even with a lower income, they can live peacefully, bringing forth those wholesome qualities.

Similarly, escaping from the fear of reproach by others, the fear of punishment, and the fear of woeful states, one can lead a good life. Next, the effort applied for that is called *"sammā-vāyāma"* (right effort)—right striving. Indeed, it is the effort made to establish this right livelihood. Those with physical strength work very hard, lift various weights that others cannot, and set grand records, showing these as feats of skill, as displays of great heroism. However, the Buddha does not identify these as right effort. What is right striving? It is applying some endeavor, effort, and energy to prevent the arising of unwholesome states (*akusala dhamma*) that are waiting to slip into this mental continuum. Next, expelling the unwholesome states already present within oneself. It is like closing the front door to prevent enemies from entering, and then pushing out through the back door the enemy who has already entered inside. That is the bad side. On the good side, too, two things must be done. What are they? One must make an effort to bring close the wholesome states (kusala dhamma) that have not yet arisen. One must draw good people close to one's home. Waving and calling, "Come, come, come inside

and sit down," in that manner, one must draw good wholesome states close. Next, those good guests, those good visitors who have arrived—those good wholesome states:

In that manner, this fourfold energy is shown: for the non-arising of unarisen unwholesome states, for the abandoning and expelling of arisen unwholesome states, for the arising of unarisen wholesome states, and for protecting, stabilizing, and developing the arisen wholesome states so as to live by them. This person who exerts such energy is not particularly visible to the world. Perhaps they are sitting with closed eyes, or perhaps they spend their daily life calmly. Yet, this is being performed within their mental continuum. This is the right effort praised by the Buddha. Therefore, if some devout person is keen to correct their livelihood, and sincerely tells their children and spouse, "Let us try to make such a change starting from today, somehow or other," within that effort, this very right effort is developed. The person who develops this "sammā-vāyāma" unconsciously becomes a practitioner (*yogāvacara*). Because of this process carried out with the mind, that person becomes a meditator (*bhāvanā-yogī*), even though it is not visible externally.

Next, what is the result of that applied right effort? It is *"sammā-sati"* (right mindfulness). Here, one has to act like a watchman. If one is to act as a watchman, one must remain constantly mindful and heedful, with awareness. Then *"sammā-sati"*, that good mindfulness, becomes established in that person. By that good mindfulness, one grasps the nature of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*): "This is the nature of the body; this is the nature of feelings (*vedanā*); this is the nature of the mind; this is the nature of the mental objects coming to the mind." The four foundations of mindfulness are indeed what is called *"sammā-sati"*. When this is fulfilled, next, one obtains the power of concentration (*samādhi*) to keep the mind on a wholesome object for a long time. That is called *"sammā-samādhi"* (right concentration). The Buddha has declared, *"Sammādiṭṭhissa sammāsaṅkappo pahoti, sammāsaṅkappassa sammāvācā pahoti..."* showing how these are connected to one another. Within a person of right vision, good thoughts called right intentions arise. From the person with those good thoughts, good words are uttered. The person who utters good words engages in good courses of action. The person who engages in good courses of action establishes a good livelihood. Within the person who has established a good livelihood, good endeavor and energy arise. Within the person who generates that energy, good mindfulness and clear awareness arise. Within the person who generates that mindfulness, there arises concentration—a good state of calmness.

In this very manner, the Noble Eightfold Path becomes complete within a person. These are practical things. In the past, too, Buddhist lay devotees practiced these. One must reflect that it is possible. One must contemplate that Nibbāna, which is this cooling down, is the true protection and refuge declared by the Buddha. This cooling down, this ending of the entire samsāric suffering (*dukkha*) experienced for an infinite time—expressed as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair—to bring this to an end, the best opportunity is this human state of existence during the era of a Buddha's appearance. One must strive to take the true, maximum advantage of this opportune moment (khaṇa-sampatti). When it is said that

Prince Bodhirāja attained Stream-entry upon hearing this Dhamma verse, it means the merits and power of merit accumulated in the past emerged through a single verse of the Buddha. This became a key to the door of Nibbāna.

Even if not as quickly as that, these devout listeners must correct their shortcomings with effort and travel on this path to Nibbāna in this manner, without thinking, "These are impossible for us." One must strive to enter and walk on this path. Primarily, this involves guarding the three doors: mind, body, and speech. Next, virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). One must constantly reflect on and live according to one's Five Precepts or the *"ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*". Along with that, calming this mind, and next, wisdom—wisdom means the realization of the Four Noble Truths. One must make a firm determination to strive for that. The purpose of such a Dhamma sermon is to generate a series of wholesome thoughts in us. We reflect on the blessings that arise from hearing this Dhamma. Even in past times, on occasions of hearing the Dhamma, beings realized the paths and fruits as the deepest blessing of it. The mental continuum operates in connection with one's life: "I must correct these shortcomings in my life. Going home, I will live in this manner." Only the person who is able to remove even the craving (*taṇhā*) for the wealth and grain in their home at that moment can realize the paths and fruits. When one thinks, "If only I could live according to such a Dhamma, this indeed is the noblest life," those bonds one held are broken, and the realization of truth arises. One must contemplate in that manner. This Dhamma declared by the Buddha is *"sandiṭṭhika"* (to be seen here and now), *"akālika"* (timeless), *"ehipassika"* (inviting one to come and see), and *"opanayika"* (leading inwards). This is a path of Dhamma where one can see the results in this very world, obtaining them without delay—a Dhamma to be realized by the wise within their own mental continuums.

Contemplating in that manner, on this valuable *Uposatha* (poya) day, these devout listeners must make a special determination to put into practice the lessons to be drawn from this story and the lessons to be drawn from the verse. For some time, you observed a valuable virtue—the *"ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla"*—which is connected to the Noble Eightfold Path. One must reflect that a great merit, a strength in the mental continuum, has been generated through that undertaking of virtue. Next, when focusing the mind on this Dhamma sermon, you listen to these with a certain concentration and calmness. Next, by contemplating deeply on the basis of the Dhamma, you generate certain capacities of understanding. Virtue, concentration, and wisdom arise naturally in the person who listens to the Dhamma properly. Next, similarly, the Buddha has declared that through these, five faculties that support Nibbāna arise in a person: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

A certain amount of faith exists within us. However, it must be developed into a faculty to realize Nibbāna. This faith (saddhindriya) is not a physical faculty like the eyes, ears, or nose. It means that faith must gain dominance in our mental continuum. Faith, next energy. Accordingly, one must think: "In this manner, I will expel these unwholesome states and draw wholesome states close"—such is energy. Next, due to that application,

mindfulness, a good awareness arises. Through that, bringing forth concentration, one gains an understanding. One must make a determination to walk on this path of Dhamma.

Aspire thus: "May this mass of merit accumulated within our mental continuums up to this moment support the realization of Nibbāna! May this mass of wholesome intentions support us in escaping from this entire terrifying samsāric suffering (*dukkha*) consisting of birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and so forth, and in realizing the supreme, deathless Nibbāna!" Similarly, there is a group of beings who rejoice in this accumulated store of merit. Various beings of the world from above and below are watching those who perform these meritorious deeds. Some watch as if expecting some help. Some rejoice in this and generate empathetic joy (*muditā*). Such are the deities and Brahmas, chief among whom are the guardian deities of the Sasana. One must reflect on that.

Then, let us aspire: "May that assembly of deities and Brahmas, as well as any guardian deities presiding over this place, rejoice in our merit accumulated through this delivering and hearing of the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they be freed from all woeful states, reach happy states, and next, walking on that path of meditation, realize solace through the supreme, deathless Nibbāna—known as the un-aging and deathless—by means of their aspired Enlightenment!" Next, make that same aspiration for all deceased relatives who have passed away in your names, as well as all classes of beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who expect these merits, who desire merits, and who desire Nibbāna: "May everyone, by rejoicing in this merit, be liberated from samsāric suffering (*dukkha*) and realize solace through the supreme, deathless Nibbāna, known as the un-aging and deathless." With that aspiration, recite these verses to share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #117

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.12)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Attanā codayattānaṃ, paṭimāse attamattano;

so attagutto satimā, sukhaṃ bhikkhu vihāhisi;

attā hi attano nātho, attā hi attano gati;

tasmā saṃyamayattānaṃ, assaṃ bhadraṃva vāṇijo ti.

From:

Dhammapada 379–380 (Bhikkhuvagga)

Dear Listeners,

Today is the Duruthu Full Moon Poya Day—the first Full Moon Poya Day of the new year according to worldly convention. When a new year arrives, worldly people usually make new resolutions, look at new calendars, set aside old things, and expect to begin a new life. Just as we try to make things new, we are also compelled to preserve and protect certain old things. There is also a custom in the world to maintain old things as mementos and souvenirs. However, most people maintain and protect as mementos and souvenirs those things that increase defilements and prolong samsara. But when we think in accordance with the Dhamma, the true mementos and souvenirs we should utilize and protect are those through which our minds develop, our minds are purified, and those things and objects that bring an end to samsaric *Dukkha* (Suffering).

It is a story about a Venerable monk who derived the maximum benefit from such a practically valuable memento that is presented in the Dhammapada Commentary as the background story to the verses we have taken as our theme. We have themed two verses from the *Bhikkhu Vagga* of the Dhammapada.

At the time when our Buddha was residing at Jetavana monastery, there lived a certain poor man in the city of Sāvatthī. He was someone who lived with great difficulty, doing various hired manual labor for others. One day, a compassionate monk saw this man

going to work with a plow on his shoulder, wearing a very dirty, ragged piece of cloth—let us say, like a loincloth. Out of compassion, this monk asked him: "Rather than leading a livelihood of this nature, wouldn't it be better for you to ordain?" The man replied: "Oh, Venerable Sir, who would ordain someone leading a life like ours?" Then the monk declared: "If you are willing to ordain, my dear friend, I shall ordain you." The man agreed, saying, "Oh, that is very good!"

At that very moment, this monk took that man to Jetavana monastery, bathed him well with his own hands, brought him to the *Sīma Mālakaya* (ordination hall), and ordained him. Furthermore, this monk did something specific at that time: he arranged to place the ragged piece of cloth the man had been wearing, along with the plow, on a branch of a certain tree within the *Sīma Mālakaya* premises itself. Because of this, a nickname was attached to this newly ordained monk: "Nangalakula" (of the plow family). After being ordained, this monk received higher ordination (*upasampadā*). He was known as "Venerable Nangalakula." "Nangalakula" means one ordained from a plow family; somehow, a name connected to this plow was attached to him. During the lifetime of our Buddha, the Sangha generally did not lack the four requisites. This monk, too, received the four requisites well, in contrast to his previous miserable life.

However, the conduct of this new monk must not have been conducive to Nibbāna. Before long, he became disillusioned with the monastic life. He felt like disrobing and leaving. Yet, he thought: "Right now, I have nothing to wear and go. It is not good for me to go in this robe. It is not proper to go home taking the clothing given by people out of faith." Thus, he went to that tree in the *Sīma Mālakaya*, to the place where the ragged piece of cloth was kept. When he went there, a great sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) arose within him. He admonished himself: "You shameless man! Do you expect to wear this and do hired labor again?" He admonished himself thus. Lo and behold! His mind turned back toward the monastic life. His mind settled. The mind was stilled. Thus, he went back to perform his duties of the monastic life. After a few days, he again felt like going home. Once more, he came to that spot. He came and admonished himself. In this manner, this monk frequently visited the vicinity of that plow and loincloth.

Then, the other monks, seeing this, asked: "Friend Nangalakula Thera, why do you go to that particular place so often?" This monk gave a very wise answer: "Venerable Sirs, I go to my teacher (*ācariya*)." Who was this teacher? The plow and the loincloth. For this monk, who had accustomed himself to go there frequently in this manner, there was no need to go there for long. Before long, having destroyed all defilements, he realized the noble fruit of Arahantship.

After becoming an Arahant, there was no necessity to go to that plow and loincloth in that manner. Seeing that he no longer went in that direction, the other monks asked him in jest: "What is the matter, Venerable Nangalakula? Has the road to your teacher now been closed?" Then this monk replied: "Friends, when I had attachments and blockages, I went to that teacher. Now that they are broken, there is no need for me to go there." This was a profound statement. From this, the monks understood that this monk was declaring his realization of Arahantship. To claim Arahantship without having attained it

is a grave offense according to the Vinaya. Therefore, these monks went and complained to our Buddha: "Indeed, the monk of such a name is speaking in this manner." Then our Buddha declared: "No, monks, it is indeed so. My son, having exhorted himself and established himself in the practice of accusing himself, destroyed all defilements and attained supreme Arahantship." It was then that our Buddha uttered the two verses we mentioned earlier:

Attanā codayattānaṃ

paṭimāse attamattanā

so attagutto satimā

sukhaṃ bhikkhu vihāhisi.

That is the first verse: "Exhort yourself by yourself, examine yourself by yourself. Thus self-guarded and mindful, O monk, you will dwell in comfort."

The next verse states:

Attā hi attano nātho

attā hi attano gati

tasmā saṃyamayattānaṃ

assaṃ bhadraṃva vāṇijo ti.

"Self indeed is the savior of self. Self indeed is the destiny of self. Therefore, restrain yourself, as a merchant restrains a noble horse." Since that is the case, the advice is to tame, discipline, and restrain oneself. Next, a simile is given: just as a horse-merchant, upon receiving a fine horse, tames and domesticates it, so should one domesticate and discipline oneself. The Buddha's advice concludes with this verse.

Let us now reflect, in this new year, on the lesson we can extract for our lives from these verses and the story. *Codayattānaṃ*—this "accusing" or "exhorting" is a deep word. In modern times, it is commonly used as something to be directed at someone else. In courtrooms, the word "accusation" is used in that sense. However, this word contains many far-reaching meanings. Exhortation (*codanā*) does not mean merely accusing. The idea of urging or driving forward is present there. It is like what we call "driving" cattle. Even this monk, when he went near that plow and rags, might have remembered how he used to drive bulls. It is not easy to drive a bull in the mud; the bull always tries to avoid the yoke. But he had the habit of driving. Instead of driving bulls, what did this monk do? He drove himself out of the muddy swamp of defilements. Thus, in the word *codayati*, there is that quality of beating and driving oneself, or in other words, admonishing oneself. Admonishing is something that helps one reform.

Through *attanā codayattānaṃ*, this Venerable monk did a very wise thing.

Next is *paṭimāse attamattanā*. This means measuring oneself by oneself. At first, this monk went there because he wanted to disrobe and needed the ragged cloth to wear. But when he got there and thought about it, two images must have appeared to him. On one hand, the monastic image clad in the robe, which is the banner of Arahantship. On the other hand, the image of the farmer wearing rags, carrying a plow, or driving bulls. Then, the question must have naturally arisen within him: "Is this suitable for me? Is this fitting? Is it proper?" Thus, our Buddha explains that way. The lesson required for someone to reform is found here. *Attanā codayattānaṃ paṭimāse attamattanā*. One must drive oneself; one must admonish oneself. Likewise, one must measure oneself by oneself.

In the world, "self-respect" (*ātma-gauravaya*) is often spoken of, as in, "this is harmful to self-respect." That word "self-respect" is often used in the sense of pure conceit (*māna*), meant to stand out above others rather than with an intention to reform. However, our Buddha shows its practical value. The Dhamma points out three guiding principles for a person to reform: *Attādhipateyya* (Self-sovereignty), *Lokādhipateyya* (World-sovereignty), and *Dhammādhipateyya* (Dhamma-sovereignty). *Attādhipateyya* means measuring things and making decisions with oneself as the primary authority. Raising the questions: "Is this suitable for me? Is this fit for someone like me? Is it proper for me?" Then, if it is not suitable, one refrains from doing it. Our Buddha points to this principle as something that helps one reform.

There is another method for someone to rise from wrong and shape their character. That is called *Lokādhipateyya*. It is also called *lokāpavāda* (censure of the world) or *parānuvāda* (blame by others). *Lokāpavāda* here means that one should be mindful of being subjected to the censure of wise people. Generally, fools praise what is bad. However, there are always things in the world that the wise censure, and things the wise praise. Thus, our Buddha declares that it is good to refrain from doing things that invite the censure of the wise, and to do things that receive their praise. This is what is meant by *Lokādhipateyya*. By utilizing this, too, a person can correct their shortcomings. The third principle is shown as *Dhammādhipateyya*. This is acting out of respect for the Dhamma, in accordance with the Dhamma one has learned and heard: "In the Dhamma declared by the Buddha, this has been stated as good, and this has been shown as bad." Thinking thus, discarding wrong thoughts according to the Dhamma, and turning to the right path is *Dhammādhipateyya*.

Now, in this instance, this monk utilized *Attādhipateyya*. The specific reason we see here is that this monk ordained with a certain sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding his miserable life. Our Buddha points out eight factors called *saṃvega-vatthu* (objects of spiritual urgency) which help a person reform and which a meditator must constantly reflect upon daily. Just as various speeds and forces are required for other journeys in the world, the force that helps the journey to Nibbāna—which extinguishes the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of samsara—is *saṃvega* (spiritual urgency). Our Buddha has pointed out eight objects that assist this spiritual urgency: *Jāti* (Birth), decay/aging, sickness, death, woeful states, *Dukkha* (Suffering) endured in the past, *Dukkha* (Suffering) that will have

to be endured in the future, and the *Dukkha* (Suffering) that has to be endured in the search for food.

To explain them one by one, *Jāti* means Birth. Birth / Arising is *Dukkha* (Suffering). In this samsara, for an infinite time, one is born and dies, born and dies. The event of birth itself is an occasion of *Dukkha* (Suffering) that brings pain. From the place of birth, next is decay and aging (*jarā*). Reaching old age, decaying—one must think about this. For an infinite time in this samsara, one has built up these physical cages and watched them decay.

Next is sickness (*vyādhi*), diseases; one does not know when they will arrive. Perhaps sickness is remembered by many only when doctors tell them so—when they say "you have only a week or two to live," only then does spiritual urgency arise in some people. In this day and age, there are infinite, boundless diseases like cancer. It is in such circumstances that spiritual urgency sometimes arises. That is too late. This is something that must be recalled constantly: this physical cage can fall prey to sickness in this manner. What happens in the end? Death. Everyone has a fear of death. They think about the pleasures and resources of the world, and thereby suppress this. Some do not even like to think about death even when they are at a funeral house. However, for a meditator, if they are to develop spiritual urgency and proceed along this path of Dhamma, death is something that must be contemplated daily.

Next is the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of woeful states (*apāya*) that many have to endure after death—the *Dukkha* of the four woeful states. In this samsara, if one has not attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), anyone can go to the four woeful states just like going to their own home. Why? Because in leading a human life, it is mostly unwholesome actions (*pāpakamma*) that are performed. Therefore, one must think of this *Dukkha* of woeful states and develop spiritual urgency. Next, if the Buddha's word is true, one must think of the past *Dukkha*(Suffering) endured in samsara over infinite time, and develop spiritual urgency, thinking: "I must shorten this samsara, I must end this samsara." If one does not realize Nibbāna, for how much longer in the future will one have to endure *Dukkha* in this manner? The past *Dukkha* and the *Dukkha* to be endured in the future are of that nature. The final factor is the *Dukkha* one has to endure in this very life in order to search for food. For those who are wealthy and have money in their daily lives, this is not understood as *Dukkha*. However, for a poor man, for someone who had to lead a poor life like Venerable Nangalakula, it is easily understood how painful a matter this is—this matter of sustaining one's stomach. This is something that causes great spiritual urgency.

Since monks did not lack the four requisites during the Buddha's time, one might think they lived such a monastic life. But this monk must have thought: "For an infinite time in this samsara, I have lived in this manner just to sustain my stomach." Our Buddha also declared on a certain occasion: "Monks, when you see a poor person, think in this way: I, too, must have lived in this manner at some time." Now, some people do not think that way. Seeing others, they develop conceit about their own superiority, rather than thinking: "I, too, must have led such miserable lives for an infinite time in this samsara;

I, too, must have begged." But our Buddha tells the monks to recall this constantly: "You have suffered *Dukkha*(Suffering) like this for an infinite time in samsara."

In that manner, what especially helped this monk to ordain was the last-mentioned object of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*) regarding the *Dukkha*(Suffering) of searching for food—the accumulation of *Dukkha* one has to endure by performing hired labor to sustain the stomach in order to lead this life. This monk utilized that very thing as a support for Nibbāna, using it just like a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). For some, they can bring meditation to its culmination through that very object of spiritual urgency. What does one do through that? What is its practical value? It is the ability to renew the mind when the mind runs after defilements. When the mind is about to fall, he used that memento as a support to raise it. When practiced in this way for a long time, it must have naturally become a meditation subject. Whenever this monk felt like going home, the plow and the rags appeared to him. In this way, he trained his mind. It was to renew this that he came there from time to time.

We have only two things to do: we must expel the defilements that arise in our minds, and we must arouse wholesome thoughts. To put it another way, in the Dhamma, this is expressed as the fourfold effort, or Right Effort (*Samyak Vyāyāma*): the non-arising of unarisen defilements, the expelling of arisen defilements, the arousing of unarisen wholesome thoughts, and the protection of arisen wholesome thoughts. The support for this is that memento. Indeed, the monk who derived the highest possible benefit from a plow in the world was this monk. He used it as a support all the way to Nibbāna.

Likewise, he measured himself by himself. Recalling his past, he thought: "If I go back now, how will it be? What a wrong thing to do! Now I am leading a valuable monastic life. If I go back, wear those rags, and lead that kind of livelihood again, haven't I turned back toward samsara?" Thus, he accused himself. He admonished himself. Because of doing so—*paṭimāse attamattanā—so attagutto satimā*, by maintaining thoughts in this way, he aroused mindfulness. *Satimā* means he aroused mindfulness. Through that, *attagutto*, he secured his own protection. To put it briefly, he entered the path of *Satipaṭṭhāna* (Establishment of Mindfulness). He constantly watches over his body, *Vedanā* (Feeling), mind, and the mental objects (*dhamma*) that enter his mind—the unwholesome states that arise in his mind. Then, he takes the necessary course of action to dispel them. Next, he strives to develop and increase wholesome qualities. This is what one has to do if one expects to realize Nibbāna. *So attagutto satimā*—through that, one secures one's own protection.

In this Dhamma, there is self-discipline. One must do this oneself; another person cannot do this for you. In the world, in society, there is something called "self-service." There is something called "self-employment." When people look for jobs and fail, they create a job for themselves as self-employment. Or else, self-service: doing the service oneself. In the same way, in this Dhamma, what takes place is self-discipline. One disciplines oneself. This is not something another person can do. That is why in the second verse our Buddha declared: *Attā hi attano nātho*—Self indeed is the savior of self.

There are some religions that say another person, some other god, secures one's liberation. Our Buddha declares unequivocally:

Attā hi attano nātho

ko hi nātho paro siyā

attanā hi sudantena

nāthaṃ labhati dullabhaṃ

"Self indeed is the savior of self, for who else could the savior be? With a well-tamed self, one obtains a savior that is hard to find." Thus, our Buddha declares.

Here too, *Attā hi attano nātho — Attā hi attano gati*. *Gati* means where one goes. For the next world, we often use the phrase "the place one goes to." Even if we do not explicitly say where one goes, most people know where they are going. Rarely does someone go upwards to a happy destination (*sugati*). Most people go to a woeful destination (*dugati*). Thus, the place one goes to is decided not by any other creator or god, but by oneself—in accordance with the kamma one performs. Thus, that too belongs to oneself. Our Buddha has constantly reminded us of this responsibility that lies with us. On another occasion, our Buddha declared:

Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ

akkhātāro tathāgatā

"O monks, you yourselves must make the effort; the Tathāgatas are only teachers." They point the finger, showing: "Go in this direction." The journey itself belongs to you. *Paṭipannā pramokkhanti mārabandhanā* (those who tread the path will free themselves from the fetters of Māra). If anyone walks on this path and develops concentration (*jhāna*) and meditation, such people will escape from Māra. In various instances, our Buddha reminded us of this responsibility that lies within us.

Therefore, what we must do, which our Buddha points out as advice in conclusion, is: *Tasmā saṃyamayattānaṃ, assaṃ bhadraṃva vāṇijo*. "Therefore, restrain yourself, as a merchant restrains a noble horse." Restrain yourself, tame yourself, discipline yourself. How does one tame oneself? The simile is given: *assaṃ bhadraṃva vāṇijo*—like a horse-merchant when he gets a horse. Although we say "horse," when a wild horse is received, there is no use in a wild horse to sell and earn something. No matter how valuable this horse may seem, due to its wildness, that value is lost. Therefore, it must be tamed. The horse-merchant has to undergo considerable effort, toil, and expense for this taming.

This simile is presented here to show how one must tame oneself. Just like taming a wild horse or a wild elephant, this is something to be done systematically. It must be done with great care. This process of training is shown in the Dhamma as the threefold training: *Sīla* (Virtue/Morality), *Samādhi* (Concentration), and *Paññā* (Wisdom). If we translate the word *Sīla* into Sinhala, it is taming itself. *Sīla* means being tamed. This is

not taming other animals, but taming oneself. Taming others sometimes seems easy; taming oneself is difficult. In the world, that is the very thing most people try to do last. Most people try to tame others. But most are reluctant to become tamed themselves. However, that is what must be done.

Now, here, these meritorious people undertook the precepts. In doing so, you uttered the word *samādiyāmi* at every turn. *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*—the precept of refraining from taking the lives of beings, that practice of taming, *samādiyāmi* means "I take it up well and protect it. I observe that practice. I protect it." Although we say "we give precepts," we do this to make it easy to pronounce the Pali words correctly. But what is done here is not "giving" precepts, but taking them, through the word "I" (*samādiyāmi*).

There lies a self-discipline. One disciplines oneself. One promises to discipline oneself. How does this become a discipline? It is not merely saying it and forgetting it. Almost everyone here knows the meaning. It is to generate greater respect and faith that it is traditionally recited in Pali. However, one must understand its meaning clearly in Sinhala. Undertaking this practice of refraining from destroying the lives of beings and protecting it is a certain resolution—a promise to oneself. It is not a promise made to another person. Since it is a promise made to oneself, when that promise is broken, who is it that blames? Oneself. That indeed is the fear of self-reproach (*attānuvāda-bhaya*). Our Buddha declares: "Some people in the world say, 'I am not afraid. I am fearless. I am brave.'" But in the Dhamma, it is shown that one must fear what is to be feared.

Abhaye bhayadassino

bhaye cābhayadassino

micchādiṭṭhisamādānā

sattā gacchanti duggatiṃ

Thus, it is shown that some people fear what is not to be feared; that is wrong. However, one must fear what is to be feared. What are the things to be feared? The fear of woeful states (*apāya*), the fear of samsara—one must fear these. No matter if one says one is not afraid of these, in the end, as a consequence of these, one will have to endure a multitude of terrible sufferings (*Dukkha*). Therefore, as we have expressed, our Buddha always highlights those things that help us reform. They are not things to be settled by argument. They are things that help our reformation and our growth. Various debaters might speak in different ways: "There is no need to fear anything; one need not fear anyone!" However, our Buddha declares that those who said there is no need to fear in that manner might one day have to be born as animals in the animal world, living in the midst of a multitude of fears from all sides. Therefore, one must fear what is to be feared. Our Buddha points out four kinds of fear: *Attānuvāda-bhaya* (fear of self-reproach), *Parānuvāda-bhaya* (fear of others' reproach), *Daṇḍa-bhaya* (fear of punishment), and *Duggati-bhaya* (fear of woeful rebirth).

Attānuvāda-bhaya means, as we said before regarding self-respect, that one's own mind blames oneself. The mind of a man who committed a theft knows the theft he committed. Even if he did it as a great feat so that no one else would suspect, one person in the world knows it. Who is that? Himself. That is why our Buddha declared:

Na santi loke raho nāma

pāpakammaṃ pakubbato

attā te purisa jānāti

saccaṃ vā yadi vā musā

"For the person committing sin in the world, there is no such thing as a secret. Even if it is a secret to others, it is not a secret to oneself." Then, as if pointing a finger at that person, our Buddha says: "O man, you yourself know! You yourself know the wrong deed you did." Because of that, one's own mind blames oneself in that manner. Some people gather vast amounts of wealth unlawfully and unrighteously—through killing animals, stealing, and so forth—but in their final days, they cannot sleep. They go searching for sleeping pills. What is the secret? The wrong deeds they committed begin to appear to them. That is the television seen at night. That is the television seen when closing both eyes. When they cannot escape from this, they have to seek sleeping pills. That indeed is *attānuvāda-bhaya*—one's own mind accusing oneself.

Next is *Parānuvāda-bhaya*. Some people do various things in this manner so as not to be seen by the world, but even their neighbors know the life they lead. Everyone in the country and the world knows. Perhaps they smile to their face, but everyone knows. Worldly censure comes to that person. That is called *Parānuvāda-bhaya*. Our Buddha declares that if one wishes to reform, this is something to be feared.

Next is *Daṇḍa-bhaya*—punishments. Falling into the clutches of the law, one will have to suffer some punishment at some point, no matter how long one has remained escaped. Even if one escapes from such things, what one cannot escape from in the end is *Duggati-bhaya*—having to go to a woeful destination (*dugati*). No matter how much one lived according to worldly conceit, in accordance with the kamma one has performed, one will have to go to hell, the animal world, the preta world, and so on. When a person dies, if that person was prominent or held office, we usually use the term *divaṅgata*—meaning "gone to the heavenly world." Who knows if they went to the heavenly world? Yet, that word is used. But in the end, instead of going to heaven (*divaṅgata*), what has actually happened is that they have gone to the animal world (*tirisaṅgata*) or to the preta world (*pretagata*), or among yakkhas and so forth. One's destiny is decided by oneself: *Attā hi attano gati*. In this samsara, one cannot proceed by closing one's eyes to such dangerous words. Having understood these, our Buddha declared that one must fear what is to be feared.

Therefore (*tasmā*), *saṃyamayattānaṃ*—one must be especially diligent regarding *Sīla* (Virtue). *Sīla* is not merely a foundation that assists meditation. If one violates those

precepts of *Sīla*, if one turns to living like in the lawless animal world where they kill and eat each other, as a consequence of that, one will have to be born in the animal world, the preta world, and so on. Therefore, one must especially be diligent about *Sīla*—about taming and disciplining the body and speech.

Why was *Sīla* shown as the first training in this path of Dhamma? By taming the body and speech, one obtains a lightness of mind, a lack of remorse, and a sense of relief and peace within oneself. Today, "restlessness" or "stress" (*asahana*) is a word frequently used in the world. If we consider it deeply, the root seed of this is the wrongness of the life one leads—the lack of discipline regarding body and speech. By taming body and speech in that manner, a person can secure a certain amount of relief and leisure. Leisure is not something to be obtained externally, nor is it something obtained through a holiday given by the government. Leisure means the mental leisure (*citta-viveka*) and peace of mind that one can obtain by taming body and speech.

Once that peace is obtained, it is consolidated through *Samādhi* (Concentration). One must remove the sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, sloth and torpor, the shrinking nature of the mind, restlessness, remorse, and doubt—things that scatter the mind and obstruct its stillness. Thereafter, one must maintain the mind on a single meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). By constantly bringing to mind such words as "May all beings be well and happy," or "Buddhō," "Arahant," "Sammā Sambuddhō"—by frequently bringing them to mind through the multiplication of meditation—one can develop a certain *Samādhi*. That is a great relief. It is a wonderful relief that cannot be obtained from sleeping pills. It brings a wonderful mental, spiritual joy (*nirāmisa-pīti*) that cannot be obtained through various other devices or intoxicants. One must strive to reach a certain level of *Samādhi* through that.

There are various meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) such as *Buddhānussati* (recollection of the Buddha), *Dhammānussati* (recollection of the Dhamma), *Saṅghānussati* (recollection of the Sangha), and *Ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing)—directing the mind to inhalation and exhalation. Whether lay or ordained, one must learn these from those who know them, and constantly apply oneself diligently amidst one's daily activities. Without thinking of doing these after retiring in old age, by practicing little by little whenever opportunity arises in daily life, and doing so for a long time, one can obtain a certain *Samādhi*.

In this dispensation, during the period of a Buddha's appearance, the highest possible result, the supreme gain, is to free oneself from all this samsaric *Dukkha* (Suffering) through the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship. If one is to obtain that noble fortune which can only be obtained during the period of a Buddha's appearance, what must be done next is the development of *Paññā* (Wisdom)—*Sīla*, *Samādhi*, *Paññā*.

Paññā means insight (*vipassanā*)—a special seeing, the wisdom of insight. Opposed to this wisdom (*Paññā*) is delusion (*moha*), confusion, foolishness, and ignorance (*avijjā*). As long as this foolishness and confusion exist, the worldly people remain in darkness.

Confusion and delusion are comparable to darkness; wisdom (*Paññā*) is comparable to light. Through this, the difference between the two can be understood. No expense is incurred in removing this confusion. This is not something that can be done only by the educated or the wealthy. One should not think that this can be done only by the Sangha. Whether lay or ordained, our Buddha has shown in various ways the method to arouse this. For that, one must develop the four establishments of mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*).

We mentioned souvenirs/mementos earlier. If we translate *Satipaṭṭhāna* into Sinhala, its meaning is "mementos of mindfulness" (*sihivaṭana*). The ancient word is *sihivaṭan*—the four *sīvaṭan*. That indeed is the true memento, the true object of remembrance. In the external world, we use things we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands as mementos. We keep them hidden away, or else in the living rooms of our houses, to remember. But the true memento must be created within one's own mind. Those indeed are called "mementos" (*sihivaṭan*). There are four establishments of mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*). What are they? This body—one dwells contemplating the body in the body. This means one must contemplate the nature of one's own body. This is not something made of pearls and gems, or cast from iron and steel. One must dwell seeing the true nature of this physical cage, which is made of a collection of impurities—the thirty-two impure parts—and constructed from the elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). That is the memento. That is the object of remembrance. That is what must be brought to mind.

Next are the *Vedanā* (Feeling) that arise in this body—whether pleasant, painful, or neutral/middle feelings that lie between the two—contemplating how these feelings come and go; this is dwelling contemplating feelings in feelings (*vedanānupassanā*).

Next is *cittānupassanā*—this mind. The mind is just like signal lights; it changes according to the occasion in line with greed, anger, and delusion.

Next is *dhammānupassanā*—here, *dhamma* means the objects that come to the mind, the things that are cognized by the mind. These cognized objects also come and go. When one constantly watches these with close scrutiny in this manner, what emerges through this? In this world, there is nothing that is permanent (*nicca*). Everything arises and ceases. In everything, there is a nature of arising, existing, and ceasing. This physical cage, too, arises, exists, and ceases. This begins to be seen rapidly. This is not seen in the ordinary way of birth, youth, old age, and death; rather, it is seen deeply. Moment by moment, this body wears away very rapidly.

Next, the *Vedanā* (Feeling) likewise. Likewise, this mind changes—the thoughts that come to the mind. Dwelling seeing how these come and go. Arising and ceasing is *Dukkha* (Suffering) itself. It is through this that wisdom (*Paññā*) develops by way of insight (*vipassanā*). Each of these is seen deeply: the fact that there is nothing here to be taken as "I" or "mine," that this is an Inconstant / Impermanent (*anicca*) thing, and because it is impermanent, it is *Dukkha* (Suffering). This is constantly changing. It always has a nature of oppressing; it suffers pain. It has this nature of changing. It has to be attended to; it has to be repaired. This is a great trouble.

Next, likewise, in all of these, there is no essence, no core, no heartwood that can be taken as "I" or "mine." This is a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), like a banana stem (*kadalikkhandha*). This realization must come to oneself: "This is a heap of bark without any heartwood."

Our Buddha declares that this well-proclaimed Dhamma is directly visible (*sandiṭṭhika*), timeless (*akālika*), inviting one to come and see (*ehipassika*), leading onward (*opanayika*), and to be personally realized by the wise (*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*). What is the nature of this Dhamma that is well-declared, described as *sandiṭṭhika*? It can be seen by oneself—it can be seen by oneself in this very world. It is not that one sees its truth only after going to the next world; one can see it with one's own eyes in this very life. It is *akālika* (timeless)—without delaying, one can reap the benefits of treading this path of Dhamma. We can see its results in this very life without delay. If one recognized a greedy mind—that greed had arisen within oneself—and removed it with effort through a thought of generosity, then one knows: "Previously there was a greedy mind, now it is not there." If a certain amount of greed was present and was removed, how much greater is the relief when greed is completely removed? It is the same regarding anger, and the same regarding delusion; that can be felt by oneself. It is *akālika*—its results are obtained without delay. Next is *ehipassika*—it says "come and see." Here, the Dhamma does not mean our Buddha is saying "come and see"; rather, the Dhamma itself says, "Come, put me into practice and see, then you will see the results." That is *ehipassika*. *Opanayika* means it leads onward, from one stage to another; they are connected to each other.

If Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)—which is correct seeing—has arisen, then in accordance with that correct seeing, right thoughts arise in the mind; right thoughts and aspirations arise. If correct seeing has arisen, right thoughts arise. If right thoughts have arisen, right speech arises, right action arises, right livelihood arises. Next, likewise, right effort, striving, and exertion arise. Right mindfulness arises. Right concentration of mind arises. What we have just mentioned is the Noble Eightfold Path expressed by way of Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*), and so forth. In this manner, a complete transformation of life can take place. They lead onward, one to another, like the links of a chain—*opanayika*. Therefore, *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*—by the wise, just as Venerable Nangalakula did, by such wise people—not merely by the clever—*paccattaṃ veditabbo*, the true nature of this Dhamma, the Dhamma of Nibbāna, can be personally realized.

That is how our Buddha has declared this Dhamma. This path, this path of training—whether we call it *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, *Paññā*, or *Sati*, *Samādhi*, *Paññā*, or the Noble Eightfold Path—in whatever way we say it, this is the path to Nibbāna. What is the final result? Our Buddha brought to light the solution to this extremely terrible samsaric *Dukkha* (Suffering), which no other teacher in the world could find. The true nature of this world lies within the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). None of the things that the worldly people consider to be permanent have a permanent nature. Everything changes; they are impermanent

(*anicca*). Because they are impermanent, they are of the nature of suffering (*dukkha*); they are constantly oppressed by suffering. Even the little that the worldly people think of as happiness is suffering (*dukkha*). In this manner, our Buddha declared unequivocally that the entire five aggregates—everything that the worldly people grasp as (*upādāna*) (*taṇhā*)—brings suffering.

The supreme bliss of liberation obtained by destroying that craving (*taṇhā*) is called the bliss of Nibbāna. The path to that is the Noble Eightfold Path. It is by treading this Noble Eightfold Path and through the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship that one extinguishes this extremely terrible samsaric *Dukkha* (Suffering). In this manner, these meritorious people must think: "Let us take the ideas expressed by our Buddha through these Dhamma discourses and verses, put them into our minds, and shape our lives accordingly in this new year. Let us accuse ourselves by ourselves, measure ourselves by ourselves, and treading this path of Dhamma, strive to bring about some blessing, peace, relief, and comfort in this very life."

The matters we have expressed so far have helped to arouse a multitude of wholesome thoughts (*kusala-cetanā*) in the minds of these meritorious people. By undertaking these precepts, you restored your *Sīla* and gave a resolution to your mind; that too is a wholesome thought by way of *Sīla*. Next, during the time of listening to this Dhamma, by directing your minds to it by way of *Samādhi*, you developed a certain measure of concentration. Next, if any deep understandings arose, that too belongs to *Paññā* (Wisdom). To think of it in another way, there are five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) that assist Nibbāna: there must be faith (*saddhā*); next, energy (*viriya*) that follows faith must arise; next, with energy as the forerunner, mindfulness (*sati*)—good mindfulness and wisdom—must arise; through that, concentration (*samādhi*) must be consolidated; next, the deep understanding called wisdom (*Paññā*) must come. Listening to this Dhamma has also helped to develop such spiritual faculties within your mental continuum.

Reflecting in this manner, make a wish: "May this store of merit, this multitude of wholesome thoughts, this store of wholesome qualities accumulated so far, serve as a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*) and a wholesome potential for us to realize that noble Dhamma of Nibbāna in this very life through the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry and so forth!"

Likewise, make this wish: "May any guardian deities of this place, and the guardian deities of the Sasana, rejoice in this merit of listening to and teaching the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they be comforted by the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through a path of awakening (*bodhi*) of their choice!"

Likewise, make the wish: "Whatever departed relatives of ours there may be, and whatever beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, may they all rejoice in this merit of listening to and teaching the Dhamma, and realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through a path of awakening of their choice!"

Having made that wish, let us now transfer the merits by reciting the verses in this manner:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #118

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.31)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Uccinda sineham attano, kumudaṃ sāradikaṃ va pāṇinā;

santimaggameva brūhaya, nibbānaṃ Sugatena desitaṃ ti.

From:

Dhammapada 285 (Piyavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The word "peace" (*santi*) is a beloved word to everyone. This word is frequently used in the Dhamma in reference to Nibbāna. The Buddha introduced Nibbāna as the supreme peace, the highest tranquility. Devotees like you often perform various propitiatory rituals (*shanthi karma*) to escape the turmoils and problems of your daily lives. However, the true peace, the supreme peace, is the deathless Nibbāna. This deathless Nibbāna is the state where the exhaustion, suffering, and thirst that arose from running after a mirage in this *saṁsāra* out of *Taṇhā* (Craving) for an extremely long duration are completely stilled. That is why the Buddha introduced Nibbāna as the supreme peace.

It is a verse and a story that shed light on that path to supreme peace that we intend to expound today. This verse was delivered by the Buddha concerning a pupil of Venerable Sāriputta. Under Venerable Sāriputta, a very handsome young man born into a family of goldsmiths was ordained. Venerable Sāriputta gave this monk the meditation on foulness (*asubha*) as his subject of meditation. The Elder thought that since this was a young man, lust/passion (*rāga*) would be intense, so a meditation on foulness would be more suitable. So, this monk went to a forest and tried for three whole months to concentrate his mind. But this meditation on foulness was not suitable (*sappāya*); it did not agree with him. When this monk returned to Venerable Sāriputta, the Elder asked him, "How is it, is the meditation subject becoming clear to you?" The monk expressed that he was still unable to settle his mind on it. Then Venerable Sāriputta clarified and explained that meditation subject further and said, "Do not let your mind weaken just because it didn't succeed all at once. Try again." That monk went back to the forest and meditated, but it

did not succeed. He returned once more. On that occasion too, Venerable Sāriputta explained the meditation subject with more reasons and similes and sent him back. Yet, this monk returned once again and stated, "My mind does not agree with this meditation subject. The mind does not settle."

At that moment, Venerable Sāriputta thought: "There must be some reason. It is very difficult for me to understand how this monk's mind works. Perhaps this monk is 'Buddhaveneyya' (meaning, he is someone with some difficult mental problem who must be tamed by the Buddha Himself)."

He took this monk to the Buddha and related the matter. When the Buddha, using His unique knowledge of the inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa* (inclination and Anusaya: Latency / Underlying tendency)), inquired into this monk, He understood that because he had been born into a family of goldsmiths for five hundred consecutive lifetimes, it was difficult for him to concentrate his mind on the meditation on foulness. He only delighted in agreeable things, in beautiful sights and the like. Because for a very long time he had kept his mind settled on crafting various beautiful forms out of gold, such as lotus flowers, his mind did not take to the meditation on foulness. There was a tendency for the mind not to grip it. Therefore, the Buddha said to Venerable Sāriputta: "Sariputta, go. This matter is something relevant only to a Buddha who possesses the *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*. Therefore, this monk whom you could not tame for four months, I shall bring to Arahantship this very evening, today itself." Having said this, He sent Venerable Sāriputta away. What did the Buddha do? Through psychic power, He created a lotus flower as large as a cartwheel. It was a life-like lotus flower showing dewdrops trickling from its petals, and water drops trickling from its stem. Giving that flower to this monk, He instructed him to go to the edge of the monastery, place this lotus on a heap of sand, and gaze at it while cultivating this meditation subject by repeating: "*Lohitakaṁ, lohitakaṁ*" (Red, red). He directed his mind to the red *kasiṇa* meditation.

As soon as the Buddha gave that flower to this monk, his mind became highly pleased. Likewise, he took it, placed it on a heap of sand as instructed, and as he gazed at it repeating "*lohitakaṁ, lohitakaṁ*", all the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa-dhamma*) that obstruct mental concentration—such as sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, and skeptical doubt—were stilled, and his mind reached absorption (*jhāna*). Furthermore, because he had cultivated these in the past, the monk mastered the first *jhāna* almost instantly. To "master" (*vasībhāva*) means that he attained a state where he could handle it as he wished. When one attains a *jhāna*, there is a method of mastering it in five ways: to enter it, emerge from it, dwell in it, advert to it, and review its factors as and when one wishes. In that manner, he mastered the first *jhāna* in five ways. Next, he attained the second *jhāna*. He attained the third *jhāna*. He attained the fourth *jhāna* very quickly.

Generally, meditations of this kind are called tranquility meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*). Due to that tranquility meditation, there is a tendency to get immersed in that pleasure; one clings to that pleasure. Because when a person who has enjoyed the

pleasures of the five cords of sensual pleasure (*pañcakāma-sampatti*) for a long time in *saṁsāra* receives the bliss of *jhāna*, it is hundreds of thousands of times greater. The Buddha has declared that compared to the bliss of *jhāna*, the pleasures of the five cords of sensual pleasure are like a small child playing with excrement and urine. He declared that *jhāna* bliss is hundreds of thousands of times more noble and superior. Therefore, when this monk received this bliss of *jhāna*, out of desire for that pleasure of tranquility, he began to engage in *jhāna* play. That pleasure is an extremely subtle pleasure. "Jhāna play" (*jhāna-kīḷā*) means practicing the *jhānas* one has mastered, moving up and down through them.

At that time, the Buddha, seated in His Fragrant Chamber (*gandhakuṭī*), was watching how this monk was acting according to his subject of meditation. Seeing this, the Buddha considered whether this monk could turn this into insight (*vipassanā*). For the sake of Nibbāna, this *jhāna* must be turned toward insight—from the side of insight. When He saw whether he could do it without help, He realized that help was necessary. Then, while the monk was absorbed in *jhāna*, the Buddha caused that flower right in front of him to wither, just like a fading lotus flower. When a lotus flower squeezed, bruised, and crushed by a hand withers, it turns blackish. In that manner, the Buddha, through His psychic power, turned the created flower into something discolored and decayed.

Then, as soon as this monk emerged from *jhāna*, he saw that the flower in front of him had become misshapen. Next, he reflected: "Alas! Even this insentient, inanimate object is subject to such *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death / Aging and Death). Then what need is there to speak of this sentient body?" He then thought about his own body: "My body, too, which is sentient, will surely undergo decay in this very manner, won't it?" That was the sign of turning toward insight. At that very moment—according to how it is recounted in this story—a group of young children came to a pond near where this monk was sitting, plucked the blue water-lilies (*kumudu*) in that pond, and piled them on the shore. This monk's eyes turned toward that as well. He saw the withered nature of the flowers piled on the shore, and the vibrant, fresh nature of the flowers still in the water. Once again, he reflected further on his own body, realizing that this body too would fall into decay at some point. Through that, his mind fell upon *Anicca* (Impermanent).

You have heard that insight meditation is expressed in three terms: *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self) (*aniccaṁ, dukkhaṁ, anattā*). Whatever is *Anicca* (Impermanent) is *Dukkha* (Suffering). That *Anicca* (Impermanent) means it constantly has to be prepared/formed; one has to keep looking after it and attending to it. It does not remain in a constant state. It is *Dukkha* (Suffering). It cannot be kept as one wishes. Therefore, one cannot say of it, "This is mine, this I am." It cannot be made to yield to one's power—it is *Anattā* (Not-self). In this manner, as soon as he saw impermanence, simultaneously, the nature of suffering and the nature of non-self within it became clear to this monk. At the moment of this realization, the Buddha projected a light—it is mentioned in many instances that the Buddha did so. Without physically going there, He projected a light, and through that light, He made His form appear as if He were present right in front of the monk. At that moment, the monk stood

up and worshipped Him. It is at that very moment, as recounted, that the Buddha uttered the verse we mentioned earlier:

Uccinda sineham attano, kumudaṁ sāradikaṁ va pāṇinā,

Santimaggameva brūhaya, nibbānaṁ Sugatena desitaṁ.

The meaning of the first two lines is: "Just as one would pluck an autumn lily with one's hand, so should one completely cut off self-affection (affection for oneself)." "Cherish only the path to peace, Nibbāna as taught by the Sugata." That was the brief advice presented by the Buddha. It is recorded in the story that, with that advice, his insight was brought to its culmination and this monk attained Arahantship.

Now, what we have to do is to gather from this verse and story a few core values that can be useful for our lives. Now, almost everyone has heard that we travel in this long *saṁsāra* due to ignorance (*avijjā*) and *Taṇhā (Craving / Thirst)*, according to the Buddha's word. Ignorance and craving are just like the father and mother of *saṁsāra*. Why? Because this ignorance supports and helps the concept of 'I' that a person has formed. Generally, one identifies 'I' in relation to what is 'mine'. In this manner, being immersed in these two concepts of 'I' and 'mine', and remaining in that wrong view for a long time, is what is called the journey of *saṁsāra*.

Now, the things that are taken as 'I' or 'mine' were pointed out by the Buddha as five heaps (aggregates): *rūpa* (form), *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā* (perception), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness). The heap of form is this physical body. The world regards this as a single unit. Next, *Vedanā* (Feeling). The feelings that keep coming are regarded as distinct units. Next, perception. Based on feeling, some recognition is formed—recognizing the feelings and sensations that arise in this physical body. Next, based on those recognitions, various desires, expectations, intentions, wishes, etc., arise as activities of the mind. These are called *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), a preparing/forming. There is a preparation/formation within the mind; one tries to maintain things as one wishes. Next, there is a mind that cognizes them distinctively. This mind we refer to as *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness)—the nature of distinguishing one thing from another. That characteristic is in this mind. Thus, due to the unwillingness to let go of these five heaps, clinging and sticking to them, we travel in *saṁsāra* for a long time thinking "this is I, this is mine." Now here, it is said to cut off at the root the affection for self—the attachment to oneself. The most superficial part is form (*rūpa*), the attachment to form. Sentient beings in the world have, for a long time, generated the perception of beauty/sublimity (*subha-saññā*) regarding their own form and the forms of others.

The Buddha declared that there exists in the world a distorted view called perversion (*vipallāsa*). They regard what is foul as beautiful. No matter how many foul substances are inside the body, due to defilements (*kilesa*), they tend to appear as beautiful. It is to counter this perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*) that Venerable Sāriputta gave this monk the meditation on foulness. However, because of the perception of beauty he had

habituated himself to in *saṁsāra* in the past, and due to his unwillingness to let go of it, his mind did not take to that meditation subject. The Buddha, applying His *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa* (knowledge of inclinations and *Anusaya* (Latency / Underlying tendency)), as if pulling out this monk's personal saṁsāric file, contemplated: "This is this monk's past tendency, inclination, and preference." Accordingly, He created a lotus flower and gave it as his meditation subject. But even there, He created it as something life-like, living, or vibrant. Next, by causing it to wither, He led his mind back, through a detour, to the foul nature of reality. What is visible there is the Buddha's skill-in-means (*upāya-kosalla*).

From this, we understand that for insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) to reach its culmination, both sides must be completed. Now let us consider the meditation on foulness. In that, merely considering the foulness of one's own body is not sufficient. On the other hand:

"As this body is, so is that body; as that body is, so is this body."

Yathā idaṁ tathā etaṁ, yathā etaṁ tathā idaṁ, ajjhattañca bahiddhā ca, kāye chandaṁ virājaye.

It is expressed in that manner: "Just as this body is, so is that body. Just as that body is, so is this body." By comparing them in this way, by relinquishing attachment (*chanda*) to both the internal and the external (*ajjhattañca bahiddhā ca*)—concerning one's own body internally, and other bodies externally—insight is brought to completion.

For some, this can be started by directing the mind to one's own body. For some, perhaps, they must first understand the foul nature of another's body, and then direct that realization toward their own body. This is also seen in the story of this monk. Similarly, other such instances are recounted in the Dhamma. King Bimbisāra's Queen Khemā was intoxicated with her own beauty because she was extremely beautiful. Her pride in her beauty was such that she did not even go to see the Buddha, who was residing in the Veluvanārāma monastery built by King Bimbisāra himself. Having heard that the Buddha frequently preached about the foul nature of the physical form, she was unwilling to go because of that. King Bimbisāra employed a certain stratagem.

He had songs sung about the Veluvanārāma monastery in a way that the Queen would hear them. Having been encouraged in this manner, Queen Khemā went to see the Buddha one day. When she arrived, the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma to the congregation of monks. The Buddha also saw that Queen Khemā was no ordinary person, but one who had fulfilled her perfections (*pāramī*) to become the foremost female disciple in wisdom among the female disciples in this long *saṁsāra*.

At that moment, the Buddha created the image of a woman even more beautiful than Queen Khemā fanning Him. Then, Queen Khemā did not listen to what the Buddha was preaching. Instead, she looked at that form, thinking, "Isn't this someone more beautiful than I?" While she was watching, the Buddha gradually transformed that form from youth to old age, showing her decaying through decrepitude (*jarā*). It was at that very

moment that Queen Khemā felt disenchantment (*nibbidā*) toward her own body and attained the paths and fruits. There are such accounts in the Dhamma. From this, we can understand that in one way or another, we must develop disenchantment toward this physical form. For some, they can first think of their own body and then realize that others' bodies are also the same. For another, they can contemplate the loathsome nature of an external body and understand that their own is similar. Many such opportunities occur in our daily lives.

In whatever manner, one must also think of oneself again. It is not only others who are like this. For some, by thinking only of their own body, a kind of self-hatred arises. They even think of committing suicide. That is due to a lack of balance. For it to be balanced, one must think as a matter of natural law (*dharmatā*) that "just as my body is, so are other bodies." This foul nature, this loathsome nature, is not unique to my body alone, but is common to other bodies as well. It is recorded in the Dhamma that because they did not do so, a group of monks who meditated on the loathsome nature of mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*) were led to commit suicide. On such occasions, the Buddha pacified and balanced this by teaching mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). From such stories, we see that both aspects must be fulfilled to become disenchanted with form and to let go of form. It is through letting go that this Nibbāna can be attained. Letting go does not mean destroying this, but destroying the attachment that exists toward it.

There is another method called the attention to the elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*). It is the understanding that "my body, as well as external things, are made of the elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*); both here and there, these are made of these elements." The only difference is that this is sentient—this body is alive—and external things are insentient. Here, it is mentioned that the monk, reflecting on the lotus flower, thought: "If even an insentient thing is subject to such decay in this manner, what about our body?" In this way, we can draw many points related to this meditation subject from this story.

Regarding these five heaps, ordinary worldlings have a perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*). The perception of compactness means that this appears as a single unit. This form changes moment by moment, but to the mind, it is felt as one: when we take it as "my form," we do not think about its changing parts. Similarly, feeling follows form. These are also taken as one. That is called the perception of compactness. Insight (*vipassanā*) means "seeing in a special way." When a concentrated mind is directed toward a meditation subject through the three characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self), that object, which was perceived as one, gradually begins to be understood as a collection. One must reach such a state. It is by seeing in this way that the mind is inclined to let go of this—seeing it as something that is breaking up and disintegrating. No one likes to grab onto something that is breaking apart. Along with grabbing it, one falls. This is seen in insight. First, one sees the arising and passing away of things. That is called *udayabbaya* (arising and passing away). These are things one can experience in daily life.

The Buddha tells us to experience this impermanence regarding our own form: "This form arises in this way, it passes away in this way." This can be understood by oneself at various levels. Even when one is about to eat food, one can see the state that food goes through after being consumed. Next, there is the exhalation that comes along with the inhalation. One is forced to cast it out. In this manner, we can understand the impermanent nature of this form within this body through this. As one directs the mind more and more to arising and passing away, and as that deepens, one then sees how it breaks down even faster than it arises. The mind inclines to that extent toward dissolution (*bhaṅga*). Along with the dissolution of the object, one sees the mind itself dissolving. Why? Because it is with the mind that one grasps these objects. When that object dissolves, the mind also dissolves. It is through this that one experiences fear—fear regarding this *saṁsāra*—and the desire to travel further in this *saṁsāra* thins out, and the mind progresses toward the path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*). In this manner, the Buddha shows the path of insight (*vipassanā-magga*). Ordinary worldlings think only of clinging to the pleasure obtained from tranquility meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*). Without the instruction on insight, even that monk would have remained playing with those *jhānas*. That too is a high pleasure. But the Buddha points out that the true pleasure, peace, is the tranquility attained by being freed from this entire *saṁsāra*.

There comes a stage when one can deeply understand the desire for form, feelings, and the recognition of perceptions, each one of them. Next, the intentions (*cetanā*) within the mind. All these are things subject to arising and passing away. Next, this thing called "mind" (or consciousness) cannot be taken as mine either. To what extent? The Buddha declares that the mind changes even faster than this body; this mind is something that changes extremely rapidly. The Buddha declared that He could not even find a simile for the speed at which the mind changes, though we call it "my mind." In this way, if one practices directing one's thoughts in daily life so that attachment to the five aggregates—*rūpa*, *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā*, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness)—is abandoned or thinned out, Nibbāna is not far from that person. That is why the Buddha declared: "This is the truth, Nibbāna, which lies closest to oneself, yet the world does not see it."

From this, we see that the things we take as subjects of meditation are not costly things. They are things that lie closest to ourselves. It is through these very things that we must direct the mind toward Nibbāna. In ordinary parlance, within what is called "the world," there are many worlds. There are various worlds such as the world of sports, the world of cinema, the world of literature, and the world of drama. Similarly, we can say there is also a "world of meditation." This world of meditation is more exquisite than all these other worlds. One enters this world of meditation through the doorway of the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). "Kammaṭṭhāna" means the meditation topic, the subject of meditation. If one hopes for Nibbāna, or if one hopes for those meditative tranquilizations, pleasures, etc., which are superior to the thoughts of ordinary worldlings, one must obtain such a *kammaṭṭhāna*, a meditation topic, from a suitable person and practice it.

The Buddha possessed the *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa* (knowledge of inclinations and *Anusaya* (Latency / Underlying tendency)) to the highest degree, a knowledge that no other disciple possessed. As soon as the Buddha directed His mind to any individual, He could see the strengths, tendencies, likes, dislikes, and the states hidden within that person's mind developed through their saṁsāric existence. Nowadays, many people are amazed by computers. But more amazing than any product manufactured by man is the mind that produces it. It is to understand this very mind that meditation helps. Thus, through this *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*, the Buddha could pull out an individual's personal file in a single moment and give the matching solution. That is how He gave subjects of meditation.

Next, those who have attained direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) also have a limited power to think according to the past lives of an individual; if they give a meditation subject based on that, the work is quick. Otherwise, as happened to that monk, there can often be a delay. In any case, if someone has entered the world of meditation through the doorway of the meditation subject, from there onward, they progress on the path of development. Next, by arriving at those *jhānas* through tranquility (*samatha*), they are able to experience extremely subtle, noble pleasures that are secluded from the world and secluded from the five cords of sensual pleasure.

Next, what is even higher than that is arriving at those paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) beginning with Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), which are attained as liberation from the entire *saṁsāra*. This is the path pointed out by the Buddha. Liberation from this *saṁsāra* is something no other teacher was capable of showing, because the Buddha has declared the dreadfulness of this saṁsāric journey on many occasions. At the very least, a person who has not even attained the fruit of Stream-entry cannot say when, either due to past actions (*kamma*) or due to bad actions committed in this life, they might fall into the four woeful states (*apāya*). Such a dangerous situation exists.

Therefore, if one has obtained a human rebirth during the lifetime of a Buddha, one must especially give place to insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). Using tranquility (*samatha*) as a basis for insight meditation, one can settle the mind through *jhānas* and the like. Those energies one has cultivated in *saṁsāra* over a long time do not go to waste.

For five hundred lifetimes as a goldsmith, that monk had directed his mind to pieces of gold. When a goldsmith fashions an ornament out of a piece of gold, how much attention does he pay to it? Similarly, one carves a statue out of stone. In such instances, a certain concentration (*samādhi*) is applied. Not a single one of the energies generated by our actions in *saṁsāra* goes to waste. All of them are deposited in the mind in an extremely subtle way. Now, many people are amazed by things like computers. That too is a material object. But that material object arose within the immaterial mind. In that mind are stored both the good and the bad we have done in *saṁsāra* over a long time, the strengths we have built up, and our weaknesses. All of these exist within the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*). So what is it that we need? It is to bring out the good side and free ourselves from this *saṁsāra*. Therefore, to enter the subjects of meditation and exit

through the door of Nibbāna, one must enter this world of meditation. Various worlds are presented in this society in attractive ways. But we should not be deceived by them as Buddhists. Reconsidering our core values and our worth, we see how our ancestors spent their lives; no matter how many fancy things there were in the world, because they did not forget the three characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self) taught by the Buddha, as soon as a disaster struck, "*Aniccaṁ, dukkhaṁ, anattā*" would naturally escape their lips. But it is not a mere utterance of words that is there. In these times, perhaps, there is a group that thinks merely reciting them is meditation. In the past, our ancestors had the habit of directing their minds to how the trees and leaves around them, the flowing river, the things around them changed, and how their own bodies changed. Therefore, they lived a meditative life, even though their daily lives appeared to be spent in an ordinary way.

In any case, we too must reflect, however fast the world changes, on developing new evaluations and new values regarding our lifestyle. "Kammaṭṭhāna" (meditation subject) can be translated as "workplace." A meditation subject is a workplace that helps toward one's Nibbāna or toward attaining this noble goal. For that monk, it was a red lotus flower by way of *kasiṇa* meditation. For some, even a single hair of the head can be a sufficient and suitable meditation subject. It is by settling the mind in that manner, and directing that settled mind toward the three characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self), that one can attain the realization of the paths and fruits. When we consider it in this way, the Buddha has presented this path of Dhamma in such a way that even a very young child can start it.

You know that three types of meritorious deeds are mentioned: *dāna* (giving/generosity), *sīla* (virtue/morality), and *bhāvanā* (meditation). In these times, why do people practice giving? To receive hundreds of thousands of times more than what is given in a future life. Or to go to the heavenly worlds. It is true that such benefits exist. But that should not be the ultimate purpose. If someone has developed a sense of urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding *saṁsāra*, if they have thought that freeing themselves from this *saṁsāra* is necessary, even at the moment of giving a small thing, they should not think of heavenly pleasures. Those too are impermanent (*anicca*). Even if one goes to a heavenly world, as soon as a past bad action (*kamma*) surfaces—since the bodies of deities are extremely subtle, even an unwholesome thought is sufficient for them to fall from there, pass away, and drop into the woeful states. Such a dangerous situation exists in the heavenly worlds, regardless of how beautiful they seem. Therefore, even heavenly pleasure is nothing major. It is received as a side benefit. If one misses the mark, one goes to a heavenly world. But in reality, we should try, even at the moment of giving a gift (*dāna*), as pointed out by the Buddha, to base it on the thought of non-greed (*alobha*), or the intention of removing the *Taṇhā* (Craving) in it, the intention of removing that self-affection; even meritorious deeds like giving must be done with that at the forefront.

Regarding giving, the Buddha has pointed out: "They give gifts as an ornament for the mind" (*cittālaṅkāraṁ dānaṁ deti*). The deepest purpose is pointed out as the ornamentation of the mind—and requisites (*pirikara*) mean things that are helpful to

someone, things that serve as causes. Thus, giving for the sake of developing the mind is the highest purpose. When we reflect on it in this way, even when we serve a spoonful of rice, or when we offer something to the poor, travelers, beggars, or to the Saṅgha, we should think: "May I, through this mental factor of non-greed (*alobha-caitasika*), gain the strength to abandon *Taṇhā* (Craving)." It is because of self-affection—attachment to oneself—that the world grasps onto everything as "I" and "mine". When freeing themselves from these, people often experience greed (*lobha*) and regret. What does a person do who gives with a clear mind in all three stages of volition? They give while paying attention to that mind, without any regret over that gift. The benefit of this is not to receive hundreds of thousands of times more in return, nor to go to heaven, but one must think: "This was a good opportunity to thin out the unwholesome state of greed, or *Taṇhā* (Craving), that was in my mind." That is the deepest aspiration one should cultivate regarding giving.

For one who thinks in that way, there are opportunities in daily life to thin out this self-affection. At times when one donates or offers something one owns or uses to the poor, travelers, beggars, or to the Triple Gem, one must look at one's mind: "Previously, I thought of this as mine. Now, this is not mine. At the moment of giving, I separated from it." By giving in that manner, one must habituate oneself to contentment. One must habituate oneself to that tranquility and peace mentioned earlier.

It is the same with virtue (*sīla*). Virtue is also something, in this era, which is often thought of as a mere customary ritual, like something to be taken on a Uposatha day or to be recited in front of monks. When we reflect deeply, virtue supports meditation. Why? Because it is through the taming of the body and speech that the mind can be tamed. This virtue is the method of taming body and speech. Whether it is the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*), the livelihood-as-eighth precept (*ājīv-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*), or other higher virtues—by undertaking this virtue and guarding it, one must have the thought: "I am preparing the foundation for my meditation." Generally, in *saṁsāra*, the things I like are killing beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous speech that is of no benefit to this world or the next. These are things I like. The concepts of 'I' and 'mine' are the causes that lead to traveling in this *saṁsāra*. We see this in animal life. Animals are not outsiders; we too have lived there for a long time. We know how those minds of animals, ghosts (*preta*), and demons (*yakṣa*) operate—they are extremely low. What we should do is not prepare to go there, but rather to obtain a higher state; that is why virtue (*sīla*) is prescribed.

What is done through virtue is the thinning out of that self-affection. Now, while one dislikes being harmed, one harms others. One does so expecting some pleasure from it, for entertainment, or for food, or for various reasons. What is present there is self-affection. It is the same with stealing, committing other unwholesome deeds, and lying. Within every one of them lies the attachment to the concept one has taken as "self." This virtue can then be used to thin out this self-affection. Next, what is higher than even that is meditation (*bhāvanā*). In that meditation, too, generally, people do not like to be secluded from the world. Now, how many people have gathered in this hall at this

moment? Those engaged in other various activities are hundreds of thousands of times more. Those are often things that do not help toward Nibbāna. In this way, to reject various invitations from cinemas, theatres, and other entertainment halls, and to come here to spend even an hour, a letting go is required for meditation.

First, the mind's delight in a meditation subject is called "delight in meditation" (*bhāvanārāmatā*). One must develop a delight in meditation. That is fundamental. The world mostly consists of a world that delights in very low, loud clamor. Having gradually developed a distaste for those, one then develops a liking for songs and music alone. Going further, realizing the coarse, gross nature of even those, one then begins to delight in tranquility, peace, silence, and stillness. It is such a world that is called the "world of meditation." This means gradually freeing oneself from those low delights common to animals, demons, and ghosts, and developing a higher inclination. What helps in this is the meditation topic called *kammaṭṭhāna*. If one has respectfully accepted it from a teacher, when one shapes one's daily life according to it, the opportunity arises to recognize the word "peace" mentioned in our thematic verse—what true tranquility is.

Both the so-called developed society and the undeveloped society are now enslaved to their senses; to gratify them, they run along the path of various things presented by this commercial world, as if running after a mirage. Developed society uses them to the extreme, and ultimately, remaining stuck and immersed in them until life is destroyed, they sacrifice their lives for the five cords of sensual pleasure. Next, those who do not have such luxuries target those very things, and to obtain those five cords of sensual pleasure and luxuries, they tire themselves out, clash with weapons, get into debt, think of them day and night, lose sleep, dream of them, and destroy their lives. In contrast, what does the meditator do? They adopt the concept of simple living and high thinking. Stepping out of that world of pomp, show, and fashion, instead, just as you do on a Uposatha day, clothed in simple attire, with simple food and drink, practicing contentment (*alpeccatā*) in everything, habituating themselves to be satisfied with what is received, they try to settle their mind according to a meditation subject, freeing themselves at least a little from the sensory inputs coming through the eyes, ears, nose, etc. That is how life in the world of meditation is.

The world of meditation cannot be recognized all at once like that fancy world thought of by the world. To what extent the energy in this, and its helpfulness to one's life, is great—the Buddha almost always pointed out the value of being diligent in this, urging us to enter this path of meditation diligently. Why? Because we cannot do this every day. The opportunity to do this does not always arise. The birth of a Buddha (*buddhōtpāda*) is rare. A human rebirth is rare. Similarly, the opportunity to benefit from this combination of opportune moments (*khaṇa-sampatti*), those who support it, and the hearing of the proper Dhamma are extremely rare. Therefore, if one gets the opportunity to know them at some point, everyone must be eager to recognize this world of meditation. One aspect of that world of meditation is what we mentioned as "jhāna play." That too is a very high pleasure, so much so that ordinary worldlings cannot experience it. Those who have attained those *jhāna* states experience something like Brahmic bliss. They experience Brahmic bliss in this very life. What is even higher than that is that peaceful tranquility

pointed out by the Buddha as liberation from that *Bhava* (Becoming)—the state where *Taṇhā* (Craving) is eradicated at the root.

Why is it that a person cannot let go of these? Because of the concept of "I" that they have taken. But what is the path shown by the Buddha? He allows one to realize for oneself that this concept of "I" is an ignorance (*avijjā*), a wrong concept. Next, He allows one to realize that not a single one of the things taken as "mine" can actually be maintained under one's power. Such realization occurs through the application of attention in the mind—the application of meditative attention (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*), through reflection. If a meditator has directed themselves to this path of meditation, that meditator gradually understands that this body, which we are so attached to as "my body," is subject to decay very rapidly—at a speed we cannot even think of.

Also, how much suffering and difficulty must one undergo to maintain this form? One understands that it is *Dukkha* (Suffering). All of it cannot be taken as mine. How many living beings, such as worms, reside inside this? In this way, there is a nature of not being able to maintain this under one's power. When it gets sick, one cannot stop it by saying, "Do not get sick." That is form (*rūpa*). Next, it is the same with feelings. Pleasant feeling comes. It is not permanent; it is gone. Next, painful feeling comes. The Buddha pointed out that not only pleasant and painful feelings, but also neutral feelings—all of these are *Anicca* (Impermanent), they change. Therefore, this meditator gradually removes the desire for feelings as well. They also realize for themselves the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) in them. Next, perceptions, recognitions. The Buddha compared their deceptive nature to a mirage. In everything, there is color and shape (*vaṇṇa* and *saṇṭhāna*). When some color is painted and presented with some shape, the world is deceived. There is a miragelike nature in it. That is perception (*saññā*).

Next, what are called *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations)—the intentions (*cetanā*) that constantly arise within our minds, the desires, intentions, aspirations, expectations that arise in extremely subtle ways—all of these are the vast number of preparations made very rapidly inside the mind. There is a moment when this too is understood as *Dukkha* (Suffering). As the meditative attention becomes more and more subtle, these are things that everyone can experience. For one who has developed these in *saṁsāra* for a long time, they can be attained very quickly, like that monk. One should not think that this happens merely by listening to a sermon. It is the energy present within that individual.

This entire world is like a huge school without partitioned classrooms. Sometimes, a small child may have a mental strength that a great professor does not have. Similarly, a so-called uneducated person may have an extremely great strength to see Nibbāna, a strength of rapid understanding. It is to such people, regardless of caste or social status, that the Buddha, using His *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa* (inclination and *Anusaya* (Latency / Underlying tendency)), went—sometimes with a single word, a word of Dhamma, a verse—and allowed them to realize that noble, deathless Nibbāna in that manner. Therefore, practically, we must think of absorbing something for our daily lives from this story of Dhamma and this verse. We must try to develop a specific determination,

specific aspirations, new values, and evaluations regarding our daily life. Only then does one inherit the true benefits of hearing the Dhamma.

Today, on this Uposatha day, you listened to the Dhamma at this moment. Reflecting on this moment of listening, consider the change that has occurred in your mind now. To come to such a place and listen to this Dhamma, some faith (*saddhā*) must have arisen—faith in the Triple Gem: faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma preached by the Buddha, and the Saṅgha who live according to that Dhamma. When hearing it, it sinks into the mind only if there is a heart filled with faith. To a world blinded by intellectualism, they often cannot harvest the true practical value of this Dhamma. They cannot absorb it because it appears to them as a heap of words, or they look at the Buddha's word as something to be understood through a dictionary. All these dictionaries are deposited within our minds, like the computer we mentioned. We must benefit from this in the proper way by tightening the correct screw. Otherwise, one must enter this world of meditation through the doorway of the meditation subject and make an effort to test the strengths within oneself.

It must be because you directed yourself to these over a long time in *saṁsāra* that you received the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma with such faith. The growth that arises in the mind next to faith is energy/effort (*viriya*). If in some way a thought arose at this moment according to faith, "From today at least, I must walk on this path of Dhamma, I must meditate," that is a thought of energy. Not only that, to remove drowsiness and laziness for this hearing of the Dhamma and to apply the mind to every single word also requires energy. Through that applied effort, mindfulness (*sati*) is developed; if one listens to these with good attentiveness and clear comprehension, that quality of mindfulness also grows. If one listened well in this manner for about an hour, some concentration (*samādhi*) regarding the value of the Dhamma is also likely to arise in the mind, by way of recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*). The mind settles on the value of the Dhamma—concentration.

Next, through this Dhamma, some deep understandings arise; even a Dhamma passage heard a hundred times, when heard in the correct manner, can produce deep understandings at that moment. Nowadays, such Dhamma sermons are heard incessantly when traveling in buses and vehicles. At every boutique junction where they stop, songs are heard from one place, and sermons from another. But do they strike the mind? Sometimes a song strikes the mind better—be it a song or a ball game. That is how the world goes. But if you have prepared yourself and listened to the Dhamma especially on such an occasion, then wisdom (*paññā*)—those deep understandings—arises.

The qualities developed in that manner—*saddhā* (faith), *viriya* (energy), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom)—are not trivial. These five spiritual faculties are the very qualities that will support Nibbāna at some point in the future—or even in this very life. They are the virtues that must necessarily be developed in a mind striving for Nibbāna. We should gladden our minds thinking that this hour was not wasted because we spent this short time developing them. Similarly, you undertook some virtue (*sīla*) according to your level. Now, virtue is seen to be

deteriorating in a very dangerous way in this society. There is a society where even the five precepts cannot be kept. In such a situation, you undertook the livelihood-as-eighth precept (*ājīv-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). There may also be devotees who undertook the eight Uposatha precepts. In that manner, you engaged in an effort to tame your body, mind, and speech through a valuable virtue. To the devotee who is directed toward this meditation, even listening to the Dhamma is itself a meditation. Through that Dhamma, their meditative mind is made to grow. That is why it is said that some attained the paths and fruits through hearing the Dhamma. To a person who has cultivated meditation in *saṁsāra* for a long time, or has cultivated it in this life, it is like opening a door with a key. When the correct word, the correct verse of Dhamma is received, at that moment, the mind opens. One receives the strength and power to reach that mentioned supreme peace.

We also think that you too, according to your capacity, must have harvested the fruits and benefits of this hearing of the Dhamma. Having made determinations in the manner mentioned, you must look to the future. Because we cannot say where we will go next after letting go of this human rebirth at any moment or on any occasion—unless we have reached a certain destiny (*niyata-gati*) through a path and fruit such as Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*). That is why they are called "objects of urgency" (*saṁvega-vatthu*). The speed, the fuel that helps to make the Sasana journey is what is called *saṁvega* (urgency). Directing your mind to the sufferings and turmoils of this world and this *saṁsāra* by way of *Jāti* (Birth / Arising), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death / Aging and Death), sickness, and death, try to determine to make use of this invaluable opportunity.

May all those deities—including the guardian deities of the Sasana and the Brahmas—who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, rejoice in this store of merit accumulated by you through this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma hearing! May they rejoice in this noble merit! Rejoicing, may they fulfill their own Dhamma aspirations and realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi (awakening) they aspire to! Transfer the merit to the deities in this manner. Similarly, may all beings, from your relatives to those in Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, who wish to see Nibbāna, rejoice in this merit of Dhamma hearing and Dhamma preaching! May everyone find peace in the noble, decay-and-deathless (*ajaramara*) Nibbāna! May you too, through the strength gained from listening to this Dhamma, direct yourselves to the path of meditation in this very life, complete those tasks, and realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits—Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship—and reach supreme peace! Cultivating these aspirations, recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #119

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.85)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Saddhā bījaṃ tapo vuṭṭhi, paññā me yuganāṅgalaṃ;

hiri īsā mano yottaṃ, sati me phālapācanaṃ;

kāyagutto vacīgutto, āhāre udare yato;

saccaṃ karomi niddānaṃ, soraccaṃ me pamocanaṃ;

viriyaṃ me dhuradhorayhaṃ, yogakkhemādhivāhanaṃ;

gacchati anivattantaṃ, yattha gantvā na socare;

evamesā kasī kaṭṭhā, sā hoti amataphalā;

etaṃ kasiṃ kasitvāna, sabbadukkhā pamuccatī ti.

From:

Kasibhāradvāja Sutta, Sutta Nipāta, Khuddaka Nikāya

Dear Listeners,

It was on an Esala Full Moon Poya Day such as this that our Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Enlightened Buddha, revealed to the world with its deities the path to Nibbāna, which brings the suffering of saṃsāra to an end. For a world trapped within a lifestyle that only multiplies the suffering of saṃsāra, it is not easy to understand the value of the virtues that help one escape from that suffering. For this reason, on certain occasions, the Buddha had to use components of that very worldly lifestyle as illustrations to explain the value of those spiritual virtues. A few verses and a story demonstrating such an occasion are what we are going to present to you today.

When the Buddha was residing in the brahmin village of Ekanālaka in the Magadha country, one day the brahmin Kasībhāradvāja was distributing food to the crowd gathered for the sowing festival at a place where five hundred plows were yoked. Seeing the Buddha standing on one side for alms, the brahmin challenged him in this manner: "Monk, I plow and I sow. Having plowed and sown, I eat. Monk, you too should plow and sow; having plowed and sown, eat." Then the Buddha replied to him in this way: "Brahmin, I too plow and sow. Having plowed and sown, I eat." Then the brahmin said: "We do not see any yoke, plow, goad, or draft-oxen belonging to the Venerable Gotama, which are the agricultural implements necessary for farming. Yet, the Venerable Gotama says, 'having plowed and sown, I eat.' How are we to understand this?" When asked, the Buddha uttered these few verses which we mentioned at the beginning:

Saddhā bījaṃ tapo vuṭṭhi, paññā me yuganāṅgalaṃ;

Hiri īsā mano yottaṃ, sati me phālapācanaṃ.

Faith is the seed-paddy. Austerity is the rain-water. Wisdom is my yoke and plow. Shame of wrongdoing is the plow-pole. Mind is the yoke-strap. Mindfulness is my plowshare and goad.

Next, he further declares:

Kāyagutto vacīgutto, āhāre udare yato;

Saccaṃ karomi niddānaṃ, soraccaṃ me pamocanaṃ.

Restraint of body and speech, and moderation in food—controlling the stomach—these are my weeding, my protection, or in other words, the fence of the field. Truthfulness is my weeding. Gentleness (soracca), which is the supreme state of discipline, is the unyoking of the oxen.

Then he further declares:

Energy is my draft-ox, drawing the plow. That guiding of the plow leads to the security from bondage (*yogakkhema*), which is Nibbāna. *Yogakkhema* is a name for Nibbāna. That plow, drawn by the oxen, goes straight towards Nibbāna.

Gacchati anivattantaṃ, yattha gantvā na socare.

That plow moves forward without turning back. To whatever place it goes where there is no sorrow—meaning, to the sorrowless Nibbāna—that plow goes without turning back. What is meant here is that it is unlike the plow in the brahmin's field, which reaches the end of the field and then turns back.

Evamesā kasī kaṭṭhā, sā hoti amataphalā;

Etaṃ kasiṃ kasitvāna, sabbadukkhā pamuccatī'ti.

Plowed in this manner, this plowing of mine yields the fruit of the Deathless (*amata-phala*)—it yields the harvest of Nibbāna, which is the Deathless. Having done this plowing, one is released from all suffering; one can escape from the entirety of the suffering of saṃsāra. Here, as we mentioned earlier, the Buddha utilized the very implements connected to the brahmin's plowing. The brahmin spoke of plowing in the worldly, conventional field. Using those same concepts, the Buddha explained the cultivation of spiritual virtues in the field of this Dispensation and explained what its harvest is.

In this challenge made by the brahmin, we can see the criticism raised by the brahminic society regarding the monastic tradition of the Saṅgha established by the Buddha. To the brahmins, there was something strange in this. This is because brahminic society is a priestly society. While living on the offerings and sacrifices made to the gods, they also engaged in farming as a livelihood and profession. That is why he is called Kasībhāradvāja. Bhāradvāja is a brahminic name, belonging to the priestly caste. "Kasī" means one engaged in agriculture—a farming brahmin. Thus, to a brahmin accustomed to such a lifestyle, when the Buddha came and stood with an empty bowl, it appeared as if he was just eating without doing anything. "What is the meaning of this? One must do a job to expect food"—with this idea, he raised that argument, or rather, made the challenge. But the monastic society established by the Buddha was a society that gave priority to spiritual cultivation. It exists within the cultivation of virtue. The significance and value of that venerable society lie therein. That is what the Buddha highlighted on this occasion, using the brahmin's own implements as analogies.

Let us reflect a little on each of these virtues. Why did the Buddha show faith (*saddhā*) as the seed here? As we all know, the fundamental requirement for cultivating these dispensation virtues, for engaging in the practice of the Dispensation, is faith. A farmer starts farming only if there is seed-paddy. If there is no seed-paddy, he does not even begin farming. Moreover, seed-paddy refers to that which has the capacity to germinate. Dispensation practices done without faith are, metaphorically speaking, like cultivating hollow grain. Where there is no faith, there is only a crop of hollow grain. By showing faith as a seed here, we can understand its immense value. Faith is something connected to the heart. Placing the heart, as it were, one establishes faith in the Triple Gem—in the Buddha, the Teacher, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. Guided by that faith, the energy and strength to practice the spiritual virtues of the Dispensation arise.

To explain this further, when a grain of paddy is germinated, it takes root. Similarly, it is through faith that the roots of virtue (*sīla*) are established and strengthened. Next, just as the sprout shoots up, just as the leaves grow from above, calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) can be developed. What helps this seed to grow is the rain. That is why the Buddha compared austerity (*tapas*) to rain. Austerity can be understood briefly as restraint of the senses (*indriya-saṃvara*). Ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*), virtues of morality (*sīla*), and all such qualities belong to this. In brief, the restraint of the senses is austerity. It is through preserving the virtues of austerity, such as morality, that the seed of faith grows. Next, wisdom (*paññā*)—"wisdom is my yoke and plow" (*paññā me*

yuganāṅgalaṃ). Just as the yoke goes foremost in plowing, wisdom goes foremost in this path of practice. You know that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is placed first even in the Noble Eightfold Path. It is explained as "right view is the forerunner" (*sammā-diṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā*). It goes ahead, it runs in front. Just as wisdom is primary, on the other hand, it is wisdom that goes deep. The work done by the plow is digging the earth. That is why wisdom is compared to both—the yoke and the plow. Moreover, it is with that plow that weed-roots and the like are uprooted. It is through wisdom that the roots of defilements (*kilesa*) are uprooted.

In this way, we can understand the value of the simile given by the Buddha. "Wisdom is my yoke and plow." "Shame is the plow-pole" (*hiri īsā*). Standing in front of the plow, what helps to guide the yoke properly is the plow-pole. Here, *hiri* refers to the shame and fear of sin/wrongdoing. You may have heard that shame and fear (*hiri-ottappa*) are described as the guardian laws of the world (*loka-pālaka-dhamma*). In the protection of the virtues of the Dispensation as well, the fear and shame of sin stand guard. Although only shame (*hiri*) is mentioned here, the other (fear of wrongdoing) can also be understood—the shrinking nature of the mind is "shame, the plow-pole". "Mind is the yoke-tie" (*mano yottam*). It is through the mind that all of this is connected. The yoke, the oxen, the plow—all are connected by the tie of the mind. "Mindfulness is my plowshare and goad" (*sati me phālapācanaṃ*). The virtue of mindfulness, *sati*, is shown as the plowshare. Standing as a protection for the plow and going ahead to perform that task is the plowshare. Next, two functions of mindfulness are shown through two similes—the plowshare and the goad. Mindfulness is the plowshare and the goad. In some places in the Dhamma, mindfulness is explained as "mindfulness is the protective charioteer" (*sati ārakkha sārathī*). "Ārakkha" means it brings protection, and "sārathī" means the driver; it both guards and directs. It guides along the right path. Both are done by mindfulness, by the quality of *sati*. That is why it was compared here to the plowshare as well as the goad. It is out of fear of the goad that the oxen walk on the right path.

Restraint in body and speech, and moderation in food—restraint of body refers to the three-fold physical restraint: abstaining from killing living beings, abstaining from taking what is not given, and abstaining from sexual misconduct. "Restrained in speech" (*vacīgutto*) means being restrained in speech—abstaining from lying, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous talk. Next, "moderation in food" (*āhāre udare yato*) means consuming food in moderation. These matters are compared by the Buddha to the fence—the fence of the field. If there is no fence for the field, wild cattle will enter and eat it up. Similarly, the things that support the cultivation of these virtues are the aforementioned virtues of morality, such as restraint of body and speech, and moderation in food. Next, "truthfulness is the weeding of the field" (*saccaṃ karomi niddānaṃ*). The weeding of weeds is done by truthfulness. As soon as weeds grow, a good harvest cannot be obtained if the weeds of falsehood grow. Falsehood must be removed by means of truth. Wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), incorrect ideas, wrong beliefs, false doctrines—these must be uprooted using truth, with truth going foremost. They must be uprooted in time. Otherwise, in the end, instead of a harvest, what one gets is a

heap of hollow grain. There is an old saying: "When it turns to hollow grain, the actual rice grains are few." The majority becomes falsehood; in the end, what remains are empty things, false things, and a bit of nonsense. There is nothing of real substance, and no real harvest is obtained. Therefore, truthfulness is utilized for weeding out the weeds.

Gentleness (*soracca*), or docility, refers to the supreme state of discipline, culminating in Arahantship—the highest discipline which is perfected in Arahantship. It is at that stage that the oxen are unyoked, finally released from the burden of the yoke. One is released when that complete state of discipline is achieved. Energy (*viriya*) is compared to the oxen that draw the yoke together, drawing it evenly—the oxen drawing the plow. The two oxen must share the weight of the yoke equally. Similarly, energy is truly fruitful when there is balance of energy (*viriya-samatā*)—which means neither excessive energy nor deficient energy. If energy is excessive, there is restlessness (*uddhacca*). If energy is deficient, there is laziness (*kosajja*). The work must be done with the balance of energy between these two. To show this, the Buddha presented: "Energy is my draft-ox" (*viriyaṃ me dhuradhorayhaṃ*), just as the two oxen drawing the plow pull together as one. The pulling of the plow is done through energy, and that too with balance—with energy accompanied by balance.

Next, it is further said: "leading to security from bondage" (*yogakkhemādhivāhanaṃ*). *Yogakkhema* is a name for Nibbāna. Actually, the word *yoga* comes from the word *yuga*. *Yuga* means a yoke. Entering into the work of this Dispensation is like putting one's neck to the yoke. It is such a great task. The words used in this context, such as duty (*dhura*), yoke (*yuga*), and bondage (*yoga*), all carry the connotation of the work done by those two oxen. In the past, many of these words etymologically arose from the context of cattle farming. Behind *dhura*, *yuga*, and *yoga*, there lies the story of the two oxen under the yoke.

"Leading to security from bondage" (*yogakkhemādhivāhanaṃ*) means release from that yoke. What is shown by this is release from the suffering of saṃsāra. That is a name for Nibbāna. It goes up to that. "Without turning back" (*anivattantaṃ*)—it goes without stopping. As mentioned before, if it is the plow in a brahmin's field, it must go to the end of the field and turn back. This is not like that. "It goes without turning back" (*gacchati anivattantaṃ*); the plow goes on without stopping. To where? "Where having gone, they do not sorrow" (*yattha gantvā na socare*). To whatever place having gone they do not sorrow—meaning, to the sorrowless Nibbāna, to the Deathless—to that very place this plow goes. Having preached thus, the Buddha finally declares:

When this plowing is done in this manner, it yields the fruit of the Deathless (*amataphala*); it yields the fruit of Nibbāna which is the Deathless. It is not an ordinary harvest. Having done this plowing, one is released from all suffering; one can escape from the entirety of the suffering of saṃsāra.

When such a meaningful set of verses was uttered, the brahmin was inspired with faith. He immediately went, filled a large golden bowl with milk-rice, came back and offered it to the Buddha, saying: "Let the Venerable Gotama partake of this milk-rice. For the

Venerable Gotama is indeed a farmer—a farmer who does the farming that yields the fruit of the Deathless." He accepted it in that way. At that moment, the Buddha declared in another verse: "It is not proper for me to partake of this milk-rice. For this is something obtained by chanting verses." By "chanting verses" (*gāthābhīgītaṃ*), he meant that partaking of this milk-rice as a reward or an offering received by reciting his own virtues in verses was not proper for him. "This is not fit for my livelihood; it is not fit, not allowable for Buddhas who maintain the purity of livelihood (*ājīva-pārisuddhi*)." Thus, he rejected it. "But if one offers food to a great sage whose taints (*āsava*) are destroyed, who is accomplished, that is like sowing in a supreme field of merit, yielding great fruit and great benefit"—this fact was also declared. Then, when the Buddha rejected the milk-rice, the brahmin asked: "Then to whom shall I give this?" At that moment, the Buddha declared: "Brahmin, I do not see anyone in this world, including the devas, maras, and brahmas, along with ascetics and brahmins, who can digest this milk-rice after consuming it. Therefore, throw this milk-rice either in a place devoid of green grass, or into water devoid of living beings."

When this was said, the brahmin Kasībhāradvāja took that milk-rice and threw it into water devoid of living beings. As soon as it was thrown, that milk-rice began to hiss, sputter, and emit steam, making the sound "ciṭi-ciṭi, ciṭi-ciṭi". Seeing this, the brahmin, realizing it was a great miracle, felt a sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) and hair-standing goosebumps, and through that, he developed great faith in the Buddha. Then he expressed his faith with a certain statement: "Excellent, Venerable Gotama, excellent!" He then illustrated it with several similes and declared his taking refuge in the Triple Gem. "Just as one would upright what was overturned, or reveal what was hidden, or show the path to one who was lost, or hold up an oil lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way, the Dhamma has been made clear in many ways, with various similes, by the Venerable Gotama. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha. May I receive the going-forth (*pabbajjā*) and the higher ordination (*upasampadā*)."

Then, as mentioned in the story, in the end, the brahmin Kasībhāradvāja, having received the going-forth and the higher ordination, attained Arahantship before long. The story shows that he abandoned worldly farming and entered into the farming taught by the Buddha. From this, we can reflect on many things regarding those values of the Dispensation. What is the ordinary idea of the world? Building up the economy. There are various cultivation campaigns in the world for economic development. But we must realize that where this cultivation of virtue is absent, no matter how prosperous other cultivations make us, they can fall into decline and be destroyed when virtues disappear among human beings. If we reflect on this Dispensation, the monastic society of the Saṅgha is indeed established on principles completely different from those of the priestly society. It is not priestly, but venerable (*pūjya*). This is extremely clear when we constantly reflect on those virtues of the Saṅgha. When we think of the virtues of the Saṅgha, everyone recites words like: *supaṭipanno*, *ujupaṭipanno*, *ñāyapaṭipanno*, *sāmīcipaṭipanno*. What is spoken of there is the practice (*paṭipadā*). It does not speak of sacrifices, rituals, or offerings made to the gods, but of the practice, the conduct. The

Saṅgha is *supaṭipanno*—meaning they have entered well upon the practice. *Ujupaṭipanno*—they have entered directly, straight upon this practice, without crookedness or deviousness. *Ñāyapoṭipanno*—they have entered upon the practice methodically, systematically. *Sāmīcipaṭipanno*—they have entered upon the practice properly, in a way that deserves the praise of "sādhu, sādhu". In all these, the emphasis is on the practice (*paṭipadā*).

It is for this very reason that they are next described as *āhuneyyo*, *pāhuneyyo*, *dakkhiṇeyyo*, *añjalikaraṇīyo*. In the past, the word *āhuti* was used for offerings and gifts brought from afar. *Pāhuti* referred to food and hospitality offered to guests. Thus, because of their wealth of virtue, they are worthy of offerings brought from afar, and worthy of hospitality—worthy of being given even those things kept for guests if they arrive unexpectedly. *Dakkhiṇeyyo* is also an ancient brahminic word. *Dakkhiṇā* meant the fee or gift given to brahmins for their sacrifices and rituals. But here, that word is used because of that wealth of virtue. They are *dakkhiṇeyyo*—worthy of receiving such gifts because of their wealth of virtue, not because they perform sacrifices, rituals, or recite blessing verses or curses, but solely because of the aforementioned wealth of virtue. Next, *añjalikaraṇīyo*—worthy of having hands raised in reverent salutation above the head. This too is not because of anything else, but solely due to their wealth of virtue. It is because of their wealth of virtue that they are worthy of being worshiped.

Within this passage on the virtues of the Saṅgha lies the answer to the brahmin. Otherwise, the error of the brahminic society and the ordinary world in describing these monks as idle idlers is evident from this. What, then, is the purpose of the monastic society established by the Buddha? In the end, it is described as *anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa*—the establishing of an unsurpassed field of merit for the world. The brahmin prepares his field expecting a harvest that will temporarily satisfy physical hunger. But the Buddha helps to bring the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*) to a state that yields the fruit of the Deathless, called the nectar of Nibbāna—bringing the supreme bliss of Nibbāna, which is considered the most delicious and directly realizable thing in the world. In fact, though we speak of this "field of the Dispensation" (*sasun keta*), we cannot point to it and say it is in such-and-such a place. The field of the Dispensation is the mind-stream itself. To put it briefly, the discussion is entirely about the mind-stream. Wisdom, mindfulness, and all these Dhamma factors exist within the mind. Therefore, the mind-stream is the true field of the Dispensation shown by the Buddha.

This is exactly what is said in this verse which you have heard so often:

> *Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ, kusalassa upasampadā;*
>
> *Sacittapariyodapanaṃ, etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ.*

Abstaining from all evil, cultivation of wholesome qualities, and purifying one's own mind—this is the teaching of all the Buddhas. The mind-stream is the field. If that field is cultivated to finally yield that fruit of the Deathless, or the nectar of Nibbāna, then that field becomes a sacred thing—that mind-stream becomes a sacred object to the world.

That is why they are called *anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa*—an unsurpassed field of merit is prepared for the world. From this, the difference between the priestly society of the brahminic tradition and the venerable, monastic society of the Saṅgha becomes extremely clear to us. This is something we must recall and point out in this day and age. Likewise, we spoke about worldly cultivation. There, even this brahmin realized: "What the Venerable Gotama has introduced to me is far more valuable than this plowing I do with five hundred plows." Understanding this, he spoke in that manner and even asked for the going-forth and higher ordination from the Buddha. We can understand that there is profound depth even in the few similes he used while showing his submission to the Buddha. In many Sutta discourses, after the Buddha preaches the Dhamma, the passage that constantly occurs when the listener expresses their faith is the one used here. "Excellent, Venerable Gotama, excellent!" Next, a few similes are given. Let us now reflect on them.

That constantly used passage shows the wonderful nature of the Buddha's style of preaching. It is the mental revolution that occurs within a person through his preaching that is shown by those words and similes. Through his teachings, according to each individual's capacity of comprehension, a complete mental revolution takes place. Actually, in some Sutta discourses, not all parts of the Buddha's preaching are recorded. Instead, it is briefly stated that "after the progressive talk (ānupubbī-kathā), he preached thus". Since everyone knows the progressive talk, it is often not mentioned. Here, the value of these similes is made very clear. That is why we thought of specifically speaking about it. What are those similes?

"Just as, Venerable Gotama, one would upright what was overturned"—when something is overturned, its contents cannot be seen. Thinking it is useless, it is left overturned; but when it is uprighted, its true nature is seen. Such an understanding dawned upon this brahmin. What is the meaning of this? The brahmin was living within worldly society, within conventional values. According to conventional values, a person must eat. To do so, they must engage in some industry, craft, or employment. So, when someone comes without any job, holding an empty bowl and standing in front of a house, it seems like a useless act of eating for free. The brahmin was established on such wrong ideas. That is why it is like "uprighting what was overturned". Also, "like revealing what was hidden". Until the Buddha declared it, the brahmin did not know, he did not recognize what the true seed-paddy was, what the true rain was; he did not understand their deep meanings. Through the matters shown by the Buddha, those things became clear. The hidden virtues were revealed. Next, "one who was lost"—the brahmin was someone lost in saṃsāra. The path was shown. Next, "one who was in darkness"—the Buddha lit a lamp. Through that light of the Dhamma, the brahmin could see, because he had eyes; the brahmin was indeed a wise person.

Regarding this Sutta, ancient teachers point out that the Buddha presented faith (*saddhā*) as primary here because the brahmin possessed wisdom (*paññā*) but lacked faith (*saddhā*). When the Buddha shed the light of the Dhamma, because the brahmin had eyes, he saw the truth. Thus, we can understand the value of those similes. In fact, those four similes are used to show the mental revolution that occurs within the disciple

through the Buddha's style of preaching. It is not so clearly seen in every Sutta. Because it is extremely clear and prominent in this Sutta, we highlighted it. Through all these matters, we can see the limitations of worldly plowing as well as the value of the supramundane plowing shown by the Buddha.

The Buddha expressed this same matter to some extent on another occasion, also while out for alms. Actually, close to this Sutta, there is another short incident. One day, the Buddha went for alms to the house of a brahmin named Udaya. The brahmin filled the bowl well and offered it. The Buddha returned. On the second day too, he went to that house, and on the second day too, the bowl was filled and offered. On the third day too, he went. On the third day, after offering the food in the bowl, the brahmin expressed the thought: "This monk comes again and again out of greed for taste"—meaning one who is greedy for taste. At that moment, the Buddha uttered a series of verses. The brahmin had said "again and again". "This monk comes here again and again"—the Pali word for "again and again" is *punappunaṃ*. In Sinhala, we say *puna punā*. "This monk comes here again and again." Using that very word, the Buddha uttered a series of verses, using the word "again and again" repeatedly.

He said: "In this world, it is not only this alms-round of mine that is done again and again. Whatever things exist in this world, they are all done again and again." What are they? He goes on to say: "Again and again they sow the seed. Again and again the rain falls. Again and again they gather the grain and fill the granaries. Again and again beggars come and beg. Again and again donors give gifts. Having given gifts again and again, donors are born again and again in heaven." Next, he says the same regarding cattle farming: "Again and again those who milk the cows draw milk." You know that when the udder is squeezed once, all the milk does not come out; how many times must one labor for this? "Again and again the calf runs to the cow, and thereby falls exhausted and suffers." Next, he states a profound matter: "Again and again one enters the womb. Again and again one is born. Again and again one meets death. Again and again one is carried to the cemetery." Then he concludes with the Dhamma: "The wise person who has attained the path to the place where one is not born again, is not born again and again." When this series of verses was uttered, that brahmin too, probably because he was wise, understood the point, expressed his refuge in the same way, and took refuge in the Triple Gem.

From this, we can realize that what exists in this world is a process of preparing *saṅkhāras* (preparations). These must be prepared and repaired continually. By yoking five hundred plows or so, holding sowing festivals with great clamor, you cultivate and fill your granaries. For how many days? When it is finished, because you have to cultivate again and again, you set aside seed-paddy. Thus, the world moves within an endless cycle of repetition. It is the same with cattle farming, and the same with other activities. There is no end to any of it. There is no finality to anything. One has to keep preparing, repairing, and maintaining them. That itself is suffering (*dukkha*). "All preparations are impermanent" (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*). These are preparations. The entirety of life is a heap of preparations. The food taken this morning is gone by nightfall. That food and drink, the air taken in for inhalation and exhalation—all these are wearing away. They

arise and pass away. The effort to repair those that are lost is what is called "again and again". One must do these again and again. In all worldly cultivations, this is present—doing things again and again.

The Buddha highlights a cultivation of virtue—a path of practice to escape from this suffering nature of repetition, from the entire suffering of saṃsāra. That path of practice is what is presented in this *Kasibhāradvāja Sutta*. That path of practice begins with faith (*saddhā*) and ends with wisdom (*paññā*). The host of other virtues within it was shown by the Buddha through various implements. Therefore, when we say the Buddha's Dispensation, it is the cultivation of virtue. There are indeed many things shown to others as the Buddhist Dispensation. Although they point to them as the Dispensation, if we look inside, if those aforementioned virtues are not there, there is no Dispensation. What the Buddha shows is the way of looking inward. In the end, one has to look inward. When one grows old, the eyes cannot see, and one cannot recognize the person nearby. One cannot look at the beauty of other external implements. Spontaneously, the mind turns to oneself, inward. "What is inside this?" If instead of virtues, there is a heap of unrighteousness, a heap of vices, sins, and crimes, that person will have to depart to the next world weeping and wailing. But if one can see inward: "I have preserved these and these virtues. Conventionally, I have achieved this. Supramundane states have been attained. There is no fear of hell, no fear of further rebirth." If such a realization is there when looking inward, that person alone has true peace. That is the path shown by the Buddha. It was to tread this path that the Buddha established this monastic society of the Saṅgha. That is where the difference lies between the priestly function and the venerable state.

It was difficult for the brahminic society to understand this. Sometimes, it might be difficult for modern society to understand this as well. But as the Buddha's Dispensation, the Buddha always highlighted a specific truth that no one else in this saṃsāra had been able to discover. That is why we call him a Buddha. That truth is the Four Noble Truths (*cattāri ariya-saccāni*). Why was suffering (*dukkha*) called a Noble Truth? We all know suffering. Why should the Buddha teach this suffering anew? What we know is ignoble suffering (*anariya-dukkha*). Ignoble suffering means limited suffering—the suffering we have partitioned off as a separate department, separating the rest as pleasure (*sukha*). But the Buddha declares, to put it briefly—as you often express the meaning of suffering as birth is suffering, aging is suffering, separation from the loved is suffering, union with the unloved is suffering, and so on—but it concludes with, in brief, the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) themselves are suffering. The aggregates of form, feeling, perception, preparations, and consciousness (*rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa*) themselves are suffering.

The five aggregates are suffering because they are all a heap of preparations. The preparations of the aggregate of form (*rūpakkhandha*) are those things connected with protecting this bodily cage. Food and drink, medicine for illness, patching up broken and fractured parts—in this way, carrying this bodily cage with the same license plate, applying various colors and paints, or begging from others, or buying parts with money

to fit them together—even if we think of the body, it is such a journey. The others are also the same. The Buddha has declared that not one of these is permanent (*nicca*). When pleasant feeling (*sukha-vedanā*) passes away, it is suffering. Everyone looks for pleasant feeling. Escaping from a heap of painful feelings is what is called pleasure. That too is impermanent. Thus, between pleasure and pain, the world is engaged in a game of see-saw, like riding on coconut-leaf stems.

There is no end to perception (*saññā*) either. They too are continually prepared. This heap of perceptions means recognitions. Its boundaries cannot be found. To the extent that one can proudly say they are a modern, advanced person, worldly beings toil day and night to complete their perceptions about this world. Next, because of that heap of perceptions, according to one's likes and dislikes, the preparations made through mind, speech, and body are the heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra-goda*). Because of that heap of preparations, there is a mountain of suffering. It does not end there. There are also many results (*vipāka*) of that heap of preparations—whether pleasant results or painful results. Not only in heaven or the human world, but even in the brahma worlds, there are pleasant energies experienced for aeons, and in hells, there are painful energies experienced for aeons, caused by those preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Next, consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—the mind that thinks "this is mine, this is I"—that too changes. Sometimes two people join together, thinking they have a mind that does not change, but without their knowing, the mind changes. The Buddha declares that although one can give an analogy for the change of the body, no analogy can be given for the change of this consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The mind changes so rapidly (*lahuparivatta*) that not even an analogy can be given. Here too, there is no soul (*attā*); nowhere is there a soul. A soul means one's permanent protection, something that can be maintained under one's control. The Buddha declares that in none of these five aggregates is there such a thing.

By the word "is released" (*pamuccati*), the Buddha highlights the path by which beings are released from this aforementioned state of suffering. That path of release is the Noble Eightfold Path. You have heard this so often. As we said earlier, right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is the forerunner. One treads a path with some understanding that "this is the correct path". The transformation of life that occurs according to that right view is what is called the cultivation of virtue within the mind-stream. The very path of life that the Buddha presented on that occasion to the brahmin Kasībhāradvāja, in a manner suited to the life of the Saṅgha, is what we generally call the Noble Eightfold Path.

The systematic training of one's thoughts and intentions according to the right view first established is called right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*). Removing unwholesome thoughts of sensual desire (*kāma-vitakka*), ill-will (*byāpāda-vitakka*), and cruelty (*vihiṃsā-vitakka*), one develops thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*)—which means the intention to escape from saṃsāra. Non-ill-will (*abyāpāda*) means thoughts of loving-kindness (*mettā*). Non-cruelty (*avihiṃsā*) means thoughts of compassion (*karuṇā*). Standing on the premise and hypothesis of the right view one has taken—that the entire world is sunk in a heap of suffering—when looking at the world, the three concepts that arise are those of renunciation, non-ill-will, and non-cruelty.

When treading and training oneself in those concepts and thoughts, a certain restraint is established in one's speech as well. That is why there is abstaining from lying, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous talk. Through the effort to act in accordance with that speech, the body is restrained from sins that cause suffering in saṃsāra and harm both oneself and others—namely, killing living beings, taking what is not given, and sexual misconduct.

Next, the journey of connecting this more systematically with one's livelihood is called right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*)—the correct way of living. Abstaining from wrong livelihoods (*micchā-ājīva*) which we mentioned as trade in human beings, trade in weapons/flesh, trade in poisons, trade in intoxicants, and such wrong trades, and leading a good and wholesome life is the purification of livelihood. Through the effort to purify it, there grows within oneself what is called right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*): the four-fold right effort of preventing unarisen evil thoughts from entering the mind, abandoning unwholesome states already present in the mind, developing unarisen wholesome states, and consolidating wholesome states already present. When engaged in that effort, through it develops right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*)—correct mindfulness. One has to act with good mindfulness. When that mindfulness becomes more stable and established, taking up some meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*), one can attain states of concentration (*samādhi*), right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*), and the absorptions (*jhāna*).

This is what is called the Noble Eightfold Path. Within it too, there is a path of life. It is a systematic, complete transformation of the mind-stream. A complete reorganization of the mind-stream. In modern terms, we hear about the reorganization of various departments. But the highest level of reorganization of the individual mind-stream is what the Buddha has presented through this Noble Eightfold Path. Any energetic person can put this into practice and realize for themselves the change in the experience of their own mind-stream. Then, the stages of that realization are called Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship. Through that one-pointed mind, through a one-pointed reorganization of character, one can understand the world through insight (*vipassanā*).

Insight is a special seeing. To see specially, a pure, concentrated mind is necessary—an undistracted mind. When the mind is applied to pure concentration, the world is clearly seen. The true nature of reality (*yathā-bhūta*) is briefly shown by the Buddha in three words: as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). These are merely three words. But to realize them, one must tread the aforementioned path. When that reorganization, starting from right view and going up to right concentration, is developed to a certain level, at some point, through a series of special insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) arising in one's mind-stream, one understands the impermanence within these five aggregates. The impermanence of form, the impermanence of feeling, the impermanence of perception, preparations, and consciousness. Impermanence means the nature of arising and passing away. What we usually mean by impermanence is "it was there, and now it is gone"—that is all. But here, there is a nature of constantly arising and passing away. These operate in a very subtle manner within them. It is not

seen. Because it is not seen, worldly beings, through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), grasp them as separate entities—"my form, my feeling" and so on. But to the insight wisdom, at some point, one directly realizes that change occurring in each of them.

The worldly being wishes for the arising of this very five-fold aggregate. The person traveling in saṃsāra always waits for the sun to rise tomorrow morning. That is what is meant by being on the side of arising (*samudaya-pakkha*). "Although today was bad, tomorrow morning a good morning, a better morning will come"—thinking thus, they travel in saṃsāra. But tomorrow is just like today. The one who hopes for Nibbāna looks at the setting of the sun. Whichever way it is, even if the sun rises, it sets. The nature of all these is that they pass away. That is what agrees with the truth—this nature of cessation (*nirodha*). That is where Nibbāna lies. Worldly beings do not like to see that. They do not like to look at it. They do not like to direct their minds to it, because for so long in saṃsāra, they have kept their minds only on the side of arising (*samudaya*). But the Buddha declares that the truth lies there. "Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease" (*yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*).

If so, clinging to them, grasping them is not proper. If one grasps them, one is destroyed along with them, and suffering and trouble come. At some point, the five aggregates are let go of. That is what is called arriving at the fruit of Stream-entry. For the first time, that realization comes. By further sharpening the power of knowledge on that path, by further sharpening the realization of the Three Characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*), through the realization of the path and fruit of Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, one is finally released from all suffering of saṃsāra and can find peace in the supreme and noble Nibbāna. We must reflect on this. We hear everyone talking about values and virtues in this world. We, as Buddhists, must value these virtues that the Buddha highlighted to the brahmin Kasībhāradvāja. We must bring them to light. We must shape our values of life according to them, and shape our path of practice accordingly. Within this very era of a Buddha's appearance, making as much effort as possible, developing one's virtue, concentration, and wisdom, it is good to resolve to escape from the suffering of saṃsāra.

Thus, today many observed the Poya eight precepts. Likewise, at this moment, some observed the eight precepts of pure livelihood (*ājīvatthāmaka-sīla*). Established in those precepts, if there is any concentration or meditation you have developed, at least during this opportunity of hearing the Dhamma and preaching the Dhamma, having concentrated your minds, if you have gained some understanding from these, may they be a supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for your own realization of the Dhamma! Through the association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), developing your sermon-hearing and meditation, and with the help of this wholesome energy, may this merit of hearing the Dhamma lead to the realization of the supreme and noble Nibbāna through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship within this very life! Make that aspiration.

May all the realms of devas and brahmas, including our departed relatives from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, who wish to rejoice in the merits of this preaching and hearing of the Dhamma, rejoice! By doing so, may they all realize the supreme and noble Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi! With this aspiration, let us recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #120

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.94)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Piyato jāyatī soko, piyato jāyatī bhayaṃ;

Piyato vippamuttassa, natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ ti.

From:

Dhammapada 212 (Piyavagga)

Dear Listeners,

We constantly hear and see many people falling into *Dukkha* (Suffering), unable to bear the sorrow of separation from their beloved ones. The Supreme Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, who pointed out the path to extinguishing the *Dukkha* of saṃsāra, explained how to mitigate this grief of separation from the beloved even in daily life. Today, on this Vesak Full Moon Poya Day, we intend to present how the Most Compassionate One helped a certain householder who was rendered helpless by grief over the death of his son.

A certain householder in the city of Sāvatthi, when his son passed away, out of the immense grief that arose, stopped taking food and drink properly, abandoned his daily work, went to the cemetery, and wept constantly. While he was spending his days in this manner, one morning, as the Buddha was surveying the world at dawn with the attainment of Great Compassion (*Mahākaruṇā Samāpatti*), He saw that this lay devotee possessed the supportive conditions (*upanissaya sampatti*) for attaining the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*).

After His alms-round that day, the Buddha, having taken His meal, walked to the house of that lay devotee accompanied by a certain monk. Knowing that the Buddha had arrived, the family invited Him inside, prepared a seat in the middle of the house, and made Him comfortable. When the lay devotee came and sat down, the Buddha asked, "Why is it, lay disciple, that you seem to be in *Dukkha*?" Then he replied, "I have met with such trouble, Lord. My son has passed away. Because of this grief, I cannot even attend to my other duties."

Then the Buddha stated, "Lay disciple, weeping and grieving over the loss of a beloved one is futile. Death is not something that happens to only one person in one place. Wherever there is *Bhava* (Becoming), it is common to all. Therefore, abandoning one's duties and grieving because a son has died is a useless task. In the past, when their beloved sons passed away, the wise did not grieve but, establishing mindfulness of death, carried out their duties properly." When He spoke in this manner, curiosity arose in the lay devotee, and he asked, "Blessed One, when and who did such a thing?"

Having received this invitation, the Buddha related a past story found in the Jātaka book under the name ‘Uraga Jātaka’. The event is told as follows: In the past, in the city of Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a brahmin in a brahmin family, living by farming. At the time of this incident in the story, six people lived in that brahmin's household: the brahmin (the father), the brahmin lady (the mother), the son, the daughter, the daughter-in-law, and the servant maid. These six people together, in accordance with advice and instruction, constantly practiced mindfulness of death. One day, while plowing the field, while the son was gathering dry leaves and setting them on fire, the smoke disturbed a cobra in a nearby anthill. Angered, the cobra came out and bit the brahmin youth on his hand. Right there, overcome by the venom, he fell dead.

The Bodhisatta carried his son, placed him under a tree, and covered his face with a piece of cloth because he was dead. Having covered him, he went back to plowing the field without paying any heed to it. Then he asked a passerby, "Where are you going?" When the man replied that he was going to the village, the Bodhisatta said, "In that case, please convey a message to our house: tell them to bring food for only one person instead of two as usual. And tell the brahmin lady, the daughter, the daughter-in-law, and the servant maid, all four of them, to wash their heads, bathe, and come bringing perfumes and flowers." So those people also came in that manner, bringing the food. The brahmin sat under that very tree, right near the dead body, finished his meal, and then all five of them, very calmly and composedly, gathered firewood and cremated the corpse. It is said that due to the power of that righteousness (Dhamma-nature), Sakka, the king of gods, whose Pandukambala stone throne became hot, turned his attention there and arrived on the scene in disguise.

The subsequent events are recorded in the book in this manner. He asked, "What is this group cremating?" They replied, "This is a corpse." "No, no, you must be lying because you would have to share the wild game with us. This must be a wild boar or a deer that you are burning." "No, no, it is a human corpse." Then he asked next, "Then is this an enemy you are burning?" "No, no, it is my own beloved son." "Why? Was the son disobedient?" "No, he was extremely obedient to me." "Then why are you not weeping?" Then, with an illustration, the brahmin said, "Just as a serpent sheds its skin and leaves it behind, my son has abandoned this physical body and is now born in some other place. My weeping is completely futile. Grieving for the dead is useless."

Then Sakka, who was in disguise, asked the brahmin lady, "Who is this deceased person to you?" She replied, "He is my son." Then he said, "Men may be able to generate presence of mind, reflect on things, and bear their grief in this way, but it is the nature of

women to weep. Why is it that you do not grieve?" Then the brahmin lady said, "When my son was conceived, he did not tell me he was coming. When he died, he did not tell me he was leaving. He went just as he came. Weeping is of no use. Even if I weep, my son will not return. Grieving for the dead is futile." It is mentioned in a verse there that the brahmin lady answered in this manner.

Next, Sakka, the king of gods, asked the sister of the deceased son, that is, the brahmin's daughter, "Who is he to you?" "My own brother born of the same womb." Then he said, "It is the nature of sisters to wail and weep when their brother dies. Why are you like this?" Then she also said, "If I start to weep, my mind will fall into *Dukkha* (Suffering), and my physical body will also become discolored. That is the only result of it. My brother will not return because I weep." Thus, she explained why she did not grieve.

Next, he asked the daughter-in-law, "Who is he to you?" She replied, "He is my husband." "Even if no one else does, a wife weeps more than other relatives when her husband is lost, because she becomes a widow, and because of separation from her beloved. Why do you not weep?" Then the daughter-in-law said, "Losing one's husband is just like the sun and moon rising in the east and setting in the west. Death is common to everyone who is born. It is not my husband who is here; this is just a corpse, and he is already born in another place. My weeping is futile." Thus, she replied.

Finally, he asked the servant maid, "Who is this to you?" She replied, "This is my master." "Why? Did he torment, abuse, and exploit you while he was alive?" "No, no, he was extremely kind to me, like a child of my own, and my master was the same to me." "Then why do you not weep?" Then she said, "Just as when a clay pot filled with water is carried, falls, and breaks, the pieces of that pot cannot be joined back together; in the same way, the deceased person will not return just because we weep." In this manner, she too explained the reason for her equanimity. Having heard all this, it is said that Sakka praised them, filled their house with the seven kinds of treasures, and departed.

Next, at the end of the Jātaka story, the connection of lives is made: the brahmin was the Bodhisatta, the brahmin lady was Khema Theri, the daughter was Uppalavaṇṇā, the brahmin youth was Rāhula, and the servant maid was Khujjuttarā. In this way, they were identified with contemporary characters. The Buddha stated, "The wise, when they lost their beloved sons, did not grieve but took their food and carried on with their duties." The verse the Buddha uttered on that occasion is the very one we chose as our theme.

Now let us look at the meaning of this verse. *Piyato jāyati soko*—it is because of the beloved that sorrow arises. *Piyato jāyati bhayaṃ*—it is because of the beloved that fear arises. *Piyato vippamuttassa*—for one who is freed from the beloved, there is no sorrow, *kuto bhayaṃ*—whence can there be fear? This is the meaning. So, through this story and the verse, we can understand how our Buddha, as the Teacher of the Three Worlds, directed others toward mindfulness of death. The way they acted with such a wondrous sense of equanimity regarding their child is an example to everyone.

The Buddha Himself once declared that He is an incomparable physician and surgeon. The words used here are physician (*bhisakka*) and surgeon—*sallakatto anuttaro* (the unsurpassed surgeon). What is the task of that physician known as the Buddha? It is to treat the disease of saṃsāra at its very source. The habit of ordinary people in the world is to treat the symptoms of a disease. This saṃsāric disease is a chronic illness that has plagued beings wandering through saṃsāra, shrouded in ignorance and bound by *Taṇhā* (Craving) since time immemorial. Curing a chronic illness is no easy task. One must treat the disease at its very source.

Through this verse, the Buddha presents the root cause of the disease. It is because of the beloved that sorrow and fear arise. Where there is no beloved, there is neither sorrow nor fear. This is the truth that the Buddha presents through this. We must apply our minds to this a little. Why did He make such a statement? If someone is dear to another, the expectation is to keep that beloved person with oneself constantly. However, the worldly nature, the law of nature, is opposed to this. The Buddha has shown this as a principle in a certain valuable passage: *Sabbehi me piyehi manāpehi nānābhāvo vinābhāvo aññathābhāvo*—meaning, "From all those who are dear and delightful to me, there must be change, separation, and alterity." All three of these words are extremely important. They are worth reflecting upon deeply.

Nānābhāvo means becoming separate. Because of love, the union is so close that some think they are not two people, but two halves of one person. Some think, "We are two halves, two parts." Similarly, some think the other half is better. Be that as it may, this relationship is sometimes split in two; it gets broken apart due to various reasons.

That is what happens to "oneness." That is what is called *nānābhāvo*. These two who were integrated in oneness eventually become "diverse" (*nānā*). The two go in opposite directions; they part ways. Such is the nature of the world. It can happen due to various reasons. When that happens, some drink poison, commit suicide, or sometimes resort to highly violent acts. That is because of *nānābhāvo*. Next, *vinābhāvo*—even if they do not change or part ways in that manner, they are separated by death. The person whom one thought they could not live without, they are forced to live without. This *vinābhāvo* occurs either because one's beloved dies before oneself, or because one dies while the other is still alive. This is called bereavement (separation by death). *Vinābhāvo*. Even then, one has to face various kinds of *Dukkha* (Suffering), sorrow, and so forth, in the same way.

Next, changes occur (*aññathābhāvo*). Sometimes, even two people who were united like gold and quicksilver fall out. The state of being beloved gradually turns into a state of dislike due to various reasons. Or else, it eventually turns into hatred, even a terrible hatred. Then they resort to various things like suicide. *Nānābhāvo, vinābhāvo, aññathābhāvo*—these are the symptoms of the disease that spring from that very source, from that state of being beloved. Thus, the word of the Buddha is exactly so.

Even though the Buddha stated this fact in this way, it is not easy for ordinary worldly people to accept it. Sometimes, even the Buddha was unable to convince certain

individuals of this fact. A good example of this is mentioned in the Dhamma itself, named the ‘Piyajātika Sutta’. In that Sutta, which is found in the Majjhima Nikāya, many matters directly related to this question of the beloved are mentioned. That too is a good story. It is described as follows.

A certain householder in Sāvatthi, when his only son died, went to the cemetery daily out of that grief and wept, abandoning his food, drink, and business. While he was weeping like that, crying "Where is my only son? Where is my only son?", for some reason, this person felt like visiting the Buddha. Having gone and sat down near the Buddha, He asked, "Lay disciple, your appearance has changed now. Your faculties seem uncontrolled; why has this happened to you?"

"How could it be otherwise, Lord? My only dear and delightful son has passed away. That is why for the past few days, my day is spent in this manner." Then the Buddha declared, "That is how it is, householder. It is because of the beloved that sorrow, lamentation, *Dukkha* (Suffering), grief, and despair arise." But that person did not accept it. He said, "How can you say that, Lord? How can that be? It is because of the beloved that happiness and joy arise!" Even after undergoing so much *Dukkha*, that person did not accept the word of the Buddha. That is the conventional nature of the world. It is hard for worldly beings to accept it.

Then, rejecting the word of the Buddha, where did this person go when he got up? Near sacred places like Jetavana monastery, various things happen, and a group of people had gathered to play dice. This person went to these gamblers and told them the news: "My son passed away, and when I told this to the Buddha, He uttered such a statement." Then those gamblers also agreed with this man's words: "That is so, householder, your opinion on this is correct. It is because of the beloved that happiness and joy arise, not sorrow and lamentation!" So, that householder accepted their view and went home. However, this story went from mouth to mouth and eventually reached the ears of King Pasenadi of Kosala.

So King Kosala said to Mallikā, "Is it so, Mallikā, that the ascetic Gotama has made such a statement: ‘From the beloved, sorrow and lamentation arise’?" As soon as he said this, Queen Mallikā replied, "Great King, if that is the word of the Blessed One, then it must be exactly so." Thereupon, King Kosala became angry and said, "That is just like you. Whatever the Blessed One says, you say ‘it is exactly so,’ just as a pupil agrees with whatever the teacher says." In this way, he made a statement rejecting it. There is a certain Pāli passage mentioned there, which if translated, would mean he dismissed Mallikā, saying something like, "Just go away, what nonsense are you talking!"

However, Mallikā did not stop there. Because Mallikā was a highly intelligent woman, she summoned a certain brahmin named Nāḷijaṅgha and told him, "Go and ask the Blessed One whether He indeed made such a statement. If the Blessed One gives some explanation or elaboration on it, bear it well in mind, come back, and tell me." Thereupon, the brahmin Nāḷijaṅgha went and inquired of the Buddha, "Reverend Sir, was such a statement indeed made by the Blessed One, that because of the beloved,

sorrow, lamentation, *Dukkha* (Suffering), and grief arise?" Then the Buddha, with reasoned examples, replied, "Yes, I said so for these reasons," and He gave illustrations from incidents of the kind we frequently hear and see, or read about in newspapers nowadays.

"Brahmin, in this very city of Sāvatthi, a certain woman, when her mother passed away, became mad and deranged because of it. She went from street to street, from junction to junction, asking, 'Has anyone seen my mother? Has anyone seen my mother?' In the same way, a certain woman behaved like that when her father passed away, when her husband passed away, when her son passed away." He gave several such examples, and next, He gave an illustration of the kind that is reported even in modern times.

"Similarly, a certain woman in this city of Sāvatthi went to live with her relatives' family. Those relatives wanted to separate her from her husband and give her hand to another man. But this woman did not consent to it. She went and told her husband, 'These relatives of mine are going to separate me from you and give me to another.' Then what did that husband do? Taking a sharp weapon, he cut that woman in two, and then ended his own life with that same weapon, saying, 'May we meet in the next world!'" It is clear from this that such things were done by people even in those days. It is not I who am saying this; the Buddha Himself gave such an illustration on that occasion.

The brahmin Nāḷijaṅgha came back and related this entire event to Queen Mallikā. The wise Queen Mallikā, without mentioning that she had sent such a message to the Buddha, went back to King Pasenadi of Kosala and asked, "Your Majesty, is the princess Vajirī dear (beloved) to you?" Princess Vajirī was the daughter of King Kosala and Queen Mallikā. They had no son; they had only a daughter. "Is Princess Vajirī beloved to you?" "Yes, she is beloved to me." "If some misfortune were to happen to Princess Vajirī, would sorrow, lamentation, weeping, and grief arise in you?" "What are you saying? Not just weeping and lamentation, but even my very life might end!" "That is indeed why, Great King, the Blessed One, the Fully Self-Awakened One, uttered this statement; it was because of this." Showing proof in this way, she did not stop there. Next, she asked, "Is Queen Vāsabhakhattiyā beloved to you?" She too was a queen very dear to King Kosala. When he replied "Yes," she asked him the same question: "If Queen Vāsabhakhattiyā were lost to you, what would you feel?" Next, she asked about General Viḍūḍabha—General Viḍūḍabha was the son of Queen Vāsabhakhattiyā, the King's own son—and when asked about him, he replied in the same manner. Then, thirdly, Mallikā asked about herself: "Am I beloved to you?" "Oh, yes," he said. Then she asked, "So if something were to happen to me, would there be sorrow, weeping, and lamentation?" "What are you saying? If that happened, my life too would end!" Thus, after asking several questions and having convinced the King, such great faith arose in him that he exclaimed, "With what great wisdom and what a truthful matter has the Buddha taught!" Right there, saying "Namo tassa..." he turned toward the direction of the Buddha and paid homage.

From these valuable stories, we can understand that it is generally difficult for worldly people to accept that from this state of being beloved, *Dukkha* (Suffering) and grief arise.

Ordinary worldly people think that the beloved is a cause for pleasure and happiness. Next, another similar incident is mentioned concerning Visākhā. Visākhā had many children; she had ten children. It is said that Visākhā lived for one hundred and twenty years. By that time, she had a huge number of children and grandchildren, a large number like several hundreds. One day, while the Buddha was residing in Pubbārāma, which was built by Visākhā herself, one of Visākhā's granddaughters passed away. She was a very dear and delightful granddaughter.

So Visākhā, grieving deeply (experiencing great *Dukkha*), went to visit the Buddha in broad daylight, having bathed, with wet clothes and wet hair—which must have been a custom at that time when someone died. The Buddha asked her, "Why is it, Visākhā, that you come in broad daylight with wet clothes like this?" She replied, "My extremely dear and delightful granddaughter has passed away. Because of that, I have come in this grief." Then the Buddha asked, "Would you like it, Visākhā, if you had as many children and grandchildren as there are people in this city of Sāvatthi?" "Oh, if I had that many children, indeed I would like it!" she said. Even though she already had so many, it seems it was still not enough.

"If I had as many children and grandchildren as the population of Sāvatthi itself, it would be so good for me." Then the Buddha asked, "How many people pass away in Sāvatthi in a single day?" She replied, "Sometimes ten, or perhaps nine, or at the very least, one person dies. There is no day when someone does not die." Then the Buddha said, "In that case, Visākhā, you would never have even a single day to live without wet clothes and wet hair." Thereupon, when she understood the matter, Visākhā said, "Then I do not want that many children!" The Buddha, on certain occasions, delivers wondrous discourses in a way that deeply touches one's heart.

The Buddha said to Visākhā: "Visākhā, if someone has a hundred beloved ones, they have a hundredfold *Dukkha* (Suffering). If someone has ninety beloved ones, they have ninetyfold *Dukkha*. If eighty beloved ones, eightyfold *Dukkha*. If seventy, seventyfold *Dukkha*. If sixty, sixtyfold *Dukkha*. If fifty, fiftyfold *Dukkha*. If forty, fortyfold *Dukkha*. If thirty, thirtyfold *Dukkha*. If twenty, twentyfold *Dukkha*. If ten, tenfold *Dukkha*. If nine, ninefold *Dukkha*. If eight, eightfold *Dukkha*. If seven, sevenfold *Dukkha*. If six, sixfold *Dukkha*. If five, fivefold *Dukkha*. If four, fourfold *Dukkha*. If three, threefold *Dukkha*. If two, twofold *Dukkha*. If one, they have one *Dukkha*. For those who have no beloved ones, there is no *Dukkha* (Suffering) at all." In this way, the Buddha preached. Whether we are willing to accept this is something we must ask ourselves. It is something that worldly people find impossible to accept.

In many places, it is said that to the extent that one has beloved ones, to that extent they have bonds (knots). Therefore, for those who have no beloved ones, there are no bonds. Thus, a state of being beloved is a bond; one is caught in a knot. The Buddha says that the way to be freed from those bonds—destroying this belovedness—does not mean turning it into something disliked. The Buddha once stated briefly: *Ganthā tesaṃ na vijjanti yesaṃ natthi piyāppiyaṃ*—"Bonds do not exist for those who have neither beloved nor unbeloved." So, here there is neither belovedness nor unbelovedness. Then

what is there? Neutrality, equanimity. Now, the six people in the aforementioned Uraga Jātaka possessed that very equanimity. They had no attachment (belovedness) toward the child, nor did they have any dislike or anger toward him on account of disobedience and so forth. There was equanimity, an acceptance of the Dhamma-nature. That acceptance of Dhamma-nature is what lies within mindfulness of death. Therefore, a person who has developed mindfulness of death can carry out their duties with an equanimous mind on such occasions. Thus, that brahmin ate his meal right next to his son's corpse, and then, putting the corpse aside, even started plowing. Such a wondrous way of behavior! One might think, "Even if it is possible for them, we cannot do it." However, even in these times of disaster, it is seen that some people are endowed with the strength to generate equanimity (*upekkhā*) through the power of the Dhamma.

Since people also like to hear stories, if I may relate another incident, among the female lay disciples in this Dispensation, the one who can be called a "great heroic mother" is Bandhula Mallikā. The general named Bandhula is shown as someone with immense physical strength, and his wife Mallikā was also a woman of great physical strength. To distinguish her from Kosala Mallikā, she was called Bandhula Mallikā. It is said that these two had thirty-two twin sons, born from sixteen pregnancies. All of them were a bunch of highly powerful children with wondrous strength of character. Since General Bandhula was the chief commander, they too were men of great warrior-like strength. However, at one time, out of jealousy toward General Bandhula, a certain faction slandered him to King Kosala, sowed discord, and tried to take revenge. Thereupon, King Kosala was deceived and thought, "If I put General Bandhula to death openly, it will bring great disrepute to me." Thus, he employed a trick: through a conspiracy, he instigated a rebellion in a remote border region.

Having faked a rebellion, he told General Bandhula to go with his sons and suppress it. As General Bandhula went with his group, the rebellion was easily subdued. On their way back, the King sent another band of warriors with them, with orders to cut off the heads of General Bandhula and all his sons once they approached the city. In that very manner, those warriors executed the task. It must have been at night; when they arrived close to the city, they cut off the heads of General Bandhula and his sons. Next, as part of the conspiracy, a spy took that news, written on something like a palmyra leaf of that time, and delivered it to Mallikā Devī.

At the moment of delivery, a great alms-giving ceremony was taking place at Bandhula Mallikā's house. This message arrived while alms-food was being offered to five hundred monks, headed by the chief disciples Sāriputta and Moggallāna. She received the message, read it, and tucked it into her waist. Bandhula Mallikā continued to perform all the duties and hospitality that needed to be done. While serving the alms-food to the Saṅgha, two servant maids were carrying a pot of ghee, and right in front of the Saṅgha, it fell and broke. When it broke, the Great Arahant Sāriputta, thinking that Mallikā's mind might be disturbed by this, uttered a word of consolation to Bandhula Mallikā: "*Bhedanadhammaṃ bhinnaṃ, na cintetabbaṃ*"—"What is of a breakable nature has broken, do not worry about it. Do not be overly troubled."

At that moment, Bandhula Mallikā said, "Venerable Sir, I have received this message saying that my husband and my thirty-two sons have all been beheaded and are dead. If I can carry out my duties in this manner while keeping that message tucked in my waist, would I regret the breaking of that pot of ghee?" It is said that Ven. Sāriputta then delivered a sermon appropriate to death and departed. What a heroic mother! It is difficult for us even to imagine the way she kept her mind calm and acted with such wondrous equanimity and courage in such a situation.

Next, we must take into consideration that what the Buddha presented through these Sutta discourses and stories as a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) to plant this Dhamma-nature in our minds is mindfulness of death. What is mindfulness of death? If we speak of death by way of an analogy, it is just like a stranger whom we meet every day but do not recognize. We think of death as something that happens only to others. We forget that it happens to ourselves. That means we have not recognized death. Such is the nature of worldly people. Countless people die, and we hear and see daily that they die. Yet, for some reason, the thought that "I will die" does not enter our minds. It does not really strike our hearts. Because of this, when death comes to us, it is like a stranger. It is an unfamiliar thing, something we do not know, something unexpected.

There is a certain therapy, like homeopathy, where a small amount of a pathogen is introduced to build up immunity against a disease. What the Buddha points to is similar: putting the very idea of death into the mind and training the mind to get used to it. Generally, there is fear of death within a person. But just as the power of that fear is broken when death is accepted as a Dhamma-nature, the Buddha introduces the concept of death into our minds. By reflecting on the death of others, one attributes it to oneself. It is by developing this as a meditation—thinking, "This will definitely happen to me too"—that we can develop the strength within us to accept that equanimous state, the Dhamma-nature.

Almost everyone has heard of the meditation on mindfulness of death, and they may be practicing it to some extent, using phrases like "*jīvitaṃ aniyataṃ, maraṇaṃ niyataṃ*"—"life is *Anicca* (Impermanent), death is certain." By constantly bringing to mind even just the word "*maraṇaṃ, maraṇaṃ*" (death, death), we are able to shape our view of life accordingly. By developing mindfulness of death in this manner, we can develop the perception of *Anicca* (Impermanent) even regarding the things we see around us. When we reflect deeply, what is found within mindfulness of death is the very perception of *Anicca* (Impermanent) itself.

The wrong concept arising from *Taṇhā* (Craving) for *Bhava* (Becoming)—the belief that "I exist as a permanent soul (self)"—gradually fades away. Along with that, if one acts with mindfulness in daily activities, one can see death within each of them: within bodily postures, within inhalation and exhalation, and within the food we consume. The Buddha declares that death is constantly present in all of these. It is also shown as momentary death. The cells of this body are dying rapidly. Even faster than that, our mind dies, our thoughts die. The world does not see this because of that false view, the *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion/view of existing group/body).

Sakkāya-diṭṭhi (dogma of self-illusion/view of existing group/body) is the feeling that this collection exists as a whole; even if it is said that there is no self (soul) in the body, there remains a feeling among worldly people that some unchanging, permanent, eternal thing is hidden at least in the mind. Especially for a person overcome by *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, it is difficult to grasp the Dhamma-nature of the mind as taught by the Buddha. Yet the Buddha declares that this mind changes with an inexpressibly wondrous speed, much faster than material form (*rūpa*) changes: "*Lahuparivattaṃ cittaṃ*" (the mind is quick to change). It changes so rapidly that, "*Upamā pi na sukarā*"—it is not easy even to give an analogy. It is said that the mind changes so fast that one cannot even provide an analogy. That is what is called cessation (*bhaṅga*). The mind is breaking up, breaking up; it is something that breaks up. Even if we think about the aforementioned process of the body, especially inhalation and exhalation, what is present there too is nothing but death.

To put it briefly, we might as well consider this thing we call "life" as a constant struggle not to die. If we explain this "living" from another perspective, what we have to say is that it is a constant effort to survive. When we are sick or engaged in a highly strenuous activity, how difficult is it to take another breath after one breath? So, even between those two—between two breaths—there is death.

In this way, within the continuation of one's life, one begins to see the breaking up of one's own body as well. Similarly with external things: a capacity to see death in everything arises. The entire perspective changes. When leaves fall from a tree, when flowers fade and fall, when fruits drop, every single one of them brings that perception of death. That is why in the past, the Buddha said:

Dumapphalānamiva patanti mānavā,

daharā ca vuddhā ca, kāyassa bhedā.

(Just as fruits fall from a tree, so do humans, both young and old, pass away at the breaking up of the body.)

For instance, when a mango tree blossoms, we are filled with anticipation, thinking we will get a huge harvest of mangoes. But how many of those flowers fall, caught in storms while still in the blossom stage? Then, caught in storms, due to their small stems, the tiny flowers, the tender little buds fall at that very stage—things we were waiting to eat when fully ripe. Going on like this, in the end, only a few mangoes are left on the tree. That is the analogy shown here. Among those born in this world, some perish within the mother's womb itself. In these times, everyone who does science knows that, to put it briefly, parents do not even know the total number of children conceived by them. That means they dissolve within the mother's womb itself. Having been conceived, they dissolve like that, and out of numerous such attempts, it is only as the final result that a child is born.

Indeed, within a mother's womb, there are unimaginably many opportunities for one to die. Even after overcoming those situations, the moment of birth is also an extremely

dangerous moment. Then, after birth, during infancy, when one cannot even say what is needed and can only express one's thoughts through crying, if not for the constant care and watchfulness of the parents, how easily would life be destroyed? Consider what happens to the eggs of wild animals when they are found by other beasts. Looking at the world in this way, that perception of death arises within us everywhere.

This applies to animate objects, and the same Dhamma-nature applies to inanimate objects as well: the leaves and flowers of trees and so forth. Thus, throughout the entire universe, there are only these two: *Jāti* (Birth) and *Jarāmaraṇa* (passing away/decay and death). This is what the Buddha points to by words like *samudaya-vaya* (arising and passing away) and *udayabbaya* (rise and fall). Worldly people place this within a massive span of time and hold grand celebrations saying, "Lo, a child is born!" Having held a birthday party, they make a great din, rejoicing and making merry because a stranger has joined their family, and then, while living like that, at some moment or another, lo, death arrives. The wedding turns into a funeral. *Jāti* (Birth) ends in *Jarāmaraṇa* (decay and death).

The momentary death that occurs in the interim is not understood by ordinary worldly people. But that too becomes understood. As that is understood more and more, that previously held perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*)—the feeling that "here is a person"—gradually dissolves. It is through this that the aforementioned state of equanimous neutrality can be developed. Now, we generally think that when a beloved one is lost, we weep for that person. But this too is a delusion. It is not that child who is beloved; it is oneself who is dearer to oneself.

A certain incident in this regard is recorded in the Dhamma. On one occasion, King Kosala asked Queen Mallikā, "Who is dearest (most beloved) to you?" She replied, "To me, I myself am dearest." King Kosala did not agree with this. So when he reported this matter to the Buddha, He uttered a verse: "Having traversed all directions with the mind, one cannot find anyone dearer to oneself than oneself. Since that is so, and since oneself is dearest to oneself, one should not harm others." Through this, the Buddha highlights a unique Dhamma point.

We generally put forward the argument, "I am weeping for so-and-so." But in reality, it is a weeping for oneself. Indeed, it is because of the loss of the protection, comfort, closeness, and love that one received from that child that one weeps on that occasion. Therefore, when we reflect deeply, there is no one dear to us other than ourselves. Reflecting on this Dhamma-nature, what we must do is understand the fault of being dear to oneself. It is for this that insight meditation (*vipassanā*) is of help.

To be dear to oneself means that one's body is dear to oneself. Not only for the sake of preserving this stomach, but for maintaining this bodily cage, how many efforts—a heap of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations)—do we accumulate? For the sake of all these adjustments, how much fatigue, *Dukkha* (Suffering), and exertion do we undergo? Every bit of exertion we put in breaks down when we least expect it. Every delicious meal we take has to be expelled in a matter of hours. Inhalation becomes exhalation. Within everything,

there is this nature of breaking up, breaking up—there is *bhaṅga* (dissolution), a nature of breaking up. Now, while this breaking up is not visible to the ordinary eye, it is visible to the meditator through the eye of wisdom. But the one who does not grasp this thinks that from the day of birth until death, it is this very same person who exists.

To give an analogy for this: now, there are some vehicles whose license plate remains the same, but they have been repaired with fitted parts for years. Parts keep falling off, yet the license plate is the same. It is the same when we think of the human body. Ask any surgeon. Someone gets admitted to a hospital; they leave having received blood from someone else, or with parts like kidneys borrowed from others, or artificial things. Everyone knows about teeth; they are usually the first to change. All of those are carried on by joining collected parts together. Yet, the name is the same. Name, prestige, position—all are the same; they do not change. So, along with that, at the moment of death, it is said that so-and-so, who held such-and-such high positions, has died. But this is just a heap of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). It is a great mass of *Dukkha* (Suffering). A temporary end to a heap of *Dukkha*. It does not end there, according to the Buddha. In the end, the force exerted to catch a breath is the very grasping (clinging) of *Taṇhā* (Craving) and *Upādāna* (Grasping) operating in that subtle manner between two breaths, which finally performs the seizing. Accordingly, another *Jāti* (Birth) comes about. There too, it is that same process.

It is by putting all this together that the Buddha presented the entire world, the entire Dhamma-nature, by the single word *Dukkha* (Suffering). In Sinhala, it is just two letters (දු-ඛ). Within those two letters of *Dukkha* lies the truth taught by the Buddha. This is something carried with great difficulty (*Dukkha*). It is bearing with difficulty, and though borne, it is *Dukkha*. If one has the understanding that we are carrying this burden of the five aggregates in this manner, and if, free from the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), we have the feeling that this is just a heap, then those aforementioned agitations will be greatly reduced. One will be able to compose one's mind.

Sometimes we capture various moments of this life in photographs, paste them in albums, and show them to others with pride, saying, "This is me, and this is also me," "The one holding these trophies and receiving these honors is also me." We must bear in mind that this "I" is just something fitted together with parts in that manner. Even if we have not fitted parts from others, we must constantly reflect on the transaction we carry out with the four great elements: earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*).

When going into the deeper aspect of the Dhamma, we come across two concepts: *upādinna* (clung-to/appropriated) and *anupādinna* (not clung-to/unappropriated). It may be a somewhat deep concept. *Upādinna* refers to this bodily cage of ours, including our faculties. This is the portion we have grasped tightly. That grasping in the mother's womb through the power of past kamma is what we continue to carry, being born as a child, thinking "this is me" in this life, nourishing it, and carrying it with the help of others. Next, in order to maintain this *upādinna* (clung-to) body, we take as food, even by killing them, certain animate or inanimate things considered as *anupādinna* (not clung-to). We preserve this clung-to body with the help of other things. Yet, we will have

to abandon this clung-to (*upādinna*) bodily cage at some point. Just as we use external things like food, drink, clothing, and other items, and abandon them when they decay to take up new ones, we abandon one breath to take another. Thus, within that very process lies what the Buddha calls *Anicca* (Impermanent).

Within this *Anicca* (Impermanent) lies the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering). Because this is impermanent, we constantly have to prepare (sustain) it, we have to repair (reconstruct) it. If something has to be repaired constantly, it is a great hassle. It is a torment. Even in the case of a vehicle, if it is in the garage every day, constantly up on jacks, then this body is just like that. The moments of being placed "on jacks" are the times spent in the hospital. At that time, we hand this over to the doctor. One is not sure of returning home, and one even signs one's own death warrant during highly critical moments. In this way, this vehicle of a body is indeed constantly "on jacks."

If we all reflect on this condition constantly, we can bring to mind that nature of constant change within it. This does not cost any money. What is required is to turn the mind, which is directed toward the unnecessary things of the world, toward this side. The difference between the two is mentioned in the Dhamma as *ayoniso manasikāra* (unwise attention) and *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). The word *ayoniso manasikāra* mentioned in the Dhamma means inappropriate (unwise/unsystematic) reflection, while *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) means proper (wise/systematic) reflection.

If we explain it more deeply, *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) means directing the mind to the very source of things, to the place of their arising, and trying to understand them. *Ayoniso manasikāra* means applying the mind to external things and expecting a solution from them. To give an illustration, a deer starts running after a mirage to catch what appears in the distance. But a wise person, understanding that it is a mirage, does not run because it is something appearing due to a certain defect of the eye itself. Due to a defect in the eye, that distant phenomenon appears to us as water. If one understands this by way of *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), that person does not run. But the deer runs; that is *ayoniso manasikāra*. What has happened now is also like that: because the truth is hidden, many people are running in that manner out of *ayoniso manasikāra*.

The Buddha has declared: "Within this fathom-long body itself, I make known the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." The Buddha has delivered a wondrous teaching, the like of which has never been uttered by anyone in any other dispensation. Without paying heed to this, we go either searching for visible stars, and in the end, no matter how many stars are seen, we do not abandon that effort, and next we go to conquer planets. All of those may be good. However, according to the word of the Buddha, if we reflect on what needs to be done within this extremely brief, short span of time, we would not turn toward those activities that destroy so many human lives or wealth. What needs to be done is right here.

Some might think that the Buddha did not investigate these things or did not know them, and therefore He was not omniscient. However, the Buddha saw that within this short life span, especially during the appearance of a Buddha, there is only one task to be done which could not be done hitherto. There is only one task to perform. What is that task? Hitherto, we have been unable to destroy this *Dukkha* (Suffering), this saṃsāric *Dukkha*. The advice necessary for that was not received from anyone. Even if received, we have not paid heed to it so far. At least at this moment, during this period of the appearance of a Buddha, as long as the Dhamma of the Buddha remains, the Buddha has shown us the reality of this.

Now, this is exactly what was said in this verse. It is the story about the source of the disease, which ordinary worldly people do not accept. Hitherto, what ordinary worldly people have been doing everywhere in various fields like the social field, the political field, and so forth, is like weeding a jungle (felling wild bushes), a mere patching up. Or, if we think deeply, it is treating the symptoms. But the Buddha points out that unless the source of the disease itself is treated, this disease cannot be cured. So, it is that very matter that the Buddha presents even through this short verse. We must make an effort to understand it. If we make an effort to understand it, applying *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) instead of *ayoniso manasikāra*, and without being deluded by carrying the whole world in our heads, we must direct our minds to this fathom-long world introduced by the Buddha.

That is why, in brief, the Buddha pointed to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*). What are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness? *Kāyānupassanā*—contemplation of the body. *Vedanānupassanā*—contemplation of feelings (*Vedanā* (Feeling). *Cittānupassanā*—contemplation of the mind. *Dhammānupassanā*—contemplation of mind-objects (thoughts arising in the mind). Are machines required to look at this? This is constantly visible to oneself, if looked at and reflected upon properly. Next, if one wishes to look at something else, for the sake of easier understanding, one can also look at things seen externally, at bodies seen externally: other bodies are just like one's own body. One can draw examples from them too. It is not that we should keep our eyes closed. If other people are seen in the world, we can attribute it to them as well: the Dhamma-nature of other bodies is exactly the same as the Dhamma-nature of my body. That is precisely what is mentioned in the Dhamma: "*Yathā idaṃ, tathā etaṃ; yathā etaṃ, tathā idaṃ*"—"As this is, so is that; as that is, so is this." As this body is, so is that body; as that body is, so is this body.

So, if in that way, it is planted in the mind as a Dhamma-nature, as a universally applicable Dhamma-nature, and if one sees deeply, then the knowledge that sees arising (*Jāti*) and passing away (*Jarāmaraṇa*) gradually inclines toward the side of dissolution (*bhaṅga*), which is breaking up. From there, other insight knowledges rapidly arise, and disenchantment with these five aggregates is born. Having deeply understood the Three Characteristics—*Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self)—one can realize in this very life that wondrous supramundane state of Nibbāna, known as

Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship.

Therefore, we must reflect: on this valuable Poya day, although we started with that small verse, we have attempted to present the entirety of the True Dhamma to some extent within this short sermon. While making an effort to understand this according to your capacity of comprehension, may the power of hearing this Dhamma sermon, by maintaining precepts like virtue (*sīla*), engaging in meditation, and gathering these matters pertaining to wisdom, together with all the meritorious power accumulated so far, support you! At this final hour when the lamp of the Buddha's Dispensation is about to go out, putting forth the maximum possible effort, removing *ayoniso manasikāra* and doing what needs to be done through *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), may this power of listening to the Dhamma sermon assist you in realizing the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna by way of the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, thereby escaping from this terrifying saṃsāric *Dukkha* (Suffering)! I bless you thus.

Likewise, if there be any beings from here up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who wish to rejoice in the meritorious power of this Dhamma teaching and Dhamma hearing, may they all rejoice in this merit and realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna by way of their wished-for Bodhi (awakening)! Say "Sadhu" and recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #121

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.34)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Na taṃ kammaṃ kataṃ sādhu, yaṃ katvā anutappati;

Yassa assumukho rodaṃ, vipākaṃ paṭisevati ti.

From:

Dhammapada 67 (Pāpavaagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Self-Awakened Buddha, saw how beings in this saṃsāra swim in an endless ocean of karma and an ocean of suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), with no visible boundary or shore, due to not understanding properly the relationship between karma and its result (*vipāka*). When performing an action (karma), a certain volitional force (*cētanā-śakti*) that arises in the mind gradually matures and ripens, and the stage where it manifests its result is called the ripening of karma (*karma-vipāka*). Thinking only about the superficial appearance of these results of karma, many people form a wrong understanding of good and bad based on that, and committing various deeds in the world, they undergo dreadful painful consequences in saṃsāra.

What we distinguish as good and bad, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*), merit and demerit, are generally understood by people according to their capacity to bring pleasant results or suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*) results. However, the manner in which a karma matures and ripens is difficult for ordinary worldly people to see or understand; it is known only to the Buddha himself. What is the reason for this? The perspective of the ordinary worldly person is narrow. They lack far-reaching wisdom and deep understanding. Because of that, according to their short-term perspective, narrow view, and superficial outlook, they think only of the superficially visible pleasant results of those actions (karma), establish a social convention that “this is good, this is bad”, conduct their lives accordingly, and ultimately suffer in terrifying places like the hells (*apāya*).

For this very reason, the Buddha often seized opportunities to show the world what is necessary regarding good and bad. One such occasion is presented in the books as the background story (*nidāna kathā*) related to the verse we have chosen as our theme today.

While the Buddha was residing at Jetavana monastery, a farmer nearby went to plow his field. On the previous night, a gang of thieves had entered the city through a sewage drain, tunneled into a wealthy house, stolen gold, silver, ornaments, money, and other items, and made their escape. One of the thieves, without the knowledge of the others, tied up a purse of gold coins (*kahāpaṇa*) and hid it in his waist pocket. He joined the others, went near a field, and divided the stolen goods. As they were departing after dividing the loot, the hidden purse of coins accidentally dropped by the side of the field without his knowledge.

As was his custom, when the Buddha surveyed the world with his attainment of Great Compassion (*mahā-karuṇā-samāpatti*) that morning, he saw this farmer plowing his field. At that moment, the Buddha perceived a certain Dhamma-principle (*dhammatā*) within this event. Seeing how the farmer would fall into danger and how He could rescue him from it, and also seeing that this farmer possessed the supportive condition (*upanissaya-sampatti*) and past merit to attain the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*), He journeyed to the vicinity of that field accompanied by the Venerable Ānanda.

The farmer indeed approached the Buddha, paid homage, and returned to his plowing. The Buddha went to the spot by the side of the field where the purse of coins lay and asked Venerable Ānanda: "Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?" Venerable Ānanda replied: "Yes, Venerable Sir, the deadly, poisonous serpent." Again, the Buddha asked: "Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?" "Yes, Venerable Sir, the deadly, poisonous serpent," Venerable Ānanda replied. Hearing this, the farmer, after the Buddha departed, thought, "It seems there is a serpent in the place where I am working at this odd hour," and took a stick to kill the serpent. But when he went and looked, what was there was a purse of coins. He understood that the Buddha had referred to this as the serpent. However, lacking far-reaching wisdom, he took the purse of coins, set it aside, covered it with soil, and resumed plowing his field.

Meanwhile, the owners of the burglarized house, following the footprints of the thieves, arrived at the edge of the field and saw the spot where the goods had been divided. Then, following the farmer's footprints, they caught the farmer, saying: "This man is pretending to plow here after breaking into our house!"

They took the farmer and presented him to the King. The King sentenced the farmer to death. Then, the executioners bound the farmer's hands behind his back and led him to his execution, whipping him along the way. While being led, at every lash of the whip, what did the farmer say? "Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?" It is recorded in Pāli in the books. But when we take the meaning, at every lash of the whip he went along saying: "Do you see the serpent, Ānanda? Yes, Lord, the deadly, poisonous serpent." Then the

royal guards asked: "Man, what is this you are saying?" He replied: "I will explain this only if you take me before the King."

These men took him before the King. When the King questioned him, he narrated the entire story: "I am innocent of this. The Buddha journeyed to this spot. This is what happened. I only hid it," he explained. Thereupon, the King said to the royal guards: "According to what this man says, he is citing the Buddha, the foremost in the three worlds, as his witness. Therefore, do not execute him; I will investigate this matter." Having dismissed the royal guards, in the evening, the King went to see the Buddha along with this farmer.

Taking the farmer along, the King asked the Buddha: "Blessed One, did you journey to a certain field in the morning with Venerable Ānanda?" When the Buddha replied, "Yes," the King asked: "What was the incident that occurred there?" The Buddha repeated those words and further declared, giving the advice that a wise person should not perform any deed that leads to regret, uttering the verse we mentioned:

Na taṃ kammaṃ kataṃ sādhu, yaṃ katvā anutappati,

yassa assumukho rodaṃ, vipākaṃ paṭisevati.

(That deed is not well done, which, having done, one repents, and the result of which one experiences weeping, with a tearful face.)

It is recorded that upon hearing this verse and the sermon delivered by the Buddha in connection with it, the farmer attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). That is all there is to the story.

Looking at the surface of this story, what appears to us is that it is dangerous to pick up a purse of coins fallen on the road. That is all that ordinary intellect grasps. Even that is a great thing. Nowadays, if any pile of rubbish is fallen on the road, people not only pick it up, but they do so with a dishonest mind. Such is the era. So, even from that much, there is a great lesson here. The Buddha referred to that purse of gold coins as a serpent because he knew exactly the perspective from which an ordinary poor man, or an ordinary person, looks at a purse of coins. Without realizing it is a serpent, he picks it up and carries it away. Ultimately, it is when that serpent bites that suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*) occurs.

Next, why the Buddha journeyed there can be understood in that way today. But there is a depth far greater than this. In the scriptures, there is no record of the Buddha appearing as a witness for every court case. Here, he specifically presented himself as a witness because there was a far more valuable potential within that farmer. He possessed the merit to realize the fruit of Stream-entry. In such instances, the Buddha would travel even many leagues and, when the right moment arrived, employ an appropriate means. Now, here too, in some way, there must have been a karma of the farmer's past that led to his being accused in connection with the purse of coins, for it is due to past karma. We are often agitated by these groundless accusations that happen to us. But in reality, the

'locus' of every groundless accusation is visible to the Buddha. That is why it is said that the Buddha has the correct understanding of what is a ground (*ṭhāna*) and what is not a ground (*aṭṭhāna*). Behind the groundless accusations through which we are punished innocently, there is a force of past karma. Be that as it may, we can understand at our level that the Buddha journeyed there because the farmer had the potential to become a Stream-enterer, and also because it provided the opportunity to preach a certain Dhamma-exposition that would help the world develop deep foresight.

Next, let us consider what it was in this story that caused this person to attain Stream-entry. Just a short while before, or rather that very morning, he was an ordinary man plowing a field, and one who possessed a dishonest thought. How did he, by evening, attain the supramundane state which is superior even to universal kingship? This might be a problem in this day and age. Let us now look at this story. The fruit of Stream-entry is obtained as the final result of a certain transformation that occurs within the mind, known as insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). In order to attain the fruit of Stream-entry, one must realize to a certain extent the three characteristics of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*). The primary knowledge in this regard is called the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*), which is the understanding of arising and passing away. This must be deeply realized. Next, in the aspect of passing away, to a meditative or calmed mind, there is a stage where passing away is seen to occur with extreme rapidity. That is what is called the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*)—everything is breaking up and dissolving. All these are preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). This is a series of revolutions taking place within the mind. All these things arise and pass away. Seeing that passing away is even faster than arising, a terror arises: "Are all these things breaking up and dissolving, which I am grasping, clinging to, and holding as 'I' and 'mine'?" That is called the knowledge of the appearance of terror (*bhayatupaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*).

Next, in accordance with that terror, in that path of knowledge, he understands the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) and the undesirable side of everything that worldly people generally grasp. Consequently, a great disillusionment arises within him. Even though it is not visible to other worldly people, a special transformation occurs within his mind regarding this entire saṃsāra, regarding the world: "If such is the nature of preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*), there is no use in remaining here. There is no use in this becoming (existence) (*bhava*) and continued existence." Thus, a disillusionment arises. Next, according to that disillusionment, there comes a stage where, in accordance with his capacity of understanding, he feels: "Somehow, I must escape from this, I must attain Nibbāna, I must bring an end to this suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) of saṃsāra through the supreme bliss of Nibbāna." This is called *muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*—the desire for deliverance. That too is a certain insight-knowledge. Next, in accordance with that, there comes a stage where the three characteristics of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*) are deeply understood by him. A stage of deep investigation and

contemplation. That is called the knowledge of reflective contemplation (*paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa*).

Thus, passing those knowledges, there comes a stage concerning these preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*) where, having understood their impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*) to a certain extent, one distances oneself from them, realizing "these do not belong to me." Just as a drop of dew on a lotus leaf slips away without belonging to the leaf, there is a time when the objects that come to the mind are not grasped. That is called *saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*—equanimity towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). There is a stage of equanimity towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). Even though he has not read vast books, these arise even in a poor farmer when the time comes, if he has developed corresponding meditation in the past. Let us see if there is any trace of effort that we can see in this story that could have given rise to such a thing in this farmer. First, let us think: what kind of thoughts would have arisen in that farmer when he found the purse of coins, set it aside, and started plowing? A thousand dreams and thoughts, pleasant dreams, must have arisen. "Now I have this purse of coins. Now I don't need to do farming anymore"—thus dreaming various pleasant dreams, he must have been.

All of this began to shatter when the royal guards and the owners of the house came and arrested this person on a groundless accusation. What arose then was the fear of death. He saw that there indeed was a serpent in the purse of coins, just as the Buddha had said. That understanding came. There too, what arose was a heap of preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*)—what is called a purse of coins. It is something that gives rise to thoughts and expectations in a person. This is a heap of preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). So, he understood that too, and its disadvantage (*ādīnava*). He saw that the very object which initially helped him dream pleasant dreams about the future had now become the cause of his death. It was for this reason that he responded in that manner when being whipped. Generally, when a person is whipped, how much hatred (*dosa*) and anger arise? Towards those who whip him, or especially if he is innocent, he develops further hatred thinking, "They are beating me innocently." But what did this farmer do? At that moment, he entered into the meditation on the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). He began to repeat those few words through which the Buddha had identified the situation: "Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?" and then the reply given by Venerable Ānanda. He kept reciting that like a mantra.

So, what did he do through that? If we look at it as a serenity meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*), he recollected the Buddha. You know that when some danger arises, as stated in discourses like the Dhajagga Sutta, recollecting the Triple Gem is a special protection. Recollecting the Buddha, that person obtained that protection according to his own direct experience. Next, it can also be considered as the recollection of the Buddha, as a serenity meditation. It must have helped to calm his mind. Likewise, when contemplating deeply on that statement, a disillusionment towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*) could also arise. "Now I realize this is indeed a serpent.

Everything in the world is like serpents. They are fine until they bite." Having understood in this way, what arose next was equanimity towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). He endured those things. When uttering those words at every lash of the whip, there was a certain equanimity in his mind. Without weeping or wailing, he uttered those few sentences. Thus, we can think that indeed all those experiences were, as we often say, blessings in disguise. So, the Buddha allowed these things to happen. This person brought forth those insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) from the university of the world, or through life, through those shocks and conflicts.

Now we can learn many lessons from this. Regarding the groundless accusations and various other sorrowful conflicts and life problems that confront us, we often get agitated, blame others, and get entangled in great currents of karma. But in reality, if we think of it from one perspective, these are the results (*vipāka*) of past karma. Even if we do not know it, it is a turn of ripening (*vipāka-vāra*) of past karma. In the face of this turn of ripening, if we begin to struggle by generating defilements like greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) towards them, we accumulate more karma. This is due to the lack of understanding that these are preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). Therefore, this farmer has given us a good lesson to practice wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)—which is reflection with wisdom—concerning those life problems.

When beaten with whips, a person would at least speak of the pain that arises, perhaps by way of cursing. Instead, this person contemplated the true word spoken by the Buddha. He expressed the understanding of 'this serpent', which is the nature of preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). Through that, we can think that even within the various severe shocks that confront us in life—in short, within every current of karma—these insight-knowledges lie dormant. Just as only a doctor or someone with knowledge can read the description of a vitamin pill and know that 'this and that are contained in this', yet even a small child who does not know this will still receive its benefit if given the vitamin pill—likewise, these insight-knowledges are embedded within these experiences. Whether there is book-knowledge or not, what is needed and helpful to realize them is precisely that wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), which is contemplating properly with wisdom. Contemplating the place where these arise. Instead, if one engages in unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), which is incorrect contemplation, those will never emerge. Instead, one prepares further karma that brings results. This is the entanglement of saṃsāra.

If we grasp a rope while its twists are untangling, more twists will be added to it. Instead of that, one lets it untangle with equanimity. That is what this farmer must have done. He developed equanimity towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). Then, we can extract a valuable Dhamma from that. This story contains the manner in which that person, relying on wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), turned the danger that befell him into good. Likewise, there he made use of situational wisdom (*sthānocita-prajñā*). It was the word of the Buddha that he ultimately held as his point of witness. Because of those very words, he also received pardon from the King. The King said to the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, it is because of the Blessed One that this person received the gift of life

today." And what is even more valuable is that, upon hearing that verse and the Dhamma sermon, that man attained the noble fruit of Stream-entry.

From this, we can imagine how many Dhamma-matters are contained in a simple Dhamma-story. In our daily lives, there are many things to learn for our lives not only from the highly educated but even from an ordinary man. Nibbāna is present within all of this. That is why the Buddha sometimes says: "This Nibbāna which is so close is not seen by fools." Within the shocks and conflicts of life that confront us, those insight-knowledges lie dormant. All of them are connected to the forces of past karma. That is to say, in short, insight (*vipassanā*) is seeing the nature of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*) that is found within everything in the world. It is impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*). If something is impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), its nature is suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*). If its nature is suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), it is something that brings fear. Next, there is no reason to grasp it as 'I' and 'mine' there. One cannot keep it under one's control, just as he could not make that purse of coins his own by covering it with soil. In this way, we can extract many points even from that story.

Now let us look at this verse. There, the Buddha declared that if a person is wise, a true pandit, he should not do that which leads to regret. Regardless of the definitions of the wise and the foolish in these times, the Buddha has presented a very deep philosophy regarding good and bad, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) in the manner shown here. Now, if we look from a short-term perspective, because they bring temporary pleasant results, we incline towards certain things; we perform certain karmas. Later, when viewed according to the word of the Buddha, they are sins (*pāpa-kamma*). That is why the Buddha declared that the fool, as long as the karma does not ripen and mature, as long as its results are not received, considers it as honey: *Madhuvā maññatī bālo yāva pāpaṃ na paccatī*—the fool thinks of the sinful deed as sweet like honey as long as it does not ripen. It is for this very reason that Ven. Vīdāgama Maitreya declared in the *Lō Väḍa Saṅgarāva*:

> When committing sins, they seem sweet as honey;
>
> When experiencing the suffering, it becomes intense like fire.
>
> Knowing this, the advice to discard those sins
>
> Should be known, not giving opportunity to the three doors.

So, when committing them, sins, sinful actions, appear sweet. But when experiencing them, one has to suffer the results like burning in the fires of hell (*apāya*) and other places. Falling victim to a groundless accusation in this world and facing the death penalty is an event that can happen in the world. Stealing and other such deeds, which have deeper consequences, appear good to worldly people because of some temporary benefit or utility. The Buddha shows their consequences deeply. What is meant by 'the advice to discard those sins'? What is the advice? It is right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which

is true foresight. It is indeed a far-reaching vision. The right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) presented by the Buddha is a far-reaching vision. Now, in these times, according to various short-term plans, people do various things by setting up ten-year plans, twenty-year plans, etc. Many things belonging to the five sins (violations of the five precepts) can be included in them. Killing animals, stealing, increasing liquor taverns, and various other sinful deeds can occur. According to those plans, economic results might be obtained. But when viewed according to the Buddha's philosophy, one will have to suffer their grave undesirable consequences some day. Not just once, but hundreds of thousands of times. Ten million times.

The nature of this mind is that when a certain karma is deposited in the mind, deposited in consciousness (*viññāṇa*), it re-emerges again and again. Just like when one gets hiccups. It has a nature of re-emerging again and again. Every time it re-emerges, that person repents (burns). He repents in this world; he repents in the next world. This is what the Buddha declared: that having done a certain karma, if it leads to remorse, one should not do it. Then, how do we recognize good and bad in this? The Buddha has shown this in a very simple manner. That which is done with a defiled mind is bad. That which is done with a pure mind, a clear mind, is good. To understand this further, the Buddha has pointed out greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) as the causes, or roots, of all sinful deeds. Even without explaining greed, hatred, and delusion anew, everyone can recognize them when looking at themselves. Through the arising of greed, hatred, and delusion, the mind is defiled. If one thinks, speaks, or acts, using a certain volition rooted in them, the Buddha briefly declared all of them to be sinful deeds, unwholesome karma (*akusala-karma*).

Next, wholesome qualities (*kusala-dhamma*). What lies beneath wholesome actions (*kusala-karma*)? The exact opposite of the other. It is departure from greed, which is called non-greed (*alobha*). If one has departed from greed to some extent, to that extent that mind is pure, bright, and clear. Actions done with such a mind are wholesome actions (*kusala-karma*). So, in this way, the path of traveling from greed to non-greed is what is called the practice (*patipadā*). It is the path leading from hatred to departure from hatred, which is called non-hatred (*adosa*). From delusion to wisdom, or departure from delusion, which is called non-delusion (*amoha*). So, it is between these two that the Buddha showed the distinction between the wholesome and the unwholesome. Not according to temporary results. Beyond that, the word 'result' (*vipāka*) is indeed a force of ripening and maturing that extends very far. Such a thing within karma is a highly wondrous thing. It is a Dhamma-principle (*dhammatā*), because consciousness (*viññāṇa*), turning round and round, brings up these turns of ripening. When we look at karma, it seems like a small thing. But once it is deposited in the mind, like the onset of hiccups, it re-emerges again and again. Every time it re-emerges, it brings about birth either in the realm of hungry ghosts (*peta-loka*), the demon realm (*asura-loka*), or the hells (*apāya*), or in the human world, the animal world, and such places. What is done by all of these? Creating a bodily cage out of the four great elements of cohesive, hot, mobile, and solid elements (*āpo, tejo, vāyo...*), it says 'suffer/experience this', and so one suffers. This kind of thing is what is called saṃsāra. It is what is called becoming

(existence) (*bhava*). It is what is called continuation. It is to escape from this condition that the Buddha preached this Dhamma of Nibbāna.

When the Buddha says 'fool' (*bāla*), it does not mean young in age, but foolish. Even if a person has reached sixty years of age, if he does not have even the knowledge of a crawling child, that person is a fool (*bāla*). A small child. Thus, the word 'fool' (*bāla*) is used in the Dhamma in the sense of a foolish person.

The method of distinguishing the fool and the wise person was declared by the Buddha on a certain occasion in the *Bālapandita Sutta*. If there is someone who thinks bad thoughts, uses bad words, and performs bad deeds, no matter how much worldly education he has, he is a fool, a foolish person. The wise person (*paṇḍita*) is the person who thinks good thoughts, speaks good words, and performs good deeds. It is very easy to recognize them. The Buddha shows how much the fool repents because of his foolish deeds. In this verse, it is specifically said that if a certain karma leads to regret, it should not be done. The Buddha points out the occasions when that regret arises. The five sins are indeed the worst things in the world. They can be easily recognized.

As you know, none of these five sins can be done with a clear mind. One cannot kill an animal, kill a human, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie, or consume intoxicants while keeping the mind clear. The mind is defiled. The mind is completely defiled. So, the results of that defilement are what are called results (*vipāka*). Evil results. Sinful results. The fool maintains thoughts related to the sinful actions of the five sins. You know that for killing, murder, stealing, etc., they often make plans for a long time, they have to think. When maintaining those thoughts, sinful karmas flow in. Sinful results flow in. Next, they organize words regarding that. Next, they perform it through action.

Those three doors are what are called the 'three doors' in the phrase 'the three doors'. The three doors are those three. Not the doors of houses. So, those are the three doors to be guarded. We make great efforts to guard the doors of our houses. But if we do not guard these three doors, to that extent we have terrifying dangers in this saṃsāra. That is indeed what Ven. Vīdāgama also said: 'not giving opportunity to the three doors'. Thus, the fool, without concern for those three doors, maintains wrong thoughts, speaks wrong words, commits those sins like killing animals, and let us say he goes to a crossroads or an assembly. The five sins are spoken of there. At that moment, a regret arises in this person. 'What they are saying is what I too have done,' thus a certain amount of regret arises. The Buddha points out that this is the first occasion of regret that arises in the fool.

Next, likewise, this person gets to see another person who committed the very same wrong deeds being caught by the law and punished. Sent to prison. Or, as happened here, facing the death penalty. At that, a shock and regret arise in this person: 'Now, I too have done those things. If I too get caught, if someone gives information about this, this will happen to me too,' thus he repents. As the third occasion, the Buddha points out that whether the fool sits on a chair, lies down on a bed, or even sits on the ground, on all those occasions, the memory of the sinful deed he committed comes and torments him.

The Buddha gives a good simile regarding this. The similes given by the Buddha are very deep. By reflecting on them, one can drive that advice into one's mind. He declares to the Sangha: 'Monks, just as in the evening, think of the shadow of a great mountain—how is the shadow of a great mountain when it becomes evening? It extends even further than the mountain. It extends further and further. It is like something hanging from the mountain. As if the shadow is hanging on the mountain. In the same way, the remorseful mind of the fool is as if hanging on the body of the fool.'

That is to say, even if he sits on a chair, lies down on a bed, or sits on the ground, that person's mind is covered. The memory, the trace of the sinful deed done in the past, hangs in the mind. He remembers it. Every time he remembers it, that person repents. This is what the Buddha points out through the simile. The things that have to be experienced in this very life as the terrifying consequences of those sinful deeds are this regret. Next, the Buddha declares a regret far more serious than that regret. If at any point this person dies and is born in hell, from there onwards, the Buddha points out these sufferings of hell. He gives very long descriptions of the terrifying nature of this hell (*apāya*). Having described that, the Buddha declares to the Sangha that the amount of suffering in hell is so great that it is impossible to show even by a simile; even giving a simile is difficult.

A certain monk who was among the Sangha requested of the Buddha: 'Blessed One, please give me a simile.' Even though he said it is difficult to give, the monk requested a simile. Then, the Buddha gave this simile: 'Well, monks, think of a king who catches a thief who has committed a serious crime and, as a punishment, tells his royal guards: "Pierce this man a hundred times in the morning with sharp spears." The royal guards did so. Next, having summoned them, he asks: "How is it, is that man still alive?" "Yes, Your Majesty," they say. "Ah, then give him the same medicine at noon. Pierce him a hundred times." They do so at noon. Next, in the evening, he asks: "How is it, is that person still there?" "He is still alive." "Ah, then pierce him in the same way a hundred times in the evening." Then, when pierced three hundred times in this way, what kind of suffering does that person experience?' the Buddha asked the Sangha. 'Blessed One, three hundred is not needed. Even if pierced once, a person experiences very severe suffering,' they replied.

Next, the Buddha presented the simile. As he often did, the Buddha took in his hand a pebble about the size of his palm. 'Monks, is this pebble larger, or the great Himālaya, the king of mountains?' 'Blessed One, this pebble cannot even be compared to the great Himālaya, the king of mountains.' 'Just so, monks, the suffering a person experiences from the severe tortures mentioned in this simile I gave is like this small pebble in my hand. One will have to experience an amount of suffering as large as the Himālaya mountain in the four lower realms (*apāya*), especially in hell,' the Buddha declared in simile.

On another occasion, the Buddha pointed out four fears that can come to a person: the fear of self-reproach (*attānuvāda-bhaya*), the fear of others' reproach (*parānuvāda-bhaya*), the fear of punishment (*daṇḍa-bhaya*), and the fear of an evil destination

(*duggati-bhaya*). 'Fear' there means danger. Then, the fear of self-reproach means one's own mind blames oneself. That is what was shown in the matters mentioned earlier: that person's mind blames himself. That can ultimately lead to madness. Sometimes, for those extremely wealthy people—we are not saying this of everyone, but in some instances—one reason for insomnia and such must be that they acquired their wealth through unlawful means. Every time those are remembered, that person has no peace. He has to seek the help of sleeping pills. In this way, we can understand how terrifying a burning, a regret, that comes in this very life is. Far more terrifying is dying at some point and being born in those realms of hungry ghosts (*peta-loka*), or the demon, yakkha realms, or hells, and having to experience the exact same results corresponding to the karma one did. If one killed, one too is put to death. If one stole, one is born sometimes without even a cloth to wear, lacking the stolen things, in an even more terrifying manner. In this way, there is a nature of giving results exactly corresponding to the karma. From all of this, we can understand in what a terrifying ocean of karma worldly people are lost.

In truth, the Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, does not appear in the world to teach an ordinary thing. That is why the ancient sages declared:

Na hi sīlavataṃ hetu,

uppajjanti tathāgatā,

Aṭṭhakkharā tīṇipadā,

sambuddhena pakāsitā.

(Tathāgatas do not arise in the world merely for the sake of moral precepts (*sīla*) and vows. It is to introduce to the world three words consisting of eight letters, which lead to disillusionment with this entire saṃsāra, and to provide an understanding of the three characteristics: *aniccaṃ* (impermanent / inconstant), *dukkhaṃ* (suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress), and *Anattā* (Not-self).)

That is indeed what that poor farmer obtained through his own experience. By thinking about karma as the disadvantage of this saṃsāra, a person can develop a great fear, a fear of saṃsāra. Now, in this dispensation of a Buddha, there is that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) preached by a Buddha. It is present at least in books; one can read it or hear it from someone who knows. If one is born in a non-dispensation period, one lives like animals, yakkhas, and hungry ghosts. There is no Dhamma. One must think of how much terrifying suffering one would have to undergo in saṃsāra by committing sins in such an era. A person can develop a great fear, thinking, 'Am I ready for those burnings?' What we sometimes consider as groundless accusations are all forces of karma coming from beneath. How severe the turn of ripening of a karma is, is such that sometimes, due to a grave deed done in one single moment, one has to suffer for eons (*kalpas*). Various analyses of karma are mentioned in the Dhamma. The results of some grave sins have to be experienced in this very life as *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* (to be experienced in this

life). Or some others definitely bring results in the next life, the next birth. Others bring about birth in some future life.

In this way, through various methods, this karma emerges from those respective places. Beneath the many events that occur in our lives lies this wheel of karma (*karma-cakra*). That is why it is said that there are two wheels in this world: the wheel of karma (*karma-cakra*) and the wheel of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakra*). The wheel of karma is always turning. Whether the Dhamma is present or not, the wheel of karma turns. Worldly people, caught in this wheel of karma, fall victim to a multitude of terrifying sufferings. But they do not know its cause. They do not know how it happens. Because of that, when the results of karma come, they struggle with those results and accumulate more karma. That is why this becomes a great entanglement. Like a tangled ball of thread, this cannot be untangled. One must be eager to develop insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) along these three characteristics of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*), which are available only during the dispensation of a Buddha. Thereafter, with the understanding of arising and passing away, looking at how these break up and dissolve, one must develop fear towards them and understand the aspect of disadvantage (*ādīnava*). By further developing the three characteristics of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*) and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*), one can develop equanimity towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). Going beyond that, passing through those insight-knowledges mentioned as the knowledge of reflective contemplation (*paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa*), the knowledge of conformity (*anuloma-ñāṇa*), etc., is how one realizes the path and fruit (*magga-phala*). This is a special transformation that occurs within the mind. The raw materials needed for this are abundant in our daily lives. Now, the entire series of events that happened to that farmer that morning became a book of Dhamma. The farmer who was there in the morning was not the same by evening; he was a noble disciple (*ariya-puggala*). He became a person capable of delivering a good sermon by relating it to his own life, to his life story.

The Buddha praises such a Stream-enterer, saying he is: *diṭṭhadhammo, pattadhammo, viditadhammo, tiṇṇavicikiccho, vigatakathaṅkatho, vesārajjappatto sattusāsane*—one who has seen the Dhamma, attained the Dhamma, known the Dhamma, crossed over doubt, got rid of wavering, and attained courage in the Teacher's dispensation. One who has seen the Dhamma, entered into the Dhamma, understood the Dhamma, one who has removed doubts and anxieties regarding those supramundane qualities. A confident person. Now, we see the word 'confident' (*visārada*) being used extensively as degrees. But the Buddha gives the title of 'confident' (*visārada*) even to that poor farmer. He obtained confidence/mastery regarding the supramundane Dhamma. In a world where people run rapidly on the path of unrighteousness, casting the Dhamma aside to make short-term plans succeed through the economy, we as wise Buddhists, if we are to protect this dispensation, must train ourselves to think about these values of the dispensation even through such brief Dhamma sermons.

These qualities of the Dhamma, such as *sandiṭṭhika* (to be seen here and now), *akālika* (timeless), *ehipassika* (inviting one to come and see), mean that this Dhamma, the supramundane Dhamma, can be directly realized in this very life before one's own eyes. It brings results without delay. Likewise, the Dhamma invites us, saying 'come and see'. What is meant by saying the Dhamma invites us? It is not that the Buddha invites us. It is the Dhamma itself that invites us: if one lives according to the Dhamma to some extent, the benefit is naturally received to that extent. No other person needs to come and give it. If one takes one step on the path, a strength to go forward along that step arises automatically. There is a nature in the Dhamma that brings one to a certain point, and also: *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*—it is to be individually realized by the wise. These are the qualities of the Dhamma. We recite these passages daily in our homage to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. We do not tend to think about them. But like the vitamin pill, all of these are present within our life experiences. What is the method needed for that? One must bring forth wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) from within one's mind instead of unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*).

What is called insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) is precisely that reflection with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). What is contained in that wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)? Bringing forth the impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*) nature of these, instilling in the mind the understanding that 'all these are things that come and go, things that arise, exist, and pass away', and accordingly, contemplating mindfully the objects that come to the mind. We said earlier that if we grasp a rope that is untangling in the middle, instead of untangling, it gets knotted there. In the same way, if we grasp the things that emerge as turns of ripening with craving (thirst) (*taṇhā*) as grasping (holding / fuel) (*upādāna*), or if we generate further karma through them, this will never be untangled. Instead, what is found in this path of meditation is equanimity towards them.

What is called equanimity (*upekkhā*) is looking at them. When letting a rope untangle, we have to look on. In the same way, looking on as these are completely untangled and dissolved within a force of karma is what that farmer did. So, he prepared for it according to the occasion. His hands were bound; there was nothing he could do. Then, there was also the desire to escape from that—which is called the desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatā*)—even in a worldly sense, there is the desire to escape. 'It is enough if at least my hands are freed.' But what was there to be done for that? To escape from the royal guards? None of that was possible. So, he contemplated with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*): 'Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?' 'Yes, Lord, the deadly, poisonous serpent.' 'Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?' 'Yes, Lord, the deadly, poisonous serpent.' That was the mantra, that was the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). That is what helped this farmer to attain the fruit of Stream-entry.

In this way, we can learn those lessons from the experiences in our university of life. Or, we can analyze the shocks and conflicts that come to our lives according to that angle of the Dhamma, according to that wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). In truth, there is nothing even to analyze; we must contemplate them and develop equanimity towards

them. Contemplating them with wisdom by way of reflective contemplation (*paccavekkhaṇā*) and freeing the mind from them. What is called deliverance (*vimutti*) is freeing the mind. Freeing the mind from the things that flow into it is not something that can be done by struggling. It is something to be done by looking on with equanimity towards them, endowed with wisdom and understanding. Therefore, this path of Nibbāna is indeed blocked by ourselves. That is why the Buddha declares that humans do not see this Nibbāna which is so close. No matter how close we come to a lamp that has light, or to a lamp-post (*pahankanuwa*), if we do not open our eyes, we do not see. Therefore, we must try to open our eyes. It is of no use closing our eyes and saying 'it is not visible.' It is not visible. Therefore, each one must make some effort regarding one's own life.

First, by developing some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) as serenity (*samatha*). Now, we said that for the farmer, it must have helped to calm his mind by way of the recollection of the Buddha, with faith: 'Ah, the Buddha told me this before. How valuable a person! What was invisible to me was visible to him, wasn't it? He knew this was a serpent, didn't he?' It was with that faith that he declared the Buddha's word. Even in the words that the farmer spoke, there is that quality of 'knower of the worlds' (*lokavidū*) we speak of. He knows things about this world that are invisible to others. In that way, that collection of virtues of the Buddha helped that farmer as a serenity meditation subject. We too can generate such faith and calm the mind through some meditation subject that helps to calm the mind regarding the Triple Gem. You know that there are the four guardian meditations (*catu-ārakkha-bhāvanā*): it can be the recollection of the Buddha, the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā*), the meditation on foulness (*asubha*), or the recollection of death (*maranasati*). Through any of these, the mind can be calmed to some extent.

This entire collection of thoughts, this heap of preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*) that arises in the mind by way of volitions and expectations, has the mind beneath all of them: *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*. Therefore, when viewed from the final analysis, beneath everything lies this thought. Even that thought is not something permanent. It comes and goes. It arises and passes away. If we do not grasp them, if we do not cling to them, they arise, exist, and pass away. When looking at that state, it is seen that this entire existence (*bhava*), continuation, which we grasp so greatly, all of this hangs on this thread called a thought. The entire world hangs on this thread called a thought. Then, to become supramundane, what is to be done is to cut this thread. This is not an easy task. Even though it is called a thread, it has to be cut with a subtle knife called the insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) or the path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*).

This entire world, the universe, hangs on a single strand of thread: the strand of thread called a thought. But all these educated people struggle, unable to break this strand of thread called a thought. The more they struggle, the more they are bound in that ocean of karma and swim in that ocean of karma. That indeed is the state of the world. That is the word of the Buddha. Wise people who contemplate this should try not to fall victim to the various wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) that spread in this era, or to the idea that

Nibbāna is impossible in this day and age. Developing a true respect for the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha in this dispensation, relying on this Triple Gem, generating faith in it, one must then calm the scattering mind through some serenity meditation subject appropriate to one's temperament.

Next, without running with this running mind, to stop that running, practicing that equanimity (*upekkhā*) like looking at the untangling of a rope, is when those preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*) are understood, and they are brought to stillness. When preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*) are understood, at that very moment, the great delusion (*moha*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) within this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) are dispelled, and wisdom (*paññā*) arises. It is through that light of wisdom that a person frees himself from the suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra experienced for eons of ten million times, and realizes the noble, deathless Nibbāna.

Therefore, on this valuable Poyaday, at this moment, it is good for these meritorious people to look at the transformation that has occurred within their own mental continuums. What we call listening to a sermon is for a certain purification, even if temporary, of our minds. It is not about some benefit that can be obtained in the future by merely listening to a sermon. In the manner declared by the Buddha in those days, the noble disciple listens to the Dhamma thinking, "There is a purpose in this Dhamma for me" — *atthikatvā, manasikatvā, samannāharitvā, ohitasoto dhammaṃ suṇāti*. *Atthikatvā* and *manasikatvā* mean contemplating every single word of that Dhamma. Next, likewise, leaning one's ear well, directing attention, one listens. It is when listening in that manner that deep understandings regarding these Dhammas arise. It is by listening to the Dhamma in that manner that even those paths and fruits were realized in the past. Therefore, the wise, meritorious people, having generated faith in the Triple Gem at this moment, undertook this noble precept of the eightfold precept with livelihood as the eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*).

What is called this *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* is abstaining from eight things that cause regret in a person's life: killing animals, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slandering, harsh speech, frivolous talk, and wrong livelihood. All of these are things that cause regret to oneself. Therefore, within the determination to separate from them lies deliverance from regret. That too is a great happiness. What is shown in the Dhamma as *anavajja-sukha* (bliss of blamelessness) is a happiness that a person who conducts a blameless livelihood has, which others do not receive. 'My blameless livelihood'—rejoicing in this, that person can be elated at any time. Just as you have undertaken such a valuable precept, you have also listened to a certain explanation of this verse which seems simple but contains a deep Dhamma. During that time, what happened to your thoughts? If you had spent that time in ordinary daily life, in such a society, how many heaps of defilements would have flowed into the mind? Either regarding the past, the future, or regarding the present. Instead, these meritorious people generated faith in the Triple Gem, generated respect for the Dhamma, and listened to the Dhamma at this moment. Next, if you did that with wisdom, at every single word it was seen that all of these come and go. A multitude of

feelings arise from these. But when looking at the end, there is nothing to grasp in any of these. When contemplating deeply within this Dhamma, after calming the mind, what is seen is that aforesaid nature of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*) and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*).

We started saying we would preach a sermon for an hour. Now, the hour is near its end. We must think that the passing of this hour is the passing of a chapter of our life, a valuable chapter, a long period of time. We think of our life as a long one, we think of a great future ahead as the retirement time. But death can happen right here. In this way, when reflecting on death, we can think of how long a period an hour is in a human life; indeed, that hour has passed away. Along with it, our life too has passed away. We must deeply understand the nature of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*) of all of these.

As the Buddha declared, there are many reasons to be diligent (*appamāda*). One is this dispensation. Before long, this word 'Nibbāna' (The Mind Stilled / Extinction / Extinguishment) will be hidden. It will not even be heard. Such an era is what is called the disappearance of the dispensation. Until a Buddha appears again, one will lose the opportunity to escape from this saṃsāra. One will fall into a great darkness. If, while walking in a great city admiring the sights under bright electric lights, the electricity suddenly fails, in what a great darkness will that group lose their way? In the same way, we must think. Such a time is coming in the future. Before that, whether lay or ordained, everyone must keep this noble supramundane state shown by the Buddha as the goal of their life, and make a determination: 'I must bring an end to saṃsāra through one of the three kinds of Bodhi.' To that end, may this collection of virtues deposited in your mental continuums by way of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—*saddhā, vīriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*—serve as a supportive condition (*upanissaya*)!

Now, up to this point, you have generated a multitude of wholesome volitions, whether by way of serving the Sangha, worshipping and offering, listening to the Dhamma, or in various other ways. May the deities of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) who protect the dispensation, the devas and Brahmas, who wish to fulfill their own Dhamma-aspirations, rejoice in and accept these wholesome qualities we have accumulated! May they fulfill their Dhamma-aspirations! Likewise, may they protect us and help to maintain the dispensation for a long time! Thus we must share the merit with the deities. Likewise, if any being from the Avīci hell up to the Akanitā heaven, including our departed relatives, wishes to share in the merit of this listening to and preaching of the Dhamma, may all of them so share in the merit and make it a supportive condition to find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! With this aspiration, now share the merit by reciting these verses!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #122

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.57)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Māppamaññetha puññassa, na maṃ taṃ āgamissati;

Udabindunipātena, udakumbho pi pūrati;

Pūrati dhīro puññassa, thokathokampi ācinaṃ ti.

From:

Dhammapada 122 (Pāpavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Blessed Buddha, clearly explained to the world that the fundamental force that brings about true progress and true development while wandering in saṃsāra is the power of merit. We all know that the core principle of the Buddhist way of life is refraining from evil and inclining towards merit. The Blessed Buddha constantly points out to us, amidst the various values in the world, the value that must be given to merit, as well as the worth of accumulating merit.

It is precisely this matter that is emphatically demonstrated in the stanza taken as today's theme, and in its corresponding background story. During the time the Blessed Buddha was residing at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī, the people of Sāvatthī used to gather in groups and had a regular system of almsgiving, a rotational method of offering alms to the Community of Monks headed by the Buddha. On one occasion, at the conclusion of that alms-giving, the Blessed Buddha delivered the following sermon as an appreciation:

"Lay devotees, if someone gives alms himself but does not encourage others to adopt the practice of giving alms, nor does he involve them; such a person, in whatever place he is born, receives the fortune of wealth, but does not receive the fortune of followers. Secondly, another person does not give alms himself but encourages others to give alms. Such a person, in whatever place he is born, does not receive the fortune of wealth, but receives the fortune of followers. Yet a third person neither gives alms himself nor

encourages others to give alms, nor makes them adopt the practice. Such a person receives neither the fortune of wealth nor the fortune of followers. Fourthly, it is shown that another person gives alms himself and also encourages others to adopt the practice of giving alms. Such a person, in whatever place he is born in saṃsāra, receives both the fortune of wealth and the fortune of followers."

A wise lay devotee who was listening to this sermon thought, "This is a great wonder. I must act in such a way as to obtain both of these fortunes." Having made a firm determination, as the Blessed Buddha was preparing to depart after the Dhamma sermon, this man went forward and invited the Blessed Buddha, saying: "Venerable Sir, Blessed One, please accept alms from us tomorrow."

"How many monks do you require?" the Blessed Buddha asked. "The entire Saṅgha of monks. My invitation is to the entire Saṅgha headed by the Buddha," he replied. The Blessed Buddha expressed his consent to it. "Tushnīmbhūta" means he accepted it silently. Now, this man, this lay devotee, then went to the village and went from house to house, calling out: "Fathers, I have invited the Saṅgha of monks headed by the Buddha for alms tomorrow. To the extent that each of you is able, in whatever measure you can give alms to the monks, bring those provisions, and let us gather in one place to prepare the alms-giving." Making this proclamation, this man went from house to house.

While going around in this manner, he also went to the shop of a certain treasurer—"treasurer" means a person like a modern-day businessman or merchant. At that time, this treasurer developed a kind of envious and hostile thought regarding this matter: "This man, instead of inviting a number of monks that he himself is capable of feeding, has started an impossible task and is walking through the village shouting." What did he do next? As if in mockery, he said, "Come, bring it, I too shall give a contribution," and gripping with three fingers, he gave the man three grains of rice, a few mung beans, some black-eyed peas, and dipping a ladle into the vessels of oil, ghee, and honey, he gave just a few drops. This lay devotee took the alms-materials given by others into one vessel but took the things given by this treasurer into a separate vessel. Seeing this, the treasurer became suspicious: "This man might humiliate me in some way." In the meantime, those who were watching this event—it seems that in India at that time, just as it might be today, people in the villages were very clever at coining nicknames—coined a name for this treasurer: "Cat's Foot Treasurer" (*Bilālapādaka Seṭṭhi*). Because he gave grains of rice using three fingers like a cat grabbing something with its paw, they sarcastically dubbed this treasurer "Bilālapādaka Seṭṭhi" or "Cat's Foot Treasurer." In any case, what did this treasurer do? As the lay devotee was leaving with the goods, he secretly sent one of his servants behind him, saying, "Go watch what he does with this and come back and tell me."

This lay devotee did not throw those things away. What did he do? He went to the place where the alms-meal was being prepared, and into every vessel preparing gruel, rice, and so forth, he put two grains of rice, two mung beans, and two black-eyed peas. Into the vessels preparing oil-cakes and such, he dropped those drops of honey and oil. He did so while wishing, "May this be of great fruit and great benefit to the treasurer! May this

alms-giving be of great fruit to the treasurer!" Having watched this, the servant returned and told the treasurer. Yet, the treasurer's heart did not soften or become tender. The treasurer thought, "Very well, we shall see tomorrow as well. Tomorrow, after the alms have been given to the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha, if he mentions my name and humiliates me, I know what I will do." Thus, on the day of the alms-giving, this treasurer went carrying a sharp weapon, like a dagger, tucked into his waist, thinking, "The moment he humiliates me, I will (stab) this man..." With such a hostile mind, this treasurer went and stood watching.

Behold, the alms-giving activities were concluded beautifully. In the end, that chief lay donor said to the Blessed Buddha: "Venerable Sir, Blessed One, in this alms-giving we offered today, everyone participated, each according to their capacity. Some gave much, some gave a little. May this alms-giving be equally of great fruit to all of them!" When he heard this, a great pang of remorse arose in the treasurer: "Alas! Was I not coming to kill such a person?" He stepped forward, fell prostrate at his feet, and begged for forgiveness. When asked what the reason for this was, the treasurer related the whole story. The Blessed Buddha, having watched to see what was happening, also asked the chief lay donor what the cause of this was. Once that matter was explained, at that moment, the Blessed Buddha said to the treasurer: "Treasurer, even if you give a small thing to the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha, do not think of it as trivial. Do not look down upon it. Do not regard it as a small thing. Wise individuals, even by performing merit little by little, become filled with merit." To illustrate this, he gave the simile of a vessel placed outside during the rain, being filled with water as drops accumulate. This is the idea contained in the stanza we have taken as our theme:

Mā puññassa na maṃ taṃ āgamissati

"Do not underestimate merit, thinking 'how will this merit come to me?' Do not regard it as trivial."

Udabindu nipātena udakumbho'pi pūrati

"Even a water-pot is filled by the falling of water-drops." And likewise,

Pūrati dhīro puññassa thokathokam pi ācinaṃ.

"Gathering it little by little, the wise person, the learned person, fills himself with merit." In this manner, the Blessed Buddha preached. Having heard the Dhamma sermon delivered along with that stanza, a great multitude realized the fruits of the path. Here, a specific detail is mentioned which some might find doubtful: that the aforementioned treasurer also became a Stream-Enterer (*Sotāpanna*). Be that as it may, that is how the story goes. Next, let us see if there is something we can extract from this story for our own lives.

Indeed, even if we look at it from the beginning, the Blessed Buddha's teaching itself is a revelation that brings great peace to the world. For we all know that alms-giving is a good practice. However, as something equally valuable that goes hand-in-hand with

giving alms, encouraging others to give alms is shown here, and the word used for it is *samādāna*. Merit-seekers can understand from this how the meanings of these words change over time. The word usually applied to virtue is used here: *samādāna*—meaning "undertaking virtue" or "making someone undertake virtue." Yet, in current usage concerning money or donations, the word used is *sammādam*, rather than making individuals undertake a practice. The fundamental meaning of *samādāna* here, however, is making someone accept and adopt the practice of alms-giving.

Just as "undertaking virtue" means causing someone to adopt the practice of virtue, making someone adopt the practice of alms-giving is the fundamental meaning of *samādāna* here. However, nowadays, when referring to alms, that word has become *sammādama*. It has shifted towards a donation drive, towards the economic side. The success of a *sammādama* is judged by the total sum on the collection list. But if we think deeply, those who go on collection drives should realize that, in truth, our objective must be to accustom people to the practice of giving, allowing them to give something according to their individual capacity. It is not the amount received that is important there. If we look at it that way, then we could also say we "collected virtue." Giving virtue is like making people undertake virtue, because it causes them to adopt the practice of virtue. In the same way, it causes them to adopt the practice of alms-giving. A prime example of this is found in this very story. Indeed, we can understand that this wise lay devotee, whose name is not even mentioned here, was a person of exceptionally noble character. Those who organize meritorious deeds in this day and age receive a good lesson and a fine example from this lay devotee. For if we look closely, we can see a wealth of virtues in this story. One of these is the power of determination of that lay devotee.

How serious a task is it to invite the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha for the following day! If one cannot manage it properly, how would it feel? The entire noble Saṅgha headed by the Buddha would go hungry the next day. Yet, such was the mental strength of that man—as the saying goes, "if there is a will, is the vessel too small?"—due to his faith and the right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) engendered by that Dhamma sermon, he took a massive burden upon his shoulders. But he possessed the capacity to match it. He had a spirit of sacrifice to match it. He possessed the sublime abodes of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity to match it. Moreover, he proceeded in accordance with the principles of the triumph of Dhamma. Because of this, that lay devotee was able to accomplish that objective.

Now, these merit-seekers know that when organizing such meritorious activities, various unexpected troubles and opposition arise from society. An example of this is the treasurer's mockery and his words. Yet, this man was not shaken. An ordinary person might have thrown those things aside, or perhaps a dispute would have ensued, demanding, "Why are you insulting me?" None of that occurred. He humbly took what was given, and placing it in a separate vessel was also done with a great purpose. Furthermore, we can see this person's humility; in those days there were no loudspeakers like today, so he used his own voice, going around to collect alms calling out, "Mothers, Fathers." Calling them "Mothers, Fathers" conveys a profound sense of

equality. It was with such an attitude, with great compassion and loving-kindness, that this man placed even what was received as mockery from the treasurer, little by little, into the large vessels so that it would become of great fruit and great benefit. That is what true *sammādama* is called.

Often in this day and age, though perhaps not among these merit-seekers, there are some who, when participating in such donation collections, bow down repeatedly before wealthy and influential people, using all kinds of flattering words, hoping for a large donation and striving to obtain it. On the other hand, if a very helpless, poor person, who barely has enough to eat for the day, gives a small sum of money as a great sacrifice, they insult that person, saying, "Keep this safe for yourself," and finally turn away. Some people possess that kind of attitude. There is no sense of equality there. This man was not like that; even though the treasurer was capable of giving but gave in a mocking, contemptuous manner, he did not become disillusioned. Instead, with great compassion, loving-kindness, and equanimity, he acted in a way that would bring blessing to that treasurer. Had he not done so, lives might have been lost. This is an excellent example for those who organize meritorious activities in this day and age: what kind of inner strength is required to perform a great task. It is when this is lacking that various conflicts are created, corrupting the minds of others as well as one's own, eventually leading to insults toward the Triple Gem and alienation from meritorious deeds. Therefore, we must derive the necessary benefits from this side of the story as well.

Even if we do not speak of the Greatly Compassionate Blessed Buddha anew, these merit-seekers know of the immense depth in every word he preached, in accordance with his wondrous great compassion and wisdom. Now, the stanza these merit-seekers heard here was actually not part of the appreciation given to the chief lay donor. It was an appreciation given for the small alms of rice grains and mung beans offered by that treasurer who had received the name "Cat's Foot Treasurer." Keep that well in mind. The Blessed Buddha consoled that person with this stanza. At that moment, that person must have felt a great sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) and regret, thinking, "Alas! Was it to such a person that I did such a thing? Did I not give a mere trifle to the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha?" But the Blessed Buddha, out of great compassion, consoled him. "Do not think so, lay devotee. Do not think of it as a small thing. By offering even small things to a Saṅgha like this, doing so step-by-step, one can eventually become filled with merit." Thus, consoling his mind, he delivered a sermon in a way that inspired great faith in the Triple Gem. It is that sermon that we have taken as our theme for these merit-seekers today.

Thus we see that the Blessed Buddha did not deliver that sermon to flatter the chief lay donor. He delivered that sermon in a way that would reform the person who did not know the Dhamma and who still had weaknesses, in a way that would bring him solace. Therefore, the report mentioned at the end of the story—which at first glance might seem like a question to us—that the treasurer became a Stream-Enterer, is perhaps not surprising. Often, such supermundane leaps, falling into those stages, occur through a sudden mental revolution. Through that, a profound understanding arises. Whether this was such an instance, we do not know. It is quite possible. That is how the actions of that

wise lay devotee and the words of the Blessed Buddha unfolded. Thus, we can learn many things from this story.

Next, let us consider the idea of merit presented by the Blessed Buddha in this stanza. Although, according to the Dhamma, merit and demerit should be a matter of practice for Buddhists in that manner, many consider gold, silver, pearls, and gems—which have temporary value in this world—to be more valuable. But if we think about it, in accordance with the Dhamma, according to the Dhamma preached by the Blessed Buddha, merit is like a gold coin of eternal value that is not subject to the economic inflations of the world. For whether Buddhas arise or do not arise, whether it is an era of a Buddha's appearance or not, by that very nature of reality, the power of benefit and the power of result of merit are never lost. It has eternal value. If there were no such eternal value, one could not fulfill the perfections through merit. A Buddha would not arise; a Pacceka Buddha would not arise; an Arahant would not arise. For whatever was done would simply end right there. But this, in truth, is part of the law of kamma. These merit-seekers have often heard that everyone owns only the kamma they perform—*kammassaka*. Kamma is one's inheritance, kamma determines one's birth, kamma is one's kinsman, kamma is one's refuge. This is part of the Blessed Buddha's teaching on kamma. We carry with us both demerit and merit. We carry the kamma we perform. Here, the emphasis is on merit. The Blessed Buddha declares that the true treasure, the true wealth a person has in this world, is merit—the fortune of merit. These merit-seekers have also often heard many of the Blessed Buddha's sermons on this subject during alms-giving and other meritorious activities. But we must not dismiss them as trivial merely because we have heard them often. There is a deep meaning there. The most valuable thing that helps us succeed in our future saṃsāric lives through our own mind-stream, or to achieve the targets we set as aspirations, is this thing indicated by the word "merit."

Furthermore, in a lengthy sermon, the Blessed Buddha on one occasion described this mass of merit as a treasure. In those days, great wealthy merchants would hide and deposit their wealth as "treasures" on riverbanks, leaving some sign known only to themselves. Instead of banks as we have today, they buried treasures in the ground, either in the forest or somewhere else. By burying treasures in this way, what did they expect? "In the event of royal danger—which would be lawsuits in modern terms—or illness, famine, or times of scarcity, these treasures will be my refuge." Even though they thought so, sometimes those treasures could be swept away by the river. The signs placed there could be forgotten. Or else, someone they disliked, or thieves, could come and dig them up and take them away. In this way, even while they are alive, treasures are lost and destroyed; they can even be destroyed by fire, and so on. In this modern era, various words like deposits and savings are used for what ordinary people accumulate. Most people nowadays focus only on those things. But what remains and is deposited for the entirety of saṃsāric existence is this very treasure of merit. That is why the Blessed Buddha points to it as a following treasure. When one dies and passes away, the power of merit has the strength to bring along even the assets of rebirth needed for the next state of becoming.

Asādhāraṇam-aññesaṃ, acora-haraṇo nidhi,

Kayirātha dhīro puññāni, yo nidhi anugāmino.

There is a well-known stanza: "It is not shared with others" means others cannot take that merit—even if they wish to share it, they can only do so through appreciation. "Thieves cannot steal it." Therefore, the Blessed Buddha points out in various ways that wise individuals should perform merit, which is a following treasure. When we say "merit," what is currently in the minds of these merit-seekers is the merit of giving. But in the Dhamma, three bases of meritorious activity are shown: consisting in giving, consisting in virtue, and consisting in mental cultivation. All of these belong to this.

Thus, it is through the treasure of merit accumulated through giving, virtue, and mental cultivation that a Buddha is born in the world, a Buddha arises, a Pacceka Buddha arises, and Arahants and various great disciples are obtained. Because this is something of eternal value that is not subject to inflation. If these changed from time to time, one could not fulfill one's aspiration. Precisely because it does not change, birth after birth that merit accumulates, deposited in this consciousness. Due to that very karmic energy, it leads to a corresponding direction, even without special wishes. This is the power of benefit in those merits. These merit-seekers know, to give an example, that when speaking of food, because long life, beauty, happiness, strength, and wisdom are present in that food, it is said that one can also obtain long life, beauty, happiness, strength, and wisdom. Similarly, if there are specific energies inherent to the things given, the results and benefits can be obtained correspondingly and in a fitting manner. Indeed, if one keeps a suitable attitude, a prepared mind for performing merit, performing merit is not difficult. Wondrously, the wise person can spend his life in such a way that he is constantly filled with merit.

These merit-seekers have often heard the saying, "giving alms with a purified mind in three stages." Before giving, one generates joy. While giving, one generates devotion. When giving alms to the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha, to those endowed with virtues, one generates devotion and faith. Then, after giving, one rejoices over it. Out of the three stages of mind of the aforementioned treasurer, the first two were defiled. But the Blessed Buddha preached that stanza in that manner at least to reform his final stage of mind, so that he would not regret it, but think of what he gave as a significant thing. Therefore, merit-seekers must contemplate preparing a suitable attitude even before giving alms. One must give alms endowed with faith as well as right view, which is the belief in kamma and its fruits. If one has that confidence, that right view of believing in kamma and its fruits, then during alms-giving and other such activities, one is not shaken by the blame or praise of the world. Whether people blame or praise, one must make a firm determination: "the inherent result of the merit will come to me." Because that lay devotee possessed these, he was not shaken, though obstacles came from various people in the world. Having overcome all of those, if one has right view regarding merit, thinking, "the more difficulty with which I performed this, the greater the merit," then that merit becomes even stronger.

The merit consisting in virtue is similar. The Blessed Buddha sometimes refers to it as a gift. Keeping the five precepts is described as five great gifts. For there, too, a massive sacrifice is made. The Blessed Buddha declared that the merit-seeker who, having made the determination to abstain from destroying life, keeps that training rule, gives safety and non-enmity to infinite, boundless beings. Therefore, it is shown that even recluses and brahmins accept this as a great gift. Likewise is the merit consisting in mental cultivation. In this, too, there is great merit in spreading the energy present in thoughts of loving-kindness and so forth to the world. Going hand-in-hand with the power of merit is what we call "wholesome." These merit-seekers often find that the two words *kusala* and *puñña* are frequently used synonymously. Generally, the word *kusala* carries the meaning of "skillful"—skillfulness in performing merit, as well as generating thoughts that allow one to act in a skillful manner regarding one's future journey in saṃsāra. These merit-seekers know that one must perform merit by pushing away the defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion, and bringing forth thoughts of non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion.

Regarding merit, elsewhere it is presented as the ten bases of meritorious activity. These merit-seekers have often heard it expressed in a stanza:

Dānaṃ sīlañca bhāvanā, patti pattānumodanā,

Veyyāvaccāpacāyañca, desanā suti diṭṭhiju.

This stanza indicates the well-known paths of performing merit. The bases of meritorious activity mean the objects of performing merit, or the topics that assist them: alms-giving, virtue, mental cultivation, sharing of merit, appreciation of merit, service, reverence, expounding the Dhamma, listening to the Dhamma, and straightening of views. Thus, a section called the ten bases of meritorious activity is shown. In whatever manner they are performed, this is a certain energy generated within our mind-stream. Over a long period in saṃsāra, this merit possesses the power to bring about all things—the assets of rebirth that assist becoming and support life, various strengths such as long life and beauty, wealth, fortune of assets, and fortune of followers.

Finally, if one has kept a certain goal, determination, or aspiration, this merit also has the quality of fulfilling it. That is why the Blessed Buddha points so strongly to merit as the highest fortune in the world, the greatest saṃsāric fortune, and something towards which one should be so enthusiastic. Furthermore, as is mentioned here too, do not regard merit as small. It accumulates. Merit adds to merit. As they accumulate and the power of merit grows, a massive transformation takes place within that individual.

In short, we must realize that our present life, our birth, and this current peace we enjoy, even though invisible to us, are due to past merit. Therefore, should we squander and deplete that merit, or should we direct our minds further towards merit and lead that saṃsāric existence through a successful life towards Nibbāna? This is what we must contemplate and decide. Various values in the world change at different times. The prices of gold, silver, and so forth fluctuate. Banknotes are sometimes invalidated

overnight. Such is the nature of the wealth accepted by worldly convention. Likewise, things kept as treasures are sometimes destroyed, falling prey to thieves, rulers, fire, or water. But it is the power of merit built up in our mind-stream that ultimately helps us. Hence, on certain occasions, the Blessed Buddha has declared:

Mā puññānaṃ bhāyittha, sukhassetaṃ bhikkhave adhivacanaṃ, iṭṭhassa kantassa piyassa manāpassa yadidaṃ puññāni.

"Monks, do not fear merit. For 'merit' is another name for happiness, which is extremely desirable, lovely, pleasing, and agreeable." The Blessed Buddha pointed this out in that manner because he delivered that sermon based on his own direct realization.

"I say this because I have directly realized this myself. For during my time as a Bodhisatta, over a long period, I experienced the benefits of the merits I accumulated in saṃsāra. That is why I am declaring a truth I have experienced," the Blessed Buddha said on that occasion. Then, he gave an example. Having developed a mind of loving-kindness for seven years, I spent seven eons of world-contraction and world-expansion in the Brahma realms. Next, as the direct benefit of developing those seven minds of loving-kindness, of practicing the meditation on loving-kindness, thirty-six times I became Sakka, the king of devas. Many hundreds of times I obtained the position of a wheel-turning monarch. There is no need even to mention the number of times I ruled as a regional king. "I reaped such a massive harvest of benefits," the Blessed Buddha declared from his own direct realization, adding, "Then, while enjoying those results and benefits, I reviewed and saw: 'from where do I receive such fortunes, and because of what?'" At that point, although he spoke of the mind of loving-kindness, he encapsulated something even deeper: "All of this is the result of three practices: giving, self-taming, and self-control." "Dāna" is alms-giving. "Dama" is taming, which refers to virtue and so forth. "Saṃyama" is restraint of the mind, which is related to meditation. Thus, in a person who practices the meditation on loving-kindness, the mind of giving, as well as the virtue that assists it, all develop. When we speak of "merit" here, it encompasses the aforementioned threefold mass of merit: giving, virtue, and mental cultivation.

It is what arose through all of those that brought such great benefits to the Bodhisatta. Similarly, we must contemplate that we may have various goals and purposes in our daily lives. But all of those things that are considered major in the ordinary world are only for this life; they are temporary things. But because one has to travel in saṃsāra for a long time, what actually helps a person is the treasure of wealth deposited in one's mind-stream. That is what the Blessed Buddha has shown as merit. Furthermore, these merit-seekers have also often heard the Blessed Buddha pointing out that, among these three meritorious deeds, the meritorious deed consisting in virtue is superior to the meritorious deed consisting in giving. Even superior to that is the meritorious deed consisting in mental cultivation.

Next, there are various levels within alms-giving itself. This, indeed, is something these merit-seekers should also pay attention to. Just as was mentioned regarding the occasion of giving alms, when offering alms, there is the "fortune of the giver"—the true state of

being a donor. Next, the "fortune of the gift" refers to the righteousness, purity, and suitability of the thing given. Next, the "fortune of the recipient" refers to the virtue of the receiving party. A meritorious deed complete in these three aspects is considered an excellent, exquisite, and superior merit. One must be mindful of these. For if one is immoral and gives for worldly pride, filling the mind with various defiled thoughts and wrong views, it is impure on the donor's side. Next, if the gift is given as if thrown away—meaning a worthless thing, like throwing something one wishes to discard—and if that given object was acquired in an unrighteous manner, then the fortune of the gift is not complete.

Next, regarding the fortune of the recipient, the Blessed Buddha specifically declares it is the virtue of the receiving party. The Blessed Buddha has analyzed this in detail in certain sutta discourses. Perhaps these merit-seekers have also heard of this. Fourteen types of individual offerings are shown—how the benefits of alms given to fourteen types of individuals vary and differ. At the lowest level, even alms given to an animal has a hundredfold benefit. In this manner, the Blessed Buddha points out that, compared to what is given to an animal, if given to a worldling of developed mind—even though immoral—alms given to an immoral worldling is a thousandfold beneficial. Next, if given to a virtuous worldling, an ordinary person, it brings a hundred-thousandfold or ten-thousandfold benefit. Next, it is said that alms given to disciples outside of this dispensation who are free from passion—meaning they have removed lust and elevated their minds through their respective meditations—brings a hundred-thousand eon-fold benefit.

From there onwards, it refers to those who have achieved supermundane states, or those preparing to achieve supermundane states, who have entered the path to Stream-Entry. Going step-by-step in that manner, it culminates with alms offered to an Arahant, a Pacceka Buddha, or a Perfectly Enlightened Buddha. Regarding those, it is described as incalculable and immeasurable. It is said that they cannot be quantified. Quantification was done only regarding the first three or four types mentioned. The Blessed Buddha constantly emphasized and showed that such a wondrous mass of benefit, a torrent of merit, flows from this merit, from a meritorious thought.

An offering to the Saṅgha is shown to be far more beneficial than any individual offering. In this regard, seven types of alms-giving to the Saṅgha are mentioned. Fundamentally, during the Blessed Buddha's lifetime, alms given to the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha is the most beneficial. Less beneficial than that is the alms given to the Saṅgha of monks after the Blessed Buddha's parinibbāna. Next, to the Saṅgha of bhikkhunīs, and so on, shown step-by-step. The discourses often emphasize the end-part more than the beginning. But we can see that even in an offering to the Saṅgha, it is according to the quality of virtue that an alms-offering becomes of great fruit and great benefit. Even at the lowest level, it is beneficial. However, we must strive, as donor merit-seekers, to make that merit as complete as possible. As the Blessed Buddha has shown through a simile, there is a field for sowing merit. That is those endowed with virtues. The Saṅgha is described as "puññakkhettaṃ anuttaraṃ" (an unsurpassed field of merit)—it is like a

field of merit. For it is when alms are given to those endowed with virtues that it becomes extremely beneficial.

Now, if a seed of paddy accidentally falls onto fertile ground while someone is carrying a sack of paddy, a large bush of paddy grows from it. Likewise, even unknowingly, if one gets the opportunity to offer alms to a person of supermundane virtue—to a Pacceka Buddha, a Buddha, or an Arahant—it yields an extremely wondrous power of benefit. The Blessed Buddha reminds the world that such a natural law exists in the world. This is precisely why it is said, "do not regard merit as small." If one has strong faith, there are many stories in ancient Buddhist literature of extremely poor people offering their own food to a monk on pindapata, or to a member of the Saṅgha. The merit obtained through that is sometimes far superior to a vast amount of wealth given for worldly pride without faith or right view, using unrighteously acquired wealth. Yet, to someone looking at the contribution list, that is a trivial thing, something they would turn away from with contempt, saying, "keep that safe for yourself." But according to that individual's mental purity, that alms-giving becomes of great fruit and great benefit. Knowing this, as related in this story, that wise lay donor engaged in that collection work righteously and humbly, with a sense of equality, without allowing his mind to be corrupted regarding any individual.

Similarly, merit-seekers must always contemplate that we should constantly live with a meritorious mind. When an opportunity to perform merit arises, we can only benefit from it if our mind has been prepared for it beforehand. There is a great depth in the phrase "pubbeva dānā sumano" (cheerful before giving). It is not merely the joy felt at the moment of giving alms. It is only the person who lives with the thought, "Oh, if only I could find an opportunity to give alms," who will not miss the opportunity when it arises, but will benefit from it. At that time, to the world, the objects given in alms might seem like things that person did not need much. But the Blessed Buddha reminds us that the mental strength generated through the intention of giving within that concept of alms-giving brings immense benefits.

Just like alms-giving, so is virtue, which we sometimes regard as minor. Now, these merit-seekers might think, "What is this keeping of the five precepts other than just undertaking training rules?" But we can see the difference between keeping the five precepts and not keeping them. Some of these merit-seekers have heard of certain famous people in the world who, without even knowing this training rule against killing, or without caring about it, spent their entire lives performing various acts in the world. We must think about this. It is not impossible for our own minds to be prepared to do such a thing. We possess the mental capacity to bring about a highly dangerous state of crime in the world, yet instead, we tread this path. Then, looking at the opposite side of that training rule, we see the truth of the Blessed Buddha's words. It is like giving safety to infinite, boundless beings. The person who properly keeps that training rule has given safety to infinite, boundless beings. There is a difference between the evaluation standard of the world and the evaluation standard of the Blessed Buddha. What the world considers high, visible things, the Blessed Buddha regards as minor, coarse things, and points out that there are things far superior to them.

When it is said that virtue is superior to alms-giving, some might doubt it. But from this, we can see the beneficial aspect of virtue, just like the beneficial aspect of alms-giving. According to the example we mentioned, if one person keeps the five precepts in that way, then two, three, a whole nation, a country, the world—what a massive difference! In that case, restraining the physical body and speech is a great sacrifice. One might feel like killing an animal, or stealing, or doing other things. Through all of those, trouble is caused to society as well as to oneself. Even if a temporary happiness, profit, or benefit is obtained, sacrificing that is what is called virtue. Next, it is said that mental cultivation is even superior to that. To the world, mental cultivation might sometimes appear to be an anti-social activity. One might think, "When there is so much concern about the economy and cultivation, why should someone meditate?" But the Blessed Buddha points out that the meditative energy arising in a single individual's thought can sometimes bring peace to the entire world.

Conversely, a single individual's thought can also destroy a world. What we call mental cultivation is making the mind, preparing the mind. The Blessed Buddha has spoken wondrously, especially about the meditation on loving-kindness. The high level of concentration developed through the meditation on loving-kindness is called the liberation of mind through loving-kindness. If someone develops a wondrous mind of loving-kindness that can extend equally to the entire world, without any division of directions or intermediate directions, above, below, across, in all ten directions, without being bound anywhere, breaking through all barriers; the Blessed Buddha declares that this mind of loving-kindness, this mind of *mettā-cetovimutti*, surpasses all alms-deeds that the entire world regards as great, subdues them, and stands out far above them. If someone possesses wealth, grains, positions, assets, a healthy body, beauty, and strength, these are regarded as the assets of rebirth. When looking at the meritorious deeds that possess the power to grant these, those alms-giving deeds do not value even a sixteenth part of the liberation of mind through loving-kindness. That is to say, those alms-deeds regarded as great in the world do not value even a sixteenth part of the power of benefit generated by the mind of the person who has developed his mind through loving-kindness. The Blessed Buddha points this out in that manner.

The Blessed Buddha provides three excellent similes regarding this. However many stars there are in the sky, when the moon rises, their radiance is eclipsed and the moon shines bright. Likewise, the Blessed Buddha declared that the liberation of mind through loving-kindness shines and beams, surpassing all those meritorious deeds consisting in giving. He also gives another simile: just as in the autumn the sun rises into the sky, dispelling all the mass of darkness in the entire sky and shining bright, so does the liberation of mind through loving-kindness shine, surpassing all meritorious deeds consisting in giving. Thirdly, he points out—as there is what we call the morning star, the brightest star among those in the sky—here it is shown that, just as the morning star shines in the sky at dawn, so does that sublime meditation called the liberation of mind through loving-kindness shine, surpassing all meritorious deeds that bring about the assets of rebirth. From this we see that we have a gradual progress through the three kinds of merit: giving, virtue, and mental cultivation. We do not remain immersed only

in alms-giving. In many people, alms-giving is accompanied by the expectation of receiving worldly and saṃsāric wealth. It is like a trade concept, a commercial concept. In truth, even for one who has become an Arahant, merit is necessary. That is why the Blessed Buddha, in a sermon preached to Princess Sumanā, declared that merit assists humans, merit assists devas, and it also assists the ordained.

Nevertheless, even though we refer to this generally as "merit," we must not think we should remain immersed only in alms-giving deeds. The energy developed through alms-giving must next be directed towards performing meritorious deeds of virtue. Next, the leisure and space obtained through virtue by restraining the body and speech must be utilized for mental cultivation. It is through this that we can deposit that most exquisite wholesome deed—the wholesomeness consisting in mental cultivation—within our mind-stream. It was the benefit of such a wholesome meditative state maintained for seven years that the Blessed Buddha referred to in the previously mentioned sermon: having developed a mind of loving-kindness for seven years, being reborn in the Brahma worlds for seven eons, becoming Sakka thirty-six times, ruling as a wheel-turning monarch for hundreds of other times, and receiving countless other royal fortunes—all through the power of that mind of loving-kindness.

Accordingly, we see that this thing called merit is not something done for worldly pride visible to the external world, or to stand out in society. It is something connected to our mind-stream. If we, with a good mind, a pure mind, having right view and preceded by faith, perform it before the Triple Gem; or, preceded by compassion, engage in giving alms to the poor, travelers, and beggars, then that merit accumulates in our mind-stream in the most subtle manner. The Blessed Buddha has also declared that these accumulated things do not disappear without yielding results: "I declare that actions performed in this saṃsāra do not wear away without giving their corresponding results." They will yield results in some manner. At the very least, these wholesome deeds we perform help to break the power of evil actions. Therefore, in this way, the pair of words that should always be joined in our minds and in our speech is "merit-demerit" and "wholesome-unwholesome." That is to say, when thinking about any course of action or work to be done, one must think: "Will a merit or a demerit occur through this?" One must think, "Is this wholesome or unwholesome?" That is the primary evaluation. We should not analyze our course of action according to money or worldly convention. According to the Buddha's word, merit is something of eternal value, like a gold coin that does not wear away. We must strive to maintain our thoughts in accordance with that.

These merit-seekers, on the occasion of undertaking the virtue of livelihood-as-the-eighth just now, spoke of livelihood—of a good livelihood. Merit-seekers know that in modern society, various improper paths are pointed out to get rich quickly. To get rich quickly, one can do things like killing animals, raising animals for meat, and various trades in weapons, intoxicants, and poisons. But when such courses of action and such jobs are presented, one must contemplate: is this actually a protection, a security? If our thoughts and aspirations are prepared in accordance with the Dhamma preached by the Blessed Buddha, then some progress can occur in this society that is dangerously plunging into an abyss, because many are searching for shortcuts. But if we prepare our

course of action according to those evaluations and values of merit-demerit and wholesome-unwholesome, then it constantly becomes an opportunity to protect one's virtue.

In this virtue, within each and every training rule, there is immense power. As one keeps them more and more, one's mind shapes itself accordingly, with a corresponding set of thoughts. In the instance of abstaining from destroying life, many valuable virtues such as non-violence accumulate in the mind; when abstaining from theft, honesty accumulates. The same applies to other things. When refraining from intoxicants, one develops the capacity to derive the maximum possible benefit from the human mind one has obtained. One also gives safety to the world. In this way, through these training rules, one delivers the world from the troubles that can befall it. Likewise is the meditative mind. In a certain subtle way, those thoughts are added to this universe. Sometimes, through that thought, even some change occurs in other thoughts. Even if not, it is the power of merit.

The Blessed Buddha has shown that the very result of that merit, of that meritorious intention arising in one's mind, is what helps one in the future to become a Buddha, a Pacceka Buddha, or an Arahant. Therefore, these merit-seekers must bring the example shown in this story, as well as this stanza, close to their lives, and strive to prepare their lives according to the true values revealed to the world by the Blessed Buddha. If one lives with a meritorious mind, a wholesome mind, merit wells up in everyone throughout the day. Not only that, by generating sympathetic joy towards the person performing merit, one can accumulate a vast wholesome merit along with it.

Generating sympathetic joy by looking at the person performing merit—how many people must have rejoiced that that man organized an alms-giving for the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha overnight, even if that treasurer did not? Boundless, infinite beings must have obtained great benefits through the appreciation of that alms-offering. Indeed, our true wisdom, our true skillfulness, must be developed regarding these wholesome qualities. Skillfulness is actually not the skillfulness accepted by worldly convention. As pointed out by the Blessed Buddha, *kusala* means being skillful in diverting one's journey in saṃsāra away from the path of the planes of misery, and treading along the path of happy destinies towards Nibbāna. Thus, we must contemplate utilizing this sermon as well to prepare our life-conduct in accordance with those pairs of words: wholesome-unwholesome and merit-demerit.

Today, this group of merit-seekers established themselves in virtue at their respective levels. They undertook virtue. In the morning, we came to this area to undertake virtue. It appears to have been successful. Many undertook virtue. On this occasion, too, they undertook virtue. Therefore, we must contemplate that it is through such actions that welfare is brought to the world. Welfare is also brought to oneself. Today, for about an hour, we had the opportunity to listen to a Dhamma sermon that is necessary for the qualities of faith, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, which help in stilling our minds, based on a valuable stanza of the Blessed Buddha and its corresponding, exemplary story. We must make an aspiration: May the benefits of listening to this

Dhamma also definitely serve as a supportive condition for us to prepare our lives according to the core principles indicated by the matters discussed in this Dhamma sermon, to escape quickly from this highly dangerous saṃsāra, and, having escaped from all saṃsāric suffering including birth, aging, sickness, and death shown to the world by the Blessed Buddha, to be stilled in noble, deathless Nibbāna!

Likewise, may all devas and Brahmas of right view, and our relatives, and whoever from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven wishes to appreciate merit, appreciate this mass of wholesome merit we have accumulated through this preaching and listening of the Dhamma! Having appreciated it, may they escape from all saṃsāric suffering as quickly as possible through their aspired Bodhi, and be stilled in noble, deathless Nibbāna! Making this aspiration, recite these stanzas to share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #123

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.102)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Diso disaṃ yaṃ taṃ kayirā, verī vā pana verinaṃ;

micchāpaṇihitaṃ cittaṃ, pāpiyo naṃ tato kare ti.

From:

Dhammapada 42 (Cittavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Since the mind precedes all things, the Buddha constantly emphasized the importance of establishing the mind correctly. If one directs one's mind along the wrong path and establishes it there, one becomes one's own enemy. The Buddha pointed out that a wrongly directed mind causes far greater harm than the dangers arising from any external enemy. The verse that expresses this fact is our theme for today.

That verse was preached in Sāvatthī concerning Nanda, the cowherd of the financier Anāthapiṇḍika. The Buddha almost constantly visited Anāthapiṇḍika's mansion for alms. This cowherd named Nanda, who looked after Anāthapiṇḍika's cattle, was quite a wealthy person. Whenever he brought the five products of the cow to the financier's mansion, he listened to the Dhamma from the Buddha and invited the Buddha to visit his home. However, the Buddha delayed the journey until this cowherd's spiritual faculty of wisdom had matured. Later, on a certain occasion, while traveling with a retinue of monks, the Buddha sat at the foot of a tree near Nanda the cowherd's house. Nanda came there, exchanged friendly greetings with the Buddha, and invited him to accept alms at his home for seven days. Accepting the invitation, the Buddha, along with the retinue of monks, took alms at his home for seven days. On the seventh day, after the appreciation (*anumodanā*) with a Dhamma sermon given in a gradual sequence (*anupubbikathā*), Nanda the cowherd attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*).

While the Buddha was returning, Nanda the cowherd followed behind, carrying the Buddha's bowl. After going some distance, the Buddha said, "Nanda, stop here." As the cowherd was returning, he was shot and killed by a hunter. The monks walking behind

saw this and came to the Buddha, saying, “Venerable Sir, it was because the Blessed One accepted this difficult-to-accept invitation and visited this house that Nanda the cowherd met with such a sudden death. If the Blessed One had not visited, this death would not have occurred.” The Buddha said, “Monks, whether I came or not, even if Nanda the cowherd had gone to the four directions, intermediate directions, up or down, he could not have escaped death today.” He thus indicated that such a kamma was present. Having declared this, the Buddha said that a wrongly established mind causes far more harm than any harm that could be caused by an external enemy or hater. Demonstrating this fact, he spoke this precious verse:

Diso disaṃ yaṃ taṃ kayirā, verī vā pana verinaṃ

Micchāpaṇihitaṃ cittaṃ, pāpiyo naṃ tato kare

The meaning of this verse is: whatever a foe may do to a foe, or a hater to a hater, a wrongly directed mind does to oneself a far worse, more severe harm. It is mentioned in the books that after this verse was declared, the assembly attained the paths and fruits accordingly.

What is unusual here is that the past-life story is not mentioned. That is, the monks did not ask, and they did not question, what past bad kamma Nanda the cowherd had committed. Because of this, it is recorded in the books that the Buddha also did not declare that matter. This is somewhat strange; even you, devout friends, might have expected the past-life story—asking what Nanda the cowherd had done to die so suddenly. But for some reason, there is no mention of it in the books. We can only think of it this way: the monks unwittingly made an unfounded accusation against the Buddha, suggesting this happened because the Blessed One visited; at least, that is how it appeared according to the monks’ “sudden death inquest.” Even in these times, there is such a thing as a sudden death inquest. However, according to the Buddha’s Buddha-cognition (*buddha-ñāṇa*), he showed that this was the result of a kamma committed by Nanda the cowherd himself at some point in the past, due to a wrongly established mind. It appears the monks did not ask beyond that. They were satisfied with that general law of Dhamma (*dhamma-niyāma*), that reality (*dhammatā*), being demonstrated.

Let us reflect on that small point as well. Now in this society, sudden deaths, road accidents, murders, and such things occur in this manner. These become news to us, and we strive to look at them because they are unexpected, sudden events. That is how it appears to us. But when the Buddha directs his mind, all of those appear like ordinary occurrences. Nowadays, a kind of sudden death inquest is conducted. A forensic medical officer comes, dissects the body, and gives certain conclusions, declaring the manner of the person’s death. The conclusion that anyone can easily make is that death occurred due to the inability to breathe. Looking a bit further, after cutting and dissecting the body, they say it happened due to a defect in some limb or organ of the body, or a sudden arrest of blood circulation, or something of that nature. Or else, they show that it occurred due to external dangers such as poisoning or being poisoned. Beyond that, no one can state the ultimate cause of death through medical examinations. But when we

think deeply, all of those are merely immediately supporting conditions that came together. The real cause, the deep cause, the remote cause (*dūra-nidāna*), lies in kamma.

Therefore, here, we must pay special attention to kamma and the cravings of the aforementioned directed mind (*paṇihita citta*). The divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) is a part belonging to the Buddha's own Buddha-cognition. It is mentioned that even some ancient sages (*ṛṣis*) during the Buddha's time possessed it. But they did not have a completely pure knowledge of kamma. They saw past births, but they did not see them 100% completely; they saw them partially. The Buddha had an extremely pure understanding of it through his divine eye. Therefore, the Buddha declared on certain occasions: "Monks, due to a wrongly directed mind, through using wrong speech, performing wrong bodily actions, holding wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), and abusing the Noble Ones (*ariyas*), beings go to hell. I do not declare this having heard it from another recluse or brahmin, nor from hearsay. I declare this having seen it myself, with my own knowledge." The Buddha made such fearless declarations in many places. Next, as a special point we can raise: when we think about the cause (*nidāna*) of bad kamma, in many places it is mentioned as greed, hatred, and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*). Briefly, the causes or roots of the unwholesome kamma in our minds can be shown as greed, hatred, and delusion.

On one occasion when the Buddha was residing in Vesālī, the Licchavi prince named Mahāli asked the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, what is the cause, what is the reason, for committing a bad kamma?" On that occasion, the Buddha explained in detail, mentioning five factors. The first three factors are known to everyone: greed, hatred, and delusion. The fourth is *ayonisomanasikāra*, meaning unwise attention (non-radical attention). Fifthly, he mentions *micchā-paṇihita-citta*, the wrongly established mind. Thus, we can understand that in addition to the first three roots, unwise attention, which is called *ayonisomanasikāra*, and a wrongly established mind also assist in committing bad kamma. Accordingly, we must be mindful not to establish the mind wrongly, but to establish it correctly.

This is the same idea mentioned earlier: a wrongly directed mind does far more severe harm to oneself than what an enemy or hater would do. There is another verse in the Dhammapada that shows the opposite side: a rightly directed mind (*sammā-paṇihita citta*) does one a greater good than even one's mother, father, or other relatives could do. Anyhow, this word *paṇihita* contains a deep meaning.

There is also the word *praṇidhi*. *Praṇidhi* means setting a target/goal regarding something. People try to understand this in various ways. But the Buddha gave a very simple simile on one occasion to clarify this. We need to explain a certain word to understand the simile. Perhaps in this area, this word is not commonly used. At the tip of a grain of paddy, there is a very tiny point. That is called the awn of a paddy grain (*vī-naṇḍuwa*). The Buddha uses this awn as a simile. "Monks, if the awn of a grain of hill-paddy or barley is wrongly established or turned sideways, when trodden on by the palm or foot, it will not pierce the palm or foot and draw blood. Why? Because the awn is not directed straight." This is compared to the *micchā-paṇihita* mind—the wrongly directed

mind. Piercing the palm or foot is compared to shattering ignorance (*avijjā*). Drawing blood is compared to bringing forth knowledge (*vijjā*) and realizing Nibbāna,. But if that tiny awn is rightly directed and straight, when trodden upon, it pierces the palm or foot and draws blood. That is called *sammā-paṇihita citta*—the rightly established mind. Likewise, with a rightly established mind, one can shatter ignorance, bring forth knowledge, and realize Nibbāna,.

We can see the awn of paddy, but the mind cannot be seen. If that tiny, visible awn can do such a thing, the unseen mind can do something far more wonderful. You might have heard of *praṇidhi* in the context of the Bodhisatta's aspiration over a long period: "I will become a Buddha." Setting the goal and establishing the mind with that wish. This word *praṇidhi* is often connected with the teachings on perfections (*pāramīs*), such as disciple-perfections. Next, we must understand what precedes or leads in establishing the mind rightly or wrongly. The Buddha says that wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) precedes the *micchā-paṇihita* mind, and right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) precedes the *sammā-paṇihita* mind. View is principal; view comes first everywhere.

That is why it is said *sammādiṭṭhi-pubbaṅgamā*—"right view is the forerunner." In passages describing the Noble Path, it says right view goes ahead. On one occasion, the Buddha gave this discourse: "Monks, for one of wrong view, wrong intention (*micchā-saṅkappa*)"—now we have translated these into Sinhala as wrong view meaning wrong vision, and wrong intention meaning wrong thoughts—"and wrong speech (*micchā-vācā*), wrong action (*micchā-kammanta*), wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*), wrong effort (*micchā-vāyāma*), wrong mindfulness (*micchā-sati*), wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*)..." And going further, ten factors are mentioned in that sutta, including wrong knowledge (*micchā-ñāṇa*) and wrong liberation (*micchā-vimutti*). This is a concept found among those of wrong views.

These are the factors, starting from wrong view up to their liberation, according to the Buddha's analysis of wrong view. The Buddha further shows that if a person has wrong view, wrong intention, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration, wrong knowledge, and wrong liberation, then all their bodily actions, verbal actions, and mental actions conform to that view. A few more important words are mentioned there:

"Whatever intention (*cetanā*), whatever aspiration (*patthanā*), whatever resolution (*praṇidhi*), whatever saṅkhāra (preparations) that person generates, all of of those conform to that view. They go in the wrong direction." If an intention arises, it is a wrong intention. If an aspiration is made, it is a wrong aspiration. *Praṇidhi*—our word—if there is a direction or target, that too is wrong. Next, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), which can be briefly understood as dressings, fabrications, processes of action. If such exist, they all go astray because the root was wrong, because *sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view) was lacking. Next, a simile is given. Sometimes the Buddha gives the simile first, sometimes the Dhamma first.

The Buddha says: “Just as, monks, when a seed of neem (*kohomba*), bitter-gourd (*karavila*), or bitter-pumpkin (*titta-labu*) is planted in moist soil, whatever earth-nutriment and water-moisture it draws in, all of it results in a bitter fruit. Why? Because the seed is bad, its nature is to yield bitter fruit.” In the same way, the outcome of all those factors starting from wrong view—not only words, actions, and thoughts, but also those intentions, aspirations, resolutions, and preparations (*saṅkhāras*)—goes to the bad side, yielding a bitter, painful fruit. Having shown the bad side, the Buddha then shows the opposite side. You can easily understand this even without me explaining: if one starts with *sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view), then *sammā-saṅkappa* (right intention), *sammā-vācā* (right speech), *sammā-kammanta* (right action), *sammā-ājīva* (right livelihood), *sammā-vāyāma* (right effort), *sammā-sati* (right mindfulness), *sammā-samādhi* (right concentration), *sammā-ñāṇa* (right knowledge), *sammā-vimutti* (right liberation)—these ten factors show that whatever bodily, verbal, or mental action that person performs, all of it is right (*sammā*) and on the good side.

Likewise, whatever intention, aspiration, resolution, or preparation (*saṅkhāra*) they have, they all lead to the good side and bring good results. The simile given is: “Just as when a seed of sugarcane, hill-paddy, or grape is planted in moist soil, the fruit that arises from it is sweet and delicious.” Similarly, if the view is right, such results occur. Through this, we understand how wonderful the Noble Eightfold Path is. Starting with view, it usually ends with *sammā-samādhi*. In some places, it is shown that based on *sammā-samādhi*, through the *sammā-ñāṇa* (right knowledge) that arises next, one attains *sammā-vimutti* (right liberation). It is presented as ten factors. If it is wrong, the wrong fruit (bad, bitter side) comes; if it is right, good results come.

On another occasion, the Buddha gave a wonderful discourse to the monks showing the importance of this Noble Eightfold Path: “Monks, when there is a disturbance of bile, phlegm, or wind, physicians give purgatives. Monks, there are such purgatives. I do not say they do not exist. But those purgatives given by physicians for the three humors may succeed or they may fail. But, monks, I give a Noble Purgative (*ariya-virecana*). I teach you a Noble Purgative which always succeeds and never fails. What is this Noble Purgative?” He then analyzes:

“Monks, in a person of right view, through the very power of establishing that right view, wrong view is purged. Whatever evil, unwholesome states (*akusala dhamma*) associated with wrong view there are, they are all purged away. Wholesome states (*kusala dhamma*) connected with right view grow. Next, in one of right intention, through the power of that right intention, wrong intention is purged. Whatever unwholesome states arise due to wrong intention, they are purged away. Wholesome states grow through meditation (*bhāvanā*) and development. That is the good side, the blessing.” Ten factors are shown up to right liberation. In each, wrong liberation is eliminated, and all evil unwholesome states associated with it are eliminated. This is the purge—the Noble Purgative of the Buddha.

It doesn't stop there. Next, the Buddha gives an emetic. It begins the same way. “Monks, physicians know emetic methods for bile, phlegm, and wind disorders… There is such an

emetic method, I do not deny it. But, monks, I give an emetic, a Noble Emetic (*ariya-vamana*). The physician's emetic may succeed or fail, but this Noble Emetic never fails. What is it?" He analyzes it in the same way. "In one of right view, who has established right view correctly, wrong view is vomited up. They have to vomit up wrong view. Whatever evil unwholesome states associated with wrong view there are, they are also vomited up." Then he states the wholesome side: "Whatever wholesome states there are due to right view, they grow. In one of right intention, wrong intention is vomited up..." and so on up to the tenth. Thus, the Buddha vividly illustrated the difference between *sammā-diṭṭhi* and *micchā-diṭṭhi*. The Buddha called himself the "unexcelled physician" (*anuttaro bhisakko*). Why? *Bhisakka* means physician. Many people use it for physical physicians. The word has become obsolete, but in the past, they were called *bhisag-vaidya* (physicians who treat with medicine) as opposed to *salya-vaidya* (surgeons who cut and heal). The Buddha speaks here as a physician who gives purgatives and emetics. The medicines of other physicians may fail, but those of the *Anuttaro* Buddha—the Noble Emetic and Noble Purgative—never fail.

Indeed, there is a most valuable teaching in the Buddha's word regarding kamma which we must constantly bear in mind. You are familiar with these important words: *kammasako'mhi, kammadāyādo, kammayoni, kammabandhu, kammapaṭisaraṇo*. Each of these is very important. *Kammasako* means: kamma is one's own property. Not the external wealth and properties we claim. Truly, in saṃsāra, what belongs to us is only our kamma. *Kammadāyādo*: parents give various heritages to children, but children cannot take them away when they die; they only take the kamma they performed. *Kammayoni*: our birth arises from kamma. *Yoni* here means origin/source. We are reborn according to our kamma. *Kammabandhu*: our real friend, our real relative is kamma. According to the verse mentioned earlier, good kamma is one's real relative. If we do bad kamma, it becomes our enemy or hater. *Kammapaṭisaraṇa*: kamma is our refuge in this saṃsāra. We must constantly remind ourselves of this. Some people in this era fall into nihilistic views (*nāstika diṭṭhi*) because they ignore these facts. The Buddha here declared a reality (*dhammatā*) that affects the ordinary worldling who lives with the sense of "I" and "mine". If there is anything that belongs to them, it is the kamma they perform. The foundation for this lies in *sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view).

This *sammā-diṭṭhi* is described as ten-fold (*dasa-vatthuka*). Briefly: there are fruits and results of giving. There is this world and the next world. Some think it all ends here. But in the continuation of saṃsāric life, there is a distinction between this world and the next world. There is "mother" and "father"—meaning there are fruits and blessings in serving and looking after parents. There are fruits and results of good and bad deeds. One must believe this as a premise, as an accepted truth. Likewise, there are recluses and brahmins in the world who have rightly understood this world, noble ones who have developed their eye of wisdom and attained direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) beyond us. One must understand this. It is upon these premises that the Buddha presents the view on good and bad deeds. Without this ten-fold *sammā-diṭṭhi*, people do not care about wholesome and unwholesome deeds, merit and demerit, and try to live as they please. That is what humans easily do. Such a nihilistic view is what we easily see in the world today. But

their consequences are also there, and they have to be experienced. This is the reality (*dhammatā*) the Buddha constantly reminds us of. Even the Buddha could not escape it, nor could the Arahants. You have heard this many times.

We can understand this: even with the Buddha's spiritual power, when Devadatta rolled the rock, two other rocks came and stopped it, but a splinter chipped off and cut the Buddha's foot, causing severe pain. He had to be treated by the physician Jīvaka. This happened due to some past kamma. Everyone has also heard of Maha Moggallāna Thero. Despite his amazing supernormal powers, performing miracles of psychic power (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*), traveling to the Brahma worlds and heaven worlds, doing miraculous things—when the past bad kamma of killing his parents matured and the wheel of kamma rolled in, even he could not escape it. Twice, using his power of absorption (*jhāna*) and psychic power, he escaped from five hundred bandits. But the third time, he realized the gravity of "kammic attraction" (*kamma-ākarṣaṇaya*).

There is such a thing as "kammic attraction," dear devotees, which the world does not know. Most people try to understand these things through a materialist perspective. There are aspects that do not fit into that. This "kammic attraction" is one such. Inside us are the four great elements; outside too are the four elements. But the mental energy, the intention (*cetanā*), and preparations (*saṅkhāra*) generated by a person who has grasped these internal four elements through craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) are so powerful that the external four elements also submit and yield to it. That is why what we call "sudden accidents" sometimes occur in miraculous ways. Some escape. Some are pulled to that spot when the time of disaster comes—it is an attraction. Such incidents are found even in Jātaka stories, and many such things happen even today. Sometimes people commit terrible sins, not even knowing it is a sin. Sometimes lightning strikes and kills them in that very manner. There are many such real events in society. We can infer that there is indeed something called "kammic attraction."

The Buddha stated that some teachers who have partial understanding—meaning they have the divine eye but do not see kamma completely—make wrong conclusions. It is described thus: a certain person is committing bad deeds. We expect him to go to hell. But that teacher sees him reborn in a happy destination, in heaven. Then that teacher thinks: "Therefore, there is no result of kamma; I can see that." The Buddha says that though he saw it partially, the result of that bad kamma will come at some point. Why did that rebirth happen? Either because of his near-death mind where something good arose, or a wholesome kamma more powerful than that bad kamma came forward at that moment to give rebirth. But the result of the bad deed will still manifest at some point. This is sometimes described in three terms: some kamma is *diṭṭhadhammavedaniya* (to be experienced in this very life), some is experienced in the next life (*upapajjavedaniya*), and other kamma keeps giving results across various lives (*aparāpariyavedaniya*) going on and on. Such is the situation in saṃsāra. Because the Buddha had a clear understanding of this, he did not make extreme conclusions like other teachers. He understood that in such cases, it was not because bad kamma has no result, but because a specific circumstance arose, so the result was not given immediately.

The Buddha expressed this on one occasion in a Dhammapada verse:

Na hi pāpaṃ kataṃ kammaṃ, sajju khīraṃva muccati

Dahantaṃ bālamanveti, bhasmacchannova pāvako

An evil deed committed does not immediately bear fruit, just as milk does not curdle all at once. Smoldering, it follows the fool like fire covered with ashes.

This verse is interpreted slightly differently, even incorrectly, in some commentaries. Even the simile is wrongly explained. The commentaries talk about milk curdling quickly, but here we must take it as: bad kamma does not give results immediately, like milk coming out of a teat or udder all at once. Instead, it follows one, smoldering like an ember under ashes. That is what is meant there.

One should not expect the results of some kamma immediately. Especially, severe deeds might be experienced in this very life. But if the kamma that gave birth to that person is very strong, the bad results might not show up in this life. That is why many people argue: “We live virtuously, observing precepts, keeping the five precepts—where is the benefit for us? We have nothing. But those who kill animals, steal, and enjoy themselves are doing great.” They hold this wrong view because of that. Devotees, there are many details in this simile of the ember under the ashes. When there is an ember under ashes, you can sit on it. After a while, you feel the heat. After another while, it burns enough to make you want to get up. If you don't get up, it might burn that side completely. Such is this sin: first, remorse (*pasutävilla*) begins. That is where the burning starts.

From the moment a bad deed is done, one feels remorse. Why remorse? One's own mind knows. You know there are many mysteries in the world. Murders are investigated by police and found with great difficulty. Some are done so subtly. That subtle planning is what is called *micchā-paṇihita*. *Micchā-paṇihita* refers to that subtle planning.

The Buddha declared that even the intelligence a fool gains is for his own destruction. In that way, some dangerous criminals have an amazing kind of intelligence. Through that intelligence, they plan great conspiracies and cunning deeds to commit terrible murders and robberies without getting caught. Even the detective police cannot catch them. They think, and the world sees them, as very clever. But one person knows. Who is that? Oneself knows. That is why the Buddha declared:

Natthi loke raho nāma, pāpakammaṃ pakubbato

Attā te purisa jānāti, saccaṃ vā yadi vā musā

There is no secret in the world for one who commits an evil deed. Your own self, O man, knows whether it is true or false. Even if one employs clever lawyers, uses corrupt tricks, bribes, or silences witnesses through threats and fear, and wins the court case, one still has to undergo the punishment in the supreme court of kamma, according to one's conscience. That is it.

No one can block that conscience. That is why they cannot sleep at night. Next, the first thing to fall victim to that burning is the four elements of one's own body. Aggravation of wind, phlegm, etc., burning sensations, itching, blisters, wounds arise, and finally, they end up in hospitals. Even doctors cannot find the cause. The cause that doctors cannot find was shown by the Buddha: that is the *micchā-paṇihita* mind—the wrongly established mind.

Thus, even if one deceives the supreme courts and the world through cunning and commits murders and robberies, though other witnesses are silenced, that one witness cannot be stopped—the conscience cannot be stopped. And its result, the punishment, is experienced by oneself. The lives of such people end in a truly terrifying, tragic manner, amidst great pain. Sometimes at that moment, they scream and blabber about what they did. Not only about killing humans, dear devotees, but also about killing animals to satisfy their craving for taste (*rasa-taṇhā*). You know how many helpless animals are slaughtered daily to satisfy the craving for taste. The methods used are sometimes shocking and amazing, because they are so greedy for raw meat. The demon, the beast inside man is so powerful that he does not like old meat from shops. Just as no one likes old vegetables, they do not want to eat an animal killed days ago. They want the meat of an animal killed recently, today. Sometimes the animal is brought before them, killed, and eaten right there. The only difference is the spoon and fork to show he is not an animal. But the demon, the beast inside, is what commits that cruel slaughter. Although the body grows from it, the result—those diseases, mental illnesses—begins right there. Next, physical illnesses also begin as a result. Through that, first remorse, then burning in the body. Next, the flames of hell are ready and waiting. We know there are volcanoes. Even if people do not believe it nowadays, there are stories of the earth splitting open, fire burning, and dragging one down to hell. And what comes from above are thunderbolts.

As we explained, here too are the four elements, and outside are the four elements. There is a relationship, a friendship between them. It is operated by that kamma-machine. Indeed, in some ancient books, even when there was no understanding of modern machines, ancient teachers regarded kamma as a machine: *kammayantena yantito* (bound by the machine of kamma). Kamma is such an amazing thing, understood only by the Buddha's knowledge. Even to us, its inner workings are not clearly visible. That is why the Buddha described this entire saṃsāra using terms like *tantākulakajāta* (tangled like a ball of thread), *muñjapabbata-bhūta* (matted like rushes), etc.—showing that this is completely tangled like a ball of thread that cannot be unraveled. Kamma and its results are all intertwined. Why is that? Let's say we experience a result of kamma—a loss from someone, a theft, or physical pain. At that moment, we do not see our own kamma, we do not see that we did this to ourselves. We do not see that person as merely an instrument. Instead, we think, “I am innocent, why did he do this to me?” Then we take revenge. Through that, it goes on and on. That is the danger in kamma. The ball of thread is tangled further.

If you give a ball of thread to a cat and ask it to unravel it, what does it do? It rolls it this way and that and tangles it completely, because of ignorance (*avijjā*). Man is the same.

The wheel of kamma is also amazing. A bad kamma done in youth in a past life, when it rolls around in this life, can give results during youth. The time-frame of the wheel of kamma is also shown in Dhamma in some places. That is why some kamma takes seven days to exhaust. Some takes many lives, some 500 times, some 1000 times, some 10,000 times. There is a wheel of kamma that gives results in this way. It rotates within consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and gives results. If a grain of sand gets caught in a spinning wheel, it makes a strange sound every time it rotates. Similarly, this bad kamma that has fallen in. As long as one lives, the wheel rotates. Every time it is remembered, one suffers remorse. It is the same after rebirth. If the seed of kamma has sprouted somewhere, one has to experience its bitter results for an infinite time in saṃsāra.

So we can understand that the root of all this, on one hand, is the *micchā-paṇihita* mind (wrongly established mind). What supports it is wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) standing behind. Therefore, we must strive to remove those wrong views and bring forward the correct premises of life. The Buddha taught that there is this saṃsāric world and next world, there is mother and father, there are good and bad deeds, there are wise people in society. Some "intellectuals" say, before realizing Nibbāna: "Everything ends with the mind and logic. Such people do not need merit (*puñña*). Making merit means staying in saṃsāra for a long time, so we don't need merit either. And we don't commit sins anyway; we don't do harm to anyone." In this way, they present arguments. But they cannot escape. The Buddha has shown that we do not know what kind of kamma we have done in the past. But we have a way of escape. We do not necessarily have to experience the results of every single kamma we performed. Instead, he presented the simile of the grain of salt, which we mentioned on previous occasions.

It is through the Buddha's teaching on the simile of the grain of salt that some relief can be found within this wheel of kamma. First, let's state the simile. The Buddha first presents this Dhamma point as a problem: "Monks, of two persons who have committed a bad kamma of the same proportion, one goes to hell because of that kamma, while the other does not go to hell but experiences it mildly in this very life." This is a problem. At first glance, this seems like an injustice of kamma. Both did the same kamma. The first goes to hell due to the result, while the second pays it off mildly in this life and escapes easily. Why is this? The Buddha says: "The world is unsubstantial (*anattā*), without a ruler." There is no creator, no God who protects the world. Why does this happen? Is this unjust?

Then he gives the reason: "Monks, that first person did not just commit the sin. His way of life is like this: *abhāvita-kāyo, abhāvita-sīlo, abhāvita-citto, abhāvita-paññ̃o, paritto, appātumā*." These words mean: this person has not developed his body (conduct), has not developed virtue (*sīla*), has not developed his mind (*citta*), has not developed wisdom (*paññā*). He has a narrow mind, a very low kind of person. Because of this nature, even for a small bad deed, he goes to hell. "And the other person, the one who pays it off mildly in this life as *diṭṭhadhammavedaniya* and escapes, his life is described as: *bhāvita-kāyo, bhāvita-sīlo, bhāvita-citto, bhāvita-paññ̃o, appamāṇo*."

That means his body (conduct), virtue, mind, and wisdom are developed; his mind is immeasurable (*appamāṇo*). That is why he escapes.

Then comes the simile, which anyone can understand. There are two equal grains of salt. We put one grain into a small cup of water, a small pot. When it dissolves, the water becomes very salty. We dissolve the other grain of salt in the River Ganges. We check the water of the river—no, there is no salty taste. Why? The water in the pot is very little, so the salty taste is strong. The water in the River Ganges is vast, so it is not felt. It is because of such a reality (*dhammatā*) that the Buddha declared that one can attain liberation through this life of purity (*brahmacariya*), through the path of Dhamma shown by the Buddha. What did the Jain disciples, the Nigaṇṭhas, who did not know this do? They too had some understanding of kamma, but it was a partial understanding. So they thought: "We have done infinite bad deeds in the past. Now what we have to do is pay off those bad deeds by inflicting pain on the body." They tried to pay them off. By suffering as much as possible and torturing the body, they tried to exhaust past bad deeds, while not performing new kamma. You might see some Nigaṇṭhas living like this when you go to India—without clothes, without food, living in a strange way. That is the extreme view.

Instead, the Buddha shows this simile of the grain of salt. We must reflect on this. We do not know what kind of bad deeds we have done in the past. But what we must do is not to feel remorse, but to increase our volume of water. Think about the simile of the River Ganges instead of the little water in the pot. If we develop virtues like *sīla*, even if those bad deeds come, they will be like mere scratches and we will escape. Just as some people die in terrible accidents, some escape by a hair's breadth, and some escape with just a scratch. There can be certain laws of Dhamma within this. Perhaps the one who has good virtues is the one who escapes in that way. If we understand this Buddha-word, within it is the path to liberation (*vimuktiya*). For how long have we wandered in saṃsāra? If even Maha Moggallāna Thero killed his parents in the past, what have we not done in this long saṃsāra? We might have done countless bad deeds.

But at this moment, what we have to do is what needs to be done according to the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) shown by the Buddha. That is called *sīla* (virtue). *Sīla* is sometimes described as making a small platform for oneself to sit on for meditation in this swamp of saṃsāra. One builds that platform by planting five pillars as the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*), eight pillars as the Uposatha Eight Precepts, or ten pillars as the Ten Precepts. Having built a small platform, one prepares the mind: "Today, I live on this virtue, on this determination. My mind is pure." Delighting the mind in that, one develops meditation (*bhāvanā*). You have heard that even Ven. Angulimāla, who killed thousands of people, finally became an Arahant based on this very reality (*dhammatā*). That means, whatever past kamma may be, if we live in the present moment in the way shown by the Buddha, we can bring forth liberation within it—this can be stated in accordance with the Dhamma.

Therefore, we must correctly understand this word *micchā-paṇihita* (wrongly established). The mind becomes *micchā-paṇihita* if those many wrong factors that follow

wrong view accumulate in our minds. We must strive to bring forth right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) in its purity. The Buddha declared that for one of right view, right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) arises naturally. This is not something a person does. There is a wonderful reality (*dhammatā*) there. That, devotees, is what is called dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Many people ask about liberation in this Dhamma: “If there is no 'I' (self), how is this done?” There is no self here, that is true. Due to the ignorance (*avijjā*) within us, the feeling of 'I' exists. But the Buddha showed that there is a wonderful connection in every part of this path of Dhamma. That is why the Buddha declared: *dhammā dhamme abhisaṇdenti, dhammā dhamme paripūrenti, apārā pāraṅgamanāya* (states flow into states, states complete states, for going from the near shore to the far shore). In going from this shore to the other shore, what happens? Dhamma itself flows into Dhamma. Dhamma itself fulfills Dhamma. It is the work of Dhamma, not one's own work, even though one thinks of it as one's own.

What we have to do is simply complete those Dhammas. That is why, if right view arises in someone, right intention arises in them almost naturally. Right intention, as you know, means good thoughts. If good thoughts arise, good words are spoken. According to those words, one then strives to correct one's actions. If those actions are corrected in purity, then regarding one's livelihood, without going into the aforementioned wrong livelihoods (*micchā-ājīva*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) arises in them. In one of right livelihood, through the effort they make, right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) arises in the mind without them even knowing it. The four-fold right endeavor (*sammā-ppadhāna*)—not to bring about unarisen unwholesome states, to discard arisen unwholesome states, to bring about unarisen wholesome states, and to consolidate arisen wholesome states—develops within oneself without one even knowing it. It can be said to happen without one even knowing.

While that is developing, what happens? When one guards one's mind like a watchman, what is constantly done? Mindfulness (*sati*) develops. Mindfulness develops automatically. If one can maintain mindfulness correctly without letting it scatter, for ten minutes, fifteen minutes, half an hour, an hour, two, or three—that is concentration (*samādhi*). That is concentration. If it is not wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*) but real concentration as shown by the Buddha, then with the support of that concentration, one can direct radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) towards the Three Characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). If that practitioner (*yogāvacara*) directs radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), then as shown by the Buddha, through those insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), at some point, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, they can realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna,.

Within this short time, we have illustrated the Middle Path shown by the Buddha. To cultivate a rightly established mind (*sammā-paṇihita citta*) instead of a wrongly established mind (*micchā-paṇihita citta*), you have today observed precepts and listened to the Dhamma in that manner. I believe that through this listening to the Dhamma, you

have also cultivated these faculties and powers (*indriya* and *bala*) which we constantly remind you of: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Relying on all these, with the help of association with good friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), constantly and diligently engaging in these practices of Dhamma and meditation, doing everything necessary for your liberation without delay, before this Dispensation (*sāsana*) declines, may this merit of listening to the Dhamma be a supportive condition for realizing the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna,, through the penetration of the paths and fruits starting from Stream-entry! Thus you should aspire. Also, may all those in this universe, from the lowest realm to the highest (*Akaniṭṭha*), who wish to rejoice in these merits of preaching and listening to the Dhamma, by doing so, with the help of that meritorious energy, at some point realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna,, through the Bodhi of their aspiration! Having made this aspiration, recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #124

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.132)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Dhanapālako nāma kuñjaro, katukappabhedano dunnivārayo;

Daddho kabalaṃ na bhuñjati, sumarati nāgavanassa kuñjaro ti.

From:

Dhammapada 324 (Nāgavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Greatly Compassionate Lord Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, afforded a supreme place to the care of parents among social virtues. In instances where this virtue was neglected, he employed skillful means (*upāya-kauśalya*) to remedy it. During his lifetime, he timely revealed the example he himself set by fulfilling this virtue. From the verse we have chosen as our theme today, and its introductory story, we can find evidence for this. The Buddha preached this verse in Sāvatthī, concerning the four sons of a certain Brahmin.

In Sāvatthī, there lived a certain Brahmin who possessed eight hundred thousand (eight lakhs) of wealth. When his four sons reached the proper age, he arranged their marriages and distributed four hundred thousand from that wealth among the four children. Sometime later, his wife passed away. The children began to think: "If our father brings another wife, it might lead to some problem regarding our family wealth." As a strategy, they began to attend to their father, pampering him with food and drink even more than before, and massaging his hands and feet. One day, during the afternoon, while massaging the father after he woke from sleep, the children spoke of the bitterness of household life in a way that would induce disillusionment with saṃsāra, or rather, in a way that would incline him toward ordination, and then they said: "Please give the rest of the wealth to us as well." Believing them, the Brahmin gave those four hundred thousand to the children too. Not only that, he distributed all his other goods and possessions, leaving himself with only his undergarment and upper robe. Having done so, while he was staying for a few days at the eldest son's house, one day he went out, bathed, and

upon his return, the daughter-in-law stood at the doorway and said: "Why, did you give an extra hundred or two to the eldest son? Didn't you give two lakhs to each? Won't the other sons' houses take you in?" The Brahmin, angered by this, cursed her, calling her an outcast (*vasalī*), and departed from there. Next, he went to the other sons' houses. Receiving similar treatment at their homes as well, the Brahmin was ultimately forced to take to the road. He then thought of a way to survive and sustain himself; he received ordination in the mendicant order called *Kaṇḍalaṅga* and began to live by begging for alms.

Gradually, as he grew old, due to the lack of proper food and drink, and having no place to sleep, his body became extremely weak. One day, after waking up from sleep on a wooden plank, he reflected: "The only refuge I have is our Ascetic Gotama. From what I have heard, he is someone who engages in friendly conversation, someone whom one can approach without fear." Carrying his walking stick, he went to the presence of the Buddha. The Buddha asked him: "Why, Brahmin, have you come here so weak, without proper clothing?" Thereupon, he told his story. The Buddha then taught this Brahmin five verses, instructing him to go and recite them at an assembly when his children were gathered in the Brahmin hall. The Brahmin learned the five verses, went inside when his children were assembled with the other Brahmins, raised his hand, and asked for permission to speak a few verses. Having received permission, he recited the five verses taught and expounded by the Buddha. Let us state the meaning of those verses.

In those verses, the Buddha presented what the Brahmin was to say concerning his children: "Those children at whose birth I rejoiced, whose progress I looked forward to—they, in conspiracy with their wives, have driven me out of the house. It is just like dogs barking and chasing away a pig." Furthermore, he says: "These ungrateful, wretched children, like demons in the guise of sons, have driven me, in my old age, out of the house. Just as horses receive good food and drink as long as they possess swiftness and strength, how is an old horse treated? It is turned out to graze like cattle. In the same way, my children have driven me from the house without giving me my due sustenance in my old age." Next, he says: "This walking stick is of greater help to me than these ungrateful children. Supported by this walking stick, I drive away fierce dogs and cattle. When walking in the dark of night, this walking stick guides me, going before me. Likewise, when stepping into water, it tells me the depth of the water. When I am about to fall, the walking stick becomes my support. Not even that much support do I have from my children." Thus he spoke those verses. It is said that in those days, there was a custom that if anyone received their inheritance from their parents and failed to care for them, that person should be put to death. Therefore, these children became terrified, prostrated at their father's feet, and begged: "We shall care for you. Please spare our lives."

Then the Brahmin told the rest of the assembly: "Now indeed my children will look after me." They then seated the father on a chair and carried him home. The eldest son told his wife to look after him well, otherwise there would be punishment. From that day on, the Brahmin received "regular meals"—amounting to eight portions of rice—along with excellent food, drink, and foot massages, just as he desired, from all four sons' houses.

Before many days had passed, when the Brahmin's body had recovered well, he thought of the Brahmin custom of offering teacher's fees (*guru-paṇḍuru*). Thinking thus, he took two robes he had received, went to the Buddha, and offered them, saying: "O Ascetic Gotama, I have brought these teacher's fees for you." The Buddha accepted them out of compassion. When the sermon of appreciation (*anumodanā*) was delivered, the Brahmin developed faith and took refuge in the Triple Gem. He also invited the Buddha, asking the Blessed One to accept four of the eight portions of daily food he received from his four children. The Buddha expressed his consent. The Brahmin went home and informed his children: "If the Venerable Gotama comes to our house, treat him well." The Buddha, in due course, walked for alms to those houses. They too prepared excellent food and drink and offered alms to the Buddha.

On a certain occasion, it is mentioned that when an auspicious ceremony arose at the eldest son's house, the son asked his father to whom the wedding feast should be given. The father replied: "To whom else should it be given? It must be given to our Ascetic Gotama." Accordingly, they invited the Buddha and five hundred monks to the eldest son's house. On that occasion, after serving the alms bountifully and performing other acts of generosity, the children sat near the Buddha and said: "Now we are caring well for our father; do you not see how exceptionally healthy and well he is?" It was on that occasion that the Buddha declared: "Indeed, in the past too, wise sages of old cared for their aged parents." As an example, he related the Jātaka story found in the Jātaka book, known as the *Mātupōsaka Nāgarāja Jātaka* (The Jātaka of the Mother-Supporting Elephant King). The verse we have chosen as our theme is the one that expresses the meaning of that Jātaka story:

> *Dhanapālako nāma kuñjaro katukappabhedano dunnivārayo;*
>
> *baddho kabalaṃ na bhuñjati, sumarati nāgavanassa kuñjaro* ti.

The elephant named Dhanapālaka, in must, fierce and normally difficult to restrain—once bound in the elephant stable, did not eat even a single morsel of food. The elephant remembered the Naga-forest where his mother resided; therefore, he did not take food.

If we briefly summarize that *Mātupōsaka Jātaka* story, it is detailed as follows: As you, virtuous friends, know from the Jātakas of the past, during the reign of King Brahmadatta, the Bodhisatta was born in the Himalayas in an elephant herd of thousands, as an elephant pure white in all limbs—an elephant of great meritorious features. He lived as an elephant king, surrounded by his herd. In the course of time, after his mother became blind, he sent food to his blind mother through the other elephants. However, he later came to know that those elephants, instead of giving the food to the blind mother, ate it themselves. Knowing this, the Bodhisatta elephant became disillusioned, left the herd that very night, and went to a certain mountain called Caṇḍora. Placing his mother, the mother elephant, in a cave near a bamboo grove, he stayed there, attending to all her needs.

On one occasion, a certain poor man, a forester from the city of Benares, having lost his way, was unable to find the path and began to weep. The Bodhisatta elephant went to investigate, and when told that the man was lost, he seated the man on his back and showed him the path back to the city. However, this ungrateful man marked the path as he went. Meanwhile, when the king's state elephant died and could no longer perform its duties, the king had a drum beaten, announcing that if anyone knew of a suitable elephant, they should report it. This man came forward and said: "I have seen a completely white elephant king in such-and-such a place." He then led the elephant trainers and pointed the elephant out while it was in a lake. The Bodhisatta elephant, understanding the situation, thought: "It is this ungrateful person who has brought this calamity upon me," yet without showing any opposition, he remained calm. The trainers led the Bodhisatta elephant to the city. The king, celebrating the arrival of the elephant, decorated the stable and placed before him various delicious royal foods suitable for him. Although seven days had been spent on the journey, the elephant did not take any food. The king then came and pleaded: "If you remain thus, we cannot carry out these affairs." The elephant replied: "While my blind mother is starving in the forest, I shall not take food." Deeply moved by this virtue, the king released the elephant king. The Bodhisatta elephant, freed from the king's service, returned to his mother and attended to her.

According to the Dhamma accounts, the king was so moved by this virtue that he declared that region a separate tax-free village, and ultimately provided special facilities for the Bodhisatta elephant and his mother. That is to say, he arranged for food and drink to be provided, and later, naming the area Hastipura, he had an image of the elephant carved in stone. The books mention that the story of this elephant remained famous in India (Dambadiva) even after that. When the Buddha expounded this elephant king's story in detail, the children developed a deep sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding the care of parents.

At that moment, the Buddha preached the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, and upon hearing that sermon, the Brahmin, his children, and their wives all attained the Fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*). In brief, this is the origin story of this verse, with which the Jātaka story is connected.

With reference to this, let us now attempt to connect it to our present era, and also bring to mind the categories of Dhamma related to the care of parents. For the decline of this virtue is occurring on all sides—in lay society and in monastic society alike. Among the virtues of lay society, we find numerous sutta teachings revealing that the Buddha gave an exceptionally supreme place to the care of parents. In particular, the Buddha declared on one occasion that if parents are properly honored and cared for in a home, it is as though Brahmās reside in that home. As you, virtuous friends, have often heard: *"Sabrahmakāni tāni kulāni"*—in whatever clans or families parents are properly cared for and honored, there is a Brahmā in that family, in that home. Similarly, the Buddha pointed out that parents are worthy of the sacrifices and offerings normally dedicated to Brahmās. He also stated that they are the "first teachers" (*pubbācariya*) in the home, and are worthy of offerings. In this manner, the Buddha praised the care of parents in the most sublime terms.

Likewise, among the seven vows that lead to rebirth as Sakka, the primary one is: *“yāvajīvaṃ mātāpettibharo assaṃ”*—"as long as I live, may I support my mother and father." It is mentioned that because he undertook and kept this vow, he attained that celestial state. You have also heard in both the *Vasala Sutta* and the *Parābhava Sutta* that the Buddha declares that if anyone who has the capability does not support their aged parents, that person is an outcast (*vasala*). Neglecting the care of parents is also shown as a cause of one's downfall (*parābhava*). In the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, which relates to lay life and is frequently recollected by you, Sigāla, the son of a Brahmin householder, worshipped the six directions as a daily ritual. However, the Buddha gave a completely different meaning to the worship of the directions practiced among Brahmins, in order to preserve social ethics. Among them, the Buddha first indicated the Eastern direction—the forward direction—as representing parents: *“mātāpitā disā pubbā”*.

Regarding the care of parents, the Buddha has shown five duties that children must perform for their parents: "Having been supported by them, we shall support them in their old age"—this resolve must be maintained. Likewise, one must perform their duties and affairs when they are unable to do so themselves. Furthermore, preserving the family lineage and tradition; managing the inheritance received from parents properly and protecting it; and lastly, transferring merits to them after they pass away—the Buddha indicated in the *Sigālovāda Sutta* that these five duties must be fulfilled. When these are fulfilled, the mutual relationship and the support received from parents was expounded by the Buddha in that sutta.

When parents are cared for in this manner, its blessings (*āniśaṃsa*) are received. If children support their parents, the parents, with joyful minds born of that, bless the children, saying: *“Ciraṃ jīva, ciraṃ āyu!”*—meaning, "May you live long! May you have long life!" This blessing becomes a cause for the progress of the children. Furthermore, parents restrain children from evil deeds, establish them in wholesome qualities, teach them arts and sciences at the proper time, provide them with suitable spouses, and hand over their inheritance to them in their old age. In this manner, the relationship between parents and children has been expounded. In various other places too, the Buddha has spoken about the care of parents.

To show the value of parents, there is a special discourse of the Buddha: "Monks, there are two persons whose care one can never repay in this world. Who are the two? Mother and father." Then, using a few extraordinary words, the Buddha expounds the value of parent care: "If a son, with the intention of caring for his parents, were to carry his aged father on one shoulder and his mother on the other for a hundred years, providing them with all care, cleansing their excrement and urine, and performing all massage and nursing, even then, the help and refuge received from those parents would not be fully repaid." Secondly, the Buddha declares: "If a son, with the intention of repaying his parents, were to establish them in sovereign kingship over this great earth filled with the seven treasures, even then, he would not have done enough for his parents. But if a child establishes faithless parents in the blessing of faith, immoral parents in the blessing of virtue, stingy parents in the blessing of generosity, and unwise parents in the blessing of wisdom—such a child has not only repaid them, not only done what is sufficient, but has

done more than enough." In the *Maṅgala Sutta*, which is well known to you, *"mātāpitu upaṭṭhānaṃ"* (supporting mother and father) is shown as a highly valuable blessing among the thirty-eight blessings. Thus, while neglecting parents is a cause of decline, caring for them is shown as a blessing that leads to one's progress.

Nevertheless, the failure to care for parents has always existed in society. For many forget the protection they received in their childhood. In short, forgetting the service rendered by the mother at birth, and the service rendered by the father in guiding one's life on the right path, some are even reluctant to introduce their parents. Parents must be revered as those who introduce this world: *"imassa lokassa dassetāro"*—those who showed this world. In ancient times, there was a practice of *preta-pūjā* (offerings to spirits) among the Brahmins for transferring merits to the deceased. It was this ritual that the Buddha, in suttas such as the *Tirokuḍḍa Sutta*, presented according to the Buddhist way—namely, the method of helping deceased parents by transferring merits. The word *dakkhiṇā* in many places refers to the sacrifices of the Brahmins; but here, *dakkhiṇā* means that deceased parents can be made happy by performing meritorious deeds such as almsgiving to the Triple Gem and transferring those merits. However, sometimes there are instances where they are neglected while alive, and only after death are they remembered as a matter of custom. What is emphasized here is that parents must be cared for even while they are alive, especially in their old age, remembering the help and protection they gave in our childhood, such as cleansing our excrement.

Because of this importance, the Buddha granted certain special privileges regarding parents even to the Sangha. Now, regarding travel during the rainy retreat (*vassa*), the Buddha has laid down certain rules for the Sangha, stating that it is unsuitable to go away for more than six nights during the *vassa*. However, as special cases, it is indicated that one may go for some urgent matter concerning members of the order, such as a bhikkhu, bhikkhunī, or sāmaṇera. Likewise, if there is an affair connected with one's mother or father, permission has been granted to go, whether there is an invitation or not. Even without an invitation from the parents, if they are afflicted with illness, or if there is a need to preach the Dhamma to them, the Buddha has permitted the Sangha to go even during the *vassa*. Furthermore, if the parents are extremely poor, and after the child has ordained, they have no other way of obtaining food, permission has been granted to go on almsround and give the alms food received to them as well. The Buddha has indicated on certain occasions that there is no wrong in giving parents one's personal gains, though not the communal property of the Sangha.

Although the Sangha has been instructed to use what is given in faith (*deyya*) in such a way that it does not go to waste, special privileges have been shown as a favor concerning parents. If they are aged or ill, a monk is permitted to physically support his father to care for him. In times of illness, the Buddha has permitted him to attend to his mother as well, even while avoiding direct bodily touch. Through this virtue of parent care, we must understand the value of gratitude. On the other hand, cruel acts committed against parents, which we hear of through the media, did not fail to occur in the past as well.

The consequences of cruel acts committed against parents instead of the care due to them are illustrated within the Dispensation itself by the character of Ven. Mahāmoggallāna. The chief disciple Ven. Mahāmoggallāna was a person of such great psychic power. Yet, because he listened to his wife's words ninety-something eons ago, beat his parents, and abandoned them in the forest, the result of that unwholesome deed was so grave that even in the life he attained the position of chief disciple with great psychic power, his bones were crushed by five hundred bandits, leading to his final passing (*parinibbāna*). Such accounts are heard both in the past and in the present.

Parents are noble individuals, equivalent to the state of Brahmā. If anyone in society wishes to accumulate merit, they have the opportunity right at home. Instead of worshipping the fire god, instead of throwing food into the fire, the Buddha introduced the care of parents to the world. We occasionally hear of some who consider the sole purpose of their lay life to be the care of their parents. Such virtuous people have come to us too on certain occasions, and from their stories, we hear that some still preserve these valuable virtues. There are those who even give up jobs offered far away, dedicating themselves to the care of their parents. In lay life, both in the past and present, a common point of conflict after marriage is the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. This is what is revealed even in the story of Ven. Mahāmoggallāna.

We remember a certain devotee who knew of such situations telling us that before marrying a young woman, he gave her a "two-week interview" to care for his parents. Only if she passed that test would he marry her. On that occasion, that gentleman had declared: "I can find any number of wives, but I have only one mother and father." We must be mindful of virtues that are in decline. The foundation of lay society is that very relationship between parents and children. If it is broken at any point, it becomes a powerful obstacle to the future progress of this Dispensation. In particular, when the Poson season approaches, Buddhist devotees make great efforts to uplift the Dispensation. But it is within the unit of the family that these virtues must awaken. The relationship within a family is analyzed in the Dhamma as the four Divine Abodes (*cattāro brahmavihārā*).

According to Brahmin teachings, the Brahmins were born from the mouth of Brahmā, or else Brahmā created them. That is why those Brahmins worship Brahmā. But the Buddha's description of parents is not based solely on the fact of giving life. That too is true, but parents did not "create" the child there. Rather, when one is born as the child of those parents due to some karmic cause, we all know the importance of the protection given by parents in early childhood. It is a common fact known to everyone. But a fact often forgotten by us is that during the period spent in the mother's womb, there are thousands of opportunities to die. Yet, those mothers, caring for the child, even refrain from taking foods they like, thinking of the child.

Furthermore, even after birth, everyone says that they feed us by turning blood into milk. The Buddha states on one occasion: *“Lohitaṃ idaṃ ariyassa vinaye vuccati yadidaṃ mātutaññaṃ”*—"In the discipline of the Noble Ones, mother's milk is called blood." The Buddha expressed this to direct our feelings toward this, to urge us toward reality. No

one would like to suck and drink blood from a mother. Therefore, we have to say that through a certain law of nature, the mother's blood becomes milk. The Buddha presented this directly. On one hand, at the beginning of life, the primary nourishment is received from the mother. Unlike wild animals, protection is provided by the father in a civilized society. That is why the Buddha often praised the care and worship of parents. To go to the Brahmā world, what helps a person is not the fire worship spoken of by the Brahmins, but the four Divine Abodes (*brahmavihāra*), as the Buddha declared. The four Divine Abodes are the four virtues: loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Among them, we speak of extending the quality of loving-kindness (*mettā*) to all living beings. In showing the relationship between children and parents, the primary quality we can bring forward is this mind of loving-kindness.

In the *Karaṇīyametta Sutta*, it is shown thus:

> *Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttaṃ āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe,*
>
> *evampi sabbabhūtesu mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ.*

"Just as a mother would protect her only son even by sacrificing her life, even so, let one cultivate a boundless mind of loving-kindness toward all living beings." From this, it is clear that loving-kindness is fundamentally helpful in shaping a child's life. As a simile, a mother's loving-kindness is compared to milk. When looking at early childhood, the food easiest for anyone to digest is milk. Just like giving the mother's milk to the infant, so is loving-kindness, the mind of loving-kindness—a very friendly and gentle quality. It is with the mother's gentle quality that milk is given on that occasion.

As the child grows, the mother has to employ skillful means (*upāya-kauśalya*) to a certain extent, according to the situation, to discipline the child. Sometimes, when the child is naughty, she has to speak firmly or harshly. Even the Buddha, who was greatly compassionate, addressed not only Devadatta but sometimes even some monks as "empty men" (*mogha-purisa*). One might think: "The Greatly Compassionate Buddha spoke harshly like this, didn't he?" One might doubt this. Not only us, but even the Niganṭhas (Jains) had such a doubt. On one occasion, the teacher named Niganṭha Nātaputta, without presenting himself, assigned a prince who held his views to present this question to the Buddha: "If the Blessed One is greatly compassionate, why did he use such words that would hurt the mind of Ven. Devadatta?" This question was prepared beforehand to be asked of the Buddha, thinking it would pose a double-horned dilemma to the Blessed One. At that moment, Prince Abhaya was holding his young child in his lap. The Buddha then asked: "Well, Prince, if this child in your lap, through your negligence or that of a nurse, were to put a pebble or a stick in his mouth, what would you do?" "I would pull it out, even if it drew blood." "In the same way, when I see that Devadatta cannot be disciplined otherwise, I use such words," the Buddha replied.

There we see a certain depth in that quality of great compassion. A mother's compassion is just like that. Scolding children is not out of anger or for revenge, but in disciplining

children through true compassion, she has to speak firmly on certain occasions. It is said to be a stage of childhood where they do not understand, even running after slithering snakes, chasing after whatever they see. It is at that stage that compassion is aroused. As the child grows, at the stage where they must be disciplined, the mother has to step in and speak firmly according to the situation, and sometimes even punish them.

Reflecting wisely, she has to do this as a means to discipline the child. This can be compared to a lump of butter (*veḍaru piḍa*). A lump of butter melts very quickly, though it is more solid than milk. In the same way, although the mother tries to discipline the child in that manner, if the child, by not listening, does something and gets hurt, she does not say: "Let him suffer." She immediately treats the child. That is how we must understand the characteristic of compassion: at first glance, it appears firm or harsh, but it melts quickly. That is compassion. Thus, in the growth of the child, the quality of compassion that helps a mother is the second stage of the Divine Abodes.

Next, when the child grows up, studies well, and some perhaps attain high positions, the parents look at those children with great sympathetic joy (*muditā*). They rejoice, thinking: "The child whom we raised with so much struggle, hardship, and expense can now stand on his own feet, and can live without our help." Sympathetic joy is a rare quality in this world. When discussing these Divine Abodes, many speak of loving-kindness, and many speak of compassion, but very few direct their minds to sympathetic joy. Sympathetic joy is the quality opposed to jealousy (*issā*). Jealousy is what is abundant in the world. When looking at curd (*dī-kiri*), everyone's mind is pleased; a vessel of curd is a very pleasing sight. Just like that curd is the quality of sympathetic joy. These similes are not those found in the Dhamma itself; we employ these similes to illustrate this mutual parent-child relationship.

As the child grows and develops in that manner, sometimes due to foreign travel or various studies, they have to leave. Likewise, if it is a daughter, as everyone knows, there is an occasion when parents weep—seemingly in vain—when giving the child away in marriage. On such occasions, they cultivate equanimity (*upekkhā*), thinking: "Now indeed, let her live safely somehow." That is the occasion for equanimity. This stage is compared to ghee (*gi-tel*). For, as we all know, a vessel filled with ghee can be turned upside down without fear, as it does not spill easily; ghee is solid and heavy. The word for heavy is *garu* (grave, respected). Thus, that grave quality... the similes of milk, butter, curd, and ghee can be applied accordingly. Like ghee is that stage of equanimity. From this, we see that just as the child grows with the help of the parents, the parents too grow through those four Divine Abodes, taking the child as their object.

A great mutual relationship can be brought out through this. When the discussion of the four Divine Abodes is brought close to this, the parents cultivate loving-kindness taking the child as object, and in the final stage, they cultivate such equanimity and strength that they can selflessly let go of the child. It was in this sense that the Buddha gave parents the status of Brahmā. It is not merely because one is born due to parents; in truth, one is born due to various kamma, utilizing parents as a support. Because of giving

the first understanding of life, and because of the protection received from parents to build the body and the mind, parents are called "first teachers" (*pubbācariya*).

The parents' side too must reflect on this: if the qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity developed toward one's own children can be gradually extended to one's neighbors and others, that itself becomes the arising of the four Divine Abodes. The mutual relationship between parents and children is a good opportunity for us to cultivate and grow virtues even through lay life. If the loving-kindness started in a home taking one's children as object can be extended to neighbors, the village, the country, and to all sides—that is the development of the Divine Abode of loving-kindness (*mettā-brahmavihāra*). When neighboring children succeed, just as one's own children stand on their own strength, one must arouse the quality of sympathetic joy instead of jealousy. The start for this was received from the home itself. Likewise, the quality of compassion. You have heard: *"Paññā sassa sabbadhammesu, karuṇā sabbajantusu"*—that is, the Buddha has wisdom regarding all phenomena, and compassion toward all living beings.

Therefore, the great compassion of the Buddha is so deep that it is beyond our comprehension. To the Buddha, beings fallen into the ocean of saṃsāra appeared just like children running close to the hearth fire, or trying to jump onto a road where vehicles are passing. That is why, to rescue them from states of misery and guide them onto the path to heaven, the Buddha sometimes took firm measures, and even laid down strict disciplinary rules (*Vinaya*) for the Sangha. This was not out of a lack of compassion. A common folk story expressing a mother's compassion toward her children is mentioned in the Dhamma literature itself: A certain child was about to go into the forest, and the mother warned him as a threat: "If you go to the forest, a wild buffalo will gore you to death!" But when he encountered the buffalo, the child reflected: "If my mother actually wished this, let it happen. But if she spoke this without such a wish, merely as an advice, let it not happen." At that moment, the child was saved. This shows that the words a mother uses to prevent something, free from anger, are sufficient for discipline and must be used with due measure.

Sometimes, the advice of a wise mother is only understood by a child after they reach adulthood. In times of illness, accidents, or when being drawn into wrong relationships, the advice given by parents must be understood as the arising of the quality of compassion. In society, firm measures must be taken on certain occasions. If we can do so mindfully, just as a mother scolds her child, we have learned something from that family life.

At present, intellectuals have spread new concepts such as "positive thinking". Within such things, there is a headlong rush like a rhinoceros, looking only at one's own progress, making wealth the sole purpose of life, without considering moral virtues. In an era when such corrupt social views are widespread, we must be mindful to use the four Divine Abodes to arouse the same sympathetic joy toward a neighbor's child when they study well, pass exams, and attain high positions, as we would for our own child. If we can cultivate a quality where we can rejoice, thinking of even a poor or low-caste

child, "Oh, how good, how valuable!" and saying "Sādhu! Sādhu!", we would be preserving the vanishing quality of sympathetic joy in the world.

An extremely deep stage in the parent-child relationship is that of parting from the children. In parting from those children, it is indeed an occasion where the parents experience the state of Brahmā at its highest. When speaking of the position of Brahmā in the world-system, they are the highest class. That is why they are depicted with a long beard. Parents too, by the time their children are grown, have reached a significant elder status. Through the fulfillment of responsibilities and grave duties, they have acquired a strength and dignity. Just as children learn from parents, parents also learn from children; that is what is called a mutual relationship. Utilizing the child as a support, the parents develop loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy, and finally reach up to equanimity. Now, some think equanimity means bow-headed submission to everything. But according to the simile we mentioned, we can show that we cannot get pure ghee from cows without milk. It is after passing through the stages of milk, curd, and butter that ghee is produced. That is why the Buddha placed equanimity at the end. Loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and lastly comes equanimity. That equanimity does not mean merely closing one's eyes and ignoring everything. Nor is it a cruel disregard of the world. Equanimity is something deep. It is with that depth that parents act regarding their children when parting from them—selflessly, altruistically, for the welfare of the children. But children must not think: "Our parents' duties are over, so we are finished."

It is from there that the children's duties begin. If the children are strong, the Buddha has declared: *"Bhatto nesaṃ bharissāmi"*—"Having been supported by them, I shall support them." "We were brought up by our parents; because they raised us, we must now support them." *"Kiccaṃ nesaṃ karissāmi"*—"It was for our sake that our parents performed various works at home; we must perform those works." In this manner, a multitude of duties such as caring for parents devolves upon the children from that point. There are various ways of looking after parents. For some, it is possible to look after parents by writing a cheque, or by sending them to elder care homes. That is one way. Yet, as we mentioned earlier, some even give up jobs they receive to preserve those virtues, and with great desire, feeling that they are performing something valuable, they care for their parents. They receive the parents' blessings in their final moments.

The Dispensation of the Buddha consists of the fourfold assembly: bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, upāsakas, and upāsikās. When we speak of the decline of the Dispensation, we often speak of the shortcomings of the Sangha. But this class called the Sangha also comes from that very lay society. Therefore, the corruption of virtues and the decline of virtues in lay society naturally enter among the Sangha as well. If the Sangha did not receive such an environment even during the time they spent in their homes, then both sides must be held responsible. If the duties due from parents are properly fulfilled for the children, from the milk onward as mentioned, then the children too, placing the Buddha's word at the forefront, will fulfill their duties. Children should not be like birds that leave the nest and fly away, forgetting the protection they received, flying as they please, finding another who flies likewise, and flying here and there in the world. But if

the portion of duties to be performed is fulfilled with one's own hands rather than through a cheque, that is something extremely valuable, an example to the world. It is mentioned that even some kings of ancient Sri Lanka, despite holding high positions of kingship, engaged in the care of their parents before attending to state affairs.

Even here, in the Jātaka story related, we have a blind mother elephant. Once she became blind, what could the children not do? Who would know, who would see? But it is when she became blind that the care was given. The care given to blind parents is the greatest care. The Dhamma story shows that even as a wild animal, such care was performed. Such accounts of Bodhisatta lives are frequently mentioned.

A "Bodhisatta" is a noble being aspiring for Buddhahood. A Buddha is born through the vastest range of experiences possible in this world-system. It is by the completion of one's vast range of experiences and the accumulation of the mass of wisdom that the ten perfections—generosity (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*), ending in equanimity (*upekkhā*)—are filled and perfected. Therefore, we must reflect on the preservation of this Dispensation of ours. Lay Buddhists, in their home life, must strive for the longevity of this Dispensation by cultivating these numerous virtues related to the care of parents through the four Divine Abodes. We brought out these points on this occasion in connection with this Dhamma sermon because everyone speaks of the Buddha's Dispensation when the Poson Poyaday approaches. We must strive to integrate the points presented so far into our lives, and go as far as possible along the path of Dhamma, without falling prey to those "positive thinking" concepts.

As the first step in renunciation (*nekkhamma*), you have left your homes today, observed the noble precepts (*sīla*), and in accordance with the declarations of the Buddha, you have observed these precepts to cross over the suffering of saṃsāra. Next, in connection with that, you engaged in sermon and meditation. Likewise, utilizing a Dhamma sermon that supports the valuable virtues of life, may this wholesome power (*kusala-saktiya*) you have acquired through the blessings of hearing the Dhamma guide your lives on the path of Dhamma, and may it swiftly become a supportive cause and condition for your liberation from the suffering of saṃsāra—from birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa / jarāmaraṇa*)—and for your realization of the supreme peace of Nibbāna,! May all beings, from the Avīci hell to the highest heaven (Akaniṭṭha), by rejoicing in these blessings of preaching the Dhamma and hearing the Dhamma, realize the supreme peace of Nibbāna,, through their aspired path of awakening! Let us recite this verse.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #125

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.174)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Etaṃ nāgassa nāgena, īsādantassa hatthino;

sameti cittaṃ cittena, yaṃ eko ramati vane ti.

From:

Dhammapada 325 (Nāgavagga)

Dear Listeners,

In the society of the Buddha's time, four animals were frequently highlighted in Dhamma literature as being considered noble and majestic creatures. The lion, the noble thoroughbred horse, the bull, and the elephant—these four animals were accepted in the world of that era as noble creatures. For this very reason, in many instances, one sees the names of these animals being applied to the Buddha as titles of honor or epithets. Not only that, even the Buddha himself, in certain instances when employing similes, compared himself to these four animals. Now, what is contained in this verse chosen as our theme is an occasion where the Buddha compared himself to a king elephant. The background story (*nidāna kathā*) related to this is as follows:

During the time the Buddha was residing at Ghositārāma in the city of Kosambi, a great dispute, shouting, quarreling, and conflict arose among the bhikkhus of Kosambi over a minor Vinaya issue. They did not accept even the advice and admonitions of the Buddha. Then, perhaps due to the inability to settle this conflict, the Buddha's mind inclined toward seclusion. He thought to himself:

"Now I am residing with difficulty in a crowded environment thronged with bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, laymen, laywomen, kings, royal ministers, heretics, and disciples of heretics. It would be well if I could leave this crowd and dwell in the happiness of seclusion."

Considering this, the Buddha on that day went for alms in the city of Kosambi, returned after the almsround, partook of the meal, set his lodging in order, and without informing even his attendant bhikkhu or telling the bhikkhu Sangha, took his bowl and robes and

departed alone toward the Pārileyyaka forest. In due course, having arrived at the Pārileyyaka forest, he prepared to reside under a Sal tree—later known as Bhaddasāla—in a forest tract later known as the Rakkhita Forest Grove.

At that very same time, a certain king elephant had also grown weary of living in the elephant herd and felt a desire to spend his time in seclusion, thinking in this manner:

"Now I live in a restless environment crowded with bull elephants, she-elephants, and baby elephants. I only get to eat the grass left over after other elephants have eaten the tender shoots. Other elephants come and eat even the branches I break off for myself. I only get to drink water muddied by other elephants wading into the pool. When I bathe at the bathing place and climb out, she-elephants rub against my body. It would be well if I could leave these things behind and live in seclusion."

Thinking thus, that king elephant also came to that Sal tree in the Rakkhita Forest Grove where the Buddha was residing. Having arrived and seeing the Buddha, he conceived confidence (*prasāda*), cleared away the plants and weeds from the spot with his trunk, and, as stated in the story, even provided the Buddha with drinking water, water for washing, and consumer water. While the Buddha too was residing there in seclusion, such a thought occurred to him: "Previously, I resided with difficulty in a crowded environment thronged with bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, laymen, laywomen, kings, royal ministers, heretics, and their disciples. Now I reside here in comfort, peacefully, and in solitude."

Simultaneously, a thought occurred to that king elephant as well: "Previously, in the manner mentioned before, I lived without seclusion amidst bull elephants, she-elephants, and baby elephants. I got to eat only the grass whose tender shoots were eaten by others. Others ate the branches I broke. I had to drink muddy water. She-elephants came and rubbed against my body. Now there is none of that. I can eat fresh grass. There is no one now to eat the branches I break. I can drink clean water." In this manner, a certain thought regarding the happiness of seclusion arose in the mind of the king elephant too. On that occasion, the Buddha, combining the happiness of seclusion he was experiencing and the thought that had arisen in the mind of the king elephant, uttered a joyful utterance (*udāna*) as an inspired verse, which is the verse we presented as our topic on this occasion:

> *Etaṃ nāgassa nāgena īsādantassa hatthino*
>
> *sameti cittaṃ cittena yaṃ eko ramati vane ti*

In this, the mind of this elephant, who has tusks like plow-poles, and my mind, which is like an elephant's, agree. In what? In delighting in dwelling alone in solitude in the forest. From that story, we can see an occasion where the Buddha, reflecting on that secluded dwelling, compared himself and that elephant.

We can see a very moving story that you have heard many times. It exists in later literature with various ornate descriptions. What we present at this moment is the event

of the taming of the elephant Nālāgiri as recorded in the Vinaya Pitaka. To assassinate the Buddha, the Thera Devadatta first sent archers. When that was unsuccessful, while the Buddha was walking up and down (*caṅkamana*) on the path below Gijjhakūṭa, he rolled down a boulder from above onto his head. When that too failed, what did he do next?

The king had a very fierce elephant named Nālāgiri, who killed people and was in rut (*mada*). Devadatta conspired with the elephant keepers to release this elephant when the Buddha came for alms. Thereafter, when the Buddha was walking down the street for alms together with the Sangha of bhikkhus, the elephant keepers released the elephant Nālāgiri and turned him into that street. Even from afar, the elephant saw the Buddha, raised his trunk, spread his ears, lifted his tail, and ran toward the Buddha. Then the bhikkhus said, "Venerable Sir, this man-killing elephant Nālāgiri has entered this street. Let us turn back." Then the Buddha said, "Do not fear, bhikkhus, come. It is impossible to end the life of a Tathāgata through the efforts of another (*parūpakkamena*)." A second and third time the bhikkhus made the request. But the Buddha kept walking straight forward. Meanwhile, the citizens of the city had climbed onto roofs, upper storeys of palaces, and balconies, and were watching. Among them, foolish people lacking faith said, "Now indeed, this excellent, beautiful recluse will be destroyed by the elephant!" Faithful and wise people said, "After a long time, we will get to see a Nāga battling with a Nāga." "Nāga" (noble elephant / great man), dear devotees, is a name for an elephant. Thus, they said a noble being is battling with another noble being. Then, on that occasion, the Buddha suffused and projected a mind of loving-kindness (*mettā-citta*) toward the approaching elephant Nālāgiri. By the power of that mind of loving-kindness, this elephant lowered his trunk and, in a fully tamed manner, came and stood before the Buddha. While stroking the elephant's temples (*kumbhasthala*), the Buddha uttered these two verses.

It is that primary first verse that we are reciting to you on this occasion, because of its significance:

Mā kuñjara nāgamāsado

na hi nāgahatassa kuñjara

sugati hoti ito paraṃ

"Kuñjara" too, dear devotees, is a name for an elephant. Addressing this elephant, the Buddha declares: "*Mā kuñjara nāgamāsado*"—O elephant, do not attack this elephant, this Nāga. Do not clash with this Nāga. "*Na hi nāgahatassa kuñjara, sugati hoti ito paraṃ*"—O elephant, for one who harms this Nāga, there will be no happy rebirth hereafter. Furthermore, he declared, "O elephant, do not fall prey to intoxication and negligence. Those who succumb to negligence do not go to a happy destination (*sugati*)." When the Buddha addressed the elephant in this manner, as stated there, the elephant took the dust trodden under the Buddha's feet with the tip of his trunk, sprinkled it on

his head, and backed away as far as he could be seen. Backing away in this manner, he returned to the elephant stable and stood there.

Afterward, he abandoned his fierce nature. Seeing this, the astonished citizens expressed the Buddha's virtues in a verse that you may have heard:

Dantī dameh' aṅkusena kasāhi ca

adaṇḍena asatthena mahāmaunī damesi naṃ

"Some tame animals with sticks, with goads, or with whips. But this Great Sage tamed the elephant without sticks, clubs, or any weapons." Thus, this too is an instance where the Buddha compared himself to an elephant.

Even more detailed is a valuable sutta in the Aṅguttara Nikāya called the *Nāga Sutta*, which compares the vast collection of the Buddha's virtues with the limbs and body parts of an elephant. The background story of this *Nāga Sutta* is as follows: The Buddha, having resided at Jetavana in Sāvatthī, went for alms, returned, partook of his meal, and said to the Venerable Ānanda, "Ānanda, let us go to the palace of Migāramātā." That was the Pubbārāma built by Visākhā, so called, to spend the afternoon in seclusion. So, having gone to the Pubbārāma with Venerable Ānanda, he spent the entire afternoon in meditation. Rising from meditation in the evening, he said to Venerable Ānanda, "Ānanda, let us go to the Pubbakoṭṭhaka to cool our bodies a bit." "Pubbakoṭṭhaka," dear devotees, was a bathing place nearby, a famous bathing place.

So, having gone with Venerable Ānanda, the Buddha bathed, climbed out, and stood with only his undergarment on, waiting for his body to dry. At that very moment, the royal elephant of King Pasenadi of Kosala, named Seta ("Whitey"), was climbing out after bathing at the bathing place. He was climbing out amidst a great sound of musical instruments—being a royal elephant, after all. He climbed out after bathing amidst the sound of music. The people seeing him praised him, saying, "This is an inspiring, beautiful, handsome, great Nāga!" They said, "This is a true Nāga." On that occasion, a monk named Udāyī was standing near the Buddha. There were many individuals named Udāyī; this Venerable Udāyī appears to have been someone with great intellectual intuition, much like Venerable Vaṅgīsa. He asked the Buddha:

"Venerable Sir, is it only to the elephant that people say, 'This is a true Nāga, a great Nāga'? Or do they say so to other animals and other large-bodied creatures as well?" Then the Buddha declared: "Udāyī, an elephant is called a Nāga. Likewise, a horse is called a Nāga. Likewise, a bull is sometimes called a Nāga. A tree is called a Nāga. Humans, too, are sometimes called a Nāga. But, Udāyī, in this world with its devas and humans, the one who does not commit '*āgu*'—the Pali word meaning 'wrong'—he is the one who can truly be called a Nāga." That is, he was declaring this with reference to himself.

Now, there the Buddha gave a novel etymology. The Buddha gives etymologies for many words, as those among you who know the Dhamma must have heard. That is: "*Āguṃ na*

karotīti nāgo"—He is a "Nāga" in the sense that he commits no wrong (*āgu*). Thus, it was expressed there that he himself is a Nāga in that sense. Venerable Udāyī, saying "Wonderful, marvelous!", expressed great appreciation and joy, and asked, "Permit me, Venerable Sir, to make a eulogy of this Buddha-Nāga." Then, he declared a long series of verses.

Beginning with, "This peaceful, tamed, great and noble man, worshipped by devas and humans, is the true Nāga, superior to all animals called Nāgas," he then said, "I shall now praise that Buddha-Nāga." Next, he amazingly connects the limbs of the elephant to the ocean of the Buddha's virtues. This is indeed very deep. Let us explain it according to our understanding and as time permits.

First, he says that the two front legs of this Buddha-Nāga are discipline (*dama*) and harmlessness (*avihiṃsā*)—for we can understand that an elephant usually attacks with its two front legs. The front legs of the Buddha-Nāga are discipline and harmlessness. Next, the two hind legs are austerity (*tapas*) and the holy life (*brahmacariya*). The hind legs are compared to austerity and the holy life. Next, the trunk—the trunk of this Buddha-Nāga is faith (*saddhā*). As you know, the trunk is the main organ of an elephant. Normally, an elephant performs heavy, rigid work with it; similarly, it can do very delicate work, like picking up a needle, with it. Here, the trunk of this Buddha-Nāga is faith. Next, the two white tusks of this Buddha-Nāga are equanimity (*upekkhā*). Because they are evenly positioned, the two tusks are compared to equanimity. Then comes a great simile: the neck of the Buddha-Nāga is mindfulness (*sati*). The neck is compared to mindfulness.

There is an amazingly deep matter here. In the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*), this matter is explained simply. Why is mindfulness compared to the neck of the Buddha? Now, some of you who have read the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* may know of a well-known event recorded in Dhamma literature. When the Buddha was journeying to Kusinārā for his parinibbāna, the manner in which he cast his final look toward the city of Vesālī is described as looking with an "elephant-look" (*nāgāpalokitaṃ apaloketvā*). This is because he does not turn just a part, but turns his entire body. This is frequently mentioned as a characteristic of the physical posture of Buddhas, or as a characteristic of their behavior. Even regarding Kakusandha Buddha, it is mentioned in Dhamma literature that he turned and looked with his entire body. What this indicates is full attention. Similarly, behind the Buddha, to investigate whether he was indeed a Buddha, the young Uttara—a disciple of Brahmāyu Brahmin—followed the Buddha for seven months, and finally declared in his eulogy of virtues: "This recluse Gotama turns with his entire body; he does not look by turning halfway or partially." An elephant too has this very characteristic. If you look closely at the behavior of an elephant, you may see this. When an elephant turns its neck, its entire body turns. This is a very special, wonderful characteristic of the elephant. Then one might think, "Then how does an elephant behave in a battle?" In relation to that, we read of an event from recent times, not from the Dhamma.

A certain hunter, in a deep forest, suddenly witnessed a battle between a lion and an elephant. I remember reading that description. That person was not someone who knew anything about these things, but his description of that battle was very amazing. Whenever the lion prepared to spring onto the elephant's temples (*kumbhasthala*), the elephant turned directly toward the lion, springing and turning very fast. This means the ability to respond with the entire body. Within that lies complete attention. Thus, in presenting mindfulness as a characteristic of the elephant, it shows the ability to direct full attention to something. Likewise, the reason mindfulness of the Buddha was compared to the elephant's neck is because of that. For we know there is a special difference between the behavior of a monkey or macaque and the behavior of an elephant. That is the matter concerning the neck.

Next, Venerable Udāyī says that the elephant's head is wisdom (*paññā*), reflection on the Dhamma (*dhamma-cintā*), and investigation (*vīmaṃsā*). Wisdom, investigating intellect, and Dhamma reflection are compared to the elephant's head. Everyone knows the elephant has a large head. Wisdom is compared to the head. Next, the belly of this elephant is the Dhamma. It is filled with Dhamma—the large belly of this elephant, the belly of this Buddha-Nāga. Next, the tail of the elephant is compared to seclusion (*viveka*). Although the commentators say a story about the tail—that just as an elephant drives away flies with its tail, when he needs seclusion he drives away people; the commentator explains it as driving them away by striking with the tail. But we can think that the tail is the peaceful, quiet limb of the elephant's body. Be that as it may, Venerable Udāyī thus compared the vast collection of the Buddha's virtues to an elephant, using the elephant to symbolize the Buddha's virtues.

That eulogy goes on even further. The simile of a white lotus is applied to the Buddha. You too have likely heard this simile often used to describe the Buddha. Just as a beautiful, pure, fragrant white lotus is born in the water, grows in the water, yet remains unsmeared by mud and unsmeared by water, in the same way, the Tathāgata is born in the world, arises in the world, yet lives unsmeared by the world. His supramundane (*lokuttara*) virtues are shown through the lotus. Next, a simile concerning the Dhamma or the spiritual meaning of the Buddha is given. Here, a somewhat unusual simile is told. The lives of the Buddha and the Arahants are indeed a puzzle to the world. The lotus simile is presented to show this in a simple way. After the lotus rises above the mud and water, neither mud nor water smears it; even if water touches it, it just rolls off to the other side.

Just like that, here a large log of wood is shown. Think for a moment: a log of wood is pulled out of a bonfire. Then, because it does not burn with blazing flames like that bonfire, it is said to be stilled/extinguished (*nivuna*) to that extent. This is shown as an illustration of the Nibbāna element (*nibbāna-dhātu*). For during the lifetime of the Arahants and the Buddha, in their daily activities like taking food and drink, the five faculties operate because they are not cut off or broken—since life is present. But because of the realization attained—due to the destruction of lust, hatred, and delusion—they are said to be stilled/extinguished. They are stilled. That is why it is said the Buddha "saw" Nibbāna. But the occasion when this is completed, when it ends, is: *'Sarīraṃ vijahaṃ*

nāgo parinibbisati anāsavo'—"Relinquishing the body, the taintless Nāga (the Buddha-Nāga) finally attains parinibbāna." At some point, like a burning log of wood that is completely extinguished when it receives no more firewood, that state is called *parinibbāna*. It is called *anupādisesa-parinibbāna* (extinguishment without residue). At the end of the Buddha's life, that fire was extinguished to the very point of not obtaining another birth. Thus, Venerable Udāyī praised the Buddha with a series of deep and meaningful verses as a eulogy.

Now let us go to another elephant story. There was a queen of King Udena of Kosambi named Māgandiyā. This Queen Māgandiyā harbored a grudge against the Buddha because he had once disparaged her beauty. Due to that grudge, Queen Māgandiyā bribed the citizens of the city to insult and drive away this recluse when he came for alms, by calling him a camel, an ox, etc. Consequently, when the Buddha was walking for alms together with the Sangha of bhikkhus, those citizens followed behind them uttering obscene words. Then Venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha, "Blessed One, we cannot live in this city. People insult us with such obscene words wherever we go. Let us go to another city." Then the Buddha asked, "Well, if that happens in that city too?" "Then, Blessed One, let us go to another city." "No, Ānanda, that is not right. A problem must be solved right where it arises. I am like an elephant entered into battle. It is the duty of the elephant entered into battle to endure the arrows of insults and abuse." Therefore, the Buddha rejected that proposal, and next, in relation to this, comparing himself to an elephant entered into battle, he uttered this verse. Perhaps you have heard it:

Ahaṃ nāgo va saṅgāme

cāpāto patitaṃ saraṃ

ativākyaṃ titikkhissaṃ

dussīlo hi bahujjano

"Like an elephant entered into the battlefield, I shall endure arrows shot from the bow (abusive words); for indeed, many people are undisciplined." There too, the Buddha compared himself to an elephant.

You must have heard of another valuable occasion: an occasion where the footprints of the Buddha were compared to the footprints of an elephant. There are two suttas called *Hatthipadopama* (Simile of the Elephant's Footprint). Here we take the *Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta*. In that *Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta*, such an event is mentioned: A wanderer named Pilotika, who had conceived faith in the Buddha, was walking along the road when he met the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi coming toward him. At that time, Jāṇussoṇi had no faith in the Buddha.

When asked, "Where are you coming from?", the wanderer Pilotika made a great praise of the Buddha in this manner: "Just as an elephant hunter—those elephant-keepers and others who go to catch elephants are called *nāgavaṇṇika*—a skilled elephant hunter, entering a forest where elephants live, if he sees a large elephant footprint in length and

width, comes to the conclusion by those very footprints, those tracks of the elephant, 'There is a large elephant in this forest.' Likewise, I too saw four footprints of the recluse Gotama. It is having seen them that I came to know: 'The recluse Gotama is a Fully Self-Awakened One (*Sammā-Sambuddha*), the Dhamma is well-proclaimed, and the Sangha is practicing well (*supaṭipanna*).'"

Next, the wanderer Pilotika describes those four elephant footprints in this manner: "When royal scholars, kṣatriya scholars, who are highly recognized in the country, whom others cannot tame, and who are skilled in debate, come to the recluse Gotama, having heard his Dhamma discussions, they finally become lay followers (*upāsaka*) or disciples of the Buddha. Just like kṣatriya scholars, brahmin scholars, householder scholars, and recluse scholars—scholars skilled in debate of these four kinds—come to the Buddha and finally become disciples of the Buddha. Seeing that, just as an elephant hunter recognizes an elephant from a footprint, I knew: 'This is a great Fully Self-Awakened One (*Sammā-Sambuddha*), the Dhamma is well-proclaimed, and the Sangha is practicing well (*supaṭipanna*).'" At this, the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi alighted from his carriage, bowed in the direction of the Buddha, and said, "I must see the Buddha."

Accordingly, when he approached the Buddha, Jāṇussoṇi mentioned how the wanderer Pilotika had praised the Buddha in this manner. Then, the Buddha said to the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi, "No, Brahmin, the elephant footprint simile is not complete with just that. I will tell you how it is completed." Thereupon, a very valuable sutta was preached under the name *Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta*. To show how great the historical value of this sutta is, you may have heard that the *Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta* is recorded as the sutta preached by the Great Arahant Mahinda upon arriving in Sri Lanka to inspire the Sri Lankan people for the first time. So, the Buddha explains it in this manner:

From this sutta, one understands how profound the all-knowing Buddha's understanding of elephants was.

"Brahmin, when a skilled elephant hunter, such an elephant-catcher, enters the forest, he sees a very wide and long footprint. If that elephant hunter is skilled, he does not immediately come to a conclusion upon merely seeing it, 'This is indeed the noble elephant I am searching for.' Why is that? Because in that forest, there are also stunted she-elephants named Vāmanikā, who have large footprints of that sort. Therefore, he does not abandon the search, nor does he come to a conclusion based on that alone. He goes further. Going further, he sees not only footprints of that kind, but also marks of branches broken off at high places. Yet, the elephant hunter does not decide on that alone, 'This indeed is the mark of the elephant I am searching for.'" Because there, the Buddha declares, there is another class of she-elephants named Kāḷārikā who can likewise break high branches. "Going further, he encounters places where tusk-slashes have been made. Yet, the elephant hunter does not come to a decision on that alone either, because there is still another class of she-elephants who can leave such marks. It is only when he finally goes and actually finds the elephant he was searching for, that the truly skilled elephant hunter comes to a certain conclusion." Next, the Buddha connects this to the Dhamma in this manner:

A wise person does not immediately decide with absolute certainty, "Indeed, the Buddha is Fully Self-Awakened, the Dhamma is well-proclaimed, and the Sangha is practicing well." It is through walking this path of training (*sikkhā-magga*) that one realizes it for oneself. From there, it is shown how a bhikkhu who has entered this Dispensation, gradually practicing the designated training, gradually attaining the jhānas, path-factors, and fruits, and finally, after attaining Arahantship, realizes for himself: "Indeed, the Buddha is Fully Self-Awakened, the Dhamma is well-proclaimed, and the Sangha is practicing well" through personal realization. Through this, the Buddha gives an amazingly wonderful message to the world. Faith (*saddhā*) is not an absolute, blind faith; the stage where faith is confirmed through help is personal realization. By realizing it oneself. In relation to that, it is shown that a bhikkhu attains the states of jhāna. He does not stop with that. Likewise, he attains direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). Still he does not stop. It is only when he finally ends suffering (*dukkha*) and destroys the taints (*āsava-khaya*) that he can properly recognize the Buddha. It is then that he can understand that the Dhamma is visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*), timeless (*akālika*), and inviting one to come and see (*ehipassika*). It is then that he can understand that the Sangha is practicing well (*supaṭipanna*). From this, a deep understanding regarding the Buddha as well as the Dhamma arises in a person.

Even the scholars who talk about faith in this day and age should understand this point. Just as the skilled elephant hunter, not being satisfied with that much, went on searching for more and more signs, so one must realize for oneself through personal realization the Dhamma, the Full Self-Awakening of the Buddha, etc. Until one realizes it, it is not suitable to establish absolute faith. That is only one faculty (*indriya*). Making use of faith, using it as an aid, one goes further forward. Faith grows gradually. That is why we frequently reminded you that this Dhamma is visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*), timeless (*akālika*), and inviting one to come and see (*ehipassika*). The *ehipassika* quality of the Dhamma means that as one goes forward, one finds more and more signs. The moment of true realization is the moment one realizes the Dhamma preached by the Buddha. Thus, the *Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta* is extremely important in that regard for educated people.

Furthermore, concerning the practice (*paṭipadā*) we just spoke of, there is an equally valuable sutta called the *Dantabhūmi Sutta*. There, too, it is indeed that same practice that is described. It is a very deep sutta on one hand. There, the Buddha on one occasion, addressing the novice (*sāmaṇera*) named Aciravata, compared this practice to the process a mahout uses to tame an elephant. A long explanation is given to that recluse. Let us explain it briefly. The king's mahout, or elephant hunter, has the duty of catching new royal elephants from the forest and taming them when they are brought back. An amazing, detailed analysis of taming elephants is found as a simile in the *Dantabhūmi Sutta*. In its components, the Buddha has compared them one by one in an amazing way, leading up to Arahantship in this Dispensation. If we take it briefly, it is shown as follows:

The king's mahout goes to catch a good elephant in the forest, taking the royal elephant along. Let us call him the state elephant (*maṅgala-hatthī*). Having gone, he catches that wild elephant and binds him to the neck of this royal elephant. Having bound him, he brings him to some secluded place in the forest, to a place where there are not many trees and leaves. Having brought him, he plants a large iron post firmly and binds this elephant to it. Having bound him, the Buddha shows in an amazing way the method by which that elephant is tamed. That mahout summons people who speak pleasant words and makes the elephant listen to those words. The Buddha further shows:

The wild elephant has "forest conduct" (*āraṇyaka sīla*)—that is, forest habits, wild habits. Eliminating those wild, restless habits, intoxication, etc., and creating a liking for the village, that mahout feeds him well from time to time. In that manner, through a subtle training, he makes him abandon the wild elephant's wild habits, wild conduct, forest habits, wild behaviors, dust, heat, and tames him in a manner suited to the village. Having tamed him thus, gradually, next, the Buddha shows an extremely rigorous stage of training in an amazing manner. Now, this is not just an elephant that drags logs; he is the king's elephant. He must have amazing strength to go to the battlefield. According to that description, an elephant receives an amazingly wonderful training that is almost beyond imagination. Having trained the elephant gradually in this manner, making him obedient to the mahout, next, what is done is shown:

Finally, how is this elephant trained to go to the battlefield and endure those arrow strikes? Sitting on top of the elephant is a mahout holding a lance (*tomara*)—do not understand "tomara" merely according to the modern Sinhala word. In any case, it is a sharp weapon used for such work. There are also mahouts with lances standing on the ground. A mahout stands in front. Not only that, next, they hang a large wooden board from his trunk, so that he cannot use his trunk. In that manner, a board is hung from the elephant's trunk. On his head sits a mahout with a lance, and they are also all around him. So at that time, the elephant has nothing to do but be disciplined.

Next, it is said that the elephant's discipline is such that the elephant does not shake his ears, does not shake his trunk, and does not shake his tail. He remains completely, entirely still. The word "*āneñja*" (imperturbable/unshakable) is applied there. Remember that word: "*āneñja*" means unshakable. The elephant is brought to an unshakable state. Then, because there are people with lances all around him in that manner, there is no way for the elephant to move. It is the occasion when he has developed calmness, restraint, and discipline to the point where he can remain completely still. That is the elephant's final test. Thereafter, if that elephant is taken to the battlefield, he does not retreat. He becomes capable of enduring those arrow wounds, lance wounds, or whatever, in the manner described. Then, the Buddha presents that story of the elephant, and next, shows the practice of this Dispensation in an amazing way. Therein we have much to contemplate; some of it is not immediately visible on the surface.

In this Dispensation, likewise, some person leaves the lay life and ordains. The Buddha compares ordination to the open space (*abbhokāsa*). Here, I forgot to mention a word

for the open space, which is *abbhokāsa*. It is a word equivalent to open air or open space. Then, just as that elephant was brought from the forest to an open space, this wild animal living in the lay home is brought to the secluded place of this open space of the ordained life. Next, a post is planted. What is the post? The four establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). This elephant is bound to the post of the four establishments of mindfulness. This is the first step. Having bound him thus, just as that mahout did, the Buddha from then on shows: "One must behave in this and this manner, one must eat food in this and this manner," showing the path of training contained in mindfulness—the subtle path of training. What is that done for? That is shown next. Regarding the aforementioned elephant, it was said to be the abandoning of wild habits. Here, what is spoken of is the abandoning of vulgar, lay habits (*grāmya-gatiya*). Whatever thoughts, wishes, behaviors, lay conduct, or rather, the lack of virtue brought from the lay home—if those are present, to eliminate them, he is bound to the post of the four establishments of mindfulness and directed to the aforementioned path of training. It is the teachers who do this on behalf of the Buddha. That is what we have to understand.

In this manner, gradually taming him, the path of training is shown. Next, directing him to meditation, he is established in the jhānas. Among them, the fourth jhāna in particular is described by that word "*āneñja*". "*Āneñja*" means an unshakable state of the mind; the fourth jhāna is an incredibly unshakable, powerful jhāna-strength. Likewise, there are subtle states like the sphere of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*), etc. Based on the powerful jhāna of the person who has attained that fourth jhāna, dwelling in that imperturbability (*āneñja*), he exercises psychic powers, great direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), flying through the air, etc., which are almost beyond our imagination. That word "*āneñja*" shows us, just like the taming of that elephant, the most rigorous stage of the elephant's training. Then, even more than the stillness brought about through those jhāna-strengths, the most powerful stillness is obtained through Arahantship. That is why it is said of the Buddha that he is endowed with an amazingly wonderful state of stillness, unshaken by the eight worldly conditions (*attha-lokadhamma*).

Now, recall the simile the Buddha declared about that elephant during the occasion of Māgandiyā's conspiracy. "Like an elephant entered into the battlefield, I endure these arrow strikes." Just as he compared himself to the elephant, the practice by which the worldly people are tamed is contained within that *Dantabhūmi Sutta*. That is worth contemplating. That is, then, who is the mahout? There is also a part not explicitly explained there.

If it is not a disparagement to the Buddha, we can think of it like this. What did that royal mahout do to tame this wild elephant? He took the state elephant (*maṅgala-hatthī*) to the forest. Having gone to the forest, he bound that wild elephant to the neck of the state elephant. If we take this simile deeply, one might think it is inappropriate, but what is done through binding the robe-strap (the act of ordaining) is the first sign of entering the class of the Buddha's state elephant. It is like binding it to the Buddha's neck. Let us think of it like that for a moment. Then, it was after binding him to the state elephant's neck that they went to the secluded place. After bringing him, from then on, the manner

in which the teachers and preceptors tame that wild elephant is described. Placing him in the four establishments of mindfulness, guiding him along that training, they finally, gradually, develop him and even make him attain those jhāna-strengths. Likewise, they make him a disciple capable of displaying great, marvelous direct knowledges.

That shaking nature (*iñjana*) present in this entire saṃsāra is craving (*taṇhā*) itself. Where there is no craving (*taṇhā*), there is no grasping (*upādāna*). The mind that has developed such a powerful stillness that it is no longer dragged further into saṃsāra is called Arahantship. When the Buddhas and Arahants in moments of seclusion dwell in the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samāpatti*), it is said that even if a thunderbolt strikes, they do not hear it—it is that state. We have likely explained to you before an event recorded in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*. Once, when the Buddha was resting in a chaff-house, a rainstorm with great claps of thunder occurred, and two farmers and four oxen were struck by lightning and killed. But when the Buddha came outside and asked, "Why have these people gathered?", they said, "Why, Blessed One, were you not right here?" "Yes, I was." "Did you not hear it?" "No, I did not hear it." "Were you asleep?" "No, I was not asleep, I was awake." That person could not fathom it. That is why it is said: escaping from all this shaking nature (*iñjana*) produced through these six sense bases—the nature of being dragged into the world through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—that complete silence is called in the Dhamma "noble silence" (*ariya-tuṇhībhāva*). Silent to the whole world. Such indeed is what is meant by having ended the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra and attained noble, deathless Nibbāna.

Accordingly, we can understand how important this elephant simile is. You have likely heard of a matter connected to the biography of the Buddha in the Jātaka Commentary's introduction. To show how symbolic this elephant is to the Buddha, the occasion of Queen Mahāmāyā conceiving the Bodhisatta Siddhattha is described as her dreaming of a white baby elephant holding a white lotus entering her womb. In any case, we must contemplate that this elephant is a very valuable animal for teaching us the Dhamma. Venerable Udāyī showed us that it can be used to help us learn the virtues of the Buddha.

Using this elephant as a simile, what we presented through this "Elephant Sermon" is the virtues of the Buddha, the virtues of the Dhamma, and the virtues of the Sangha. Just as you believe in the Triple Gem and have devotion toward the Triple Gem, using that Triple Gem as a guide, just as one follows that elephant's footprint, one must go to that final place mentioned. We wish that this Dhamma sermon may be an aid for that! We pray that the stream of wholesome thoughts developed by you through listening to this Dhamma sermon so far, and if any support is received for that practice, utilizing that too, may this Dhamma sermon be a supportive condition for you to quickly attain the noble, deathless Nibbāna—the realization of the paths and fruits starting from Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*)—before the lamp of this Dispensation is extinguished! At the same time, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, if there are any beings who wish to rejoice in such a wholesome deed of Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening, may they, through that rejoicing, be released from states of misery, reach happy states of existence,

and quickly be comforted by the noble, deathless Nibbāna through the bodhi of their aspiration! Wishing thus, let us recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #126

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.32)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Na antalikkhe na samuddamajjhe,

na pabbatānaṃ vivaraṃ pavissa;

Na vijjatī so jagatīpadesoko,

yatraṭṭhito mucceyya pāpakammā ti.

From:

Dhammapada 127 (Pāpavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Within every living mind, there is a wheel that constantly revolves. We call this the wheel of kamma (*kammacakka*). In this long *saṃsāra*, the wholesome and unwholesome deeds (kamma) we perform through the three doors of body, speech, and mind are deposited like karmic seeds in this *viññāṇa* (consciousness). Having been deposited, they mature and arise at various occasions as turns of retribution, bringing us pleasant or painful *Vedanā* (Feeling). Wholesome deeds bring pleasant *Vedanā* (Feeling). Unwholesome deeds bring painful *Vedanā* (Feeling). This is a natural law (*dhamma-niyāma*) that inevitably happens to everyone. We like pleasant feelings and dislike painful feelings. Therefore, when the turns of retribution for evil deeds that bring painful feelings arise, we try various methods to escape or run away from them. Similarly, we seek shelter and places of protection. But the Blessed Buddha declares that there is no place in this world to escape, flee, or hide from evil deeds. That is the very point declared in the stanza we have set up as our theme. Along with this stanza, there are three background stories that led to its preaching. These stories also demonstrate the idea that there is no place to escape from evil deeds.

While the Blessed Buddha was residing at the Jetavana monastery, a group of monks who had traveled to a distant region were returning to Jetavana to see the Blessed

Buddha. On their way, they entered a certain village for alms-round. The people of that village invited these venerable ones, offered them morning gruel, ushered them into the assembly hall, and sat listening to the Dhamma while the midday alms-meal was being prepared. At that moment, as a certain woman who was cooking the meal blew into the hearth, a flame caught the roof, and a wisp of thatch from the roof caught fire and flew up into the sky. Right at that moment, a crow flew by, got its neck caught in that ring of burning thatch, was burnt to death, and fell down in the middle of the village. Seeing this, the monks felt great spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). "This crow must have arrived there at that exact moment due to some evil deed. Only the Teacher knows the kamma underlying this; we must ask the Teacher about this," they thought, and they set off toward Jetavana. That is the first incident.

Next, another group of monks, while traveling to see the Blessed Buddha, boarded a ship because they had to cross a stretch of sea. Right in the middle of the sea, the ship suddenly stopped on its own. The ship stood completely still there, unable to be moved this way or that. Then, the people on the ship thought, "There must be an unlucky, miserable person here. Let us draw lots to find out who this miserable person is." The first time, the lot fell to the ship captain's wife, a young and beautiful woman. She was chosen as the unlucky person in the first round. So they said, "Draw the lots again." The second time and the third time as well, it fell to her.

Then the crowd looked at the ship captain, asking, "What shall we do about this?" The captain also thought, "I cannot risk the lives of this large crowd for the sake of one person." Therefore, he gave them permission to throw her into the sea. As the crowd prepared to lift her and throw her into the sea, she screamed in mortal terror. Then the captain said, "Not like that. Remove her jewelry and ornaments, dress her in a piece of dirty rag, and throw her into the sea. Moreover, I do not wish to see this woman floating on the water; it pains my heart. Therefore, tie a basket of sand around her neck so that she sinks immediately upon falling into the water."

The men did exactly that. When the woman fell into the water in that manner, only the sharks and sea monsters in the ocean knew what happened to her body. The monks on board, reflecting on the news of the woman who met such a terrible fate, thought, "This must be due to some grave past kamma. We must ask the Teacher about this." That is the second incident.

Next, another seven monks, also traveling to see the Blessed Buddha, arrived at a nearby monastery as night fell. When they inquired about a place to stay the night as guest monks, those monks handed over a certain cave with seven beds to these venerable ones. While they were asleep at night, a massive boulder rolled down and blocked the entrance of the cave. Seeing this, the monks of that monastery cried, "Alas! A great disaster has befallen our seven guest monks!" and gathered the people of several villages to try for seven consecutive days to remove the boulder. Those inside also tried their best, but they could not move it. But on the seventh day, the boulder rolled away on its own. When it rolled away, those monks were extremely ill and weak from being without food and

drink. Those monks also thought, "This must be due to some past evil deed of ours; we must ask the Teacher about this," and they set off.

All three groups met on the way, discussed their experiences and what they had seen, and arrived at Jetavana. They related what they had seen to the Blessed Buddha, one by one. Then, the Blessed Buddha revealed the karmic retribution underlying each event: "Monks, that crow that was burnt by fire in the sky and fell down was, in the past, a certain farmer in this very city of Sāvatthī. That farmer tried very hard to tame his ox. But after going a short distance, the ox would lie down. It was extremely disobedient. After trying repeatedly and failing to tame the ox, the farmer grew angry and thought, 'Fine then, sleep as much as you like!' He wrapped straw around the ox's body and set it on fire. The ox died right there. That was the evil deed. As a result of that evil deed, the farmer boiled in hell for a long time. Thereafter, reborn in the state of a crow, he was burnt by fire in the sky and fell down in this very manner for seven consecutive lifetimes." Thus, the Buddha explained the details of the first evil deed.

Next, the second story: the tale of the captain's wife. In the past, she was the wife of a householder—or perhaps a farmer's wife—in this very city of Bārāṇasī. She had to do all the household chores. While doing so, the dog at home followed her wherever she went, watching her. When fetching water, going to the forest to gather firewood, or bringing food to the field, the dog followed her constantly, always staying with her. Because of this, people teased her about it. Overcome with anger and shame, what did she do? One day, while taking food to her husband in the field, she hid a rope around her waist. The dog followed behind her. After emptying the food basket she had brought, she came near a well, filled the basket with sand, tied one end of the rope to the basket of sand, and called the dog to tie the other end. The dog came to her, wagging its tail. She tied the rope tightly around its neck and lowered the sand basket into the well. Immediately, the dog was dragged in and drowned. On account of that evil deed, after boiling in hell for a long time, she was bound with a sand basket around her neck and drowned to death in this exact manner for a hundred lifetimes. That is the second matter.

Thirdly, the story of the seven monks. The Blessed Buddha declared their past: in the past, these seven monks were seven cowherd boys. They were tasked with taking the cattle to the forest to graze, in turns—about once every seven days. One day, while returning after grazing the cows, they saw a large land monitor lizard running along. They chased after it. Many people know about the monitor lizard—perhaps as food, or for whatever reason, they chased it. The lizard ran and entered an anthill with seven holes. They tried very hard to get the lizard out, but failed. When they couldn't, what did these boys think? "We must come back tomorrow and catch this monitor lizard," they thought, and gathered various sticks and twigs to block all seven holes. Having blocked them, they went home. Afterwards, they forgot about this incident. Busy with other activities, seven days later, while passing by that path, they suddenly saw the anthill and remembered the monitor lizard. "We must open it and see what happened to the monitor lizard," they said, and opened it. When they looked, they saw the lizard coming out, extremely weak, trembling, reduced to mere skin and bones. Seeing this, the boys felt great compassion. Instead of killing it, they stroked its back and let it go, saying, "Oh, go on your way

safely." The Blessed Buddha declared both the good and bad aspects of that action: "Those seven did not boil in hell because they did not kill the lizard."

"But instead, for fourteen lifetimes, they had to remain without food and drink for seven days each, due to being trapped in this manner." When the Buddha declared these evil deeds, a certain monk asked the Blessed Buddha: "Venerable Sir, it seems then that one cannot escape from one's evil deeds even by flying into the sky, going into the sea, or entering between mountains?" "Indeed, monk, that is precisely so. There is never any way to escape, flee, or hide from evil deeds," the Blessed Buddha declared, and then spoke the stanza we have taken as our theme:

"Na antalikkhe na samuddamajjhe,

Na pabbatānaṃ vivaraṃ pavissa;

Na vijjatī so jagatīpadesoko,

Yatraṭṭhito mucceyya pāpakammā."

The Blessed Buddha declared that there is no place anywhere in the world—neither in the sky, nor in the midst of the sea, nor by entering mountain clefts—where one can escape the retributions of evil deeds. The more we think about this, the gravity of this kamma and evil deeds becomes clearly manifest. Moreover, all three stories mentioned here are about the violation of the first precept—the unwholesome act of destroying life. This shows the immense depth of the sentence we recite: *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi* ("I undertake the precept to abstain from destroying living beings"). What is spoken of here is the killing of animals, not even humans. We can understand to what extent even killing animal life, like an ox or a dog, leads to experiencing retribution. Furthermore, we must reflect a little on being born as a crow after escaping from hell. Having boiled in hell, the crow was born carrying that black color and an unquenchable hunger. According to this story, we can understand that the crows flying around us are actually animals that have escaped from hell. Such is the terrifying state of affairs in this *saṃsāra*. Just like killing, causing harm and torture brings painful retributions for a long time. The turns of retribution appropriate to kamma, and the way opportunities arise for them, are truly wondrous. As shown here, it is even difficult for someone to comprehend.

When we hear the term "death trap," we think it is something set up for us by others. But as we see here, this death trap is prepared automatically; one prepares it oneself through one's own kamma. There is a certain force of attraction in kamma. When this turn of retribution arises, the individuals, objects, and everything appropriate to that retribution are drawn towards it. If there is nothing else to deliver the retribution of an evil deed, even a lightning bolt will strike down. To that extent, the entire universe, the entire world, is arranged to exhaust the energy we generate through our volition (*cetanā*). We can say so. Earth, water, fire, and wind—these elemental portions we normally think of make up this body. The same is true for humans and other things in the external world.

Yet, all of these operate to exhaust that karmic force, that retribution. This is a wondrous death trap from which not even a Buddha or an Arahant can escape.

When one contemplates this, a great sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) toward *saṃsāra* arises. The Blessed Buddha has declared that due to ignorance (*avijjā*), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) arise in the mind. *Saṅkhāra* means the very concept of kamma. A certain preparation is made by the mind. That preparation is made due to ignorance and *Taṇhā* (Craving), based on the notion of "I" and "mine". It is due to the ignorance of "I" and the corresponding *taṇhā* that grasps things as "mine" that one thinks, "If this is my ox, I must be able to tame it." Because it did not bend to his will, he tortured and killed it. Similarly, because that woman felt a certain shame that did not suit her mind, she killed the dog that was the cause of it. The other incidents are the same. Even in the case of the monitor lizard, it must have been due to some craving for food that those boys tried to kill it. Whichever it may be, the mind is defiled by greed, hatred, and delusion, and a certain force arises. It is like a karmic seed. That is why it is stated in the Dhamma:

"Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ,

Tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ;

Kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ,

Pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ."

"Just as one sows, so does one reap the harvest." Those who perform good kamma receive pleasant retributions. Those who perform evil kamma receive painful retributions. This is a natural law (*dhammatā*). Thus, there is a wondrous entanglement of kamma here. On one occasion, a deity approached the Blessed Buddha and asked a question:

"Anto jaṭā bahi jaṭā,

Jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā;

Taṃ taṃ gotama pucchāmi,

Ko imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ."

"An inner tangle, an outer tangle; this generation is entangled in a tangle. I ask you this, Gotama: who can untangle this tangle?" they asked the Blessed Buddha. The Blessed Buddha declared on that occasion:

"Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño,

Cittaṃ paññañca bhāvayaṃ;

Ātāpī nipako bhikkhū,

So imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ."

"If someone, established in virtue (*sīla*), develops the mind—that is, concentration (*samādhi*)—and develops wisdom (*paññā*), and thus walks upon the path of practice consisting of virtue, concentration, and wisdom, fulfilling the Noble Eightfold Path; then such a wise, energetic monk untangles this karmic knot."

From this, we first see the importance of virtue (*sīla*). Nowadays, the Five Precepts are regarded as a simple, minor thing. Just now, these merit-seeking devotees undertook the *Ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (virtue with livelihood as the eighth). What is expected through all of this is the taming of body and speech. Though we say body and speech, what lies beneath them is the mind. The Blessed Buddha has declared: *Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi, cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā*. According to the Dhamma, this kamma is something connected to the mind. "Monks, I call volition itself kamma. Why? Having willed, one performs kamma through body, speech, and mind." If actions performed by machines happen automatically, they are of a different kind. But when they are connected to a certain volition, one becomes entangled in that kamma. So much so, we can call this the machine of kamma.

Indeed, ancient teachers, when speaking of the wondrous and sorrowful operation of kamma as described in these stories, used certain words: "operated by the machine of kamma" (*kamma-yanta*). This means the way kamma delivers its retribution is like the working of a machine. This is a wondrous thing. According to the volitional force generated in the mind, various things in the entire universe align and are drawn to that point. Individuals are drawn, things are drawn, and opportunities are aligned. In particular, what is to be understood here is that in the rendering of retribution for evil deeds, what are drawn are often the individuals who were the cause of, or assisted in, the original deed. Also, sometimes it is due to the hatred generated therefrom, for revenge. If one harbors hatred toward someone and thinks, "I will take revenge on them," then in the next life, perhaps that person can take revenge. However, the kamma does not end there. Instead, one becomes more and more entangled. This is what is called the inner and outer tangle. The Blessed Buddha declared that this is like a tangled ball of thread. The Blessed Buddha used several words to describe the entirety of *saṃsāra*: *tantākulakajātā, kulagaṇṭhikajātā, muñjababbajabhūtā*. It is like a tangled skein of thread. Similarly, there is a special type of grass called *babbaja* grass, which also has a tangling nature. It is for this reason that the entire *saṃsāra* is said to be a tangle, possessing a tangled nature. Due to this ignorance, other people are also drawn into the evil deeds one commits. These individuals are involved in this situation as instruments. They too generate more and more kamma. Thus, there is no end to this. Furthermore, when experiencing the retribution of kamma, unless a Buddha reveals it or one has a correct understanding of kamma, one thinks it is a death trap set up by someone else. So, they develop hatred toward them. But in truth, it was oneself who set this trap through the evil deeds one committed. Therefore, the Blessed Buddha declares that those who perform evil deeds act as their own enemies. They behave as their own enemies because they will have to experience the results of what they have done one day, and they will have to suffer them severely.

Now, when a grain of paddy is planted, it grows into a large plant, a crop of paddy. Similarly, a small seed becomes a tree. In the same way, from the moment a kamma is performed, it begins to mature. In its maturing, it yields results on a massive scale. Because the unwholesome roots of greed, hatred, and delusion draw in the further essence required for it. Having drawn it in, it yields retribution hundreds of thousands of times over, like the original evil deed. The Blessed Buddha declares regarding the retribution of some kamma, that a person boiled in hell for hundreds of years, thousands of years, hundreds of thousands of years. Sometimes, upon performing such grave evil deeds, they boil in hell for aeons (*kappa*).

Thus, this is a wondrous thing. This is something done by the machine of kamma, and furthermore, other individuals are drawn into it. Not only that, but those individuals are also caught in the kamma. Not knowing that it is a retribution, they too accumulate more and more kamma from it. Like a tangled ball of thread that cannot be untangled, where the end cannot be found, a web of confusion exists here. This can be called the operation of the machine of kamma, or else the wheel of kamma (*kammacakka*). Because having performed kamma, it then revolves and comes back as the turn of retribution.

For example, if we want a certain time on the clock in front of us—often what we call an alarm—we set it to operate at a specific time. Then, when that time passes, the gear wheel revolves and that action takes place, producing a certain sound. In the same way, this kamma revolves within this mind. Volition revolves and yields results as turns of retribution. Not once or twice, but arising hundreds of thousands of times, they yield their results, bringing painful results. Regarding the individuals who serve as instruments for those retributions, it must be said that they accumulate more and more kamma anew. The only wheel that can weaken or stop this wheel of kamma is the Wheel of Dhamma (*dhammacakka*). That Wheel of Dhamma is what we referred to as virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). If we speak first of virtue (*sīla*), since the stories here are about the unwholesome act of destroying life, let us see what is meant by undertaking a precept.

Nowadays, many educated people say, "Is it not enough to undertake it once? Do we have to undertake it every day? Is this something to be taken from a monk every day?" and raise various such questions. But what is being done here? It is a certain technique to tame one's mind. In short, one implants a certain determination in the mind so that by taming the mind, one can then tame the body and speech. "I abstain from destroying other lives, from the evil deed of destroying others' lives, and from causing harm and torture," and one undertakes this as a training precept. "I do not do this because someone else says so, but because I fear its retributions, I keep this precept," and one develops a firm determination. Once a determination is made, it is a good beginning. When one's mind inclines toward evil, it is that very determination that helps restrain the mind. One remembers, "Did I not undertake the precept in this manner?" Through that, one issues a command, an order to one's own wisdom: "If you see an animal, do not kill it." One's impulses say, "Kill it." Impulses mean emotions. One's feelings—that is, to please the tongue, or to take revenge, or for entertainment, etc.—make one feel like killing a bird, a dog, a goat, a chicken, or a pig. Right then, when the virtue (*sīla*)

undertaken in the mind is remembered, a command comes: "This must not be done; do not do this." Because of that, one is able to abstain from it.

It is for this strength that the undertaking of virtue (*sīla*) exists. Without such a method or technique, one cannot escape from this. Because the influences of society as well as one's own feelings are that powerful. When these two come, if there is no prior preparation, it becomes very difficult to control the mind. That restraint or abstaining is an extremely difficult thing. It is as a foundation for this that one undertakes a training precept. In that way, virtue (*sīla*) helps. The retributions of violating such virtue are what we see in all of these stories. Thus, what is done through training precepts is receiving some encouragement to abstain from one's evil deeds. That means taming the body and speech. Yet, a multitude of thoughts arise in the mind. Even that thought is a highly grave kamma.

The Blessed Buddha has declared that volition itself is called kamma. Kamma is not merely the action visible to the external world, nor the word heard, which are caused by volition. The moment an unwholesome volition arises in someone, from that very moment, they are caught in a grave kamma. Let us say, an evil volition. Now, we have heard of the Venerable Devadatta Thero; it is mentioned that he harbored intense hatred and malice toward the Blessed Buddha and did various things. It is not only the things he did, but even that thought itself was an extremely grave unwholesome act. Because that thought was directed toward the Blessed Buddha, the foremost in the three worlds, or toward the Arahants—individuals who have developed their minds to the highest degree. Leaving that aside, as shown here, if someone harbors hatred or a volition to kill even toward animals, from that very moment they will have to face a multitude of grave karmic retributions. Through its execution, it becomes complete. If they are things that proceed to action, the volition is completed through body or speech.

Therefore, to destroy the root here, virtue (*sīla*) alone is not sufficient. That is why it is said: *Sīle patiṭṭhāya*—"established in virtue." If one is not established in virtue, one does not even think of the mind. Therefore, established in virtue, having developed some control over body and speech, next, *cittaṃ paññañca bhāvayaṃ*—one must develop one's mind. Developing the mind means bringing about concentration (*samādhi*). Because the mind is a scattered thing. The mind of ordinary worldlings is of an extremely scattered nature; it cannot be brought under control. Now, when looking at a flowing stream of water, it turns this way and that, turning toward where the rocks are, running here and there. It goes in whichever direction it pleases. But if this is confined, narrowed, and directed through a pipe, sometimes it yields a massive force capable of turning a giant iron wheel. We see this at hydroelectric power stations. Similarly, in this scattered mind, no real power is seen. The power remains suppressed. The mind is an extremely powerful thing. But this power is hidden; because the power of the mind is scattered, it cannot be put into operation. Through that, one cannot attain that wisdom (*paññā*). Wisdom (*paññā*) means understanding the *Anicca* (Impermanent) and *Anattā* (Not-self) nature of the entire universe of the world. Ultimately speaking, one must come to the realization that there is nothing to be taken as "I" or "mine".

To come to that, one must first see the impermanence (*anicca*) of all these things. Due to that impermanent nature, the realization must arise that the entirety of existence is constantly *Dukkha* (Suffering). Then, it will automatically be understood that there is nothing to be grasped here as "I" or "mine". When those first two aspects are understood, the realization of this *Anattā* (Not-self) nature arises—that there is nothing in the world that can be taken as "I" or "mine". The absence of this (realization) is what causes the volitions that put kamma into action. "These things must exist in the world as I wish. Others must exist as I wish." It is based on such firmly held notions that worldlings are inclined toward various evil deeds. To eliminate this perception of self (*atta-saññā*), this feeling of "I" and "mine" lying beneath that notion, one must develop the insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) declared by the Blessed Buddha. Insight (*vipassanā*) means a special seeing, a penetrative seeing. One must see the impermanent nature of our life, of our body, of everything in this world. To do all of that, the mind must be concentrated. That is what is called *cittaṃ bhāvayaṃ*—developing the mind. Developing the mind is developing absorption (*jhāna*). Establishing a concentration (*samādhi*) in the mind by way of *jhāna* meditation and so on. A mind so concentrated becomes powerful, just like a large flow of water restricted into a pipe becomes strong enough to generate electricity.

Therefore, not being satisfied with virtue alone, one must constantly raise in the mind some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) as a wholesome thought, not an unwholesome one. One should constantly bring to mind a wholesome thought—such as recollecting the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), either a phrase on the Buddha's virtues or one of the nine virtues of the Blessed Buddha; or a thought of loving-kindness (*mettā*) such as "may all beings be well and happy"; or a part of the body that feels particularly repulsive to oneself, like hair, body hair, or bones; or a short phrase like "death is certain, life is uncertain". A *kamaṭahana* or meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) does not mean saying things like "I will kill, I will kill, somehow I will kill, I will kill," but rather a thought like "may they be well, may they be well!" That is right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). For a good concentration, one must use a good wholesome *kammaṭṭhāna* in a way that inclines the mind toward the wholesome. If the mind becomes concentrated through that, then one can experience the power of the mind at that moment, seeing how powerful the mind is. Then, that is used to gradually stop the unwholesome thoughts that flow in the mind like a torrent of water. That is, when a thought arises, our mind rolls over and inclines toward the unwholesome. For a long time, like a river flowing downwards, the mind of beings in *saṃsāra* has inclined toward the unwholesome side. When such a thought arises, due to the thoughts and thought-conceptions (*vitakka*) that arise upon it, a multitude of further kammas are automatically accumulated.

To stop the operation of this machine of kamma, one must break the power of those unwholesome thoughts, the volitional force. One must gradually calm this down. This is what *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) means. The mind constantly has a restless nature. Stopping those, one must bring about a calming, an extinguishment (Nibbāna. Because with every single instance of this restlessness, the kammas generated create more and more *Bhava* (Becoming) and lifetimes. This is a wondrous thing. The way birth (*jāti*) is brought about in various states of existence to yield the retribution of a kamma, and how

corresponding to it, in an appropriate manner, the four elements—earth, water, fire, and wind—come together to create a body in some womb or elsewhere.

They say this body is created precisely to experience the feelings (*vedanā*) corresponding to that kamma. As a way of giving an opportunity to experience them. If kamma is to yield its retribution, one must experience the corresponding feelings (*vedanā*). Those feelings are experienced through some body. That is how the body is created. Thus, some are born blind, mute, deaf, deformed, or in various other ways. Various other sufferings, illnesses, and accidents all come to exhaust that karmic force. The entire universe is arranged to yield retributions according to the force generated by that volition (*cetanā*). So, one might think: "Then, why not just keep performing meritorious deeds? Can we not remain in this *saṃsāra* forever?" To remain forever as one wishes is something that can never be done. This *saṃsāra* is a heap of *Dukkha* (Suffering).

Everyone is struggling to satisfy their own cravings (*taṇhā*) and desires. In such a place, one can never live as one wishes, according to one's own desires. That is one aspect. The other is that even if one performs wholesome deeds, as soon as their retributions are exhausted, one must experience the retributions of past evil deeds. Let us say one is born in heaven; after that merit is exhausted, one falls back into hell. No matter how many meritorious deeds one performs, even after aeons have passed, once their retributions are exhausted, one has to experience the retributions of one's unwholesome deeds. That is what impermanence (*anicca*) means. The Blessed Buddha declared that even the Brahmas in the Brahma worlds think they are permanent, yet they too are impermanent. Even after aeons, when that merit and wholesome kamma are exhausted—it is just like when the paddy in the barn runs out. One lives eating, drinking, and dancing, but the day the paddy in the barn runs out, on that day, one understands this danger. In the same way, even if one performs wholesome deeds, on one hand, the mind is never satisfied. Therefore, looking at it ultimately, this knot must be broken first. This tangled ball of thread can never be untangled—so much so, not even a Buddha can untangle it (for us, we must do it ourselves).

Next, the Blessed Buddha declared the way to calm these kammas, and that is called the Wheel of Dhamma (*dhammacakka*). On that side, it revolves automatically, yielding retributions. The Blessed Buddha points out the Wheel of Dhamma which must be revolved through effort. The Wheel of Dhamma must be revolved through effort, just like swimming upstream in a river. The Blessed Buddha directly declares regarding this entire Dhamma that it is a path that goes against the current (*paṭisotagāmī*). Going against the current (*paṭisotagāmī*) means like swimming upstream against the flowing torrent. Going with the torrent is easy, but swimming upstream is difficult. The Dhamma is something like that. Because the mind of the ordinary worldling is inclined toward evil. Unless one makes an effort, one can never escape from this *saṃsāra*. Then we can understand that the effort applied for this is breaking the power of that volition in that manner.

This is broken in four stages. In the first stage, when a deep understanding of the Three Characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self)

arises through the insight-knowledge called the path-knowledge of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*), as a matter of natural law, that person's mind sees Nibbāna for the first time. One experiences a certain calming. Although not freed from all defilements, due to one's wisdom (*paññā*), a certain portion of karmic seeds dry up. That is, the kammas known as those leading to states of deprivation (apāya)—if one performs an unwholesome kamma by holding very strongly to the notion of "I" and "mine", its retribution is a grave one that might lead to hell itself. Therefore, first of all, the power of those kammas in the mind is broken. What helps to break that power is wisdom (*paññā*). Why? Because if *saṅkhāra* (Preparations) arise due to ignorance (*avijjā*), when ignorance is thinned out to some extent, *saṅkhāra* must also be thinned out. When ignorance is completely eliminated, *saṅkhāra* must also be completely stilled. This is the natural law (*dhammatā*). It is according to this natural law that the Blessed Buddha has shown those four stages of paths and fruits (*magga-phala*).

The Blessed Buddha illustrates the liberation gained through that path-knowledge of Stream-entry in the first stage with this simile: By the liberation gained through the path-knowledge of Stream-entry, the remaining *Dukkha* (Suffering) that person has to experience in the entirety of *saṃsāra* is like the dust on a fingernail, whereas the portion from which they have received relief is like the great earth. So terrifying is *saṃsāra*; to the ordinary worldling, it feels as though one can never escape from it. Such is the wondrous, massive entanglement of "an inner tangle, an outer tangle," tangled both inside and outside. But the path of virtue, concentration, and wisdom shown by the Blessed Buddha reveals that through four stages, these karmic forces can be broken. The Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) receives great relief, being one who will be reborn in *saṃsāra* only seven times at most. When that Wheel of Dhamma is revolved once more further along, at that stage that person is called a Once-returner (*sakadāgāmī*). That means they return to this world only once. Having been reborn in heaven, if at all, they return to the human world only once; or else, departing from the human world, they are reborn in heaven. Thus, they receive great relief by returning to this world only once. Thereafter, they definitely become an Arahant and bring *Dukkha* (Suffering) to an end.

Next is the state called Non-returner (*anāgāmī*). Non-returner means they do not return to this world. Being reborn in a Pure Abode (*suddhāvāsa*) Brahma world, they bring *Dukkha* (Suffering) to an end right there. Becoming an Arahant, they attain final Nibbāna (extinction / extinguishment). Ultimately, becoming an Arahant means penetratively seeing the Three Characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self) in the deepest manner in this very life, experiencing the complete calming of *saṅkhāra* (Preparations) in the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*), drying up those karmic seeds, and bringing the sufferings of *saṃsāra* to an end so that one is never reborn again. Yet, so powerful is that wheel of kamma we spoke of, that even Buddhas and Arahants had to experience the retributions of certain kammas performed in the past. The most famous instance of this, as you have all heard, is the Great Arahant Moggallāna. Ninety-one aeons ago, he beat and crushed the bones of his parents, killing them. So intense was the retribution of that evil deed that, in physical terms, his body became dark-colored, like that crow we mentioned.

Furthermore, even though he was someone of such great psychic power, in the end, he was killed at the hands of five hundred bandits, his bones crushed to pieces. In that manner, the retributions of those evil deeds are received even by Arahants. Such is the power of kamma. But what is the relief? There is no further rebirth (*jāti*).

When the Great Arahant Aṅgulimāla walked for alms, broken pots thrown from houses or stones thrown by boys would fly through the air and hit his head. When he returned from the alms-round with blood flowing from his split head, the Blessed Buddha consoled him: "Brahmin, that evil deed for which you would have had to boil in hell for a very long time—that evil deed of destroying the lives of so many people for which you would have had to boil in hell—you are now freed from it, and this danger you face now is a minor thing." From that, we see that this wheel of kamma is extremely powerful. What is the way to escape from this? It is the terrifying escape from this *saṃsāra*—namely, the cessation of further rebirth (*jāti*) by raising wisdom (*paññā*). When this is said, nowadays Buddhists often feel afraid: "Oh, then what about existence?" The craving for existence is the most subtle *Taṇhā* (Craving) within worldlings. The Blessed Buddha declares this to be *bhava-taṇhā* (craving for existence).

Beings always try to exist in the world somehow. No matter how much this is explained, a fear arises: "Oh, we are going to cease to exist." To eliminate that fear, what is to be done? One must eliminate that dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)—which causes our feeling of "I"—by raising wisdom (*paññā*). There is nothing here to be taken as "I" or "mine". Both the things taken as "I" and "mine," and that "I" itself—each and every thing is impermanent (*anicca*). From moment to moment, they change extremely rapidly. Likewise, there is nothing there to be taken as pleasure. Everything that changes, due to the agitation caused by its alteration and preparation, produces only *Dukkha* (Suffering). This nature of *dukkha* is what exists in the entirety of *saṃsāra*. In short, the Blessed Buddha has declared that if one sees it correctly, *dukkha* is like a thorn. Similarly, what is called pleasure is also, in reality, *dukkha*. In that way, everything that worldlings think of as pain and pleasure, the Blessed Buddha designates as *dukkha*. Because even that feeling (*vedanā*) we think of as pleasure, when it changes, becomes *dukkha* for us. When a pleasant thing or a beloved person is separated from us, *dukkha* comes to us. Everything that comes in the form of pleasure is actually *dukkha*.

For this reason, the Blessed Buddha declares that there is no escape other than being liberated from the entirety of *saṃsāra* existence. The reason one does not want to be liberated from it is delusion (*moha*) or ignorance (*avijjā*). When that ignorance is eliminated, that person has no fear, because through that deep understanding, the realization arises that there is no "self" here to cease to exist. It is such a profound vision that the Blessed Buddha presents to escape from this entanglement of kamma in *saṃsāra*. There is a nature in kammas to yield such terrifying retributions, chasing and yielding results again and again. Some kammas yield results in this very life, some in the next life, and some in a life further beyond. In this way, some kammas chase and yield retributions hundreds of thousands of times. Therefore, these merit-seeking devotees must reflect: "Why do we bring this Dhamma close to our lives? It is for liberation from

saṃsāra." The sufferings of *saṃsāra* do not mean merely those superficial sufferings identified by ordinary worldlings. It is something far deeper, and it is well understood by a concentrated mind. When the mind becomes still, one understands that everything we think of as pleasure actually possesses a nature that brings *dukkha*. One can never be satisfied with any of it; there is no lasting satisfaction. The Blessed Buddha has described *Taṇhā* (Craving) as a wondrous thirst. Like a fever-stricken patient asking for water, if our expectations in this life are not fulfilled, at the moment of death, we draw our last breath with the wish and desire to be reborn somewhere. According to that desire and wish, what we receive is not merely what we want; it is arranged according to the kamma we have performed. In that story, by killing the ox, that person obtained some pleasure and satisfaction. Fittingly, he received a body suitable to exhaust those retributions, in the form of a crow.

The retributions of the evil deeds done for one's own entertainment and pleasure must be experienced by oneself in return. This is called being the owner of one's kamma (*kammasakatā*). Kamma and its retribution are often identical. The retribution is exactly corresponding to the kamma, in that very manner. Thus, this is a world where the wheel of kamma revolves. In short, this *saṃsāra* is an ocean of kamma. It is called an ocean of *dukkha* because it is an ocean of kamma. One performs kamma here; indeed, one cannot remain without performing kamma. To carry on existence, one must use this volition (*cetanā*) and perform various kammas. And it is not only wholesome deeds that are performed; because one is automatically forced to commit sins for the sake of one's loved ones, and for the maintenance of one's own life.

Therefore, other than being liberated from the entirety of *saṃsāra*, there is no way to cut this knot. That is why the Blessed Buddha declared to that deity: *Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño*...—"The wise, energetic, and capable monk established in virtue, developing the mind and wisdom..." Though it says "monk," here it is not only a monk, but any practitioner (*yogāvacara*)—whether lay or ordained—who untangles this knot. Virtue, concentration, and wisdom are the Noble Eightfold Path itself. Right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). In this manner, one must reorganize one's entire stream of thought. First of all, one must align one's daily view of life with right view—possessing a basic understanding of good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome, as well as some understanding of the Four Noble Truths: *Dukkha* (Suffering), the cause of *dukkha*, the cessation of *dukkha* which is Nibbāna, and the path to it.

Next, according to that view of life, one must direct one's thoughts. The very thought of escaping from this *saṃsāra* is what is called renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*). It is not merely the thought of becoming a monk. One must generate thoughts of departing from this *saṃsāra—saṅkappa*. Next, thoughts of loving-kindness, and thoughts of non-harming (*avihiṃsā-saṅkappa*) which are separate from harmful thoughts. In that manner, one must train the mind in good thoughts. Following those thoughts, one must

next align one's speech. Abstaining from false speech, slanderous speech, harsh speech, and idle chatter, one must practice the good side, such as speaking beneficial and truthful words.

Next, regarding one's actions, *sammā-kammanta* (right action)—here, one must particularly abstain from grave unwholesome deeds, the wrong bodily actions of killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Furthermore, not only that, but also one's livelihood (*ājīva*). It is there that we must reflect: nowadays, killing animals is an extremely easy thing. Something seemingly unavoidable, something one cannot do without if one is to live in society and become rich. If one can kill animals by the thousands, one can get rich quickly. But the retributions one has to suffer for them are exactly what we see in those stories. Therefore, one who wishes to make a profit can live in that manner, causing such harm. The Blessed Buddha declared the loss that comes from it. One can even take it as a "profit" in another sense: one kills only one animal, but one has to die hundreds of thousands of times. So, in that way, one receives it hundreds of thousands of times over. One could think of it as "not a loss" in that ironic sense!

In any case, one must reflect on the terrifying retributions of those evil deeds. Reflecting thus, one must arrange one's livelihood as declared by the Blessed Buddha, abstaining from wrong trades—such as trading in intoxicants, poison, animals for slaughter, and weapons—and arrange one's livelihood in a way that aligns one's thoughts. While so arranging, through that very effort, one trains oneself to prevent the mind from entering unwholesome states, to abandon unwholesome states already within, to arouse wholesome states, and to develop wholesome states already present. Through the very arrangement of one's livelihood, one practices that fourfold Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*). Then, when the mind constantly moves only in good thoughts in that manner, that person's *sati* (mindfulness) develops. One is compelled to remain with good mindfulness and clear comprehension, like a gatekeeper.

Next, through that, by constantly raising wholesome thoughts in the mind, one can also establish concentration (*samādhi*). In that way, when the Noble Eightfold Path is completed, if someone deeply penetrates the Three Characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self) through what we consider insight-meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), then that person is the one who, through the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, escapes from this extremely terrifying *saṃsāra* and attains liberation by the calming of all *saṅkhāra* (Preparations) in the noble, deathless Nibbāna. One realizes noble Nibbāna.

On a Poya day like today, these merit-seeking devotees inclined their minds toward the Noble Eightfold Path, and therein toward concentration and wisdom. You have maintained good thoughts, even for this short period, by reflecting on the terrifying nature of evil deeds and the terrifying nature of *saṃsāra*, thus generating fear of *saṃsāra* and understanding its nature of *dukkha*. That helps toward Nibbāna. One must close the door to *saṃsāra* and turn toward Nibbāna. Therefore, you have generated a multitude of such valuable thoughts based on a Dhamma stanza preached by the Blessed

Buddha. Rejoicing in that, you must continue to maintain your thoughts in a way that develops the virtues of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). You must seek out things that develop them. What are the things that develop them? The Dhamma. Dhamma reflection. Or else, performing wholesome, meritorious deeds. Through all of those, one's mind is inclined toward the wholesome. Ultimately speaking, it is by subjecting the mind to meditation and escaping from *saṃsāra* through insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) that one can escape. Resolving in that manner, at this moment, you must make a firm determination to turn your entire livelihood toward the path of goodness. Because you will have to experience the retributions of the evil deeds you perform. There is no shelter or place of protection in this entire world to ever escape or be liberated from them.

According to that sermon, during this short time, these merit-seeking devotees have accumulated a great store of merit by way of hearing the Dhamma and by way of meditation. Utilizing that multitude of wholesome volitions as a supportive sufficing condition (*upanissaya*), may you develop your Dhamma practice and meditation in this very life, and may you gain the power and strength to find solace in the noble, deathless Nibbāna through the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry, Once-returning, and so on! One must make such a wish. Furthermore, may this mass of merit we have accumulated so far through this Dhamma sermon and Dhamma listening be shared with the assembly of deities and Brahmas who protect the Sasana, and with all those who assist and direct their minds to this Dhamma! May they rejoice in this merit, and having rejoiced, may they find solace in the noble, deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! One must make that wish. Similarly, may all beings, from the Avīci hell to the highest heaven of the peak of existence (*bhavāgra*), including our departed relatives, rejoice in this merit of Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening! Having rejoiced, may they realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! Recite this stanza to share the merit with that aspiration:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #127

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.56)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Na brāhmaṇassa pahareyya, nāssa muñcetha brāhmaṇo;

dhī brāhmaṇassa hantāraṃ, tato dhī yassa muñcati;

na brāhmaṇassetadakiñci seyyo, yadā nisedho manaso piyehi;

yato yato hiṃsamano nivattati, tato tato sammati-c-eva dukkhaṃ ti.

From:

Dhammapada 389–390 (Brāhmaṇavagga)

Dear Listeners,

We generally consider attachment and clashing (aversion) as two completely different mental states. Why? Because attachment is towards what we find pleasant, while clashing is towards what we find unpleasant. However, the Buddha points out to us that even within clashing, there is a certain gratification or pleasure that is experienced. To put it briefly, we are inclined to repeatedly recreate conflict and clashing because we derive some happiness or gratification from it. What is that happiness? Revenge, paying back in kind (tit-for-tat), or seeing one's opponent fall into Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*). Now, the two valuable verses we have taken as our theme today clarify this very subtle point. The background story to these verses as recorded in the texts is highly exemplary.

While the Buddha was residing at Jetavana monastery, one day a conversation arose among a group of people gathered in Sāvatthī. It was a discussion praising the immense virtues of Ven. Sāriputta. "This Ven. Sāriputta of ours is a truly marvelous person. He possesses a wondrous power of patience and forbearance. Even if someone gets angry with him or strikes him, he does not get angry." Hearing this praise, a certain heretical Brahmin who was there asked, "Is there anyone in the world who does not get angry? Who is it that doesn't get angry?" When they replied, "Yes, our Ven. Sāriputta cannot be

made angry," the Brahmin made a sort of bet: "Well, is it impossible to make him angry? I know how to do it. I will show you how to make him angry."

Next, what was the method this Brahmin employed? While Ven. Sāriputta was walking for alms, the Brahmin walked up behind him and struck him extremely hard on his back. Without even turning back to see what it was, Ven. Sāriputta continued walking forward at his normal, natural pace. Seeing this, a cold sweat broke out on the Brahmin. "Oh, what immense virtue this person possesses!" he thought. He immediately ran ahead, fell at the Elder's feet, and begged for forgiveness: "Venerable Sir, forgive me." Ven. Sāriputta asked, "What is this about?" The Brahmin replied, "I struck you to test you." Even before the Brahmin could beg further, Ven. Sāriputta immediately said, "I forgive you." Then the Brahmin said, "Venerable Sir, if you forgive me, out of compassion please walk to my house and accept almsfood." Having said so, he asked for the Venerable's almsbowl.

Taking the bowl, the Brahmin walked behind. Having conducted Ven. Sāriputta to his house, the Brahmin offered him almsfood bountifully. Meanwhile, the news that a Brahmin had struck the Elder spread, and a large crowd of people armed with sticks and clubs gathered near the house, saying, "This Brahmin must be killed! He has struck our innocent Elder." They stood outside the house, waiting. When Ven. Sāriputta looked out after finishing his meal, he saw these people. The Elder reflected with wisdom and employed a certain skillful device. What was it? He handed the almsbowl to the Brahmin. Ven. Sāriputta then walked in front, and the Brahmin followed behind carrying the bowl. The people did not know what to do. They appealed to Ven. Sāriputta, "Venerable Sir, please take your bowl and let us have this Brahmin." "Why?" the Elder asked. They replied, "This Brahmin struck you, Venerable Sir. We know what to do to him." Then Ven. Sāriputta asked, "Did this Brahmin strike you or me?" "He struck you, Venerable Sir," they said. "Ah, if he struck me, I have already forgiven him. You may all go." Thus, he sent away the lay devotees who had come to assault the Brahmin with sticks and clubs.

After sending them away, Ven. Sāriputta returned to Jetavana. When the news spread among the community of monks, a discussion arose: "What is the meaning of what Ven. Sāriputta did? He went to the very house of the Brahmin who struck him and accepted alms! What will happen to us now? If someone can strike the Chief Disciple like this, that man will go around striking all of us!" In this way, an uproar arose among the monks. At that moment, the Buddha arrived there and asked, "Monks, what were you discussing?" When they told him the story, the Buddha first remarked, "Monks, a (true) Brahmin does not strike another Brahmin. What has happened here is that a lay Brahmin has struck an ordained Brahmin." Then, using that incident as a basis, the Buddha expounded these two verses to the world as a Dhamma instruction, which we have taken as our theme.

Na brāhmaṇassa pahareyya, nāssa muñcetha brāhmaṇo

Dhī brāhmaṇassa hantāraṁ, tato dhī yassa muñcati

These few lines express a deeply profound meaning. On that occasion, the Buddha used the word 'Brahmin' in a deep sense. As some of you may have heard, for instance in the Vasala Sutta, in this Dispensation, a 'Brahmin' in the truest sense refers to an Arahant, not one who is a Brahmin by birth. Accordingly, the Buddha took the Arahant as the true Brahmin. That is why he said a (true) Brahmin does not strike. What happened here was that an ordinary lay Brahmin—that is, one who is a Brahmin merely by birth—struck an ordained Brahmin, an Arahant.

Employing the word 'Brahmin' in this manner, the Buddha declared: *Na brāhmaṇassa pahareyya*—one should not strike a Brahmin, that noble Arahant. That is a grave unwholesome deed. *Nāssa muñcetha brāhmaṇo*—similarly, after being struck, if one is a true Brahmin, he does not unleash hatred towards the assailant. He does not harbor hatred or anger. Next: *Dhī brāhmaṇassa hantāraṁ*—the word *dhī* is used in Pali to mean "shame upon!". Shame upon him who strikes a true Brahmin, an Arahant, because it is such a grave and serious unwholesome deed. Then he says: *tato dhī yassa muñcati*—yet, worse than the act of striking is when the victim unleashes his wrath or hatred against the assailant.

Then he further declares:

Na brāhmaṇassetadakiñci seyyo, yadā nisedho manaso piyehi

Regarding the true Brahmins who possess those noble virtues in accordance with the Dhamma, what is about to be said is no small thing. What is it? *Yadā nisedho manaso piyehi*—restraining the mind from what is dear. Here, "what is dear" (*piya*) refers to what one holds as dear or pleasant. Now, for someone who is angry, what is "dear" is taking revenge, venting anger, or reacting towards the person who struck him. Restraining the mind from that "dear" reaction is no minor good thing; it is a great and valuable thing. That is to say, if someone insults or strikes us, our mind "likes" to strike back or insult back. Restraining the mind from that "dear" reaction is an extremely noble quality—this is what the first two lines mean. The reason for this is explained as a natural law (*dharmatā*) in the next two lines. Often, the Buddha makes a statement and then confirms it by showing the natural law. What is that natural law?

Yato yato hiṁsamano nivattati, tato tato sammati-c-eva dukkhaṁ

Yato yato nivattati—wherever the harmful, violent mind is restrained or turned back, *tato tato sammati-c-eva*—to that very extent, in accordance with those situations, one's samsaric Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*), which can arise as mental distress due to unwholesome deeds and bad kamma, is calmed. That is to say, even if taking revenge, retaliating in anger, or blaming the other person seems pleasant and dear to us, if we restrain the mind from them, what is the result, the benefit we receive? To the extent that we restrain the mind, to that very extent our samsaric Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*) is calmed. This is the advice. We first briefly summarized the story and the verses as they appear in the texts. Now let us go a bit deeper into this to see the examples and lessons we can draw for our lives.

Let us first reflect on the nature of the great Ven. Sāriputta's noble virtues. You have heard much about the sublime character of the Chief Disciple, Ven. Sāriputta. Generally, the Chief Disciple Ven. Sāriputta is recognized among the disciples in this Dispensation as the one foremost in wisdom. However, if we take wisdom in this day and age as mere cleverness or scholarship, it does not necessarily require noble character or virtue. But Ven. Sāriputta's wisdom was of such a high order that it was accompanied by a marvelous store of virtues: humility, patience, loving-kindness, compassion, and gratitude—all these great virtues were established in his character. What is illustrated here is Ven. Sāriputta's quality of patience, which is called *khanti* (forbearance/patience), not anger (*kēntiya*). Do not misunderstand this. Patience is the polar opposite of anger. What we have here is a story illustrating that valuable quality of forbearance, the quality of patience.

Moreover, if we reflect deeply on this story, we can see both a poignant side and a somewhat humorous side. The poignant aspect is that, for whatever reason, the Brahmin struck the back of the Chief Disciple who possessed such high virtues. Indeed, in those days, the news must have spread as: "A Brahmin struck Ven. Sāriputta!" There were no advanced communication media back then. If such an incident were to occur today, it might appear in bold black letters as a front-page newspaper headline: "Brahmin Attacks Ven. Sāriputta!" The news spread in a similar manner. But that is not all. The striking was not done out of anger or hatred. It was not a blow struck out of enmity towards Ven. Sāriputta. That is why I said there is a humorous side to it; the Brahmin struck him merely to win a bet!

Such things happen in society. People make bets and then try to pull off some stunt to show off their prowess. But although done in jest, it is a deadly serious matter. Due to his wrong view and dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), the Brahmin did not realize this. Striking such a person is a grave unwholesome deed, regardless of the motive. But the Brahmin did not learn this lesson from some deep sutta expounded by the highly wise Ven. Sāriputta. There are extremely deep suttas taught by Ven. Sāriputta, but we can learn valuable lessons not only from them, but also from his character and the way he acted in such situations. Here, Ven. Sāriputta did not preach a long sermon. He preached a silent sermon. After being struck, he quietly kept walking in the same manner. He did not even look back to see who had struck him. If the Brahmin had not run ahead to beg for forgiveness, he wouldn't even have known who struck him. You can well imagine what would normally happen if such an incident took place in a city: blow for blow, word for word, happening almost instantaneously. Instead, Ven. Sāriputta continued to walk in his natural, composed manner. It was this very composure that made the Brahmin break into a cold sweat. It was a silent sermon. Through it, this heretical Brahmin was completely transformed in a single moment, instantly becoming a devoted lay follower. That is why he took the almsbowl and conducted Ven. Sāriputta to his house to offer alms.

Meanwhile, the news spread through word of mouth—the communication medium of that time. Today we have various media. You all know about word-of-mouth news; like the story of the "crow's feather," only one side gets exaggerated. Even regarding

newspapers today, we know that headlines are designed to agitate and provoke people, rather than report the complete truth. These are open secrets. It was the same back then; it is a common trait of society. So, the story went: "A Brahmin struck Ven. Sāriputta." The people came armed with sticks and clubs. Even though Ven. Sāriputta was calmly eating his alms, the people's anger did not subside. Ready to take revenge and pay back the Brahmin, they asked the Elder to take his bowl. At that moment, the words Ven. Sāriputta wisely uttered were highly valuable: "Did he strike you or me?" When they replied, "He struck you, Venerable Sir," he said, "Then, if he struck me, I have already forgiven him. What business is it of yours?" Here too, we find a valuable lesson from Ven. Sāriputta's character: his wisdom, which is called situational wisdom or tact (*sthānōcita prajñā*). If Ven. Sāriputta had not used situational wisdom at that moment, it would have resulted in a massive entanglement.

If Ven. Sāriputta had finished his alms and walked away, thinking "let whatever happens to this donor happen," what would have occurred? The mob would have assaulted that poor man with their sticks and clubs. Now, this man was no longer just an assailant; he had become a devotee in a single moment. A person's character can transform in an instant. But the world does not know this; they became enraged upon hearing the partial news. Ven. Sāriputta pacified the crowd and returned to Jetavana. But the issue was not over. Next came the protest from the monks—in modern terms, the reaction of the Maha Sangha. Their reaction was: "What is the meaning of what Ven. Sāriputta did? How can we face society now? If they can strike Ven. Sāriputta like this, how can we walk down the streets?" Thus, the monks made a huge uproar. These are also typical of things that happen, and we must learn lessons from them. The main problem had already been solved on the spot, but its echoes and repercussions were still spreading. It is through the spreading of such partial/incomplete news that dangerous crimes and severe situations arise.

Next, let us look at the Buddha's reaction. We can learn a lesson from this too. When it was reported in such an exaggerated way, the Buddha downplayed its severity. How? "A (true) Brahmin striking another Brahmin does not happen. What happened is this: a lay Brahmin—that is, one who is a Brahmin merely by birth—has struck a practicing Brahmin (Brahmin by conduct)." By analyzing it this way, he reduced its gravity and drew a lesson for the world. What is the practice of a true Brahmin? A true Brahmin does not strike, nor does he take revenge. Instead, what does he do? What is his effort, his vigor (*vīriya*)? To calm his own mind. His mind might urge him to take revenge or pay back in kind, but he restrains it. Restraining the mind is no small achievement, the Buddha declares. Why? Because if one restrains it to any degree, to that extent the Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*) of oneself and the world is calmed. The pressure and harm on society from escalated conflict is stopped. By calming one's own mind, one appeases a mountain of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*)—such as anger, remorse, defilement of the mind, and the accumulation of unwholesome kamma. This is what the Buddha declares here.

So, from this short story and these two verses, you can gather many things to help your own lives. Anger (*kōpaya*) is a common weakness we all know. We know that in sudden

anger, people even go to the extent of killing their own parents, or defiling their minds toward the Buddha and other noble ones. You know the story of Devadatta. That anger can turn into multi-lifetime hatred, leading to a host of terrifying unwholesome deeds. If such a thing is not pacified at the very beginning, there is no end to it; it drags on and on in samsara. Instead, the Buddha advises us to stop it right where it arises. People in the world often think that when someone does something to them, they must pay them back in kind (tit-for-tat). They think this solves the problem. But instead of solving it, it escalates it. Why? Even a child knows this; it is not a complex calculation: 1 + 1 = 2. Paying back 'one for one' makes the problem 'two.' Then, based on how the other reacts, those two become four, four becomes eight, eight becomes sixteen, and so on. This is how conflicts escalate. Therefore, the Buddha says: do not pay back in kind. Do not answer back in kind. By doing so, Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*) grows. The Buddha has given a valuable teaching on not answering back in another verse of the Dhammapada:

Sace neresi attānaṁ, kaṁso upahato yathā

Esa pattosi nibbānaṁ, sārambho te na vijjati

That is to say, when someone insults you or says something provoking, if you restrain yourself (*sace neresi attānaṁ*)—even though words rush to your tongue, if you restrain your mind, discipline your speech, and remain silent—the Buddha gives a beautiful simile. How do you calm yourself? What is the simile? Like a broken bronze/copper vessel. Let us think of a cracked bronze vessel, or one with a broken rim. If you strike it, the sound stops right there; it does not reverberate. A normal bronze vessel, even if lightly tapped, resonates and reverberates for a long time. Similarly, when someone says a word to an ordinary person, it reverberates in their mind: "I know what to do to him! I will show him!" echoing in the mind until they take revenge. Just as a normal bronze vessel rings continuously when struck, the ordinary mind keeps echoing with thoughts of revenge.

Here, the Buddha gives the example of a cracked or broken bronze vessel: when struck, its sound ends immediately and does not spread. If you restrain your mind according to this simile, you are truly stilled, as if you have realized Nibbāna. You experience the taste of Nibbāna right within your mind in a temporary way (*tadaṅga*) at that very moment. *Sārambho te na vijjati*—because of that calming, you do not engage in retaliatory speech. The Buddha has explained this regarding retaliatory speech. In society, conflicts and clashes occur because we forget this natural law (*dharmatā*). We try to solve these problems through *ayoniso manasikāra* (unwise attention), grasping the wrong end, the wrong side of things. Instead, the Buddha points out Right Effort (*sammā vāyāma*) as explained in the Noble Eightfold Path. As soon as the mind is freed from the unwholesome, one is liberated from a host of terrible dangers, and great peace is brought to the world. This is what is meant here regarding retaliatory speech.

Anger arises in all of us depending on the situation. Today, there is a common phrase in society: "justifiable anger" (*sādhāraṇa kōpaya*). In truth, anger is never justifiable, and

there is no anger in what is truly just. Yet, this term has become very common in social usage, perhaps due to a wrong concept among other religions. Why is anger never justifiable according to the Dhamma? The Buddha declared that once a person falls into anger, they cannot see things as they truly are; the mind becomes dark. If you cannot see things as they are, how can there be any justice? Not only that, you have heard of the four biases or ways of falling into wrong (*satara agatiya*). Going to *agatiya* means being driven to do what should not be done. Four are mentioned: *chanda* (desire/favoritism), *dosa* (aversion/hatred), *bhaya* (fear), and *moha* (delusion). Under the influence of *chanda*, out of excessive attachment, one can become biased and commit a wrong. Under the influence of *dosa* (hatred/anger), one can act unjustly, depriving someone of what they deserve. Out of *bhaya* (fear), one can do unjust things. Or out of *moha* (delusion/ignorance). Here too, *dosa* (aversion/hatred) is mentioned. This is why there is no such thing as "justifiable anger." The Buddha has shown how to handle sudden anger using various wonderful similes in different suttas. There is another valuable simile we should keep in our minds:

Yo ve uppatitaṁ kodhaṁ, rathaṁ bhantaṁva vāraye

Tamahaṁ sārathiṁ brūmi, rasmiggāho itaro jano

If someone restrains the anger that has arisen in their mind—and here is the simile—like quickly bringing back to the road a chariot that has veered off. In those days, there were horse chariots. If the horse drags the chariot toward a ditch, and you do not turn it back immediately, the chariot falls into the ditch or down a slope and gets destroyed. Therefore, one must immediately bring it back onto the road. Similarly, as soon as anger arises, one must try to steer the mind away from it. *Rathaṁ bhantaṁva vāraye*—just like bringing a runaway chariot back to the path, if someone quickly pacifies the anger that has arisen, "him I call a true charioteer, a true driver." Of others, the Buddha says: *rasmiggāho itaro jano*—they are merely holding the reins, as if sleeping. The Buddha uses such wonderful similes. He also says:

Yo uppatitaṁ vineti kodhaṁ, visataṁ sappavisaṁva osadhehi

Thus, he gives a simile of snake venom. *Yo uppatitaṁ vineti kodhaṁ, visataṁ sappavisaṁva osadhehi*—how should one act when anger arises? When a snake bites, one does not just wait and watch, because snake venom spreads rapidly. As soon as anger arises, just as one would quickly neutralize the spreading snake venom with medicine (*osadha*), one must pacify anger immediately. This is the true practice declared by the Buddha. Often, we do not understand the true nature of this basic disturbance in our minds. We either consider it justifiable or think that taking revenge is something that must be done. A world-famous Dhammapada verse taught by the Buddha is:

Na hi verena verāni, sammantīdha kudācanaṁ

Averena ca sammanti, esa dhammo sanantano

As an eternal law, the Buddha declared that hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is it appeased.

However, we do not try to realize this truth for ourselves. We see only the opposite side. We think we must pacify it by paying back in kind. One has to calculate and see if this actually works. This is the situation. The Buddha spoke of anger in this way. Then, he pointed out many methods in various places to help us calm anger and bring these practices into our lives.

Everyone knows that the direct opposite of hatred/aversion (*dosa*), or the quality that helps calm it, is loving-kindness (*mettā*). Almost all of you practice *mettā* meditation to some extent. But when speaking of *mettā* meditation, some people today experience a certain dryness or lack of interest. In this modern world, running after worldly things, meditation has been marginalized as something done only by going to the forest for a short time, and then returning to the world to live a completely different life. Therefore, if we express the function of this meditation in a term familiar to the world, we must say this: through *mettā* meditation, what we expect to build is an attitude of loving-kindness. You must have heard this word "attitude" (*ākalpaya*) often. When we build a certain attitude, then when a sudden situation arises, we react according to that attitude. If a person who has built an attitude of loving-kindness faces a problem, their solution will follow the path of loving-kindness. But a person who has developed an attitude of aversion or hatred will act accordingly. Therefore, what helps us in daily life from *mettā* meditation is that attitude of loving-kindness.

In this Dispensation, there are higher things that can be achieved through the *jhānas* (meditative absorptions). These are the highest states. *Mettā cetovimutti* (mind-deliverance through loving-kindness) is a marvelous liberation of the mind that can be attained through loving-kindness. For those whose minds do not easily take to formal meditation in daily life, they should think: "What I am doing through *mettā* meditation is building an attitude of loving-kindness. This is a small exercise I do to prevent myself and others from falling into grave suffering due to sudden anger in dangerous daily-life situations. This is an exercise in training the mind in daily life." Thinking thus, they should engage in *mettā* meditation to build an attitude of loving-kindness.

Next, there are situations where one cannot pacify anger through loving-kindness alone. In such situations, thinking about that person's ignorance or lack of understanding, one should arouse compassion (*karuṇā*). Not only compassion, the Buddha points out that in some situations, equanimity (*upekkhā*)—impartiality/neutrality—is helpful. This is the level that the person has brought with them; one cannot expect more from them. Thinking thus, one elevates the mind to equanimity. Or, one avoids paying attention to the cause of anger, directing the mind elsewhere. Or, one thinks about kamma: "His kamma belongs to him, my kamma belongs to me." The Buddha points out: "beings are owners of their kamma, heirs to their kamma" (*kammassakā, kammadāyādā...*). What he does is his kamma, what I do is my kamma. Usually, the world considers taking revenge as something that must be done, an absolute necessity. But because that "necessary action" leads to terrifying consequences (*dukkha*), the true thing to be done

instead is to withdraw the mind from it, thinking: "That is his kamma. I do not need to create more kamma through this."

These are the things the Buddha has shown on various occasions. The wonderful patience and forbearance of Ven. Sāriputta, which we discussed, was demonstrated in his character during this incident. He also gave a valuable sermon showing how much patience and forbearance he possessed. On one occasion, he gave a discourse to the monks on how to subdue resentment/malice (*āghāta*). Resentment (*āghātaya*), dear devotees, is the most severe, extreme end of aversion, hatred, and anger. Everyone knows that when anger arises, it starts as a minor disturbance in the mind. There are stages to it. First, there is the state where one says, "My mind is a bit upset." Next, "I got angry," then "I felt wrath," "hatred," and "enmity." When this enmity becomes multi-lifetime, it is called *āghāta* (entrenched resentment/malice)—a very grave thing. It is called bound enmity (*baddha vairaya*). Resentment (*āghāta*) means bound enmity. Ven. Sāriputta shows ways to remove even this bound enmity. The similes he uses are wonderful, very deep though they seem simple. Since he was preaching to the monks, he presented them in a way relevant to a monk's life. Suppose a monk develops resentment (*āghāta*) toward another monk. Why? Because that person's bodily conduct is very unrefined and improper. His verbal conduct is also very improper. How to subdue resentment toward such a person? Ven. Sāriputta explains it as follows.

First, he speaks of a person whose bodily conduct is unrefined, but whose verbal conduct is refined. In this first stage, Ven. Sāriputta says we should ignore the unrefined aspect and think only of the refined side. The simile he gives helps us grasp this: Monks who wear rag-robes (*paṁsukūla*) find the cloth they need for their robes by picking up discarded rags fallen on the road while walking for alms. They sew their robes from these. He uses a simile based on this. A rag-robe wearing monk walking on the road sees a dirty rag. It is so dirty that he cannot even touch it with his hands. But he needs the cloth; he cannot just throw it away because he has a need. What does he do? He steps on the dirty rag with his left foot, tears off a clean piece with his right foot, and takes it with him. Similarly, one should ignore that person's unrefined bodily conduct, focus only on their refined speech, and thus calm one's resentment.

Next, he presents the opposite case: a person whose bodily conduct is refined, but whose verbal conduct is unrefined. What he does with his body is good, but what he says is bad. He gives a similar simile: In the hot season, a traveler comes along, extremely thirsty, looking for water. He finds a pond that is completely covered with algae/moss. Even though it is covered with algae, he is thirsty and must drink. What does he do? He pushes the algae aside with both hands and drinks the clear water. Similarly, at that moment, without thinking ill of the person's words, one should think only of their good bodily conduct and remove one's hatred.

He gives another simile for another type of person: a person whose bodily conduct is completely useless, and whose verbal conduct is also completely useless—extremely unrefined. However, occasionally, even for a brief moment, wholesome, good, valuable thoughts arise in that person's mind. Rarely, once in a while. The simile for this is: In the

hot season, a traveler is walking along a long road through a great wilderness, and there is no place to drink water, no well anywhere. Suddenly, he sees a little water in a puddle left by a cow's hoof-print. Since there is so little water, he cannot scoop it up with a bucket or a large cup. What does he do? He gets down on his knees like a cow, laps up the water with his tongue, and continues on his way. Similarly, at that moment, do not focus on that person's bad bodily conduct, nor on their bad verbal conduct. Think only of that rare moment when their mind became calm and their good qualities briefly emerged, forgive them, and withdraw your mind from hatred.

Next, he speaks of another person: a person whose bodily conduct is not good, whose verbal conduct is not good, and in whose mind there is not even a single wholesome thought or good state occasionally. There is absolutely nothing good to take from him—he is 100% useless, so to speak. Yet, Ven. Sāriputta shows how to remove hatred even toward such a person using this simile: Suppose someone sees a very sick, ailing traveler on the highway. He has no medicine, no travel allowance, nothing to eat, and does not know the way. Seeing him, a person feels great compassion: "Oh, how good it would be if there were someone to show him the way, someone to give him food, someone to give him medicine and attend to him." At least that compassionate thought arises. Similarly, Ven. Sāriputta states, even toward that completely unrefined, 100% bad person, what helps remove hatred is compassion (*karuṇā*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), and sympathy (*dayānukampā*). One must arouse these qualities.

Fifth, he presents what is a very easy thing, but we must understand it: Suppose there is a person whose bodily conduct is entirely good, and whose verbal conduct is entirely good, yet for some reason, out of some personal dislike, anger or hatred arises toward them. This can be calmed very quickly. The simile for this: A thirsty traveler sees a beautiful, delightful pond. It is full of clean water. He can drink as much as he wants, and he can bathe. Going there, he bathes and drinks as much as he likes. Similarly, that person should think of the immense heap of virtue in that individual: "How could I develop hatred toward someone who possesses such a heap of virtue?" Reflecting on those virtues, he quickly removes his hatred. In this way, Ven. Sāriputta has shown various strategies, having analyzed our minds deeply. Our minds have different states/tendencies (*pravṛtti*). There are times when it is easy to calm them, times when it is very difficult, and times when it seems impossible. But to cover all these, the Buddhas and the likes of Ven. Sāriputta have given these wonderful similes. Based on these, we must reflect that the reason we travel in this long samsara is due to the three unwholesome roots: greed (*lobha*), hatred/aversion (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*).

As we said at the very beginning, greed (*lobha*) and hatred/aversion (*dosa*) appear to be opposites at first glance. But underlying them is this: when we do not get what is dear/pleasing to us, or when someone does not behave as we wish, then hatred/aversion arises toward that person. Then, that hatred continues and drags on because we see revenge, tit-for-tat, or seeing that person suffer as something "dear" (pleasurable). "Ah, he did it to me, now here is the result!"—seeing this and finding a chance to be happy is what drives us to harm and take revenge on that person. Such attitudes exist in the mind. When we cannot fulfill this, we have to wander endlessly in samsara. The best proof of

how long the hatred in the mind can last is the conflict between the Bodhisatta and Devadatta. Those who read the Jataka stories can see how far the hatred and resentment (*āghāta*) that arose between the two of them from a small beginning dragged on over countless aeons (*kalpas*).

From this, we can understand how grave this hatred/aversion is. In short, it is described as a fire—the fire of hatred. That is why the Buddha called the subduing of hatred a "stilling/extinction." Hatred is a harsh, rigid state of mind, while loving-kindness is a soft, gentle state of mind. One must try to make the mind soft and gentle. One cannot just wait for the right moment. Some say, "We generate loving-kindness in our minds and radiate it to so-and-so, or to the world, but there is no use in just saying it." But what is the nature of our minds? If we think about something repeatedly, if we maintain thoughts accordingly, our mind bends in that direction. The Buddha has declared this: there is a bending, an inclination of the mind in this world. If a person's mind is bent toward hatred and anger, if they act in that direction, if they maintain thoughts in that direction and think of its benefits, that person bends more and more toward anger. Instead, if one tries to develop loving-kindness, if they consider the benefits of loving-kindness, their mind becomes soft and gentle. There is a huge difference between the solution that comes to a soft and gentle mind and the solution that comes to a rigid mind when a problem arises. That is why we used the word "attitude." The difference lies in that attitude. Another word used in society is "reaction" (*pratichāraya*). We spoke of the reaction of the monks. These are the reactions of different individuals. The reason is the shaping of the mind. If the mind is not properly shaped, the reaction follows accordingly. Ven. Sāriputta's reaction was not like the reaction of the monks who protested at Jetavana. It shows the level of development in each individual's mind.

Therefore, we must strive to understand these facts. The Buddha has not shown us something impossible. It is something possible. But if we do it systematically according to proper instructions, we will receive the benefits declared by the Buddha. You have often heard of the benefits of *mettā* meditation. The Buddha has shown eleven benefits. In addition to helping in daily life, if one attains a state of concentration (*samādhi*) or absorption (*jhāna*) through loving-kindness that helps one's samsaric liberation, that too can be used to support Nibbāna. In short, this loving-kindness is a liberation of the mind—called *cetovimutti* (mind-deliverance). Because the mind is trapped within fences and barriers. The very first fence is the notion of "I" and "mine" (*mamaya, māgēya*).

The Buddha has declared that there is no one in this world as dear to oneself as oneself. That is a truth. Some think their children are dearer, or others are dearer. But they are all dear to us because we hold ourselves dear. That is a reality. If we accept this, then in practicing loving-kindness, we must think that just as we are dear to ourselves, others are also dear to themselves. This is the basic illustration of non-harming (*avihiṁsā*) shown by the Buddha.

Attānaṁ upamaṁ katvā, na haneyya na ghātaye

One does not like to be beaten, insulted, or to fall into suffering. Similarly, thinking of others, keeping oneself in the witness stand and comparing oneself to them, one should not harm others—this is what the Buddha has shown. On the other hand, some love only themselves; this is called selfishness. But a mother, for instance, will protect her child even at the cost of her own life. The Buddha shows us how to gradually expand that attitude, not just to one's family, not just to one's friends, but to neighbors, and then to all beings. For some, this can be done very easily. Although we think of these as fences/barriers, the practice here is not about forcefully breaking them, but understanding roughly that there are many such fences and expanding very deep, valuable concepts of loving-kindness to break through them. Sometimes, the phrase "May they be well and happy!" (*suvapath vetvā*) can be useful. One does not need to add many words to it. Often, what happens to us is getting lost in a multitude of words.

What many people do as "meditation" is chanting a large number of beautiful words in a beautiful melody. It does not penetrate within. Meditation is often done as something external, something heard outside. It is broadcast through loudspeakers and other devices, rather than entering within. But to enter within, one does not need such a large pile of words. One word that is meaningful to you is enough: "May they be well and happy!" "May they be well and happy!" As the Buddha has declared, to the extent that one repeatedly brings this to mind, the mind becomes accustomed to it, and an attitude is built. Thus, to build an attitude of loving-kindness, one does not need to go very far. One word, depending on the opportunity, starting in one's quiet, dedicated meditation posture during free time, determinedly practicing it even for a short while. Based on that habit, gradually during other activities and postures, the Buddha has declared: *Tiṭṭhaṁ caraṁ nisinno vā, sayāno vā yāvatassa...* as you have often heard in the Karaṇīyametta Sutta. When the meditation is well-developed, some can maintain this mindfulness in all four postures—standing, sitting, lying down, walking—at least until they fall asleep. Some can maintain this mindfulness throughout the entire day. To the extent they maintain it, the mind becomes unified, concentrated, and enters *samādhi*, and then, as declared by the Buddha, the mind is liberated (*vimukta*). "The mind is liberated" means it breaks through those barriers—the barriers of selfishness.

Breaking through the separation of "my people" and others, finally, the word gains a marvelous depth that encompasses the entire universe, including all animal beings. It is just one word. But when it is aroused, the entire world is already encompassed by the mind. It breaks through everything. It is a marvelous thing. Thus, from a small start, a great thing is accomplished. Through this, the grave unwholesome root of hatred/aversion is dispelled. The roots that carry us through this samsara—greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*)—are like a triangle. Delusion (*moha*) is the very illusion of "I" and "mine." Once we grasp things as "I" and "mine," then what "I" like is greed (*lobha*). The obstacles to getting what "I" like, as well as what "I" dislike, form the other side, which is hatred (*dosa*). If delusion (*moha*) is "I", then on either side are what "I" like and dislike. The world exists between these two as attraction and repulsion, attachment and clashing. It is because of the things we accumulate as kamma within this that we travel in samsara for a long time. In the Dhamma, it is mentioned that when

looking at the results of kamma (*kamma-vipāka*), as a minor result of hatred/aversion, one becomes ugly/disfigured. Similarly, skin diseases and other ailments occur. Diseases and afflictions become abundant due to harming others. Furthermore, as Devadatta did, if one takes revenge against those who have attained the noble state—the highest treasures in the world, such as the Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Arahants—it is like smashing one's head against a rock. It is the end. Some are said to have been swallowed by the earth. This is a cosmic law (*loka dharmatā*). For you know that the severity of an unwholesome deed done with a defiled mind is affected both by one's own mind and by the spiritual quality of the person one harms.

Harming a Buddha, a Paccekabuddha, or an Arahant is not the same as harming an ordinary animal. They are not the same. This is because harming the most noble treasures in the world, even with a single thought of the mind, generates grave unwholesome kamma. Therefore, in a world inclined toward such defilements, the mind is like having the steering wheel of a fast-moving vehicle placed in your hands. If you do not know how to turn this steering wheel when necessary, if you do not know how to bring it back to the road when needed, you can imagine where it will end. That is why the Buddha has shown the simile of the charioteer. On the other hand, what is the first thing you do when a snake bites? Before the venom spreads, you apply medicine as quickly as possible. You look for a snake-stone (*nai gala*) or try some method to draw out the venom. Similarly, when greed or hatred arises, the Buddha directs us toward the internal conflict/struggle by reflecting on its danger, rather than the external conflict. The world tries to solve problems through external conflict, through paying back in kind—one and one make two, two and two make four, and so on.

Usually, we consider the cause of anger—some word spoken or action done by someone—as a challenge to show our power and capability. Instead, the Buddha points out that it is a challenge given to us to shape, calm, and quieten our own minds. How much has our mind developed through meditation? How quickly can we bring our mind to that state of stilling/extinguishment? Thinking of the word spoken or action done by that person as a good challenge, it is only through this internal struggle that we can achieve our true victory. Thus, you have received a lesson from the noble character and example of Ven. Sāriputta. Moreover, we have come here amidst these daily conflicts and a multitude of samsaric defilements. With the help of the Buddha, we hope to conquer our samsaric weaknesses and escape this terrifying samsara as quickly as possible.

You have established yourselves in the noble virtue of *Ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*. There too, restraint of speech is mentioned. There are also those who observe even higher precepts. What everyone expects through practicing virtue (*sīla*), meditation, and all of these is the training of the mind. Many facts related to this were mentioned in this sermon. If you reflect more deeply on these similes and stories and bring them into your lives, you will receive the true benefits of this Dhamma sermon, the benefits of hearing the Dhamma (*dharmasravaṇānisansa*). As we always remind you: this opportunity has helped develop faith (*saddhā*), which supports our realization of Nibbāna, along with energy (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Through this, you have received the opportunity to develop Right Effort (*sammā vāyāma*) to

conquer the unwholesome and cultivate the wholesome. By directing your minds to this Dhamma sermon, you have had the opportunity to develop mindfulness (*sati*), and also to attain concentration (*samādhi*) through recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*), recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), and recollection of the Sangha (*saṅghānussati*). Through all of these, may you cultivate the quality of wisdom (*paññā*) by gaining deep understanding of the Dhamma with a calmed mind.

May the merit of hearing this Dhamma accumulated so far definitely help remove the dangers that may arise in daily life and in samsara, and help you live with Dhamma peace! Furthermore, by developing meditation through the association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), may this store of wholesome merit accumulated today definitely be a supportive condition for realizing the path, fruit, and penetration of *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī*, and *Arahant*, and for attaining the peace of supreme, deathless Nibbāna! Similarly, may this store of wholesome merit be shared with and rejoiced by all deceased relatives, as well as the noble friends, the deities and Brahmas who protect the Dispensation, and all beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who hope to receive such merits! May they all rejoice in our merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they as quickly as possible be liberated from all samsaric suffering such as Birth / Arising (*jāti*), Decay and Death / Aging and Death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death, and attain the peace of supreme, deathless Nibbāna! Wishing thus, let us share the merits by reciting these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #128

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.65)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Aṭṭhinaṃ nagaraṃ kataṃ, maṃsalohitalepanaṃ;

jarā ca maccu ca, māno makkho ca ohito ti.

From:

Dhammapada 150 (Jarāvagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, pointed out that the world tries to create a sense of security by forgetting the inconstant nature of life, precisely due to four perversions (*vipallāsa*). It is by relying on these four perverted views—namely, regarding what is impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, regarding what is suffering/unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) as pleasant, regarding what is not-self (*anattā*) and not one's own as self, and regarding what is foul as beautiful—that the world attempts to secure its existence/becoming (*bhava*). The Buddha constantly reminds us of the inconstant/impermanent (*anicca*) nature of this life and the precarious nature of this cage of a body, with the sole intention of removing these perverted views. Today, this very point is clarified by the verse chosen for our reflection and its corresponding origin story.

The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, preached this Dhamma verse at Jetavana monastery to the bhikkhunī Janapadakalyāṇī Rūpanandā. Devotees, this Janapadakalyāṇī Rūpanandā was the princess who was betrothed to Prince Nanda, the younger half-brother of the Buddha. At the time the Buddha visited the city of Kapilavatthu, Prince Nanda was facing three auspicious celebrations: his coronation ceremony, his housewarming ceremony, and his wedding ceremony. While these three auspicious events were close at hand, the Buddha visited the palace, accepted alms-food, and upon departing, handed his alms-bowl to Prince Nanda.

Though reluctant, out of respect, Prince Nanda took the bowl and followed behind the Buddha. When they reached the courtyard, Janapadakalyāṇī received this news; while

still bathing, she ran out with her hair still wet and called out, "Noble Lord, return quickly, return quickly!" But Prince Nanda did not return. Instead, the Buddha led him away and ordained him. Now, after some time had passed in this manner, Janapadakalyāṇī pondered: "Now Prince Siddhattha has renounced the kingdom and gone forth; Prince Rāhula too has been ordained; Prince Nanda, who was to marry me, has also been ordained; and Mother Pajāpatī Gotamī has also been ordained. What is the use of me staying at home alone?" Thus, she went and was ordained among the bhikkhunīs. Because she possessed extremely exquisite beauty, she was known by the name 'Rūpanandā'.

Having heard that the Buddha constantly speaks of the defects of form (*rūpa*), preaching that form is impermanent (*anicca*), suffering/unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), and expounding meditations on the foul (*asubha-bhāvanā*), Rūpanandā was reluctant to go and listen to the Dhamma, fearing that he might say something disparaging about her own beauty. As time went on, hearing praise of the Buddha's virtues here and there, the bhikkhunī Rūpanandā also felt that she should go and listen to the Dhamma one day. She decided to go along with the other bhikkhunīs, hide herself among them, listen to the sermon, and return. When Rūpanandā went to listen to the sermon that day, the Buddha, knowing her mind, what did he do? By psychic power, he created the form of a sixteen-year-old maiden whose beauty far surpassed Rūpanandā's. He showed her fanning the Buddha, dressed in most exquisite garments and ornaments. He resolved that this created form should be visible only to himself and to Rūpanandā.

Thus, when Rūpanandā sat down to listen to the Dhamma and looked at the Buddha, she saw this young woman. She gazed with great fascination at this person of far superior beauty. Comparing herself to this form, she thought, "In comparison to her, am I not like a crow next to a swan?" Thus, her pride regarding her own beauty was humbled, and she gazed with great captivation at the limbs and features of that form. At that moment, while the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma, he gradually caused that created form to assume the appearance of a twenty-year-old. Then, she felt a slight sense of strangeness, thinking, "Has this form now changed?" Next, the Buddha, through psychic power, gradually aged the fanning woman, transforming her into old age. Finally, she became an old hag with broken teeth, grey hair, bent over, relying on a walking staff, yet still fanning the Buddha. Next, the Buddha showed her falling to the ground afflicted with a severe illness, wailing, wallowing in her own urine and excrement, rolling from side to side. Seeing this, Rūpanandā felt a great sense of urgency and disenchantment (*nibbidā*), thinking, "Alas! How has such an exquisite form been destroyed in this manner?"

Next, the Buddha showed that woman passing away. Immediately after, he showed the body swelling, and pus and worms oozing from its nine apertures. In this way, the Buddha made the complete destruction of that form visible to Rūpanandā, like a fast-moving motion picture. Seeing this, a great fear regarding existence/becoming (*bhava*), a sense of urgency regarding the danger of existence, and in short, an understanding of the inconstant/impermanent (*anicca*) nature of this life and its disadvantages (*ādīnava*) arose in her, culminating in disenchantment (*nibbidā*) with saṃsāra. To assist her in that moment, the Buddha uttered two verses:

Āturaṃ asuciṃ pūtiṃ, passa samussayaṃ;

bālāni abhipatthitaṃ,

yathā idaṃ tathā etaṃ, yathā etaṃ tathā idaṃ...

dhātuyo suññato passa, mā lokaṃ punarāgami;

bhave chandaṃ virājetvā, upasantā carissasīti.

The general meaning of those verses is: "O Nandā, look at this heaped-up body, diseased, impure, putrid, highly yearned for by fools, oozing from above and below. 'As is this (body of yours), so is that (created body); as is that, so is this.' See the elements as empty (*dhātuyo suññato passa*)." Look at these elements—earth, water, fire, and wind—as empty! Empty means to look at them from the perspective of not-self (*anattā*). "Do not return to this world (*mā lokaṃ punarāgami*)." Having relinquished the desire and craving (*taṇhā*) for existence/becoming (*bhava*), wander in tranquil peace (*upasantā carissasi*). The Buddha gave this instruction as a meditation subject. Hearing this, Rūpanandā attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*) through that very disenchantment.

Then, the Buddha thought of helping her further to attain the higher paths and fruits. To support that, he next preached the verse we used as our opening theme. Looking at the way Nandā's mind was operating, he uttered that verse in a way that made the not-self (*anattā*) nature and emptiness of this body even clearer.

Aṭṭhinaṃ nagaraṃ kataṃ, maṃsalohitalepanaṃ

yatthe jarā ca maccu ca, māno makkho ca ohito

There is a city built of bones, plastered with flesh and blood, wherein are deposited decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), pride, and detraction. The idea expressed in this verse is that there is a city made of bones, which is also a description of this cage of a body. It is recorded that upon hearing this verse and the sermon preached accordingly, Nandā attained Arahatship. That is the narrative of the Dhamma.

As we do every day, let us now see what essence of meaning we can extract from this Dhamma narrative and the verse. This story is one that reveals the Buddha's supreme style of Dhamma-instruction, known as his quality of being the incomparable charioteer of men to be tamed (*purisadamma-sārathī*). If we consider the character of Rūpanandā, she was of a disposition that took great pride in her form (*rūpa*). Both her title as a "Janapadakalyāṇī" (the beauty of the land) and her name indicate her exceptional beauty. Furthermore, among the bhikkhunīs, she was known specifically as Rūpanandā. Because of the pride she held regarding her form in that way, she came to that place with a certain degree of displeasure toward the Buddha. What did the Buddha do to remove that displeasure? Now, as you devotees know, when a thorn pierces the skin, to extract that thorn, one needs another thorn that is even sharper. Similarly, to destroy the pride

this woman had in her beauty, the Buddha used form itself. He created the form of a woman with far superior beauty. Moreover, seeing her fanning the Buddha, her previous displeasure must have faded away.

She might even have thought, "Despite what they say, the Tathāgata does not disparage beauty all that much." Be that as it may, while she was gazing with great captivation in that manner, the Buddha then made the transformation (*vipariṇāma*) that occurs to this form over eighty or ninety years visible to Rūpanandā in a matter of a few moments.

By doing so, the Buddha cleared the path for the cognitive process of insight (*vipassanā citta-vīthi*). Now, when we say these things, you devotees might think that such things can be done with modern machines and technology as well. But those are used to increase existence/becoming (*bhava*), not to eliminate the desire for existence (*bhava*). They are used to generate the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*), not the perception of the foul (*asubha-saññā*). This is a wonderful story for developing a special understanding of Dhamma values. Rūpanandā's story is indeed an exemplary one. The Buddha revealed the true nature of this body in an instant.

In this extremely long saṃsāra, we have spent our time with this body—for an infinite period of time. Yet, we have not truly known the body. The characteristics of the body mentioned earlier... what we called perversions (*vipallāsa*) or perverted views are just like seeing upside-down views when looking at things with one's head on the ground; those are called perverted visions. These are called perverted phenomena (*vipallāsa-dhamma*). In the world, there exists the tendency to take the inconstant/impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent; to regard the inconstant (*anicca*) as permanent. Likewise, regarding what is suffering/unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) as pleasant; regarding what is not-self (*anattā*) as self; and regarding what is foul as beautiful. It was to eradicate these perverted views that the Buddha employed that skillful means.

Next, we can reflect on the transformation of mind that occurred through this. When we contemplate in accordance with the Dhamma, we can consider it in this way. Now we know that form (*rūpa*) is what most people use to prove their identity. "Ah! This is me!" they say fearlessly, pointing to their form (*rūpa*). But the Buddha shows that this form (*rūpa*) is proof of otherwiseness (*aññathābhāva*)—of change. Why does the ordinary world not realize that form (*rūpa*) changes? It is because they have formed a wrong concept regarding this form (*rūpa*) through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*). Forgetting the change that occurs in this, they grasp at specific stages of form (*rūpa*). In short, those who proudly take photographs of their entire lives, paste them in books, and say, "This is me, this is me," sometimes traveling all over the world to show those photographs and display their pride to others—this matter and this story will prompt them to reflect. The ordinary world does not care about the change in this form (*rūpa*), the change that occurs over many years. Sometimes, upon meeting a friend coming toward them, they might say, "Oh! How much you have changed!" Yet, they do not see their own change. Such is the nature due to self-love—due to grasping these through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*). Therefore, what helps to shatter these is seeing them as preparations (*saṅkhāra*) through insight (*vipassanā*).

We often render *saṅkhāra* in Sinhala as "preparations" (*sakas-kirīm*), constructions, or arrangements. Now, when taking a photograph, many people make certain preparations/arrangements, don't they? They think, "I must look beautiful at this moment to capture it well in this photo." Thus, they proudly take that photograph as "myself". But next, when another year or several months pass and they take another, it has changed. Yet they take that, too, in the same way. In this manner, what we call life is a collection of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), a continuity of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Many do not consider the inconstant/impermanent (*anicca*) nature of these. There is a tendency in the world to take each of these as "This is mine, this I am, this is my self" (*etaṃ mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attā*).

If someone sees this continuity of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) through insight, through the wisdom of insight (*vipassanā-paññā*), then a definite disenchantment regarding existence/becoming (*bhava*) will arise in them. If one hopes for Nibbāna, one must remove the desires for existence/becoming (*bhava*). To hope for Nibbāna while retaining desire for existence (*bhava*) and wallowing in the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*) is entirely futile. Because one has to face reality—this truth of suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) or this impermanent (*anicca*) and not-self (*anattā*) nature declared by the Buddha. This is not understood by the ordinary world due to ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*), delusion (*moha*), and pride (*māna*). "A city built of bones" (*aṭṭhinaṃ nagaraṃ kataṃ*). This is a city built of bones. Now, generally, various teachers with wrong views have taught that a subtle soul or self is embedded within this body—that there is a wondrous, permanent self inside. But the Buddha has shown that this is a city made of bones. Just as a house is built by raising pillars, binding them with vines, and plastering them with mud, what is there inside this city or house constructed by raising the pillars of bones, binding them with the vines of sinews, and plastering them with the laths of flesh and blood? It is decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), pride, and detraction. One develops pride, saying "I", the conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*). Likewise, decay and death are entrenched here. These are not things that happen externally. These things—death, decay, etc.—come along with the body itself, right from birth (*jāti*). From the very moment of birth (*jāti*), it begins to decay. The world forgets this by setting up a concept called "youth". Next, in accordance with the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*), they even employ various artificial methods to preserve it. Now, according to our Buddhist culture, growing old is not something to be hidden in that manner. There is an ancient saying: "Receive honor with a grey head." But now, according to Western culture, what do the elderly do? They try to receive honor with blackened hair. Dyeing their grey hair with various lotions, and stretching their wrinkled skin using various new medical techniques, they try to remain young until they die. There is no fault in taking medicine for an illness or disease. But that delusion—getting deluded oneself and seeking to deceive others—that is an extremely foolish and ignorant thing. Such people suffer in saṃsāra for a long time. They have never understood the true nature, the reality of this body that exists from birth (*jāti*) until death. So in this story, there is something that prompts reflection not only for Rūpanandās but also for others—especially those who give prominence to fashions in accordance with urban sophistication.

Let us investigate what the Buddha intended through these verses. Indeed, these verses go very deep; though we may not cover every single aspect, we intend to present a brief analysis of them. In the verse preached first by the Buddha, *āturaṃ asuciṃ pūtiṃ*: *ātura* means something diseased. This body is described in some places as a nest of diseases (*roga-nīḷaṃ*), a fragile nest of diseases. Likewise, *asuciṃ* means impure. This is the impurity of this body. In civilized life, one has to cover this impurity to a certain extent. But one must at least understand this impure nature for oneself. There is a tendency to forget this due to the pride generated through cosmetic beauty. *Āturaṃ asuciṃ pūtiṃ*... next, *pūti* means it is putrid. We all know what the condition would be if we did not wash our face and mouth for two or three days. Thus, it has a putrid nature. Next, *samussayaṃ* means something heaped up like a mound of earth. The word *samussaya* is applied to the body in the Dhamma. It is just like a heap built by gathering the four elements (*dhātu*). Under the influence of clinging (*upādinna*), in accordance with the momentum of past karma, it is built up as a body in some mother's womb. What assists this are the very elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*)—all four elements. Thus, within this, decay and death are firmly established. That is why, having first shown the nature of the body as repulsive and foul (*asubha*), the Buddha then directs the mind toward the meditation on elements (*dhātu-kammaṭṭhāna*) to incline it toward higher insight (*vipassanā*). He turns it in that direction.

"See the elements as empty" (*dhātuyo suññato passa*). See these four elements of which the body is made as empty! The ordinary world takes not only the limbs and organs of this body, but also everything inside it—such as blood, flesh, etc.—as "mine" and "I". But these are the very same elements found in the external world. Though they appear in a peculiar form here, the Buddha points out that they are not things to be taken as "I" or "mine". One must practice contemplating this constantly through insight (*vipassanā*). Look at these elements as empty! Empty means there is no self-substance here; there is no self-nature (*attā*).

Likewise, *yathā idaṃ tathā etaṃ, yathā etaṃ tathā idaṃ*. A certain principle shown in fulfilling insight is that some begin insight (*vipassanā*) from within and complete it externally. Others begin externally and complete it within. "Within" refers to one's own body. Now here, because of the pride Nandā had regarding her own form (*rūpa*), she did not have the strength to raise her own body to the level of insight (*vipassanā*) all at once, to turn in that direction and understand its foul nature. Therefore, what the Buddha did was to create an external form. Thus, while she kept her attention focused on that form, by allowing her to see the decaying and breaking-up nature of that form, the Buddha showed that both the internal and the external—the two sides—are the same, saying: "As is this (body), so is that (created body); as is that, so is this." This was to bring the mind to equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Indeed, devotees, the explanation concerning consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is a rather deep matter. It is precisely because of the discriminative knowing by consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that a division of these elements into "internal" and "external" is created. This drama called "life" arises from this very division—the division of internal and external. For a

long time in saṃsāra, due to ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), a portion of these four elements was taken as "This is me, this is mine." Due to that very craving (*taṇhā*) and grasping/holding (*upādāna*), this seed—this seed of consciousness (*viññāṇa-bīja*)—germinates again in some place. To describe this, the Buddha points out: "Karma is the field, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the seed, and craving (*taṇhā*) is the moisture" (*kammaṃ khettaṃ, viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ, taṇhā sneho*). The field is prepared according to the actions (karma) one has performed through mind, body, and speech. In that field of karma, the seed of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) grows, with craving (*taṇhā*) acting as the moisture. Again in saṃsāra, in existence/becoming (*bhava*), craving (*taṇhā*) is the moisture.

Devotees, if we contemplate along those lines, what is meant by seeing Nibbāna as shown by the Buddha? It is the removal of that moisture of craving (*taṇhā*), drying up that moisture, thereby rendering this seed of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) hollow so that it can no longer germinate. That is how the Buddha brings this saṃsāric journey to a halt. For this, a direct seeing/realization through the cultivation of insight (*vipassanā*) is necessary. If we briefly consider what are called the internal or personal elements: examples of the earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*) are hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, bones, etc. Examples of the water element (*āpo-dhātu*) are blood, pus, urine, and other such liquid things. These are examples of those two elements. Next, the fire element (*tejo-dhātu*) is the nature of heat—warmth, and the heat that helps in digesting food, etc. The wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*) is characterized by inhalation and exhalation and other winds moving through the body. So, accordingly, only the four elements are present here. Yet, there exists in the world a perception of "I" and "mine" regarding these.

In accordance with the principle mentioned as "This is not mine, this I am not" (*n'etaṃ mama, n'eso 'ham asmi*), these must be wisely seen as not one's own. That is why it was said, "See the elements as empty (*dhātuyo suññato passa*)." The Buddha declares that by seeing in this way, one does not return to existence/becoming (*bhava*) again. As long as there is attachment to existence (*bhava*), one returns to existence (*bhava*). Therefore, the ultimate purpose of this Dhamma is the eradication of attachment to existence (*bhava*), and for that, the disenchantment known as *nibbidā* is absolutely essential. Now, for some, disenchantment with life arises only after contracting a serious illness or when they have become extremely old. At such times, the mind sometimes does not function well enough to raise it to the level of insight (*vipassanā*). But if someone understands its reality while their cognitive faculties are still sharp, it can be easy for them to realize Nibbāna. We must take that into consideration. Because the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*) regarding this body blinds the eyes of the world in an extremely dangerous way. You devotees all know this. That is why the Buddha has shown the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*) to be a perversion (*vipallāsa*).

Now, when reflecting on this meditation on the elements (*dhātu-kammaṭṭhāna*), some of you devotees may have heard that in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, there is a section called attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*). There, the Buddha gives a wondrous simile

regarding how one should look at this body. He indicates: "Just as a butcher, having slaughtered a cow, cut it into pieces, and sat at a four-way crossroads selling it, no longer has the notion of 'cow', in the very same way, the yogi—the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā-yogi*)—should analyze this body in terms of elements and dissect it in this manner." Sometimes, someone might think that the Great Compassionate Buddha has presented an uncompassionate simile here. But we must understand the depth within this simile in this way: Generally, a butcher works hard to slaughter that cow and cut it into pieces, thereby developing the perception of meat (*maṃsa-saññā*). Similarly, the yogi (*yogāvacara*) dissects this very body, in which the perception of a living being resides, using the scalpel—the weapon—of insight (*vipassanā*), cutting and dividing it to gain understanding. It is for this purpose that this simile is employed. We all know that the knife a ruffian uses to kill someone is sometimes used by a surgeon to cure someone. Similarly, the Buddha employed this seemingly harsh butcher simile to demonstrate the sharpness of the wisdom of insight (*vipassanā-paññā*).

Indeed, it is said that the perception of elements (*dhātu-saññā*) is the domain of, and is accessible to, those of sharp wisdom. Contemplating this body exactly as it is, and establishing equanimity (*upekkhā*) by seeing that only these four elements are present within it. What is the purpose of developing that equanimity (*upekkhā*)? Through that equanimity (*upekkhā*), the division between "internal" and "external" fades away. Eradicating that division is necessary to cease consciousness (*viññāṇa*), or as mentioned, to render it hollow (like a dud seed). To make it hollow means neutralizing the power within this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to create another existence/becoming (*bhava*). In short, the Buddha has also pointed out that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) serves as the sustenance for future birth (*jāti*). As long as this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) remains, one will be born somewhere in accordance with karma. Therefore, one cannot escape by holding onto a nihilistic view (*natthika-diṭṭhi*), thinking, "Let us enjoy ourselves as we please as long as we live, for life ends here." According to the law of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), the actions (karma) one performs, the karma one accumulates, prepares the field. Into that field falls the seed of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The germinating power of that seed of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is due to that craving (*taṇhā*). In that moisture of craving (*taṇhā*), it strikes roots called grasping/holding (*upādāna*). Craving (*taṇhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*); once it takes root through grasping (*upādāna*), there is existence/becoming (*bhava*)—renewed existence. Once a seed is cast into ground that has moisture, in a few days, its roots strike deep and it becomes a tree. Such is the story of this life. This story of existence/becoming (*bhava*) can be understood even through that short Dhamma passage we mentioned earlier: "Karma is the field, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the seed, and craving (*taṇhā*) is the moisture."

Indeed, the world does not hope to escape from existence/becoming (*bhava*); they want to bring an end to suffering (*dukkha*). Everyone talks about ending suffering (*dukkha*). Because they dislike the word "suffering" (*dukkha*), they talk about eliminating unrest or stress. No matter what beautiful words are used to express it, all the wise people who have appeared in the world thus far have contemplated that there is a certain nature of

suffering (*dukkha*) in this existence/becoming (*bhava*), in this state of being. There is an unsatisfying, insatiable nature to it. Seeking a remedy for this, seeking a way to eradicate this suffering (*dukkha*), even followers of other religions have been presenting various views. But the Buddha pointed out the limitations of the solutions they offer. Indeed, this existence remains precisely because of a certain truth of reality that they are unwilling to accept. That is why the Buddha declared the entirety of the five aggregates of grasping to be suffering (*dukkha*). What are called form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the Buddha designates in the Dhamma by the name "aggregates" (*khandha*). The aggregate of form (*rūpakkhandha*) means a heap of form; a heap of feelings (*vedanā*), a heap of perceptions, a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and a heap of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Then, it is immediately clear that gathering five heaps together and calling them "mine, mine" is a foolish thing. Although this is understood in a general sense, one must see this through the eye of insight (*vipassanā-cakkhu*). To see it thus, one must maintain attention—maintain contemplation—in such a way that the aforementioned perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) is removed.

In that collection of forms which the Buddha created and showed by psychic power like a motion picture, Rūpanandā grasped each one, moment by moment. That grasping is what is called preparations (*saṅkhāra*). There, her mind was constructed along with desire for it, thinking, "How beautiful! How beautiful!" Right after that, all of it broke up and dissolved, moment by moment. Now, you devotees know that little children sometimes blow soap bubbles. When the soap bubbles float in the air, they are very beautiful. Like a wondrous painting, they are extremely beautiful. Just as one goes to touch them, they pop and vanish. "Where did they go? Where did they go?" That is the answer one must then seek. That little child does not know how to reflect on it. He just keeps blowing more and more soap bubbles. In this saṃsāra, we have done the very same thing. But what the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā-yogi*) does is, along with this blowing, and as soon as this blown bubble bursts, he looks at what happens internally. Looking at that internal state is different from running after it by blowing more and more bubbles. Radical attention / Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means directing attention to the mind itself, concurrent with the breaking-up of the object. That itself is what is called the understanding of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa-dhamma*).

Indeed, in the Dhamma, everything is looked upon as the preparations of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa-saṅkhāra*). If we consider the phenomena of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*) as mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*): in dependence on each of these, a feeling (*vedanā*)—an experiencing—exists. Through that, one forms a perception—a recognition. Through that, certain intentions are generated. In accordance with those, a certain sense of contact (*phassa*) arises. One looks at all these things with attention (*manasikāra*). This is all that is meant by mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*).

When we isolate and examine any single moment of life, this is all there is as mental phenomena. So when Nandā was looking at each of those forms, as they finally broke up,

she must have thought: "What is this that is breaking up? It is my own mind that is breaking up along with it." In insight (*vipassanā*), what is seen is not just the breaking up of the object. The ordinary world sees only the breaking up of the object. Seeing the objects break up, they construct more and more objects, hoping to make at least some of them permanent. The world runs after such a mirage. But the yogi (*yogāvacara*), concurrent with that breaking-up object, looks within next. What happened? The mind that grasped that object also broke up. Even if it grasps another, it is just the same—that breaking-up mind. Looking at that breaking-up mind, one then realizes: "There is no such thing as a self (*attā*) here. There is nothing to be taken as 'I'. Here there is only a collection of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), only a continuity of preparations (*saṅkhāra*)."

Seeing reality as it really is (*yathābhūta*), one cannot help but become disenchanted (*nibbindati*). Now, some people want to live without any disenchantment toward this existence/becoming (*bhava*), this state of being, while at the same time wishing to see the truth. This is impossible. As we said in a simile on another occasion, if you give a little child a beautiful piece of cake, he wants to keep looking at its beauty and showing it off proudly to others, and he also wants to eat it. He cannot do both. Reality is just like that. To think that one can see the truth as it really is (*yathābhūta*) and yet not become disenchanted is a delusion. Therefore, we are compelled to speak the truth. Along with the knowledge and vision of things as they really are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*) comes the disenchantment known as *nibbidā*.

Indeed, what we have described in a few words is precisely what is presented in the Dhamma as the stages of insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). It is as the final result of that extremely rapid transformation within the mind that the path-knowledges (*magga-ñāṇa*) of Stream-entry and so forth are obtained. Therefore, the first thing is the nature of the impermanent (*anicca*). That is why one must gain the understanding of what is impermanent (*anicca*) precisely as impermanent (*anicca*). This five-aggregate bundle is a heap of form, a heap of feeling... it is called a heap. That is precisely what is illustrated by various similes, such as a lump of foam. The way feelings (*vedanā*) break up is shown to be like bubbles on water when it rains. Form (*rūpa*) is said to be like a lump of foam, feeling (*vedanā*) like a water bubble. Through such similes, the Buddha has shown the nature of the arising and passing away of these. When one rapidly contemplates this nature of arising and passing away, there arises from it an understanding of the disadvantageous (*ādīnava*) nature of this existence. One realizes the disadvantageous, defective nature of each of these, and concurrent with that, disenchantment (*nibbidā*) arises. It is through that disenchantment that the door to Nibbāna (Extinction) is opened.

Next, one is prompted to develop the three characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) shown by the Buddha: the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). Why is one prompted to develop them? When, through this disenchantment (*nibbidā*), the feeling arises: "I do not need to construct such an existence (*bhava*) again," one searches for the means to achieve this. This is described in the Dhamma as: "He does not grasp at any existence, just as one would not grasp a red-hot iron ball" (*na gaṇhāti bhavaṃ kiñci,*

suddhattaṃva ayoguḷaṃ). The mind of the yogi (*yogāvacara*) becomes unwilling to grasp at this entire existence/becoming (*bhava*). It is at that very moment, then, having seen the true nature of this existence as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), that the attachment one had toward form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), etc., ceases, and the mind is liberated for a moment from the five aggregates. That itself is what is called this peace—the ultimate peace of Nibbāna. That state of being liberated from the five aggregates, that mind.

That itself is the Nibbāna-element (*nibbāna-dhātu*) described by the Buddha as the final mind of the Arahant—the unborn (*ajātaṃ*), the un-decaying (*ajaraṃ*), bringing an end to birth (*jāti*) and an end to decay (*jarā*). Thus, the path leading to it is visible through this. If Rūpanandā, who held such great pride in her form (*rūpa*), could attain Arahatship through a single Dhamma sermon by the Buddha's skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*), should we not reflect: "Is this not possible for us too?" Perhaps our own saṃsāric merit-power is embedded within us. The only slight shortcoming we have is our reluctance to accept that truth. Instead, we prefer to cover up the truth. If we think in that manner, it will never be possible to escape from this saṃsāra. That is what we have to take from this story as well as from these verses.

Next, when considering the dissection of this body in terms of elements (*dhātu*), it is a very easy thing for someone. In one sense, it is simple. One must contemplate it constantly. Now, what is expected through contemplating it as repulsive, contemplating it as foul (*asubha*), and contemplating it in terms of elements (*dhātu*), is seeing the true nature of this body. First is the perception of the foul (*asubha-saññā*). We know that. The ordinary world dislikes the word "foul", we can understand that; but why does the Buddha give meditations on the foul (*asubha-kammaṭṭhāna*)? For an extremely long time, the world has been wallowing in this very perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*). It is to soothe or pacify, at least to some extent, this limitless wallowing in the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*) that we are told to cultivate the perception of the foul (*asubha-saññā*). After doing that, next, one brings it to equanimity (*upekkhā*). What helps to bring it to equanimity is that very perception of elements (*dhātu-saññā*). Once we see it as elements—both the internal and external as elements—when we think in that way, the mind gradually comes to equanimity (*upekkhā*). It is for this purpose that the Buddha has declared: "See the elements as empty" (*dhātuyo suññato passa*), meaning there is nothing to be grasped here as a self (*attā*). One must practice contemplating in such a way that this understanding arises. From this story of Rūpanandā, we can extract many points specifically relevant to insight (*vipassanā*).

Now, what we call preparations (*saṅkhāra*) is a collection of constructions and arrangements. Throughout our whole life, whether our day-to-day thoughts and wishes are photographed or not, they are deposited in this mental continuum (*citta-santāna*) as preparations (*saṅkhāra*). In this mental continuum, due to that sense of "I-ness," a multitude of experiences are deposited as "This I am, this is mine, this is my self." As a result, that karmic energy (*kamma-sakti*) will not fade away without yielding its fruit. Such is the nature of the cosmic law (*dhammatā*). That is why saṃsāra grants renewed

birth (*jāti*) again and again for an infinite period of time. It is as if it says, "Since you asked for it, here you go!" and hands it over. Sometimes, at the moment of death, one might hope: "For me, I must go to a heaven, or to such-and-such a place." But it is not received merely by wishing or hoping for it, because one lacks the qualification. One lacks the qualification if one has performed unwholesome deeds (*akusala-kamma*), sinful deeds; there are specific places in this universe destined for those, where their fruits ripen and yield results.

Indeed, the Buddha has declared that the reason why there is such a thing as existence/becoming (*bhava*)—the reason we say there are various worlds, states of deprivation, and hells—is because places are required to ripen the momentum of karma performed through ignorance (*avijjā*) by this being who possesses consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Then, they go and are born in those places. Having been born, they are compelled to experience that long story of suffering (*dukkha*)—birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*). Now, in the form the Buddha showed to Rūpanandā here, all of it was present: decay, sickness, and death—every single one of them. Seeing the state to which that woman finally deteriorated, Rūpanandā drew out her understanding. We too, then, must look at the world by relinquishing that aforementioned wrong view—that is, by regarding decay and growing old as something we must indeed be prepared to accept.

In this life, old age is not something to be hidden. It is common to everyone. Therefore, in association with that old age, we must try to develop composure, understanding, and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Instead of that, if one tries to live in a self-constructed youthfulness, deceiving others and deluding oneself, that is an extremely ignorant and childish thing. Perhaps that is some of the habits of the Rūpanandās of the present day. There are even some among our Buddhist devotees, especially in urban society, who take examples from the Western world. What happens through this? One is unable to open that Dhamma-eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*). The most supreme thing in the world is the opening of this Dhamma-eye. Even if one has the capability through all other forms of knowledge to go to the moon, yet spends one's life in a state destined for hell, the person who returned from the moon will next be born in hell, in a state of deprivation. So, what is the use of that? Next, let us consider what is generally regarded in the world as various levels of knowledge. People generate various conceits through degrees and so forth. There are various other positions of authority. Those who have shone at the very top with offices, power, and wealth, sometimes, due to a grave karma, a sinful deed, go and are born in bad destinations. Such is the dangerous situation that exists in this saṃsāra. That is precisely why a Buddha is necessary. We do not pay homage to this Blessed Buddha because of some ordinary, trivial matter.

There is a verse uttered by ancient Buddhist scholars:

Nahi sīlavataṃ tathāgatā...

aṭṭhakkhārā tīni padā

sambuddhena pakāsitā.

Tathāgatas do not arise in the world merely to teach ordinary moral vows. What the Fully Enlightened Buddhas do is preach three words consisting of eight syllables. What are the three words? *Aniccaṃ, dukkhaṃ, anattā* (Impermanent, Suffering, Not-self). Within these very words are eight syllables—referring to those eight vocalic measures. So then, it is this three-fold characteristic (*ti-lakkhaṇa*)—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—that our Buddhist devotees should indeed practice.

If one develops this three-fold characteristic (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) to some extent, regarding both one's own body and external things, one can gradually draw closer to that wisdom. No matter how much one piles this up as academic knowledge, there is no use in it. Indeed, the world accumulates experiences. Sometimes, a person lives for a hundred years, but they depart carrying only the dregs of the vast multitude of experiences accumulated throughout their entire life. They did not extract the essence. The essence is to practice seeing that three-fold characteristic—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—within one's own life, as well as within the lives of those whom one meets, sees, and associates with. Now, when members of the Saṅgha go to a house of mourning, they say they are going to witness a foul sight (*asubha-dassana*). But nowadays, for lay devotees, there might not be much difference between going to a house of mourning and going to a wedding house.

In any case, a friend of ours has passed away, or has fallen ill, or met with an unexpected death. Likewise, those we associate with, who looked so handsome, show us what becomes of these cages of bodies, of this city made of bones. While there are so many such examples, why are we unable to see this Dhamma? No matter how many books have been written, no matter how many good, deep books have been written, if we do not practice raising this to our own lives as direct experience, if we do not try to develop that Dhamma-eye, then no matter how advanced or educated we think we are, we are always in the kindergarten class. We remain in the very same place forever. Just as shown by the Buddha, even the very word "attention to the repulsive" (*paṭikūla-manasikāra*) is repulsive to some. For you devotees, too, when a serious illness strikes, the medicine given by doctors is indeed bitter. Sometimes, if necessary, you have to take it with a bit of sugar. Thus, somehow, even if it is bitter, what matters is that it does the job. Just so is this teaching which the Buddha has shown to the world as the truth. The ordinary world does not want to accept it. Because regarding this suffering (*dukkha*), some people think like this: "There is nothing wrong with this existence (*bhava*); it is only because of small shortcomings that this little part of ours is suffering," and they try to isolate only that part.

But the Buddha, taking the entire saṃsāric background into account, declared that this entire existence/becoming (*bhava*) is suffering. Having listed birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness, death (*maraṇa*), sorrow, lamentation, and so forth, how does he conclude it? With what phrase? "In short, the five aggregates of grasping are suffering" (*saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*). When certain scholars analyze and comment on this suffering (*dukkha*), they forget that final part. Perhaps it slips their mind. Even if they

disregard the suffering of birth (*jāti-dukkha*), they are willing to accept that decay (*jarā*), separation from the loved, and association with the unloved are suffering (*dukkha*). But that statement of the Buddha—"In brief, the entire five aggregates are suffering" (*dukkha*)—is something certain people are unwilling to accept.

That is why most people run after the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*). But the Buddha has shown that this is the truth, and as long as one does not understand this, one will suffer in saṃsāra. Therefore, if one needs examples of this, they can be obtained not only by looking around but also from one's own body. That is why insight (*vipassanā*) has been declared. Looking at one's own body, reflecting on the existence of the body, one can direct what are called contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), and contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*)—as found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta—internally toward oneself and externally toward others. Regarding one's own body and the bodies of others, regarding one's own feelings (*vedanā*) and the feelings of others—one knows that one does not directly experience another's feelings, yet in dependence on their reactions, we can know the nature of those feelings (*vedanā*): their impermanent (*anicca*) nature, their nature of suffering (*dukkha*), and so forth.

Likewise, regarding minds and mind-objects (*dhamma*), one must understand the true nature of each through insight (*vipassanā*). To know that, one must place that Dhamma shown by the Buddha as the path to Nibbāna—such as the Satipaṭṭhāna meditation—in a place of high respect and practice accordingly. One cannot realize Nibbāna merely by studying them and obtaining degrees. It is only by bringing them close to one's own life as a matter of meditation, making them accessible to the meditative mind, that these can be directly realized. Therefore, we must take lessons from such Dhamma narratives. Even though the Buddha is no longer with us, we still have the Dhamma. We must make an effort to guide our daily lives accordingly, by directing our mind deeply and reflecting even on a single sermon.

To begin with, establishing oneself in some virtue (*sīla*)... some do not even consider virtue (*sīla*) to be a necessary thing. Some misunderstand these as things that manifest suddenly and spontaneously on their own. Now, regardless of other factors, Rūpanandā here was perhaps a person who had fulfilled great spiritual perfections (*pāramī*). We constantly remind you that the Buddha cannot produce Nibbāna (Extinction) anew for anyone. It is in accordance with their own power of perfections (*pāramī-sakti*) that even the Buddha's attention is directed toward that person. This becomes very clear to us from those stories where the attainment of Great Compassion (*mahākaruṇā-samāpatti*) is seen. When surveying the world, the Blessed Buddha sees those whose past perfections (*pāramī*)...

...are mature. When we reflect in that way, those who understood this Dhamma quickly were those who possessed that power of perfections (*pāramī*) in the past. Accordingly, we should not think that there is no such path as the path of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) declared by the Buddha, or that there is no Noble

Eightfold Path. We must practice that path shown by the Buddha which helps to realize Nibbāna, without harboring any unusual pride. When practicing them, if one's power of perfections (*pāramī*) is developed, one's progress can be rapid. If one practices virtue (*sīla*) properly, dwells in concentration (*samādhi*), and if one's power of merit is mature, it is possible that what others achieve in years, one might achieve in a matter of days. But one must apply oneself to it. Without application, it will not succeed. That is why, no matter how great a scholar one is considered in the ordinary world, one cannot set aside these teachings. Having undertaken a certain virtue (*sīla*) to discipline the body and speech, next, one must concentrate the mind through some object of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*). It is to the concentrated mind that the reality of this world is understood as it really is (*yathābhūta*).

Therefore, once the mind is composed, next, in accordance with those teachings declared by the Buddha, we must understand that three-fold characteristic (*ti-lakkhaṇa*). It is not a matter of merely repeating "anicca, anattā". One must practice contemplating the impermanence of these in dependence on those aforementioned Name-and-Form phenomena (*nāmarūpa-dhamma*). When contemplating thus, if at some point the necessary factors are fulfilled, that lineage of insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) flows through one's mental continuum (*citta-santāna*). Now, if someone is attached, or if they develop an attachment toward something, as a result of that attachment, they obtain that thing and rejoice.

Likewise, if we look at the opposite side, when one's desire/will (*chanda*) for this world is removed, it ultimately ends in the supreme peace of Nibbāna. If one developed a specific attachment to something, because of that craving (*taṇhā*), a certain grasping/holding (*upādāna*) occurs. Next, one thinks that one has obtained it. That is how it works on one side. To turn it to the other side, one must see its impermanent (*anicca*) nature. That is what is meant when showing the insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*): when contemplating this impermanence deeply, there is only arising (*jāti*) and passing away. There is only arising and passing away in every single thing. When the mind is directed toward this arising and passing away, gradually this aspect begins to be understood more clearly.

Just as in the story of blowing soap bubbles, when this is understood as futile, when all these are regarded as empty and vanishing things, disenchantment (*nibbidā*) arises within that person. It is through that disenchantment that, at some point, the truth of Nibbāna can be realized. Then, the Buddha calls this the peace of Nibbāna, tranquility, the destruction of craving (*taṇhākkhaya*). It is also called the cessation of existence (*bhava-nirodha*)—the end of existence/becoming (*bhava*). Thus, the ordinary world tries to escape from suffering (*dukkha*) while securing this very existence (*bhava*). That is an entirely futile effort.

Rūpanandā lived harboring pride regarding her beauty. Yet, she understood the truth very quickly. But even without possessing such exceptional beauty, some of these devotees are unable even to face a word like "foul" (*asubha*). Such a weak mental state exists even among certain scholars. Therefore, we must reflect wisely: the reason why

this Buddha-Dhamma transcends all other philosophies is because the Buddha solved that very problem concerning this entire existence/becoming (*bhava*), which no one else had been able to solve until then.

That is why we call him the Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds—the Supreme One of the Three Worlds. It is not because he presented other political or social philosophies. We must understand this well. If we are to preserve the true essence of that Dhamma within ourselves and by helping others to do so, we must make an effort. If only the dregs are left, there is no Dispensation (*Sāsana*) here. That is why we have briefly mentioned these points. You devotees, on this valuable Poyaday, have undertaken the Ajīva-aṭṭhamaka sīla (virtue with livelihood as the eighth factor) and even more valuable virtues, taming your body and speech, and have listened to this Dhamma sermon for about an hour. During this time, you devotees must have gained, to some extent, the strength to develop those qualities that assist in realizing Nibbāna—namely, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), which are the spiritual powers (*bala-dhamma*).

In any case, without trying to cut short this Dhamma study and meditation out of an impatient desire to attain the fruits immediately, one must constantly apply oneself to these, practicing virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path declared by the Buddha. A practitioner (*yogāvacara*) means one who applies himself. If one applies oneself to these, and strives while carrying out these tasks, then perhaps even in this period, which appears to be the final phase of the Dispensation, it is still possible to realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through the penetration (*paṭivedha*) of the paths and fruits declared by the Buddha—namely, Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahatship.

Therefore, you should make a wish: through this multitude of wholesome intentions accumulated today, and through that Dhamma-energy developed as energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), and by relying as much as possible on the association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) to study the Dhamma and meditate—may this merit definitely serve as a supportive condition to realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna, escaping from all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) as quickly as possible through the penetration (*paṭivedha*) of the paths and fruits known as Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahatship. Likewise, may all the Sasana-protecting deities and Brahmas in this universe, and all beings from Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven who desire merit and Nibbāna, rejoice in this merit of our Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening! May they, having rejoiced, realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi they have aspired for! Make this aspiration and share the merits by reciting the verses in this manner.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #129

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.93)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Porāṇametaṃ Atula, netaṃ ajjatanāmiva;

nindanti tuṇhīmāsīnaṃ, nindanti bahubhāṇinaṃ;

mitabhāṇimpi nindanti, natthi loke anindito;

na cāhu na ca bhavissati, na cetarahi vijjati;

ekantaṃ nindito poso, ekantaṃ vā pasaṃsito ti.

From:

Dhammapada 227–228 (Kodhavagga)

Dear Listeners,

There is a storm in this world that everyone has to face. Even a Buddha cannot escape this storm, which is the storm of blame and praise. It is the habit of ordinary people to judge individuals by using blame and praise as yardsticks. However, the Buddha points out the shortcomings of these yardsticks while highlighting the eternal principles on which blame and praise should actually be based.

Now, these facts will become clear from the verses we have taken as our theme and their related story. There lived a lay disciple named Atula in Savatthi, who had a following of five hundred other lay disciples. One day, this lay disciple Atula went to the Jetavana monastery with his following to listen to the Dhamma. First, he went to the Venerable Revata. After the group sat down near him, the Venerable One did not say anything; he dwelt in solitude, not being one to maintain many associations. He remained completely silent. Angry at this, the lay disciple Atula stood up and went in search of Venerable Sāriputta. The Great Arahant Sāriputta asked, "Why have you come?" He replied, "I came with this group to listen to the Dhamma. We went to Venerable Revata, but he said nothing at all. Therefore, I became angry and came here." Venerable Sāriputta then said,

"Come then, sit down," and delivered a long Dhamma discourse concerning the Abhidhamma. Lay disciple Atula thought, "Who can understand this? This is a long Abhidhamma talk. It is of no use to us," and stood up and left with his following.

Next, they went to Venerable Ānanda. When Venerable Ānanda asked, "Why have you come this way, lay disciple?", he replied, "We came to listen to the Dhamma. First, we went to Venerable Revata, but he did not say anything to us. Out of anger, we then went to Venerable Sāriputta, who preached a very long sermon that we could not understand. Thus, we have come here to listen to the Dhamma." Venerable Ānanda preached a very brief sermon that was easy to understand. Lay disciple Atula became angry at this as well. "Why does he preach only a little Dhamma to us?" and standing up from there too, he went to the Blessed One. When the Blessed One also asked, "Why have you come this way, lay disciple?", he told this entire story: "We went to Venerable Revata, but he said nothing to us. Angry at that, we went to Venerable Sāriputta, who spoke a very deep and long story. We cannot understand those things. Then we went to Venerable Ānanda, who stopped after speaking only a little. Unsatisfied with that as well, we have come here," he told the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One said: "Atula, this is not something of today. From the past, it has been the custom: they blame the one who sits silent, saying nothing; they also blame the one who speaks much in the world; and they also blame the one who speaks in moderation, measuring and weighing his words. There is no one in the world who does not receive blame. There never was in the past, nor will there be in the future, nor is there now in the present, a person who receives only blame, or only praise." Next, he says: "Some people blame even kings, while others praise them. Some praise and others blame even this great earth, the sun, and the moon. Let alone others, even a Fully Self-Awakened Buddha preaching the Dhamma in the midst of the fourfold assembly is blamed by some and praised by others. This is the nature of the world." Next, the Buddha declares to this lay disciple Atula: "Lay disciple, regardless of how things are, the blame received from foolish people is not real blame. The praise received from such people is not real praise. If one receives blame from a wise person, that is real blame. The praise given by a wise person is real praise." Thus, he brought to light a certain Dhamma principle. That is the story.

When reflecting on this story, we can see that blame and praise can occur with cause, and can also happen to someone without sufficient causal grounds. Praise can also occur in this way. On one occasion, the Buddha addressed the community of monks regarding this very question: "Monks, in this world, possessed of two things, the untalented, foolish, untruthful person"—here, 'foolish' means ignorant—"the ignorant, untalented, untruthful person brings about his own ruin. He is subjected to the fault-finding of the wise, and also accumulates much unwholesome kamma. What are the two things? Without investigating the facts properly, he praises the one who should not be praised. Likewise, without investigating the facts properly, he blames the one who should be praised. That is to say, praising the one who deserves blame, and blaming the one who deserves praise. Behold, such a person brings about his own ruin in that manner, becomes subjected to the fault-finding of the wise, and accumulates much sin."

Next, the opposite side is shown: the wise, talented, and virtuous person, possessed of two things, is praised by the wise, and also accumulates much wholesome kamma and merit. In that case, it is shown that the wise person, having thoroughly investigated the facts, praises where praise is due, and blames where blame is due. Instead of the ordinary worldly custom, the Buddha brought to light a Dhamma principle through this. As mentioned, those of you who have read the life of the Buddha have heard how even the Blessed One was repeatedly subjected to groundless accusations and false charges. Even if we do not go into those long stories, since there are lessons to be learned from them, let us now highlight a few. On occasions when the Blessed One was censured, slandered, or blamed, he showed wonderful responses. He responded in various ways appropriate to each occasion. We can learn something from these.

To give one example, one day a Brahmin named Bhāradvāja came to see the Buddha. This Brahmin came in great anger, in a fierce rage. What was the reason for his anger? A Brahmin of his own clan had listened to the Dhamma from the Blessed One and went forth in the Dispensation. Feeling deep anger over this, he came to the Blessed One and began to abuse him with vulgar, harsh words. You know what vulgar words are—obscene language. He stood before the Blessed One and insulted him severely with vulgar words. The Blessed One simply let him abuse him. This man abused him until he was out of breath. After he had slandered for a considerable time, the Buddha asked, "Now, Brahmin, do relatives and friends ever visit your home?" "Yes, Master Gotama, they visit occasionally." "Then, when they visit, do you offer food and drink to those guests?" "Yes, on some days we do offer such food." "Then, if they do not accept the food you offer, what happens to it?" "If they do not accept it, then it remains ours." "Ah, indeed, Brahmin! Now, you have been abusing, insulting, and reviling us for all this time, coming to pick a fight and quarreling with us."

"I did not engage. Just like the story about that food, all of it now belongs to you, Brahmin. If one abuses him who abuses, quarrels with him who quarrels, fights with him who fights, it is like eating together. Here, the Buddha says, 'All that abuse belongs only to oneself.'" Through this discussion, the Brahmin gradually understood the matter, and such great faith arose in him that he went forth, received higher ordination in the Dispensation, and ultimately, it is said, became an Arahant. Through the Buddha's patience and those few wise words, the Brahmin's anger was stilled, and finally, he became an Arahant.

You have also heard of many other such occasions. One of the most serious accusations leveled against the Blessed One was the story of Ciñcā Māṇavikā. When the sectarian ascetics of other religions saw their gains and hospitality decline while the Blessed One received honor and hospitality, out of jealousy, they devised a certain strategy, a conspiracy, to bring blame and great disrepute to the Blessed One. What was the conspiracy? They instructed a very beautiful young female wanderer, Ciñcā Māṇavikā, and devised a scheme. In the evening, as people were returning from listening to the Dhamma at Jetavana, this young woman would walk towards Jetavana, well-dressed and carrying flowers.

When asked, "Where are you going, Ciñcā?", she would coquettishly reply, "What is it to you where I am going?" Then she would go and spend the night at a sectarian monastery near Jetavana. Having spent the night there, in the morning, watching for the time when people, the male and female lay disciples, were arriving at Jetavana, she would walk along that road from the direction of Jetavana. When asked, "Where are you coming from?", she would answer in a suspicious manner, "What is it to you where I am coming from?" Proceeding in this manner for some time, after several months had passed, while the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma in the midst of a large fourfold assembly, this woman came directly before the Buddha, disguised as a pregnant woman, and began to make a long accusation of misconduct against the Buddha.

The Buddha's response at that moment was truly wondrous. What did the Buddha do? Halting the Dhamma sermon, it is described that he raised his head straight like a lion and said: "Sister, whether what you say is true or false, only you and I know." "Only you and I know whether the story you are telling is true or false." Why did he say so? If such an accusation were true, a person would bow their head, hide their face, and lack even the strength to speak. However, only someone with strength of character can raise their head straight like that and speak without fear. Thus, the wise people understood from this that the Buddha was innocent. That was the kind of response the Buddha showed there. A long story follows from there. In the end, with the intervention of Sakka and the assistance of certain deities, the disguised pregnant belly slipped and fell off. It became untied and fell. Instantly, people struck her, abused her, and chased her away. Finally, the story concludes by mentioning that the earth split open and she went down to the Great Avīci Hell because of that serious false accusation.

Similarly, another incident related to the Buddha's life is mentioned concerning the female wanderer Sundarī. That too was very similar to the former. The sectarian ascetics used a beautiful female wanderer named Sundarī to execute a plot. Just as before, she would walk towards Jetavana in the evening and return from that direction in the morning. She spent some time doing this. Next, what was the subtle plot of these sectarians? They hired rogue men and had Sundarī killed. Having killed her, they hid her body in the rubbish heap where withered flowers and trash near the Blessed One's Fragrant Chamber (*Gandhakuṭi*) at Jetavana were thrown. After hiding it, they started an outcry: "Where is Sundarī? She is nowhere to be seen. We do not know where Sundarī has gone." Next, they went and complained to the King. The King asked, "Whom do you suspect? Is there any suspicious place?" "She did go towards Jetavana during the past few days. We do not know where she is now."

"Then search for her," the King said. So, these sectarians themselves went, dug up the place where the corpse was hidden, placed the dead body on a cot, carried it into the city, and began a protest: "Look at this! This is the work of the recluse Gotama and his disciples. After committing misconduct in this manner, they have finally killed this woman." Thus, they made a serious accusation.

Following this incident, when the monks went on alms round, the citizens of the city accused them, blaming and insulting them severely. When the monks came and reported

this news, at that moment, the Buddha taught them a certain verse. He instructed them to reply with this verse when people accused them. Even though we recite this verse in the Pali language, we will explain its meaning.

Abhūtavādī nirayaṁ upeti

yo cāpi katvā na karomīti cāha

ubho pi te pecca samā bhavanti

nihīnakammā manujā parattha

The meaning of it is: the liar goes to hell. *Abhūtavādī nirayaṁ upeti. Yo cāpi katvā na karomīti cāha*—if someone commits a wrong and says, "I did not do it," that liar also goes to hell. The liar who falsely says he did something he did not do goes to hell, and the one who did it but says he did not do it also goes to hell. *Ubho pi te pecca samā bhavanti*—after death, both go to the same place, becoming equals. *Nihīnakammā manujā parattha*—because both of them perform low actions. Even there, a wise person can discern the truth of what the monks are saying. Through this, a Dhamma point was demonstrated.

Next, another occasion is mentioned where the Buddhas and the community of monks were slandered. In the city of Kosambī, there was a queen of King Udena named Māgandiyā. This queen had harbored hatred toward the Blessed One for a long time, because on one occasion he had disparaged her beauty. In order to insult and blame the Blessed One and his community of monks, she bribed the city dwellers. She told them to abuse the Blessed One and the monks with vulgar words when they came into the city on alms round. Thus, the townspeople, including male and female servants, laborers, and others, gathered and began to abuse the monks. Then Venerable Ānanda came and said:

"O Blessed One, wherever we go, these people blame us. Let us go elsewhere." Then the Buddha asked, "Where else do we have to go, Ānanda?" "Let us go to another city," he replied. "Well, if the people in that city also blame and abuse us in this way, where shall we go?" "We shall go to another city." "Well, what if the same happens in that city too?" "We shall go to yet another city." "No, no, Ānanda, that is not the right way. If an issue arises in a certain place, we must only move to another place after that issue has been settled." Next, the Buddha declared: "I am like an elephant entered into battle. I can endure any arrow shot from around me. Likewise, it is my task to endure the abuse and insults of these unvirtuous people. This blame will last for only a week; after a week, it will vanish." He said this, seeing it with his Buddha-wisdom. And indeed, after a week, those people stopped their blaming.

In this manner, we find instances in the life of the Buddha where the Buddha responded to blame. Next, we all know that among the virtues of the Buddha, there is the quality of *purisadammasārathī* (the incomparable charioteer of men to be tamed), like a charioteer in taming tamable beings. Now, if we think of a chariot yoked to horses, it is the duty of the charioteer to use a rein and a whip.

That is to say, according to the quality of *purisadammasārathī*, the Buddha also had to blame his disciples in the course of disciplining them. Because it was unavoidable, he had to do so according to the occasion. Similarly, on certain occasions, he also had to praise his disciples. This helps to identify what should and should not be done in this Dispensation. When we know that someone received blame even from the Buddha, we understand that it is an unsuitable thing.

When we think, "This received praise even from the Buddha," we can know that this is a good deed, something to be taken as an example. Such tasks belong to a teacher. In brief, this is known as *nigraha* (censure) and *pragraha* (encouragement/support). We all know that *nigraha* means to blame or censure. The word *pragraha* (*paggaha*) is used to mean giving encouragement. Thus, the duty of a teacher is to censure, punish, and discourage the one who has done wrong, and to highlight and praise the one who has done the right thing. Through this, an example is set. The Buddha had to perform both of these functions in relation to the quality of *purisadammasārathī*.

Specifically, throughout the Vinaya Piṭaka meant for the community of monks, there are shown instances where the Buddha very strictly censured and punished the monks who committed wrongs. Often, the Buddha addressed the wrongdoing monks as *mogha purisa*—foolish man. Particularly, because Venerable Devadatta caused a schism in the Sangha and led a large group towards the path of non-Dhamma and non-Vinaya, instances of severe censure against Venerable Devadatta are shown. Similarly, there was a group of six monks called the *Chabbaggiya*. They also had a large following. Everywhere they looked to behave as they pleased, breaking the training rules in a rebellious manner. The Buddha strictly censured these *Chabbaggiya* monks on many occasions.

Indeed, it is mentioned in the Buddha's own words: *Garahāva seyyo viññūnaṁ, yañce bālappasaṁsanaṁ* (Better is the censure of the wise than the praise of fools). It means that censure from the wise is better than praise from fools. Why? Because through the praise of fools, one goes astray. Through the censure, blame, and criticism of the wise, one takes the right path. Therefore, we should not misunderstand the blame directed by the Buddha according to the occasion. One should not think, "Even though we speak of the Buddha's quality of Great Compassion, where is that Great Compassion here?" One must not think in that manner.

On certain occasions, when some monks did not behave properly, the Buddha expelled them. He drove the monks away, saying, "Do not come here near me." Sometimes, when the monks could not be disciplined, the Buddha would depart, saying, "Well then, do whatever you want." He was that strict.

On one occasion, the Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, I do not discipline my disciples like a potter carefully moving raw clay pots back and forth with both hands. I discipline my disciples strictly, censuring them," like tapping and testing well-baked pots. "I do not discipline my disciples with fear. I censure them according to the occasion." He also declared regarding the disciplining of disciples: *Saṇhena pi vinemi,*

pharusena pi vinemi (I tame them with gentle words, I tame them with harsh words, and I tame them with a mixture of both). This indeed is a special characteristic of the Buddha's quality of *purisadammasārathī*, which many people cannot understand.

On one occasion, Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta—who was another teacher—devised a certain plot through Prince Abhayarāja, who had come to him. He pointed out: "You can gain great fame by winning a debate against the recluse Gotama, if you present this kind of question to the Master Gotama. What is the question? First, ask: 'Does a Tathāgata speak words that are displeasing and disagreeable to others?' If the recluse Gotama replies that he does, then ask: 'Then what is the difference between an ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) and a Tathāgata?'" and instructed him to censure the Blessed One using that statement. "On the other hand, if he says, 'No, a Tathāgata does not speak words that are displeasing and disagreeable to others,' then ask: 'Then why did the Master Gotama say of Devadatta that he is bound for hell, destined to boil in hell for an aeon? Because of those words, Devadatta became angry, did he not? Why did you make such a statement?'"

This kind of question is called a two-horned dilemma (*ubhatokoṭika*). A two-horned dilemma means that one can neither say "yes" nor "no" to it. Whichever answer is given, one gets trapped. Having presented this question, Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta finally told Prince Abhaya: "If this question is presented to the recluse Gotama, he will be like a man with an iron hook stuck in his throat, unable to swallow it and unable to vomit it up. Through this, a great rumor will spread that you have defeated even the recluse Gotama in debate."

Now, to ask this, Prince Abhayarāja prepared the occasion in this way: He invited the Buddha to his palace for an alms-food offering along with three other monks. After they arrived and finished the meal, Prince Abhayarāja asked that two-horned dilemma presented by Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta: "Does a Tathāgata speak words that are displeasing and disagreeable to others?" What was the Buddha's very first reply? He said that this question cannot be answered categorically. One cannot say categorically "yes" or "no." As soon as he said this, Prince Abhayarāja exclaimed, "Alas, then the Nigaṇṭhas' plot has failed!" Thus the matter was exposed—that this was indeed the two-horned dilemma presented by Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta. Prince Abhayarāja confessed the story. The Buddha explained it in detail, giving reasons through a long Dhamma story. The task of a Tathāgata is to speak the truth to the world. Sometimes, the truth can be displeasing and disagreeable to others. Even if it is displeasing and disagreeable, if it is the truth, the Tathāgata speaks it to that person, choosing the right time and season. Looking at it, it may seem like blame or censure, but it has to be done. Thus, the Buddha demonstrated the matter with reasons. To illustrate this, the Buddha first asked a question of Prince Abhayarāja. During this conversation, an infant—his own son—was sitting on Prince Abhayarāja's lap.

Then the Buddha asked, "Prince, if this child sitting on your lap, due to your negligence or the negligence of a maid or wet-nurse, should put a pebble or a piece of gravel in his mouth, what would you do?" "I would pull it out. If I could not do it immediately, I would

hold his head with my left hand, crook my right finger, and pull it out, even if it drew blood. Why? Because I have compassion for the child. It is because of compassion that I do it, not out of anger." Seizing upon that very point, the Buddha said, "In the same way, Prince, on certain occasions, even though it is displeasing and disagreeable, and even though it appears like censure or blame, if it is the truth, I say it to my disciples according to the occasion." Because the final words he said are extremely important: "I have compassion for these living beings."

We generally think of *anukampā* (compassion/sympathy) and *karuṇā* (compassion/mercy) as the same. Semantically, they are indeed similar. However, within *anukampā* there is a sense of deep resonance or "shaking along with" (*kampa*). That is to say, even if it is not exactly like the affection a mother or a father has for their children, it is the desire to discipline those children. Truly, what lies within it is compassion (*karuṇā*). It is out of compassion and sympathy (*anukampā*) for them that one has to do such things, as the Buddha explained to Prince Abhayarāja on that occasion. In various ways, the Buddha sometimes strictly blamed the monks to discipline them. Furthermore, when that was insufficient, he meted out punishments. Looked at superficially, these may seem unkind. However, it is something that helps to maintain the Dispensation. That is the side of blame. Likewise, the Buddha praised according to the occasion.

Blame as well as praise is necessary for practically carrying on a Dispensation. That is why the Buddha awarded positions to a large number of individuals who possessed special skills among the fourfold assembly of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. In the Sutta Piṭaka, there is a separate chapter called the *Etadagga Vagga* (Chapter on the Foremost). Just like the graduation ceremonies held in universities today, the Buddha introduced those with special skills in various fields to the community of monks: "Monks, this one is foremost among my highly wise disciples. Among those with psychic powers, Moggallāna, Mahāmoggallāna, is foremost. Among those who observe the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅgadhārī*)—that is, those who maintain rigorous practices—Mahākassapa is foremost. Among the attendants, Ānanda is foremost. Among those monks who have attained the divine eye, Anuruddha is foremost." In this manner, instances where those deserving praise were specifically introduced are mentioned in the Dhamma.

Not only that, the Buddha praised the Chief Disciples, the Great Arahants Sāriputta and Moggallāna, on many occasions. He told the monks: "Monks, the two Chief Disciples are very wise. They are very helpful to their companions in the holy life. So much so, Sāriputta is like a mother to you. Moggallāna is like a wet-nurse to you." In that way, the Buddha introduced his disciples. Special praise was also shown for the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. Why? Because he was respectful of the practice. When the decline of the Dispensation begins, the very first thing to easily loosen is the practice. Therefore, the Buddha praised the Great Arahant Mahākassapa, who observed the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅgadhārī*) and stood firm in strict practice, at the highest level. On certain occasions he said, "If anyone is to advise this community of monks or preach the

Dhamma, it is either I or Mahākassapa who is fit to do so." He praised him at the highest level, saying, "Whatever jhānas and direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) I have attained, Mahākassapa has also attained them all." In those instances, the Buddha described the virtues of those who deserved to be praised. Why? For the sake of the posterior folk—"posterior folk" was used in the past to mean future generations. For future generations to take as an example. Thus, what should not be done can be understood from the characters of those who did wrong in the Vinaya Piṭaka, based on the censure directed at them. What should be done, the correct path, is shown by the noble ones who received praise from the sacred lips of the Buddha in the *Etadagga Vagga* and other places; they are the ones we must take as our example. He did not stop just by saying that.

Among the Sutta discourses, there is a hidden and valuable sutta. It is a very wonderful sutta. The Buddha presents this sutta in a very special way, indicating from whom one should take an example. This is how the sutta goes: As you know, a mother, harboring certain future aspirations for her only child, says to him: "Now, in this day and age, son, become somebody. Become an engineer. Become a millionaire. Become someone holding various positions. Become world-famous." Instead of that, the Buddha shows something like this: A faithful laywoman, a faithful mother, should make a request of her only son in this manner. The word *āyācanā* (petition/request) is used there. To her only son, she says this as an aspiration.

Now, in this day and age, parents, especially mothers, no matter how poor they are, when addressing their son, add the word "gold" (dear/darling) to it. Let us say it in the same way: "Oh, my golden son, in the future, be like the lay disciple Citta Householder. Be like the lay disciple Hatthaka of Āḷavī." Why was this said? The Buddha himself declares: "I say that among my lay disciples, Citta the Householder and Hatthaka of Āḷavī are the standard (*tulā*)." *Tulā* means a scale/balance. But we cannot just say "balance" now; we can call it a standard of weight, in this era when such tools are becoming obsolete. What we called a balance is a standard of weight. Among lay devotees, the true standard of weight, or the measure, the correct quantity, the standard is indeed those two. So this is said to the only son. This mother says to her only son: "Oh, golden son, someday be like Citta Householder. Be like Hatthaka of Āḷavī." Next, it does not stop there. The Buddha further says: "Golden son, if you go forth from the home life and become ordained, be like the Great Arahant Sāriputta. Be like the Great Arahant Moggallāna." The Buddha presents this as if spoken by the mother. "Why do I say so?" the Buddha next declares: "Among my ordained disciples, these two—Sāriputta and Moggallāna—are the true measure, the true standard, the true yardstick, the true balance." In that manner, he presents it regarding that son.

Furthermore, the sutta continues to say that a faithful laywoman should make a request of her daughter in this manner: "Oh, golden daughter, if you remain in the lay life, be like Khujjuttarā. Be like Nandamātā of Veḷukaṇṭaka." "Why do I say so? Among my female disciples, the laywomen disciples, these two are foremost. These two are the true measure," he introduces them in that way. "Daughter, if you should somehow go forth from the home life and become ordained, be like the Nun Khemā, be like the Nun

Uppalavaṇṇā." "Why do I say so? Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā are the true yardstick." The Buddha shows such a sutta discourse.

Similarly, on certain other occasions, the Buddha, as a Teacher, created wonderful opportunities to praise his disciples as mentioned. Kapilavatthu was the country of the Sakyans. On one occasion, when the Buddha was residing at the Nigrodhārāma in Kapilavatthu, the Sakyans had built a new assembly hall (*santhāgāra*) for their Sakyan princes to gather and discuss, and the time came to inaugurate it. In the past, the word "open/inaugurate" was not used. Instead, they had the community of monks, led by the Blessed One, use and occupy that assembly hall as a special meritorious deed.

That night, the Buddha preached the Dhamma for most of the night, and then what did he do? He said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, my back is aching a bit. I will lie down for a while. In the meantime, you preach the Dhamma to this assembly." A topic of the sermon that Venerable Ānanda could fearlessly preach was the *Sekha Patipadā* (the practice of the initiate) related to the path of Stream-entry. Having asked him to preach to this group under the topic of the *Sekha Patipadā*, what did the Blessed One do? Folding his outer robe (*saṅghāṭi*) into four layers, he spread it out and lay down right there. The Buddha lay resting in that very Dhamma hall. Venerable Ānanda preached the Dhamma. Throughout the entire night, Venerable Ānanda preached the Dhamma.

At that time, there was also the awareness that the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, was listening. After the sermon was finished, the Buddha got up and praised Venerable Ānanda, saying, "Sādhu, sādhu! It is extremely valuable," and praised how well he had delivered the discourse. He employed that strategy precisely to create that opportunity. There are many other such instances. On certain occasions, the Buddha would preach a deep discourse in brief to the monks. Having finished, he would suddenly get up and enter his dwelling. No one could understand it; he would say something in brief, get up, and leave. Thus, the monks would be utterly bewildered: "What is the meaning of this?" This was a strategy of the Teacher. Even in this day and age, teachers have a lot to learn from this. So, after the Buddha got up and went to his dwelling, the assembly would discuss: "Now, we cannot go back and invite the Blessed One again. How shall we explain this?" and they would look around.

Then, they would see various Venerable Ones step forward. Particularly, Venerable Mahākaccāna—in that *Etadagga Vagga* "graduation ceremony" (do not consider our use of this word as disparaging, we used it contextually)—was declared by the Buddha: "Monks, among my disciples who are capable of explaining in detail the Dhamma discourse and the Dhamma points delivered in brief by the Buddha, Mahākaccāyana is foremost." Thus, on such occasions, if Venerable Mahākaccāyana was in that assembly, those monks would go and request him: "O Venerable Sir, please explain this to us. After all, the Buddha has praised you highly in this regard." Yet, those Venerable Ones would not accept it immediately. They would reply humbly, "Indeed, the right time to ask was when you were with the Blessed One. Just like someone searching for leaves while the heartwood of a Sal tree is right there, you come searching for us." However, when they repeatedly implored him, Venerable Kaccāna would finally say, "Well then, I shall

explain what the Buddha said in brief, according to my understanding," and he would explain it thoroughly.

"However, do not accept what I say just like that. Go to the Buddha and report the sermon I preached, and accept it only if the Buddha approves it," he would tell the monks.

Finally, when the monks, having listened to Venerable Kaccāna's sermon, went to the Buddha and reported the matter, the Buddha said: "Monks, Mahākaccāna is wise. He has great wisdom. If you had asked me about this matter, I too would have answered it in the very same way. Therefore, maintain the explanation given by Mahākaccāyana as my own word." That is praise. So, what was done here? It was not merely that the Buddha went to his dwelling. It was a way of lending a hand to the pupil's skill and capability, and setting an example for future generations, so that when the Blessed One is no more, the next generation will have those who are foremost in these respective fields. Thus, those monks will not be left lost. Not only that, on certain occasions, the Buddha would leave the assembly, allowing Venerable Sāriputta, or even Venerable Ānanda who closely associated with him, to explain and preach the Dhamma points in detail to the gathering. There we see the act of praising. It is something a teacher must possess. One must praise where it is appropriate. It is not for any other reason but for the long-lasting endurance of the Dispensation. Many other such instances are found throughout the Tipiṭaka.

A special occasion of this kind can be described in this way: During the daytime in the assembly hall of Jetavana, Venerable Visākha Pañcāliputta delivered a Dhamma discourse to the monks in a wonderfully eloquent manner, using very pure and polished words. He was a very eloquent monk in preaching the Dhamma to the assembly. He preached the Dhamma in an inspiring way. The Buddha listened to this from a distance. Having listened, he came to the assembly hall in the evening and asked the monks, "Monks, who was preaching the Dhamma in the assembly hall?" "Venerable Sir, it was Visākha Pañcāliputta." "Ah, extremely valuable. Sādhu, sādhu!" Thus praising it, both to encourage him and to show the value of that Dhamma sermon, the Buddha uttered a certain valuable verse.

Bhāsaye jotaye dhammaṁ

paggaṇhe isinaṁ dhajaṁ

subhāsitadhajā isayo

dhammo hi isinaṁ dhajo

If we translate this verse, it goes like this. This is a very valuable and powerful verse. *Bhāsaye jotaye dhammaṁ*—Preach and illuminate the True Dhamma! *Isinaṁ dhajaṁ (paggaṇhe)*—Hold and raise the banner of the Sages! It says to hold and lift up the banner of the Sages. *Subhāsitadhajā isayo*—Well-spoken words are the banner of the Sages! The banner belonging to the Sages is well-spoken speech. *Dhammo hi isinaṁ*

dhajo—The Dhamma indeed is the banner of the Sages! Therefore, if we translate this into English, we can also take it like this:

> Preach! Illuminate the True Dhamma,
>
> Hold and raise the Sages' banner!
>
> Well-spoken words are the banner of the Sages,
>
> The Dhamma itself is the Sages' banner!

So then, what is the real Buddhist flag? The Dhamma. The real Buddhist flag is the Dhamma. When it says to raise this flag, it means to preach the Dhamma. That Dhamma is our true flag. "Sage" (*Isi*) refers to the community of monks. There too, the Buddha made use of the opportunity to give respect in that manner to that eloquent Dhamma preacher, even though he was his own disciple. In this way, there are countless Sutta discourses that demonstrate such praise.

Likewise, we know that sometimes praise is even more dangerous than blame. The Buddha had to deliver a series of very special discourses regarding that topic. Specifically within that theme, a few words are mentioned: *Lābha, sakkāra, siloka*—gain, honor, and praise. This praise comes along with gain and honor. The danger of these is such that sometimes they are shown to be more dangerous than blame. The Buddha has described this category of gain, honor, renown, and praise with these words: *Daruṇo*—it is a dreadful thing; *Kaṭuko*—it is a bitter thing; *Pharuso*—it is a harsh thing; because of the disasters they cause. If one succumbs to gain, honor, renown, and praise, there is nothing one cannot do. That is why it is called dreadful. Gain, honor, renown, and praise are shown to be things one must guard against. When looked at, they are even more dangerous than blame. Through them, it becomes very easy for someone to go astray.

Indeed, the Buddha shows wonderful similes for this as well. One simile is how a fisherman catches fish: he casts a bait for the fish. This gain, honor, renown, and praise are described as the bait cast by Māra, the fisherman. If one swallows this bait, one falls into trouble; that is what the Buddha points out there. He also shows another simile: "Monks, high up in the sky there is a storm called the Verambha wind." Earlier we spoke of the storm of blame. Now we are speaking of the storm of praise. "High up in the sky there is a great storm called the Verambha wind. If a bird is caught in this storm, its legs go one way, its wings are swept another way, its head goes another way, and its body goes yet another way. Behold, the bird meets with such great destruction when caught in the Verambha wind." Here, this Verambha wind is compared to the aforementioned gain, honor, renown, and praise. It shows that once caught in it, one knows not what will happen. In this way, the Buddha also showed the dangerous side of praise.

Truly, based on the Buddha's word, the life of the Buddha, and the Dhamma-Vinaya, we now know what our problem is. What should be done? What should not be done? How is it right? How is it wrong? The Buddha presents blame and praise as examples for precisely that. So-and-so acted in such a way and received blame from the Buddha. So-

and-so acted in such a way and received praise from the Buddha. Through this, we can extract a standard, a true measure, as well as Dispensation-related values and virtues. That is why the Buddha praised. In any case, accepting it with humility is the quality of the wise. That is precisely why, even though Venerable Mahākaccāna and other Venerables had received "degrees" as being foremost (*etadagga*), when the monks came and requested, "Oh, please explain this to us," they did not say, "Oh, then there is no need to go to the Buddha; I shall tell you." Showing great reluctance, they would say, "Oh, why now? The time has passed, hasn't it? You should have asked when the Buddha was present," and with much hesitation, they would humbly say, "Do not accept what I say just like that. Accept it only if the Buddha approves it." Thus, even the disciples who received praise from the Buddha in the past acted with humility. Because this praise was solely for the purpose of setting an example for the world.

Indeed, you virtuous people have also heard that blame and praise are things belonging to the Eight Worldly Conditions (*Aṭṭha Lokadhamma*): "Lābho alābho ayaso (yaso ca), nindā pasaṁsā ca sukhañca (dukhaṁ)." This is the Eight Worldly Conditions. All these are impermanent (anicca). In the world, one receives gain and also loss. *Lābho alābho*. *Ayaso yaso ca*—one receives fame and disrepute. This "yasa" refers specifically to the wealth of retinue. Next, *nindā pasaṁsā*—one receives blame and praise. One receives happiness and also suffering (*dukkha*). These keep turning in the world like a chariot wheel. Therefore, these are impermanent (anicca). There is no point on a turning wheel that one can grasp. One must understand the turning wheel as it turns. Blame and praise are part of these Eight Worldly Conditions. They have a certain practical value when we think of the Dispensation and the future generations. It is with this in mind that the Buddha censured certain individuals according to the occasion, and praised certain individuals. Through this, there are many things for us to learn. Therefore, we should not merely talk about the principles of this Dhamma from the Buddha's life; we must also take these character examples. We can understand from the Dhamma literature and Vinaya literature: who should be taken as our model from among the close disciples of the Buddha, and who should not. We must try to understand these by contemplating deeply and investigating the facts.

Regarding blame and praise, in the ordinary world, as mentioned earlier, if the majority of people blame someone, then he is indeed considered contemptible. If the majority of people praise someone, then he is indeed considered the best person because of the praise. However, the Buddha said: *Garahāva seyyo viññūnaṁ, yañce bālappasaṁsanaṁ*—Better is the censure of the wise than the praise of fools. Through this, the Buddha showed the true yardsticks to the world. There are countless examples in Dhamma literature for us to recognize these values and virtues. He highlighted eternal principles regarding blame and praise. He also showed that there are two sides to those mentioned. Sometimes, people blame without investigating the facts. They praise without investigating the facts. There is a wrong side to both. Blaming without investigating the facts is a mistake. Praising without investigating the facts is also a mistake. It indicates that we must do both mindfully. When we finally look at these, every single one of them is impermanent (anicca). They belong to the Eight Worldly

Conditions. They are like a turning chariot wheel. Therefore, while taking the practical value from them, we must extract the portion relevant to this path to Nibbāna.

We constantly recall this practice of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) as the Buddha's Dispensation. This virtuous assembly spent today practicing the meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) and observing virtue (*sīla*) to the best of their ability, fulfilling the practice relevant to the Buddha's Dispensation. The real benefit, the maximum benefit, and the most valuable thing that can be obtained during the era of a Buddha's appearance is liberation from this suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra—liberation from the suffering (*dukkha*) of the round of rebirths. During a time when there is no Buddha, any other clever feats can be performed. But the greatest feat that can be performed when a Buddha is present is this. Therefore, as a dedication towards that end, today helped you to fulfill these practices. With that strength, on this occasion, you also listened to this Dhamma sermon which supports that very Nibbāna.

If you, virtuous people, have accumulated any wholesome energies through this, may this merit of listening to the Dhamma be of support. Through the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇamitta*) in this very life, may you dispel the obstructive factors to your meditation, acquire the supportive factors, and through the realization of the paths, fruits, and penetration of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, may this wholesome deed of Dhamma-sharing surely be a supportive condition for the realization of the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! Aspire thus. Likewise, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, if any beings, including your relatives, wish to escape from this suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra, or wish to rejoice in this wholesome deed of sharing and listening to the Dhamma, may all of them rejoice in this merit! Having rejoiced, may they realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through the Bodhi of their aspiration! Say *Sādhu*. Recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #130

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.127)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Sabbattha ve sappurisā cajanti,

na kāmakāmā lapayanti santo;

sukhena phuṭṭhā atha vā dukhena,

noccāvacaṃ paṇḍitā dassayanti ti.

From:

Dhammapada 83 (Paṇḍitavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The rare quality of equanimity, of remaining balanced in both pleasure and pain, is a valuable exemplar we receive from the life of the Buddha. Becoming elated in pleasure and depressed in pain (*dukkha*) is a weakness commonly seen in society. The Blessed One preached that remaining balanced in both these situations is a characteristic of the wise (*paṇḍita*), and that is the occasion we are presenting today.

We believe that on this Duruthu Full Moon Poya day, as you commence a new year, you will be able to extract certain points from this verse and its background story that will assist your philosophy of life. The Blessed One preached this thematic verse at Jetavana monastery in reference to five hundred monks. However, in truth, the primary incident related to this story occurred in Verañjā. Not long after the Great Awakening, the Blessed One, along with five hundred monks, was residing at the root of the Naḷeru margosa tree in Verañjā. At that time, a Brahmin named Verañja came to discuss with the Blessed One. After a long, debate-like Dhamma discussion, he developed faith in the Blessed One and became a lay follower who went for refuge in the Triple Gem. Right at that moment, he invited the Blessed One and the community of five hundred monks to spend the upcoming rainy season there. However, due to a certain unfortunate circumstance, this Brahmin Verañja completely forgot to attend to the needs of the monks during the rainy

season. Along with this, there was a famine in Verañjā. When the monks did not receive any support from that Brahmin, even though they went on alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*), the famine in Verañjā was so severe that they received nothing during their alms-round. Meanwhile, five hundred horse dealers traveling with five hundred horses from the Northern Route (Uttarāpatha) arrived in Verañjā. Those horse dealers wished to offer a measure (*pata*) of barley grain to each of the monks. The monks went to the horse paddocks, received a measure of barley grain each, brought them back, pounded and powdered them in a mortar, and offered them to the Blessed One as well, sustaining themselves on this during those three months.

The Blessed One asked Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, what is that sound of a pestle striking a mortar?" Often, the Blessed One does not ask such questions because he does not know. The reason is that although he knows, when there is a need to deliver a Dhamma discourse or to lay down a disciplinary rule, the Blessed One asks a question to create an opportunity. We must think it was the same on this occasion. For when he asked about the sound of the pestle, Ven. Ānanda explained the matter: that they were not receiving support from the Brahmin Verañja, and even when going on alms-round, they received nothing, and finally they were receiving this measure of barley grain.

After that was said, the Blessed One uttered a very deep and meaningful short statement: "Ānanda, sadhu, sadhu, Ānanda! It has been won by you, good men." "Won" (*vijita*) is the word used. "It has been won. Yet, future generations might look down even upon red rice." "Future generations" means the monks who will arise in the future will disparage even high-quality rice. "But it has been won by you, good men." From this, we must understand that they conquered both greed and the famine through this practice of fewness of wishes (*alpeccatā*). In any case, at the end of that rainy season, the Blessed One told Ven. Ānanda, "It is the custom of the Buddhas, if they have spent the rainy season in a place, to inform the donor who invited them before departing on their provincial tour." So, together with Ven. Ānanda, he went to the house of the Brahmin Verañja and told him, "Brahmin, in accordance with your invitation, we have spent the rainy season. Now we are prepared to go on our provincial tour. We have come to inform you of this." It was only then that the Brahmin Verañja remembered the matter. Then he said, "It is true, Venerable Gotama. Indeed, I did invite you. But it was not because I lacked the means to give, nor because I was unwilling to give. Something happened. I think it must have been forgotten due to the many duties, worries, and household chores in this lay life." To make up for it, the Brahmin Verañja, with great faith, invited them for the next day and offered an excellent alms-giving.

After this, the Blessed One journeyed by stages and returned to Sāvatthi. On that occasion, the residents of Sāvatthi offered a grand alms-giving to the Blessed One and the community of monks as guest-offerings. By that time, five hundred lay followers had handed over their household properties and goods to their wives and children and were staying at Jetavana, listening to the Dhamma of the Blessed One. It is mentioned that there was an arrangement such that they too could subsist on the same food offered to the monks. Furthermore, those who served as attendants, described in the Dhamma as

“eaters of leftovers” (*vighāsāda*), were also living on the remnants of the food offered to the monks.

Having eaten the delicious food received as leftovers, these people behaved in an extremely undisciplined manner; they went to the riverbank, where some slept soundly, while others engaged in wrestling and various absurd and improper behaviors, creating a great disturbance both in the monastery and on the riverbank. A discussion arose about this among the monks: “The monks, even during that famine in Verañjā, endured those difficulties in an extremely peaceful manner, and even now, when exquisite food is received, they remain peaceful. But these undisciplined people are behaving in this manner.” Thus, a discussion arose in the Dhamma assembly. The Blessed One, having arrived there and asked about the discussion, said, “Indeed, monks, good men do not show highness or lowness in either pain (*dukkha*) or pleasure, but remain balanced.” And he uttered the verse we took as our theme:

> *Ve sappurisā cajanti na kāmakāmā lapayanti santo,*
>
> *sukhena phuṭṭhā atha vā dukhena, noccāvacaṃ paṇḍitā dassayanti.*

“Indeed, good men let go” (*ve sappurisā cajanti*)—this means that in all places, good men renounce; they practice letting go. Everywhere. “They do not speak out of desire for sensual pleasures” (*na kāmakāmā lapayanti santo*)—*santo* means good men. What is the habit of those good men? *Kāmakāmā* means because of those desires, with the hope of fulfilling desires; *lapayanti* means they do not speak self-interested or flattering words. They do not behave by speaking flattering words to please others. Next, “when touched by happiness or indeed by suffering” (*sukhena athavā dukhena noccāvacaṃ paṇḍitā dassayanti*). This means that when the wise are touched by pleasant sensation (*vedanā*) or painful sensation (*vedanā*)—when experiencing pleasure or pain (*dukkha*)—they do not show highness or lowness, elation or depression. Furthermore, before preaching this verse, the Blessed One related a certain Jātaka story to illustrate this. He declared the Vālodaka Jātaka, showing that those undisciplined individuals had behaved in this same way in the past as well. We will present that Jātaka only in brief on this occasion.

According to that story, in the past, when King Brahmadatta was reigning, enemy hostiles arose in a border province. The king went with his army, quelled the hostile threat, and returned. To treat the horses that were exhausted from the warfare, he ordered his royal officers to press grapes, without mixing water, and to give pure grape juice to the horses to drink. After that was done, the pressed grape dregs remained. When asked what to do with them, he ordered that they be mixed with water and given to the donkeys that had carried the horses’ baggage and food. After those donkeys were fed with it, they became intoxicated by it and began running here and there in the royal palace, creating a huge nuisance. The king asked what the noise was. There, acting as minister, the Bodhisatta declared: “Yes, your majesty, horses of noble birth—thoroughbred horses—remain silent even after drinking such excellent grape juice. But donkeys of low birth behave in this manner after drinking merely this sour, dregs-water.”

The Blessed One showed this as an illustration and then uttered this verse. In the Jātaka story, it is said that those donkeys were indeed these five hundred people. Accordingly, we can understand this verse in this manner. When the Blessed One said here, “Indeed, in all places, good men let go,” he referred to how those monks endured and acted with fewness of wishes (*alpeccatā*) during that extremely difficult time of famine. Furthermore, “they do not speak out of desire for sensual pleasures.” They did not go and speak self-interested words because of those desires. To put it briefly, not a single monk out of those five hundred went to the Brahmin Verañja to complain: “Lay devotee, you invited us to spend the rainy season here, didn’t you? But there is no care as promised. Even the Buddha is consuming barley grain.” Not a single monk went to complain. That is what is called “winning” (*vijita*). From this, we can understand why the Blessed One used that word “conquered” (*vijita*). Indeed, if any monk had gone and said such a thing to the lay donor, it would have been a defeat.

We must learn something from this. The Blessed One preached this verse as praise for the practice of the monks. He also made a certain prediction for future generations, saying that the monks who would arise in the future would be different. The dispensation (Sāsana) has to go forward into the future. It must have been because the Blessed One felt that such things would happen in it that he said they would disparage even red rice. Various related matters are mentioned in the history of the dispensation and in later times, which you too have heard of.

There was an undisciplined group led by six monks known as the Chabbaggiya. They were constantly seeking loopholes in the dispensation of the Blessed One and behaving in a highly rebellious manner. Because of this, many disciplinary rules had to be laid down. Next, you have also heard the stories regarding the elder Devadatta. Elder Devadatta was a relative of the Blessed One. Out of pride, overcome by gain and honor, he requested the Blessed One to hand over the Saṅgha to him in the Buddha's old age, subsequently caused a schism in the Saṅgha, and created a great deal of trouble. Having won over King Ajātasattu, the king began to go to serve him daily, morning and evening, with five hundred carriages carrying five hundred bowls of rice. When the monks mentioned this incident, the Blessed One declared, “Do not be envious of that; therein lies the ruin of Devadatta.” For it is the nature of base men that the more they receive, the more proud they become. On that occasion, he preached a verse using similes:

> *Phalaṃ ve kadaliṃ hanti, phalaṃ veḷuṃ phalaṃ naḷaṃ,*
>
> *sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanti, gabbho assatariṃ yathā.*

“Indeed, its fruit destroys the banana tree; its fruit destroys the bamboo and the reed. Honor destroys the bad man, just as the embryo destroys the she-mule.”

“Indeed, its fruit destroys the banana tree”—when the banana tree bears fruit, it is destroyed. Bearing fruit is a sign of the destruction of the banana tree. Likewise, if bamboo trees, reeds, etc., bear fruit, they too meet with destruction. “Honor destroys the bad man” (*sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanti*)—*kāpurisa* is the opposite of the word *sappurisa*

(good man). *Kāpurisa* means a bad person, a bad man, an ignoble man. What is the nature of an ignoble man? When he receives honor and hospitality, he is destroyed by it due to pride. Through this, we can understand how those of base character gradually fall into decline the more they receive gains and honors. In the early days of the dispensation, the noble monks endured that famine in Verañjā. But as time went on, due to the undisciplined actions of some monks and their greed for the four requisites, various corruptions occurred in the dispensation.

Next, let us look at exemplary characters. The Blessed One constantly presented the great character of Ven. Mahā Kassapa to the monks as an example regarding the practice of gathering alms (*piṇḍacaryā*), etc. Foremost among those who observed the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*), the Ven. Mahā Kassapa received high praise from the Blessed One in a manner that no other monk or Arahant received. He was held up as an exemplar to the monks.

On such an occasion, the Blessed One said to the monks, “Monks, the nature of Mahā Kassapa is that he is content with whatever” (*santuṭṭho itarītarena*)— “whatever” (*itarītara*) is used to mean much or little, exquisite or coarse. He has the nature of being content with any kind of alms-food. Furthermore, he speaks to others about that contentment in terms of praise, recommending and demonstrating it as an example. Next, he does not become dejected when he does not receive alms-food. After receiving it, he partakes of it without greed, reflecting upon it wisely, focused on liberation (*nissaraṇapañño*), which means with Nibbāna as the goal.

In this manner, the character of Ven. Mahā Kassapa was highlighted. Next, on another occasion, the Blessed One asked the monks, “What kind of monk is suitable to approach lay families for alms-food, etc.?” Then the monks said, “We do not have a clear understanding. May the Blessed One himself clarify this matter!” Then the Blessed One waved his hand in the air for a moment. In the preaching style of the Blessed One, you may have heard of such actions, like taking a little soil on his fingernail. On this occasion, waving his hand in the air, he said as a simile, “Monks, just as this hand does not adhere to, bind with, or get caught in the air, when a monk goes to lay houses, if his mind does not adhere to, bind with, or get caught in those lay houses, then such a monk is suitable to go for alms-round among families.” “Mahā Kassapa is just such a person.” Various similes have been given regarding the Arahant Mahā Kassapa, such as the “moon simile” (*candūpamā*)—like the moon. No one can grasp the moon. The moon is seen everywhere. The reflection of the moon in the sky is seen in any body of water, yet no one can grasp it. Through various such similes, the limit of the connection between Arahant Mahā Kassapa and lay people was shown.

Similarly, the Buddha pointed out: “If, before going for alms-round, a monk thinks, 'Lay people must give me alms-food. They cannot avoid giving. They must give a lot; they cannot give a little. They must give exquisite food; they cannot give coarse or rough food. They must give quickly; they cannot delay. They must offer it respectfully; they cannot offer it disrespectfully'—if he goes with such thoughts beforehand, then if those lay devotees do not give alms-food at all, that monk becomes distressed and troubled by it.

Even if they do give, if they give only a little and not a lot, he still becomes distressed. If they give coarse food instead of exquisite food, he still becomes distressed. If they give slowly instead of quickly, he still becomes distressed, falling into dejection. Furthermore, if they give without preparing it properly or without order, he likewise becomes distressed."

Having shown that incorrect way, he then declared, "But if a monk thinks beforehand, 'How can one get what one wants from others' families? Therefore, there is no necessity; they may or may not give. Furthermore, how can one expect that others' families will give a lot? How can one expect that they will give exquisite food? How can one expect that they will give quickly? How can one expect that they must prepare it properly?'—if he considers this beforehand and goes on alms-round, then even if he receives nothing at all, or receives a little, or receives coarse food, or does not receive it quickly, or receives it unprepared, that monk does not become distressed. He remains balanced."

Thus, in this way, the Blessed One pointed out certain valuable facts regarding the practice of gathering alms. All of this comes under that word "conquered" (*vijita*). There are valuable discourses (*sūtras*) that further explain this noble practice of the monks that the Blessed One declared. Especially, in explaining the practice of sagehood (*moneyya-paṭipadā*) to the ascetic Nālaka, valuable verses related to this are mentioned.

In one verse, the attitude that a monk should cultivate when going for alms-round is described as follows:

Alābhā yadi vā lābhā, ubhayeneva so tādī,

rukkhaṃva paṭinivattati.

If he receives, it is well; if he does not receive, that too is well. In both cases, he is one who is "such" (*tādī*); he returns like one who approached a tree.

If he goes for alms-round and receives, that is good; if he does not receive, that too is good. "If he receives, it is well; if he does not receive, that too is suitable... In both cases, he is 'such' (*tādī*)." The word *tādī* is used. *Tādī* means "suchness" or "being as such." This is a word with a special, deep meaning. It is a word indicating the quality of *tādī*, the quality of equanimity, shown in reference to Arahants and the Blessed One. In both situations, he is shown to be thus, as such. Next is the simile given. "He returns like one who approached a tree." Just as someone who goes to a tree to see if there is fruit does not beat or curse the tree if there is no fruit, when a monk goes to a layman's house and does not receive anything, he does not blame the lay devotees, saying, "What is this, lay donor?" There is no such blaming at all. That is what is meant. He returns with balance and equanimity, just like one who went to a tree and returned. That is what is shown as the quality of *tādī*.

Now, the meaning of this quality of *tādī* is shown in relation to the eight worldly conditions (*aṣṭa loka dharma*). The simile used in ancient times for the eight worldly conditions is the balance-beam (*tulā-daṇḍa*). A balance-beam is like the beam of a

weighing scale. Thus, in weighing equally, it is mentioned as “balanced like a scale in pleasure and pain” (*sukha-dukkhe tulābhūto*). In pleasure and pain (*dukkha*), it is like a scale; it remains perfectly level.

On another occasion, we used a modern simile, saying that the eight worldly conditions are like a rotating Ferris wheel (scissors-swing). Just as one does not fall whether going up or going down, one develops a certain attitude of mind. There is a deep meaning in “being as such.” If one receives, it is so; if one does not receive, it is so. If there is pleasure, it is so; if there is pain (*dukkha*), it is so. That is “suchness”—the quality of equanimity. That is why it is said here, “touched by happiness or indeed by suffering, they show neither elation nor depression”—they do not show highness or lowness. That is the meaning.

In the end, the Blessed One declared that this entire collection of qualities regarding the practice of gathering alms exists in the Arahant Mahā Kassapa, and urged others to take him as an example. Thus, both the declining side and the sublime side of this dispensation are shown in the Dhamma through the character of the Arahant Mahā Kassapa regarding this practice of gathering alms. Indeed, in this day and age, we must especially consider this matter because, like everything else, within the monkhood, the practice of gathering alms and meditation are things that must be done with a deep meaning. However, due to various reasons, they often tend to become a mere fashion. The Blessed One declared that going for alms—begging—is the lowest livelihood in the world: *“Antamidaṃ, bhikkhave, jīvikānaṃ yadidaṃ piṇḍolyaṃ.”* Among all the livelihoods in the world, the lowest is begging. Yet, noble sons of good families enter even this begging for the deep purpose of fulfilling renunciation (*nekkhamma*).

As it is said: “Abandoning a small mass of wealth or abandoning a great mass of wealth, abandoning a small circle of relatives or abandoning a great circle of relatives,” they depart from the home life and go forth into homelessness. After going forth, having abandoned all—just as the Buddhas, and even those of merchant families and royal families did—the next thing to do as a livelihood, though we call it a livelihood, is the alms-round (*piṇḍacārikā*). However, we are shown here that they do not go and beg like a beggar. Unlike beggars and pleaders, they stand silently designated for alms (*uddhissa*). Going on alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*), they stand before a house for a certain amount of time waiting, and only then depart. Furthermore, “they do not speak out of desire for sensual pleasures”—this means that when going on alms-round, they do not ask the lay donors, “Give me this or that.” *Lapayanti* means they do not speak self-interested words in that manner. Or rather, there are no flattering, chit-chat, or pleasing conversations on alms-round. Where that practice is spoken of, it is also mentioned in this manner:

> *Sa pattapāṇi vicaranto, amūgo mūgasammatho,*
>
> *appaṃ dānaṃ na hīḷeyya, dātāraṃ nāvajāniya.*

“Wandering with bowl in hand, though not mute, he is regarded as mute. He should not despise a small gift, nor look down on the giver.”

A somewhat deep and meaningful verse is mentioned in that manner. “Wandering with bowl in hand” (*sa pattapāṇi vicaranto*)—that monk wandering with his bowl; “though not mute, he is regarded as mute” (*amūgo mūgasammatho*)—on the alms-round, though he is not mute, he behaves as if he were mute. Lay devotees may ask various questions. They may try to draw him into various pleasant chit-chats, but monks are instructed to behave like a mute person. Although not mute, he must behave as if mute. Furthermore, “he should not despise a small gift” (*appaṃ dānaṃ na hīḷeyya*)—even if the gift is small, he does not look down on it, weaken his mind because of it, or find that offering repulsive. “Nor look down on the giver” (*dātāraṃ nāvajāniya*)—it is also mentioned that he does not show disregard or contempt toward the person who gives a small amount. This quality is shown in the character of the Arahant Mahā Kassapa, as well as in the incident in Verañjā we discussed.

Similarly, another important incident is mentioned concerning the Blessed One. Perhaps you have heard the story of the slave-woman Puṇṇā. Let us consider this briefly, as it is a valuable story. There was a slave-woman named Puṇṇā belonging to the treasurer of Rājagaha, who was extremely poor. She was faithful, but poor. One day, she made a coarse bran-cake for herself, baked it on the embers, placed it in her waistband, took a pot, and went to the watering place. On the way, she met the Blessed One coming into the village on his alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*).

This woman thought, “On other days when I meet the Blessed One, I have nothing to give. But today, I have something to give. However, this is a very coarse food, a rough food. If the Blessed One would accept it, I will offer it.” Saying these very words, she said, “Venerable Sir, this is my extremely poor and coarse food, a rough food. May the Blessed One, out of compassion, accept this as an offering to bless me!” The Blessed One made a sign to Ven. Ānanda. Ven. Ānanda handed over the bowl. The Blessed One accepted it in his bowl. This woman also paid homage and aspired, “May this be a supportive condition for me to attain that Dhamma which the Blessed One has attained!” The Blessed One blessed her, saying, “May it be so!”

However, this slave-woman thought, “Now, although the Blessed One accepted this out of compassion for me, perhaps he will give it to a crow and go to a royal palace or a treasurer's house on alms-round.” Just as this thought arose, the Blessed One, perceiving it, made a sign to Ven. Ānanda. Seeing a tree-root nearby, Ven. Ānanda spread a robe. The Blessed One sat down and consumed that very bran-cake as his meal for the day, so it is mentioned. There, we are shown that even from the life of the Buddha, he accepted even the small gift of the giver in that manner, without allowing any stain in his mind, helping them to give. As mentioned in the Dhamma, rather than modern economic principles, there is a different concept of gaining merit. The Blessed One pointed out that a true monk goes on alms-round with this kind of thought:

“May those who seek gains of merit receive gains of merit! May those who desire merit (*puṇṇakāmā*) perform merit!” with such a thought.

Often, concerning characters like Mahā Kassapa, it is mentioned that after rising from the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), they go on alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*) to poor huts. Why is that? According to modern thinking, one should go to places of abundance, not to places of lack. For the world considers taking from a place of lack to be wrong. But here, when looking at the concept of gaining merit, the Blessed One declared: *“Appasmā dakkhiṇā dinnā…”*—offering something from very little is worth a thousandfold. It is worth a thousand times the gift given. Because, according to the concept of gaining merit, that which is given with difficulty, given in suffering (*dukkha*) and hardship, is highly fruitful. It was understanding this that those Arahants and Buddhas accepted and consumed those offerings out of compassion for poor people.

Accordingly, we too must think of that: “They do not speak out of desire for sensual pleasures.” Concerning alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), they do not engage in various self-interested words, flattering words, or pleasant chit-chats for its sake. Furthermore, they do not look down on what is given, whether it is little or much. Especially, considering that when the Arahant Mahā Kassapa rose from the attainment of cessation and someone got the chance to offer alms-food, it would be of great fruit and great benefit; giving that opportunity to poor people is a valuable example we see in the history of the dispensation.

Furthermore, the matters mentioned in this verse have been explained here only in relation to the community of monks or the monastic society. However, if we contemplate further with wisdom, the “good man” (*sappurisa*) mentioned here is not only found among the monks; such a person can also be found among the laity. Therefore, these points of the Dhamma in this verse, which can be shown as the practice of a good man, can be integrated even into lay life. That is what we must especially remind you of on this occasion. Thus, if we take the very first line of the verse: *“Sabbe ve sappurisā cajanti”*—“Indeed, in all places, good men let go.” Monks let go of household things and go forth. But lay devotees also face various occasions to let go. In fact, what is done in acts of giving (*dāna*), etc., is letting go. Similarly, various occasions may arise in one's day-to-day life where, according to the situation, one must sacrifice pleasure, sacrifice wealth, and let go in the mind—that is what is meant. In all situations, one must develop the strength to let go. Next, “they do not speak out of desire for sensual pleasures”—the nature of good men is that they do not use self-interested words, flattering words, deceitful methods, or deceitful speech to fulfill their expectations for various reasons.

Next, “when touched by happiness or indeed by suffering, the wise show neither elation nor depression”—this is the quality of remaining balanced in all things, whether pleasure comes or pain (*dukkha*) comes. Those eight worldly conditions affect all of us. The Blessed One declared that the world rotates around the eight worldly conditions, and the eight worldly conditions rotate around the world. When one understands the eight worldly conditions that constantly present themselves to oneself in accordance with the karma performed in *saṃsāra*, there is no room for those fluctuations. The most

important word we have to extract from here is the quality of *tādī*—"suchness." That is the unshakable state amidst the eight worldly conditions. The eight worldly conditions are described as: gain (*lābha*) and loss (*alābha*), disrepute (*ayasa*) and fame (*yasa*), blame (*nindā*) and praise (*pasaṃsā*), pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*dukkha*). There are these eight states. Thus, in these states, ordinary beings, in times of loss, disrepute, blame, and pain (*dukkha*), are oppressed by them and fall into depression. Next, when the good side comes—gain, fame, praise, and pleasure—their minds become puffed up and proud. Through that understanding, one must strive to prevent this. Here, let us look at the incident in Verañjā. The Blessed One was the supreme one who completed the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramitā*). Nevertheless, due to those changes of time and famines, even the Blessed One and the monks had to face such situations.

So, when we think about how we will spend the coming year of our lives, and when we reflect on the sequence of events happening around us, we must be prepared for anything. There, a sacrifice of pleasure becomes necessary. As said in "Indeed, good men let go," depending on the situation, even lay devotees have to sacrifice their pleasures for the well-being of the majority. Similarly, one must act in accordance with the Dhamma as much as possible, free from selfishness. For the main cause of these disasters is one's own karma brought along in *saṃsāra*. Those karmas yield their results through the eight worldly conditions. This wheel of karma, in accordance with karma, is what is shown to us through the worldly conditions—that the eight worldly conditions rotate.

Thus, even the Blessed One had to face gain, loss, disrepute, fame, blame, praise, pleasure, and pain (*dukkha*). From stories like that of Ciñcā Mānavikā, we see how much insult the Blessed One received from the sectarians. He endured all of that without being shaken. That is what is called the quality of *tādī*—suchness. Fashioning the mind according to whatever comes. The quality of equanimity. Indeed, it is for this very purpose that we engage in this practice-dispensation. On this occasion, too, you are spending this Poya day by letting go of various comforts and pleasures of the household life, leaning toward a very simple life, as a rehearsal for the life of the Arahants, a rehearsal for that way of living. In a manner fitting the eight-fold Uposatha precepts (*uposatha aṭṭhaṅga sīla*), in accordance with various training rules, you separate yourself from entertainment like dancing, singing, and instrumental music, separate yourself from wearing various ornaments, and train in a simple life. There too lies letting go. Therefore, from the very beginning of this dispensation, one must train in that letting go. Lay devotees, instead of being drowned in household thoughts in their day-to-day lives, separate themselves from them, and indeed, keep even the Poya eight precepts as a training in renunciation (*nekkhamma*).

The word *veramaṇī* (abstaining) present in every training rule is what is important there. That too is letting go. Killing living beings is easy; one likes it. But abstaining from it is difficult. In the Dhamma, concerning grasping (*upādāna*), two types of desire are mentioned: sensual objects (*vatthu-kāma*) and sensual defilements (*kilesa-kāma*). In practicing generosity, first, to eliminate sensual objects, one trains in letting go of things belonging to oneself. Furthermore, to let go of defilements, one must take an even

subtler course of action. In day-to-day life, we can understand the way the world behaves according to the habits of *saṃsāra* through the behavior of animals and those who lack virtues like morality (*sīla*). When we consider the opposite of those training rules—killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants—we see that these are the easy things in the world. Anyone can quickly enrich their life or make it pleasurable through these. But the Blessed One has shown the danger (*ādīnava*) of these. Although they are easy, if we do not let go of them, we will have to face a great mass of suffering (*dukkha*), and not only in this life.

You have heard of the four fears: the fear of self-reproach (*attānuvāda-bhaya*), the fear of reproach by others (*parānuvāda-bhaya*), the fear of punishment (*daṇḍa-bhaya*), and the fear of an unhappy destination (*duggati-bhaya*). “Fear” means that the mind blames itself. When one commits acts like killing living beings or stealing, that wrong deed remains deposited in the mind. Because of that, one's own mind blames oneself. Some people cannot sleep. That is the fear of self-reproach—one's own mind blaming oneself. Next is the fear of reproach by others—the blame of others. Next is the fear of punishment—getting caught in the grip of the state and the law, and having to suffer pain and hardship. Finally, the fear of an unhappy destination—going to an unhappy destination, which the Blessed One saw and declared with his Buddha-eye. Similarly, the Arahant Mahā Moggallāna, who possessed direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), and others showed illustrations to the world, demonstrating the danger of breaking these five precepts, of breaking these training rules—the suffering and hardships that lay people or monks who break them have to endure.

Considering those, one must perform that letting go. Letting go through the primary renunciation of giving (*dāna*) is sometimes easy. Letting go of external objects is easy. What is difficult is to free oneself from those bad habits and wrong practices that have been cultivated for a long time in *saṃsāra*. It is for this that morality (*sīla*) is necessary. The Blessed One declared that as an effort to cleanse the mind from the unwholesome karma performed over a long time in *saṃsāra* as animals, hungry ghosts (*preta*), demons (*yakṣa*), etc., one must observe the five precepts as permanent morality (*nicca-sīla*).

While observing the five precepts, gradually going higher, you observe the Poya eight precepts or ten precepts on this Poya day, making a sacrifice of pleasure, as an effort to escape from this *saṃsāra* with its terrifying fear of unhappy destinations, and as a training in the lifestyle of the Arahants. The word *veramaṇī* in every training rule reminds us of a letting go. Thus, that indeed is the quality of good men (*sappurisa*). The Blessed One has shown both the danger (*ādīnava*) side and the benefit (*ānisaṃsa*) side. The Blessed One constantly points out the benefit side. Generally, everyone enters into something after seeing its benefits. Similarly, when the danger side is shown, one becomes concerned and develops a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*), realizing that a change must occur.

As benefits, it often brings wealth and resources of becoming (*bhava*). But the benefit of morality (*sīla*) brings good births—it brings good births in the human world or happy

destinations (*sugati*). Because it is through morality (*sīla*) that the true cultivation of virtues takes place within. Thinking about morality (*sīla*) in this way, we see that it too is a letting go—"Indeed, good men let go." Letting go is a characteristic of good men. Next, an even deeper letting go belongs to those among you who are inclined toward meditation. From the moment the mind wishes to meditate, obstacles appear from all sides; one must make an effort to conquer these obstacles from within oneself. It is of no use to blame externals, saying, "I cannot meditate because of this or that." How is one's lifestyle structured? What are the things that can be let go of from these? One must contemplate and see for oneself. Then, one might think, "Although we have done these things so far, they are unnecessary; they do not contribute to the task of developing the mind." Therefore, one must develop the strength to let go of them.

Indeed, the very first problem for meditators is to break those bonds. Those bonds are things created due to attachment, due to craving (*taṇhā*). Therefore, if one hopes to escape from this *saṃsāra*, those too must be broken. Those are the defilements of desire (*kilesa-kāma*) in the mind. Therefore, one must conquer the attachments and conflicts regarding one's wives, children, wealth, etc.—the craving (*taṇhā*) for them. Sometimes, unless one contemplates them with wisdom, the craving (*taṇhā*) for them will not cease merely by giving them away. To assist in meditation, the Blessed One highlights the impermanence (*anicca*), the suffering (*dukkha*) nature, and the non-self (*anattā*) nature of all these. The Blessed One has presented various such perceptions (*saññā*) from the perspective of insight (*vipassanā*).

Lay devotees too must contemplate in some way this nature of suffering (*dukkha*) in *saṃsāra* highlighted by the Blessed One. Every time we recollect it, we understand the danger aspect of this *saṃsāra*. By grasping things that have danger, we become further trapped in *saṃsāra*. We will have to let go of them naturally. Therefore, the meditator must contemplate with wisdom and be strong enough to let go of those bonds and what are shown as impediments (*palibodha*) for one's progress in meditation. Indeed, the word "good man" (*sappurisa*) is used especially in reference to Arahants. If anyone is a good man, he must possess that collection of qualities within him. In any place, he must have the strength to let go and act altruistically. He must use words honestly without self-interested talk. Then, he must endure those pleasures and pains (*dukkha*). One must develop such strength.

The Blessed One declared: "I do not see a single thing in this *saṃsāra* that is not a bond," let alone even the meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). Now, an ordinary meditator might think, "By attaining these absorptions (*jhāna*), etc., I will spend time in the Brahma worlds or Deva worlds." But the Blessed One showed that these too are bonds. These too must be let go of—to the extent that there is nothing of which he said, "Do not let go." The Blessed One has highlighted this regarding the Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in this entire becoming (*bhava*).

You have heard many times: *"Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā"*—"All Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are impermanent (*anicca*)." Often, we recollect such things at funeral houses, etc. But we must constantly recollect this collection of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) related to this

saṃsāra, seeing them as Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and realizing: “These are not mine; there is nothing here that can be taken as 'I' or 'mine'.” It is by constantly instilling this understanding in the mind that one can develop that strength. One who hopes for concentration (*samādhi*) in meditation must remove even those things that are pleasing to oneself if they obstruct the one-pointedness of mind, concentration (*samādhi*), and only then can the mind be concentrated. After that, for the development of insight (*vipassanā*), the Blessed One has pointed out various perceptions (*saññā*), such as the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), the perception of non-self (*anattā-saññā*), the perception of danger (*ādīnava-saññā*), and the perception of abandoning (*pahāna-saññā*). The Blessed One has declared four wrong perceptions—perverted perceptions (*vipallāsa-saññā*)—present in the ordinary world: the perception of permanence in the impermanent (*anicce nicca-saññā*). The Blessed One declared that the world, not seeing impermanence (*anicca*), forms a perception of permanence in impermanent things and acts in a perverted manner in *saṃsāra*. Similarly, the perception of beauty in the foul (*asubhe subha-saññā*), considering foul things as beautiful; the perception of pleasure in the painful (*dukkhe sukha-saññā*), forming a perception of pleasure in things fraught with suffering (*dukkha*); and finally, the perception of self in the non-self (*anattani atta-saññā*), considering that which is non-self (*anattā*) and cannot be kept under one's control as self. In this manner, these perverted perceptions exist in the world.

But instead of that, in discourses such as the Girimānanda Sutta, the Blessed One highlights Dhamma-conforming perceptions (*saññā*) to be constantly raised in the mind, such as: the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), the perception of non-self (*anattā-saññā*), the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*), the perception of danger (*ādīnava-saññā*), the perception of abandoning (*pahāna-saññā*), the perception of dispassion (*virāga-saññā*), the perception of cessation (*nirodha-saññā*), the perception of non-delight in the entire world (*sabba-loke anabhirata-saññā*), and the perception of impermanence in all Preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāresu anicca-saññā*). You constantly deal with perceptions (*saññā*). However, those perceptions (*saññā*) are often things that cause one to remain in *saṃsāra*. Instead, one must incline the mind toward those perceptions highlighted by the Blessed One in discourses like the Girimānanda Sutta. These thoughts must be constantly cultivated as attitudes in the mind. These are not things that arise all of a sudden. The Blessed One has declared that each of these contributes to Nibbāna.

If someone is trained to see impermanence (*anicca*) as a trait of their character, by developing that perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), they can complete all other tasks as well. In discourses delivered concerning the community of monks on certain occasions, the Blessed One points out: “In this community of mine, there are some who develop the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). Certain individuals in that group, being directed to that alone, complete the rest through it.” There, it is the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) regarding the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). Similarly, the perception of non-self (*anattā-saññā*). Regarding the sense bases (*āyatana*)—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—and their

corresponding objects, cultivating the perception of non-self (*anattā-saññā*), that "nowhere is there a self," is the perception of non-self (*anattā-saññā*).

Next, concerning the thirty-two impure parts of the body, the impure parts of the body, or what is shown as the nine cemetery contemplations (*nava sīvathika*), reflecting on the fate of this body when it goes to the cemetery, one can cultivate the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*). Next, the illnesses within this body. The list mentioned in the Buddha's time is not enough; we have to extend it further when we think about the diseases of this day and age. The Girimānanda Sutta is especially meant for this. Indeed, as shown under the perception of danger (*ādīnava-saññā*), this body is a nest of diseases, a heap of diseases. The Blessed One declared that if anyone says this body is healthy even for a single moment, it is foolishness. Not even for a single moment is there real health, real disease-free state. Thus, we generate this *saṃsāra* again and again due to the desire for this body. It is because of not understanding that it is a nest of diseases, a heap of diseases. When one understands the true nature of the illnesses and pains of the body, the strength to face them arises. Conversely, the attachment to this body gradually disappears. Similarly, one understands from this that it is something that cannot be kept under one's control. Next, what is shown by the perception of abandoning (*pahāna-saññā*), etc., is the strength to eliminate those defilements at the very moment they arise.

Next is the perception of dispassion (*virāga-saññā*). With Nibbāna as the object, it is shown as the impermanent nature of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and their pacification alone being pleasant. The perception of Nibbāna is there. This itself is peaceful: *"Etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ"*—"This is peaceful, this is sublime, namely, the stilling of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), the relinquishment of all assets (*upadhi*), the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*), dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna." In every single word, there is letting go. *"Etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ"*—looking at these words, they are very beautiful. "This is peaceful, this is sublime." What is sublime? It is not what we think that is considered peaceful and sublime here. *"Sabbasaṅkhārasamatho"*—the calming, the stilling of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). *"Sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo"*—if there is any asset (*upadhi*) we are holding onto, whatever things we are cultivating, as they say, and when speaking ultimately, the form, sensation (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) of these five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*), which we call "I" and "mine," as well as one's houses, lands, vehicles, and mass of wealth—all these are assets (*upadhi*)—letting go of them in the mind. This is not throwing them away or destroying them; it is letting go of the attachment to them in the mind (*sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo*).

Similarly, craving (*taṇhā*). It is through craving (*taṇhā*) that we are carried on and on in this *saṃsāra*. There is nothing that cannot be completely satiated by nourishing it as much as this craving (*taṇhā*). This craving flows in various directions like rivers flowing here and there. The destruction of this craving, drying it up, is *taṇhakkhaya* (the destruction of craving). Next, *virāga* (dispassion) directly means that very attachment—

attachment to becoming (*bhava*), attachment to these five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). Eliminating them, or in other words, Nibbāna itself is there.

Looking at the highest level, it is the occasion of letting go of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). Dispassion, cessation. Cessation (*nirodha*), when looked at from one perspective, is the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*). It is the ending of this suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra*. The Blessed One declared this as something that can be realized in this very life: *"Bhava-nirodho nibbānaṃ"*—"The cessation of becoming (*bhava*) is Nibbāna." It is difficult for many to even think of. Because they long for becoming (*bhava*), they are born again and again. No matter how much we say this *saṃsāra* is painful (*dukkha*), as long as the feeling of "I" and "mine" remains within us, the world longs for becoming (*bhava*). That is why it is said, "as long as there is grasping (*upādāna*), there is becoming (*bhava*)." As long as there is grasping (*upādāna*), we establish this mind in some place that is prey to that grasping, and then from there, we take birth again. That is resolved by karma.

No matter how the world thinks, in truth, birth (*jāti*) is easy; ending birth (*jāti*) is difficult. Therefore, if birth (*jāti*) is suffering (*dukkha*), what we have to do is to end birth (*jāti*). The Blessed One declared that what supports this is that mental grasping (*upādāna*). It is when that is eliminated that becoming (*bhava*) also ceases. The Blessed One highlighted that this can be done in this very life, in a manner that no other teacher has shown. That is what is called the mind of Nibbāna. At some moment, seeing the danger (*ādīnava*) in these, drawing the mind away through seeing that danger—that is what is called dispassion (*virāga*). When the mind is drawn away, one sees that cessation (*nirodha*) as happiness. Constantly, the nature of a formation (*saṅkhāra*) is arising and passing away: origination and fall (*samudaya-vaya*), arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*), origination and cessation (*samudaya-nirodha*)—these various words describe the arising and passing away. This is the nature of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). But the world, because of craving (*taṇhā*), remains in the aspiration for rebirth. The nature of craving, described as leading to rebirth (*ponobbhavikā*), is that it longs for becoming (*bhava*) again. It is said, *"taṇhā ponobbhavikā"* (craving leading to rebirth). Similarly, it is accompanied by delight and lust (*nandī-rāga-sahagatā*). The nature of this craving is that it finds delight and attaches here and there (*tatra-tatrābhinandinī*). It finds delight here and there. At one moment here, at another moment there. Jumping from place to place in this way, this craving seeks satisfaction.

Thus, craving leading to rebirth, accompanied by delight and lust, finding delight here and there (*taṇhā ponobbhavikā nandī-rāga-sahagatā tatra-tatrābhinandinī*). Craving itself creates rebirth, creates another becoming (*bhava*). Similarly, that characteristic of attachment and delight is present within that craving. It finds delight here and there. It is the occasion when that craving is destroyed that the Blessed One called the destruction of craving, cessation, Nibbāna (*taṇhakkhayo nirodho nibbānaṃ*). The destruction of craving itself is cessation. There, the person who hitherto directed the mind toward the side of origination (*samudaya*), who longed for repeated arising, when he sees the happiness of cessation (*nirodha*), that is extinguishment (Nibbāna. Fuel (*upādāna*) is

also the word used for firewood. If we want to spread a fire, we must feed it with fuel (*upādāna*)—firewood. When firewood is thrown in, the fire spreads. No matter how much we hope to extinguish the fire, if we feed it with firewood, the fire will grow and not be extinguished, won't it? That is why the Blessed One declared: be without fuel (*anupādāno*). He says to remove the fuel (*upādāna*) material. When the mind is developed through meditation, the true nature of the Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in this *saṃsāra* begins to be understood. Just as when a corpse is placed on someone's shoulder, they immediately let go of it with disgust, a turning away occurs in the mind. Letting go occurs through a deep turning away. For that to be nourished, as the Blessed One pointed out, so that knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*) is developed, we must maintain our thoughts in accordance with the three characteristics: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*).

Everyone in *saṃsāra* dislikes seeing cessation. Instead, they direct the mind toward production. If you think about your own lives, you will see that no one even looks at the waste products excreted from their body. Instead, they try to preserve this by constantly putting raw materials into it. Even if we think about our clothes, ornaments, etc., when they get old, we discard them as rubbish and get new ones. We go shopping, but we do not direct our mind to the fate of the things we have used so far, to their impermanence (*anicca*). We have described this through various similes—this is the impermanent nature of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). The Blessed One highlights this so that we may see cessation (*nirodha*). The world dislikes cessation (*nirodha*). They look only at the side of origination (*samudaya*). Everyone likes to watch the sun rise tomorrow morning. They do not like to see the sun set. But what we have to do in *saṃsāra* is to make this sun set. That is why the Blessed One constantly tells us to recollect cessation (*nirodha*). Arahants declare that when the mind goes to cessation (*nirodha*), there is a peace within it that was never known before. That is why it is said, *"bhava-nirodho nibbānaṃ"*—the cessation of becoming (*bhava*) is Nibbāna. When becoming (*bhava*) ceases right here, that cessation characterized by peace, which is called the bliss of Nibbāna by many, can be experienced permanently. *"Etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ"*—"This itself is peaceful, this is sublime"—what is meant is that occasion when all is let go of.

Starting from day-to-day life, when that letting go is developed to its maximum state, it is understood by one's own mind: this is a state where nothing is grasped, a state where one is not trapped in anything—a state of liberation (*vimukti*). Nibbāna means liberation—the liberation of the mind. The mind is constantly bound. At this moment, thoughts are experienced as a trouble. No matter how subtly those are attained in states of absorption (*jhāna*), there is some connection to becoming (*bhava*) there. It goes and gets trapped somewhere. Even if one attains those states of absorption (*jhāna*), one goes to the Brahma world and gets trapped. There too, one goes round and round like a spinning top. But the Blessed One alone showed the true medicine for this. Looking at everything as Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), considering their arising and passing away and their conditions, when the mind is directed toward cessation (*nirodha*), we attain liberation.

Therefore, you must contemplate that through this short verse, we have gathered a great many facts on this valuable day that are helpful for day-to-day life as well as for Nibbāna. Your constant performance of actions like offering alms to the virtuous and providing requisites to the monks helps to eliminate the desire for sensual objects (*vatthu-kāma*). Observing morality (*sīla*), listening to the Dhamma, and meditating help to eliminate the defilements of desire (*kilesa-kāma*). Employing whatever wholesome power you have gathered so far through all of these, and whatever strengths there are that help to develop the faculties (*indriya-bala*) of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) gained through the benefits of hearing this Dhamma, aspire: "May this wholesome power definitely be a supportive condition to realize the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the path, fruit, and penetration of stream-entry, non-returning, and Arahantship as quickly as possible, before the decline of this Dispensation of the Buddha!" Similarly, let us recite these verses so that all beings, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including your deceased relatives who have passed away, may rejoice in this merit of Dhamma-preaching and Dhamma-hearing, and realize the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired enlightenment (*Bodhi*)!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #131

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.35)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yo daṇḍena adandesu, appaduṭṭhesu dussati;

dasannamaññataraṃ ṭhānaṃ, khippameva nigacchati;

vedanaṃ pharusaṃ jāniṃ, sarīrassa ca bhedanaṃ;

garukaṃ vāpi ābādhaṃ, cittakkhepañca pāpuṇe;

rājato vā upassaggaṃ, abbhakkhānañca dāruṇaṃ;

parikkhayañca ñātīnaṃ, bhogānañca pabhaṅguraṃ;

atha vassa agārāni, aggi ḍahati pāvako;

kāyassa bhedā duppañño, nirayaṃ so upapajjatī ti.

From:

Dhammapada 137–140 (Daṇḍavagga)

Dear Listeners,

At this moment, we have chosen as our theme several verses related to a most poignant event of great significance in the Dispensation, which occurred while our Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, was residing at Veluvana Monastery. By realizing Nibbāna, a person becomes a noble treasure to the world. When a Buddha, a Paccekabuddha, or an Arahant arises in the world, a vast multitude—not only in this human world but also among the deities and Brahmas of the heavenly realms—attain great welfare and solace, not merely by making offerings to them, but even by simply gladdening their minds in their presence. That is why they are known as the supreme fields of merit—the incomparable field of merit.

However, there is another group of people in the world who, by corrupting their minds toward these noble ones and by harming or harassing them, fall into intense *Dukkha* (Suffering). They undergo terrifying *Dukkha* (Suffering) and torment, boiling in hell for aeons. It is because of this state of affairs that the Buddha, through these verses, pointed out and declared a certain danger that can come upon the world regarding these noble persons. That danger refers to the numerous hazards that can occur by corrupting one's own mind. These verses were uttered as a warning regarding this.

The incident connected to this is also of great value to the Dispensation. While the Buddha was residing at Veluvana Monastery, a group of sectarians known as the Niganṭhas gathered in a certain place and discussed, "How is it that this Recluse Gotama receives so much gain and honor?" While discussing this, some of them said, "These massive gains and honors are received because of a monk in this Dispensation named Mahā Moggallāna. From time to time, he goes to the heavenly worlds, asks the deities about the meritorious deeds they performed which caused them to be born in heaven, and returning to the human world, tells the people. He also goes to the hells, finds out about the evil deeds that caused the torment of those born in the purgatories, and informs the humans. That is why such immense gain and honor are received. If we can kill this Elder Moggallāna, we can divert those gains and honors to ourselves." Next, what did they do? Having raised a subscription of a thousand gold coins (*kahāpaṇas*) from among their supporters, they hired a band of five hundred murderous bandits to put the Great Arahant Moggallāna to death. At that time, Ven. Moggallāna was residing at a rock known as Kālasilā.

This band of bandits surrounded the hut to capture the Arahant. Knowing this, the Elder escaped and slipped away through the keyhole by his psychic power. That was the first time. Once again, when this band of bandits surrounded the hut to capture the Great Arahant Moggallāna, he broke through the circular peak of the roof and escaped, again by his psychic power. In this manner, two months passed. By the third month, the Great Arahant Moggallāna perceived that the gravity of a grave evil karma he had committed in the past had caught up with him. Realizing that this time there was no escape, he did not flee in that manner. The bandits broke into the hut, captured him, beat him severely, crushing his bones to the size of broken rice, and thinking he was dead, threw him into a bush and left. However, the Great Arahant Moggallāna did not pass away (*parinibbāna*) simply by that. It is said that by the power of meditative absorption (*jhāna*), he gathered all the remaining bones of his body together and bound them with the "meditative wrap" (*jhāna-veṭhuma*). Flying through the air in this manner, he arrived before the Buddha and informed him, "Venerable Sir, I am about to attain *Parinibbāna*." The Buddha said, "Very well, then preach some Dhamma to me before you pass away." The Elder rose into the air, delivered a sermon, and then went to the Kālasilā region where he attained *Parinibbāna*.

As this event spread throughout the country, King Ajātasattu deployed spies to capture the bandits who did this. While these spies were going about, on one occasion, members of that bandit gang, while drinking alcohol in a tavern, began boasting to one another. During a joke made among themselves, it was revealed that it was they who killed the

Great Arahant Moggallāna. Thereupon, when the spies arrested them and investigated, the fact that they were employed by those Nigaṇṭhas was also revealed. Accordingly, when the five hundred Nigaṇṭhas and the five hundred bandits were arrested and handed over to the king, what punishment did the king decree? He ordered that all of them be buried in pits up to their waists in the palace courtyard, covered with soil, and burned to death. That was the punishment he meted out. Furthermore, after burying them, covering them with soil, throwing straw over them and burning their bodies, he ordered that harrows be dragged over them to shred all their bodies into pieces. While the monks were gathered in the Dhamma hall discussing this event, the Buddha arrived there. He asked, "Monks, what is the subject of your discussion?" The monks stated, "Venerable Sir, we are speaking about how the Great Arahant Moggallāna met a death that was unbefitting of him." At that moment, the Buddha declared, "Monks, although the Elder Moggallāna met a death that seems unbefitting of him in this life, that death occurred in a manner that was entirely fitting for an evil karma he committed in the past." He then recounted that past story.

In the past, the Great Arahant Moggallāna was born as the only son of a pair of blind parents, and he looked after those blind parents, doing all the work in the house and the fields. Meanwhile, seeing the son exerting himself, the parents said, "We shall bring you a wife. You cannot do all this work alone." Although the son initially expressed his unwillingness, he agreed due to his parents' repeated entreaties.

Accordingly, a certain woman was brought to that house. After serving the parents for a few days, she developed a disgust toward them. She began pointing out the parents' faults in a way that hurt her husband's feelings. When he did not believe her, she scattered slimy, frothy substances like gruel foam in various places in the house. When her husband returned home in the evening, she lied to him, saying, "Look at this! These parents are ruining and dirtying everything here." In this way, she poisoned the son's mind. Thus, this son decided that he must kill his parents.

What did he do next? He told his parents, "Your relatives in such-and-such a distant region wish to see you." He put them in a cart, and while driving through a great forest, he told them, "There are many fierce bandits in this area. Therefore, I will get down from the cart." Giving the reins into his father's hands, he got down from the cart and made terrifying noises, just like fierce bandits shouting. The parents cried out, "Oh son, we are old! Save your own life!" While they were saying this, the son, continuing to make the sounds of the bandits, beat his parents to death, threw them into the forest, and returned home.

Thereupon, the Buddha declared, "Because of that evil karma committed by my son Moggallāna in the past, he boiled in hell for hundreds of thousands of years. As a residual result, in a hundred lifetimes, he met his death with his bones crushed in this very manner. Therefore, this is entirely fitting for his past karma. Furthermore, due to the unwholesome karma they committed, this group of a thousand people who corrupted their minds toward my son Moggallāna—who himself harbored no corrupted mind and held no rod—suffered a terrifying destruction even in this very life, by order of the king."

With this as the basis, he uttered those verses. As we mentioned earlier, the Buddha, through those verses, pointed out the numerous disasters that can karmically befall someone by corrupting one's mind toward those who are considered the most noble treasures of the world—the Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, Arahants, as well as Noble Persons such as Stream-Enterers, Once-Returners, and Non-Returners, and by harming or harassing them.

If we take the meaning of those verses: *Yo daṇḍena adaṇḍesu, appaduṭṭhesu dussati*—whoever harms with weapons/rods those who do not use weapons/rods, and whoever harbors hatred toward those who have uncorrupted minds and are free from hatred; *dasannamaññataraṃ ṭhānaṃ, khippameva nigacchati*—as a result of that, very quickly incurs one of ten consequences. What are they? *Vedanaṃ pharusaṃ jāniṃ*—he undergoes extremely harsh *Vedanā* (Feeling), grave *Vedanā* (Feeling). Next, *sarīrassa ca bhedanaṃ*—the parts of his body are broken and destroyed; he falls into great ruin. *Garukaṃ vāpi ābādhaṃ*—grave illnesses, chronic diseases that one might even carry from birth. Next, *cittakkhepañca*—he goes mad, falling into a state of insanity. Also, *rājato vā upassaggaṃ*—he undergoes harm from the king, disasters that come by royal command. *Dāruṇaṃ*—likewise, he faces terrible, baseless accusations. *Ñātīnaṃ*—his relatives are suddenly ruined. *Bhogānañca*—and his wealth is also destroyed. *Atha vassa agārāni*—furthermore, his houses, his dwellings, *aggi ḍahati pāvako*—are burned down by consuming fire. These are ten painful consequences that can befall someone due to insulting or harming the Noble Ones. Finally, *kāyassa bhedā duppañño, nirayaṃ so upapajjati*—upon the breakup of the body, that foolish person is reborn in hell. In this way, the Buddha, as a warning, pointed out the consequences of that grave evil karma.

Thus, through this story as well as through these verses, the Buddha highlighted to the world the terrifying nature of this karma. The reason we recall this matter on many occasions is that we feel this is an era in which many people live under the concept of "it does not matter how one lives, as long as one gets by," spending this brief lifespan only to be reborn and suffer for countless billions of aeons in hells, animal realms, and ghost realms. The message that Buddhas give to the world is the turning away from the path of bad destinations to the path of good destinations, and then, liberating oneself from both good and bad destinations, to be freed from this entire samsara, and to find solace in the sublime, deathless Nibbāna. We can extract many points related to this from this story and these verses. Let us first reflect: Ven. Mahā Moggallāna was no ordinary person. He was someone who had fulfilled the perfections (*pāramīs*) for the position of Chief Disciple over a vast period of many aeons. Yet, even such a person, when he was a worldling (*pṛthagjana*), developed such a wrong view and hatred toward his parents, and committed the grave evil karma of murder. Concerning parents, the Buddha declared: *"āpādakā posakā, lokassa dassetāro"*—they are the ones who brought about one's birth, nourished one, and introduced the world. In the sense that they are to be regarded as the Brahmas of the household, the Buddha also declared: *"brahmāti mātāpitaro"*—"parents are called Brahmas."

Developing hatred toward such parents who brought one up and putting them to death is a most grave unwholesome deed, and these virtuous people may have heard about *ānantariya* (immediate) weighty karmas (*garuka kamma*). Killing one's mother and killing one's father are pointed out as the primary, gravest unwholesome deeds. A person who commits such evil deeds has absolutely no escape; in the very next life, they go to hell. That is why it is called *ānantariya*—having immediate consequences. Thus, even Ven. Moggallāna, who had fulfilled such perfections, committed such a grave evil karma in the past and boiled in hell for a long time. As a mark of this, as you all know, even the body of the Arahant Moggallāna was dark in color.

Indeed, because the definite prophecy (*niyata vivaraṇa*) obtained in the past also had to be fulfilled, he attained the position of Chief Disciple in this manner. From that event, we can understand that even psychic power (*iddhi-bala*) is defeated by the power of karma (*kamma-bala*). What is the illustration shown to us by the Great Arahant Moggallāna through this? What did his undergoing of that grave and terrifying disaster teach the world? Even many Buddhists regard psychic power as something magnificent. Indeed, they are great. But when we reflect on the fear of this samsara, it is clear that there is no escape through any of them. Especially, psychic power is not always sufficient to escape from the disasters that can arise karmically. This is evident from the fact that the Great Arahant Moggallāna, knowing in his final moments that the attraction of karma was supreme, did not flee from there. He understood that this was something destined to happen.

Therefore, it occurs to us that the most powerful force in this world, surpassing even psychic powers, is the force of karma. Nowadays, people are amazed when they think about computers, which are considered modern inventions. When you input something into a computer, it can be retrieved. Similarly, the human mind—*Viññāṇa* (Consciousness)—has a similar nature. The Buddha declared: *"Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi. Cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā"*—"Monks, I say that intention (*cetanā*) is karma. Having intended, one performs karma through body, speech, and mind." That is because every action or word considered as karma proceeds with intention as its forerunner. Therefore, when a karmic seed is deposited in *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) according to that intentional force, it does not perish without yielding its result; it persists, undestroyed, for billions of aeons. How wonderfully it operates is shown by the statement made right here, that Ven. Moggallāna met his death in that manner, with his bones crushed, a hundred times. One cannot even fathom how it happens. It is so astonishing how everything in the external environment aligns itself so that the karmic seed grown in one's own mental continuum yields its fruit accordingly.

Our mind exists depending on the four elements present in this body: earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). When something bad falls into that mind, it also affects those four elements. Earth, water, fire, and air are also what exist around us. Therefore, we can understand the connection between these. We live individually, saying "this is I" and "this is the other person." But apart from the idea created by ignorance (*avijjā*), namely "I" and "mine," what exists here are only those four elements: earth,

water, fire, and air. Whether it is inside or outside, these are interconnected. Thus, what must happen karmically? Due to that force of karma, which is like the power in a computer, it operates in a precise, circular manner.

The wheel of karma (*kammacakra*) is magnificent. Sometimes, it happens in a way that even the Wheel of Dhamma (*dhammacakra*) cannot withstand. Even here, Ven. Moggallāna was such a noble Elder who held the highest position in this Dispensation. Even though he spun the Wheel of Dhamma to such an extent, he was subjugated by his own wheel of karma. This shows that even if one attains the state of an Arahant, this life exists on the force generated by the karmic energies committed in the past, until one attains *Parinibbāna*. One has to experience the agreeable and disagreeable *Vedanā* (Feeling), the pleasures and pains that must be received from them. Even in the case of the Buddha, when Devadatta rolled down the rock, although he was able to prevent it with his supreme Buddha-power, he was still injured and afflicted by a splinter. This occurred in accordance with past karma. If karma yields its results even to the Buddha and the Arahants, we can imagine how powerful a force, a law (*niyāmatā*), it is. It is done by the mind itself. Whenever a grave unwholesome intentional seed is deposited in this mind of ours, which exists dependent on the four elements, it persists undestroyed thereafter and yields its results in a circular manner across various lifetimes. As found in some stories, seven times, sometimes a hundred times, five hundred times, a thousand times, or millions of times. In this way, this wheel of karma can spin and deliver the exact same result repeatedly. From this, we can see how terrifying this samsara is, how terrifying a situation it is.

Many Buddhists, rather than supramundane virtues, often consider flying through the air by obtaining psychic powers as something grand. Flying through the air is done even by crows. Nowadays, it is done by vehicles and planes. These are common things. Even during times when no Buddha has arisen, non-Buddhists who attained *jhānas* and direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) performed various kinds of psychic miracles. But more than all of them, we must realize that the most terrifying force in this samsara is karma. So much so that even the Buddha declared that the domain of karma (*kamma-visaya*) is unthinkable (*acinteyya*). Within this karma, there is an astonishing nature that cannot be fully fathomed. The event that clearly reveals this is the final *Parinibbāna* of the Great Arahant Moggallāna, who reigned supreme in this Dispensation, occurring through his death at the hands of bandits with his bones crushed. What a heartbreaking event!

Another nature of this karma is that, for the ripening of that karma, not only inanimate things but even living beings are drawn into it. In that way, they become entangled in the knots of karma. Here, we saw who became the instruments to exhaust the karmic force of Ven. Moggallāna. Those five hundred Niganṭhas and five hundred bandits were drawn into that matter in that manner. Often, those with weak minds become involved in the karmic entanglements of others and suffer pain and distress. That is the most terrifying thing in this ball of karmic thread. When we live virtuously, well-established in those noble qualities, we have the strength, by applying wisdom, to remain free from those entanglements. Otherwise, if we live holding wrong views and committing evil deeds, without even knowing it, we are likely to become instruments to exhaust the karmic

forces of others. We must keep this in mind as a warning. That danger can happen to us if we do not spend our daily lives properly in accordance with the Dhamma, according to the teachings of the Buddha. We too are likely to become instruments to exhaust the karma of others, just as happened to those Niganṭhas and bandits. That is one lesson.

Furthermore, not only that, someone might think that it is the duty of a king to punish those who did wrong. However, even King Ajātasattu accumulated evil karma through that. From these facts, we can see how chaotic this matter of karma is. That is to say, there is no escape for the king simply because he meted out a punishment. The king also became involved in that karma.

From all of this, it is apparent to us that this samsara is a massive web of confusion. As long as one lives within this web of confusion, there is no solace. True solace lies only in being liberated from this entire samsara, in truth, through *Parinibbāna*. Normally, when some disaster comes as a result of such grave karma, a person's reaction is often to develop anger toward those who helped exhaust that karmic result. In an event like what happened to Ven. Moggallāna, if he had developed hatred toward those bandits, then that person would have accumulated more karma through it. That is why it is said: *appaduṭṭhesu dussati*—he harbored hatred toward those who are free from hatred. Ven. Moggallāna understood, "This is my past karma. These people are merely helpers who are exhausting my karma." From this, the value within the realization of Nibbāna is seen. Within that realization, there is a strength to develop a certain equanimity (*upekkhā*) toward things that arise karmically. One gains such an understanding. Likewise, a power of equanimity arises in the mind. That power of equanimity arises from the understanding: "This body of mine, and external things, are created from the four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. There is nothing here to be taken as I or mine." Indeed, we commit these evil deeds because of the self-notion, "I," which we have taken within these things, relying on the essence absorbed from the earth, and the blood, flesh, etc., received from our parents. What is done within samsara is the nourishing of this. Therefore, due to the disasters that come upon oneself, one corrupts one's mind and gets entangled in various evil deeds. While experiencing the result, one generates further karma through that result. Thus, there is no end to them. It goes on and on in samsara.

Instead of that, what is the solace that the Buddha presented through this realization of Nibbāna? It shows a certain cooling down (*nivīma*). While those karmic forces are being exhausted, by using wisdom and equanimity, one understands: "This is a past karma, and what are operating here are only these phenomena." Through that wisdom, it is shown that this is merely a collection of phenomena regarding the body or the mind. Next, for that very reason, one develops equanimity, without leaning toward the side of hatred or lust. That power is present at its highest in the Buddha. If the Arahants constantly remain concentrated in the concentration of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samādhi*), the mind can quickly be freed from the karmas that can approach; otherwise, some deficiency occurs. In the Dhamma, that is known by the name "habitual tendencies" (*vāsanā*).

Now, you may have heard about the Buddha, that he is "one who has abandoned all defilements along with their habitual tendencies" (*savāsanā sakala-kilesa pahīna*). It is said that he destroyed not only the defilements but also the habitual tendencies (*vāsanā*). Today, this word *vāsanā* is used in society with a different meaning—such as regarding lotteries (luck/fortune). That is not the *vāsanā* spoken of in the Dhamma. What is the deep meaning of the word *vāsanā*? Now, we know that even if the fish is removed from a leaf in which it was wrapped, the smell of fish remains. On the other hand, even if the flowers or incense sticks are removed from something in which they were wrapped, the fragrance remains. It is in reference to this idea of odor or fragrance that this has been said. This means that certain grave karmas do not go away, and certain deficiencies that come in accordance with past character are seen even in Arahants. Due to those deficiencies—that is, at a time when they are not in that noble state called the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samāpatti*), at times when they do not keep the mind raised to the supramundane state—such things can arise in daily life samsarically even for Arahants. Although their minds travel some distance due to those weaknesses, they do not get entangled in a complete karmic knot to suffer for a long time. However, even Arahants generate a certain amount of unwholesome karma that yields results in this very life, which is called *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* (to be experienced in this very life). That weakness is what is meant by the word *vāsanā* in the case of Arahants. There, *vāsanā* is not meant in a good sense, but as weaknesses. That too is a part of the defilements themselves. That is why it is said *savāsanā*—the Buddha has no defilements with habitual tendencies. But Arahants have them.

Due to that weakness, certain deficiencies occur in Arahants. But even that does not lead to a future *Bhava* (Becoming). Why? Because in that fruit of Arahantship, in seeing Nibbāna, what is done? The Arahant has brought the mind to a state where rebirth does not occur, due to that wisdom, due to the power of relinquishing the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). Then, the results of actions or karmic results that can approach due to certain deficiencies arising from this *vāsanā* are common even to Arahants. Such is the nature of that entanglement of karma.

Now, when compared with ordinary people, the mind of the Arahants operates just like a sewing machine without an under-thread (*yaṭi nūla*). Now, as long as the under-thread is there, it knots properly. If it does not knot properly with the under-thread, there is no proper stitch. In the same way, because the portion called *Anusaya* (Underlying tendency) that lies beneath the defilements has been destroyed by the Arahants upon attaining Arahantship, a stitch cannot be made in the true sense. They do not build up grave karma again. That is the state of an Arahant's mind. For those noble ones who have reached the supreme state, like the Great Arahants Moggallāna and others who developed concentration to such a supreme degree near the Buddha, those states are minimal in them. Those weaknesses are fewer. But such weaknesses can be found in certain Arahants. Apart from that, there is no rebirth in samsara. Therefore, the greatest state in the world is the attainment of a mind liberated from this entire samsara. You have also heard this expressed in the Ratana Sutta:

Khīṇaṃ purāṇaṃ navaṃ natthi sambhavaṃ,

virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṃ;

Te khīṇabījā avirūḷhichandā,

nibbanti dhīrā yathāyaṃ padīpo.

The extinguishment (*nivīma*) of the Arahants is shown to be just like the extinguishing of a lamp. Why? Because *khīṇaṃ purāṇaṃ*—by the time they attain *Parinibbāna*, whatever old karmas there were that helped maintain their lives in the past are entirely exhausted. It is just like a lamp whose oil is completely finished. Next, *navaṃ natthi sambhavaṃ*—there is no accumulation of new karma in that Arahant's mind. Karmas that generate a future *Bhava* (Becoming) do not accumulate in an Arahant's mind. That is just like not adding any more oil to the lamp.

Next, *virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṃ*—likewise, there is no desire or *Taṇhā* (Craving) for a future *Bhava* (Becoming). The *Taṇhā* for *Bhava* (*bhava-taṇhā*) is the subtlest and gravest weakness in the world. One likes *Bhava*. One likes existence. No matter how many troubles and difficulties there are, why does one carry on this existence? It is because of the feeling, "I." One is afraid that "I" will cease to exist. Although the feeling "I" is a wrong understanding—and though "I" is necessary as a convention to live with the world—the Arahants have realized its lack of essence, its lack of core, its *Anattā* (Not-self) nature. Therefore, there is no desire for a future *Bhava* (Becoming). Concerning such Arahants, it is said: *te khīṇabījā*—this *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) is the seed. This seed of *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) sprouts in the field of karma (*kamma-khetta*). It sprouts in the field of karma. It is on wholesome or unwholesome karma that this *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) sprouts. Just as a seed sprouts depending on the soil. Thus, *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) sprouts in the field of karma. The moisture, the wetness that assists this is *Taṇhā* (Craving). As long as there is *Taṇhā* (Craving) in the world, and as long as one lives according to wrong view without a true understanding of karma, one performs various karmas and, accordingly, undergoes birth (*Jāti*) again and again. And what come along with that birth (*Jāti*) are indeed what the Buddha pointed out as *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarā* (decay/aging), *Vyādhi* (sickness), and *Maraṇa* (death).

To destroy the mountain of *Dukkha* (Suffering) that can arise due to that impermanence, one must cut its root. That cutting of the root is indeed *te khīṇabījā*—there, the seed of *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) came to an end. It was exhausted. *Avirūḷhichandā*—no *Taṇhā* (Craving) arises in that mind again. Therefore, *nibbanti dhīrā yathāyaṃ padīpo*—those wise ones are extinguished just like this lamp. That is how it is shown concerning the Arahants. Therefore, through this story, we must reflect on our own lives. We must make this a lesson for our own lives. This era is a time when Buddhists have adopted a strange way of thinking, such that they do not even believe in evil karma, let alone in places like hell. Due to rationalism, some even think that the stories about hell in books, and the sufferings of hell, are invented things.

Indeed, if we have the eye, it is possible to see the things happening in places like hell as if seeing them with our own eyes. It cannot be shown to everyone. It cannot be shown.

But things that are like symbols, things that run close to it, are seen in our daily lives. Now, look at the insects called winged termites (*meru*). In times of rain like this, they suddenly emerge from the earth. Millions of insects. Those insects fly. There, too, like a certain psychic power, they rise into the air. But they fly only to be destroyed. Those wings come for their destruction. There, too, we see the way karma works. As soon as wings come to them, they depart by the millions. In the end, only the wings remain. Other creatures gather and feast on those insects. They meet their death right there. From this, we see in this world, even before our very eyes, how animals undergo that *Dukkha* (Suffering) karmically.

Similarly, when we think of how grasshoppers/moths (*palaṅgāṭiyan*) jump into a fire, we can understand how one is born in hell with blazing fires. Moths come to a place where there is a lamp or a fire, and even while seeing others of their own kind burning, they fall into that fire. In the same way, all of this happens to the beings of the world due to that soiled mind, that corrupted mind. Therefore, we must think of a way to escape from this. The Buddha also pointed out: *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, *Paññā* (virtue, concentration, wisdom). Even at the level of *Sīla* (virtue), we act with a certain fear of evil karma. Some regard fear as a bad thing. Sometimes, fear is good. Fear of sin (*ottappa*) is pointed out in the Dhamma as a good thing. It is pointed out as a world-protecting Dhamma (*lokapāla-dhamma*). *Abhaye bhayadassino, bhaye cābhayadassino*—in this way, it is pointed out that those who hold wrong views see fear in what is not fearful, and see no fear in what is fearful, which is incorrect.

Therefore, to abstain from sin, one must have a fear of sin. When reflecting on stories of this nature, a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) arises regarding one's own samsaric karma. One thinks, "This kind of thing can happen to us too." By being enslaved by the words of various people in society, and by developing hatred toward our own relatives, friends, and parents, we too can fall into such states, just as happened to the Great Arahant Moggallāna.

Likewise, we must undertake and protect some virtue, such as the permanent Five Precepts (*nicca-pañcasīla*) or the Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). What do we do by undertaking that virtue? We know that in daily life, we take some vaccine or appropriate medicine against infectious diseases. By taking it, we provide some immunity to the body. It is when the body is weak that we fall ill. Therefore, through such an immunization, or by not frequenting places where those diseases spread, one must ensure one's own safety. It is such a thing, virtuous people, that is called undertaking virtue (*sīla*). This is not just something to be repeated when a monk says it, but must be regarded as a determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*) made by oneself, in agreement with one's own mind. This is not a mere statement in words. It is a constant determination every morning, and then trying to live according to that determination. That is what is called *Sīla*.

What goes hand-in-hand with virtue is reflection (*āvarjanā*). One undertook virtue. Next, by constantly being mindful of it, one looks to see, "Is this being fulfilled by me?" Such a person thinks, "For no reason whatsoever will I kill a living being, commit theft,

engage in sexual misconduct, or tell lies. Next, I will not engage in slander, harsh speech, or frivolous talk." Or else, if one takes it to heart, "I will not do those things considered as wrong livelihood—such as breeding animals for meat, trading in weapons, trading in poisons, trading in flesh, trading in intoxicants." Then, no matter among what kind of people or at what level in society that person moves, this is what is constantly brought to mind. That helps one not to fall prey to their instigations. What is present within a training rule (*sikkhāpada*) is a command to one's own wisdom. It tells you, "Behave in this manner." If that person exists accordingly, reflecting upon it, then they have created an immunity for themselves while moving through that corrupt society. At one level, that helps one to escape from these karmic forces.

Next, there is a level even higher than that. Often, we lean toward sin because of the lack of concentration of the mind. When the mind is scattered, it is easy for us to be drawn away. Now, in a person who drinks alcohol, there is absolutely no such concentration of the mind. It is a distracted mind. The mind of a person inclined to other evil deeds is also distracted. Instead of that, if one strives to prevent the scattered nature of the mind and concentrate it by constantly bringing to mind some wholesome thought—such as the idea of "may they be well" in loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*), a quality of the Buddha like *"Arahaṃ"* in the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), something like "skeleton" (*aṭṭhika*) in the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*), or "death is certain, life is uncertain"—then what does that person do first when such a problem arises? They place the mind in concentration. Let us assume a difficult situation arose. That is to say, "Shall I kill this animal? If I kill it, there is profit. If I do not, there is loss. There is no one watching this theft. This can be done. If I do it, there is indeed a temporary profit for me. But shall I do this or not?" In such moments, what one must keep as one's value of life are indeed these Dhamma principles mentioned. Accordingly, by directing the mind to one's meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), one calms the mind; one unifies it. In such moments, if the mind is concentrated, one can make a true and correct decision in accordance with the truth; one can establish the mind. That is something extremely valuable in daily life. That is why the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are pointed out as obstacles to concentration.

Every virtuous person here knows that if lust, or sensual desire, arises, the mind becomes distracted. That is to say, when sensual desires arise, the mind is distracted. If hatred or anger arises, and next, if sleepiness and sluggishness (*thīna-middha*) arise, then too the mind is distracted. The mind does not function; it does not become workable (*kammaññā*). Next, similarly, *uddhacca* which is the restlessness of the mind, and the state of over-regret (*kukkucca*). Next, doubt (*vicikicchā*)—such as harboring doubt and hesitation, thinking "will this be of any use?" It is due to such weaknesses arising in minds that one is unable to concentrate the mind.

Thus, the Buddha has pointed out that by using some wholesome object, one frees the mind from those things called hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) which scatter the mind, weaken mindfulness, and make the mind feeble and weak. In that way, a person who has that power of concentration, having freed the mind, can secure protection to some extent in

the face of those grave karmic forces. Even higher than that, at the supreme level, in the deepest way, the power to forever escape from these karmic forces of samsara, from this grave phenomenon of karma, from this grave law of karma (*kamma-niyāma*), is developed indeed by cultivating that wisdom—namely, supramundane wisdom (*lokuttara-paññā*). It is about that we mentioned earlier. What is called realizing Nibbāna? What is this extinguishing (*nivīma*)? According to the Buddha's word, the entire samsara is a flow. Through new productions, this world gives us new targets day by day. Science, and the other forces that drag society along in this world, everyone always gives us a target. If we went to the moon, then to the next place. In that way, various targets are given to us. But every single one of these targets lies within samsara, within *Bhava* (Becoming), within existence.

The Buddha pointed out existence as a fire. All of this has caught fire. The eye has caught fire; the ear has caught fire; the nose has caught fire. All of this has caught fire. With what have they caught fire? With the fires of lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). They are burning with them. Then, why is this simile of fire extremely meaningful? Fire always exists depending on something like wood, some fuel material. When fire blazes in that wood, that is what is called a fire. Similarly, how that fire spreads, why that fire arises, is pointed out by the Buddha. The word used for that in the Dhamma is *Upādāna* (Grasping), which means grasping/clinging. Due to *Taṇhā* (Craving), there is a certain grasping. This grasping is not a grasping with the hand that is spoken of here; it is a grasping with the mind. Due to *Taṇhā* (Craving), we hold on, we grasp with the mind, thinking "this is my property," "these are my relatives." In various ways, we grasp those things. Along with that grasped thing, we burn. There is a heating, a burning. That is why the Buddha points out existence itself as a fire in the mind. This fire, this sheet of fire, extends from hell up to the highest point of existence (*bhavāgra*), leaving aside the Akaniṭṭha Brahma world. That is because the Buddha has pointed out that there, the Non-Returners (*Anāgāmis*) exist as long as that life lasts, and definitely attain Arahantship.

Until one reaches *Parinibbāna*, the entire samsaric life has to experience, to some extent, the karmic forces brought from the past. In a way that no other teacher pointed out, the Buddha declared the entire *Bhava* (Becoming) to be a fire. Therefore, what is here is an extinguishment (*nivīma*). Nibbāna means extinguishment. The wisdom that helps to bring the mind to that extinguishment is what a person realizes in the four stages of Stream-Entry, Once-Return, Non-Return, and Arahantship. The Buddha has pointed out that wisdom through three words: *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self). What is required is to understand, to realize, the *Anicca*, *Dukkha*, and *Anattā* nature present within this entire existence.

Within this body, and within everything around us that we call "I" and "mine," there is only impermanence (*Anicca*). Every single thing arises and ceases. Because both that arising and ceasing occur, there is nothing within this that can be considered permanent. There is nothing to be taken as beautiful or as pleasurable. That is *Dukkha* (Suffering). It is *Dukkha* because it breaks apart repeatedly. Likewise, there is no power or ability to grasp it and maintain it under one's control, saying "this is I." Therefore, it is *Anattā*

(Not-self). By reflecting on this, a person, at some moment, through meditation, having established some concentration, becomes able to remove from the mind the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), namely form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which the mind is grasping. It is at that moment that it is said that the under-thread of that sewing machine has, to a certain extent, ceased to knot again. That is why it is said that the Stream-Enterer (*Sotāpanna*) is freed from the four lower realms of suffering. A Stream-Enterer appears to act in daily life just like others do. But the *Upādāna* (Grasping)—the clinging toward them—is weak. Therefore, it does not knot. It does not knot to such an extent that it drags one to hell. The *Sotāpanna* mind has only the power to bring about results limited to seven more lifetimes. There lies that phenomenon, just like in that sewing machine.

Next, going even further, when that Wheel of Dhamma spins once more, one becomes a Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmi*). At another level, all other karmas are dried up except those that bring about birth only once more, or are limited to about two lifetimes. They are brought to a state where their results cannot be yielded. When one reaches the state of a Non-Returner (*Anāgāmi*), one is born in the Suddhāvāsa Brahma worlds and does not return to this world. All of this is pointed out based on the question of rebirth in samsara. Why? Because not only during the time when Buddhas arise, but even during times when no Buddha has arisen, every wise person thought about how to escape from this samsara. When that wisdom emerges, to everyone, the entire samsara appears as *Dukkha* (Suffering).

Next, the escape from it is also seen. It is to answer this, and to show the path to this, that the Buddha fulfilled the perfections (*pāramīs*) for four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand cosmic cycles (*sāra-asaṅkheyya-kappa-lakkha*). For the sake of crossing over from samsara. Because only by that path can one separate oneself from these terrifying karmic forces, from this clearly visible *Dukkha* (Suffering) of existence, from this fire. That is what is called extinguishment (*nivīma*). The word Nibbāna is used in this Dhamma for the highest goal in that very sense. We must reflect then that we can achieve our extinguishment at three levels. When we think, "By undertaking such virtue, I live within the virtue I determined; I spend today in this manner," there is extinguishment. When one comes to a place where animals are killed, even if others do it, one thinks, "This does not belong to me. The majority do this; we shall remain without doing it," and calms the mind there. One is not drawn into it. Next, similarly, there are so many who commit theft, and there are those who think it is profitable. Looking at one's own mind, one cools down. One extinguishes the mind from theft. One extinguishes the mind from misconduct, from lying, from falsehood. Next, looking at one's own mind in every single one of these, looking at the virtue one undertook, one extinguishes the mind. That is one level.

The level higher than that is indeed concentration (*samādhi*), as we mentioned earlier. When one has developed concentration, one can remain happily within that concentration-pleasure one has obtained, even for an hour or two. That too is a certain solace, an extinguishment. Even higher than all of them is that supramundane

extinguishment. Having developed insight (*vipassanā*) in that manner, having obtained the deep understanding of *Anicca* and *Anattā*, one finds solace in the sublime, deathless Nibbāna as declared by the Buddha. Thereafter, it is through that indeed that one can bring samsaric existence, that entire samsara, to an end. Today, a Dhamma exposition was presented. This story is a demonstration, an illustration. One must bring this demonstration to one's own mind, and thinking "such events can happen not only to the Great Arahant Moggallāna but to us as well; we live in this kind of society, in this kind of world," one must use it to assist that demonstration. Next, based on that, we must resolve to depart from the bad side of these things and walk on the good side. That is what is called undertaking (*samādan*). Understanding "these are good things, these are bad things," one must generate a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) within oneself regarding this. Next, along with that sense of urgency, one must also generate joy within, thinking "we are walking at least a little on this path."

The Buddha declared: *"sandasseti, samādapeti, samuttejeti, sampahaṃseti"* (he instructs, instigates, rouses, and gladdens) concerning Dhamma discourses. What we expect from every single Dhamma talk, from every Dhamma sermon, is for these virtuous people to apply these to their own lives, and to develop the correct path in their daily lives. Through that, one gains the strength to realize the value of the virtue one protects, next, a deep sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding samsara, and a true joy, a happiness regarding this path, thinking "this path we are walking is correct," and to travel further on that path.

Thus, by listening to this Dhamma sermon for about an hour, qualities such as faith (*saddhā*) were cultivated and arose in the minds of these virtuous people. Qualities such as faith (*saddhā*), energy (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are specifically pointed out as factors that assist Nibbāna. If you can develop these to some level, you should be joyful. Relying on this blessing obtained through listening to the Dhamma, and further developing these, may you gain the strength and power to practice meditation within this very life, within this valuable era of the arising of a Buddha, within this human existence we have obtained, and find solace in the sublime, deathless Nibbāna through the realization of the paths, fruits, and penetration of Stream-Entry, Once-Return, Non-Return, and Arahantship! Likewise, may all those who desire merit, from the Avīci hell up to the highest point of existence, rejoice in this great store of merit we have accumulated today through delivering and listening to this Dhamma, and may they use it to realize the sublime, deathless Nibbāna through their own aspired Bodhi (awakening)! Furthermore, if there are any groups, including your relatives and friends, who wish to rejoice in these merits, may all of them rejoice in these merits and find solace in the sublime, deathless Nibbāna! Directing these merits with a mind of compassion, recite these verses and dedicate the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #132

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.62)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Idha socati pecca socati, pāpakārī ubhayattha socati;

so socati so vihaññati, disvā kamma-kiliṭṭham attano ti.

From:

Dhammapada 15 (Yamakavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The question of livelihood is a serious issue that affects everyone living in this society. It is with the intention of living comfortably, without want, that a person chooses a certain path of livelihood, a profession. But the Buddha points out that if that choice is not made with wisdom in accordance with the Dhamma, one can even fall into great ruin.

The Buddha reminds us that one should choose a profession with both eyes: the economic eye that sees the way to earn wealth, as well as the righteous eye that helps to identify good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome. Otherwise, if one lives like a one-eyed blind person, possessing only a squinted eye that sees only the way to earn wealth, one is likely to fall into a multitude of terrifying sufferings / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) both in this world and the next. A good illustration of this very point is the background story to the verse we have taken as our theme today.

During the time the Buddha was residing near the Veluvana monastery, there lived a pig-slayer named Cunda. This pig-slayer lived for fifty-five years killing, eating, and selling pigs. This is how his livelihood is described: During times of food scarcity in distant areas, this man would travel in a cart taking paddy, collect piglets in those villages in exchange for a measure or two of paddy, and return with a cart full of them.

After rearing them—as you, devout devotees, know, the main food of pigs is found behind houses anyway—after they ate all those things and grew fat, he would light a furnace, bind the pig nearby so that it could not move, and beat it thoroughly with a square club to make its flesh firm. Having finished beating, next, just like driving in a

wedge, he would insert a wooden peg to keep its mouth open, and pour boiling water heated in an iron vessel down its throat to wash away the animal's excrement and filth. Once the intestines were completely cleansed, he would pour the remaining water over its body to peel off the skin, singe the bristles with a torch of grass, and finally sever the neck with a sharp sword. Having severed it, he would collect the flowing blood, cook that pork with the blood gravy, enjoy it thoroughly with his family, and sell the rest. In this manner did Cunda's livelihood continue.

Having lived in this way for fifty-five years, finally, at a time we would now call retirement, Cunda contracted a severe disease due to his kamma. His entire body was burning. He began running up and down the house, wailing exactly like a pig. What was the reason for that? He began to see the place where he was to be reborn after death—Avīci. Avīci, the great Avīci purgatory. So, in fear and trembling, in fear of death, he ran here and there. The family members tried to close his mouth, but it was so loud that even the neighbors in the surrounding houses could not sleep. The doors of the houses were closed. This man was running here and there like a pig. Having spent seven days in this manner experiencing suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), on the seventh day he died and was born in the Avīci Great Hell. In the meantime, when the members of the Sangha were passing near this house, they heard this sound and, thinking that Cunda had been slaughtering pigs for seven days, went to the Buddha and said, "Venerable Sir, there must be some festival or wedding at the house of Cunda and his family; for seven days they have been slaughtering pigs in this manner. That man has no compassion or loving-kindness at all." "No, Bhikkhus, he was not slaughtering pigs; rather, as a result of his kamma, in a manner appropriate to that kamma, he has been running up and down, wailing like a pig for seven days, and died today and was born in Avīci." When this was said, the monks remarked, "Venerable Sir, having suffered in this world, this person has gone to a place where he will suffer indeed, hasn't he?" "Yes, Bhikkhus, the one who does evil grieves in this world, and grieves in the next world." Expressing this idea, the Buddha uttered the verse we took as our theme today:

Idha socati pecca socati pāpakārī ubhayattha socati

The evil-doer grieves in this world. He grieves in the next world. He grieves in both places, this world and the next.

So socati so vihaññati disvā kamma-kiliṭṭham-attano ti

Seeing the defiled nature, the impurity of his own deeds, he grieves; he is also vexed, distressed, and sorrowful, so it was declared.

From this story, you devout devotees can learn certain things. However, everyone might not look at this story in the same way. In modern parlance, Cunda had a pig farm behind his house. The way Cunda farmed that pig farm is what was described at the beginning. Thus, if one looks at it from an economic perspective, this is how Cunda reared animals and carried out his profession. If someone is studying the condition of pig farms during the Buddha's time, this is a good story for that. But if we look at it according to the Dhamma, what we have here is a story of terrifying kammic retribution. Cunda

performed such evil deeds for fifty-five years and finally retired. Instead of the ease of retirement, what he received was distress of body and mind.

Although this story appears to us as such a sorrowful one, we all know that in this era, animals are slaughtered both individually and collectively on farms in an even more cruel manner. Especially in Western countries, you devout devotees might have heard that slaughter of animals is done on a massive scale using machinery. Sometimes, a herd of living animals enters through one door of a hall as raw material, and from the other door, tins containing meat products exit as the finished product. So, what is done through these various machines is the very same evil deed that Cunda did. No matter what kind of machines exist, dear devotees, everything is subject to the most miraculous machine in the world, the machine of kamma. According to the words of the Buddha, we can say that everyone who produces machinery and turns towards the slaughter of animals will be subject to the machine of kamma, caught up in it, and suffer for aeons. Therefore, we must direct our minds toward this machine of kamma. No extraordinary fuel is needed for the functioning of this machine of kamma. Volition (*cetanā*) alone is sufficient. Through volition, one is drawn into the machine of kamma. As a result, not only does one go to places like hell, the animal realm, the realm of hungry ghosts, and the Asura realm, but sometimes one even has to suffer severe consequences in this world, just as Cunda suffered. If someone is seen not experiencing such painful retributions, it is due to the power of the meritorious deeds (*puññakamma*) they brought with them. They remain protected because of the power of that wholesome force that granted them a human rebirth. The moment that is diminished, those retributions begin to take effect. That is what the Buddha declared:

Na hi pāpaṁ kataṁ kammaṁ, sajju khīraṁ va muccati;

dahantaṁ bālam anveti, bhasmacchannova pāvako.

An evil deed done does not bring retribution immediately, like milk curdling. It follows the foolish person, burning him, like a spark of fire covered by ashes.

Now, some people in society think: there are so many people who slaughter animals on a large scale like this. Where are their retributions? They do not seem to receive them; they seem to be doing well, don't they? But the reason for that is the strength of the wholesome kamma by which they obtained this human rebirth. The moment that is exhausted, it begins to yield its retribution. Now, from the story of Cunda, it is very clearly seen that even in this very life, he experienced retribution corresponding exactly to his kamma; he ran here and there on all fours, bellowing like a pig. That is a characteristic of kamma itself; it means that retribution is often provided in accordance with the kamma itself. The machine of kamma prepares the environment to suit it. What we describe as the Avīci Great Hell and so forth are the planes where that aforementioned kamma is activated. In short, the entire thirty-one planes of existence where this kamma ripens are what we designate as heaven, the Brahma world, hell, and so forth. If there are realms like heaven and the Brahma world for the ripening of wholesome kamma, we must accept that there is also such a thing as hell, even if it is not

visible to us. It is those who have done such evil deeds who are mostly born in the animal world as well. In this way, we can understand the side of retribution for those evil deeds as taught by the Buddha. Not only that, but in this very life, *so socati so vihaññati*—he suffers, grieves, and is vexed—refers to remorse. The reward that comes with retirement to someone who has done a good job, a righteous livelihood, is the bliss of blamelessness (*anavajja-sukha*). One who has led a righteous livelihood can breathe their last breath in peaceful comfort, thinking: "I led my life in accordance with the Dhamma. I did not live by wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*)."

Otherwise, for someone who lives by wrong livelihoods (*micchā-ājīva*) such as rearing animals for meat, trade in flesh, trade in weapons, trade in poisons, and trade in intoxicants, remorse arises. This is because a multitude of unwholesome thoughts are generated in their mind-stream. Nowadays, when even some Buddhists see non-Buddhists running animal farms that slaughter animals on a large scale, they look at those of wrong views with envy and are tempted to emulate them. That is a great foolishness. Although they may appear to prosper temporarily, the wealth they accumulate is like a bungalow built on the seashore during the monsoon season; it breaks down and is destroyed in the same manner. Regarding the acquisition of wealth, the Buddha declared to lay devotees that wealth should be earned righteously, through the sweat of one's brow. It is not out of envy toward lay devotees becoming rich quickly that the Buddha declared this.

Livelihood is presented in this manner as one step of the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha saw the immense suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) that one would have to undergo in this world and the next through such a livelihood. To tell the truth, wealth acquired righteously, though earned with difficulty and through the sweat of one's brow, is stable wealth. It is as strong as a termite mound built with the hard work of termites. It is as delicious as a honeycomb constructed with difficulty by bees; wealth should be earned in that manner. Instead, if one slaughters animals that love life and fear death, mercilessly slaughtering them and accumulating wealth through unrighteous means, that person will have to burn in this world and the next as a retribution of that evil deed, caught in the machine of kamma. So, that is the natural law (*dhamma-tā*) in the world. We must ponder on that.

Especially in this era, some people think that if we are to eradicate rapidly growing poverty, we must adopt such short-cuts according to economics. To accumulate great wealth as quickly as possible, they propose unrighteous methods like animal slaughter to solve these problems. These are short-sighted paths. Through them, the entire human race is defiled. It is through this that various crises next arise in society. Children do not care for their parents; there are occasions when parents kill their children, and children kill their parents. If, when a festival day, a wedding day, or sometimes even a meritorious day arrives, animals kept as pets at home are dragged to the backyard and slaughtered while crying, to enjoy their meat, then in such homes, there is no room left for virtues like caring for parents to remain, because of what is witnessed. Next, another similar issue is the eating of meat. Various arguments are presented: "It is indeed bad to slaughter animals, but there is nothing wrong with eating meat." But here, one must

realize that just as one cannot drink medicine secretly from one's throat, one cannot eat meat secretly from one's tongue. There is a nature in the tongue to be greedy for the taste of meat. Why? Because having been born in the animal realm where we preyed on one another during this long *saṁsāra*, and having been born as demons (*yakṣas*) and monsters (*rākṣasas*) and consumed flesh, the tendency to be drawn to meat and its taste lies deposited in this tongue. It is awakened when the taste of meat comes near.

Next, if meat is not naturally available, one is tempted to eat by killing, or having someone else kill. The tongue is dangerous to that extent. Therefore, one has to contemplate on this meat-eating diet as well. It is because the demand is high that there is a corresponding supply in the world. As those who are fond of meat-eating increase, those innocent animals are sacrificed to death on a massive, large scale in the world. Sometimes, they are slaughtered raw and alive in various ways, even more cruelly than Cunda did. Because getting fresh meat is just like getting fresh vegetables. Generally, humans like fresh things. So, what is fresh meat? Killing that animal while the warm blood is dripping, and then dicing and slicing it like a carrot or a cabbage. Thus, a multitude of such concepts exist in this society. There is also a faction that approves of them.

What wise devotees should learn from such a Buddhist story is not a study of animal farms in ancient India. What should be done through this is to direct the mind to how terribly this machine of kamma, which has eternal power, affects us. When choosing a profession or a livelihood, instead of letting it happen automatically, or doing it because there is nothing else to do, choose it after wise consideration. Even if it is slightly less profitable, even if one has to put in sweat and hard work, one must try to choose a righteous profession. Now, in this era, even some Buddhists, though they talk about other things, do not like to talk much about this. They do not agree, mostly because lay devotees get displeased. Therefore, many of them like to create more Cundas. They give loans and other allowances to Cundas to encourage them further. But we must try, as true Buddhists, not to be a Cunda, and not to belong to Cunda's family.

Cunda, together with his relatives, greedily enjoyed the taste of meat daily. It was only what remained that he sold. That very greed for the taste of meat was perhaps the reason for continuing that job further. In the same way, once one becomes greedy for meat, if it is not easily available, one is tempted to kill animals oneself. In that light, the most delicious food—the most delicious meat—is human flesh. Therefore, sometimes—and this is no secret—on certain occasions, even if human flesh is given under the guise of animal meat, a person who has followed that craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) for taste (*rasa-taṇhā*) would consume even that. There are instances where, having eaten human flesh, that person later regretted, thinking, "Throughout my life, did I not regress to a barbaric age?"

There is a multitude of such disadvantages (*ādīnava*) connected to this aforementioned livelihood, wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). We must contemplate deeply on that. Various arguments and disputes can be presented. But it is the tongue that presents those arguments and disputes that ruins us. There is a story: a person greedy for meat

came home at noon. The wife had given the remaining meat at home to someone else. He could not eat without that flesh. Therefore, it is said that he cut off the tongue of a cow in the backyard, cooked it, and ate it. It is also said that as a retribution, while eating, his own tongue fell off. Such a Dhamma story is recounted. Whether retribution is given immediately or not, a person is tempted to do such cruel things because of that greed for the taste of meat.

When we contemplate in that manner, we see through these stories that the evil-doer has to suffer retribution not only in the next world but also in this very world. Indeed, the burning that occurs in this world is what is called 'remorse' (*pasutävilla*). When an evil deed is done, what arises first through it is remorse; the mind burns within. Next, a physical burning is added to that burning, as a result of that very burning; as a development of that very seed of kamma (*kamma-bīja*), one is drawn to places like hell, the Avīci Great Hell, which possess the necessary instruments for that. Not in just one or two places in the Dhamma, but in various places, to such an extent that it cannot be said to have been added after the Buddha's time, stories of this hell are found in those places of the Dhamma. The four woeful states (*satara apāya*) are spoken of. Now, we cannot say that the animal realm does not exist, because it is visible to our physical eyes. That a realm of hungry ghosts (*peta-loka*) does not exist cannot be said, as you devout devotees can infer even from the incidents you hear of at home, and the spirit troubles that occur in households. The Asura realm too can be inferred through demon afflictions and so forth. Hell is what some people doubt the existence of. But those who have attained direct knowledge (*abhiññā*) have no doubt about it. They see all these things just as one sees with the physical eyes.

It is mentioned that Ven. Maha Moggallana on certain occasions reported what he saw through his direct knowledge (*abhiññā-ñāṇa*) to the Buddha. Some people ridicule the descriptions of hell found in books. They laugh, asking how these things can happen. Think of it this way for a moment: we know that in hospitals in this world, there is something called the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). They are set up in a manner suitable to provide intensive care to those patients. Similarly, we can describe this hell as an 'intensive retribution unit'. The machines here are not enough to yield retribution for these severe evil deeds. There is not enough space for them in the human world. Therefore, through that very machine of kamma, certain methods of yielding retribution are created in places like hell. So, just like in that intensive care unit, in the intensive retribution unit, when one screams, "I am thirsty!" molten metal is brought and poured into the mouth. When one screams, "I am hungry!" red-hot iron balls are put into the mouth. The Buddha describes these in several suttas. Although these appear somewhat ridiculous, these are real things. Wonderful things. They occur through the machine of kamma. In short, the entire universe stands ready to yield the retributions of this volitional energy (*cetanā-shakti*) of ours. It is from the great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind (*paṭhavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*) that heavenly worlds and so forth are created, and heavenly pleasures are created. These four elements are also the cause of the pleasures and sufferings we experience in the human world. In hell too—especially because of that aforementioned intensive retribution unit in hell—there are massive fires

and sheets of flame appropriate to it. It is described that they are made to run on red-hot iron ground. Now, even in hospitals, sometimes they make patients do exercises, don't they? Moving this limb, moving that limb. In hell, however, the doors are locked. In short, what did Cunda do for seven days? He displayed to his family members a rehearsal of the mountain of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) he would have to undergo in Avīci in the future. Because he did it behind closed doors, others could not see. Cunda experienced that suffering as a pig, as a rehearsal of the mountain of suffering he would have to undergo. Even in these times, we occasionally hear of such stories. As if they went to hell alive. As if the earth split open and swallowed them. There is such a nature of retributions yielding so severely to some people. If someone is not yielded retribution so quickly, that is no reason to doubt kamma. As we said before, the evil deed done does not yield retribution immediately. Just as when a cow's udder is squeezed, milk does not come out immediately, it does not yield retribution that quickly.

Na hi pāpaṁ kataṁ kammaṁ, sajju khīraṁ va muccati;

dahantaṁ bālam anveti, bhasmacchannova pāvako.

Burning the fool, they follow behind him like sparks of fire hidden under ashes. In this manner, we must contemplate according to the natural law (*dhamma-tā*). Especially in this world, some people talk about the universe and the future in various ways. They blame the environment. They talk about the shortcomings of the environment. They talk about the neglect of the environment. Something more important than that is this spirituality/interiority (*adhyātma*). As long as the inner mind is defiled, the environment is also defiled. No matter how much we clear away other things in the environment, if this inner mind is defiled, the environment is also definitely defiled.

Now, if slaughter is done on such a large scale, if streams of blood and rivers of blood are flowing, the environment cannot be clean, no matter how beautiful it is made. In that way, we must realize that the Buddha solves these problems by administering the medicine to the very source where it should be solved. Therefore, the Buddha's statement, *"mano-pubbaṅgamā dhammā,"* reminds us constantly that the mind precedes all things. Thinking of that, the Buddha declared that one should depart from wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) on the Noble Eightfold Path and turn to right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Some people think of these as things that cannot be done. If one thinks so, we can find a very valuable example from history—the reign of King Dharmasoka (Ashoka).

To tell the truth, the king who was later known by the name Dharmasoka was previously called Candasoka (Ashoka the Fierce). Having destroyed hundreds of thousands of people in war, together with the remorse that arose within him, by hearing the Dhamma, a complete transformation occurred in his life. Through that itself, the king reached the state of being known entirely as Dharmasoka. Not only did he stop battles and wars, but he also gave sanctuary (*abhaya*) to animals. That is what we have to take note of in particular. Even modern historians declare that in the lineage of kings containing tens of thousands of kings in this world, King Dharmasoka shines like a star. The reasons for

that can be shown in this way: in this era, what is done at the state level is assisting wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*)—by giving loans, allowances, etc., in that manner. But King Dharmasoka set up stone pillars, proclaimed the Dhamma to the world, eradicated even slaughter, stopped the slaughter of animals even in the royal household, and set an example. Next, instead, he even built hospitals to treat sick animals. In that way, he taught the world on a large scale about loving-kindness (*mettā*), non-violence (*avihiṁsā*), and compassion (*karuṇā*). That is why King Dharmasoka is accepted as a great king even by non-Buddhist historians in this era. This historical experiment itself is sufficient to see whether we can transform our lives personally, and whether these can be implemented broadly at the state level.

Not only that, in the Jātaka stories and also in our lineage of kings, there were many kings like Buddhadasa who acted with great compassion toward animals. To tell the truth, an animal is also a being like us that feels pain, loves life, and fears death. So, if we give food to an animal, we should give it with the thought, "May this animal live for some more time." But in those cruel animal farms where animals are slaughtered, food is given to animals to keep them alive either for three days or for several weeks. The certificate of those animals is already written. Food is given to that animal only until it fattens up to the required number of kilograms. Those who follow such a way of thinking and perform such terrible evil deeds will definitely have to suffer in the future in hell and other places, and even if they come to the human world. Next, the Buddha, in the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta where kammic retributions are specifically spoken of, declares: if a woman or a man, with blood-stained hands, slaughters animals without any mercy, that person either goes to hell or is reborn in the woeful state. Even if they come to the human world at some point, they become short-lived (*alpāyuṣka*); their lifespan is shortened. What is the meaning of a shortened lifespan? Deaths increase. The number of deaths of that person in *saṁsāra* increases. By shortening the lifespan of others and slaughtering animals by limiting them to days and weeks in that manner, one inherits a short lifespan for oneself in *saṁsāra*. One dies untimely. So, we see those things even in this world; how beings like mayflies and locusts are born and die within a very short time, and die attracted to fire in bulk. One should understand that all of this demonstrates the operation of the machine of kamma.

Next, in the animal world, there is preying on one another. That very habit of preying on one another is finally added to society through this meat consumption. Therefore, regardless of the taste of meat, the way of thinking (*cintana*) generated through it is terrifying. Its retribution is terrifying. That is what we have to understand. The Buddha reminds us of all this with foresight, against the background of *saṁsāra*. The way of thinking of ordinary worldly people is like seeing through the squinted eye of a one-eyed blind person; it is a plan for the present, or at most for thirty or fifty years. It is within that that ordinary worldly people operate. If we do it this way, in fifty years this will overflow with milk and honey; regardless of milk and honey, those streams of blood will certainly flow. It is with a view to an economically developed era and prosperity that economists generally show such short-cuts. But the Buddha, because he understood the natural law of kamma in this universe, points out with foresight that if one lives

according to short-cuts, that person will have to burn in this world as well as in the next. Not only that, but in the life one leads, especially in the final phase, one will be subjected to severe remorse. When there is nothing else to do, that person has only this thought. Lying in bed, unable to move, like the four legs of a bed, on all fours; the stream of thoughts that comes is about the animals one slaughtered, the way they were slaughtered, the crimes committed—it is within these that that person lives. So, it is like a hell on earth. Although some people do not express it in words, they suffer such things.

We are still talking about the Cundas, not about you devout devotees. It is the fate that befell Cunda that we have to reflect upon. Then, we must resolve not to become a Cunda. A good example for that is what we mentioned earlier about King Dharmasoka. The discourses the Buddha preached about hell are indeed astounding. Some are born in the midst of flames, yet they do not die. That is an unimaginable wonder. Now, we know that if one falls into fire in this world, one must die. It is said that they are kept alive without dying by the force of kamma—through the power of kamma. Now, that they are kept alive through that kamma... if one looks at it from a scientific perspective, one can argue: how can someone burn in such an intense fire for a long time? But, dear devotees, we use the term "suffering/enduring" (*viňdavanavā*) in our daily life. In some of these hospitals, we see patients, and even doctors are surprised: "This person is not dying." Sometimes they have no limbs. They are infested with worms. Even their heads are infested with worms, yet they do not die. Somehow they remain, suffering. What is meant by "suffering/enduring"? It is the power of kamma that operates there. The evil deed is that severe. Retribution must be yielded for it. If a certain volitional energy (*cetanā-shakti*) arose in the machine of kamma, that is a universal natural law. There is a reaction to every action.

Thus, if a certain system of volitions associated with ignorance (*avijjā*), craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), and wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) has arisen in our mind-stream, these four innocent elements are there to provide the appropriate retribution. Or rather, those four elements are drawn to it, to put it briefly. Now, you devout devotees have also heard of the sayings: "the earth split open," "a thunderbolt struck." Even in the Bodhisatta stories, these are present; even if one escapes from other things, finally, a natural thunderbolt in this universe strikes down. Such incidents are heard of even in these times; what are called "crimes that heaven and earth cannot bear," "crimes that strike thunderbolts." It is not wishing it upon anyone, but because such things happen. So, such a wonderful natural law exists in this world. Even though they are heard of occasionally, they are covered up. They are not brought to light, because then it becomes an obstacle to the path we tread, a hindrance to our wrong livelihoods (*micchā-ājīva*); hence they are kept as secrets. Such things might be happening to one's own neighbors day by day. They do not go to speak about them; they cover them up. But that is the real situation.

That the seed created in a mother's womb at the moment a person is born survives for ten months without being destroyed is a great miracle; that too happens through the power of kamma. If one is fit to receive that birth, it exists through that power of kamma. In the same way, even in the midst of a great fire, one does not perish, but screams and wails, and dies only after those retributions are exhausted. Even when one dies, one is

born there again. The Buddha has shown in the Dhamma that this occurs millions of times in such places. Therefore, special machines are required. Just as there is a separate unit called the Intensive Care Unit in a hospital, here too, in this universe, among these world systems, in the thirty-one planes of existence (*tis-ek talaya*), there is a portion that is an "intensive retribution unit." Those who have done evil deeds get to go there. What is done in them can be seen only by those who have attained direct knowledge (*abhiññā*). Those who are blind, possessing only physical eyes, do not see it. Therefore, no matter how much one claims to look with a critical mind, they cannot be rejected. It is a word of the Buddha. Not only the Buddha, but other possessors of direct knowledge have declared them as true. Therefore, one must have faith in them. This *saṁsāric* journey of ours is a long one. If it were to end here, we could live within a twenty-year plan or a fifty-year plan as mentioned. Even though such big plans are laid, sometimes things do not happen that way. They turn completely upside down in a way we did not expect. Economists spend days and nights sleeplessly making plans, but all of them are sometimes destroyed due to the evil deeds done by those individuals. In the present, due to various anomalies in the environment, it is said that this world system is heading toward destruction. The cause for that is shown in the Dhamma to be the coarseness, the roughness of the mind-streams of beings. As our mind-streams become coarser, our environment also follows suit. There lies the true origin of environmental science. Thus, *"patirūpa-desa-vāso ca, pubbe ca kata-puññatā"* and so forth are shown for this reason. *"Patirūpa-desa-vāso"* means an environment where there is a group of people living righteously.

"Pubbe ca kata-puññatā" means there must be merit done in the past. If there are evil-doers, along with them, the environment is destroyed. Next, thirdly, there is *atta-sammā-paṇidhi*—establishing oneself in the right way. These three factors must be brought out. If we are to reduce even slightly this running within these world-destroying forces, we must pay attention to those three factors. *"Patirūpa-desa-vāso"* does not mean a place with good electricity and water facilities; that is not the real environment. It is an environment with the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) and facilities to worship and pay homage to the Triple Gem. That is what is presented in the Mahāmangala Sutta as "dwelling in a suitable locality." Having merit done in the past. We can see that from the way that person behaves and acts. The merit that is inside must be brought out to some extent. To bring that out is what is called *atta-sammā-paṇidhi*—straightening one's mind. That straightening itself is the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha has declared that the Noble Eightfold Path is a straight path: *"ujuko nāma so maggo, abhayā nāma sā disā"* (Straight is the name of that path, and fearless is the direction). This path is straight. The direction it goes is fearless. *"Abhaya"* means without fear—fearless. The side it goes is fearless. There is no fear. It is secure. The path is straight. Then, if the path is straight, having started the Noble Eightfold Path from Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and come to Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), one cannot escape by saying, "That is not such an important thing, it is fine if the other things are there." It is from there, in truth, that we can understand which direction a person's life is taking. Now, because Cunda turned to that profession, through that he became

subservient to the taste of meat. So, it was by reason of both of these that he inherited such a mountain of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*).

Similarly, due to the gains and benefits obtained through a profession, due to their unjust advantages, one is tempted to continue it continuously. That is why the Buddha declared to lay devotees: "Do not remain like a one-eyed blind person, and do not remain like a completely blind person; use both eyes." Thus, if we adjust our livelihood after understanding good and bad in accordance with the Dhamma, the beginning might be painful. One must be prepared according to the Dhamma to lead a simple life, saving with difficulty through the sweat of one's brow. Although that person may appear to have lost in that competitive world, at the time of retirement, they automatically receive the reward called the bliss of blamelessness (*anavajja-sukha*), and achieve a great victory in their mind-stream. Rejoicing in that, they can breathe their last breath in peace; that is what we can demonstrate according to the Dhamma.

This path of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*) shown by the Buddha, or the Noble Eightfold Path, is a straight path. It is one where one factor fits and connects well with another. Thus, if we have understood good and bad through Right View, if we have understood the true nature of *saṁsāra* through the truth, we must reflect that we have a very long journey ahead. To say it is a long journey means that whether we go in *saṁsāra* or not, there is a bag of kamma we have brought with us in our mind-stream. If we are not careful, the retributions of the kamma we perform go a very long way. They go a very long way, not just for this life. Therefore, we have to act with foresight.

Thus, with a Right View, in accordance with it, one must develop good intentions called Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), which are presented as renunciation (*nekkhamma*), non-ill-will (*avyāpāda*), and harmlessness (*avihiṁsā*). Two of those factors in Right Intention are connected to loving-kindness (*mettā*). They are connected to compassion (*karuṇā*), kindness, and sympathy. *Nekkhamma* means separation from the pleasures of the five senses, or departure from the household life. *Avyāpāda* means the absence of hatred, or thoughts associated with loving-kindness. *Avihiṁsā* intentions mean abstaining from violence. Then, if those thoughts of abstaining from violence are present, one cannot, as a profession or for one's livelihood or for one's life, slaughter animals that wish to live and dislike pain just like oneself, or feed them to fatten them up to the required kilograms with the intention of slaughtering them. The mind does not allow it. Instead, one becomes accustomed to looking with kindness and compassion.

According to the description shown by the Buddha in the Karaṇīyametta Sutta, *"ye keci pāṇabhūtatthi..."* and so forth, without distinction of large or small, near or far, one is shown to make every animal the object of thoughts of loving-kindness. Therefore, we cannot think that these animals are born for us to eat, like cabbages and carrots.

Similarly, if we accept kinship in *saṁsāra*, we must reflect that one's past relatives and parents are likely to be born in one's own households. Sometimes they are born as cattle, as goats, as pigs, and as chickens. Then, if we drag animals to the backyard and slaughter

them to perform meritorious deeds to transfer merit to those parents, what is the meritorious deed there? One must contemplate in that manner. When thinking about *saṁsāra* in this way, one has to accept that through slaughter, one might even be killing one's own parents without knowing it. Not only that, even as mentioned in those Jātaka stories, sometimes they take birth as animals. If so, through the slaughter of such an animal, one performs an even more severe unwholesome deed. Because even if a Bodhisatta takes birth in an animal realm, there is a great power in that Bodhisatta aspiration. Even if done unknowingly, there is a great unwholesome kamma in bringing about the death of such an animal. Now, even when we think about humans, we know that harming or killing a Buddha, an Arahant, a noble disciple who has attained the path and fruit, or a virtuous person is not like harming an ordinary unvirtuous person. Likewise, there are special characteristics regarding the power of kamma.

Thinking about that, everyone has to spend their daily life very carefully, especially regarding their profession. Therefore, you devout devotees must contemplate wisely: we received all these lessons from Cunda. "Oh, may you not have to experience what happened to me. Do not become a Cunda. This is the lesson you must take from me," as if Cunda were saying so, is the idea we must understand from this Dhamma discussion. We also understood the verse preached by the Buddha on this occasion. For you devout devotees, observing the precepts on a Uposatha day like today means turning toward such a pure life. Having generated those good thoughts, next, in accordance with that, abstaining from destruction of life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, etc., which is good Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), next, turning to a good livelihood, and the sermons and meditations done accordingly are what are called Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). It is toward developing the Noble Eightfold Path in this manner that you devout devotees have turned. Especially on this occasion, we mentioned the livelihood-as-the-eighth precept (*ājīv-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). One must be particularly careful about one's livelihood. It is not merely about earning wealth day by day. It is not merely about obtaining some food and drink somehow. If that is not done righteously, not only individually but collectively, this entire universe will finally become an animal world. Taking up the perception of beasts (*miga-saññā*) and killing one another is because of that very way of thinking. One must contemplate wisely on the facts that the environment is defiled because of that aforementioned defilement of the inner mind.

I think that you devout devotees, by today's observance of precepts and by listening to the Dhamma, have developed those virtues of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) in your mind-stream. Resolve thus: "May this multitude of wholesome thoughts indeed become a supportive condition (*hetu-vāsanā*) for us to end this *saṁsāric* suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) as quickly as possible!" Similarly, may all the guardian deities and Brahmas of the Sasana from Avīci up to Akanitha, and all our relatives, rejoice in this merit of our preaching the Dhamma and listening to the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they end all *saṁsāric* suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) as quickly as

possible, and attain peace through the supreme, noble Amata Mahā Nibbāna: by means of an aspired Bodhi! With that aspiration, recite these verses and transfer merit!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #133

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.63)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Idha nandati pecca nandati, katapuñño ubhayattha nandati;

puññaṃ me katan ti nandati, bhiyyo nandati sugatiṃ gato ti.

From:

Dhammapada 18 (Yamakavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Our long journey in saṁsāra is a journey of accumulating kamma. Within the continuation of saṁsāra, our progress or decline is determined by the merits (*puñña*) and demerits (*pāpa*) we accumulate. That is why it is said that merit leads to a happy destination (*sugati*) and demerit leads to a miserable destination (*duggati*). The Buddha has preached that belief in merit and demerit—Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*)—is an essential component. Believing that fortune and luck arise only through merit, and that misfortune and bad luck are the inevitable consequences of demerit, is a fundamental principle of a good Buddhist life. Today, we have chosen as our theme a verse which declares that a person who lives their life according to this principle can rejoice both in this world and in the world hereafter. The Buddha preached this verse with reference to Sumana, the youngest daughter of Anāthapiṇḍika, the great banker (*seṭṭhi*).

In the city of Sāvatthī, both the lay disciple Visākhā and the great banker Anāthapiṇḍika had the custom of offering alms daily to about two thousand monks in their respective homes. To put it briefly, those mansions of the seṭṭhis were like alms halls. Although they offered alms daily in this manner, they did not have the opportunity to organize the alms-giving daily themselves. The reason was that those who held large alms-giving ceremonies in Sāvatthī were very keen to invite one of these two to their own alms-givings to organize the events. This was because both Visākhā and Anāthapiṇḍika had a deep understanding of the needs of the Saṅgha, what was allowable (*kappiya*) and suitable, and their likes and dislikes.

Since they could not organize the daily alms-giving at their own homes, they employed their children for that purpose. Just as the great lay disciple Visākhā employed a daughter of her son for this task, the banker Anāthapiṇḍika employed his eldest daughter, Mahā-Subhaddā, to organize the alms-giving. While attending to the needs of the Saṅgha, she attained the stage of stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) and later entered married life; next, Cūḷa-Subhaddā took over the alms-giving organization. She, too, attained stream-entry and later married, whereupon the duty was passed on to the youngest daughter, Sumana. She did not enter married life. While serving the Saṅgha, she attained the stage of a once-returner (*sakadāgāmī*). On a certain occasion, due to a sudden and severe illness, she was on her deathbed and sent a message to her father. At that time, Anāthapiṇḍika was busy organizing an alms-giving in another house. As soon as he received the message, Anāthapiṇḍika came. Upon arriving, he asked, "What is it, my daughter Sumana?" She asked, "What is it, younger brother (*malli*)?" Then, when he asked, "Why, daughter, are you talking in delirium?" she replied, "No, younger brother, I am not talking in delirium." "Why, daughter, do you seem afraid?"—he was asking if she was afraid of death. Then she said, "No, younger brother, I am not afraid," and passed away immediately after.

At this moment, the banker felt great grief, thinking, "My daughter, who possessed such a sense of moral shame and dread (*hiri-otappa*), died talking in delirium with a confused mind." Having completed the cremation rites, he went to see The Buddha crying and in great distress. The Buddha asked, "Why, banker, have you come weeping, sorrowful and depressed?" He said, "My youngest daughter has passed away." "Why, banker, do you not know that death is common to all?" "I know that, Venerable Sir, but I am sorrowful because my daughter passed away with a confused mind, talking in delirium at the moment of death." Then the Buddha asked, "What did she say?" and requested the details. He explained all the details to The Buddha in a question-and-answer manner. The Buddha said, "No, banker, your daughter addressed you as 'younger brother' because you are junior to her. In terms of the fruits of the path (*magga-phala*), you are established in the fruit of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). Your daughter was established in the fruit of once-returning (*sakadāgāmi-phala*). That is why she addressed you as younger brother." In this way, the banker's grief was stilled. Next, the banker asked, "Where has she been reborn now?" "In the Tusita heaven," he replied. At that moment, expressing his joy among his relatives, the banker said, "My daughter lived happily, spending a good life, and has now been reborn in a place of happiness." "Yes, banker, if someone practices the Dhamma diligently (*appamāda*), that person rejoices both in this world and in the next world," and giving this meaning, The Buddha uttered the verse we mentioned earlier:

Idha nandati pecca nandati, katapuñño ubhayattha nandati

The doer of merit rejoices in this world, rejoices in the world hereafter. He rejoices in both worlds.

Puññaṁ me katan'ti nandati

He rejoices with the feeling, "Merit has been made by me" in this world.

bhiyyo nandati sugatiṁ gato

"He rejoices even more after going to a happy state in the next world." In this manner, The Buddha uttered a verse expressing the value of merit.

Now, when we look at this story, it appears to be a very simple incident. Only the last few words of Sumana are recorded here. But through this, we can recognize that Sumana was a very wise woman. At the moment of death, she passed away after posing a Dhamma riddle to make her father reflect. Moreover, she did so with clear awareness. Normally, people would think these were words spoken in delirium. But she presented a deep meaning through them. Although she was the youngest daughter, she was senior not only to her two sisters but also to her father in terms of the fruits of the path and supramundane (*lokuttara*) qualities. Regardless of chronological age, when looking at seniority in virtue (*guṇa-vuddhi*) and seniority in spiritual practice (*tapo-vuddhi*), she was more senior, which is why she faced him addressing him as "younger brother." Through this, we can understand that she was a noble character.

Next, let us consider: the task assigned to her was organizing the alms-giving. You all know that in this Dhamma preached by The Buddha there are ten ways of making merit, called the ten bases of meritorious action (*dasa puñña-kiriya-vatthu*). Giving alms (*dāna*), keeping moral virtue (*sīla*), practicing meditation (*bhāvanā*), sharing merit (*patti-dāna*), rejoicing in others' merit (*pattānumodanā*), rendering service (*veyyāvacca*), paying reverence (*apacāyana*), preaching the Dhamma (*dhamma-desanā*), listening to the Dhamma (*dhamma-savana*), and straightening one's view, i.e., Right View (*diṭṭhijjukamma*)—in this way, ten items are shown as meritorious deeds in the Dhamma. She lived in an environment where she could complete all these ten items. During the Buddha's time, while daily serving the Buddha and the Saṅgha and organizing alms-givings, there were opportunities for a lay person to accumulate all ten bases of meritorious action, expressed as *dānaṁ, sīlañca, bhāvanā, patti-pattānumodanā, veyyāvacca, apacāyañca, desanā-suti-diṭṭhiju*. Indeed, it is only during the period when a Buddha arises (*buddhōtpāda-kāla*) that all ten meritorious actions can be properly completed. Ordinary people of the world consider grain, wealth, gold, silver, pearls, and gems as things to be accumulated and deposited. But in accordance with the Dhamma, as pointed out by The Buddha such wealth is limited only to this world. For a being wandering from becoming (*bhava*) to becoming (*bhava*) in this long saṁsāra, what is truly useful and stands as a support for a long time both in this world and the next is the accumulation of merit (*puñña-sambhāra*) one has gathered, the treasure of merit (*puñña-nidhāna*).

The difference between the treasure of wealth and the treasure of merit is pointed out in many places in the Dhamma. Just as the treasure of material wealth is limited to this world, it can be destroyed by danger from kings, thieves, fire, or water, sometimes even during one's lifetime. But the treasure of merit cannot be taken by kings or thieves. It is not destroyed by fire or water. It follows one like a shadow, as a follower-treasure

(*anugāmika-nidhāna*); in this way, The Buddha has declared the value of the treasure of merit on many occasions. Also, it is said here, *katapuññho ubhayattha nandati*. What can be called a fortunate life is having done meritorious deeds. The doer of merit rejoices both in this world and in the world hereafter. Now we know that in the Maṅgala Sutta, "having done merit in the past" (*pubbe ca kata-puññatā*) is mentioned as a blessing. Having done merit in the past is a good foundation for this life. Having done merit in the past is obtained only if one has performed merit in previous times.

If life does not end here, the merit we do now becomes a foundation for the next life in the same way. In saṁsāra, to put it briefly, beneath everything we consider as our fortune or luck, or things we think suddenly fall into place, lies some meritorious deed performed in the past. When we think of it in this way, the opposite is also true: the moment the power of merit (*puñña-sakti*) is exhausted, just as an airplane flying in the sky crashes to the ground when it runs out of fuel, those who flourished with immense wealth and high positions suddenly fall into ruin. We do not see the causes of these events, but a Buddha or those possessing direct knowledge (*abhiññā*) can see them: because of what they received, because of their positions, they fell into negligence (*pamāda*) regarding making merit, and not realizing that their fuel was running out, the airplane descended—not just normally, but amidst flames.

In that manner, we only hear about the incidents of such unfortunate lives. We must understand the natural law (*dhammatā*) within them in accordance with the Dhamma. That is why The Buddha always declared that a wise person is always, constantly diligent (*appamatta*) in making merit. One does not know how much is left of one's deposits, one's treasure in the bank. Without considering these, if one falls into negligence and merely enjoys comforts because of the power of merit brought from the past, then one might sometimes fall into a terrible decline in that manner. The value of the power of merit is so great that if the meritorious kamma with which a person was born is small, and if they perform merit in this life, it will assist as kamma to strengthen the birth-merit they brought as productive kamma (*janaka-kamma*). Likewise, if there are unwholesome kammas, they might be cut down by the meritorious deeds one performs, and as obstructive kamma (*upapīḍaka-kamma*), the power of that unwholesome kamma is broken. Sometimes, it can also completely destroy that wholesome or unwholesome force as destructive kamma (*upaghātaka-kamma*).

In this way, various energies, various functions of kamma are expressed in the Dhamma. We must understand through this that the treasure of merit is the most valuable treasure in a human life. Even if other things are lacking, a wise person has opportunities to make merit. It is not something done only with money; when we think about the matters mentioned here—giving alms (*dāna*), keeping moral virtue (*sīla*), practicing meditation (*bhāvanā*), and also serving (*veyyāvacca*) etc.—they are not things that necessarily involve expenses. If there is wisdom and if there is faith (*saddhā*), anyone has the ability to act diligently in accumulating merit. Likewise, if one commits a sin, there is remorse from that very moment. Remorse from the very moment it is done. The mind knows that one has done wrong. For the doer of merit, from the very moment it is done, there is great relief. Whenever they think of it, a multitude of meritorious thoughts arise from it,

like earning interest. One is encouraged to do more and more merit. There is such a natural law regarding merit. Therefore, understanding the value of merit is extremely important, especially in this day and age.

In truth, this merit is not something that helps only in the next life. If one has a certain goal in the long saṁsāra, such as becoming a Buddha, a Paccekabuddha, or an Arahant, this merit is capable of fulfilling even those goals. To achieve those goals, what is required is to firmly make a resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*) and aspiration (*prārthanā*) in that regard. Through that, one can direct those merits to realize and succeed in the desired goal one hopes for. Now, you have heard about the word *praṇidhi* (aspiration/resolve). One makes a *praṇidhi* for Buddhahood (*buddha-bhava*). One aspires, "May I become a Buddha!" and makes a firm resolution. Then, all the wholesome kammas (*kusala-kamma*) performed are pulled towards that *praṇidhi* as perfections (*pāramī*). In the same way, if one has made a certain *praṇidhi*, a certain direction in the mind, the essence of the meritorious deeds one performs is drawn to that direction, and in the end, those merits help one even to end the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra. However, some people these days think that making merit is an action of those who have only ignorant, foolish faith, and that it prolongs saṁsāra. That is a misunderstanding. This happens because of not properly understanding the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) in the Dhamma of The Buddha. Let us consider a little the fundamental principles of the Middle Path of The Buddha because it is important for us to dispel the doubts that often arise within us regarding making merit.

You have heard of the Middle Path preached by The Buddha. It is the path which is a valuable middle way going between, or rather transcending, two extreme views existing in the world. Those extreme views are shown as the annihilationist view (*ucchēda-diṭṭhi*) and the eternalist view (*sassata-diṭṭhi*). The annihilationist view, dear devotees, is the idea that after we die, life ends right here; there is no rebirth, and there is no distinction between this world and the next world. Next, the eternalist view is the idea that there is a permanent soul (*attā*) within us that goes on forever, eternally. The Buddha rejects both of these as extremes. Instead, let us investigate a little what the middle way shown by The Buddha is. It is Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*) itself, or rather, this Noble Eightfold Path itself that The Buddha has introduced as the middle way. This Noble Eightfold Path begins with Right View—with correct seeing. The Buddha has preached that there are two aspects to this Right View. "Monks, I declare that Right View is twofold." What are these two types?

One is this: there is a Right View which is described as *sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā*. *Sāsavā* means "with taints" (*āsavas*). Within saṁsāric becoming (*bhava*), there are three forces that intoxicate and pull us in. There is a tendency to be drawn to sensual pleasures; that is the taint of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*). The taint of becoming / existence (*bhavāsava*) means liking becoming / existence; wishing to obtain becoming / existence, loving becoming / existence. The taint of ignorance (*avijjāsava*) means being drawn towards ignorance, towards darkness. There is such an intoxicating nature of taints. So, this Right View is *sāsava*, with taints. It accepts that. But it is

puññabhāgiyā. *Puññabhāgiyā* means inclined towards the side of merit. Next, it is called *upadhivepakkā*. *Upadhi* resources (*upadhi-sampatti*) are the material resources and wealth that support a person's life and help to maintain life properly. Next, lives free from deformities—such acquisitions are called *upadhi*. So, what is done through this Right View is providing those resources. They are indeed with taints, but they are inclined towards merit. Also, they provide the resources of becoming / existence (*upadhi*) in saṁsāra. Even for someone who hopes to see the Nibbāna, if they have a good life, they can engage in listening to Dhamma, meditation, etc., without trouble. *Upadhivepakkā*.

Next, the other Right View is introduced as *ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggāṅgā*. That is Noble Right View. It is also free from those taints mentioned, thus *anāsavā*. Next, *lokuttarā maggāṅgā* means a factor of the supramundane path. It is a deep thing. Here it refers to a deep aspect: a factor of the supramundane path. In fact, dear devotees, by these two aspects of Right View, those two extremes mentioned are removed. How are they removed? The person who has adopted the annihilationist view, based on the idea that life ends here and there is no rebirth, abandons belief in merit and demerit. They also destroy belief in good and bad. Next, what do they do? As long as they live, committing crimes as they please, whether by good or bad means—you have heard of devotion to sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*). Devotion to sensual pleasures, being attached and immersed in sensuality, is the way of life of the person who has taken that wrong view, the annihilationist view. There is an old Sanskrit verse expressing this. It is not something in the Tipiṭaka; it is from Sanskrit literature. There is an ancient verse that very briefly and beautifully shows the life purpose of the person who has gone to the extreme of devotion to sensual pleasures:

> *Yāvaj jīvet sukhaṁ jīvet, ṛṇaṁ kṛtvā ghṛtaṁ pibet;*
>
> *bhasmībhūtasya dehasya, punarāgamanaṁ kutaḥ*.

As long as one lives, one should live happily. *Yāvaj jīvet sukhaṁ jīvet*—one should remain enjoying pleasures well. *Ṛṇaṁ kṛtvā ghṛtaṁ pibet*—even by taking loans, one should drink ghee. Ghee refers to something showing luxurious living, because wealthy people often use ghee. Therefore, even if you are in debt, even if you do not have it, run into debt and drink ghee, because you won't have to repay the debt; there is no rebirth! Drink ghee even by borrowing. Why? Because *bhasmībhūtasya dehasya*—once the body is reduced to ashes, *punarāgamanaṁ kutaḥ*—how can that body return? In this way, because of this annihilationist view, they go and get stuck in devotion to sensual pleasures.

Next, what is the other view? It is the one that existed among the Nigaṇṭhas and others: the eternalist view (*sassata-diṭṭhi*). What they did was think, "There is a permanent soul, an eternal soul, inside this body of ours. We must free this soul from the body," and they tried to liberate the soul by practicing various difficult vows like the goat-vow, the dog-vow, and the cattle-vow—behaving like goats, dogs, and cattle—inflicting suffering on the body and torturing it. That is called self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). Those

who held the eternalist view went to the extreme of the practice of inflicting excessive suffering on the body. Then, through the deep aspect of the Right View of The Buddha described as *ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggāṅgā*, that very idea of a permanent soul is rejected. What is there is indeed the deep teaching of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*): becoming / existence according to causes and conditions. In short, if we are to define the Right View that is *ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggāṅgā*, it must be defined through the Four Noble Truths: the entire five aggregates are suffering (*dukkha*), underlying them is craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), the stilling of craving is the Nibbāna, and the path to the Nibbāna is the Noble Eightfold Path. What is done through this second Right View? A permanent soul is rejected. Here there is no soul. There is nothing to cry about just because there is no soul. In truth, what is here is only the five aggregates; merely five heaps existing due to causes and conditions. At that point, the eternalist view of the Niganṭhas, as well as self-mortification, were rejected. Instead, the Middle Path of The Buddha is a wonderfully unique middle way. That middle way is described by a few other terms.

The Buddha always declares that in this Dispensation of mine, there is a gradual training (*anupubba-sikkhā*), a gradual action (*anupubba-kiriyā*), and a gradual practice (*anupubba-paṭipadā*). It is a training that goes systematically, step-by-step, in sequence; a practice that goes in sequence; a program, procedure, and process of action that goes in sequence. These points we presented along with various Pali terms can be understood very easily through a beautiful simile mentioned in the Dhamma, in the *Oghataraṇa Sutta*. On one occasion, a deity came to The Buddha and asked a question. The address deities use for The Buddha is translated into Sinhala as *nidukāṇeni* ("O painless one"). "O painless one, how did you cross over the flood?" Dear devotees, four saṁsāric sweeping floods are shown in the Dhamma: the flood of sensual desire (*kāmōgha*), the flood of becoming / existence (*bhavōgha*), the flood of views (*diṭṭhōgha*), and the flood of ignorance (*aviijjōgha*). This being is swept away by the flood of sensual desire. Likewise, one is drawn into the flood of becoming / existence. Next, one is drawn into views, and then into ignorance. It is in the midst of these four floods that saṁsāric becoming / existence continues. So, how did you cross over these four floods?—this was the question asked of The Buddha. What was the answer given by The Buddha? "Friend, without halting and without straining, I crossed over the flood."

Next, the deity asked, "But how, O painless one, did you cross over the flood without halting and without straining?" asking for more details. Then The Buddha declared, "Friend, when I halted, I sank; and when I strained, I was swept away." This refers to his own saṁsāric experience. This can be understood in this way according to the Dhamma principles mentioned earlier. If on any occasion, according to the annihilationist view, according to devotion to sensual pleasures, I had passively thought, "There is no result of merits and demerits; there is no importance to them," and if I had lived in that way, what would have happened to me was sinking completely. The philosophy of the annihilationist view regarding merits and demerits is analyzed in ten points like this, as the ten-point wrong view (*dasa-vatthuka micchā-diṭṭhi*): there is no giving (*dāna*), there is no sacrifice (*yāga*), there is no offering (*homa*)—meaning those ancient methods of

giving, sacrifices, and offerings are of no use. Next, there is no fruit or result of good and bad kammas. There is no this world, there is no next world. There is no special duty toward a mother, there is no special duty toward a father. There are no spontaneously born (*opapātika*) beings. There are no ascetics and brahmins in the world who, having realized by their own direct knowledge, declare this world and the next world. In this way, ten points are stated as "there is no, there is no" in the annihilationist view. Instead of those ten, The Buddha presents "there is, there is."

"There is giving (*dāna*), there is sacrifice, there is offering. There is fruit and result of good and bad kammas. There is this world, there is the next world. There is a mother, there is a father. There are spontaneously born beings in the world, like gods and hungry ghosts (*petas*). Next, there are ascetics and brahmins who, having realized by their own direct knowledge, declare this world and the next world." In this way, The Buddha shows Right View in ten forms. By that ten-fold Right View, the ten "there is no, there is no" points declared in the annihilationist view are rejected. Then we can clearly see that if the annihilationist view says something "is not," The Buddha says it "is." If the eternalist view says something "is"—meaning if it says there is a permanent soul—The Buddha says it "is not." The saying "is not" is done indeed by taking refuge in the Four Noble Truths. Now, so that you can easily consider this, if we recollect again, the annihilationist view says "is not, is not," such as there is no mother, there is no father, there is no this world, there is no next world, there is no fruit or result of sacrifices and offerings, etc. To put it briefly, they reject the doctrine of kamma (*kammavāda*). Instead, The Buddha said "there is, there is." Those are saṁsāric indeed, *sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā*. It is true that they are with taints. But they are merits. The Buddha presented a Right View that is inclined towards the side of merit: the ten-point Right View, or otherwise called the Right View of ownership of kamma (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*).

The Right View of ownership of kamma (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*) means the idea that kamma is one's own property. That is the first aspect of Right View. It is through that that the annihilationist view and devotion to sensual pleasures are rejected. Next, the deep aspect is that Right View which was shown as the Noble Supramundane Path-factor regarding the Four Noble Truths. Through that, the eternalism of the Niganṭhas is rejected. Here, that there is a soul is rejected, showing that the five aggregates are entirely a heap of suffering (*dukkha*). Behold, then, The Buddha presents a wonderfully unique solution here. One cannot cross over that flowing flood of saṁsāra all at once. When caught in a whirlpool, one knows that if they halt, they sink; and if they strain, they are swept away. It is such a whirlpool. Therefore, by a certain systematic device—which is what we mentioned as gradual action (*anupubba-kiriyā*), gradual practice (*anupubba-paṭipadā*), and gradual training (*anupubba-sikkhā*)—it is only through systematic discipline, a systematic practice, and a systematic course of action that one can cross over a whirlpool or a swift current. You can now consider deeply this Middle Path shown by The Buddha. Normally, we think that we have abandoned devotion to sensual pleasures, and we have abandoned self-mortification, and that the Middle Path is just that much. There is something much deeper than that in it.

Now, we say all of this for a certain reason. Some scholars often make statements like this: "Saṁsāra grows through meritorious deeds. If there is no doer of kamma, how can there be a recipient of the fruit? If The Buddha preached a teaching of not-self (*anattā*), and if there is no one to say 'this is mine' regarding the kammas we performed, how do we receive their fruits?" Through this, they make it an excuse to fall into passivity and finally even to go into devotion to sensual pleasures. This is a completely wrong idea. It is a misunderstanding of the Dhamma. It is an overrunning. It is what is called an overrunning, going beyond limits, created through mere logic. Why? Just because a permanent soul is rejected, The Buddha does not reject responsibility for kamma. What is the reason for that? In short, kamma is something that arises out of ignorance. Whether it is a good kamma or a bad kamma, according to the teaching "with ignorance as condition, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arise" (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*), it is due to ignorance that one performs some merit or demerit as a formation (*saṅkhāra*) according to one's desires. In doing that, the feeling of "self" is presented. According to the responsibility of that presented feeling of "self", if one is responsible for that kamma, one has to be responsible for the result as well. Therefore, one cannot merely claim responsibility for the kamma and escape the result through logical arguments. That is the point; many people confuse this.

That supramundane path Right View is very far from them. They have not even come close to that side yet. However, pointing to that supramundane path Right View, they try to escape from those things called making merit shown by The Buddha in this life. One cannot escape like that. In fact, in the book called the Dhammapada, there is a chapter, a section, called the *Atta Vagga*. *Vagga* means a chapter. Sometimes it is translated as "Chapter on the Soul". Often, non-Buddhists take the word *atta* (soul/self) in this *Atta Vagga* incorrectly and try to show: "The Buddha did not preach a teaching of not-self (*anattā*). Look, isn't he talking about a soul here?"

But in this *Atta Vagga*, dear devotees, it speaks of oneself. It must be taken there as meaning "oneself". There is a verse which makes this very clear to us:

Attanā va kataṁ pāpaṁ, attanā saṅkilissati;

attanā akataṁ pāpaṁ, attanā va visujjhati;

suddhī asuddhī paccattaṁ, nāñño aññaṁ visodhaye.

This is a verse in that very chapter, *Atta Vagga*. Through this, we can see that this word *atta* is used here with the meaning of "oneself". Because *attanā va kataṁ pāpaṁ attanā saṅkilissati*—by oneself is evil done, by oneself is one defiled; *attanā akataṁ pāpaṁ attanā va visujjhati*—by oneself is evil left undone, by oneself is one purified. "Leaving evil undone" means refraining from evil. You all know that is a wholesome deed (*kusala*). Thus, by oneself is evil left undone, by oneself is one purified. Therefore, *suddhī asuddhī paccattaṁ*—purity and impurity are individual matters (*paccattaṁ*). *Nāñño aññaṁ visodhaye*—no one can purify another. So, through this, even from the words of The Buddha it is clearly evident to us that this is something concerning oneself. If one did it,

one must experience it. At that point, because of taking this word *atta* incorrectly as a permanent soul through an overrunning of intellect, many people, without even knowing it, fall into the nihilistic view (*nāstika-diṭṭhi*). Very learned and scholarly people confuse this because of not properly understanding the Middle Path of The Buddha. They think: "Thinking about merit is a foolish thing. It only increases saṁsāra."

You are all familiar with hearing the word *puñña* (merit) and the word *kusala* (wholesome/skillful) shown by The Buddha. Especially within the word *kusala*, there is the meaning of "skillfulness". Often they seem to have almost the same meaning; we say "making merit" and we say "performing wholesome deeds". But *kusala* means a certain skillfulness. What is this skillfulness? It is skillfully, step-by-step, breaking away and escaping from that flood. According to that, even in making merit, a person must wisely progress in a practice that goes step-by-step, so that there is development—that is, going from merits of lesser value towards higher, supreme, and noble merits. That is what true *kusala* is.

In short, the word *kusala* is used all the way up to being led to the saṁsāric state of Buddhahood (*buddha-bhava*). That too is skillfulness. Inside the word *kusala* lies the skillfulness regarding everything: going to a happy destination without going to hell in saṁsāra, and ending the entire saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) without going to hell or to a happy destination, and thereby seeing the Nibbāna. So, one does that by breaking away from the whirlpool step-by-step, in sequence. This cannot be done all at once. Even if one halts, one sinks. That is the nature of saṁsāra. This is exactly why a Buddha is needed to solve this riddle of saṁsāra. This is not a knot that can be easily cut. It is not a problem that can be easily solved. That is why a Buddha is absolutely necessary, and why a Middle Path is absolutely necessary. If you confuse this, you fall into trouble, like catching a snake by its tail. In that case, there is no merit made here, but the talk is supramundane (*lokuttara*). The work is of no use either for this world or for the next world.

Such views exist among certain scholars. These are often heard. Through them, many people are misled, even helpless Buddhists. That is why we specially presented this as a topic today, to clarify this matter. Accordingly, we must understand the section of the Dhammapada called the *Atta Vagga* (Chapter on the Self). The Buddha is not preaching about a permanent soul there. Rather, it is to show a fundamental principle of that Right View which is *puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā*. If, through the feeling of "self" created out of ignorance, one has performed some merit or demerit, its result and benefit belong to oneself in a saṁsāric sense. If one accepts that truth, then, in accordance with the word *kusala*, we must gradually try to make the merit we perform a supreme merit by cultivating the qualities of faith (*saddhā*) and wisdom (*paññā*) within ourselves.

There is also a good discourse (*sutta*) regarding this. We will mention one illustration due to time limitations. Giving alms (*dāna*) is a familiar thing to all of you. In a certain discourse speaking about this alms-giving, The Buddha points out eight ways of giving alms. He points them out like this: some people give alms out of desire (*chanda*). *Chanda* means because of a special liking or attachment; because of attachment to

someone. *Chandā dānaṁ deti*. Another person gives out of hatred (*dosa*), throwing it like it's a nuisance. Another person gives out of delusion (*moha*)... not even knowing whether they gave it or not, giving it without mindfulness—there is an old story about "giving a horse to Kaluhāmi"—that is out of delusion. Next, fear of blame. Sometimes, out of fear of blame: "If I don't give, others will blame me," so they give. Next, it is shown that another person gives thinking: "Our ancestors kept the custom of giving alms. We should not break that custom, therefore we must give alms." Another person thinks: "By giving this alms, I should be reborn in a happy state," and gives alms looking forward to heavenly pleasures. Next, a seventh point is shown: another person thinks: "In giving alms, at the moment of giving, a great joy and happiness arises in my mind," and thinking of that joy, they give alms.

The eighth way is shown by The Buddha using two somewhat deep words: *cittālaṅkāraṁ cittaparikkhāraṁ dānaṁ deti*—one gives alms for the adornment of the mind, as an equipment for the mind. That is shown as the supreme giving. The things mentioned earlier are also alms-givings, indeed. But they are mentioned as being of a lower level. What is mentioned at the very end is the supreme thing. Giving alms with the thought *cittālaṅkāraṁ cittaparikkhāraṁ dānaṁ deti* means giving alms hoping for some growth of one's mind. Not hoping for: "May I receive a hundred-thousandfold of what I give! May I receive heavenly bliss! Or may I receive a status socially!" Not out of fear of blame for breaking a custom—not such narrow purposes. What is the deepest meaning? When performing a meritorious deed, it is drawing one's mind closer to the Nibbāna; purifying the mind. That practice of purifying the mind is introduced as *cittālaṅkāraṁ cittaparikkhāraṁ*. The commentators explain those two words as serenity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Briefly considered, what is done through serenity is making the mind concentrated, calm, and gentle; making it soft and gentle.

In truth, there is a deep meaning in both those items. To explain practically what it means to give alms for the growth of the mind by looking at one's own mind: now, let us say we offer some object of alms to the Saṅgha. At the moment of giving, one can give according to the ways mentioned earlier. It could be due to one's attachment, due to hatred, as a custom during a time of blame, or due to various other reasons. But in truth, if we hope to reap its supreme benefit at the highest level, we must think in this way. This is an act that must be done with close attention in a meditative manner. "Through this, my mind becomes soft and gentle." How does it become soft and gentle? The occasion of giving alms is indeed an occasion where the mind of the giver becomes gentle, and the mind of the receiver also becomes gentle. When giving with compassion, kindness, and loving-kindness, the mind becomes gentle. When giving with faith (*saddhā*), the mind not only becomes soft, but also becomes pure. At the moment of giving with faith, through special meditative ways like recollections of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), Dhamma (*dhammānussati*), and Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*), the mind is purified in relation to serenity meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*).

Next, "insight-oriented" (*vipassanā-maya*) means that at the moment of giving, one's mind abandons greed regarding that object, at least temporarily (*tadaṅga-pahāna*); a

mind of non-greed (*alobha*) arises. Next, one is freed from hatred; it is called non-hatred (*adosa*). One is freed from delusion (*amoha*); freed from the feeling of "I" and "mine". When giving it, one does not ask for it back saying "it is mine" again. At that moment, one understands: "This is what The Buddha preached as not-self (*anattā*). The attachment that was there when I was holding onto this is no longer there, is it? I am now freed from that, am I not?" Through that, one deeply understands. If the Nibbāna is indeed the destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion, then if one can say: "Even for one brief moment, I saw Nibbāna through this alms-giving, I saw Nibbāna through this gift," then that is the supreme gift. That is *cittālaṅkāraṁ cittaparikkhāraṁ*. If one could take a picture of that mind, it would be a very beautiful picture. The mind is very calm, soft, and gentle. Also, it has a nature of deeply seeing through, in terms of the impermanent (*anicca*) and the not-self (*anattā*). So, when making an offering of alms—you all might be giving alms frequently in your daily lives—if you give alms indeed by thinking deeply in this way, even from a small thing without much else, you can reap a great benefit. You know there are big businessmen who gather immense wealth sometimes from a small thing. It is said that an ancient *seṭṭhi* obtained the position of a banker from a dead mouse. Similarly, we must be wise to turn even a small meritorious deed we perform into a great treasure of merit that leads to this world, to the next world, and finally to the Nibbāna.

We spoke about the ten meritorious actions shown by The Buddha. But more famously, there are three mountains of merit: giving (*dāna*), moral virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*)—meritorious actions of giving, meritorious actions of moral virtue, and meritorious actions of meditation. Briefly considered, giving, moral virtue, and meditation are all meritorious deeds. If so, you know that moral virtue is nobler than giving. Why is moral virtue nobler? Giving is an external object. Moral virtue means disciplining one's body and speech. It comes closer to oneself; it gets closer to one's mind. Body and speech do not discipline themselves. One must apply the mind to discipline them. Next, directly focusing attention on that mind and developing the mind is what is called meditation (*bhāvanā*).

Thus, dear devotees, all of these are known by the name of merit. Higher than the meritorious deed of giving is the meritorious deed of moral virtue—disciplining body and speech. Even higher than that is the meritorious deed of meditation. Whether because there were people who feared merit in the past just as in the present, we do not know, but on one occasion The Buddha declared how noble meritorious action is, like this: "Do not fear merits, monks." *Mā, bhikkhave, puññānaṁ bhāyittha. Sukhassetaṁ, bhikkhave, adhivacanaṁ... yadidaṁ puññāni.* "Monks, 'merits' is a designation for happiness, which is extremely pleasant, beloved, and agreeable." In this way, after making a great praise of merit, The Buddha says: "Why do I say so? I know that I have experienced the great benefits of merits performed by me in saṁsāra over a long period. It is direct experience to me. That is why I say so," and he gives an illustration for that:

"Monks, at one time in saṁsāra, for seven years, I developed loving-kindness as a liberation of mind (*mettā cetovimutti*) spreading equal friendliness towards everyone,

completely throughout the entire universe, for seven years." That means he performed the highest level of meditative merit. Through meditation, he developed the mind up to those noble, high absorptions (*jhāna*) called the liberation of mind through loving-kindness. He says: "As its benefit, I obtained such and such things." Next, he declares: "For seven aeons of world-contraction and world-expansion, I lived in the Brahma worlds. Next, likewise in the heavenly worlds, as a wheel-turning monarch (*cakkavatti*), as various regional kings, etc., for a long time I received such a mass of resources, and when I reflected on them, I knew: 'These have arisen for me due to such and such meritorious deeds.' When considering all of these broadly, they were indeed the benefits of *dānassa damassa saññamassa*—giving (*dāna*), self-taming (*dama*) which is moral virtue, and self-control (*sañyama*) which is restraining the mind. It is the benefits of these virtues that I experienced to such an extent." In this way, The Buddha spoke about merits. From that too, it is apparent to us that if we confuse matters and, bringing forward the deep things of this Dhamma, neglect what should be done in this world, at this moment, we will fall into negligence (*pamāda*).

The Buddha always points out to us the value of this human existence (*manussa-attabhāva*), especially during the period when a Buddha arises. Some of those in the heavenly worlds leave those heavenly pleasures, pass away, and come to the human world. Because it is during the period when a Buddha arises that one can accumulate merits. Sometimes, remaining in the heavenly worlds, one can only enjoy pleasures. If one wants to earn merit, one must come to the human world during the period when a Buddha arises. Just as those ten bases of meritorious action were present in that banker's mansion, one can accumulate those treasures of merit during the period when a Buddha arises. They become follower-treasures (*anugāmika-nidhāna*) that cannot be destroyed by the mentioned dangers of water, fire, kings, etc. Also, if one has certain resolves and aspirations, one can perform merits placing those aspirations at the forefront, so that they are drawn towards them and fulfilled.

Therefore, when making merit, you should bear in mind not to give alms with low purposes, as described in the eight points. It is not suitable to give because of a special attachment to someone. Removing such occasions as giving out of hatred, out of fear of blame, or out of delusion, one must always prepare the mind and act. Indeed, through that we can see that a person with a meditative mind (*bhāvanāmaya-manasa*) can reap a massive heap of merit even from a small thing. Within that meditative mind, there is faith (*saddhā*), there is wisdom (*paññā*), there is mindfulness (*sati*), and there is clear comprehension (*sampajañña*). A person possessing such can give alms with a joyful mind in three stages, as described in the Dhamma. You have often heard about giving alms with a joyful mind in three stages: *Pubbeva dānā sumano, dadaṁ cittaṁ pasādaye; datvā attamano hoti...* "Before giving, one is glad; while giving, one purifies the mind; having given, one is gratified." So, even before giving, with a good joy, without any hesitation, one can create a great joy as the prior volition (*pūrva-cetanā*) from the very moment one intended the meritorious deed. At the moment of giving, if one performs that act with mindfulness and clear comprehension, with faith and wisdom, a great clarity and joy arises in that person's mind. Next, after performing it, without any

remorse, one can be happy for the rest of one's life thinking: "I have done a valuable thing." That is what was declared in that verse: *Puññaṁ me katan'ti nandati*—"He rejoices with the thought, 'Merit has been made by me.'" Even that thought, "I have made merit," is a matter for one to rejoice over.

Perhaps that is why the daughter Sumana declared just before passing away that she was not afraid of death. Reflecting on the life she had spent, there was no remorse to such an extent. Because she knew precisely that she would go to a good place after death, she spoke fearlessly in that manner. Generally, when looking at this as a mere story, there is nothing major here. There are stories much more interesting than this in short stories, novels, etc., but there is nothing of value to be taken from them. But this small story—it can be further analyzed to see: for whom is this Dhamma preached by The Buddha? It is not for those few self-proclaimed scholars mentioned. It is for everyone swept away by the flood of this saṁsāra, to go towards the Nibbāna gradually, step-by-step, through this Middle Path. If we make an effort, the things necessary for it are within us; they are with us. The only shortcoming is not knowing that they are there. So, what we must do is prepare them and arrange them in proper order. Then, according to the Dhamma preached by The Buddha we can cross over this saṁsāra with the help of both those types of Right View. Through that ten-point Right View, which is called *sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā* and which we generally describe as being of a lower level, one realizes that if one has performed a kamma, when the result of that kamma comes, one cannot escape saying, "This is not me, I don't know."

In truth, sometimes even in this life, when one receives a result identical to the evil kamma one performed, one feels in one's heart, "Ah, this is indeed what has given fruit to me," even if one does not tell others. Regarding the next world, it can be known from one possessing direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), or else these days through various modern methods like hypnosis, etc. Just as those possessing direct knowledge in the past did, Buddhas clearly pointed out, "This happened because of such and such past kamma." It is like that. Therefore, that responsibility cannot be rejected. If one is responsible for kamma, one is responsible for the result too. For that reason, we must not make the word *atta* in this *Atta Vagga* a logical argument like those of other religions, and make the mistake of saying, "Even though The Buddha preached the not-self (*anattā*), look, there is a soul here." In short, when a kamma is mentioned, there is a personal aspect there. It becomes a kamma that gives a result because it arises out of ignorance. In the Dhamma, the term for this is Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arise due to ignorance.

So, we must accept that. Starting from there, through the Middle Path, making that merit a supreme merit, making that wholesome action a supreme wholesome action, we gradually develop the Noble Eightfold Path in a meditative manner, and we develop it so that those factors—Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration, which were purified individually one by one—arise rapidly in one mind, in a single moment. What is called *lokuttarā maggāṅgā* is the arising of all those eight in a single mind for a moment

as path-concentration (*magga-samādhi*). It is by that path-concentration that one breaks the levels of saṁsāric defilements, is freed from the four lower realms, is freed from the entire becoming (*bhava*), and is granted liberation through the noble, deathless Nibbāna. Behold, according to that we can understand that this word "kamma" is not an ordinary, small, narrow word. This is a word we can present meaningfully all the way up to seeing the Nibbāna.

We must bring these points presented by this short verse close to our lives. Today, you all have also undertaken a valuable moral virtue (*sīla*). You perform meritorious deeds such as giving alms according to your capacity daily. Next, you must be particularly keen regarding the meditative merit. Ancient poets have said that the noblest of all merits is the merit of meditation. The supreme merit among merits is the merit of meditation. As The Buddha declared, the merit of meditation provides even heavenly and Brahma pleasures for a long time in becoming (*bhava*). But it is not becoming (*bhava*) that should be aspired to. Even if those are natural results, in the end, as an inevitable result of developing that mind, when those levels of defilements are removed, it is through that light of wisdom that one can realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the path and fruit of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and Arahantship.

Today, you have completed moral virtue (*sīla*) at various levels through the eight precepts, etc. You have engaged in meditation to some extent. Next, at this moment too, we believe you have received the strength to generate within your minds those qualities of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) which assist towards the Nibbāna as faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*). With the help of all those accumulations of wholesome deeds (*kusala-sambhāra*), associating with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), engaging diligently in Dhamma and meditation, reaping the highest fruit that should be taken from this period when a Buddha arises as quickly as possible—and unless there is a special aspiration or *praṇidhi* for Buddhahood, etc.—may you, according to your aspiration, escape from the four lower realms as quickly as possible through the path and fruit of stream-entry, etc., and finally, through Arahantship, escaping from this great saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) consisting of birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and all other saṁsāric sufferings, realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna! May the merit of listening to this Dhamma be a supportive condition (*hetu-vāsanā*) for that! Make that aspiration.

Next, likewise, may all beings, including the guardian deities of the Dispensation, and whoever is there from Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including our departed relatives, rejoice in this accumulated mass of merit! May they rejoice in this wholesome deed of preaching and listening to the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, and having escaped from all saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) consisting of birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, etc., through whichever Bodhi (awakening) they have aspired to, may they be stilled in the noble, deathless Nibbāna! Make that aspiration and recite the verses in this manner:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #134

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.117)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Yo sāsanaṃ arahatānaṃ, ariyānaṃ dhammajīvinaṃ,

paṭikkosati dummedho, diṭṭhiṃ nissāya pāpikaṃ;

phalāni attaghaññāya, kambūva phalatattano ti.

From:

Dhammapada 164 (Attavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The true ultimate purpose of the Buddha's Dispensation is to direct the practitioner towards the Noble Path which culminates in Arahanthood. The Blessed One introduced whatever views that run contrary to this ultimate purpose as "evil views." He also pointed out the danger of presenting such views with the intention of fulfilling various selfish desires. With reference to the stanza selected as today's theme and its accompanying background story, we will be able to clarify this matter.

The Blessed One preached this Dhamma stanza while residing at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthi, in connection with a certain Elder named Kāla. A certain faithful female lay disciple (*upāsikā*) in Sāvatthi was constantly attending on this Elder Kāla, placing herself in the position of a mother. That is to say, she attended on him with great faith, just like a mother. This lay disciple's neighbors would frequently return after listening to the Blessed One's Dhamma and praise it, saying, "How wonderful are the Buddhas! How sweet is the preaching of the Blessed Ones!" Hearing this, that lay disciple also felt a desire to go and listen to the Dhamma from the Blessed One. When she mentioned this intention to Elder Kāla, the Elder said, "Do not go; do not go to listen to the Dhamma from the Blessed One." She asked for permission a second and a third time, but he still said no. The reason was that this Elder thought: "If this lay disciple goes to the Blessed One and listens to the Dhamma, the support and services I receive from her might diminish."

However, one day, having taken her meal early in the morning and undertaken the Uposatha precepts, this lay disciple told her daughter to attend to the monk well and provide him with alms when he arrived. She herself went to listen to the Dhamma from the Blessed One. Elder Kāla, having arrived at the house at the time of almsround and finished partaking of the meal, asked, "Where is the chief lay disciple?" When told that her mother had gone to listen to the Dhamma from the Blessed One, a great burning sensation, like jealousy, arose within this monk. He went immediately to the place where the Blessed One was preaching the Dhamma. There he saw the Blessed One preaching the Dhamma to that lay disciple. Approaching, he said, "Revered Sir, this lay disciple cannot understand very deep Dhamma. Do not talk to her about things like the five aggregates. It is quite enough to speak on almsgiving and morality (*sīla*)." The Blessed One understood the intention of this monk.

Addressing that monk as a "foolish monk," the Blessed One said, "If someone, due to a wrong view, intends to attack the Dispensation in this manner, that person only brings about his own destruction," and he uttered that Dhamma stanza:

Yo sāsanaṃ arahatāṃ

ariyānaṃ dhammajīvinaṃ

paṭikkosati dummedho

diṭṭhiṃ nissāya pāpikaṃ

phalāni attaghaññāya phallati.

"Whosoever is a foolish person, who out of an evil view reviles the Dispensation of the Worthy Ones, the Noble Ones who live according to the Dhamma, prospers only for his own destruction, like the bamboo bearing fruit." The Blessed One declared that although such a person secures those endeavors, that very prosperity arises solely for his own destruction.

Here we can see that the reason this Elder developed a fear and jealousy regarding her listening to the Blessed One's sermon was due to a selfish view: if that lay disciple inclined toward the side of Nibbāna—toward that deep side—the support and service rendered to him would be lost. This stinginess is called *kula-macchariya* (clannish stinginess)—stinginess regarding families, stinginess regarding one's own supporting families. There are various types of stinginess.

On many occasions, the Blessed One clearly enjoined his style of teaching upon the Order of Monks (*Saṅgha*) in the same manner. Furthermore, the ultimate purpose is to direct the minds of those disciples, the listeners, progressively higher and higher towards increasingly subtle Dhamma, in the manner described as *uttaruttariṃ paṇītapaṇītaṃ* (higher and higher, more and more sublime). The Blessed One delivered an excellent discourse on this to Ven. Ānanda while residing at the Ghositārāma monastery in Kosambī. At that time, there was a monk named Udāyī. In fact, Udāyī was one of the

most unrestrained, immoral, and shameless monks in this Dispensation. Because of this monk Udāyī, the Blessed One even had to lay down many disciplinary rules (*Vinaya*). However, this monk Udāyī was very popular among the lay devotees—extremely popular.

So, one day, this Ven. Udāyī was preaching Dhamma to a large gathering of laypeople. Seeing this, Ven. Ānanda came and said to the Blessed One, "Revered Sir, the venerable Udāyī is preaching the Dhamma to a large gathering of laypeople." Without saying anything else about it, the Blessed One declared: "Ānanda, preaching the Dhamma to others is no easy task. It is a very difficult and demanding task. The person who preaches must first develop and establish five qualities within themselves. One must preach the Dhamma holding five factors in mind. First: the intention to give a gradual discourse (*anupubbikatha*). Intending to outline the points briefly first and explain them in detail later; delivering the Dhamma sermon as a gradual, step-by-step discourse; this is the first factor. Second factor: delivering the Dhamma sermon showing causes and examples according to the occasion. Third factor: preaching the Dhamma with a heart full of loving-kindness and compassion for the listeners. Fourth factor: delivering the sermon without expecting the four requisites, without expecting offerings and hospitality. Fifth factor: preaching the Dhamma without harming one's own virtues or the virtues of others. This is in brief."

To explain in detail, we have pointed out the gradual discourse to you, lay devotees, on previous occasions too. A series of words is mentioned in this Dhamma regarding the Blessed One's style of preaching: *dāna-kathaṃ, sīla-kathaṃ, sagga-kathaṃ, kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ, okāraṃ saṅkilesaṃ* (talk on giving, talk on morality, talk on heaven, the danger, degradation, and corruption of sensual pleasures). First, this gradual discourse begins with the talk on giving (*dāna-kathā*); saying that giving is a good practice, and morality (*sīla*) is a good practice. Next, that as their fruit, birth in heaven is obtained—*sagga-kathā* (talk on heaven); stories of those who received the blessings of being born in heaven. Then, He does not stop there. Again, as if falling from the sky, there comes *kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ* (the danger of sensual pleasures). Whether in this world or in the heavenly world, all sensuality is *Anicca* (Impermanent); hence, *kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ*—their dangerous aspect, their bad results, and *okāraṃ saṅkilesaṃ*. *Okāra* means baseness, the lowliness of defilements. These are pointed out. Even if one enjoys happiness in this world, the next world, or heaven by performing acts of charity and merit, one cannot be satisfied with that. Their dangers are such; the five-fold sensual pleasures are base things.

Next, if at any point the Blessed One perceives that the disciple's mind is fit to be directed towards the deep Dhamma, it is at that moment that the Blessed One declares the benefits of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). In that manner, the dangerous aspect of the five-fold sensual pleasures, their base aspect, their nature of producing defilements, and also the benefits of renunciation—the benefits of leaving the household life to ordain—are declared. If by that time the disciple's mind has matured well, at that very moment He delivers the sermon on the Four Noble Truths—*Dukkha* (Suffering), *samudaya*

(origin), *nirodha* (cessation), and *magga* (path)—which are discovered and introduced to the world by the Buddhas themselves. This is the sequence.

Therefore, what is expressed here is that when any member of the *Saṅgha* delivers a Dhamma sermon, they should keep these matters in mind and gradually direct the minds of the listeners towards Nibbāna. In the same way, one must show reasons and examples fittingly as relevant to the Dhamma talk. That is the second factor. You, lay devotees, can understand this easily. The third factor is that one must deliver the sermon with a strong compassion and kindness, having generated compassion and faith towards the listeners, thinking, "Oh, these people who are fallen in this *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Saṃsāra* must somehow be rescued."

The fourth factor is that it is improper to think, "Hearing this sermon, let them honor and attend on me well, let them bring me the four requisites." One does not preach the Dhamma expecting offerings and baskets of gifts. Next is the fifth factor. Why is it said "without harming one's own virtues or the virtues of others"? To harm one's own virtues is called *attukkaṃsana*—self-exaltation, praising oneself, showing oneself off as high, saying, "I am such-and-such a person, holding titles and honors, a degree holder," or "a person endowed with such-and-such virtuous qualities." One does not say such things in Dhamma sermons. Similarly, one does not disparage the virtues of others. One does not target others critically to diminish their virtues, nor destroy the qualities of the virtuous. It is meant there that one should preach the Dhamma keeping these factors firmly in mind.

Also on another occasion, the Blessed One introduced to the *Saṅgha* what impure Dhamma-preaching and pure Dhamma-preaching are. Indeed, the member of the *Saṅgha* whom the Blessed One praised the most in the entire Dispensation was the Great Elder Mahākassapa, the Arahant. Numerous discourses praising Ven. Mahākassapa are found in the Kassapa Saṃyutta. This too is one such occasion. Before praising the noble qualities of the Great Elder Mahākassapa, the Blessed One asked the monks this question: "What do you think, monks? The sermon of what kind of monk is pure?" Then the monks requested: "Revered Sir, we learn all this Dhamma from the Blessed One. The Blessed One is our refuge. We do not understand this. If the Blessed One himself explains this, we can bear it in mind accordingly."

Then the Blessed One analyzed it. The monk with impure Dhamma-preaching is described thus: "If a monk thinks: 'May these people listen to my Dhamma sermon and be pleased with it! Being pleased, let them make rich offerings and services to me in a manner fitting their pleasure!'—that Dhamma-preaching is impure." But another Dhamma-preacher thinks: "This Dhamma preached by the Blessed One is well-proclaimed, visible here-and-now, timeless, inviting one to come and see, onward-leading, to be personally realized by the wise." You, lay devotees, know this phrase of the qualities of the Dhamma. It is a Dhamma well-proclaimed, well-shown, and preached by the Blessed One. A Dhamma whose fruits can be seen in conformity with the practice; giving fruits without delay, immediately productive, endowed with the quality of "come

and see," possessing a great power that leads from one stage of practice to another, a Dhamma to be personally realized by the wise within their own minds.

Contemplating those qualities of the Dhamma, he then thinks: "Oh, may this audience listen to this well-proclaimed, visible here-and-now Dhamma of the Blessed One! Having heard it, may they understand it! Having understood it, may they practice accordingly!"—having absolutely no regard for gains and offerings, thinking, "May they practice!"—recollecting this sublime nature of the Dhamma, this supreme quality of the Dhamma, and bringing forth compassion, kindness, and sympathy for the listeners, he preaches the Dhamma. The Blessed One pointed out such a preacher and the Dhamma sermons of such a monk as pure Dhamma-preaching.

Furthermore, there are other discourses relevant to this theme, also in that section called the Kassapa Saṃyutta. In the end, the Blessed One points out: "Kassapa preaches such pure Dhamma sermons." The sermon was aimed at that. He says, "Kassapa, it is in this manner that the Dhamma should be preached." Next, in another discourse, He asks the monks: "Monks, what kind of monk is suitable to approach lay households, to go to lay households?" We might think that anyone is fit to go. "But what kind of monk is suitable to go to lay households?" There too, the monks said, "Revered Sir, we listen to this Dhamma from the Blessed One. We do not understand this. If the Blessed One himself explains it, we shall bear it in mind."

What did the Blessed One do first on that occasion? He waved his palm in the air. Waving his palm in the air, He said, to give a small simile: "Monks, just as this palm does not stick to the air, is not caught anywhere in the air, and is not bound to it, in the same way, if a monk's mind does not stick to lay households, is not caught by lay households, and does not linger there while on morning almsround, then such a monk is suitable to go to lay households." It is also mentioned that this monk thinks in this way: "May those who should receive gains receive them! May those who wish to perform meritorious deeds perform them!" He is as happy about the gains received by another monk as he is about the gains received by himself. He does not think, "May he go before me and get this, it should come only to me." He does not think thus. "Such a monk is fit to approach lay households for alms. Kassapa is like that," the Blessed One said next.

In another discourse, it is mentioned: "Monks, what kind of monk becomes an intimate of families (*kulūpaga*)? Or what kind of monk is fit to approach families, and what kind of monk is unfit?" The meaning of the word *kulūpaga* is that, just like the Elder Kāla mentioned here, some monks in the past used to visit certain faithful households frequently. There was a custom of going to those places and partaking of meals. The idea there too is approaching a family. That means going to a lay house. Who is fit to be such a monk? There too, the monks said in the same way, "We do not understand. May the Blessed One explain." Thereupon, the Blessed One pointed out five factors on that occasion as well.

"If a monk, while going for alms, thinks: 'They must give me this alms-food; they cannot avoid giving it. And when they give, they must give in abundance; they cannot give just a

little. Furthermore, what they give must be delicious, sweet, and choice food; they cannot just give coarse food haphazardly. Then, when they give, they must give it quickly; they cannot delay. And also, they must give with great respect, hospitality, and honor, in a well-prepared manner; they cannot give without hospitality and honor.'"

Now, the Blessed One declares that the monk who goes with such thoughts, who goes planning his almsround in this way, does not receive alms-food from a certain house. Thereupon, he falls into *Dukkha* (Suffering), dejection, and distress of mind. Even if they do give, if they give only a little, or if they give food that is not choice, or if they give with such shortcomings, this monk's mind becomes upset. Therefore, a true intimate of families is like this: without such thoughts and plans, he reflects, "How can this be? In other families, how can one receive things exactly as one wishes?" and keeping his mind balanced, he goes with an equanimous heart. "How can one expect such things from other families, like 'they must definitely give, they must give in abundance, they must give delicious food, they must prepare it well'? How can one think in this way?" When he goes with such an equanimous mind, it is all the same to him however he receives it.

Thus, contentment with whatever is received (*yathālābha-santuṭṭhi*) is shown there. In other places, this is illustrated with a simile: one goes to a tree expecting fruits. Going there, one looks at the fruits with equanimity. It is just the same when going to a lay house. Whether one receives or does not receive, if there is something, let it be received. The Blessed One declared that a true intimate of families is like that.

What is mentioned here is the issue of material things (*āmisa*). There are indeed many other discourses related to this that the Blessed One delivered in an extremely powerful manner. In numerous discourses, the Blessed One has preached using an amazingly powerful collection of words regarding the nature of gains, offerings, fame, praise, honor, and respect: "*Dāruṇo, bhikkhave, lābhasakkārasiloko kaṭuko pharuso antarāyiko.*" Declaring that gains, offerings, fame, and praise are extremely dreadful, bitter, harsh, and hazardous to Nibbāna, He then presents several similes. One is the simile of the fisherman. Just as an angler, a fisherman, having fixed a bait, casts his hook into a pond or lake; a fish that keeps its eye on the bait swims up and swallows it. As soon as it swallows it, the fisherman gets the opportunity to pull the fish out and kill it as he pleases. In the same way—how is the simile completed? The fisherman is Māra. The bait is gains, offerings, fame, praise, and honor. The disaster resulting from this is shown there. Having spoken in that manner, He concludes by saying, "Monks, gains, offerings, and fame are dreadful, bitter, and harsh like this."

In the very next discourse, He gives a similar simile: a long-haired she-goat enters a thorny thicket. Having entered, she gets stuck here and there in the thorny thicket, gets bound to it, and is caught by it. In the same way, a certain monk, having robed himself in the morning, goes on almsround without any restraint. He goes and gets stuck, bound, and caught in those households, because of gains, offerings, fame, and praise. There too, the simile was given to show the danger of gains and offerings.

There is another simile of the Blessed One of this nature: what happens when a strong man binds someone's calf with a horsehair rope and pulls it, is described thus: above one's skin is the epidermis! It cuts through the epidermis and cuts the skin; having cut the skin, it cuts the flesh; having cut the flesh, it cuts the tendons; having cut the tendons, it cuts the bone; and having cut the bone, it strikes against the bone marrow. This simile shows that offerings, fame, praise, and honor destroy one’s spiritual virtues in the very same manner.

On another occasion, there is mention of Ven. Devadatta, who was led astray by gains and offerings in this Dispensation and, because of developing jealousy towards the Blessed One, met with a great destruction, finally plunging into hell as the earth split open. Ven. Devadatta tried to wrest the leadership of the *Saṅgha* from the Blessed One and even made attempts on His life. Failing in this, he finally requested the Blessed One to hand over the Dispensation of the *Saṅgha* to him, saying: "Now the Blessed One is aged. Hand this over to me now." After the Blessed One dismissed him, he then started a separate dispensation. At the same time, using the psychic powers he possessed back then, he won over Prince Ajātasattu and gained various gains and offerings. On that occasion, the Blessed One uttered several similes close to the one mentioned in today’s stanza. When the monks came and said, "Lo, Prince Ajātasattu is now sending alms and offerings to Ven. Devadatta on a large scale," the Blessed One gave several similes, which you, lay devotees, might have heard: "This prosperity Devadatta has received is solely for his own ruin, solely for his own destruction." It is stated in that stanza:

Phalaṃ ve kadaliṃ hanati,

phalaṃ veḷuṃ phalaṃ naḷaṃ;

sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanati,

gabbho assatariṃ yathā.

That stanza shows four similes. *Phalaṃ ve kadaliṃ hanati*: the banana tree bears fruit only for its own destruction. *Phalaṃ veḷuṃ*: in the same way, the bamboo tree bears fruit only for its own destruction. *Phalaṃ naḷaṃ*: *naḷa* refers to the reed, which is also like that; once it blossoms, it dies. And *sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanati*: similarly, gains and offerings destroy a wicked person. The fourth and final simile given is: *gabbho assatariṃ yathā*. *Assatarī* means the she-mule. When the she-mule conceives, she dies in giving birth to the offspring. What is shown by these four similes is that the prosperity indicated by gains and offerings actually leads solely to that person's own destruction. Thus, the Blessed One showed the danger of gains and offerings in various ways through similes as a lesson for the future; as a warning for the future Dispensation of the Buddha. Otherwise, one might wonder what the point of repeating this is. It was done with a specific, meaningful purpose.

Furthermore, on another occasion, He actually gives many more similes. To mention one of them, the Blessed One declares: "Sometimes, when I look at a certain monk's mind, I

see that this monk would not tell a deliberate lie even for a golden bowl filled with silver powder. Yet, later on, that very same monk, overcome by gains, offerings, and fame, tells lies for their sake." He further mentions: "I see another monk who would not tell a lie even for the sake of his mother, his father, or the most beautiful girl of the land. Yet, later on, overcome by those gains, offerings, and fame, that very same monk knowingly tells lies."

On another occasion, the Blessed One declares: "Monks, I see some people whose minds are overcome by gains and offerings going to hell, like Devadatta, who, overcome by them, committed various sins and developed jealousy. Another person goes to hell due to the lack of gains and offerings. Why? Because, lacking gains and offerings, they are tempted into sinful deeds and wrong ways. Yet another is seen to be ruined by receiving gains and offerings, and also ruined by not receiving them." Consider how, due to this issue of gains and offerings, a certain monk destroys his virtues by turning to wrong livelihood and incorrect ways of living. While receiving them, if he has desire for them, and when not receiving them, if he does not bring his mind to a state of balance, equanimity, and contentment with little, then he is also ruined.

While the Blessed One declared these in various ways, He always pointed out the Great Elder Mahākassapa, the Arahant, as the most valuable member of the *Saṅgha* as an exemplar for the monks in this regard. Indeed, even though the two chief disciples were present, considering the future of the Dispensation of practice, the Blessed One specially praised Ven. Mahākassapa. This was not out of partiality, but considering the aspect of virtue, because Ven. Mahākassapa was the foremost keeper of the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*), a wonderfully exemplary character. That is why He delivered those discourses as praise, in order to remind the monks of that exemplar. We must understand that these four requisites are indeed indispensable to a member of the *Saṅgha*. They are called the "four requisites" precisely because they support life. Since they help to sustain a life, just like for anyone else, the Blessed One has shown how to utilize these four requisites.

You, lay devotees, have heard of the fourfold purified morality (*catupārisuddhi-sīla*) belonging to the *Saṅgha*. *Pātimokkha-saṃvara-sīla* is that connected with disciplinary rules. Next, there is restraint of the senses (*indriya-saṃvara-sīla*) regarding guarding the faculties. Next, there is purity of livelihood (*ājīva-pārisuddhi-sīla*) regarding how to obtain the four requisites without resorting to wrong livelihoods. Next, there is morality connected with the requisites (*paccayasannissita-sīla*), which means reflecting upon and wisely considering the obtained requisites, consuming them with their true meaning in mind. This is shown as a separate meditation.

It is heard that even you, lay devotees, partake of your food after reflecting upon it. This is a very good virtue. Because one did not ordain for the sake of these four requisites. The mind is impressed with the thought that these must be used merely as an aid to the supreme liberation from *Saṃsāra*, to cross over the wilderness of *Saṃsāra*. Likewise, through the reflection on the four requisites, the mind is detached from greed towards them. To remove greed for the four requisites, they are reflected upon in terms of

elements; they are wisely considered. Moreover, their true meaning, their ultimate purpose—which is merely to sustain this body—is contained in those very texts of reflection.

This restraint regarding the four requisites is known as "restraint by wisdom" (*ñāṇa-saṃvara*). Unlike the Niganṭhas (Jains), one cannot live without food or clothing. These are necessary. But only to sustain life at a level of fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*). Regarding food, it is shown that it is used for sustenance, for survival, and to gain the strength necessary for this body to fulfill spiritual virtues. The other things are also like that. Being content with a minimal level is what is shown as restraint by wisdom. Because one consumes those four requisites reflecting wisely. By consuming them while reflecting wisely in this way, one is able to escape from those dreadful, dangerous, bitter, and harsh dangers (*ādīnava*) of gains and offerings mentioned earlier. This is called "the wisdom of seeing the danger and of escape" (*ādīnavadassāvī-nissaraṇa-paññā*). While seeing the danger in being attached to them, one constantly brings to mind that these are used for the escape from *Bhava* (Becoming), for crossing over *Saṃsāra*.

There is indeed a discourse that shows this very point briefly but in a deeply moving way, called the Ariyavaṃsa Sutta. It is a very short discourse; there are no long stories in it. The Blessed One points out to the monks and to the world that from the ancient past, there are four practices to be regarded as the noble lineage (*ariyavaṃsa*), which have not been despised, reviled, or discarded by wise ascetics and brahmins, but are accepted, valuable, and supreme.

This Ariyavaṃsa Sutta discourse—so valuable was it that it is recorded that during times when the Buddha's Dispensation flourished in this country, sermons on this Ariyavaṃsa Sutta were sometimes held throughout the entire night. It is recorded that even kings went to listen to that sermon. At that time, royal patronage was given to such valuable discourses that helped to develop the practice of the *Saṅgha*. What is said in this discourse? The three requisites—robes (*cīvara*), alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), and lodging (*senāsana*)—are mentioned here. And fourthly, meditation is mentioned.

The first factor: a certain monk is content with whatever robe is received. The word *itarītara* (whatever is available) is used. *Itarītara* means the robe might be coarse, it might be fine—with any robe, whether coarse or fine. Sometimes it might be a rag-robe (*paṃsukūla-cīvara*); as you know, in the past Ven. Mahākassapa, the Arahant, collected scraps of cloth discarded in rubbish heaps on the road to make his robes. You have heard of rag-robes; they are the most minimal things that can be used with fewness of wishes.

In that way, with whatever is received—the words "or with that if there is no other" are used—he is content with a robe, whether coarse or fine, good or bad, high or low. This is also called contentment with whatever is received (*yathālābha-santuṭṭhi*); he is content with whatever robe is obtained. He also praises this quality of contentment. He recommends it to others, saying it is a good virtue. Furthermore, he does not employ wrong methods, improper methods, or methods contrary to discipline to obtain that

robe. Next, he does not get distressed or dejected because a robe was not received. After receiving it, he does not increase defilements through greed and attachment towards it.

Similarly, pointing to the practice he maintains, he does not praise himself or disparage others. Moreover, he acts very skillfully and untiringly in maintaining that practice. In this way, a host of virtues is mentioned. Such a monk is described as one established in the noble lineage. In that manner, what was first declared was the proper practice of contentment regarding robes, as a valuable ancient practice to be undertaken by ascetics and brahmins, regarded as supreme in the noble lineage.

It is exactly the same with regard to alms-food mentioned next. In that too, the quality of being content with what is received is praised in the same way. Not resorting to improper, unsuitable, or unlawful means and livelihoods to obtain alms-food. Furthermore, if by some chance alms-food is missed due to not receiving it, he does not corrupt his mind by abusing the donors. He prepares his mind, thinking, "Even the Blessed One did not receive alms-food for three months (during the famine at Verañjā)." Next, even when receiving it, he partakes of it with the reflection on the four requisites, without generating greed for it, and without getting attached and immersed in it. Next, he does not go about proclaiming to the world that he maintains this practice, nor does he revile those who do not do so. Then, he acts untiringly, wisely, and with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) regarding the practice he maintains. This group of virtues concerns alms-food.

It is just the same with regard to lodging (*senāsana*). We can understand that medicine, requisites for the sick, is perhaps not mentioned because it is needed in a manner suitable for illness; otherwise, it could also be included by connecting it to alms-food.

Fourthly, a special matter is shown here. We usually expect it to be about the four requisites. But having mentioned only three here, a different special matter is shown fourthly. It is mentioned there in connection with a certain monk: the two words *bhāvanārāmo hoti pahānārāmo*. *Bhāvanārāma* means delighting in meditation. Delighting in meditation, and not in other things, is a good virtue. And *pahānārāma*. What is meant by *pahāna* (abandoning / removal)? Here it means the abandoning of defilements, the destruction of defilements. He finds delight in the abandoning of defilements. The nature of the world is not meditation; the world delights in a distracted mind—to distract the mind as much as possible and enjoy oneself. The true practitioner (*yogāvacara*) develops a love for meditation. The mind of the world is not about destroying defilements, but about growing defilements. But the practitioner is pleased to the extent that the defilements in his own mind are destroyed. That destruction is *pahānārāmatā* (delighting in abandoning).

Delighting in meditation (*bhāvanārāmatā*) and delighting in abandoning (*pahānārāmatā*) are shown as the fourth practice of the noble lineage. These two are shown together. Being devoted to meditation. Meditation means developing good qualities in the mind. Delighting in abandoning means removing the bad parts present in the mind. This is also what is contained in the fourfold effort known as Right Effort, or

sammappadhāna (supreme efforts). Understanding the good side and the bad side within oneself, one must give encouragement to the good side. One must allow the good side to grow. *Pahāna* (abandoning) means restraint. Next, there is safeguarding of meditation. One removes upcoming unwholesome thoughts by restraining them. One abandons the unwholesome states already present within oneself. Next, one develops certain things as meditation. That is what safeguarding means—protecting the signs of meditation developed through meditation. When shown as supreme efforts, it is shown as four. In that way, through the fourth factor—delighting in meditation and delighting in abandoning—the target of Nibbāna is shown to us.

The ultimate purpose of a member of the *Saṅgha*—of a practitioner—should be to develop valuable spiritual virtues that are not yet present within oneself. Next, to abandon the bad qualities, shortcomings, and defilements present within oneself. Then, the monk who develops a love for these two is shown as the valuable monk. What was just said is the summary of the Ariyavaṃsa Sutta discourse. So there is no big story here. There are no similes and so on. But when thinking about this Dispensation, there is an amazing thing. It is mentioned in our ancient books what the monks preached throughout the entire night regarding this short discourse, which is barely even two pages long.

Perhaps in this day and age, it is hard even to imagine. Unlike what is heard nowadays, there is nothing in this Ariyavaṃsa sermon that attracts the youth, nothing that agitates the mind, or leads towards paths of entertainment. Yet, it is recorded that even those kings went and listened to these throughout the entire night, and in the end, even great offerings were made to show the faith that arose within the kings. What was the reason? Royal patronage in those times was given to the true values of the Dispensation, not to hollow things. It is seen that sermons like the Ariyavaṃsa sermon, which show the practice of the monks and the essence of the Dispensation, were extremely popular in the past. Huge crowds were drawn to them. It is shown that huge crowds came not only in Anurādhapura, but even from distant provinces. Thus, through the popularity of the Ariyavaṃsa sermon, we can see that there was an understanding of the danger of gains, offerings, and praise as declared by the Blessed One, and also that the monks of the past respected that exemplary character of the Great Elder Mahākassapa, the Arahant.

From this, we can understand something more. Now, as expressed by these stanzas too, there were such members of the *Saṅgha* in the Buddha's time. It was by obtaining royal patronage that Ven. Devadatta finally met with decline. That is why, at a glance, a kind of prosperity was visible. Ven. Devadatta also established a separate dispensation and started on a very grand scale, but it is recorded that in the end, the earth split open and he went to hell. That is what was expressed in that stanza by *attaghaññāya phallati*. If someone, based on a wrong view, an evil view, attacks the values of this Dispensation of the Buddha, and if some prosperity arises for that monk, that prosperity is indeed for his own destruction—just like the banana tree bearing fruit, the bamboo bearing fruit, the reed bearing fruit, or the she-mule conceiving. That is the natural law (*dhammatā*) shown by the Blessed One on that occasion.

We too must understand these values of the Dispensation. The account concerning the gradual discourse is extremely important. The Blessed One shows that the disciple's mind is gradually led, starting with talks on giving, talks on morality, and so on; the benefits of the virtues at that level are shown through the talks on heaven. Birth in heaven can be obtained. But do not be satisfied with that. Because everything is *Anicca* (Impermanent), when viewed in terms of the Three Characteristics. Next, having obtained heavenly happiness, one might sometimes even go back to the plane of misery when the merit is exhausted. Similarly, having shown the baseness and the defilement-producing nature of the five-fold sensual pleasures, He then directs them towards renunciation (*nekkhamma*). Therefore, we have to understand that the Blessed One does not expect us to expand the world, but to cross over the world. To cross over this world. The Blessed One himself has declared:

Hīnaṃ dhammaṃ na seveyya, pamādena na saṃvase;

Micchādiṭṭhiṃ na seveyya, na siyā lokavaḍḍhano.

(Do not follow a low path; do not live in negligence; do not cultivate wrong views; do not be one who expands the world.)

This means that, as the world generally follows very low wrong views, do not go to follow such base views. Likewise, do not live falling into negligence (*pamāda*). *Micchādiṭṭhiṃ na seveyya*—do not associate with wrong views. Do not become one who expands the world. What is meant by "expanding the world"? What was done all this time was expanding *Saṃsāra*—the expansion of the world. That means expanding the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Saṃsāra*. But the world looks at this Dispensation in such a way that, in this day and age, even some members of the *Saṅgha* are afraid of directing certain groups towards the side of Nibbāna. Perhaps they are also thinking about the population problem, on one hand. In one way or another, they have developed an unfounded fear that this population will decrease. On that, we have pointed out a simile on a certain occasion.

If one thinks that patients in a certain hospital should be kept there forever in order to provide employment for the doctors and attendants working there, that would be a wrong point of view. The ultimate purpose of a hospital should be to cure the patients as quickly as possible and discharge them. It was exactly like that when the Blessed One looked at the world. This world is a crowd afflicted with a great illness—afflicted with the illness of *Saṃsāra*, the illness of defilements. Therefore, the Blessed One's ultimate purpose, through every possible effort, through whatever means or skillful device, was to bring out the past merit of these worldly beings and direct their minds towards meditation. Even the Blessed One cannot liberate anyone from *Saṃsāra* by force or carry them across. But the Blessed One possessed powers that no one else had—to see those karmic energies accumulated in the past within their minds and, helping them according to the occasion, giving them the proper meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) and the proper advice, to direct them towards Nibbāna.

That is what is meant by the Blessed One entering the attainment of Great Compassion (*mahākaruṇā-samāpatti*). To put it in modern terms, at that time in the morning, the Blessed One would see the patient most suitable to receive treatment from Him. He would see that if they did not receive treatment from Him, they might sink down in *Saṃsāra* again for a long time. It was to help at that time that the Blessed One surveyed the world with His knowledge of the attainment of Great Compassion, looking for the one fit to be helped on that day. By "helping," it meant escaping from *Saṃsāra*. Therefore, it is those of wrong views, like the brahmins, who think: "For the growth of this world, we must always keep our people restrained within the talk on giving and the talk on morality, like Kāla the Elder." If one thinks in that way, it is a wrong view, an evil view. The ultimate purpose of a Dhamma-preacher in this Dispensation should be, as we mentioned, *uttaruttariṃ paṇītapaṇītaṃ*—to direct that disciple higher and higher towards increasingly subtle Dhamma. It is not to keep them stagnant in one place. That is what is called the gradual discourse.

On certain occasions, we see from the events recorded in the Dhamma that people who have not heard even a single word of Dhamma, and who possess no education, arrive at the place where the Blessed One is preaching the Dhamma. Such was the Blessed One's style of preaching that sometimes the one who arrived was a destitute beggar. That beggar did not have anything even to give as charity. But what we have to understand is that, when He delivered the talk on giving, the beneficial aspect of giving must have impressed itself on that person's mind in a wonderful way. When He spoke on the benefits of morality—even if He did not formally administer precepts to him—he must have resolved on that morality. That is how we have to think.

As the mind was being prepared in that manner, that was when the Blessed One delivered the discourse on the Four Noble Truths. The most valuable Dhamma introduced to the world by the Buddhas themselves is indeed the Dhamma of the Truths: *Dukkha* (Suffering), *samudaya* (origin), *nirodha* (cessation), and *magga* (path). You, lay devotees, have heard how this Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) is described on countless occasions. Having mentioned *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decay), *vyādhi* (sickness), and so on, because it could not be completed with just that, the Blessed One declared in His analysis of the Truth of Suffering, *saṅkhittena*—"in brief." Why say "in brief"? Because one cannot cover it completely by listing at length "birth is suffering, decay is suffering, sickness is suffering," and so on. However, in this day and age, some people often show only that much. Even out of that, some do not even say that *Jāti* (Birth) is *Dukkha* (Suffering).

For us, a birthday is something so good that we celebrate it. The birth of a child in a home is regarded as a very great festive occasion. He is born crying. Yet, it is the parents who celebrate it greatly. But *Jāti* (Birth) itself is *Dukkha* (Suffering). The suffering of sickness—He does not end it by just saying all these. Because they cannot be fully described, the Blessed One declared: *saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā* (in brief, the five aggregates of grasping are suffering). This pile of form (*rūpa*), pile of *Vedanā* (Feeling), pile of perception (*saññā*), pile of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and

viññāṇa (consciousness)—this pile of thoughts—within all of these lies that nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering). Due to their very *aniccata* (impermanence / inconstancy), there is no lasting happiness in them. As said in *yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ* (what is impermanent is suffering), there is in them the nature of suffering, the nature of change (*vipariṇāma*). For that very reason, they cannot be taken as "me" or "mine". This is purely a set of five piles.

It is precisely because of *Upādāna* (Grasping), because of this heavy burden, that this exists as *Dukkha* (Suffering) for us. The more one lets go, the more peace is felt through this lightness. That letting go does not mean grabbing with the hand and throwing away. It is something to be achieved by seeing their danger (*ādīnava*) through wisdom. That is what was meant by the benefits of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). Along with disillusionment with *Saṃsāra* comes the desire to destroy *Taṇhā* (Craving)—the desire arising for departing, escaping, and letting go of these. That is what was called *pahānārāma* (delighting in abandoning).

If at any moment, having wisely seen the *Anicca* (Impermanent) and *Anattā* (Not-self) nature of these five aggregates which were hitherto held as "me" and "mine", they are let go—that very moment is shown as the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*) and so on. Therefore, personally realizing that in this very life is what is called Nibbāna. Because that realization is a peaceful and sublime experience, it is called the supreme happiness. It is not a matter of going to a strange world, to some strange place like a strange heaven. Even if described by a strange term like "that noble element of Nibbāna" (*nibbāna-dhātu*), which was realized in this very world by the Blessed One, by the great monks of the past, and by the monks of recent times—what is meant there is the bliss of stilling in the mind when ignorance and *Taṇhā* (Craving) are destroyed. It is not the bliss of *Vedanā* (Feeling), but the bliss of stilling. This, then, should be our ultimate purpose.

Therefore, the ultimate purpose of every Dhamma-preacher, wherever they begin—whether with the talk on giving or the talk on morality—should be to conclude by directing the listeners towards the discourse on the Four Noble Truths, which is the message we receive only from a Buddha. By directing them towards the Noble Eightfold Path through that, the ultimate purpose of every preacher should be to provide them with the opportunity to personally realize the end of this *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Saṃsāra* by applying their own energy to achieve the path, fruit, and penetration (*magga-phala-paṭivedha*) of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and Arahanthood.

Therefore, you, lay devotees, should also consider that, as we have declared on many occasions, even almsgiving should be done—as said in *cittālaṅkāraṃ dānaṃ deti* (one gives alms for the adornment of the mind)—with the intention of guarding the mind, of adorning the mind for the development of serenity and insight (*samatha-vipassanā*). Not for the sake of heavenly happiness. Similarly, morality (*sīla*) too should be maintained not with an external idea of protecting these virtues in society, but with the idea of providing a foundation for one's concentration (*samādhi*), thus keeping Nibbāna as the objective. Then, if we consider both giving and morality according to that gradual discourse mentioned earlier, they must be used as aids to Nibbāna.

Today, this pious gathering performed those meritorious deeds of giving, morality, and so on. Maintaining morality, developing meditation—doing all these as special practices on this Poya day, to practice with greater effort at least on such an occasion what cannot be done in daily lay life, is what we expect through a Poya day program. Therefore, we believe that you, lay devotees, have today accumulated factors that help to develop what are shown as faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*)—namely, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—which help to bring your lives closer to Nibbāna. This Dhamma sermon should also be used for that very purpose.

With the aid of the accumulation of merit gathered so far through the blessings of listening to this Dhamma, and with all of that, may this power of merit be a cause and support for you, lay devotees, to remove whatever obstructive states (*antarāyika-dhamma*) there may be to your Nibbāna, to acquire supportive states, to quickly secure the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), to escape from all *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Saṃsāra* such as *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, and so on, and to realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! May you make this aspiration. Similarly, may whatever living beings there may be, from the Avīci hell up to the Akanittha heaven, including your own departed relatives, rejoice in this merit of preaching and listening to the Dhamma on this occasion; and through that rejoicing, may they too obtain the help of noble friends, quickly bring an end to the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Saṃsāra* such as *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, and so on, and be appeased by the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! With this aspiration, recite these stanzas.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #135

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.139)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Pucchāmi muniṃ pahūtapaññaṃ, buddhaṃ dhammassāmiṃ vītataṇhaṃ;

dvipaduttamaṃ sārathīnaṃ pavaraṃ, kati loke samaṇā, tadingha brūhi ti.

Caturo samaṇā, na pañcam' atthi, te te āvikaromi sakkhipuṭṭho;

maggajino, maggadesako ca, magge jīvati, yo ca maggadūsī ti.

From:

Sutta Nipāta (Cundasutta)

Dear Listeners,

During the Buddha's time, the word '*Samaṇa*' (ascetic/monk) was used in society as a common term to refer to the Buddha, his disciples, and ordained followers of other sects. The Buddha constantly endeavored to give this word '*Samaṇa*' a meaning that was in alignment with the Dispensation (*Sāsanānulomika*). The invitation made in the two verses we have taken as our theme today is precisely such a request—an invitation for such an analytical definition.

As mentioned in the *Cunda Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, it was Cunda the smith (*Cunda Kammāraputta*) who made this invitation to define the term *Samaṇa*. You may have heard of this lay disciple, Cunda the smith, as the donor who offered the last alms-food to the Buddha before his *Parinibbāna* (final passing away). When the Buddha was traveling towards Kusinārā for his final passing away, he arrived at the city of Pāvā, accompanied by a large community of monks, and resided in the mango grove belonging to Cunda the smith. Hearing that the Blessed One had arrived at his mango grove, Cunda the smith went to pay homage to him, and the Blessed One encouraged and inspired him with a Dhamma talk. This Cunda the smith was already a devoted lay disciple who had

previously met the Buddha, gained clarity through a Dhamma talk, and become a follower. Thus, with deep faith, Cunda the smith invited the Buddha and the Sangha to his home for the following day's alms-meal. The Blessed One accepted the invitation in silence.

The next day, Cunda the smith returned home and prepared exquisite food and drink. Along with this, it is mentioned that he prepared a substantial amount of *sūkara-maddava*. This term *sūkara-maddava* is a highly debated word in the history of the Dispensation. Although we will not analyze it at length here, we must note that the Commentaries offer three different meanings. The first meaning given is the tender flesh of a boar. The second meaning is a soft rice dish prepared with the five products of the cow—namely, milk, curd, ghee, etc. The third meaning is a certain medicinal preparation known in alchemy by the name *sūkara-maddava*. In any case, let us use the term *sūkara-maddava* for this occasion. Having prepared this *sūkara-maddava* along with various other foods, Cunda the smith announced to the Blessed One that the meal was ready, and the Blessed One arrived there with the community of monks. As soon as he sat down, the Blessed One addressed Cunda the smith: "Cunda, serve me with whatever *sūkara-maddava* you have prepared, and serve the rest of the food to the community of monks."

The intention was that this *sūkara-maddava* should not be given to the other monks. Saying "Yes, Venerable Sir," Cunda served the alms-meal to the Buddha and the Sangha accordingly. After the meal, the Blessed One addressed Cunda and said: "Cunda, if there is any remaining *sūkara-maddava*, dig a pit and bury it in the ground. I do not see anyone in this world, with its devas, māras, and brahmas, who can digest this food if eaten, other than the Tathāgata." Thus he made a special declaration. Cunda then buried the remaining portion as instructed. Next, according to the details in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, we see that after partaking of that food, a severe illness called *lohita-pakkhandikā*—an illness involving the purging of blood—befell the Blessed One. We must remember that prior to this, while the Blessed One was on his final journey, a grave illness had also arisen at the village of Beluva, and Venerable Ānanda was deeply grieved, fearing that the Blessed One would pass away. However, through the power of his determination, the Blessed One suppressed that illness with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) and energy, determining his life-preparations / Preparations (*jīvita-saṅkhāra*). Therefore, we should understand that it was this suppressed illness that re-emerged here. In any case, this purging occurred. Yet, the Blessed One said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, let us go to Kusinārā," and they set out for Kusinārā.

Now, the incident related to the two verses we have taken as our theme today actually took place at Cunda's alms-hall. But let us return to the alms-hall later. Let us walk a little way behind the Blessed One, because on the way, the Blessed One made certain statements regarding this *sūkara-maddava*. On this occasion, it is mentioned in the narratives that along with the Blessed One, Venerable Ānanda and another monk named Venerable Cundaka went as attendants. The long journey from Pāvā to Kusinārā with the community of monks is not a distance to be taken lightly. Yet, he made the journey. As

they drew near to Kusinārā, they approached a river named Kakutthā. By the time they reached it, the Blessed One was extremely ill. Stepping aside, he went to the foot of a tree and said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, I am very tired. Fold my outer robe in four and spread it out." Then, sitting there, the Blessed One said: "Ānanda, I am thirsty. Bring me some water." Venerable Ānanda replied: "Venerable Sir, five hundred carts have just crossed and made the stream muddy and turbid. Further ahead is a river with clear, clean water. The Blessed One can drink water there." But for a second time, the Blessed One said: "Ānanda, bring me some water. I am thirsty." Venerable Ānanda repeated his reply. The Blessed One made the request for a third time. As a disciple, when the Blessed One made a request for the third time, it could not be refused. Therefore, when Venerable Ānanda took the bowl and went to the stream, the muddy water had miraculously become completely settled, clear, and pure. Ānanda thought: "This is a great wonder, a marvelous thing! Due to the psychic power of the Blessed One, this muddy water has become clear." He then brought the water and offered it to the Blessed One. The Blessed One drank the water and set out again.

Next, we hear of them reaching the Kakutthā river itself and entering a nearby mango grove. There, the Blessed One addressed Venerable Cundaka—we must not confuse him with Cunda the smith, as there were many individuals named Cunda. He told Venerable Cundaka: "Fold my robe in four and spread it out. I wish to lie down." The Blessed One then lay down there in the lion's posture (*sīha-seyyā*) for a short while. After waking, he said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, perhaps some might say to Cunda the smith after my passing away—by then, the Blessed One had already declared that he would pass away that night in Kusinārā—'The Blessed One passed away after consuming your last meal.' This might cause him remorse and regret. They might generate worry in him, saying: 'This is your misfortune, this is something you did wrongly. The Blessed One passed away after consuming the meal you offered.' If anyone speaks thus, Ānanda, you must tell him: 'No, no. The Blessed One has declared: "It is a great gain (*suladdhaṃ*) for you, it is well gained by you, that you were able to offer the final alms-meal to the Blessed One."'"

Then, the Buddha explained the benefits of that final alms-meal. The alms-meal that helped the Tathāgata attain supreme Enlightenment—which you all know as the milk-rice offered by Sujātā—and this final meal are of equal fruit and equal result. He declared it as a natural law (*dhammatā*) that the final meal after consuming which the Tathāgata passes away into final extinguishment / extinction (*parinibbāna*) carries the same fruit, same result, and same great benefit as the meal after consuming which he attained supreme Enlightenment. The Buddha instructed: "Ānanda, if anyone blames Cunda the smith, tell him that you heard this directly from the Blessed One."

Indeed, this matter has been a subject of controversy, and our main topic is still ahead. However, in brief, we must consider that for various reasons, the explanation regarding boar's meat is the one most popular among many. But we can also think of it in this way: when mentioning it by name, the sutta does not say 'boar's meat' (*sūkara-maṃsa*), but uses a different name. It says that 'along with other foods, a *sūkara-maddava* was also prepared.' Therefore, we may consider that since the Buddha was gravely ill at the time,

Cunda the smith might have prepared and offered some kind of medicinal rejuvenator (*rasāyana*). Then one might ask, "If he ate it, why did this purging occur?" Due to the previously suppressed illness, if there was bad blood, it might have been purged. The Commentary explains this further, as if to dispel any blame from Cunda the smith. The Commentary explains that the illness was not caused by that food. Rather, whatever that food might have been, eating it gave the Blessed One the strength to walk such a great distance. Therefore, one should not think that it caused his final passing away / final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*).

In any case, we can understand that rather than an offering of boar's meat, such a food was prepared with the intention of providing comfort to the Blessed One in his illness. Through the strength gained from it, a purging occurred which helped ease his physical discomfort. This is merely a general view.

Let us now turn to the section relevant to our main topic. These two verses are recorded in the Dhamma text known as the *Sutta Nipāta*, not in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*. The Commentary to the *Sutta Nipāta* gives the following background story. This Cunda the smith was a goldsmith—a very wealthy creator and merchant of gold jewelry. Because of his great faith, when offering this alms-meal, he had served the food and curries in golden vessels to the community of monks. Some monks, arising doubts regarding the use of golden vessels, did not use them. However, some monks did use them. They must have eaten from their own bowls, but those special items were offered in golden vessels.

According to the Commentary, after the alms-giving was over and Cunda the smith had washed his hands and was preparing to listen to the Dhamma sermon, he saw a certain corrupt monk take one of the golden vessels and slip it into his shoulder bag along with his keys. Although he saw this, due to his deep faith and wisdom, Cunda the smith thought: "If I expose this theft now, it will bring great disrepute to the Blessed One and the virtuous community of monks. Furthermore, it will give sectarian heretics an opportunity to attack the Dispensation." Thinking thus, he did not speak out, but a doubt arose in him: "Are such individuals also *Samaṇas*?" It is said that in order to dispel this doubt, he went to the Blessed One in the evening and asked this question, which led to this sutta discourse.

Now let us come to the meaning of the verses. Let us see what the meaning of these verses is. *Pucchāmi muniṃ pahūtapaññaṃ*... There is a characteristic in the ancient verses of the *Sutta Nipāta* where, in dialogue-form suttas, the name of the speaker is included within the verses. We usually put that at the end, saying "so-and-so said this." Here, it appears after the first line. Thus: *Pucchāmi muniṃ pahūtapaññaṃ iti Cundo kammāraputto*. The phrase *iti Cundo kammāraputto* is a phrase inserted by the Council-compiling monks (*saṅgītīkaraka*) to show that it is Cunda the smith who speaks. What did he ask? "I ask the Sage of deep wisdom—*pahūtapaññā* means the Blessed One of vast and great wisdom—the Sage." Then follow several epithets of the Buddha: "The Buddha, the Lord of Dhamma (*dhammassāmiṃ*), the one free from craving / thirst (*vītataṇhaṃ*), supreme among bipeds (*dvipaduttamaṃ*), the excellent charioteer (*sārathīnaṃ pavaraṃ*). I ask this question of the Buddha." Then he presents

the question: *Kati loke samaṇā tadingha brūhi?* "How many kinds of *Samaṇas* are there in the world? Please be kind enough to explain this to me." Thus Cunda presented his question in that verse.

Here is the first verse of reply given by the Blessed One: *Caturo samaṇā na pañcamotī Cundāti bhagavā*. Here too, the words *Cundāti bhagavā* were inserted by the Council-compiling Venerable Ones to indicate that the Blessed One is replying. The first line states: *Caturo samaṇā na pañcamotī*—"There are four kinds of *Samaṇas*, Cunda, there is no fifth." Thus the Blessed One replies. *Te te āvikaromi sakkhipuṭṭho*—"Asked by you in my presence, I shall make them clear to you." Then he names the four: *Maggajino, maggadesako ca, magge jīvati yo ca, maggadūsī'tī*. The first is *Maggajina* (Conqueror of the Path). The second *Samaṇa* is *Maggadesaka* (Teacher of the Path). The third *Samaṇa* is *Maggajīvī*—one who lives on the Path (*magge jīvati*). The fourth *Samaṇa* is *Maggadūsī* (Defiler of the Path). Both *magge jīvati* and *maggajīvī* are used in the same sense there.

In the subsequent verses, the Blessed One analyzes these four. Although we will not go through each verse, we will explain their general meaning here. It is easy to understand the term *Maggajina*. The Blessed One expresses this regarding himself. Everyone knows that it was the Blessed One who discovered this path to Nibbāna, after the Dispensation of the previous Buddhas had disappeared. In some places, it is compared to a path to a city that had been overgrown and lost in the wilderness for a long time, which was rediscovered by the Buddha. In that sense, the path to Nibbāna—the Noble Eightfold Path, the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment—was first uncovered by the Blessed One. That is the *Maggajina*. Thus, the general idea of that verse is that the Blessed One, the Buddha, is the *Maggajina*—the one who has conquered the Path, the one who has discovered the Path.

The second *Samaṇa* is the *Maggadesī* / *Maggadesako* (Teacher of the Path). Regarding this *Samaṇa*, it is said: *paramaṃ paramaṃti ñatvā loke*—"having directly realized the supreme Nibbāna in this world as the supreme." It refers to the Arahant who then teaches and analyzes that Dhamma. As you have heard, such an Arahant utilizes the analytical powers (*paṭisambhidā*) to make the Dhamma understood by others and to dispel their doubts regarding the Dhamma. Such a monk is the *Maggadesī*—that is, the Arahant. Having fully realized it, the second *Samaṇa*, the *Maggadesī* or *Maggadesako*, fearlessly explains these Dhamma matters.

The third is the *Maggajīvī* (One who lives on the Path). This means one who trains correctly, with restraint and mindfulness, on the well-taught path of Dhamma—one who practices on the path of Dhamma. You may have heard of the two terms *Sekha* and *Asekha* when speaking of noble disciples (*Ariya-puggala*). *Asekha* refers to the Arahants who have completed their training. *Sekha* refers to the other noble disciples, from the Stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*) up to the Non-returner (*Anāgāmī*), who are still training. First, the Buddha was mentioned. Second, the Arahant was mentioned. Third, it refers to those *Sekha* monks—the noble ones from Stream-entry to Non-returning who are still training on the path, practicing the true way. In addition, the *Kalyāṇa-puthujjana* (noble

worldling)—the monk who, though not yet having realized the paths and fruits, is fully accomplished in virtue and principles and follows the good path—is also included in this third category.

Fourth, the *Maggadūsī* (Defiler of the Path) is shown—the one who corrupts the path. Here, the character of this *Maggadūsī* monk, who lives with the outward appearance of disciplined monks—taking on the guise of a monk or an Arahant—is described in several words. *Pakkhandī* means one who intrudes into the midst of the Sangha, pushing himself forward based on his seniority or possessions. This is how the Commentary explains it. Next, *Kuladūsako*—one who corrupts families, meaning he engages in activities that corrupt the faith of lay devotees. Then, his physical and verbal behavior is rough and unruly. Another word used is *Palāpo*. The word *Palāpa* refers to the chaff or empty husks found among grains of paddy. Looking from the outside, one might be deceived into thinking there is a grain of rice inside, but there is none. *Palāpa* means empty, hollow.

The Blessed One uses many such words there. They are called *Samaṇa-patirūpaka*—those who behave in the guise of a monk. Such a person is a *Maggadūsī*—he defiles the path.

Having shown these four, the Blessed One then states another important point. An intelligent noble disciple (*Ariya-sāvaka*) who is a householder or master of a house, having correctly understood these four, recognizes them and thinks: *sabbe nekātādiso'ti*—"Not all are alike." Thinking thus, he does not lose his faith. How can one equate the corrupt with the pure, the defiled with the undefiled? In this way, the Blessed One concluded the sermon to dispel the doubt of Cunda the smith.

In connection with this, let us consider a few more points. Here, we must speak particularly about that term *Samaṇa*. As we mentioned earlier, because the social term *Samaṇa* was used for the Buddha and the Sangha, the Buddha had to show and make known to the world: "The concept of *Samaṇa* we present is not the one that has existed so far." You may have heard that in the *Mahāsīhanāda Sutta*, the Buddha made a lion's roar at the very beginning of the discourse, addressing the monks: *Idheva samaṇo, idha dutiyo samaṇo, idha tatiyo samaṇo, idha catuttho samaṇo, suññā parappavādā samaṇehi aññehitī*. The Buddha made an extraordinary lion's roar there: "Only in this Dispensation is there the first *Samaṇa* (Stream-enterer). Only here is the second *Samaṇa* (Once-returner), the third *Samaṇa* (Non-returner), and the fourth *Samaṇa* (Arahant). Other dispensations are empty of true *Samaṇas*." He instructed the monks to roar this lion's roar fearlessly against other sectarian views (*parappavāda*).

Along with this, regarding the word *Samaṇa*, the Buddha spoke in another sutta in a way that penetrates the heart of the monks: "Monks, I say that those ascetics and brahmins who do not understand gratification (*assāda*) as gratification, danger (*ādīnava*) as danger, and escape (*nissaraṇa*) as escape in this world, are not truly ascetics and brahmins. They have not understood the true meaning of being an ascetic or a brahmin."

This shows that understanding gratification as gratification, danger as danger, and escape as escape in the world, and directly realizing it, is the true task of a *Samaṇa*.

When speaking of this task of a *Samaṇa*, another similar sutta comes to mind. On one occasion, the Blessed One said: "Monks, what are the *samaṇa-karaṇīyāni*—the duties of a *Samaṇa*, the tasks of a *Samaṇa*?" Various people in the world might point to various duties. But the Blessed One pointed to those things that support the state of a *Samaṇa*. What are they? *Sīla* (Virtue), *Samādhi* (Concentration), and *Paññā* (Wisdom). In that sutta, the three terms used are *Adhisīla* (Higher Virtue), *Adhicitta* (Higher Mind/Concentration), and *Adhipaññā* (Higher Wisdom).

You may have heard of these. *Adhisīla* is that noble virtue which supports the realization of the paths and fruits. *Adhicitta* is concentration (*samādhi*). *Adhipaññā* is insight, the wisdom of meditation (*vipassanā-paññā*). The Blessed One declared that there are three tasks belonging to a *Samaṇa*. What are they? Training in higher virtue. For this, there must be a strong desire—the term *tibba chanda* is used there. Sometimes we have to use words that might be misunderstood, but *tibba chanda* means an intense desire, a sharp intention. A true *Samaṇa* must generate an intense desire for the training of higher virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*). Similarly, he must generate an intense desire for the training of higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*)—concentration. He must generate an intense desire for higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*). This is what belongs to the monks. Having shown this, the Blessed One then gave a simile that contains a wonderful, subtle irony. "Monks, sometimes a donkey follows behind a herd of cows, crying: 'I too am a cow! I too am a cow!'" The Pali phrase used by the Buddha there is *aham-api amhā, aham-api amhā*. The Buddha used these words to sound like the braying of a donkey, yet they are not meaningless words. *Ahaṃ* means 'I', and *amhā* is the plural verb "we are" (meaning "I too am among them"). Saying *aham-api amhā, aham-api amhā*, this donkey follows right behind the herd of cows, meaning "I too am one of you, I too am one of you."

"But, monks, that donkey has neither the color of the cows, nor the voice of the cows, nor does it walk in the manner of the cows. Yet it follows behind them braying, 'I too am a cow! I too am a cow!' In the same way, monks, a certain monk in this Dispensation follows behind the community of monks, saying: 'I too am a monk! I too am a monk!' (*aham-api bhikkhu, aham-api bhikkhu*). Yet, in that monk, there is no intense desire (*tibba chanda*) for the training in higher virtue, no intense desire for the training in higher mind, and no intense desire for the training in higher wisdom." This is how the Buddha presented the sutta. "Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves thus: 'We will generate an intense desire, a strong determination, a powerful aspiration for the undertaking of higher virtue, higher mind, and higher wisdom.'" This teaching also helps us understand the duty of a *Samaṇa*—what the task of a *Samaṇa* is, in the Buddha's own words.

Next, there is another valuable sutta whose very name contains the word *Samaṇa* used in an indirect sense—the *Samaṇamaṇḍikā Sutta*. There too, the Blessed One gives a profound explanation of a *Samaṇa*—what his ultimate goal and his practice should be. It is a very long and deep sutta indeed. We will attempt to present it briefly as fits the

occasion. It begins as follows: There was a monastery in Sāvatthī called Mallikārāma. Queen Mallikā had built this hall, Mallikārāma, as a place for various wanderers and sectarians to meet and discuss.

While the Blessed One was residing in Sāvatthī, the wanderer Uggāhamāna, son of Samaṇamaṇḍikā, was living in this Mallikārāma with a large crowd of wanderers. Often, as noted in our books to show the lack of restraint of these wanderers, they would be making a great noise, engaging in various low, worldly talk (*tiracchāna-kathā*). When they saw the Buddha or a monk or a lay disciple approaching, they would quieten one another, saying, "Be quiet, be quiet," to show restraint. On one occasion, there was a very faithful carpenter in Sāvatthī named Pañcakanga—perhaps so called because he constantly used five tools. One afternoon, Pañcakanga the carpenter set out to see the Blessed One. But on the way, he realized: "At this midday hour, the Blessed One and the monks will be resting or in quiet meditation. Therefore, I should go a bit later. In the meantime, I will go to Mallikārāma, meet the wanderers, have a discussion, and then proceed."

When he went there, the crowd was quieted, and the wanderer Uggāhamāna said: "Oh, here is our master carpenter Pañcakanga!"—or whatever they called him at the time. After he sat down, Uggāhamāna expressed his view, as if expecting a response: "If a person does no evil deed with the body, speaks no evil word, thinks no evil thought, and maintains no evil livelihood, I declare him to be a supreme *Samaṇa*, accomplished in the highest wholesome state, one who has reached the supreme state, unvanquished in debate, invincible."

Hearing this, the carpenter Pañcakanga wondered if this was correct. But he did not reply. Neither accepting nor rejecting it, Pañcakanga the carpenter rose, went to the Blessed One, and reported the matter—what the wanderer had said. Then the Blessed One declared: "If what the wanderer Uggāhamāna says is true, then a tiny infant lying on its back would be a supreme *Samaṇa*. For a tiny infant lying on its back does not even have a concept of 'body', so how can it perform an evil deed with the body, except for mere wriggling?

"Similarly, an infant lying on its back does not even know what a word is, as it cannot yet speak. So how can it speak evil words, except for crying? Crying is the infant's language. Furthermore, an infant lying on its back does not have thoughts that can be called 'intentions', except for smiling without cause. We assume there is some internal intention through that smile, but other than that, the infant has no capacity for conceptual thinking. Fourthly, an infant lying on its back has no other livelihood than drinking its mother's milk. That is its livelihood. Therefore, according to the wanderer Uggāhamāna, a tiny infant lying on its back would be a great *Samaṇa*, invincible in debate!"

Then the Blessed One explained how one becomes a true *Samaṇa*. He explained that practice in great detail. If we were to explain all of it, it might be difficult for you to grasp. But I will present the main idea. Principally, the Blessed One says: "I say that one

endowed with ten factors is a true *Samaṇa*, one who has reached the supreme state." What are these ten factors? You all know the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path: *Sammā-diṭṭhi* (Right View), *Sammā-saṅkappa* (Right Intention), *Sammā-vācā* (Right Speech), *Sammā-kammanta* (Right Action), *Sammā-ājīva* (Right Livelihood), *Sammā-vāyāma* (Right Effort), *Sammā-sati* (Right Mindfulness), and *Sammā-samādhi* (Right Concentration). To these eight, when speaking of an Arahant, two more are added: *dasehi aṅgehi samannāgato arahā hoti*—an Arahant is endowed with ten factors. The other two are *Sammā-ñāṇa* (Right Knowledge) and *Sammā-vimutti* (Right Liberation). After completing the Path, it is through *Sammā-ñāṇa* and *Sammā-vimutti* that the Noble Path is completed.

Although we often speak of the eight factors, for the Arahant, these two are also mentioned: *Sammā-ñāṇa* and *Sammā-vimutti*. "I declare the Arahant who possesses these ten factors to be a true *Samaṇa*," says the Blessed One. In connection with this, another important practical step is revealed. A series of steps of great practical value is mentioned there. The path one travels until reaching that state emphasizes the four kinds of Right Effort (*sammappadhāna*). This is of central importance in the practice. The energy, effort, exertion, and striving (*padhāna*) we apply represent a special capacity within human beings that a small child lacks. The Buddha highlights this as something to be done by a *Samaṇa* until Arahantship is reached—namely, the four Right Efforts (*sammā-vāyāma*). You may have heard this Pali passage:

> *Anuppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ anuppādāya*
>
> *chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati.*
>
> *Uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya*
>
> *chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati.*
>
> *Anuppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ uppādāya*
>
> *chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati.*
>
> *Uppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ ṭhitiyā asammosāya bhiyyobhāvāya*
>
> *chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati.*

The essence of these four statements always points to effort, exertion, and energy (*viriya*). It is fourfold. The first energy is applied for restraint (*saṃvara*): one must make an effort to prevent unarisen unwholesome states from arising. The second is abandoning (*pahāna*): one must make an effort to abandon and eliminate the unwholesome states already present within oneself. The third, looking forward to what we wish to achieve, is development (*bhāvanā*): one must exert energy to arouse and

bring close unarisen wholesome states. Fourthly, one must make an effort to maintain, protect, and guard (*anurakkhaṇā*) the wholesome states already attained.

To make this clear, we sometimes use a modern analogy. When you travel and see a bridge being built, the first thing they do is pump out the unwanted water using pumps. Next, if it is a flowing river, they block the oncoming water with a dam. They remove the existing water and build a barrier to prevent more water from flowing in. Meanwhile, they bring materials and begin building the bridge or culvert. Having started, they then reinforce the rough structure by pouring concrete. This is what is indicated here. Thus, there is a fourfold aspect to energy, shown in this Dhamma as Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) or the four Right Efforts (*sammappadhāna*). Several highly valuable terms are found here: *chandaṃ janeti* (arouses desire), *vāyamati* (strives), *viriyaṃ ārabhati* (arouses energy), *cittaṃ paggaṇhāti* (exerts the mind), *padahati* (strives resolutely). We mentioned *chanda* (wholesome desire) earlier. The meaning of *chanda* in the Dispensation is the initial thought, desire, or interest to do something. To do anything, we first need the desire or interest to do it. It is difficult to generate this desire, especially regarding wholesome qualities. Generating a desire (*chanda*) for wholesome qualities is very difficult, whereas desire for unwholesome things arises naturally.

Once that desire is generated, the journey proceeds from there: *chandaṃ janeti*—one generates desire. Next, *vāyamati*—one strives. This striving is also synonymous with effort and energy. Yet we see a specific meaning in these terms. Every word of the Buddha has a deep meaning, showing how that striving gradually grows. First, the interest is generated; next, a certain striving is made. We can illustrate this with the simile of moving a boulder. If there is a large boulder blocking our path, the thought first arises: "I must remove this." Next, to see if one can move it, some initial effort must be made. One might place a lever underneath and try to lift it. Through that initial attempt, one's hands and feet gain a certain strength—a striving. This striving implies both the beginning of the work and the basic preparation for it.

After striving, when there is a feeling that it can be done, *viriyaṃ ārabhati*—one arouses energy. Energy (*viriya*) is a powerful word. The Buddha uses terms like "manly strength" (*purisa-thāma*) and "manly energy" (*purisa-viriya*). Unearthing that energetic power, one then applies oneself to the task. When doing so, when applying energy, obstacles must be expected in any task. In the face of those obstacles, some people weaken their minds and give up. But the wise person firmly establishes his mind at that moment; he brings forth his power of determination. After arousing energy (*viriyaṃ ārabhati*), in the face of obstacles, *cittaṃ paggaṇhāti*—he exerts the mind, establishing it firmly, thinking: "I will not give up until this is done."

Only after establishing the mind in this way does one apply striving (*padhāna*). The word *padhāna* is an extremely valuable word in this Dispensation. Though we generally treat it as a synonym for energy, there is a wonderful power of meaning in each of these words. Here, the Buddha is referring to the ultimate effort. We do not normally call this mere striving or energy; it is *mahā-padhāna* (great striving). *Padhāna* here does not mean 'chief' or 'primary' as in the Sinhala language. Though the sound is similar, in Pali

it has a different meaning. *Padhāna padahati* means to apply oneself with absolute resolution, even at the risk of one's life. You may have heard of this ultimate effort in relation to the Buddha. When describing his ultimate effort, the Buddha said: "I applied an energy endowed with four factors (*caturanga-samannāgata-viriya*)."

We understand the four factors of the Buddha's determination through the words he used when making that resolution. It is said that at the foot of the Bodhi tree, in his final effort for Enlightenment, he thought: "Gladly would I let only skin (*taco*), sinews (*nahāru*), and bones (*aṭṭhi*) remain in this body; let my flesh and blood (*maṃsa-lohitaṃ*) dry up. As long as I have not attained what can be reached by manly strength, manly energy, and manly progress, there shall be no relaxing of my energy."

Why is this called fourfold? Skin, sinews, and bones are three factors. Flesh and blood make the fourth. Those three remain, while flesh and blood dry up. Based on this, the term "energy endowed with four factors" has come into use. This is the energy of striving (*padhāna*).

In daily life, in your work, businesses, or heavy physical labor, you can understand this when such moments arise. When the mind weakens, if the task is something that must be done, that is when we say *cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati*—one exerts the mind and strives resolutely. That is when one bites one's lip, determined to do it even at the cost of one's life, like a man pushing a boulder. If it rolls back, it is dangerous. Not everyone can undertake such a task; that is when others step aside. While others run, fearing they will be crushed, the energetic person says, "No, I will do it," brings forth his energy, firmly establishes his mind, and pushes it over, even if he dies. That is *padhāna—padahati*. These four steps are thus mentioned. From this, we see that to prevent unarisen unwholesome states from arising, we likewise need desire, striving, energy, firmness of mind, and the ultimate effort (*padhāna*)—an supreme exertion.

Similarly, to abandon the unwholesome, bad things already within us, to prevent new unwholesome states, to avoid them, to eliminate existing bad things, and to gather and bring close good things, we must exert the same kind of energy. Finally, to secure them. For the Buddha said: "I do not praise even the mere standing still (*ṭhiti*) in wholesome states, let alone their decline (*parihāni*)." This means that once this energy has begun, one must maintain it without break until the end is seen. Sometimes, a monk's satisfaction with what he has already attained is pointed out as a shortcoming. Satisfaction is good, but "I do not praise merely arriving at that satisfaction. I praise exerting more and more energy for the things not yet attained."

This shows how serious the task of a *Samaṇa* in this Dispensation is. The wanderer Uggāhamāna considered a person to be a *Samaṇa* merely by not performing evil deeds, not speaking evil words, not thinking evil thoughts, and not leading an evil livelihood—just like a tiny infant lying on its back.

Even today, there are certain views that attract many people. They think: "By merely folding our hands and feet, we can accomplish all of this." It is a common habit among

young people to come to us, discuss things, and say: "Well, we do not commit any wrong." That is often their view. Taking it further, some might even consider the state of an infant to be the attainment of the paths and fruits. For the infant is innocent. But the Buddha has pointed out elsewhere—and even here—that the infant's wriggling, crying, smiling, and intense greed for its mother's milk all arise because of the defilements. The Buddha shows that these exist at the level of latency / underlying tendency (*anusaya*) brought from *saṃsāra* (the cycle of rebirth).

This Dispensation's task is a serious one because of the gravity of these underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) and taints (*āsava*) that have existed in our minds for a long time in *saṃsāra*. It is no easy task. Because it is not easy, the Buddha had to use such a large vocabulary to describe this energy—the story of energy. We mentioned how much effort is needed even to build a bridge. You know that work must be done on all four sides, in all four ways. If even one is lacking, the task cannot be accomplished.

Every moment presents itself to us in this way. Various obstacles come in the way of what we attempt to do. Similarly, if Nibbāna is the purification of the mind—if that is the noble goal shown by the Buddha—then on the path leading to it, a massive place is given to Right Effort (*sammappadhāna* / *sammā-vāyāma*). That is the practice; that is the Path. That is why this matter has been introduced here within a discussion on the Path: *Maggajino*. The Blessed One, through that fourfold energy, discovered that path and, in order to declare it to others, attained the state of *Maggajina* (Conqueror of the Path). The second—the Arahant—is the *Maggadesako* (Teacher of the Path), who can fearlessly and clearly explain what the supreme thing in the world is, through his own direct realization, without causing doubt in others. Thirdly, those *Sekha* Noble Ones who are walking on the Path, practicing the faultless way of the Dhamma, dwelling in the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), and making the necessary effort on that path.

Fourthly, we hear of those who have merely the outward appearance of the path, not knowing what the path actually is, yet behaving as if they are on it. Regarding them, the Buddha used a terrifyingly sharp, ironic simile, comparing them to a donkey following a herd of cows. Although the Buddha was deeply compassionate, he expressed a very subtle irony there. He gave the simile of a donkey following a herd of cows, braying *aham-api amhā, aham-api amhā*. We must reflect on what the task of a *Samaṇa* is. What did the Buddha present to the world through his Enlightenment (*Sambodhi*)? It is only then that we truly recognize the Buddha. Why were other ascetics and brahmins waiting for a Buddha to arise? Because they had a problem they could not solve. Those ascetics who had developed the absorptions (*jhāna*) and higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) could see hundreds of thousands of past births. They saw that we have come a long way in this *saṃsāra*. But they saw it just like going from one house to another. Due to the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), they held a wrong, permanent view of a soul: "I went through such-and-such lives in this way." Beyond that, although they understood to some extent that *saṃsāra* is suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), they saw no solution to it. It was the Buddha alone who, through the Four Noble Truths, revealed the

true nature of the world to the world, through this deep Dhamma of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), which no one had understood or presented before.

Within those Four Noble Truths lies this existence. Taken as a whole, "in brief, the five grasping aggregates are suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*)"—even if some are unwilling to accept this statement of the Buddha, it is the truth. For the Buddha showed that the continuation of *saṃsāra*, existence in *saṃsāra*, is entirely suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*). Next, the craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) for this existence—*taṇhā ponobhavikā* (craving that leads to renewed existence). At the moment of death, we pray: "May I get in the next life what I could not get in this life!" There is no satisfaction in craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). Because of that prayer, through those karmic forces, rebirth occurs—this is what the Buddha declared. That is why the Buddha declared that the eradication of that very craving / thirst (*taṇhā*)—the calming of that thirst—is Nibbāna. It is just like extinguishing a fire by removing its fuel. If we put straw or wood into a fire we want to extinguish, the fire only grows.

Similarly, the Buddha saw the efforts of the world to satisfy craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). In order to satisfy craving, all these graspings / holdings (*upādāna*)—all these things they hold onto—become further sheets of flame in which they themselves burn. *Sabbaṃ ādittaṃ*—"All is burning"—is what the Buddha declared regarding this. To his Buddha-vision, he saw that everything was on fire: the eye, the ear, the nose, and so on, were all burning. The extinguishing of that fire is what is declared here. To extinguish the fire, that craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) must be calmed. To calm that craving, a complete transformation of one's personal identity, one's individual personality, must be made. That transformation is shown as the first step of the Noble Eightfold Path. We speak of the Path at the end of that practice, when it is complete. When the Arahant completes Right Knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and Right Liberation (*sammā-vimutti*), the ten factors are complete. Then the task—the task of the holy life—is complete.

In this way, let us try to understand the task of a *Samaṇa*. We can then understand whom the Buddha considered a *Samaṇa*, even though the word was used broadly during his time. If you are to protect the Dispensation, you must recognize the Dispensation. We hope you have been able to learn certain Dhamma points through this sermon that will assist you in this. Therefore, without losing your faith, you must develop your faith and strive to walk on this path of Dhamma.

Using the help and support gained from this Dhamma you have heard, the virtue you have kept, and the meditation you have practiced today to the best of your ability, you must strive to bring your meditation to fruition. Before the decline of this Dispensation, you must resolve to realize the noble paths and fruits—Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship—and realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna. May all beings, from the lowest hell (*Avīci*) to the highest heaven (*Akaniṭṭhā*), who wish to hear and rejoice in such Dhamma sermons, realize their aspired Enlightenment (*Bodhi*) through this appreciation! With this aspiration, recite these verses.

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #136

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.17)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

Appamatto pamattesu, suttesu bahujāgaro;

abalassaṃva sīghasso, hitvā yāti sumedhaso ti.

From:

Dhammapada 29 (Appamādavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Poson Poya day is that noble day on which our country received the heritage of the Buddha-Sāsana. We have all heard that on this Poson Full Moon day, the great Arahant Mahinda Thero brought the Buddha-Sāsana and established it in this country during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. This is something we all know. However, it appears that most people do not have a very clear understanding of the term "Buddha-Sāsana."

The primary meaning of the word *Sāsana* is "message." So, when we reflect roughly, the Buddha-Sāsana is not some message given to the world by a Buddha that is passed from hand to hand or mouth to mouth. It is something to be practiced by oneself, implemented by oneself, and carried from heart to heart; it is not something deposited in buildings, stūpas, or temples. It is something connected to human lives. Thus, in the Dhamma, this is mentioned in brief through three words: *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā*. The Buddha presented that message through those three words. What is presented through this message of *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā* is about escaping as quickly as possible from this extremely terrible and fearful *saṁsāra* (cycle of existence) and realizing the noble Dhamma of Nibbāna. In this world, there is a class of messages called "urgent messages." There are messages in the world that must be carried out without delay (with heedfulness), implemented without delay, and fulfilled. Today, everyone knows about them. The Buddha too has shown that this message of *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā* is indeed an urgent message that must be fulfilled without delay—the message of Nibbāna. What is the reason for this? The period of a Buddha's arising (*buddhōtpāda*) is

extremely rare. Similarly, obtaining a human existence during a period of a Buddha's arising is also extremely rare.

Next, although we speak of human existence, you, meritorious listeners, know well how short human life is, and how quickly a life can be destroyed. Therefore, when reflecting on the shortness of life, this extremely rare message given by the Buddhas must be fulfilled as quickly as possible, without delay (with heedfulness). This is why it is shown that the Buddha, as his daily advice (*sugatōvāda*), addressed the Saṅgha and exhorted them: *"Appamādena, bhikkhave, sampādetha"*—"Monks, strive with heedfulness to accomplish what needs to be done for Nibbāna." Similarly, the last words of the Buddha spoken before his Parinibbāna (final passing away) were: *"Vayadhammā saṅkhārā, appamādena sampādetha"*—"All Preparations (saṅkhāras / preparations) are of a decaying nature; therefore, accomplish your tasks for Nibbāna with heedfulness." When reflecting in this way, this word *appamāda* (heedfulness) is as important in the Buddha-Sāsana as the letter 'A' (the first letter of the alphabet). Thus, the stanza of Dhamma we have taken as our topic today is also about *appamāda*. The occasion that led to the preaching of this Dhamma stanza is mentioned in the scriptures, specifically in the Dhammapada Commentary (*Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*), as follows.

While the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana monastery, two friendly monks obtained subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from the Buddha and went to a forest monastery to spend the rainy season (*vassa*). Although both of them went having obtained subjects of meditation in this manner, one monk spent the rainy season like this: early in the evening, he would gather firewood, make a fire-pan, and sit warming himself by the fire with the novices, spending the first watch of the night in this way. While he lived in this manner, the other monk, who was acting diligently (heedfully), advised his friend: "Doing things like this is not right; Buddhas cannot be deceived with trickery. We have come after obtaining subjects of meditation from a living Buddha. We must do this work diligently." Although he advised and admonished him in this way, that monk did not accept it. Instead, when the diligent monk, who had worked very hard practicing walking meditation and meditating during the first watch of the night, retired to his hut to rest during the middle watch of the night as permitted by the Buddha, the other monk would come and mock him. To disparage him, he would say: "Great lazy one! Why have you come after obtaining subjects of meditation from the Buddha only to sleep like this?" Slandering him as a lazy person, he would then go and sleep soundly himself.

In this way, these two monks spent the rainy season in two different manners. Before the end of the rainy season, the monk who acted diligently attained the state of Arahantship with the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*). However, the other monk was unaware of this. After the rainy season, both of them went to the Buddha. The Buddha asked: "Monks, how was the rainy season? Did you fulfill the purpose of your ordination? Did you live diligently?" Then, the monk who had fallen into negligence spoke first, using disparaging words: "Where is there any diligence in this monk? He just went and slept there!" The Buddha saw all of this clearly. Therefore, the Buddha accused that monk,

saying: "Having fallen into negligence yourself, you are disparaging this member of the Saṅgha, my son, who has acted diligently."

Next, as a simile, he uttered this Dhamma stanza. That is to say, conveying the idea: "When compared to my true son, you are like a weak horse next to a fast-running horse," he uttered the Dhamma stanza we mentioned earlier.

"Appamatto pamattesu, suttesu bahujāgaro;

abalassaṁva sīghasso, hitvā yāti sumedhaso."

"Heedful among the heedless, wide awake among those asleep, the wise man advances, leaving them behind like a swift horse leaving a weak horse behind" — this is the meaning of that stanza. Thus, through this Dhamma stanza, the Buddha showed the world the beneficial side of diligence (*appamāda*). Now let us try to understand this word *appamāda*, which is specifically mentioned in this stanza.

The world analyzes *appamāda* (heedfulness) in various ways as it relates to daily worldly life. However, in this Dispensation (*Sāsana*), in the explanations of this stanza, this word is explained by equating *appamāda* to *sati*—to the virtue of *sati*. *Sati* means mindfulness. In short, in this Dhamma, *appamāda* and *sati* are presented as almost synonymous, to the extent that they can be shown as an equation. Similarly, sleeping and being awake are not shown in the Dhamma in the same sense that the world matches them. Now, worldly people would think that the monk warming himself by the fire-pan was awake. But that is not true wakefulness. Developing the virtue of *sati* within oneself and remaining mindful is the true wakefulness. The words used in the Dhamma are often used in a deep sense. The Buddha himself sometimes says that the world is "blind." There are so many people here whose physical eyes can see. But why does he say they are blind despite having eyesight? Because they lack the eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*). In the same way, no matter how awake they seem to us, even if they have their eyes wide open, they are asleep if they lack mindfulness, if they lack *sati*. This is the kind of situation we have to point out when analyzing the meaning of these words in accordance with the Dhamma.

The Buddha has shown through a simile how important this virtue of *sati*, and also the word *appamāda*, is: just as the footprint of any other animal can be contained within the footprint of an elephant because there is enough room, so too all wholesome qualities (*kusala dhamma*) are encompassed within the word *appamāda*. From this, we can understand that everything in this path of Dhamma is gathered into this very word, *sati*. It is that primary a thing. Furthermore, it is this *appamāda*, this quality of heedfulness, that is the root of every wholesome state.

When we consider the meaning of *appamāda* in the context of the Sāsana, we see that a certain urgency (speed) is required to act with heedfulness. There are various things in the world that arouse speed and force. You, meritorious listeners, may have heard that the Buddha has pointed out eight factors that generate the force and urgency helpful for the journey of the Sāsana, known as the grounds for urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*): *Jāti*

(Birth), *jarā* (decaying/aging), *vyādhi* (sickness), and then *maraṇa* (death). *Jāti* means birth. *Jarā* is decaying, becoming old, or rather, the decaying process that begins from the very moment of birth. Then *vyādhi*, falling ill. Then *maraṇa*, decay and death / aging and death. Similarly, reflecting in accordance with the Buddha's words on the saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) experienced in the past, in past *saṁsāra*, one can arouse urgency regarding that too. Furthermore, the suffering (*dukkha*) and hardships one will have to undergo in *saṁsāra* in the future if one does not put an end to this saṁsāric suffering. Next, the suffering (*dukkha*) one experiences directly in this very life to obtain a meal, to maintain life. It is shown that one must constantly feel urgency reflecting on such sufferings (*dukkha*) that come upon beings in *saṁsāra*. It is through such an attitude of urgency (*saṁvega*) that momentum (force) is generated. But in implementing it, it is *sati* (mindfulness) that helps.

What is *sati*? What are the functions of *sati*? How is *sati* maintained? The Buddha has explained these matters in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*). The virtue of Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*) shown in the Noble Eightfold Path, and the quality we generally refer to as *sati*, are analyzed and understood with reference to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The Buddha points out thirty-seven factors contributing to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). At the very beginning, he places the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. It is that fundamental and primary a thing. The true objects for establishing mindfulness are shown as: *kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna* (contemplation of the body), *vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna* (contemplation of feeling / sensation), *cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna* (contemplation of the mind), and *dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna* (contemplation of mind-objects). In the ordinary world, we speak of being "unconscious" or "mindless." But here, the Buddha has pointed out the four objects on which mindfulness must be properly established as Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) in accordance with the Dhamma. Establishing mindfulness by contemplating the body is *kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. Next, establishing mindfulness by contemplating feeling / sensation (*vedanā*) is *vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. Establishing mindfulness by contemplating the mind, looking at the states of the mind, is *cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. Establishing mindfulness by contemplating the thoughts, the mind-objects (*dhammārammaṇa*) that come to the mind, is *dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. It is a mindfulness (*sati*) that goes progressively deeper in this manner that the Buddha showed must be developed.

Let us try to understand one of these, to some extent at least, as time permits: *kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. It is also called mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*). That is, mindfulness gone along with the body, or establishing mindfulness by contemplating the body. We can also briefly mention what is meant by "contemplating." When a carpenter planes a piece of wood, he casts a certain special look at it to inspect its actual condition and see if it has been planed properly. That is to say, without any sense of ownership like "this is something I planed," he looks at it in a special way to understand its nature of reality, its actual nature. It is with such a look that one must look at one's body. One must look at one's feeling / sensation (*vedanā*). One must look at one's mind. One must look at the thoughts that come to the mind. To

understand the actual state objectively, without creating a greed based on likes or a hatred based on dislikes. This is what is meant by contemplation of the body—establishing mindfulness by contemplating the body.

If we express a few examples for this according to the occasion, we know that the most basic aspect of the body is *ānāpāna*—in-breathing and out-breathing. From the moment we are born, we breathe in this air in this world, and then breathe it out. Because this process is connected with life, we call it "breath of life" (*prāṇaya*). Even though such an important process takes place, we ignore it in our daily lives. We let it happen automatically. It is within this automatically occurring process that delusion is hidden; *moha* (delusion) is hidden; defilements (*kilesa*) are hidden, like a dark cave. That is why lack of mindfulness leads to defilements, whereas mindfulness (*sati*) brings out wholesome qualities (*kusala dhamma*). Such is the nature of things.

Bringing out wholesome qualities is the function of mindfulness, the function of Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*). Thus, in this process of in-breathing and out-breathing, one directs full attention to that in-breath. Complete attention is applied to this in-breath. Then, when breathing out, with the feeling and understanding of "this is the out-breath, I am breathing out," one breathes in—that is, one establishes mindfulness on the in-breath and establishes mindfulness on the out-breath. This is something that must be done with effort. What is the main obstacle to this? The ordinary nature is for thoughts (*vitakka*) to flood the mind. Thoughts keep flooding in. We think about other things. In-breathing and out-breathing are left to happen automatically on their own. But what is done here is an exercise in cutting off these thoughts (*vitakka*). The energy of the mind is scattered on thoughts. Due to the multitude of thoughts running to the past and future in pursuit of the fivefold sensual pleasures, one does not recognize the power of one's own mind. Worldly people use only a very small amount of the mind's power in daily life. Therefore, in the effort to gain wisdom (*paññā*), one has to develop *sati*. For someone living a daily worldly life, establishing this mindfulness requires a great deal of effort and exertion. But the effort applied for this does not go to waste. In fact, it is a great saving—a huge saving.

We can understand this even through events that occur in daily life. This is given as an illustration: someone asks us to pour some coconut oil into a small-necked vial. If we do this without mindfulness, how much oil will be spilled? One cannot pour it while trembling. But what happens when mindfulness is well established? One directs it precisely to the mouth of the bottle and begins to pour. Without breaking the stream of oil, it is poured beautifully inside without even a single drop going astray. The Buddha has often used this simile regarding someone who has established mindfulness well: *"Siniddhā teladhārāva ahosi iriyāpatho"* — even the maintenance of physical postures is as smooth as a stream of oil. It flows very smoothly without jolts and bumps.

We have understood here that properly establishing *sati* even in daily life is a great saving in that moment. As meditation masters (*kammaṭṭhānācariya*) instruct, by cutting off distractions systematically with great effort, one gradually brings mindfulness (*sati*) completely to the in-breath. Then, the mind stays within that in-breath and does not wander outside. When the out-breath occurs, the mind is established within that out-

breath. It is by doing so that *sati* is gradually developed. Thereafter, what was previously done with effort happens effortlessly. It happens spontaneously without exertion. Such a state is called *upaṭṭhita-sati* (established mindfulness). *Satipaṭṭhāna* means the establishing of mindfulness. That is an exercise. When mindfulness is firmly present, it is called *upaṭṭhitā sati*—mindfulness that is present. It means that mindfulness is with you at all times.

If a servant in a house is far away, we have to call them constantly to come and do this or that work. But if the servant is right next to us, they do the work the moment we make a slight sign. That is the benefit of established mindfulness (*upaṭṭhitā sati*). Thus, establishing mindfulness on the in-breath and out-breath is something that must be done with effort and exertion. Similarly, maintaining the postures in daily life is also a good exercise for establishing *sati*. The Buddha states in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* regarding postures (*iriyāpatha*): when walking, one understands "I am walking"; next, when standing, one understands "I am standing"; when sitting, one understands "I am sitting"; next, when lying down, one understands "I am lying down." It might seem as if there is not much to this. But everything is contained within this. What is done by this is cutting off thoughts (*vitakka*) and establishing the mind—which otherwise wanders and is scattered and distracted—on one single object. This is what is called mindfulness, *sati*. This is how postures are maintained—these are the major postures.

Not only that. The Buddha has exhorted us to be even more effortful and maintain *sati* regarding minor bodily movements as well. The purpose is to bring automatic actions under the control of mindfulness—gradually bringing automatic movements under the control of mindfulness. For this, it is said: *"Abhikkante paṭikkante sampajānakārī hoti"* — in going forward and returning. This does not mean going a long distance, like going to a town; even moving a little away from where one is standing. In going forward, one has the awareness of going forward, doing it well. The other word that goes hand in hand with *sati* is clear comprehension (*sampajañña*). We practice *sati* with mindfulness and also act with awareness—not unconsciously. Thus, one goes forward with awareness and returns with awareness. Next, *"ālokite vilokite"* — in looking ahead and looking aside, or in casting a glance and withdrawing it, one does so with proper awareness. Next, in bending and stretching the limbs, one must strive to do those actions as much as possible with awareness. That is *"sammiñjite pasārite"*. Not only that, in other postures—in eating, drinking, and even in evacuating feces and urine—in all of them, by applying mindfulness to every action one performs, one gradually prevents even those minor movements from happening automatically, making it possible to perform those movements with *sati*.

The Buddha has shown the benefit of *sati* developed in this way, and the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) of not developing it—that is, of unmindfulness—through various kinds of similes. When a simile is told, a person can digest it well. It can be recalled constantly. If a single simile is well deposited in the mind, it is like reading a large book; when one's mindfulness slips, one can recollect it accordingly.

The Buddha has declared concerning this *sati*: *"Sati ārakkha-sārathī"*. Meritorious listeners, *"ārakkha-sārathī"* means: *"sārathī"* is the charioteer, and *"ārakkha"* means protective or guarding. The guarding charioteer. Now, whether the animal pulling such a chariot is a horse or an ox, one has to guard and protect that animal in some manner. Thus, that phrase *"sati ārakkha-sārathī"* shows that both guarding and directing belong to this *sati*.

Next, in connection with that very topic, a good exemplary story uttered by the Buddha on one occasion is mentioned in the Dhamma. On one occasion, the Buddha went for alms to the place where a brahmin named Kasi Bhāradvāja was plowing, at the time they were having their meal. Since this brahmin had no faith, he challenged the Buddha:

"Ascetic, I plow and sow. Having plowed and sown, I eat. Ascetic, you too plow and sow! Having plowed and sown, eat!" Then the Buddha replied: "Brahmin, I too plow and sow. Having plowed and sown, I eat." Then the brahmin asked: "Where is it? This ascetic Gotama says he plows and sows, but I do not see any implement of farming." At that moment, the Buddha, through a series of stanzas, pointed out the set of implements connected to his farming. This is a very striking simile for anyone.

"Saddhā bījaṁ, tapo vuṭṭhi,

paññā me yuga-naṅgalaṁ,

hirī īsā, mano yottaṁ,

sati me phāla-pācanaṁ."

If we put this into English, we can also express it generally as a poem:

Faith is the seed,

Austerity is the rain,

Wisdom is my yoke and plow,

Shame (conscience) is the pole,

Mind is the rein-rope,

Mindfulness is my plowshare and goad.

Faith, then, is the seed paddy. Next, austerity is the rain—rainwater. *"Saddhā bījaṁ tapovuṭṭhi."* Next, wisdom (*paññā*) is the yoke and the plow. *Hirī* means the quality of shame towards sin; that is the pole of the plow: *"hirī īsā"*. *"Mano yottaṁ" — mano* means the mind. The mind is the rein-rope. Then, finally, comes what we need: *"sati me phāla-pācanaṁ"*. The virtue of mindfulness (*sati*) is the plowshare and the goad. They are the ones engaged in guarding, protecting, and directing during activities like plowing. In this simile, the virtue of mindfulness is equated to them.

On another occasion, a certain lay devotee named Sunakkhatta asked a series of questions from the Buddha. In that Dhamma discussion, the Buddha spoke of himself in this manner: "I am the supreme surgeon in the world. This is my task: there is a poisoned dart, a poisoned thorn of craving (*taṇhā*) pierced within this heart. I pull out that thorn and heal the patient. What is the instrument, the forceps, I use to pull out that thorn? It is *sati* (mindfulness). Next, to cut open the wound and remove the thorn, I use the scalpel of wisdom (*paññā*)—scalpel means the weapon. Thus, it was with wisdom that it was completely pulled out and discarded. And it was with *sati* that it was brought to a head and extracted." In that way, *sati* has the nature of bringing things to the surface. From all of these, we can understand the value of *sati*.

Next, on another occasion, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that the Buddha was compared to an elephant. Having compared himself to an elephant, his own inner virtues or the virtues taught by him are shown through the parts of the elephant. Even if we do not mention all of them, the elephant's trunk is compared to faith (*saddhā*). Its tusks are compared to equanimity (*upekkhā*). Its head is compared to wisdom (*paññā*). *Sati* is compared to the elephant's neck. Now, when reflecting a little, even you, meritorious listeners, might wonder, "Why is *sati* compared to the elephant's neck?"

To give an illustration of that, although rarely, some people get to see a fight between a wild elephant and a lion in the forest. The lion is generally regarded as the king of beasts. But on some occasions, the elephant also wins. How does the elephant win? The lion always tries to jump onto the elephant's temples (*kumbhasthala*) without being seen or caught by the elephant. But the way the elephant's body is built and functions is so wondrous that the elephant cannot turn its neck alone. It turns its entire torso along with its neck. Then, its whole attention, full attention, is directed towards the lion at all times. There is no way for the lion to jump then. With great speed, very rapidly, the lion tries to somehow jump onto the elephant's temples. But the elephant very rapidly turns its entire body, not just the neck, and because of this, the elephant wins in such situations. When you look at a macaque or a monkey, they always show a very distracted nature, a scattered mind, turning their heads this way and that. Regarding the elephant, like its other noble qualities, it is said that if the elephant wants to look back, it turns its entire torso. It is mentioned that this quality was specifically present in the Buddha. It is called the "elephant-look" (*nāgāvalokita*); the Buddha turned fully when looking back.

From that, we can understand the reason for comparing *sati* to the elephant's neck. This *sati* means directing full attention to something in an undispersed, undistracted manner. Now, as we said, when maintaining the in-breath, one does not think of anything else. It is within the in-breath itself. Or within the out-breath. Or, in the maintenance of various postures, it is about those specific activities. There is no distinction of big or small for *sati*. *Sati* can be brought out even through minor things. Thus, the Buddha declared that *sati* must be practiced to generate such an undistracted mind. What is the reason for this? When *sati* is well established, concentration (*samādhi*) naturally follows. That is why in the Noble Eightfold Path, concentration (*samādhi*) is placed right after mindfulness (*sati*). For one who develops the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the *sati* developed with effort arises effortlessly in the course of time. Effortlessly, *sati* is always

right next to one. At such a time, one can generate a well-concentrated mind. The nature of a concentrated mind is *sati*; the nature of an unconcentrated, distracted mind is lack of mindfulness. By understanding it in this way too, we can see that this virtue of *sati* holds a primary place among the virtues of the Sāsana.

Thus, in that manner, the Buddha showed the beneficial side of *sati*. It is indeed not a waste. It becomes a protection for oneself—the protection of the mind. It was called *"ārakkha-sārathī"* because it brings protection to the mind, providing guard to the mind. It is this *sati*, this quality of *sati*, mindfulness, that guards the mind. Without stopping at that, the Buddha placed before the Saṅgha amazing, wonder-inducing similes, especially regarding the importance of maintaining mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*). On one such occasion, the Buddha suddenly begins a sermon: "The Belle of the Country, the Belle of the Country (*Janapada-kalyāṇī*)"—and lo, a huge crowd gathers. Making a great noise, a large crowd assembles. This Belle of the Country is skilled in dancing and singing. Therefore, hearing that "the Belle of the Country is dancing and singing," an even larger crowd gathers there. Even today, such things happen, as you can imagine. So, a crowd is assembled in that manner. Next, the Buddha says this: to this place comes a certain man who wants to live and does not want to die, who loves pleasure and hates suffering (*dukkha*). To this man, that crowd says: "Here, we give you a bowl of oil to carry on your head. A bowl of oil filled to the brim. You must carry this on your head right through the middle, between the place where this Belle of the Country is dancing and the assembled crowd." "Belle of the Country" refers to attraction, attachment (*ælīma*). "The crowd" refers to conflict (*gæṭuma*). Where there is a crowd, there is conflict. The idea there is to go free from both attraction and conflict.

So, one must go with this bowl of oil on one's head, in between the Belle of the Country and the massive assembled crowd. But next, who would be following behind you? A man with a drawn sword follows right behind. "If even a little is spilled from that bowl of oil, your head will be cut off right then and there." That was the illustrative story the Buddha gave. Next, the Buddha asks the Saṅgha: "Monks, what do you think? Would that man, who wants to live and does not want to die, abandon his diligence (*appamāda*), fall into negligence, and spill even a little of that bowl of oil when such a threat is following behind him?" Having given that simile, the Buddha declares: "Monks, I have given this as a simile. This bowl of oil filled to the brim is a simile for mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*)." It was the importance of establishing mindfulness directed to the body that the Buddha expressed and taught through this. That mindfulness must be guarded by keeping the mind detached both from the attractive side of the world and from the conflicting side of the world. That is extremely difficult. This is an amazing simile that can arouse even urgency (*saṁvega*) in a person. At that moment, the mind says, "Look towards the Belle of the Country." But then, on the other hand, due to the behaviors of the people, the mind conflicts in various ways. Withdrawing from both, one carries the bowl of oil in that manner. The Buddha showed even such similes. This demonstrates the importance of this *sati*.

Why do we develop these? Why do we do this? What the Buddha brought out through the word *appamāda* was for us to take some benefit from this rare opportunity shown by way of those grounds for urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*). If one hopes to put an end to saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*), one cannot keep putting these things off. Meditation on *Satipaṭṭhāna* should not be restricted only to a limited setting. In daily life, whether by observing precepts (*sīla*) on a Poya day like this, or by making some quiet time in one's daily life, one must make a beginning. It is best to make a beginning by dedicating oneself specifically to this. It can be done to a certain extent in daily life too. However, especially given the current state of society and the restless environment, it is extremely difficult to practice such religious paths in daily life. Therefore, taking a rest in this manner, one must make a special start. This is because establishing this *sati* sometimes has to be done slowly, like a sick person performing physical movements with great difficulty, and often by withdrawing the mind from other activities. Otherwise, it is difficult to establish this *sati*. The mind runs to the past and the future; it runs to various other things. The nature of the mind to be distracted is what we have trained ourselves in for a long time in *saṁsāra*. We can understand this by looking at how wild animals behave. Even though we have obtained a human body, as the saying goes, *"manushya rūpena mṛgāścaranti"* (they wander as beasts in human form), in many humans there are beastly traits and beastly behaviors. Therefore, a special effort, an exertion, is needed. Even if one had developed virtues in past *saṁsāra*, without teachers one cannot derive benefit from those virtues. They are like embers hidden under ashes. Therefore, no matter what one's education is, or whatever one's age, it is mentioned that even seven-year-olds attained Arahantship; if an effort is made, and if there is merit-power from the past, one can very rapidly bring out those supramundane fruits (*lokuttara-phala*) one hopes for and escape from this terrible *saṁsāra*.

As we said before, this Dispensation (*Sāsana*) is an urgent message that must be fulfilled with diligence (*appamāda*). It is not something passed from mouth to mouth or book to book. There are three aspects: learning (*pariyatti*), practice (*paṭipatti*), and penetration (*paṭivedha*). In that way, there is also a part of teaching that Dhamma to one another. But in reality, this Dispensation must be carried forward through association with good spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*).

A spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) is one who, walking on the path of the Dhamma, can give advice to others. For such people, it is not like carrying a basket from hand to hand in the dark; they can show others with reasons how to cultivate and improve these virtues. That is why indeed every person, every Buddhist, if they are to establish the Buddha-Sāsana within themselves, must try to become a spiritual friend to the world in the truest sense of the word, by walking on this path of *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā*. That is indeed something done not only for others, but also for oneself. Regarding *Satipaṭṭhāna*, the Buddha states that one should practice *Satipaṭṭhāna* by reflecting on both others and oneself, keeping both sides in mind. Therefore, this is not something that goes to waste.

To obtain the maximum fruit, the true essence of one's human existence in daily life, one must develop these supramundane virtues within oneself. One must strive to walk the path of the Sāsana starting from the maintenance of *sati* (mindfulness). Then, through this word *appamāda*, we can realize what a valuable Dhamma the Buddha has brought out for us. Similarly, the *sati-sampajañña* declared by the Buddha—the two virtues of mindfulness and clear comprehension (awareness)—usually go together. Awareness along with mindfulness. The Buddha has declared a meditation that helps to develop these two matters. Similarly, regarding the feelings (*vedanā*) associated with one's body, one watches them, seeing that they come, they remain, and they pass away. It is just like watching a guest. Although these are things present with us in our own bodies, we must look at them like the carpenter looking at the wood he is planing, as if looking at something external. It is because of delusion (*moha*) that we do not look at them, thinking we already know them well. Instead, we go to watch various outdoor shows and performances. But the best show, the best dance and drama in the world, can be watched if one applies *sati* and *sampajañña* to look at the maintenance of one's own physical postures.

The Buddha, having spoken about postures, in going and coming, next states: *"Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti, tathā tathā naṁ pajānāti"*—in whatever way his body is disposed, in that way he understands it. Generally, we very rarely reflect on how our body is disposed. But to the person who reflects with proper *sati*, when looking at themselves, they feel: "Am I not performing a play? From the moment I wake up in the morning until I go to sleep, is this not a certain performance?" Through that itself, weariness with *saṁsāra* (*nibbidā*) often arises. That is why the Buddha stated that *sati* should be applied even in the maintenance of postures—not only to the external existence of the body, but also to the feelings (*vedanā*) that arise in the body. This feeling arose, whether pleasant or painful (*dukkha*). In this way, it came, it remained, and it passed away. It is stated that one should look at feelings in that manner to develop *sati-sampajañña*.

Similarly, *saññā* means perception or recognition. Through eyes, ears, nose, etc., various perceptions (*saññā*) are brought to our mind. Various perceptions, mere measures of recognition, come to us. Let us assume that a sound is heard at this moment of speaking. The moment one stops at "it is heard," the sound is finished there. When I speak again, another sound comes. The external sound is also like that. Next, when watching oneself and others in this manner, it is also like a drama. Worldly people waste money in vain instead of watching the best dramas in the world. The best drama is the way this body functions—*kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. And *vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*—how feelings (*vedanā*) come and go. And *cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*—how this mind turns red with lust (*rāga*), blue with anger (*dvesa*), like signboards. How it turns black with delusion (*moha*). The way the mind changes is like the signboards on a road. Next, the thoughts that come to the mind—these come and go! They come and go!! rapidly. How rapidly they come and go! Looking at them in this manner.

In the same way, regarding feelings (*vedanā*), one sees them coming, remaining, and passing away; one remains watching. Next, similarly, regarding thoughts (*vitakka*). Thoughts are what we call mental activity. How diverse and how amazing are the thoughts that flood into this mind in a single day! If only the world could hear them! These thoughts are mostly not spoken aloud. If they were expressed, the world would consider one a madman. The mind is that distracted. The thoughts that come to the mind are so diverse, beyond imagination. Sometimes extremely dangerous thoughts arise; foolish thoughts arise. The way those who succumb to them behave! It is only when people fail to control them that the world separates them as "mad" and puts them in an asylum. But the Buddha saw this entire world as a madhouse. Saying this might be thought of as an insult to great scholars. Just as he said *"ayaṁ loko"*—that the world is blind—the Buddha declares all these worldlings (*puthujjana*), every single one of them, to be madmen, as those who have fallen into insanity. Why is that? Because the worldling's mind is often like madness. Let us reflect in accordance with the term *appamāda*, which is extremely helpful for taming this mind. When the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which started with the contemplation of the body, go progressively deeper, as one reflects more and more on this body, the feelings (*vedanā*) present in that body become manifest. Generally, the world lives between two types: painful feelings (*dukkha-vedanā*) and pleasant feelings (*sukha-vedanā*). The world barely knows about neutral feelings (*upekkha-vedanā*), the indifferent feeling. Worldly people are so immersed in those two.

But gradually, for the person who reflects on feelings (*vedanā*), it becomes possible to grasp not only pleasant feelings (*sukha-vedanā*) and painful feelings (*dukkha-vedanā*), but even that neutral feeling (*upekkhā-vedanā*). In that way, the understanding arises regarding feelings—that they come and go—and their actual nature. Next, one sees how the mind behaves in accordance with feelings—how the mind acts in accordance with greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*).

Next, the thoughts that come to the mind. Paying attention to their wholesome (*kusala*) side and unwholesome (*akusala*) side, the moment an unwholesome thought arises, one has to make an effort to dispel it without delay. If they are wholesome thoughts, one must encourage and reinforce them. That is precisely why Right Effort (*Sammā-vāyāma*) is shown before Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*). Indeed, one has to make an effort, an exertion. This is not something that comes automatically. We have to apply the fourfold effort called Right Effort: to prevent unarisen unwholesome states from arising, to abandon arisen unwholesome states, to bring about unarisen wholesome states, and to maintain and reinforce arisen wholesome thoughts. It is through that very effort that Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*) can be obtained. Therefore, if a person has faith (*saddhā*), applying this effort in accordance with it leads to the arising of mindfulness (*sati*). If the virtue of *sati* is established in someone, that *sati* directs full attention to whatever one is doing at every moment, just like the elephant facing the lion. If the ability to direct undistracted attention is generated, the ability to maintain it continuously and uninterruptedly also arises. Often, in practicing it, *sati* comes and goes. It must be brought up at all times by making a determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*). It must be

brought up through the power of determination. One must not let the mind become weak.

These cannot be obtained all at once. But let us say, "Today, at this moment in the morning, I resolve to practice this *sati*." After five or ten minutes, one does not even remember what happened. Again, sitting quietly, one must bring up that determination. Or else, one can make a determination hour by hour. Or determine every two hours. The moment one realizes that mindfulness (*sati*) has slipped, one brings it up again. It can be done in that way. One has to make a special effort in that manner regarding *sati*. When, by making such an effort, one is able to maintain continuous *sati* uninterruptedly, then, just like pouring oil into a small-necked vial, it is very easy for the mindful person to develop concentration (*samādhi*), a concentrated mind. When a concentrated mind is generated, that is a great power. If that concentrated mind, which is called Right Concentration (*Sammā-samādhi*), is arisen, then, by raising insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) and deeply understanding the actual nature of the world through that concentrated mind—the impermanence (*anicca*) of arising and passing away—one can realize the noble fruit of Arahantship through the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship.

Thus, the entire mass of the virtues of the Sāsana is gathered within this word *appamāda* given by the Buddha. Its beginning, however, lies in this word of two syllables: *sati*. We must try to develop this mindfulness with effort to whatever extent possible, even in our daily lives. Similarly, on a quiet day like this, a Poya day, or by spending several days under someone who guides meditation subjects, making an effort, even with difficulty or taking unpaid leave, one must strive to develop these virtues. The capacity to realize Nibbāna may be present within oneself. Instead of saying "I cannot, I cannot" and remaining passive, if one makes an effort, and if one has some merit-power from the past, one can develop these very quickly. It is not out of mere desire for quick results. But if one applies oneself properly, through these virtues one might perhaps obtain that noble fruit in this very life.

On this occasion, reflect on today. What was discussed here is not about anything else, but about the Buddha-Sāsana. Now, everywhere in the world, one hears about the Buddha-Sāsana. But we presented it in a different way. This message is not merely on the external side. As we said before, it is a message that goes from heart to heart; if the Dhamma does not penetrate the heart, how can we carry it forward? As it is now, these have been limited to buildings. How do we give new life to the Buddha-Sāsana? By painting some paint on the buildings, or by renovating them further. It is through these that they uplift the Buddha-Sāsana. The Buddha-Sāsana cannot be uplifted in that manner. The Buddha-Sāsana is deposited within these three virtues: *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā*. Thinking deeply about this, one must resolve to protect this Buddha-Sāsana with diligence (*appamāda*). The Buddha has declared that association with spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) is extremely rare. Ven. Ānanda on one occasion expressed the value of having a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta-sampatti*) in this manner:

"It seems to me, Bhante, that half of this Buddha-Sāsana is spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇa-mitta-sampatti*)." The Buddha declared: "Ānanda, do not say so. The entire Buddha-Sāsana is indeed spiritual friendship." You too, meritorious listeners, must reflect on that. Therefore, while deriving benefit from those spiritual friends, in order to qualify oneself to also become a spiritual friend to others, one must firmly resolve to walk on this path of Dhamma. It is by doing so that a Buddha-Sāsana is protected.

Today is Poson Poya day. We see that many people observe the precepts. Dedicating a day for that and spending life in this manner engaged in Dhamma sermons and meditation is an extremely valuable virtue of the Sāsana. Similarly, even during the hearing of Dhamma in general, if one listens to that Dhamma while reflecting on it properly, if there is merit-power from the past, in the exact manner declared by the Buddha, one can generate concentration (*samādhi*) through the development of the faculties (*indriya*) of *saddhā* (faith), *viriya* (energy), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom). That is to say, through faith, because of the effort and energy applied to listen to that Dhamma properly, one brings out *sati* through it. During that time, concentration arises in the mind. If, through that, one gains a deep understanding of those Dhamma matters, in such instances, just like when people attained the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) when the Buddha preached the Dhamma, one can even obtain such fruits. That is, only if one does these things properly. It happens in that way to everyone.

Reflecting in that manner, even during this short time today, during this hour, you must generate that joy, thinking, "I dedicated myself to perform this task in order to plant and cultivate these virtues within myself." This undertaking of cultivating the virtues of the Sāsana is the true cultivation—the cultivation of virtue. No matter what other cultivation there is, if there is no cultivation of virtue, there is only decline. Directing ourselves to this cultivation of the virtues of the Sāsana, and through this task, escaping as quickly as possible from this extremely terrible and fearful *saṁsāra*, may we gain the strength and power to put an end to saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) through the realization of the noble paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship, with that noble Deathless, Great Nibbāna! In that manner, one must make such aspirations for oneself.

Similarly, let us share this mass of merit we have accumulated through this preaching and hearing of the Dhamma with the assembly of deities protecting the Sāsana, including the guardian deities of this place, and all those deities who rejoice in such virtues of the Sāsana. By rejoicing in this merit, may they provide protection to this Sāsana, and may they realize the noble, Deathless, Great Nibbāna through their wished-for Bodhi! Let us make such aspirations as blessings for the deities as well. Likewise, whatever worldly beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha expect to share in these merits, including one's own departed relatives, by sharing in these merits, may they be released as quickly as possible from states of misery and reach happy states of existence; and, obtaining the association of spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), practicing Dhamma and meditation, may they obtain the strength and power to put an end to saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) with this

noble, Deathless, Great Nibbāna! Making such aspirations, let us now chant the stanzas and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #137

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.29)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Yathāpi mūle anupaddave daḷhe, chinnopi rukkho punareva rūhati;

evampi taṇhānusaye anūhate, uppajjatī dukkhamidaṃ punappunaṃ ti."

From:

Dhammapada 338 (Taṇhāvagga)

Dear Listeners,

It is precisely to the extent that we realize the nature of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) in samsāric existence that we draw closer to the supreme Nibbāna. It is because of this very reason that the Blessed Buddha has constantly described this samsāric existence by showing its nature of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), in a way that arouses spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding it. All of us wish to be freed from suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). However, the reason we are not enthusiastic about the eradication of craving / thirst (*taṇhā*)—which is necessary to be freed from suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*)—is that we do not realize that this samsāric existence is suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and that this burden of the five aggregates is suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Reflecting upon the lives we have spent in this *samsāra* often helps us to understand this.

When hearing, reading, or seeing the life stories of someone else in past *samsāra*, whether through some supernormal power (*abhiññā*) or otherwise, we should internalize them and think, "Could my life also have passed in this manner?" When thinking thus, a great spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*)—a samsāric urgency—arises within us. In truth, the entire samsāric existence is filled with a series of risky somersaults. Taking birth / arising (*jāti*) in various planes of becoming / existence (*bhava*), going up and down, being born and dying, this samsāric journey is indeed like a series of risky somersaults. The origin story (*nidāna-kathā*) related to the verse we have themed today

is a story that vividly reveals the risky nature and the tragic quality of these many somersaults. Although this story begins in the time of the Buddha, it can be considered a reincarnation story that extends right up to our present day. Therefore, on a day like today—especially on this Poson Poya day, the day we received the Buddha Sāsana—it is a story that helps to arouse greater spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) in us that is connected to this verse.

One day, the Blessed Buddha, accompanied by Ven. Ānanda and surrounded by the community of monks (*saṅgha*), entered the city of Rājagaha for alms. Just as he entered Rājagaha, he saw a young sow (piglet). Seeing it, he smiled. The Blessed Buddha does not smile in vain like ordinary human beings, but rather to bring to light some deep Dhamma principle. Knowing this well, Venerable Ānanda asked the Blessed Buddha:

"Venerable Sir, what is the reason for a smile to arise in the Blessed One?" Then the Blessed Buddha asked Venerable Ānanda, "Ānanda, do you see that young sow over there?" "Yes, Venerable Sir," he replied. "During the time of the Kakusandha Buddha, that young sow was a hen near the assembly hall of a certain monastery of the Sangha. Having listened to a certain practitioner (*yogāvacara*) chanting a subject of insight meditation (*vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna*), even though she did not understand what was being said, she focused her mind on that sound of Dhamma. By the power of that merit, she was born in a royal family in her next life."

We can understand that it must have been the very merit of directing her mind to that subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) that enabled her, when born later in a royal family, to evoke the meditation subject on foulness (*asubha*) called the perception of a worm-infested corpse (*pulavaka-saññā*) upon seeing worms in a toilet. That is to say, when a corpse decays, there is a stage where it is infested with worms. This is a sight that arouses extreme disgust and disillusionment regarding *samsāra*. Thereafter, having gone forth among female wanderers (*paribbājikā*), through this perception of a worm-infested corpse, she attained the first absorption (*jhāna*). By the power of that first *jhāna*, she was born in a Brahma world. The Blessed Buddha was briefly indicating this person's past. Having been born in the Brahma world, now she has come and become a young sow; that is what the Blessed Buddha declared.

As soon as he saw this young sow, that past history became clear to the Blessed Buddha in that very instant. When he spoke in this manner, Venerable Ānanda and the other monks developed a powerful sense of spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding this *samsāra* and craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) for becoming / existence (*bhava*). Next, in a fitting manner, the Blessed Buddha delivered a series of verses. That series of verses is recorded in the Taṇhā Vagga of the Dhammapada. Out of those verses, the first verse is what we have set as our theme.

"Yathāpi mūle anupaddave daḷhe,

chinnopi rukkho punareva rūhati;

Evampi taṇhānusaye anūhate,

uppajjatī dukkhamidaṁ punappunaṁ."

Just as, when the taproot is undamaged and firm (*yathāpi mūle anupaddave daḷhe*), a tree grows back again even though it has been cut down (*chinnopi rukkho punareva rūhati*); likewise, as long as the underlying layer of craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), the latent craving / thirst (*taṇhā-anusaya*)—which is the latency / underlying tendency (*anusaya*) of craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), the most subtle defilement-layer of craving / thirst (*taṇhā*)—is not rooted out (*evampi taṇhānusaye anūhate*), this suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) arises again and again (*uppajjatī punappunaṁ*). Starting with this verse, the Blessed Buddha preached a series of verses showing the perils of craving / thirst (*taṇhā*).

It is mentioned that upon hearing those verses, many in that assembly attained paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). However, the story does not end there. That is what is significant here. Where was this young sow reborn after she died? In Burma, known in ancient times as Suvaṇṇabhūmi. She was born in Burma—what is called Myanmar. She was born in a royal family. Having been born there, she passed away and was reborn in Benares, India, also in a high-caste family. From there she died and was born in the port of Suppāraka, in the family of a horse dealer. Passing away from there, she was born in the port of Kāvīra, also in a merchant family. From there she passed away and was born in Anurādhapura during the reign of King Dutugemunu. In a very recent period, she was born in Anurādhapura in a high-class, wealthy family. Passing away from there, she was born in the village of Mokkanta, south of Anurādhapura, as the daughter of a householder named Sumana, and she was named Sumanā. From there, the story unfolds in this manner.

Around that time, due to the Tamil disturbances, some people had to abandon their villages. Sumanā's father also had to leave that village and go to a village in the south called Mahāmuṇi. Quite suddenly, a minister of King Dutugemunu named Lakuṇṭaka Atimbara arrived at that village. That minister, having seen this lady, felt an attachment to her, married her, and took her to his own village. Around this time, a monk residing in the Great Monastery of Koṭipabbata came to this minister's house for alms. That monk must have been one possessing supernormal powers (*abhiññā*). The moment he saw this lady, he remembered, "Is this not the young sow from the time of the Buddha?" Then he said to the other monks, "Friends, look, that young sow has now become the wife of the prime minister Lakuṇṭaka Atimbara. What a thing!" Whether by word of mouth, or because she overheard those words, or in some other way, that lady—Sumanā—came to know of this. The moment she heard it, the knowledge of recollection of past lives (*jātissara-ñāṇa*) arose in her.

Pious devotees, this knowledge of recollection of past lives is not (necessarily) the supernormal power (*abhiññā*). Just as we often hear today in stories of reincarnation in this country and abroad, many people in their childhood see their past lives to some extent. They remember them. Likewise, that too must require a developed mind. Similarly, this lady saw many of her past lives, even more in detail than what the Blessed

Buddha had briefly declared. At the same time, a great spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) arose in her. Filled with urgency, she pleaded with her husband, the minister, and somehow obtained his permission. Since the Order of Nuns (*Bhikkhunī Sāsana*) was well-established at that time, she went forth as a nun (*bhikkhunī*). Having gone forth, it is next shown that while listening to the preaching of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta at the Tissamāhāvihāra, she attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). Later, this nun returned to the village of Mokkanta, where her father had previously resided, since the Tamil disturbances had ended by then. Listening to a monk preaching the Āsivīsūpama Sutta, she attained Arahantship. So she was an Arahant. Then, at the time of her final passing away (*parinibbāna*), in the presence of both the bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs, placing a monk who preached the Dhammapada in the position of a witness, she revealed all her past histories.

This is shown in greater detail. She declares: "In the past, during the time of the Kakusandha Buddha, just as the Blessed Buddha declared, I wandered as a hen near the assembly hall of a certain monastery. In that period, having listened to the chanting of insight (*vipassanā*)..." we know there was a certain wholesome potential (*kusala-satti*) within it. A certain mishap that occurred there is mentioned, which is highly poignant—it is said that a hawk snatched that hen away and severed her neck. Although she met with such a terrible death, in her next life she was born in a treasurer's (*seṭṭhi*) family, and in the following life in a royal family. It was when she was born in that royal family that, as the Blessed Buddha declared, she saw worms in a toilet and thereby evoked the meditation subject of foulness (*asubha*) called the perception of a worm-infested corpse (*pulavaka-saññā*), went forth among the female wanderers, and attained the first absorption (*jhāna*).

"Next, by the power of that first absorption (*jhāna*), I was born in the Brahma world. Returning from the Brahma world, as the Blessed Buddha described the nature of those ups and downs of samsāric somersaults, I gradually became a young sow at last. What happened after that is what we have already mentioned. From being a young sow, I was reborn in Burma. Then in Benares, then in the port of Suppāraka, the port of Kāvīra, and thus going on, I had two lives in Anurādhapura, and in my final life, being born as Sumanā, I put an end to birth / arising (*jāti*) in this way. Therefore, strive for Nibbāna with diligence!"—thus stirring spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) in the fourfold assembly, she entered *parinibbāna* (final passing away / final extinction).

So, what we have just heard is a story. Such stories are frequently found in books and heard in these times as well. But if we do not take the example that we should from this, it merely remains a story that helps to satisfy our curiosity. As we mentioned earlier, utilizing all these stories in accordance with the Dhamma means applying them to our own lives—that is, internalizing them.

Now, this young sow, who was a young sow during the time of the Buddha, finally passed away as a great Arahant nun in Sri Lanka during the time of Dutugemunu. How many somersaults did she perform in *samsāra* in the interim? Several animal births are mentioned. Even more, having gone to the Brahma world—having climbed so high—she

fell down again. This indeed is the nature of somersaults in this *samsāra*. Under such conditions, no one can truly harbor conceit / pride (*māna*) or pride regarding the pleasures and luxuries they have received, their birth / arising (*jāti*), prosperity, kingship, or treasurer-status in *samsāra*. Why? Where will this pile of somersaults end? As long as one goes on in *samsāra*, one has to undergo various births according to the results of one's own wholesome and unwholesome actions (*kamma*). Not only animal births and human births, but also as hungry ghosts (*peta*), demons (*yakkhā*), and so forth, or in the terrifying hells (*niraya*). Even as those details were being declared in the Buddha's time, a group of monks understood the nature of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) in *samsāra* to such an extent that they attained the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). They developed disillusionment with *samsāra*. Similarly, later on, having heard the sermon containing the personal history of Sumanā as a nun, we can imagine that many people must have realized Nibbāna.

In this society, we often think of animal beings as if they have no relation to us. Furthermore, we frequently hear in these times that even in Buddhist homes, pigs and chickens are not only kept but reared. We do not really know whether they do this out of compassion, thinking of their samsāric kinship. Whatever the case may be, among those animals, even one's own parents or children might have been born. Sometimes, people perform various charities and dedicate merit to them. But those relatives to whom they dedicate merit might be living in those very chicken coops and pigpens! Therefore, we must arouse spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding this as well—our possible kinship with these animals. That is one lesson we can learn from this. Next, although we call them "animals," some of them might be beings who have developed their minds through insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) and so forth in long *samsāra*. Even though those animals have fallen into animal existence due to some unwholesome action (*akusala*), they still possess wholesome potentials.

This is also mentioned in stories about them. Therefore, we should cultivate special compassion toward those animal beings. Next, another point is revealed to us by this: the beneficial aspect of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). Even though a young hen listening to the chanting of a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) does not understand what is being said in that meditation subject, yet such is the power of the Dhamma that if listening to it produces some composure or faith (*saddhā*), this story shows how immensely fruitful even that level of listening can be.

This is revealed to us by the way that young hen obtained her next birth, which inclined her toward the path of meditation that helps in escaping from *samsāra*. From this, we must consider: if even an animal, by listening to this meditation, can obtain such benefits and find help in crossing over from *samsāra*, why are we, who have obtained this precious human life, not enthusiastic about these meditations? In this series of verses, the Blessed Buddha has shown the simile of the tree. As long as the root of the tree—the taproot—is not severed, no matter how much one prunes it, most people only prune this tree of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), without even looking for the taproot. But if one wants to cut the taproot, what needs to be done is this very

meditation, only through insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). That is why the Blessed Buddha has declared:

"Savantī sabbadhī sotā,

latā ubbhijja tiṭṭhati;

Tañca disvā lataṁ jātaṁ,

mūlaṁ paññāya chindatha."

This too is a verse from that same series of verses. These rivers flow in all directions. Then these desires sprout and grow, just like creepers, like vines. These must be cut with wisdom (*paññā*). It is with the weapon of insight (*vipassanā*), which is wisdom, that this latency / underlying tendency (*anusaya*) of craving / thirst (*taṇhā-anusaya*) has to be cut down. That is how we must understand the beneficial aspect of this meditation.

If one hopes to escape from *samsāra*, this craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) for becoming / existence (*bhava-taṇhā*)—which we actually treat as something very minor when we call it "craving / thirst" (*taṇhā*) or "desire"—starts through the sense objects that come to these six doors: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Desires grow along with them. Caught up in our past karmic forces, through a multitude of those karmic entanglements, further planes of becoming / existence (*bhava*) are created. This is what is called *samsāra*. When considered from one perspective, this samsāric journey is a very long journey. We call this the infinitely long *samsāra*. But from another perspective, this samsāric journey is like spinning in one place. That is why it is called "samsaraṇa" (wandering/cycling)—spinning in one place, going in one circular loop. Even in these times, in amusement parks, there is something called a merry-go-round. When a small child is placed on a wooden horse, the merry-go-round spins a few rounds amid a great din and music. This child thinks he is going on a great journey. Spinning and spinning, he comes right back to the same place. Yet, it is as if he went on a great journey. Our journey of life is just like that.

Because this journey goes on for an infinite time, it is called the long *samsāra*. But if wise people contemplate it, what is here is just spinning in one place, in one circular loop. Birth / arising (*jāti*), decay / aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*)—birth / arising (*jāti*), decay / aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*)—that is all that goes on. Because it exists in this way, whatever plane of becoming / existence (*bhava*) one obtains—whether one becomes a king, a treasurer, a deity, or a Brahma—it is not much different from that animal existence, because the fate is the same. There is a beginning; there is an end. And in the middle, there is a massive pile of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*).

So, it is this reality that one must understand through meditation. Indeed, it is something to be understood through meditation. Although in many Dhamma stories, and even in this story, it is mentioned that someone attained Arahantship or paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) simply by listening to a sermon, that does not happen to everyone.

That happens only to someone who has inclined toward the path of meditation in past *samsāra* and done much of that work. For those whose minds are prepared, the realization of paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) can occur through the mere hearing of a Dhamma sermon. However, some intellectuals make an argument out of this, saying that meditation is unnecessary. If one thinks, as some say in these times, that we can be satisfied merely by reading a book or listening to a sermon, that is a wrong view.

In truth, in those days, they attained paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) through hearing the Dhamma because they listened to it with meditative attention (*manasikāra*). Since we often record sermons on devices and think we can listen to them later, we do not show much interest in them. But in those days, when books were scarce, a word of Dhamma was listened to with total attention. What is contained within "listening with total attention"? If we contemplate it in terms of meditation, it is those phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). While listening to the Dhamma, one begins to see how one's own mind operates. First, one directs the mind to the Dhamma. Next, through hearing the Dhamma, one understands how the mind grasps the objects coming to one's senses—in short, the eyes, ears, nose, and so forth. Thus, it is through understanding this subtly that one is able to escape from *samsāra*, that one can cut the latency / underlying tendency (*anusaya*) of craving / thirst (*taṇhā-anusaya*), and that wisdom (*paññā*) arises. For someone who listens to the Dhamma in this way, it truly becomes a meditation, a meditative attention. One who does not have this must train gradually from the very beginning. The practitioner (*yogāvacara*) is the one who is engaged in the practice. The workplace belonging to that person is called the subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*). If "kamma" is taken as "work" and "ṭhāna" as "place," then "kammaṭṭhāna" is the workplace. Therefore, if one has taken up a certain workplace, working in that workplace is what belongs to the practitioner (*yogāvacara*).

Many people are attracted to the numerous reincarnation stories we hear. Often, they only derive curiosity from them. Why? Because they think of it as something that happened only to those people. The Blessed Buddha has shown in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta that when seeing someone's corpse, one should apply it to oneself: "This will happen to me too. When my body decays, it will be like this. When my body is infested with worms, it will be like this." That is what meditative attention is. In truth, it is applying that external object to one's own life and thereby generating spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*). Not only regarding corpses; the Blessed Buddha has preached on certain occasions: "Monks, when you see a very poor, very miserable person, you should think, 'I too have been in this state for an infinite time in *samsāra*.'" When we see a beggar, or a blind, mute, deaf, or deformed person on the street, we either look away or mock them. But we do not think, "In the infinite time of *samsāra*, I too must have spent my time like this according to my kamma. In the future too, it could be like this." It is in that very way, by applying it to our lives on every occasion, that meditation is put into practice.

The Blessed Buddha has declared this as something to be directly realized. This direct realization begins with the understanding of the suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of *samsāra*. It is not difficult to understand samsāric suffering through these

very five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). Inside this, there is a massive pile of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). But it is kept covered.

Now we are in this one posture. After a little while, this becomes a great trouble. Next, we feel like turning. According to that thought, we turn our body to another side. Next, to yet another side. In this way, let us say we spend an hour. But what did we do through this? We covered up the truth of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), preventing it from being understood. We covered up suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Without understanding the painful nature of the body—the nature of not being able to remain in a single posture—we turned this body as we wished. It is just the same with other things. The filthy nature of this body, and the painful nature regarding existence in this world—all of these are covered up for us by this civilization, and also by the conceit (*māna*) present within us humans. The point here is not that we should expose them and throw everything into confusion. But we must contemplate them.

Although it is visible on the outside, this is only the outer skin. It is with the thought "this is only the outer skin" that the practitioner (*yogāvacara*) contemplates, whether going into a city or anywhere else. What are these built as massive buildings made of? Concrete, with some paint applied on them. That is how the power of wisdom (*paññā*) is shown, like the way things below are seen when one has climbed to the top of a mountain. That is to say, no matter how superior or valuable they look, when actually seen, all of these are things that deceive the eye. This *samsāra* exists within a mass of such things that deceive the eye and deceive the ear. If we do not contemplate those deceptions at least on a Poya day like this, we will never be able to reach realization. If even that young sow, though unable to do so during the Buddha's time, came to Sri Lanka and became an Arahant, yet if we who live in Sri Lanka do not engage in sermons and meditation at least in this way and at this time—even in this final period of the Buddha Sāsana—we will not be able to bring an end to samsāric suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) in that manner.

We must bring to light the extremely deep points contained in this verse. There is a great depth in every simile given by the Blessed Buddha. In another verse of this group of verses, a simile like this is mentioned. There, the nature of craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) is shown. This craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) for becoming / existence (*bhava-taṇhā*)—that is, the desire to be born again and again in *samsāra*. Why does one desire to be born so? How hard does one strive to reach the targets one expected in this life? Although one worked hard, sweating, yet when life comes to an end, one sees that those things are not finished. This is just like walking on a new mat; as one side is unrolled, the other side rolls up. In that way, desires sprout and grow.

Under such conditions, when drawing the last breath, one sees: "Alas! My life is a blank. The things I expected in this were not fulfilled." Saying so, one wishes for another life. One wishes for a life according to that desire, that craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). That is called grasping / holding / fuel (*upādāna*). Through that desire, next, it is not necessarily what we wish for that we get. Birth / arising (*jāti*) is received according to the action (*kamma*)

one has performed. It is according to kamma. In Dhamma stories, these pious devotees must have heard many times that at the final moment, according to kamma, one develops an attachment to a mother's womb that is extremely foul-smelling, like an unimaginable pit of excrement, or to a similar womb of an animal, or to the fiery flames of hell. It is through that that one next takes birth / arising (*jāti*). Thereafter, one holds tightly onto that state of existence (*ātma-bhāva*). Even if it is an animal, it is not in the way we look at animals that animals think of themselves. In that way, everyone, according to that birth / arising (*jāti*), holds on as "I" and "mine," and once it becomes "I," the effort to collect more and more as "my things" is indeed craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), those desires. It never reaches satisfaction. Because of this, the journey in this long *samsāra* goes on...

Then, what should be done to cut this craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) for becoming / existence (*bhava-taṇhā*)? One must understand the true nature of these desires. For this, we must first understand what it is that we think of as "I" and "mine." The Blessed Buddha has pointed out that what we grasp are form (*rūpa*), feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These that we grasp as "I" and "mine" are heaps. Not just one. A heap of forms (*rūpa*), a heap of feelings / sensations (*vedanā*), a heap of perceptions (*saññā*), a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—meaning fabrications, those mental paintings—and next, a heap of thoughts of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Every single one of these is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*). They arise and pass away.

This arising and passing away nature is not understood by the ordinary mind. A rapidly spinning wheel appears as if it is stationary in one place. The impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature present within this process of ours is generally not understood. To understand it, one must compose the mind with concentration (*samādhi*), and then direct that mind through meditative attention (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*) to know what the true nature of the things we took as "I" and "mine" is. In fact, the Blessed Buddha has indicated the entire *samsāra* in a single word. Everything we have taken as "I" and "mine," the Blessed Buddha calls a heap of preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). Whatever the meaning of that word *saṅkhāra* may be, if we look for a close Sinhala word, we can think of it as a heap of fabrications, a collection of mental paintings. One can understand that in daily life to some extent.

Now, if the small children, youth, and elderly present in this place contemplate their lives spent so far, they can think of it for a moment like watching a movie. Even in movies, sometimes the upcoming movie is shown running very fast, saying "here is the movie." If one thinks in that way for a moment, from the time one can remember—the period in the mother's womb is not remembered—and thereafter, from the barely remembered age, what we call "one's life," how much have these desires and cravings / thirsts (*taṇhā*) operated within that life? In childhood, desires operate abundantly regarding food and drink, toys, or things we think of as dolls. Next, during the growing stage, in youth, regarding fancy things, and then due to conceit (*māna*), one strives in various ways to achieve targets of social status and prosperity. That very collection of

efforts made to achieve those targets and satisfy those desires is what we call "life." There is nothing other than that. When that collection of efforts is removed, there is no existence here. This is what is called the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*).

Ultimately, the realization that comes is that there is actually no existence within what we think of as becoming / existence (*bhava*) or existence. This is an extremely wonderful thing. So, how to see it? Every single one of these fabrications, these mental paintings, has a beginning and an end. What is in between, we call "existence." We recognize something called "existence." There is a beginning, and there is an end. The portion between these two is what we call "existence." We say it exists. Now let us consider an object in front of us. As far as we can see, what we think of as its beginning is the day we bought it brand new from the shop—a brand new item. So, with that feeling of newness, we do not think beyond its beginning; there is no need to. When that brand new item gradually becomes old, because of our desire for it, we repair/re-fabricate it in various ways. We further repair/re-fabricate that heap of preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). We mend it more and more. Doing so, because of our attachment to it, we do not throw it away, until at last, when we can do nothing more, we are forced to throw it away.

So, it is the very same with this body of ours. This body, which is called a heap of preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), is also like that. To prepare this heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), the action (*kamma*) performed in the past was primarily helpful. Next, through parents, and other food and drink, this created cage of a body is maintained. We take that as "existence." We think "I exist." But within this, there is a very rapid breaking up, which is called momentary death (*khaṇika-maraṇa*). That is understood only by the meditative mind. Until that is understood, one does not realize the nature of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) in samsāric existence. What is needed for that is the aforementioned wisdom (*paññā*), the wisdom of insight (*vipassanā-paññā*), and subtle reflection. It is only through the power of that reflection. We cannot understand suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) by traveling all over the world, or by seeing many humans in the world, or by visiting countries where miserable people live.

Closing our eyes, we must direct our mind to our own five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) and strive to see the impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature of the feelings / sensations (*vedanā*) arising therein, and of the perceptions (*saññā*) operating through them, and the impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature of our thoughts, aspirations, and expectations, which we think of as intentions arising because of them. Likewise, we must focus our mind on the respective nature of what we take as contact (*phassa*). For all of these, reflection called attention (*manasikāra*) helps us. Indeed, that reflection itself is wisdom (*paññā*). Now we have the capacity to reflect on something, to focus the mind; to reflect on something is an action done entirely within the mind, not something given externally. Through that reflection, the true nature of those respective occasions is understood. Now, what often happens is that without reflection, our thoughts move very rapidly, like something caught in a river being swept away—a current of thoughts

(*vitakka*)—one thought being overwhelmed by another group of thoughts. It is a state where one does not know where it starts and where it ends.

That is why one must, in terms of meditation, establish oneself on a certain level of concentration (*samādhi*) and maintain mindfulness (*sati*) regarding the posture of this body, how this body works, and how this mind works, let alone how one maintains the postures. When maintaining postures, because of saying "I stretch the arm, I bend the arm," and so forth, the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) arises in many people. What helps the perception of permanence is this thing taken as "I." Therefore, removing what is here, as the Blessed Buddha declared, we must evoke the preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). Every one of these is a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). To evoke this, it is necessary to be observant of how one spends one's daily life, the activity of one's body, the things we encounter, how our mind works, and so on. That very keeping watch is what is called attention (*manasikāra*)—reflection. If the mind is not applied in that way, what mostly happens is merely being caught in that web of thoughts (*vitakka*) and being pushed forward. Indeed, craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) is called "bhava-netti" (the conduit of becoming). "Bhava-netti" means being pushed forward in becoming / existence (*bhava*), like a protruding forward. We always like new clothes, and we do not throw away the old ones and reflect on their impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature.

Likewise, the world always likes to become new. The Blessed Buddha declares that the entire *samsāra* exists on the side of arising (*samudaya*). Human beings in this *samsāra* look for the sun rising every next morning. But the Blessed Buddha shows that that is not what should be looked at. One should look at where the sun sets. No matter how much majesty, power, or wealth we have, all of these are impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) in *samsāra*. The bliss of Nibbāna is often shown like the setting of the sun. Just as the sun that has traveled the whole day falls into the ocean, everything sinks down. Therefore, we must reflect on this impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature. Truly, what exists in the world is the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*), the perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*), and the perception of self (*atta-saññā*). In opposition to this, we must maintain our attention (*manasikāra*) in a way that evokes the impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) and non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*) nature. Through everything we see and hear in daily life, through every single one of them, we can evoke a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Not only through what is seen in a meditation hall or a meditation center elsewhere, but even from what is seen in a toilet. When that lady was born as a royal princess named Ubbarī, she took the meditation subject on foulness called the perception of a worm-infested corpse (*pulavaka-saññā*) from a toilet. In that way, everywhere in this world, these trees and leaves, and everything, help us to arouse samsāric urgency (*saṁvega*). They help us to always bring out the impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature.

Now, various products are created in this world. They are sold at very high prices. But when looking at their raw materials, they are very minor things. Likewise, the world might think, "Can this path to Nibbāna be evoked from something very minor?" The wise

person extracts the most supreme thing sometimes from what is considered worthless, from a hair of the head, or a corpse, or a skeleton; from these, they evoke the most supreme thing. That is where the value lies. Our viewpoint—if we use the word currently in use, "point of view"—we must adjust the way we look at things. As long as we do not adjust the way we look at things, we remain within the delusion of this long *samsāra*. Ignorance (*avijjā*) is nothing other than not realizing the painful nature (*dukkha*) of this samsāric existence, not realizing the suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of *samsāra*.

When we say "samsāric suffering (*samsāra-dukkha*)," it is not merely that such-and-such disasters happened to so-and-so, or that diseases spread, or that one reaches old age. One must understand that this entire five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*)—form (*rūpa*), feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—bearing this heavy pile of the five aggregates is itself suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). We do not realize this. When there is hunger, there is food; through that, hunger is forgotten. When thirst comes, there is water; through that, thirst is forgotten. When we cannot remain in one posture, we turn to the other side; through that, it is forgotten. In this way, we cover up sufferings (*dukkha*). By covering up suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), one can never understand suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). That is how things are in the world. But the wise person who hopes to escape from *samsāra* does not do any covering of that latent tendency of becoming / existence (*bhava-anusaya*). The latency / underlying tendency (*anusaya*) of craving / thirst (*taṇhā-anusaya*) is, in short, the attachment to this becoming / existence (*bhava*). Craving for sensuality (*kāma-taṇhā*) is the desire to possess respective things and objects. An even more subtle desire is the effort made to maintain this person called "I" in this *samsāra* for a long time. Within that, there is a massive delusion—a delusion caused by that perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). Since whatever collection of expectations and desires this person called "I" had are not finished when life comes to an end, next, along with the last breath, that person expects another becoming / existence (*bhava*). Another becoming / existence (*bhava*) somewhere. One does not even consider the end of becoming / existence (*bhava*) as suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*).

The Blessed Buddha declares a truth that no other religious teacher could state, a truth that no one likes to say. The Blessed Buddha declared: "Becoming / existence (*bhava*) is suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Cessation is peace." Becoming / existence (*bhava*) means being crushed by a burden. Cessation means being freed from the burden, being freed from the burden of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). That indeed is the truth found there. That is why we said that ordinary people in *samsāra* always expect another morning, thinking: "At least today things will go well for me," "At least today I will receive the things I expected," and in that way, they wander in this *samsāra* for an infinite time. But the one who hopes to escape from *samsāra* looks at its impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature, the way these break up. Everything that arises breaks up. If it breaks up, why should I renew this again and again? Why should I expect to evoke these again? Thus they arouse spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding

samsāra. As we mentioned at the beginning, it is to the extent that samsāric urgency (*saṁvega*) and disillusionment with *samsāra* arise that we draw closer to the supreme Nibbāna.

Most people in these times do not like to think about those things. They act in a way that grows this becoming / existence (*bhava*), just like the growth of that tree, like the growth of that vine called the creeper of craving / thirst (*taṇhā-latā*). Similarly, various views and opinions in the world also exist in that very manner. The Blessed Buddha has declared: "Health is a disease... life ends in death." We all wish health and freedom from disease for everyone. But no matter how much we wish it, its end is sickness, falling ill. Likewise, we wish for long life—the blessing of longevity and health. That is a good thing. But we know that no matter how much we wish for the blessing of longevity and health, there is a limit, a certain moment comes when that person has to abandon life and go. Therefore, the things we wish for do not happen in this *samsāra*.

We have related a story involving several lives. The Blessed Buddha declared on one occasion: "Monks, there is no plane of becoming / existence (*bhava*) in which I have not been born in past time, except for the Suddhāvāsa (Pure Abodes)." Suddhāvāsa is a Brahma world where Non-returner noble persons are born. "Only in Suddhāvāsa have I not been born," and the Blessed Buddha also stated the reason for this: "If I were born in Suddhāvāsa, I would not return to this world again." That is to say, because he aspired for Buddhahood, he could not take birth in the Suddhāvāsa. Apart from that, the Blessed Buddha has spent his Bodhisatta period in every state of existence. It was that comprehension of life (*pariññā*) and understanding of the samsāric condition which the Blessed Buddha, out of compassion for the world, preached sometimes through a long discourse, sometimes through a short verse, a line of a verse, a single word, or on another occasion, through a brief smile. This story began with a brief smile. That smile of the Blessed Buddha is not like our smiles. Our smile is something we do when our mind is amused, with a delight in becoming / existence (*bhava*). That gentle smile of the Blessed Buddha is not such a thing. That gentle smile is a certain response shown out of great compassion to make the world understand the painful nature of this *samsāra*. Knowing its meaning, Venerable Ānanda raised the question in that manner. In this story, through the answer given by the Blessed Buddha, many were able to attain the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). Similarly, that young sow connected to the story, having become an Arahant nun and declaring her past histories in more detail, brought about true realization of the Dhamma for a large number of people.

Stories about reincarnation and re-becoming / rebirth are often heard in this country and in the world. How many derive the true benefit from them? To some, this is just like other short stories or novels we write. They do not even have proper faith (*saddhā*) in them. From these, they only get the taste of curiosity: "So-and-so is born in such-and-such a place," and then they also carry out research. If they had directed that research toward the Noble Quest (*ariya-pariyesana*), they could have achieved far greater benefits for themselves. We know that in the mathematical method called geometry, no matter how many problems we solve, if we have not properly learned the underlying principle, the core theorem, we have not derived the true benefit from it. Likewise,

within every word of Dhamma, there is something called the taste of liberation (*vimutti-rasa*). It is that taste of liberation we must bring out, not the taste of curiosity contained within it. However, the world mostly looks to gain publicity from these, to obtain more titles and honors, and to further grow becoming / existence (*bhava*). We are now reminding you that the attitude and point of view held by many regarding such stories must be different. Not much is needed for this. These pious devotees have read the Jātaka stories of the Blessed Buddha from past times. From those too, one can evoke these things. The Blessed Buddha has also pointed out that for some, spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) is aroused more by the past histories of someone close to them, someone they know. One should think about that; then it is easy to apply it to oneself: "Our mother, our child, our father is in this state. Then is this not the same condition for us too?" One must think in that manner.

Especially, let us take the point related to that wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) we brought up—namely, keeping animal beings in homes. Indeed, I do not need to say it specially; these pious devotees know why they do it. Even such people should contemplate: "Our deceased parents and children could be among these beings." In that way, one can arouse a great spiritual urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding the becoming / existence (*bhava*) of the entire world. It is only by arousing such urgency that, leaving aside other activities on a Poya day like this, dedicating the mind to Dhamma, dedicating the mind to virtue (*sīla*), and dedicating the mind to meditation, one can obtain the leisure and retirement to utilize what is the most supreme opportunity received to escape from this entire *samsāra*. Leisure or "holiday" is not something given by the government. A holiday is something we must obtain ourselves. We often wait until we get a holiday from the government. Then we wait until we get a holiday from our job or in other ways. A holiday is something we can obtain ourselves. So, those who have obtained their holiday in that manner are the ones who properly engage in these activities and benefit from them.

We must consider: even though we hold various festivals saying that the Buddha Sāsana was received in Sri Lanka, the Sāsana does not exist through them. The Sāsana exists by these three qualities—virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—living within the hearts of Buddhists. If the qualities of virtue, concentration, and wisdom do not live in the hearts of Buddhists, the Sāsana is dead. No matter how many decorations there are, even if gold is painted wherever one looks, if the inside is empty, there is no use in them. Therefore, it must be because these pious devotees understand this that on a valuable day like today, as much as possible, some have observed the eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*) on this Poya day, and some the ten precepts (*dasa-sīla*), spending the day with meditative attention (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*). It is such people who can especially reap the benefits of hearing the Dhamma. Today, within this one hour, these pious devotees listened to a Dhamma sermon that helps them understand something about their own samsāric nature, about that truth declared by the Blessed Buddha, and about craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) which causes it. Next, they must also think of its opposite. This craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) must be eradicated. This suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) must be eradicated.

What helps in that is the Noble Eightfold Path declared by the Blessed Buddha. These pious devotees have heard many times: *sammā-diṭṭhi, sammā-saṅkappa, sammā-vācā, sammā-kammanta, sammā-ājīva, sammā-vāyāma, sammā-sati, sammā-samādhi*. If we translate this into Sinhala, we can say: right seeing, right thoughts and aspirations, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration of mind. The Blessed Buddha calls "the Noble Eightfold Path" a path capable of making a complete transformation, a revolution of this entire life through these eight aspects. The Blessed Buddha has declared that this is superior to every other path in the world: "Maggan'aṭṭhaṅgiko seṭṭho" (Of paths, the eightfold is the best).

There are various paths in the world—beautiful, wide paths. The Noble Eightfold Path is superior to all those paths. However, this is not something that exists elsewhere in the world. It is a path that must be created, established, developed, and cultivated within one's own heart. It starts from right seeing and ends in true concentration (*samādhi*). It is through that power of concentration (*samādhi*) that, as the Blessed Buddha declared, one is able to understand the three characteristics—the three basic characteristics of impermanence / inconstancy (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*)—present within this entire existence. It is then that wisdom (*paññā*) can be evoked. One should not be afraid of that word "wisdom" (*paññā*). That wisdom operates within everyone—young and old, learned and unlearned—at respective moments through the aforementioned meditative attention (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*), through what is shown in the Dhamma as proper reflection: wise attention / radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Not in a wrong way.

Removing the notions of permanence, beauty, pleasure, and self—called the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*), perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*), and perception of self (*atta-saññā*)—one must reflect in a way that develops the impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature, painful (*dukkha*) nature, foul (*asubha*) nature, and non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*) nature of this. Indeed, even without thinking in an unusual way, when keeping watch over the existence of one's body and the existence of the mind in daily life in the aforementioned manner, one sees that all of these are a collection of mental paintings, a collection of fabrications—preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). There is no end to these mental paintings. No real end. When one ends, we look for new things, calling it "renewal." Why does it become new? Because of becoming old. It is when disillusionment with *samsāra* has arrived that one gets to see that very impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature present within these two—renewal and aging.

No matter how much we pray, "May I receive the Deathless (*amata*)!" as a beautiful phrase, one cannot obtain it through that. It is not something that can be bought from shops. What must be seen within one's own mind is that this entire becoming / existence (*bhava*), this existence, every single bit of it is suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Then, the journey toward that realization is what is called this journey to Nibbāna, the journey of the Sāsana, the Sāsanic existence. Therefore, indeed, the threefold Sāsana—learning (*pariyatti*), practice (*paṭipatti*), and realization

(*paṭivedha*)—ends with the state of realization (*paṭivedha*). That is to say, one learns something. Next, accordingly, one begins to fulfill the practice through virtue (*sīla*). But that ends in what is called realization (*paṭivedha*)—the realization of paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). Therefore, it is through the wisdom of insight (*vipassanā-paññā*) that one is able to realize this supreme, great Nibbāna. Then, all of you should resolve: "May this hearing of the Dhamma help us to transcend all these wishes and obtain the strength and power to realize that supreme, great wish for Nibbāna in this very life!"

On this valuable Poya day, these pious devotees listened to the Dhamma for about an hour. We too have accumulated some merit of preaching the Dhamma. If there are any deities, including the assembly of Devas and Brahmas who protect this Buddha Sāsana, may they all rejoice in this supreme merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma! Rejoicing in it, providing protection to the Sāsana, may they help to sustain this Sāsana for a long time! Likewise, having fulfilled their own supreme aspired Dhamma, may they realize the supreme great Nibbāna through the aspired Bodhi they hope for! Similarly, if our deceased relatives, and any beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, wish to be freed from this samsāric suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), may they all, by rejoicing in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, escape from samsāric suffering in the manner they hope for, and find peace in the supreme, great Nibbāna! Having made this aspiration, recite these verses and dedicate the merit:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #138

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.48)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Dūre santo pakāsenti,

himavanto'va pabbato;

Asant'ettha na dissanti,

ratti khittā yathā sarā."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 304 (Pakinnaka Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Today, on this Poson Full Moon Poya day, we must all bring to mind that historic event where the legacy of the Buddha-Sāsana was received by our island through the grace of the Great Arahant Mahinda. Although Emperor Dharmashoka sent emissaries to other countries, he sent the Great Arahant Mahinda, specifically his own son, to our island due to a special affection towards us and our country. Furthermore, it is in this country that the Dispensation of the Supreme Buddha properly took root, and since the Buddha also visited Lanka, for all these numerous reasons, even being born in this country should be considered a highly fortunate gain. Even though the Triple Gem has appeared in the world, the blessing of the Triple Gem is not received by everyone. It is not something that can be obtained casually or haphazardly. For that, a certain power of merit, a wealth of supporting conditions, and a wealth of sufficing conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*) are required. This aforementioned power of merit is often referred to in the Dhamma by the name of 'virtue of the virtuous' or 'the quality of a true person' (*sappurisa-guṇa*). Within this quality of a true person, there lies an attractive power that falls within the range of the Buddha's knowledge and draws His attention. A verse of Dhamma that reveals this, along with an introductory story that clearly illustrates it, is what we are presenting for today's Dhamma sermon.

Between Anāthapiṇḍika the Treasurer of Sāvatthī and Ugga the Treasurer of the city of Ugga, a great friendship had existed since childhood. This was because both of them studied arts under the same teacher in the same teacher's clan. At that time, in their youth, the two of them made an agreement: when they reached the proper age, married, and had children, if the time came to marry off the son of one, and if the other had a daughter, she should be given in marriage to him. They established this as a sort of pact. Thus, with the passage of time, both of them were appointed to the position of Treasurer (*Setthi*) in their respective cities. One day, Treasurer Ugga came to Sāvatthī with five hundred carts for trade and stayed at the mansion of his old friend, Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika. Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika entrusted all the hospitality duties to his second daughter, Cūla Subhaddā. Cūla Subhaddā was a stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*) lay woman, extremely well-mannered. She, with great care and courtesy, personally prepared food and drinks for Treasurer Ugga and performed all the necessary duties exceptionally well. Her perfect conduct and polite manner generated a great deal of appreciation in Treasurer Ugga. On one occasion, while conversing with Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika, he reminded him, saying, "Do you remember the agreement we made in our youth?" and proposed Cūla Subhaddā for his son. However, no matter how close a friend he was, Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika could not immediately give his consent because Treasurer Ugga was a staunch wrong-believer.

In any case, Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika informed the Buddha about this matter. We can understand that a noble female disciple is a daughter of the Buddha. Somehow, permission was received from the Buddha. He must have seen some inherent law of the Dhamma (*dhammatā*) in this. Therefore, the Buddha had no objection to giving her in marriage, even to a family of wrong view. Accordingly, Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika returned home, secured his wife's consent, set a date, and, with great hospitality and honor, gave his daughter in marriage to the son of Treasurer Ugga. In the past, parents of high-class families, when sending their daughter to her in-laws' home, would appoint eight reputable noblemen to reside in that area to resolve any issues that might arise. Such a story is also seen regarding Visākhā. Here too, it is mentioned that Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika sent eight noblemen along with his daughter.

Since Treasurer Ugga was of wrong view, on the auspicious days of the wedding, just as people nowadays invite the Sangha and offer alms, he invited the *Acelakas* (naked ascetics) whom he regarded as ascetics (*samaṇas*) for an alms-giving. If we explain '*Acelaka*' in words we can understand, they were the unclothed *Nigaṇṭhas* (naked ascetics). Thus, Treasurer Ugga was a disciple of those *Nigaṇṭhas*. So, when inviting these *Nigaṇṭhas* to the house to give them alms, he invited his daughter-in-law to come and pay respect to those ascetics. As soon as she arrived and saw these *Nigaṇṭhas* naked, she exclaimed, "These are shameless people!" and returned in embarrassment. Even though messages were sent repeatedly asking her to come, she did not return. The Treasurer felt angry about this. His anger grew to the extent of throwing her out of the house. Then, when this matter—this lawsuit—was presented to the aforementioned eight noblemen, they decided that it was not even a minor fault on her part. Although the Treasurer was silenced by this, he told his wife, "This daughter-in-law insults our

ascetics as 'shameless people'." Then the mother-in-law asked Cūla Subhaddā: "What kind of ascetics are those whom you praise so much?" At that moment, Cūla Subhaddā beautifully described the perfect conduct and noble attitude of the Buddha and his disciples through a series of verses.

"Santamānasā santaṃ, tesaṃ gataṃ ṭhitaṃ;

Okkhittacakkhū mitabhāṇī, tādisā samaṇā mama."

My ascetics are like this: they possess peaceful minds, peaceful senses, with downcast eyes, speaking in moderation; such are my ascetics. Their going and standing, all their movements and postures, are extremely peaceful. Moreover, their physical deeds, verbal deeds, and mental deeds are all pure. Furthermore, in the face of the eight worldly conditions—gain and loss, disrepute and fame, blame and praise, pleasure and pain—they do not swell with favorable conditions; that is, they do not get puffed up by gain, nor do they let their minds weaken in times of loss, staying free from pride in favorable situations and from dejection in unfavorable ones. Thus, she expressed the vast store of virtues of the Buddha and those Arahants.

Impressed by those words, the mother-in-law asked, "Is it possible for you to show us those ascetics?" Then Subhaddā said, "I can." Subhaddā was residing in a region very far away from Sāvatthī. But what did she do, relying on the power of faith and the strength of determination? She ascended to the upper terrace of the mansion, offered fragrant flowers, and turning towards Jetavana Monastery, invited the Buddha, saying: "May the Blessed One, along with the Sangha, visit this house tomorrow for alms." After making this invitation, she threw eight handfuls of jasmine flowers into the sky. The eight handfuls of jasmine flowers travelled through the air across many leagues (*yojanas*) and appeared like a canopy of flowers above where the Buddha was delivering a Dhamma sermon at Jetavana Monastery at that moment. The Buddha understood this from that sign. At that very moment, Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika, at the end of a Dhamma discussion, invited the Buddha and the Sangha for alms the following day. Then the Buddha said, "Treasurer, we have already received an invitation." Then he asked, "I did not see anyone coming, Blessed One; who made that invitation?" "It was your own Cūla Subhaddā," He replied. When he asked, "How could she invite you when she is so many leagues away?" the Buddha answered that question with the aforementioned verse.

"Dūre santo pakāsenti, himavanto'va pabbato;

Asant'ettha na dissanti, ratti khittā yathā sarā."

"Treasurer, even if true persons (*sappurisā*) are far away, they are visible; they appear to the Buddha-eye." *Dūre santo*. '*Santo*' means that even if true persons are far away, they are manifest like the Himalayan mountain. The Buddha gives a beautiful simile there. No matter how far away they may be, true persons appear to the Buddha-eye just like the Himalayan mountain. No matter how far away the Himalayan mountain is, even if one does not go near it, it is visible from afar as if it were close. Next, He gives the other simile: '*Asant'ettha na dissanti, ratti khittā yathā sarā*'. Untrue persons (*asappurisā*)

do not appear, are not revealed, and are not manifest, even if they are close by. What is the simile given for that? When an arrow is shot in a pitch-black dark night, the arrow might pass right by one's face or ear. Yet, it is not seen because of the darkness. Just like an arrow shot in the night, untrue persons do not appear and are not manifest. Having delivered this verse, it is mentioned that many people settled their minds with confidence and attained states of meditation.

Thereafter, according to that invitation, the Buddha, along with five hundred Arahants, travelled through the air to the city of Ugga. On that occasion, Cūla Subhaddā properly attended to the Buddha and the Sangha, performing all duties, and it is mentioned that she conducted a great alms-giving for seven days. Having heard the Dhamma preached by the Buddha in that city, thousands of people in the city of Ugga became disciples of the Buddha. Because of this, it is mentioned that when the Buddha was returning from the city of Ugga, he instructed a great Arahant to remain and reside in this very city, supported by the patronage and sponsorship of Cūla Subhaddā. Looking briefly at this narrative, we can consider this as an event showing how the Buddha-Sāsana spread to the city of Ugga during the lifetime of the Buddha. Now we must direct our minds to certain points within this that are of doctrinal (*dhammatā*) importance to us. As for the story, if considered briefly, that is all.

Now, we must especially contemplate that such an event occurred due to the power of merit of Cūla Subhaddā. These psychic powers and miracles (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*) are things done through direct knowledge (*abhiññā*) from a concentrated mind. However, on one hand, it is mentioned that when there is intense faith, there is a miraculous power inherent in that very faith. Moreover, on another hand, there is also what is called 'psychic power born of merit' (*puṇṇa-iddhi*); there is a psychic power that comes from merit itself.

Let us pay special attention to this word '*sappurisa*' (true person). In this society, a 'true person' is referred to in a very limited sense. We think that those who are not untrue persons are true persons. But in the Dhamma, a much deeper meaning is shown. A true person is one filled with great merit, possessing past merits and wholesome actions. Moreover, those highly fortunate and meritorious individuals who, having made certain aspirations before Buddhas, have received definite predictions (*niyata-vivaraṇa*) that they will attain such-and-such states at such-and-such times, are called true persons. Then, untrue persons are the opposite of that. Those who do not possess such power of merit, those who lack the wealth of sufficing conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*)—and this wealth of sufficing conditions is itself the past power of merit that leads to Nibbāna. Those who do not have such a thing are called untrue persons.

Now, how do all of you, pious devotees, usually conclude even the offering of a flower or a lamp?

> *"Iminā puñña-kammena mā me bāla-samāgamo;*
>
> *Sataṃ samāgamo hotu, yāva nibbāna-pattiyā."*

This is a verse that everyone recites. In this, there is a highly valuable essence of meaning. Because, what is expected and aspired for here? It is the association with true persons (*sappurisa-samāgama*) that is being sought. *Iminā puññakammena*—by this meritorious deed; *mā me bāla-samāgamo*—may I not have the company of fools; *sataṃ samāgamo hotu*—may I have the company of the wise/virtuous; *yāva nibbāna-pattiyā*—until the attainment of Nibbāna. Instead, may I have the company of true persons until Nibbāna! Many of you, pious devotees, are life-long members (*yāvajīva*) of various societies. What is spoken of here is not 'life-long' (*yāvajīva*), but what is aspired for is 'until Nibbāna' (*yāva-Nibbāna*). This is something extremely deep. Until I attain Nibbāna, may I not have the association of those foolish, ignorant, and untrue persons! Instead, may I have the association of wise, meritorious, and noble beings like the Buddha and other Aryas who are supreme through the majesty of their merit! It is such a great aspiration that is being made.

That is precisely why, as you pious devotees know, when speaking of rare things, '*sappurisa-saṃsevo*'—association with true persons—is mentioned. The association with true persons; that is to say, the association with noble ones like the Buddhas is absolutely essential to realize Nibbāna. Likewise, where the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-aṅga*) that help one become a stream-enterer are shown, four factors are listed: *sappurisa-saṃsevo* (association with true persons), *saddhamma-savanaṃ* (hearing the true Dhamma), *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), and *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti* (practice in accordance with the Dhamma). The association with true persons. It is by relying on those true persons that one listens to the Dhamma: *sappurisa-saṃsevo*. Consequently, *saddhamma-savanaṃ*—hearing the true Dhamma. After hearing the Dhamma, one practices the wise reflection called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). Reflecting wisely, *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*—one practices in accordance with the Dhamma. Thus, the primary aid to practicing in accordance with the Dhamma is the association with true persons. True persons are those who have not merely known and learned the Dhamma, but have put it into action, brought it into practice, and personally realized it. They are able to help others at any given time. That is why those true persons are so extremely important in these matters of the Dispensation. Therefore, what everyone hopes for and aspires to through that kind of verse is indeed that association with true persons.

Now, let us next contemplate how one becomes a true person. To do that, we must keep in mind two pairs of words. Everyone knows them. There are two words called 'wholesome' (*kusala*) and 'unwholesome' (*akusala*). There are two words called 'merit' (*puñña*) and 'demerit/sin' (*pāpa*). Of these, the unwholesome is easy, while the wholesome is difficult. It is difficult to turn away from the unwholesome; that is to say, one must turn away from the unwholesome and enter the path of the wholesome.

For example, in analyzing the wholesome and unwholesome, it is shown that taking life (*pāṇātipāta*) is unwholesome. Abstaining from taking life is wholesome—*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī kusalaṃ*. That is to say, abstaining from killing animals or destroying the life of others is wholesome. These words, wholesome and unwholesome, are the first pair.

The other pair of words is merit and demerit. These are two words familiar to everyone's ears, which we use frequently. Within this lies the secret of becoming a true person. What we must do is, at every possible opportunity, turn away from unwholesome actions and incline towards the path of wholesomeness—doing wholesome deeds. If we look at the meaning of this word, *kusala* means skillfulness. However, according to worldly standards of skillfulness, the world calls various cunning activities 'skillful'. Or else, there is a certain worldly level of skillfulness in mechanical works.

When speaking of these virtues of the Dispensation, what is skillfulness? In this extremely terrifying saṃsāra, turning away from those unwholesome deeds of mind, body, and speech that lead to the path of the lower realms, and walking on the right path—this is what is meant by turning away from the unwholesome and turning towards the path of the wholesome. In one way, it can be stated like that. To explain it in another way, if this saṃsāra is a wilderness, then wholesomeness is that which helps one from getting lost in this wilderness of saṃsāra. Furthermore, it is something that helps one draw closer to the safe haven of Nibbāna. It is abstaining from things that defile one's mind, and properly directing one's mind, body, and speech. For the vast majority of the time, being wrong-believers, associating with untrue persons of wrong views, and acting on wrong understanding out of ignorance and foolishness—as well as out of *Taṇhā* (Craving) that follows foolishness—we have developed various unwholesome habits in our minds. A certain power is needed to free ourselves from those habits.

Now, it is for this very reason that you, pious devotees, have at this moment observed various levels of precepts, from the *Ājīva-Aṭṭhamaka-Sīla* (Eight Precepts with Pure Livelihood) to higher moral virtues. What is done through this is taking a determination to abstain, even with difficulty, from taking life, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and so forth. Behaving wisely according to the understanding that "this is what must be done" is called *sīla* (morality), which means taming and discipline. In that manner, what begins with moral virtue goes all the way to Nibbāna. Accordingly, if we look at what is called *kusala* (wholesomeness) ultimately, it is the skillfulness that helps one cross over this entire suffering of saṃsāra and realize Nibbāna. We have to be responsible for the things we do through mind, body, and speech. If we are not skillful in regard to them, if we are unskillful, we will have to be reborn in terrifying places like the hells. We will have to spend a long time in saṃsāra. Therefore, if we are to quickly end this suffering of saṃsāra (*saṃsāra-dukkha* (suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress)), we must apply our minds to that aforementioned wholesome side.

Next, a pair of words very close to this is indeed 'merit and demerit' (*puñña* and *pāpa*). These are words that run almost parallel to each other. Merit is also a certain power that we generate, that we obtain, through that wholesome skillfulness. The result of that power is what is called meritorious results, pleasant results. Its opposite is called demerit/sin. The terms 'merit and demerit' are more familiar to our tongues.

You, pious devotees, have heard a great deal about what are shown as merits, such as the ten bases of meritorious deeds (*dasa-puñña-kiriya-vatthu*). Generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), meditation (*bhāvanā*), as well as sharing merit (*pattidāna*), rejoicing in others'

merit (*pattānumodanā*), rendering service (*veyyāvacca*), showing reverence to those worthy of reverence (*apacāyana*), teaching the Dhamma, listening to the Dhamma. Next, although one may have right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), there can often be shortcomings in it. Straightening one's view (*diṭṭhijukamma*). That is to say, until one reaches the noble state of stream-entry and so forth, the view one obtains by reading books and listening to the Dhamma is not completely pure. It is crooked. One must make an effort to purify it as well. Every single time we do so, wholesome thoughts, or merits, are generated in our minds. Thus, through these, we become complete in wholesomeness; we become complete in merit. It is to that extent that the previously mentioned virtue of a true person (*sappurisa-guṇa*) grows within us. If we contemplate this virtue of a true person, we can see that other things have come to the forefront in place of those values and noble ethics (*sāradharma*) that our Sinhalese people of the past held regarding merit and demerit. In fact, if we think about it, this merit is like an inexhaustible gold coin.

In this present age, the value of various currencies, money, gold, silver, and so forth decreases due to temporary economic inflation and various other reasons. Their purchasing power is worn away. Nowadays, even though various things are said to be very expensive, sometimes money itself is extremely cheap, because its value has depreciated. Thus, due to economic revolutions and transPreparations in the world, the value of the currencies and coins we use changes. But the value of this merit—the value of *puñña*—is never lost. It is something with an eternal and timeless value. That is why you, pious devotees, have heard so much in Dhamma sermons about the merits we accumulate. As the Buddha declared in a sermon:

"Acoraharaṇo nidhī, kayirātha dhīro;

puññāni yo nidhī anugāmiko"

He shows it as a wealth that is not shared with others—meaning others cannot take possession of it—which cannot be destroyed or lost to thieves, rulers, fire, or floods. An un-stealable treasure (*acoraharaṇo nidhī*), and a treasure that follows one (*anugāmika*), like a shadow. Such is the value of those merits. So one must contemplate these things, especially if one hopes to become a true person.

By drawing close to the Triple Gem and developing an understanding of this Dhamma, one must remain mindful of wholesomeness and unwholesomeness at every moment of one's life. The clue to whether something is wholesome or unwholesome is shown by the Buddha: all unwholesome states spring from the three things in our minds called greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Everyone recognizes these. Everything done through mind, body, and speech that arises from attachment (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) is unwholesome. The opposite of this—meaning if we make an effort to move away from greed, if we make an effort to move away from hatred, if we make an effort to move away from delusion—all of those are wholesome. In brief, that is how it is.

From another angle, considering their results, actions that lead to the downfall of oneself and others are shown. Killing animals, stealing, and so forth are all harmful to oneself and to others. They are harmful to oneself because they defile the mind. Moreover, they cause remorse and regret. One has to go to terrifying places like the lower realms. And there is no need to emphasize that after a being is killed, it suffers pain because of it. So, it has been analyzed in that manner as well. The Buddha has categorized and presented these moral precepts (*sīla-sikkhāpada*) so that one can understand them for oneself and abstain from those harmful actions. He has grouped them into five, eight, or ten, giving them to us to say, "Here, take this and try to practice it; take this and try to practice it." After taking the Five Precepts and practicing them for some time, one says, "I have a bit more strength now. Next, I should observe the *Ājīva-Aṭṭhamaka-Sīla*, or the Eight Uposatha Precepts on Poya days. Next, I must observe the Ten Precepts." Going on in this way, a life transformation might occur, and one might even enter the ordained life. In this manner, the Buddha shows that everything is based on this wholesome and unwholesome. This saṃsāra is a terrifying place. Crossing over from it is true skillfulness. Whatever helps one cross over is wholesome. Thus, concerning the wholesome and unwholesome, it is through them indeed that a true person is formed.

Let us contemplate the other side, using other events in this story. Here, it is mentioned that Cūla Subhaddā generated faith in her father-in-law, mother-in-law, and others by describing these virtues of the Sangha. The virtues of ascetics (*samaṇa-guṇa*). That too is an important thing. The perfection of conduct (*ākappa-sampatti*) is something that helps a Dispensation endure for a long time. The Buddha has declared that ascetics, bhikkhus, must not have the attitudes or conduct of laypeople. In the *Dasa-dhamma Sutta*, it is stated that a monastic must constantly reflect: "*Aññho me ākappa karaṇīyo*" — My conduct must be different from that of a layperson. I must conduct myself differently from the layperson. Pious devotees, that perfection of conduct is a matter regarding one's physical postures and deportment. Here, it is said that Treasurers like Ugga had developed faith in those *Nigaṇṭhas*.

The behavior and attitude of the *Nigaṇṭhas*, however, were extremely low. Among those unclothed *Nigaṇṭhas* called *Acelakas*, some observed the canine vow, behaving like a dog. For instance, Seniya, who had taken the canine vow (*kukkura-vata*), came to see the Buddha, conversed nicely with Him, and sat down exactly like a dog circles around and curls up to sit. They did these things believing that through them, they could become a god, achieve a high state, or realize Nibbāna. The Buddha declared that if one develops the behavior and attitude of a dog, in the next existence, one will end up as a dog. It would in no way help toward Nibbāna.

Thus, out of ignorance, leave alone others, even kings and treasurers, around the time the Buddha appeared in the world, were serving those wrong-believing, naked *Acelaka Nigaṇṭhas*. They were the ones considered as ascetics. Here, in order to shatter that wrong view, Cūla Subhaddā made use of the virtues of the Buddha—the virtues of the Buddha and the virtues of His disciples. She declared a long series of verses describing how even their bodily postures are highly inspiring, extremely peaceful, and that they

possess deeply peaceful minds. Thereafter, as if to prove it, only after the Buddha visited with five hundred Arahants did the city of Ugga become a city completely filled with disciples of the Buddha. Therefore, we must bear in mind that, even when contemplating from the perspective of the Dispensation, what was said about that perfection of conduct is highly important. This perfection of conduct is also not something that arises spontaneously. This—such as the deportment of physical postures—is something one must develop through the fulfillment of virtues, especially through meditation practices such as Satipaṭṭhāna meditation. For the Buddha Himself has shown that this is helpful to the Dispensation. On certain occasions, when there were shortcomings among the Sangha, the Buddha promulgated those things called disciplinary rules (*vinaya-nīti*).

Two reasons are shown for this: "*appasannānaṃ vā pasādāya, pasannānaṃ vā bhiyyobhāvāya*" — for the confidence of the unconfident, and for the increase of the confident. Seeing the misbehavior of some bhikkhus, the Buddha promulgated certain disciplinary rules, saying that such behavior does not lead to the confidence of the unconfident. Furthermore, it could also cause those who already have confidence to lose it. It is clear that the Buddha considered this when promulgating disciplinary rules. From this, we can understand that the existence of this Dispensation—and its progress—consists of the development within our own minds, and the corresponding change in our physical and verbal actions. It is through this indeed that the message of the Dispensation is transmitted. So, when comparing with those other ascetics, during the time of the Buddha, the mere sight and association of the Buddha and other noble members of the Sangha were sufficient for many to develop faith. In that manner, the appreciation of wise people is not the mere blind faith of ordinary foolish persons.

The Buddha Himself has stated this: "*Garahā va viññūhi yañce bālappasaṃsanaṃ*" — Better is the censure of the wise than the praise of fools. The censure of the wise is far better than the praise of fools. Therefore, the values of this Dispensation are not those things that are considered popular and please ignorant, foolish worldly people. The values of the Dispensation consist of behaving and conducting oneself in a manner suitable to fulfill the virtues of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Therefore, the point shown in this story regarding the perfection of conduct is also highly important. If we look at the present state of the Buddha-Sāsana, we see a serious lack of noble values (*sāradharma*) in society. '*Sāradharma*' is a word frequently used by many people nowadays. Noble values mean the core, the heartwood, or the ultimate purpose of life. They set various goals in life, some of which are short-term. To accumulate as much wealth as possible, by hook or by crook, or to attain high positions through various irregularities. Many people set such goals in their lives.

But the noble values highlighted by the Buddha are the Seven Noble Treasures (*sapta-ariya-dhana*) shown in this Dhamma. The Buddha has revealed seven noble treasures. Whether lay or ordained, these are seven valuable treasures with which one in this Dispensation can find true solace:

> *"Saddhā-dhanaṃ, sīla-dhanaṃ, hiri-ottappiyaṃ dhanaṃ,*

suta-dhanañca cāgo ca, paññā ve sattamaṃ dhanaṃ."

The first treasure is faith (*saddhā*). Without this treasure of faith, one cannot make this journey of the Dispensation. Faith is something that is also connected with the heart. No matter how scholarly we may be, we cannot ignore the heart. Some people, thinking in terms of rationalism, are inclined to search for truth by drowning in various debates and arguments. But when a Buddha appears in the world, the Buddha Himself declared: "I am the all-knowing supreme one of the three worlds." Thus, if someone cannot develop faith in Him, that is a serious deficiency. If one cannot establish faith where faith should be established, it is a great shortcoming. On the other hand, its importance is shown in that faith is the foundation of all activities in the Dispensation. The simile given for it is an elephant's trunk. With its trunk, an elephant can perform heavy tasks, and with the tip of its trunk, it can perform delicate tasks. The trunk is also that animal's primary organ. Likewise, among the virtues of the Dispensation, faith in the Triple Gem is primary. Faith in the enlightenment of the Buddha, and the leading-out character (*niyyānikatā*) of the Dhamma—meaning that if this Dhamma has been taught for a specific purpose, when it is put into practice, that purpose is fulfilled; it works.

Next, the Sangha. The Great Noble Sangha of eight noble persons are like eight lamp-posts on this path of practice. They are a group of people who demonstrate that one can reach the state of Nibbāna by walking along this Noble Eightfold Path. That is why we revere them as the Triple Gem: Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. The faith in that Triple Gem. It is by the power of that very faith that one, as the first step on that path, descends into the practice called *sīla* (morality). Particularly in this day and age, even though people have the external appearance of humans, it is difficult to recognize if they are truly human. Because what the sages of the past said is becoming more true: "*manusya-rūpeṇa mṛgāścaranti*" — they roam about in human form but with the nature of beasts. Furthermore, in human form, they sometimes behave like demons (*yakṣas*) and hungry ghosts (*pretas*), even worse than beasts. They have degenerated to that extent. Thus, the deficiency here, the primary deficiency, is morality (*sīla*). Because they have not properly disciplined their physical and verbal behavior, they have drawn dangerously close to the animal world, and close to the state of demons and hungry ghosts. Therefore, the treasure of faith is developed.

Next, morality (*sīla*). In the one who protects this morality, there arises a sense of shame regarding demerit—the aforementioned *hiri* and *ottappa*. One develops a sense of shame, like a disgust, toward committing demerit. A nature where the mind shrinks away from them. Next, *ottappa* means that one develops fear by contemplating the resulting side of that demerit. Ordinary worldly people think, "I am not afraid." Considering fearlessness as a great achievement, and considering shamelessness as an achievement. You know the stories this society tells. There is a society that regards a shameless person as a very great person. What is spoken of here is that it was by regarding the shamelessness of those *Nigaṇṭhas* as an achievement that the treasurers' appreciation was generated.

But in the person who guards morality, these virtues called *hiri* and *ottappa* are developed as divine qualities (*deva-dhamma*). It is through that indeed that one receives protection in a society, in social life. An ability to live is received, preventing society from degrading to an animal level. *Hiri-ottappiya-dhanaṃ*—the treasure of shame and fear of wrongdoing. To the extent that they arise, they become a treasure for oneself, and one draws closer to Nibbāna.

Next, a similar thing is *suta* (learning). Learning means Dhamma knowledge. One must obtain an understanding of the Dhamma, either by listening with the ear or by reading from a book. If someone thinks that he knows everything and that this will arise spontaneously through self-awakened knowledge (*svayambhū-jñāna*), that person might not even want to open his eyes from that blind wrong view for his entire life. There are such people in society. Thus, when it is said that a Buddha is born, many are inclined to go to Him out of the immense faith that arises. They are drawn to the Dhamma from Him. Even if they do not have direct contact with Him, in this present day, even in Western countries, despite whatever shortcomings there may be in books containing the Dhamma, wise people see some portion of the Dhamma that they can comprehend, and have opportunities to transform their entire lives. Such is the Word of the Buddha. Even if it is not volumes of books, sometimes a small sentence, a small word of Dhamma that touches the heart, is capable of causing a complete life transformation. Why is that? Because it is that very Buddha-power that is present there. Therefore, *suta* means Dhamma knowledge. One must make an effort to develop that as well. Nowadays, pious devotees like to listen to many things. Indeed, we do not need to elaborate on the things that these pleasure-seeking lay devotees listen to. But you must contemplate that if you hope to live a good life, shorten this saṃsāra, and bring an end to the suffering of saṃsāra (*saṃsāra-dukkha* (suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress)) as quickly as possible, you must make an effort to gain an understanding of the Dhamma. And behave in a way where you can reflect wisely with wisdom to understand what is true and what is false.

Next, an equally valuable thing is *cāga* (generosity/renunciation). Giving up/generosity is also described in the Dhamma as a noble value, a valuable treasure. When generosity is called a treasure, one might wonder: how can this be a treasure? Now, in giving alms, a giving up is performed. So, when alms are given, what truly remains for oneself is indeed this treasure of generosity (*cāga-dhana*). When thinking about it a little, it is seen that after giving alms, some people find solace thinking, "Due to the alms I gave, I will receive such-and-such things in the future." That is merely a thought; it has not been received yet, even though it will be received in the future. But the gain received at that very moment of giving alms is indeed that aforementioned power of generosity. The power of letting go. This is shown as a treasure. Because even in daily life, the one who lacks the power of letting go often falls into disaster. To give one example, when a serious disaster or loss occurs unexpectedly, or when houses burn down, or when one's wealth is destroyed, some people drink poison. Some people, upon hearing of it, die of a ruptured heart. Such things happen because they have not accumulated that treasure of generosity (*cāga-dhana*). No matter how much wealth and treasure is deposited in banks, if the

treasure of generosity is not deposited within the mental continuum (*citta-santāna*), and if there is no ability to think, "It is better that this is gone," then that person falls into ruin. That wealth is not a true treasure. That is why, when looking at the noble values of the Dispensation, this quality of generosity (*cāga*) is something that must be developed. One must practice letting go by giving to the poor, travelers, beggars, and the needy at various times according to one's own means. Because, ultimately, we will have to let go of all of this if we are to escape from this saṃsāra.

The Buddha declares that we must let go of everything we are grasping with the mind, namely the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*): form (*rūpa*), feeling (*Vedanā* (Feeling)), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*Saṅkhāra* (Preparations)), and consciousness (*viññāṇa* (consciousness)). Prior to that, the letting go of one's external possessions is important. Even the Buddha, during His days as a Bodhisatta, began His letting go with the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramitā*). Just as He let go of those things, next, gradually, regarding actions that are pleasant to oneself, actions done by body and speech. If one likes to lie, or likes to backbite, one lets go of those too. In that journey of letting go, finally, one descends into meditation. For meditation, one has to perform many special acts of letting go; sometimes one even has to let go of the lay life and enter the ordained life. Sometimes, depending on the situation, one even has to go to the forest. In whatever way, one must be prepared for that letting go. If one thinks that one can go along while holding on to this without letting go, that is a delusion. It will not be complete. Because it is close to that generosity, that letting go, that wisdom is found—within the power of letting go.

That is indeed what is shown ultimately: *paññā ve sattamaṃ dhanaṃ* — wisdom is the seventh treasure. Then, one must contemplate that no matter how much wealth is accumulated, if our mind is covered in ignorance and shrouded in the darkness of delusion (*moha*), that person has not taken advantage of this life. If, by drawing close to the Triple Gem, walking on this path of practice, starting with faith in the aforementioned way, bringing close this collection of noble values, and finally obtaining insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), one then attains the noble state. Then, we cannot obtain the noble treasures without walking on the Noble Path. Without walking on the Noble Eightfold Path, the noble treasures cannot be obtained.

This very word *ariya* (noble) is something we must contemplate as a valuable thing. To distinguish these virtues of the Dispensation, and to differentiate them from other religions, this word *ariya* is used. Two words are shown: noble (*ariya*) and ignoble (*anariya*). Through this Dhamma presented by the Buddha, at the end of the complete transformation that occurs in a person, one is freed from that mundane state and reaches the supramundane state (*lokuttara*). The supramundane means generating the power to escape from this saṃsāra within our mental continuum. Those states called stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), non-returner (*anāgāmi*), and arahant mean that the mind does not return to that saṃsāra of *jāti* (birth / arising), *jarā* (decay / aging), and sickness; and to help achieve that, cultivating and developing these

aforementioned noble values, or virtues beginning with faith, in one's mental continuum is required. Developing them. Therefore, one must be particularly mindful of that.

Now, this is the Poson Poya day. A large number of people have observed valuable precepts at this moment. One must contemplate the value of each of those training rules (*sikkhāpada*). That is the greatest solace. As mentioned before, *virati* is abstaining and turning away. One has determined to abstain from those wrong actions like taking life, stealing, and so forth. Because this determination is made with one's own wisdom, one receives the power to withdraw from situations that tempt one to commit them. This is something that must be done gradually. By protecting the Five Precepts daily, and then by protecting the Eight Precepts on Poya days, one gradually becomes more and more practiced in disciplining the body and speech. Only the person who has developed morality in that way can generate a certain consoling situation, a state of quietude and leisure.

Many people say they have no leisure or time for meditation. This leisure and quietude is not something given by the government, nor is it something obtained merely by going entirely to a forest. Ultimately, if we look at it, this is mental quietude and leisure (*citta-viveka*). So, one must begin to generate that mental quietude by disciplining the body and speech. If virtues like morality are developed, allowing one to direct the mind to a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) without remorse, then that person obtains a certain quietude and leisure through that alone. Next, by calming the mind, there lies within the mind the power to understand the reality of the world. A Buddha does not speak of doing something impossible. That is why the Buddha states on many occasions: "Monks, if it were not possible to let go of these unwholesome states, I would not tell you to let go of them. It is because it can be done that I tell you to do so." In that manner, as if urging us, the Buddha declared. Thus, in this way, there is within our mental continuum the power to understand this world. But it is covered by those aforementioned defilements—the defilements we have practiced for a long time in saṃsāra. There are many habits regarding body, speech, and thoughts; all of these must be gradually broken down, like removing rust. Thus, at the level of morality (*sīla*), one pile of rust is removed. Next, *samādhi* (concentration) means settling the mind on some wholesome object. It could be loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*)—the thought, "May they be well and happy!" Or else, recollecting the Buddha (*buddhānussati*)—words like "Bhagavā", "Arahant". It means keeping the mind on some meditation subject for a long time without allowing other thoughts to enter. Because the very nature of the mind is to go about catching hold of thoughts. Through that, the power of the mind is weakened. One cannot see the power of water in a scattered lake. One cannot see the force within the water. It is when they are gathered together and directed through pipes that one understands there is a massive force in this water.

Just like that, letting go of this nature of thoughts running here and there, holding the mind on a single object—a single wholesome object—can be accomplished. For that, a certain training must be done from a young age. For anyone, considering this state of society, the word "May you be well and happy!" is easy. One trains the mind by reciting it constantly, whether audibly or silently. One tries to live in that state for as long as

possible. Likewise, when various things that support hatred arise in society, one brings this to mind. In that way, one receives great solace from it. Gradually, when the mind is calmed in that way, this concentration (*samādhi*) helps one to simultaneously become awake to the reality of this world.

Next, if we consider in terms of insight (*vipassanā*), the Buddha shows that by constantly being mindfully attentive to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)—regarding this body, feelings, the mind, and thoughts/mental objects that come to the mind—one receives the ability to understand them. In that manner, also through insight. Ultimately, the Buddha shows that this entire saṃsāra is *Dukkha* (Suffering). To the Buddha-eye, it appears that there is nothing here worth taking. All other teachers removed a part of this and said, "This part is good." They did not understand the true nature of suffering (*dukkha-sabhāva*) in this saṃsāric existence. Only the Buddha declared a true solution—a solution that is not found in the heavens, the Brahma-worlds, or anywhere else.

Therefore, what must be done is: if we are to end all of this *jāti* (birth / arising), *jarā* (decay / aging), sickness, and death, we must eliminate repeated birth. To eliminate this, we must eliminate the desire for repeated birth. Because as long as there is *Taṇhā* (Craving), we desire everything, obtain it, and try to acquire it. Then, we must understand the dangers of *taṇhā*. The more one wishes for another *Bhava* (Becoming), the more one receives it. Then, to help eliminate that wishing, reflecting wisely on the true nature of this life and reflecting wisely on the true nature of the body helps generate disenchantment (*nibbidā*) in the mind. Many people are afraid of this word 'disenchantment'. Particularly, lay devotees might be afraid of it. But it is through disenchantment, denoted by the Pali word *nibbidā* shown by the Buddha, that one ultimately draws close to this wisdom. If we are to bid farewell to this saṃsāra, we must make an effort to understand for ourselves the suffering-laden nature of this saṃsāra. For many people, it is only when they lose their loved ones, or when other disasters and losses occur, or when sickness and suffering strike, that they understand this as *Dukkha* (Suffering).

Therefore, they put patches on these, somehow repair them, and try to drag this along further in saṃsāra. That is precisely why the Buddha shows that whatever suffering arises, it all arises because of *saṅkhāras* (preparations / Preparations / volitional activity). What the worldly people do is prepare and prepare, trying to remain right here. The Buddha presents the peace obtained by the very stilling of this preparing as the final goal. A word is shown in the Dhamma: *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). In this saṃsāra, there is a nature of creating kamma within our minds. According to the aforementioned greed, hatred, and delusion, various kammas are accumulated through mind, body, and speech. Through those forces of kamma, repeated births are given to us, sensations and feelings are given to us. So ultimately, the Buddha shows that going on in this way, no matter how much merit is made, one cannot experience eternal happiness in the heavens or the Brahma-worlds. As soon as the merit is exhausted, one returns to those lower realms and so forth. Since such a dangerous state exists in saṃsāra, the solution given by the

Buddha is to bring the mind to the end of the entire saṃsāra. That is to say, if this suffering arises due to *Taṇhā* (Craving), then by understanding the dangers of *taṇhā*, this thirst, these desires, must be stilled. To that end, the aforementioned meditation is helpful. Gradually, one lets go of external possessions. Next, there are various other things that grasp the mind. Merely by letting go of external possessions, one's mind is not freed. It creates thoughts about them; it creates concepts (*papañca*). Gradually calming all of those, finally through insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), one sees that all of these arise and pass away. One must make an effort to understand at one's own level that within this body's inhalation-exhalation process, the maintenance of postures, the consumption of food and drink, and all these things done throughout the day, there lies nothing but the arising and passing away shown by the Buddha. Through this arising and passing away, one must make an effort to understand the law of impermanence (*Anicca* (Impermanent)) shown by the Buddha.

So, when this matures deeply at some point, it is seen that this is extremely terrifying—it is like a dance on a burning iron plate. Let us say that nowadays foreigners like to see theatrical shows in various countries. If someone is dressed up nicely and made to stand on a heated iron plate, from afar it might appear to be a dance. This is exactly like that dancing. It is because of that pain and problem that they move their limbs here and there. But to the world, it looks like a dance. We must realize that all this dancing we do is just like that. When we think about it, even those theatrical shows are like thrashing about in madness. That is why there is a saying deeply shown by the Buddha, which artistic people nowadays might not like very much: "*Ummatthakamidaṃ naccaṃ*" — song is like weeping, and dance is like madness. So why does the Buddha show it in this way? To the one who contemplates deeply, who develops this through insight (*vipassanā*), it is seen that every activity in the world is merely a heap of movements, a multitude of movements. According to the gratification derived from this, we call it a dance. What is actually there is a thrashing about; they thrash about because of the heated surface. That thrashing about appears from afar—and if one wishes, it can even be recorded on a camera—as looking like a dance. Thus, it is of such a nature.

Even if the world does not have this kind of understanding, one understands these things for oneself at various levels. It is through these indeed that the terrifying nature of saṃsāric existence is comprehended. According to that comprehension, that *Taṇhā* (Craving) within the mind is gradually worn away. Just as fire is never satisfied no matter how much firewood or straw is given to it, but only increases more and more, such is this saṃsāric existence. Many people, in order to satisfy *Taṇhā* (Craving), pass exams in this life, accumulate as much wealth as possible, and attain positions; yet, no matter how much they receive, there is no satisfaction in any of it. When they do something, they feel: "I need a little more, I need a little more." That is why the Buddha declared: "*Ūṇo loko atitto, taṇhā-dāso*" — The entire world is always suffering from some deficiency. *Ūṇo loko* — there is some deficiency in the world; it is never filled. Moreover, *atitto* — it never reaches satisfaction; it is a slave to *Taṇhā* (Craving). Everyone in the world is a slave to *Taṇhā* (Craving). From that point, to still that state of *taṇhā*, first of all, on a small scale, one gives away what belongs to oneself. Going on and

on in this way, ultimately, by removing all those aforementioned defilements in the mental continuum, one generates the power to be freed from the five aggregates: form, feeling, perception, Preparations, and consciousness. That indeed is what is called this Dispensation. The Buddha has introduced the path that ends this entire saṃsāric journey and brings solace through the supreme, deathless Nibbāna, by the name of the Buddha-Sāsana. Therefore, if we are to carry forward this Dispensation, we must begin with morality, develop the mind with concentration, and culminate it with wisdom, in this very manner; our aspiration being the aspiration for Nibbāna.

Therefore, today, everyone has observed a valuable precept according to their own level and capacity, and has listened to the Dhamma for about an hour at this moment. We hope that through this Dhamma sermon, you were able to develop some understanding regarding those aforementioned noble values in your own mental continuums. It is in lives spent without any purpose in daily life that great, terrifying disasters occur. There is no understanding of life's purpose, noble values, and so forth. Therefore, by understanding those Buddhist noble values, and by listening to sermons and meditating in this way, you must act as good Buddhists to ensure that this Buddha-Sāsana endures for a long time. Furthermore, you must make an aspiration: may this accumulated mass of merit, and this mass of wholesome mental states generated at this moment in terms of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), serve as a cause to bring to light your aforementioned quality of a true person (*sappurisa-guṇa*), your power of merit, and your wealth of sufficing conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*); to make your respective meditations successful; and to realize supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and Arahantship!

Likewise, if there be any assembly of Devas and Brahmas who protect the Dispensation, may they all rejoice in this mass of merit accumulated by us through the teaching and hearing of the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they grant us the opportunity to continue our activities for the Dispensation! Similarly, including our departed relatives, may all beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who desire merit and Nibbāna rejoice in these merits, be freed from all saṃsāric suffering, and find solace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! With that aspiration, recite this verse and share the merits!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #139

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.50)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Na hi verena verāni,

sammantīdha kudācanaṃ;

Averena ca sammanti,

esa dhammo sanantano."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 5 (Yamaka Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Attachment as well as conflict can be identified as mental forces that cause beings to encounter one another repeatedly in this saṁsāra. We all know that attachment or desire possesses an attractive force. In the same way, this conflict is what brings two individuals together repeatedly in the long course of saṁsāra, due to a certain attractive force inherent in the intention of revenge. Once the mind is corrupted to the state of harboring hatred as anger intensifies, the intention of revenge arises, followed by a mutual desire for retaliation. The Blessed One, using an illustration, taught a stanza showing that this retaliation does not end with one or two instances, but becomes an endless competition in the long saṁsāra. This is the very stanza we have chosen as our theme.

In Sāvatthi, a certain young man, after his father passed away, looked after his mother by performing all the work in the house and the fields himself. Recognizing that her son was exhausting himself alone, the mother thought of arranging a marriage for him. When she proposed this, the son objected, saying, "As long as my mother is alive, I will remain as I am." However, as the mother repeatedly urged him, the young man fell silent. Next, the mother prepared to visit a certain house to make a marriage proposal. At that moment, the son redirected her attention, saying, "There is another family that I prefer more."

The mother went accordingly, brought the young woman, and married her to her son. However, it was revealed that this young woman was barren. Therefore, the mother later told her son, "I arranged a marriage for you from the place you preferred. But she is barren, and a family without children will perish. The lineage cannot be continued. I shall bring you another wife." The son objected to this. But the barren wife overheard this conversation. She reflected: "If she brings another wife by some means, that woman will bear children and become the mistress of this household, and I will have no place. Therefore, I must manage this matter myself." With this cunning thought, she went to a certain house and said, "I am a barren woman. Give us a daughter from here to be a wife to my husband." When they objected and questioned her intentions, she presented her reasons, saying, "A family without children will perish, and that is why."

In one way or another, she persisted, brought that young woman, and handed her over to her husband. But what was the secret thought in her heart? "If this woman somehow becomes pregnant, I must take measures to prevent it." Thus, acting in a very friendly manner, she told her, "When a child is conceived in your womb, let me know." The other woman, completely unaware of her motive, informed her when she conceived. What did the barren woman do? She mixed an abortifacient drug into her food and gave it to her. Consequently, the child was lost. In the same manner, she destroyed the second pregnancy of that woman as well. Meanwhile, the neighboring women inquired about this matter and told the second wife, "Why are you so foolish? Your co-wife—according to the social customs of India at that time, women who shared the same husband were called co-wives—is the one doing this. Therefore, do not inform her when you conceive next time." Because of this advice, she did not inform her on the next occasion. As the pregnancy advanced, the co-wife asked, "Why did you not tell me?" The second wife replied, "You brought me here and twice caused me great suffering (*dukkha*). Why should I tell you?" Nevertheless, the barren woman managed to slip the same drug into her food. Since the pregnancy was in an advanced stage, the second wife was thrown into severe labor pains and met her death.

At the moment of death, harboring intense hatred and deep anger, she made a resolution—it was like a curse: "May I be reborn as a she-demon with the strength to devour you and your children!" With that very thought, she died in immense pain. After her death, she was reborn in that very house as a cat. Later, the husband beat the barren wife severely, saying, "Because of you, my family has been destroyed." Due to the injuries from that beating, she died and was reborn in that same house as a hen. The cat would come and eat the eggs laid by the hen. When the cat ate her eggs two or three times in this manner, the hen conceived deep hatred towards her, and at the moment of death, resolved, "I must devour you and your children!" Harboring such hatred, she died and was reborn as a leopardess.

Later, the cat died and was reborn as a doe. The leopardess would come and devour the fawns born to the doe. This happened three times. Then, the doe made a resolution of hatred in the same manner: "May I be reborn as a she-demon and devour your children!" Reflecting thus, the doe died and became a she-demon. After the leopardess died, she was reborn as a young woman in Sāvatthi, and upon reaching the proper age, she

married and gave birth to a child. On that occasion, the she-demon arrived at the very moment of birth, pretended to examine the baby, devoured it, and left. This happened a second time as well. Consequently, when she was about to give birth to a third child, the woman told her husband, "A she-demon comes to this place and devours my children. Therefore, let us go to my parents' home." Thus, she went with her husband to her parents' house as the birth drew near. Meanwhile, as recorded in the accounts of these non-human beings, there is a figure named Vessavaṇa. Vessavaṇa is the lord of the yakkhas. From time to time, he assigns she-demons water-carrying duties as a form of punishment. This she-demon too had been assigned her turn to carry water. Because of the delay caused by this duty, the woman had the opportunity to go to her parents' home and safely give birth to her child.

Later, having been released from her water-carrying duty, the she-demon came searching. Disguised as a friend, she asked, "Where is our dear friend?" The neighbors replied, "She has gone to her parents' home to give birth, because there is a she-demon in this place." Thinking, "No matter what, you will not escape me," she ran swiftly towards Sāvatthi. Coincidentally, that very day was the naming ceremony for the newborn child. Having bathed and named the child, the woman told her husband, "Let us go home now," and they set out on the path passing through the Jetavana monastery. On the way, the woman bathed in the pond located within the Jetavana grounds and sat nursing her baby while waiting for her husband to finish bathing. At that very moment, she saw the she-demon approaching. Seeing this, she screamed to her husband, "Here comes the she-demon!" Since her husband delayed in coming, the woman took the child and ran desperately towards the monastery.

At that moment, the Blessed One was preaching the Dhamma to a large gathering of the Sangha. The woman ran in, placed her child at the feet of the Blessed One, and cried, "Blessed One, I offer this child to you. Please grant him his life!" At that juncture, it is mentioned that the divine king Sumana—who is none other than Saman Deviyo of our Sri Pada region—was guarding the gate of Jetavana. That deity did not allow the she-demon to enter. However, the Blessed One instructed Venerable Ānanda, "Go and summon the she-demon." When the she-demon entered, the woman became terrified. The Blessed One said, "Do not fear, be silent." Then, the Blessed One addressed the she-demon, "Why do you attempt to appease hatred with hatred in this manner? Hatred is never appeased by hatred. Had you not encountered a Buddha like me, your hatred would have persisted for an eon, just like the mutual hatred between crows and owls." Thus, He uttered the stanza we stated as our theme:

Na hi verena verāni, sammantīdha kudācanaṁ;

Averena ca sammanti, esa dhammo sanantano.

"Never in this world is hatred appeased by hatred; it is appeased only by non-hatred. This is an eternal, timeless law." Thus the Blessed One delivered this four-line stanza. In that Dhamma narrative, it is stated that upon hearing this stanza, the she-demon—whose name is recorded as Kāḷī—attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*). Then, in

order to reveal the transformation that had occurred within her, the Blessed One told the other woman, "Place the child in the hands of this she-demon." The woman cried, "Oh no, Lord, I am afraid!" The Blessed One assured her, "There is nothing to fear, hand him over."

The infant was then placed in the hands of the she-demon. She kissed and embraced the child, handed him back to the mother, and began to weep. The Blessed One asked, "Why do you weep?" She replied, "In the past, even when I lived as I pleased, I did not receive a bellyful of food. How shall I survive now?" This meant that she could no longer kill and eat as before, due to the inner transformation that had occurred. To settle this matter, the Blessed One instructed the mother, "Take this friend of yours, who is now well-disposed, to your home. House her in a suitable place, and regularly entertain her with good food and drink."

It is then recorded that this woman, having appeased her own hatred, took the she-demon home and began providing her with food and drink. However, the she-demon later complained that the place was not suitable. The reason? When they pounded paddy in the house, she felt as if the pestle was striking her. Consequently, she was relocated to several other places, such as near the water-pot and near the hearth. At each of these places, she complained that it did not suit her and was troublesome. Finally, they housed her in an open space outside the village specifically dedicated to her, and brought her food and drink daily. The she-demon, wishing to show her gratitude, advised the woman, "There will be heavy rains this year; cultivate on high ground. There will be a drought this year; cultivate on low ground."

Accordingly, the woman's crops flourished while the crops of others failed. The villagers then asked her, "How is it that only your crops are so abundant?" She replied, "I perform a certain service. My friend regularly informs me about the rainy seasons." She added, "If you also entertain her with food and drink, she will help you too." The people of that region likewise brought food and drink to the she-demon in a manner similar to the ticket-food system. Consequently, the she-demon faced no shortage of sustenance, and the villagers' crops also flourished. This is how the story is recorded in the Dhamma commentary. In this day and age, some might doubt such accounts of a she-demon. However, only an extremely minute portion of the occurrences in this universe falls within the grasp of the ordinary human mind. Be that as it may, let us extract the significant points that are of value to us from this very story.

When we look at this story, we can see that even when considering modern society, these are not strange phenomena. What is described here is a hatred that emerged from a commonplace problem of domestic life. In ancient India, the institution of co-wives existed. That is to say, there were several wives sharing a single husband under polygamy. In such situations, they were referred to as co-wives (*sapattnī*). However, jealousy often arises within this setup, and jealousy turns into hatred. For this reason, a word was added to the language: *sapatta*, which carries the meaning of "enemy." It is a word derived from *sapattnī*. It became a word meaning "enemy" precisely because hatred arises through jealousy among co-wives. Here too, we see two co-wives becoming

enemies, satisfying their mutual hatred birth after birth, taking animal and demonic existences in saṁsāra. From this, we can see how hatred travels for a long time through saṁsāra. The aforementioned conflict and the intention of revenge within that conflict act as the attraction. There is a certain attraction within that intention, which provides the opportunity to collide.

These two individuals spent such a long time attempting to satisfy their hatred. In reality, they were merely retaliating, but were unable to appease their hatred. It was the Blessed One who demonstrated the timeless law that hatred can never be appeased by hatred, no matter how many eons pass. He made the she-demon realize this as a natural law. Instead, as the short advice of this stanza indicates, one must employ non-hatred in place of hatred to break or appease the power of hatred. Yet, some may wonder how such a profound transformation could occur in a she-demon upon hearing this.

We know that the realization of the paths and fruits of liberation often occurs when one looks at the inner side of a mental conflict. This she-demon was indeed an individual subjected to such a mental conflict. She had thought of appeasing hatred with hatred. Hearing the Dhamma verse taught by the Blessed One, she looked at her own mind with *yoniso manasikāra* (wise attention / radical attention). "This cannot be appeased through hatred." By looking at the mind operating within, she attained even the supramundane state.

Accordingly, there is a lesson for us to learn as well. A cannibalistic she-demon, who had come intent on devouring the child, cradled and kissed the baby after attaining the fruit of Stream-entry. Furthermore, she turned to a vegetarian diet. Thus, we have much to learn from this she-demon for our society. Her mind became so soft and gentle through this stanza uttered by the Blessed One. Her mind became so gentle that, having attained the Noble state, she showed affection to the child at the end of the story and took up a vegetarian policy. These are the examples we must gather from this story. When we contemplate the deep meaning of this stanza, it seems there is not much to explain extensively. Yet, here the Blessed One declared that hatreds are never appeased by hatred, but are appeased by non-hatred. Here, the word *avera* (non-hatred) is used. This is a word with a very broad meaning. Generally, when we speak of malice or anger, the opposite term we apply is loving-kindness (*maitrī*). However, the Blessed One refers to deep-seated hatred as *baddha vaira* (bounden malice), and also uses the word *āghāta* (resentment/grudge). The Blessed One teaches that such deep-seated resentment cannot be broken instantly by loving-kindness alone.

In the *Āghātapaṭivinaya Sutta*, the Blessed One teaches five methods for dispelling resentment or deep-seated hatred. First is loving-kindness. That is, if one harbors intense hatred toward someone, one uses thoughts of loving-kindness to appease that hatred. If that fails, one should employ compassion. Here, compassion means considering that the person harbors hatred due to a mental weakness such as ignorance or a lack of Dhamma understanding; thus, treating that person as a sick patient or someone with a mental disability, one generates compassion and removes the hatred toward them, relinquishing the urge for revenge from one's own side. Thirdly, it is shown

that one can also employ equanimity depending on the situation. Now, these are things you can test practically. We say "practice loving-kindness" quite easily in words. But sometimes, it is difficult to raise the mind to loving-kindness. Therefore, the Blessed One provides further assistance by pointing out additional methods. Just as one gathers various tools when a deeply rooted tree cannot be easily uprooted, here one employs not only loving-kindness but also compassion, and not only compassion but also equanimity. As you know, equanimity means bringing the mind to a state of balance. Whether filth or a flower falls upon this great earth, the earth expresses neither special praise nor criticism. The same is true of fire. Similarly, whether perfume, soap, or filth is washed in water, the water has no complaint. In the same way, the mind is brought to equanimity. Through that equanimity, one can sometimes eliminate hatred.

Fourthly, He presents a deeper method: *asati amanasikāra* (non-attention / non-recollection). That is, consciously and effortfully directing the mind away from the trigger of hatred, from the object of hatred—which is what the person did—to another object. To use an analogy, when a blinding, harsh light that we do not wish to see approaches, we close our eyes or look the other way. In the same manner, one deliberately removes that thought from the mind. That is what is meant by *asati amanasikāra*.

Fifthly, He points out another method: *kammassakatā* (ownership of Kamma). Ownership of Kamma means that one is the heir to one's own deeds. In ordinary society, those who think in accordance with the Dhamma use a common expression to help eliminate such angry thoughts: "What he does is for him; what we do is for us." This is where that idea is expressed. "What he does is his own." Therefore, if someone harbors hatred, intends revenge, and attempts to retaliate, that is a Kamma for him; it is his inheritance of Kamma. If we perform actions with a good mind and loving-kindness, that is for us. In this manner, the Blessed One points out the nature of Kamma as: *kammasako'mhi, kammadāyādo, kammayoni, kammabandhu, kammapaṭisaraṇo*—stating that what belongs to each person, what they can call their own, is their Kamma. One's inheritance is Kamma; one is born of Kamma; one's relative is Kamma; one's refuge and support is the very Kamma one performs. Recalling this natural law, one does not go to clash or retaliate with the person who hates or tries to take revenge.

The Blessed One reminds us that this retaliation does not stop with one or two instances. It continues for a long time in this saṁsāra. You have also heard of this regarding the Blessed One in the Jātaka stories. Everyone knows the conduct of the individual known as Devadatta in his final birth. As told in the *Serivāṇija Jātaka* of the past, having become a merchant named Serivāṇija, he harbored hatred against the Bodhisatta merchant named Kacchapuṭa over a golden bowl. This hatred, carried over for countless eons, finally ended with Ven. Devadatta committing *ānantariya-kamma* (grave offenses with immediate retribution). By shedding the blood of the Buddha and causing a schism in the Sangha, he committed these terrible *ānantariya-kamma* and fell into the Avīci hell. This hatred is something that brings such terrifying consequences; it goes that far.

Even from that perspective, we can see that once hatred takes root, it cannot be easily removed. That is why the Blessed One has shown such a variety of methods.

We have now mentioned loving-kindness, compassion, equanimity, and the effort to forget the trigger by diverting mindfulness and attention. One removes the contemplation of it. It can also be said that one trains the mind not to contemplate it. Finally, by recalling the law of Kamma known as *kammassakatā*, one calms one's mind.

Let us reflect on each of these again. You have all heard about loving-kindness frequently, and you practice it to the best of your ability. In the *Karaṇīyametta Sutta*, the Blessed One describes how to practice loving-kindness toward all. To whatever extent there are beings who exist—whether trembling or firm, classified by their body size, near or far, born or seeking birth—in this manner, He encompasses all beings under the term "all living beings." Not only that, the *Karaṇīyametta Sutta* further states: *na paro paraṁ nikubbetha, nātimaññetha katthaci naṁ kañci*—not only does one refrain from hating, but one wishes that let no one deceive another, let no one despise anyone anywhere. *Byārosanā paṭighasaññā, nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya*—let no one, through anger or resentment (which is bounden malice), wish suffering (*dukkha*) upon another.

What is the habit of the ordinary world? One does not wish to take revenge directly; one does not wish to burn one's own hands, but would prefer someone else to carry out that revenge on their behalf. At the root of this lies anger and hatred. In contrast, the *Karaṇīyametta Sutta* states that while wishing well for everyone, wishing "may all beings be well and happy!", one does not even wish to witness such conflicts. If one purifies this loving-kindness, one can gradually conquer that hateful mind. When we say "all," not a single person is left out. The method of cultivating this loving-kindness lies within the words "may they be happy and well!" But this must be understood deeply.

Next, compassion means treating that angry mind as a weakness of that individual, viewing them as a helpless person who, due to lack of Dhamma knowledge and understanding, has harbored a mind of hatred. One makes a wish through compassion: "May their hatred be dispelled! May their anger be dispelled!" Just as one wishes "may they be healed!" for someone suffering from a disease or pain, one should think of the hostile person as a sick patient. "May they be freed from this suffering (*dukkha*) called hatred!" In this way, compassion is cultivated. Next, as we mentioned, one strives to develop equanimity like the great earth. We can learn certain lessons even from these inanimate objects. One attempts to cultivate that quality of equanimity found in inanimate objects within oneself.

We have already spoken about non-contemplation. Next, by deeply reflecting on Kamma and its fruit, one softens the mind from anger. Furthermore, if we go deeper, within all of these lies the quality called *khantī*—patience or forbearance. First, one must develop the strength to endure the pressure that comes upon oneself. Having endured it, one then practices loving-kindness by wishing well for others. Another factor is attention. *Yoniso manasikāra* (wise attention) means grasping these thoughts precisely at the point where they arise. If we reflect further on the stanza, how did the she-demon attain Stream-entry

upon hearing it? To state it briefly, it is evident that supramundane states—namely, the realization of Nibbāna—often arise through a mental revolution or conflict.

Nibbāna is the stilling of preparations (saṅkhāra). If Nibbāna is the stilling of preparations, what assists this is comprehending and realizing the true nature of preparations (saṅkhāra). We fail to comprehend the true nature of preparations because our minds are constantly running along thoughts (*vitakka*). They run in a web of thoughts, either along lust, along hatred, or along conceit and other defilements. This running is a race that ignores the very place where thoughts arise. It is just like a deer running after a mirage. The cause of the mirage lies in incorrect perception. If the perception is corrected, the deer will not run. It is due to a distorted perception (*vipallāsa-saññā*) that the deer runs after it, thinking it can get closer. Similarly, what is the nature of our minds? The momentum of preparations, which is the momentum of thoughts, chases after the object presented by those thoughts. Even if we chase for countless eons, we cannot appease them, just as we cannot satisfy hatred. Now, this stanza speaks about appeasement: *Na hi verena verāni, sammantīdha kudācanaṁ*. Here, the precise word *sammanti* (are appeased/stilled) is mentioned. Never in this world is hatred appeased by hatred. There, He speaks of stilling. Next, it is said: *averena ca sammanti*. It is stilled only by non-hatred. Thus, the two words, hatred (*vera*) and non-hatred (*avera*), are spoken.

Let us consider that moment. The Blessed One infused a certain secret, a realization, into the she-demon who was filled with intense hatred. He gave her an understanding: "You can never satisfy this hatred in this way; it will only go on endlessly. Instead, what you must do is look back." Thus, *yoniso manasikāra* (wise attention)—as we all know, attention means turning this reflection inward. One turns it back to the very place where these thoughts arise. Suppose we are directing a powerful beam of light outward, to the external side. With it, we are busy looking at forms. We can project it very far. But if, at some point, we turn that very beam of light backward, at that moment, that individual fully realizes what is within their own mind. This is precisely what happens there.

The momentum of preparations (saṅkhāra) was stilled in that manner. While she was running along preparations (saṅkhāra), the Blessed One pointed out that non-hatred, and not hatred, is the medicine here. Non-hatred means the removal of hatred. To one who had experienced all the turbulence caused by hatred, He demonstrated that true stilling lies only when this hatred is appeased. Through this, the word *sammanti* (are stilled) becomes very clear—the momentum of thoughts could be stilled. Within that lies the extinguishment of suffering (*dukkha*)—the opening of Nibbāna. This long saṁsāra proceeds upon these thoughts and concepts. As everyone knows, once attachment arises, how far it goes! When a faint sound, a sweet voice, or a form is seen, there is no need to explain extensively how far the attachment born within it goes, and into what kind of abysses it finally leads. The same applies to conflict. Thus, it is a race like running after a mirage. In contrast, attaining the supramundane state and liberating oneself from saṁsāra means stopping instead of running. In short, one stops right there. The moment

the light is turned backward, one sees: "Here is the true source; this is the very place where it genuinely arises."

This is what is stated in the Dhamma: *rāgo ca doso ca ito nidānā*—lust and hatred have their origin right here. When we look at a banyan tree, can anyone find its original root once the tree has grown very old? The true root cannot be found because the aerial roots have descended and finally turned into a massive, tangled, and confused mass. What happens through thoughts is precisely the same. We chase after individuals. We chase after other objects. But we do not see the true arising, the origin of this. To see the origin, we must turn that beam of light backward. That turning is what is called wisdom (*paññā*), *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), or wise reflection. What is done through wise reflection is turning the wisdom or comprehension—which we normally direct outward—backward to look at one's own mind. In that moment of looking, there is a stopping. There is no running. There is a halting. That halting, that extinguishment, is what is called Nibbāna. The she-demon realized this extinguishment through the first path-knowledge (*Sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*). Consequently, as a result that goes hand in hand with virtue (*sīla*), her mind became soft and gentle, and she turned to a vegetarian diet. A wonderful miracle of the Dhamma is recorded in this story.

We extracted another factor here that assists in appeasing hatred, which is the aforementioned *yoniso manasikāra* (wise attention). When such hatred arises, we often do not merely retaliate, but we attempt to go beyond what was done to us. In the Dhamma, this is referred to as *karaṇuttariya-kamma* (surpassing actions). If someone glares, one abuses them. If they abuse, one strikes them. If they strike, one kills them. Such is the nature of surpassing actions—doing more than what was done. There is no end to it. Ultimately, it keeps intensifying hatred in saṁsāra in a terrifying manner. Instead, one turns toward stilling. One looks back at this. One looks back for a moment with *yoniso manasikāra* (wise attention). Then, there may be various external causes for anger—the weaknesses of that person, the things they did to us. But the immediate cause lies within oneself. That is why it is said: *rāgo ca doso ca ito nidānā*—lust and hatred arose right here, not out there. Lust, hatred, and other defilements did not arise from that object or from that person; they arose right here. This is the truth the Blessed One revealed to the world. Understanding this is what is called the path of Dhamma, what is called *yoniso manasikāra*.

Ordinary worldlings possess *ayoniso manasikāra* (unwise attention). In ancient terms, *ayoniso manasikāra* means reflecting unwisely or inappropriately. It is like running after a mirage. Instead, what is found here is looking back at the thought itself. With the understanding that "this stream of thoughts arose due to this, didn't it?", it is stilled, because its secret has been revealed. Just as when a lamp is brought into a dark place, darkness can no longer be found. The moment the lamp is brought, darkness is not there. In the same way, it is instantaneous; the realization of the paths and fruits is instantaneous. Darkness does not wait to disappear saying, "Now the lamp has arrived." It vanishes along with the light of the lamp. The realization of the paths and fruits is a similar instantaneous occurrence. We often use the expression "a blessing in disguise."

Similarly, here too, there was a life crisis. The she-demon was able to resolve this crisis and attain stilling right there through *yoniso manasikāra* (wise attention).

Furthermore, another factor that assists in appeasing hatred is mentioned in the Dhamma as *paccavekkhaṇa* (wise contemplation / retrospective reflection). Retrospective reflection means looking back, or contemplating with wisdom. Although we say "looking back," it is not a looking with the physical eye, but a contemplation with wisdom. This, too, sometimes assists in appeasing hatred. One advises oneself by wisely recalling how hatred was conquered in the Bodhisatta's life, such as in the perfections of loving-kindness (*mettā-pāramī*) and patience (*khantī-pāramī*). In doing so, one gives foremost place to wisdom.

Generally, hatred and anger are things that arise from the heart based on emotions. In those moments, wisdom is suppressed; intellect is suppressed. Here, through retrospective reflection, one brings wisdom to the forefront. By bringing wisdom forward, one creates an opportunity to understand this. That is what is called retrospective reflection. For this, one can employ examples such as the Bodhisatta's life, other Dhamma passages, and the teachings of the Dhamma as reflections. The Blessed One has declared a Dhamma passage in the *Anamatagga Saṁyutta* that can be used as a reflection: "In this incredibly long saṁsāra, it is not easy to find a being who has not been your mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter." Through this, one can contemplate how long we have spent in this extended saṁsāra. According to this word of the Buddha, every person here must have been, to one another, a mother, a father, a brother, a sister, a son, or a daughter. The Dhamma states that by reflecting on this, one should free one's mind from anger and hatred.

According to this truth, according to this long-term existence in saṁsāra, there is no one who has not been our relative. Thus, having been relatives, they must have helped us in various ways in those instances; they must have sacrificed their lives for us. One should reflect: "It is such individuals who have now come disguised as enemies in this long saṁsāra." It is like a play. But one must understand that if this is not comprehended correctly, one will head toward woeful states like hell as a terrifying consequence. Just as happened to Ven. Devadatta, one can go to Avīci by letting this hatred go on and on. Therefore, this may be a timely sermon, because in this day and age, not only in our country but even in the wider world, the tendency is to attempt to appease hatred with hatred. Even in international forums, these things are spoken of, because the ordinary world easily forgets this. The word of the Buddha is that hatred can never be appeased by hatred.

Yet, we still attempt to appease hatred with hatred. We may not be able to do this collectively. Now, this very story reveals that they were reborn in animal existences to prey on each other. The hen's eggs fell prey to the cat. Next, the doe's fawns fell prey to the leopardess. In this manner, for those who wish to take revenge and satisfy hatred, Māra has arranged this world such that they can obtain existences where they prey on each other. In short, the Blessed One has declared that the domain of beings and the domain of Kamma are unthinkable (*acinteyya*). It is so wondrous that it is beyond

thought. Yet, beneath all of this lies Kamma; it is our thought. It is through thought that these are brought together and separated, and ultimately, stilling too can be achieved only by looking at this mind. But from this we see that if our expectation is to be reborn in animal existences to prey on each other and satisfy hatred, we can create the opportunity for it. That is precisely what happened here. Furthermore, this shows the terrifying nature of saṁsāra. We tend to view the gradual growth of a hateful mind as a trivial matter. Anger is easily aroused in anyone. With a slight provocation, anger arises. Anger becomes resentment. Resentment becomes malice. Malice becomes hatred. Hatred becomes bounden malice, reaching up to the term "resentment" (*āghāta*). Having grown in this manner, just as a deeply rooted tree cannot be easily uprooted, sometimes thoughts of loving-kindness do not find a listening ear, and it becomes difficult to raise the mind to loving-kindness. That is why the Blessed One has shown so many methods and strategies for one to compose one's mind.

All of you listen to the Dhamma not as a mere custom, but to compose your own minds. Therefore, from this story, we must take to heart the examples and illustrations, as well as the depth contained within this Dhamma verse. Through all of this, the qualities of being well-proclaimed (*svākkhāta*) and timeless (*akālika*) in the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, and the manner in which results can be experienced right before one's eyes, become clear. Now, especially when looking through retrospective reflection, we are advising our own minds. We are giving place to wisdom. Instead of being slaves to emotion, we give place to wisdom. Thinking in accordance with the word of the Buddha and framing it within the Dhamma, one then advises oneself: "Is it not in such a saṁsāra that you are journeying?"

When describing this long saṁsāra, another analogy the Blessed One used is: "Monks, if one were to cut all the trees, plants, and branches in this entire Jambudīpa into four-inch pieces, and stack them saying, 'This is my father, this is my mother,' the number of parents one has had in this saṁsāra would still not be exhausted." Such is its long duration. When we think thus, no one is a stranger to anyone else. It seems as though everyone could be our saṁsāric relatives. But due to ignorance (*aviijjā*), we forget this. Therefore, the Blessed One brings to light this eternal, timeless law. Never can the aforementioned hatred be appeased by hatred. Instead, it occurs when the inner operation of this is understood. This becomes clear through it. One is caught in a trap of one's own making, and is running after it.

Loving-kindness means gentleness—developing a soft and gentle mind. This is something that must be done systematically. One may not be able to raise the mind to it instantly, but we must train the mind gradually. That is what the Blessed One has shown in the *Karaṇīyametta Sutta*. He has not spoken of individuals separately there. Instead, what we must contemplate is that to whatever extent there are beings who experience pain and suffering (*dukkha*), all of them desire happiness and dislike suffering; they dislike violence. We must bring this thought to our minds.

Then, the capacity to wish well for everyone arises within us. As a meditation, we can regularly generate the thought: "May all beings be well and happy!" The Blessed One has

shown that this meditation can be practiced in all four postures. When a certain thought is repeatedly cultivated, the mind naturally leans in that direction. As a natural law, the Blessed One has declared: *yaṁ yaṁ deva bhikkhū bahulaṁ anuvitakketi anuvicarati, tathā tathā nati hoti cetaso*—whatever a monk frequently thinks and ponders upon, that becomes the inclination of his mind. *Nati* means an inclination or a leaning. We all know that our minds currently have leanings toward various directions. But often, the leaning is not toward the good side. Often, we journey through this saṁsāra with a leaning toward the bad side; we prefer to lean toward those things.

But here, what is required is an inclination, a leaning, that must be developed through effort. That is what is called meditation (*bhāvanā*). Meditation is described as the repeated arising of wholesome states of mind. In the Dhamma, this is presented as the condition of repetition (*āsevana-paccaya*). *Āsevana* means maintaining something by way of frequent association. *Āsevitā, bhāvitā, bahulīkatā*—cultivated, developed, and practiced frequently. In this way, one generates a certain strength in the mind. Even a few drops of water falling from a tree onto a rock will eventually begin to wear a hole in it over a long period. In the same way, when a thought is repeatedly raised, a certain special inclination is created within.

Now, what is done through the meditation on loving-kindness is directing the mind toward an inclination that removes resentment, removes hatred, removes anger, and brings well-being to others. Once that gentleness is systematically established, one can very quickly appease the anger and hatred that arise. Even if it is not possible instantly, by reflecting again and raising the mind to that meditation, one gains the strength to banish them. That is why the daily practice of the meditation on loving-kindness is so important. Especially for those living in society, it is words, rumors, and news that tend to cultivate anger and hatred from all sides that fall upon our ears and meet our eyes. Through these, our minds are disturbed, and starting from small beginnings, they ultimately reach the level of hatred.

Because of this, we sometimes attempt to take revenge, either individually or collectively. Not only in this country but in Western nations and everywhere in the world, the cause of these massive conflicts is the result of anger arising in a single mind. Where did all these massive, terrifying bombs originate? Where did all these terrible weapons, these nuclear weapons, originate? Where were they conceived and manufactured? In the human mind—in the aforementioned mind of hatred. It started from there. It started from the mind of hatred.

What was manufactured was not something that brings well-being, but an instrument that destroys a world. What assisted its manufacture was that very mind of hatred. The individual who manufactured it knew that it would destroy a world. Thus, if for some reason, whether considering profit or otherwise, they directed their mind toward it, then the factory where it was manufactured was that very mind filled with hatred.

The Blessed One declared: "The world exists within ourselves." The world exists within ourselves. We attempt to recognize the world through various communication media.

You too probably watch the world every day without sleep. But that is not the world the Blessed One points to. There, one must look back. One must stop that viewing apparatus for a moment and look back at this eye that views. One must look back at this ear that hears, and at the others. It is on the day the light of wisdom is turned toward oneself that the world can be understood.

It is because He understood this world of the six sense-spheres—namely, the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—that the Blessed One is truly the Knower of the Worlds (*Lokavidū*). In this day and age, scientists too may be called "knowers of the world" according to their own understanding. But that is not what the Blessed One, in the deepest sense, calls "the world"—it is this internal world. It is to conquer this world, to cross over this world, that the Blessed One has taught His Dhamma.

We have gradually gone into the depths of this Dhamma through a short, simple stanza. Each of you must have understood it to some degree, according to your capacity for comprehension. We listen to all these sermons in order to generate those valuable qualities of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom within our minds—qualities that will assist us in realizing Nibbāna at some point. Thus, you have been listening to a Dhamma sermon on the appeasement of hatred, which is highly timely and relevant to this era. The faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom developed through this must be cultivated and developed by way of meditation in this very life.

The Blessed Ones and the Arahants crossed over from a terrifying saṁsāra of the kind described here, where beings take revenge on one another and devour each other. After attaining Nibbāna, the Arahants declared: "I am freed from the slaughterhouse." That is how the Arahants looked back at saṁsāra and spoke: *mutto āghātanā yathā*—just like one freed from a slaughterhouse. We must think in this manner. Thus, we have listened to a Dhamma that assists in freeing oneself from this slaughterhouse, which we now think of as "the world."

May this hearing of the Dhamma certainly be a supportive condition for us as human beings to also acquire those supramundane states acquired by the she-demon—who made her mind soft and gentle—by relying on the association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), practicing the Dhamma, and meditating, so that we may be released from all saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) and find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! Furthermore, may all the guardian deities and Brahma kings of this universe who protect the Dispensation rejoice in this store of merit we have accumulated through the preaching and hearing of the Dhamma, and may they attain the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi! Likewise, may all beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including our departed relatives, who desire merit and Nibbāna, rejoice in this store of merit we have accumulated through the preaching and hearing of the Dhamma, and by doing so, may they be released from all saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) such as birth (jāti), decay (jarā), disease, and death (maraṇa), and find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! With a mind of compassion, let us dedicate these merits by reciting the stanzas.

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #140

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.133)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Na paresaṃ vilomāni,

na paresaṃ katākataṃ;

Attano va avekkheyya,

katāni akatāni ca."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 50 (Puppha Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Today, this Poson Full Moon Poya Day, is a day on which the attention of everyone is focused on the future of the Buddha Sāsana in this country. It is an occasion when the responsibility to protect the heritage of the Buddha Sāsana, which we received from the great Arahant Mahinda, arises in the hearts of everyone. Therefore, today we intend to present a stanza and a story appropriate for this occasion.

The Blessed One expounded this stanza concerning an Ājīvaka ascetic named Pāṭika. In Sāvatthī, a certain housewife was supporting Pāṭika, an Ājīvaka ascetic—'Ājīvaka' refers to a non-Buddhist ascetic of that time—treating him like her own son. When this housewife's neighbors returned after listening to the Dhamma from the Blessed One, and frequently praised the virtues of the Buddha and the Dhamma, this lay woman also felt a desire to go to the monastery and listen to the sermon from the Blessed One. When she went and told this to the Ājīvaka, he immediately said, "Do not go." Although she asked for permission repeatedly, the Ājīvaka did not grant it. This housewife then thought, "Now I must arrange a way for this without telling him. If I cannot go to the monastery, I should invite the Blessed One here." One evening, she told her son, "Go and invite the Blessed One for tomorrow's alms-giving." On his way, this boy went to meet the Ājīvaka. When he sat down, the Ājīvaka asked, "Where are you going?" When the boy explained

that he was going according to his mother's message, the Ājīvaka said, "Do not go." The boy replied, "I am afraid. My mother will threaten me and blame me." Then this Ājīvaka said, "Do not go, and let the two of us together eat the food prepared for that Ascetic Gautama." Even so, this boy did not agree and said he must go. "If so, well, it is alright if you go. But when you go, do not tell the path to come to the house, but return by another path," said the Ājīvaka.

So this boy went and invited the Blessed One to visit their home, and returned in the manner he was told. On his way back, when he went to meet the Ājīvaka, the Ājīvaka asked, "How is it, did you do the job?" The boy said, "Yes, I came after doing so." The Ājīvaka said, "Good. Now the two of us can eat that alms-food." By that time, the neighbors in the village had cleaned the housewife's house—which in those days was called white-washing (plastering with white lime). They had cleaned and purified everything, prepared the Buddha's seat, scattered the five kinds of puffed flowers, and decorated it beautifully. The Ājīvaka also left early in the morning for his disciple's house. When he arrived, they seated the Ājīvaka in an inner room of the house. While he was waiting there, the Blessed One arrived.

The lay woman received the Blessed One warmly and offered the delicious alms-food with great devotion. After finishing the offering, when the time came to deliver the sermon of appreciation (*anumōdanā*), this housewife, now with great faith, began listening to the Buddha's teaching with hands clasped in worship, saying "Sādhu, Sādhu." Hearing this, the Ājīvaka grew angry and came out of the room. He walked out of the house in anger, abusing both the lay woman and the Blessed One in harsh language. This was while the lay woman was listening to the sermon of the Blessed One. Because of this incident, the lay woman's mind became agitated. Having her mind agitated, she was unable to pay attention to the Buddha's teaching, to that sermon of appreciation. The Blessed One perceived this. Why? Because when the Blessed One preaches the Dhamma to someone, He preaches while observing how that person's mind is functioning. Thus, He asked, "What is it, sister, is your mind agitated? Are you unable to concentrate your mind?" "Yes, Venerable Sir. Because the words spoken by that Ājīvaka keep coming to my mind, I cannot concentrate my mind," she replied. It was then that the Blessed One expounded this stanza. He first explained the meaning and then delivered the stanza. "It is not right, sister. You should not think of what others have done, but only of what you have done. Without directing your mind to his words, let us direct our mind to the sermon." Conveying this idea, He expounded a highly meaningful and valuable stanza in a much broader sense:

Na paresaṃ vilomāni

na paresaṃ katākataṃ

attanova katāni akatāni ca

"Do not contemplate the disagreeable ways, the wrong behaviors of others, nor what they have done or left undone. Think only of what oneself has done or left undone." This is the brief advice.

The meaning of this stanza also runs deep. Let us first try to draw what we should from that story. First, when we think about the behavior of that Ājīvaka, it serves as an example of the external dangers that have always threatened the Buddha Sāsana. During the time when the Blessed One preached the Dhamma, He had to face various troubles from Nigaṇṭhas, Ājīvakas, and other non-Buddhist sectarians, and sometimes even greater difficulties than this. Here, the Ājīvaka tried to prevent his lay follower from going to see the Blessed One, to stop her from becoming a disciple of the Buddha. When he failed in that, he employed a trick, a certain foolish trick. No one needs to show the path to the Blessed One. The Blessed One is the supreme being who knows even the path to Nibbāna. Yet, the Ājīvaka tried to make the boy not tell the way to the house, so that he could eat that alms-food. When none of these succeeded, finally, when the lay woman was listening to the Blessed One's sermon, out of jealousy, he insulted them with vulgar words and walked away. Because the neighbors of that lay disciple were strong and supportive of her, the Ājīvaka, having nothing else to do, left the house. Next, let us consider the other side of this.

That housewife performed a highly meritorious deed. It was an extremely rare opportunity to invite the Blessed One, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, to one's own home and offer an alms-giving in this manner. The moment that culminates the meritorious deed of alms-giving is the moment of listening to the sermon of appreciation. It is a valuable opportunity where one can reap the fruits of alms-giving right then and there. However, this housewife failed to concentrate her mind. Due to that weakness, she was unable to focus her mind on it. But after the Blessed One expounded this stanza, she directed her mind to the correct path accordingly, and at the end of the story, it is mentioned that she, as well as the others, attained the Fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*). Thus, we see that she derived benefit from that stanza. Instead of polluting her mind by thinking of what others had done and said, by thinking of her own meritorious deed, she generated joy and gladness regarding the meritorious deed of giving, and on the basis of that concentration (*samādhi*), she must have attained the Paths and Fruits.

The manner in which one should listen when the Dhamma is being preached is constantly mentioned in the teachings. It is frequently stated of a noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) or anyone listening to the Dhamma: *sabbacetaso samannāharitvā ohitasoto dhammaṃ suṇāti* (applying the whole mind, with attentive ears, one listens to the Dhamma). When one listens, thinking "This sermon is of benefit to me," contemplating word by word, and dedicating the entire mind to it, only then can one obtain a direct, experiential realization of the Dhamma.

Thus, when we consider the aspect of external dangers as depicted in this story, all of you, this devout congregation, know that similar situations exist today as well. However, if we do not wisely consider the course of action to be taken regarding them, instead of

the expected progress, it could lead to decline. Here, that Ājīvaka had to walk away. Likewise, if we focus only on the external and fail to strengthen the internal, it will result in the decline of the Sāsana rather than its progress. Now, let us try to bring up a small illustrative story on this point. There is a certain proverb in our society related to this story. I will not mention what that proverb is. When you finish listening to the story, that proverb will naturally come to your mind. Especially for these little lay gentlemen and little lay mothers who are to inherit the Buddha Sāsana of our small country in the future, I present this simple village tale.

Once upon a time, there was a merchant in a country who made a living by carrying goods from village to village to sell them. This merchant carried his goods on the back of a donkey. During the daytime, he would travel with those goods loaded onto the donkey. He also had a dog at home to protect his wealth. This donkey and the dog were very close friends. Then, one night, a gang of thieves came to break into this house. So, the donkey said to the dog, "Look, you are here to guard this house. Why aren't you doing your job? Shouldn't you bark?" But the dog would not bark. The donkey thought, "If he is not doing it, I must do it myself, shouldn't I?" and so the donkey started screaming. What did the merchant sleeping inside the house do? He came out with the club he kept for securing the door and beat the donkey severely. In the meantime, using that opportunity, the thieves outside entered and went away with the money box and everything. So, we can draw a lesson from this. The donkey took upon himself the duty that should have been performed by the dog. Because of that, it was his own back that ultimately received the blows of the club. In this manner, we must reflect that even for the protection of the Sāsana, if we take incorrect courses of action, it will only result in the decline of the Sāsana. Therefore, we should constantly think about strengthening the internal.

How do we become strong from within? On a day like this, this devout congregation has undertaken a noble precept (*sīla*) and is spending the day here to become strong from within. Here, what we have to bring to mind is that, according to the words of the Buddha, the opportune moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*) is not a secret. It is rapidly declining. How is that moment? It is like a lamp going out. Now, let us take another small illustration—not quite an analogy, but a small example. It is a lamp-lighting ceremony on a dark night at the lamp-post (*pahan kanuva*). Storms are blowing from this side and that side. The flame of the lamp dances and turns blue. It draws close to going out. What do we do? We feed some oil to the wick. Even when that does not work, we pull up the wick and pour more oil. When even that does not work, we add another wick. When even that does not work, we bring that dying lamp close to a bright lamp. Why? Because in this dark night, we can obtain light even for a short while only in this manner—this is the idea.

According to this analogy, we must reflect. As those who seek to obtain light from a lamp that is flickering but prepared to go out in the midst of storms, when it is about to extinguish, we must pour in some oil of faith (*saddhā*). We know the inconstancy (*anicca*) of the wick, yet we must add another wick to increase the light. What one cannot do by oneself, one should achieve by leaning on a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), and thereby strengthen the internal Sāsana consisting of virtue (*sīla*), concentration

(*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Otherwise, there will be nothing left to protect. What remains to be protected would be a hollow shell, not a Sāsana. Therefore, we must reflect that the Buddha Sāsana is like a message that goes from heart to heart. To strengthen it, we, as Buddhists, must develop within ourselves that system of virtues aimed at Nibbāna. Then, just as lighting one lamp from another, if that dying lamp is preserved in that manner, it can provide strength to other lamps. It can provide light. It is in that manner that we have to act in this dark night. This is what is meant by becoming strong from within.

Furthermore, when we contemplate this stanza expounded by the Blessed One in a broader sense, we see that a certain principle of Dhamma (*dhamma-niyāma*) is embedded within it. Here, it is said: "Do not direct your mind to the improper behaviors, the misconduct of others, and without thinking of what they have done or left undone, focus your mind on what you yourself have done or left undone." Why was this said? As we all know, generally, it is easy for us to see the faults of others. Seeing one's own faults is extremely difficult. This is stated in the Blessed One's own words in the Dhammapada:

Sudassaṃ vajjaṃ aññesaṃ

attano pana duddasaṃ

paresaṃ hi so vajjāni

opuṇāti yathā bhusaṃ

attano pana chādeti

kaliṃva kitavā saṭho

The meaning of this stanza: "The faults of others are easy to see, but one’s own faults are difficult to see. One winnows the faults of others like chaff, but conceals one’s own, just as a crafty gambler conceals a losing die." These are the analogies given by the Blessed One. They are highly appropriate.

In the same way, even the ancient Sinhala poets expressed this matter in another way. One's own fault is not seen, but the faults of others are very easily seen. Next, a question is asked: "Why is it that these two eyes can see the nose that is outside, yet cannot see oneself?" The eyes see the nose that is external, but they cannot see oneself. Then, is there a way to see oneself? Suppose there is a small ailment, a wound, or trouble in the eyes. How do we see it? Through a mirror. It is this analogy of the mirror that the Blessed One gave to the young Rāhula. This is represented by the word 'reflection' (*paccavekkhaṇā*), the word for 'looking back.' Here, *attanova avekkheyya* means looking at oneself. To look at oneself, something is required. A mirror is required. Thus, with that analogy, the Blessed One then illustrates how all ascetics and brahmins of the past and future corrected their own faults.

A wonderful sermon has been preached regarding that principle of Dhamma. You must have heard this to some extent. Since it is relevant here as well, let us bring it forward. The Blessed One suddenly asked, "Rāhula, what is a mirror for?"

"For the purpose of reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*)." Reflection means looking back. Why does one look back? To correct any shortcoming one has. You know very well that before stepping out onto the road, one looks at a mirror to see if the face is clean, or if the clothes are worn properly. In such instances, there are mirrors that show one's entire body. That is the use of a mirror. So, the Blessed One applies that very thing here. A similar mirror exists within our minds as well. Among the mental factors (*cetasika*) related to this mind of ours, there is a certain power to look back. This is highly developed in humans, whereas it is virtually absent in animals. It is this power that we make use of.

Paccavekkhaṇa means the power of looking back. The Blessed One declares as an instruction to Ven. Rāhula: "Rāhula, if you are to perform an action by body, before doing it, you must reflect: 'Does this action I am about to do lead to my own harm or to my own trouble? Or does it lead to the harm of others? Does it lead to the harm of both? And is it an unwholesome deed?' Thinking thus, if it is so, then 'one should by no means do it.'" One reflects wisely before acting. Next, if in any way it does not lead to one's own harm, nor to the harm of others, nor to the harm of both, and if it is a wholesome action, then "one should do it." What should not be done and what should be done was shown by the Blessed One at this first level. But in certain instances, it is difficult to decide before doing the work. There are such deeds. The side of danger in it is sometimes understood only after the work has gone some distance, because we do not possess that much strength. Now, the reason we look at the face in the mirror several times is to see whether the perfume or powder applied is correct or insufficient. If there are shortcomings, we have to look again next time. So, it is the same here. Next, the Blessed One shows that one should reflect even while performing the action. Look back at the mind. Consider whether this action being performed leads to one's own harm, to the harm of others, or to the harm of both. If it is so, stop it right there. Halt that work right there.

If while carrying it out, you feel that it is not wrong but good, then continue doing it. That is not all; there is a third stage. The work is finished. After it is finished, sometimes faults that were not visible in both the previous stages might become apparent. Therefore, for the third time, the Blessed One points out that even after finishing, one must reflect: "Did this action I performed lead to my own harm, to my own decline, or to the harm of others? Did it lead to the harm of both?" Having considered thus, now indeed the action is done. Although it is finished, what is to be done now is to declare it to the Blessed One or to other co-associates in the holy life (*sabrahmacārī*), saying: "This happened due to my ignorance and foolishness." Declaring the fault, one resolves upon future restraint (*āyati-saṃvara*), which means training oneself again: "Henceforth, I shall not do such a thing."

Similarly, if upon looking back after finishing it, one realizes that it did not lead to one's own harm or to the harm of others, but resulted in the welfare of both, then with that joy and gladness, thinking "I have done a good deed," and with that very gladness, one should live training oneself well during the day. In that manner, the Blessed One spoke concerning bodily actions (*kāya-kamma*). By the same principle, He speaks of vocal actions (*vacī-kamma*), the faults committed through speech. One reflects whether the words spoken lead to one's own harm, to the harm of others, or to the harm of both. Even while speaking, one reflects, and if it is unsuitable in the manner described, one stops it. One refrains from doing it. Otherwise, one continues. In this manner, regarding vocal actions. It is the same regarding mental actions (*mano-kamma*). Regarding mental actions, it refers to a thought—one thinks about a certain matter. When that first thought arises, its fault is not visible. When the thought goes a little further, sometimes it might become visible. Then, in the manner described, one halts that thought. If it is a good thought, one carries it forward. After going some distance, if one realizes that this is an unwholesome mind, the Blessed One indicates that one should arouse disgust toward it. There is nothing to be declared to anyone there. One arouses a disgust and aversion toward it in the mind so that it does not arise again. If it is a good thought, in the manner described, one joyfully carries forward that training.

In this manner, the Blessed One declares systematic and methodical reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*) in three instances—before, during, and after—concerning bodily actions, vocal actions, and mental actions. "If any ascetics and brahmins of the past purified their bodily, vocal, and mental actions, or if in the future they will purify their bodily, vocal, and mental actions, they do so in this very manner." Thus, the Blessed One introduced a highly valuable principle of Dhamma to the world. Accordingly, we have to understand what we must do to protect the Buddha Sāsana from within.

Next, let us consider the other side. Now, that lay woman, as we mentioned earlier, after performing such a valuable meritorious deed, instead of focusing her mind on the Buddha's teaching during an extremely rare era of a Buddha's arising, directed her mind to the vulgar words and obscenities of the Ājīvaka. Because of that, she was unable to concentrate her mind. At any occasion, without directing the mind in accordance with the sermon, one cannot realize the Paths and Fruits. Thus, there is an important point regarding this. Although that lay woman, who had been a disciple of the Ājīvaka, was agitated in the beginning, because she adjusted her mind in accordance with the advice and instruction of the Blessed One as the occasion demanded, she also attained the realization of the Paths and Fruits.

Whether one can attain the Paths and Fruits through the mere hearing of the Dhamma is also a question in many eras. If we are to say something about that, the Blessed One has pointed out five spheres of liberation (*vimuttāyatana*), five occasions where the liberation of the mind occurs. It is shown in this manner: while the Teacher or one of His disciples is preaching the Dhamma, one must listen to the Dhamma by dedicating the entire mind to it, contemplating word by word, thinking "This Dhamma is of benefit to me," in the manner we mentioned earlier. Concerning this, it is stated: *attha-paṭisaṃvedī ca hoti dhamma-paṭisaṃvedī*. One experiences the meaning of what is

being said, and one experiences the Dhamma contained within that meaning. That is an important thing. One must listen to the Dhamma in such a way that both the meaning of what is said and the Dhamma shown according to that meaning are understood. One must experience both. It is an experience: *attha-paṭisaṃvedī dhamma-paṭisaṃvedī*. To make it an experience, one must have a well-concentrated mind.

In the presence of the Blessed One, due to His style of preaching and all His other Buddha-powers, the mind becomes concentrated at the very moment of listening. Right there, a concentration (*samādhi*) arises by way of recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). Listening to the Dhamma with that concentrated mind, one understands the meaning of what is said, and one understands the Dhamma contained within it. *Attha-paṭisaṃvedī dhamma-paṭisaṃvedī*. When listening in that manner, experiencing the meaning and experiencing the Dhamma, an inner gladness (*pāmojja*) arises. Gladness means joy (*pīti*). Then, one does not go to tell the person next to them. One calms it down and turns it into joy. There is only a slight difference between gladness and joy. One transforms that gladness into joy, into a subtle joy. When the mind is joyful, the mind no longer goes to an external song heard outside, because the joy is present right within. Due to that very reason, the body and mind become tranquil. Within that tranquility, one experiences a peculiar pleasure (*sukha*) in the body, a tranquil pleasure never experienced before. It is within that pleasure that the mind becomes concentrated. Through that concentration, understanding (*paññā*) arises next. This is how the first step regarding the realization of the Paths and Fruits is described. It is mentioned in the texts that even while listening to the Dhamma in this manner, one can attain the realization of the Paths and Fruits. But that is only one of them.

Next, the second one is shown. A certain disciple, instead of listening to the Dhamma in the manner described, preaches the Dhamma. Even while preaching, when that preacher preaches while experiencing and contemplating the meaning of the Dhamma and the Dhamma contained within it, then through that very process within oneself, one attains the realization of the Paths and Fruits, which perhaps had not been attained until then. If we are to illustrate this with an analogy, when it is heard that a guest is coming to a certain house, delicious food is prepared. It is not only the guest who enjoys it. Together with them, one also enjoys it oneself. Similarly, when a preacher preaches while understanding the meaning of this Dhamma and experiencing that Dhamma, not only the listeners but the preacher also attains the realization of the Paths and Fruits. Many such instances are mentioned in the Dhamma. Extremely wonderful things. That wonder occurs not through anything else, not through some other strange miracle, but through this very principle of Dhamma spoken of by the Blessed One. If not only the listener but also the preacher of the Dhamma acts in this manner, Dhamma points that were not understood until then can be understood at the very moment of preaching. That is why it is declared that such an opportunity arises.

Next, thirdly, for a certain person, even while reciting the Dhamma in detail, a similar realization of the Paths and Fruits can occur. In recitation, the mind does not wander; the mind is alert. Recitation exists especially to dispel sleepiness (*thīna-middha*). When one recites aloud, one also becomes alert. One's own ear hears it. If it strikes the mind

just as it is heard by the ear, without letting the mind wander to external things, even at that moment, one can absorb the deep ideas contained within that portion of the Dhamma more deeply into the mind, in the manner of *attha-paṭisaṃvedī dhamma-paṭisaṃvedī*. That is what is meant by 'experiencing' (*paṭisaṃvedī*). One turns it into an experience. On such an occasion, even while reciting, an inner gladness arises in the very same manner, and turning it into joy, one thereby generates the lightness of body and mind called tranquility of body (*kāya-passaddhi*) and tranquility of mind (*citta-passaddhi*). If the portion of the Dhamma being recited is in some way inclined toward Nibbāna, then through that very process, one can realize the Paths and Fruits. That is the third occasion. Next, fourthly, it is shown that a certain person mentally contemplates, reflects in mind upon a portion of the Dhamma they have heard and learned. They examine it in mind again and again. While examining it thus, they go deeper and deeper. Within that portion of Dhamma, they enter into a certain concentration. There, by the fact that the portion of Dhamma learned until then becomes a direct realization—*attha-paṭisaṃvedī dhamma-paṭisaṃvedī*—states of concentration arise, and it is shown that even thereafter, the realization of the Paths and Fruits is possible.

The fifth one shown is the most important. Usually, at the end of discourses, the Blessed One mentions the most important thing. Here too, the fifth one shown is what we all refer to in practice: one contemplates a certain theme of concentration (*samādhi-nimitta*) that is familiar to oneself. One directs the mind to a theme of concentration that one has well-developed. On the basis of that theme of concentration, just like concentration, one directs it toward wisdom (*paññā*). At the moment of directing the mind from concentration to wisdom, then too, the realization of the Paths and Fruits is possible. This principle of five spheres of liberation (*vimuttāyatana*) shown by the Blessed One is useful to all of us. Now we listen to many sermons. We preach sermons. Next, we recite. Occasionally, we contemplate the Dhamma, the things we have learned. Not with the intention of passing exams, not to pass exams and gain degrees in the world, but if one does so with the intention of removing acquisitions (*upadhi*), instead of passing the four biggest exams in the world to gain a degree, if one contemplates the portion of Dhamma learned with the intention of relinquishing acquisitions (*upadhi-patinissagga*), which means letting go of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*), then too, the realization of the Paths and Fruits is possible.

For us to have such a developed mind, that instantaneous realization of the Paths and Fruits mostly occurs to those who have fulfilled the perfections (*pāramī*) for a long period in *saṃsāra*. It is difficult for others to recognize such individuals. They are caught only by the Buddha-eye, due to the Blessed One's special six uncommon knowledges (*asādhāraṇa-ñāṇa*), such as the knowledge of the inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsaya-anusaya-ñāṇa*). Because they are not common to other disciples, they are called 'uncommon knowledges' (*asādhāraṇa-ñāṇa*). This does not mean 'unjust' in the sense used today. Because of the Blessed One's special powers, such as the attainment of great compassion and the knowledge of inclinations and underlying tendencies (*anusaya*), He has the understanding of those capacities. It is frequently mentioned that when the Blessed One preached, those instantaneous realizations of the

Paths and Fruits occurred because of those capacities. But that may not happen every day. It may not happen everywhere. Even if one comes with such accumulated strength, the moment they manifest is seen clearly only by the Buddha-eye. Therefore, in an era like this, without harboring that wishful expectation—the hope that it will be achieved by the mere hearing of the Dhamma—one must do what needs to be done. One must engage in what must be done. What is that? That very subject of meditation (*kamaṭṭhāna*).

If we look at even the word *kamaṭṭhāna—karma-sthāna*—in a way that fits this era, since *kamma* means 'work' and *ṭhāna* means 'place', one can introduce it as an 'spiritual workshop'. Undertaking such an spiritual workshop and constantly engaging in it as a subject of meditation (*kamaṭṭhāna*), whether during leisure times or by securing leisure, if one engages in it, gradually, in the manner of *attha-paṭisaṃvedī dhamma-paṭisaṃvedī*, that portion of the Dhamma can be understood deeper and deeper. Generally, in the beginning, a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) becomes dry because the subject of meditation (*kamaṭṭhāna*) does not appeal to one's mind. In the past, it was mentioned: *kammaṭṭhāne cittīkāraṃ katvā*. One must generate a great respect toward it. Something like respect for the Teacher, thinking, "Through this meditation subject, I will accomplish the tasks I expect." Otherwise, a hesitation, a state of double-mindedness arises.

Then, having obtained that, in accordance with it, one must systematically develop a certain level of serenity (*samatha*). As we all know, becoming concentrated (*samādhi*) means removing—at least temporarily—sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will (*byāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*), which drag down the strength of the mind. Thus, when those sensual thoughts, angry thoughts, sleepy and sluggish states, doubts and hesitations, restless states and regrets are stilled, and the mind becomes settled on the subject of meditation (*kamaṭṭhāna*), that is when one is said to be concentrated—the one-pointedness of concentration. At the moment of one-pointedness, if the strength related to the three characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) that incline toward insight (*vipassanā*) is wrapped within that concentration, then through that very concentration, or after emerging from concentration, one can realize the Paths and Fruits. That is what is mentioned in conclusion. Making use of a theme of concentration (*samādhi-nimitta*) that one has developed, one can attain for oneself that noble direct realization which we refer to as Nibbāna.

Thus, when we say we are protecting the Buddha Sāsana, it is not something done by shouting and making a noise. That Ājīvaka had to go out from inside the house because the neighbors acted strongly on that occasion. In the illustrative story related to the proverb we mentioned, that merchant went out with the door-bolt, which was kept for the protection of the house, to beat that animal. Then, the door was opened for the thieves automatically. In the same way, if we take short-sighted measures, thinking of protecting the Sāsana, we might end up harming our Sāsana. Instead, we must constantly recollect the matters spoken of by the Blessed One regarding the opportune

moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*). You have heard a poem mentioned in the *Lōväḍa Saňgarāva* on this:

Aňdurehi as loma vidinaṭa duradī

viduliya pahä varadunahot varadī

viduliya van mē kaya lat tänadī

sidunokaḷot matu saga mok varadī

This is an ancient analogy. In the past, the skill of archers was measured: they would wait in the pitch-dark night, holding the arrow to the bow, waiting for the lightning to flash. On the other side, there is a horsehair, at a considerable distance. To prove one's skill, to pass the exam, one must shoot that horsehair using only the brief flash of lightning. It is something hard to imagine. But according to the words of the Buddha, it is that analogy that comes in this poem: "To shoot a horsehair from afar in the dark—if one misses the flash of lightning, it is over." What is signified by lightning is "when this lightning-like body is obtained." It is not just this physical body that is meant here, but this wise human existence, this opportune moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*) obtained during the era of a Buddha's arising. If, when this is obtained, one does not perform the meritorious deeds by way of giving, virtue, and meditation, future heaven and liberation (*mokṣa*) will be missed. It is this very idea that Sanskrit poets also expressed at times, in a way that arouses spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*):

Rātrau yathā megha-ghanāndhakāre

vidyud yathā prajvalatīṃ prakāśā

buddhānubhāvena tathā daduti

loke'smi kṣaṇaṃ cā

"Just as in the dense darkness of rainy clouds at night, lightning flashes for a moment with bright light; in the same way, by the power of the Buddha, a mind inclined toward merit arises in this world for a single moment." What we have to do, then, is to protect that which has arisen for a single moment. It is that very thing that the Blessed One has declared:

Cittuppādamapi kho ahaṃ, Cunda, bahukāraṃ vadāmi, ko pana vādo kāyena vācāya anuvidhiyanāsu

"Even the arising of a thought concerning wholesome qualities, Cunda, I say is of great benefit. What indeed is there to be said of conforming to it by body and speech?"

Therefore, we must reflect on protecting that wholesome thought that has arisen. That lay woman was unable to protect the wholesome thought she had generated, because she thought about that Ājīvaka. What we also have to do for our internal progress is to

protect ourselves from within. Otherwise, to become strong from within, we must walk on this path of Dhamma, no matter what kind of insults and abuses come our way.

In that very discourse preached to Ven. Mahā Cunda, another highly profound matter is mentioned. A concept that existed among the Nigaṇṭhas and others during the time of the Buddha's arising was the idea of wearing away their defilements to a degree that others could not. With the intention of wearing away—meaning reducing—they gave up and relinquished various things. Relinquishing and relinquishing, the Nigaṇṭhas in the end even gave up the clothes they wore. According to their concept, the concept of letting go was taken in that manner. They called it *sallēkha* (effacement).

The Blessed One also makes use of this word *sallēkha*. *Sallikhati* means gradually scraping or wearing away. What we mean by scraping or wearing away is like carving a piece of wood little by little. In that manner, it is a method of scraping and wearing away defilements by gradually reducing one's needs. But the Blessed One presented a novel concept through it. If we look at it according to the practice of the Nigaṇṭhas, what can be designated as *sallēkha* are those states of absorption such as the first *jhāna*, the second *jhāna*, etc., obtained by striving with great difficulty and separating oneself from the pleasures of the five senses. But the Blessed One says: "According to the noble usage, these absorptions are not called *sallēkha*." The Blessed One designates those states of absorption as 'pleasant dwellings in this very life' (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukha-vihāra*). Speaking of the attainments (*samāpatti*) that went even beyond that, He says: "I do not call even those attainments *sallēkha*." I do not use the word used by those Nigaṇṭhas. *Santā ete vihārā*—"I designate them as peaceful dwellings." What is the true effacement (*sallēkha*)? It is designated in this manner:

Pare vihiṃsakā bhavissanti, mayamettha avihiṃsakā bhavissāmā'ti sallekkho karaṇīyo.

"Others will be harmful. Here too, there is the talk of self and others. Others are those who are bent on harm. 'We here shall be harmless,' thus effacement (*sallēkha*) should be practiced." While the majority practice harm, let us free our minds from that harm and be harmless. This is the novel concept of effacement (*sallēkha*) shown by the Blessed One. It will become clearer as we go further. *Pare pāṇātipātī bhavissanti, mayamettha pāṇātipātā paṭiviratā bhavissāma.* "Others will be destroyers of life. We here shall refrain from destroying life." There too, there is a separation—not a separation from clothes as the Nigaṇṭhas said. Here, that word *sallēkha* is deeply connected to these virtues of morality (*sīla*).

Accordingly, what we have to understand is that others are harmful in that manner. They destroy the lives of others. They commit theft and robbery in that manner. They engage in various wicked deeds. They plunder and destroy. If we also go to compete with them and do the same, instead of protecting the Sāsana, it will only result in the decline of the Sāsana. If we go to do it just because others are doing it. There, the Blessed One declared the practice of effacement (*sallēkha*). It is something contrary to that, something contrary to what the world does, that goes on here. The majority do that; we, on our part,

shall train ourselves in this manner. Thus, we can draw something from this as well. Although preached to the Sangha, many of these discourses can be practiced generally by everyone to a certain extent.

Even if we think about this occasion, this is an occasion where this devout congregation has undertaken a precept and is dedicated to it. At this moment, your mind does not incline to act in the way you do when problematic situations arise in your day-to-day home life, because you have firmly declared *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* (abstaining from destroying life) and *adinnādānā veramaṇī* (abstaining from taking what is not given). We often say to pronounce the word *veramaṇī* with a bit of emphasis. Through that, the idea of abstaining is taken into the mind. Through that idea of abstaining, we are protected. The Blessed One introduced the practice of effacement (*sallēkha*) by bringing it close to virtue (*sīla*). Thus, there is no need to speak separately of those states of absorption (*jhāna*). As a result of that, those 'pleasant dwellings in this very life' (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukha-vihāra*)—peaceful dwellings—are obtained. Those are the results. It begins with virtue (*sīla*). Devotees who expect to protect the Buddha Sāsana must reflect wisely on what the Sāsana actually is. Even if nothing else is present, if virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) exist somewhere, we must consider that the Sāsana exists there.

When we reflect in that manner, we have that lamp. Where is that lamp? Where is that lamp whose light we protected with great difficulty during the monthly Poya day lamp-offering or at the lamp-post (*pahan kanuva*), which we took as an analogy? It is in our heart. Thus, that too is something like a clay lamp. It is to that lamp of the heart that we pour the oil of faith (*saddhā*), place the wick of effort (*viriya*), and when even that is insufficient, if there is something we do not understand, we draw close to another lamp—draw close to the lamp of a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) and make use of that light. A person who has become strong in that manner can strengthen ten others, twenty others. It is in that manner that a Sāsana is protected.

That is why we constantly declare that the Sāsana is protected not by external things, but through internal strength. Even if external things exist, if internal virtues are absent, they become hollow, empty, mere monuments, things that attract foreigners, limited only to photographs, things about which one can only shout loudly. If internal virtues are present, then they become sacred sites for us. Now, when we recollect those places like Anurādhapura and Mihintale, why do those ruins not remain mere ruins to you? Generally, ruins and remains are not things of great value. But something remains within those remains. You must reflect on what it is that remains. As you, who go to those places, constantly recollect, it is the touch of those past practitioners, those noble individuals who made use of those stone caves and other places, that has transformed those remains into memorable monuments of the Sāsana.

If we reflect in that manner, without limiting ourselves only to worshipping those ancient things, if our own homes, our meditation huts, the monastery or forest hermitage where we live, become filled with those virtues, we do not need to wait for centuries. They will become objects of worship in the very same way. In that manner we must reflect. As is

constantly reminded, the Sāsana is something that must be built within the stream of consciousness (*citta-santāna*). When that is strengthened, no one can come near it. That Ājīvaka was unable to prevent her from going to the Blessed One. Having heard of the virtues of the Buddha and the virtues of the Dhamma, the faith (*saddhā*) that arose within that lay disciple through the praise spoken by her neighbors was so great that, without even minding the word of her own teacher, the Ājīvaka, she brought the Blessed One by a device and made the Ājīvaka sit in the room. It is not even mentioned in the story that food was given to the Ājīvaka there. The Ājīvaka was inside the room, inside the house. But this lay woman performed that meritorious deed beautifully. It was only when the sound of 'Sādhu' arose that the Ājīvaka could no longer tolerate it.

In that manner, you too must strive to establish this within our Sāsana. If we strengthen the internal Sāsana in that way, whatever external dangers may arise, we can conquer them through a certain power of the Dhamma. When the internal Sāsana collapses, we end up in the illustrative story of the proverb mentioned earlier. We have to take the very door-bolt meant for protecting the house and use it to deal blows on the back of that animal. Although done with good intention, that animal forgot the duty belonging to itself. Now, it does not matter even if we do not mention this proverb explicitly. Many points for you to reflect upon wisely have been spoken today on this valuable day. Devotees who reflect on the future of the Buddha Sāsana can reap something from this thoughtfully. We have to constantly think about the value of our lives through that story concerning the opportune moment (*khaṇa-sampatti*). Within a very short lifespan of less than a hundred years, according to what we acquire through our courses of action, to the extent that we are rich enough to give to others, a Sāsana is protected.

We know that when a flashlight is passed from hand to hand in a dark night, it is not seen from whom it is received or to whom it is given. But it is seen by the light of the flashlight. It is in this manner that this Sāsana has been protected for over two thousand five hundred years. Therefore, we must reflect on protecting this internal Sāsana even anonymously, and through that, to help others as a duty of a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), relying on the association of noble friends. The Blessed One has declared that the Buddha Sāsana is entirely the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mittatā*). He said that the entire holy life (*brahmacariya*) is companionship with noble friends. Accordingly, through the association of noble friends, the Sāsana is protected.

Therefore, you must reflect wisely. If there is a certain taste of meaning, a taste of Dhamma in these matters spoken, reap it, and by shaping your lives accordingly, walking on this path of Dhamma, just as the Blessed One did, perform this Dhamma service at least by a word, offering the association of noble friends, and proceed forward. You must strive to carry forward this beginning made on this Poson Full Moon Poya Day. Leaving your homes, undertaking a valuable precept, many of you are striving at least a little to draw close to the first step of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). That course of action which begins therewith, some conclude by entering the homeless life (*pabbajjā*). Even if one is ordained, there is no end there; it is only a beginning. The long journey from there onward is an unseen journey.

Everyone knows that the fourfold assembly—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen—belongs to this Sāsana. Therefore, if everyone becomes strong in this manner, the Sāsana will be protected automatically. Thus, on this noble Poya day, this devout congregation, having dedicated themselves, preparing themselves, keeping the precepts, performing your own study and meditation today, and listening to the Dhamma sermon at this moment—through the mass of merit accumulated through all of this, may you strengthen those qualities that should be developed as spiritual faculties and powers (*indriya-bala*) at the stage of the Paths and Fruits, namely faith (*saddhā*), effort (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). And as quickly as possible, before this lamp of the Buddha Sāsana goes out, through the penetration (*paṭivedha*) of the Paths and Fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship, may this merit definitely be a cause, may it be a supportive condition (*upanissaya*), for realizing the noble, supreme Peace of Nibbāna! Make that aspiration. Likewise, from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, if there is anyone who wishes to rejoice in this merit of preaching the Dhamma and hearing the Dhamma, through that rejoicing, may they end the suffering of *saṃsāra* through their aspired Bodhi, the noble, supreme Nibbāna! Aspiring thus, recite this stanza.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #141

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.41)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Yassa pāpaṃ kataṃ kammaṃ,

kusalena pithīyati;

So imaṃ lokaṃ pabhāseti,

abbhā mutto va candimā."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 173 (Loka Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

On this Vesak Full Moon Day, you must have awakened with the qualities of the Buddha in your minds. We contemplate the ocean of the Buddha's qualities through the text of the nine supreme virtues. As you all know: *Itipi so Bhagavā Arahaṁ, Sammāsambuddho, Vijjācaraṇasampanno, Sugato, Lokavidū, Anuttaro purisadammasārathi, Satthā devamanussānaṁ, Buddho, Bhagavā*. Among these nine virtues, the infinite great compassion—the quality of great compassion—of our Buddha is beautifully manifested through the sixth quality mentioned among these, namely *Anuttaro purisadammasārathi* (the incomparable leader of men to be tamed).

What is meant by *Anuttaro purisadammasārathi*? The Buddha is described as being like a supreme charioteer in taming individuals who can and should be tamed. That is to say, just as a charioteer tames horses or bulls to guide a chariot on the proper path, the Buddha possesses the quality of taming and disciplining individuals who need to be tamed. A biographical story that exemplifies this quality of *Anuttaro purisadammasārathi* exceedingly well is the story of Aṅgulimāla. The verse we have selected as our theme today was delivered by the Buddha with reference to Venerable Aṅgulimāla. As Buddhists, we have all heard the story of Aṅgulimāla to varying extents. Today, in keeping with the occasion, we hope to briefly present the story of Aṅgulimāla.

A son was born to the Brahmin lady named Mantānī, the wife of the Brahmin Gagga, who was the royal chaplain (purohita) to King Kosala. The name given to this son by his parents was Ahimsaka (the Harmless One). When this young Brahmin youth, Ahimsaka, reached young adulthood, his parents sent him to the world-renowned teacher (Disāpāmokkha) in Taxila (Takkasilā) to learn arts and sciences. This boy, this Ahimsaka, in a truly harmless manner, won the heart of his teacher, performed his duties and rituals, and mastered the arts with great skill. By the time his studies were nearing completion, a great jealousy arose among the other students regarding this youth Ahimsaka. Driven by this jealousy, they formed groups, conspired, approached the teacher, and fabricated a slanderous rumor involving the teacher's wife.

Although the teacher, who became enraged by this, had an intense urge to kill the youth Ahimsaka, he considered the disrepute it would bring upon himself and thought of a stratagem instead. What was the stratagem he employed? He told this young Ahimsaka, "If you are to reap the proper benefit of these arts and sciences, you must pay the appropriate teacher's fee (guru-dakṣiṇā). You must make an offering of honor. Therefore, the tribute I demand is nothing other than the killing of a thousand wayfarers. Accomplishing that feat is the payment for these arts and sciences as a teacher's fee; complete that," he instructed.

This Brahmin youth Ahimsaka was someone of immense physical strength and vigor. Taking the five types of weapons, he went into a forest and began to kill every person who entered it. As he killed, being unable to keep an accurate count, he cut off a finger from each person he killed and gathered them, attempting to keep a count of the victims. Since those fingers would wither and decay in different places, he eventually strung the fingers together and wore them as a garland. Even if groups of ten, twelve, or twenty people came, he would chase them down and kill them due to his innate strength and vigor, continuing to amass fingers in this manner. Because he wore a garland of fingers, this man came to be known by the terrifying name "Aṅgulimāla" (Finger-garlanded). Due to the dread of Aṅgulimāla, villages, market towns, and provinces began to be deserted. People abandoned their homes. When this terrifying threat arose, the Brahmin chaplain also heard of it. Realizing they might incur the wrath of the king, he spoke to his wife, the Brahmin lady, and said, "Look, our son has become this ferocious." Driven by a mother's affection, the Brahmin lady thought, "I must go tomorrow and somehow bring my son back before he faces the king's wrath." Precisely by that day, Aṅgulimāla's count in his woven garland of fingers had reached nine hundred and ninety-nine. Only one more was needed to complete the thousand. Thus, with great anticipation, Aṅgulimāla resolved to kill whoever came the next day, gather the finger, and perform the teacher's offering.

Precisely on that morning, when the Buddha arose from the attainment of great compassion and surveyed the world, he saw that if he did not go, Aṅgulimāla would kill his own mother, commit that weightiest of sins (ānantarika-kamma), and inevitably be reborn in hell; whereas if he did go, he would be tamed, ordained, and possessed the supportive conditions (hetu-sampatti) to become an Arahant. That day, after returning from his alms-round in Sāvatthi, without informing even an attendant, the Buddha

tidied his dwelling and set off alone to the forested area where Aṅgulimāla lived. It is mentioned that, owing to the manner of his travel, even those who saw him could not recognize him as the Buddha. Therefore, the cowherds, farmers, and travelers met along the way, who lived near that forest, thinking he was just an ordinary monk, pleaded with him two or three times, saying, "O monk, do not go down that path. There is a bandit named the notorious Aṅgulimāla. There is no need to speak of those who go alone; even if groups of twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty go, he chases them down, kills them, and collects their fingers. Do not go!" The Buddha silently continued on his way.

Next, Aṅgulimāla saw the Buddha walking from afar. He thought, "While people who come in such large groups fall into my hands, this monk is coming all alone. This seems like a challenge. I must kill this monk by any means," and he gave chase from behind. The Buddha, employing his psychic power, caused the earth to ripple so that no matter how fast Aṅgulimāla ran, and even though the Buddha was walking at his normal, natural pace, Aṅgulimāla was made unable to catch up with him. Thus, Aṅgulimāla ran, panting heavily. Yet, he could not get close to the Buddha at all. It is mentioned that he ran for three leagues (yojanas) in this manner.

Finally, when he was utterly exhausted, he stopped and shouted, "Stop, monk! Stop, monk!" Then the Buddha declared, "I have stopped. You, too, stop!" Being a wise person, Aṅgulimāla thought, "These monastics are truthful. What is the meaning of this statement?" Then he asked, "Why is it that while I am standing still, you tell me to stop, and while you are walking, you say you have stopped?" In response to this, the Buddha said, "Aṅgulimāla, I have stopped for all time, having abstained from harming living beings, having abstained from violence to creatures, and having laid aside weapons. But you, because you have no restraint regarding the destruction of life, have not yet stopped," thus expressing a profound truth. Comprehending the truth of this, Aṅgulimāla cast away his weapons and asked the Buddha for ordination. The Buddha ordained him with the formula *Ehi Bhikkhu* (Come, Bhikkhu).

Then, Venerable Aṅgulimāla, the new monk, walked behind the Buddha. Having traveled to Sāvatthi, they went to Jetavana monastery. Meanwhile, there was a huge uproar in the royal courtyard of King Kosala's palace. The public had gathered and was protesting: "O Lord, in your realm there has arisen such a terrifying, persistent bandit, who is killing people, cutting off their fingers, and causing such devastation. Villages, market towns, and provinces are deserted. Eradicate this terrifying dread of this thief!" Then, King Kosala set out with a cavalry of five hundred soldiers to capture this bandit Aṅgulimāla. On his way, he thought he should also visit the Buddha and came to Jetavana. The Buddha asked, "Great King, why are you marching as if for battle? Has King Bimbisāra of Magadha declared war? Or have the Licchavi kings declared war? What is the matter?" When asked, he replied, "No, Blessed One, there is a terrifying bandit in my realm. Therefore, I am going to subdue that bandit." Then the Buddha asked, "Great King, if you were to see that Aṅgulimāla, with his hair and beard shaved, wearing saffron robes, abstaining from taking life, from taking what is not given, from false speech, and so on—having abstained from those things pertaining to the five precepts—and living the

celibate life of a monk, what would you do?" "In that case, Blessed One, I would bow to that Aṅgulimāla. I would offer him the four requisites. But, Blessed One, how could such a sinner obtain such moral restraint?" At the moment the King was saying this, Venerable Aṅgulimāla was seated not far from the Buddha. The Buddha pointed with his right hand and said, "Great King, that is Aṅgulimāla." Upon hearing this, the King was seized with great fear and terror. The Buddha said, "Do not be afraid, Great King, do not be afraid. Now, you have no reason to fear this Aṅgulimāla."

Then the King approached Venerable Aṅgulimāla and asked, "Are you, Venerable Sir, the Venerable Aṅgulimāla?" "Yes." The King thought that the name "Aṅgulimāla" was not very suitable, and not respectful enough for this member of the Sangha. Next, he asked, "Of what clan is your father, Venerable Sir?" "Gagga." "Of what clan is your mother?" "Mantāṇī." In accordance with the ancient way of addressing a person, the King then said, "Ah, then, Venerable Gagga Mantāṇīputta, I invite you to accept the four requisites from me. Regard me as your supporter. I shall serve you with the four requisites: robes, alms-food, lodging, and medicine for the sick." By this time, Venerable Aṅgulimāla had not only become ordained, but was also training in the strict practices known as ascetic practices (*dhutaṅgas*). He had already entered upon a rigorous lifestyle: living in the forest, going on alms-rounds, wearing rag-robes, and being content with just three robes. Therefore, Venerable Aṅgulimāla replied, "Great King, my robes are complete. I do not need robes." Deeply inspired by this, the King said to the Buddha, "Blessed One, this is wonderful and marvelous! One whom I could not tame even with sticks and weapons, the Blessed One has tamed in this manner without sticks or weapons," and making this wonderfully praiseful statement, the King departed.

Now, Venerable Aṅgulimāla goes on alms-round in Sāvatthi. As soon as people hear, "Venerable Aṅgulimāla is coming on alms-round," they close their doors. Some run into the forests out of fear. Consequently, Venerable Aṅgulimāla does not receive proper alms-food and has to return. Furthermore, Venerable Aṅgulimāla seeks quiet places to meditate. Day and night, he strives to meditate. But he cannot raise his mind to the meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Instead of the meditation object, what comes to his mind is the way he killed people during his time as Aṅgulimāla, and the screaming voices begging for their lives. Next, how they struggled in the throes of death. These are the things that fall into his mind. He cannot concentrate his mind. Meanwhile, one day, as Venerable Aṅgulimāla was on alms-round, he saw in a house a pregnant mother undergoing extreme labor pains and distress. Developing great compassion for her, he came to the Buddha and kindly expressed his sorrow, saying, "Alas, to what great suffering do these living beings fall!" On that occasion, the Buddha said to Venerable Aṅgulimāla, "In that case, Aṅgulimāla, go to that woman. Go and perform an act of truth (*saccakiriya*) in this manner: *'Yatohaṁ, bhagini, jātiyā jāto nābhijānāmi sañcicca pāṇaṁ jīvitā voropetā, tena saccena te hotu sotthi hotu gabbhassa.'* Perform the act of truth in that way. What is its meaning? 'Sister, since I was born, I do not recall intentionally depriving a living being of life. Sister, by this truth, may there be well-being for you, and well-being for your child in the womb!'—make such a wish." Then, Venerable Aṅgulimāla asked the Buddha, "Alas, Lord, how can I perform such an act of

truth? Would that not be telling a deliberate lie? Have I not deprived so many living beings of life?" Offering a small modification, the Buddha declared, "In that case, Aṅgulimāla, perform the act of truth in this manner. How? *'Yatohaṁ, bhagini, ariyāya jātiyā jāto nābhijānāmi sañcicca pāṇaṁ jīvitā voropetā, tena saccena te hotu sotthi hotu gabbhassa.'* What is its meaning? 'Sister, since I was born of the noble birth'—'noble birth' (*ariyā jāti*) means the noble birth of renouncing the lay life and joining the noble Sangha, since the day of receiving this noble birth—'I do not recall intentionally depriving a living being of life. By this truth, may there be well-being for you, and well-being for your child in the womb!'" "Ah, in that case, I can do it," said Venerable Aṅgulimāla. He went to that house and performed the act of truth in that manner. This is the origin of the highly powerful Aṅgulimāla Pirith, which is cherished with love by all virtuous laypeople to this day.

Now, some might have a doubt as to why the Buddha allowed such a protection chant (*pirith*) for Venerable Aṅgulimāla, given that practicing medicine is prohibited for monks according to the Vinaya (monastic discipline) laid down by the Buddha. However, this is not a medical practice; it is merely an act of truth. On the other hand, out of great compassion, why did the Buddha specifically present this practice to Venerable Aṅgulimāla? Venerable Aṅgulimāla was suffering to the extent that he was not even receiving alms-food. There was great fear among the public even when Venerable Aṅgulimāla walked for alms. It was to provide relief regarding that, and also as a solution to the problem of his meditation object not developing.

There is a special meaning in saying "noble birth" (*ariyā jāti*). In this long *saṁsāra*, there is no one who has not committed actions related to the five evils. But if we are to walk on this path of Dhamma, what we need is the foundation of virtue (*sīla*). There is a certain boundary in that foundation of virtue. It is by relying on a resolution and a reflection that one can perform an act of truth. Here, the Buddha gives a immense solace to Venerable Aṅgulimāla. How? It was not the physical birth he had in this life that was taken there. If that were taken as the boundary, there would be no room for Venerable Aṅgulimāla to find peace, considering how many humans he had killed. Instead, through the phrase "since I was born of the noble birth," a great relief was brought about. A boundary was set from that point onward. From that boundary, his mind was pure. That is why Venerable Aṅgulimāla was able to do it. Out of great compassion, the Buddha allowed this stratagem to remove the remorse that was obstructing his meditation object. Because the act of truth succeeded, Venerable Aṅgulimāla felt great solace and a immense self-confidence. Through that self-confidence—thinking, "Now, since the day of my noble birth, I am pure; my virtue is pure"—Venerable Aṅgulimāla was able to concentrate his mind. Unremittingly and intensely developing insight (*vipassanā*), he became an Arahant.

Having become an Arahant in that way, Venerable Aṅgulimāla now goes on alms-round—the Arahant Aṅgulimāla. Alms-food was now received well, but other things were also received. What were they? Stones, pebbles, sticks, and clubs thrown by the villagers would fly through the air and fall upon Venerable Aṅgulimāla's head, striking his body,

hitting his torso. In the end, Venerable Aṅgulimāla would return from his alms-round with his bowl broken, his head cut and bleeding, and his robes torn. Seeing this, the Buddha declared, "Brahmin, Brahmin! Endure it, Brahmin!" (The word "Brahmin" is used by the Buddha with reference to Arahants). "For whatever evil deed you would have boiled in hell for hundreds of years, thousands of years, hundreds of thousands of years, you are now experiencing a minor result as a ripening to be experienced in this very life (*diṭṭhadhammavedanīya-kamma*). Bear with it!"—so the Buddha consoled him. When Venerable Aṅgulimāla entered the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samāpatti*), he would be freed even from those physical pains considered as ripening in this very life, and while experiencing the bliss of liberation (*vimutti-sukha*), he would utter an exclamatory verse of joy (*udāna*). The freedom even from those bodily afflictions regarded as *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* is found in Arahants when they enter the concentration of the fruit of Arahantship. Experiencing that bliss of liberation, the true bliss of Nibbāna, the pure bliss of Nibbāna, Venerable Aṅgulimāla then expressed a verse (which is not directly a word of the Buddha):

"Yo ca pubbe pamajjitvā

Pacchā so nappamajjati

So imaṁ lokaṁ pabhāseti

Abbhā mutto va candimā"

"He who was formerly negligent, but later is not negligent, illuminates this world like the moon freed from a cloud." Venerable Aṅgulimāla uttered this noble and precious verse as an exclamation of joy, a statement of spiritual triumph.

Thus, while experiencing the bliss of liberation as an Arahant, he did not live for long. Perhaps due to the severity of his past unwholesome deeds of destroying life, when his life-Preparations (*āyu-saṅkhāra*) waned, Venerable Aṅgulimāla attained Parinibbāna (final extinguishment). Many members of the Sangha did not even know that this Venerable monk had become an Arahant. After his Parinibbāna, a discussion arose among the monks assembled in the Dhamma hall: "Where was this Venerable Aṅgulimāla reborn? He has passed away; where was he reborn?" When the Buddha was asked, and they related this discussion, he declared, "No, bhikkhus, my son Aṅgulimāla attained Parinibbāna as an Arahant." It was on that occasion that he uttered the verse we selected as our theme:

> *"Yassa pāpaṁ kataṁ kammaṁ*
>
> *Kusalena pithīyati*
>
> *So imaṁ lokaṁ pabhāseti*
>
> *Abbhā mutto va candimā"*

"He whose evil deed is covered by a wholesome deed illuminates this world like the moon freed from a cloud." He delivered this Dhamma verse. Briefly put, this is the story of Aṅgulimāla.

Now, an explanation is needed regarding the lesson we should draw from this story. On one hand, as we mentioned earlier, there are many facts herein that help to develop our faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha's quality of the attainment of great compassion. The skill in means (*upāya-kosalla*) employed by the Buddha to save Venerable Aṅgulimāla from the path to hell was such that, in truth, Venerable Aṅgulimāla escaped hell by a hair's breadth—just as he was saved at nine hundred and ninety-nine. If he had killed his mother and completed the thousand, not even a Buddha could have saved Aṅgulimāla. The weightiest sin (*ānantarika-kamma*) is that severe. Before that could happen, the Buddha acted, without informing anyone, traveling there all alone out of his quality of great compassion.

Furthermore, the Buddha used only two short sentences to tame Aṅgulimāla: "I have stopped. You, too, stop, Aṅgulimāla." That was all. The notorious bandit Aṅgulimāla, whom neither kings nor weapons could tame, was tamed by the Buddha through those two invaluable sentences, which served as a meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*). "I have stopped. You, too, stop." Aṅgulimāla, who possessed past meritorious power, past perfection (*pāramī*) power, and whose intellect was sharpened by the arts and sciences he had mastered as the youth Ahimsaka, understood the meaning of this. He understood that the lack of restraint regarding the destruction of life is "not stopping," and that true "stopping," being settled in the truest sense, is liberation from this. Having understood this, he became ordained.

Moreover, why did the Buddha give Venerable Aṅgulimāla a protection chant (*pirith*), or rather, instructions helpful for a protection chant? The Buddha saw that although he was making an effort, Venerable Aṅgulimāla was unable to concentrate his mind. He was also facing various difficulties regarding alms-food due to the public's fear. Furthermore, he could not gather his mind together. That is why the Buddha gave him an act of truth in that manner. When Venerable Aṅgulimāla performed that act of truth, it was not only instantly verified, but it remains verified to this day. What was manifested there was a marvelous Buddha-power. We must also reflect on the power inherent in that act of truth.

Virtue (*sīla*) is the foundation of an act of truth. We see the value of virtue through this. Now, in today's society, there is a group of people called "defeated ones." Perhaps even among this audience there may be those who think, due to various reasons, "The path of Dhamma does not belong to us. We do not have the strength to walk the Dhamma-path. There is no merit in us." It was for those people that we uttered those two verses. Even the simile presented in those two verses is sufficient. Now, on a full moon day like today, someone tries to look at the moon. But it is covered by a dark cloud. They watch with great effort. There is nothing more beautiful than the orb of the moon emerging from a dark cloud. In the same way, if there are some dark blemishes in one's character which one considers as obstacles to the Dhamma-path, it is on that very background that one

can attain this liberation. The character of Aṅgulimāla is like an embroidery of silver thread on a background of black velvet. That is primarily how the lesson we must draw from it appears to us.

The primary lesson we must learn from the story of Aṅgulimāla is that if one generates the perception of capability ("I can") at any moment, establishes faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem, makes a firm resolution, and enters upon this path, one has the strength to go all the way. Furthermore, when reflecting on the power of acts of truth performed with virtue (*sīla*) as the head, it becomes clear that a certain boundary is necessary for that. A person who practices meditation does all this in order to forget the past. Now, wearing this robe, bringing about this external change, is done to remove the remorse arising in one's mind. Those activities also assist in that. What helps even more is making a firm resolution with a specific boundary: "From today, from this very moment, I shall conduct myself in this virtue." Going along with this virtue is what reflection (*āvarjana*) means—looking back.

Virtue (*sīla*) is the foundation. The resolution regarding virtue is what supports it. Now, depending on the occasion, some of you have undertaken the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (virtue with livelihood as the eighth precept). As I see it, the majority of people on this precious full moon day have undertaken the Eight Precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*) with the right intention and with a true, deep understanding of its meaning. Others have undertaken the Ten Precepts (*dasa-sīla*). In this way, some virtue was resolved upon. That is the foundation for walking on this Dhamma-path and concentrating the mind.

Having laid down that foundation, what next helps to settle the mind for meditation is reflecting on that virtue. Through reflection, joy arises in a person. The benefit of virtue is described as non-remorse (*avippaṭisāra*). That is the essence of virtue. Undertaking virtue and not meditating is like laying the foundation of a building and not constructing the building. Therefore, having laid the foundation of virtue, standing upon it, and reflecting upon it, one then concentrates the mind on the meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*) through that strength. In such instances, the meditation object becomes very clear. That is the principle revealed to us by the story of Aṅgulimāla. After performing that act of truth, Venerable Aṅgulimāla was able to concentrate his mind, thinking: "So, my mind is pure; the past is gone." At that point, he turned a new page. He turned a completely new page in his life. Now, something you often hear is about "turning a new page in life." Once you turn that page, the other page is no longer visible; it is just like that. Virtue is what helps in this. We can realize the value of virtue through that.

Likewise, from the stratagem employed here by the Buddha to tame a person, we too, in our own measure, can appreciate the importance of association with a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). The monks asked the Buddha, "How did Aṅgulimāla attain Arahantship despite committing such evil deeds?" It was on that occasion that the Buddha declared, "He committed such evil deeds in that manner because he did not have a true noble friend. But because he obtained a noble friend like me, those committed evil deeds could be covered by the wholesome deed of the supramundane path (*lokuttara-*

magga-kusala)." Here, "covered by a wholesome deed" (*kusalena pithīyati*) does not refer to ordinary wholesome deeds. They were covered by the wholesome deed of the path of Arahantship. There are levels within that wholesomeness as well.

What is the victory achieved through the supramundane state of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), which you frequently hear of? It is bringing the mind to a state where it cannot fall into the four lower realms of misery. That is, one is freed from unwholesome karma leading to rebirth in hell. An ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) does not know when the results of unwholesome karma will strike. A person who has not achieved Stream-entry does not know when they might have to go to hell. The value of the Wheel of Dhamma shown by the Buddha is apparent from this. Virtuous friends, there are two rotating wheels in this world: the wheel of karma (*kamma-cakka*) and the Wheel of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakka*). The wheel of karma rotates and rotates in a wonderfully powerful manner. But there is another wheel that can break its power, and that is the Wheel of Dhamma. That is the Wheel of Dhamma discovered by the Buddhas after fulfilling perfections (*pāramīs*) for four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand aeons. What it does is break that power. It cannot be broken entirely at once, but it is broken stage by stage.

The first breaking is when someone attains the path-knowledge of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*). If that state of Stream-entry is attained, then in accordance with that level of mental development, by the very power of the supramundane state of Stream-entry, those unwholesome deeds leading to hell are discarded. In short, birth (*jāti*) is limited to at most seven times more in the happy realms of existence (*sugati*). A happy destination means bringing the mind to a state where it is born only in the human world or the deva worlds, excluding the lower realms of misery. That is why the Buddha, on many occasions, described the wonderful peace thus obtained using various similes. Just as the great earth cannot be compared to the dust on a fingernail, the remaining unwholesome karma of a Stream-enterer is like the dust on a fingernail. The Stream-enterer stands having obtained liberation from karmic forces as vast as the great earth. Such immense solace is received merely by becoming a Stream-enterer. Next, proceeding gradually in that manner, one reduces birth to at most once more (Once-returner), and then becomes a Non-returner (*anāgāmī*) who does not return to this world, but is reborn in the Brahma realms, and subsequently becomes an Arahant in the Brahma realm.

Even after becoming an Arahant, there is an important point there. We saw from this story of Aṅgulimāla that even after becoming an Arahant, the unwholesome karma to be experienced in this very life (*diṭṭhadhammavedanīya-kamma*) remains effective, showing how severe the wheel of karma is. Venerable Aṅgulimāla, having obtained relief in that manner, became an Arahant with great difficulty. Yet, even after becoming an Arahant, why did stones and pebbles thrown elsewhere fly through the air and land on his head when he went on alms-round? Because after one becomes an Arahant, the past unwholesome deeds to be experienced in this very life struggle intensely to yield their results. They have to be experienced. That is how powerful the wheel of karma is.

Yet, there is an opportunity for Arahants to obtain, at least temporarily, relief even from such karmic results and to experience the true nature of liberation in the mind stilled (Nibbāna). This is called the concentration of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samādhi*). While remaining entered in that attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samāpatti*), having greatly thinned out those karmic forces, they directly realize the pure state of cessation (*nirodha*), the state of extinguishment, complete extinguishment. That is the highest peace in the world. This peace shown by the Buddha is not something at the level of what ordinary worldly people think. This supramundane peace is a certain power of peace and extinguishment obtained by calming and taming the power of those karmic forces as well as all other Preparations (*saṅkhāra*); it is called the bliss of liberation (*vimutti-sukha*). It was by experiencing that bliss of liberation that Venerable Aṅgulimāla declared that if someone, having previously fallen into negligence, frees himself from negligence and becomes diligent, he illuminates the world like the moon freed from a dark cloud. With reference to this, we can understand how the Buddha's Wheel of Dhamma helps to break this wheel of karma.

Ultimately, when we reflect on it, there is nothing in this *saṁsāra* worth holding onto. That is why the Buddha declared, "I do not praise becoming (*bhava*) even for a moment. Just as even a tiny amount of excrement is foul-smelling, the entirety of becoming (*bhava*) is a place of great terror." Let alone other realms, even existence in the Brahma worlds—wherever there are Preparations (*saṅkhāras*), there is suffering (*dukkha*); this was pointed out by the Buddha. Therefore, during a period when a Buddha has appeared, everyone must walk this path to Nibbāna and strive, at the very minimum, to achieve Stream-entry to be freed from the four lower realms of misery, and at the maximum, to end all the suffering of *saṁsāra* and find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna. Make that resolution in that manner; the day of Vesak is the best opportunity to turn a new page. Thinking about this year, it is one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine (1999). Here too, we have an instance of escaping at "ninety-nine" (like Aṅgulimāla at 999). If, even at this juncture, one does not reflect wisely and turn toward the Dhamma-path, but expects to live in a state of defeat in this society, then not only the individual but also society as a whole will be subjected to a terrifying destruction.

Therefore, all of us must resolve to bring the lesson given by Aṅgulimāla's character close to our own lives. Indeed, it is a wonderfully marvelous miracle. We must bring forth not only the miracle of the Buddha, but also the miraculous power within ourselves through this. After Venerable Aṅgulimāla was ordained, the way he walked diligently on that Dhamma-path—with his head cut, spilling blood, not even receiving alms-food properly, in the midst of various obstacles, yet remaining energetic, standing firm in his virtue (*sīla*), and meditating—he realized the supreme state of Arahantship.

Similarly, we must understand that whether one is a layperson or a monk, many obstacles and hardships may arise when walking the Dhamma-path. None of those are excuses. Within every one of us, there are wholesome as well as unwholesome deeds done in *saṁsāra*. There is a good side and there is a bad side. Unwholesome deeds

support unwholesome deeds, and wholesome deeds support wholesome deeds. It is just as the Buddha pointed out: association with bad friends (*pāpa-mitta*) is extremely dangerous. At the beginning of this story, that is exactly what happened. The friends around Aṅgulimāla were bad friends. Furthermore, his teacher also eventually became a bad friend, and by giving that kind of wrong advice, prompted the innocent Ahimsaka to evil, turning the innocent Ahimsaka into the fierce Aṅgulimāla.

On the other hand, while so many people warned him, the Buddha went alone to find the bandit Aṅgulimāla, tamed him with just two sentences, and brought him back as a monk, solely because of his own great compassion. We must understand that this miracle of the Dhamma is not only within Aṅgulimāla, but within each and every one of us. Thinking of it in this way, this present auspicious time is a highly suitable opportunity to undergo a special life transformation. The true auspicious time is the Buddhist auspicious time. What is this auspicious time? It is the auspicious time of the Buddha's birth, his awakening, and his Parinibbāna (final extinguishment). This is the day on which the three most noble and supreme events of the Buddha's life occurred. On such a day, we must reflect that we too have certain goals.

Now, every one of us has various mundane goals. We must have formed such mundane goals countless times in this long *saṁsāra*. Whether they were achieved or not—as the Buddha points out, this *saṁsāra* is a journey of falling prey to birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*), sickness, and death (*maraṇa*), being subjected to suffering (*dukkha*) countless times due to other karmic results, and traveling from suffering to suffering. Therefore, the Buddha pointed out that instead of running, we should bring forth extinguishment, which is the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from *saṁsāra*, escaping from the spinning-in-one-place of wandering (*saṁsaraṇa*); that is what is called the Wheel of Dhamma. That Wheel of Dhamma is something that must rotate within one's own mind-stream. The Dhamma-path to be walked for that purpose is the path of meditation.

So, using virtue (*sīla*) as the foundation, resolving on virtue, gladdening and delighting one's mind through that reflection, one then concentrates the mind through some tranquil meditation object (*samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*). A tranquil meditation object is what helps to concentrate the mind. When one constantly reflects on the quality of *Anuttaro purisadammasārathi* mentioned on this occasion, in accordance with the faith (*saddhā*) arising within oneself, a power and concentration (*samādhi*) capable of keeping the mind anchored in that very object emerges, bringing about a certain unification, a one-pointedness of mind. Relying on that, one can turn toward insight (*vipassanā*) to understand the reality of the world as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*).

In the same way, there are various meditation objects such as recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), foulness (*asubha*), and mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*). If someone, by relying on these, concentrates the mind and then directly perceives the impermanent nature of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), turning the mind to insight and meditating,

they can bring forth the path-knowledges (*magga-ñāṇa*). It is by bringing them forth in that manner that one can escape from this *saṁsāra* forever.

We bow to a Buddha and honor a Buddha not by thinking of the qualities of his physical body, nor by thinking of other things. A Buddha is so called because he discovered something that no other teacher could discover. What is that? The method of escaping from this terrifying *saṁsāra* and from the wheel of karma. This is not something that can be achieved by going to an extreme. As shown in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, it is neither by indulging in sensual pleasures nor by torturing one's body as if taking revenge upon it that one can escape from this *saṁsāra*. It is through the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) shown by the Buddha, namely, the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path consists of Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). This is the very thing the Buddha describes as the Middle Path. This path is one that must be developed within one's own mind-stream.

What first supports this path is Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). One must understand good and bad. One must properly understand good and bad, merit and demerit. Next, one must understand the difference between this *saṁsāra* and the liberation from *saṁsāra*. That is the understanding that this entire *saṁsāra* is suffering (*dukkha*), and the deep understanding that underlying it is craving (*taṇhā*). It is the understanding that where craving is absent, there is peace and extinguishment—Nibbāna. Next, what supports that is this very path. Through this understanding, through this Right View, one generates Right Intentions (*sammā-saṅkappa*), which are proper thoughts. One must strongly generate the desire and wish for renunciation (*nekkhamma*), for leaving the lay life. For a long period of time, the Buddhas fulfilled that renunciation as a perfection (*pāramī*).

Next, moving away from ill-will, there is the thought of loving-kindness, the thought of non-ill-will (*avyāpāda*), and then the thought of harmlessness (*avihiṁsā*), which is the thought of abstaining from violence. Perhaps the bandit Aṅgulimāla also developed Right View from those two phrases uttered by the Buddha. Then, through that, he generated the right intentions of renunciation, non-ill-will, and harmlessness. From that point on, it is about taming one's body and speech. Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*) means proper words. An act of truth is indeed Right Speech. What Aṅgulimāla did was use Right Speech. We see that he was unwilling to speak a wrong word. What was the first hint given by the Buddha? The Buddha employed a very subtle stratagem there. He first told Venerable Aṅgulimāla, "In that case, perform the act of truth in this way: 'Since I was born, I have not killed a living being.'" Because Venerable Aṅgulimāla was by then observing the precept of abstaining from false speech, he asked, "Alas, Blessed One, how can I perform such an act of truth falsely? Would that not be telling a deliberate lie?" That shows how Venerable Aṅgulimāla was conscientious about his speech. Next, with the polished feeling of "since my noble birth, I am pure," Venerable Aṅgulimāla fearlessly performed the act of truth. That indeed is truthful speech.

Thus, if Venerable Aṅgulimāla was able to utilize truthful speech to shape his life, it is not impossible for us. Next, bodily deeds—Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), which means proper deeds. The deeds he had done as Aṅgulimāla were not proper deeds. He discarded those wrong deeds done by taking up the five weapons; he discarded them in a single moment.

Now, we find it difficult to let go of many things in this society. Abstaining from the wrong modes of livelihood mentioned at the end of the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* we undertook may be something that you find highly unappealing—to the extent of saying, "That is simply impossible to do." But just as Aṅgulimāla discarded all five weapons, one must develop the mental strength within oneself to abandon those five wrong trades or five wrong lifestyles. What are they? Slaughtering animals, trading in flesh, trading in intoxicants, trading in weapons, and breeding animals for slaughter. One must develop the strength to abstain from such wrong livelihoods. For if one abstains from the five evils and also rectifies one's livelihood, one can establish Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Before long, even by the time the King invited him to accept robes, Venerable Aṅgulimāla was undertaking and observing strict ascetic practices (*dhutaṅgas*). That is why he refused even the King's offer of the four requisites. From this, we can see how conscientious Venerable Aṅgulimāla was regarding his livelihood.

From this story, we see the immense contrast that occurred within a single lifetime. Now, many present this story through films and such. In truth, this is a film that one can watch within one's own mind-stream. As we went along narrating earlier, what kind of person was Aṅgulimāla? What did we think of him? Even though his name was Ahimsaka, had he not committed so many sins? Then, a complete life occurred. Thus, we see from this story of Aṅgulimāla the background necessary for a complete transformation of life. After having such a livelihood, and while going on alms-round in such a difficult manner, Venerable Aṅgulimāla drew close to the supreme state of Arahantship. He concentrated his mind, applying strong effort—Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*)—and practicing Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) which brings about concentration. That is, initially, the meditation object was not clear. But he did not back down. Instead, using the solace given by the Buddha, he settled and concentrated his mind. It was through that concentration that, by reflecting on his entire past, Venerable Aṅgulimāla was able to understand the nature of the entire *saṁsāra*, understand suffering (*dukkha*), and eradicate craving (*taṇhā*), which is the path to escaping from that suffering.

Therefore, we must think of bringing this character of Aṅgulimāla close to our lives. Bringing the character of Aṅgulimāla close to us does not mean walking on the path of unrighteousness (*adhamma*) that Aṅgulimāla walked. It means abandoning all the feelings associated with that name Aṅgulimāla, built up by collecting fingers, and then having the strength to undergo such an immense life transformation as to become a wonderfully calm and tranquil monk, as Venerable Aṅgulimāla did. That strength becomes an encouragement for every one of us. For the majority of people in this society are those who hold the perception of inability ("I cannot"). There are very few who have the perception of ability ("I can"). Generating the perception of inability by saying, "We

cannot do any of these things. It is impossible in this day and age. Although it was possible during the Buddha's time, it is impossible now," is how we walk on this unrighteous path and support unrighteousness.

So, what is the lesson we draw from this story? Due to the wonderfully infinite great compassion of the Buddha, such a notorious criminal was turned into a wonderfully tranquil member of the Sangha. Similarly, we must reflect that something very helpful for our lives is looking back, examining ourselves—in other words, introspection. Through that, some might only feel remorse or regret.

But that is not how we should think. In such situations, according to the Buddha's Dhamma, there is room for us to turn a new page. If one discards the wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) within oneself and turns to Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), from that very point, the path ahead is clear. If Right View is established, next, the proper thoughts and wishes known as Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) must follow accordingly. It proceeds like a flight of steps. When proper thoughts and wishes are fulfilled, proper words are spoken—what we can call proper speech. When proper speech is perfected, the proper path of action—Right Action—is automatically established. By resolving upon virtue, such as the Five Precepts, one rectifies one's actions, rectifies one's conduct. When that is properly and systematically established, one is inclined to rectify one's livelihood as well. What lies within the effort to rectify that livelihood? The effort to turn away from the unwholesome and draw close to the wholesome, which is the proper striving known as Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*). Through a proper way of life, the proper striving, which is proper energy, arises. It arises in the proper manner—physical energy arises. Relying on that energy, Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) arises through it—proper mindfulness, the ability to establish mindfulness. When that mindfulness is maintained for a long time, the mind becomes concentrated on a single object. This is how the Noble Eightfold Path is completed.

The fundamental requirement for all of this is the perception of capability—the feeling that "we can." To strengthen that feeling, Buddhist Dhamma stories found in the Sasana, such as this story of Aṅgulimāla, help us. Indeed, we must reflect that there is hardly any unwholesome deed we have not committed in this long *saṁsāra*. If we could see our past, we must have committed various kinds of evil deeds just like Aṅgulimāla over infinite time, and suffered in hells. But we should not weaken our minds because of that. If, from today, from this very moment, we observe virtue (*sīla*), we can make a new beginning, turn a new page from that point. The path to be walked from that point onward is what the Buddha has shown.

Therefore, you must reflect that today, on this precious Vesak Full Moon Day, you can obtain through this a great opportunity to turn a completely new page in life, and to shape your life-conduct like the orb of the moon emerging from a dark cloud. One must always compare the Dhamma story heard to one's own life and practice discipline accordingly. That is why the Dhamma is called leading-onward (*opanayika*). This Dhamma is called visible-here-and-now (*sandiṭṭhika*) because its results can be seen right before our eyes in this very life—just as the bandit named Aṅgulimāla became an

Arahant. It is timeless (*akālika*); without delay, whenever one changes one's mind, a transformation takes place from that very moment. Next, *ehipassika* means "come and see"—here, the Buddha did not merely say "come and see," but invited Aṅgulimāla to look at the Dhamma. There, Aṅgulimāla understood the difference between stopping and not stopping. Likewise, the quality of leading-onward (*opanayika*)—Aṅgulimāla turned toward the Dhamma-path and, by implementing those principles of virtue and the path of meditation within his own mind-stream, reaped the fruits through the quality of leading-onward. *Paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi*—it is to be personally realized by the wise.

Therefore, during a period like this when a Buddha has appeared, whether we are laypersons or monks, unless we have other deep aspirations such as Buddhahood, we should maintain only two targets in this life. That is, as mentioned earlier, we must walk this Dhamma-journey with a firm resolution either to achieve the state of Stream-entry to be freed from the four lower realms of misery, or to cross over the entire suffering of *saṁsāra* and attain Parinibbāna through supreme Arahantship. If virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*) constitute the Dispensation (*sāsana*), then we can illuminate this Buddha-dispensation only by shaping our lives in that manner. To the extent that our lives are shaped, those around us obtain a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). On many occasions, it is said that noble friends are as rare as the mythical *kaḷunika* herb. Especially in this day and age, a person becomes a noble friend when they develop the Noble Eightfold Path within themselves, starting with Right View, and acquire the capacity to support others through the Dhamma. It is not supporting through money or wealth. A noble friend is someone who possesses that capacity to support through the Dhamma, which is gained in proportion to how far one walks on the Dhamma-path.

Today, on this precious full moon day, many of you, while disciplining yourselves in some virtue (*sīla*), listened for about an hour to a sermon concerning Venerable Aṅgulimāla Arahant, who can be shown as an extremely valuable disciple in the Buddha's Dispensation. Within that character, there are many highly valuable lessons for one to learn. We should reflect that during this hour, we have absorbed many valuable points from Venerable Aṅgulimāla's character that we can absorb into our lives. Thus, using the Dhamma-solace obtained so far as the very foundation, and disciplining ourselves through it, we must resolve to walk on this very path of Dhamma.

Furthermore, obtaining the association of noble friends, practicing meditation, settling the mind through tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) meditation, we must make the aspiration: "May we obtain the strength and power to cross over this highly terrifying and formidable ocean of *saṁsāra*, cross over the desert of *saṁsāra*, and find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna shown by the Buddha!" We often describe these benefits of hearing the Dhamma (*dhamma-savana-āniśaṁsa*), which support this, as a certain transformation arising within one's own mind-stream. Through the stories we present during Dhamma-listening, faith (*saddhā*) arises. Next, along with faith, a certain mental energy arises—the feeling of "we too can do it," just as Aṅgulimāla did. Settling the mind accordingly—merely by directing the mind during Dhamma-

listening, mindfulness (*sati*), proper mindfulness, arises. Likewise, through that, if one keeps the mind properly focused on listening to the Dhamma, listening to it word by word, a certain concentration (*samādhi*) arises, as a form of recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*).

Next, if a deep understanding regarding that Dhamma has been generated, that is considered as wisdom (*paññā*). In that manner, one should rejoice that this hour or so was spent to generate within one's mind-stream, to some extent, the qualities of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*), which as spiritual powers (*bala-dhamma*) support the attainment of Nibbāna. While rejoicing thus, make the aspiration: "By the power of this store of merit accumulated so far, may all beings from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha Brahma realm, including the assembly of devas and Brahmas who protect the Dispensation, and all our relatives, rejoice in this merit! Having rejoiced, may they be released from this formidable *saṁsāra* and directly realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through whichever of the three Bodhis they aspire to!" For yourself, perform the sharing of merit by reciting the verses, wishing: "By the power of this accumulated store of merit, may I, as quickly as possible, relying on the association of noble friends, realize Nibbāna!"

Recite the verses to share merit:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #142

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.54)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Nidhīnaṃ va pavattāraṃ,

yaṃ passe vajjadassinaṃ;

Niggayhavādiṃ medhāviṃ,

tādisaṃ paṇḍitaṃ bhaje;

Tādisaṃ bhajamānassa,

seyyo hoti na pāpiyo."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 76 (Paṇḍita Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

A person who hopes to steer their life on the right path should make an effort to seek the help of wise spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). One must fashion one's conduct and attitudes in a manner that allows one to receive the assistance of spiritual friends. What we mean by assistance here is the help to correct one's shortcomings and faults. Generally, one does not see one's own faults. They are visible only to the wise spiritual friends one associates with. That is why the Buddha compared a wise person who points out faults to someone pointing out a hidden treasure, and gave a simile. This is what is expressed in the verse we have chosen as our theme. The Buddha preached this verse with reference to a monk named Rādha, who was a pupil of Venerable Sāriputta.

In his lay life, Venerable Rādha was an extremely poor brahmin in the city of Sāvatthī. Since he had no means of livelihood, he came to the Jetavana monastery, attended upon the Sangha, swept and cleared the premises, and sustained himself with whatever he received. As time went on, this man developed a great desire to ordain. However, the

Sangha was not keen on ordaining him. Perhaps they felt he was seeking ordination merely for a livelihood. Be that as it may, due to this man's genuine desire and because his hope was not being fulfilled, his body became emaciated. One day, when the Buddha was scanning the world with his attainment of great compassion (*mahākāruṇika-samāpatti*) as was his daily custom, this man at the Jetavana monastery came into the net of his wisdom-vision.

When the Buddha investigated this, he saw that this man possessed the supportive merits to attain Arahatship. As a general custom, the Buddha would occasionally go on walking tours of the monastery to see how the monks were doing and whether their work was progressing well. That evening, while walking around the Jetavana monastery in this manner, he approached this brahmin and asked, "Brahmin, what are you doing here?" He replied, "Venerable Sir, I am attending upon the Sangha and earning my livelihood." "Do the monks show you any hospitality in return for your services?" "Yes, Venerable Sir, I get food and drink. However, they do not ordain me," he said.

Thereupon, the Buddha assembled the Sangha and, introducing a discussion centered on this man Rādha, asked: "Is there any monk among the Sangha who remembers receiving any special help from this brahmin?" Venerable Sāriputta immediately spoke up: "Venerable Sir, I remember this brahmin once placing a spoonful of rice in my bowl when I was on alms-round." Then the Buddha asked: "Sāriputta, is that not enough to help someone escape the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *saṃsāra*?" Venerable Sāriputta replied: "Very well, Venerable Sir, then I shall ordain him," and he ordained the man.

Despite being ordained, he did not receive any special attention from the Sangha. One can understand why. He sat at the very end of the seats and did not even get proper food and drink. He was somewhat marginalized. Venerable Sāriputta, noticing this, and with the compassionate intention of paying special attention to this new Venerable Rādha, went on a wandering tour accompanied by Venerable Rādha. During this journey, he pointed out his faults and gave him advice and admonition. This monk Rādha was extremely obedient, gentle-spoken, never showed any anger, corrected his faults, and by practicing meditation, attained Arahatship very quickly.

Thereafter, Venerable Sāriputta came with Venerable Rādha to see the Buddha. The Buddha asked, "How is it, Sāriputta, is your pupil obedient?" "Oh yes, Venerable Sir, he is very obedient. Whenever a fault was pointed out to him, he never got angry." Then the Buddha asked, "Sāriputta, if you could get pupils like this, would you like to have many?" "Oh yes, as many as possible. I like such pupils very much," Venerable Sāriputta praised. Similarly, a talk arose among the monks: "Venerable Sāriputta is an extremely grateful person. Merely for a spoonful of rice, he ordained this man. Also, Venerable Sāriputta is someone who constantly seeks advice, and he has found a pupil who is willing to receive advice." Hearing this, the Buddha praised Venerable Sāriputta's quality of gratitude and then said: "Monks, a bhikkhu should be gentle-spoken (*suvaca*) like this Rādha. If someone points out one's faults, one should think that they are pointing out a hidden treasure." Expressing this idea, he uttered this verse:

Nidhīnaṃva pavattāraṃ, yaṃ passe vajjadassinaṃ;

Medhāviṃ tādisaṃ paṇḍitaṃ bhaje, tādisaṃ bhajamānassa seyyo hoti na pāpiyo.

If one sees a wise person who points out one's faults as if pointing out hidden treasures, one should associate with such a wise and learned person. Associating with such a person brings progress, not decline. This is the meaning of this verse. Here we should especially consider the value of this simile given by the Buddha. Whenever the Buddha gave a simile, it carried a very deep meaning. Normally, people of the world do not like having their faults pointed out; they dislike criticism or fault-finding. Since the Buddha knew this attitude, he placed a completely new concept before the world, taking this gentle-spoken bhikkhu as an example. To call advice a hidden treasure is because in those days, gold coins and such were deposited in pots and vessels and hidden in the jungle or by riverbanks. Just as someone goes and points out those treasures buried under the earth, a wise person points out the treasures hidden beneath one's faults. What are these treasures? Hidden beneath one's faults are one's skills and abilities. It is pointing out these skills that is referred to here as pointing out a hidden treasure. Just as treasures emerge when the earth is removed and cleared away, when one's faults are unearthed and removed, one's wholesome qualities, skills, and abilities emerge from within. That is the fundamental value of the simile in this verse.

Furthermore, this story illustrates a noble quality of the Buddha's life. A major part of the daily routine of the Great Compassionate One is to scan the world during the dawn with his unique wisdom—which is considered an extraordinary knowledge exclusive to a Buddha—to find the person most suitable to receive his assistance. They could be far away, or close by. At this time, this helpless person living right nearby in Jetavana monastery appeared. This net of wisdom is truly wonderful. It is something that demonstrates the Buddha's quality of equality. Setting aside all other work, he went to that person, visited him, and showed him the way to find help. Although this man may have attended upon all the monks, the Buddha asked about anyone who had received a special favor from him because he wanted to draw special attention to him.

This gratitude was a special characteristic of Venerable Sāriputta. Until his parinibbāna, he showed great respect towards Venerable Assaji, who had given him the Dhamma. Similarly, on various occasions, incidents revealing Venerable Sāriputta's quality of gratitude are mentioned. Here too, it was the incident of a spoonful of rice. It seems like a very small thing. But it was on that basis that he helped that man. Venerable Sāriputta's quality of gratitude shines through here.

Venerable Rādha, too, did not have the common weakness of getting angry when someone points out a fault. When his faults were pointed out to him, he accepted them with great diligence and obedience, as if being shown a hidden treasure, as we mentioned earlier. That is why he was able to reach the state of Arahatship. There are lessons for us to reflect upon and adopt from each of these points. There is a word in this

verse that might be somewhat unappealing to the mind: *nigayhavādiṃ medhāviṃ*—one who reproves or censures.

Generally, no one likes to be censured or reproved. But this censuring is also necessary at times to point out the gravity of a fault. To show someone a fault in a way that sticks in their mind, censuring is sometimes required. This is especially a task assigned to a teacher. The teacher has to give some punishment—not in a deep and severe manner disproportionate to the mistake, but in an appropriate way so that the pupil remembers. Sometimes through words, sometimes through other courses of action. Therefore, we must reflect on this wisely. The matters contained in this verse help us in our daily personal lives, at home, in institutions, in schools, and everywhere else.

Let us first consider the greatest teacher in the world. It is through the Buddha's own life that we can understand this word *nigayhavādī* (reproving). Two qualities of the Buddha are mentioned: *anuttaro purisadammasārathī* (the incomparable charioteer of men to be tamed) and *satthā devamanussānaṃ* (the teacher of gods and humans). These two qualities demonstrate the responsibility assigned to the Buddha as a teacher. *Anuttaro purisadammasārathī* means he is like a charioteer in taming tamable humans. We know that this is not like the drivers of today. In those days, when driving a horse-chariot, one had to train the horse. Sometimes, even a whip had to be used. Similarly, the Buddha, as the teacher of gods and humans, had to use words of censure according to the situation. Thus, this characteristic of the Buddha's character became a problem for some people.

There is a good illustration of this in the Dhamma. Seeing the Buddha's fame spreading, there were Niganthas (Jains) who became jealous. Other sectarians and adherents of other religions always looked for ways to defame and take revenge on the Buddha. On one occasion, when Prince Abhayarāja visited the religious teacher Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "The fame of the ascetic Gotama is spreading widely. Prince, if you can present an argument to the ascetic Gotama that he cannot answer, then your fame will spread too." When asked, "What is the argument I should present?" he said: "Present this double-horned dilemma (*ubhathokoṭika-pañha*) to the ascetic Gotama. What is it? First ask, 'Venerable Gotama, do you speak words that are displeasing and disagreeable to others?' If he says he does use disagreeable words, then say the conclusion is: 'Then what is the difference between the Buddha and an ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*)? An ordinary worldling also speaks displeasing and disagreeable words.' On the other hand, if he says he does not use them, then ask: 'If so, why did you censure the Venerable Devadatta by saying he is destined for hell for an aeon? Devadatta was enraged by that.' In this way, there is a mismatch there too, isn't there? That is to say, whichever of the two answers he gives, present this argument. Then the ascetic Gotama will be left speechless." Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta gave a simile for this: "Just like an iron hook stuck in one's throat, the ascetic Gotama will be left with nowhere to turn. Therefore, present this argument."

Prince Abhayarāja then went to see the Buddha to present this argument. When he went and looked around, it was a bit late in the evening. He thought, "I should invite the Buddha to the palace itself and ask him on that occasion." So, he invited the Buddha and

three other monks to his house, the palace, for the next day. The next day, after the Buddha had finished his meal, Prince Abhayarāja asked the Buddha: "Blessed One, do you use words that are displeasing and disagreeable to others?" Then the Buddha said: "Prince, I do not give a one-sided answer to this. This is an answer that must be analyzed." Thereupon, Prince Abhayarāja realized that the argument would not work. "Ah, then the Niganṭhas have failed!" muttered Prince Abhayarāja. When the Buddha asked, "Why do you say that?" he told the whole story: "I was taught like this. That is why I asked."

At that moment, Prince Abhayarāja had his infant son on his lap. The Buddha drew a simile from that very situation: "Now, prince, if this young child on your lap, due to the negligence of his nurse or your own negligence, were to put a pebble or a splinter into his mouth, what would you do?" "Venerable Sir, I would hold his head with my left hand, crook my right finger, and pull it out. Even if it meant drawing blood, I would pull it out. Why? Because I have great compassion for the child." Thereupon, the Buddha declared: "It is the same with me. Because I have compassion for beings, if a word is true and beneficial, even if it is displeasing and disagreeable, I speak it to that person according to the occasion. The word is true. It is beneficial to that person. But it is displeasing and disagreeable. That is, a word of censure or blame. Yet, I speak it because I want to correct him." In this way, on that occasion, the Buddha resolved that double-horned dilemma. Similarly, lay devotees, you may have heard this stated in the Dhamma itself:

Garahā va seyyo viññūhi, yañce bālappasaṃsanā.

"Censure by the wise is indeed better than praise by fools." This idea is a wonderful motto. Mothers who raise children know how to discipline their children according to the occasion. The same happened with the Buddha. He had to use various skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*) to deliver the worldlings, who are burdened with defilements, from *saṃsāra* according to the occasion. Going hand in hand with great compassion is this skillful means. To speak a word of censure that leaves a lasting impression, without any hatred in the heart but out of compassion for beings according to the occasion, belongs to that skillful means. This is how the concept of censuring should be understood.

Next, let us look at this quality of being gentle-spoken (*suvaca*). *Suvaca*, in a general sense, is called obedience. Obedience means doing as told. But the real meaning of the word *suvaca* is that one can be given advice without fear. *Duvvaca* (difficult to speak to) means one is afraid to say anything to them. Suppose there is some fault in someone, but one is afraid to mention it. One does not want to, because that person will get angry, scold, and rage over it. To the person who does not get enraged in this way, one can speak without fear. That is why they are called *suvaca*—someone who is easy to speak to, someone to whom a fault can easily be pointed out. A *duvvaca* or *dubbacajātiya* (of difficult speech) person is one who gets angry the moment something is said and causes a great deal of trouble. Therefore, people say nothing; they stand aside and watch, thinking, "Let them do whatever they want." So, we must understand the difference between these two words, *suvaca* and *duvvaca*.

We get excellent illustrations of this from the Sasana itself. The greatest example, which you lay devotees must have heard many times in Dhamma sermons, is Venerable Sāriputta himself, the Chief Disciple of the Sasana. His humility was truly wonderful. Going hand in hand with humility and patience is the quality of being gentle-spoken (*suvaca*), obedience—the ability to listen to whatever is said, whether harsh or bitter, and the ability to listen when faults are pointed out. It is precisely because of this that, as you know, in the verses on blessings (*Maṅgala Sutta*), it is said: *khantī ca sovacassatā, samaṇānañca dassanaṃ*. *Khantī ca sovacassatā*—patience and being gentle-spoken. Being gentle-spoken goes hand in hand with patience. Thus, a valuable quality of Venerable Sāriputta is mentioned. On one occasion, a seven-year-old novice monk, newly ordained and cute like a child, noticed a corner of Venerable Sāriputta's undergarment (*antara-vāsaka*) hanging down and pointed it out to him. Venerable Sāriputta adjusted it, came back, clasped his hands as if worshipping, and uttered a verse:

Tadahupabbajito santo, jātiyā sattavassiko;

So pi maṃ anusāseyya, sampaṭicchāmi muddhane.

"Even if a seven-year-old novice ordained today points out a fault in me, I accept it on my head." This is a valuable illustration of the gentle-spoken (*suvaca*) nature in Venerable Sāriputta's life.

It was the same with Venerable Rāhula. Venerable Rāhula was in a position where he could easily have become *duvvaca* (difficult to speak to), because he was the son of the Buddha in his lay life. As you know, children of those with high positions and wealth, when corrected even slightly, sometimes threaten, "I will tell my mother" or "I will tell my father." Though he was the son of the Buddha in his lay life, how humble and gentle-spoken was Venerable Rāhula! It is said that every morning he would take a handful of sand, throw it up, and say, "May I receive as many admonitions from the Buddha, my teachers, and preceptors as there are grains of sand here!" He would say this as a game, throwing the grains of sand. This shows Venerable Rāhula's humble, gentle-spoken, and obedient nature. There are many other stories told about Venerable Rāhula's attitude and gentle-spoken nature.

There is another valuable story. On one occasion, five hundred monks led by Venerable Yasoja came to see the Buddha at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī. Coming as guests, they exchanged greetings with the resident monks and arranged their bowls and robes, which created a great noise. The Buddha asked Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, who is making this noise? It sounds like fishermen shouting at a fish market. What is this racket?" he asked Venerable Ānanda. Venerable Ānanda replied: "Venerable Sir, a group of five hundred monks led by Venerable Yasoja has arrived, and that is why there is this noise." "Tell them to come to me," the Buddha assigned to Venerable Ānanda.

Then Venerable Ānanda brought Venerable Yasoja and the group. The Buddha asked why they were shouting like in a fish market. They explained the matter: "Coming as

guests, when we were putting away our bowls and robes, we made this noise." "Do not stay near me. I do not wish to keep you here. Depart from here," the Buddha said. Venerable Yasoja and the group had come with great desire to see the Buddha that day. But the Buddha dismissed them. Having no choice, he departed with his group, went on a tour, and arrived in the Vajjī country.

Then the rainy season (*vassa*) arrived. They built huts near the river called Vaggumudā and entered the rains-retreat with this group of five hundred. On the first day of the rains-retreat, Venerable Yasoja gave advice to his group, saying: "Friends, we have been dismissed by our Teacher, who is highly benevolent, desires our progress, and has compassion for us. Now, let us live in a certain way. In what way? Let us correct our shortcomings now, so that the Buddha, the Tathāgata, will be pleased when he sees us." The group agreed to this and began to practice meditation. Within the rains-retreat itself, all these monks attained the noble state (of Arahatship) accompanied by analytical insights and supernormal powers (*abhiññā*).

Now, the next news. After the rains-retreat, the Buddha traveled from Sāvatthī to the Gabled Hall (*Kūṭāgāra-sālā*) in the Great Forest of Vesālī. Having arrived, he looked into Venerable Yasoja and his group. In such events, the Buddha would search again. He examined the minds of Venerable Yasoja and his group with his own mind. He saw that everything was complete. All of them were Arahats.

Then he said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, the direction where the bhikkhus on the banks of the Vaggumudā live is as if radiating light. I have no aversion to going in that direction. Even to contemplate it is very pleasing to me. Send a messenger, send a courier: 'The Teacher wishes to see you. I wish to see you. Tell Yasoja and his group to come.'" This was the invitation the Buddha made. Venerable Ānanda went to a certain bhikkhu and expressed the permission received from the Buddha. That bhikkhu—he was a bhikkhu possessing supernormal powers—as it is said in the books, as quickly as a strong man might stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm, vanished from the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest and appeared where the bhikkhus on the banks of the Vaggumudā were. In an instant. In a flash. Then he gave this news: "The Buddha is inviting you." Thereupon, that group too arrived by psychic power (*iddhi-bala*) to where the Buddha was at the Gabled Hall.

By the time they arrived, the Buddha was seated in concentration. He was seated in the imperturbable concentration (*āneñja-samādhi*), a silent concentration. Venerable Ānanda was standing to one side. The Buddha was in concentration. Then this group arrived. Having arrived, Venerable Ānanda worshipped the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, the guest monks who were invited have arrived. May the Blessed One exchange friendly greetings with them." The Buddha remained silent. The first watch of the night passed. Then, Venerable Yasoja and his group examined with their own power what kind of concentration the Buddha was in. Seeing that he was in that silent concentration, they too sat down in that very concentration. Thus, the Buddha was sitting on one side, and Venerable Yasoja and his group were sitting in concentration on the other side. This was

a problem for Venerable Ānanda. When guests arrive, should they not be attended to? The Buddha himself invited them, and yet he is just sitting there.

Then the first watch passed. After the first watch ended, Venerable Ānanda reminded him again: "Venerable Sir, much of the night has passed. The guest monks have also arrived and have been waiting for a long time. May the Blessed One exchange friendly greetings." No, he was still silent. The second watch passed. Then, the third watch passed, and it was the time of dawn. Once again, for the third time, he invited him in that manner. Still, the Buddha was silent. Finally, he said to the Buddha: "Now, Venerable Sir, the night has passed, and it is dawn. This group is still sitting here. May the Blessed One exchange friendly greetings!" Then the Buddha said: "Ānanda, if you knew the matter as it really is, you would not have spoken even this much. Both I and this group, both parties, were in the imperturbable concentration (*āneñja-samādhi*)." And he uttered a verse as an utterance of joy:

Yassa jito kāma-kaṇṭako,

akkoso vadho ca pabbato va jito;

Anejo navedati so bhikkhu.

"The bhikkhu who has conquered the thorn of sensuality, abuse, and physical harm, stands unshaken like a mountain; he is imperturbable and does not tremble." He uttered that verse.

From this story too, we see the gentle-spoken (*suvaca*) quality of Venerable Yasoja. When there is a group of five hundred, one does not need that many people these days—even over a small word, people start a big campaign to show their power. But Venerable Yasoja very humbly accepted his fault. That is a great quality. Accepting his fault, he brought forth that hidden treasure. The words spoken there are truly wonderful. He started by saying: "We have been dismissed out of compassion by the Buddha, who is kind, great in compassion, benevolent, and compassionate towards us. He dismissed us out of compassion. Now, let us live in such a way that the Buddha is pleased with us." That is how they began the rains-retreat. And they brought forth that treasure, the treasure of Arahatship. Here, Venerable Yasoja's character is extraordinary. Similarly, we see the Buddha's skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*). He dismissed them having seen a certain reason. It was fully accomplished.

Next, there is an even deeper point. You lay devotees might be surprised. We all know that when someone comes, we should welcome them. Everyone knows about hospitality to guests. Here, after sending an invitation himself, when those monks arrived, the Buddha just sat there in silence. There is a very deep meaning here. You know that if a guest arrives while you are having a meal, you pull up a chair and let them join the meal. The Buddha did something similar. The Buddha was consuming food in his own pasture. Perhaps within the concentration on the fruit of Arahatship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*). He was absorbed in the fruit-attainment (*phala-samāpatti*), the concentration of realizing Nibbāna that he had attained. The monks who arrived were also suitable to

consume that food. Venerable Ānanda, however, was not yet there. That is why it was a problem for Ānanda. So those monks too looked at what the Buddha was consuming, and thinking, "We too must consume this," sat in that very concentration the whole night. That is the real welcome. This is good to depict in a painting. Two paintings could be drawn. The first time they came, those monks were shouting like in a fish market, causing a great racket. When they came this time, how was it? The Buddha's welcome was appropriate to that. There is a very deep example and model for the world to take from this story. In this way, on one hand, we must understand the value of being gentle-spoken (*suvaca*).

Next, on the other hand, there are also illustrations of being *duvvaca* (difficult to speak to). Not everyone in the Buddha's Sasana was gentle-spoken like this. The monk Devadatta, whom you all know, was such a stubborn person that he even tried to take the life of the Buddha, precisely because of the *duvvaca* nature that arose from a slight disagreement. Similarly, there is another incident. Mention is made of a group of monks called the *Chabbaggiya* (the group of six). These monks, consisting of six factions led by six leaders, lived in an extremely stubborn and disobedient manner, repeatedly breaking the disciplinary rules (*vinaya*) laid down by the Buddha. They also reaped the consequences of their actions. On some occasions, the Buddha dismissed them from those places. He had to censure them according to the circumstances.

Similarly, another special incident regarding censure is mentioned in the Dhamma. You all know about Minister Channa, who was a minister of the Buddha. He was the minister who accompanied Prince Siddhārtha when he renounced the lay life. Unlike Venerable Rāhula, he developed pride due to his close connection with the Buddha. Because of that conceit, he behaved in an extremely disobedient manner. He would not allow the monks to point out any fault in him. Due to this disobedience, although the Buddha laid down various disciplinary rules, he could not be tamed. Finally, even on his parinibbāna bed, the Buddha had to direct his attention to this. That night, before his parinibbāna, the Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, after my passing, impose the Brahma-punishment (*brahma-daṇḍa*) on the monk Channa." When asked, "What is the Brahma-punishment?"—it was a rule that had not been laid down in the *vinaya* until then, which is why Venerable Ānanda asked, "What, Venerable Sir, is the Brahma-punishment?" The Buddha declared: "Let the monk Channa say whatever he wants. The monks should neither advise nor admonish him." It was an outright boycott. The permission to impose such a complete boycott was given by the Buddha before his parinibbāna. Thus, the final punishment given by the Buddha for that stubbornness (*duvvaca-bhāva*) is called the Brahma-punishment. It is a very severe punishment. *Brahma* means the highest, doesn't it? A most severe punishment. It is said that as soon as Venerable Ānanda declared this matter after the Buddha's parinibbāna, the monk Channa fainted and fell due to the shock. Due to the very shock that arose from this, the monk Channa later meditated and somehow became an Arahat. There too, through that punishment, the monk Channa was tamed in one way or another and attained Arahatship.

From the disciplinary rules of the monks and the customs of the Sasana, lay devotees too can learn many things. Especially, something that helped the survival of this Sasana was

pointing out the faults of others. This is a custom of the Sasana. Even in society, we know that if no one points out the faults of others, this society would become far more dangerous than it is now. But sometimes, the person pointing it out does not do so out of compassion. Instead of pointing out a hidden treasure, if they act as if digging a pit for the other, then the effort fails. Without any compassion for that person, some people point out faults with highly dangerous and malicious intentions, such as character assassination. Not so the wise; they do so with the intention of correcting the person in the right way, and even if they use words of censure according to the situation, it becomes a help. There is a custom in the Sangha regarding the disciplinary rules of the monks, where they point out each other's weaknesses. This is called *aññamañña-vuṭṭhāpana*—rehabilitating one another from offences by helping each other. They point out the fault. When one says out of compassion, "Friend, such a fault has occurred," the other corrects it.

After spending the rains-retreat, the monks have a custom called *pavāraṇā*. You lay devotees may have heard of this as performing the *uposatha*. There is a special significance in the *pavāraṇā* of the Sangha. It is the disciplinary act performed at the end by a group of monks who have lived together during a rains-retreat. Here, they invite the Sangha: "If there is any fault of mine that you have seen, heard, or suspected, please speak out! Out of compassion, please point it out to me!" Thus, they make an invitation to the group. We must understand from this that when someone points out a fault, one should not get angry. When teachers and others say something with good intentions, one should feel that they are pointing out a hidden treasure and say, "If there are any other faults, please point them out to me." That is a special invitation. It is this invitation—to point out any fault of mine seen, heard, or suspected so that I may correct it, and if I see it as a fault, I will correct it—that is done through this monastic custom.

But nowadays, especially in educational institutions, and in other institutions almost everywhere, over a very small incident, merely because a small fault is pointed out, a host of strikes, threats, insults, disagreements, and crises arise. These arise from a very small thing. Why? Because if we had taken the feeling of "pointing out a hidden treasure" into our minds, our reaction would be different. We would say with even more enthusiasm, "Please tell me with facts what the fault is, so that I can correct it." Instead, the moment a word is said, people get angry and develop deep-seated hatred. That is the wrong attitude. Instead, we must understand from these stories the value of advice in steering our lives on the right path. According to the treasure-simile shown by the Buddha, we see that sometimes it is necessary to speak with censure. The Buddha too, according to the situation, laid down some disciplinary rules in an extremely strict and severe manner. If the fault is severe, they are expelled altogether. Sometimes, remedies are applied right there to tame them again. This re-taming is also a valuable quality.

Let us say we did not see that fault in the first instance. But if we saw it at least in the second instance, we should go to the person who pointed out the fault and sincerely express our gratitude. Such incidents too exist in the Sasana. We should take some example from them as well. To give one example, when the Buddha laid down the training rule regarding eating at improper times (*vikāla-bhojana*), a monk named

Bhaddāli became displeased and protested. There is no need to explain this further. Even nowadays, when speaking about eating at improper times, there are more people who dislike it than those who like it. In those days too, there were such groups of monks; when the Buddha laid down the training rules on eating at improper times, they criticized it severely and stood aside. But later, when they saw the benefits of the training rule, they came and confessed their fault. There too, a highly valuable phrase is used to accept the fault: *accayo maṃ bhante accagamā yathā bālā yathā mūḷhaṃ yathā akusalaṃ* and so on, which is a wonderful sentence spoken when coming to confess one's fault.

"Venerable Sir, a transgression overcame me"—nowadays people say "a mistake happened to me." That is the kind of thing said there. "A transgression overcame me, through my foolishness, through my delusion, through my unwholesomeness. That is why this happened." Thus, humbly confessing the fault that happened through oneself, one says: *accayaṃ accayato paṭiggaṇhātu āyatiṃ saṃvarāya*—"May the Blessed One accept this as my transgression for the sake of my future restraint." The Buddha also forgives it: "Very well, that is how it is. *Vaddhi h'esā ariyassa vinaye yo accayaṃ accayato passitvā yathādhammaṃ paṭikaroti*..."—and so on. He declares: "In the discipline of the Noble Ones, it is a sign of growth, a factor of progress, when one sees one's transgression as a transgression, confesses it according to the Dhamma, and undertakes restraint for the future." This too is a valuable custom of the Sasana. I do not know whether such things happen in lay society today, but these are extremely valuable things.

Sometimes, the moment a fault is pointed out, one does not see it as a fault, especially if it was said with censure. So, they go on harboring hatred. But as they go on with their work, they realize, "Is it not true what our parents said?" or "Is it not true what the teacher said?" Even so, they feel ashamed to go and admit it. At that moment, they do not offer the praise due to noble ones. Thus, there is a valuable quality here. If one understands even later, one should go and confess one's fault, and say, "I was like this, but I want to improve now." There is a valuable virtue here. Therefore, we should constantly remind ourselves of this: *garahāva seyyo viññūhi yañce bālappasaṃsanaṃ* (censure by the wise is better than praise by fools). Nowadays, everyone in society likes praise. But the policy of the majority is *attukkaṃsana paravambhana*—exalting oneself and disparaging others. In many instances in society, there are those who look for faults with corrupt intentions, like the character assassination mentioned earlier. This is called "seeking the loopholes of others." One should not cultivate such an attitude. If you have to point out such faults as parents or as teachers, you must act after observing the right time and place. As the Buddha declared, one must first see whether this matter is true or false. The Buddha points out three things to Prince Abhayarāja. A matter must be true. Along with being true, it must be beneficial and useful to the person to whom it is spoken. Next is the question: is that speech pleasing or displeasing to that person? Whether it is pleasing or displeasing to that person, one has to speak it according to the occasion. That is what we must reflect on wisely.

For that, we must first prepare our inner self. We must have compassion and loving-kindness (*mettā*) within, thinking: "I must correct this person, I must correct this child, I must correct this student, I must correct this employee in this institution." One must develop the inner strength to point out, with compassion, the shortcomings not only of those below but also of those above. Why? Because often, by hiding these faults and shortcomings, society becomes further corrupted. Therefore, it is something that must be done.

You lay devotees know that a criminal who takes a knife in hand destroys a life. But a surgeon who takes that same scalpel saves a life. In the same way, one must consider the words one uses on that occasion. If one does so with the compassionate and kind intention of not merely exposing and highlighting that person's fault but removing it and bringing forth that hidden treasure we mentioned, then it is a great service to society. It is due to the lack of this service that there is decline on both sides. There is no readiness to accept advice and admonition; there is no gentle-spokenness (*suvaca-bhāva*). Similarly, the minds of those who give admonition are also often corrupted. The word *medhāvi* (wise) is explained in the Dhamma as *dhamma-paññā*—that valuable wisdom developed through the Dhamma itself. That is lacking in many people.

Three guiding principles that help a person to improve are mentioned in the Dhamma: *attādhipateyya* (self-governance / supremacy of self), *dhammādhipateyya* (supremacy of the Dhamma), and *lokādhipateyya* (supremacy of the world).

Attādhipateyya means what we normally call self-respect or acting according to one's conscience; thinking by oneself in this way: "This is not suitable for me, this is not proper for me, this does not befit me," and refraining from doing something wrong. Placing oneself first and avoiding a fault.

Next, there is another way: *dhammādhipateyya*—placing the Dhamma first. Thinking: "The Dhamma of the Buddha that I have learned states this. I must discipline myself in this way." Developing an understanding of good and bad, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*), and disciplining oneself accordingly.

There is another way: *lokādhipateyya*. Here, the "world" does not mean the ignorant world, not the ordinary foolish world. For other matters, be that as it may, here we should not take the common talk of the masses, nor should we take the various political meanings of today. It is the wise, the prudent, and those endowed with virtue who are considered the "world" here. Here we should consider not what the ignorant, foolish people say, but what wise people point out. That is a special matter. If such a person points out our fault, we can steer our lives through that.

Such noble characters as the life of Venerable Rāhula and the life of Venerable Sāriputta are mentioned in this Dhamma. Similarly, when monks confess their transgressions, they point out each other's faults and thereby collectively protect the Sasana, while also securing their own progress. In every institution, in every place, this very Dhamma-principle (*dhamma-tā*) helps progress. Why? Because it is a nature of *saṃsāra* that one does not see one's own faults, just as the eye does not see itself. The eye can see the nose,

but the eye cannot see itself. That is why it is mentioned in the Dhamma: *Sudassaṃ vajjaṃ aññesaṃ, attano pana duddasaṃ* (Easy to see are the faults of others, but difficult to see are one's own). The faults of others are seen very clearly. But one's own fault is not seen by oneself. Be that as it may, when we see the fault of another, we must first reflect: "Is this a fault we see because of our own fault, or is it truly another's?" Reflecting wisely on whether it is indeed a fault that has occurred, we must then speak, observing the right way and the right time.

It is by speaking in this manner that one can help someone. Due to the hatred that Devadatta carried throughout *saṃsāra*, even the Buddha could not tame him. But on many occasions, the Buddha helped people and steered them on the right path through his quality of great compassion, sometimes through the very punishment he meted out. Here, the story of Venerable Yasoja was mentioned. The Buddha used his skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*) there. There is no partiality in the Buddha. When a group of pupils of Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahāmoggallāna behaved in that very manner, the Buddha censured them, saying it was like a fish market, and dismissed them. These were pupils of his own Chief Disciples. Yet, the Buddha dismissed them. In this way, the Buddha impartially censured the fault when it was necessary. He also told the Chief Disciples that if he did not do so, this Sasana would become a collection of sweepings and rubbish.

To point out the fault according to the occasion and correct that person is what a mother and a father also have to do. If one develops hatred or a wrong attitude, if one lacks Dhamma-understanding, or if one has hypocritical thoughts within, then one cannot correct another. To point it out according to the occasion, one must generate great compassion and sympathy. It is because of the lack of this strength that conflicts often arise in society. First, one disciplines body and speech through training rules like virtue (*sīla*). One disciplines the mind through meditation. Next, reflecting by way of *attādhipateyya* and *dhammādhipateyya*, one corrects one's own shortcomings. Then, when a problem arises, we are able to make an impartial decision. If one lives with mindfulness and wisdom, without confusing the mind with intoxicants and the like, one can point out the right path to another.

Let us say someone who is about to fall into disaster goes to another seeking help. One should not assist them in what is bad, thinking they might become displeased. Always comparing it with the Dhamma, one must help in accordance with the Dhamma, impartially. Indeed, what is called "welfare" here is not merely progress in this life. It is easy to give advice for progress in this life.

You lay devotees know well that in various sectors of society, especially towards the latter part of life, there are people who can give advice to a large number of people on specific subjects. That is regarding this world. But only a very few think of both sides—this world and the next world. For the sake of progress in this life alone, through highly dangerous advice, someone can even be led to hell. I need not give you fresh examples. Therefore, we must first establish a proper Dhamma-judgment within ourselves by way of *attādhipateyya* and *dhammādhipateyya*. We must look at the world with a clear

judgment regarding what the true values of life are, what should and should not be done, and what is wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*). Otherwise, the person who does what is right will appear to us as wrong.

If there is no harm in using that word, even if we look at it with an idea like "democracy" and take the majority opinion, the opinion of the majority there can also be wrong. Therefore, we must always look, keeping the Dhamma of the Buddha first. This group called the wise (*viññū*), the learned (*paṇḍita*), the intelligent (*medhāvī*) are not many in the world. There are only a very few. It is so at all times.

There is a good incident regarding this as well. When Venerable Sāriputta asked his teacher to come to the Buddha, the teacher asked, "Who are there more of in this world? Fools or the wise?" "There are only a few wise people." "Well, in that case, the wise will go to the ascetic Gotama. The crowd of fools will come to me," he replied. Similarly, there are mostly fools in the world. The person who has developed the inner knowledge of the Dhamma and has that wisdom is the one who should be taken as the "world" here by way of *lokādhipateyya*. Keeping such a standard, whether it be a low person or a high person in one's own institutions, just like one's own children and students, one must point out those faults according to the occasion. One must develop the Dhamma-strength within to do such a thing. Otherwise, society will head further down the path of decline. It is because of this that even the Sasana falls into decline.

Furthermore, if we do not get an example for our lives, that is not a Dhamma sermon. You should think of what has been preached here as a sermon that helps you to improve. In everything, there are examples in the world showing us the good side and the bad side. Through both of these, we must understand the side of advantages (*ānisaṃsa*) and the side of disadvantages (*ādīnava*). Through the lives of Venerable Rāhula, Venerable Sāriputta, and Venerable Yasoja, we understood the good side, the exemplary side. Similarly, regarding the *Chabbaggiya* monks, Devadatta, Bhaddāli, and others, there is the bad side. Through this, we must understand the path we should take. We must walk on that path.

Therefore, on this valuable *poya* day, this devout group has undertaken a certain precept (*sīla*). What is being done there, too, is the correcting of one's own faults—the correcting of faults regarding body and speech. Next, through Dhamma sermons and meditation, we concentrate our minds and try to gain an understanding of the true nature of the world, of life. Just as the Buddha said, *bahujana-hitāya bahujana-sukhāya* (for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many), may this Dhamma sermon preached today also help for the good of the world through our Dhamma-strength and our character-strength! If this devout group has developed certain Dhamma-strengths—namely faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—by listening to this Dhamma sermon, may that also help these devotees when they aim for Nibbāna at some point.

May all those who wish to rejoice in such merit, including the guardian deities of the Sasana, and our relatives from the *Avīci* hell up to the *Akaniṭṭha* heaven, rejoice in the

store of merit gathered by these devotees so far through listening to the Dhamma, and the store of merit gathered by us through preaching the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they all escape from all the suffering of *saṃsāra* as quickly as possible through their aspired Bodhi (Awakening), and reach the noble, deathless, supreme Nibbāna! Similarly, utilizing the Dhamma-strength we have gained, may we also make our own meditations successful, obeying the advice of spiritual friends to the letter, bearing even words spoken in censure, walking gentle-spokenly on this path of the Dhamma, succeeding in our meditations, and may we receive the strength, power, and blessing to realize the noble, deathless, supreme Nibbāna through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahatship!

With this aspiration, please recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #143

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.59)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Gataddhino visokassa,

vippamuttassa sabbadhi;

Sabbaganthappahīnassa,

pariḷāho na vijjati."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 90 (Arahanta Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Today, this Vesak Full Moon Poya Day, we all know, is a day to bring to mind the incomparable aggregate of virtues of the Great Compassionate One, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Self-Awakened Lord Buddha. The Buddha-activity of that Supreme Lord Buddha of the three worlds was to clarify the path of practice to bring to an end this extremely long journey through Saṃsāra. In this entire world system, no event greater than that has ever occurred, nor will it ever occur. That is why we all consider this Vesak day as an extremely noble day, a memorable day.

Everyone knows that in connection with the Vesak day, we commemorate three important events in the life of the Lord Buddha: the birth, the enlightenment, and the final passing away (*parinibbāna*). Although these appear as three distinct events, devotees, if we look at them truthfully, there is no error in considering them as three stages of a single event. These three events—the final birth of that Lord Buddha who fulfilled the requisites of enlightenment (*bodhi-sambhāra*) over a long period for our sake, the realization through His Buddha-wisdom that this was indeed His final birth, and the termination of His saṃsāric journey in accordance with that realization—are what we celebrate through these three events of birth, enlightenment, and final passing

away. Thus, it is a valuable Dhammapada stanza highlighting this very concept of liberation from Saṃsāra that we have chosen as our theme today.

The background story related to this stanza is connected with a certain event in the Buddha's life that evokes a sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) in you, devotees. We have all heard of the Elder Devadatta. He was a relative of the Lord Buddha, yet as a retributive turn of a certain hatred he harbored for countless eons, he acted in an extremely terrifying manner during the Lord Buddha's old age, even attempting to take His life, as you all must have heard. The events regarding this are described as follows.

Shortly after his ordination, Elder Devadatta attained supernormal powers (*abhiññā*). However, he did not attain any supramundane state. As the Lord Buddha's old age drew near, a great jealousy arose in Elder Devadatta regarding the spread of the Lord Buddha's fame and glory. Seeing that other members of the Sangha received gains and honors while he did not receive them adequately, a strong desire for gains and honors arose in him. For this purpose, he utilized his psychic powers to win over Prince Ajātasattu, the son of King Bimbisāra. By displaying a psychic miracle, he won the confidence of Prince Ajātasattu, and through that, devised a way and method to receive various gains and honors.

As these gains and honors increased, and his following grew, a certain sinful thought arose in Elder Devadatta. Thinking, "I must let the Buddha retire and take over all the affairs of the Sangha myself," he went and requested the Lord Buddha, "The Blessed One is now aged. Please step aside and hand this over to me." To this, the Lord Buddha replied, "I would not hand over the charge of this Sangha even to my chief disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna. It is not fit to hand it over to you." Angered by this, he harbored deep hatred and subsequently plotted to take the Lord Buddha's life. For this purpose, he approached Prince Ajātasattu and employed an extremely subtle scheme. He planned a highly deceptive and intricate conspiracy, sending a squad of archers along the path the Lord Buddha was walking to shoot Him, ensuring that none of those archers would survive to tell the tale. However, it was not successful. By the power of the Lord Buddha's majestic spiritual power, those archers were unable to shoot. Not only that, but by His power, everyone involved was drawn close to the Lord Buddha, and upon hearing the Dhamma He preached, they all became devoted followers. Therefore, Elder Devadatta's attempt failed.

Next, thinking, "Now I must destroy this Buddha myself," he told Prince Ajātasattu, "You kill your father, the king, and take the Kingdom of Magadha. I will kill the Buddha and take the Kingdom of the Buddha." Thus, Prince Ajātasattu, in that very manner—which is a long story—tortured and killed his father, the king, and seized the kingdom. Yet, Elder Devadatta was still unable to fulfill his part of the plan. What did he do next? While the Lord Buddha was walking at the foot of the Gijjhakūṭa (Vulture Peak) mountain, Elder Devadatta climbed to the top of the mountain and rolled a massive boulder down toward the Lord Buddha's head. At that moment, as a miracle performed through the Buddha's spiritual majesty, two rock peaks sprang up from the ground and intercepted that

boulder. However, a splinter that chipped off from it struck the sole of the Lord Buddha's foot, causing a serious wound. A wound that bled profusely was formed.

The Sangha escorted the Lord Buddha to the park called Maddakucchi Migadāya (the Maddakucchi Deer Park). While spending the first night at that Maddakucchi Migadāya, the Lord Buddha experienced sharp, intense feelings (vedanā) that would be unbearable for an ordinary person. With His mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), and through His power of concentration (*samādhi*)—that is, the fruit of Arahantship concentration (*arahattaphala-samādhi*), which is directly connected to Nibbāna, being the most supreme power of concentration in the world that the Lord Buddha possessed—He endured all those feelings (vedanā). So much so, He endured them without any agitation. Seeing this, hundreds of deities (*devatās*) came to the Lord Buddha at night and paid special praise: "This Ascetic Gotama is a great king of elephants. He endures such bitter, sharp, and severe feelings (vedanā) without any agitation." Similarly, other groups praised Him, saying, "The Lord Buddha is a great king of lions, a great thoroughbred, a great and supreme person." While they were praising Him in this manner, the Lord Buddha too, reflecting on His own liberation from Saṃsāra, uttered a joyful solemn utterance (*udāna*) in a stanza: "Behold the power of my developed concentration (*samādhi*) and liberated mind! How feelings (vedanā) are endured with equanimity, completely free from attraction and aversion."

Then, the next day, the Lord Buddha asked the Sangha to take Him to Jīvaka's Mango Grove. When the Sangha brought Him to Jīvaka's Mango Grove, physician Jīvaka arrived quickly and applied a very strong medicine to the Lord Buddha's foot to heal it rapidly. Even nowadays, you know, a strong medicine is applied to bring about a quick recovery. Having applied the strong medicine, physician Jīvaka said to the Lord Buddha: "Venerable Sir, I have come after administering medicine to a certain patient inside the city. I must return there now. Until I return, please let this bandage, this wound-dressing, remain exactly as it is."

So, physician Jīvaka went to the city. Having gone and treated that patient, by the time he was about to return, the city gates had been closed. Thus, physician Jīvaka was unable to return. Sitting there, he thought with great anxiety: "Alas! What a grave mistake I have made. Treating the Lord Buddha like an ordinary person, I applied such a strong medicine and came away, and now it is the time to remove this bandage!" While Jīvaka the physician was thinking thus, the Lord Buddha, perceiving his thought, said to Ven. Ānanda: "Ānanda, Jīvaka went to the city and is unable to return because the gates have closed. He is thinking that it is now the time to remove this bandage. Therefore, remove this." Ven. Ānanda then removed that wound bandage. The moment that wound bandage was removed, the wound was completely healed. The wound had healed entirely.

Thus, early the next morning, physician Jīvaka ran back in great haste and with deep concern, and asked the Lord Buddha: "Blessed One, did you experience any burning sensation (pariḷāha) during the night due to this wound?" When a doctor comes, it is natural to ask how one's health and comfort are. Now, when he inquired about His well-

being with deep regret, especially feeling that he had committed a lapse, the Lord Buddha uttered the stanza which we have set as our theme.

The Lord Buddha replied to that question not on a mundane level. When a wound occurs, or due to cold and heat, such physical afflictions arise for the Lord Buddha as well as for anyone else. That is natural. However, bringing out a profound meaning from the word "burning sensation" (*pariḷāha*), the Lord Buddha declared this stanza:

Gataddhino visokassa,

vippamuttassa sabbadhi,

Sabbaganthappahīnassa,

pariḷāho na vijjati.

The meaning of that stanza is:

Gataddhino – for him who has completed his journey (the journey of Saṃsāra),

Visokassa – who is free from sorrow, who has destroyed sorrow,

Vippamuttassa sabbadhi – who is liberated in every way, from all sides,

Sabbaganthappahīnassa – who has abandoned all knots (ties), who is freed from all knots,

for that Destroyer of Cankers (*Khīṇāsava*), the Arahant, the liberated one,

pariḷāho na vijjati – no burning sensation (pariḷāha) exists.

In that manner, He declared in the truest sense that He remained without any burning sensation.

That means, although there was physical burning, there was no mental burning. There was no distress or sorrow. That is what is shown by this stanza. Thus, from this story as well as this stanza, we can extract many excellent events to understand the value of this Dhamma.

Those among you, devotees, who have heard or read the Jātaka stories know well the conduct of Elder Devadatta. Countless eons ago, Devadatta existed as the merchant Serivānija, and the Bodhisatta as Kacchapuṭa. A dispute arose over a golden bowl, and having lost the golden bowl, as the merchant Kacchapuṭa was carrying it away, the other merchant ran after him to snatch it. When he failed, it is mentioned in that Jātaka story that he died vomiting blood. According to that, we can understand that it was as a retributive turn of that very mind of hatred developed over so many eons in the past, and as a kind of re-enactment, that something similar occurred in this life when the Buddha attained enlightenment. He had not yet acquired any qualification to obtain the Kingdom of the Buddha. He only possessed a fraction of supernormal power (*abhiññā*). Yet, he

attempted to usurp the Kingdom of the Buddha through devious means. For this reason, harboring jealousy and hatred, he sought to destroy the Lord Buddha's life, trying to fulfill in this life that very determination born of hatred. That is why he attempted to bring about the death of the Lord Buddha in that manner.

It did not stop there. Two events were mentioned here. You must have heard often about the third attempt he made. That is, as a brutal scheme to take the Lord Buddha's life, he got King Ajātasattu to intoxicate the elephant Nālāgiri with toddy and released him onto the path where the Lord Buddha was walking. However, you have heard many times the story of how the Lord Buddha subdued Nālāgiri through the power of loving-kindness (*mettā*). Although his attempts to take the Lord Buddha's life through three such endeavors failed, he fell into the grave, immediate-retribution kamma (*ānantariya-kamma*) of shedding the blood of a Buddha. An immediate-retribution kamma (*ānantariya-kamma*) means that when such a grave action is committed, one definitely goes to the Avīci hell. No one can kill a Buddha. Yet, he committed another grave unwholesome deed. By gathering a group through underhand means, leading away five hundred newly ordained monks, he caused a schism in the Sangha (*sangha-bheda*). That is, to appear as if he too were a Buddha, he went to Gayāsīsa, keeping associates as if they were chief disciples, and created a split in this Sangha with a false Buddhahood. That too is a grave immediate-retribution kamma (*ānantariya-kamma*). It is revealed in the Dhamma that having committed such grave kammas in this manner, Devadatta went to the Avīci hell.

However, before being reborn in the Avīci hell, he took refuge in the Lord Buddha. At the final moment, he understood something of the Lord Buddha. Throughout all these events, it is recorded that no hatred ever arose within the Lord Buddha. This becomes very clear when we discuss this burning sensation (*pariḷāha*). In the entire Saṃsāra, there is burning and running (struggling). Here, by the word *gataddhino*, something is said about the journey of Saṃsāra. After harboring that hatred, Elder Devadatta's journey through Saṃsāra was a journey completely burnt and scorched by hatred. After the Lord Buddha attained Buddhahood, He radiated loving-kindness (*mettā*) even toward those who devised such schemes against His life. That is why on His side, there are no burning sensations. Furthermore, established in His liberated mind, established in the concentration of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samādhi*), He endured even those severe pains without sorrow or distress.

Thus, on one hand, we see from this story how the murderous Devadatta acted toward the Lord Buddha's life, and on the other hand, how physician Jīvaka healed the Lord Buddha through medical treatments that are considered miraculous even today. You, devotees, do not need to dwell too much on the conduct of Elder Devadatta. What we need to understand through it is only the danger of hatred. It is not proper to harbor hatred thinking, "He did such and such to our Lord Buddha." Such things are what exist in the long Saṃsāra. If anyone harbors hatred, it goes on and on as a retributive cycle. That is the nature. That is the way of things. It goes on like a mere habit. That saṃsāric habit continues in the same way in various forms. That is why the Lord Buddha has

declared: "By attachment, attachment is not appeased; by lust, lust is not appeased; by hatred, hatred is not appeased. It is through equanimity, the middle path, through peaceful neutrality between the two, that all of this can be conquered." As they accumulate more and more, the simile given is that of a creeper growing in the rainy season—cravings branch out and grow. Next, as you add more of the anger called hatred, it is like adding straw to a fire; there too, the fire burns.

This is precisely why the entire Saṃsāra is said to be a heap of burning sensations. In short, the reason for this running is the burning sensation. It is said to arise due to the thirst of craving (taṇhā). The Lord Buddha revealed that it is because of craving (taṇhā) that we wander in Saṃsāra for a long time. It is called *taṇhā ponobhavikā*—craving (taṇhā) is what produces a renewed becoming (bhava). Craving (taṇhā) is this desire. It has a nature of never being satisfied, never being content. The Lord Buddha declared this. There are two sides to craving (taṇhā). Through craving (taṇhā), in terms of lust, attachment, and desires, certain things are expected. One attempts to acquire them. Due to the obstacles that arise in obtaining them, hatred arises. Then, both of those are burning sensations. Next, through the futile effort made to appease them, the fire of delusion (*moha*) also burns. In this way, the Lord Buddha has pointed out three fires: lust, hatred, and delusion (*rāga, dosa, moha*).

Now you, devotees, can understand: though not at such a severe level, when a strong attachment to something is formed in one's life, until it is appeased, there is a great burning sensation—a great burning inside the mind. If someone obstructs it, then that burning of hatred, that fire, emerges. Next, one attempts to complete or appease this in devious ways. The Lord Buddha has declared that it can never be appeased by feeding it with more and more things. Instead, this can be conquered by directing the mind toward equanimity which lies between the two, by directing the mind to neutrality. However, the ordinary person who does not know this runs to appease that lust and hatred. Through that running, the fire of defilement (*kilesa*) called delusion also grows. In our sermons, we have illustrated this in many instances with a well-known simile: it is like a deer running after a mirage.

Thus, the entire saṃsāric running, as described by the Lord Buddha, is a running to quench the thirst of craving (taṇhā). The multitude of burning sensations that grow through it is what is indicated in the stanza by the word *pariḷāha*. In fact, the fundamental word, the main word in that stanza, is *pariḷāha*—the burning sensation. Thus, by this stanza, the Lord Buddha declared that He is free from these burning sensations. Accordingly, on a Vesak day like this, we must bring to mind the uniqueness of the Dhamma presented by the Lord Buddha.

Bringing to an end the journey of Saṃsāra is the purpose of this Dhamma. The fundamental purpose of the entire Buddha-Dhamma is liberation from Saṃsāra. When we say this, it means He brought to an end the journey of Saṃsāra. The Lord Buddha, when reflecting upon Himself, rejoiced in that very fact: "I have brought to an end this journey of Saṃsāra." Then, what is bad about the journey of Saṃsāra? The Lord Buddha always reminds us of its perilous side. Some people might think, "No matter how the

Lord Buddha says it, we must continue this existence (bhava)." In most people, a desire for this existence (bhava) called craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*) exists in a very subtle manner. It is to break this that the Lord Buddha presented various similes to arouse a sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding Saṃsāra. Indeed, the essence of the Buddha-Dhamma must be the sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding Saṃsāra and the keen desire for liberation from Saṃsāra. One must reflect on what exists in Saṃsāra and arouse a sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). Similarly, one must exert an effort, a struggle, to be liberated from Saṃsāra. One must make an effort to properly appease that craving (taṇhā) through wisdom, through realization, and through equanimity.

In this manner, the Lord Buddha has preached many relevant Sutta discourses. Those Suttas are generally known as the *Anamatagga Suttas*. There are many Sutta discourses where the Lord Buddha, by means of various similes, points out the length of this Saṃsāra, saying, "For this much time have you wandered in this Saṃsāra." When one directs the mind to them, a great sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) arises regarding this saṃsāric existence (bhava). The Lord Buddha declares: "Monks, for you who are shrouded by ignorance, bound by craving (taṇhā), as you travel along this journey of Saṃsāra, no beginning is to be seen. It cannot be conceived when this began. For such a long time have you traveled in this Saṃsāra."

Next, He gives a simile: "Monks, if a person were to collect all the grass, wood, branches, and foliage in this entire India (Jambudīpa), cut them into four-inch pieces, and lay them down one by one, saying: 'This is my mother, this is my mother's mother, this is my mother's mother's mother,' and start counting the mothers one has had in the past using those pieces of wood, those pieces of wood would run out, but the number of mothers one has had in the past would not come to an end." "So, through traveling in Saṃsāra for this long, what is the only thing you have achieved? What was its purpose?" The Lord Buddha points this out too. What is the feat you have performed all this time? It is called *kaṭasivaḍḍhitā*—which means filling up the cemeteries. That means you have only increased the number of graves. All have increased the cemeteries. You have become 'cemetery-extenders,' 'graveyard-extenders.' That is all you have done; in the entire Saṃsāra, you have filled up the cemeteries.

In another Sutta categorized under the *Anamatagga* group, the Lord Buddha asks the Sangha: "Monks, what do you think? Which is more: the tears you have shed as you wept and wailed when associated with the disagreeable and separated from the agreeable during this extremely long Saṃsāra, or the water in the four great oceans?" The Sangha replies: "Venerable Sir, as we understand the Dhamma preached to us by the Blessed One, the tears we have shed are indeed more than the water in the four great oceans." Connecting to that very point, the Lord Buddha declares again: "Not only the tears shed for all your relatives, but if we take separately the tears you wept for your mother, for your son, for your daughter, then for other relatives, for the loss of wealth, for the onset of illnesses—even each of these is more than the water in the four great oceans." The Lord Buddha concludes: "This is enough, monks, to become disillusioned with all

preparations (saṅkhāra)—which are the things that cause the running after which the world runs; this is enough to lose interest in them all, this is enough to be liberated from them." That is how the sermon ends.

Similarly, on another occasion, the Lord Buddha points out: "Monks, if we were to collect the mother's milk you drank after being born in various births (jāti) in the past, which is more: that volume of milk, or the water in the four great oceans?" There too, the Sangha replies: "Venerable Sir, as we understand the Dhamma preached by the Blessed One, the milk we drank from mothers is indeed more, and the water in the four great oceans is less."

Likewise, a certain monk came to the Lord Buddha and asked: "Blessed One, since you often speak of this eon (*kalpa*), and use the word *kalpa*, how long indeed is an eon?" Then the Lord Buddha says: "Monk, an eon is so long that it cannot be counted or indicated in numbers, in calculations, such as this many hundreds of years, or this many thousands of years." "In that case, Blessed One, can you give a simile?" "I can," He says. Then He gives the simile: What is the simile? "Suppose, monk, there were a solid rock mountain, a yojana long, a yojana wide, and a yojana high, completely solid without any cleft or crack. A man would come once every hundred years with a fine cloth from Kāsī and stroke that mountain once. By this stroking with the Kāsī cloth once every hundred years, that rock mountain would be worn away and exhausted, but the eon would still not have ended." In that manner, the Lord Buddha points out the length of an eon. Having said this, the Lord Buddha then points out: "Monks, through such a long Saṃsāra, you have passed through hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands of such eons."

On another occasion, when the Lord Buddha was in the vicinity of Mount Vepulla, He pointed out Mount Vepulla to the Sangha and said: "Monks, if the skeletons left behind by a single person during a single eon were collected, they would become as large as this Mount Vepulla." There too, what is shown is the length of Saṃsāra. Next, there is another highly poignant and moving Sutta that was preached. To thirty monks who had come as visitors from the city of Pāvā, none of whom had attained any path or fruit, the Lord Buddha preached a discourse that evokes the fear of Saṃsāra. There, the Lord Buddha points out: "Monks, if the blood shed by you when being decapitated during this extremely long Saṃsāra were collected, which is more: that blood, or the water in the four great oceans?" Then too, those monks declare: "Venerable Sir, as we understand the Dhamma declared by the Blessed One, the blood so shed is indeed more, and the water in the four great oceans is less."

Then, not stopping there, the Lord Buddha declares next: "If the blood shed by you when being decapitated after being born as cows in this long Saṃsāra were collected, even that is more than the four great oceans. Next, if we collect the blood shed by being decapitated as water buffaloes, as goats, as chickens, as sheep—being born as each of these animals in turn—it is more than the four great oceans." The Lord Buddha presents all of these in the form of questions and answers. "What do you think, monks?" He asks. The monks are obliged to answer each one. "Similarly, when you were caught as highway robbers and decapitated, or caught committing other misdeeds like adultery and

decapitated by the king's men—the blood shed on such occasions is more than the water in the four great oceans." In this way, He delivered a certain discourse. So moving was that discourse that at its conclusion, all those thirty monks attained Arahantship. From this, we can see that if we are to be liberated from Saṃsāra, if we desire liberation from Saṃsāra, we must experience the fear of Saṃsāra. One must become disillusioned with Saṃsāra. While harboring attachment to Saṃsāra, being liberated from Saṃsāra does not happen. That is a major issue. For you, devotees, in your day-to-day lives, this too can be a problem. Even for a small child, as we know, if we give a beautiful piece of cake, they want to admire its shape and take pride in it, and they also want to eat it. Both cannot be done. We are just like that.

Truly, we must understand that a Buddha arises specifically to show the dangerous aspect of this Saṃsāra. However, nowadays, the prevailing trend is toward the expansion of the world (*loka-vaḍḍhana*). Most people are enthusiastic about expanding the world. Even this Dhamma is often used to fulfill social requirements and to find satisfaction within this. But that will never happen. If that were possible, the Lord Buddha points out, during eras like the reign of a Wheel-Turning Monarch (*Cakkavatti*), craving (taṇhā) should have been satisfied. Yet, it was never satisfied through any of those. For the thirst of craving (taṇhā) can never be quenched. The Lord Buddha has pointed out that even if a rain of gold coins were to fall, one would never be satisfied. It is because such a nature exists in the world that a Buddha arises. It is to introduce the supramundane—which rises above the mundane—to the world, and to point out supramundane liberation. Now, what is spoken of in this stanza is that very supramundane liberation. Therefore, what we have to say is that if we are true Buddhists, we must try to cross over from the world, rather than becoming 'graveyard-extenders' or 'world-extenders.' A Buddha-sāsana exists, the Buddha-Dhamma exists, only if we act in accordance with this fundamental purpose pointed out by the Lord Buddha. If it drifts in the opposite direction, toward the side of Saṃsāra, toward the mundane side—there is no Dhamma there, there is no sāsana. That fact must be specially remembered.

In this stanza, it is further said *gataddhino visokassa*, that He remained without sorrow or spiritual distress. When feelings (vedanā) and the like arise, everyone experiences afflictions. But what is spoken of here is that the Lord Buddha, due to His equanimity, did not generate mental distress or sorrow through physical feelings (vedanā). The entire Saṃsāra is completely a sorrowful narrative. In Saṃsāra, there is entirely a nature of falling into sorrow because one cannot fulfill the things one expects. However, the Lord Buddha, utilizing the supramundane liberation He had attained, transcended sorrow.

Similarly, "liberated in every way" (*vippamuttassa*) means from the five aggregates. You, devotees, have heard of the five aggregates: form (*rūpa*), feeling (vedanā), perception (*saññā*), preparations (saṅkhāra), and consciousness (viññāṇa). The Lord Buddha has pointed out that every individual clings to these, thinking, "This is mine, this I am." It is by abandoning craving (taṇhā) and abandoning attachment toward these that one is liberated from them. Thus, the Lord Buddha, seeing these five aggregates as

impermanent (anicca), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (anattā), realized Buddhahood and attained supramundane liberation. That is why He is *vippamuttassa sabbadhi*— liberated in every way. Similarly, *sabbaganthappahīnassa*. "Freed from knots" is explained in the Dhamma as being freed from four kinds of knots (*gantha*): covetousness (*abhijjhā*), which is obsessive greed; ill-will (*vyāpāda*), which is hatred; clinging to rules and vows (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), which is grasping wrong habits and vows; and dogmatic insistence on truth (*idaṃsaccābhinivesa*), which is grasping certain views/dogmas. The Lord Buddha declared that He was freed from all those knots.

Thus, within that stanza lies the value of the liberation He attained. Through that, He replied to physician Jīvaka: "Throughout the night, I appeased and conquered those burning sensations (pariḷāha) through the bliss of liberation I have attained in this manner." On a Vesak day like this, if we are to preserve the valuable portions of this Dhamma in this Sāsana, we must live in accordance with them. The Lord Buddha has pointed out the path of liberation that leads to supramundane knowledge and brings to an end this journey of Saṃsāra. The fearfulness of this journey of Saṃsāra is revealed in that very multitude of *Anamatagga Suttas*. One must frequently contemplate that multitude of Suttas. In accordance with them, whatever hardships may arise while trying to fulfill various expectations in one's life, one must become more and more courageous through them to be liberated from Saṃsāra.

One must make an effort specifically to walk on this path of Dhamma. You have heard that the path of Dhamma consists of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Today, most of this meritorious group observed precepts such as the ten precepts or eight precepts, and another group at this moment undertook the precepts of right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). Virtue (*sīla*) is foremost, because it is through the taming of body and speech that the opportunity to tame the mind is subsequently provided. Just as the Lord Buddha distinguishes black and white, He has pointed out the things to be done and not to be done in the world, the wholesome and unwholesome, merit and demerit. Thus, by guarding these three doors of mind, body, and speech, without falling into these unwholesome and sinful things, and through the restraint developed while walking on the path of wholesome actions, one can attain the calming of the mind through concentration (*samādhi*). Utilizing that very concentration (*samādhi*), one must understand the impermanent (anicca) nature of all of this, the impermanent (anicca) nature of this entire existence.

The ordinary world does not understand this because they take everything as "me" and "mine." Through that, the running in Saṃsāra increases. Due to craving (taṇhā), a strong grasping (upādāna) occurs. It is that very grasping (upādāna) that manifests at the moment of death. You have seen in many instances the struggle that occurs at the time of death, which we refer to as gasping for breath. What is happening here? What is done by that? That force, that force of grasping (upādāna), goes outward and establishes itself on a sign (*nimitta*) that presents itself in accordance with kamma. In accordance with that, even if we do not expect it, if we have committed grave unwholesome deeds, we will be

forced to take birth (jāti) in places such as hell. Such is the dangerous nature that exists in this Saṃsāra.

In this day and age, some people try to dilute these facts. Everyone likes it if these problems are diluted. Therefore, some people present modernistic arguments regarding these: "Where are they? We cannot see hells or heaven worlds. Those were presented by the Lord Buddha merely as symbols; they are all right here in this world. Those who are economically destitute in this very place are the ones existing as hungry ghosts (*petas*); those who commit sinful deeds are the demons (*yakkhas*), and so forth." Such a method of interpretation is coming forward now. Many people have been trapped by these.

Instead of moving toward the supramundane liberation pointed out by the Lord Buddha in the Dhamma by understanding it correctly, they content themselves with a kind of temporary solace in their day-to-day lives. However, one must recognize these well. This Dhamma cannot be diluted in that manner. A Buddha does not fulfill the perfections (*pāramīs*) for four incalculable eons and a hundred thousand eons to point out such trivial things. There are many things in this existence (bhava) that are invisible to oneself. If someone says that hells and heaven worlds do not exist merely because they are invisible to them, the Lord Buddha compares it to a blind man saying that the sun and moon do not exist because he cannot see them.

This meritorious group must think in that manner, without succumbing to mere logic. There are certain truths revealed to the world by Buddha-wisdom as well as by those possessing supernormal powers (*abhiññā*). There are many invisible things in the world. Things invisible to the ordinary physical eye are seen by some through various instruments. Even things invisible through those instruments are seen by some through that very power of concentration (*samādhi*) and supernormal power (*abhiññā*). Therefore, if one lives thinking that only what is visible to oneself is true, that person can never bring to an end Saṃsāra.

Therefore, our thoughts and aspirations must truly be directed specifically toward this disillusionment with Saṃsāra. "These events in our day-to-day lives are all a part of that river of blood pointed out by the Lord Buddha. This is but one part, one single drop, of the blood I have shed in this entire long Saṃsāra." One must think in that way. "This is but one of the heaps of skeletons." One must think in that manner. Thinking in that way and realizing the dangerous nature of this Saṃsāra, one must walk on the path of liberation from it.

We said the path of liberation is virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). If, by being established in a certain virtue (*sīla*), one calms one's body and speech through the peace obtained thereby and strengthens the power of concentration (*samādhi*) developed, and if one has obtained supernormal powers (*abhiññā*) through that power of concentration (*samādhi*) which are unseen by the ordinary world, then heaven worlds, Brahma worlds, and the like become visible to the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*). Hells, the purgatory, and all those places which the world claims do not exist, are visible to those with supernormal powers (*abhiññā*). This is called the divine eye.

However, the Lord Buddha points out the eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*)—which is insight (*vipassanā*)—as being higher than both the physical eye and the divine eye. The eye of wisdom means insight (*vipassanā*). Then, if one has understood in that manner that such a dangerous thing exists in the world, that it exists in Saṃsāra, one must next direct one's attention specifically to that insight (*vipassanā*). Insight (*vipassanā*) means a special seeing.

What is briefly indicated in that insight (*vipassanā*) meditation is the seeing of the three characteristics: impermanent (anicca), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (anattā). One must frequently contemplate the three characteristics (*tilakkaṇa*)—the impermanent (anicca) nature of this entire existence. The reason it is not visible to the ordinary world is because of the notion of taking it as "I" and because of the forces of defilements such as craving (taṇhā). But as the mind becomes calmer and calmer, one can obtain a certain understanding regarding these. One must direct the mind to the nature of continuity (*santati*) in each of these, the flowing nature, the nature of arising (jāti) and passing away. As one directs the mind, applying the reflection called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), they begin to be understood more and more subtly. Through that understanding, when they begin to be shown in accordance with reality (*yathābhūta*), disillusionment arises naturally. The Lord Buddha has declared that if one sees the world through the knowledge of reality (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*), disillusionment with Saṃsāra arises simultaneously.

Then, just as mentioned regarding the piece of cake, one must hope to walk on the path to gain the right understanding. When the right understanding comes, an opportunity to be liberated from this Saṃsāra arises. The Lord Buddha has presented a great revolution regarding the values held by the world. This understanding can occur at any moment in life, from a seven-year-old child to the final deathbed, depending on that individual's power of perfections (*pāramī*); at any moment, these powers, these supramundane powers, can emerge. Therefore, what we must do is exert the effort required to bring out that supramundane aspect.

Although one's past power of perfections (*pāramīs*) is not visible to oneself, if such a thing is to emerge, one must engage in this path of Dhamma as a support to it. Some people think: "This virtue (*sīla*) is a great hassle, so we do not need that either. Concentration (*samādhi*) and meditation (*bhāvanā*) are anti-social activities done by isolating oneself from society, so we do not need those either." There are those who speak in this manner. However, one must contemplate wisely: the Lord Buddha considered the liberation of the individual as supreme. It is by the coming together of many individuals that a society is formed, a nation is formed, a world is formed. Therefore, there is no social code that disregards the individual.

Some people think virtue (*sīla*) means merely refraining from doing wrong to society. But it is not completed by that alone. The Lord Buddha points out something far deeper. The virtue (*sīla*) shown in this Dhamma is a foundation for concentration (*samādhi*). It is something that supports concentration (*samādhi*). Relying on virtue (*sīla*), one proceeds to concentration (*samādhi*). Relying on concentration (*samādhi*), one proceeds

to wisdom (*paññā*). However, as natural laws (*dhammatā*), the Lord Buddha points out that within virtue (*sīla*) lies what is beneficial to both oneself and society. That is, the Lord Buddha has pointed out virtue (*sīla*) as a path that causes harm neither to oneself nor to others.

Similarly, in that regard, some people think this is directed solely at society and is something done only for society. If taken in that way, that is a narrow view. One gets stuck there. There is no progress for oneself there. If looked at in that way, there is no need to observe precepts like this. If military forces and police are deployed properly, that happens automatically. What is present there is not self-discipline. What is there is a forced taming, for the benefit of society. But here, the Lord Buddha points out: *cetanā sīlaṃ, cetasikaṃ sīlaṃ*—this virtue (*sīla*) is something connected with volition (*cetanā*) and mental factors (*cetasika*). It is not merely sitting with folded hands and feet. That is what is visible to the world: wearing white clothes, staying to one side with folded hands and feet.

But there is something more than that here. This morning, this meritorious group established themselves in a deep determination called virtue (*sīla*), undertaking some form of virtue (*sīla*) belonging to them, whether the ten precepts or the eight precepts. Within that undertaking lies a great power. That is one thing. One must think: "Today I am standing upon this virtue (*sīla*). It is within these eight pillars, or ten pillars, that I conduct myself today." One must guard this virtue (*sīla*) with that thought. That becomes a strength for meditation (*bhāvanā*). Established in that, one's mind does not wander toward sinful deeds and the like outside of it. A special feature of that virtue (*sīla*) is that, with the support of the power of determination in virtue (*sīla*), past events do not barge into the mind. "Today my virtue (*sīla*) is pure. May this pure virtue (*sīla*) support my meditation (*bhāvanā*)! May it support the development of my meditation (*bhāvanā*)!" If one meditates upon that power of determination in virtue (*sīla*), one can make the meditation (*bhāvanā*) successful.

The Lord Buddha has pointed out this virtue (*sīla*) in a way that, through right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), it supports one's own liberation. In day-to-day life, we utilize only a very small fraction of the mind's total power. The mind is scattered. In completing day-to-day activities, we live with a scattered mind. Because of that, the true state and true power of the mind are not understood by oneself. Therefore, the Lord Buddha has pointed out that the mind should be established on a certain meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*), on a single object. That object too must be a wholesome object, not an unwholesome object. It must be an object that supports the growth of one's mind. In that manner, if it is the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*), it is "May they be well and happy!" If it is regarding the Lord Buddha, it is terms like *Itipi so Bhagavā, Arahaṃ*, etc. When one contemplates and develops such a meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*), that scattered mind is removed and establishes itself on a single object. Through that, one can test the full power of the mind.

In that manner, at the levels of concentration (*samādhi*), some can also obtain physical comfort along with it. One with a scattered mind seeks happiness in external things.

They seek happiness in shops. But for the person who has concentrated their mind, happiness is right there. To show the difference between what the world enjoys as these five cords of sensual pleasure (*pañca-kāma-sampatti*) and the bliss of concentration (*samādhi-sukha*), the Lord Buddha compares those five cords of sensual pleasure to a small child who, in the absence of his parents, plays with feces and urine, when compared to that concentration (*samādhi*). The Lord Buddha has pointed out such similes. Then, after the mind is calmed through concentration (*samādhi*) in that manner, if one next looks with diligence at one's life—whether at one's body, mind, or feelings (vedanā)—each of these begins to be understood in a more subtle manner than what is understood by the ordinary world.

Within that, the true nature (*dhammatā*), the impermanence (anicca) pointed out by the Lord Buddha, becomes clear. It is clearly understood that everything is of the nature of arising (jāti) and passing away. The reason it is not visible to the world is because it is covered by the shroud, the veil, of the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*). This entire world is covered by a certain shroud. That supports the growth of delusion (*moha*), which causes the existence (bhava) of the world, the saṃsāric existence (bhava). Delusion (*moha*) is within ignorance (*avijjā*). That is why the Lord Buddha declared "hindered by ignorance" (*avijjā-nīvaraṇa*). Ignorance (*avijjā*) is a screening veil. Covered by that, and bound by craving (taṇhā), we have been carried along in this Saṃsāra. The Lord Buddha has declared a joyful solemn utterance (*udāna*) in this stanza regarding Himself. Drawing from that, we must reflect to draw close to this liberation declared by the Lord Buddha. There are various liberations accepted by society. You get to hear of various kinds of liberations. All of those are temporary liberations. Through those liberations, sometimes one is bound even further to Saṃsāra. None of those is the true liberation.

This very liberation pointed out by the Lord Buddha is the true liberation. Taking it as a society, if someone is mature in that society, there is no distinction of educated or uneducated, rich or poor, in attaining this liberation. That too is not received for nothing; if one exerts effort for it, one can attain it. Without any strange expenditure, without any strange cost, it comes as the definite result of the effort one exerts. Maintaining a Buddha-sāsana means living in accordance with that. The Buddha-sāsana is truly like a message going from heart to heart. Through association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), this is a journey made by supporting one another as those who walk on the path of Dhamma. It is through that connection that a Sāsana exists.

Thus, the Lord Buddha acted as a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) to the Sangha, and the Sangha acted in the same manner toward the lay devotees and everyone else who walked on that path of Dhamma. That is how a Sāsana is maintained. All of them placed Nibbāna at the forefront. They gave pride of place to Nibbāna. For a Buddha arises to preach specifically this message. There is an ancient stanza:

Na hi sīlavataṃ hetu,

uppajjanti Tathāgatā,

Tīṇi padā sambuddhena pakāsitā.

There were those in society who observed vows as dogs or as cows. A Buddha does not arise in the world to preach such ordinary vows. Buddhas arise to declare a certain truth consisting of three terms, made of eight letters. That truth is this three-fold characteristic: impermanent (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā). It is to reveal this that a Buddha arises in the world. Therefore, on this Vesak day, we must think: "It is for our sake that the Lord Buddha fulfilled the requisites of enlightenment (*bodhi-sambhāra*) over such a long time. It is to attain Buddhahood for my sake that He made this effort."

Thus, the Lord Buddha declared here the end of that long journey traveled for so long in Saṃsāra, saying, "I have completed the journey." Just as He completed the journey, He is free from sorrow. He is free from attraction and aversion. He declared regarding Himself: "I am liberated from all five aggregates (pañcakkhandha)." As the Lord Buddha declares, "let one be of a stilled mind" (*nibbāna-manaso siyā*), we must always try to live with a mind stilled (Nibbāna). Through all these things, we must see the Four Noble Truths. "This is suffering (dukkha)." "Underlying this suffering (dukkha), the cause is craving (taṇhā)." "If this craving (taṇhā) is appeased anywhere, that appeasement is true happiness." "The path to that is right view." Starting from right view, that course of action is virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*), or the Noble Eightfold Path. One must understand it in that way. Through day-to-day life, one then walks on the path to Nibbāna. Whatever one's status or social standing may be, one can fearlessly say that one is walking on the path to Nibbāna. In that manner, understanding the true meaning of the Vesak day, one must try to live accordingly.

Today, on this valuable day, this meritorious group observed a certain virtue (*sīla*) to the best of their ability, and generated meditative thoughts. Likewise, through the Dhamma sermon at this time, you have listened for an hour to the Dhamma discourse that supports the growth of those qualities of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) within your minds—which can be considered the essence of a Dhamma sermon that we frequently mention, which are developed within us for the sake of Nibbāna. May the multitude of wholesome volitions generated by this meritorious group through this, before the period of decline of this Buddha-sāsana comes to an end, serve as a supportive condition (*hetu-vāsanā*) for attaining that noble supramundane liberation by realizing the paths, fruits, and penetration (*magga-phala-paṭivedha*) of stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship!

Similarly, may the merit we have accumulated through preaching and listening to the Dhamma be shared by the deities and Brahmas protecting this Sāsana, as well as by all those who desire merit, including one's relatives, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven! May they rejoice in it, and as quickly as possible, be freed from all saṃsāric suffering (dukkha), and attain peace in the noble, supreme Deathless Nibbāna, which is free from aging and death (jarāmaraṇa)! Having aspired thus, share the merits by reciting the stanzas.

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #144

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.96)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Bahuṃ pi ce saṃhita bhāsamāno,

Na takkaro hoti naro pamatto;

Gopa'va gāvo gaṇayaṃ paresaṃ,

Na bhāgavā sāmaññassa hoti.

Appam pi ce saṃhita bhāsamāno,

Dhammassa hoti anudhammacārī;

Rāgañca dosañca mohaṃ pahāya,

Sammāppajāno suvimuttacitto;

Anupādiyāno idha vā huraṃ vā,

Sa bhāgavā sāmaññassa hoti."

From:

Dhammapada Verses 19 and 20 (Yamaka Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha-word of the Buddha has been preached for the sole purpose of achieving liberation from Saṃsāra. Disregarding that purpose and merely studying, learning, and memorizing that teaching was often criticized by the Buddha. The Buddha constantly reminded us that rather than the broad knowledge gathered through learning, memorizing, and so on, it is the deep knowledge of the Dhamma, obtained by putting that Dhamma into practice, that is supreme.

It was on such an occasion that these two verses we have taken as our theme came to be preached. In the city of Sāvatthi, two young men who were friends ordained in the Dispensation. One of them thought: "Since I have ordained in old age, instead of the duty of study (*gantha-dhura*), I must fulfill the duty of insight (*vipassanā-dhura*)." Turning his mind towards insight, he obtained meditation subjects from the Buddha, went into retirement, meditated diligently, and soon attained Arahantship with the four analytical knowledges.

The other monk, with the hope of fulfilling the duty of study, learned the Buddha-word in detail and taught the Dhamma to a group of about five hundred disciples, living as the teacher of a large following.

The monks practicing insight, having obtained meditation subjects from the Buddha, went to the place of retirement where the first-mentioned monk resided. Having received advice from him and through his association, they attained Arahantship. Later, when they asked for permission to go and pay respects to the Buddha, that monk said: "Very well, Venerable Sirs, go and pay respects in my name to the Buddha and also to the eighty chief disciples, saying that I pay my respects. Likewise, convey my respects to my dear friend, such-and-such a monk."

Those monks also journeyed to Sāvatthi, paid respects to the Buddha and the other eighty chief disciples, and then went to the aforementioned monk, saying: "Our teacher pays his respects to you."

"Who is your teacher?" he asked. "So-and-so monk," they replied. When groups of disciples came and paid respects in this manner again and again, a kind of jealousy arose in that monk. "He went to the forest wearing rag-robes right at the time of ordination. He does not even know a single four-line verse. Yet, having gathered a group of disciples, he sends them to pay respects in this way." In this manner, a certain jealous feeling arose in the monk who fulfilled the duty of study. "Very well, when that monk comes one day, I must question him," he thought to himself.

Meanwhile, on one occasion, that Arahant monk also came to Sāvatthi to see the Buddha, and paid respects to the Buddha and the eighty chief disciples. Before doing so, he left his bowl, robes, and other requisites in the hut of his friend. Having paid respects to the Buddha and the monks, when he returned, the studying monk, after completing his duties, prepared to sit on a seat of equal height and question the elderly monk on the Dhamma. The Buddha saw this. Seeing this, He thought: "If this monk questions my son, the Arahant, and harasses him, he might fall into hell." Thus, the Buddha went to that hut as if walking on a tour of the monastery. In those days, a seat was prepared for the Buddha in every hut, and the monks lived there accordingly. The Buddha sat on that Buddha-seat. The two monks stood on either side.

The Buddha asked the monk who fulfilled the duty of study a question regarding the first absorption (*jhāna*). He answered that question. Then He questioned him on the second absorption, third absorption, fourth absorption, and so on, regarding all the fine-material and immaterial absorptions. The monk answered them all. Next, the Buddha

asked a question about the path of Stream-entry. To that question, the studying monk had no answer. Then, the Buddha asked that question of the Arahant Elder. He answered it. Likewise, the Arahant monk was able to answer the questions asked about the paths of Once-returning and Non-returning. The monk who fulfilled the duty of study was unable to answer them.

The Buddha uttered "Sādhu" (well done) to all four answers given regarding those paths. It is said there that the sound of "Sādhu" vibrated all the way up to the Brahma world. Now, when this "Sādhu" was uttered, the disciples of the monk who fulfilled the duty of study were disturbed. "Look at that, the Teacher uttered 'Sādhu' so much to that old monk. He did not praise our teacher at all, who is the teacher of such a large crowd." Thus a murmur arose.

The Buddha asked, "Monks, what are you talking about?" and when the matter was explained, He declared on that occasion: "Your teacher is like a cowherd who merely counts others' cows. My son, the Arahant, is like the owner of the cows who enjoys the five products of the cow." With this theme, He uttered the two verses we took as our title.

"Though he recites much of the Buddha-word, the heedless person who does not act accordingly is like a cowherd counting others' cows; he is not a partaker of the monkhood." That is the meaning of the first verse. In the second verse, He speaks of the state of the Arahant monk:

"Though he recites but little of the Buddha-word, the monk who practices according to the Dhamma, having abandoned lust, hatred, and delusion, living with right wisdom and a well-released mind, clinging to nothing here or hereafter—he is indeed a partaker of the monkhood."

There is a deep meaning in the two words "clinging to nothing here or hereafter" (*anupādiyāno idha vā huraṃ vā*). "Here or there," "this world or the next"—these are two words with many broad meanings. It means not holding on with grasping (*upādāna*), either here or there. It is the nature of the Arahant that is expressed there. Such a monk is indeed a partaker of the monkhood, of the fruits of monkhood. This is the matter that the Buddha highlighted through this.

We can see from this story that the monk who fulfilled the duty of study developed a certain jealousy due to conceit. He had memorized the scriptures, the Buddha-word, very well. He knew a great deal. He had a large crowd of disciples. Due to the arrogance arising from that, he looked down upon the inner, spiritual accumulation of virtues of the forest-dwelling monk without knowing it. He prepared to question him in a degrading manner. The Buddha intervened on that occasion out of compassion for that monk, to prevent him from falling into hell. He came there, intervened, and questioned them in that manner. The monk who fulfilled the duty of study did indeed answer the questions regarding the absorptions well. But regarding the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*), there was no answer. He was speechless. Therefore, we see that the Buddha pointed to the supramundane as the true fruit of monkhood. Absorptions and so on were also present among those of other religions. They also have an important place in the

Dispensation. However, using them as an aid to attain the supramundane which transcends grasping (*upādāna*)—the state of being without grasping—is the primary purpose of the Buddha's Dispensation. Since he had fulfilled that purpose, the Buddha praised the elderly forest-dwelling monk and uttered "Sādhu."

We can learn many things from this. Even in this day and age, according to the intellectual attitude, this Dhamma is often made into an intellectual subject. There is an attitude of analyzing and living within various analyses and critiques of this Dhamma. Indeed, the danger of limiting the Dhamma—which was declared by the Buddha for a practical purpose—merely to learning and study (*pariyatti*) in an indirect way, is shown through this story.

In two suttas, this Dhamma is compared to a raft. This is a very deep and meaningful simile. "Monks, I have compared this Dhamma of mine to a raft. It is for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping." Not for holding on with grasping (*upādāna*) in that manner. It is for crossing over. We must say a little about how this simile is presented to bring out the points revealed in this story. A certain man sets out on a long journey. On the way, he comes to a great stretch of water. The near shore is full of fear and doubt. The far shore is free of doubt and safe. Then, there is a need to go from the near shore to the far shore. But there is neither a ship nor a bridge. So, what does this man do? Collecting grass, twigs, branches, and creepers, he binds a raft, and making an effort with his hands and feet, and with the aid of the raft, he crosses over to the far shore. After reaching the far shore, he does not carry the raft on his shoulders. That is the basic idea there.

Another sutta discourse sheds light on the ideas in this story of the raft. The Buddha himself mentions on a later occasion that the stretch of water refers to the four floods of sensual desire, becoming (*bhava*), views, and ignorance. These are the four floods flowing in this Saṃsāra. This is the body of water. The near shore, which is full of doubt and fear, is the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). The dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) means taking this five-aggregate bundle of form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as "me" and "mine."

That is the weakness in the samsaric individual. It is because of this that all fear and doubt arise. The far shore is Nibbāna, the place of freedom from these. Next, this raft is compared to the Noble Eightfold Path. The effort made by using the raft and using hands and feet represents the initiation of effort. One who travels on this path has to apply effort. The Buddha states that he went putting forth effort with hands and feet with the aid of the raft, to show the idea of applying effort and initiating effort. Then we see that if the raft is the Noble Eightfold Path, the Noble Eightfold Path is not something to be carried on one's shoulders. That is where the main meaning lies. This path is solely for crossing over. After crossing over, what remains is the Fruit of the Path.

There is a very valuable sutta discourse on this called the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*. Corresponding to the name of that sutta discourse, the Buddha shows another simile.

Alagadda means a snake. We can get a certain idea about the monk who held the duty of study, especially from the second simile. Suppose a person who is skilled in catching snakes, or is looking for a snake, sees a large snake. Due to haste, if he mistakenly catches the snake by its coils or its tail, the snake will turn back and bite him. According to that simile, the Buddha preaches: "Similarly, in my Dispensation, some foolish men learn the Dhamma which was preached for crossing over, but do not examine its meaning with wisdom. If they had examined it with wisdom, they would see that this is something to be put into practice; without understanding it as such, they use it to raise various theories, arguments, and disputations, leaning towards them to look down on others."

Now, the monk who carried the duty of study hoped to defeat the other monk by questioning him. The consequence of that is like the snake turning back and biting. In this way, the Buddha highlights the practical value of the Dhamma. There are several other discourses regarding the place given to learning during the Buddha's time. On one occasion, a monk came and asked the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, 'one who dwells in the Dhamma' (*dhammavihārī*), 'one who dwells in the Dhamma' is said. To what extent, Venerable Sir, does one become a dweller in the Dhamma?" The meaning of the word *dhammavihārī* is one who lives according to the Dhamma. So this monk is asking: "To what extent does one become a dweller in the Dhamma?"

Then the Buddha preaches: "Here, monks, a certain monk learns the Dhamma in detail." What is mentioned here is not the term "Piṭaka." In the past, the Triple Piṭaka (Tipiṭaka) Buddha-word was known as the nine-fold Dispensation of the Teacher (*navaṅga-satthu-sāsana*). According to the prominent features of those Buddha discourses, the nine-fold Dispensation of the Teacher is divided and shown as: *sutta* (discourses), *geyya* (mixed prose and verse), *veyyākaraṇa* (expositions), *gāthā* (verses), *udāna* (inspired utterances), *itivuttaka* (as-it-was-said), *jātaka* (birth stories), *abbhutadhamma* (marvels), and *vedalla* (catechisms). Nowadays, the term Triple Piṭaka is used.

In the past, someone would learn this nine-fold Dispensation of the Teacher—comprising *sutta, geyya, veyyākaraṇa, gāthā, udāna, itivuttaka, jātaka, abbhutadhamma, vedalla*—in detail. Having learned it, he spends the whole day on those activities of learning. He does not think about meditation—that is, secluded dwelling, seclusive living—nor does he think about concentration (*samādhi*). He spends the entire day in learning. Such a monk is designated as "one who is abundant in learning (*pariyatti-bahulo*), not a dweller in the Dhamma (*no dhammavihārī*)." That is, a monk who devotes most of his time to learning, to scripture, and is not a dweller in the Dhamma. That was one category mentioned.

Next, in the same way, four others are described. A certain monk learns the Dhamma in detail and preaches that Dhamma to others, teaches it to others. Such a monk spends the entire day teaching others. The Buddha describes such a monk as "one who is abundant in teaching, not a dweller in the Dhamma." Except for teaching the Dhamma to others, he does not live according to the Dhamma.

There is a third monk who, having learned the Dhamma well, spends the whole day reciting it. Such a monk is called "one who is abundant in recitation, not a dweller in the Dhamma." He spends his time in reciting, but does not live according to the Dhamma.

Then, a fourth monk, having learned the Dhamma in that way, spends his time thinking and pondering over the Dhamma, reflecting and reasoning, without meditation. Such a monk is called "one who is abundant in thinking, not a dweller in the Dhamma." Many of today's educated people might fall into this category. They are abundant in thinking, but they do not live according to the Dhamma. They do not try to put the Dhamma into practice and realize it.

Next, the fifth monk is the one who learned the Dhamma, but devotes a considerable part of the day to meditation and concentration, realizing the Dhamma. It is that monk who is called a "dweller in the Dhamma" (*dhammavihārī*) in the true sense. Having declared this, the Buddha utters a very powerful passage at the end, which is frequently mentioned in the sutta discourses.

He made this statement even when His Parinibbāna (final extinction) was approaching: "Whatever should be done for his disciples by a teacher who seeks their welfare and is compassionate, all that has been done by me for you. Here, monks, are the roots of trees; here are empty huts. Practice meditation! Monks, do not be negligent! Do not be remorseful later!" With this passage, the discourse ends. What this shows is that the Buddha's teaching is something that must be realized through meditation.

From this too, we see the place the Buddha gave to the knowledge that must be realized. He considered realized knowledge itself as supreme. We can see this even more deeply from the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*. Throughout His entire Buddha-career of forty-five years, the Dhamma that the Buddha preached was summarized by Him at the final moment as a series of practical groups of Dhamma. "Whatever Dhamma I have preached having directly known..." and then He says, what are those Dhammas? The four foundations of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhāna*), the four right efforts (*cattāro sammappadhāna*), the four bases of spiritual power (*cattāro iddhipāda*), the five faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the Noble Eightfold Path—these are the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*sattatisa bodhipakkhiya dhammā*) that the Buddha identifies as the Dhamma He preached.

One can also go on counting these. For those who go on counting, there are many conveniences nowadays. There are computers. Therefore, those who count cows now have great conveniences. They even have computers. Like the cowherd counting cows, one can go on counting in this way. However, it is regarding the enjoyment of the five products of the cow that there is the greatest rarity nowadays. Those who enjoy the five products of the cow are very few. The majority are cowherds. At the final moment, the Buddha identified the four foundations of mindfulness and so on—things to be put into practice—as the groups of Dhamma. Let us think a little about this idea in the Buddha's teaching. Indeed, gathering knowledge merely as knowledge is a burden to the mind. It is only something gathered. But wisdom, obtained by following the practice of the Dhamma

and its sub-laws (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*) consisting of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*), is a deep understanding, a vision that cuts off thoughts and stills the mind. It is through that alone that the Four Noble Truths can be understood.

On one occasion, a monk named Udāyī came and declared how he attained Arahantship to the Buddha: "The Blessed One preached to me in this way: 'This is form (*rūpa*), this is the arising of form, this is the passing away of form. This is feeling (*vedanā*), this is the arising of feeling, this is the passing away of feeling. This is perception (*saññā*), this is the arising of perception, this is the passing away of perception. These are preparations (*saṅkhāra*), this is the arising of preparations, this is the passing away of preparations. This is consciousness (*viññāṇa*), this is the arising of consciousness, this is the passing away of consciousness.' The Buddha preached such a discourse to me. I went to an empty place, a secluded hut, and looking at these five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*), turning them upside down and examining them, I understood the Four Noble Truths."

Therefore, it is not in scientific laboratories that these five aggregates of form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) can be understood. It is something to be realized within this very fathom-long body. The laboratory for that is that very place of retirement. That is why the Buddha spoke of empty huts and roots of trees. Having gone to such a place, what is the instrument used there? Radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Reflecting with wisdom. Then, through reflecting with wisdom, with the help of mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), putting into practice the foundations of mindfulness, right efforts, and so on, the monk Udāyī understood the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) of the five aggregates of grasping, thoroughly understood the Four Noble Truths, and attained Arahantship.

Thus, it is revealed through this too that the purpose of the Dhamma can be approached through that practical path. That is why in this verse it is said, "with clear comprehension and a well-released mind" (*sammapajāno suvimuttacitto*). "He is a practitioner according to the Dhamma" (*dhammassa hoti anudhammacārī*). If we state this practice according to the Dhamma (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*) briefly, as we mentioned earlier, it is virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*). Especially, it is to a concentrated mind that this deep Dhamma is understood. Secular, physical things may perhaps be understood even by a mind that does not have much concentration. All those scientists do not have a pure mind freed from defilements. They also perform various feats. But to understand this Dhamma preached by the Tathāgata, a concentrated mind is necessary. We get a good evidence for this from a Dhamma story.

A brahmin named Saṅgārava came and asked a question of the Buddha. "Master Gotama," he asks about a problem he has, "on certain occasions, even the mantras that have been well practiced and recited are not understood. Needless to say, the things that have not been recited are not understood at all. On other occasions, even the things that

have not been practiced through recitation are understood. Needless to say, the things that have been recited are easily understood." You merit-seekers might understand this. That is, "This is a problem that came to me. Sometimes, even things I have not memorized suddenly become clear. Sometimes, even the things I have memorized do not come to mind. What is the reason for this?" he asks. The Buddha declares: "Brahmin, on any occasion when the mind is overcome by arisen sensual lust (*kāmarāga*), if one does not know the escape from that arisen sensual lust, on such an occasion, that person does not see his own good, nor does he see the good of others. Even the Dhamma that has been well recited, memorized, and retained does not come to mind. Needless to say, the things that have not been memorized do not come to mind." Then, to make it easy to remember, He shows a simile. The similes given by the Buddha are very wonderful.

Suppose there is a bowl of water. Dyes of red, yellow, blue, and crimson are mixed in it. In those days, there were no mirrors like today to look at one's face. Most people looked at their faces in a bowl of water. But if a person with eyes tries to look at his face in a bowl of water mixed with dyes in that manner, he does not see it properly. It is not clearly visible because of the mixed dyes. Just so, when the mind is disturbed by lust, one does not see one's own good, nor does he see the good of others. Likewise, the learned Dhamma is also forgotten. What is mentioned in this first simile is the hindrance of sensual desire (*kāmacchanda-nīvaraṇa*), which is an obstacle to concentration, as you merit-seekers have heard. What the Buddha points out through this simile is the state of being overcome by sensual desire.

Next, as the second point, He points to ill-will (*byāpāda*). If a person is in a state of strong anger, and is unable to free the mind from it, on that occasion, he does not see his own good, nor does he see the good of others, and the Dhamma he has learned is not understood. The simile given next for that is: if a bowl of water is heated by fire, boiling and bubbling, and emitting steam, in such a bowl of water, one's face is not visible in that manner. It is not clearly visible. That is, it is not seen. Thus, that second simile is ill-will (*byāpāda*).

Next, we come to the third simile: sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), which is the shrinking state of the mind, the inactive nature. Sleepiness and laziness, as we normally call it. On the occasion when the mind is overcome by that too, one does not see his own good, nor does he see the good of others. Even the learned Dhamma is not understood. The simile given for that is: a bowl of water covered and enveloped with water-moss. The growth of water-moss represents that laziness. In all these similes, there is a very deep meaning and a fitting nature. Thus, trying to look at one's face in a bowl of water covered with water-moss is a useless task; that is the state of being overcome by sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*).

Next, the fourth point is shown: the hindrance of restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*). Restlessness (*uddhacca*) does not mean the same meaning as used nowadays. Restlessness (*uddhacca*) means agitation, especially the agitation regarding the future. Worry (*kukkucca*)—scrutiny, in the past it was called remorse. Regret, remorse over things done and undone, as well as worry over bad things done. Thus,

when the mind is in the state of restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), it does not see. The simile shown for that is: a bowl of water, and that water is shaking and rippling when there is wind. Then too, the face is not seen properly. Just so is the state of restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), the agitated state of a mind.

The fifth state is doubt (*vicikicchā*), which is hesitation, skepticism. The simile given for that is: a bowl of water kept in the dark, and that water is muddy and turbid. One does not see the face by looking into a bowl of muddy, disturbed water kept in the dark. Just so is that doubt (*vicikicchā*), the state of hesitation. Thus, the reason why the brahmin does not understand the mantras is due to these hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). If even the brahmins' mantras are not understood when overcome by these hindrances, then how can someone understand the Buddha-mantra while remaining within a hindrance? That is what we have to think of next.

The Buddha did not stop the discourse there. Next, He declared to that Brahmin Saṅgārava: "Brahmin, to eliminate these hindrances, the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) must be developed." The factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*). Now, for many Buddhists, these are mere words. They are hardly ever put into practice. But the factors of enlightenment are called so because they lead to enlightenment (*bodhāya saṃvattanti*). *Bodhi* means realization. In the sense of aiding realization, they are called *bojjhaṅga*. Thus, these valuable Dhammas that every Buddha brings to light are called the seven Dhammas. They are: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), rapture (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Mindfulness (*sati*) means attentiveness. There too, mindfulness means developing mindfulness based on the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Next, investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*) means obtaining understanding of wholesome and unwholesome states through that developed mindfulness. That is, at the moment when mindfulness is well established in the mind, one sees: "these things are obstacles to my mind's concentration; these things are helpful to it." Then, a certain understanding can be gained through that. Investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*) means the capacity to know things as they truly are in their respective places.

Next, after knowing, one applies energy accordingly—to abandon those unwholesome states and to develop wholesome states. That is the next: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*). When proceeding with energy in that manner, a unique kind of rapture (*pīti*) arises in oneself. When it becomes successful, a great joy arises in the mind. Next, it is through that rapture (*pīti*) that the calmness, both physically and mentally, called tranquility (*passaddhi*) arises. Through that internally generated rapture, a quietness called tranquility (*passaddhi*), a quietness of the mind, arises. From that alone, concentration (*samādhi*) comes. So, it is not a matter of just saying "I want concentration, I want concentration." When the hindrances are naturally removed and at some point internal rapture and quietness arrive, the mind settles. That is like something coming and settling right beside oneself—that is tranquility (*passaddhi*). Next is concentration (*samādhi*). Thus, concentration follows

tranquility (*passaddhi*). After obtaining that concentration, to protect it, there is equanimity (*upekkhā*). Equanimity (*upekkhā*) means a neutral looking-on. The simile shown for that is: if the horses are running restlessly, one has to pull the reins. But if they are running properly, they are allowed to trot. Just so is equanimity (*upekkhā*). One watches with equanimity, with neutrality, to protect concentration.

Those are shown as the factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*). Indeed, it is when these factors of enlightenment are developed that the Noble Eightfold Path arises. You merit-seekers also must have heard that it is the Noble Eightfold Path that is most famously spoken of in usage. The fundamental alignment for that Noble Eightfold Path comes from this very Dhamma, because it aids awakening. Here itself, the Buddha declares: "To develop the factors of enlightenment, the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) are necessary." It is through developing the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) that one can go up to those factors of enlightenment. In the end, the Brahmin Saṅgārava took refuge in the Buddha and became a disciple. From these facts, we see that to understand the Dhamma properly, to realize it, what is needed is not arguments and disputations, but that very unification of mind, making the mind concentrated. Concentration (*samādhi*) means the state where hindrances are removed.

For some who have developed their minds over a long period in Saṃsāra, freeing the mind from those hindrances is possible even while listening to the Dhamma. It is not impossible even while listening to the Dhamma. This is something that happens rarely. It is not appropriate for everyone to expect it to happen that way. Nowadays, there is an opinion among some educated people that all this occurs merely by listening to the Dhamma. That is a rare occurrence. Even while listening to the Dhamma, if one focuses the entire mind on it and listens properly, it is not impossible for the mind to become concentrated, for the hindrances to be removed, and to gain direct realization. Likewise, when even a person preaching the Dhamma preaches with his mind properly applied, like eating the food prepared for others himself, there are instances mentioned in the Dhamma where direct realization was obtained through that. Sometimes, when reflecting on the Dhamma or reciting it, some people realize the Dhamma. Finally, it is shown that when one constantly reflects on a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), a theme of meditation, and systematically develops it through meditation, that realization comes. Even so, it is not proper to assume "I belong to that category."

As the Buddha generally pointed out, one has to proceed from the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) itself. In the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhāna*), which you merit-seekers have heard of so often, what is shown is: contemplation of the body, contemplation of feelings, contemplation of the mind, and contemplation of mind-objects. Contemplating in that manner means, separating from the feeling of "me" and "mine," to understand with wisdom according to radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) as it becomes manifest. What aids that is mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). Mindfulness (*sati*) means attentiveness. Within the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), its objects are the body, feeling, the mind,

and thoughts that come to the mind. These are things present within oneself. Making these the object and applying mindfulness to them.

Next, clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) means that which must go together with that mindfulness. In the section on the postures in the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), this is shown. In ordinary daily life, a person does not even realize that he is breathing in and breathing out. But mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) means establishing mindfulness on that inhalation and exhalation. This is understood as an extremely difficult thing by the ordinary world, because the world lives a life abundant in thoughts (*vitakka-bahula*). When entangled in other activities with abundant thoughts, one does not even know that he is breathing. But the Buddha points out that by establishing mindfulness on this inhalation and exhalation, one can go all the way to the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*). Why? Because within this inhalation and exhalation, the three characteristics are present. The three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) are present within this very inhalation and exhalation. An inhalation taken ends with an exhalation. Thus, each of them is like two halves of a circle. There is only a process of emptying and filling here. Saying "I am breathing" here is due to thinking of it as an imputation of "me" and "mine," thinking of it in terms of self and what belongs to self. But at some point, this is understood with wisdom by one who has applied mindfulness to this inhalation and exhalation. That is why this mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) is shown as a meditation. The same principle applies to the others too. In the foundations of mindfulness, these are given systematically; you merit-seekers may have heard or read about them sometimes.

Next, the maintenance of postures—going, coming, standing, sitting, lying down—these four postures are like four wheels. Our life is spent within these four wheels, turning in this circle. Standing, then sitting. Next, lying down. Next, getting up. Next, walking. Within this too, there is a cycle just like that. There is also a moment when this is understood. If mindfulness is properly applied to these, it is understood: "There is no one here who goes; there is only this process. This is like a puppet being moved this way and that." Thus, a certain direct realization comes.

What goes even deeper is called the section on clear comprehension (*sampajañña*). That very maintenance of postures is shown in a more subtle manner. That is, how subtle it is: looking forward, looking at something, and looking away. This is something that happens extremely rapidly. One looks at something, then looks away. In ordinary life, one does not even know that he is doing it. But one practices doing even that with mindfulness. Looking at something, looking away. Likewise, going forward, returning. Looking at something, looking away. Extending the arm, bending it—this very process. These subtle movements of the limbs of this body, regarding the functioning of the body. That is developed. Awareness is indeed living. When proceeding in such a subtle manner, one recognizes the moment of looking at something. He knows it with mindfulness. Likewise, he knows the moment of looking away. That is like living. Then, there is no time to jump into the past or the future. It is when going in such a subtle manner that gradually this impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature is understood. In that way, clear comprehension has been declared.

Next, there are other sections that aid the very same thing. You merit-seekers have heard about the thirty-two impure parts of the body. The Buddha compared it to a bag open at both ends, filled with various grains like hill-paddy, rice, kidney-beans, green gram, and so on. If a bag is open at both ends, indeed, it is not even a bag. Thus, what we call "my body" was compared by the Buddha to a bag open at both ends. One must maintain this mind in such a way that the understanding regarding the parts of this body arises at some point. In the same way, alongside that, the nature of loathsomeness is also understood. Next, the four elements in this—earth, water, fire, wind (*paṭhavi, āpo, tejo, vāyo*)—their characteristics of hardness, fluidity, heat, and so on; it is in oneself that the understanding lies.

By reflecting on the parts of the body related to the four elements, one comes to the understanding that "this is merely a collection of the four elements." There, the Buddha shows the simile of a butcher; after slaughtering a cow and dividing it into parts, the perception (*saññā*) of "cow" disappears. One should not take this simile as an encouragement for cow-slaughter. Some might take it that way. What the Buddha points out here is that even to the person who slaughters cows, after dividing the cow into parts and piling them up, the feeling of "cow" is not there. Similarly, when the mind is maintained regarding these four elements, at some point it is understood: "this is only a piling up of the four elements; there is no 'me' there." It is to lead to this understanding that the simile was shown.

Next, it goes even beyond that. The dead body of a person is shown there, not as a simile, but as an illustration. Either one imagines it in the mind, or if one actually has an opportunity to see them, he uses it as an aid. A person who has died, and after several days have passed, the body is bloated, blue, and infested with worms. Next, in that way, gradually, a body being eaten by various animals. A heap of bones held together by tendons. Finally, going on and on in that way, a heap of bones reduced to dust, the Buddha has allowed the mind to be directed up to that.

What is shown through that is the fate of this body-cage, which is fed and looked after so much. We bring that to mind. We bring it to mind through a simile or through something we have seen, and apply it to ourselves: "Just as this body is, so is that body; just as that body is, so is this body" (*yathā idaṃ tathā etaṃ, yathā etaṃ tathā iḍaṃ - ca bahiddhā ca kāye chandaṃ virājaye*, as it is stated).

Thus, what is contained in this *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is, by using one's own body, others' bodies, one's own feelings, others' feelings, and all of them as an aid, to understand the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) within this body as a universally valid law. One must look at it as internal, external, and as internal-and-external (*ajjhatta, bahiddhā, ajjhatta-bahiddhā*). In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha preaches to develop this foundation of mindfulness in three ways: internal, external, and combining both internal and external. "Internal" and "external" refers to what we normally call "self" and "others." That idea is more clearly stated as internal and external. We understand certain things as things inside us; others are external things. By using external things, we can apply them and understand that our

body is also like this. That is why it is said, *yathā iḍaṃ tathā etaṃ, yathā etaṃ tathā iḍaṃ*. Just as this body is, so is that body; just as that body is, so is this body. The purpose there is to remove attachment to both bodies. Some might think: "Although this body is like this, that other body is not so." You merit-seekers can understand this through your own minds. Although one's own body is subject to such illnesses and so on, the body of the person one likes is not such a thing. The feeling one generally gets through perception is that "this is like a statue cast in one piece; this will never be destroyed." Just as mentioned about the Nun Khemā, a person who has a greater attachment to her own beauty can start Vipassanā (insight) from another's body.

The Buddha has allowed one to complete Vipassanā by starting from one's own body and ending with another's body, or starting from another's body and applying it to one's own body. Whichever way one goes, what is done is understanding the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) as a universally valid, all-applicable law. That is what was meant by "clinging to nothing here or hereafter" (*anupādiyāno idha vā huraṃ vā*). One does not grasp (*upādāna*) here, nor does he grasp there. That "not grasping here, not grasping there" is explained in some places as "this world and the next world." Now, the person who is grasping here is the one who grasps there at the moment of death. It is the very momentum of grasping here that makes one go and grasp there when one has to let go of this place.

That very thing operates in daily life through these six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). When this eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are taken together with their respective objects, they are called sense-bases (*āyatana*). A process of work is carried out there, because a sense-base (*āyatana*) is a place where a certain process of work is done. Based on the eye and form (*rūpa*), a certain process of work is done; based on the ear and sound, a certain process of work is done—that is the ear-base (*sotāyatana*). Going on in that way, finally it comes up to the mind-base (*manāyatana*). Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind. For the mind-base (*manāyatana*), there is the mind and the thoughts. Between the mind and thoughts, there is an extremely subtle connection. One has to remove the attachment to both ends, called "here" and "there," which are taken as external (*bahiddhā*) in those sense-bases.

On one occasion, the Venerable Mahākoṭṭhita came to the Venerable Sāriputta and asked a question: "Is the eye a fetter (*saṃyojana*) to forms? Is the fetter bound from forms to the eye? Is the tongue a fetter to tastes? Is the fetter bound from tastes to the tongue? Is the mind a fetter to thoughts? Is the fetter bound from thoughts to the mind?" Then Venerable Sāriputta answers with a simile: "Now, suppose a black ox and a white ox are bound together by a single rope. When a black ox and a white ox are bound together by a single rope, if someone says that the white ox is a fetter to the black ox, or that the black ox is a fetter to the white ox, would that be a correct statement?" Then that Venerable monk says: "No." What is it indeed? The white ox is not a fetter to the black ox, nor is the black ox a fetter to the white ox. The fetter there is the single rope by which both are bound. To that rope, Venerable Sāriputta compares desire-and-lust (*chanda-rāga*).

Desire-and-lust (*chanda-rāga*) means wishing, attachment, craving (*taṇhā*), lust. Thus, form (*rūpa*) is not a fetter to the eye, nor is the eye a fetter to forms. The fetter is the attachment, the desire-and-lust (*chanda-rāga*) that is created between the two. The secret lies there. It is within that that Saṃsāra exists. Therefore, what the Buddha says is not to make oneself blind, nor to go on destroying the beautiful forms in the world. Liberation lies in eliminating the attachment that arises within oneself regarding these two. Therefore, the path to eliminate that attachment is what the Buddha shows. That is why this is called a path of dispassion (*virāga*). It is stated as "leading to absolute disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation" (*ekānta-nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya*), and so on. In this Buddha's Dispensation, it is entirely for the purpose of generating this disenchantment. The word "samsaric disenchantment" (*nibbidā*) may not be a very pleasing word in this day and age, but in short, that is the practice carried out through the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). This eye is impermanent (*anicca*), forms are also impermanent (*anicca*). The eye is also suffering (*dukkha*). It is not only when an eye-disease comes that this is understood. Forms are also suffering (*dukkha*). The eye is also not-self (*anattā*). One cannot say "me" or "mine." The reason we are given a pair of spectacles is because of poor vision. If our eyes saw properly, would we add another thing called spectacles? It is a great hassle. Thus, even within those, we see this not-self (*anattā*) nature.

So, in that way, the eye is impermanent (*anicca*), the eye is suffering (*dukkha*), the eye is not-self (*anattā*). Forms are also like that. So, when understood in that way, that middle fetter is loosened little by little. Desire-and-lust (*chanda-rāga*) is loosened. What is the attachment in this? How long can one keep this? In the very same way, you merit-seekers can think of the tongue and taste, and the others too. The deepest part is the mind and the thought. The thought is also something created by the mind itself. That is where the deepest matter lies. That is indeed what can be realized only through meditation.

Now, in this day and age, we hear many people saying that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) too can be understood through physics and research. The laboratory of Venerable Udāyī was the empty place (*suññāgāra*). But now, many people try to understand even consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in a physical way. Without understanding form (*rūpa*), without understanding feeling (*vedanā*), without understanding perception (*saññā*), without understanding preparations (*saṅkhāra*), how can one understand consciousness (*viññāṇa*)? Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the illusion, the deepest one. But the clue to understanding it is right there. At the moment when it is understood that the mind, the thought that comes to the mind, and this thought itself is something created by ourselves, this final link is unfastened.

That is why the Buddha said "Mind precedes all mental states" (*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*). The mind is at the forefront. The mind is at the forefront and creates the thought according to our likes and dislikes. We are engrossed, immersed in some thought. What are we thinking about? Thinking day and night? Then, sometimes we can say with great difficulty: "I am thinking about so-and-so, I am thinking about such-and-

such a thing." So we might say, "Is that even something to think about?" Although it is nothing to us, to him it is everything because of that desire-and-lust (*chanda-rāga*).

So, we must understand in that way that these things are created from within our own mind. That is a very subtle matter. It is something to be understood at some point through meditation. In the deepest state of Vipassanā (insight), when that is understood, this fetter is completely broken. There is no need to blame this mind. It is neither the mind nor the thought that is the problem. At the moment when the attachment, the desire-and-lust (*chanda-rāga*) within those two is eliminated, this is understood as "here." From that is liberation. That is what was meant by "clinging to nothing here or hereafter" (*anupādiyāno idha vā huraṃ vā*). One does not grasp (*upādāna*) here, nor does he grasp there. One does not grasp this world, nor does he grasp the next world. One does not grasp this five-aggregate bundle, nor does he grasp that five-aggregate bundle. One does not grasp this internal sense-base, nor does he grasp the external sense-base. He who has gone in that manner is the one who is freed from all samsaric bonds, from those floods (*ogha*), and attains the supreme, deathless Nibbāna.

Therefore, as shown in those two verses uttered by the Buddha, we must abandon the practice of a cowherd and consider as supreme, as noble, the owner who enjoys the five products of the cows. You merit-seekers also spent this day with the effort to develop virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*), even in a small measure. The Buddha has declared that one must proceed right from the beginning, starting even with the five precepts or the practice of virtue (*sīla*) that must be observed. Next, concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*). In this way, systematically, in the manner of "gradual training, gradual action, gradual practice" (*anupubba-sikkhā, anupubba-kiriyā, anupubba-paṭipadā*), it is through a gradual training, practice, and process that one can approach liberation. One cannot jump into this. One cannot jump there from above. It is a journey that must be traveled systematically.

According to the Buddha-word, by removing those aforementioned hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), developing those states, practicing the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), may today's hearing of the Dhamma certainly be a strong support (*upanissaya*) to escape from all samsaric suffering—such as birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), disease (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*)—through the realization of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship, and to reach the supreme far shore, the supreme Nibbāna! May all deities and Brahmas from the earth up to the Akanitha world, including our departed relatives and everyone else, rejoice in this store of merit accumulated through this preaching and hearing of the Dhamma, and may they realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through whatever Enlightenment (*bodhi*) they wish for! Likewise, by using this hearing of the Dhamma as an aid, walking on the path of meditation, may we also gain the strength and power to realize the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) as quickly as possible! Make this aspiration and share the merits by reciting these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #145

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.101)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Attānam eva paṭhamaṃ,

patirūpe nivesaye;

Atha'ññam anusāseyya,

na kilisseyya paṇḍito."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 158 (Atta Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

We have all heard the wise saying, "Example is better than precept." The Buddha declared that where there is no practical example, the effectiveness of advice is diminished, and the one who offers advice is subject to blame and reproach. Today, we hope to present a verse and its background story that reveal this very fact.

During the time of the Buddha, there lived a monk named Upananda Sakyaputta. This means he was someone who had gone forth into the monkhood from the Sakya clan. This Venerable Upananda Sakyaputta was highly skilled in preaching the Dhamma. He often skillfully delivered sermons on the virtue of fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*)—meaning having few desires, which is a highly valuable quality. Hearing these sermons, other monks, who practiced rigorous vows such as the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅgas*), would offer their own robes to this monk, and he would gather and accumulate all those requisites.

One day, this Venerable Upananda went to a countryside region nearby. When he arrived at a certain monastery, the novice monks there, desiring to hear the Dhamma, invited him, saying, "Venerable sir, please spend this Rains Retreat (*vassa*) here." He had arrived just as the Rains Retreat was drawing near. So, this monk asked, "What is received here as Rains Retreat robes (*vassāvāsika*) after the retreat?" They replied, "One

robe is received." Then, this Venerable Upananda Sakyaputta, to show as if he intended to return there, left his pair of sandals behind and went to another monastery. There he asked, "What is received here after the Rains Retreat?" They said, "Two robes are received." He left his walking stick there. Having left it, he went to another monastery. There he asked, "How is it after the Rains Retreat? What is distributed to the Saṅgha as Rains Retreat requisites?" They said, "Three robes are received." There he left his water vessel.

When he went to a fourth monastery and inquired, he found that four robes—four cloths—were received there after the Rains Retreat. Saying "Very well," he spent the retreat there. After preaching the Dhamma beautifully to the monks and laypeople there, they offered many requisites to this monk. Not only that, this monk also sent messages to the three previous monasteries, saying, "I left those items there with the expectation of returning for the Rains Retreat. Therefore, those Rains Retreat robes rightfully belong to me," and had those requisites brought to him as well.

Having gathered them in this manner, Venerable Upananda was traveling with them loaded in a cart. On the way, he saw two young monks who were arguing, unable to divide two cloths and a valuable woolen blanket they had received. While they were arguing, saying, "You take the two robes, and I will take the blanket," they saw this Elder and said, "Oh, please settle this dispute of ours." Venerable Upananda said, "No, you should resolve it among yourselves." They replied, "No, no, it is difficult for us. Please solve this, Venerable Sir." He asked, "Then will you stand by my word? Will you accept what I say?" When they agreed, Venerable Upananda Sakyaputta gave the two cloths to the two monks, said, "This blanket belongs to me who preaches the Dhamma," took the blanket, and departed.

When those two monks reported this matter to the Buddha, the Blessed One used it as an occasion to deliver a sarcastic Dhamma sermon, censuring this monk Upananda, and uttered the very verse we have chosen as our theme:

Attānameva paṭhamaṃ patirūpe nivesaye

Ath'aññamanusāseyya na kilisseyya paṇḍito

"First, one should establish oneself in the proper practice. Only then should one instruct another. By doing so, the wise person does not become defiled by receiving the blame and censure of others." This is the meaning of this short verse. Thus, we can see that Venerable Upananda set a very bad example.

In the Dhamma stories of the Buddha's time, it is mostly mentioned that when the Rains Retreat drew near, the monks would obtain meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from the Buddha and journey to remote countryside areas in search of a suitable place, aiming for Arahantship. They would not even explicitly state they were looking for a place. If a faithful laywoman or layman offered them alms and asked, "Venerable sirs, where are you traveling?" they would simply say, "We are traveling in search of a suitable and supportive (*sappāya*) place." Then those laypeople would invite them, saying,

"Venerable sirs, please reside here for this Rains Retreat. We shall support you." In that manner, those monks, setting a highly exemplary standard, spent those three months practicing rigorous vows such as the ascetic practices, meditating diligently, attaining Arahantship, and ultimately receiving praise from the Buddha. That was generally the practice of those monks.

But this monk Upananda gave a completely different kind of example. He went from monastery to monastery, searching for a place where more requisites could be obtained. Having found the place where the most could be obtained, he spent the Rains Retreat there, and in an indirect, improper, and crooked way, secured requisites from the other places as well. To make matters worse, he also took the woolen blanket from the two novice monks and earned the censure of the Buddha. Here, the difference between these two practices is clearly seen.

The Buddha has delivered a valuable sermon where we can contemplate the difference between these two: *"Dhammadāyādā, bhikkhave, bhavatha, mā āmisadāyādā."* "Monks, be heirs to my Dhamma, not heirs to material things." "Material things" (*āmisa*) refers to objects such as robes and other requisites. The literal meaning of *āmisa* is "bait"—just like what is used to catch fish. Requisites and such things are like bait to a greedy and covetous person.

Furthermore, as stated in that verse, during the sermons of this Venerable Upananda, he spoke mostly about the fewness of wishes. Yet, while other monks were relinquishing requisites to safeguard their practice, he gathered them all. Thus, he was seen as a monk traveling with carts full of accumulated requisites. He was one who honored material things (*āmisagaru*). Therein lies the inheritance of material things (*āmisadāyāda*), received by one who fails to follow the true inheritance of the Buddha.

There is not just one incident, but a multitude of incidents recorded regarding this monk Upananda. The characters of good monks who lived during the Buddha's time are recorded, and the characters of bad monks are also recorded. Which of these two is followed more in this present era is somewhat doubtful. In any case, there are several other stories about this Venerable Upananda. They are mentioned here not as an example to be followed, but because they are relevant to this discourse. Another such incident is mentioned in the Vinaya Piṭaka. On one occasion, Venerable Upananda accepted King Pasenadi of Kosala's invitation to spend the Rains Retreat. He had accepted the invitation—or rather promised—to spend the retreat at a certain monastery. Having made the promise, on his way to that monastery, he visited two other monasteries and came to know that more robes could be obtained there. Subsequently, he spent the Rains Retreat at those two monasteries instead.

Learning of this, King Pasenadi of Kosala became highly displeased and criticized him: "Do the Sakyaputta ascetics perform such deeds? Breaking their promises! When the Blessed One has declared the danger of lying to such an extent, do they commit such actions?" When the monks went and reported this matter to the Buddha, the Blessed

One summoned Venerable Upananda, censured him as a "foolish man" (*mogha purisa*), and laid down a training rule (*sikkhāpada*).

Another such incident is recorded. Upon examination, it appears even somewhat comical. Because this monk, as mentioned before, was highly skilled in preaching the Dhamma, a certain merchant's son (*seṭṭhiputta*) once came, heard him preach, became deeply inspired, and made an invitation: "Venerable sir, people like us are capable of providing anything. Please let me know if you need anything regarding your four requisites." Then Venerable Upananda said, "Very well, if you wish to give, give me that upper robe of yours." He was asking for the very upper robe that the merchant's son was wearing. Then the merchant's son said, "We are respected people in society. Going about with only one garment is improper for us. Therefore, Venerable sir, please be patient. I will go home and send you not just something like this, but something even more valuable."

But there was no escaping Venerable Upananda. He asked for it a second time. The merchant's son again said, "Oh, it is very difficult for us to walk on the street like that." Still, the monk did not listen. For the third time, Venerable Upananda made the same request. When the merchant's son explained why he could not give it at that moment, the monk censured him, saying, "Then why do you make an invitation if you are not ready to give?"

Finally, unable to bear the harassment any longer, the merchant's son offered his upper robe to Venerable Upananda. As he was walking along the street, people asked, "Why are you wearing only one garment today?" So he told them the story. Subsequently, people began to criticize, saying, "The Sakyaputta ascetics have intense desires; there is no fewness of wishes among them when they perform such deeds." After this story spread, the Buddha summoned Venerable Upananda again, severely censured him as a "foolish man" (*mogha purisa*), and laid down a training rule. Thus, several such incidents regarding the four requisites are recorded in connection with this monk. That is the dark side.

Next, let us look at the other side, which contains valuable examples. Those are the ones we should truly contemplate and highly appreciate. Everyone knows the chief attendant of the Buddha, the Great Elder Ānanda. To put it briefly, he accepted the position of attendant from the Buddha only upon a certain condition: "I do not want any robes from the Blessed One. If you do not give me robes, then I will attend upon you." Anyone else would have attended upon him expecting such things. Venerable Ānanda was so exemplary that he rejected even those.

Moreover, the incident being referred to actually occurred after the Buddha's *parinibbāna*. After the *parinibbāna* of the Buddha and the conclusion of the cremation rites, Venerable Ānanda journeyed to the city of Kosambī to perform a certain Vinaya act—the details of which are not necessary here—accompanied by a group of monks. Having arrived, he was seated at the foot of a tree near King Udena's park. At this time, King Udena was spending time in the park with the women of his harem. Those harem

women heard that Venerable Ānanda had arrived. In those days, the female followers had a special affection for Venerable Ānanda—especially because he had helped establish the Bhikkhunī Sasana. Therefore, saying, "Our teacher has arrived," they obtained permission from the king to go and listen to the Dhamma.

After listening to the Dhamma from Venerable Ānanda, they were deeply inspired, and ultimately those harem women offered five hundred upper robes to Venerable Ānanda. When they returned to the king, King Udena asked these harem women, "How was it? Did you go to see Venerable Ānanda?" When they replied, "Yes, great king," he asked, "Did you offer anything after listening to the Dhamma?" They answered, "We offered five hundred upper robes." Hearing this, the king thought, "What is Venerable Ānanda going to do with such a pile of robes? Is he going to start a cloth trade? Is he going to open a drapery shop? Is he going to open a textile store?" With such critical thoughts, the king went to meet Venerable Ānanda.

The king asked, "Did our harem retinue come to see you, Venerable sir?" Having asked that, he then asked, "Did they offer anything?" Venerable Ānanda replied, "They offered five hundred robes." "Venerable sir, what will you do with those five hundred robes—with so many robes?" Then he said, "We will distribute these robes among those monks whose robes are worn out." Then the king asked, "Very well, but what will you do with those monks' old robes?" "We will use them as bedspreads."

"Then what will you do with the old bedspreads?" "We will use them as pillowcases." "What will you do with those old pillowcases?" "We will use them as floor rugs, spread on the ground." "Then what will you do with those old floor rugs?" "We will use them as foot-wipes." "What will you do with those old foot-wipes?" "We will use them as dust-rags to wipe away dust." "Then what will you do with those old—what we now call rags—those old pieces of cloth?" "We will knead them with clay—nowadays, people talk about plastering wattle-and-daub houses with cow dung. In those days, they would knead them with clay to plaster the walls." That means using them as plaster.

King Udena was highly pleased and thought, "These Sakyaputta ascetics do not let anything go to waste. They derive the proper use from everything; they have fewness of wishes and do not hoard." Being deeply inspired, he offered another five hundred robes to Venerable Ānanda. This is an exemplary story from the life of Ānanda.

Furthermore, even greater than that, the supreme example in this Sasana regarding virtues such as the fewness of wishes was set by the Great Arahant Mahākassapa. So immense was his mass of virtue that the Buddha praised Venerable Mahākassapa on many occasions. At times, the Buddha would invite him, saying, "Kassapa, preach the Dhamma to these monks. If others are to be admonished, it is either you or I. Only we are fit to do so"—to that wonderful extent. On one occasion, the Blessed One even exchanged his own robe with the Great Arahant Mahākassapa, and praised Mahākassapa's virtues of contentment and fewness of wishes with words of high commendation.

This virtue of fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*) means having fewer desires. We know that monks are those who have abandoned lay pleasures, gone forth in search of Nibbāna——and depend on the four requisites provided by faithful lay devotees. Therefore, fewness of wishes, or having diminished desires, is presented as their social duty. Not only that, but this practice of fewness of wishes also supports them in safeguarding their practice, reducing desires, and eliminating *Taṇhā* (Craving). It was on these points that the Buddha especially highlighted and presented the Great Arahant Mahākassapa, showing the Saṅgha, "Look at these valuable qualities present in Mahākassapa."

On one occasion, the Buddha declared to the Saṅgha: "Mahākassapa is a person like this. He is content with whatever robe he receives, whether coarse or fine. This is the quality of contentment (*santuṭṭhi*)—being satisfied with what one gets. He does not go around choosing only good robes. The quality of being content with any coarse or fine robe received is present in Mahākassapa. Furthermore, Mahākassapa praises this virtue to others as well." This means he describes the virtue of fewness of wishes that is present in himself. This is a valuable quality. He saw its benefits. Therefore, he recommended it to others—what nowadays we call "recommending"—saying, "This is the virtue of it, and it has such benefits."

Not only that, but as the third point, it is shown that when he did not receive robes, he was not troubled by it. He did not become displeased because he did not receive them. Moreover, he did not resort to improper means to obtain robes, unlike the monk Upananda. He did not descend into improper practices—meaning wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*)—when robes were lacking. Furthermore, even after receiving robes, he used them without greed or intense attachment, with the goal of Nibbāna——in view, reflecting wisely upon them. In this way, the Buddha on various occasions declared the mass of virtues of the Great Arahant Mahākassapa regarding robes.

Similarly, regarding the Great Arahant Mahākassapa, on another occasion, a point highly relevant to this era is shown. Two aspects of preaching the Dhamma are pointed out: pure Dhamma teaching and impure Dhamma teaching. The Buddha explains pure Dhamma teaching precisely by taking the Great Arahant Mahākassapa as the model. First, he speaks of impure Dhamma teaching. Impure Dhamma teaching is described thus: when a certain monk preaches to a group, he thinks, "May this audience, having listened well and become inspired, offer me various requisites in accordance with their inspiration." He preaches with such a selfish motive. That is designated as impure Dhamma teaching.

Pure Dhamma teaching is described thus: before preaching to the audience, a monk thinks, "This Dhamma of the Buddha is well-proclaimed (*svākkhāto*), visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhiko*), immediate (*akāliko*), inviting one to come and see (*ehipassiko*), worthy of being applied (*opaneyyiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*). It is a Dhamma characterized by this collection of qualities. It is a Dhamma that can be experienced in this very life, yielding results without delay, possessing the quality of 'come and see', capable of leading onward, and to be directly realized by the wise within themselves." He reflects on the valuable qualities of the

Dhamma. Furthermore, he preaches with a mind of compassion, kindness, and sympathy towards them, wishing: "May these people listen to the Dhamma and understand it well! Having understood it, may they practice in accordance with it and realize this Dhamma!" That is pure Dhamma teaching.

Thus, what the monk Upananda did was impure Dhamma teaching, whereas what Venerable Mahākassapa and other such Elders did was pure Dhamma teaching. By this alone, that matter can be understood.

So, based on such incidents, we must understand that for the survival of this Sasana, the preaching of the Dhamma is indeed necessary. What is being conducted now is also a Dhamma sermon. Because the sound of this sermon was insufficient, we even had to wait a while to adjust this amplifier system. However, even though we do so due to contemporary needs, the true Dhamma sermon is the "silent sermon." What is meant by the "silent sermon"? Let us try to understand it. The "silent sermon" means the example of one's character. In short, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa did not go around proclaiming that he was virtuous. The Buddha simply pointed a finger in his direction and said, "Look over there." That is the silent sermon. Therefore, what this society needs now is the silent sermon. It is true that many people are drawn to vocal, sounding sermons. That is natural. But this sound sometimes becomes a hollow sound if it does not go hand in hand with practice. That is why the Buddha declared that one must first establish oneself in a certain practice before advising others. Otherwise, as he said, one becomes defiled—defiled by receiving censure.

Nowadays, there are various examples of this. Because some people do not conduct their lives according to the Dhamma they preach, they distort the Dhamma. This is happening frequently now. They turn the Dhamma upside down; they turn it inside out. Do not think it strange when I say this, but one hears some say, in a ridiculous manner, that the precept *"Surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā"* means "taking it in moderation is fine." Although we might have regarded such explanations as ridiculous in the past, this is an era where some people take such talk as the truth. In that manner, the Dhamma is being distorted in a strange way. The reason for this is that this valuable Dhamma, which is beyond mere reasoning (*atakkāvacara*), is subjected purely to logic, studied in isolation from one's life, and presented through academic analysis, without entering into the actual practice. Far more valuable than that is the silent sermon mentioned earlier. That is why the Buddha highlighted the character of Mahākassapa and presented him with special honor before the Saṅgha.

The Great Arahant Mahākassapa was an example for the people of the future—the term used in the Sasana for this is *pascimā janatā*, meaning the future generations, the future generation of monks. Therefore, the Buddha not only constantly praised the Great Arahant Mahākassapa, but also, since Mahākassapa was not someone who traveled around preaching extensively but instead guarded his practice impeccably, the Buddha himself frequently invited him, saying, "Mahākassapa, preach the Dhamma to these monks." On some occasions, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa would say, "Blessed One, these monks are highly undisciplined," expressing his reluctance at first. He observed the

practice to such a rigorous degree. Yet, he received such great honor from the Buddha because in the future, his exemplary character would serve as a silent sermon.

In the same way, we must reflect within our own small capacity. What the world needs, what society needs, is that very example of character—that silent sermon. There is a relevant Dhamma discussion on this which I have explained in detail on previous occasions. Venerable Ānanda asked the Buddha, "Blessed One, the scent of flowers, the scent of sandalwood, tagara, and kolitha, as well as the scent of roots and heartwood—all these travel only with the wind, not against the wind. Is there a fragrance that travels against the wind?" The Buddha replied, "What is that?" (and explained): "If in some village, market town, or city, there is a woman or a man who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, gone for refuge to the Dhamma, gone for refuge to the Saṅgha, and who refrains from taking life, from taking what is not given, and from other wrong actions violating the Five Precepts; and who spends their lay life generously and selflessly—the reputation of that virtuous person spreads among ascetics and brahmins, among the public, and among the devas." The verse says: *"Na pupphagandho paṭivātameti"*—the scent of flowers does not travel against the wind. But the Buddha declares there: *"Satañca gandho paṭivātameti"*—but the fragrance of the virtuous, the scent of their goodness, the fragrance of their virtue (*sīla*), blows both with and against the wind in all directions. This, too, refers to the story of exemplary character.

In the Buddha's Dhamma, both the dark side and the bright side are constantly shown. Often, the dark side is shown first. Even here, the impure Dhamma teaching was mentioned first. After depicting the dark side, the Buddha then shows the bright side. It is then highlighted clearly, like a white dot or mark on a black velvet background.

In that manner, the dark side was painted by the monk Upananda Sakyaputta. These events occurred at a certain time of year in the Sasana. When I say "at such a time," you might think of it in a different way. This is an important period in the lives of the Saṅgha. Today we conclude the four months of the rainy season (*vassāna*). The month starting from the Vap Full Moon Poya, which is considered the final month of the four Rains Retreat months, and ending with this Il Full Moon Poya, is known as the "Robe Month" (*cīvara māsa*). It is during this Robe Month that meritorious deeds are conducted in many places, and robes and other requisites are offered to the Saṅgha.

It is an incident from such a season and such a period that we have taken as our topic today. Therefore, it is timely in several aspects. In any case, we must contemplate that if we hope to grasp the true essence of the Buddha's Sasana, we must not honor material things; we must honor the Dhamma. Honoring material things (*āmisagaru*) means being drawn to that bait. What is the bait? Robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicinal requisites. One has to swallow this bait to maintain this life. However, because it must be swallowed with great care, the Buddha instructed the monks to reflect upon the four requisites and use them with wise consideration. This is presented as a form of meditation.

When speaking of virtue (*sīla*), it is mentioned as restraint according to the Pātimokkha (*pātimokkha-saṃvara*), restraint of the sense faculties (*indriya-saṃvara*), purification of livelihood (*ājīva-pārisuddhi*), and virtue concerning the use of requisites (*paccayasannissita-sīla*). Virtue concerning requisites is the virtue related to those four requisites. Relevant to this is the reflection on the four requisites. That is, considering them wisely: "These requisites are of such a nature; they are made of the four great elements—earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). Whether it is a robe, almsfood, or anything else, everything is constructed from these four elements," thereby bringing the mind to equanimity. Furthermore, one considers "the repulsiveness that arises once they enter this decaying body, or how the robe becomes soiled by sweat and dirt once worn on the body."

Reflecting in this manner, one turns it into meditation. What is accomplished through this? It is called restraint through wisdom (*ñāṇa-saṃvara*). Restraint through wisdom means exercising restraint with the aid of wisdom. Now, the Nigaṇṭhas (Jains), thinking "craving and desire will increase through these," went without wearing any clothes at all. That is falling into an extreme. The Buddha did not go to that extreme. You all know that a robe is cut into pieces and sewn together to reduce the material value of the cloth. Next, it is dyed with vegetable dye to discolor it. Through such means, the intention is to reduce desire and greed for them.

When we transition from lay life to monkhood, we bring along a massive bundle of desires and a bundle of *Taṇhā* (Craving). Therefore, what a monk should do is reduce these, not stimulate them further. One must make an effort to reduce them and diminish desires. That is what fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*) means. Contentment (*santuṭṭhitā*) is the quality that goes hand-in-hand with it—being satisfied with what is received. It is a highly valuable thing, which is why it is preached: "This Dhamma is for one with few wishes, not for one with many wishes." "This Dhamma is for the monk who is content with what he receives." Saying "the Dhamma is for such persons" is meant to highlight the value of that quality.

That example is received at the highest level from the character of Mahākassapa. We must take as our model both the conduct of the exemplary monks of the past and the conduct of the exemplary lay devotees. There were noble individuals like Anāthapiṇḍika the merchant, Citta the householder, and many others in the past who lived valuable lives having realized the fruits of the path. Although the story of Anāthapiṇḍika the merchant is not directly related to this, it is worth recollecting at this moment.

"Anepidu Sītāṇan" means Anāthapiṇḍika—the one who feeds the helpless. He was an extraordinarily generous and meritorious merchant who helped not only the Saṅgha but also the destitute. He gave so much alms that, without pursuing or chasing after the debts owed to him, and even when the loans he had granted to various people were not repaid, he did not reduce his meritorious deeds of giving. Ultimately, it went so far that this merchant Anāthapiṇḍika, who used to provide the Saṅgha with various delicious and exquisite foods of various tastes, was on one occasion reduced to offering sour gruel and coarse, broken rice as alms. If that was what the merchant offered to the Saṅgha, we can

imagine what the members of his household must have eaten. Even when reduced to such a state, those merchants gave foremost place to the Dhamma. They gave foremost place to practice. Therein lies reverence for the Dhamma (*dhammagāravatā*). Thus, such an exemplary generation of laypeople also existed in the past during the Buddha's time.

Similarly, there is no need to speak further about noble Elders like Mahākassapa, Ānanda, and Sāriputta. If one thinks of the future generations (*pascimā janatā*), the Buddha specifically declared, "Look at this Mahākassapa." Accordingly, we too must be vigilant. In this era, we get to hear sermons through the media to an extent never seen in any other era. We get to read books. Even this morning, a beautiful book was given to you lay devotees free of charge. To that extent, the Dhamma is abundant. Indeed, we say the Dhamma is priceless. When it is received for free, some might think it has no value. We distribute it for free because it is priceless Dhamma. However, some might mistakenly think, "They are distributing this because they have nothing else to do."

In the past, people traveled many leagues (*yojanas*) with great difficulty to meet the Buddha or the Great Arahants, listened to a word of Dhamma with their full attention, and deposited it in their minds like placing lion's fat in a golden casket. Instead of such Dhamma listening, today one can not only listen to sermons while sitting on a comfortable chair at home, but one can also watch sermons. The media has developed to such an extent that one can listen to and watch sermons by the country's well-known monks. Dhamma discussions are so accessible that one can ask any deep question from the comfort of one's home and receive answers; the Dhamma is that abundant.

Yet, a question arises: "If so, with so much Dhamma being heard, why is this country heading in this direction? Why have lawlessness and terrible crimes increasingly reached a level that is animalistic, in this media-abundant era where so much Dhamma is heard and read?" We must realize it is because of that very reason: silent sermons are scarce. Examples are scarce. What do we do about this? How do we increase silent sermons? We must consider the answer the Buddha gave to Venerable Ānanda's question about the fragrance of flowers. If a virtuous person, in this crime-ridden world, keeps at least the first training rule—that is, the training rule of refraining from taking life, from killing living beings—properly, the Buddha compared and equated it to granting the gift of fearlessness (*abhayadāna*) to endless, boundless beings.

But nowadays, the gift of fearlessness (*abhayadāna*) is often thought of as performing some special act worthy of having one's picture published in a newspaper. You lay devotees know this. That is what is commonly regarded as *abhayadāna*. However, during the Buddha's time, if some lay devotee quietly, without shouting or making a fuss, made a determination and kept the Five Precepts properly, that was a silent sermon. That is like the fragrance of flowers. If in a certain house, let us say the master of the house or the wife, either by agreement or individually, trains themselves saying, "Let us guard this practice," the children too will guard that practice. The servants and maids will also guard that practice. Subsequently, the neighbors too will observe, thinking, "This house is somewhat unusual; there is less noise; they are a different kind of people,"

and they too will follow that Dhamma. That is how example spreads from house to house. The spreading of that scent of virtue, the fragrance of Dhamma, throughout a village in that manner is what we called the silent sermon. It happens naturally; one only has to make the effort to guard one's own practice. That is why the Buddha said, *"Attānameva paṭhamaṃ patirūpe nivesaye"*—first of all, one must establish oneself in the proper practice. Instruction then follows naturally. If an occasion arises, or if someone presents a problem, a sermon is delivered by that virtuous person in the form of offering a Dhamma-compliant solution.

The benefits they have personally experienced, the practices they keep, and the benefits of practicing those Five Precepts are spoken of in that very manner. That too is a sermon. It does not have to be a grand affair. Even without a formal seat, if one meets someone on the way under a tree and speaks to them when they bring a problem, that is a sermon—a silent sermon. That silent sermon expresses itself naturally according to the occasion, through one's practice.

Thus, we must understand that this Dhamma must indeed be understood through practice. The best illustration of this is how the Buddha, at the time of his *parinibbāna*, summarized the Dhamma he had preached for forty-five years from a practical standpoint, through a practical lens. In this day and age, if one asks scholars what the Dhamma preached by the Buddha is, you lay devotees might not be able to articulate it, even if you live according to the Dhamma. Scholars, however, would recite a series of texts in one breath. They would list the collection of texts known as the Tipiṭaka. They would say the Buddha preached such-and-such Dhamma, and if you listen further, they might even recite the Suttas.

But the Buddha summarized the Dhamma he had preached during his entire life—during those forty-five years from his Enlightenment onward—from a practical standpoint. That is, he showed the Dhammas known through direct knowledge (*abhiññā*) as the Thirty-Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*sattissa-bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). These consist of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*), the Four Right Strivings (*cattāro sammappadhānā*), the Four Bases of Spiritual Power (*cattāro iddhipādā*), the Five Spiritual Faculties (*pañcindriyāni*), the Five Powers (*pañca balāni*), the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅgā*), and the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*), which altogether add up to thirty-seven.

Those are what the Buddha referred to as "the Dhamma preached by me." If that is the Dhamma we have to preserve, if that is the Dhamma we have to preach and teach, then these are not things that can be learned from books alone. They must be put into practice and preserved. They have a side of danger/drawback (*ādīnava*) and a side of benefit (*ānisaṃsa*). One must also understand the danger of not fulfilling them. To some, even this is not clear.

The Buddha declared that many people do not even know the danger (*ādīnava*) of not keeping virtues such as *sīla*. If they knew it, would they turn to alcohol and drink continuously until they die of terrible illnesses? Surely not. The same applies to other

things. They would not resort to killing animals or stealing just because they get a large income, if they only understood the danger of those actions. The Buddha pointed out the danger not only in this world. At the final moment of life, one has to suffer regret. Not only that, he explained the danger in the next world and declared, "This is not good."

Similarly, they do not know the benefits (*ānisaṃsa*) of guarding it. The benefits of guarding it can only be known by the person who guards that practice. When one refrains from alcohol, with what a vigilant mind and with what capability to act according to the situation does one live! When one refrains from sinful actions such as killing living beings and stealing, the peace that people search for through various external means is realized. The direct realization that this peace can be obtained, at the very least, by keeping the Five Precepts properly, belongs only to the one who guards them.

That refers to the silent sermon related to the Five Precepts. Similarly, on this Poya day, you lay devotees observed the Eight Precepts (*aṭṭhasīla*). When you guard a training rule properly, you feel the strength within it. With the support of that strength, you can succeed in your Dhamma study and meditation. In this way, the Buddha has pointed out the Ten Precepts (*dasasīla*), and beyond that, the novice virtue (*sāmaṇera-sīla*) and monk virtue (*bhikkhu-sīla*) for the Saṅgha. Turning towards that practice is the first step. Then, utilizing that support, the part concerning the concentration of the mind is presented next.

Next, with the support of that concentration, through insight (*vipassanā*), one understands this life and the world deeply, and puts an end to this *saṃsāra* (round of rebirths)—this is what the Buddha has shown. Therefore, one does not need instructions merely to pass exams. It is to accomplish what one has been unable to do throughout this *saṃsāra*. That is, birth (*jāti*) occurs automatically. No matter how much one tries to stop it, as long as those forces of karma (*kamma-vegas*) exist, one is born somewhere. Even after dying, one is born again and again. That is the word of the Buddha.

Therefore, the most difficult task we face is stopping this birth—this *Jāti* (Birth). It is for this that the Buddha has shown this Dhamma of Nibbāna—. Next, as you lay devotees have heard, the one who first attains the path and fruit known as Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*) is born at most seven more times, traversing only seven more *Bhava* (Becoming). At that level, the round of rebirths is broken. The Once-returner (*Sakadāgāmī*) returns to the human world only once more. The Non-returner (*Anāgāmī*) goes to the Brahma world and puts an end to *Dukkha* (Suffering) in the Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsa*). The Arahant puts an end to *dukkha* right here and does not undergo *jāti* again.

Thus, escaping from *saṃsāra* is the greatest problem in the world. All other problems are minor compared to it. For an infinite time in *saṃsāra*, we have been solving those small, emerging problems of ours. None of them provided an eternal solution. But the Buddha placed this single question before the world. That is why the great philosophers and teachers of that time were waiting for the appearance of a Buddha. It is called the

"announcement of a Buddha" (*Buddha-kolāhala*). Before a Buddha appears, sages who could see the future uttered prophecies, saying, "In such an era, such a person will be born." That is what is meant by *Buddha-kolāhala*—not in the sense of a riot or uproar as the word is used today. Everyone was talking, saying, "There is a rumor that someone is going to be born, a Buddha is going to be born. Where? Where?" and they were inquiring in this manner.

Thus, everyone was hoping for that very escape from *saṃsāra*, and they took various measures according to their respective philosophies. However, at some point, they realized, "This is not the true path." It is mentioned in our Dhamma stories that around the time of the Buddha, there was a group called wanderers (*paribbājakas*). They went from place to place. They would go to one teacher; it was not there. They would go to the next teacher; it was not there either. In this manner, they went about searching. Searching in this way, when a Buddha finally appeared, they went in search of him. This present era is somewhat like that era. Countless people go from place to place like wanderers. Why? Because that silent sermon mentioned earlier is absent. Due to the lack of that silent sermon, after a while, a hollow sound is heard from those places. Therefore, wise people who go about searching for the Dhamma seek instructions that will help them lean towards the path of practice (*paṭipadā*).

There is a carpenter's workshop, and all the carpentry tools are there. But if there is no carpenter, no teacher to explain, no master carpenter, then that workshop is just an empty building. Something similar is happening now regarding the Dhamma. As the number of people who put the Thirty-Seven Factors of Enlightenment into practice and live within them decreases, the Dhamma on one hand becomes difficult to comprehend. On the other hand, it is distorted by excessive intellectualism. That is even more dangerous—like a medicine going bad. That is far more dangerous. It leads to wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). One gets trapped in half-truths. A half-truth is something that appears to be the truth at first glance. However, a half-truth is even more dangerous than an outright lie. A lie is easily exposed, but a half-truth is far more dangerous. People go and get trapped in it. Those logicians with half-baked wisdom go and get trapped in them. Having got trapped, they struggle for years and years, and only when no result is achieved, they sigh in frustration and leave. Such things happen because they do not look at the Dhamma through the lens through which it should be viewed.

At his final moments, the Buddha analyzed the Dhamma from a practical standpoint: "This is the Dhamma I have preached." He has preached a Dhamma consisting of the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), right strivings (*sammappadhāna*), and so forth, which can be put into action and personally realized, and which is visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*), immediate (*akālika*), and inviting one to come and see (*ehipassika*). Otherwise, this is not an academic subject. It is not something to be understood through external research. What exists as the Buddha's Dhamma are the clues and primary instructions obtained through the Noble Quest (*ariya-pariyesanā*) conducted by the Buddha at the highest level: "Abandon these things; act according to these things." This

is the very reason why the Buddha, on certain occasions, did not value psychic powers (*iddhi*).

It is to the miracle of psychic power (*iddhipāṭihāriya*) that the world is often drawn. If it is heard that someone is flying through the air, all the wealthy people of this country will run there, taking their vehicles. They will line up their vehicles if they hear that someone can fly even six inches off the ground. Those are the people who are drawn to the miracle of psychic power. There is also the miracle of mind-reading (*ādesanā-pāṭihāriya*)—meaning being able to read others' minds. That too is highly regarded. On one occasion, a certain householder named Kevaṭṭha (Sermon literally says:— a certain monk named Kevaṭṭha) invited the Buddha to perform these miracles to elevate and strengthen our Sasana. The Buddha said, "Others also show the miracle of psychic power. The miracle of mind-reading is also known by some who have developed their minds and jhānas. But what is regarded as supreme in my Sasana is the miracle of instruction (*anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya*)." What is that? The miracle of instruction is making a challenge to put things into action.

> *"Evaṃ vitakketha, mā evaṃ vitakkayittha;*
>
> *evaṃ manasikarotha, mā evaṃ manāsattha;*
>
> *idaṃ pajahatha, idaṃ upasampajja viharatha."*

The miracle of instruction is expressed through these few phrases: "Think in this way, do not think in that way. Reflect in this way, do not reflect in that way. Abandon this; enter and dwell in that." That is all there is in the miracle of instruction.

Thus, when followers of other religions, and nowadays even many who are Buddhists only by name, hear of a miracle of psychic power in this country or in another country—whether it is flying through the air as mentioned, materializing objects, or some other display of psychic power—our Buddhists also flock to them. The Buddha did not highly regard these things. Only in unavoidable situations, to break the pride of those who came with psychic powers, did the Buddha utilize psychic powers; he did not use psychic powers simply to grant Dhamma realization. In unavoidable cases, he countered those who came with psychic powers using psychic powers, employing his spiritual strength, but he did not use psychic powers beyond that.

If we are to obtain knowledge of the instructions that the Buddha regarded as supreme and bring about that miracle within ourselves, we must perform that very task. "Think in this way" refers to right thoughts, good thoughts—right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*). "Maintain such thoughts. Do not think bad thoughts." We must do just that. Next, "Reflect in this and that way." That is, as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), not-self (*anattā*), repulsive (*asubha*), and so forth. There are specific methods of reflection shown by the Buddha in accordance with the Dhamma, presented as perceptions (*saññā*). In short, it is called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). It is about maintaining that reflection. Therefore, we must control our thoughts. We must control our reflection—the application of the mind.

Next is abandoning. There is also a portion to be abandoned. You lay devotees can easily understand the things to be abandoned—abstaining from the five sins. That is what is called *veramaṇī* (abstinence). The things the world is generally inclined towards are killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and drinking alcohol. Do not do those. Instead, guard these virtues of *sīla*. That is the other side of it. Nowadays, some scholars say that the Buddha tells us to abstain, abstain (*veramaṇī, veramaṇī*) from everything, as if telling us to sit with our hands and feet folded. "What is the meaning of this?" they ask. But they do not consider the other side of it. Along with such abstaining, the Buddha also shows a wealth of attitudes to be developed within oneself. It is not just about refraining from killing living beings; the following passage further states:

"Nihitadaṇḍo nihitasattho, lajjī dayāpanno, sabbapāṇabhūtahitānukampī viharati."

"He dwells having laid aside the rod, having laid aside the weapon; he is conscientious, merciful, and dwells compassionate and kind to all living beings."

Nihitadaṇḍo—having laid aside the rod and staff, having laid aside weapons, putting them aside. *Lajjī*—being conscientious, feeling shame regarding the killing of living beings. Feeling shame toward unwholesome deeds and sins is a strength. It is shown as a divine quality (*deva-dhamma*). *Dayāpanno*—being merciful, having kindness toward living beings. *Sabbapāṇabhūta-hitānukampī*—dwelling with compassion and kindness toward all living beings. That is what should be done.

One should not distress the mind by thinking only of what should not be done. Every training rule has another side. You can contemplate that for yourselves. When refraining from stealing, as a benefit of it, they live honestly. That is how one must think about every other training rule. To the one who refrains from alcohol, because of that very abstinence, the opportunity arises to spend their life without confusion, with good memory and mindfulness (*satimant*).

Every one of them has a side of benefit (*ānisaṃsa*). On one hand, we must comprehend the danger (*ādīnava*). Next, having understood that danger and abstained from these things, we must walk on that path of Dhamma. That is what is meant by turning toward the practice (*paṭipadā*). Where practice is lacking, as stated in the verse, one becomes defiled through blame and censure, just like the monk Upananda.

Furthermore, if that person tries to distort the Dhamma to escape censure, that becomes an even more dangerous thing. On a day like today, what we are saying may in various ways be timely and relevant. You lay devotees must consider this with wisdom. In any case, it is indeed visible that this Sasana is increasingly sliding into decline, from both the lay and ordained sides. When we contemplate according to this method of evaluation, it does not become a problem or a puzzle to us.

We must recollect the great examples shown by the Buddha. On the ordained side, the characters of noble Elders such as Mahākassapa, Ānanda, and Sāriputta are mentioned, and on the lay side, extraordinary characters such as Anāthapiṇḍika, Citta the

householder, and Hatthaka of Alavi are recorded in those Dhamma stories. Indeed, the young people of this era should all try to read about such noble characters—the characters of the disciples (*sāvaka*). Various clues that offer the courage needed to build a life are often present in those biographies. As we mentioned earlier, when reading the stories of those Elders (*theras* and *therīs*), the dark side is often presented first: "Oh! We lived such low lives as murderers, thieves, and courtesans. But at some point, a transformation of life occurred." Such examples help one understand both the dark side and the bright side. That is why it is said: *"Kaṇhaṃ dhammaṃ vippahāya, sukkaṃ bhāvetha paṇḍito."* "Having abandoned dark qualities, the wise person should develop bright qualities." Removing dark qualities and developing bright qualities is the duty of the wise.

Since our time is drawing to a close, you lay devotees can understand these briefly mentioned points in detail as a timely necessity. Make an effort to develop that silent sermon mentioned earlier. Even if you do not shout it out to the world, by doing so, a developing environment will be created in this society. Regarding the decline of the Sasana, we should not just push it into inconstancy by saying, "Everything is impermanent (*anicca*)." We should not push what is falling into the abyss further into the abyss. Our ultimate purpose should be to help at least one more human being to walk this Dhamma path and realize Nibbāna—. Likewise, it is to preserve the Sasana for at least one more day.

Today, by observing this valuable virtue (*sīla*) and listening to this Dhamma sermon, valuable thoughts and aspirations must have arisen within you lay devotees, relevant to developing the spiritual faculties (*indriya-dhamma*) we often mention: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Utilizing these as support, and securing the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), may you practice with greater effort and succeed in your Dhamma study and meditation. May you gain the strength and capability to escape the suffering of *saṃsāra* through the supreme, deathless Nibbāna——by penetrating the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmī*), and Arahantship in this very life! Furthermore, may whatever relatives of yours from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, and whoever else wishes to rejoice in this merit of Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening, by so rejoicing, find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! With this aspiration in mind, please recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #146

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.69)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Kodhaṃ jahe vippajaheyya mānaṃ,

Saṃyojanaṃ sabbamatikkameyya;

Taṃ nāmarūpasmiṃ asajjamānaṃ,

Akiñcanaṃ nānupatanti dukkhā."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 221 (Kodha Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

In society, we frequently hear and see instances arising due to anger and jealousy that spring up in the mind. The feeling present in most people is that they can appease the anger and jealousy that have arisen within themselves by bringing suffering (*dukkha*) upon another person. Because of this, they seek means and methods that support this (external action) rather than being inclined to think of Dhamma-inspired methods that help appease these defilements from within. However, our Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Supreme Buddha, points out the mass of suffering (*dukkha*) and hardships that one has to undergo in this long Saṃsāra as a result of an angry mind and a jealous mind. A similar event is mentioned in the background story (*nidāna*) related to the stanza (*gāthā*) we have selected as our theme today.

On one occasion, Ven. Anuruddha Thero journeyed to his birthplace, the city of Kapilavatthu, accompanied by a retinue of five hundred bhikkhus. When they heard that he was residing at the Nigrodhārāma in Kapilavatthu, his relatives came to see him. However, his sister named Rohiṇī did not come. Ven. Anuruddha asked the relatives, "Where is Rohiṇī?" "She is at home," they replied. When he asked, "Why didn't she come?", they said that she had contracted a skin disease like leprosy and had not come out of shame. The Thero asked them to bring her. Due to the nature of her illness, she

covered herself with a shawl and came to that place. Then Ven. Anuruddha said, "Sister, since you have such an illness, wouldn't it be good to perform a meritorious deed?" When she asked, "What should I do?", he told her to construct a two-story assembly hall where the Saṅgha could reside and partake of alms, and suggested that Rohiṇī use her personal jewelry to fund the expenses. He instructed her to sell those ornaments and build the hall with that money. Ven. Anuruddha also advised that once one floor of the hall was built, Rohiṇī herself should perform duties such as cleaning, sweeping, preparing seats for the Saṅgha, and setting up drinking water. Furthermore, Ven. Anuruddha informed the relatives about the matter and arranged the organizational work for it. Though she was a royal princess of a royal family, Rohiṇī performed all those duties exactly as instructed, built the hall, and upon its completion, arranged to offer an alms-giving to the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha.

At the conclusion of the alms-giving, the Supreme Buddha asked Ven. Anuruddha, "For whom is this alms-giving, and from whom is it?" When he replied, "This is from our sister, Rohiṇī," the Buddha asked, "Where is she?" He was told that she had not come because of this illness; even by then, she had not come even to see the Buddha. It is further mentioned that while performing the duties related to the hall, her illness had subsided to some extent due to those performances of duties. However, because she was not fully cured, she had not come at the time of the meritorious alms-giving. The Supreme Buddha sent for her. When asked for the reason, she said, "Because of this skin disease of mine, I did not come out of shame." "Do you know the cause for this?" the Buddha asked. She replied, "No." Then, the Buddha related the past story, saying, "This is the result (*vipāka*) of anger and jealousy that you harbored in the past."

In the past, when she was the chief queen of a king of Bārāṇasī, out of jealousy and anger toward a dancing girl who had won the king's heart, she powdered a type of stinging pod that existed at the time and sprinkled it on the dancing girl’s bed, around the bed, and on the bedsheets. When these touched the body, they caused intense itching. Furthermore, she sprinkled them on the dancing girl's face too. She sprinkled them on her body as well. Immediately, boils broke out, and that woman went and lay down on the bed. Due to the itching substance that was also on the bed, the dancing girl experienced severe pain and torment. This is what the Supreme Buddha pointed out as her past kamma. Therefore, conveying the idea that one should not harbor anger or jealousy even in the slightest degree, the Supreme Buddha delivered a sermon on that occasion, taking the stanza we have themed today as the starting point. Upon hearing it, not only was Rohiṇī’s skin disease cured—it is said her skin regained a golden complexion—but she also attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*).

That stanza is:

> *“Kodhaṃ jahe vippajaheyya mānaṃ,*
>
> *saṃyojanaṃ sabbamatikkameyya;*
>
> *taṃ nāmarūpasmiṃ asajjamānaṃ,*

akiñcanaṃ nānupatanti dukkhā.”

It is a very meaningful stanza. It contains a medicine of Dhamma sufficient not only for a skin disease but for the entire disease of Saṃsāra. *Kodhaṃ jahe*: one should abandon anger. *Vippajaheyya mānaṃ*: one should dispel pride. *Saṃyojanaṃ sabbamatikkameyya*: There are ten fetters (*saṃyojana*) that bind one to this Saṃsāra. They are pointed out as ten defilements (*kilesa*) which act like chains, bonds, or hooks. These ten fetters are: the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), adherence to rules and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), sensual lust (*kāma-rāga*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), lust for form (*rūpa-rāga*), lust for formlessness (*arūpa-rāga*), pride (*māna*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). *Saṃyojanaṃ sabbaṃ atikkameyya*: One should overcome all fetters—all the chains and bonds that bind one to existence (*bhava*). Next, *taṃ nāmarūpasmiṃ asajjamānaṃ*: By doing so, the one who does not cling to, or get entangled in, one’s own Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is designated by the term *akiñcanaṃ* (possessing nothing/unattached). If someone, by developing wisdom through insight (*vipassanā*), does not cling to Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), there is nothing of lust, hatred, or delusion remaining in him. Therefore, he is called *akiñcana* (owning nothing). Nothing belongs to him; *akiñcanaṃ* means that he has released them from the mind. Upon such a person who owns nothing, *nānupatanti (dukkhā)*: sufferings do not fall. The idea expressed in the stanza is that the sufferings of Saṃsāra do not fall upon him. It is a deep stanza. Be that as it may, we can derive a significant amount of valuable Dhamma advice applicable to our daily lives from both this story and the stanza, mainly concerning this anger and jealousy which are our themes.

It is clear from this event that just as the poisonous powder—or rather, the stinging powder—which Rohiṇī threw at another in the very distant past when she was the chief queen, came back to her, this affliction in her own body was produced. From this, we see the consequences (*vipāka*) of anger—severe consequences. Just like anger, and something that goes hand in hand with anger, is jealousy. Beneath that jealousy lies pride (*māna*). That is why this stanza spoke of both anger and pride. You, devout devotees, know that both of these are common weaknesses in society. When jealousy is added to anger, it becomes far more severe. Here, because she was the chief queen, when the king developed a special affection for a dancing girl, jealousy arose toward that woman. Combining that (jealousy with anger), she acted in that manner as if to take revenge. From this, we can see that the real cause (*nidāna*) of many illnesses that we suffer from is not visible to ordinary physicians. If it is a skin disease, physicians might say that it was caused by the impurity of blood. But the Great Physician Buddha says that it is not the impurity of blood, but the defilement of the mind that lies underneath.

The saṃsāric cause (*nidāna*) of illnesses is not visible to ordinary physicians. It is only to the Supreme Buddha and to those who have attained higher spiritual powers (*abhiññā*) that the saṃsāric cause of this saṃsāric disease is visible. Beneath the things we often give up on as incurable "chronic diseases," there lie such grave kammas; these are called "illnesses of kamma" (*kamma-roga*). There is a saying among Buddhists that a disease

of kamma cannot be cured. How can such diseases of kamma be cured? We can get some hint regarding that too from this story, if we contemplate the story well.

Now, this Ven. Anuruddha Thero of whom we speak was no ordinary person. He was the bhikkhu who held the foremost position among those possessing the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) in this Dispensation (*Sāsana*). Therefore, it is possible that he came to the city of Kapilavatthu for a specific reason; he might have seen that some merit of his sister's had matured to a degree sufficient to cure both her skin disease and her saṃsāric disease. Indeed, one can escape from these diseases of kamma only through the power of merit (*puñña-sakti*). The medicine for it is merit (*puñña*). We know that when speaking of medicine for an illness, both medical treatment and nursing care are necessary. Here, Ven. Anuruddha did something akin to nursing care. What was it? He advised Rohiṇī on a certain duty and practice (*vatta-paṭipatti*), and on performing meritorious deeds. When considered deeply, there is something to be grasped there too. Being a member of the royal Khattiya family, how much wealth must she have had! It was only a matter of telling her relatives. But how was it assigned here? "Do this by selling your ornaments."

Everyone knows about ornaments; it is only when household difficulties and scarcities become extremely severe that jewelry is sold. Women have such a great attachment to ornaments. Here, Rohiṇī was assigned to sell her ornaments. To sell the ornaments and build this hall. It was not due to a lack of money. Within that, there was something that helped wear away that kamma. For it was because of the pride (*māna*) she had harbored due to (her royal lineage/wealth) that she had behaved in that manner. Moreover, regarding those ornaments, she must have realized: "When I cannot even go outside with this skin disease, what is the use of ornaments?" Thus, there are many aspects there. He told her to sell the ornaments and build this hall. Not only that. Though she might have had numerous male and female servants in those royal palaces, here she was assigned to clean and purify the ground floor while the upper floor was being built. During the construction of such a building, there is a lot of cleaning to be done. That, too, is a punishment. Or, even if it was not a punishment, it was a special duty and practice (*vatta-paṭipatti*). Through servicing the Saṅgha, such as preparing seats, cleaning, and so forth, the past kamma is worn away. It is mentioned that simply by performing those duties, her skin disease was greatly reduced.

Next, through the stanza preached by the Supreme Buddha, a remedy was obtained for that skin disease as well as for the saṃsāric cause of the mind—the cause of the disease—mentioned earlier. In short, it was the medicine of Dhamma that the Supreme Buddha administered. That medicine of Dhamma is mentioned in this stanza. What is the medicine of Dhamma? The cause of this disease is not the impurity of blood, but the defilement of the mind. This stanza was spoken in order to remove the causes that defile the mind. *Kodhaṃ jahe*: one should abandon anger. *Vippajaheyya mānaṃ*: one should dispel pride. Anger and pride work together. Then, likewise, at the end, if this saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) is like this, why remain bound to it any longer? Turn these bonds and hooks the other way. The dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), etc., are things to be abandoned through path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*);

when one provides what is necessary for that, at that moment, the bonds of the fetters (*saṃyojana*) break away. Attaining Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*) means breaking three bonds that bind one to Saṃsāra: the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), and adherence to rules and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*). This stanza is designed to aid that. *Taṃ nāmarūpasmiṃ asajjamānaṃ*: here, not clinging to Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is spoken of.

In terms of the Dhamma, what are regarded as mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) are those concerning the mind: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention/volition (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Next, the concept/designation (*paññatti*) of form (*rūpa*) is grasped by us based on the four great elements: earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). When deeply considering according to the Dhamma the concept/designation of "I" and "mine" that one constructs through this, it is just a collection of mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) and physical phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*) that one takes as "I". Based on the four elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*), we construct this concept of form (*rūpa-paññatti*). When we constantly apply wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) to these four elements, the understanding arises that there is no core/substance in this form. Although we grandly call it "physical/material," these four elements, the four great primaries (*mahābhūta*), cannot be understood individually; they act together in a very wondrous state. It is based on such a state that we construct this concept of form (*rūpa-paññatti*). By then, Rohiṇī must have understood the nature of form. In this way, not clinging to this concept/designation of "I" and "mine" which is merely a heap of mental and physical phenomena (*nāmarūpa-dhamma*)—this is what is meant by *asajjamānaṃ* (not clinging). How does one bring oneself to such a state of non-clinging? One must abandon greed, hatred, and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*)—which are called clinging toward this, conflicts/clashes arising based on this, and delusions such as pride created in relation to this. When these are abandoned, there is nothing left for that person to take as "I" and "mine". Such a person is called *akiñcanaṃ*. *Akiñcanaṃ* means the person who owns nothing. As long as these clings exist, all these troubles remain. After everything is abandoned, once one reaches a state where the mind cannot be caught, sufferings/stress (*dukkha*) do not fall upon him. *Nānupatanti*: sufferings do not fall upon him. This is the meaning of this stanza, if we state it briefly. Based on this, let us now try to extract further points relevant to our lives.

We know that anger (*kodha*) is a very common weakness in society. This anger arises in various ways, either under the name of "justified anger" or as other sudden fits of rage. For this, the Supreme Buddha has administered wonderful medicines in various places. A stanza containing a very valuable and deep idea about this is the first stanza mentioned in the Uraga Sutta—a sutta consisting entirely of verses—and in short, the valuable book of Dhamma called the Sutta Nipāta begins with that very stanza.

“Yo uppatitaṃ vineti kodhaṃ,

visaṭaṃ sappavisaṃva osadhehi,

so bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ,

urago jiṇṇamiva tacaṃ purāṇan'ti."

The Uraga Sutta is the sutta that has the serpent as its simile. The simile of the serpent runs all through it. In this very first stanza, the Supreme Buddha presents several highly valuable ideas by using the serpent as a simile in two ways. *Yo uppatitaṃ vineti kodhaṃ visaṭaṃ sappavisaṃva osadhehi*: whichever bhikkhu immediately subdues arisen anger just as one subdues the spreading venom of a serpent with medicine, *so jahāti orapāraṃ urago jiṇṇamiva tacaṃ purāṇaṃ*: that bhikkhu leaves behind both this shore and the yonder shore, just as a serpent sheds its old, worn-out skin; this means he develops a liberated mind.

In this stanza, the serpent is used as a simile in two ways. The first simile is snake venom. When anger arises, one must think, "A cobra has bitten me; the cobra has bitten." When a cobra bites, one does not just stand and watch. Before the venom spreads, medicine is administered as quickly as possible. That is the idea the Supreme Buddha conveys through this stanza. The similes given by the Supreme Buddha indeed possess a wonderful practical value. When a sudden fit of anger arises, one cannot stand there counting lists of Abhidhamma. The easiest way is to conjure up a certain mind-born image (*cittaja-rūpa*) that we can instantly evoke, as given by the Supreme Buddha through a simile. Through that, one gains the strength to escape from anger. Now, if one thinks, at the very moment anger arises, "Here, a serpent has bitten, or a cobra has bitten," then through that, one has to realize: "Now the mind is about to be defiled." Once anger arises, it spreads. Everyone knows that if anger is not subdued at that moment, it turns into hatred (*dosa*). That hatred goes on to various stages designated by different names such as enmity (*vaira*), malice/hostility (*āghāta*), and aversion/repugnance (*paṭigha*). Aided by revenge, it then continues for an endless time as hostility and enmity. Thus, the snake venom has spread. Therefore, the moment one knows that it has arisen in the mind, before it spreads, one must think, "The serpent has bitten," and try to treat it. Ordinary people of the world attempt to appease anger through revenge. But a person who reflects according to the Dhamma must strive to appease this anger from within. Appeasing anger from within is the true victory.

The Supreme Buddha has declared that if someone quickly appeases the anger that has arisen within him, he is like one who has won a battle that is difficult to win. Likewise, if one, upon seeing that another is angry, trains one's mind so that anger does not arise within oneself, then, through such an attitude, welfare is brought to both. What this indicates is that one should appease anger and rage as quickly as possible. Moreover, the second simile of this stanza expresses an even deeper idea. Let us contemplate how a serpent sheds its skin. To the serpent, all attachments and conflicts are felt through this skin. We all know, as seen in Rohiṇī's story, that the moment the skin is slightly affected, one cannot even go outside. To such an extent does there exist a great attachment to this skin among worldly beings. It is through this skin that the entire world is captivated. But what happens when that skin decays and becomes old? What does the serpent do when the skin becomes old? It wedges it against some branch or something, leaves it behind,

and escapes from it; it gets freed from it. That simile of the worn-out skin is what is taken here in the second place. Just like shedding a worn-out skin, one must abandon anger. Otherwise, if we grasp tightly onto that which became the object of anger, it goes on clashing in Saṃsāra for a long time through revenge and so forth. But immediately letting go of the object of anger from the mind is compared to shedding that skin; therefore, the second simile is also extremely important. Once the serpent has shed its skin, it has neither attachment nor conflict regarding it. There is neither a yonder shore nor this shore. There is no "I", nor is there a division between internal and external. The sloughed skin remains right where it was dropped; it has no connection to it.

One can gauge the depth of the similes given by the Supreme Buddha from this: on one hand, the serpent's venom; on the other hand, if we contemplate deeply according to the Dhamma, it is the abandoning of the saṃsāric bond that exists through those things like anger that we have tightly grasped. Right there lies liberation. In a similar manner, the Supreme Buddha states in another sutta on another occasion. A question asked in verse by Sakka, the lord of devas, to the Supreme Buddha is recorded: "Having slain what does one sleep soundly? The slaying of what, or the destruction of what, does Gotama praise?" The answer given by the Supreme Buddha is: "It is by slaying anger that one sleeps in peace." Not by taking revenge out of anger, but by appeasing anger from within. If one were to use a simile: anger has a poisoned root and a honeyed tip (*mula visa, aga rasa*). The nature of anger is poisoned at the beginning, but sweet at the end. Because of the sweet end, one takes it into the mouth; but because of the poisoned beginning, one meets with disaster through it. That is what the Supreme Buddha says there regarding anger. Its nature is poisoned at the beginning, sweet at the end. So, you devout devotees can bear this in mind: poisoned at the root, sweet at the tip. If you eat it because of the sweet tip, you will fall into difficulty due to the poisoned root. "It is such anger that I tell you to destroy," not the enemy, not the object that caused the anger, but this anger that arises from within. Not that person. Appease the anger from within.

On another occasion, the Supreme Buddha gives an even more wondrous simile. It is one so difficult that one can hardly even imagine it. Nowadays, sometimes even hearing it makes one feel afraid. It is a very famous simile given to a bhikkhu who frequently became angry. The Supreme Buddha makes this statement: "Bhikkhus, even if bandits, murderers, should come and sever one's limbs, hands, and feet with a double-handled saw, cutting them piece by piece as if cutting the branches of a tree, and if at that moment of being cut, one should defile one's mind with anger, he is not one who acts according to my teaching; he goes against my advice." Thus, the Supreme Buddha has given a wonderful simile on the value of appeasing anger to the absolute highest degree. If one gets angry even when a mosquito bites, how is one to endure when being cut piece by piece with a double-handled saw? Leaving aside enduring, how is one to prevent anger from taking hold in the mind? He also points out how to control it. Yet we see that the bhikkhus of old used this maximum-level simile in a practical manner.

As shown in texts like the Theragāthā, in those days, when bhikkhus went to the forest, they did not carry books with them; instead, when going to meditate, they bore such

similes given by the Supreme Buddha in their minds. In some stanzas of that era, it is said:

“Uppajjate sace kodho,

āvajja kakacūpamaṃ.”

So, if anger arises within you, remember the *Kakacūpama* (the Simile of the Saw). The *Kakacūpama* means the Simile of the Saw. Recall the Simile of the Saw given by the Supreme Buddha the moment anger comes. At least when you apply mindfulness to that, the anger is reduced to some extent, isn't it? When you bring this Dhamma advice to mind for a moment, the mind that was engaged in anger is subdued at least slightly by it. That is how we must conquer these.

If we consider these practically, these are things of importance to everyone in daily life, problems that everyone faces. The Supreme Buddha does not point toward carrying these further by adducing various reasons like "justified anger"; rather, he points to reflecting on the vast array of their saṃsāric consequences (*vipāka*). Since birth (*jāti*)—re-birth—is our heritage, if we have to be born again and again in Saṃsāra, we will have to be responsible for them. Understanding the fact that we will have to be born in various births/existences countless times in this Saṃsāra, and if we have to undergo their consequences through that, we must cultivate the resolution: "Let us appease this anger and enmity." Doing this is not as easy as saying it.

For that reason, the Supreme Buddha shows a gradual training. This is mentioned in the Karaṇīyametta Sutta, which all of us frequently hear and have the opportunity to hear. It is a wonderful sutta. Because we hear it so often, to some people it has no value, and they are not inclined to think about it. They think that by mere hearing, our illnesses will be cured. Because of this, one does not tend to think about the deep ideas contained in some suttas that we regard merely as *paritta* (protective chants). They satisfy themselves with its sound alone. Actually, if the Karaṇīyametta Sutta is chanted properly, even by that alone, the mind is stilled—even for someone who does not know the language. That sutta is to be valued to such an extent. If one contemplates the meaning of that sutta with wisdom, through that, one can build a compassionate attitude of loving-kindness (*mettā*). Now, for those who do not like the word "meditation" (*bhāvanā*) in this day and age, they must at least try to develop an attitude of loving-kindness if they are to conquer anger. Our pattern of action depends on our attitude. When a certain problem presents itself, we react to it according to our attitude. Therefore, if we prepare an attitude of loving-kindness beforehand, our response can be quite different from that of a person who harbors intense thoughts of anger. As an aid to building such an attitude, we thought on this occasion to highlight a few highly valuable points from the Karaṇīyametta Sutta—which can be considered its most substantial parts, like what we call "gems"—and to instill a few thoughts in the minds of you devout devotees regarding them.

In the middle part of the Karaṇīyametta Sutta, there is a passage of this kind:

“Sukhino vā khemino hontu,

sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā.”

May all beings—*sukhino* means may they be happy and well! *Khemino* means may they be free from danger, or may they have protection! There are several passages mentioned that clearly explain what is meant by "May all be possessed of happy minds! May all be happy!"

“Ye keci pāṇabhūtatthi,

tasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā,

dīghā vā ye mahantā vā,

majjhimā rassakāṇukathūlā,

diṭṭhā vā ye va addiṭṭhā,

ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre,

bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā,

sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā!”

There we see the wonderful way in which the Supreme Buddha has analyzed the term "all beings." In fact, the entire world is presented there in five totalities—that is, in five categories in such a way that everything is included. *Ye keci pāṇabhūtatthi*: here, what is the first totality? *Tasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā*: *tasā* means those who are trembling and fearful. *Thāvarā* means those who are steadfast and unmoved, or firm. You know the word *thāvara*; it has the meaning opposite to "trembling." By the term *anavasesā* (without exception), its status as a totality is shown.

The entire world is divided into these two categories: the trembling and the steadfast. It appears that through the scholarly interpretations some people offer, the practical value of these terms is lost. Some of those who interpret it in that manner point out that *tasā* refers to those who are not Arahants. Everyone else is trembling. "An Arahant does not tremble"—they explain it in this way. But that does not become meaningful in daily life. We must be able to understand this in accordance with each particular situation.

To take an illustration: when a mouse is in the mouth of a rat-snake, sometimes we feel something like loving-kindness toward that mouse. We feel like hitting the rat-snake and saving the mouse. Now, according to this situation, the mouse is *tasā* (trembling), and the rat-snake is *thāvarā* (steadfast/unmoved). The rat-snake is holding onto that mouse very firmly. To such an extent that it will not let it go. However, because of the term *anavasesā* (without exception), and because we must apply loving-kindness to both groups—the trembling and the steadfast—we have no right to try to save that mouse through indirect violence. Therefore, either equanimity (*upekkhā*) is applied, or a mind of loving-kindness. Sometimes, things we cannot do physically can be achieved by

directing a pure mind of loving-kindness, for a person who has developed loving-kindness. Sometimes, it is not impossible to resolve it through the mind of loving-kindness itself. In any case, we can understand here that, depending on the situation, the entire world can be divided into these two: *tasā* and *thāvarā*. When taken in that way, it is highly meaningful in daily life.

Next, it is mentioned: *dīghā vā ye mahantā vā majjhimā*. That is according to the size of the body. *Dīghā vā ye mahantā vā*: long or large. Then short, or extremely subtle, or stout, or middling, and so forth; in this way, according to physical dimension. That is the second totality.

Next, another totality is pointed out: *diṭṭhā vā ye va addiṭṭhā*, those seen and those unseen, including all of them without distinction. Next, *ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre*: not only those who are nearby. Not only those in the vicinity, but those who dwell far away too. Next, *bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā*. Some people explain these two terms in various ways academically. But if we explain it in a way that is meaningful for our daily lives, *bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā* means: *bhūtā* refers to those already born into this world, and *sambhavesī* refers to those seeking birth (*jāti*). Here, we can think of a child in a mother's womb, or a tiny creature inside an egg. In this day and age, we have to direct our attention to those as well. It is because of the lack of loving-kindness toward them that we hear of such problems in society. *Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā!* Indeed, may all those *sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā!*

Next, the Supreme Buddha points out further in a very wonderful way:

> *"Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha,*
>
> *nātimaññetha katthaci naṃ kañci."*

Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha: here, it does not speak only of oneself. One must also cultivate the wish: "Let not one deceive another, nor do harm or wrong to another." Next, *nātimaññetha katthaci naṃ kañci*. Let no one, in any place, despise or look down upon another!

That is the nature of a pure mind of loving-kindness. Even if ordinary worldly beings do not step forward to take revenge on their enemy themselves, when the enemy meets with disaster through some external trouble, they rejoice, saying: "Ah, kamma has given him his due; don't you see? It has happened to him!" They derive pleasure from that. Or else, they get someone else to do it to that person. Likewise, if it happens due to someone else, they rejoice over it. What is the pure loving-kindness here? One thinks, "May I not witness such conflicts in the world externally!" Not "May I not see my enemy!" Rather, from a pure mind of loving-kindness, it occurs to one: "May I not witness such events!" *Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha*: May no one oppress another, or do harm to another! May no one despise anyone in any place!

Next, in the same way, it continues:

“Byārosanā paṭighasaññā,

nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya.”

Byārosanā means resentment. Out of resentment, or with a perception of repugnance (*paṭigha-saññā*)—meaning an idea of conflict—*byārosanā paṭighasaññā*. *Nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya*: still, the talk is about the other. May one not wish suffering (*dukkha*) upon another! That means one does not wish to see even two other people opposing each other. Such is the purity of that mind of loving-kindness.

Having said all this, next comes the most valuable simile. There is no need to explain this specially to mothers. Indeed, in this day and age, perhaps it has to be spoken of specifically.

“Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttaṃ,

āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe.”

Just as a mother would protect her only son, her only child, even at the risk of her own life. With her own life-span, giving her own life. Nowadays, though rarely, we hear of such incidents. Sometimes, during childbirth, when a dangerous situation arises threatening both lives, some mothers say: "It does not matter if I die; save the child." It is such a wondrous thought of loving-kindness that is spoken of here. *“Evamapi sabba-bhūtesu.”*

Having given that simile, the Supreme Buddha does not stop there, limiting it only to that family. Taking this family as the unit, using it as an illustration: *"Evamapi sabbabhūtesu mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ."* In accordance with that simile, "even so, toward all living beings, let him develop a boundless heart, without limit, without boundaries," not saying: "These are only my family members, only my relatives, only our villagers, only our countrymen, only the people of our world." As many worlds as there may be, there is no need to speak of them separately; but within these words, everything is contained.

One could perhaps write pages of academic commentary on these. But once all of this is brought close to the heart, no extra commentaries are needed. Can one write a book about the attachment and love a mother has for her child? Something of that nature is present here. If that simile has penetrated the heart, what remains is to develop that attitude—the attitude of loving-kindness—to the highest degree, based on that simile. No other teacher in the entire world has expressed loving-kindness of this nature. *"Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttaṃ āyusā... evamapi sabbabhūtesu mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ." "Mettañca sabba-lōkasmiṃ mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ."* That is emphasized further. A mind of loving-kindness toward the entire world: *"Mettañca sabba-lōkasmiṃ mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ."* One should develop a mind of loving-kindness that is measureless, without any measure or boundary.

“Tiṭṭhaṃ caraṃ nisinno vā,

sayāno vā yāvatassa vigatamiddho."

Next, the manner of developing it is shown. Whether standing, walking (*caraṃ*), sitting (*nisinno*), or lying down (*sayāno*)—in these four postures—as long as one is awake (*yāvatassa vigatamiddho*). Until one falls asleep, until sleep comes, when drowsiness approaches, or when one is highly exhausted and falls into sleep; throughout the entire day, this should be developed. How is such development spoken of? *"Etaṃ satiṃ adhiṭṭheyya, brahmametaṃ vihāraṃ idamāhu."* From the phrase "etaṃ satiṃ" (this mindfulness), we see the mindfulness of loving-kindness. Now, those devout devotees who practice meditation mostly know what *sati* is. *Sati* means mindfulness, maintaining mindfulness. One can maintain daily mindfulness regarding postures and various other matters, and perform them with mindfulness and wisdom. In a mind where loving-kindness has been developed limitlessly in that manner, it is called *mettā-cetovimutti*—the mind is liberated through loving-kindness. That means, for that mind of loving-kindness which has reached the state of liberation of mind (*cetovimutti*), there are no walls. There are no parapets, no hurdles, no barriers or foundations. Breaking through all of them, this mind of loving-kindness radiates. In that manner, then, is that boundless loving-kindness. For one who has such a mind of loving-kindness, *"etaṃ satiṃ adhiṭṭheyya"*. Daily mindfulness is maintained along with loving-kindness, without any burden, with thoughts of loving-kindness. Travels, and all other activities, proceed hand in hand with the mind of loving-kindness. It becomes well-accustomed to the mind. Once it is thoroughly assimilated by the mind, mindfulness goes along with it without any trouble.

To use an analogy, to a person who is accustomed to wearing spectacles, he is not even conscious of their presence. Without any trouble, he looks at the world through them. In the same way, one can look at the world with an attitude of loving-kindness. There are devotees who say they have no time for meditation because of their daily occupations and jobs. Now, you devotees do various jobs for your daily livelihood. Is it impossible to develop loving-kindness along with those? It is true that you receive a salary at the end of the month for those things you do. It is true that the consumer pays a certain amount of money for the goods you sell. But if we have a mind of loving-kindness, we can offer something far greater than that. We invisibly give something far more valuable than the item we hand over. That is the mind of loving-kindness, the wish of loving-kindness. "May there be only good! May you be happy and well!"—offering it as if it were one's own. What is meant by "as if it were one's own"? Suppose we have to serve food to someone. Let us assume one works in a restaurant. The restaurant worker merely has to serve the food to the customer who comes in. But when that person arrives, the worker sees that he comes in highly exhausted, thirsty, and in distress. So, what the worker actually does is simply bring and serve the item. Those goods do not belong to him. But if he serves it with a mind of loving-kindness at that moment, something far greater than his wage is credited to his account through that mind of loving-kindness. In that manner, in daily life, if we consider teachers, in their teaching, they too should not look merely at the salary. Indeed, teachers of the past lived in that very manner. It was a true vocation, not just a job. In a spiritual sense, elevating it to the Dhamma, they sought the welfare of

the world through it. What is said here is that if one performs one's daily duties with an attitude of loving-kindness, just as a mother thinks of her child, then occupations and jobs will not be a burden to him.

Generally, occupations are a burden to human beings. It becomes a light thing only on pay-day. But it is pay-day every day! One receives wages every day, if one performs those duties with an attitude of loving-kindness. Let us consider the work one does in an office; through the way one handles things there, this entire social mechanism, this social machine—if society is a machine, the moment a single screw is missing, it becomes inactive. There are times when this becomes evident to us through strikes. So, strikes aside, what we have to understand is that if we work with an attitude of loving-kindness, that social mechanism functions properly. One rejoices, "I supplied the screw for that machine to function." This is not about harboring pride (*māna*) about it. How is it done? By setting aside for a moment the feeling that "this is something I must do out of fear of someone, or something done merely considering the salary to get paid," and doing it conscientiously with a mind of loving-kindness: "Not only to the person who comes near me, visible or invisible, to whom I give a small helping hand, but to the visible and invisible, infinite and boundless beings, through this small service of mine, a well-being of the kind mentioned will occur." One must generate such a feeling. Then, through that, a wonderful lightness arises in life. Those things are not a burden. It is not a mere official duty. It is not something done because the king commands it. It is something that belongs to oneself. There is no "official duty"; in fact, if one thinks of one's saṃsāric liberation, none of these are mere official duties. The task that belongs to oneself is to be freed from this disease of kamma.

Thus, the Supreme Buddha highlights for us not only these illnesses. Also sudden disasters—what are called accidents—or sudden mishaps. There is no such thing as a "sudden accident" in the world. For all of these, there is some cause, some origin (*nidāna*). Some say that kamma is not behind everything. That kamma is not the cause. But underneath these, kamma is connected in a subtle manner. Living for this long time in Saṃsāra, there is no unwholesome kamma (*pāpa-kamma*) that we have not done. Just as we have done good kammas, we have also done bad, sinful kammas. In various instances, the wheel of kamma (*kamma-cakka*) surfaces. Their exact cause is visible only to the Supreme Buddha and to those with higher spiritual powers (*abhiññā*).

Likewise, with each passing moment of our lives, what are we doing? We are wearing away the merit and wholesome kamma (*kusala*) that granted us this human life. If a person who does a job lives on the salary he received last month without thinking about the next month, he will have to regret it. Why do we, who have obtained a human state of existence and are proceeding along Saṃsāra, encounter not only those dangerous diseases of kamma but also various ailments and sudden accidents? That is when the wheel of kamma rotates and comes back around. One must be prepared for that. To be prepared, we must daily, with a Dhamma-aligned mind, perform wholesome deeds (*kusala-kamma*) that help, at least, to reduce the impact of those kammas, or to make those kammas completely ineffective (*ahosi-kamma*), or to wear away that kamma-energy. This is what we mentioned in the story of Ven. Anuruddha. Within the duty and

practice (*vatta-paṭipatti*) that Ven. Anuruddha, who possessed the divine eye, gave to his sister, there lies a deep secret: even a duty and practice is necessary to appease these diseases of kamma. Indeed, during a time when a Buddha has arisen, a time when the Triple Gem has appeared, those duties and practices of the Dispensation (*Sāsana*) cannot be treated as minor things; within each and every one of them lies the power to appease the force of a person's kamma. That is why Rohiṇī's skin disease was appeased to some extent by that alone—by performing those duties and practices.

Therefore, because of that, we must understand that in our daily lives, we must wisely accumulate something without limiting ourselves to rupees and cents. The moment that is lacking, troubles can come upon us at the most dangerous and unexpected times in this Saṃsāra. One leads this life harboring great expectations. But things like sudden accidents happen. Beneath them lie those very kammas we spoke of. Since we do not know the medicine for them, it is fine even if we do not take medicine for each individual one. The Supreme Buddha has shown here that as long as this disease of kamma exists, this is the underlying cause. What exists here is not the impurity of blood, but the defilement of the mind. Greed, hatred, jealousy, anger—the various defilements (*kilesa*)—are said to be one thousand five hundred by those who have calculated them. In any case, it is this mass of defilements, festering and generating forms in Saṃsāra, that creates the blind, creates the deaf, creates the lame in accordance with them. All of this is to demonstrate the capabilities of kamma.

Why is one person different from another? One is beautiful, and another is ugly. Even the beautiful person suddenly becomes ugly, just like Rohiṇī whom we spoke of. One must reflect on how these things happen. None of these are mere accidents. None of these are sudden mishaps. Beneath these lie the causes of kamma (*kamma-nidāna*). If we believe the word of the Supreme Buddha, having understood it, we must strive to immediately appease those grave defilements (*kilesa*) such as anger, pride, and jealousy, which are often seen in daily life, the moment they arise. Just as loving-kindness (*mettā*) helps to appease anger, the Supreme Buddha has highlighted the quality called sympathetic joy (*muditā*) to appease jealousy.

If you who live in households wish to evoke and develop sympathetic joy (*muditā*), reflect on your own child. When that child of yours studies, gets a job, and reaches a good position at some point, you feel a certain sympathetic joy (*muditā*) about it. You do not harbor jealousy. But although you think of your own child in that way, when the neighbor next door passes an exam and becomes a doctor or an engineer, you harbor jealousy. There lies the lack of sympathetic joy (*muditā*). One must apply the principle mentioned here to that situation as well. Just as it was said here, *"Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttaṃ āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe, evamapi sabbabhūtesu,"* at that moment one has to think, "May that child, that so-and-so, be happy and well in this manner!"—regarding it as one's own happiness, and rejoice in it. That is the quality of sympathetic joy (*muditā*).

We must learn lessons from these events that we see so often in the world. It is a lesson that we learned from this event regarding Rohiṇī too. So many things happen to us. You,

devout devotees, also frequently hear of certain unexpected events in daily life that shatter great hopes. The kammas underlying these are also occasionally revealed through indirect means or in various ways: how these things happened because of their bad lives, because of the unwholesome deeds (*akusala*) they performed. There is something called "kamma" spoken of in the Dhamma. The result (*vipāka*) corresponds to the kamma. The result corresponded exactly to Rohiṇī's kamma. There is a weapon called a boomerang. When thrown at someone, it rotates and comes back to one's own hand. In the same way, regarding some kammas, their results (*vipāka*) come back to oneself. We hear of such events in our daily lives as well. To those individuals who perform grave unwholesome deeds, their results come. At that moment, it is not for us to rejoice; rather, we must learn a lesson. This is common to everyone. "Even if we do such things, the results will come." Reflecting in that way, we must bring the Dhamma close to our lives.

You, devout devotees, hear the Karaṇīyametta Sutta on various media daily. But without being satisfied merely with its sound, you must understand the meaning of the stanzas highlighted here. The Pali words of these are difficult to understand, and in this era, people do not direct much attention to the language either. On the other hand, those who know too much about these things merely highlight scholarly points and remain stuck within them, rather than presenting them in a way that can be used practically. That is the misfortune. Therefore, we have briefly highlighted a few points that can be practically implemented in daily life, as appropriate to the occasion.

"Ye keci pāṇabhūtatthi,

tasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā,

dīghā vā ye mahantā vā,

majjhimā rassakāṇukathūlā,

diṭṭhā vā ye va addiṭṭhā,

ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre,

bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā,

sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā!"

And next, likewise:

"Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha,

nātimaññetha katthaci naṃ kañci,

byārosanā paṭighasaññā,

nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya.

Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttaṃ,

āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe,

evamapi sabbabhūtesu,

mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ.

Mettañca sabba-lōkasmiṃ,

mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇan'ti."

Next, it says: *"Uddhaṃ adho ca tiriyañca, asambādhaṃ averaṃ asapattaṃ."* Here, the boundlessness is shown. That part was left out by us: above, below, and across. *Asambādhaṃ* means free from obstacles. It is from there that we say it goes breaking through hurdles, fences, walls, and barriers. Next comes: *"Tiṭṭhaṃ caraṃ nisinno vā, sayāno vā yāvatassa vigatamiddho."* In this manner, the Supreme Buddha, in a very wonderful way, demonstrates how to build that attitude of loving-kindness, or how to liberate the mind through loving-kindness (*cetovimutti*). What is meant by liberating the mind through loving-kindness? When hatred or anger arises, it means one's mind goes and strikes against someone else's mind. The mind clashes regarding another person. What happens after it strikes? It remains there, clashing and colliding. That is what is called repugnance (*paṭigha*). When anger arises, next, one wants to vent one's anger. That is *paṭigha*—taking revenge. There is never a limit to revenge. For when you take revenge, that other person does not remain quiet either. The best illustration for this is the Serivāṇija Jātaka. Through his own experience, Ven. Devadatta Thero realized: "We must appease this anger, these minds, from within." But it is to find means of appeasing them externally that worldly beings search for various types of weapons. Reflect that: "If we are to appease this from within, it is indeed those Dhamma instructions spoken by the Supreme Buddha that we must safeguard."

On this valuable day, you devout devotees have also observed a certain virtue (*sīla*). Virtue (*sīla*) means training one's body and speech. Within that training itself, there is a certain sense regarding concentration (*samādhi*) as well, so that not only is there one's own restraint, but also no harm is brought to society. There is no need to explain separately; when analyzing a precept (*sikkhāpada*), we see that we should not be satisfied merely with the training of body and speech, but from the mind too, what we must do is wish for the welfare of the world. Sectarians like the Nigaṇṭhas said that the physical rod (*kāya-daṇḍa*)—physical action—is the greatest thing. Verbal action is second, and mental action is third. The Supreme Buddha shows the exact opposite. Saying *"manopubbaṅgamā dhammā"* (mind precedes all phenomena), he gave the foremost place to the mind. Mind first, speech second, body third. That is how the Supreme Buddha points it out.

In accordance with that, we must reflect that the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*) is not just sitting idly in one place. Through it, great peace and blessings are brought to the world. In that way, without limiting this meditation on loving-kindness only to that meditation seat, it can be practiced in all four postures as mentioned. It must

be maintained boundlessly. Taking loving-kindness toward one's own family members as the unit of loving-kindness, one then radiates it toward the entire world without any barriers or boundaries. If one lives with an attitude of loving-kindness in that manner, if some anger or rage arises in daily life, at the very least, one has the strength to appease it quickly. Just as when a serpent has bitten, if one generates at least the awareness "the serpent has bitten," that person next strives to get medicine for it. Not to kill the serpent, but to get medicine for one's snake-bite. That is how one has to think. Then, it is not a matter of clashing with that object; what needs to be done is to remove the defilement that has arisen in one's mind through that object.

Today, through this sermon, the opportunity is provided to develop the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) namely faith/devotion (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), in the manner we usually remind you in a daily Dhamma sermon. In addition, the opportunity was also obtained to extract several valuable points relevant to living with a true Buddhist attitude, based on the Karaṇīyametta Sutta. Bringing these close to one's life, one must understand that the solace we expect in various ways from external forces can be brought forth from within ourselves. If each individual leads his life in that manner, through that alone, the peace, harmony, and tranquility needed by the world will emerge.

Reflecting in that way, make the aspiration: "May this mass of merit (*kusala*) we have accumulated today through the preaching of the Dhamma and the listening to the Dhamma, serve as a decisive cause and supportive condition to end one's own visible mass of saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*), to develop and cultivate virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*) as quickly as possible, to fulfill the prerequisites according to the Noble Eightfold Path shown by the Supreme Buddha, and to escape all saṃsāric suffering through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship, thereby attaining peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna!" Likewise, may all those in this universe, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including our relatives, whoever have the capacity to rejoice in the merit accumulated through this preaching and listening to the Dhamma, by rejoicing in this merit, escape as quickly as possible from all saṃsāric suffering (*dukkha*) such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death, and attain peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! With this aspiration, recite these stanzas:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #147

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.87)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Na santi puttā tāṇāya,

na pitā nāpi bandhavā;

Antakenādhipannassa,

natthi ñātīsu tāṇatā."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 288 (Magga Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Supreme Buddha points out that the reason we have run in this cycle of Saṃsāra for such a long, endless time is due to four perverted views. The Blessed One declared that in order to eliminate these four perverted views—namely, taking what is *Anicca* (Impermanent) as permanent, taking what is *Dukkha* (Suffering) as pleasurable, taking what is *Anattā* (Not-self) as self, and taking what is foul (*asubha*) as beautiful (*subha*)—one must cultivate the perception of impermanence, the perception of suffering, the perception of non-self, and the perception of foulness. The story related to the verse we have chosen as our theme today illustrates how these four perceptions assist in attaining Nibbāna.

A child was born to a poor family of cemetery keepers in the city of Rājagaha. That child was named Sopāka. When the child was just four months old, his father passed away. He was brought up by his uncle. When he was about seven years old, one day, this uncle grew furious because Sopāka had a quarrel with his own son. He took Sopāka to the cemetery of corpses (the charnel ground), bound his hands with a rope, tied a corpse to that same rope, and left him in the cemetery to be eaten by jackals. This child possessed the spiritual merit to attain Arahantship in that very life. It is mentioned in the Dhamma that it is a natural law (*dhammatā*) that a person with such spiritual merit cannot be

killed by anyone before attaining Arahantship. Therefore, although various jackals and wild beasts came, they could not even get close to him. During the night, at midnight, this child Sopāka wailed, crying out: "Is there no kinsman of mine? Is there no one to save me, who am bound and left in this cemetery?" Due to that very spiritual merit and because he possessed the supportive conditions to attain Arahantship, the Great Compassionate Buddha perceived this child. Then, the Supreme Buddha uttered a certain verse:

"Sopāka, come here, do not be afraid. Just like releasing the moon caught by Rāhu, I will save you. Look towards the Tathāgata."

As soon as that verse was uttered, through the Buddha-power itself, Sopāka appeared right by the *gandhakuṭi* (perfumed chamber) where the Supreme Buddha resided. Moreover, having attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*), he stood before the Blessed One. Sopāka's mother, as her child did not return home, asked the uncle, who said nothing. She searched everywhere and thought: "Buddhas know all times—past, present, and future. Perhaps the Blessed One knows where my son is." So she went in search of Him. When she approached the Buddha, the Blessed One made a psychic determination (*iddhi-adhiṭṭhāna*) so that Sopāka could not be seen. When she asked, "My child is lost. I cannot find where he is, does the Blessed One know?" the Supreme Buddha uttered the thematic verse:

"*Na santi puttā tāṇāya, na pitā na pi bandhavā,*

Antakenādhipannassa, natthi ñātīsu tāṇatā."

"Sons are no protection, nor is a father, nor are kinsmen. For one seized by the Ender (Death), there is no protection among kinsmen." The meaning of this verse is that when *Antaka*—meaning Māra, or Death—presents himself, no protection can be obtained from relatives. Along with this verse, the Supreme Buddha delivered a certain Dhamma sermon. Having heard it, Sopāka's mother attained the fruit of Stream-entry, and the child Sopāka attained Arahantship.

Next, as soon as the Supreme Buddha withdrew the psychic power, the mother saw that her son was there. She learned from the Buddha that he was now an Arahant, and she gave permission for him to be ordained. Thus, the child Sopāka became a novice monk. One day, watching the Supreme Buddha doing walking meditation in the open air under the shade of the *gandhakuṭi*, the novice monk Sopāka paid homage to the Buddha, asked for permission, and began to perform walking meditation in the exact same manner.

Seeing this cleverness, the Supreme Buddha asked him ten questions. He asked ten Dhamma-related questions, starting with "What is one?" and "What is two?" Whatever answer the Buddha expected, this novice monk gave exactly that answer. Highly pleased with this, the Buddha considered him worthy of higher ordination (*upasampadā*) solely by virtue of his answering these questions, and granted him higher ordination. This is a special event. Even today in the history of the Sāsana, a topic that those newly ordained get to read is this series of questions and answers known as the *Kumāra Pañha* (The

Novice's Questions). This is also known as a special higher ordination called *Pañhavākaraṇūpasampadā* (Higher ordination by answering questions). The history of the Sāsana records this unique higher ordination granted by the Supreme Buddha to the novice monk Sopāka. The past causes and the story are shown as to how the child Sopāka possessed such spiritual merit that he was able to attain Arahantship and receive higher ordination from the Buddha at the tender age of seven.

Ninety-four aeons (*kappas*) ago, during the time when the Buddha named Siddhārtha lived in the world, this Sopāka was born as a Brahmin. He learned the arts and sciences belonging to the Brahmins, grew disillusioned with the household life, ordained as an ascetic, and lived on a certain mountain. The Buddha Siddhārtha saw that this ascetic's life would soon come to an end, and He journeyed to that place. The ascetic was cleaning the mountain terrace. Developing great faith and joy, this ascetic prepared and offered a seat made entirely of flowers to the Buddha. Seated on that flower-seat, the Buddha delivered a Dhamma sermon on impermanence, starting with "*aniccā vata saṅkhārā*" (Impermanent indeed are *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). Having heard this, that Brahmin abandoned the perception of permanence customary to Brahmins and directed his mind toward the perception of impermanence (*Anicca*). It is mentioned that shortly after, he passed away, was reborn in the heavenly world, and it was by the support of that very power of meditation cultivated since then that he attained Arahantship so rapidly in this present life.

So, this is the outline or skeleton of the story of Sopāka. Now let us try to extract the narrative essence and the Dhamma essence contained within this. We see that the life of the child Sopāka began in a very helpless and tragic manner. He was born into such a poor family of cemetery keepers. Furthermore, losing his father at a young age, he seemed to have the misfortune of receiving treatment from his uncle that was akin to the harsh treatment of a stepmother.

He also had to face a cruel form of punishment. Although that side of his life was harsh, those experiences, as well as the environment of his birth, must have assisted the child Sopāka on the path to Nibbāna. We often recall a few common sayings of the modern era, though they are not explicitly found in the Dhamma. One is "a blessing in disguise." Another saying familiar to us Sinhalese is "the suffering that comes is sweet as honey." Then there is also "every dark cloud has a silver lining." Sometimes, within the experiences and events of our lives that might tempt us even towards suicide, great opportunities arise to cultivate the perception of impermanence (*Anicca*), the perception of suffering (*Dukkha*), the perception of non-self (*Anattā*), and the perception of foulness (*asubha*), which can aid even in attaining Nibbāna. Thinking in this way, the child Sopāka's birth in a cemetery environment could have been a blessing in disguise.

In such an environment, impermanence is constantly brought to mind. So too is the perception of foulness. One gets to see people coming there, crying and wailing. That brings the perception of suffering (*Dukkha*). Right there, the perception of non-self (*Anattā*) also exists. Especially, after his uncle bound him to a corpse, these bitter experiences must have thoroughly brought home the perception of non-self (*Anattā*) and

the perception of suffering (*Dukkha*). We can assume that once his mind was prepared through these experiences, the moment he heard something related to the Dhamma from the Supreme Buddha, the child Sopāka was able to realize its true fruit, the fruit of Nibbāna. From this, we must reflect that in our lives too, various calamities and misfortunes come to us and those we associate with. We must turn them into blessings in disguise. No matter how many dark clouds arrive, we must try to enrich our lives and enrich ourselves with the Dhamma, at least by looking at their silver linings.

Instead of saying "the suffering that comes is sweet as honey," we should strive to direct our minds toward those aforementioned perceptions of impermanence (*Anicca*), suffering (*Dukkha*), non-self (*Anattā*), and foulness, to the point where we can say "the suffering that comes is the taste of Nibbāna." Let us also look at the life of this novice monk Sopāka; adults have a great deal to learn from young children. It is a habit of young children to imitate adults. You know that children at home put on their mother's or father's big shoes and walk back and forth, saying, "This is how our mother and father walk." In the same way, the novice monk Sopāka, watching the Supreme Buddha doing walking meditation, began to imitate Him and do walking meditation in the exact same clever and fitting manner. In keeping with this, the Supreme Buddha, like a compassionate father asking a child if he knows right from wrong or if he knows how to count to ten, asked him ten questions.

Due to time constraints, these can only be mentioned briefly. The novice monk Sopāka gave answers that contained very deep matters. Right away, first of all, the Buddha asked:

"What is one?" (*eka nāma kiṃ?*) As soon as he was asked "What is one?", this novice monk Sopāka said: "All beings subsist on food (*sabbe sattā āhāraṭṭhitikā*)." That is a universally applicable, common fact. The answer that everyone lives on food is what he gave.

When asked, "What is two?", he said, "*Nāmarūpa*" (Name-and-Form). Those of you who practice meditation know that in insight meditation (*vipassanā*), everything that becomes an object of the mind, the entire world, is categorized into these two divisions as *Nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form). The profound Buddhist philosophy that only Name and Form exist here is what was taken as the two: Name and Form.

"What is three?" Then he said, "The three *Vedanā* (Feeling)." What are the three *Vedanā*? Painful (*Dukkha*), pleasant (*sukha*), and neutral (*adukkham-asukha*). Painful, pleasant, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant. Neither-painful-nor-pleasant refers to neutral *Vedanā*. When observed in terms of feelings, only these three are found in the world of *Vedanā*. There is painful *Vedanā*, there is pleasant *Vedanā*, and in between these two is the neutral, neither-painful-nor-pleasant *Vedanā*.

When asked, "What is four?", he said, "The Four Noble Truths." That is: *Dukkha* (Suffering), *Samudaya* (its origin—the cause of suffering), *Nirodha* (its cessation—the ending of suffering), and then *Magga* (the path—the Noble Eightfold Path). Suffering,

the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering which is Nibbāna, and the path to it. That is the four.

"What is five?" To this, he said, "The five aggregates of *Upādāna* (Grasping)." As you well know, instead of the conventional designation of a "person," the Supreme Buddha explained this "I" and "mine"—this person—as five aggregates: the aggregate of form (*rūpa-kkhandha*), a heap of form; the aggregate of *Vedanā* (Feeling), a heap of feelings; the aggregate of perception (*saññā-kkhandha*), a heap of perceptions; the aggregate of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), a heap of Preparations; and the aggregate of *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness), a heap of consciousness. This is what is meant by the five aggregates of grasping. Wherever these five heaps are grasped, there arises the perception of an "I," a "person," or a "self." It is a perverted view, yet people take it to be so. That, then, is the five aggregates of grasping. It can be called the world of the aggregates. There too, a totality is presented, viewed from different aspects in each of the answers to these questions.

When asked, "What is six?", he replied, "The six internal sense bases (*ādhātmika āyatana*)." The six internal sense bases are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, which exist within oneself. It is through these that we cognize a world. This is called the world of the sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*). In short, a "world" is produced by these: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. That is what Ven. Sopāka explained as the six, exactly as expected by the Supreme Buddha.

When asked, "What is seven?", he said, "The seven factors of awakening (*satta bojjhaṅgā*)." Seven: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of phenomena (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), rapture (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The seven factors of awakening are a sequence of seven qualities that assist in the realization of awakening—which means Arahantship or Buddhahood.

"What is eight?" To this, he said, "The Noble Eightfold Path." This refers to right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*)—a practice which when rendered in Sinhala can be expressed as right seeing, right thinking, right speech, right action, right living, right exerting, right remembering, and right unifying of the mind. The entire Noble Eightfold Path was matched with the number eight.

When asked, "What is nine?", he pointed to the nine abodes of beings (*nava sattāvāsā*)—the nine states of *Bhava* (Becoming) such as human, heavenly, Brahma, etc. Since it is a somewhat deep matter, we will not discuss it in length. It is presented as nine.

The answer given to the question "What is ten?" was that when Right Knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and Right Liberation (*sammā-vimutti*) are added to the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, one becomes an Arahant. Through this, he also spontaneously

revealed that he himself had attained Arahantship. At the end of the Noble Eightfold Path is Right Knowledge, which is the knowledge of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-ñāṇa*) attained through that path. Next, likewise, is liberation—Right Liberation. When considered together with those, they make ten. Thus, the ten were presented. So, the novice monk Sopāka knew how to count to ten. Therefore, the Supreme Buddha authorized his higher ordination.

We have many valuable things to learn from that young child there. In that manner, he answered the points of the Dhamma very cleverly and fearlessly, evoking the Buddha's appreciation. That Dhamma story unfolds in this way. Next, let us direct our minds to the meaning conveyed in this verse. The verse mentions that parents generally consider their children as their protection. For those children, the father, or else kinsmen, stand as their protection. Or, kinsmen help the children. The child Sopāka also cried out and wailed: "Is there no one for me?"

But the Supreme Buddha declared that neither sons, nor a father, nor kinsmen, nor anyone can save one when death presents itself. There is no protection. What, then, is protection? The verse says: *natthi ñātīsu tāṇatā*. *Tāṇa* means protection. The Supreme Buddha points out that the only protection available to beings caught in this Saṃsāra is Nibbāna. It is for this reason that among the many terms used to designate Nibbāna, the word *tāṇa* is also used. A multitude of words such as *tāṇaṃ* (protection), *leṇaṃ* (cave/shelter), *saraṇaṃ* (refuge), *parāyanaṃ* (final resort), and *amataṃ* (the deathless) are used to refer to Nibbāna. *Tāṇa* means protection, *leṇa* means shelter, *saraṇa* means refuge. *Amataṃ* means the deathless.

In the past, there was an opinion among Brahmins that the gods never die because they consume a drink called *amṛta* (ambrosia/nectar). However, the Supreme Buddha also designated Nibbāna by the name *Amata*—the Deathless. How does this become the Deathless? It is a somewhat deep matter. The Supreme Buddha points out that if we are to escape from Māra (Death), we must first recognize Māra. Who is this Māra? There is a place where Māra is defined. A monk named Rādha once came and asked the Supreme Buddha: "It is said, 'Māra, Māra.' Venerable Sir, to what extent is there a Māra, or who is Māra?" Then the Supreme Buddha replied: "Rādha, where there is form (*rūpa*), there is Māra, or a slayer, or one who dies." He took each aggregate one by one. The aggregate of form: "Where there is form, there is Māra, or a slayer, or one who dies. Therefore, Rādha, see form itself as Māra. Regard form as Māra. See form as a disease, as a tumor, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction. That seeing is right seeing," the Blessed One declared. In the same way regarding *Vedanā* (Feeling): *Vedanā* is Māra. Perception is Māra. *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) is Māra. *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) is Māra. Preaching in this manner, He finally designated each one of these as Māra. Thus, seeing the five aggregates as Māra, escaping from them, and releasing the mind from them—in short, not grasping them through *Taṇhā* (Craving) and *Upādāna* (Grasping)—is shown as liberation, shown as the state of the Deathless (*amata*).

Then Ven. Rādha asked: "But, Blessed One, what is the purpose of this right view? What is the purpose of right seeing?" Then the Supreme Buddha declared: "The benefit of right

seeing is *nibbidā*—disillusionment with the cycle of existence (Saṃsāra)." Then he asked, "What is the purpose of disillusionment?" "Disillusionment is needed because of the necessity to develop dispassion (non-attachment) toward the five aggregates." He asked, "What is the purpose of dispassion?" Dispassion means *virāga*. "Dispassion is developed for the purpose of liberation—the freeing of the mind, the freeing of the mind from these five aggregates of *Upādāna* (Grasping)."

Then he asked, "What is the purpose of liberation?" "Liberation is for the sake of Nibbāna—that is, for the sake of extinguishment." Then he asked, "What is the purpose of Nibbāna?" At that point, the Supreme Buddha declared: "Rādha, you have gone beyond the limit of questioning. Nibbāna is the final goal. There is nothing beyond it."

So, what we see from this is that each one of these—form, *Vedanā* (Feeling), and so forth—which we refer to as "I" and "mine," is indeed Māra. The oppression arising from this is not realized by us in the ordinary world. In our day-to-day lives, we hold onto these with attachment, unaware that they are Māra.

If we think a little about how a day is spent on this thing called "form" (the physical body): Let us consider the hardships we receive all day long because of this form. Even before the sun rises on the earth, must we not lift this form from where it fell the previous day, wash it, bathe it, feed it, give it drink, dress it, apply perfume and powder, and drag it to the place where we earn our livelihood? Next, we must provide it with lodging and shelter. When it falls ill, we must provide it with medicine. In this way, there is a mountain of trouble because of this form. There is Māra. Even before actual death, this form troubles us to the point of killing us.

So, at the moment of death, the very mental agony created by the unwillingness to leave this cage is what is called the fear of death. But if someone, while still alive, abandons the attachment they have to this form, then when Māra drags them away, they can let go without fear. Letting go is what the Supreme Buddha points to as the eradication of *Taṇhā* (Craving). Finally, to Ven. Rādha too, the Supreme Buddha declared: "Through this right seeing, walk on the path to Nibbāna, which is the destruction of *Taṇhā*." He invited Rādha to enter upon that path. So, this is the path: training one's thinking in such a way that disillusionment arises regarding each and every aggregate. Recognizing their troublesome nature and that they are Māra, some might even feel afraid, thinking, "Then nothing will be left for us after we let go of all these." But what is the problem? The problem is the fear of death.

The Supreme Buddha points out: "I teach that this entire world is only *Dukkha* (Suffering)." In reality, there is no such being or person. There is no self. But in the world, there exists this fear of death. Due to the inability to leave this cage of a body, and due to the attachment to it, a great tremor occurs at the moment of death. So, the Supreme Buddha points out that, in truth, one must abandon attachment to each and every aggregate as Māra. There is no being or person in any of these. There is only a perverted view. A perception of self exists in the world, thinking "I" and "mine." This is called *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body). One conceives the heap of form as

one unit. One conceives the heap of *Vedanā* (Feeling) as one unit. One conceives the heap of perception as one unit, and having conceived them so, grasps them. One holds onto them. Within that very grasping lies the tremor that occurs when one has to let them go. But *sakkāya* means seeing all these heaps as one. Normally, even when we take a photograph, we say, "This is my form." But this changes from moment to moment in an extremely subtle way. Every single one of these is subject to the law of impermanence (*Anicca*). It is when this is let go that there exists that liberation, the cooling, Nibbāna, which the Supreme Buddha points to.

This is why Nibbāna is called the state of the Deathless (*amata*). But in the world, there is generally a fear: "If that happens, nothing will be left for us here, will it?" This is a perverted view. A good answer to this can also be drawn from a question asked by Ven. Rādha himself.

On another occasion, Ven. Rādha asks the Supreme Buddha: "Venerable Sir, it is said 'a being' (*satta*). In what sense is this said, or to what extent does one become a being?" He is expecting an analysis, a definition of that word. The Supreme Buddha analyzes it: "Rādha, if there is any passion, attachment, desire, *Taṇhā* (Craving), or feverish longing for form, it is because of that attachment to form that the concept of 'a being' arises."

Here, the Supreme Buddha, as He sometimes does, uses a single word in two different senses. Indeed, only someone who knows the language well can understand this. The word *satta* (or *satto*) can be understood in two ways. *Satta* can mean "an existing thing" or "truth/reality" (from *sat*). On the other hand, if taken as a past participle (from the root *sañj/saj*), *satta* means "one who is attached/clinging." That word comes from a completely different verbal root. When you look at it, it is one phonetic word, but with two meanings. The Supreme Buddha uses this word-play to analyze the term here. It is in the sense of being attached to form. A "being" does not exist because there is some invisible self, about the size of a thumb, as the Brahmins think, or something hidden in the heart or in *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness). As long as there is attachment to form, the conventional designation of a "being" remains.

This must not be misunderstood. This is a pitfall where many scholars stumble when trying to understand this Sutta. If we were to assume that the Supreme Buddha accepted the existence of a "being," this is all it means: as long as there is attachment to form, there is a being. As long as there is attachment to *Vedanā* (Feeling), if one is stuck in it, then *satta* means being stuck. In the sense of being attached to form, in the sense of being attached to *Vedanā*, there is a being. The same applies to perception, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness). Having taught this, the Supreme Buddha did not stop there. He gave a wonderful simile for this. That is something we must ponder very deeply.

What is that simile? "Rādha, imagine young boys or girls playing, building toy houses out of sand or clay. They are called *paṃsu-kīḷā* (dirt playhouses). As long as those young boys and girls maintain attachment, *Taṇhā* (Craving), desire, and longing for those toy houses, they undergo distress and oppression on account of them. They treat those

playhouses as real. They treat those playhouses as actual houses. They play with them. They call them 'mine.' They highly prize them as their wealth. If mothers or fathers come and, seeing these children building houses out of mud or dirt, say, 'What a nuisance! What are you doing handling dirt?' and kick and smash them down, those young children will start to cry. They build them thinking of them as their wealth, as their houses. Thinking of them as houses, they even fight over them. But once these children reach an age where their wisdom matures, their desire for those toy houses they made vanishes. Thereafter, no one else has to do it; they themselves smash and destroy them." The Supreme Buddha points out that at some point, when their attachment to them is gone, those boys or girls will scatter, smash, demolish, and turn those dirt playhouses to dust with their hands and feet.

Next, connecting to the simile, He makes a statement that is quite frightening to think about. "In the same way, Rādha, just as those young children, once their understanding and wisdom have matured, kick and smash with their hands and feet and demolish those dirt houses they made, so too you must scatter form. Destroy it. Break it down. Blow it away. Destroy *Vedanā* (Feeling) too. Blow it away." In this manner, the Supreme Buddha speaks about all five aggregates, these five heaps. Sometimes, it makes one afraid: "Is this something that can be done? What is the Supreme Buddha saying here? Is He telling us to commit suicide? How can we destroy form? How can we scatter form? How do we break it down?" Right there lies the portion relevant to meditation.

As long as there is the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) regarding this form, the attachment to form remains. Those of you who practice meditation might have heard that in insight meditation (*vipassanā*), there is a term called "perception of compactness." Opposed to it is the "perception of a heap" (*rāsi-saññā*) or analytical perception. What exists in the world is the perception of compactness—taking form as a single solid unit. That is what is called *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body). Taking *Vedanā* (Feeling) too as a single unit. For example, a person might say, "I have had this pain (*Vedanā*) in my knee since yesterday, and it has not left me yet." Then, if the teacher says, "Direct your mind to it a little. Apply attention—contemplation—to that pain," it does not mean crying out "pain, pain." It means applying attention (*manasikāra*).

When attention is applied, that *Vedanā* (Feeling) which was taken as one unit is understood to be not a single thing, but a series of throbbing sensations, a heap of feelings, a multitude of feelings. Here there is a heap of *Vedanā*; that is what is seen through attention. This is what is called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). Thus, the person who, through unwise attention, took *Vedanā* as a single unit, understands it as a heap of feelings when applying *Yoniso manasikāra*.

The same applies to form. When one applies mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) based on a certain meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*), this form which appears as a single unit to others—and not just one's own form, but as the meditation develops, even external things—is understood by the meditating devotee to be not one solid thing, but a heap (*rāsi*). A "heap" means a mass of arisings and passings away. It is

then that one realizes that a lamp flame is not a single unit, a stream of water is not a single unit. Every single one of these is understood by the meditator, as direct experiential knowledge, to be a heap. Just as one builds dirt houses by soaking heaps of dirt with water because of *Taṇhā* (Craving)—the word *sineha* (moisture/affection) is also used for *Taṇhā*—by pouring the moisture of *Taṇhā*, we make this form into a single unit to make it easy for the mind to grasp it as *Upādāna* (Grasping). We make *Vedanā* (Feeling) into one unit. We make perception into one unit. We make *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) into one unit. We make *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) or the mind into one unit.

But the Supreme Buddha points out that here is a heap. A "heap" means that next, each of these begins to be understood as *Nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form). Here there is only Name and Form. These change with such an astonishing speed that it cannot be described. Even the changing of form is extremely rapid. The Supreme Buddha states that the mind changes with a speed so great that no comparison can even be given to describe it.

So, that is how it is. Then, when the perception of a heap (*rāsi-saññā*) arises, form is scattered. Just now we mentioned that the Supreme Buddha said to scatter form. "Scattering form" does not mean breaking it into pieces and throwing it away. It does not mean tearing off arms and legs and throwing them aside, or throwing away the head. This does not refer to committing suicide. When reflecting in accordance with the Dhamma, to scatter form, one must cultivate one's wisdom—insight wisdom (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). When *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) is applied correctly, and mindfulness and clear comprehension are applied, and the meditation attention is maintained in that proper manner, that person sees not only their own body but even the parts of others' bodies as a heap. Even when looking at a tree, it is no longer the previous perception of "a tree." There are times when it appears as if a heap of leaves has been gathered and hung on a tree. Even when looking at a waterfall, in that same way, the perception of a heap arises regarding everything. That is when form is scattered.

Regarding *Vedanā* (Feeling), the simile we just mentioned is sufficient. Perception (*saññā*) is also like that. Perception is shown to be like a mirage. This is a simile we frequently use. Why is the deer deceived by the mirage? There is a heap of layers of perception here. That which is seen in the distance changes little by little as one gets closer to it. But based on the perception previously formed, one thinks: "What I am seeing here is exactly the same thing." Something is seen in the distance; it looks beautiful. Let us say a beautiful mountain is seen over there. So, with great effort, one goes there. With every step taken, the levels of perception change even faster. But due to ignorance (*avijjā*) and delusion (*moha*), this is not understood. So, one goes and looks, and foolishly returns, thinking, "Ah, I am seeing the same mountain and the same scenery that I saw from over there." But this scenery seen from here is like a mirage. One cannot go there and see it again. When one gets there, it is different. This is how everything is.

Regarding the mind, it is even more subtle. Until the Dhamma of the Supreme Buddha finally penetrated among beings, not only Brahmins but everyone thought either that the mind is the self, or that *Vedanā* (Feeling) is the self. If someone accepted that there is no self in form, they next grasped *Vedanā*. If they said there is no self in *Vedanā*, they grasped perception. Thus, step by step, they finally got stuck in *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness), thinking that *Viññāṇa* is indeed the self. And no one else can disprove it either. So, they grasp that. But the Supreme Buddha points out that there is a certain way to understand even the *Anattā* (Not-self) nature of this *Viññāṇa*, and that is what is called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). Through the proper method, at some point, even this *Viññāṇa* can be understood. It is through that understanding that *Viññāṇa* ceases. The terms "scattering," "breaking down," and "destroying" *Viññāṇa* are used to refer to the cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇa-nirodha*). The state where *Viññāṇa* is finally ceased is what is called Nibbāna.

So, in one sense, this Nibbāna is right here. "Right here" means within the five aggregates. That is why the Supreme Buddha declared: "Within this very fathom-long body, I point out the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world which is Nibbāna, and the path leading to it." From this, we see that what the Supreme Buddha pointed to is the eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*). The ordinary worldly person possesses only the physical eye. Looking with the physical eye, people grasp this world through the perception of compactness. Going a little further than that, obtaining various levels of absorption (*jhāna*) and supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*), they still get stuck in the Brahma worlds. Even then, they cannot remove the perception of self. This is a result of the ignorance (*avijjā*) present in the world, due to ignorance and *Taṇhā* (Craving). But when one acts in accordance with the Dhamma—the Noble Eightfold Path, the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), etc., taught by the Supreme Buddha—at some point, the yogi realizes that these houses they are grasping are indeed only toy houses, not real houses.

Then, if they are not real houses, some might use the word "annihilation" (*uccheda*). Some think that the Dhamma preached by the Supreme Buddha is annihilationism (*uccheda-vāda*). They think of annihilationism as a destruction akin to committing suicide. But it is nothing of the sort here. It is seeing things as they really are (*yathā-bhūta*). No one can object to seeing things as they really are. Why does one see this? To eliminate this suffering. Why? Because the problem of *Dukkha* (Suffering) is what the world faces. On certain occasions, those Brahmins accused the Supreme Buddha: "This ascetic Gotama teaches a path that destroys an existing self, a self that truly exists. It is a destructive teaching that destroys families," they accused the Buddha. The Supreme Buddha declared: "They make this false accusation against me for something I do not say. For in the past, as also now, I lay down only *Dukkha* and the cessation of *Dukkha*. The problem before me is the problem of suffering. I have given a solution to eliminate suffering. So, you cannot blame me." Next, what was shown as suffering? We come back to that story of Māra. "This form too is suffering (*Dukkha*). This form is Māra. *Vedanā* (Feeling) too is Māra."

Although not directly relevant at this moment, since the story of Sopāka was mentioned, let us bring it in. The child Sopāka was bound to a corpse. A corpse is something that does not belong to oneself. Consequently, it caused great suffering to the child Sopāka. When we observe this in light of what was said about form, we see that every one of us is bound to form. We have to go along with this form. As mentioned before, it must be lifted up, fed, given drink, dressed, and applied with perfume and powder. This is the trouble of this form. The same applies to the others too. That is why the Supreme Buddha called this Māra. Something that does not belong to us has been bound and tied to us. That bond is *Taṇhā* (Craving) and *Upādāna* (Grasping). Due to ignorance, a division is created. Going a little deeper, what exists here? Here too, we must return to the story of the dirt houses. Ultimately, what exists here is only a heap of dirt. Only a heap of dirt.

In those days, there were open cemeteries (charnel grounds), though they do not exist now. There are many lessons to be learned in an open cemetery. When a body is cast there, after a few days, the body becomes bloated and fat, far fatter than could ever be achieved by eating and drinking. Bloated and swollen, it turns blue and bursts. Having burst, pus and bodily fluids flow out from one side. Meanwhile, wild beasts come, devour it, and tear it into pieces. Finally, only the bones remain. Over time, even those turn to dust. If you go and look at a cemetery or a graveyard, there are many things to learn. Ultimately, it is dust. Only a heap of dust. It finally reduces to those four elements: earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). Only the story of the four elements exists here. Four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind.

Now, those of you who practice meditation know that the Supreme Buddha has declared, even when taking food, as a meditation: "In this food I consume, there exist only the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind. Within my body too, the same exists." So, ultimately, what happens is that those four elements merge with these four elements. However, there is a difference. That difference is created by our *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness).

Now, this body, this form, is generally called *upādinna* (clutched/grasped by consciousness). This portion that is firmly grasped is what we guard so closely as our body. What is external is called *anupādinna* (not grasped by consciousness). We do not hold onto that to the same extent. We use it to sustain, protect, and look after this clutched body (*upādinna*). That is why we consume food and drink. Thus, *upādinna* refers to that which, at the beginning of life, whether in a mother's womb or elsewhere, we prepare from those four elements in accordance with karma. We prepare it through the power of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) in a manner that yields a certain *Bhava* (Becoming). If there are grave unwholesome deeds, one is born blind or deaf. If there is spiritual merit, one is born with a better form, as a person of capability.

In whatever way, there is that clutched body—next, emerging from the mother's womb, it enters the world as a person. Then, from the moment of birth, it conducts a transaction with the world. The very first transaction is breathing. What is contained within breathing? The surrounding air is taken into this body. But that too cannot be held as

"mine"; it must be expelled. That is what is called inhalation and exhalation (*āśvāsa-praśvāsa*), or *ānāpāna*. So, right there, that process is visible. Here there is a competition, a dividing. The primary step to look after this clutched body (*upādinna*) is breathing. Taking in this inhalation, taking in a breath, giving a kind of fresh life to this body, and then expelling the waste.

It is the same with food. It is the same with drink. This very transaction is what is called life. Life is—when expressed in accordance with the Dhamma—the competition between the clutched (*upādinna*) and the non-clutched (*anupādinna*). Or else, it is the guarding of the clutched by utilizing the non-clutched. This cage called "mine" is protected and nourished by gathering those external form-elements. Within this lies *Dukkha* (Suffering). Here lies the entire aggregate, and here also lies fear.

Sometimes, afflicted by various unimaginably terrible illnesses, this cage is barely breathing. Someone might say, "Oh, it would be better for me to die than to suffer like this." But despite saying so, secretly in their heart there remains: "It would be good if some skilled doctor came and saved me. It would be good if I could live for at least one more day." This is exactly what is called *Taṇhā* (Craving) and *Upādāna* (Grasping). The Supreme Buddha declares that as long as this exists, there is no peace for the world. One must direct one's mind deeply to that simile of the toy houses.

In fact, many philosophers view the Supreme Buddha's teaching of *Anattā* (Not-self) as a problem. They ask, "When teaching the Dhamma of *Anattā*, is the Buddha not telling us to destroy these? Is this not a very dangerous philosophy?" But the Supreme Buddha explains that what exists here is *Dukkha* (Suffering), or rather, a disease. Just as we mentioned a tumor—a tumor, a disease. A doctor cures the disease, but he cannot cure the disease while leaving the pus inside. The pus must be pulled out. The thorn is pulled out, and the pus is pulled out to cure the disease. But you cannot cure the disease while keeping all of these. This is the kind of problem the world has.

So, that story of the young children and the toy houses helps us understand this. Indeed, if someone else comes while those young children are playing and smashes and breaks those toy houses, the children will fight and cry. But when understanding comes to those very children, they kick them, strike them with their hands, throw them away, and break them down.

The Blessed One points to exactly the same thing. Thus, one who has correctly understood the Supreme Buddha's Dhamma and developed right view eliminates those perverted views. We can compare perverted views to looking at a scene while standing on one's head. It is an entirely upside-down view. In short, what is *Anicca* (Impermanent) is truly impermanent, yet one regards it as permanent. What is truly *Dukkha* (Suffering) is regarded as pleasurable. What is truly not-self cannot be kept under one's control as "I" and "mine." Underlying this perception of self is the idea that it can be kept under one's control, that it can be owned, grasped, and that it exists for one's protection.

But the Supreme Buddha points out that one does not even have protection for oneself. There is no protection from those external sources we seek, such as parents and children.

Even the doctors sought at the final moment cannot protect us. There is a limit to that as well. Thus, not a single one of these can be guarded in that way. What is real protection? When *Taṇhā* (Craving) and grasping toward every single one of these are abandoned, there lies the peace one hopes for.

For instance, even at home, when we hear a glassware breaking, we suddenly feel disturbed. But if we understand beforehand that it is something already broken, that it is something useless, then the shock is less. Similarly, the Supreme Buddha points out that these are things that are constantly breaking. This form is breaking down rapidly. *Vedanā* (Feeling) is breaking down constantly. But through the perception of compactness, we grasp them, thinking: "This is my form, this is my feeling." Thus, it is because of that wrong understanding, that wrong grasping, that the tremor occurs. If at some point, directing the eye of wisdom, one understands: "This very same thing occurred even while I was alive." That is what is referred to nowadays as momentary death (*khaṇika-maraṇa*). One sees momentary death. From moment to moment, this changes rapidly to a state that is not mine. *Vedanā* also changes in the same way. That happiness comes precisely through that vision.

By "happiness," we do not mean grasping with the perception of compactness, but rather this very vision. That is, it exists based on a relationship of causes and conditions; apart from this causal relationship, there is absolutely no eternally existing self in any of these heaps. These are only five heaps. Because of that understanding, to the extent one sees it, there is peace. That is why the Supreme Buddha declared in the Dhamma:

"*Yato yato sammasati, udayabbayaṃ labhati pīti-pāmojjaṃ, amataṃ taṃ vijānataṃ*."

As mentioned in a verse of the Dhammapada, whenever the yogi, through close contemplation, beholds the arising and passing away of these aggregates, he obtains rapture and joy. A great joy arises in that person. That is an insight-born rapture, not like the joy of shouting, dancing, and drinking alcohol. Some might think, "What a miserable time (*Dukkha*) yogis must undergo, going far into the forest alone among wild beasts!" Yet, in that very situation, rapture and joy arise. Why? Because when one beholds how the five aggregates change from moment to moment, a great happiness arises: "Was this not what I was holding onto for so long?" Now, that grasping, that *Upādāna* (Grasping), keeps breaking down. The state where this understanding is established is what is called Nibbāna. The complete, direct realization of this understanding is what constitutes the knowledge of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-ñāṇa*).

Even while alive, what exists here is only a fivefold aggregate of *Upādāna* (Grasping). There is nothing to be taken as "I" or "mine." It is not a single unit, but a heap, a mass. If someone sees that, with respect to each one of these, there is only a collection of arisings and passings away as *Nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form), that person directs their mind to the causal relationship. Then there is no oppression. The mind is directed to that, to this change. When this change is seen as a natural law (*dhammatā*), there is nothing there to change. Ultimately, only if one takes that form as a single unit does it "change." Now, what is seen is the changing itself. The mind goes to the heap of arisings and passings

away. It is then that that rapture and joy arise. That is the Deathless (*amata*). That is why it is called the Deathless. Then, there is no death.

Thus, the Deathless pointed out by the Supreme Buddha is that very freedom from the fear of death. The Supreme Buddha describes this as an imaginary fear, like the fear of an anthill. The fear exists only if one conceives that there is a cobra inside the anthill. It is because of the belief that there is a "self-cobra" inside this body that fear exists in the world. But if at some point one sees: "This is just an empty anthill, there is no self inside it"—if that is directly realized by someone, then at that moment, because there is no more *Taṇhā* (Craving), there is no grasping.

The most dangerous thing is the unquenched *Taṇhā* (Craving) within us and the grasping called *Upādāna* (Grasping). As long as these exist, those wishes and expectations that could not be fulfilled in this life are carried over to the next life. Next, one goes and is born in another place. Even then, it is not as one wishes, but in accordance with the karma one has performed. In this way, one travels in Saṃsāra for a long time. But if someone understands right here that neither within this form called the body, nor within *Vedanā* (Feeling), nor within perception, nor within *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), nor within any single one of them is there any substance worthy of being taken as "I" or "self" as previously conceived—they see its essenceless nature. You have frequently heard the similes given by the Supreme Buddha for each of these aggregates. Form is like a lump of foam. Is a lump of foam a single solid unit?

Next, *Vedanā* (Feeling) is like a water bubble, rising during a rain shower. Water bubbles keep arising and passing away. Perception is like a mirage, as mentioned earlier. *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) is like the trunk of a banana tree. A banana trunk has no heartwood; it is completely made up of layer upon layer of sheaths. Next, *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness) is ultimately like an illusion (*māyā*), showing something that is not there as if it exists. That non-existent thing is the "self." It displays it as if it exists, and that is what is grasped as "I" and "mine." Thus, according to the vision of the Supreme Buddha, all this *Dukkha* (Suffering) arises from conceiving that a non-existent self exists. It is through that understanding that everyone obtains the cessation, the peace, the supreme peace, the supreme tranquility, the Deathless that they hope for.

So, you must reflect that on this valuable Poya day, you have observed a certain virtue, such as the Poya Eight Precepts, as a way of joining that path to Nibbāna, that practice. The Supreme Buddha points out that although the child Sopāka attained this understanding quickly because of the power of the perfections (*pāramī*) he had fulfilled over a long period, let no one think that merely by listening to a Dhamma sermon or merely by hearing a verse, this deep direct realization will be obtained. The Supreme Buddha has shown the practice to be undertaken for this, in terms of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Thus, in accordance with that step of virtue, by observing the precepts today to some extent, your body and speech have been disciplined. Next, to the best of your ability, through meditation and concentration, by unifying your thoughts, you must develop mindfulness and concentration.

Even more deeply, if you maintain *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) in a manner that understands the Three Characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self), establishing right seeing, then, by obtaining the association of true noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), generating the appropriate perception for these activities, and engaging in them, you will be able to stop running in this wheel of Saṃsāra that you have done for an extremely long time. You will be able to free yourselves from those perverted views and realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna in this very life through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship. May all these wholesome deeds be a supportive condition for that! I make this wish. May all beings in this universe, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including our departed relatives, who rejoice in these wholesome merits gathered through preaching and listening to the Dhamma, by rejoicing in them, be freed as quickly as possible from all samsaric *Dukkha* (Suffering) such as *Jāti* (Birth), decay, sickness, and death (*Jarāmaraṇa*), and may they find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna. With this wish, let us share these merits by reciting the verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #148

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.98)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Sabbābhibhū sabbavidūhamasmi,

Sabbesu dhammesu anūpalitto;

Sabbañjaho taṇhākkhaye vimutto,

Sayaṃ abhiññāya kamuddiseyyaṃ.

Na me ācariyo atthi,

Sadiso me na vijjati;

Sadevakasmiṃ lokasmiṃ,

Natthi me paṭipuggalo.

Ahaṃ hi arahā loke,

Ahaṃ satthā anuttaro;

Ekomhi sammāsambuddho,

Sītibhūto'smi nibbuto.

Dhammacakkaṃ pavattetuṃ,

Gacchāmi kāsinam puraṃ;

Andhabhūtasmiṃ lokasmiṃ,

Āhañchiṃ amatadundubhin-ti."

From:

"Majjhima Nikāya 26 (Ariyapariyesana Sutta)

Dhammapada Verses 353"

Dear Listeners,

Meeting a true noble friend (*kalyāṇamitta*) is a memorable occasion in one's life. Through meeting a noble friend, an opportunity is afforded to guide even a life that has gone astray back to the correct path. The greatest noble friend who ever appeared in this world is our Fully Self-Enlightened Buddha. Recalling the memorable occasion of meeting Him, we intend to present, through the guidance of these verses, how a certain helpless individual came to a firm decision regarding putting an end to the Suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra.

After attaining Supreme Enlightenment, while the Buddha was traveling to Benares to preach the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, He met an Ājīvaka named Upaka on the way. An Ājīvaka means someone who lived according to a certain religious philosophy at that time. Seeing the serene nature of the Buddha's faculties and the gentle, radiant quality of His physical complexion, this Ājīvaka Upaka was pleased and said, 'Friend, your faculties are extremely serene. Your complexion and physical color are exceedingly pure. On whose account have you gone forth? Who is your teacher? What Dhamma do you follow?' It was then that the Buddha expounded the verses we recited earlier, as an introduction of Himself.

'*Sabbābhibhū*'—I am one who has conquered everything. '*Sabbavidūhamasmi*'—I am one who has known everything. '*Sabbesu dhammesu anūpalitto*'—with regard to all phenomena (*dhammas*), with regard to all things, I am untainted. '*Sabbañjaho vimutto*'—I am liberated by abandoning everything and through the destruction of Craving (*taṇhā*). '*Sayaṃ abhiññāya kamuddiseyyaṃ*'—having understood this Dhamma thoroughly by myself, whom should I point to as my teacher? '*Na me ācariyo atthi*'—I have no teacher. '*Sadiso me na vijjati*'—there is no one equal to me. '*Sadevakasmiṃ lokasmiṃ na atthi me paṭipuggalo*'—in the world together with its devas, there is no counterpart who can equal me or approach me.

'*Ahaṃ hi arahā loke ahaṃ satthā anuttaro*'—I indeed am the Arahant in the world, the incomparable, supreme Teacher. I am the one who has attained perfect self-awakening (*Sammāsambodhi*) all alone. '*Sītibhūtosmi nibbuto*'—I have become cooled, I am extinguished/stilled (Nibbāna). '*Dhammacakkaṃ pavattetuṃ gacchāmi kāsinam puraṃ*'—To set the Wheel of Dhamma in motion, I am going to the city of Kāsī. In this blinded world, I shall beat the drum of the Deathless. Beating the drum of the Deathless means sounding the great drum of the deathless state of Nibbāna. In this manner, the Buddha made an introduction of Himself. Then Upaka the Ājīvaka said, 'Now, according to what you say, you deserve the name *Anantajina*.' *Anantajina* means one who has conquered all things. Thereupon, the Buddha declared in another verse, 'Yes, that is true.

Because I have destroyed the defilements (*āsavas*) and conquered all unwholesome actions, it is fitting to use the name *Jina* (Conqueror) for me.' Hearing this, Upaka the Ājīvaka said, 'It may be so, friend,' shook his head, and went his own way.

Next, the story of this Ājīvaka Upaka is recorded as follows. He went to a province called Vaṅgahāra. Having gone to a village of deer-hunters in that province, he began to live there. The chief hunter of those deer-hunters was pleased with this Ājīvaka, developed faith in him, and, believing him to be an Arahant, began to support him by offering daily alms food and other requisites. While they were living in this manner, on one occasion, this deer-hunter had to go hunting in a distant village. At that time, he told his daughter named Cāpā, as well as his other children and relatives, 'Look after my Arahant well while I am away.' After the deer-hunter left, the next day when this Ājīvaka Upaka came to the hunter's house, the daughter named Cāpā came forward to offer him alms. Upon seeing her, a mind of lust (*rāga*) arose in this Ājīvaka Upaka; without even consuming the alms food he had received, he set it aside and lay down starving, without taking any food, thinking, 'If I get this woman Cāpā, I will live. Otherwise, I shall die.' Thus, seven days passed. After seven days, as soon as the deer-hunter returned home, he asked, 'How is it? Did you attend to my Arahant?' Then the daughter said, 'He came for alms food only on one day.'

Thereupon, running in a hurry to see him, the hunter found this Ājīvaka lying down, massaged his feet, and asked, 'Venerable sir, what is your illness?' But he did not answer; he just tossed and turned from side to side. When the hunter repeatedly pleaded, 'Please tell me, tell me. I will do everything I can for you,' Upaka eventually indicated his intention. Then this deer-hunter asked, 'Do you know any craft, science, or trade that you can practice?' Upaka replied, 'I have not learned anything like that.' The hunter said, 'Then it will be difficult to lead a household life.' Upaka replied, 'In that case, I will carry your carrying-pole of meat, take it to the market, and sell it; I will do that job.' The hunter said, 'Very well.' Since this Ājīvaka was weak, the deer-hunter kept him at a friend’s house for a few days, and then brought him home and gave his daughter in marriage to him. In the course of time, a child named Subhadda was born to them. This woman named Cāpā would lull the baby to sleep, saying mockingly, 'Son of the Ājīvaka, son of the meat-seller, do not cry, do not cry,' lulling the child in a way that hurt Upaka's feelings. When she repeated this for several days, this Ājīvaka became angry and said, 'Do not think that I am a helpless person. I have a friend named Anantajina. If you abuse me in this way, I will go to my friend!'

As this went on continuously, one day he got extremely angry and prepared to leave. At that time Cāpā—who, after he became a householder, addressed this Ājīvaka Upaka by the name 'Kāla'—tried to stop him, saying, 'Kāla, do not go. Do not be angry like that. Both I and my relatives are very submissive to you.' But when Kāla firmly held onto his decision and prepared to leave, she began to describe her own beauty and asked, 'Where are you going, abandoning a beautiful woman like me?' Then Upaka said, 'Even a little of what you say is enough for someone who has affection for you. But you cannot stop me like that. You are trying to stop me just as a bird-catcher tries to catch a bird. I will definitely go!' Next Cāpā said, 'What about your son? How can you leave a child like this

and go?' Upaka replied, 'Wise people abandon their children, wives, relatives, and wealth, and go forth to ordain.' She threatened him, saying, 'Then if you go, I will beat this child to death; I will throw him on the ground.' Thereupon, Upaka said, 'Even if you feed this child to dogs and jackals, I will not turn back!' and prepared to leave. Finally, Cāpā asked, 'Very well then, to whom are you going? In which direction? To which city are you going?' He then replied, 'Far beyond the Neranjara river lives my friend named Anantajina, the Blessed, Fully Self-Enlightened Buddha. He expounds the Dhamma to bring an end to all Suffering (*dukkha*). I am going to Him. He is my Teacher!'

At that moment, for some reason, a certain faith arose in Cāpā, and she said, 'Very well then, if you are going, pay homage to the Tathāgata on my behalf, and circumambulate Him.' Upaka replied, 'I will certainly do that,' and departed in search of the Buddha. By that time, the Buddha was residing in the Jetavana Monastery in Sāvatthī. The Buddha foresaw this occasion. Having seen it, He told the Saṅgha beforehand, 'If anyone comes and asks, "Where is Anantajina?", bring that person to Me.' So, Upaka traveled from place to place, searching and calling out, 'Where is Anantajina? Where is Anantajina?' He arrived at Jetavana, sat in the middle of the monastery, and said, 'I need to see the Venerable Anantajina.' The Saṅgha then escorted him to the Buddha. Upaka asked, 'Can the Blessed One recognize me?' The Buddha replied, 'Yes, I remember you. Where have you been all this time?' He answered, 'In the province of Vaṅgahāra.'

'You are old now, aren't you? Wouldn't it be good to ordain?' the Buddha asked. Upaka replied, 'I would like very much to ordain.' The Buddha assigned a monk to ordain him. After he was ordained, the Buddha gave him meditation topics (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Meditating intensely, before long, Upaka attained the stage of Non-returner (*Anāgāmī*). Having attained the state of a Non-returner, as mentioned in the Dhamma, when he passed away, he was reborn in the Brahma realm called Aviha—which is one of the Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsa*) where Non-returners are born—and attained Arahantship immediately upon birth. The Dhamma records the names of seven monks, including Upaka, who attained Arahantship immediately upon being born in the Aviha Brahma realm and in due course attained final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*). That is the special event recorded there. Furthermore, it is said that after Upaka left, due to the grief and sorrow caused by it, Cāpā also followed the very path Upaka had taken, met the Buddha, ordained in the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha, became an Arahant Bhikkhunī, and attained final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*).

If we take this Dhamma story in brief, there is immense value in it. We usually consider the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* as the first Dhamma sermon of the Buddha. Yet, even in these few short verses, to a certain extent, we can see the Buddha declaring His Buddhahood to the world. It is apparent that ancient teachers also paid attention to this. They say, 'Even so, why is this not considered the first Dhamma sermon? It is because Upaka, who listened to it, did not attain any path or fruit (*magga-phala*) merely by hearing it. It only became a supportive potentiality (*vāsanā-sampatti*) for the Ājīvaka Upaka.' That is to say, it served as a help. We thought of paying some attention to the way it helped. In this day and age, some who attempt to analyze such events using

modern critical concepts develop views that are disparaging of the Buddha. In these verses delivered by the Buddha, His Buddhahood and His unique spiritual powers were proclaimed. Some consider this to be self-praise. They ask, 'When Upaka asked, "Who are you?", why did the Buddha give such a long self-description, only for Upaka the Ājīvaka to say, "It may be so," and walk away?' Why the Buddha gave such a lengthy introduction is a question for some, since it appeared to yield no immediate result. However, from the subsequent events, we can infer that since the Buddha possessed clear knowledge of the past, future, and the flow of time, He made this declaration about His Buddhahood to the Ājīvaka Upaka knowing this full well.

Let us take a small illustration to make it easier for people of today to understand. Let us suppose a specialist doctor sees that someone is likely to fall ill. So, beforehand, the doctor gives him a card containing his list of medical degrees—what is called a 'visiting card' these days—saying, 'If you fall seriously ill, come to my clinic.' The Buddha did something similar. The Buddha has also introduced Himself in various places in the Dhamma as '*sallakatto anuttaro*'—the incomparable surgeon. What does this surgeon do? The Buddha pulls out the dart of Craving (*taṇhā*) that is pierced in the heart; He pulls out that poisoned arrow. Thus, what was done here was pulling out the dart that was pierced in the Ājīvaka Upaka. Truly, the dart was of two kinds. Here, in the word 'Cāpā,' we are not speaking according to symbolism, yet there is a wonderful coincidence. The meaning of the word 'Cāpā' is 'bow.' Thus, Upaka the Ājīvaka was one who suffered from both the flower-arrow and the stone-arrow shot from that bow. He came to receive medicine for this, not to the clinic of that incomparable surgeon, but to His dispensation (*sāsana*). That is the only difference. Having entered the dispensation of the Buddha, he cured that wound. From this, we can see the greatness of the Buddha. It was out of compassion for Upaka that He described so much about Himself, about the Supreme Enlightenment He had attained, about having eradicated the defilements, and even declared where He was heading. Why did He declare, 'I am going to the city of Benares, to the country of the Kāsī people, to beat the great drum of the Deathless, to sound the drum of the deathless state of Nibbāna in the blinded world'? It was to provide Upaka with an opportunity to meet Him when the time was ripe. It is this natural lawfulness (*dhammatā*) that we must see there.

Furthermore, through that story, we can understand how this Suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra manifests to each individual. As an Ājīvaka, he was one who spent such a spiritual life, practicing extremely difficult ascetic vows. Yet, he underwent an extraordinary life transformation by getting caught up in the defilements. The Buddha must have seen this due to some entanglement of kamma. Ultimately, having developed an attachment for Cāpā, he entered household life, and through that, he developed weariness (*nibbidā*), which is disenchantment with saṃsāra. Because of that intense weariness, even though Cāpā reminded him of her beauty as well as of their child and made various attempts, he did not listen to any of it. According to the firm decision he had made, he went in search of the Buddha to put an end to Suffering (*dukkha*). Not only that, the other outcome was that finally, Cāpā also came and became an Arahant Bhikkhunī. The dispensation was nourished by the arrival of those two. It was in view of

such events that the Buddha presented His powers, like a list of degrees, to afford someone the opportunity to put an end to Suffering (*dukkha*).

Through that story too, we can understand the value of the Buddha's knowledge; by that very token, we can understand how a person is transformed through the very trials and Suffering (*dukkha*) of life. In this entire saṃsāra, there are only three aspects: gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*). The aspect of gratification relates to the five-fold sensual pleasures. The Buddha states that indeed, if there were no gratification in this world, beings would not be attached to these five-fold sensual pleasures. He acknowledges that it exists. Yet, it is little; mostly there is danger. When one understands this, a weariness arises through that itself. Through that weariness, thinking deeply about a solution to this, escape (*nissaraṇa*)—which is departure—arises. This person who went as far as (becoming an Ājīvaka) was someone who spent a religious life. Having reflected on the manner of his downfall and realized, 'Such a thing happened to me because I was deceived by this female form,' he abandoned everything, fled, and having revived (his spiritual potential), attained that (liberation). So, from this, we can understand the factors that help a human life to incline toward Nibbāna. Indeed, not only through such external events, but the Buddha points out that for a wise person, merely reflecting on these five aggregates is enough to abandon five-fold sensuality or to flee, in order to put an end to the Suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra.

The Buddha once presented that matter to the Saṅgha through a deep and meaningful allegorical story. This is how the story goes: 'Monks, suppose there are four snakes of highly virulent poison. A man comes there who dislikes Suffering (*dukkha*), desires happiness, wishes to live, and dislikes death. The people standing nearby tell him, "Here are four snakes of highly virulent poison. Now, you must wake these snakes up at the right time, bathe them, feed them, and put them to sleep. This is the daily routine you have to perform for these snakes. If even one of these snakes becomes angry, you will meet either death or Suffering (*dukkha*) equal to death. Do as you please." Then this man does not accept that task; he runs away in fear. He runs away in fear of these four snakes.'

'While he is running to escape, several people on the way tell him, "Five hostile executioners are coming behind you to kill you. They will kill you wherever they catch you; do what you must." This man, in even greater fear, runs even further away. As he runs, another group of people tell him, "Now a sixth one is coming in the guise of a friend, showing himself as an intimate companion, but carrying a raised sword. Prepared to cut off your neck the moment (he catches you), a sixth executioner is also coming behind you." Then this person runs faster and faster in extreme fear. As he goes, he comes across an empty village. He enters the houses in that empty village. Upon entering, every single house is vacant. Even the vessels in the houses are empty. Then those nearby tell him, "Look, a band of village-plundering bandits is coming to raid this village, to enter this empty village. Do what you can." So, this man runs away from there too. Running on and on, he encounters a body of water. He encounters a great body of water. There, this person realized: "This near shore is full of fear, extremely dangerous.

The far shore is free of fear, safe. But there is neither a ship nor a bridge. So, what is to be done?" He breaks branches of trees nearby, binds them into a raft, and with the help of that raft, putting forth the energy and effort of his hands and feet, he crosses over to the far shore using the raft. Indeed, the person who has gone to the far shore is called a Brahmin. He reaches (safety).'

Having presented this allegorical story, the Buddha then explains the simile. He explains to the Saṅgha what this simile referred to, analyzing its respective components. The four snakes are explained as the four great elements: earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). These are the four great elements of which our body is composed. Thus, these four great elements are presented as four snakes. What everyone does in their life, day after day, is to wake these four up at the right time, bathe them, feed them, and put them to sleep. This body is indeed made of these four elements. Furthermore, these snakes suddenly become provoked. That is what is called the provocation of wind, provocation of bile/phlegm, etc. Due to imbalances of these four elements, they become provoked, and sometimes one dies, or else falls prey to disorders and diseases equal to death. It was to state this that the Buddha gave the simile of the four highly venomous snakes. Then he flees from them. Fleeing means turning one's mind away. That is the meaning intended here. It is not something that happens through external events. Looking at one's own body, one sees these four elements as four snakes. Knowing that 'I must wake them up, bathe them, feed them, and after doing all that, the moment one gets angry, I will fall into trouble,' that person runs. He runs away from there.

While running, those people tell him, 'You cannot escape by running. Look, five executioners, hostile executioners, are coming behind you to kill you the moment they catch you.' Who are these five? The Buddha explains that they are the five aggregates of Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*pañcupādānakkhandha*): material form (*rūpa*), Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). As we all know, the Buddha does not analyze a person as someone who possesses a soul or self. Instead, He explains them as these five aggregates, five heaps, which are constantly changing, of an Impermanent / Inconstant (*anicca*) nature, of a nature of Suffering (*dukkha*), and of a Not-self / Non-self / Unsubstantial (*anattā*) nature. These five heaps are indeed represented as the executioners. In other places, the Buddha has explained this further. Why are these called executioners? It is only as long as material form, Feeling / Sensation, etc., exist that there is death or the fear of death for a person. The concept of 'one who dies' arises in dependence on these five aggregates, not outside of them. That is why they are called executioners. As long as we grasp these five, the fear of death remains. What is being said there is that as long as we hold onto the five aggregates of Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)—rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, and viññāṇa—and as long as there is attachment to them, we have the fear of death. Therefore, the next part describes running away, abandoning them as well.

Next, the sixth one mentioned is a somewhat deep matter. While those five are overt enemies, this executioner comes in the guise of a friend, like a spy. The Buddha has

identified him as *nandirāga* (delight and lust). In the Dhamma, *nandirāga* means delighting and lusting, delight and attachment. This is a very subtle thing. Delighting and attaching appear as a friend. To the Ājīvaka Upaka too, that feeling appeared as a friend. The disaster that came out of it was that ultimately he got caught in that bondage and entangled in a huge heap of Suffering (*dukkha*). In the end, he had to carry the load of meat for Māra. It is something like that. That is to say, the sixth executioner. When told that he too is coming, running in even greater fear, next he encounters an empty village, as it is said.

As the empty village, the Buddha points to the six-fold sense-base (*saḷāyatana*), which are taught in the Dhamma as the six internal bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Why are they called 'empty' here? Because there is no self (*attā*) in any of them. The eye is Not-self / Non-self / Unsubstantial (*anattā*). There is no such thing as a self inside the eye, even though in conventional terms we use 'I' and 'mine.' The ear is the same. The view of self (*atta-diṭṭhi*) mostly lingers in dependence on these: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Yet the Buddha says they are empty (*suñña*). There is nothing here to be taken as a self. These are like empty villages.

Next, the village-plundering bandits are shown as the external sense-bases (*bāhirāyatana*). That is to say, forms (*rūpa*) come to plunder the eye; sounds (*sadda*) come to plunder the ear. Plundering means looting or exploiting. It is because of this obstruction to the eye that they are called plundering bandits. When you go to a city, how many things come before this eye as if saying, 'look at me, look at me!' To the ear, too, similar sounds come. These are just like plundering bandits. Finally, the thoughts that come to the mind—that too is a great nuisance. That is what the Buddha is conveying to the world through these similes. Thus, in the end, one flees even from these six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). When that person runs on and on, abandoning that as well, he sees a great body of water. The Buddha also explains that body of water according to the Dhamma. What is that body of water? He explains it as the four torrents (*oghas*): sensuality (*kāma*), Becoming / Existence (*bhava*), views (*diṭṭhi*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). This torrent of sensuality (*kāmogha*) is the longest river in saṃsāra, in which the entire world is swept away. Just as a great torrent of water rushes, breaking and sweeping away everything in streams and rivers after a rain, in the same way, the torrent of sensuality flows. Similarly, *bhava* means Becoming / Existence, the desire for existence. Views (*diṭṭhi*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) are the same. It is by getting caught in these torrents that beings experience Suffering (*dukkha*) for a long time in saṃsāra.

So, that person thinks: 'This near shore is full of fear.' The Buddha explains 'this near shore' as *sakkāya* (existing group/body). The term *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body) is very common in usage. Its meaning is as follows. When looking at it according to the Dhamma, everything—material form (*rūpa*), Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—is an aggregate (*khandha*). The meaning of that word is a heap, a collection. Although it is a heap, to the ordinary person, it does not appear as a heap. Because of this, they take them as a self. The idea of taking them as a

self is like this. Let us say someone takes a photograph. Taking the photograph, they say, 'This is me.' Similarly, there is an image that falls on the mind regarding oneself. What is presented as identity is someone's photograph as if it is identical (to a permanent self). It is not identical; it changes moment by moment. Yet, that image captured by the mind is mistakenly thought of as permanent. Similarly, what everyone calls 'I, I' is this body built of those four elements, which is constantly changing—the aggregate of material form (*rūpakkhandha*). Because of not understanding material form as a heap, one takes it as a single unit. To see a heap indeed as a heap, insight (*vipassanā*) is necessary. Special seeing is necessary. Without that, the perception of an ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) who has not attained path and fruit is that one's body is a permanent thing. That person's idea of 'changing' is something like getting older according to social convention. But inside this cage of a body, there are numerous constantly occurring changes; because this is not understood, one thinks it exists (permanently). *Sat-kāya-diṭṭhi*. The perception that the heap itself exists, remaining unchanged, is what is called the Dogma of self-illusion / View of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). This is the case with regard to material form, and also with regard to Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*). Even with Feeling / Sensation, let us say someone goes to a doctor. Going there, they say, 'I have had this pain in my leg in this manner since yesterday.' The doctor asks, 'Is it the very same Feeling / Sensation you had yesterday?' 'Yes, indeed, it is the very same Feeling / Sensation.' But not even for a single moment does Feeling / Sensation remain in the same manner.

From the simile the Buddha gave regarding material form, you must have understood its nature as a collection. The perception of a collection actually arises through insight (*vipassanā*). The ordinary world takes it as a single unit. The simile the Buddha gave for material form is a lump of froth floating down a stream. When there is a large lump of froth on a river, from afar it appears as a white substance, as a solid thing. It is the same with Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*)—it is like water bubbles. When it rains and water pours from the roof, bubbles rapidly arise and pass away. But the ordinary world does not think of Feeling / Sensation in that manner. Taking Feeling / Sensation as something unchanging, they grasp it as 'I'; that is how they grasp pleasant Feeling / Sensation (*sukha-vedanā*) and clash with Feeling / Sensation of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha-vedanā*). They think of it as something that persists. But the Buddha declares that here there is only a multitude of constant arisings and passings away. Because the rapidly occurring continuity of arising and passing away is not seen, due to the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), one takes it as a single unit.

It is the same with the others. Perception (*saññā*) is compared to a mirage. There too, there is a collection. With that perception of a mirage, holding the feeling that there is something unchanging there, the deer runs after it. What is said about Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*) is also very well-known. Why did the Buddha compare them to a plantain (banana) trunk? A person who has no understanding of a plantain trunk thinks it has heartwood. But the Buddha declares that there is no heartwood or core in these Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*) either; here there is entirely nothing but a heap of sheaths. It is this volition

called Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). Indeed, what most people firmly take as 'I' is this portion of Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity. Even more subtle is Consciousness (*viññāṇa*). What we call 'my mind' is also not shown by the Buddha as a single unit. There is no self there either; there is only a multitude of thoughts. There is an ancient simile about the mind, which arises and passes away, spinning extremely rapidly like a wheel. How the perception called 'mind' arises is shown by the simile of the whirling firebrand (*alāta-cakka*). That is to say, when a firebrand is whirled around, it appears as a circle. This appearance is created because it moves extremely fast. This mind changes so rapidly that it is impossible to find a simile for it, changing even faster than the body. Next, because Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is not understood by the ordinary world, even great philosophers take Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as a self. Only the Buddha showed that this too is merely a heap.

Thus, the Dogma of self-illusion / View of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), in short, is the view of self. The Buddha states that this view of self, which is the most deep-seated defilement among worldly beings, did not arise without a cause. It did not arise without a reason; it has occurred through misunderstanding. It is because of not seeing this rapid change, this continuity of arising and passing away, that the Dogma of self-illusion / View of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) arises through grasping all five heaps—rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, and viññāṇa—as 'I' and 'mine.' This is what is called the twenty-fold Dogma of self-illusion / View of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). Either one says, 'material form is myself,' or 'myself is in material form,' or 'I possess material form,' or 'material form is in myself.' Thinking about material form in these four ways, one firmly holds the view of 'I' and 'mine.' It is the same with Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*). This is indeed what the Buddha revealed to the world: the ordinary world remains within the Dogma of self-illusion / View of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), bound to saṃsāra. That person realizes that this near shore is dangerous. This near shore of danger is *sakkāya*. The far shore is Nibbāna. The far shore is The Mind Stilled / Extinction / Extinguishment. The term 'far shore' there refers to the supramundane (*lokuttara*). The raft that this person constructs to go there is compared by the Buddha to the Noble Eightfold Path.

There too, we have many things to contemplate. As said before, there is no ship here. To cross over easily, there should be a ship. Then there is nothing special for one to do. There is no need to prepare anything; the ship is there to go whenever one wants. Or else a bridge—there is no such thing here. There is no pre-constructed, completed path to cross over from this saṃsāra, nor is there any god to carry one to the other side. Rather, it must be done by oneself. To show this, it was said that finally, that person had to construct a raft. Gathering and breaking branches and leaves according to one's own capacity, constructing a raft, and with that raft and one's own effort, putting forth energy with hands and feet—the Buddha refers to this as the arousal of energy (*vīriyārambha*). Wonderful similes are found in the Dhamma regarding this arousal of energy. The comparison of similes and their referents is a highly wondrous aspect of the Buddha’s discourses. First, a long story is presented. Captivated by the narrative, the Saṅgha listens to what the Buddha is saying. On closer inspection, what lies ahead is that

collection of allegorical stories. Finally, when He explains, one by one, 'I said this in reference to such and such a Dhamma factor,' only then can one understand this.

Nowadays, there are various concepts about roads. There are expressways, and concepts of many other kinds of roads. Many people work hard to build these. If such roads exist, we only have to put our vehicle onto that road. After that, we can go straight ahead without any problem. The Noble Eightfold Path is by no means a path to be traveled in that manner. To show this, the Buddha declared that there is neither a ship nor a bridge; oneself, with difficulty, breaks branches and leaves, constructs a large raft, and using one's own hands and feet, rouses energy with effort. The arousal of energy is also related to that very Noble Eightfold Path. What is meant by the arousal of energy? It is the cultivation of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) belonging to the Noble Eightfold Path.

One must make an effort for virtue (*sīla*). One must make an effort for concentration (*samādhi*). One must make an effort for wisdom (*paññā*). One must exert energy. This cannot be obtained easily. That is what is meant by rousing energy with hands and feet. It is through this that the Noble Eightfold Path is completed. The Buddha uses the word 'Brahmin' to designate the person who has completed the Noble Eightfold Path and gone to the other side, the one who has crossed over. He designated that person in the highest sense. You must have heard that the Buddha gave a special meaning to the word 'Brahmin.' If we take the word 'Brahmin' in the dispensation's sense, it applies to the Arahant—the one who has attained the purest, supreme state. Having crossed over, the Brahmin stands freed from that terrifying state mentioned earlier. This is indeed Nibbāna, the Deathless, shown at the very end.

Just as the Buddha promised to the Ājīvaka Upaka, 'I am traveling to the city of Benares to beat the drum of the Deathless in this blinded world,' what He declared on that occasion was indeed the preaching of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Truly, you have heard how far the sound of that drum of the Deathless, the sound of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, reverberated. The sound of that great drum of the Deathless, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, was heard all the way up to the Akaniṭṭha Brahma realm. So, what is accomplished by that? Although the word aggregate (*khandha*) literally means a heap, the ordinary world does not understand its nature as a collection in daily life. Because they do not understand, they firmly hold onto all of them as 'I' and 'mine.' It is within this that Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādāna*) in saṃsāra exists. Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādāna*) means holding tightly. Letting go is seeing them as a collection; holding tightly is taking them as a single unit. As an illustration, from a wet mud bog, we can fashion a lump of earth and pick it up because of its moisture. Craving (*taṇhā*) is also described as a moisture, called glue (*sineha*). Because of Craving (*taṇhā*), this entire collection is taken as one. Having taken it together, next one can hold onto it. That is Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādāna*)—Grasping / Holding / Fuel based on Craving / Thirst (*taṇhā-upādāna*).

That each and every one passes away rapidly when seen as a collection through insight (*vipassanā*) is shown by a simile. According to the meaning of that simile, if one takes a

handful of sand in a waterless desert, it does not remain. In ancient texts, it is said, 'A fistful of sand taken into the hand does not stay.' It does not remain in the fist; it simply flows out. In the very same way, when the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) understands this nature of a collection, he does not take it as a single unit. Thus, this collection becomes a lump only through that moisture called Craving (*taṇhā*). Because of wanting to hold onto it firmly by way of Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādāna*), we bring Craving (*taṇhā*) close to it, and it is apparent that we take it as one. Consequently, because of this, the continuity of arising and passing away is not seen. When looking through insight (*vipassanā*), as Craving (*taṇhā*) becomes distant, as Craving (*taṇhā*) is removed, the nature of this collection is understood—just like being unable to make a lump out of sand taken into the hand in a desert. This is how we must contemplate. From the very beginning of the simile, the Buddha showed the mass of Suffering (*dukkha*) experienced on this near shore by the worldlings who possess this Dogma of self-illusion / View of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). Thus, that life transformation which the Ājīvaka Upaka underwent in expectation of happiness in this life ultimately became a cause of Suffering (*dukkha*). Wearied through that realization, he ran. Running on and on, he went forth in search of his friend, Anantajina.

Similarly, ordinary people wait for some event to happen to understand this Suffering (*dukkha*). But what the Buddha demonstrates through this simile is that one does not need to wait for some household entanglement or disappointment to flee; when looking at the five aggregates in the manner described by those similes, one is compelled to flee. Fleeing there means abandoning Craving (*taṇhā*). In the very act of the Buddha comparing this body of the four elements—earth, water, fire, and air—to four highly venomous snakes, there is spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). It is terrifying to realize, 'Are these four snakes that I am caring for, waking up in the morning, bathing, feeding, and putting to sleep?' Furthermore, to increase that fear, the others said, 'Attending to these four snakes in this manner is your duty. However, if even one gets angry, you will face death or Suffering (*dukkha*) equal to death.' We experience this directly, don't we? When wind, bile, phlegm, etc., are provoked, we go in search of doctors. Even more so, when it reaches a critical state, death is met. Yet, we remain embracing the four snakes. Binding the four snakes together, collecting those four, we carry on this Dogma of self-illusion / View of existing group/body (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) of 'I' and 'mine' through this aggregate of material form (*rūpakkhandha*). It is precisely there that the Buddha shows us to flee from that too. Fleeing there means removing the attachment to it, seeing its terrifying nature, generating spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), and turning the mind away from it.

But it does not end there. There are still executioners. Going deeper and deeper, it is not merely the worthlessness found in caring for that ordinary body, but the Suffering (*dukkha*) in taking up the five heaps of Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādāna*)—material form (*rūpa*), Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—with the mind. Taking these five aggregates of Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) as a self is the cause of all the problems and masses of Suffering (*dukkha*) in the world, as well as the prolongation of saṃsāra; all of this is

represented here by the executioners. In some places, the Buddha defines the concept of Māra by saying that each of these aggregates is itself Māra. Because as long as these aggregates exist, the fear called death exists. As long as we hold onto them, there is the fear of death. There is said to be 'one who kills' or 'one who dies.' A monk once asked, 'Venerable Sir, there is this word "Māra, Māra." Who is this Māra?' Then He replied, 'I say, monk, material form is Māra. Because only as long as material form exists is there one who dies or one who kills. Therefore, material form is Māra. Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*) is the same.' Thus, the entire five aggregates of Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) have been identified as Māras. That concept is introduced there as the executioners.

Next, *nandirāga* (delight and lust) means attachment coming in the form of a friend; delight and attachment. Delectation and attachment felt toward something. What happened to the Ājīvaka Upaka too was this *nandirāga* (delight and lust) developed toward Cāpā; delight and attachment. Ultimately, through that, he fasted, made an effort, and entered household life. Ultimately, there is a mass of Suffering (*dukkha*) within this. This is *nandirāga*. Next, the six sense-bases (*āyatana*). The ordinary world takes these—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—as a self, treating them as things that remain constantly unchanged. But the Buddha points out that these bases are like empty villages. When knocking on the door and looking inside, there is no one inside them; that is why it was said that when looking at those houses, everything is empty. In the simile, it is said that as that person enters the empty village, every house he enters is empty. When he touches the vessels in the houses, every single vessel is empty. This shows the empty nature of these sense-bases. They are empty of self—Not-self / Non-self / Unsubstantial (*anattā*). Nowhere is there anyone to be taken as 'I.' When knocking on the door and asking, 'Is anyone home?', there is no one to answer. When the sound of knocking echoes back, one thinks someone is there. Something like that happens. Since they are empty houses, there is no safety there either. To make matters worse, six village-plundering bandits come to those six empty houses. Those bandits are the form-bandit, the sound-bandit, the smell-bandit, the taste-bandit, the touch-bandit, and the thought-bandit. They come to plunder. Thus, one submits to them. It was by submitting to the form-bandit that such a thing happened to the Ājīvaka Upaka. In this manner, six bandits come to plunder the village. Running in fear of that too, that person runs. While running in that manner, that body of water becomes clearly visible: 'Am I not on this side of this body of water?'

Then he realizes that these four great torrents (*oghas*) are flowing on and on: *kāmogha* (torrent of sensuality), *bhavogha* (torrent of Becoming / Existence), *diṭṭhogha* (torrent of views), and *avijjogha* (torrent of ignorance). A highly terrifying flood. Still, this near shore is dangerous. This person sees that the far shore is indeed safe. He realizes that crossing over from this is indeed true happiness. He looks around; there is no bridge, there is no ship. Next, having contemplated, he puts forth his effort and constructs (the raft). Someone might think that this Noble Eightfold Path is something that exists outwardly in the world. The Buddha says that every road in the world is inferior to this Noble Eightfold Path. But where is it? Where does it exist? This is a path that one must

generate by oneself within one's own heart. The Buddha declares, '*Eso'va maggo natthaññho*'—this indeed is the path, there is no other for liberation. '*Maggānaṭṭhaṅgiko seṭṭho*'—of all paths, the Eightfold Path is the best.

On one occasion, the monks gathered and were talking about roads. It is just like today: 'Look, such and such roads are good; there are expressways, and roads of that nature. One can travel back and forth as one pleases.' The Buddha asked, 'Monks, what are you discussing?' 'About roads.' On that occasion, He said that all those roads are inferior to the Noble Eightfold Path: '*maggānaṭṭhaṅgiko seṭṭho*.' This path of eight factors is indeed the most excellent path. But this path is not something that can be seen externally. It is something that must be prepared by oneself internally. That is why the simile of the raft was given. The Noble Eightfold Path is like that raft. Whether looked at as virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), or as tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*), everyone must make a special effort for it. It cannot be done without energy. The arousal of energy (*vīriyārambha*) means that very effort made with hands and feet. This is not a journey where one goes automatically by employing automated machines, as in modern times. With the help of the raft and with the help of his hands and feet, that man crosses over to the far shore with difficulty.

Similarly, this journey with virtue, concentration, and wisdom on the Noble Eightfold Path is not accomplished all at once by pressing a button like operating an electrical machine. It is done with difficulty. One must guard virtue (*sīla*) with difficulty—even while weeping or without eating and drinking. The same applies to meditation and concentration, and next, the effort for wisdom (*paññā*). It was to show this that the Buddha gave the simile of the raft. But after going to the far shore, there is peace, safety. There is no further Birth / Arising (*jāti*) in saṃsāra. The far shore is entirely peace, Nibbāna. That is what is called the Deathless (*amata*). As Buddhists, we must understand the concept of the Deathless. In ancient belief, it was considered a special drink found among the devas in the heaven world, by drinking which one could live eternally. What the Buddha presents as the Deathless is escape from those Māras. Material form is Māra, Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*) is Māra, perception is Māra, Preparations / Preparations / Volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*) are Māra, Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is Māra. They become Māras because of embracing them in that manner, because of Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādāna*). When Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādāna*) is abandoned, there is no fear of death. Freedom from the fear of death is realized in this very life at the moment the mind is liberated from those very Grasping / Holding / Fuel (*upādānas*). That is the great deathless Nibbāna. Thus, it was that great drum of deathless Nibbāna conveying the message of the great deathless Nibbāna that the Buddha sounded on the occasion of the *Dhammacakkappavattana*, reaching up to the Akaniṭṭha realm. That was the message given to the Ājīvaka Upaka on that occasion. In accordance with it, the Ājīvaka also achieved his liberation.

Therefore, in reference to that simile, we should contemplate that we do not need to wait for this Suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra and weariness with saṃsāra to be brought about by various external causes. There is no need to wait for weariness with saṃsāra to occur

through some external event, thinking, 'Only if some affliction occurs, or if a child is lost, or if marriage breaks down, or if my source of income is lost, will I become weary of saṃsāra.' When looking at one's own body, at the snakes and executioners in this simile, one understands the value of escaping from them. Those who have money can travel on the expressways of the world by paying tolls. This is not that kind of path. With difficulty, constructing it by oneself, like gathering branches and twigs to make a boat, one travels on this path to Nibbāna with difficulty. But even though it is practiced with difficulty, in the end, on the day it succeeds, there is peace.

It is for the sake of that Nibbāna that you, virtuous devotees, on a valuable Poya day like today, have abandoned whatever luxury goods you have in your homes, and in order to draw close to the lives of the Arahants as declared by the Buddha, have undertaken the eight-fold Uposatha virtue (*uposatha-aṭṭhaṅga-sīla*), and possessing that wealth of virtue, are directing your minds as much as possible to the Dhamma and meditation. Today too you have striven to construct that raft in order to travel on this Noble Eightfold Path. Therefore, having fulfilled that effort, and making the spiritual power of this Dhamma sermon you have heard your support, just like the noble friendship (*kalyāṇamitta*) that the Ājīvaka Upaka received from the Buddha, you must also receive the help from the Dhamma teachers and construct that raft by yourselves.

In order to put an end to this Suffering (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra, by completing the Noble Eightfold Path, may this merit of listening to the Dhamma be a supportive cause for you to escape from all saṃsāric Suffering (*dukkha*) at some point through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpattī*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmī*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmī*), and Arahantship! Make that aspiration. Likewise, whatever living beings up to the Akaniṭṭha realm are ready to share in these merits of expounding and listening to the Dhamma, may they all, by sharing in these merits, be stilled in the supreme great deathless Nibbāna through their desired path of awakening (*bodhi*)! With this aspiration, recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #149

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.104)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Idha vassaṃ vasissāmi,

idha hemantagimhisu;

Iti bālo vicinteti,

antarāyaṃ na bujjhati."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 286 (Magga Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Usually, a life is spent within a multitude of future plans. Rather than reflecting on the obstacles that might arise in fulfilling those plans, we mostly think only of the ways to achieve them. Because of this very reason, one has to experience suffering and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) due to sudden disappointments. Understanding life well in advance helps to reduce the shocks and tremors that may arise in such situations. This is precisely the advice contained in the stanza we have chosen as our theme today, as well as in the story related to it.

This Dhamma stanza was delivered by the Buddha in Sāvatthī to a certain multi-millionaire businessman known in the teachings as Mahādhana Vāṇija. This businessman was traveling for trade from Bārāṇasī to Sāvatthī, loading a stock of red cloth onto five hundred carts. Having prepared to cross the river, and intending to cross it the next day, a heavy rain fell in the middle of the night, swelling the river, and for seven days they were unable to cross over. Meanwhile, the city-dwellers spent their time celebrating festivals. The merchant could not carry out his trade. So, this merchant thought, "Even if I go back, there too will only be a delay. It is better to spend the rainy season, the winter season, and the summer season right here and carry out my trade." Such a thought arose in this merchant.

On that day, while walking for alms (*piṇḍapāta*), the Buddha saw this merchant staying at that spot. The Buddha also perceived the merchant's mind, and upon seeing it, he smiled gently. As mentioned in many places in the Dhamma, on such occasions, Ven. Ānanda, who was walking behind, asked the Buddha the reason for that gentle smile. Then the Buddha said: "Ananda, do you see this merchant named Mahādhana Vāṇija?" When he replied, "Yes, Bhante," the Buddha said: "He is thinking of spending the rainy season, the winter season, and the summer season right here. Though he thinks so, he does not see the danger to his life." Then Ven. Ānanda asked, "Bhante, do you see such a danger?" "Yes," the Buddha replied, "He will live for only seven more days, and on the seventh day, he will fall into the mouth of Death (*Māra*)." Saying this, the Buddha uttered two valuable stanzas mentioned in various places in the Dhamma. One of those stanzas is especially worthy of our remembrance. Although it was preached particularly for the Sangha, it is a stanza that helps all of us.

Ajjeva kiccamātappaṃ, ko jaññā maraṇaṃ suve,

na hi no saṅgaraṃ tena, mahāsenena maccunā.

If we render this stanza into English, it can be shown in this manner:

Do today itself the task that must be done,

Who knows, death might indeed come tomorrow,

For there can be no agreement made

With Death and his mighty army.

Because we cannot make agreements with Death, the Buddha delivered this stanza—which says that what needs to be done must be done today itself—to Ven. Ānanda. Out of compassion, Ven. Ānanda asked the Buddha, "Bhante, shall I go and tell this matter to that merchant?" The Buddha gave permission, saying, "Very well, then go with confidence about it." Thus, Ven. Ānanda went on alms-round to the place where the merchant had pitched his tents.

After the merchant had offered alms, Ven. Ānanda asked, "Upasaka, how long do you expect to stay here?" Then he said, "I have this intention. I came on this trade journey from afar. Since returning would only cause delay, I thought of staying here like this and trading throughout the entire year." Then Ven. Ānanda said, "Upasaka, when danger to life will come is something no one can know." Then the merchant asked, "Is there such a danger, Bhante?" "Yes," he replied, "There is danger within seven days."

Having felt a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) because of this, the merchant invited the Sangha led by the Buddha for an alms offering (*dāna*). For seven days, he offered alms to the Sangha led by the Buddha, and at the end, the Buddha preached a sermon of appreciation (*anumodanā*). The stanza for that appreciation sermon is the one we mentioned earlier. The Buddha said, "Upasaka, one cannot keep making plans like this—thinking 'I will stay at such a time in such a place; I will stay here during the rainy

season; I will stay here in the cold season; I will stay here in the summer season.' There is no opportunity to remain with such plans. One does not know what kind of life-danger may occur in the meantime. Therefore, a wise person does not direct their mind to such things, but rather to the danger present to one's own life." The stanza that summarizes this point is the one we mentioned at the beginning:

Idha vassaṃ vasissāmi, idha hemantagimhisu,

iti bālo vicinteti, antarāyaṃ na bujjhati.

"I will spend the rainy season here; I will spend the winter here; I will spend the summer here"—so the fool, the ignorant one, thinks and plans. But he has no understanding of the danger (*antarāya*) that can arise in the meantime. Having heard this sermon, it is said that the businessman Mahādhana Vāṇija attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). Next, when the Buddha was returning, the merchant followed him a short distance to see him off, and then came back saying, "I feel a bit of a headache," and lay down on his bed. He lay down and woke up in the Tusita heaven. That was his final sleep. Passing away in his sleep, he was reborn in the Tusita heaven. That is how the story ends. Just as described in this stanza, the Buddha saw a certain deficiency in that businessman's plan. Whatever plans he made, he did not see death (*maraṇa*) that was coming in the meantime. It was to remind him of this fact that Ven. Ānanda out of compassion went to that place.

As a result of that, if he had any hopes regarding his happiness, he was given the opportunity to enter the path of Dhamma which helps to fulfill them. In this regard, there is a stanza by the ancients:

Vyāpārā sabbabhūtānaṃ, sukhāya vidhīyare;

sukhañca na vinā dhammā, tasmā dhamma-paro bhave.

The undertakings and activities of all living beings are directed toward happiness; they are put into action for it. But there is no happiness devoid of Dhamma. Therefore, do things with devotion to Dhamma—this is the meaning. Now, here too we have to realize that what ultimately became a refuge for that businessman was the Dhamma. If we take the deeper meaning of "business" (*vyāpāra*), business means engagement, being occupied. Whether it is a commercial business or any other business, if one is engaged in something, one is engaged in it expecting happiness. Regarding happiness, the Buddha declares that there is no happiness without Dhamma. Especially, rather than the happiness thought of in worldly terms, the most noble happiness can be obtained by being devoted to the Dhamma, in accordance with the Dhamma. Therefore, one should be most diligent and heedful (*appamāda*) regarding this matter.

On one occasion, a story is mentioned in the Dhamma where the Buddha advised his relatives regarding this diligence and heedfulness (*appamāda*).

On a certain Uposatha day, when the Buddha was residing at Nigrodhārāma in Kapilavatthu, a group of Sakyans came to see the Buddha. The Buddha asked them, "Sakyans, do you observe the Uposatha eight precepts?" They replied, "Some days we observe the Uposatha eight precepts, and some days we do not." Then the Buddha declared: "Sakyans, in a life that is so full of fear of sorrow and fear of death, to say 'some days we observe the Uposatha eight precepts, and some days we do not' is a great loss for you, a great misfortune." The Buddha did not praise it as a great thing that they do it at least occasionally. Instead, he pointed out that doing it "occasionally" is a defect, saying: "In a life filled with so much fear of sorrow and fear of death, to say 'if we feel like it we do this, and if we don't feel like it we don't do it' is a very great loss."

Next, the Buddha spoke about the peace that can be obtained from this Dhamma. "Sakyans, suppose a person, without falling into unwholesome deeds, earns half a kahāpaṇa a day from his trade. What do you think of him? Would you say he is a capable person with initiative and energy (*uṭṭhāna-vīriya*)?" "Yes, Bhante." Then the Buddha gradually asked, "What if he earns one kahāpaṇa? Two, three, four, ten kahāpaṇas?" He kept asking in this manner, and they answered "Yes" to each. Next, "If that man, day by day, earns a hundred or a thousand kahāpaṇas, saves as much as possible, and amasses great wealth and material success—using that accumulated wealth, does that person live for a single night or a single day, or even half a night or half a day, in absolute, unalloyed happiness? Can he live in absolute happiness even having acquired such massive wealth?" "No, Bhante." When asked "Why?", they said, "Bhante, these objects of sensual pleasure (*kāma*) are impermanent and inconstant (*anicca*), empty. These are things that delude a person." Even the Sakyans understood this.

Then, next, the Buddha explained how happiness is obtained through his Dhamma. "Sakyans, if a disciple in my dispensation (*sāsana*) practices according to my instructions for ten years, he can live for a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand years in absolute happiness. How is this to be understood? By attaining the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), etc., and being reborn in happy realms (*sugati*). If he possesses absorptions (*jhāna*), he can be born in the Brahma realm as well. Otherwise, being born in the deva realms, he enjoys happiness for hundreds of thousands of years through the practice shown by the Buddha. Having acquired such a mass of wealth, one cannot live even one night or one day in absolute happiness. But by keeping this practice of the dispensation according to the Buddha's advice for ten years, one enjoys heavenly happiness in that manner for a long time." The Buddha did not stop there; he next declared: "Sakyans, let alone ten years! Nine years, eight, seven, six, five, four years..." and going down in number like that... "one year, ten months, nine, eight months..." and bringing the number down in this way, "even if one practices according to what I say for half a month, that person can live for hundreds of thousands, lakhs of years in that manner." Next, he said, "Not only that. If one lives according to what I say for ten days, nine days, eight days..." and finally, how does he say it? "Half a day, half (a night)"—there he is preaching by connecting it precisely to this matter of the Uposatha.

When observing the Uposatha on the full-moon day, there is a way of resolving: *Imañca rattiṃ imañca divasaṃ*—"This night and this day, I will live close to the practice of the Arahants." In accordance with this, the Buddha declared: "If one practices according to what I say for even one night and one day, that person can live in absolute happiness for hundreds of thousands, lakhs of years." After the Buddha explained his dispensational practice in this way, those Sakyans said: "Then, Blessed One, we shall observe the Uposatha full-moon day every day." That was mentioned because...

Due to the course of action taken by the Buddha here, that merchant turned toward the Dhamma. Why did he turn? Because of a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*). That is what we must contemplate. It is when the sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding death arose that he turned to the Dhamma. When told that there was danger within seven days, this merchant then thought, "Now I must perform acts of merit (*puñña*)," and invited the Sangha led by the Buddha. During that period, he took refuge in the qualities of faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), etc., that he developed within himself, as well as in that sense of urgency (*saṃvega*). What arose from that sense of urgency was the mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*). The merchant must have spent that week (*satiya*) with mindfulness (*sati*). Here, first, we said *satiya* meaning "seven days" (week). The second time we said *satiya*, it meant "mindfulness" (*sati*). Mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*) means mindfulness that follows death. One does not know when death will occur! That helps the merchant, becoming a meditation (*bhāvanā*) in itself. That meditation is very close to Nibbāna. Why? Because Nibbāna means letting go of everything. Letting go of everything is something we have to do with death, whether we like it or not. If it comes suddenly, we are not prepared for it. Even if we grasp and cling to things, we can never take them to where we are going. But when we constantly cultivate mindfulness of death, a strength to let go from the mind is developed.

Then, what helped that merchant to attain that supramundane (*lokuttara*) state was the sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding death or danger, and the qualities of faith (*saddhā*), etc., generated through activities like offering alms to the Buddha and the Sangha—it was with the help of all these. That merchant passed away in his sleep and, as if waking up from sleep, was reborn in the Tusita heaven. If he had not done so, where would that merchant have gone? Let us consider the other side. Usually, people of the world live making plan after plan. Indeed, this present time is an era of various timely disasters. In the past, there was a custom among Buddhists that when they went to a relative's house or to meet friends, they would say, "I will go and return." Now, road accidents are so frequent that one cannot even say "I will go and return." To such an extent, it is impossible to say when and where death will come. Therefore, indeed, not only for that businessman but for all of us, we have to live with an imminent mind.

Virtuous friends, you may have heard that the rebirth of a dying person is determined mainly by a certain force of kamma. If an immediate-retribution unwholesome kamma (*ānantariya-kamma*) has been committed, it cannot be changed; one will definitely go to hell. If there is no such weighty (*garuka*) kamma, next what presents itself is the near-death kamma (*āsanna-kamma*). Near-death kamma means the volition (*cetanā*) that

arises at the moment of death. Sometimes it might be the recollection of a kamma performed in the past, or else something done at that very moment. Now, because he offered alms here for seven days, that helped the merchant—the businessman—as his near-death mind (*āsanna-citta*). And because of that, he was born in the Tusita heaven. Therefore, living with that near-death mind in view is good for everyone's salvation. Of course, if there is a grave kamma of that sort, such as matricide or patricide, it is true that one cannot escape from it. Often, people bring monks at the final moment to chant pirith, preach Dhamma, and try to settle the mind at that time. We must understand that Dhamma principle here. If one can prepare one's final mind, it becomes highly supportive for the next existence (*bhava*). However, normally, a businessman does not look at the world in this way; they look at death as something that does not belong to them, as if they are ageless and immortal (*ajarāmara*). The concept prevalent among worldly people is to accumulate wealth, whether righteously or unrighteously.

The Buddha has shown the lay devotee to abstain from wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) and live according to right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). On this occasion too, in the *ājīvathaṭṭhamaka-sīla* (virtue with livelihood as the eighth), the final precept we mentioned was "abstaining from wrong livelihood." One must abstain from wrong livelihood. But these days, the educated class values an economic system and a livelihood based on the economic principles presented by wrong-viewed (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) Western scholars, higher than the matter of livelihood shown by the Buddha. They give priority to that livelihood—which, in short, is often wrong livelihood. If wealth can be earned easily, if wealth can be accumulated quickly, then killing animals, various other crooked activities, trading in poisons, trading in intoxicants—these are the ways through which wealth can be accumulated most easily. If it is received, there is no issue; that is what is called development, what is called progress. Such a concept is present among many today. At least, when a great disaster occurs and destruction happens, what many people consider as "rehabilitation/resurgence" is bringing back the very same wrongs that were done. They talk about rehabilitation while putting aside the word of the Buddha (*Buddha-vacana*).

We must reflect that there is a certain way the world teaches lessons to human beings. Now, you devotees also recite the refuge-going formula saying *dutiyampi, tatiyampi* (for the second time, for the third time). Similarly, in the Vinaya Piṭaka belonging to the Sangha, when presenting certain proposals in the ecclesiastical acts, they are read three times, saying *dutiyampi, tatiyampi*. In state administration too, there is a custom of reading a bill three times.

Not only that, even in auctions, they say "going once, going twice" (*æ̆varayi, dæ̆varayi*). There is a custom of saying things three times in this way. Likewise, let us imagine Mother Nature as a mother. So, this is an occasion where Mother Nature is standing at a certain auction, saying "going once, going twice." What was meant by "going once, going twice"? You devotees have heard that from ancient times, this island has been called the "Island of Dhamma" (*Dhamma-dīpa*), the "Pearl of the Eastern Ocean." It was through the touch of the Buddha's feet, and through the Eight Sacred Places (*Atamasthana*) and

Sixteen Sacred Places (*Solosmasthana*) that you worship, that this island became a pearl. Now, Mother Nature is preparing to auction this very pearl. Still, what we hear are the bids of demons and monsters (*yakṣas* and *rākṣasas*); the true value of this pearl is not being heard. If we do not conduct our lives according to this true value, and if we do not claim the pearl based on that value, then when the final "going three times" (*tun æ̆varayi*) is called, this entire island might be submerged by a tsunami wave. That is a small thing. There is a related event mentioned in a well-known Jataka story in the Jataka Book...

In addition, a scientifically recognized event can also be pointed out. About a century ago, there was a gentleman in America named Edgar Cayce. He was a Catholic. By entering into a hypnotic trance, he could see past lives—not only his own but also those of others. Although he did not know the word *kamma* in his daily life, he expressed certain universal laws related to past lives corresponding to the word *kamma*. In one of his readings, he stated that thousands of years ago there was a continent called Atlantis in the Atlantic Ocean. Due to the wrong ways of livelihood of the humans on that continent, it sank into the sea, got shipwrecked, and completely submerged. So, this is exactly what we have to say about this pearl as well. In auctioning this, what we hear more are worthless bids. It is as if there is no one coming forward to declare the value of this pearl according to its true value, according to genuine Buddhist values, giving priority to right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) so that this island is protected. Instead, what is called "rehabilitation" is bringing back this very wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) to be submerged by the next wave. Such is the situation. Why do we have to say such a thing?

We do not give this precept merely as a custom; we must contemplate with wisdom about this abstention from wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). Then, we have to contemplate this occurrence as a symbol. Those Buddha statues that withstood such a powerful wave are preaching a silent sermon to us about what the eternal values of the world are. We must realize that. Through that, whatever the economic principles may be, rather than bringing back the very errors made in the name of "uplifting this country" and thereby inclining people towards deviation, unrighteousness, and wrong livelihood, what needs to be done is to understand the mistake made, correct those mistakes, and steer livelihood towards the side of right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). If anyone gives some encouragement or help even by a word, then that person... Therefore, you devotees must understand deeply what we are saying here briefly as a hint. Even starting from the Buddha's time, we must think of this era we are living in. We often hear people talking about how those Buddha statues survived such a great disaster as a great miracle. They are preaching a silent sermon. What is it? The real value lies in the symbols that represent the eternal Dhamma in this world. But if we look at them according to economic principles, there is no place for them. Not only that, if we look at the stupas (*caityas*), etc., which we worship with great faith (*saddhā*), according to economic principles, they would value them based on the number of bricks they contain—saying, "How many houses for the homeless could have been built with those bricks? Why are these piled up when that is possible?" According to economic principles, they would even resort to such arguments. But they do not understand the power to awaken the minds of

worldly beings that lies in those religious monuments and symbols. Thus, it was to remind us of this that, while other things were destroyed by the waves, the Buddha statues and other religious symbols miraculously remained.

So, without understanding even that silent sermon, are we to support those wrong livelihoods (*micchā-ājīva*) further? There, we must contemplate: if Mahādhana Vāṇija had lived his life in that very same way, where would his rebirth have been? But the Buddha and Ven. Ānanda came and aroused a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding life and showed its true value. If happiness is what is expected, what is it that helps to obtain that happiness? Next, in the business world, what everyone values highly is their ledger/account book of income and expenditure. This account book of businessmen is something that has two faces. One face is the book of income and expenditure for private use. Sometimes, there is another face for the Inland Revenue Department. So, if such an account book is presented at the final moment, that person might even go to hell. Because he would remember breaking the second and fourth precepts (stealing and lying). Therefore, at the final moment, what has to be remembered is not that account book, but the book of merits (*piṇ-pota*). In the past, kings like King Duṭugāmiṇi, in their final moments, brought to mind their books of merits as an aid to prepare that near-death mind (*āsanna-citta*). Not only that, those kings did not care about their royal palaces and such. You devotees have heard the historical detail that because the Ruwanweli Maha Seya could not be completed in time, King Saddhātissa prepared a replica of the Ruwanweli Maha Seya and showed it to his dying brother to settle his mind. This too shows how religious symbols help to prepare a person's mind. Whether one is a businessman or not, our primary objective must be to understand the Dhamma, not the piling up of wealth according to economic principles. If the objective of every activity in this long saṃsāra is happiness, that happiness is based on the Dhamma.

There is a stanza often heard by devotees who perform meritorious deeds like giving alms (*dāna*): *Kayirātha dhīro puññāni, yo nidhi anugāmiko*—meaning, "A wise person should perform merits (*puñña*), which are a treasure that follows one." Thus, according to the Dhamma, one's true treasure is the merit accumulated through giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), meditation (*bhāvanā*), etc. That is all one takes along. Whatever multi-story buildings one builds, whatever things one makes, at the moment of death, one has to leave all of them behind. Not only that, even during one's lifetime, those worldly treasures can be destroyed by floods, fires, and other hazards. The banks where they are deposited can also collapse, go bankrupt, be destroyed, or catch fire in some situations. But if one has accumulated merits in one’s mind-stream (*citta-santāna*) in the form of giving, virtue, and meditation, they remain as a treasure that follows one (*anugāmika-nidhi*). That businessman named Mahādhana Vāṇija accumulated exactly that during those seven days. By engaging in meritorious deeds of giving, virtue, and meditation, and living a righteous life, he took with him the following treasure accumulated therefrom. These are lessons for us. In our lives, in this highly risky era where we cannot even say "I will go and return," we must make use of the lessons to be drawn for our lives from these ancient Dhamma stories. Therefore, accumulating this mentioned following treasure must be the primary objective of a Buddhist devotee. The happiness obtained by

maintaining daily life with right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) and without doubt or regret is referred to in the Dhamma as blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*). Blameless happiness means the happiness obtained by living without fault. A businessman who lacks this may sometimes be a great multi-millionaire. By unrighteously accumulating wealth, he may sometimes obtain very high positions. But ultimately, he realizes that even if he is a "Deshabandhu" (Friend of the Nation), in the end, he is a "Kammabandhu" (bound to his kamma). At the final moment, he realizes that he is a *kammabandhu*. The Buddha has declared *kammādāyādo*—that is, one is the heir to one's own kamma.

Although wealth can be obtained quickly through wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*), etc., ultimately, when looking at it from the perspective of saṃsāra, there will be degeneration not only of oneself but also of the society, the country, and the region in which one lives. Because what is done through that is distributing poison to society. Distributing intoxicants is distributing poison. Distributing poisons is distributing poison. The trade in meat and flesh does the same. To please the tongue, trading in meat and flesh gives support to the slaughter of living beings. So, what we must do is not to bless these things. We must try to turn those who are inclined towards wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) towards right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). It is through this that we can bring out the true value of that pearl mentioned earlier and save this pearl before the final "going three times" is called.

We must apply the points we have spoken of so far to our own lives. Since recent times, those who think according to economic principles coming from the West express contempt towards the matters of livelihood shown by the Buddha. They have not understood their value. But we must contemplate that if we go on in this long saṃsāra without listening to this word of the Buddha, we draw closer and closer to the life of animals. It might even be that such a state has already arrived. If we go looking for easy ways of living without any regard for wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala-akusala*), good and bad, merit and demerit, the easiest way we will find is the one that existed among undeveloped ancient tribes. The easiest economic system. What was it? It solves two problems at once. The food problem is solved, and the population problem is solved. What is it? Killing and eating one another. Among those undeveloped tribes in the past, there was such a custom. Even now, in the animal world, that is what exists: killing and eating one another. Killing and eating each other in that manner is not only a physical action; even with the mind, others can be preyed upon through jealousy (*issā*) in that way. They prey upon others in a highly dangerous manner. Similarly, when the Dhamma disappears, there are those who kill and eat animals, treating them as vegetables for food. That is what happens in places where there is no Dhamma.

We must contemplate that if we follow such wrong concepts, we will decline further and further. If we spend our lives according to Dhamma values, it becomes an example and a blessing for the world, as well as a benefit for ourselves. We also get to know that some stories heard about big businessmen have certain truths in them. Some rumors going around in society appear to be true events. Please do not misunderstand us if we say this. There is an animal in houses called the frog/toad (*gembā*). We cannot say exactly how this word *gembā* was formed, but it appears to have a connection to the house (*ge*).

Indeed, if you take a frog/toad and throw it outside, it lands looking back at the house. Somehow, after staying a little while, it comes back. Where does it rest? Sometimes under the cash box, under the book box, under an almirah (wardrobe). Why is that? That is the owner. Sometimes, it is a big businessman, a very wealthy person, a millionaire who lived in that very house. He might return as a somewhat large frog/toad. But in the end, it rests there, and when cleaning houses, it is put out. Once put out, it comes back again. That is the frog/toad—it comes straight to the house. Such news is heard occasionally. Even if not, we can understand according to the Dhamma that those who die with attachment and craving (*taṇhā*) to their houses and wealth, without developing the mind, are sometimes reborn as frogs/toads.

Another such animal is the rat snake (*gäraṇḍiyā*). If we look at the word *gäraṇḍiyā* etymologically, the Pali word is *gharasappa* (house-snake). It appears that *gharasappa* has become *gäraṇḍiyā*. So, the habit of this rat snake is also the same. The rat snake also enters inside the house like an owner. It circles around on top of almirahs here and there. Not only that, the dogs and cats kept in houses, pampered by their children, are sometimes their own parents. They hit and chase away their own parents.

Devotees who perform alms-givings remembering their deceased parents might sometimes, without knowing, even kill their own parents who have taken such animal births, just to obtain the requirements for that alms-giving. Be that as it may, this saṃsāra is of such a nature. Not only today or yesterday, but even during the Buddha's time, when one gets far from the Dhamma, this is how it is in saṃsāra. One cannot tell where a person will go unless their destiny (*gati*) is fixed. Now, that multi-millionaire businessman, the merchant Mahādhana Vāṇija, after attaining the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*), would never go to a realm of misery (*duggati*). His rebirth is only in happy realms of devas and humans. There, it is said he was born in the Tusita heaven. At least, one must make an effort to prepare one's near-death mind (*āsanna-citta*). Next, without being satisfied with just that—not only regarding the body one leaves behind—if one lives with greed and craving for these accumulated goods, which are a great burden, without taking their true benefit, either out of stinginess or through unrighteous ways, then in that manner, one can return to one's own house as a frog/toad or a rat snake.

We must contemplate this saṃsāra, we must generate a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*). In accordance with that, we must bring out these Dhamma values shown by the Buddha. What is this that we call observing the Uposatha eight precepts? That is what the Buddha reminded those Sakyans. The Sakyans were people belonging to high-caste, noble families. When they said, "We occasionally observe the Uposatha eight precepts," the Buddha did not stop by saying, "How great that such people observe precepts at least like that." "To say that we observe them only occasionally, when we feel like it, and do not observe them when we don't feel like it, is a great misfortune, a great loss"—that is how the Buddha showed it. We must contemplate, then, what the true values are.

In the past, Buddhists, whatever kind of jobs they did, however they lived their lives, gave a special place to the Uposatha day. Purification of the mind does not happen on its own. It is something that must be done with effort. How difficult is it even to clean a

piece of clothing? It is with great difficulty, by applying soap, etc., and rubbing it back and forth, that a cloth is cleaned. Similarly, washing away the dirt that accumulates daily within the restless lay life we lead, and restructuring the mind—that is what is contained in the observance of the Uposatha eight precepts. Such is the value of observing the Uposatha eight precepts. Next, we must also think about daily life. Even the twenty-four hours one spends must, as far as possible, be spent in a manner that at least the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) belonging to the layperson are kept properly. Moreover, it must be done not just to barely get by, but by contemplating in a broad manner. These days, in lawsuits, sometimes one can escape by underhanded methods even after committing a wrong. But it is not like that; on the Uposatha day, as well as on other days, one must contemplate with wisdom, contemplate deeply in the way shown by the Buddha, and make an effort to protect those precepts.

There is nothing new to say about wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). When talking about protecting the five precepts, some have the opinion: "Even if we drink alcohol, we do no wrong to anyone else." But when declaring wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala-akusala*), good and bad, the Buddha did not speak of "society" as some strange thing distant from oneself. "Society" is none other than ourselves. It is not some strange thing existing separately in the world. That is precisely why the Buddha showed that which harms oneself and others as unwholesome (*akusala*). Looking in a deep sense, looking with foresight, he showed precisely that which leads to the welfare of both oneself and others as wholesome (*kusala*). It is on this principle that Buddhist ethics are structured. Therefore, there is nothing to be newly amended in that. If we give priority to those economic principles presented by those who were brought up in a wrong-viewed (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) environment, who obtained certain knowledge and education in such an environment, allowing room for short-term plans, then we can only expect that in the end, we will head towards that animal state. Because, although those are easy methods, they are indeed things that cause social degeneration.

Therefore, based on this story, we must contemplate that we should place the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*) shown by the Buddha at the very forefront in organizing our lives. We must develop right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Right view means that everyone in our life has a certain view of life. The view of life belonging to a Buddhist is understanding good and bad. That is what is called wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala-akusala*). One extreme of that is the opinion that there is no rebirth, and that there is nothing wrong with living as one pleases. But the Buddha declared that as long as one lives in this saṃsāra, there is such a thing as merit and demerit, wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala-akusala*). There is value in ministering to others, etc. In this way, the Buddha has shown right view on one hand. Even more deeply, he has shown this entire saṃsāric existence as suffering (*dukkha*). He showed going for a long time through this saṃsāra, in which there are births, decay, sickness, and deaths, as pure suffering (*dukkha*).

Therefore, while living daily life with an understanding of wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala-akusala*), merit and demerit, a Buddhist sets as their goal ending this saṃsāric

existence that goes on and on, and attaining that noble Nibbāna. Then, what helps in that is starting from that mentioned right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and following it with good thoughts called right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*). It is according to one's view that thoughts arise. Having generated good thoughts as right intention, and using one's words accordingly, one turns that process into a livelihood (*ājīva*). The effort made to maintain that livelihood is that right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right energy and striving. Using that power present in our minds, applying right effort, and developing mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration (*samādhi*), we can finally realize the Three Characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) shown by the Buddha, namely impermanence (*anicca*) and non-self (*anattā*). What helps us in this is meditation (*bhāvanā*). Regarding meditation too, the Buddha points out that this very virtue (*sīla*) is the foundation. It is impossible to practice meditation without this foundation of virtue. Why? The reason is that if body and speech are not disciplined, if those qualities of virtue are not protected, then that person will feel regret. There is no blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*) of which we spoke. There is no faultless happiness; instead, regret comes. A mind with regret gets scattered. That is why the Buddha says concentration (*samādhi*) is built upon virtue (*sīla*).

To say it in another way, we can say that this entire saṃsāra is like a muddy swamp sinking everywhere. In this muddy swamp, the Buddha shows us how to plant five pillars, eight pillars, or ten pillars, and through a certain resolution of virtue (*sīla*), build a foundation, a platform, to sit down for meditation. That is exactly what you devotees did today. Through the power of these precepts, whatever unwholesome deeds (*pāpa-kamma*) you may have done in the past will not come crashing into your minds. The virtue that was firmly taken on, resolved upon at this moment, is what reigns in the mind. Through that very thing, we are able to calm our minds, to make them concentrated (*samādhi*). That is why the Buddha pointed to virtue (*sīla*) as the foundation. We must contemplate its value deeply. Therefore, virtue observed for a week is stronger than virtue observed for a day. Virtue observed uninterruptedly for a month is stronger than virtue kept for a week. Contemplating in this manner, for one who has the strength to say that they have kept even a single precept properly throughout their entire life, concentration (*samādhi*) is right there.

Then, it is by helping that concentration (*samādhi*) that wisdom (*paññā*), shown as the power of insight (*vipassanā*), arises. Through that, what occurs is a deep understanding of the world. When looking around, everything is seen to be wearing away, seen to be being destroyed. As said in this stanza, there is danger in the meantime; whatever plans we make, we do not know when danger will come. Therefore, for one who constantly has mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*), the mind does not bend towards performing those grave unwholesome acts. In everything, the concept of letting go emerges. Through that indeed, the Buddha shows that, entangled by ignorance (*avijjā*) and the perception of self (*atta-saññā*), due to this ignorance and craving (*taṇhā*), a long saṃsāric journey is made. That is pure suffering (*dukkha*). One must realize this. That is what is called meditation (*bhāvanā*).

In insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), when one looks at one's own body, the physical form (*rūpa*), when looking at feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), and volitional Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) which are called thoughts, and when looking at the mind, with a concentrated mind, all these are seen arising and passing away. In a place oppressed by the nature of arising and passing away, there is nothing permanent, no essence or core. Therefore, through precisely that understanding, at some point, with a disillusionment (*nibbidā*) towards saṃsāra, one is released from saṃsāra. Without disillusionment towards the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), one cannot be released from the five aggregates. That disillusionment arises when one sees its unsatisfactoriness. If one sees suffering (*dukkha*), one cannot remain without being disillusioned. Such a thing is what is present in this Dhamma. Therefore, one should not be afraid of it. At some point, then, when we fulfill those mentioned qualities of virtue (*sīla*), etc., in accordance with the Buddha's word, and direct the settled, concentrated mind to these five aggregates, we see—just as the Buddha declared—form (*rūpa*) as a lump of foam, feeling (*vedanā*) as a water bubble, perception (*saññā*) as a mirage, volitional Preparations/activities (*saṅkhāra*) as a banana trunk, and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as an illusion. One becomes able to understand the truth of those similes for oneself. Then, through that understanding, at some point, the mind detaches from these five aggregates and is able to realize Nibbāna.

So we must contemplate organizing our lives right from our daily conduct. While striving to observe the daily five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) as purely as possible, if there are any shortcomings, one must observe the Uposatha eight precepts with the effort to wash them away and strengthen them as necessary. While observing them in that way, one should not just spend the day idly. Settling the mind based on a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), one must strive with the aim of achieving this saṃsāric liberation, which can only be obtained during an era when a Buddha has appeared (*buddhotpāda-kāla*). In the past, during eras when no Buddha had appeared, there were ascetics who understood the painful nature of saṃsāra. Among those ascetics, some known as sages (*ṛṣis*) were kings. Those kings abandoned their kingdoms and went to the Himalayas, having understood that this saṃsāra is suffering (*dukkha*). But they had no power to be released; there was no one to teach them, there was no Buddha. But now, what we have received is this rare opportunity called the era of a Buddha's presence, when a Buddha has arisen.

Therefore, you devotees, living close to the practice shown by the Buddha, realizing these Four Noble Truths, must strive to be comforted by the noble supreme Nibbāna through the penetration (*paṭivedha*) of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship. The virtue you have kept today, and the accumulation (*sambhāra*) you have gathered through this listening to the Dhamma, will especially help to develop those Dhamma powers (*bala*) called faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Likewise, taking this Dhamma sermon as a support, as a decisive support (*upanissaya*), and using the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) as an aid, may this serve as a supportive condition for you devotees to penetrate the paths and

fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship as quickly as possible! While wishing so, if there are any beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who are waiting to rejoice in the listening and preaching of this Dhamma, may all of them also realize the noble supreme Nibbāna through their aspired state of enlightenment (*bodhi*)! Wishing thus, please recite this stanza:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #150

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.129)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti,

Sabbaṃ rasaṃ dhammaraso jināti;

Sabbaṃ ratiṃ dhammarati jināti,

Taṇhakkhayo sabbadukkhaṃ jināti."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 354 (Taṇhā Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Tathāgata, the Fully Enlightened One, introduced himself to the world with the epithet "unexcelled King of Dhamma" (*anuttara dhammarāja*). From this introduction, we can understand that there is a certain supreme, victorious quality within the Dhamma. The verse of the Dhamma we have chosen today as our theme is one that demonstrates this victorious nature extending in several directions. It is recorded that this verse of the Dhamma was preached by the Buddha at Jetavana monastery in response to four questions asked by Sakka, the king of devas.

On one occasion in the Tāvatiṁsa heaven, four questions were discussed among the devas: "Among gifts, which gift is supreme, the noblest? Among tastes, which taste is the noblest? Among attachments, known as *rati*, which attachment is the noblest? Why is the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*) considered supreme?" These questions were discussed among the devas for a long time, for many years. When they were brought to Sakka, the king of devas, Sakka said that no one other than the Buddha could answer them. It is mentioned in the texts that on a certain night, Sakka arrived accompanied by devas and asked these four questions. The answer given to these questions is what we expressed through that verse. The Buddha summarized it thus:

Sabbadānaṁ dhammadānaṁ jināti—the gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts.

Sabbaṁ rasaṁ dhammaraso jināti—the taste of Dhamma excels all other tastes.

Sabbaṁ ratiṁ dhammaratī jināti—*rati* means attachment or delight. Delight in the Dhamma excels all other delights; it conquers them.

Taṇhakkhayo sabbadukkhaṁ jināti—the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*), which is another name for Nibbāna, conquers all suffering (*dukkha*). This is the meaning.

To understand this, we must bring in another valuable discourse of the Buddha that fits this idea, which you, virtuous friends, may have also heard. On one occasion, the Buddha addressed the Sangha and declared: "Monks, there are these two kinds of gifts: the gift of material things and the gift of the Dhamma. Of these two gifts, this is supreme—namely, the gift of the Dhamma." "Material things" (*āmisa*) refer to food, drink, and other tangible items. What is implied here is that the gift of Dhamma is superior to the gift of material things. Similarly, the Buddha has declared: "Monks, there are two kinds of sharing (*saṁvibhāga*): the sharing of material things and the sharing of Dhamma. Of these two kinds of sharing, the sharing of Dhamma is supreme and foremost." And also from the perspective of helping and favoring others, the Buddha has declared: "Monks, there are these two kinds of help (*anuggaha*) in the world: help through material things and help through the Dhamma. Of these two kinds of help, help through the Dhamma is supreme and foremost." Therefore, what we can understand from this is that the gift of the Dhamma is superior to any large-scale material gift considered as a donation in the world.

Regarding this matter, the commentators also state that the gift of the Dhamma is supreme, such that even a word of appreciation (*anumodanā*) made using a four-line verse is superior to any large-scale donation of robes, alms-food, lodgings, and medicinal requisites. One might feel doubtful about this. However, when we reflect upon it: just like the arising of a Buddha, the hearing of the Dhamma is also extremely rare. Within a Dhamma that is so rare, sometimes a single line of a verse can contain the message that puts an end to the entire suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra. You have heard, indeed, how the wanderer Upatissa—who later became Ven. Sāriputta—attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*) upon hearing just half a verse uttered by the Arahant Ven. Assaji. There are many such incidents. Therefore, when considering the benefits, it is no exaggeration to say that even if the gift of the Dhamma is a short verse, it is of great fruit and great benefit (*mahatphala mahānisaṁsa*).

Just as we spoke of giving, when reflecting upon taste as well, one might feel doubtful, since there are various kinds of tastes in the world that are felt by the tongue. Yet, it is shown that the taste of Dhamma is superior to all these tastes. So much so that it is more delicious than the nectar of the devas, which is called the deathless nectar (*amṛta*). That is why, when speaking of Nibbāna, it is said: "*Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ*"—"This is peaceful, this is sublime." That "sublime" character of Nibbāna can be understood in several senses. For this very reason, the Buddha declared: "*Amatandado ca so hoti, yo dhammaṁ anusāsati*"—"He who instructs in the Dhamma is a giver of the Deathless." If

someone instructs in the Dhamma, that person is giving the Deathless nectar. In short, the taste of Dhamma, which helps one escape from saṁsāra, is a taste of the Deathless.

Furthermore, when the Buddha compared the entire Dhamma-Vinaya to the great ocean for Pahārāda, the lord of Asuras, he preached that just as the great ocean has but one taste—the taste of salt—so this entire Dhamma-Vinaya has but one taste, the taste of liberation (*vimutti-rasa*). Seen from that perspective, the taste of liberation, the taste of Nibbāna, is present in this Dhamma. That is why it was declared to be the Deathless (*amata*). When referring to insight meditation, the Buddha declared:

> *Yato yato sammasati, udayabbayaṁ (khandhānaṁ);*
>
> *Labhati pīti-pāmojjaṁ, amataṁ taṁ vijānataṁ.*

Whenever one contemplates the arising and passing away (of the aggregates), one obtains joy and gladness; to those who know, that is the Deathless. If one reflects with wisdom, from the perspective of insight, on the arising and passing away of these five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), the joy and gladness obtained through that is a taste of Dhamma like the Deathless, which defeats all other tastes. Unlike the tastes experienced on the tongue that quickly vanish, this taste of Dhamma keeps one alive for a long time, and ultimately helps to end the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra.

Next, regarding the attachment called *rati*, this word is most often used in connection with sensual delight (*kāma-rati*). If the term is used in the sense of sensual delight (*kāma-rati*), then the word *rati* is indeed something to be rejected. However, in this Dispensation (*sāsana*), the word *abhirati* (delight) is used in a good sense—delight in the higher wholesome qualities. This delight (*abhirati*) is shown to be something that supports one's monastic life. When it is absent, it is called discontent (*anabhirati*). Therefore, what is referred to as *abhirati* is that very delight in the Dhamma. That delight is shown as a good thing. If it is not there, there is boredom or aversion (*arati*); then comes a weariness regarding the monastic life, or otherwise regarding this journey to Nibbāna. Furthermore, the delight that arises for an insight meditator through insight is described as a superhuman delight (*amānusī rati*):

> *Suññāgāraṁ paviṭṭhassa, santacittassa bhikkhuno;*
>
> *Amānusī rati hoti, sammā dhammaṁ vipassato.*

It is said that for a monk who has entered an empty place (*suññāgāra*), with a peaceful mind, who clearly sees the Dhamma with insight, there is a superhuman delight. By "superhuman" (*amānusī*), it means a transcending, noble kind of delight arises. It is this very delight in the Dhamma that defeats all the attachments of the ordinary world, such as attachment to one's wife and children, or attachment to dancing, singing, and instrumental music. Through that delight in the Dhamma, a person reaches a state of great upliftment, generating joy and happiness, sometimes shedding tears—tears of joy. A great buoyancy arises in the heart; goosebumps arise. In that way, the delight that arises supports that person directly toward Nibbāna; it helps in attaining Nibbāna. You

have often heard the words *dhammarati* and *dhammarato*, as well as *dhammārāmo dhammārato*. *Dhammārāma* means a person who finds delight in the Dhamma. It is because of this that delight in the Dhamma (*dhammaratī*) is supreme.

Next, there is the matter of the destruction of craving (*taṇhā-khaya*). Now, the world uses craving (*taṇhā*) as an aid to seek happiness. The Buddha compared craving (*taṇhā*) to a thirst. If we think thirst is good because the presence of thirst allows us to enjoy delicious drinks, that is where we go wrong. Therefore, the Buddha refers to Nibbāna by the name *pipāsa-vinayo*—the subduing of thirst. The state where thirst is appeased. So, in reality, thirst is a suffering (*dukkha*). However, because of thirst, we experience gratification (*assāda*) by consuming those tasty drinks. Yet, if at any point we completely appease that thirst, that is indeed the putting of an end to one's suffering (*dukkha*). That is why the destruction of craving (*taṇhā-khaya*) is said to conquer all.

In short, you have heard many times that suffering (*dukkha*) arises because of craving (*taṇhā*): '*Taṇhāya jāyatī soko, taṇhāya jāyatī bhayaṁ*' and so on. Because of it, grief and fear arise. The Buddha declared that where there is no craving (*taṇhā*), those two do not exist. With this word 'destruction of craving' (*taṇhā-khaya*), the Buddha gave a message to the world that puts an end to all suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra. Until then, the world thought that we enjoy happiness because of this craving (*taṇhā*), and therefore regarded craving (*taṇhā*) as a good thing. Upon appeasing one desire, when one becomes satisfied with it, one then has to go in search of further desires.

The Buddha has declared that this saṁsāric journey occurs due to ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). Similarly, the Buddha has shown the disadvantages (*ādīnava*) of craving (*taṇhā*) in various situations by giving various similes, showing that within this craving (*taṇhā*) there is an unquenchable thirst, and it is afflicted by such thirst that beings wander in saṁsāra. There is such an insatiable thirst in it. Furthermore, such is the nature of craving (*taṇhā*) that no matter what one obtains, it can never be fulfilled.

Also, until its roots are removed, craving (*taṇhā*) repeatedly gives birth in saṁsāra. That is why the Buddha declared in the Dhammapada using the simile of a tree: just as a tree, even though cut down, grows again if its root remains undamaged and firm, in the same way, unless the root is pulled out, unless the roots are removed, this tree of craving (*taṇhā*), this mass of suffering (*dukkha*), grows again and again. The Buddha has also on certain occasions compared this to a creeper (*latā*), as a creeper that spreads in various directions. Sometimes it is referred to as the *māluvā* creeper. The *māluvā* creeper refers to parasitic creepers that grow on trees. You have seen, indeed, how that creeper climbs the tree and ultimately destroys the tree itself. Craving (*taṇhā*) is just like that.

Next, in some other places, because of the sticky, adhesive nature of craving (*taṇhā*), the word *lepa* (plaster/glue) is applied to it. *Ālepa* means something smeared, a resin/gum. Craving (*taṇhā*) is like resin. It is also shown as *visattikā*, something that clings or entangles. In other instances, when pointing out the factors that cause rebirth in saṁsāra, karma is described as the field, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as the seed, and craving (*taṇhā*) as the moisture that helps it sprout. There, craving (*taṇhā*) is shown as

moisture. In this way, it is explained through various similes. It is also shown as a stream of craving (*taṇhā-sota*), as a torrent. This is a river that flows without an end, the river of craving (*taṇhā*) in this saṁsāra. The Buddha declares: '*Natthi taṇhāsamā nadī*'—"There is no river like craving (*taṇhā*)." To that extent, it flows on and on without an end.

Thus, having shown that disadvantageous side, the Buddha next showed the nature of craving (*taṇhā*) through a deep simile, comparing craving (*taṇhā*) to a seamstress—*sibbanī*. *Sibbanī* refers to both a seamstress (one who sews) and a weaver (one who knits). For what is shown there is that it is this craving (*taṇhā*) that helps one to be born in existence (*bhava*) again and again, from one existence (*bhava*) to another. The Buddha has expressed it as a work like making a stitch or doing a weaving. Craving (*taṇhā*) as a seamstress...

To show the function it performs, there is a passage frequently used in the Dhamma: '*Taṇhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatratatrābhinandinī*'. Craving (*taṇhā*) has the nature of bringing about renewed existence (*bhava*) again and again—*ponobhavikā*. *Nandirāgasahagatā* means accompanied by delight and lust. *Tatratatrābhinandinī* means finding delight here and there. In craving (*taṇhā*), there is a nature of finding delight in this and that place. Delighting here and there from time to time, it goes on creating existence (*bhava*) continuously in saṁsāra.

And also, just as we spoke of *rati*, on occasions when speaking of delight in Nibbāna, the Buddha sometimes points out: '*Taṇhakkhayarato hoti sammāsambuddhasāvako*'—"The disciple of the Fully Enlightened One delights in the destruction of craving." This means that the disciple of the Fully Enlightened One remains with a delight in Nibbāna, which is called the destruction of craving (*taṇhā-khaya*). Some scholars of today question this matter: "Isn't developing a desire to destroy craving (*taṇhā*) also a form of craving (*taṇhā*)?" Some see a contradiction here. How can craving (*taṇhā*) be destroyed by craving? But a very good answer to this is mentioned in a certain noteworthy discourse (*sutta*). The event is described as follows:

At a time when the Venerable Ānanda was residing at the Ghositārāma monastery in Kosambī, a certain nun developed an attachment toward the Venerable Ānanda. Feigning illness, she sent a certain man as a messenger, instructing him: "In my name, with my words, pay homage to the Venerable Ānanda, and tell him that such-and-such a nun is very ill; out of compassion, please visit her to see her and preach a little Dhamma."

Venerable Ānanda put on his robes, prepared himself, and went to that nunnery. However, upon arrival, Ven. Ānanda understood the underlying motive of this nun. Perhaps because of that, he preached a certain discourse (*sutta-desanā*) in a way that would remove her distorted attitude. That discourse contains several valuable points we need; that is why we are bringing it up. There, Ven. Ānanda first presented four Dhamma factors to that nun:

'*Āhārasambhūto ayaṁ, bhagini, kāyo, āhāraṁ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo*'—this is the first point.

The second point: '*Taṇhāsambhūto ayaṁ, bhagini, kāyo, taṇhaṁ nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā*'.

The third point: '*Mānasambhūto ayaṁ, bhagini, kāyo, mānaṁ nissāya māno pahātabbo*'.

The fourth point: '*Methunasambhūto ayaṁ, bhagini, kāyo; methune ca setughāto vutto bhagavatā*'.

Having stated these four points, he then analyzes them. What is the first point? "Sister, this body, this physical frame, is born of food. Yet, *āhāraṁ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo*—depending on food itself, food is to be abandoned." Although this seems like a riddle, Ven. Ānanda next analyzes and explains it. What is meant by this? We cannot live without taking food. However, the practitioner (*yogāvacara*) knows that the Buddha has instructed the practitioner to consume food after reflecting on it and considering it with wisdom. It is through this reflection that, at some point, even that craving (*taṇhā*) for food can be destroyed.

That reflection is shown in this way: "One does not take this food for amusement, nor for intoxication, nor for physical beauty, nor for beautification" (*neva davāya, na madāya, na maṇḍanāya, na vibhūsanāya*). A practitioner does not take food for play, nor for increasing manly pride, nor to fill out thin places to make the body beautiful. '*Imassa kāyassa ṭhitiyā, yāpanāya, vihiṁsūparatiyā, brahmacariyānuggahāya*'—merely for the survival and maintenance of this body, for ending its discomfort (harm), and for supporting the holy life (*brahmacariya*) under the Dispensation. Furthermore, it is declared: '*Iti purāṇañca vedanaṁ paṭihaṅkhāmi*'—"Thus I will dispel the old feeling of hunger by taking this food." '*Navañca vedanaṁ na uppādessāmi*'—"and I will not generate any new feeling (pain/discomfort) by overeating." And then: '*Yātrā ca me bhavissati, anavajjatā ca phāsuvihāro ca*'—"so that there will be maintenance of my life, blamelessness, and a comfortable abiding for meditation." In that way, by taking food while considering with wisdom and with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), one can attain Nibbāna by depending on food itself.

You might have also heard in the Dhamma books that some individuals attained Nibbāna through the very reflection on food. It is mentioned in the commentaries that in the past, even during times of famine, when members of the Sangha were partaking of gruel or taking food, some attained Nibbāna at that very moment of eating, through reflection. Thus, Ven. Ānanda showed there with reason the meaning of '*āhāraṁ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo*'.

Next, it speaks about craving (*taṇhā*): "Sister, this body is something that has arisen. It has arisen because of craving. Yet, *taṇhaṁ nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā*—depending on craving (*taṇhā*), craving (*taṇhā*) is to be abandoned." This indeed, seems to be a riddle at

first glance. If this is analyzed in the way the ordinary world analyzes things, it would lead to a massive entanglement.

But here, Ven. Ānanda himself presents a special analysis. What is meant by this is not the ordinary coarse craving. Suppose a certain monk hears: "That particular monk has destroyed his influxes (*āsava*) and, having attained Arahantship, is dwelling therein." As soon as he hears this, this monk thinks: "Ah! That Venerable One has become an Arahant in this manner. When, indeed, shall I also attain to that?" That thought, "when shall I also attain to that," is indeed a desire (a form of craving). But depending on that (desire), one day that monk becomes an Arahant. That is how we must understand the special meaning of abandoning craving (*taṇhā*) by depending on craving (*taṇhā*). The third point is also similar.

'*Mānasambhūto ayaṁ, bhagini, kāyo, mānaṁ nissāya māno pahātabbo*'—this body is something born of conceit (*māna*). It is because of conceit and views (*diṭṭhi*) that we have obtained this cage (of a body). Yet, depending on conceit itself, conceit is to be abandoned. This also seems like a riddle. This is explained in a manner similar to the point mentioned before. Suppose a certain monk hears that another monk—indeed, such-and-such a monk—having destroyed his influxes, has attained Arahantship. This monk then thinks: "That monk has attained Arahantship. Why not me? I can also do it!" Conceit is indeed present there: "If that monk did it, it is not impossible for me." Yet, at some point, that conceit helps in realizing Nibbāna. Therefore, that conceit is shown as something beneficial (in this context).

Now, it was not even necessary to give a detailed explanation of the fourth point; just stating its meaning is sufficient: '*Methunasambhūto ayaṁ, bhagini, kāyo; methune ca setughāto vutto bhagavatā*'. Ven. Ānanda presents this as the very word of the Buddha: "Sister, this body is born of sexual intercourse. It is due to the sexual union of parents that this body of ours has arisen." However, regarding sexual intercourse, what the Buddha has declared is *methune setughāto*. *Setughāta* means like destroying a bridge—the cutting off of connections, disconnecting. Thus, regarding the practice of sexual intercourse, the Blessed One has declared it to be *setughāto* (the destroying of the bridge). '*Vutto bhagavatā*'—that is what is declared. The cutting off of connections.

As soon as he finished saying that, the nun—who, in fact, even before Ven. Ānanda's arrival, had been lying down covering her head, feigning illness (it was a fake illness, indeed)—immediately got up, fell at the feet of Ven. Ānanda, and begged for forgiveness: "Alas, due to my foolishness and unwholesome thoughts, I committed such a wrong act. May the Venerable One forgive me. I shall never do such a thing again." That is how that story goes.

From this, we can understand the puzzling matter mentioned earlier. Although various arguments are raised regarding the desire and conceit for Nibbāna, there is a deep meaning in it. However, it is recorded in the history of the Dispensation (*sāsana*) that certain Buddhist sects, having misunderstood that fourth and final point, developed wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) such as Tantrism. But the Buddha has clearly declared that,

regarding the fourth point, what must be done is indeed the complete destruction of the bridge.

Next, why is craving (*taṇhā*) called a seamstress or a weaver? An incident showing that this too was discussed among the Sangha is mentioned in the Dhamma. On one occasion in the Deer Park at Isipatana, a group of elder monks (*thera*) gathered and held a Dhamma discussion in a Dhamma assembly. It was like the conferences of today—a wonderful Dhamma conference mentioned in our Dhamma literature. Nowadays too, various seminars are held in different places on various subjects. Now, this Dhamma conference began in this manner. This is what was presented as the theme among the elder monks:

Indeed, they took up a certain verse uttered by the Buddha himself, which is found in a section of the Dhamma available to us even today. What is it? In the text named the Sutta Nipāta, in the section available to us as the Pārāyana Vagga—even if it was not known by the name *Vagga* at that time, it is stated thus:

In that section of the Dhamma called the Pārāyana, the Blessed One uttered a verse like this, didn't he? To whom? To Tissa Metteyya. In fact, it is called the *Metteyya-pañha* (Questions of Metteyya). This is the verse spoken to the young Brahmin Tissa Metteyya:

'*Yo ubhonte viditvāna, majjhe mantā na lippati;*

Taṁ brūmi mahāpuriso'ti, so'dha sibbanimaccagā.'

A verse that is like a great riddle. Its meaning: '*Yo ubhonte viditvāna*'—whoever, having understood the two extremes; '*majjhe mantā na lippatī*'—*mantā* means wisdom (*paññā*), does not cling to the middle with wisdom; '*taṁ brūmi mahāpuriso'tī*'—him I call a great man; '*so'dha sibbanimaccagā*'—he has escaped, gone beyond the seamstress in this world. This is what the Buddha has declared.

Even though it was spoken to the young man Tissa Metteyya, this verse was not explained in detail there; no commentary was given. Because of this, discussions and debates arose among the Sangha regarding the meaning of this verse. The question raised was indeed: "What is the first end spoken of in this verse? What is the second end? What is the middle? Who is the seamstress?" That was the question. The question was presented and taken up for discussion in this way: "What are the two ends or two extremes spoken of in this verse uttered by the Blessed One in the Pārāyana Vagga, in the section of the Metteyya-pañha? What is the middle? Who is the seamstress?"

There, one monk declared: "As I see it, here, one end is contact (*phassa*). The second end is the arising of contact. The middle is the cessation of contact. The seamstress is craving." If someone has understood this matter correctly, one meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) is completed. If this matter is understood correctly, this alone is sufficient for one to end all suffering (*dukkha*) and become an Arahant. That was the explanation given by the first elder monk. The second elder monk gave his explanation:

"As I understand it, the first end spoken of in this verse is the past. The second end is the future. The middle is the present. The seamstress or weaver is indeed craving (*taṇhā*) itself." Then, the third monk presented his opinion: "As I understand it, the first end is pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). The second end is painful feeling (*vedanā*). The middle is neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*)—what we now call equanimity (*upekkhā*), that neutral feeling (*vedanā*). And the seamstress is craving (*taṇhā*) itself."

The fourth monk then presented an opinion: "As I understand it, the first end is Name (*nāma*). The second end is Form (*rūpa*). And the middle is consciousness (*viññāṇa*)." Here, there is a special point: the middle is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). "But the seamstress is indeed craving (*taṇhā*) itself."

Next, the fifth monk expressed his opinion in this manner: "As I understand it, the first end is the six internal sense-bases (*ajjhattika āyatana*)—meaning, my virtuous friends, the six internal bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The second end is the six external sense-bases (*bāhira āyatana*): form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thoughts (dhamma), which are the objects of the internal bases. The middle is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The seamstress is craving (*taṇhā*)."

Then, the sixth monk expressed his opinion: "As I understand it, the first end, the first extreme is identity (*sakkāya*). The Buddha defines *sakkāya* as a name for the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). You know, indeed, that the five aggregates of grasping are form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). When those five aggregates of grasping are taken together with a view about them, that is called the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)—the assumption that those five exist (as a self). That is the first end. Next, the second end is the arising of identity (*sakkāya-samudaya*). Next, the middle is the cessation of identity (*sakkāya-nirodha*). The seamstress who weaves this is craving."

Thus, having analyzed these six opinions in this way, since there was a difference of opinion, a unanimous decision was reached among these monks: "Among us, as a result of this conference, six opinions have been presented. Let us go to the Blessed One and ask which of these is correct." The monks went to the Buddha and presented this report—the conference report.

The Buddha declared: "Monks, all six opinions you have expressed are correct when viewed from their respective angles. They are all correct. *Sabbaṁ saṅghassa subhāsitaṁ pariyāyena*—what you six have declared is correctly spoken in an expositional sense (*pariyāya*), when looked at from each respective angle. However, on that day, when declaring this matter to the young man Metteyya, what I intended was that first point: contact (*phassa*) is one end, the arising of contact is the other end, the cessation of contact is in the middle, and the seamstress is craving (*taṇhā*). It is with that meaning that I declared it."

Now, what remains for us is to try to understand these points discussed in the conference, each according to our own capacity. Even if we do not give a complete

exposition, if we give a hint from these, the practicing devotees (*yogāvacara*) here who practice meditation can take that as a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and will be able to personally realize the fact that each of these supports the attainment of Nibbāna.

Now let us look at the first explanation. Indeed, the explanation the Buddha declared as fitting in every way is this very one: contact (*phassa*) is the first end; the arising of contact is the second end; the cessation of contact is in the middle. This is generally difficult to understand. We think of contact (*phassa*) as something that arises from the coming together and collision of the sense organ and the object. But the nature of craving (*taṇhā*) is such that, as we said, craving (*taṇhā*) knits them together.

It leaps from one to another. The teachers of old declared that in saṁsāra, one is constantly on the side of arising (*samudaya*). The side of arising means forgetting cessation (*nirodha*). According to the Buddha's word, all these things are arisings and passings away—*samudaya-vaya*. You have heard the word *udayabbaya*. In everything, there is an arising and a passing away. However, the ordinary saṁsāric being forgets the passing away, forgets cessation, forgets the wearing away, and is inclined to renew it again and again.

That is what is done; that is why it is called renewed existence (*punabbhava*). Next, *nandirāgasahagatā*—because of that delight and lust, one brings up that pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) again and again. One forgets that it ceases; one forgets its impermanence (*anicca*). Contact (*phassa*) and the arising of contact are the two ends. In the middle is the cessation of contact (*phassa-nirodha*). One leaps over it. One forgets the cessation of contact that lies in the middle.

We can understand this through this simile. Suppose someone gets a piece of delicious cake. Whether it be a small child or a needy person, they greedily swallow the piece of cake all at once, saying "it is delicious." Instead of that, if one eats it slowly, reflecting on it in the manner mentioned before, then one personally experiences how even that pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) of taste arises and passes away, how it wears away. The cessation (*nirodha*)—the fact that there is no 'thing' there—is grasped by the mind. It is because of lust and attachment that this cessation (*nirodha*) is not grasped by us. That is the secret.

Then, what does this seamstress do? She leaps and bounds. You can compare the activity of this seamstress to the needle of a sewing machine leaping up and down. What is the function of the bobbin thread (under-thread) in a sewing machine? What is done by the under-thread? Just as one grasps something in terms of craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and views (*diṭṭhi*), the under-thread leaps forward, and when the needle goes down, it forms a knot. That is how the stitching proceeds. Then a long seam is formed. That is the seam of saṁsāra, how the stitch is made. In weaving or knitting, the same thing happens. When knitting, taking one strand or two, one pulls it and goes on making knots. As long as those knots are cast, that knitting extends. That is the kind of thing that happens in saṁsāra.

Grasping (*upādāna*) gets its place because of craving (*taṇhā*). Next to craving (*taṇhā*) is grasping (*upādāna*). It is that grasping (*upādāna*) that is done under the sewing machine, by the under-thread. Thus, caught by that under-thread, we remain under that seamstress for a long time in saṁsāra. This can be understood even through this matter of contact (*phassa*), even if the other points are not considered.

There is a certain short passage in the discourses (*sutta-desanā*) expressing insight. If we cite that verse here as an example: '*Phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ, evaṁ tattha virajjati*'. *Phussa phussa* means with every instance of contact (*phassa*), one sees its passing away (*vaya*). "Seeing the passing away with each contact, one becomes dispassionate toward it." Then, dispassion (*virāga*) arises; non-attachment arises.

When you slowly eat that piece of cake, it mixes with saliva and ultimately becomes repulsive. The perception (*saññā*) of taste that you took is ended right there. When eating it again, the same thing happens. That is what happens when seeing that cessation (*nirodha*): '*Phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ*'. When one understands the true meaning of this food through reflection as mentioned before, so that one can see that cessation (*nirodha*), and does this with non-attachment, then one understands that there is no taste in what was swallowed greedily all at once, thinking 'it is delicious.' It is not there either. The taste is not in the piece of cake, nor is it in the tongue. It is an illusion, something created by the mind—thinking 'this cake is delicious'—arising due to that contact (*phassa*) and the quickness of craving (*taṇhā*) to bring up that contact again and again.

Thus, it is not impossible to become an Arahant even through a piece of cake, if one eats it after reflecting in that manner: '*Phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ*'—seeing its passing away with every contact (*phassa*).

Let us stop there with that point. Since there are several other points to mention, next let us look at the second interpretation. The past is one end; the future is the second end. This will be easy to understand. In the middle is the present (*paccuppanna*). Think about it for a moment: you, virtuous friends, have developed some wish to buy a vehicle or build a house. You think about the provisions for it. All of those are ready in the future. Now, perhaps, that castle in the air is already built. You forget about the debt. Craving (*taṇhā*) knits together the past and the future, making you forget the present.

That is why you have heard so much about the story of Bhāgineyya Saṅgharakkhita, which we mentioned on another occasion. The pupil of that monk Saṅgharakkhita, having become discontented with his teacher, thought: "Now I must disrobe. Having disrobed, I will become a layman, go on like this, and finally get married and have a child." Having generated such a story in his mind as a form of conceptual proliferation (*papañca*), while fanning his teacher with a palm-leaf fan, he struck his teacher on the head, thinking that his wife had dropped the child. In that way, through conceptual proliferation (*papañca*), the present is ultimately forgotten. Such a thing happens. That is how craving (*taṇhā*) knits together the two ends while forgetting (the middle). That is easy to understand. That is the second one.

Next, the third one is between pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) and painful feeling (*vedanā*). The Buddha has declared that an untaught worldling (*puthujjana*) afflicted by painful feeling (*vedanā*) yearns for pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). What is the reason? Apart from pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), the ordinary worldling does not know of any escape from painful feeling (*vedanā*). This means that the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) in the middle is not understood by that person at all. The being bound by ignorance (*avijjā*) has no understanding of that peaceful, neither-painful-nor-pleasant equanimity (*upekkhā*) in the middle. That is what the Buddha points out here.

So, what that person does is play on a seesaw between pleasure and pain. When pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) ends, they bring it up again. Then next comes painful feeling (*vedanā*). As long as pleasant feeling is present, it is pleasant; when it is absent, it is painful. Then they bring it up again. Thus, there is a seesaw play between pleasure and pain. The neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling in the middle—that neutral feeling (*vedanā*)—is not understood by that person. It is in the middle. Why is it not understood? By whom is this done? By that very seamstress. She leaps and bounds. In the world, one constantly rolls back and forth between pleasure and pain. She makes one forget about what is in the middle. Through serenity concentration (*samatha-jhāna*), the happiness within that state can be understood at the level of concentration (*samādhi*). Such is the case regarding feeling (*vedanā*). This too will be somewhat easy for you, virtuous friends, to understand.

Next, with what follows, perhaps something deep might be explained: between Name and Form (*nāma* and *rūpa*). The term 'Name' (*nāma*), apart from the practicing devotees (*yogāvacara*), might not be understood immediately by ordinary people. Where the Buddha explains the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), he states that 'Name' (*nāma*) consists of five factors connected with the mind: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). You know feeling, perception, and volition, along with contact and attention. These five are shown as mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*). Next, Form (*rūpa*) is analyzed, as you, virtuous friends, may have heard, in terms of the great elements (*mahābhūta*): earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). It is based on these that one develops a perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*). Thus, the world sees only these two: Name and Form. In between these two, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), lies consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Why is that? Because both of these are connected to consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Those mental factors present in Name—feeling (*vedanā*), perception, volition, contact (*phassa*), and attention—arise through consciousness (*viññāṇa*) itself.

Next, what we recognize as Form (*rūpa*). We do not understand this in a physical sense, but in accordance with the Dhamma. What do we take as the earth element (*paṭhavī*) there? It is through characteristics of hardness and softness. There, we use mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*) even to understand form-phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*). Through characteristics of hardness and softness, we generate the perception of earth (*paṭhavī*). Next, through characteristics of cohesion and liquidity, we recognize the water element (*āpo*). Next, through characteristics of heat and cold, we recognize the fire

element (*tejo*). Through characteristics of movement and distension, we recognize the air element (*vāyo*).

Thus, that perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*) grasped by our mind is ultimately what remains as Form (*rūpa*). In between those two lies consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The commentators of the past even point out that Name and Form (*nāma* and *rūpa*) proceed in relation to each other. They support each other; neither can stand alone.

The commentators present an ancient simile. The journey of Name and Form (*nāma* and *rūpa*) in saṁsāra is shown as a journey of a blind man who can walk and a lame man who can see. Riding on the shoulders of the blind man who can walk but cannot see is the lame man. Although he cannot walk, he can see. So, this person walks according to the path indicated by him. It is said that this saṁsāric journey is like the journey of this blind man and the lame man. But if one understands at some point, in between both of these lies consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is a matter that is very difficult to understand.

If we give another common simile—we say this having considered it, and not by way of disparaging, but to make it easy for you, virtuous friends, to understand—suppose a dog crossing a single-log bridge sees its reflection in the water. For a moment, it forgets that it is the nature of water to reflect. It assumes that there is a dog in the water—a water dog. So, it reacts to this water dog. Either it growls, or it wags its tail, or otherwise, it keeps looking again and again with curiosity. The dog does not know that it is because it looks that the other dog appears. Thinking it is a visible dog, it looks. Here, that looking dog represents the mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*). The visible dog is that Form (*rūpa*). In between both of them lies that reflecting nature of the water.

Thus, my virtuous friends, within consciousness (*viññāṇa*), there is a reflecting nature like that. That is what we meant by reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*). It is this very thing: within this illusory consciousness (*viññāṇa*), there is a reflecting nature; if one does not reflect correctly, one gets caught in it. That is unradical attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). If one reflects incorrectly, like that dog, one has to remain right there on the single-log bridge, wagging its tail or growling. Because that dog does not know the difference between the visible dog and the looking dog. The journey of Name and Form (*nāma* and *rūpa*) is just like that.

Thus, that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) lies in the middle, and this reflecting nature of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is not obvious to the ordinary world. The insight meditator must understand it through contemplation. In insight, by contemplating everything, applying the effort of rapid contemplation, one does so to personally realize it for oneself.

Just saying this in words is not enough. At some point in the understanding of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), instead of taking the mixture of Name and Form as a single unit, one understands at some point: "It is because of Name (*nāma*) that Form (*rūpa*) exists, and because of Form (*rūpa*) that Name (*nāma*) exists. In the middle of this lies the illusory consciousness (*viññāṇa*)." It is from this mind itself, through the mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*) such as hardness and softness, that one understands Form. Next, for

the mental factors to bring up feeling (*vedanā*), perception, and so on, it is that very perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*) that helps us. These support each other. So, this is the journey of the blind man and the lame man. If someone thinks of stopping this saṁsāric journey, it is like the lame man realizing this at some point. Then indeed, one strives to understand Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) with wisdom in that manner. That is the analysis of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*).

The same applies to what was said about the sense-bases (*āyatana*). The six internal bases (*ajjhattika āyatana*), as mentioned, are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Next, the six external bases (*bāhira āyatana*) are form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thoughts (dhamma). What helps to understand this is the simile of the mirage, which we all hear often and which we have to apply. The deer does not know that it is a mirage. The deer thinks it is water. It assumes that the sight seen in the mirage is water. Thus, it assumes that the external base is present there as it appears.

The deer has no idea that the eye is the internal base here, and that it is running because of that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) reflecting the image fallen on the eye. It has no understanding of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in the middle. Therefore, the deer runs from here to catch that water. From this, you, virtuous friends, can understand the operation of the mirage.

That is what is meant by saying that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) lies in the middle, between the six internal bases and the six external bases. And what knits them together is craving (*taṇhā*)—that thirst. A mirage is called *mṛgathṛṣṇikā* (deer-thirst). It is indeed craving (*taṇhā*). Because of the deer's thirst, it runs. It runs after that image falling on its eye, which it sees. These are the kinds of things regarding those six. Indeed, the Buddha applies the word 'mirage' to all perceptions (*saññā*). Every perception generated based on form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thoughts (dhamma) is shown as a mirage, which, because of craving (*taṇhā*) and the impulse of craving (*taṇhā*), worldlings divide into two and chase after.

Next, the final one is somewhat deep. Identity (*sakkāya*), as we mentioned earlier, is the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) itself. These five aggregates of grasping that we hold onto—form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—are built up moment by moment. Although it is not visible to us, the five aggregates of grasping you had when you arrived at this place are not what you have now. Now, they have piled up. That piling up is called accumulation (*upacaya*). They accumulate. They accumulate because one grasps those passing experiences as 'mine' in terms of craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and views (*diṭṭhi*). In that way, piles of grasping (*upādāna*) accumulate.

The dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) means taking the five aggregates of grasping as a self: "Form is my self," "feeling (*vedanā*) is my self," or "the self possesses form," and so forth in various ways. It is twenty-fold. It is called *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*. In twenty ways, one conceptualizes form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as 'I' and 'mine'. Furthermore, ordinary worldlings develop a

perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) regarding them. Consequently, due to not knowing that cessation (*nirodha*) in the middle—that is, their nature of wearing away—they generate a perception of permanence. One who has developed the vision of impermanence (*anicca*) understands: "This eye is impermanent (*anicca*), forms are impermanent (*anicca*), the contact (*phassa*) arising due to them is impermanent (*anicca*), and the feeling (*vedanā*) arising due to them is impermanent (*anicca*)."

When impermanence (*anicca*) is developed in that way, instead of the accumulation of the five aggregates of grasping, a wearing away occurs. They begin to wear away. But this happens only after seeing that cessation (*nirodha*). That is why identity (*sakkāya*) is one end. The arising of identity (*sakkāya-samudaya*)—just like what was said about the arising of contact (*phassa-samudaya*)—which is the repeated arising of identity, is the other end. The knitting together of these two is done by craving (*taṇhā*), while disregarding the cessation of identity (*sakkāya-nirodha*). Thus, we can see the work done by the seamstress. Next, we have to mention, using that same simile, how the work done by this seamstress with the under-thread is understood by the insight meditator at some point. When you, virtuous friends, are sewing on a sewing machine at home, if the under-thread suddenly runs out, then immediately after the under-thread runs out, it looks from the outside as if it has been sewn. But the two pieces of cloth remain separated; they are not sewn together.

For the insight meditator, at some point, through that perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) emerges. Having seen both arising and passing away, one gradually seeks to escape from this. On the other hand, the person who is keen on carrying on saṁsāra continuously looks at the arising (*samudaya*): "Indeed, the sun set this evening, but it will rise tomorrow morning; there is nothing to fear. True, the sun set today, but it rises in the morning. This went wrong, yes, this happened. But the next one will be right. This lottery ticket didn't win. The next one will." In that way, through that, they carry it on and on.

However, if one understands the cessation (*nirodha*) of these and maintains that understanding continuously, the state where this becomes intense is called the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). That is what we have to contemplate, in the manner mentioned earlier: '*Phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ*'—seeing the cessation (*nirodha*) with every contact (*phassa*). When insight meditation becomes so intense that even the thoughts arising in the mind are seen as breaking up (dissolving),

then that path of insight is put into action, and ultimately, through dispassion (*virāga*), revulsion (*nibbidā*), weariness with saṁsāra, liberation (*vimutti*) finally occurs. It is at that moment of liberation that it is like the under-thread running out—something like a stitch proceeds, but it is not sewn together. If it were sewn, it could be analyzed according to time and space, as they say nowadays. But a very wonderful thing happens, which cannot be caught by time or caught by space. That is what is called supramundane (*lokuttara*). That, my virtuous friends, is the supramundane state. There, the mind, having freed itself from that grasping (*upādāna*), freed itself from the under-thread,

reaches a wonderfully peaceful and sublime state at the moment of the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*).

That is what we have to draw from that simile. The state where the work of that craving-seamstress who delights here and there is suspended is the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*). Then, that is liberation. Therefore, when we speak of Nibbāna as the destruction of craving (*taṇhā-khaya*), whatever words are used, we must accept that the ultimate purpose of this Dispensation (*sāsana*) is indeed liberation (*vimutti*).

There is this great mass of suffering (*dukkha*) called pain. The Buddha declared: "I do not declare anything else, nor an eternal existence, but suffering (*dukkha*) and the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*). That is my entire message." The world complains about suffering (*dukkha*). I gave the solution for it—cessation (*nirodha*). Apart from that, this is not an eternal, permanent self-nature (*atta-sabhāva*) or anything of the sort. That is the essence of the vision of non-self (*anattā*).

When the Buddha compared this entire true Dhamma (*saddhamma*) to a Sal tree, in the simile of the Sal tree, he compared the leaves, twigs, etc., to virtue (*sīla*), and went on declaring the various parts of the Dhamma in that manner. Ultimately, what is the heartwood of the Sal tree? It is that state of Nibbāna known as the unshakeable liberation of mind (*akuppā cetovimutti*). It is the completely liberated mind that is unprovoked, unmoving, and freed from that grasping (*upādāna*) mentioned earlier.

In that liberated mind, there is neither this end, nor that end, nor is there a middle. That is what is mentioned in the Bāhiya Sutta: '*N'ev'idha na huraṁ na ubhayantare*'—neither here, nor there, nor in between both. '*Esev'anto dukkhassa*'—this itself is the end of suffering (*dukkha*).

That Dhamma, which the great ascetic Bāhiya personally realized through that short passage of the Buddha's word, is what we have been explaining in various ways for this past hour. Thus, Nibbāna lies right there. Our ultimate goal as Buddhists is that Nibbāna which is personally realized through the wonderful attainment of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samāpatti*)—which is like a visual field without a horizon, having neither the two ends mentioned earlier, nor the middle. Apart from that, we must understand that it is not something that various people imagine it to be.

We pray that the virtue (*sīla*) observed, the meditation practiced, and the Dhamma heard today may serve as a supportive condition (*hetu-vāsanā*) to go on this journey while established in right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)!

Recalling the mass of merit (*kusala-sambhāra*) accumulated by you, virtuous friends, through this hearing of the Dhamma, along with the mass of merit we have accumulated through this preaching of the Dhamma, and the value of that gift of the Dhamma mentioned earlier, may all beings in this world—from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including all the relatives of you, virtuous friends—rejoice in this merit! By rejoicing in it, at some point, may they escape from all the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra, such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), disease, and so on, and having gone

beyond that craving-seamstress, may they attain the supreme, great Deathless Nibbāna! Please make this aspiration. Recite these verses to share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #151

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.46)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Hanti bhogā dummedhaṃ,

no ca pāragavesino;

Bhogataṇhāya dummedho,

hanti aññe'va attanaṃ."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 355 (Taṇhā Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The acquisition of worldly wealth and prosperity is generally considered in the world as a stroke of luck, a great fortune. However, the foolish person, overcome by craving (*taṇhā*) for material possessions, brings about disaster from within that very prosperity. A person whose mind is possessed by craving (*taṇhā*) for possessions and the rust of stinginess is driven to the brink of self-destruction due to that very miserliness, just as if he were being destroyed by others. That is why in the Dhamma, stinginess is described as a "rust." Through rust, the mind becomes impure and inactive. Thus, a story of a person who destroyed his life and ruined his own progress through such stinginess is presented as the origin story (*nidāna kathā*) for the verse chosen as today's theme.

On one occasion, when the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana monastery, King Pasenadi of Kosala came to see him at midday. The Buddha asked, "Why, Great King, have you come at this midday hour, an unusual time? From where have you come?" Then the king replied, "The treasurer (*seṭṭhi*) of Sāvatthi has passed away. Since he died childless, I have spent the day organizing the confiscation of his wealth to the royal treasury, and I am coming straight from there." The king also shared some details about the treasurer's life: "That treasurer possessed nearly ten million in gold coins alone; there is no need to even speak of silver. Despite possessing such vast wealth, this

treasurer daily ate only broken rice and sour gruel. For clothing, he wore a coarse hempen garment made of three pieces stitched together. He traveled in a dilapidated chariot under a canopy of leaves. He lived such a miserable and wretched life." Hearing this, the Buddha explained, one by one, the past kamma that caused this treasurer's anomalous lifestyle as follows:

"Great King, in a past life, when this treasurer was also a wealthy householder, a Pacceka Buddha named Tagarasikhi arrived at his residence. The householder ordered his household members, 'Give alms-food to this ascetic,' and then rose from his seat and went away. After the alms-food was given, a sense of regret arose in his mind: 'If I had given this food to a servant or a laborer, I could have gotten some work done. By giving it to this ascetic, it was wasted in vain.' The Buddha also revealed another incident that occurred in that same past life. He murdered his brother's only son to acquire his brother's wealth—that is, after the brother passed away, only that child remained, and he killed the child to make the entire estate his own. That was a grave unwholesome act. Yet, so powerful was the merit-energy (*ānisaṃsa*) of his mere word ordering that alms-food be given to the Pacceka Buddha, that he was born seven times in the heavenly worlds, and seven times held the post of treasurer in this very city of Sāvatthi, solely due to the wholesome potential of that brief instruction. However, because of his subsequent regret, that wholesome deed was defiled. As a result, although he attained the status of a treasurer, his mind would not lean toward enjoying those riches; he could not bring himself to enjoy good food, clothing, or vehicles, and his mind was not inclined toward the five cords of sensual pleasure, precisely due to that lingering stinginess."

Furthermore, as a result of murdering his brother's young son, he boiled in hell for hundreds of thousands of years, and as a residual consequence (*vipāka*) of that deed, he lived seven lifetimes completely childless—such that all his vast treasures eventually went to the royal treasury upon his death. The Buddha declared this. Next, the Buddha revealed that the merit this treasurer had accumulated in the past is now completely exhausted. Since he did not accumulate any new merit, he is at this very moment boiling in the Mahāroruva hell. When the Buddha described this terrifying destiny in accordance with kamma, the King exclaimed, "Bhante, how tragic this is! Even though he possessed such enormous wealth, he did not enjoy it himself, nor did he use it for meritorious deeds when the Buddha was living so close to him." It was at that moment that the Buddha spoke the aforementioned verse containing the message: "Yes, Great King, a person with craving (*taṇhā*) for wealth destroys himself in this manner, and does not direct his mind toward Nibbāna."

"Bhogā dummedhaṃ hanti, no ca pāragavesino"

Dummedha means the foolish person. Worldly wealth and possessions destroy the foolish person; they are ruined by those very riches. *"No ca pāragavesino"*—but those who seek the further shore, who seek Nibbāna, are not destroyed by wealth and prosperity in this way. Next,

"Bhogataṇhāya dummedho, hanti aññeva attanaṃ"

Due to craving (*taṇhā*) for wealth, craving for worldly prosperity, that foolish person brings about his own destruction, just as if others were destroying him. This is the meaning of that Dhamma verse. Based on this story, we can extract many highly valuable lessons. All these devout, merit-seeking Buddhists should reflect on why one is called a *'pinvatā'* (a fortunate or merit-endowed person). This is a common idiom in our language. A *'pinvatā'* is defined as someone who possesses merit (*puñña*). Among the meritorious deeds mentioned in this Dispensation, the very first to be enumerated is the meritorious act of giving (*dāna*). You all know well that when the bases of meritorious activity (*puñña-kiriya-vatthu*) are shown, they are giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and mental development (*bhāvanā*). Where the four bases of sympathy (*saṅgaha-vatthu*) are shown, they are giving, kindly speech, useful conduct, and impartiality. Among the perfections (*pāramitā*), giving is foremost. Among the ten bases of meritorious action (*dasa-puñña-kiriya-vatthu*), giving is at the beginning. In all these contexts, giving is presented as the primary discipline. You have often heard that for a gift to yield great fruit and great benefit (*mahatphala mahānisaṃsa*), one must give with the 'threefold mind' (the three thoughts). The threefold mind refers to: the intention (*cetanā*) generated before giving, the state of mind and thought prevailing at the moment of giving, and one's attitude and thought regarding it after having given. When all three are complete, only then can it be considered an entirely complete gift of great fruit and great benefit. This concept of the 'threefold mind' is explained in the Dhamma through a verse:

Pubbeva dānā sumano, dadaṃ cittaṃ pasādaye;

Datvā attamano hoti, esā yaññassa sampadā.

Here, *yañña* means sacrifice or giving (*dāna*). Three factors required to perfect the achievement of giving are presented there. Before giving, a sense of joy (*somanassa*) arises. One gives something with a sense of joy and happiness; before giving, that joy is present. *"Dadaṃ cittaṃ pasādaye"*—while giving, there is confidence or clarity of mind. One arouses a certain inspiration and clarity regarding the recipient. *"Datvā attamano hoti"*—having given, there is gladness. But for that treasurer, instead of that gladness, there arose the regret called remorse (*vipiṭisāra*). He regarded it as a loss to himself. Because of that, the merit was defiled. The Dhamma analyzes and highlights the value of safeguarding the mind in terms of the preliminary volition (*pūrva-cetanā*), the volition at the moment of relinquishment (*muñcana-cetanā*), and the subsequent volition (*apara-cetanā*). In performing meritorious deeds like giving or any other, rather than merely staring at the object offered and measuring the value of one's gift by its material worth, one must be mindful of this mind, which is invisible both to oneself and to others.

Now, from this story we see that it was because of some slight, yet real, joy that the treasurer gave the command to offer the alms-food. He did not give it with his own hands, yet he ordered that the alms-food be given. How immense the fruits (*āniśaṃsa*) of that act were is evident from his attainment of heavenly bliss and his status as a treasurer. Furthermore, three factors are frequently explained regarding the success of a gift: the excellence of the giver (*dāyaka-sampatti*), the excellence of the gift (*deyya-dhamma-sampatti*), and the excellence of the recipient (*paṭigrāhaka-sampatti*). Here

too, there must be purity in the giver's intention and conviction (*saddhā*). The object of charity, too, should be something of fine quality.

Next, the excellence of the recipient (*paṭigrāhaka-sampatti*) refers to the spiritual virtue of the receiving party. Accordingly, when we consider that merely ordering the gift to be given to a Pacceka Buddha led to seven births in the heavens and seven appointments as a treasurer, we can see how exceptionally powerful the excellence of the recipient is in making a gift bear great fruit and great benefit. The object of charity may be massive; however, if it is offered with a narrow mind, a petty mind, or with a wrong intention and wrong expectations, it does not become a truly wholesome deed (*kusala*).

We can learn much from this regarding being mindful of the mind when performing meritorious deeds like giving. The phrase "the rust of stinginess" described in the Dhamma is also well worth reflecting upon. The Buddha has pointed out the moment this rust of stinginess enters minds, stating: *"Maccheraṃ dadataṃ malaṃ"*—stinginess is the rust of those who give. Why is it called a "rust"? We know that a metal object is destroyed by rust. When rust forms on a metal object, if it is not cleaned regularly, it eventually turns into a heap of rust. Similarly, we know that if the hinges of a door are eaten by rust, that door cannot be swung back and forth properly. It cannot be opened or closed; it is incapacitated and cannot be operated. In the same way, the mind becomes incapacitated. Simply put, when stinginess sets in, neither the hand nor the mind inclines or bends toward giving. That is what the "rust of stinginess" means. Through this, the brilliance of the mind is lost. The mind becomes narrow, regardless of how wealthy one is considered in society. We usually measure wealth and richness based on a person's material assets. But if one looks inside that person, due to that rust, the stingy person possesses a mind akin to that of an extremely destitute beggar. Wealth means capability, the power to do. Being poor or 'incapable' means the inability to do.

Therefore, wealth is not measured by material riches alone, but by that quality of relinquishment, the virtue of generosity—the extent to which the mind bends toward giving. Just because wealth is present—which is indeed received due to past merit—one can still become an absolute pauper in utilizing it if that dangerous rust called the "rust of stinginess" enters the mind. Thus, this story makes it clear to us how necessary it is to protect ourselves from it. By freeing oneself from this rust of stinginess and giving, a meritorious deed is perfected. As the fruit of that merit, one receives heavenly rebirth, human prosperity, and the status of a treasurer. Not only that, the deepest benefit of giving is the growth of the quality of generosity (*cāga*). You have heard of the Seven Noble Treasures (*sapta āriya-dhana*). These represent seven types of wealth possessed by those who have attained supramundane states:

Saddhā-dhanaṃ sīla-dhanaṃ, hiri-ottappiyaṃ dhanaṃ;

Suta-dhanaṃ ca cāgo ca, paññā ve sattamaṃ dhanaṃ.

Conviction (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), moral shame (*hiri*) and moral dread (*ottappa*) which are shame and fear toward sin, then the understanding acquired through hearing the

Dhamma (*suta*), then relinquishment (*cāga*). Generosity, too, is shown as a Noble Treasure. Finally, the treasure of wisdom (*paññā*). Why is relinquishment considered a treasure? If a person has not developed the volition of relinquishment, when some mishap or disaster occurs in daily life, or if one's property is lost or destroyed through thieves or by other means, they cannot compose their mind. They lack the strength to reconcile their mind. But one who has cultivated this virtue can compose their mind. Through the strength of letting go cultivated via the volition of giving, they can reconcile their mind. That is why, ultimately, the benefit one receives from giving, both in this world and throughout the round of rebirths, is designated as "wealth."

These days, many people ask, "Even if you say we have given alms, who sees their results (*vipāka*)? Can you prove that there is a fruit to giving?" In an era where such diverse opinions exist, including the view that "performing these meritorious deeds only prolongs the round of rebirths," one must reflect on how giving purifies one's own mind. Lay devotees spend their lives surrounded by money and a mountain of possessions. Living amongst these, defilement is bound to arise in the mind. We refer to things like greed, stinginess, and miserliness as belonging to the very word craving (*taṇhā*). It is a very low, wretched form of craving. There is a risk of sliding into that state if one does not regularly practice giving. Giving is not something to be done for worldly pride or show. It must be done by clarifying the mind at all three stages—the preliminary volition (*pūrva-cetanā*), the volition of relinquishment (*muñcana-cetanā*), and the subsequent volition (*apara-cetanā*)—so that those aforementioned factors are fulfilled. Moreover, you must give as a true benefactor, endowed with virtue (*sīla*) and conviction (*saddhā*), and the gift being offered should not be thrown away carelessly, but prepared and presented in a fitting manner.

Next is the other factor regarding the receiving party (*paṭigrāhaka*). Many people say, "Due to economic hardships, we have nothing to give." It is indeed very difficult when there is nothing to give. However, the absence of a worthy recipient to whom one can offer a good, highly fruitful gift is another dangerous situation. This is a moral decline, parallel to economic decline. For a gift to yield great fruit and great benefit, it is also necessary for the recipient to be developed in virtuous qualities.

Excellence of virtue means growth in supramundane virtues. The Pacceka Buddha mentioned in this story is the second most noble person in the world. From this, we can understand that those who receive gifts should be mindful of cultivating such virtue, to the best of their ability, to become fields of merit (*puññakkhetta*) for the world. Usually, the Dhamma states, *"Anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa"*—"an unsurpassed field of merit for the world"—in reference to the Saṅgha. The Saṅgha does not refer to the external appearance, but to that aforementioned spiritual mass of virtue. Where that mass of virtue is degraded, that nature of being a field of merit is also absent. Therefore, whether one is a layperson or a monastic, it is by drawing closer to those supramundane virtues that one develops the capacity to make the success of others' giving yield great fruit and great benefit. The Buddha stated here that the treasurer had completely finished experiencing the results of his past meritorious deeds. He did not make any

effort to gather new merit. You can understand this through the analogy of a farmer who squanders all the seed-paddy in his barn; he has no seed left to sow for the next harvest. In the same way, what happened here is that he merely enjoyed the benefits of past merits. He did not gather merit that would support him further in this long round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*). The terrifying nature of its result is clear from the story of his rebirth in hell. From that, we can learn a very valuable lesson.

The great female lay disciple Visākhā, who was highly eminent in wisdom within this Dispensation during the Buddha's time, taught her own father-in-law a fine lesson. You have heard that the treasurer was Visākhā's father-in-law. Visākhā had to be married into a family holding wrong views. Treasurer Migāra held wrong views and ministered to the Nigaṇṭhas (Jain ascetics). In the early days after her marriage, one day, Treasurer Migāra was eating rich milk-rice—a highly delicious milk-rice—served in a golden bowl while seated on a very valuable seat. While he was eating, his new daughter-in-law was fanning him. At that moment, a monk on an alms-round arrived there. When he entered the house, Visākhā thought wisely, 'It is not fit to say in words to my father-in-law that a monk has arrived.' Instead, she stepped aside slightly so that the monk would be clearly visible to him. The treasurer raised his head, looked, but showed no reaction whatsoever; pretending not to see, he looked down and resumed eating his food. Visākhā then spoke to the monk—when there is nothing to offer to monks on their alms-round, there is a certain phrase used on such occasions: *"Atikkamatha, bhante"* (Please pass on, Venerable Sir). This is a phrase conveying the meaning, "Seek satisfaction elsewhere, we have nothing to offer here." Visākhā said, "Venerable Sir, please pass on. Obtain it from elsewhere. My father-in-law is eating stale food (*purāṇa*). Therefore, Venerable Sir, please be compassionate and go elsewhere."

Upon hearing this, Treasurer Migāra flew into a great rage. What was the reason? The Pāli word *purāṇa* (old/ancient) also has another connotation in some contexts, meaning excrement or refuse. Thus, the treasurer thought, 'I am eating this milk-rice, yet my daughter-in-law has placed me in such a degrading position. She said such a thing about what I am eating!' He ordered his servants, 'Take this milk-rice away, and drive this woman out of this house!' Then Visākhā said, 'I am not someone who can be driven out so easily like a slave-girl. I was brought here from an honorable family. Furthermore, when my parents married me off, they sent eight noble clan-leaders to judge any such issues that might arise. Present this case to them.' The treasurer then summoned those eight judges and made his complaint: 'While I was eating my food in this manner, my daughter-in-law said such a thing.' Then Visākhā explained her statement: 'I said it with this meaning: my father-in-law is eating stale food (*purāṇa*) in the sense that he is consuming his past merit, and is not accumulating new merit. I said it with that intention, and not as some talk about refuse.'

There may be many people in this society who are like Visākhā's father-in-law. Everyone must reflect that meritorious deeds like giving are what support one’s long journey through the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*). Shortcomings in these are what manifest in one's day-to-day life. Even performing meritorious deeds must be done correctly. One

must be mindful of how one's mind fluctuates. One must train to observe this. Furthermore, as stated in the Dhamma, the value of a gift does not depend on the size of the object given, but on the thought with which it is given: *"Appampi ce saddahano dadāti, teneva so hoti sukhī parattha."* Even if one is extremely poor, if they give even a tiny thing with a large mind, with deep conviction (*saddhā*), and with a great volition of relinquishment without a stingy mind, that is what yields great fruit and great benefit. Thus, the benefit of giving by removing the rust of stinginess is highlighted. Among meritorious deeds, the meritorious act of giving is presented as fundamental. So much so, as you well know, among the perfections (*pāramitā*) of the Buddha, the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramitā*) is paramount. The perfection of giving means going to the absolute limit of giving. The Bodhisatta is one who approaches this concept of giving with a depth that is hard for an ordinary human to even conceive. The perfection of giving is not confined to external objects, but extends to internal things—yielding even his own body, head, flesh, and blood. With this background of the Bodhisatta's life, the Buddha once declared to the monks: "Monks, if these people knew the benefits of giving as I do, they would never eat without sharing. Even if it were their very last morsel of rice, their final mouthful, they would not eat it without sharing, if there were someone present to receive it." This means, suppose someone has only one morsel of rice left, their final mouthful. Just as they lift it, a beggar arrives and asks for it. They give it. Even if it is the very food about to enter their mouth, if it can sustain another, they would give it away. The Buddha declared that the benefit of giving is that great. He also stated that it is because people do not know this that their minds are covered by the rust of stinginess.

Over the past few days, we celebrated the New Year festival. This giving, the quality of relinquishment, is a heritage our nation has received through Buddhist customs and traditions. This is visible even during the New Year festival. In the month of Bak (April), which is heavy with harvest, there is an opportunity within the New Year customs to share that fortune among relatives, friends, neighbors, as well as the poor, travelers, and beggars. Similarly, in the upcoming month of Vesak, there are the alms-stalls (*dansäl*). All of these are valuable qualities integrated into our national character based on that concept of giving. It is by developing these virtues, such as hospitality to guests, that one can make one's life in the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) fruitful, while simultaneously subduing and gradually cutting away that dangerous disease of the mind, the defilement (*kilesa*) called craving (*taṇhā*).

You know that discourses like the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta, which were preached to deities, were often delivered during the night as answers to questions asked by devas who came to visit the Buddha. On one such occasion, a young deity named Sērī came to visit the Buddha. In reply to a question asked by this deity, the Buddha stated:

> *Ye naṃ dadanti saddhāya, vippasannena cetasā;*
>
> *Tameva annaṃ bhajati, asmiṃ loke paramhi ca.*

Those who give gifts with conviction (*saddhā*) and with a clear, confident mind, never experience a shortage of food and drink, both in this world and the next. Just as if food and drink come searching for them, they suffer no lack.

Tasmā vineyya maccheraṃ, dajjā dānaṃ malābhibhū;

Puññāni paralokasmiṃ, patiṭṭhā honti pāṇinaṃ.

Therefore, conquering this rust of stinginess, overcoming and removing stinginess, one should give gifts. Why? Because for living beings, this thing called merit (*puñña*) becomes a support in the world beyond. When the Buddha spoke thus, the deity named Sērī shared his own experience: "Bhante, I see how well-spoken (*subhāsita*) and true your words are. When I was in the human world, I was a king by the very name Sērī. I was someone who practiced this giving at the highest level. That is, the world knew me as a *dāyako* (giver), a *dānapati* (lord of giving), and a *dānassa vaṇṇavādī* (one who praises giving). There is great depth in these three terms. *Dāyaka* means one who gives. *Dānapati* means one who gives on such a grand scale that he masterfully controls those acts of giving. *Dānassa vaṇṇavādī* means one who praises giving to others, explaining its value. That is the highest thing a giver can do. That is how I gave when I was a king," he declared to the Buddha.

"I built alms-halls at all four gates of the city and regularly gave alms to ascetics, brahmins, the poor, travelers, and beggars. As this went on, one day the women of the harem—the queens—came to me and said, 'Only the King gives alms; we have no opportunity to do so. It would be wonderful if we too were given an opportunity.' Then I thought, 'I, this Sērī, am a giver, a lord of giving, and one who praises giving. Therefore, when such a request is made, I cannot refuse it.' So I permitted the women of the harem to organize the giving at the first gate. The King's own alms-giving at that gate was discontinued. After some time, the princes and the royal khattiyas came with the next request: 'Your Majesty gives alms, and the women of the harem also give alms. But we have no opportunity.' The King thought in the same way, 'I cannot reject this request,' and allowed those princes and khattiyas to give alms at the second gate."

"After some time, the military forces—the soldiers under the commander-in-chief—came and made the same request: 'Your Majesty gives alms, the queens of the harem give alms, and the khattiya princes give alms. Only we have no opportunity.' On that occasion, the third gate was granted to those royal soldiers to give alms. Next, fourthly, came the brahmin householders. They made the same request. The King had to hand over the management of the alms-hall at the fourth gate to those brahmins. There was no longer any alms-giving directly from the King. The royal officers came to the King and said, 'Now, there seems to be no alms-giving at all from Your Majesty.' The deity Sērī said, 'At that point, this is what I did: "Then, my men, go and send only half of the taxes collected from outside the city—from the distant provinces—to the palace. Let the other half be distributed right there as alms to ascetics, brahmins, the poor, travelers, and beggars..." By giving alms on such a massive scale, I now enjoy this heavenly bliss. So

much so, I cannot even measure how long I will remain in this heaven, or how much merit I still have left. How true are the words of the Buddha!' declared the deity Sērī."

In this giving, in the distribution of gifts (*dāna-saṃvibhāga*), and in providing opportunities for others to give—in all of these, one has the capacity to accumulate a vast store of merit. Yet, more valuable than all of these is directing it toward Nibbāna. When speaking of a gift that yields great fruit and great benefit, it was mentioned earlier that the volition (*cetanā*) behind the act of giving is what governs it. One can give out of a specific personal preference, or out of fear, or with the expectation of a heavenly rebirth, and so forth, under various kinds of volitions.

However, these are not the highest purposes. The Buddha has stated that the deep purpose of giving is: *"Cittālaṅkāraṃ dānaṃ deti"*—one gives a gift for the adornment of the mind, and to fulfill the factors necessary for the growth of the mind. That is what is called "requisites for the mind." It is for this that one gives. Such is the purpose of giving that in accordance with the Dhamma supports Nibbāna. Here, *cittālaṅkāra* means the adornment of the mind. Through this giving, we can develop a certain degree of concentration (*samādhi*). In the Dhamma, this is designated as *cāgānussati*—recollection of generosity. Recollections (*anussati*) as meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) mean constant reflection. You know the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) well—reflecting deeply on the qualities of the Buddha. Recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*) is reflecting on the qualities of the Dhamma. Recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*) is reflecting on the qualities of the Saṅgha. Similarly, there is also the recollection of generosity (*cāgānussati*).

The Buddha has shown meditations that can be practiced. Among people of the world whose minds are choked by the rust of stinginess, I live in this manner. How is this described in the Dhamma? *"Vigatamalamaccherena cetasā"*—with a mind free from the rust of stinginess, *"agāraṃ ajjhāvasati, mutta-cāgo payata-pāṇi vossagga-rato yācayogo dāna-saṃvibhāga-rato"* and so forth. One dwells at home with a mind free from stinginess, liberal, open-handed, delighting in relinquishment, devoted to charity, and rejoicing in sharing. One is always ready and prepared to give, experiencing a special joy in letting go.

Furthermore, one makes oneself accessible to beggars (*yācayogo*), and takes pleasure in distributing gifts (*dāna-saṃvibhāgo*). When one constantly maintains the thought, "I live in this generous manner," the mind becomes composed through that reflection. The Buddha has pointed out that hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are discarded and one enters a certain state of concentration (*samādhi*). In this way, through the recollection of generosity (*cāgānussati*), even concentration can be developed. That is what is meant by "the adornment of the mind" (*cittālaṅkāra*). A mind is adorned when it becomes concentrated, when it becomes calm. Next, "requisites for the mind" refers to the practice in a deep, insight-oriented (*vipassanā*) manner. Giving is the primary training in letting go. Among the things the world considers "mine," the most fundamental is one's heap of possessions—external assets like gold, silver, pearls, gems, and lands. In

the Bodhisatta conduct of the Buddha, this letting go is illustrated even to the extent of giving away wife and children.

Similarly, by giving away parts of one's own body—eyes, head, flesh, and blood—one gradually imprints the truth of not-self (*anattā*), the realization that "these are not mine," onto the mind. Even when giving a small thing, if one reflects in terms of insight (*vipassanā*): "By giving this object—which I previously regarded as 'mine'—to someone else, it has become an exercise for me to remove greed towards it." That is precisely where the quality of relinquishment (*cāga*), of letting go, lies. When regarded as an exercise in letting go, it supports the growth of the mind from the perspective of insight. Even if one performs meritorious deeds, if one does not know the factors that help make that merit yield great fruit and great benefit, it cannot be considered a wise offering. That is why one must be mindful of these factors. Countless acts of charity are performed in the world, yet whether they are given with a pure mind as described is sometimes doubtful. Moreover, at the moment of giving, there is a possibility of the mind weakening.

Now, giving is essentially prompted by two causes: conviction (*saddhā*) or compassion (*karuṇā*). Monastic alms within the Dispensation are given with conviction in the Triple Gem. Giving to the poor, travelers, and beggars is done out of compassion. Whichever cause it may be, at the moment of giving, one must compose the mind and give in such a way that no subsequent regret arises—not with a mind that, as it were, runs back to reclaim what was given. One should give in a manner that allows one to be happy and rejoice over the deed.

Furthermore, like the story of the morsel of rice, the Buddha has shown that even an extremely poor person giving some small thing of theirs can yield great fruit and great benefit according to the excellence of the recipient. Indeed, one should give to everyone. One should give even to an animal. Yet, according to the natural law (*dhammatā*) of the world, a gift yields great fruit and great benefit depending on the spiritual virtue of the recipient. In agriculture, it is the crop sown in a fertile field that yields the greatest results, the highest harvest. It is the same when considering business investments. However, this is not like a transaction of the ordinary world. This is an act done by joining one's mind, connecting one's mind, and engaging the mind. Giving is not something that is merely visible externally.

Ultimately, we will have to let go not only of these external objects, but also of this very five-aggregate bundle (*pañcakkhandha*) that we have assumed to be "mine." This means that this concept of giving (*dāna*) extends to the capacity to let go of everything we have grasped with the mind and regarded as self-identity—namely, form (*rūpa*), sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). That is why the path begins with giving (*dāna*) in the perfections, merges with the others, and finally culminates in wisdom (*paññā*) itself—through the development of insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*). The quality of giving, which is embedded within our very identity as Buddhists, our culture, and all our customs, is shown to be a support and a foundation in this long round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), as made clear by the passage:

"Puññāni paralokasmiṃ patiṭṭhā honti pāṇinaṃ" (Meritorious deeds are the support for living beings in the world beyond). Even if one becomes an Arahant, if they have not performed acts of giving and the like, they might not even receive the basic requisites necessary to live their life comfortably. The Dhamma even mentions monastics who fell into miserable conditions due to past stinginess and jealousy.

Furthermore, one should reflect on the lightness of mind experienced when performing meritorious deeds of giving during times of personal disaster. One gains the strength of mind to reconcile oneself without regret or grief, thinking, "In this disaster, I must reflect in terms of kamma. This is something that was bound to happen to me." In this way, we can enrich our lives through this concept of giving. This society is moving in a dangerous direction, with no regard for merit or righteousness. Not only through past stories, but also through events unfolding in the present era, we can see the connection between kamma and its result (*vipāka*) taught by the Buddha. The things we consider as luck and fortune do not happen by chance. Though we receive them due to past merit, if we become intoxicated by them, breed pride, harbor improper greed and stinginess, and squander them, we can fall into extremely dangerous states in the future. Instead, what must be done is as expressed in *"no ce pāragavesino"*—the person who seeks the further shore of Nibbāna always utilizes the wealth they have received in a way that supports Extinguishment.

To support Nibbāna means to prevent rebirth in miserable realms, to head towards happy realms, to lean towards the wholesome, and deeply, by reflecting on the craving (*taṇhā*) within one's own mind and studying it from the perspective of insight (*vipassanā*), to cultivate the wisdom necessary for Extinguishment. We must utilize these possessions in a way that helps shorten our journey through the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), or at least saves us from the terrifying abysses of that journey, such as hell and the ghost realm (*peta-loka*). It is precisely those with an abundance of the rust of stinginess, greed, and miserliness who are born in the ghost realms. Or, those who die with an intense craving (*taṇhā*) and greed for their possessions are born in the ghost realms and suffer terribly, finding themselves in states without food, water, or clothing. These are not things that happen to just one or two people. Even immensely wealthy people, like that treasurer, by ignoring this concept of giving and treating it as a trivial matter, neither enjoy the wealth they daily receive nor give it to others, and are destroyed along with it. That is why the Buddha declared that just as others would destroy him, the foolish person destroys himself. The Buddha's teaching is one where the journey to cross over this round of rebirths begins right where one stands and goes deep. We must reflect on why giving is placed at the very beginning of the perfections, the bases of meritorious activity, and the bases of sympathy. This is because, starting from where one is capable, and utilizing one's wealth according to the path taught by the Buddha, the very next step after generating conviction (*saddhā*) is giving. That is why, when someone asked the Buddha what kind of person a person of conviction is, he gave this reply:

Dassanakāmo sīlavataṃ, saddhammaṃ so sumicchati;

Vineyya macchera-malaṃ, sa ve saddhoti vuccati.

A person of conviction (*saddhā*) is one who desires to see the virtuous, wishes to hear the True Dhamma, and is ready to give by removing the rust of stinginess. We see that giving, the concept of giving, is a quality that goes hand-in-hand with conviction. Reflecting from the perspective of the Dispensation, even during times when no Buddha has arisen (*abuddhotpāda*) and supramundane virtues are absent in the world, it is shown that kings and wise, wealthy people established alms-halls and gave to the poor, travelers, beggars, and well-known ascetics and brahmins. Thus, this giving is a valuable, timeless custom in the world. The part that supports our Nibbāna—the very essence of it—is the quality of relinquishment (*cāga*). Sometimes a person gives something, yet grasps it with the mind. That was why the treasurer regretted: "If I had given this even to a laborer, I could have gotten some work done." He grasped it with his mind. It should not be so; when giving something, one must completely remove expectation regarding it, understand its benefits, and give: "Through this letting go, I have comforted and brought happiness to someone." If it is an offering of food within the Dispensation, one should offer it with the thought, "I am giving someone life, beauty, happiness, strength, and wisdom." Craving (*taṇhā*) is compared to the great ocean. No matter how many treasures are poured in, even to overflowing, just as the ocean is never filled, craving is never satisfied.

"Mema haṭa ata itiriya demi yana sita

Hama raṭa raja siri sapa laduvat nata"

As stated in the *Lōvada Saṅgarāva*: "The thought, 'This is enough for me, I will give away the rest,' does not arise naturally in a person, even if they obtain the royal bliss and comfort of every country." Therefore, it is according to past habituation (*saṃsāra-purudda*) that even the volition to give arises in someone. If one does not cultivate that habit, just as rust accumulates on a metal object, rust will gradually accumulate in one's mind. Once rusted, one eventually destroys oneself. They also drag those they associate with and the world into the mouth of destruction, setting a bad example. Thus, we must be exceptionally mindful of such virtues. No matter how much prominence we give to intellect, if we do not practically incline our lives toward virtue, it unconsciously becomes a deceptive state (*vañcaka-dhamma*). What is the use of speaking of deep things to the world if one does not put them into practice? One's life will fall into an abyss in the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*).

Therefore, the New Year festival is an excellent opportunity to resolve to conduct one's affairs starting from the very first level of practice taught by the Buddha. It is not an occasion to simply enjoy, squander, dance, eat, and drink without any thought of virtue. Within these New Year customs lies the practice of sharing the wealth and grain one has received over the past twelve months with relatives, friends, and neighbors, helping them, joining with them in hospitality, and fulfilling duties. There too lies the concept of giving (*dāna*). During the Vesak season, there is a custom in this country of giving food, drink, or other things according to one's capacity to the devout, the poor, travelers, and beggars, having aroused conviction (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem. From all these practices, such as running alms-stalls (*dansäl*), what remains for oneself is that aforementioned

quality of relinquishment (*cāga*), the virtue of generosity. One's mind grows. Greed is subdued. It is due to the three unwholesome roots—greed, hatred, and delusion—that we have remained in this round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) for so long. Therefore, to eradicate greed, to subdue that thirst called craving (*taṇhā*), the primary exercise is to begin by giving away one's external possessions, wealth, grain, and other such things. A Buddha, who aspires to a grand perfection-potential, carries this concept of giving to its absolute, ultimate end—to the extent of giving his own head, flesh, and blood. Thus, we must constantly reflect on the value of that relinquishment. In daily life, without being overly concerned with one's own level of wealth, one should help neighbors or those in distress as opportunities arise, rather than merely performing these acts of charity as mere rituals within the Dispensation. One must reflect wisely and perform a wise act of giving in a manner that develops the wholesome potential of the mind.

In this manner, through the verse and these stories, the Buddha has presented a multitude of valuable virtues for us to integrate into our lives. It is through the meritorious deeds of giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and mental development (*bhāvanā*) that one is able to cross over this round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*). The relinquishment of external possessions, which begins with giving, becomes the training of body and speech through virtue. What one is forced to give up in virtue is that which one desires. The mind prompts one to kill living beings, to steal, to commit sexual misconduct, to lie, and to consume intoxicants. In virtue, too, one practices letting go of these. In giving, there is letting go; in virtue, there is letting go. Mental development (*bhāvanā*) goes even deeper; although it is not called 'giving' (*dāna*), it too is a sacrifice, a relinquishment. What is the sacrifice there? You know how much sacrifice is required to practice meditation. One must withdraw the mind from many things regarded as entertainment and comfort in daily life. One must discard numerous old habits from the mind, remove the mind's tendency to grasp the world, and restrain the mind from running toward the unwholesome, directing it toward the wholesome. There too lies a sacrifice. One must view it as a gift, a sacrifice; the very same process of letting go that was started at the beginning is practiced there as well. Therefore, we must not isolate giving and treat it as something done only by ordinary folk or the foolish. It is the very first step in developing one's spiritual life. Starting with the relinquishment of external possessions, then training one's body and speech, and utilizing that volition of relinquishment—this letting go not only fosters the growth of one's own mind but also brings immense peace to society.

Abstaining from the five vices helps the mind grow, purifies the mind, and assists in eliminating the confusion, harm, and destruction that arise in the external world. Next, when reflecting on the aspect of mental development (*bhāvanā*), some people think that sitting in a corner with limbs folded does not serve the world or society. The Buddha has declared that all the meritorious deeds of giving that can be performed in this world are not worth even a sixteenth part of the power of developing the liberation of mind through loving-kindness (*mettā-cetovimutti*), the jhana of loving-kindness. This means that all the grand acts of giving we have spoken of so far are subordinate to a mind of loving-kindness. By radiating loving-kindness from a highly developed mind—what is

nowadays referred to in modern terms as 'sending out vibrations'—the peace that the world receives, and the wholesome potential (*kusala-sakti*) within it, defeats all external forms of giving. From this, we can see how much peace a person who has developed their mind through mental development brings to the world through that mind of loving-kindness. The Bodhisatta, and others who developed their minds in this way, were capable of averting great disasters solely through that loving-kindness. It averts not only danger to oneself, but also brings great peace to the world. For that too, that aforementioned strength of relinquishment is required.

What was let go there was one's own mind—a mind freed from the defilements (*kilesa*) that arise as past habits, and cultivated in the virtues taught by the Buddha. Thus, it is the benefits of that liberation of mind through loving-kindness (*mettā-cetovimutti*) that are presented there. All other gifts are defeated by it. Yet all of these are, in turn, defeated by supramundane virtues. Before a Buddha arises in the world—that is, not during a period when no Buddhas can arise, but in the period leading up to the birth of a Buddha—it is said that Pacceka Buddhas arise. This means that through their own efforts, in accordance with their past perfection-potential, they reach the second most noble state in the world. However, the world does not know this. Therefore, when they go on their alms-round clad in rag-like robes, they are treated as ordinary people.

Because of this, some people think wrongly and behave wrongly, showing disrespect and contempt, thereby undergoing the sufferings of hell. On the other hand, some experience immense prosperity simply by generating clarity of mind through giving even a minor gift. In this story, the treasurer merely gave an order to give alms. For those few words, he was born seven times in heaven and seven times obtained the status of treasurer. We can then imagine what kind of result (*vipāka*) and benefit (*ānisaṃsa*) await those who actually give. From this we see, as declared by the Buddha, *"Anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa"*—the greatest service one can render to the world is to make oneself a field of merit, whether lay or ordained, through that supramundane mass of virtue. This letting go ultimately belongs to oneself; it returns to oneself as a benefit. The benefit of letting go of those minor external objects helps one attain heavenly and human prosperity. Letting go through virtue especially leads to good rebirths. Those who behave like animals go to the animal world. Those who behave like ghosts are born in the ghost realm (*peta-loka*). Those who behave like demons (*yakkhas*) are born in the demon realm. Those who behave like devas and brahmas are born in the heavenly and brahma worlds. From this, it is clear that the ultimate benefits of all these return to us. First, through the giving of external objects, and then through virtues like discipline, we obtain a good rebirth and a civilized life. Even more valuable is mental development (*bhāvanā*). If one develops the mind in a very deep manner through mental development, escapes this entire suffering (*dukkha*) of rebirths, develops supreme supramundane virtues, and through the realization of the paths of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmī*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmī*), and Arahantship, reaches the highest states of a Buddha, a Pacceka Buddha, or a Great Arahant—at that moment, one brings immense peace to the entire world, because one has become a true field of merit. Thinking in this way, one must reflect on how far this journey that begins with letting go

in giving goes. That life-trajectory which begins with the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramitā*) ultimately culminates in the perfection of wisdom (*paññā-pāramitā*), and thereby reaches Buddhahood.

On this valuable Poya day, we have listened to Dhamma principles that help us understand the true value of giving, which everyone performs daily, and help make our giving yield great fruit and great benefit. If you listened with proper attention, you have heard a Dhamma that helps develop the virtues of conviction (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). May this store of merit accumulated today support you in this world and, as aspired, lead to the realization of Nibbāna! By completing Dhamma study and mental development, removing obstacles from life, and drawing closer to supportive factors, may this wholesome deed of hearing the Dhamma be a supportive condition (*upanissaya*) to quickly escape all suffering (*dukkha*) of rebirths and find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! May the deities protecting the Dispensation, as well as your own relatives, and all living beings from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, rejoice in this store of merit from delivering and hearing the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they be freed from miserable states, reach happy states, obtain the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), complete all activities of mental development, and may this be a supportive condition to find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! Pray thus, and having made that aspiration, transfer merit by reciting these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #152

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.52)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve,

apassaṃ udayabbayaṃ;

Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo,

passato udayabbayaṃ."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 113 (Sahassa Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The value of a human life should not be decided by the length of time one lives. It is not decided by the wealth accumulated or the titles and positions obtained during one's lifetime. It is decided by the extent to which one has uncovered the reality, the vision of truth, of life, and drawn closer to deliverance from Saṁsāra. When one considers it in this way, even a life that appears worldly unfortunate and unsuccessful can, according to those essential values, be described as highly fortunate, blessed, and successful. Today's theme-verse and the story will provide evidence for this.

In the city of Sāvatthī, a certain multimillionaire merchant (*seṭṭhi*) had an extremely beautiful daughter. When she was about sixteen years old, for her protection, her parents made her reside on the topmost floor of a seven-storied palace. No matter what protection was provided, she developed an intimacy—an illicit relationship—with a male servant who was in their service. Meanwhile, when her parents proposed to marry her to a young nobleman of an equal merchant family, she said to that young man, "Now, my parents are going to marry me off like this. If that happens, we will never get to meet again. If you truly have affection for me, take me and elope as quickly as possible." When she said this, the young man designated a place, saying, "If so, come to such-and-such a place at the city gate tomorrow morning." Early in the morning, disheveling her hair and

making her appearance untidy, preparing as if she were going to fetch water with the servants, she somehow slipped out and secretly went to the designated place. That young man, taking this merchant's daughter with him, went to a village in a distant region and began to earn a living by farming in a field near a forest. The merchant's daughter too, like an ordinary woman, began to do all the cooking and other household chores.

As time went on, she became pregnant. When the pregnancy matured, she said to her husband, "Now, there is no one to assist me when this child is born. Parents generally have affection for their children. Therefore, take me to my parents' home." This husband said, "Oh no, if I take you there, they will certainly punish me. They will kill me. Therefore, I cannot go." Even after she asked several times, he refused. So what did she do? While her husband had gone to the forest, she told the neighbors, "If he asks, tell him I went to my parents' home," and set off. Then, when the husband returned and looked, she was not there. Next, learning of it from the neighbors, he pursued her. However, even though he caught up with her on the way, she did not wish to return. As they were going along like this, severe birth pains arose in this woman. Informing her husband, she gave birth to the child in that very thicket of the forest amidst great suffering and hardship. Thereafter, thinking, "Since the purpose for which I intended to go to my parents' home has now been fulfilled," they returned to their own home.

While some time passed in this way, when she conceived her second child, she made the same request to her husband to take her to her parents' home. When he refused, for the second time, she let her husband go to work, informed the neighbors, and set off to go to her parents' home with the first child on her hip. The husband, upon finding this out, quickly pursued her. This time too, she did not wish to turn back. Signs of a torrential downpour appeared, accompanied by lightning and claps of thunder. Meanwhile, as she felt severe birth pains, she told her husband, "Please prepare a shelter for me." The husband, taking a billhook and looking around, began to cut a large bush near an anthill. While he was cutting it, a cobra that was inside came out and bit the man; his body turned blue and he fell down dead right there. Meanwhile, a great torrential rain was falling. She kept waiting for her husband to return, but he did not come. In the midst of this, she gave birth to that child with great difficulty. In this heavy rain, both children were crying and wailing. She was helpless. Kneeling on all fours, shielding the two children under her body, she spent the entire night. By morning, her body had become completely pale, like that of a patient with jaundice. In the morning, taking the newborn baby and holding the other child by the finger, saying, "Son, didn't father go this way?", she went to look. When she went, she saw her husband lying dead upon the anthill. Falling into immense grief, crying and lamenting, "Alas, because of me, I lost my husband!", she set off to go to her parents' home.

Due to the rain that day, the Aciravatī River had flooded, and was filled with water up to about neck-deep. Crossing it with both children became a problem for her. What did she do? Leaving the elder child on this bank, she crossed to the other bank with the infant, laid the baby on a bed of leaves on the riverbank, and started to return. While returning, she looked back again to check on the safety of the child. Then she saw a hawk swooping down, thinking the child was a piece of meat, to snatch him. She shouted, "Shoo, shoo!"

to drive the hawk away. But it did not succeed. The hawk took the small child and rose into the sky. Meanwhile, the child on this bank thought, "Mother must be calling me to come," ran into the river, fell, and was swept away by the river. Now she had neither of her two children, nor her husband. Crying and lamenting in extreme sorrow, she then walked towards the city of Sāvatthī. On the way, seeing someone coming from Sāvatthī, she asked, "Where are you coming from?" When he replied, "Sāvatthī," she asked, "Do you know of that merchant family on such-and-such a street?" He said, "Yes, I know them. But do not ask about them. Ask about anything else." She told the man, "I have no use for other things. Just tell me that information." The man said, "Well, then, if you won't let me go without saying it, I will tell you. You experienced the rain last night, didn't you?" "Oh, there is no need to speak of that. That rain was indeed upon me. I will tell you that story later. Tell me right now the news of that merchant's house." Then the man said, "In yesterday's great rainstorm, the merchant's house collapsed, and the merchant, his wife, and their son—all three died trapped under that house, and are currently burning on the same funeral pyre. That smoke visible in the distance is from it."

At that moment, unable to bear that grief, her mind became deranged, and she began to wander the streets wailing like a madwoman. At that time, she did not even realize that her clothes had slipped off. Then, thinking she was a naked madwoman, people began to pelt her with stones and clods of earth. As she was wandering in this manner, the Blessed One was delivering a Dhamma sermon at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī. Seeing this woman—who had received a definite prophecy from Padumuttara Buddha and had fulfilled the perfections for a hundred thousand eons (*kalpas*) aspiring for the foremost position among the female experts in the Vinaya in the Dispensation—approaching like a madwoman, the Blessed One resolved that she should come towards Him. Then, by the power of the Buddha's resolution, when this woman tried to come there, the crowd present tried to chase her away, saying, "Oh, do not let the madwoman come in!" The Blessed One said, "No, let her come." When she came near, the Blessed One said, "Regain your mindfulness, sister." No sooner were those few words spoken than, by the very power of the Buddha, she regained her mindfulness. At the same time, realizing that her clothing was missing, she sat down in a squatting position. A wise man threw her an upper garment. Having worn it, she then expressed her grievance to the Blessed One: "My husband was killed by a snake bite like this. One son was carried away by a hawk. My other son was swept away by the flood. My parents and brother were crushed in a rainstorm and are burning on the same funeral pyre," she lamented in this manner. At that moment, what did the Blessed One do to assuage her grief? The Blessed One preached a valuable discourse called the *Anamatagga Sutta*, which He had preached on previous occasions as well. When He delivered that sermon, stating, "The tears you have shed in this Saṁsāra for your relatives are more than the water in the four great oceans," her grief was largely assuaged by that very teaching. Meanwhile, this woman also came to be called by the name "Paṭācārā".

Next, the Blessed One said, "Now, in this way, you aspire for protection from parents and children. But in reality, none of those relatives can stand as a refuge for oneself. That is

not the true refuge. The true refuge is the Dhamma, Nibbāna." Showing this, the Blessed One uttered two verses:

Na santi puttā tāṇāya, na pitā na pi bandhavā;

Antakenādhipannassa, natthi ñātisu tāṇatā.

Etamatthavasaṁ ñatvā, paṇḍito sīlasaṁvuto;

Nibbānagamanaṁ maggaṁ, khippameva visodhaye.

The meaning of those verses: *Na santi puttā tāṇāya na pitā na pi bandhavā* — neither sons, nor father, nor kinsmen can stand for one's protection; *antakenādhipannassa... natthi ñātisu tāṇatā* — when death presents itself, when Māra presents himself, none of these kinsmen can stand as a refuge for oneself. *Etamatthavasaṁ ñatvā paṇḍito sīlasaṁvuto* — the wise person, understanding this fact and restrained by virtue (*sīla*), *nibbānagamanaṁ maggaṁ khippameva visodhaye* — should quickly clear and purify the path leading to Nibbāna. When the Blessed One preached this, having heard that sermon, Paṭācārā was established in the noble fruit of stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*). It is mentioned that many others in that assembly also attained the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*).

Next, she requested ordination from the Blessed One. The Blessed One sent her to the nunnery and arranged for her ordination. She received the novice and higher ordination (*upasampadā*). Thereafter, she practiced meditation diligently to attain Arahatship. Once, while washing her feet, when she first poured some water, she saw it flow a short distance and dry up right there. When she poured a little more water, it went a little further. When she poured water for the third time, it went even further and dried up right there; the water evaporated. She contemplated this: "Is not the life of human beings also like this? Some die in their first stage of life. Some die in middle age. In the final stage of life, in old age, everyone certainly dies." In this manner, a succession of thoughts inclined towards insight (*vipassanā*) arose in her stream of thoughts. At that moment, the Blessed One, remaining in the Perfumed Chamber (*Gandhakuṭī*), projected a light and appeared before her. In order to complete the path of insight that Paṭācārā had initiated, He preached that valuable verse of Dhamma which we have taken as our theme.

Yo ca vassasataṁ jīve, apassaṁ udayabbayaṁ,

Ekāhaṁ jīvitaṁ seyyo, passato udayabbayaṁ.

Even if one lives for a hundred years without seeing the arising and passing away—called *udayabbaya*—of the five aggregates, living for a single day having developed this insight-comprehension of arising and passing away, *ekāhaṁ jīvitaṁ seyyo passato udayabbayaṁ*, is far more valuable. Hearing that sermon of the Blessed One, Paṭācārā was established in the noble fruit of Arahatship (*arahatta-phala*).

So, that is the story. Even without detailed elaboration, all of you devotees have heard this story as one of the most poignant tales in Buddhist literature. Therefore, we must contemplate this as a valuable story through which one can understand the nature of this Saṁsāra and the nature of life. For, having been born as the daughter of an extremely wealthy, multimillionaire merchant, Paṭācārā had to face a multitude of physical and mental sufferings (*dukkha*) and pressures, running along the high road as a helpless madwoman. But in the end, by the greatness of the Blessed One's quality of great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), she regained her normal mindfulness, was ordained in the Dispensation, and attained the fortune of the noble fruit of Arahatship. Accordingly, as we mentioned earlier, though it appeared to be an unsuccessful life, in the end, when considered in terms of the Dhamma and true essential values, we can describe it as an extremely fortunate life.

Next, since it is relevant to this, let us contemplate some facts the Blessed One preached regarding the nature of the world. The Blessed One has preached that, in terms of the world's nature, sentient beings pass through three stages, or that there are three phases: namely, gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*). Gratification means enjoying and taking delight in the fivefold sensual pleasures. Gratification is how we generally think of and understand the experiencing of pleasure. Danger means the various undesirable consequences arising from those very things. Next, escape means deliverance from this Saṁsāra, from this mass of Suffering (*dukkha*); it is the departure from it. The Blessed One declared that there is indeed an aspect of gratification in the world, it is not that there is none. That is why beings cling to the fivefold sensual pleasures in the world. That is natural. But similarly, there is also an aspect of danger. The Blessed One declared that the aspect of gratification is little, whereas the danger is abundant. Therefore, at some point, a multitude of undesirable consequences called danger naturally emerges from within them. Next, due to them, a person becomes reflective, applies wisdom, and at some point strives and attains escape, which is the deliverance of departing from this Saṁsāra. It is because there is such a thing as escape in the world that Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Great Arahants arise in the world.

Even if we contemplate Paṭācārā’s life, we can see that her journey in search of gratification ultimately ended in a vast magnitude of danger. She had to face an unspeakably terrible mass of Suffering (*dukkha*) and a series of tragedies. It was through the helpless feeling of having no refuge, which arose within her from those tragedies, that she became a madwoman. We know that being a madwoman—or going mad, becoming insane—means that a forgetting of the world occurs there. Becoming trapped, confined, and oppressed in one's own world, one thinks that this has happened to oneself alone. This is what happened to Paṭācārā at first too. She thought that this fallen mass of Suffering was something that had occurred to her alone. That is why she fell into this state of insanity, forgot the world, and began to run along the high road in that manner. The medicine the Blessed One gave for that was like sharing this grief. How is grief shared? He made her align it with the world through the *Anamatagga* (Sutta).

That *Anamatagga Sutta* is an extremely valuable discourse. The Blessed One preached it to the monks. It is said that by the end of that discourse, all the monks who were listening attained Arahatship. It is such an extraordinarily wondrous sermon. If we state it briefly, its essence is this:

"Monks, in this infinitely long Saṁsāra where no beginning or end is visible, if you were to collect the tears shed and wept by you over the Suffering (*dukkha*) of the death of a mother alone, the death of a father alone, the death of a son alone, the death of a daughter alone, and so forth, the drops of tears thus shed would be greater than the waters of the four great oceans." He delivered the discourse in that manner. In each instance, the Blessed One asked questions and received answers from the monks, presenting the sermon in a way that deeply penetrated their minds. When this discourse was presented to Paṭācārā on this occasion, she contemplated, "This is not something that has come to me alone. This is a universally applicable reality (*dhamma*)," and thus she shared her grief with the world. Through that, her grief was assuaged. Even when physical afflictions befell her, and finally when her husband and children were lost, Paṭācārā went in search of her parents. But the Blessed One, in the second instance, presented the idea that none of those are a refuge, through the verses beginning with *Na santi puttā tāṇāya na pitā na...*

When Māra presents himself, there is no refuge in any of these things. In truth, at the moment of death, what remains as a refuge is the noble Dhamma of Nibbāna that one has attained. The direct realization that one will not be born in Saṁsāra again is what assists one. That is what the Blessed One showed in those two verses. Having heard that, Paṭācārā arrived at the fruit of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). Accordingly, we can understand that what the Blessed One did here was, in a way, to gradually soften the mind of a person who was mentally deranged, assuage that grief, and then infuse the Dhamma into it. Furthermore, we must contemplate the verse the Blessed One uttered as a theme to assist her in attaining Arahatship. That too is a deep verse.

Yo ca vassasataṁ jīve, apassaṁ udayabbayaṁ,

Ekāhaṁ jīvitaṁ seyyo, passato udayabbayaṁ.

The Blessed One declared that rather than living a hundred years without seeing the nature of the arising and passing away of the five aggregates, living for a single day seeing that arising and passing away is noble. As we mentioned earlier, the Blessed One uttered that verse when a group of thoughts accustomed to insight (*vipassanā*) arose in Paṭācārā. Therein lies a valuable point that you must contemplate. There is a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) that assists each of us in Nibbāna. Especially, the Blessed One possesses eight extraordinary, unique knowledges of a Buddha (*asādhāraṇa-ñāṇa*), such as the knowledge of the inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*) and the attainment of great compassion (*mahākaruṇāsamāpatti-ñāṇa*). Particularly, through the knowledge of inclinations and underlying tendencies (*anusaya*), the Blessed One sees each succession of thoughts, the things embedded within the mind, the manner of those thoughts, and everything else.

Now, the meditation subject that assists someone in Nibbāna is often connected to an occasion when the reality of Suffering (*dukkha*) has deeply penetrated one's mind. Now, here too, Paṭācārā's mind was the background to her series of tragedies. Her husband was lost in that torrential rain. Next, her two children were lost in the river flood, on the two banks of the river. Next, her parents and brother were lost by being crushed in the rainstorm. Thus, water was a symbol of Suffering in Paṭācārā's life. Generally, someone might think, "Who can attain Arahatship by seeing water while washing feet?" Rationalists might think in that manner about this story. Or someone else might think, "Well then, according to this, if we go home and wash our feet, we can attain Arahatship." That is not what is happening here. Certain factors relevant to each individual's temperament sink deep into their mental continuum (*citta-santāna*). That is why we often say these are blessings in disguise. All these things—the hardships and difficulties we receive, these physical and mental pressures, this suffering of separation from the loved (*piyehi vippayogo dukkha*)—Paṭācārā had to face this suffering of separation from the loved in an unspeakably terrible manner. But through all of those, something that assists in Nibbāna sank deep. It is there that we said danger emerges from within gratification. When that danger emerges, one must derive a benefit from it. What is the real benefit? It is to contemplate them deeply and connect with the thought: "This is the nature of the world, a common reality in this Saṁsāra; there is no other way to escape this. One can escape only by crossing over from Saṁsāra." Then, that very event becomes a meditation subject for that person.

Now, having entered the Dispensation and obtained that state of stream-entry, that collection of thoughts, the succession of thoughts of Paṭācārā, always operated towards the comprehension of Suffering (*dukkha*). Something that assisted in that was that water which had become a symbol to her. It was upon seeing it that Paṭācārā began to think in that manner: "In life, death occurs either in the first stage, or it occurs in middle age, or in any case, it certainly occurs in old age." At that moment, the Blessed One projected a light and uttered that verse to make that path of insight (*vipassanā-vīthi*) even deeper. What is expressed there is that the thought-succession Paṭācārā initiated was conceived by thinking of a person's entire life—first stage of life, middle age, and final stage of life. The Blessed One compressed that matter into a single day. Indeed, within a single day itself, within this single day itself, the arisings and passings away in this world can be seen. How can they be seen? Now, the path of insight arises for the meditating practitioner (*yogāvacara*) who is attuned to insight through this very impermanence (*anicca*)—the arising and passing away called *udayabbaya* mentioned here. There are two words we use daily: *udaya* (arising/sunrise) and *astaya* (setting/sunset). We have all heard that the sun rises and the sun sets. Truly, between these two lies the fundamental principle of this insight: arising and passing away. We must contemplate that this sun rising every day teaches us a certain lesson. What is the lesson it teaches? This grand, majestic sun says, "For me too, there is a morning, a midday, as well as an evening. Similarly, for you too, there is this kind of arising, persisting, and passing away of life." This is the fact it explains. This sun reminds us that it is not time that is passing; it is you who are passing away. You are indeed passing away. The Buddhist poet

Bhartṛhari who lived in India composed a valuable verse, two lines of which are as follows:

Kālo na yāto, vayameva yātā;

Tṛṣṇā na jīrṇā, vayameva jīrṇā.

"It is not time that has gone; we ourselves have gone. It is not Craving (*taṇhā*) that has decayed; we ourselves have decayed." That is the reality of the world. Therefore, through this sun, we must understand that, just like the rising and setting of the sun within this single day, there is also an arising, persisting, and passing away in our lives. It was through that very point that the Blessed One sharpened and deepened Paṭācārā's path of insight, leading it up to the highest fruit of Arahatship.

We must resolve to gain a multitude of valuable factors for our lives through these. In our lives too, we must consider hardships of this nature as blessings in disguise. Instead of saying "the suffering that has come is sweet," we must think, "the Suffering (*dukkha*) that has come has the taste of Nibbāna." We must strive to uncover Nibbāna through that separation. It is mentioned in the Dhamma: *dukkhūpanisā saddhā*—faith arises with Suffering as its supporting condition. We have all heard that the Blessed One shows the entire five aggregates, this entire existence of life, as Suffering. Therefore, at some point, if the comprehension of Suffering has severely dawned upon someone through separation from the loved, or through other physical and mental sufferings, then faith can arise through that. But faith does not arise all at once. Before that, sometimes a person might also go mad, might become insane; the Blessed One has pointed out that fact as well. *"Dukkhavepakkamahaṁ, bhikkhave, sattānaṁ vadāmi: sammohaṁ vā pariyeṭṭhiṁ vā"*—"I say, monks, that Suffering has two results. What are they? Either bewilderment (*sammoha*), or search (*pariyeṭṭhi*)." What is meant here by "results of Suffering" is the consequences of Suffering—things that arise because of Suffering. These are two occurrences resulting from undergoing it. What are they? Either one goes mad, or one turns to searching.

This story is a good illustration of that. When this Suffering (*dukkha*) presents itself, even in this day and age, we know that many people either go mad and become insane, or they commit suicide. They are inclined to such things. The Blessed One has declared, *sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā*—all worldlings are insane. When thinking of this, a person's mind might feel offended, wondering, "Did the Blessed One think so lowly of us?" But this is a truth. Everyone is insane as long as they do not see this matter. As was said about the sun, ordinary people do not contemplate in their daily life that there is such a thing as death. They do not reflect on or remember the impermanence (*anicca*) of this life. Therefore, they are like insane people. In that case, those who pelted that madwoman with stones were also insane. That is how we must understand it. Such is the way of things in this world. Therefore, the first reaction that arises in the face of this Suffering is falling into insanity. Unable to bear the mental pressure, one falls into insanity. That can manifest in various states. Even if they do not go to mental asylums, they behave and act in various ways as if they have gone mad. But if a person has found

the right path and the association of a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), then they turn to searching. Indeed, after the Blessed One told her to regain her mindfulness, after she calmed down and regained her senses, she began to search. Starting from clothing, she found everything needed for the journey ahead. What we have to understand from Paṭācārā's life is the forward step to be taken in the face of this Suffering. If being a worldling (*puthujjana*) means insanity, it is not about remaining trapped within that insanity. Instead of being inclined to insane actions, suicide, and so forth, one must incline towards searching. "There is some deficiency here. This has not happened to me alone. This is a universally applicable reality." Thinking deeply in this manner, one must understand the true answer, the true solution. This saṁsāric being, in truth, is just like someone who does a math problem every day but without understanding the basic principle behind it; for an infinite time, they undergo Suffering such as Birth (*jāti*), Aging and Death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness. They undergo Suffering and pressures. But they do not learn the lesson from this. As the Blessed One declared, most people remain only in the class of gratification. They remain in the aspect of gratification. Even if some danger arises through those gratifications, they forget them very quickly.

Perhaps Paṭācārā also had the option, without walking the path of Dhamma, of easily finding another husband, having other children, raising a family. In that manner, collecting various insurance policies, deposits, and all such things, she could have made her life successful in that worldly way. But that success is not like the one mentioned at the beginning. The true value lies in finding an absolute, clear solution to this. The woman whom we regard as a madwoman, or an unfortunate character—Paṭācārā—was in truth someone who had fulfilled perfections (*pāramīs*) for such a long period. That power of perfections was within her. But due to some karmic reason, she went down that wrong path and, through gratification itself, subsequently uncovered a great magnitude of danger, a mountain of danger. She learned lessons from it. The Blessed One, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, assisted her in learning that lesson. It was through that that Paṭācārā ultimately attained even the foremost position among the female experts in the Vinaya in this Bhikkhunī Dispensation, just as she had aspired. What is visible through this is the fact of a blessing in disguise. This life can be very roughly and crudely divided into three stages: arising (*jāti*), persisting, and ceasing. There is childhood, youth, and old age. But at every single moment, passing away occurs in an extremely powerful manner. That is what is referred to in the Dhamma as momentary death (*khaṇika-maraṇa*). These pass away very rapidly and swiftly. This is generally not visible to the eye. It is visible only to the eye of insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*); it is not visible to the physical eye.

Even though it is said that it is visible through various instruments, it is only those instruments that see it. Instruments never attain Arahatship. Modern science and technology have developed various instruments—microscopes, telescopes, and so forth—and try to understand the true nature of these things, the true nature of the world. But that is not what is meant by developing the knowledge and vision of things as they really are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*), of understanding the truth as it is. Even if one looks through those machines, the level of defilements (*kilesa*) within the persons observing

remains exactly the same. The Blessed One has declared: *paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi* (to be personally realized by the wise). Why is this Dhamma described as *svākkhāto* (well-expounded), *sandiṭṭhiko* (visible here-and-now), *akāliko* (timeless), and so on? Because it is something to be personally realized by oneself in this very life, without delay. It is something to be personally realized by the wise. Obtaining that direct realization is not something that can be done through machines and instruments in that manner. It is not something that can be done through logic. It is only by understanding the true nature through wisdom, by understanding it through insight, that one can be freed from this Suffering (*dukkha*). What assists in that is a concentrated mind. The first step is mindfulness (*sati*).

The Blessed One first directed Paṭācārā towards mindfulness; mindfulness is present at various levels. He did not speak of mindfulness merely because Paṭācārā was walking naked. We must think that this advice was given to us as well. We too may have many more deficiencies. Therefore, mindfulness assists in correcting that state of insanity. Mindfulness comes first. Next, based on that, the wise person walking the path of Dhamma establishes a good restraint in virtue (*sīla*) and then walks the path to Nibbāna. What is the path to Nibbāna? *Nibbānagamanaṁ maggaṁ khippameva visodhaye*—the Blessed One first told Paṭācārā to quickly complete the path to Nibbāna. Every one of you has heard of this path to Nibbāna. It is this Noble Eightfold Path: right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

Therefore, this path is a path that must be uncovered from within one's own heart. The Blessed One has declared that, above all other paths in this world, *esova maggo dassanassa visuddhiyā*—"this is the only path for the purification of vision." The Blessed One has declared, *maggānaṭṭhaṅgiko seṭṭho*—"of all paths, the Noble Eightfold Path is the best." Thus, within this Noble Eightfold Path too, there are virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). To put it briefly, only these three aggregates exist. These three groups. By restraining the body and speech, one completes virtue. Through that obtained peace, through that regret-free existence, one subsequently uncovers concentration by directing the mind to a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). In that manner, after the mind is settled through concentration, one then turns it towards insight. One strives to deeply see the aforementioned arising and passing away. It is in that manner that one can bring this Saṁsāra to an end.

This is an era so abundant in everyday crises and disasters that it should urge all of us to walk this path of Dhamma declared by the Blessed One. But people do not take advantage of it. Most people do not believe in that story of a blessing in disguise. Those who were ordained and attained Arahatship in this Dispensation were not people born with a silver spoon in their mouths. They were not great merchant princes or kings. Perhaps some such people did ordain and attain Arahatship too. But not all of them were of that kind. Often, they were extremely poor, or those who, having faced various other kinds of pressures, had arrived at an unsuccessful state of life. They learned the lesson.

Therefore, they did not ordain because they had nothing else to do. Sometimes someone might think, "They came and ordained in this Dispensation because they had no husband, no children, no livelihood to live on, and thus in the end obtained such a state in this Dispensation"—to think so is wrong. In truth, having learned lessons from those, and through their multitude of personal experiences, they passed those three grades of gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*) and were able to attain Arahatship. In daily life, some people derive a sense of gratification and pleasure by hearing a story like this. They think only about certain striking aspects within it that touch their hearts. But the true essence of a story is the example to be taken from it. The example to be taken from the characters in that story. Here too, through the character of Paṭācārā, we must think, "This can come to us too; this can happen to us too." This is not something that happens to just one person. For an infinite time in Saṁsāra, we must have experienced things of this nature. But having learned the lesson from it, if some degree of Suffering (*dukkha*) or pressure has come to oneself, then on that occasion, within that pressure, one must understand through one's personal experience: "What is here is the Four Noble Truths."

Some Suffering (*dukkha*) has come. To contemplate that Suffering, one must apply *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention)—reflecting wisely. It is by reflecting incorrectly that one goes towards the side of gratification. Instead, one must reflect wisely: "What is the true cause of this Suffering? Is it because of losing the husband? Or is it because of losing the children?" No. Underlying these is Craving (*taṇhā*). Where there is no Craving, there is no Suffering. That is why the Blessed One has declared: *taṇhāya jāyatī soko, taṇhāya jāyatī bhayaṁ*—"from Craving arises grief, from Craving arises fear." Similarly, He has shown: *piyato jāyatī soko, piyato jāyatī bhayaṁ*—"from the beloved arises grief, from the beloved arises fear," and so forth. This grief, these hardships, all these sufferings, dejections, and lamentations come either from Craving or from the suffering of separation from the loved (*piyehi vippayogo dukkha*). That is why the Blessed One declared that for the person who is freed from both the loved and the unloved, there is no grief. Accordingly, we must resolve to utilize these Four Noble Truths in our daily lives. These are not things that exist only in books. Within every one of our personal experiences, there are factors that assist in Nibbāna. Some Suffering has come, or some pressure has come. When contemplating, one sees that Craving and desires of the mind lie underneath this. Desires that appear in various styles, in various guises. It is as a result of those that the pressure coming from this arises. When one understands this to some extent and calms it down, that pressure completely disappears; there is calming.

Indeed, Nibbāna is what the Blessed One has described as *sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha* (the stilling of all preparations/volitional activity). The being in this world, in the manner mentioned, is entangled in some process through ignorance (*avijjā*) and Craving (*taṇhā*) in order to protect a "self". But the Blessed One shows that what is present here is only a fivefold aggregate—only five groups. There is a group of form (*rūpa-kkhandha*). Even that cannot be kept as one's own. No matter how much we nurse it by providing food and drink and bathing it, this bodily cage does not exist according to our wishes. There are many worms inside who own it; it is said there are millions of them. Next,

there is another group outside waiting to break it down, kill it, and take revenge. Next, in that manner, there is no possibility of protecting this body as one's own. There is no possibility of looking after it as one's own. Even if it escapes such external and internal dangers, a time comes when, by nature, it undergoes aging (*jarā*), decays, and in the end, if it arose from four elements, this body dissolves back into those very four elements. That is the bodily cage.

Next, it is the same with regard to Feeling (*vedanā*). The Blessed One shows every one of these as groups. We think of them as single entities. We think of form as one, saying "this is my form." If we take a beautiful photograph of ourselves, we confidently present it as "my form." But the Blessed One says what is here is a group of form. The Blessed One has compared it to a lump of foam. Even a lump of foam, when floating down a river or a stream, can look very beautiful from afar. But what is here is a collection of bubbles arising and passing away extremely rapidly. A lump of foam is a heap formed by the accumulation of dirt and debris. This bodily cage is just like that. Right from the mother's womb, a multitude of dirt and debris accumulates here through food and drink. When we bathe, we scrub off one part as "dirt" because it is "dirt that does not belong to me." But the other part is inside the body. Those remain deposited in the same way. One claims that as "myself." Having scrubbed off the dirt and bathed, one thinks one is clean. Then one takes photos of this heap of dirt inside and shows it, saying, "This is me, this is mine." That is how it is in the world. Therefore, the Blessed One declared that this bodily cage, which arose because of parents and the four elements, is also that kind of form-group. It is like a lump of foam.

Next is this Feeling (*vedanā*). It is to escape from painful Feeling that we go in search of this pleasant Feeling. This is a heap of Suffering (*dukkha*). We understand that. Can we remain sitting in a single posture? Let us suppose that the most comfortable seat that can be manufactured in this era has been made. If someone is told to sit in it without moving for an hour, then that person understands Suffering. That is why the Blessed One has shown that we have this Suffering—a heap of Suffering—but how do we hide it? We change postures as we please. When we cannot remain turned to this side, we turn to the other side. When even that is not possible, we turn to another side. Next, when that is not possible, we stand up. Having stood up, we walk. When even that is not possible, we lie down. In this manner, we change postures. We keep rotating this bodily cage like a cycle, like rolling a wheel.

Even if we carry it on in that way, there is never any true pleasure in it. What we call pleasure is simply the suppression of that Suffering (*dukkha*). You have heard what our Ven. Vīdāgama Thero has said in the *Lōvada Saṅgarāva*: "Is it not because of hunger that we eat tasty, mixed rice?" The food that satisfies is because of hunger. Next: "Is it not because of the bad odor that we fragrance the body?" We make this body fragrant because of its bad odor. "These are but medicine for illnesses of beings in this world." Every one of these is a medicine for an illness. "Why think of this as pleasure?" A highly valuable thought is expressed there.

Is it not because of hunger that one eats delicious rice?

Is it not because of body odor that one perfumes the body?

These are but medicines for the illnesses of beings in this world;

Why think of this as a pleasure?

These are merely medicines for an illness. But we do not contemplate that. We organize large feasts and so forth. We take food to pacify the painful Feelings (*vedanā*) in this bodily cage, to quench the pain of hunger. Next, we wear these clothes to protect ourselves from flies and mosquitoes, to escape the cold, and to escape various other dangers. But the ordinary worldling forgets this. We live in houses also to escape from them. But the worldling, thinking of all these as luxurious, imagines them to be pleasures. "These are but medicine for illnesses of beings in this world." So, in that manner, next are the perceptions arising from Feelings. It is through Feelings that we establish this recognition called perceptions. Sometimes, when a certain color is seen, why does a person's mind get upset? Because it does not belong to them; it is a color belonging to an opponent. If it is a color belonging to oneself, then pleasure arises. A bull gets agitated upon seeing the color red. We too, in that manner, determine these perceptions as "good" or "bad" based on the Feeling generated in our minds due to a color or other such things. That is the kind of process that exists. It is according to those perceptions that one acts.

Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are what we all know to exist as some activity in this human life—through speech and body. It is in its operation that the conceptualizations of "I" and "mine" truly arise. It is for this very reason that we briefly call the group of preparations (*saṅkhāra-kkhandha*) "karma". What are regarded as karma are these very preparations. There are various other levels to it. The Blessed One declares that Nibbāna is the stilling of all preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*). It is through these preparations that we construct what is called Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) or the mind. We say "my mind." The mind that was present just now is not the mind in the next moment. It changes extremely momentarily, extremely rapidly. But we use "my mind," "I, I." That too is a great delusion, because its true nature is not clearly seen. The Blessed One compared Feeling (*vedanā*) to a water bubble. He compared perception to a mirage. He compared preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to a banana trunk—like a banana trunk from which layers can be peeled but which has no core at all. Next, He compared Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to a grand magic show. Why did the Blessed One give such similes for the five aggregates? Because each of these is a group. It is not a single entity as we think. It is not a single Feeling. Even regarding the Feeling of sitting that arises here, if one directs the mind well, if one applies meditative attention there in the manner of *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), one understands that what is here is a vast group of Feelings—a multitude of them.

It is the same with the others. It is only when insight-wisdom is developed that every one of them is seen as a group, as a multitude. Until then, through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), taking this to be a single entity, one develops a Craving (*taṇhā*) and desire for it. That is the lesson we must truly derive from the character of

Paṭācārā. These are things that can happen to us too. Through a single life, through a single character, this has been shown in literature. We must also take the lesson to be learned from it. "That woman, that character whom the world thought of as unfortunate and luckless in that manner, ultimately ended in Arahatship. Where are we still?" We must think in that way. When looking at it in that manner, we must consider this Dhamma story and this verse as something that truly brings an example to our lives.

Today, on this valuable full-moon day (*Poya*), this assembly of devotees observed a valuable virtue called *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (virtue with right livelihood as the eighth factor). Some also observed the eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*) or ten precepts (*dasa-sīla*) of the Poya day. In that manner, virtue (*sīla*) is indeed the fundamental assistance for walking this path of Dhamma. In this dangerous era, indeed, this virtuousness is necessary for a person. We think of this tameness as something that can be cultivated only in animals. If an animal has no tameness, we call it a wild animal. When tamed, from that state of tameness, there is a nature of that animal that captures one's heart. No examples need to be specifically stated for that. Similarly, you must contemplate that when we, like other animals, lack tameness and turn into wild beasts, what a corrupt nature arises in this society. Therefore, virtue is what becomes primary there. There is nothing new to be said about the virtue the Blessed One showed to Paṭācārā. As soon as she turned to the path of Dhamma, she became virtuous. That is why she is called "Paṭācārā"—she became well-behaved (*ācārasampanna*).

Similarly, you too must first restrain your body and speech. Why restrain body and speech? Because this mind cannot be settled until the body and speech are restrained. By restraining them, one must establish an existence that is harmful neither to society nor to oneself. This society, of which many people speak so highly, is made of individuals. If a single individual is corrupt inside, how can one build society? It is when oneself is reformed that a society is reformed. Thus, one must protect virtue (*sīla*) to the best of one's ability. If possible, one must always strive to protect a higher virtue. Next, based on virtue, having settled the mind, one must develop the capability to unify it in meditation. We develop machinery and instruments in this world and speak highly of them. We prepare to do with machines the things that are done by our minds. But even if we do all of that, we will never hear of a day when a machine attains Nibbāna. No matter how much machines are developed, they cannot bring our saṁsāric Suffering (*dukkha*) to an end. Therefore, it is this machine we possess—this very one—that must be developed. The formula to develop this machine is that aforementioned meditative attention—the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). One must strive to uncover that in one's life, in accordance with the practice, through the association of a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*).

In that manner, on this valuable day, this assembly of devotees listened to this Dhamma sermon for about an hour. At this moment, as we frequently mention, I trust that certain Dhamma forces that assist the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) which lead to Nibbāna—namely, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—have been deposited in your mental continuum (*citta-santāna*). Further developing those forces, walking the path of Dhamma, cultivating

virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), may this hearing of the Dhamma certainly become a supportive condition (*upanissaya-hetu*) for escaping as quickly as possible from such terrifying saṁsāric Suffering (*dukkha*) and finding peace in the noble Deathless Nibbāna! We aspire thus. Similarly, may the Dispensation-protecting deities and Brahma kings, as well as your relatives, including deceased relatives, and all beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who wish to rejoice in this merit of hearing and preaching the Dhamma—may they all rejoice in this rich store of sublime merit! Having rejoiced, may they find peace in the noble Deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Enlightenment (*Bodhi*)! With this aspiration, please recite these verses and share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #153

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.77)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Carañce nādhigaccheyya,

seyyaṃ sadisamattano;

Ekacariyaṃ daḷhaṃ kayirā,

natthi bāle sahāyatā."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 61 (Bāla Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Not being able to associate with fools and simpletons is identified in the *Mahamangala Sutta* as a supreme blessing. The reason for this is that through the association of such fools, one is liable to encounter various forms of harassment, adversity, and disaster. Getting angry at advice is a characteristic of a fool. It is because of such an angry, stubborn pupil who brought trouble and disaster upon Ven. Maha Kassapa—who is regarded as one of the most noble disciples in this Dispensation—that the Buddha uttered the verse we have chosen as our theme. The story unfolds as follows:

When Ven. Maha Kassapa was residing at Pipphali Cave in Rajagaha, two pupils attended on him. Although we say two pupils, in reality, only one attended on him properly. The other did so deceitfully. When the pupil who performed his duties well prepared water for washing the face and bathing, the deceitful one, seeing these preparations, would quickly go and bow to Ven. Maha Kassapa, saying, “Venerable Sir, the water is ready. Please bathe and wash your face.” Thus, the Thera thought that it was this pupil who had done it, and went to bathe and wash. As this went on, the other pupil thought, “What this fellow is doing is deceiving the teacher by claiming the duties I perform as his own. Let me play a trick on him.” One evening, while that disobedient one was asleep, the good pupil boiled water for Ven. Maha Kassapa’s bath, kept most of the hot water in a vessel behind the bathhouse, and left only a tiny amount of water on the

hearth. When the lazy pupil woke up and saw steam rising from the vessel on the hearth, he thought the water was ready. As usual, he went, bowed to Ven. Maha Kassapa, and invited him, saying, “Venerable Sir, the water is ready.”

He came with the Venerable Sir to the bathhouse. When the Venerable Sir looked, there was no water. When this was pointed out, the lazy pupil thought, “Ah, look at what this wicked fellow has done to deceive me!” and taking a pitcher, went to the water-source to fetch water. Ven. Maha Kassapa was left wondering what had happened. Meanwhile, the other pupil brought the hot water from the vessel kept behind the bathhouse and let the Venerable Sir bathe. Thus, Ven. Maha Kassapa understood the situation—that all this time, the deceitful pupil had been taking credit for everything the good pupil did. Understanding this, when the deceitful pupil came to pay respects that evening, the Thera advised him, “This kind of conduct is not good. It is not proper to present other people's work as your own.”

Hearing this advice, that pupil became extremely angry. “Look at this monk, making such a big deal out of a little water and blaming me like this!” He harbored resentment. To such an extent that he stopped going for alms with the Thera. So, Ven. Maha Kassapa went for alms with the obedient pupil to a certain house. While they were away, what did this bad pupil do? He went to the house of a close lay supporter of Ven. Maha Kassapa. They asked, “Where is the Chief Venerable Sir?” He replied, “The Venerable Sir is a bit unwell.” Then, as devout devotees, they asked, “What food is suitable for him?” The pupil named some fine food that suited his own taste. The devotees prepared and gave it. The pupil ate it on the way and quietly returned to his hut.

Furthermore, where Ven. Maha Kassapa had gone for alms, he received a fine, soft robe as an offering. He gave it to that good pupil. The good pupil dyed it well and began wearing it. This was also regarded with envy by the other pupil. On the second day, Ven. Maha Kassapa went for alms to that same devotee’s house. When he arrived, they said, “We heard yesterday that the Venerable Sir was unwell. We prepared and sent the special food the pupil requested. How is the Venerable Sir now, is he well?” The Venerable Sir remained silent, and after returning, that evening he said to the pupil, “Friend, this is indeed improper. It is not the way of the Sangha to inform laypeople beforehand and take food. This is an improper act.” He censured him. This made the pupil even angrier. “Look at this, yesterday he blamed me because of a little water. Today he blames me because of a little almsfood. He also gave the robe to his favorite pupil…” Thinking thus, the next day, this pupil did not go for alms.

While Ven. Maha Kassapa went for alms with the other monk, what did this pupil do? He took a stick, smashed all the utensils in the hut, pulverized them completely, and then set fire to the hut itself! He destroyed whatever was not burnt by beating them with the stick and fled. It is said that later—it is not mentioned exactly when or in which context—he died and was reborn in hell, specifically in the Avici Great Hell. This event brought great sorrow to the lay devotees, and the news spread: “A pupil of Ven. Maha Kassapa became angry over a small piece of advice and caused such destruction!”

Meanwhile, a certain monk from Rajagaha went to Jetavana Monastery to see the Buddha. When the Buddha asked where he came from, he said, “From Rajagaha.” When the Buddha asked, “Is my son Maha Kassapa well and healthy?”, the monk replied, “He has no other trouble, but this happened: a pupil got angry over a small piece of advice, set fire to his hut, and left.” The Buddha explained that acting in such a wicked manner was a habitual past tendency (*saṁsāra* habit) of this person, and delivered a sorrowful Dharma discourse. Expressing the idea, “Rather than associating with such fools and simpletons, it is better for my son Kassapa to live alone,” the Buddha uttered the verse we took as our theme. Its meaning is as follows:

Seyyaṁ sadisamattano... If, when searching with the mind, one does not find someone better than or equal to oneself, what should one do? *Ekacariyaṁ daḷhaṁ kayirā, natthi bāle sahāyatā*. *Ekacariya* means living alone, being established in that practice. Wandering alone is far more valuable. *Natthi bāle sahāyatā* - “There is no companionship with a fool.” The Buddha declared through this verse that living alone is better than associating or partnering with fools and simpletons. So, that is the story.

From the behavior of that disobedient pupil, we can see how much destruction was caused by hatred (ill-will / *dosa*) that arose in a single moment. Because he could not conquer that hatred, he brought about a terrible disaster upon himself and was reborn in hell. The characteristics of a good pupil are humility and obedience. Words like “compliant, refined, obedient” describe the conduct a pupil should possess. For a pupil who lacks humility, the very advice given by the teacher is enough to drive them to commit terrible crimes, such as destroying property. Through this character, we see the characteristic of a “fool” (*bāla*). In Pali, *bāla* is used for what we now refer to as young in age, but the Buddha used *bāla* to mean an ignorant person, a fool.

The Buddha has shown three characteristics of a fool on various occasions. What are they? *Duccintitacintī, dubbhāsitabhāsī, dukkaṭakammakārī*—the thoughts of a fool are bad; they think bad thoughts, speak bad words, and do bad deeds. This is exactly what we see in the character of this disobedient pupil. He harbored hatred toward his teacher and defiled his mind. Next, he harbored envious thoughts and great hatred toward his fellow monk, and accordingly, deceived the lay family with false, cunning, and deceitful words. Finally, in a destructive manner, he set fire to and destroyed the hut of such a noble Elder. Through this, we can understand the characteristics of a disobedient pupil, which is called the characteristic of a fool. Such is the way of disobedient, untamed, violent, and rogue pupils in this Dispensation. But there were also valuable pupils in this Dispensation from whom we can draw examples. You might have heard of them.

In that regard, the monk whose life reveals the most valuable heap of virtues is the young Ven. Rahula. Ven. Rahula had plenty of reasons to be proud. The young Ven. Rahula could have said, “The Buddha is my father, not yours.” He could have harbored pride regarding the Buddha. Instead, the Dhamma records that even at the age of seven, Ven. Rahula behaved with great obedience, discipline, submissiveness, and humility, not only towards the Buddha but also towards other teachers and elders. It is also mentioned that just like small children play with sand, every morning this young Ven. Rahula would take

a handful of sand in his palms and wish: “May I receive as many pieces of advice from the Buddha, the Sangha, and the elder monks as there are grains of sand in my hands.” Another valuable aspect of Ven. Rahula's conduct is mentioned in the Vinaya Pitaka.

We started with the side of bad pupils in the Dispensation, but we mention this so that the good side is also revealed. The story in the Vinaya Pitaka is as follows: On one occasion, the Buddha laid down a Vinaya rule that it is not proper for an ordained monk (*upasampanna*) to sleep under the same roof as an unordained person (*anupasampanna*), such as a novice (*sāmaṇera*) or a layman. He enacted this as a law. Sometime after enacting this rule, the Buddha journeyed to Kosambi and resided at Badarikarama. On the very day of his arrival, the monks told Ven. Rahula, “The Buddha has laid down such a Vinaya rule that a monk should not sleep or lie down with an unordained person. Therefore, find yourself another place to sleep, find another hut.”

Although Ven. Rahula tried, he could not find a place to spend the night. He went and spent the entire night in the restroom (latrine). At dawn, the Buddha went to the restroom. There is a custom among the monks—a valuable custom that even Buddhist lay devotees should follow—where a person preparing to use the restroom makes a signal, like coughing or clearing the throat. If there is someone inside, that person also coughs gently, giving a signal that “I am inside.” This is a polite tradition. When the Buddha cleared his throat in this manner, Ven. Rahula, who was inside, made the same sound. When the Buddha asked, “Who is inside?”, he replied, “It is I, Rahula.” When asked, “Why are you here?”, he told the story. On that occasion, the Buddha used this as an opportunity to deliver a sermon to the monks and made a small amendment to the Vinaya rule as a concession, stating that an ordained monk cannot stay under the same roof with an unordained person for more than two or three nights. This brought some relief, as they could stay for two or three days.

What we must extract from this story is Ven. Rahula's amazing character. If it were someone else, they might have blamed the monks, or gone to the Buddha complaining, “Where am I to sleep tonight?” There was none of that; through his conduct, he demonstrated the noble quality of humility. Such incidents are proof of the virtuous nature of pupil monks. We must reflect on the matter of association (*āsevanā*) taught by the Buddha here. Some might wonder: “What has the Buddha said here? He has told us to live alone if there is no better or equal companion. If so, how can a teacher accept a pupil?” This is a question that may arise. But there is a different meaning in the teacher-pupil relationship. What is expected of a pupil is to obediently learn something from the teacher. The teacher knows that the pupil does not possess the same capacity of understanding as himself, but that does not make the pupil a fool.

In the Dhamma, the Buddha himself shows that if a person knows their own foolishness or ignorance, that very recognition of ignorance is itself a form of wisdom (*paṇḍita*). The one who does not know their own ignorance and thinks they are wise is the greatest fool. The Buddha shows how a pupil who associates with a teacher or a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*) should always think; the attitude of a faithful pupil should be: “The

Teacher is my master. The Teacher knows, I do not know." They should maintain this extremely humble attitude in their conduct.

This teacher-pupil relationship in the Dispensation is referred to as *saddhivihārika*. *Saddhivihārika* means one who dwells together. You have heard in ancient stories, like those of the Disapamokha teachers, how pupils and teachers associated and lived together. Especially after entering the monastic life, after ordination, the pupil associates with the teacher just like a son with a father. The Buddha describes this as a father-son relationship. Performing the duties and obligations obediently, learning the Dhamma, and properly learning the Vinaya and other matters is the duty of a pupil. The idea is that by staying in the association of the teacher, that person will grow in spiritual virtues.

But if, at any point, a pupil acts disobediently in that manner, or rejects the teacher by not accepting advice, then the teacher has to abandon that person. It is with this very idea that the Buddha stated here that it is better to live alone than to be with such stubborn pupils. We must constantly reflect on this matter. One of the main problems in this world is association (*āsevanā*). It is precisely because various problems arise from association that in the *Mahamangala Sutta*, the very first blessing is mentioned as *asevanā ca bālānaṁ*—not associating with fools and simpletons. Similarly, it states *paṇḍitānañca sevanā*—associating with the wise. Some people might take this to mean associating with the wise (*paṇḍita*) or a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*) with the intention of taking something valuable from them.

Here, keeping a respectful distance, while engaging in duties and observances, one can properly receive what should be received from a teacher. In any case, because association is something that greatly affects a person's life, it is shown as the first blessing, since associating with fools can lead to terrible destruction. As the Buddha declared: "A person who associates with the low becomes low" (*nihīyati puriso nihīnasevī*), meaning that associating with a degraded person leads to one's own downfall.

On another occasion, it is illustrated that kusa grass is a valuable and fragrant plant. But if one wraps rotting fish in kusa grass, the grass itself will begin to smell foul. Various similes are used to show that associating with fools, associating with such foolish people, brings disaster upon oneself. Next, the conduct of a true pupil is shown: when their faults are pointed out, they think of it as if a treasure-revealer is pointing out a hidden treasure. The Buddha stated in a Dhammapada verse:

Nidhīnaṁ va pavattāraṁ – yaṁ passe vajjadassinaṁ

Niggayhavādiṁ medhāviṁ – tādisaṁ paṇḍitaṁ bhaje

Tādisaṁ bhajamānassa – seyyo hoti na pāpiyo

The person who points out one's fault is like someone pointing out a hidden treasure. Why? Because when the fault is corrected, that person's valuable virtues can emerge. Regarding them in this way, the wise person should be associated with. This does not mean completely discarding pupils with bad qualities, or discarding fools altogether. If a

fool, an ignorant person, understands the value of associating with a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*) and is ready to practice properly and benefit from it, it is the duty of the wise person to assist them. This is why Mahapajapati Gotami on one occasion praised the Buddha's spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*) in this manner:

Kalyāṇamittatā muninā – lokaṁ uddissa vaṇṇitā

Kalyāṇamittaṁ bhajamāno – api bālo paṇḍito assa

The Buddha, that Sage, out of concern for the world, has constantly praised the value of spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*). Why? "By associating with a spiritual friend, even a fool can become wise." If one properly associates with a spiritual friend, even a fool can become wise. Thus, what is meant by the word "fool" (*bāla*) here is that if that person practices properly, they can rise from that foolish state and reach the status of a wise person (*paṇḍita*) through that very association with a spiritual friend. These are the things we must understand correctly. Just as this matter is placed at the beginning of the *Mangala Sutta*, the attitude one should possess is shown in the *Parabhava Sutta* in this manner:

Suvijāno bhavaṁ hoti – suvijāno parābhavo

Dhammakāmo bhavaṁ hoti – dhammaddessī parābhavo

When invited to explain the causes of a person's ruin, the first thing mentioned is the factor that leads to both progress and ruin. This is the cause of progress: *Dhammakāmo bhavaṁ hoti*—loving the Dhamma is the path to progress, the cause of progress. Next, *Dhammaddessī parābhavo*—hating the Dhamma leads to one's ruin. If we connect this idea to the story, indeed, it was not Dhamma but an attitude akin to hatred of the Dhamma (*dhammaddesa*) that existed in that pupil. That is why he behaved in that terrible manner, bringing disaster upon himself and ultimately being reborn in hell. The Buddha also gave a striking simile to show that if a pupil lacks the proper attitude, even if they associate with a teacher for their whole life, they cannot acquire the Dhamma. When a spoon is placed in a pot of curry or soup, no matter how long it remains there, the spoon does not taste the flavor of the soup. In the same way, it is said that if a fool, a stubborn, disobedient fool, associates with a wise person for a long time—even for their whole life—they will not be able to understand the Dhamma. This is about improper, wrong association. Instead, the Buddha shows that the teacher-pupil relationship should exist in the Dispensation with respect for the teacher through proper duties and observances, mutual respect, similar to a father-son relationship.

Indeed, if people were to shape their lives according to the advice of the Buddha, the stubborn behaviors seen in today's society, especially in the field of education (without going into too much detail), are due to a lack of correct understanding of these basic principles. Sometimes teachers do not treat pupils as their children. Sometimes children do not treat teachers as their fathers. There may be shortcomings on both sides. In any case, going to such stubborn extremes is due to the presence of a "hater of Dhamma" (*dhammaddesī*) nature, or the absence of Dhamma. If there is at least some Dhamma,

one would reflect accordingly, refrain from stubborn actions, and resolve those issues peacefully and cooperatively through discussion. This is the state of things in society. Indeed, a person entering society must know to associate carefully with those characters that lead to downfall, so that they are not dragged down by them. If one has the ability to turn that person towards the Dhamma, there is room for that, but one must associate with them carefully. As you all know, there are various viruses/germs in society. When we think of physical association, you know that physical contact can transmit germs, leading to various diseases. To escape these, we use vaccinations and immunizations. That is to escape the germs arising from physical social contact. But many do not realize that various mental diseases can also arise through social association. These diseases arise due to the mental germs spreading in this society. These days, most people talk about environmental pollution and waste.

But some do not reflect with wisdom on how a vast amount of waste that pollutes the mental environment flows in daily through various media, and how their own children fall victim to it. Due to the vast amount of mental environmental pollution and waste flowing through these media, people are driven mad. Ultimately, the mind is defiled by various defilements (*kilesa*) in that manner, leading to terrible destruction. For this, just like physical vaccination, there must be a vaccination of the mind. It is the Buddha's Dhamma that helps vaccinate the mind. The five precepts (*pañcasīla*) can be shown as such a vaccination of the mind, a method of immunization. The determination to abstain from sins like killing living beings, stealing, etc., becomes a strength and a help to protect oneself from those germs in a society filled with bad friends (*pāpamitta*). That is what is meant by vaccinating the mind. Furthermore, this is reinforced if a person strengthens their mind by practicing a meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*), such as loving-kindness (*mettā*) meditation; that is true immunization. Then, one is further able to live escaping the waste of society, avoiding those mental epidemics. These things must be reflected upon with wisdom.

What do we mean by life? Life means protecting two continua (*santāna*). What are the two continua? We use the word *santāna* in the sense of a continuous, uninterrupted flow. There are two continua within what we call life. What are the two continua? There is the material continuum (*rūpa-santāna*) and the mental continuum (*citta-santāna*). As soon as the functioning of our material continuum (*rūpa-santāna*) stops, the body dies. That is death. Through food, drink, and especially inhalation and exhalation, this material continuum continues without interruption. The material continuum that begins in the mother's womb ends in the cemetery. But, devout devotees, we must constantly reflect that the mental continuum (*citta-santāna*) goes much further. This mental continuum goes on towards final liberation / Nibbāna. It flows without interruption. It is this mental continuum that connects from life to life. We think about the physical diseases that can arise from the waste and environmental pollution mentioned before, and we make great efforts to protect ourselves from them. Scholars often take that as their theme. But some do not pay the same attention to the pollution arising in the mental environment. To escape that waste, the vaccinations and immunizations mentioned here are necessary.

The Buddha has primarily shown the restraint of body and speech through moral precepts (*sīla*). The five precepts (*pañcasīla*) exist for this purpose. It is abstaining (*virati*). *Pāṇātīpātā veramaṇī—veramaṇī* means abstaining. Abstaining is stepping back/refraining. *Adinnādānā veramaṇī…* Thus, instead of physical vaccination, by keeping those precepts like a mental vaccination, one becomes strong. To strengthen this further, one must constantly engage in some form of meditation and develop a special attitude. As the benefit of this meditation in daily society, we expect the development of a good attitude that supports life.

A person who practices loving-kindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*) well possesses an attitude of loving-kindness. When a problem arises, a person with an attitude of loving-kindness resolves it with a mind of loving-kindness foremost. On the contrary, if there is an attitude of hatred (*dosa*), everything appears to that person as a challenge, leading to arson, destruction, sabotage, and murder. Just as a person with a physical wound thinks they have been hurt even by a gentle touch, everything appears bad to a person with thoughts of hatred.

Due to the advice given for his own good, that pupil harbored hatred and resentment. If the stick used to break those utensils had been aimed at Ven. Maha Kassapa or the other monk, it would have led to murder or an even more terrible crime. Indeed, for someone who has taken a weapon in hand, there is no limit. It is clear that the cause of all this is that attitude. That student's attitude was wrong.

In such sudden moments—what is called sudden anger—the strength to control oneself when such situations arise is first given by the moral virtue (*sīla*) one undertook in the morning. The moral virtue undertaken is a determination—a determination established in the mind, a command given to wisdom: “Today, I will live in this manner, based on these principles.” Reflecting on those principles becomes a protection at that moment. This is further strengthened if one spends the day with an attitude of loving-kindness. As the way to appease resentment, the hateful person considers sabotage, murder, etc. That pupil found satisfaction by destroying those things and fleeing, like someone breaking pots in an empty house. Thus, the hateful person seeks relief and happiness through revenge.

Instead, when such a situation arises, a person with an attitude of loving-kindness uses it as a challenge to appease their own anger. That person finds happiness and peace by bringing forth loving-kindness again and calming the agitated mind. Thus, you, devout devotees, can understand the two sides. That is what is called unwise attention—the opposite of *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention)—in the Dhamma. That person takes revenge to satisfy resentment. But the true, Dhamma-conforming method is to appease resentment internally; it is an internal occurrence. They appease it internally, thinking, “I must conquer this through the power of loving-kindness.” Where there is no such attitude, especially through the association of bad friends (*pāpamitta*), one falls into trouble. That is why the Buddha declared: *Dhammakāmo bhavaṁ hoti, dhammaddessī parābhavo*.

We must possess this noble attitude. The main lesson we should draw from this story is not the example of that bad character. We spoke about Ven. Rahula to highlight that there were also extremely disciplined and exemplary monks in this Dispensation, not only wise but also deeply practical. Their lives are wonderful and valuable examples that one should take to heart even in this day and age. These are what we should bring forward. Next, you must understand the danger (*ādīnava*). The harm caused to the world and to oneself in future *saṁsāric* lives through such attitudes and such conduct. The question of association is indeed what is shown here. The Buddha is not completely rejecting and banishing a group of people called "fools." If a fool understands that foolishness, and to that extent becomes wise, wishing to benefit from a wise person and seek help through the association of a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*), the Buddha has shown the teacher-pupil relationship in the Dispensation to assist that person.

In society, as well as in educational institutions and other organizations, when such problems arise, hasty actions often occur because these virtues are not established within oneself. It is this shortcoming that prevails. We must constantly reflect on this. If we think we can live happily merely by organizing the external environment and removing the waste from the external environment, that is a mistake, a wrong view. No matter how high a level we elevate the external environment, if the internal, mental environment is polluted, only destruction will arise from it. That is what is happening now. Therefore, rather than protecting the material continuum (*rūpa-santāna*), we must focus our attention on protecting the mental continuum (*citta-santāna*) and strive to spend our lives in a way that the mental continuum grows. It is for this that the Buddha has shown this path of Dhamma. You too, just like the moral virtue (*sīla*) you undertook at this moment, some have undertaken the eight precepts on this Full Moon day. Through each of these practices, you should think that you receive the strength to assist others from the position of a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*) in your social life.

In these times, during precept campaigns or precept programs, when we say we observe precepts, some might think of this as a selfish, anti-social act done by someone who is isolated. But what is being done here? In this retreat, one strengthens oneself to become a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta*). To be a spiritual friend to the world, to be able to assist a friend, a neighbor, or even an enemy at some point—more valuable than a "hand-exchange" (lending money/material help) is a "mind-exchange" (sharing a wholesome mental state/spiritual comfort). If we have plenty of money, we assist someone in an emergency by giving a loan (hand-exchange). More valuable than that is the "mind-exchange." A "mind-exchange" can be given only by a person who has developed their mind.

At any given moment, when discussing a matter where that person is inclined towards evil or destruction, one can fearlessly say through one's strength: "You should not go down that path; this is the path to take. This is not the principle to adopt, this is not the action to do; this is what should be done." It is by being strong in this manner that one can render a great service in society as a spiritual friend. It is through this very means that a bad friend (*pāpamitta*) can be led to the correct path. We do not segregate

someone as a bad friend; some bring polluted behaviors perhaps from the past, or perhaps acquired from society itself.

You have all heard about the character of Angulimala. Indeed, he became a great killer due to an event that occurred in the early part of his life. But the Buddha made Angulimala, that killer, into an Arahant. Such things happen in this Dhamma. Everyone should strive to bring about that transformation within themselves. We must think of the Dhamma preached by the Buddha as an invitation in every way to put it into practice. Indeed, this *saṁsāric* life is completely chaotic. The Buddha describes this as a tangled ball of string. For in the entirety of *saṁsāra*, there is an entanglement of *kamma* (volitional activities / saṅkhāra). We talk about wholesome *kamma*, unwholesome *kamma*, merit (*puñña*), and sin (*pāpa*). This shows that due to the weak or undisciplined nature of our minds, getting entangled with the *kamma* of others, the continuation of *saṁsāra* takes place as a massive web of confusion. Seeing this, the Buddha has pointed out the state of Nibbāna as the complete liberation from this. The path to that is shown as virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

So, it begins with this virtue (*sīla*). As the benefit of virtue, one receives the strength to live happily in society. By calming one's mind and restraining body and speech to that extent, one gains a great saving. Our mental energy is dragged towards external things precisely because of our lack of moral virtues. Because of this, through the association of bad friends (*pāpamitta*) and alcohol, people turn to various wrongs, or destroy their lives through bad habits like drinking and gambling. But when, reflecting according to the Dhamma, one accustoms oneself to a simple life with noble thoughts through the practice of virtue, even from that, a great relief comes.

But one must not stop there. Next is the development of an attitude of loving-kindness, or an attitude of faith (*saddhā*). Although we use a new word like “attitude,” what we indicate through this is some form of meditation (*bhāvanā*)—living with a deep understanding of this life through the meditation of loving-kindness (*mettā bhāvanā*), recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), recollection of death (*maraṇasati*), etc. A person who enters society without understanding the core values of life is like a stake driven into the mud; they are swept away. They are dragged into the great flood (*mahogha*). They are dragged into the new fashions of society and meet destruction. But if one turns to a principled life with a certain practice, properly understanding the core values shown in the Dhamma, one establishes a firm stance in those values. Establishing a firm stance, saying, “This is my practice, I will not break it,” and spending one's life according to the Buddha’s word, then no matter how strong a torrent comes, it is neutralized. Through this, one can develop the strength of resilience. That is what we called immunization. Developing those virtues of moral conduct and, at an even higher level, the strength to calm the mind internally is what is called concentration (*samādhi*). It is precisely due to the scattered nature of our minds that we are often tempted into various wrongs through the association of bad friends in society. But if a person can obtain the bliss of concentration internally, they are not dragged towards those external things.

When one remembers one's meditation object (*kammaṭṭhāna*), a great peace comes to the mind. The mind can be calmed. Even in a place of great noise and commotion, or when traveling in vehicles, or in crowded places, a person who has developed their meditation can, even for a short moment, and in a small measure according to the degree of their development, bring about some relief by turning to that meditation. That is at the second level. Higher than that, the Buddha shows insight (*vipassanā*). We must develop a correct understanding of our life.

In the meditation objects we specifically mention, such as foulness (*asubha*) and recollection of death (*maraṇasati*), what is involved is correctly understanding the true nature of this life, the true nature of the body. If one thinks of this body as something that does not fall ill, or as something wonderful created by someone or a god, then when diseases and pains arise, that person has to face terrible disappointments. Instead, one must reflect on the foul nature of this body as highlighted by the Buddha—how it decays, subjected to diseases and illnesses. To the person who constantly reflects on this, a mentally resilient nature develops. They can escape that unrest. Similarly, the meditation object called recollection of death (*maraṇasati*) is a meditation that both laypeople and monastics can practice at a primary level. Constantly reflecting that one will die might be distasteful to some. But what is in it is bringing the mind to reality.

If one has correctly understood the reality of this life, if one has correctly understood that this life is short, then according to the Buddha's word, one understands that the mental continuum (*citta-santāna*) is more important than the material continuum (*rūpa-santāna*). Because if we defile the mental continuum, the next bodily shell we receive might be an animal shell, an animal body, a hungry ghost (*peta*) body, a demon (*yakka*) body, or a body that undergoes suffering in hell. It is on our mental continuum that we must focus greater attention. We must strive to remove the waste belonging to it. To protect ourselves from them, we must be eager to vaccinate our minds. In the Buddha's Dhamma, what is called wholesome (*kusala*) are those things that lead to one's own well-being and the well-being of others. Things that are harmful to oneself and others are called unwholesome (*akusala*). From this, it is seen that the Buddha has not presented this in a one-sided, selfish manner. We have all heard about the Middle Way. Thus, the journey to Nibbāna is also a Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). It is not a journey where one goes to Nibbāna while killing others.

Understanding that others who suffer in this *saṁsāra* just like oneself also desire happiness, one assists them at their respective levels with one's mind, body, and speech. Their lives are just like this. One must develop a respect for those lives, knowing that they too depend on food and drink, and depend on inhalation and exhalation. This is what is lacking in many people today. From the incidents we hear in society, we see that destroying a human life is done just like killing a fly or a mosquito. It is regarded as a very trivial thing. All this happens because people are subjected to those germs, and the mental environment is completely polluted. Therefore, we must strive to bring forth again those core values highlighted by the Buddha.

Just as those swimming in an ocean assist one another, the Buddha declares that people in the world should help one another. In fulfilling the perfections (*pāramī*), by donating eyes, head, flesh, and blood, the Buddha made a wonderful sacrifice to the supreme limit for the target of Great Compassion (*mahākāruṇika*) and Great Wisdom (*mahāpaññā*). Other disciples also filled those virtues at their respective levels in this long *saṁsāra* and reached those states. For someone who, wishing for Nibbāna, makes an effort to eradicate the roots of defilements—greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*)—the Middle Path is what is manifested through the virtues of moral conduct. Following a path that does not harm others or oneself is what lies within the practice of virtue. In the same way is the practice of meditations like loving-kindness. Some might think: “What is the use of sitting to one side and thinking, 'May they be well, may they be well!'?”

But the Buddha has shown that the three doors of action that help us are mind, body, and speech. Our responsibilities lie in these three: mind, body, and speech. Or, to put it more systematically, let us take them as mind, speech, and body. Furthermore, some adherents of other religions point out that the mind is something unseen. The mind is not felt as much as the body. Therefore, speech is more valuable, and the coarse, gross physical process seen externally is even more valuable. That is what reigns in the world today. Physical actions are taken as great. But the Buddha showed the exact opposite: indeed, no matter how strong a person is physically, what can be done by the body is limited to a certain extent. It is extremely limited.

Through speech, a much broader service can be rendered if speech is corrected. Furthermore, a service at the highest, supreme level can be rendered if the mind is prepared. That is what many do not understand. That is why some hold a wrong attitude towards these meditations. “What is the meaning of this selfish existence, withdrawing into a forest or some other place? Is it not better to engage physically in what is regarded as social service in society?”

Social services and other such things are not bad. But if they are done with a defiled mind, with envy, anger, hatred, resentment, revenge, and competitiveness foremost, then no matter how high a level of social service is done, there is nothing in it. It is a hollow thing. Instead, if, with a true mind of loving-kindness, one can give one's food to a poor person at a moment of utmost need, or if one can step forward to protect the life of such a person and do such a thing, that indeed is the highest social service. Therefore, the mind is primary there. What is seen physically may be a small thing. That action, when looked at socially, may be a small thing. But because the mind that arises at that moment is noble, that is what the Buddha points out as the power of wholesome merit (*kusala-shaktiya*).

Thinking in this manner, a person with a mind of loving-kindness can render a service to the world at the highest level. It is not that even psychology gives a high place to these, but even psychologists accept that a person who has developed their mind can bring about a much greater service and peace to the world through that thought than ordinary people. Through that thought, a great energy is added to this atmosphere, or to this universe. We worship a Buddha. There, we think of the power of the virtues within him.

It is like sharing in that energy that has permeated this universe. From all this, we see that the Buddha declared, *"manopubbaṅgamā dhammā"*, showing that the mind is primary. We must strive to protect our mental environment from germs, develop our minds as much as possible, and create a society with a good mental environment. That indeed is called the association of spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitta-āsevanā*). Not with any other feeling of increasing numbers or showing off to those who see the benefits of the path of Dhamma, but with the intention of assisting them. Giving them the Dhamma as much as one knows, and showing them how to engage in the practice. In that manner indeed can a true service be rendered to society.

In all this, we are talking about the problem of association. This problem of association indeed affects everyone. Whether one goes to an educational institution or an organization, what happens is falling prey to the behavior of the majority. One is dragged into them. A wonderful force exists now. One submits to group power. But the wise person, through the virtues of wisdom (*paññā*) and others, somehow obtains the strength to protect themselves. There is also something called the power of Dhamma (*Dharma-shaktiya*). For the person who walks according to the Dhamma, there are various internal strengths, just like their acts of truth (*saccakiriya*). Not only that, there are also certain forces in the universe that assist them. They are established at their respective levels for those individuals. Due to the force of our *kamma*, troubles can occur. Even Ven. Maha Kassapa, the most supreme monk in this Dispensation in terms of ascetic qualities, had to face a disastrous situation where he lost and had his hut destroyed because of that pupil. Such disasters can happen. But one must reflect that there is also strength in those virtues.

Through that, those forces can be largely conquered. If one goes on the correct path, without being swept away by the incoming flood or torrent, one establishes a firm stance and gains the strength to show that path to others, to give them leadership, and to explain matters to them. Generally, because there is a group that is swept away, it is normal for them to be swept away, saying that it is impossible not to submit to it. But a person can develop within the Dhamma something called the strength of fortitude (*dhṛti-shaktiya*). The strength of fortitude means not falling prey to those sweeping forces, not being like a stake driven in mud, but acting like an *indakhīla* (indrakhīla). The word used as a simile for the strength of fortitude in the past is *indakhīla*. An *indakhīla* means a great pillar that was planted very deep in the ground in front of a city in those times. This pillar does not shake easily, no matter what kind of storm comes. A person with the strength of fortitude who can be like an *indakhīla* is indeed the one who goes—and should go—to the higher states. The fickle, unstable person is like a stake driven in mud; they have no firm stance, no practice, and no understanding of core values. They submit to the view of the majority and are swept away. Such is what exists in society. This is due to the lack of such association with spiritual friends, the lack of understanding of those virtues and core values, and, as said before, neglecting our mental continuum (*citta-santāna*) while caring only for the material continuum (*rūpa-santāna*), or reflecting only on the pollution of the external physical environment without directing the mind to the pollution of the mental environment.

The truth of the Dhamma declared by the Buddha must be brought forth through our own practice, to the extent that we understand. If, through listening to the Dhamma, reading the Dhamma, and turning to the Dhamma, some peace has been received in daily life, an even higher peace can be received by engaging directly in the practice. For some, when listening to a sermon, when hearing the Dhamma, they can obtain a great joy, a peace, a unique and wonderful experience not received elsewhere—a spiritual joy (*nirāmisa-pīti*). When this is further elevated to practice, when performing acts of merit like giving (*dāna*), and protecting virtues (*sīla*), an even higher joy is received.

Next, after going to meditation, the absorptions (*jhāna*) and other states obtained through meditation—every single one of them is surpassed by the noble, deathless Nibbāna shown by the Buddha, where one crosses over from Birth / Arising (*jāti*), Decay and Death / Aging and Death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*); the supramundane treasure obtained by ending all saṁsāric Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*). What the Buddha showed is not a one-sided journey, or a journey where one goes alone, but a journey of assisting the world according to the Middle Way, assisting at the level of teacher and pupil, or at the level of spiritual friends, understanding that others also desire happiness. The Buddha shows that everyone is stuck in this *saṁsāra*. They are stuck in the mud. Or they are swimming in this ocean of *saṁsāra*. To them, indeed, the Buddha shows that liberation must be achieved by themselves. The Buddha only shows the path. For us too, there is only to remind you of it.

I believe that you too, on this valuable day, have practiced some meditation at your respective levels, in addition to the moral virtues you undertook. Developing those sermons and meditations further, benefiting from the association of spiritual friends, walking quickly on the path of Nibbāna shown by the Buddha, crossing over all saṁsāric Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) such as Birth / Arising (*jāti*), Decay and Death / Aging and Death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*), may this merit of listening to the Dhamma lead to the realization of the noble, great, deathless Nibbāna! May it be a supportive condition! Likewise, from the Avici hell to the Akanittha heaven in this universe, if there are those, including our departed relatives, who expect to share in these merits of preaching the Dhamma and listening to the Dhamma, may they all rejoice in this merit! Through that strength, may they be released from those states of misery, reach happy realms, obtain the association of spiritual friends, bring meditation to its culmination, and through their aspired enlightenment (*bodhi*), realize the noble, great, deathless Nibbāna! Praying thus, recite the verses in this manner.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #154

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.106)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Pamādam anuyuñjanti, bālā dummedhino janā;

Appamādañca medhāvī, dhanaṃ seṭṭhaṃ va rakkhati.

Mā pamādam anuyuñjetha, mā kāmaratisanthavaṃ;

Appamatto hi jhāyanto, pappoti vipulaṃ sukhaṃ."

From:

Dhammapada Verses 26 and 27 (Appamāda Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

In Jambudvīpa during the Buddha's time, festivals like our recently held Sinhala New Year were referred to as "constellation-festivals" (*nakkatta-keḷi*). While you celebrate the Sinhala New Year by choosing auspicious times (astrological constellations) to perform wholesome deeds that bring about your progress and well-being, there are also festivals in the world where people use auspicious times to perform bad deeds that lead to one's downfall. It was in connection with such a festival, a certain constellation-festival of that nature, that the Buddha delivered these two thematic verses at the Jetavana Monastery.

On one occasion in the city of Sāvatthī, a constellation-festival named *Bālanakkhatta* (the Fools' Festival) was announced. What was the nature of this festival? Extremely foolish and ignorant people, smearing ashes and cow dung on their bodies, wandered through the city streets uttering obscene words. Everyone knows that obscene words mean vulgarities. Thus uttering, they would roam about for an entire week. Even upon seeing their relatives or monastics, they behaved without any shame or fear, uttering vulgar words. This was the characteristic of this festival. Therefore, before the festival commenced, the Buddhist lay disciples (*upāsakas* and *upāsikās*) in Sāvatthī sent word to the Buddha: "A constellation-festival like this is about to take place. During this period, we will prepare and offer alms and other requisites to the Buddha and the Saṅgha right

within the monastery itself. Even we will not step out of our houses." Having made such arrangements, they provided alms and other requisites to the Buddha and the Saṅgha.

During that period, those foolish people would come to the streets in front of the houses and shout abuses in vulgar language, creating a terrible din. To escape from this, the residents of the houses would give them a small sum of money, like a coin or two (*kahāpanas*), like a donation—a sort of vulgarity-extortion donation. So, this festival is conducted in order to collect some money in this manner. The fools collect it and move on. Having spent those seven days with great difficulty, the faithful devotees, once the seven days had passed, invited the Saṅgha led by the Buddha to the city, held a grand alms-giving ceremony, and at the end, during the sharing of merits, said: "Venerable Sir, a group of fools behaved in this manner under the name of *Bālanakkhatta*, speaking vulgarities to the point of bursting our ears. We spent these seven days with great difficulty. That is why we requested the Blessed One and the Saṅgha not to enter the city." Then the Buddha declared: "That is how it is, devotees. Foolish people, having fallen into negligence, behave in this manner. But wise devotees guard heedfulness like their most precious wealth." Expressing this idea, He uttered the two thematic verses.

"Pamādamānuyunjanti bālā dummedhino janā" — Foolish, ignorant human beings indulge in negligence. *"Appamādañca medhāvī dhanaṁ seṭṭhaṁva rakkhati"* — But the wise individual, the person of wisdom, guards heedfulness like a supreme treasure; he guards the practice of heedfulness. What is said in the next verse is:

"Mā pamādamānuyunjetha mā kāmaratisanthavaṁ" — Do not indulge in negligence! Do not associate with the delight in sensual pleasures, with attachment to the fivefold cords of sensual pleasure, with attachment to objective sensuality (*vatthu-kāma*) and subjective sensuality (*kilesa-kāma*)!

"Appamatto hi jhāyanto pappoti vipulaṁ sukhaṁ" — The heedful person, establishing himself in that heedfulness, develops absorption (*jhāna*) and realizes the supreme bliss of Nibbāna. This is the very idea expressed in those verses.

Now, if we reflect on this *Bālanakkhatta* festival, the word *bāla* is used in our contemporary times to refer to a person of young age, such as a "young child" (*bāla daruvā*). However, in our Dhamma, the word *bāla* is used in the sense of a fool, an ignorant person. Indeed, an ignorant person is like a small child who does not understand things. Some explain the Sinhala idiom "not knowing six or four" in a dispensation-based sense as "fools who do not believe in the six heavenly worlds and the four states of misery (*apāyas*)." It can be understood that way too. In any case, through the conduct of these fools, it appeared as though the city had fallen under the control of these ignorant people during those seven days. How much Dukkha (Suffering) must have been caused? Behaving in that manner, speaking obscene words. Beneath that obscene language, there must have also been intoxicants. It is not mentioned in the text. We can assume that they must have used some form of intoxicant to fuel their obscene language. We mentioned this constellation-festival not for anyone to take as an example.

Next, let us turn our attention to the Sinhala New Year festival that fell recently. This Sinhala New Year, which was born out of our ancient Buddhist Sinhala customs handed down from time immemorial, holds deep meanings, both socially and religiously. The devotees must reflect on these in this day and age. Otherwise, due to certain social transPreparations that have occurred today, it too might fall to the level of that foolish *Bālanakkhatta*. In the past, what was designated as the "New Year" was the moment when, according to astronomy, twelve months had passed and a new year dawned. This cycle of life, which spins uniformly throughout the year, is halted for a brief moment, and the *no-nakata* (the non-constellation period / inauspicious time) must have been designed to provide an opportunity to lubricate, clean, and repair the rusted parts of this machinery. Generally, lay devotees do every important task by finding an auspicious constellation (*nakata*). Thus, when it is said there is no constellation, they are forced to take a short break. It was to show the benefit to be derived from that break that the elders referred to that very *no-nakata* period as the "meritorious period" (*puṇya kālaya*).

By designating it as the "meritorious period," the intention is to repair this rotating cycle of life, removing the accumulated rust and so on. We must take refuge in the Dhamma there. It is through the Dhamma that we must understand what "rust" is. Personally, there may be various shortcomings in our individual lives, and socially, there may be misunderstandings, disputes, and other shortcomings between parents and children, or among neighbors. Reflecting on these and applying mindfulness and wisdom, we correct these shortcomings. Next, without letting the auspicious constellation pass, the customs of partaking of meals, engaging in work, and making transactions are there to allow us to look towards the coming year and the future with new determinations, having corrected those past shortcomings. If there is any depth to the Sinhala New Year customs, this is indeed its meaning. In fact, because this cycle of life rotates uniformly, if it is not cleaned once in a while, it gradually degenerates. But instead of using the Dhamma for this purpose, if one uses intoxicants in that manner, then indeed one falls into a very dangerous state. Instead of removing the rust, rust begins to accumulate on the machine.

So, if we briefly mention the Sinhala New Year, that is where its value lies for us. During the Sinhala New Year, you acted right on time, not letting the auspicious constellation pass, in order to be heedful regarding your worldly progress. But if we look at it from the perspective of the Dispensation, heedfulness (*appamāda*) is not such a narrow concept, but a much broader one. This human existence, human birth obtained during the period of a Buddha's appearance, is itself shown as the single auspicious constellation. It is shown as the "fortune of the opportune moment" (*khaṇa-sampatti*). The Buddha constantly reminds us: *"khaṇo ve mā upaccagā"* — "Let not the proper moment, the right instant, slip away!" Thus, if one has obtained human existence during the period of a Buddha's appearance, one must be heedful. Therefore, this heedfulness, the practice of heedfulness, is an extremely valuable concept in this Dispensation. To what extent? The Buddha explains the value of the term "heedfulness" through three simple similes. On one occasion, He declares: "Monks, whatever footless, two-footed, four-footed, or multi-footed beings there may be, whether with form or formless, percipient, non-percipient,

or neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient—among all these classes of beings, the Tathāgata, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Awakened One is supreme. In the same way, among whatever wholesome states there are, heedfulness is the foremost; heedfulness is supreme."

Next, employing that same truth, He illustrates the value of the term heedfulness through another simile. Just as the footprints of all land-dwelling animals can be contained within the footprint of the elephant, and the footprint of the elephant is supreme among them all, even so, among all wholesome states, the term heedfulness is the greatest, the foremost. He also shows another simile. Just as in a peaked house, all the rafters meet at the roof-peak, and the roof-peak is supreme among all the rafters, even so, among all wholesome states, the term heedfulness is supreme. In every way, the Buddha praised the value of heedfulness. Furthermore, you must have often heard a very famous Dhammapada verse in the Dhamma:

Appamādo amatapadaṁ

pamādo maccuno padaṁ

appamattā na mīyanti

ye pamattā yathā matā

If we render this into English verse, we can express it as:

Heedfulness is the path to the Deathless;

Negligence is the path of Death.

The heedful do not die;

Those who are negligent are as if already dead.

What is shown through this? Heedfulness is the path to Nibbāna, which is called the Deathless. Why is it called Nibbāna? Nibbāna means liberation from Saṁsāra. Saṁsāra means repeated Jāti (Birth). Repeated birth means repeated death. Then, what does Nibbāna do? What is the meaning within Nibbāna? What is the purpose of attaining the fortune of Nibbāna? It is the liberation from this Saṁsāra in which we have been born and died for an infinite period of time. That is why it is called liberation from death. Experiencing the realization of liberation from death right in this life is what is meant by realizing Nibbāna. On the other side is Saṁsāra. Thus, heedfulness helps to transcend Saṁsāra; the practice of heedfulness can be understood in this manner.

If we think deeper, heedfulness (*appamāda*) is often explained by the single term *upaṭṭhitasati*—established mindfulness, being mindful, dwelling with good mindfulness. The term "established mindfulness" is often shown as synonymous in meaning to the word "heedfulness." Conversely, *muṭṭhassati*—muddled mindfulness, forgetfulness of mind—is negligence (*pamāda*). Therefore, *"appamādo amatapadaṁ"*—heedfulness is

the path to the Deathless, *"pamādo maccuno padaṁ"*—negligence is the path of Death. Thus, when we look at the meaning of the word "heedfulness," it is established mindfulness, whereas "negligence" is the muddled state of mind. Next, if we contemplate a bit more deeply, the Buddha has shown heedfulness as a practice. What is shown as the practice of heedfulness is the fourfold *Satipaṭṭhāna* (four foundations of mindfulness).

You have heard of the four *Satipaṭṭhānas*—establishing mindfulness on these four objects: our body (*kāya*), Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*), mind (*citta*), and mental objects (*dhamma*). It is the mindfulness properly established in them, the established mindfulness anchored in them. On the other hand, what is the practice of negligence? It is being drawn towards the five cords of sensual pleasure. That is why it was said in the verse, *"mā kāmaratisanthavaṁ"*. Sensual delight, the relationship with objective sensuality and subjective sensuality, is negligence. That is the realm of Māra. On another occasion, the Buddha, speaking to the Bhikkhus about this *Satipaṭṭhāna* which is heedfulness, says: "Monks, this is your father's pastureland, your ancestral domain. Roam within your father's domain." What is it? The four *Satipaṭṭhānas*. Departing from that ancestral pasture is indeed submitting to the five cords of sensual pleasure. That is Māra's pastureland. To convey this matter, the Buddha has used wonderful, simple yet striking similes on various occasions. Indeed, the similes used by the Buddha, though sometimes very long, have components that fit perfectly with the Dhamma points. Rather than the knowledge you gain from reading a lengthy explanation in a large book, a heart-touching simile helps greatly when putting the teachings into practice. Sometimes, a single simile is like an entire book of Dhamma.

Let us try to present this simile just as the Buddha told it. On one occasion, the Buddha declared: "Monks, in the past, a certain hawk swooped down swiftly and seized a quail. While being carried away, the quail cried out: 'Oh, what misfortune is mine! It is because I wandered out of my father's pastureland that this hawk caught me. If I had stayed in my father's ancestral domain, this hawk would have stood no chance of fighting with me.' Hearing this, the hawk asked: 'What is your father's ancestral domain?' The quail replied: 'A ploughed field with clods of earth is my father's pastureland.' The hawk then said: 'Very well, go there. Go and see if you can escape me!' and released the quail. The quail flew back, perched upon a large clod of earth in a ploughed field, and challenged the hawk: 'Hey hawk! Come on now! Come and get me!'"

"Then the hawk, full of pride and angered by this challenge, folded his wings and swooped down with great speed to seize the quail. Waiting until the hawk got close, the quail instantly hid under the clod of earth. The hawk, diving at high speed, struck his breast against the hard earth, crushed his chest, and died." By this simile, the Buddha declared: "Even so, monks, if you wander outside of your father's pastureland, you will fall into the hands of Māra." That is to say, because the quail first abandoned its ancestral domain, it was caught by the hawk and came close to death. But when the quail was in its proper ancestral pastureland and the hawk came to catch it, it was the hawk that fell into trouble. Based on that simile, the Buddha explains: "What, monks, is your father's pastureland? From the perspective of the Dhamma, it is the four foundations of

mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*)." One dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure regarding the world, with the hope of understanding the body. Likewise regarding feelings, likewise regarding the mind, and likewise regarding mental objects. This, in brief, is the four foundations of mindfulness. So, it was to the four foundations of mindfulness that this simile was connected.

Next, there is another similar simile. The Buddha knew that the Saṅgha, as well as you lay devotees, like listening to stories. Perhaps that is why He told another story. "Monks, there are regions in the Himalayas where neither monkeys nor humans can go. There are other regions where monkeys can go, but humans cannot. And there are other regions where both monkeys and humans can go. In such a region, in a beautiful, delightful, level ground, monkey-hunters set a trap using a kind of monkey-glue. Now, when this monkey-glue is set, those monkeys who have some understanding and are not very greedy, seeing it, keep their distance from it, realizing it must be some kind of trap. But a foolish, greedy monkey comes along and touches the glue with one paw. His paw gets stuck. He brings his other paw close to free the first one. That too gets stuck. Next, he brings a foot close to free the two paws. That foot gets stuck. He brings his other foot close. That too gets stuck. Finally, what is left is the mouth—what we call the snout. He brings his snout close. That too gets stuck. Thus, stuck in five places, while the monkey lies there suspended, the monkey-hunter comes, pierces the monkey with something, kills him, and carries him away as prey."

At that point, the Buddha explains this simile according to the Dhamma. What are these glues stuck in five places? They are agreeable and pleasant forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches—the matter of being attached to these agreeable, pleasant things that become objects of prey. This is what the Buddha presents through this simile, as in the thematic verse. Thus, it is falling prey to Māra. The Buddha shows through this simile that by being greedy for the five cords of sensual pleasure, the same fate that befell the monkey will befall oneself.

Then He gives another simile, one that carries an even deeper meaning. Earlier we mentioned the word "heedfulness" (*appamāda*). *Upaṭṭhitasati*, established mindfulness, means this very same concept. Established mindfulness means constantly, continuously maintaining mindfulness in the present moment. What is meant there is the power to see a thing right then and there. Muddled mindfulness is the opposite. The Buddha shows a very wonderful simile, also through a beautiful story. You may know that there are special performances, like spinning rabana drums, which demonstrate exceptional skills. Similarly, here too, there is a balancing act; that is what the story is about. It is the story of the acrobat's bamboo pole (*caṇḍāla-vaṁsa*). The acrobat's bamboo pole might have been a performance of the outcaste (*caṇḍāla*) people. This is how the story begins.

The master and the apprentice who performed the acrobat's bamboo pole act once set out to perform this sport. The master placed the bamboo pole on his chin and, balancing it, said to his apprentice—whose name was Medakathālikā. A very strange name. Perhaps they gave names with some meaning, or maybe it was a nickname given by the

apprentice's friends. To this day, the name is recorded as Medakathālikā. Literally, *Medakathālikā* means "a bowl of fat." Be that as it may, the master said to the apprentice Medakathālikā: "Medakathālikā, climb up onto my shoulders and get onto this bamboo pole. Climb the bamboo pole and stand on it."

The apprentice did so. Then the teacher said: "Now, Medakathālikā, you look after me, and I will look after you. By doing so, we can earn income from this performance and come down from this bamboo pole safely without any harm." Then the apprentice said: "That is not the way to do it, teacher. That is not the method. You protect yourself, and I will protect myself. In that way, by each protecting ourselves, we can perform this sport properly, make a good profit, and jump down from this bamboo pole without any mishap." Having given this simile, the Buddha said: "Monks, the method proposed by the apprentice, not the teacher's words, is the correct principle (the true method)." Think about it a little: even for you, in a balancing exercise like that, if the teacher is constantly thinking only about the apprentice, there is no mindfulness there. If the teacher, without paying attention to the bamboo pole balanced under his chin, keeps worrying about what the apprentice might do or whether he will do it right, there is no mindfulness. Similarly, if the apprentice on top of the pole is thinking, "Will the teacher drop me now?" it won't work. Each protecting oneself is all that is there. There is a deep meaning in this.

Then the Buddha connects this to *Satipaṭṭhāna*. "In the same way, monks, thinking, 'I shall protect myself,' the foundations of mindfulness should be practiced. Thinking, 'I shall protect others,' the foundations of mindfulness should be practiced. Protecting oneself, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself." Having presented this Dhamma principle, He further explains it. Indeed, this is an extremely deep discourse. A meaning so deep that it cannot be fully explained in a short time is detailed here. Next, how does one protect others by protecting oneself? The Buddha explains it briefly there: by thoroughly practicing *Satipaṭṭhāna* through repetition, development, and cultivation (*āsevana, bhāvanā, bahulīkaraṇa*). By properly developing *Satipaṭṭhāna*, one sets an example for others. Not only that, if one reaches the highest state through it, its benefits are shared by the entire world. It is due to various such reasons that it was said that by protecting oneself, others are automatically protected. Next, protecting oneself by protecting others is also shown in connection with *Satipaṭṭhāna*. How is that done? Virtues such as patience, harmlessness, a mind of loving-kindness, and compassion (*anuddayatā*) are developed through this. Because of these virtues, the other person is protected. While doing so, oneself is also protected. This might seem like a riddle to you. But there is a very deep meaning there. We can give a small clue to this.

There is a certain verse associated with overcoming anger. We bring this close to highlight this very idea:

Ubhonnaṁ carati atthaṁ,

attano ca parassa ca;

Paraṁ saṅkupitaṁ ñatvā,

yo sato upasammati.

"He practices for the welfare of both, of himself and of the other, who, knowing the other to be angry, mindfully maintains peace (calms down)." This is a verse from another context, which we presented to help understand this concept. To state it again, when someone knows that the other person is angry—and one knows that the other is angry by understanding the other's mind. If we connect *Satipaṭṭhāna* to this, something that remains a problem for some is the idea of oneself and others when practicing *Satipaṭṭhāna*. There are two aspects: *ajjhatta* (internal/oneself) and *bahiddhā* (external/others), and they are also shown combined. Now, practicing *Satipaṭṭhāna* here does not mean thinking, "I do not need to care about how the other person's mind behaves." One understands through the behavior of one's own mind that others also possess a similar mind. Through their behavior or words, one understands: "This person is angry now." Knowing that they are angry, *yo sato*, if one establishes mindfulness and calms oneself, or pacifies the anger within oneself, then this anger does not proliferate further. This is the idea we have to grasp.

Some might think that practicing the four foundations of mindfulness is a selfish act done solely for one's own Nibbāna. But when one contemplates deeply on this simile given by the Buddha, and the simile concerning Medakathālikā, it becomes clear that within *Satipaṭṭhāna* lies the dynamic of protecting others while protecting oneself. That is what we have just explained as an additional analysis. Thus, through the way one's own mind behaves, one understands the universal truth that the minds of others also behave in this way. When practicing *Kāyānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna* (contemplation of the body), sometimes the nature of one's own body is understood through another person's body discarded in a cemetery. It might be the body of someone one does not even know. Yet, one understands that Dhamma-nature: "As this body is, so is that body; as that body is, so is this body" (*yathā idaṁ tathā etaṁ, yathā etaṁ tathā ïdaṁ*). It is shown in this way for *bahiddhā* (externally) too. This is how *Satipaṭṭhāna* extends both internally and externally. Thus, as one's own body is, so is another's body; as another's body is, so is one's own body. As one's own Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*) is, so is another's Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*). If one believes that only oneself feels pain, how much might one hurt others?

One must understand: "Just as it hurts me, it hurts others too." Just like in my mind, such defilements also arise in the minds of others. The four foundations of mindfulness, being a profound Dhamma, is entirely devoid of selfishness. A deep understanding of this is extremely beneficial for the devotees engaged in practicing *Satipaṭṭhāna*. The Buddha shows that the apprentice's statement, "You protect yourself, I will protect myself," was correct, pointing to the concept of *bahiddhā* (external) within *Satipaṭṭhāna*. It is when both sides are complete that it is understood in the world. To give further examples of this, individuals like Rūpanandā and Khemā, who were proud of their physical beauty, were led to *Satipaṭṭhāna* by the Buddha. He created through psychic power a beautiful female form and caused it to decay before their eyes. Reflecting, "Ah,

indeed, my body is also of such a nature," those who were proud of their body and physical beauty witnessed the decay of the external beauty and applied it (projected it) to themselves. This idea is constantly seen in every section of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. One maintains mindfulness in this way: *ajjhatta*, regarding one's own body, and *bahiddhā*, regarding the external body; regarding internal Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*), and regarding external Feeling / Sensation (*vedanā*). There are some who think: "If we are to do this in this manner, wouldn't we have to keep looking at others all the time?"

What is present here is that, in understanding the reality of the world as it really is (*yathābhūta*), we ultimately realize that any body, anyone's body, is one and the same. Because Rūpanandā and others had a strong attachment to their own bodies and their physical beauty, they were unable to acquire the feeling, the understanding, that this body is bound to decay. To address this, the Buddha showed an external body. Having shown that first, He then caused them to apply it to themselves. For some people, it is easier to direct the mind to their own body. Directing the mind to one's own body, one must be able to understand at some point: "Isn't the other body just like this body?" No matter how much one practices *Satipaṭṭhāna* on one's own body, at some point, upon seeing a beautiful person with a very attractive body, one might be deceived into thinking, "This is a flawless, ageless luster, untouched by sickness or pain," and from that point onwards, something like what happened to the monkey occurs. We must understand this matter as a universally applicable Dhamma-truth: other bodies are just like this body. *Yathā idaṁ tathā etaṁ, yathā etaṁ tathā idaṁ* (As this is, so is that; as that is, so is this). Ancient teachers point out that in completing *Satipaṭṭhāna*, some individuals, according to their temperament, enter *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation from the spiritual/internal side and complete it through the external side. Others start *Satipaṭṭhāna* from the external side, like Rūpanandā, and complete it by applying it to the internal. Ultimately, both merge wonderfully; they blend. It is at that point indeed that *ajjhatta* and *bahiddhā* lose their distinction. There is no difference; the body is just a body. There is no sense of "me-ness" (*mamatta*) thinking "this is my body," nor is there any distinction thinking "this is another's body." When looked at as a body, the body is just a body. That is precisely what is meant by *"kāye kāyānupassī"* (contemplating the body in the body).

The phrasing in the text of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, *"kāye kāyānupassī viharati"* (dwells contemplating the body in the body), is a major problem for many. It is stated in a very peculiar sentence. "He dwells contemplating the body in the body." What does it mean to contemplate "the body in the body"? When there is attachment and so on towards the body, it is not understood as it really is (*yathābhūta*). It is not understood in that way. Instead, one strives to see it as it really is, as a body in the body, as far as possible without falling into bias. For that reality-based understanding, sometimes the external body also helps. That is why we mentioned at the very beginning the stories of Rūpanandā and others. Let us consider death. Without waiting until one dies, one applies the example of a dead person to oneself: "This too will come to me." Thus, we do not learn certain things about the world through our body alone. We also shape our

knowledge based on what we see and hear. In the same way, it helps in direct realization too. There is such a Middle Path within *Satipaṭṭhāna*. That is what is highlighted here.

Therefore, through this acrobat's bamboo pole simile, this balancing simile, we can understand the matter of established mindfulness (*upaṭṭhitasati*). How subtle must that mindfulness be? At that moment, the thought exists entirely in the present. If, during the performance, the apprentice started engaging in *Papañca* (Conceptual proliferation / Prolific conceptualization) about the teacher: "Will the teacher drop me? Or how much profit will I get from this now? How much will the teacher take? How much will I get?"—if he went on proliferating in that manner, he would certainly fall from the bamboo pole. There is none of that; it is through freeing the mind. Those who have directed the faculties of mindfulness and energy, developed even in daily life, towards Nibbāna are the ones who can understand quickly. Therefore, each of us must reflect: in this life, if we act in that right and proper manner, applying mindfulness or energy, those will one day assist us in attaining Nibbāna.

Similarly, there is another simile. Perhaps some might find this even more appealing. It is called the simile of the Belle of the Country (*Janapada-kalyāṇī*), or the simile of the bowl of oil. The Buddha starts it quite abruptly. Just as in these days when a vehicle comes and starts a public announcement, the Buddha also begins: "Monks, crying 'The Belle of the Country! The Belle of the Country!', a huge crowd of people gathers." This Belle of the Country is skilled in dancing and singing. When the news spreads that the Belle of the Country is dancing and singing, even more people gather there. Now, when they have gathered in this manner, there comes a certain helpless man who loves life, does not want to die, desires happiness, and recoils from pain. Someone in that crowd—it is not specified who, perhaps some officials—gives a certain command to that man, like a punishment. What is it? "Here is a bowl of oil filled to the brim. Now, you must carry this on your head. You must walk between the place where the Belle of the Country is dancing and, on the other side, the crowd of people jostling to watch her. Right behind you will follow a man with a drawn sword. If you spill even a single drop of oil from this bowl, your head will be severed and cast to the ground." This is the threat made to him. Then, the full bowl of oil was placed on that helpless man's head. Behind him followed a man with a drawn sword. If even a drop spilled from that bowl of oil, his neck would be severed right there.

In such a situation, how would that man act? On one side, there is the Belle of the Country, singing and dancing so beautifully. What would happen if he turned his eyes towards that side? On the other side, there is the crowd of people jostling each other. Even a slight collision would cause conflict. If we analyze this simile correctly, it represents attachment and aversion. One has to maintain mindfulness, freeing the mind from both attachment and aversion. If one is even slightly forgetful (muddled in mindfulness), one fails.

Those of you who have read the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* know that it states at the very beginning: *"vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṁ"*—having removed covetousness (strong greed or desire) and displeasure regarding the world. Thus, for the man carrying the

bowl of oil, on one side there is a sight that arouses greed, causing him to be greedy and attached. On the other side, there are colliding people, jostling amidst the fire of defilements. What a nuisance this is—displeasure (*domanassa*). Thus, between these two, he carries the bowl of oil. Having said just this much, the Buddha then delves into the Dhamma principle: "Monks, 'a bowl of oil filled to the brim' is a synonym for mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*)." Devotees, mindfulness directed to the body is the mindfulness that follows the body, as explained earlier. Therefore, it is this mindfulness directed to the body that is compared to that bowl of oil.

In this manner, carrying out this practice while developing mindfulness and energy, one must spend one's life inclined toward a simple lifestyle, with the determination to protect the precepts deeply and more broadly. Undertaking these precepts is like a rehearsal for this very realization, or rather, for crossing over from this Saṁsāra. The mental peace we gain through undertaking the precepts, or rather, the freedom from remorse, helps us to concentrate the mind. It becomes difficult for a person to calm the mind when the mistakes they have committed start flooding into their thoughts. Once a person has resolved upon a precept, they are able to protect their mind to a certain extent from those past thoughts that flood the mind with sadness.

Because when one reflects starting from the period of this resolution, thinking: "My mind, my conduct, my actions through pure body and speech are pure," the joy that arises from that can be used to concentrate the mind. That is the value of that virtue (*sīla*). Indeed, the Buddha shows the factors that assist the development of these four foundations of mindfulness as: *"sīlañca suvisuddhaṁ diṭṭhī ca ujutā"* (virtue that is well-purified and view that is straight). A well-purified, clean virtue is necessary; pure virtue must be present. A straight view must be present; right view must be present. One cannot develop the four foundations of mindfulness while holding wrong views. Therefore, the essential requirements for developing the four foundations of mindfulness are shown as: *sīlañca suvisuddhaṁ diṭṭhī ca ujutā*—virtue is well-purified, view is straight. One cannot waver here and there; one cannot proceed with intentions of remaining in this Bhava (Becoming / Existence); one must go on this journey with the deep resolution to cross over from Saṁsāra completely. It is in accordance with this that, by subsequently developing the four foundations of mindfulness, one is gradually able to understand the body, feelings, mind, and the thoughts that arise in the mind.

In the Buddha's Dispensation, the practitioner (*yogāvacara*) is the one engaged in the battle against defilements, the one preparing for the great battle with Māra. The weapon the practitioner possesses is the subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Taking that weapon, the practitioner undergoes training and practice on the ground of the four foundations of mindfulness. The ground of the four foundations of mindfulness is what the Buddha referred to as the "father's pastureland."

Therefore, staying within the father's pastureland, establishing one's pure virtue and taking to heart the supreme determination to liberate oneself from Saṁsāra, one then engages in those four foundations of mindfulness, aided by the meditation subject. That is why it was said: "Do not let this auspicious moment slip away!" Occasions like the

Uposatha day—on those occasions, by inclining towards the practice leading to Nibbāna, one can make arrangements to cross over from Saṁsāra. According to the social ethics of lay life, the Sinhala New Year, from a worldly perspective, involves performing tasks at the auspicious moment without letting the constellation pass. But there is a much deeper meaning here. Utilizing this rare opportunity of a Buddha's appearance—this "constellation opportunity" of obtaining a human existence during the period of a Buddha's appearance—to engage in this practice of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*); that indeed is what can truly be considered the practice of heedfulness.

You must reflect, as shown by the Buddha, on the suffering we have experienced over this infinite period of time in Saṁsāra—repeated Jāti (Birth) and repeated death. You must resolve to walk the path of the four foundations of mindfulness shown for the liberation from this mass of Dukkha (Suffering). Furthermore, in the future, by continuing to practice and train in these activities even in your lay homes, during this era when the Buddha's Dispensation is facing decline, you should become more spiritually urgent (*saṁvega*) and bring to mind that guiding phrase: "Do not let the noble moment slip away!"

May the store of merit accumulated today through undertaking the precepts and listening to the Dhamma—especially utilizing those wholesome intentions which are shown as the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom that assist in attaining Nibbāna—be a strong supportive condition (*upaniṣraya*) for quickly securing the help of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), completing the study and practice of Dhamma and meditation, and realizing the supreme, great deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmitā*), and Arahatship! May all beings, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including your relatives and friends, and whoever wishes to rejoice in these merits of Dhamma-teaching and Dhamma-hearing, by rejoicing in these merits, be liberated very quickly from all saṁsāric Dukkha (Suffering) Jāti (Birth), aging, sickness, and death, and find peace in the supreme, great deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi (awakening)! Having made this aspiration, please recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #155

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.114)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Yassa selūpamaṃ cittaṃ,

ṭhitaṃ nānupakampati;

Virattaṃ rajanīyesu,

kopaneyye na kuppati;

Yassevaṃ bhāvitaṃ cittaṃ,

kuto taṃ dukkhamessati. "

From:

Udāna (Udāna 4.4: Juṇha Sutta)

Dear Listeners,

As the practice for ending suffering (*Dukkha*), the Blessed One, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, pointed out to the world the path of meditation to systematically develop the mind. A mind that has freed itself from attachments and conflicts and is concentrated in equanimity attains liberation, unshaken by the eight worldly conditions. What is revealed by the verse we have chosen as our topic today, and the background story related to it, is the miracle of such a developed mind.

At one time, when the Blessed One was residing at the Veluvana Monastery in Rājagaha, the two chief disciples, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, were residing at a place called Kapota Kandara (Pigeon Glen). On the night of the day Venerable Sāriputta had shaved his hair and beard, he sat entered into a certain concentration under the moonlight. Two *yakkhas* (demons), who were friends, were traveling through the air from north to south, and they saw Venerable Sāriputta seated in concentration. Seeing him, one *yakkha* said to the other, "Friend, I feel like giving a blow

to the head of that recluse." Then the other *yakkha* said, "No, friend, do not do that. He is a great, highly psychic, and powerful recluse. Do not do that." For the second time, that *yakkha* said, "I really feel like striking him." The second time too, he was told not to. A third time he said so, and even for the third time, he did not listen. That *yakkha* delivered a blow. How powerful was that blow? It was strong enough to fell an elephant of seven or eight cubits, strong enough to split a mountain peak—such was the mighty force of the blow. Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, with his divine eye, saw that *yakkha* striking Venerable Sāriputta on the head. He approached Venerable Sāriputta and asked, "How is it, Friend Sāriputta, are you well? Are you comfortable? Are you free from pain, trouble, and distress?" In the Dhamma, there is a customary way of exchanging pleasantries upon meeting. He asked in that manner. Venerable Sāriputta replied, "I have no such deficiency or trouble. However, my head hurts just a little." Then Venerable Mahā Moggallāna said, "How wonderful, how mighty and powerful is Venerable Sāriputta! A *yakkha* gave him such a powerful blow, strong enough to fell an elephant of seven or eight cubits, strong enough to split a mountain peak. Even after being struck with such a blow, Venerable Sāriputta says only, 'My head hurts just a little'!"

Then Venerable Sāriputta said, "How marvelous is this Venerable Mahā Moggallāna! I cannot even see a mud-goblin (*pāṁsu-pisācaka*), yet Venerable Moggallāna has seen the *yakkha* striking me!" In the Dhamma, it is mentioned regarding this incident that when the Blessed One heard this conversation of mutual praise between these two great elephant-kings of the Dispensation with his divine ear, the Blessed One uttered a verse of solemn utterance at that moment. That verse is what we have taken as our topic today:

Yassa selūpamaṁ cittaṁ, ṭhitaṁ nānukampati;

virattaṁ rajanīyesu, kopaneyye na kuppati;

Yassevaṁ bhāvitaṁ cittaṁ, kuto taṁ dukkhamessatīti.

"Whose mind stands like a rock, firm and unshaken, unattached to things that excite attachment, unprovoked by things that provoke anger—how can suffering (*Dukkha*) come to one whose mind is thus developed?" Thus, the Blessed One uttered this solemn utterance. So, from this brief story, we can understand both the danger of an undeveloped mind—a mind not cultured through meditation—and the miraculous power of a mind developed through meditation. We can see both of these through this.

If we first speak about the former point, it is mentioned that as soon as the *yakkha* struck the blow, he went and was reborn in the Great Hell (*Mahā Niraya*). Venerable Sāriputta suffered no harm from the *yakkha*'s blow. The *yakkha* fell, screaming "I am burning, I am burning!" and was reborn in the Great Hell. That is how he suffered. Thus, the *yakkha*, who possessed the strength to split even a rock, committed a great act of foolishness with his own power. In fact, he did it as if for fun. People who have physical strength sometimes do such things for fun or play, to let off steam, often ignoring the advice of their spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). That is the kind of thing this *yakkha* did. His friend told him, "Do not do this. He is a person of such great power." He said it

as if knowing the consequences. But that demon did not listen. He struck Venerable Sāriputta on the head. Immediately, it is said, he fell into the Great Hell, screaming "I am burning, I am burning!"

In the Dhamma, a kamma called *Āryopavāda* (insulting the Noble Ones) is mentioned. *Āryopavāda* means that even insulting, mocking, or abusing those noble beings who have attained supramundane states is a grave unwholesome act (*akusala*). There is no need to speak of striking them. Even though it was not to settle a grudge, the volition (*cetanā*) that arose during that striking was itself sufficient to cause rebirth in hell. That is what we have to reflect upon. True, Venerable Sāriputta felt a slight headache after arising from his concentration, but since he was in concentration, the *yakkha*'s act was like striking his own head against a rock. The suffering was caused to himself. But we can imagine the consequence of this: not only for that *yakkha*, but anyone who does such demonic deeds will receive such severe consequences. Because that is a law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*), it is something connected to the nature of reality (*dhammatā*). It is also shown as the law of Dhamma (*dhamma-niyāma*).

To the noble objects in the world—here, Venerable Sāriputta, who had attained a living supramundane state—it was he who was harmed. Indeed, when he was dwelling in concentration, he was like a statue. Therefore, not only to a living noble object, but history has recorded instances where people harmed or destroyed Buddha statues—which are inanimate symbols of noble dispensational or Dhamma ideals—and suffered the consequences. From this we can understand that although fun and play are good, there are times when play becomes disastrous. If one goes to insult or harm those noble objects just because one has physical strength, the consequences are for oneself. That aspect of the fruition of kamma (*kamma-vipāka*) is revealed by this.

Next, the other side: here is the power of a developed mind. Some people, based on this story, say that only Venerable Moggallāna had psychic powers and that Venerable Sāriputta had no psychic powers, because of his words, "I cannot see even a mud-goblin." But there is a lesson to be taken there as well. Within those great noble beings, instead of boasting of their own talents, there was the quality of highlighting and praising the virtues and skills of the other. That is why Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, who indeed was foremost among those possessing psychic powers, had his greatness highlighted there by Venerable Sāriputta. However, it was not that Venerable Sāriputta lacked psychic powers. The specialty here is the concentration in which he was dwelling at that time; we have to understand it as a state of being detached from the world, called the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*). With the mind stilled in Nibbāna, he was detached from the world. In certain Dhamma stories and Jātaka stories, there are accounts of piling up wood to burn a Paccekabuddha who was entered into the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), as mentioned when discussing the past kamma of Queen Sāmāvatī. I am not going to tell those long stories. But such incidents exist. Those people thought they had burnt the Paccekabuddha. However, after they left, the Paccekabuddha shook off the ashes and rose into the air without any harm. But the fruition of kamma remained, because of that volition (*cetanā*). They set the fire with the intention of killing the Paccekabuddha. The

consequence of that remained. From such incidents, we see that when one reaches a certain level of concentration (*samādhi*), there is a power that can liberate both mind and body from the harms that come from the world. This is a very wonderful thing in this Dhamma.

Two types of meditation, development of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*) and development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*), are mentioned in the Dhamma. On one occasion, Saccaka the Nigantha-putta came to meet the Blessed One. Saccaka the Nigantha-putta, mentioned in the Dhamma, was someone who debated very strongly with the Blessed One. On one occasion, when the Blessed One was residing at the Kūṭāgāra Hall in Vesāli, he presented a topic of debate to the Blessed One: "Ascetic Gotama, it seems to me that the disciples of the ascetic Gotama develop the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*) but do not develop the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*)." Then the Blessed One asked, "Saccaka, what is this development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*) that you speak of?" Then Saccaka the Nigantha spoke of the difficult vows of the Niganthas.

Among those Niganthas, there was the practice of severe vows such as fasting and inflicting pain on the body. They held the view that pleasure can only be obtained through pain. Therefore, they tortured the body as much as possible. He mentioned several of those practices. Then the Blessed One said, "Saccaka, you do not even know development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*); how can you understand development of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*)? According to the Discipline of the Noble Ones (*ariya-vinaya*), that is not development of the body. Listen then," and the Blessed One explained what development of the body and development of the mind are in this Dispensation. First, he showed the opposite side. An undeveloped body (*abhāvita-kāya*)—what kind of person is defined as one with an undeveloped body, or one who has not developed the body? The Blessed One first showed the nature of the ordinary untaught worldling (*puthujjana*) who lacks knowledge of Dhamma and has not heard the Dhamma. When a pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) arises in such a person, they develop lust and attachment towards it. Then, after that pleasant feeling ceases, a painful feeling (*vedanā*) comes. When that painful feeling comes, this person weeps, laments, faints, beats their breast, and falls into delusion. Such a person, because they have not developed the body through development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*), falls into distress. Therefore, it is shown there that when painful feeling (*vedanā*) comes, that person is perturbed. Development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*) there means not being overcome by lust regarding pleasant feeling through sense-restraint (*indriya-saṁvara*), etc. Not falling into lust. So, because of that, when painful feeling comes, that person is perturbed.

Next, the Blessed One showed development of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*). That person, when pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) comes, gets caught up in it because their body is undeveloped through sense-restraint, etc. Then, when pain and distress come, they are overcome by it because of the mind. That is a somewhat deep matter. Having given such an explanation of the undeveloped body (*abhāvita-kāya*) and undeveloped mind (*abhāvita-citta*), he clarified it further. How does a developed body (*bhāvita-kāya*) and a developed mind (*bhāvita-citta*) arise in someone? A developed body means developed through meditation (*bhāvanā*). It does not mean building muscles and flesh, which is

what 'body development' means nowadays. That is not the meaning intended here. Then he spoke of the positive side: the noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*), when a pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) arises, does not develop attachment or lust towards it because their body is developed. 'Body developed' means they have practiced bodily restraint, etc. Then, when painful feeling (*vedanā*) comes, that person does not weep, lament, or beat their breast. They direct their mind towards equanimity (*upekkha*) through development of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*), having understood its futility because they have developed the mind.

So, what does this demonstrate? As shown in the Dhamma, the mind is also freed from lust, and the mind is also detached from hatred. Because of painful feeling (*vedanā*), a person develops aversion (*paṭigha*), which is hatred. The Blessed One showed this in another place in this way: "The world says there is an abyss (*pātāla*) in the great ocean. But the real abyss is physical painful feeling (*vedanā*)." Physical painful feeling (*vedanā*) is the real abyss. Now, an abyss is a bottomless pit. So, this painful feeling (*vedanā*) is compared to an abyss. This painful feeling is such a terrifying thing. But the person who does not know the Dhamma, when faced with that painful feeling, falls into the abyss and, finding no footing or support, sinks. They cannot come up; they weep and lament. But the noble disciple overcomes those painful feelings (*vedanā*) and brings the mind to neutrality. Standing up from the abyss is said there regarding that painful feeling.

In another place, the Buddha gave a discourse to the Sangha, starting like this: "Monks, the ordinary untaught worldling (*puthujjana*) experiences pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), experiences painful feeling (*vedanā*), and experiences neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), which is neutral feeling. The taught noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) too experiences pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), experiences painful feeling (*vedanā*), and experiences neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). What is the difference between these two?" he asked the Sangha. There were occasions when Dhamma discourses were delivered in such a question-and-answer format. The Sangha at that moment said, "Bhante, we cannot answer this. What we know is also what we have to learn from the Blessed One," and they requested the explanation from the Blessed One himself.

Then, to explain it, the Blessed One declared: "Monks, when the ordinary untaught worldling (*puthujjana*) is touched by painful feeling (*vedanā*), they weep, lament, and beat their breast, thereby increasing that pain." He showed this with a simile: "Suppose a man is struck by an arrow. Right after being struck by that arrow, another arrow comes and strikes him, a second arrow. In the same way, the ordinary untaught worldling feels both bodily pain and mental pain. The weeping and lamenting is shown as the second arrow." When physical painful feeling (*vedanā*) comes, if one starts weeping and lamenting, it is like being struck by a second arrow, and the person who lacks Dhamma knowledge suffers further distress.

But regarding the noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*), when painful feeling (*vedanā*) comes, without being perturbed by it, they endure it and bring the mind to neutrality. That is like being struck by only one arrow. They do not experience mental suffering (*Dukkha*). What is meant by this is not clinging to pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) and keeping the mind

neutral there, and not colliding with painful feeling (*vedanā*) and extricating the mind from there as well. Next is equanimity (*upekkha*). That is why we spoke of a mind concentrated in equanimity. Indeed, equanimity, neutrality, is a state where the mind's power is highly developed. That is to say, even when looking at concentration (*samādhi*) in the absorptions (*jhāna*), by the time one reaches the fourth absorption (*jhāna*), there arises the pleasure of equanimity (*upekkha-sukha*). A wonderful, peaceful bliss is obtained through equanimity. Ordinary people see pleasure only in pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). Because of that very reason, they develop intense hatred towards pain, and because of that, they run around seeking pleasure, as declared by the Blessed One.

As an escape from painful feeling (*vedanā*), the door that the ordinary person sees is pleasure. Therefore, they go in search of pleasure. By seeking extreme pleasant feelings (*vedanā*), they try to cover up suffering (*Dukkha*). To eliminate the suffering that might come in the future and the suffering that has already come, they run after sensual pleasure (*kāma-sukha*). The Blessed One declares that the noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*), at that moment, brings the mind to neutrality, which has the true peaceful bliss called pacification (*upasama*). It is through that that realization is obtained. Thus, even when looking at the absorptions (*jhāna*), the mind fashioned with equanimity is the most powerful. It is by obtaining those absorption powers called the fourth absorption (*jhāna*) that special abilities like direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) can be brought forth. But a deeper equanimity than that is what the Blessed One in this Dispensation calls the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*), which is unique to Arahants—experiencing the bliss of Nibbāna in this very life. That is like being detached from the world. Therefore, we have to understand that at that moment, Venerable Sāriputta was dwelling in the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*). That is why he did not feel anything happening in this world. There are such wonderful things, like the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*). There too, the Blessed One expresses the value of keeping the mind neutral.

Now, even though we speak about these concentrations (*samādhi*) and absorptions (*jhāna*), someone might think that in daily life these are just words. But if we are walking on that path, even while sitting, what can we use as help from the Buddha's teaching? We know very well that the Blessed One has shown the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*) to subdue lust and attachment. Why did both laypeople and monastics in the past, and even these meritorious people now, develop meditations such as the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), foulness (*asubha*), and the mindfulness of death (*maraṇānussati*)? Because if the powerful forces of lust go to extremes, they lead to various crimes. Therefore, the meditation on foulness is used as a remedy for lust. If one has developed the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*) or the perception of repulsiveness (*paṭikūla-saññā*) to some extent, one does not fall into extreme attachments of lust and ruin oneself like a moth jumping into a fire, due to those attachments, due to the desire for pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), due to sensual pleasure. One does not fall into dangerous disasters.

In that way, we can understand that, on one hand, the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*) and also the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) help in this. The

perception of impermanence (*anicca*) is developed within the feeling that everything is impermanent (*anicca*). Because of that pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), we forget the impermanence of this. Deceived by external luster, thinking that this is permanent and will last forever, we are even tempted to commit grave crimes for its sake. But as soon as impermanence (*anicca*) is highlighted, when we reflect for a moment, we see the true state of things. Then, that grasping (*grahana*) is removed. Next is the attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*). That is to say, no matter how polished and beautiful our bodies and external things are, they are shown in the Dhamma as being made of the four great elements (*mahā-bhūta*): earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). Earth, water, fire, and wind are what we usually identify as these four elements. So, we must bear in mind that our external things and the food we eat are all made of these elements. Even when these meritorious people take food, what is called reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*) is reflecting with wisdom (*paññā*). Or they reflect on it as repulsive: "What happens to this food after it goes inside?" Right there, the craving for taste (*rasa-taṇhā*) is destroyed.

The Blessed One removed those cravings (*taṇhā*) and desires from the mind in such a wonderful way that, regarding the Blessed One, it is mentioned: *"Rasa-paṭisaṁvedī bhagavā hoti, no ca rasarāga-paṭisaṁvedī"* — "The Blessed One experiences taste, but he does not experience lust for taste (*rasa-rāga*)." Such is the powerful strength of concentration (*samādhi*). The sensitive systems connected to taste, the tongue, and the nerves were fully intact in the Blessed One. In fact, they were cleaner than in others. He experienced taste, but there was no lust (*rāga*) for it, because he had developed the mind. Based on that, we can think of the power of the development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*) in those who have developed the mind. They have developed the body to such an extent that it does not yield to those things. That is why meditations like the meditation on repulsiveness (*paṭikūla-bhāvanā*) and foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*) are shown.

Similarly, the attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*). The mind directed towards the four elements turns towards equanimity (*upekkha*). Here too, there are earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). Inside the body, there are the very same. In the plate of rice, there are the very same. When developing in this way as meditation (*bhāvanā*), gradually, the power to reduce those attachments is obtained. Next, on the other side, in situations where conflicts arise, when anger and irritation arise, these meritorious people know very well the methods to appease them. You have heard of them. The meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*) rises in the mind. Just like the meditation on loving-kindness, impermanence (*anicca*) can also be targeted at our anger. "I and all these people are impermanent (*anicca*). We will face death." Thinking in this way, one can conquer anger and reduce conflicts. The perception of elements (*dhātu-saññā*) also helps in this.

In this way, various methods are shown in the Dhamma. This side of Nibbāna, as we develop our practice to that extent according to the levels of meditation (*bhāvanā*), according to the progress of meditation, we can gradually bring the mind to neutrality.

Because if we analyze the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) taught by the Buddhas to the world in terms of feeling (*vedanā*), this is where it leads. The Niganthas, believing that pleasure must be sought through pain, tortured the body. But then, the Blessed One, during his time as Prince Siddhartha in the royal palace, experienced the devotion to sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*), sensual pleasure. He tried to find satisfaction through it. No satisfaction is obtained through that either. Now, in the middle of those two is this neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*adukkham-asukha vedanā*). Ordinary people do not recognize its value. Its value is almost unknown to them. But it is through this that the meditator (*yogāvacara*), the attainer of absorption (*jhāna*), brings forth a pleasure: neither-painful-nor-pleasant (*adukkham-asukha*). That concentration (*samādhi*) of the mind is a very secure place. When it is said "it stands like a rock, unshaken," "unshaken like a rock," that supreme state of mind, the highest state, is the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*) mentioned earlier. We have to think that Venerable Sāriputta was enjoying that bliss of Nibbāna, detached from the world. Indeed, the moment of crossing over from the world exists within that concentration of the fruition of Arahantship. It was while he was enjoying that that the demon came and struck him.

So, from this, we can imagine how great the miracle of this developed mind is. Next, there are many other factors that help in this. We must constantly think about impermanence (*anicca*). Indeed, if in our meditations we expect to free the mind from these defilements (*kilesa*), what helps us extremely is the insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) on impermanence (*anicca*). Regarding that, there is a very wonderful and valuable discourse of the Blessed One: that this world, the entire world, has arisen from these six sense-bases (*āyatana*). There are six sense-bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Sometimes these are shown as twelve. That is because there must also be objects for the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Those objects are forms (*rūpa*), sounds (*sadda*), smells (*gandha*), tastes (*rasa*), tangibles (*phoṭṭhabba*), and mind-objects (*dhamma*). 'Dhamma' means things understood by the mind. So, those are sometimes shown as the twelve sense-bases (*āyatana*). Where they are shown as twelve, they are shown as two parts: internal sense-bases (*ajjhattika-āyatana*) and external sense-bases (*bāhira-āyatana*). The internal sense-bases are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—the six sense-bases connected to oneself, to one's body. Their objects are, in the external world, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles (*phoṭṭhabba*)—things to be touched—and mind-objects (*dhamma*), things understood by the mind, objects that come to the mind. The Blessed One declared that the world exists within this. The entire world arises here. All connections of the entire world exist within these six, within that contact (*phassa*). So, it is through the realization of this that one can draw close to Nibbāna.

Regarding this, there is another valuable discourse with similes that is very helpful to meditators. When the Blessed One was residing at Jetavana Monastery, Great Pajāpatī Gotamī Therī came to the Blessed One and made a special request on behalf of the bhikkhunīs: "May a monk come on every Uposatha day to give us a sermon." The Blessed One gave permission for that. Since then, those elders went in turn to the bhikkhunī

monastery called Rājakārāma and delivered a Dhamma discourse. Although the other elders went, Venerable Nandaka did not go. He did not like to. When his turn came, he avoided it for some reason. One day, the Blessed One asked the monks, "Whose turn is it today to preach the Dhamma to the bhikkhunīs?" "It is Venerable Nandaka's." "Then why?" When asked, they said, "Venerable Nandaka does not wish to go." Then the Blessed One told Venerable Nandaka, "Nandaka, go and deliver a discourse to the bhikkhunīs." So, Venerable Nandaka went and delivered a valuable discourse to the bhikkhunīs regarding these six sense-bases (*āyatana*) we mentioned. A great discourse. Since meditators can benefit by deeply reflecting on those similes, we decided to present it at this moment.

Venerable Nandaka first said to those bhikkhunīs, "My discourse will proceed as a question-and-answer session. Now, while I am preaching, if anyone has a question, you must ask. If you understand, you must say you understand. If you do not understand, you must say you do not understand. You must ask me where it is not understood." Saying so, he began the discourse. Thus, step by step, he expected a response from those bhikkhunīs. He started like this. Often in the Dhamma, the discourse on impermanence (*anicca*) or the three characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) is presented first. The address used there is "Sisters." "Sisters, what do you think? Is this eye permanent (*nicca*) or impermanent (*anicca*)?" "Impermanent (*anicca*), Bhante." "Then, if something is impermanent, is it pleasure (*sukha*) or suffering (*dukkha*)?" "Suffering (*dukkha*), Bhante." "Next, if something is suffering (*dukkha*), impermanent (*anicca*), and subject to change, is it proper to regard it as self (*attā*), 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?" "No, Bhante." In this way, he questioned them regarding the eye, as well as the six internal sense-bases (*ajjhattika-āyatana*): ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

Having questioned them thus, when he asked, "Why do you say so? Why do you say so?" those bhikkhunīs replied, "Because we have understood their impermanence (*anicca*)." He asked similarly about the external sense-bases (*bāhira-āyatana*). "Is form (*rūpa*) permanent or impermanent?" "Impermanent." "If it is impermanent, is it pleasure or suffering?" "Suffering." "If it is impermanent and subject to change, is it proper to regard it as 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?" "No." Thus, the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*) were presented in a question-and-answer format regarding the six internal sense-bases (*ajjhattika-āyatana*)—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—and the six external sense-bases (*bāhira-āyatana*)—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and mind-objects. Next, Venerable Nandaka asked about eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*). "Now, when we see something, we say there is an eye and there is a form, because we have the power to distinguish them. That is eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*). Is that eye-consciousness permanent or impermanent?" "That too is impermanent, Bhante," they said. In this way, regarding the six sense-bases such as eye and ear, he asked about the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that helps to obtain knowledge through our senses, such as eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, etc. They declared that those too are impermanent (*anicca*).

Next, he asked, "Is the contact (*phassa*) arising because of these permanent?" "No, that too is not." "Is feeling (*vedanā*) permanent?" "No, that too is not permanent." Then, he explained the reason for that in each place. Feelings (*vedanā*) arise due to causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*) that arise in each instance. With the cessation of those, those feelings cease. Therefore, feeling cannot be taken as self (*attā*). We think of feeling as something continuous, as something that exists. But when wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is applied according to the Dhamma, one understands that it too arises due to causes and conditions along with contact (*phassa*). On another occasion, in another place, a monk named Moliya Phagguna asked the Blessed One, "Who experiences feeling?" The Blessed One replied, "The question 'Who experiences feeling?' itself is wrong. Feeling arises due to contact (*phassa*), due to a certain condition (*paccaya*)." That is what the Blessed One pointed out. Instead of the feeling of self, 'I' and 'mine', feeling arises due to a contact (*phassa*); he asked him to direct the mind to that. By directing the mind to contact (*phassa*), realization can be obtained. "It is not that 'I' experience feeling. Due to this contact, these feelings arise." Those bhikkhunīs understood that matter gradually.

Next, to demonstrate that feeling (*vedanā*) should not be taken as self (*attā*), he gave this simile: "The oil in a lamp is impermanent (*anicca*). The wick is impermanent. The flame is impermanent. If someone says that the light of the lamp is permanent, is that correct?" Then the bhikkhunīs said, "That is incorrect, because since the conditions (*paccaya*) that caused the light are impermanent, the light of that lamp must also be impermanent. It should not be taken as self (*attā*)." Similarly, Venerable Nandaka declared, "Whether it is pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), painful feeling (*vedanā*), or neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) arising due to that contact (*phassa*), it is not permanent. That too is impermanent. Why? Because of those impermanent conditions (*paccaya*)." 'Condition' (*paccaya*) means cause—that which helps something to arise is called a condition (*paccaya*) in the Dhamma. So, various things arise due to various causes and conditions. Since the various causes from which feeling (*vedanā*) arises are impermanent, feeling too is impermanent. There is no nature that can be taken as 'I' or 'mine'. In that manner, he showed the six internal sense-bases—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—through the simile of the lamp.

Next, if feelings (*vedanā*) arise in connection with forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and mind-objects, they too are impermanent. To show that there too they cannot be taken as self, he gave another simile: "The root of a large growing tree is impermanent, the trunk is impermanent, the branches and leaves are impermanent. If someone says that the shadow cast by it is permanent, is that correct?" he asked. The bhikkhunīs said, "That is incorrect." "What is the reason? If there are causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*) for the shadow to arise, they are impermanent. Since the causes and conditions are impermanent, the shadow itself must also be impermanent."

Next, he gave another simile: "Suppose a butcher, with a sharp knife—what is called a butcher's knife, used for cutting cattle—skins a cow. He separates the hide in such a way that the flesh is not cut, and the hide is not cut. He cuts only the inner tendons, only the tendon-bonds. Having done so, he covers that cow again with that same hide. If one then

says, 'This is the same cow as was there before, there is no difference,' is that correct?" "No, Bhante." "Why? Because now there is only the hide on the outside, there is no tendon-bond." Now, here is how the simile is explained: the inner flesh of the cow is like the six internal sense-bases (*ajjhattika-āyatana*)—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The outer hide is like the six external objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and mind-objects. These two were connected by the tendon-bonds. The butcher cut those tendon-bonds. Those tendon-bonds are what is called in the Dhamma by the word *nandī-rāga* (delight and lust), attachment, craving (*taṇhā*)—to put it briefly, craving, desire. It is through that desire that these two, the eye and the form, are connected. That is why lust called *nandī-rāga* arises from there.

Then, with what is that bond cut? What is compared to the butcher's knife? The noble wisdom (*ariya-paññā*). When one sees with wisdom at any moment as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*), if the six internal sense-bases and the six external sense-bases are impermanent, then the contact (*phassa*) and feeling (*vedanā*) arising due to them are also impermanent. It is through the realization that there is nothing here to be attached to, nothing to be taken as 'mine', that that attachment is destroyed. That is what we have to understand there.

Regarding the remaining part of that discourse, it is mentioned in the Sutta as follows: having delivered the discourse with those similes, Venerable Nandaka said, "Very well, now it is time for us to depart. You may go," and dismissed those bhikkhunīs, and Venerable Nandaka also returned. The bhikkhunīs, perhaps hoping that the Blessed One might add something, approached the Blessed One, paid homage, and stood there for a while, waiting to see if the Blessed One would say anything. The Blessed One said only this: "Go, sisters," and sent them away. As those bhikkhunīs were leaving, the Blessed One made a special statement to the Sangha. You all know what the full-moon Uposatha is. The fourteenth day (*catuddasī*) is the day before the full-moon Uposatha. The moon is not fully round on that day. If today is the fifteenth day (full moon), yesterday was the fourteenth day. The Blessed One said something like this to the Sangha: "Monks, just as it is obvious at first glance that the moon is not full on the fourteenth Uposatha day, even though these bhikkhunīs have felt some joy because of Venerable Nandaka's discourse, their expectations are not fully fulfilled. 'Expectations' means their expectation of Nibbāna is not fully fulfilled. Some joy has arisen; that discourse is good. But it is not fulfilled." Having said so, the Blessed One told Venerable Nandaka, "Nandaka, go and deliver this very same discourse tomorrow as well." Even in this day and age, these meritorious people listen to recorded discourses again and again. A similar wonderful event is found here. He told Venerable Nandaka to deliver the very same discourse.

Venerable Nandaka also went there the next day. Having approached, he delivered the same discourse as before, in the same manner, saying, "I am going to ask in a question-and-answer format," and in the same way, he gradually directed their minds. "Are eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body impermanent, are they not? Are their objects also impermanent, are they not? If those objects are impermanent, is not the feeling (*vedanā*) arising with them as cause and condition also impermanent?" He reminded them of those similes again and again. And to all of this, those bhikkhunīs gave their response, to

show that they understood, with a certain passage: "Due to the causes (*paccaya*) that arise in those respective places, the corresponding feelings (*vedanā*) arise; with the cessation of those respective causes, those feelings also cease."

That is to say, if certain feelings (*vedanā*) arise due to certain conditions (*paccaya*), when those conditions cease, those feelings also cease. That is the fundamental principle. Since we started our discourse on this question of feeling, this is a very important passage, like a valuable meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). What is meant by it is an indication that those bhikkhunīs understood this Dhamma. That is to say, feeling (*vedanā*) is not something that should be taken as self (*attā*), as 'I' or 'mine'. Feeling is always something that arises due to certain conditions (*paccaya*). Therefore, since those conditions are impermanent (*anicca*), feeling too must be impermanent. But it is because of taking them as permanent that attachments and conflicts arise in that manner. That is the story there. After delivering this same discourse, just like the previous day, Venerable Nandaka said, "Very well, the time is up," and returned. The bhikkhunīs also went to the Blessed One, paid homage, and stood.

To them, the Blessed One said again, "Very well, sisters, now you may go," and dismissed them. Having dismissed them, he said to the Sangha: "Monks, just as on the full-moon Uposatha day, one can easily know whether the moon is full or not, in the same way, all these five hundred bhikkhunīs have attained the fruits of the path (*magga-phala*). At the very least, some have attained the stage of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*)." From this, we can understand something about the way Dhamma was heard in the past. Even now, these meritorious people record these discourses we deliver, and after recording, listen to them again and again. But we do not know for sure whether they listen in the way they ought to listen. If they develop the meditation reflection (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*) in the manner thought of, there is even a possibility of such a change occurring. We can understand that from this past event.

Especially, we raised this question of feeling (*vedanā*) because what affects all of us is suffering (*Dukkha*). Physical suffering is like an abyss. It is to relieve this physical suffering that we seek pleasure. To eliminate the physical suffering we have now, and to eliminate the physical suffering that might come in the future, is why the world runs this wonderful race. Sunk in it in a way that no bottom can be found, they go searching for pleasant feelings (*vedanā*). But the Blessed One points out that what is to be done here is to bring the mind to neutrality. That realization is obtained by looking at all of these as things belonging to these three characteristics: impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). Everything is impermanent. Therefore, even when taken individually, they are impermanent. These are things that arise due to causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*). Through this perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), what happens gradually?

We all know that it is by taking things as permanent (*nicca*) that a sign (*nimitta*) comes to the mind. It is by taking things as permanent that things are remembered in the mind. But when insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) is deeply developed, one understands that after taking them as impermanent (*anicca*), they are not grasped by the mind. That

is called the signless (*animitta*). It becomes impossible to take a sign. We are holding the entire world with the mind. That is why the Blessed One declared that the world exists within the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). Therefore, if we are to release this grasp (*grahana*), we must bring forth this Dhamma principle highlighted by the Blessed One.

Everything—the internal eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and everything that is their object—is impermanent (*anicca*). It changes from moment to moment. It changes with wonderful rapidity. Although we speak so much about the change of our body, and although we hear about their change through research and various instruments, it is not understood by one's own mind. It is not realized (*pratyaksha*). That is where the problem lies. Because it is not understood by one's own mind, we run after whatever we see. Therefore, at some point, the impermanence (*anicca*) declared by the Blessed One, the way these change very rapidly, is understood by oneself through insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*). Think about the simile of the lamp highlighted by Venerable Nandaka. We think that the light is permanent. When a lamp is lit, we read a book with that light without any trouble. Therefore, our understanding is that this light remains just as it is. But when looking at it in terms of causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*), when the oil is finished and the wick is finished, we understand that the light decreases.

In that manner, the light arose due to certain causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*). In the same way are our feelings (*vedanā*). According to the very impermanence (*anicca*) of our sense-bases, even the form seen by our eye—when eyesight decreases or due to various other causes, other things can be seen. When eyesight decreases, we even begin to see things that do not exist in the world. The same is true of the other senses. So, one must deeply reflect on that impermanence in that manner. The simile of the tree is also like that. The shadow of the tree—we have a general feeling that the shadow is permanent, but when looking at everything, if it is subject to the law of impermanence, we cannot take only that as permanent. What happens through that realization? The attachment called *nandī-rāga*—it is after taking those two as permanent that they are connected. Just as the flesh and the hide were connected by tendons, the eye and the form are connected by that Dhamma word, *nandī-rāga*. *Nandī-rāga* means attachment characterized by delight. Running after the form caught by the eye is that attachment characterized by delight. So, just as the butcher cuts with the butcher's knife, what do we have to do? There, the butcher's knife is compared to noble wisdom (*ariya-paññā*). If we take noble wisdom at the level we can understand, insight meditators (*vipassanā-yogāvacara*) know: what is the knife, the instrument we use when we enter into this insight (*vipassanā*)? It is attention (*manasikāra*), reflection.

Insight teachers always ask their pupils, "Did you note? Did you note? Did you note quickly?" That noting is the knife. It is that noting itself that gradually develops, and at some point, when realization is strengthened, rises as wisdom (*paññā*). Wisdom is a word of great meaning, but the root seed lies in that noting. And that noting must be the proper noting called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). It is because of improper noting that we have come so far in samsāra. Improper noting is also shown as distortion (*vipallāsa*) and perversion (*viparīta*).

We have often reminded you that there is a perverted perception (*viparīta-saññā*), a perverted view (*viparīta-diṭṭhi*), and a perverted mind (*viparīta-citta*) within the world. The general meaning of perversion (*viparīta*) and distortion (*vipallāsa*) is like this: if someone stands on their head, that is not the normal state, it is a perverted thing. In the same way, the understanding, the point of view of ordinary people, is entirely wrong according to the Buddha's word. They regard what is impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent (*nicca*). They regard what is foul (*asubha*) as beautiful (*subha*). They regard what is painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant (*sukha*). They think of what is non-self (*anattā*)—what is not theirs, what cannot be kept under their control—as theirs. That is what exists within the world as perverted perceptions, views, and thoughts. It is because of this very reason that we have traveled in this samsāra for so long. Its result is these five aggregates of grasping (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*) we have gathered: the five groups of form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). We gathered them by such a trick. That is to say, by gathering the eye, form, ear, sound, etc., what is gathered is ultimately called "this is my group of form, this is my group of feeling, this is my group of perception, this is my group of volitional activity—which is the group of intentions—this is my group of consciousness—the group of thoughts." In this way, what is shown in the Dhamma as a "person" is the five aggregates of grasping (*upādānakkhandha*). Five groups. This is what we are holding as 'I' and 'mine' according to the Buddha's word. So, when its true nature is realized, gradually that tight bond, that tight tie, is loosened. What helps to loosen it is that attention (*manasikāra*). The proper reflection, the proper noting called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).

Now, we have to think that even though they did not have machines like these, after hearing that discourse on the first day, it sank well into their minds. They were very happy. But no realization of the fruits of the path occurred. During those twenty-four hours, they must have raised it to meditation reflection (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*) and energized it further. That is why the Blessed One said for the second time, "Deliver the very same discourse." Generally, people cannot listen to the same discourse; they might even have stood up and left, saying, "Isn't this what we heard yesterday?" But why did those bhikkhunīs listen with great respect to that discourse, with its similes, without any omission? Not merely listening, but with meditation reflection (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*).

These meritorious people too must learn a lesson from that. From this side story, also the way Dhamma should be heard, that it is not good to insult the Dhamma saying, "This is what is said every day." On the other hand, if through what is said every day, one sees something deeply, if one sees a new meaning in it, then one has benefited from it. That can be done by applying proper wisdom, applying mindfulness, and hearing the Dhamma in the way it should be heard.

We have mentioned before: to hear the Dhamma in the true manner is shown as how the noble disciples in the past heard the Dhamma: *"atthikaṁ katvā manasikatvā sabba-cetasā ohita-soto dhammaṁ suṇāti."* 'Atthikaṁ katvā' means "This is of use to me. There is a benefit in this for me." 'Of use' does not mean listening to go and pass an exam, but

to realize Nibbāna. "This is of use for my Nibbāna, for my progress, to develop my mind." *Manasikatvā* means reflecting word by word. Not thinking, "I did not listen to this now, but it is nicely recorded in this machine; I can listen to it whenever I want." *Manasikatvā*—reflecting word by word, listening with good wisdom. *Ohita-soto*—with attentive ears, not with half the mind here and half the mind somewhere else. 'Attentive ears' means with full attention, listening with the mind fully directed; it is then that such a meditative change occurs within a person.

Because they benefited from that in the past, the Blessed One told Venerable Nandaka to deliver the very same discourse again. Then we see that change. On that fourteenth Uposatha day, and next, like the full moon of the fifteenth Uposatha day, those bhikkhunīs realized the fruits of the path (*magga-phala*). When we say "the world" in this day and age, we think of the world of the materialists as something external to us. But the Blessed One defined the world: the world itself is suffering (*Dukkha*). Suffering is the world. The world and suffering are connected to each other like two panels of a folding door. The Blessed One has defined: *"loko patiṭṭhito loko dukkhe patiṭṭhitaṁ"* — "The world is established on suffering, suffering is established on the world." Like two folding panels. Why did the Blessed One declare so? What we grasp as the world is that knowledge received from those six sense-bases (*āyatana*), is it not? There is nothing outside of that, is there? What is seen by the eye, what is heard by the ear, thinking in that way, ultimately, what is understood by the mind. What is understood by the mind is what gathers there mostly.

What is gathered from those five ultimately goes to the mind, does it not? That which is gathered in the mind is what we call the world. Saying "Things happened in such and such a place in this way," what is called globalization is going on. They think of that globe as something existing outside. That globe is right here. Because our 'globies' (worldly people) do not know that, these entanglements have occurred. So, globalization is actually right here, within those six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*).

That is why the Blessed One declared: *"chasu loko samuppanno"* — "In six the world has arisen." 'In six' means, by putting together both the eye and the form, sometimes it is shown as six. We take twelve when we separate them as internal and external. If taken so, there are twelve sense-bases (*āyatana*). But where those two connect, that is called the bases of contact (*samphassāyatana*). When those two connect and contact (*phassa*) occurs, it can also be taken as six. There, it is called the base of eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassāyatana*), the base of ear-contact (*sota-samphassāyatana*). Contact regarding the eye is one sense-base. Contact regarding the ear is another sense-base. Taken in that way, there are six. So, it is within those six that the world is born: *"chasu loko samuppanno, chasu kubbati santhavaṁ"* — "In six the world has arisen, in six it makes its acquaintance." It is with these six that all coordination (acquaintance) is made. All coordination is within these six.

Now, in this day and age, there are various devices to connect with the world. All of these devices do not work on their own. We put them to our ear, to our eye, and through them we receive all of this. Thus, we bring those external devices close to these six sense-bases

(*āyatana*). We must remember that what is still being performed is an activity of the six sense-bases. That is the world. That statement of the Blessed One is true even today: *"chasu kubbati santhavaṁ"* — "In six it makes its acquaintance." All acquaintances—'acquaintance' means associating, coordinating, and such new words—all are done within these six. Next: *"channam-eva upādāya, chasu loko vihaññati"* — "By grasping these six, the world is oppressed in the six." Grasping (*upādāna*) these six, the entire world is oppressed, is weary in these six—this is the Buddha's word. That is why the Blessed One declared: the world is equal to suffering (*Dukkha*), suffering is equal to the world. Thus, within this very perception of the world (*loka-saññā*) that we take based on those six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), this suffering (*Dukkha*) exists. Even if we separate it as pleasure, indeed, that is what the Blessed One declares. The true noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) must see pleasure as suffering (*Dukkha*), and see suffering as a thorn. Leaving aside other things, neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*adukkham-asukha vedanā*), though peaceful, is also impermanent (*anicca*). So, through that, what is shown to us is the impermanent nature of everything.

Through this realization, we must make an effort, if our deep aspiration is to be freed from this samsāra, to meditate basing ourselves on some such meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and quickly bring forth that noble wisdom (*ariya-paññā*), and through the penetration (*paṭivedha*) of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship (*arahatta*), to cross over from the suffering of samsāra such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death. May the discourse delivered today also be a supportive condition (*upanissaya*), a help for that! We aspire thus. Similarly, if anyone from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha wishes to rejoice in this merit of delivering and hearing the Dhamma, through that rejoicing, using that merit as a help, may it help them to realize the noble, supreme, great Nibbāna through an aspiration of enlightenment (*bodhi*) of their choice! Say this:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #156

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.82)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Vāṇijo va bhayaṃ maggaṃ,

appasattho mahaddhano;

Visaṃ jīvitukāmo va,

pāpāni parivajjaye."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 123 (Pāpa Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, explained demerit and merit to the world based on the far-reaching understanding he gained regarding existence in *saṃsāra*. Due to a lack of foresight, the Buddha saw how living beings fall into Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) in *saṃsāra*. The Buddha points out how, by acting as slaves to one's whims based on a narrow philosophy of life limited only to this life, one undergoes bitter Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) in *saṃsāra* for an infinite length of time. Today's thematic verse is one that illustrates this very point. The Buddha preached this Dhamma verse at the Jetavana monastery to a group of monks, addressing a disastrous situation faced by a certain wealthy merchant.

About five hundred thieves had been watchfully waiting for a very long time to break into the house of a very wealthy merchant living in the city of Sāvatthī. But they did not get the opportunity. On a certain occasion, this merchant set out to trade in a distant region, preparing five hundred carts. In those days, there was a custom where merchants travelling to such distant regions would inform the monks, inviting them to accompany them if they also wished to travel in that direction, because they had to travel through vast forests. Likewise, this merchant told the monks, "I am going to trade in such-and-such a region. If you, venerable sirs, are also planning to go there, please come with me.

Then there will be no trouble regarding alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), etc." Hearing that the merchants were leaving, those thieves hid in the forest along that path to rob them when they passed by. Meanwhile, the merchant set out with the group of monks, and exactly at the entrance to the forest, they stopped at a village for two or three days to organize the carts and oxen.

Knowing that the journey was delayed, the thieves, who were waiting for the merchant, sent a thief to a villager friend of his to find out the reason for the merchant's delay. When he asked the villagers when this wealthy merchant would depart, the villager replied, "Perhaps in two or three days. Why do you ask?" He replied, "Our group is ready and waiting for these merchants." Thereupon, the villager said, "Then the merchants will come soon," and after sending his friend away, he thought, "Should I side with the merchant, or should I side with these thieves?" Then he reasoned, "Because of this merchant, a group of monks is receiving alms and other requisites. Therefore, even though he is my friend, I will side with the monks instead of the thieves." This villager then went to the merchant and asked, "When do you intend to leave? When are you departing?" When the merchant said it would be on the third day, the villager replied, "Then listen to my word. Do not go on that journey. If you go, such-and-such a thing will happen." When asked, "How did you know?" he replied, "I have a friend in that gang of thieves. It was from him that I got this tip." The merchant thought, "Now it is dangerous for me to go through that forest. Therefore, I must return to the village." Having thought so, he was preparing to do so.

Meanwhile, the thief again sent that man to find out about the merchant's delay. Then the villager said, "Now those merchants are preparing to return." Next, they prepared to rob them on their return journey. The merchant received information from the villager that there were dangers even on the return journey and that the thieves were lying in wait. Because of this, the merchant was at a complete loss as to what to do. He went to the monks and said, "Now I cannot go on this planned journey, nor can I return to my village. Thieves are waiting to rob me. Therefore, if any of you, venerable sirs, wish to remain right here, please do so. Do as you wish. I will be delayed for some days due to this situation." The monks said, "In that case, we will return to Sāvatthī." When they returned to the Buddha, the Buddha asked, "Monks, why did you not go with that wealthy merchant?" The monks then related the news: "We went like this, but because of this danger of thieves, a dilemma arose for the merchant, and he remained there. We returned because of this."

Using that as an illustration, the Buddha then addressed the monks: "Monks, consider that this entire *Bhava* (Becoming) is like a place fraught with the danger of thieves." Knowing this, he gave another simile: "Just as someone who wishes to live avoids poison, and just as a merchant avoids a dangerous path, one must quickly escape from this *Bhava* (Becoming)." Giving advice in this manner, he delivered a discourse. He delivered a discourse that would even help those monks attain the fruits of the path (*magga-phala*). The verse related to that sermon is what we have set as today's topic. It is a very simple verse:

Vāṇijo va bhayaṃ maggaṃ,

appasattho mahaddhano;

visaṃ jīvitukāmo va,

pāpāni parivajjaye.

Just as a merchant with a small caravan—a "caravan" refers to the groups of carts that went on trading journeys in the past; meaning a small group of carts—but with great wealth, avoids a dangerous path; and just as one who wishes to live, *visaṃ jīvitukāmo va*, one who desires to live avoids poison, a deadly poison; so too, *pāpāni parivajjaye*, one should avoid evil deeds (sins). This is the instruction mentioned in that verse.

Although this is a story, the Buddha used it to direct the minds of the monks to a far deeper matter. This is an ordinary event that happens in the world. However, even from this small story, we can reflect on something. The merchant's life was saved—the opportunity for the merchant to escape danger arose—because that villager pondered whether to side with his close friend or with the merchant. At that moment, due to the merchant's faithful nature, because of his quality of faith (*saddhā*), and because he was helping the monks, protection was afforded to him, and he received that tip. That faithful merchant had the opportunity to save his life because of his faith (*saddhā*). Thus, based on the discourse given by the Buddha, and using this story, this incident as a starting point, the Buddha gives a certain "tip" to the world. What is this tip? This journey in *saṃsāra* is a journey undertaken on a path fraught with great danger. Therefore, the sooner one puts an end to this journey in *saṃsāra*, the greater the peace one has. One can reach a safe haven. One can reach the safe haven of Nibbāna. This is the idea given here.

The Buddha constantly speaks about avoiding evil deeds (sins). Why does the Buddha tell us to avoid such sins? We know that we have to perform various actions to carry on with life. The actions that seem easiest for maintaining and sustaining life are what appear as the five sins (five precepts violations). Living by killing, stealing, lying, and in other ways mentioned among the five sins, is easy. Yet, the Buddha describes them as unwholesome deeds (*pāpa-kamma*). Not only that, there is also a category called the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*). Thus, the Buddha tells us to abstain from these because they carry severe consequences (*vipāka*). This is due to his far-sighted point of view. If we look at it daily from a narrow angle limited only to this life, it might seem that there is nothing wrong with carrying on with life in whatever way possible. But according to the far-sighted vision of *saṃsāra* shown by the Buddha, according to this perspective, the shortcomings in the short-term plans of worldly beings begin to appear. Worldly beings make those plans without any thought about *saṃsāra*, without knowing about it. Worldly beings only see this world visible to the physical eye. Many people doubt the four woeful states (*catu-apāya*), etc., shown by the Buddhas and those with higher direct knowledges—especially when it comes to worlds other than the animal realm, even if they might accept the animal world.

Yet, the Buddha points out that it is these unwholesome deeds that cause birth in hells and other such places. Therefore, he tells us to abstain from them. The simile of poison is shown here. A person who wishes to live does not knowingly drink poison. Similarly, one who desires happiness and dislikes Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) should not commit sins—this is the Buddha's advice. Indeed, the question of livelihood has always been a great challenge to the world. What action should be taken in the face of the question of survival? At that point, the Buddha introduces to the world two things: wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) and right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Indeed, if one recognizes wrong livelihood, abstaining from it itself is considered right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) for laypeople. To briefly introduce wrong livelihood, it is presented in five terms in the Sutta discourses, stating that one should abstain from five types of trade. What are they? *Sattha, satta, maṃsa, visa, majja* (weapons, living beings, meat, poison, and intoxicants). *Sattha* means weapons—the trade in weapons, living by it. Likewise, *satta* refers to living beings—indeed, here it means human beings, living beings; it refers to humans. Next, *maṃsa*, the trade in meat. Next, the trade in poison (*visa*). Next, the trade in intoxicants (*majja*).

Why these are shown as wrong may also be a question to some. The trade in weapons—the trade in weapons of war—contains the quality of instigating war and conflict to satisfy hatred. Because of this production and trade of weapons, it is a form of trade that leads to violence towards others. The trade in weapons is shown as something that should not be done by a faithful Buddhist lay disciple.

Similarly, although the word *satta* (written as *satata* in the transcription) is there, it means selling men and women into slavery or for immoral purposes—the selling of a life, and other such forms of trade. These lead to social corruption and cause harm to others. Next is the trade in meat. Regarding this, there are certain controversies in this day and age. Speaking of the trade, as some point out, wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) exists only at the back of the butcher shop, while right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) is at the front. This is because the killing of animals is done only at the back, while at the front, the meat of those dead animals is kept for use and consumption by those who seek health. Thus, they think that the front part is right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). But if we think deeply, we can see the trade itself as wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). Within it, there is a quality of making humans crave, get addicted to, and become greedy for the taste of meat.

Even in these times, when lay disciples who have an understanding of society talk about food, there is a tendency to expect fresh meat just as one buys fresh vegetables. "Fresh meat" means something like killing and eating on a daily basis. Likewise, warm food is considered superior. In some hotels, at that moment, the customer or guest chooses the animal they like, and it is brought to the table, killed, and eaten while the blood is still warm—we even get to hear of such things. What is seen from this is greed for the tongue. To please the tongue, to satisfy the greed for the taste of meat, even the tongue of a cow is cut, cooked, and eaten, to such an extent that the beastly, demonic qualities in the human mind-stream (*citta-santāna*) are brought out. Thus, when we think about hotel life, the only difference between the food eaten by a beast and the food eaten by a human is the use of spoons and forks. To that extent, since this meat trade habituates society to

certain wrong habits, beastly habits, we can see that there is a disadvantageous side to the meat trade. It is difficult to consider it as right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*).

The others are clear. In the trade of poison, what is present is helping to destroy someone's life. Today, mass slaughter of animals often takes place; sometimes there is no understanding of the environmental pollution within it. However, the trade in poison that aids in the mass killing of insects, denying their right to live, can also be included in this. When we think deeply, these are things that defile one's mind-stream (*citta-santāna*) and harm the world. Demerit (*akusala*) was described as that which leads to self-harm and harm to others.

When we think deeply, self-harm means the defilement of one's own mind—the defilement of the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*). If one drinks poison, either life is destroyed immediately because of it, or after that poison enters the body, one has to suffer its consequences after some time. Such is the case with poison that enters the physical body (*rūpa-santāna*). But through the poison that arises as unwholesome deeds (*akusala*) entering the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*), it either yields results in this very life as *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* (to be experienced in this life), or as *upapajjavedanīya* (to be experienced in the next life), or as *aparāpariyavedanīya* (to be experienced in subsequent lives) in a future life; through that poison added to the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*), one has to undergo painful, bitter Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) in hells (*apāya*) and other such places. That is why the Buddha showed that such things should not be done.

There is nothing new to tell you lay disciples about the trade in intoxicants mentioned last. There, too, is that which completely deranges the mind, makes one forget human existence, and reduces one to a beastly state. Next is the addiction to drinking. The trade in intoxicants leads to that addiction. The Buddha indicates that a true faithful Buddhist lay disciple must withdraw from such trading methods. This question of livelihood is a problem for many people, especially in this day and age, because support and encouragement for wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) are received from all sides. A person who desires a righteous livelihood has to face dilemmas just like that merchant. Facing dilemmas means facing great problems of whether to go forward or backward. When we look at occupations and employment, almost everything contains things that incline towards such wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*).

Solving that problem is indeed a matter left to each individual. However, a valuable Dhamma discourse that may help in this regard is mentioned in the Majjhima Nikāya by the name of the Dhanañjāni Sutta. It is a long Sutta discourse, but I will try to present it briefly. On one occasion, while the Buddha was residing at the Veluvana monastery in Rājagaha, the chief disciple Ven. Sāriputta wandered in the region of Dakkhiṇāgiri with a group of monks. Meanwhile, a certain monk who had spent the rains retreat (*vassa*) with the Buddha in Rājagaha arrived in the Dakkhiṇāgiri region and met Ven. Sāriputta.

First of all, Ven. Sāriputta asked this monk, "How is it, is the Blessed One dwelling in good health?" When the monk replied, "Yes," Sāriputta asked, "Is the community of

monks in good health?" When the monk replied, "Yes," he next asked, "Is the Brahmin Dhanañjāni, who lives in the village of Taṇḍulapāla, in good health?" After the monk replied, "Yes," Ven. Sāriputta asked, "Is that Brahmin Dhanañjāni diligent (*appamāda*)?" Diligent here means diligent in wholesome deeds (*kusala*). That is, whether he is leading a righteous life without committing sins. It was then that the monk declared, "Friend Sāriputta, what diligence is there for Dhanañjāni? The Brahmin Dhanañjāni exploits brahmins and householders in the name of the king, and exploits the king in the name of brahmins and householders. He lives by corrupt practices. Furthermore, Dhanañjāni's former faithful wife has passed away, and he is now married to a woman who lacks faith." Hearing this, Ven. Sāriputta expressed his sadness: "Indeed, this is very bad news we have heard, that the Brahmin Dhanañjāni has fallen into negligence (*pamāda*). If only I could meet Dhanañjāni someday. It would be good if an opportunity to speak with him arose." Thus he made a mental note.

Sometime later, Ven. Sāriputta returned to Rājagaha and, while residing at the Veluvana monastery, went on his alms round in Rājagaha one morning. At that time, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni was engaged in milking his cows outside the city. Ven. Sāriputta, having finished his alms round and eaten his meal, walked to the place where the Brahmin Dhanañjāni was. Seeing Ven. Sāriputta from afar, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni invited him, saying, "Venerable Sāriputta, come and have some milk." Ven. Sāriputta replied, "No, there is no need. I have finished my meal. Come to such-and-such a tree. I will be resting there under that tree during the daytime. Come there." Accordingly, while Ven. Sāriputta was under that tree, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni, having finished his meal, came to Ven. Sāriputta. Ven. Sāriputta, after exchanging friendly greetings, straightaway asked, "How is it, Dhanañjāni, are you diligent?"

Now, the answer given by the Brahmin Dhanañjāni is the very answer many people give nowadays. What did the Brahmin Dhanañjāni say? "Venerable Sāriputta, what diligence is there for us? We have parents to support. We have a wife and children to support. We have servants and workers to support. We have to perform duties towards friends and companions. We have to perform duties towards relatives. We have to perform duties towards guests. Next, we must perform offerings (*preta-pūjā*) to our departed relatives (*preta*). We must perform offerings to the deities (*deva-pūjā*). We must perform duties for the king. Not only that, we must also gratify and maintain this body. When there is such a heavy burden of duties, what diligence can there be for us?"

Thus, this Brahmin was leading an unrighteous, uneven life, inclining towards unrighteousness. Ven. Sāriputta declared, "But Brahmin, if you live unrighteously and lead an uneven life, and upon death are born in hell (*niraya*), can you escape by telling the wardens of hell (*yamapalla*), 'I did these things for the sake of my parents, to look after my parents; do nothing to me'? Can you escape thus?" The Brahmin replied, "No, that would not be possible." Ven. Sāriputta then asked, "Can those parents step forward and say, 'It was for our sake that our child behaved unrighteously and led an uneven life, so do not do anything to him'? Can they save him thus?" The Brahmin replied, "No, they cannot save him. The hell-wardens will drag him away and inflict various kinds of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*)."

In the same way, to make that matter clearer, Ven. Sāriputta questioned him about each of those groups of people: "If you behave unrighteously and lead an uneven life for the sake of wife and children, or for servants and workers..." In this way, he questioned him step-by-step so that it would sink deep into the Brahmin's mind. Finally, Ven. Sāriputta asked, "What do you think, Brahmin? If someone supports their parents righteously and evenly (*dhamma-cārī samacārī*), and another supports their parents unrighteously and unevenly (*adhamma-cārī visamacārī*), who between the two is the better person?" The Brahmin replied, "Indeed, the practice of supporting parents righteously and evenly is the better one." Then Ven. Sāriputta declared, "Brahmin, there are livelihoods in society through which one can live righteously, support one's parents, and perform meritorious deeds. This is a possible thing." Thus he convinced the Brahmin Dhanañjāni, and Dhanañjāni accepted it with joy.

Next, what we find in that Sutta discourse is the final period of the Brahmin Dhanañjāni's life. Being extremely ill and near death, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni sent a message through a servant to pay respects to the Buddha and to Ven. Sāriputta, and to invite Ven. Sāriputta, saying that the Brahmin Dhanañjāni was gravely ill and asking him to visit out of compassion. Ven. Sāriputta visited the house of the Brahmin Dhanañjāni. Having arrived, he began a Dhamma talk. Gradually, he delivered a Dhamma talk of a nature that would elevate the Brahmin's mind from lower worlds to higher worlds, and at the very end, he spoke about the four divine abodes (*brahma-vihāra*): loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Ven. Sāriputta thought, "These brahmins desire to be born in the Brahma world. Therefore, I must tell him the path to the Brahma world." He then explained how to develop the four divine abodes (*brahma-vihāra*). Having explained this, he rose from his seat and returned. At that time, as his final words, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni said, "Pay homage to the Blessed One in my name." A short while after Ven. Sāriputta had left, that Brahmin passed away and was reborn in the Brahma world. When Ven. Sāriputta went to the Buddha and related this news, the Buddha admonished Ven. Sāriputta: "Why, Sāriputta, did you establish him in the inferior Brahma world when there was more to be done, when he could have gone much higher?" Thus he expressed a certain blame toward Ven. Sāriputta.

From this, we can understand that the strength of the wholesome potential (*kusala-shakti*) developed by that Brahmin near his death was so great that, if Ven. Sāriputta had in some way turned him toward insight (*vipassanā*) and preached the Dhamma, the Buddha was indicating that he could have realized the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). "Why did you stop him at the inferior Brahma world when he could have been led higher?"—this was the admonition given to Ven. Sāriputta. We can learn many things from this incident. Although the story itself is brief, it is highly valuable as a Sutta discourse. On one hand, we see the wonderful compassion of Ven. Sāriputta. Indeed, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni was not even someone who had taken refuge in the Triple Gem. But because his former wife was extremely faithful, Ven. Sāriputta had a special compassion for this lay Brahmin. That is why, after inquiring about the Buddha's well-being and the Sangha's well-being, he asked the monk about the Brahmin Dhanañjāni.

Then, having visited him specifically for this purpose, instead of asking casual questions like "How are you? Where are you living?", Ven. Sāriputta asked, "Brahmin, are you diligent?" That is the real question. That is the correct question to ask lay disciples. "How is it, are you now leading your life diligently?" Based on the answer given to that question, Ven. Sāriputta convinced the Brahmin Dhanañjāni through that long discourse that an unrighteous life, an uneven life, uneven behavior is very dangerous, and that its consequences (*vipāka*) are extremely severe. It was because he understood this at the end that the Brahmin Dhanañjāni developed his mind so much at the moment of death. He developed it to such an extent that, by establishing himself in the four divine abodes (*brahma-vihāra*) of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, he even attained birth in the Brahma world. Ven. Sāriputta brought about a massive transformation in his life at that moment. Otherwise, had he continued with that unrighteous life, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni would have fallen into hell (*apāya*) after death. We can learn something from this. Indeed, as stated earlier, everyone thinks that the easiest way to live is through those unrighteous methods. Why did the Buddha reject them? As we constantly remind you, today more place is given to the economy than to righteousness. Therefore, they try to inflate the economy to such an extent that there is no place for a righteous life. But the Buddha points out its result. When we think far-sightedly, the Buddha highlights the disadvantageous side (*ādīnava*) of it.

If we consider the easy methods, we have to take economic principles from the great ocean and the forest. This is because in the ocean there exists a very easy way of life. In ancient terms, this is called *mātsya-nyāya* (the law of the fish). *Mātsya-nyāya*, lay disciples, means the large preying on the small—the tuna preying on the sprat. Throughout the great ocean, there is only the large animal preying on the small animal. That is the easiest way of life. Next, in the forest, too, there is the strong preying on the weak. This natural law is expressed in the Buddha's words as follows:

In a Sutta discourse where this is mentioned, it is said that if one is born in the animal world, it is extremely difficult to obtain a good rebirth again. Taking a small amount of dust on his fingernail, the Buddha made a statement to the monks. The Buddha used this simile on many occasions. When asked, "Is the dust on the fingernail greater, or is the soil of the great earth greater?" the monks replied, "The soil of the great earth is much greater, while the dust on the fingernail is very little." The Buddha then told the monks, "Just so, monks, once someone is born in an animal womb, it is extremely difficult to rise out of it. It is like the dust on the fingernail; only a very few rise out of it. What is the reason for this? What are the two terms that describe the natural law in this animal world? *Aññamaññabhādikā ettha vattati, dubbalabhādikā*. *Aññamaññabhādikā* means devouring one another. The principle of devouring one another and the principle of oppressing the weak exist in the animal world." Indeed, it is those natural laws of the animal world that have gradually entered human society today.

The word "exploitation" (devouring / grabbing) that we mentioned in society is indeed a word taken from the animal world. Now, you lay disciples also occasionally get to see a kingfisher or a hawk perched on a tree, turning its head and watching for a while, as if deeply pondering some profound economic theory. After watching for a while, it dives

down onto its prey with the speed of an arrow; that is "grabbing" (exploiting). That is the kind of thing happening in today's society. You know that this is done not only out of poverty; it is not only the poor, but also the rich who do this—grabbing/exploiting. What is seen through this is, just as the Brahmin Dhanañjāni did earlier, carrying on with one's livelihood through lying, fraud, theft, and various forms of corruption. The Buddha points out the severe consequences (*vipāka*) of these. We must learn something from this.

Thus, if we look at it according to that economic theory, there are indeed countless easy paths. Yet, the Buddha designates these five as wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) with a deep meaning. Life does not end there. When poison enters this physical body (*rūpa-santāna*), it affects only this life. But how do these enter the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*)? Through the defilement of mind, body, and speech—by their becoming corrupted. They become corrupted by greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dvesha*), delusion (*moha*), and other various defilements (*kilesa*). In particular, after a person's mind-stream (*citta-santāna*) is corrupted, not only by the unwholesome deeds of killing and stealing, but also by those things shown as the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*), the next *Jāti* (Birth) is received as a result. Neither parents nor relatives and friends can step forward and save a person from hells (*niraya*) and other such places. The Buddha shows this through the natural law of kamma.

You lay disciples have often heard the law of kamma expressed in words such as *kammasako'mhi kammadāyādo kammayoni kammabandhu kammapaṭisaraṇo*. Kamma is the only thing one takes from here. Only the kamma one has done, whether good or bad, is what one owns: *kammasako'mhi*—one is the owner of one's kamma. Likewise, what one has as one's inheritance is kamma: *kammadāyādo*—heir to one's kamma. Where one goes and is born, how one's birth is determined is kamma: *kammayoni*—born of one's kamma. What stands as one's relative is kamma: *kammabandhu*—related to one's kamma. What serves as one's refuge is kamma: *kammapaṭisaraṇo*—supported by one's kamma. Therefore, according to that word of the Buddha, we must reflect on the danger of those easy paths. What appears from this is the way we must practice equanimity (*upekkhā*) on certain occasions. Just as that merchant stopped for a while, unable to go forward or backward, when we face certain paths that seem easy, we must consider whether they are righteous or unrighteous, think whether they are even behavior or uneven behavior, and think deeply. If they fall on the uneven side, the unrighteous side, we must practice equanimity (*upekkhā*). That means we should not act rashly. For, by acting quickly, we get entangled in a severe unwholesome deed (*akusala*) without even knowing it. One will have to pay for it for a long time in *saṃsāra*.

That is why the Buddha explained the danger of this wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). Normally, people now consider these as minor things. There is another very famous discourse delivered on this very topic. On one occasion, the Buddha declared that there are three types of people in the world. The analysis of persons the Buddha makes there is done by grasping both the economic and the righteous aspects. There is an analysis of persons made by grasping both the economic and the righteous aspects. There are three

types of people in the world. Who are the three? The blind, the one-eyed, and the two-eyed. The Buddha explains the blind person as follows: There is a person who lacks the eye of wisdom necessary to acquire unacquired wealth, or to secure, consolidate, or increase acquired wealth. Likewise, that person also lacks the eye of wisdom, the Dhamma-eye, that helps to distinguish good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala akusala*), merit and demerit. That person is completely blind.

The second person is the one-eyed. The Buddha describes such a person as one who has the economic eye necessary to acquire unacquired wealth and to increase acquired wealth, but lacks the righteous eye. This person does not reflect on good and bad, on the wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala akusala*). That is the nature of the one-eyed. The person with two eyes—according to this, you lay disciples can straightaway understand that this is the person who is complete in both aspects. Thus, if one is a true Buddhist disciple, according to that analysis shown by the Buddha, one must strive to live with both eyes. Otherwise, if one lives as a one-eyed person, there will be severe consequences (*vipāka*). That is, the Buddha straightaway points out that if one lives unrighteously and unevenly through lies, fraud, theft, and violence, one will eventually have to suffer the consequences in hells (*niraya*) and other such places for a long time. In that analysis of persons, too, it becomes clear to us that the Buddha directed attention to both the economic and the righteous aspects.

Next, in a similar way, in a certain place, the Buddha points out four undertakings of Dhamma (*dhamma-samādāna*). You have heard of the undertaking of virtue (*sīla-samādāna*). Undertaking virtue (*sīla-samādāna*) means accepting a certain practice of virtue, striving to live according to it, making a promise, and making a determination. What is shown here by the name of *dhamma-samādāna* is not things like the five precepts or the eight precepts. What is spoken of here is the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*)—abstaining from the ten unwholesome courses of action. Most people know what the ten unwholesome courses are: abstaining from the three unwholesome deeds done by the body, namely, killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Next, abstaining from the four unwholesome deeds done by speech. What are they? Lying, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous talk (*sampappalāpa*)—that is, speaking useless gossip, speaking meaningless words. Next, regarding the mind, the word *abhijjhā* (covetousness) is used. That means intense, uneven greed. How is uneven greed described? Greed exists in everyone. The nature of uneven greed is that when someone has something, one thinks, "Oh, if only I could get this somehow," and out of envy for another's happiness, a greed arises to acquire it. That greed, that uneven greed, is a severe unwholesome deed developed by the mind. Similarly, hatred—a hateful mind. Next, thirdly, wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) is shown: uneven greed, a hateful mind, and wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*).

Taking up the practice of abstaining from these ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*) is what is meant here by *dhamma-samādāna*. The Buddha points out four types of *dhamma-samādāna*. In this brief, limited time, we do not need to mention all of those matters. It is not necessary to show them. We will highlight only the two matters relevant to this topic. One of these four is: there is a certain undertaking of

Dhamma (*dhamma-samādāna*) that brings happiness in the present but yields painful consequences in the future. There is another undertaking of Dhamma (*dhamma-samādāna*) that has a painful nature in the present but yields happiness in the future. Let us first describe the one mentioned first.

The Buddha points it out in this way: Suppose someone engages in killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, etc., with great joy and pleasure. They engage in those sins with great joy. But having gone and been born in hell (*apāya*), they have to suffer severe, painful consequences (*vipāka*) of those deeds. The Buddha also gives a simile for this. The Buddha gives similes, etc., to make every single point sink deep into the mind, not as poetic ornaments. What is the simile? Suppose there is a vessel containing a good drink. That drink has a beautiful color, a good fragrance, and a good taste. There is a drink that is colorful, fragrant, and tasty. But this drink has been mixed with poison.

A person who is interested comes there. Those standing by the vessel of drink say, "Come, come, here is a good drink. This is tasty, fragrant, and colorful. However, poison has been mixed into this. If you wish, drink it. When drinking, it is very tasty and fragrant. But after drinking it, you will either die or fall into a suffering equivalent to death." This is what those standing by the vessel of drink say. Indeed, they state the fact. Thereupon, that person drinks it without reflecting wisely. What happens when he drinks it? While drinking, it is tasty. But after drinking, he faces death in the manner described, or falls into a suffering equivalent to death. This is the simile given by the Buddha for the practice of performing unwholesome deeds with joy, which are pleasant while doing them, but eventually bring painful consequences (*vipāka*) that one must suffer.

What is the second undertaking of Dhamma (*dhamma-samādāna*) mentioned? At the time of engaging in them, it is painful. It is felt not as happiness but as pain, as displeasure. Yet, its fruit, its consequence (*vipāka*), is happiness. It is something that brings happiness. The Buddha's simile for this is briefly described as follows: Suppose someone abstains from killing, stealing, etc., with great difficulty. "With great difficulty" means that, thinking about the Buddha's words, they keep those precepts (*sikkhāpada*) and abstain from those unwholesome deeds (*akusala*) with great effort and pain. Yet, as a result of that, they eventually obtain birth in a happy realm (*sugati*).

The Buddha gives a simile there. The Buddha himself prescribed a medicine specifically for the monks, which is called *pūtimutta-bhesajja* (fermented urine medicine). *Pūtimutta-bhesajja* is a medicine made from cow's urine. When yellow myrobalan (*aralu*), etc., are added to it, it is a very good medicine for jaundice (*paṇḍu-roga*). That is the simile the Buddha points out here. When drinking that medicine, it smells bad, has no pleasant color, and no pleasant taste. But after drinking it, that disease is cured. A jaundice patient comes to a place where such a drink is kept. Those who are there say, "Here is a medicine. When drinking this, there is no taste or fragrance. But if you drink it, you will be cured." Having heard this, that person reflects wisely and, although it is unpalatable, takes that medicine. Having taken it, he is cured. Through this simile, the

Buddha shows that for those who follow the righteous path, even though with difficulty, even though with pain, even though crying, happiness can be expected in the end.

The same kind of thing is present in this undertaking of virtue (*sīla-samādāna*). Here, the Buddha spoke about the first person. Thinking very highly of themselves, exulting over it, they engage in killing, stealing, etc., with great joy. It is only when they have to suffer the consequences (*vipāka*) of those deeds that they realize. The next person mentioned abstains from those things with great difficulty. It is very hard to abstain from them, yet, with great difficulty and displeasure, they abstain from them. But the result of that is good. Now, this is where we can connect the value of these virtues (*sīla*), etc. For, it is through understanding that one can change one's attitude.

Now, someone might think, "Abstaining from killing, abstaining from stealing, etc., is very difficult; abstaining from these is a great trouble. There are easier methods than this"—that is wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). If someone has developed faith (*saddhā*) according to the Buddha's word, that person can derive joy from it. In keeping virtues (*sīla*), etc., reflecting on the value of the undertaking of virtue (*sīla-samādāna*), reflecting on that determination of virtue, and then reviewing (*āvarjana*) it, one derives joy. That is called blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*). That is a happiness belonging to a lay disciple. In particular, even extremely wealthy people do not have that blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*) in this day and age. What is the reason? It is because of that "exploitation" (grabbing) mentioned earlier. That is their diligence. Nowadays, what the world mostly considers as diligence is the diligence of the kingfisher, the hawk, and the vulture. They swoop down on their prey very diligently. That is not the diligence the Buddha points out here. It is one's far-sightedness. The kingfisher, the hawk, and the vulture also have a certain far-sightedness that sees only that prey. But the far-sightedness, the diligence shown by the Buddha, is different.

Now, some wealthy people do not have that blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*)—that faultless happiness. Even though they have gathered a vast amount of wealth, when they think about how they gathered this wealth, a great regret arises. The happiness gathered by oppressing human beings, through various forms of corruption, fraud, and exploitation. Because of this, that person has to suffer severe pain and suffering on their deathbed. Indeed, according to the Buddha's word, there is nothing new to say about having to suffer pain and suffering after death. Instead, the Buddha points out that what a wise lay disciple should do is reflect on the virtuous side of what appears to be difficult, gain that faith (*saddhā*) thinking, "This will bring me good," and derive joy through that.

Faultless happiness means the happiness derived from that virtue (*sīla*). "I have kept such-and-such a practice." In short, the recollection of virtue (*sīlānussati*) itself can be turned into a meditation (*bhāvanā*). The fact that one is virtuous. When reflecting on that again and again, that joy arises in that person, and finally, through that, the mind becomes concentrated; it becomes focused in concentration (*samādhi*). One can go that far. Because of this, some might think, "The Buddha has always preached *veramaṇī, veramaṇī*. What is this *veramaṇī*? Abstain, abstain, he says. The Buddha speaks only of things to be avoided, things to be given up. He does not tell us anything to do." Someone

might say this according to economic theories. But the Buddha points out that within that giving up, one can find joy. If someone keeps the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) properly, they can derive that joy by reviewing (*āvarjana*) each of them.

The Buddha points out, "In a world where so much killing of living beings takes place, I am living while giving this infinite, immeasurable gift of fearlessness (*abhaya-dāna*)." Nowadays, as we constantly remind you, the gift of fearlessness (*abhaya-dāna*) has sometimes been limited to releasing a cow destined for slaughter, prepared for taking a photograph. But silently, without shouting to the world, if one, as a matter of principle, avoids causing harm and keeps the precept of abstaining from killing very purely, the Buddha declared that such a person is giving the gift of fearlessness (*abhaya-dāna*) to infinite, immeasurable living beings. By deriving joy from that and reviewing (*āvarjana*) that precept (*sikkhāpada*), that person can even attain concentration (*samādhi*). That itself can be used to help attain Nibbāna. Such a wonderful depth lies in these virtues (*sīla*), etc. That must be understood. Similarly, what was called *dhamma-samādāna* here is, just like *sīla-samādāna*, abstaining from the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*). That practice of abstaining from the ten unwholesome courses of action goes even further. When reflecting on each of them, thinking, "In such a society, I am keeping such-and-such precept, or keeping such-and-such practice," joy arises. Looking at it from that perspective, it is not like drinking that fermented urine medicine (*pūtimutta-bhesajja*) unwillingly; it is a state where one can drink it willingly.

There is a deep practice, a deep meaning within these virtues (*sīla*), etc., through which one can find relief on each occasion. Thus, the fundamental factor in all of this is abstaining from sins. What the Buddha constantly declares is: just as the merchant practiced equanimity (*upekkhā*), neither going forward nor backward when there was danger on the road, if in a certain course of action one sees, "It is wrong if I do this, and it is wrong if I do not do this," on that occasion, one must practice equanimity (*upekkhā*). One must hold back for a while. It is bad to be attached to it.

Similarly, one must have the strength to reflect on these far-sightedly. A person who lives in such a principled way has fewer regrets. As the Buddha declares, there is blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*), faultless happiness. The mind can constantly remain in joy. When reviewing—reviewing (*āvarjana*) means looking back. Looking back and reflecting on the purity of one's life, that person experiences great joy, especially at the final moment. Although the Brahmin Dhanañjāni lived unrighteously in the first part of his life, even though the details are not mentioned at length, we see that a massive transformation took place in his life after he received Ven. Sāriputta's advice. It was as a result of that massive life transformation that this Brahmin was able to obtain birth in the Brahma world, by relying on the Dhamma heard at the final moment. Therefore, in whatever way our individual lives have been spent, if we make a determination... At the end of a year, you make various kinds of targets, determinations, connecting them with New Year customs. Even setting out for occupations is done at an auspicious time (*näkatha*). But even if done at an auspicious time, if those things belong to the inauspicious, there is no use in it. What is inauspicious? One must do what is auspicious, what is good. What is inauspicious is wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). If one sets out for

employment at an auspicious time, but sets out for that wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*), there is no use in that auspicious time.

This life transformation may not be possible in a single day or in a single moment. Yet, if wise lay disciples direct their minds to these and make an effort, it will not be impossible to bring about a transformation in their individual lives according to the Buddha's word. Worldly beings have given up things greater than this. One step in the method of doing so is, at least, observing precepts (*sīla*) on one of the four Poya days of the month. If someone engaged in such wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) withdraws from it for one day, sacrifices it, sacrifices the profit received from it, observes pure virtue (*sīla*), and spends the day in that manner, an opening is created for them there. "If I can do this for one day, why not make it two days, observing it on two Poya days?" Next, if taken to four Poya days, it is four days. Going on in this manner, gradually, they will be able to withdraw even from hereditary wrong livelihoods. If one makes no such effort but goes on, enslaved to the direction in which society is heading, one only moves further down the path of decline. As we mentioned, the tongue adapts very quickly in a way that encourages meat-eating, etc. Such is the world that exists. One must reflect wisely on wrong notions and understand the Buddha's words deeply. One's livelihood is not something limited only to this life. In this journey of *saṃsāra*, this era of a Buddha's arising (*buddhotpāda-kāla*) is an extremely rare time. Human existence (*manussa-attabhāva*) is also an opportunity. If we live as beasts, as demons, we cannot derive the true benefit of the Buddha's Dispensation (*sāsana*). Therefore, transforming our lives internally is something that belongs to each of us. Today, on account of the New Year, you have received that stream of thoughts to be added to your mind-streams (*citta-santāna*).

During this period of about one hour, this group of lay disciples, having undertaken in varying measures the eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*), the ten precepts (*dasa-sīla*), or the precepts with right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīvatthamaka-sīla*), listened to the Dhamma sermon. It is through taming the three doors of action—body, speech, and mind—in our daily existence that we can attain deliverance from *saṃsāra* (*saṃsāra-vimukti*). Therefore, as we constantly remind you, may you develop those qualities of faith (*saddhā*), etc., with the strength gathered by hearing the Dhamma. May you turn the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) into spiritual powers (*bala*). Supported by association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), may you gain the strength and power to quickly escape all the suffering of *saṃsāra*, such as *Jāti* (Birth) and death (*maraṇa*), through the realization, the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant, and by attaining the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! Similarly, if any departed relatives in one's name, or any beings from the Avīci hell to the Akanitha heaven, wish to share in the merit of this Dhamma teaching and Dhamma hearing, may they, by sharing in this merit, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! With this aspiration, please recite this verse:

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #157

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.109)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Yassa pure ca pacchā ca,

majjhe ca natthi kiñcanaṃ;

Akiñcanaṃ anādānaṃ,

tamahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 421 (Brāhmaṇa Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

As the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) to escape the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *saṃsāra*, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, placed before the world the Noble Eightfold Path on an Esala Full Moon Poya day like today. This path and practice, followed by everyone who aspires for Nibbāna without distinction between lay and ordained, is none other than this Noble Eightfold Path. The background story to the verse we have selected as our theme today is an exemplary account of how *nekkhamma-saṅkappa* (the thought of renunciation)—which is a primary component of *sammā-saṅkappa* (Right Resolution)—matured within a lay household.

The Buddha preached this Dhamma verse at the Veluvana Monastery in Rājagaha concerning a bhikkhunī named Dhammadinnā. During her lay life, Dhammadinnā's husband was the lay devotee Visākha. One day, after listening to the Dhamma from the Buddha, the lay devotee Visākha attained the stage of Non-returner (*anāgāmi-phala*). On his way back home, he reflected: "I must hand over all my wealth and possessions to my wife, Dhammadinnā, and set myself free."

Usually, Dhammadinnā would wait by the window, watching for her husband to return from outside. As the husband approached, they would greet each other with smiles; such was their custom. On this particular day, however, the lay devotee Visākha entered the

house calmly without even looking toward the window. Dhammadinnā was somewhat perplexed by this, wondering why today was different. Furthermore, when the meal was prepared, whereas Visākha would normally invite his wife, saying, “Come, let us eat together,” this time he ate in silence. Thus, Dhammadinnā further pondered whether his mind was upset or if he had become angry due to some matter.

Later, when the lay devotee Visākha was sitting quietly, he called his wife and said, “Dhammadinnā, please take charge of all these riches and comforts.” At this, Dhammadinnā thought, “People who are angry do not hand over wealth in this manner. What could this be?”

Then she asked, “My lord, what will you do?” When he explained the situation, Dhammadinnā replied, “I do not wish to pick up the lump of spit that you have spat out. Please grant me permission to ordain.” From this, we can infer that even by that time, Dhammadinnā must have been a woman of great faith (*saddhā*) who had also practiced meditation. Visākha, the lay devotee, escorted Dhammadinnā to a nunnery and facilitated her ordination. Since Theri Dhammadinnā delighted in solitude, after her higher ordination (*upasampadā*), she went to a remote province with a group of other bhikkhunīs to dwell in seclusion. Not long after going into seclusion to meditate after her higher ordination, she attained Arahatship with the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*). She then thought, “I must give my relatives the opportunity to accumulate merit through me,” and returned to Rājagaha.

When the lay devotee Visākha heard that she had returned to her nunnery, he thought, “Perhaps she has returned so quickly because she has become dissatisfied with the holy life for some reason.” Thus, Visākha went to the hermitage and paid his respects. However, he could not directly ask Theri Dhammadinnā, “Why is this? Have you returned because your mind has turned away from ordination?” Instead, what did he do? He asked a question pertaining to the path of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga*). She answered that question directly and correctly. Next, he asked question after question, rising to the path of Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi-magga*) and the path of Non-returning (*anāgāmi-magga*). The answers came in an extraordinary manner—only the question and the answer, with no irrelevant chatter. Sensing that the final question, concerning the path of Arahatship, went beyond the boundary of the lay devotee Visākha’s own level of Dhamma-realization as an Anāgāmi, Theri Dhammadinnā said: “O lay devotee, you have overstepped the limits of questioning. You have failed to recognize the boundary of this question. If you wish, you may go and report this discussion to the Blessed One as it transpired.”

Accordingly, the lay devotee went to the Buddha and related the entire discussion. The Buddha praised her and said: “My daughter Dhammadinnā’s analysis of the Dhamma is absolutely correct. Even if you had asked me, I would have given these very same answers to those questions. She is a woman of great wisdom.” Elsewhere in the Tipiṭaka, it is mentioned that when the Buddha declared the foremost positions among the disciples, he declared Theri Dhammadinnā foremost among the bhikkhunīs who are Dhamma-speakers (*dhammakathikā*) in the entire Bhikkhunī Sāsana.

That very Dhamma discussion can still be found today in the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It is an extremely profound discourse that draws the attention of both great scholars and meditators alike. There is no extraneous elaboration in it—it is simply question and answer, question and answer. A highly valuable compilation of Dhamma is found there. Through this, we see the miracle of the Dhamma. Not only that, but after doing so, the Buddha also uttered a certain verse in praise of Theri Dhammadinnā. It is that verse we have taken as our theme today:

Yassa pure ca pacchā ca, majjhe ca natthi kiñcanaṃ, akiñcanaṃ anādānaṃ, tamahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ.

At first glance, it is almost like a riddle-verse. “He who has nothing before, after, or in the middle—who is possessionless, who grasps at nothing—him I call a Brahmin.”

This *Dhammapada* verse is very simple. On this occasion, I will explain it very briefly. The Buddha often used the word “Brahmin” to refer to an Arahant. What is revealed here is that Theri Dhammadinnā had attained Arahatship. Thus, the nature of an Arahant's mind is shown by those words. For now, we will mention it briefly and elaborate later. “Before” (*pure*) refers to the past. There is no aspiration, no desire regarding the past five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). Similarly, there is no aspiration or desire regarding the future five aggregates. There are no special desires regarding the past aggregates, nor is there any desire regarding the future aggregates.

Next, “middle” (*majjhe*) here refers to the present. Likewise, there is no attachment to the present five aggregates. It is in the *Brāhmaṇa Vagga* of the *Dhammapada*, which describes the Arahants, that this verse is found, saying: “Him I call a Brahmin, who has nothing of his own, who grasps at nothing.” If we first consider the story, as we mentioned earlier, it demonstrates the transformation brought about by the emergence of *nekkhamma-saṅkappa* (the thought of renunciation) within a lay household. From this, lay devotees of today can learn many lessons. After turning toward the Dhamma, lay devotees can find excellent examples in this story for the various problems they encounter at home. Looking even at daily life, the harmonious relationship that existed between the lay devotee Visākha and Dhammadinnā as husband and wife can be called exemplary.

The wife would watch from the window for her husband returning from outside. Then, as soon as the husband arrived, she would welcome him warmly. The husband, too, was a very gentle-natured person. When taking meals, he would call his wife to eat together. They were two people who lived such a friendly and affectionate life. However, due to a sudden transformation brought about by the Dhamma, the lay devotee Visākha decided: “Now I need freedom for my Dhamma study and meditation. Let me hand over the management of all these resources to my wife.” In the stories of the past, Dhammadinnā is depicted as a highly meritorious lady who had fulfilled her perfections (*pāramīs*) and come aspiring for such a position. Therefore, as soon as her husband spoke those words, instead of desiring those riches, she regarded them as a lump of spit and, saying, “What use is the lump of spit spat out by you to me?”, she renounced them even before her

husband did. Indeed, it is mentioned that while the lay devotee remained a lay devotee, his wife became highly renowned in this Sāsana as Theri Dhammadinnā.

When this Dhamma leading to Nibbāna enters a person's heart, that transformation is difficult for many to understand. Especially for those bound by various ties of lay life, being unable to understand what occurs in another's mind-stream leads to various kinds of friction and displeasure. However, we are all temporarily met in this *saṃsāra*, in this wayside resting house of the world, due to certain past connections. Yet, this path to Nibbāna is a journey that must be made individually. It is the journey through *saṃsāra*, the journey of crossing over *saṃsāra*. Thus, supporting those who step forward with the necessary qualifications for it in a friendly manner is exactly what the lay devotee Visākha did. He went and handed over his wife to the nunnery. Next, let us look into analyzing these deep matters of the Dhamma.

Now, the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) were mentioned here. You, lay devotees, have heard this word “five aggregates”. Most of you know that they are the five: form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These aggregates (*khandha*) mean heaps or piles; thus, there are five heaps. These five heaps are analyzed in this way: they are divided into past, future, and present, and are also seen both internally (*ajjhatta*) and externally (*bahiddha*). Internal refers to oneself—the heap of form regarding oneself—and external refers to others—the heap of form regarding others. Let us understand it thus. Furthermore, it can be gross form or subtle form, superior form or inferior form, near form or far form. In this way, all various forms are gathered into this aggregate of form (*rūpakkhandha*). It is because of grasping these with *Taṇhā* (Craving) that they are called *Upādāna* (Grasping)—the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). So, how does one recall the past five aggregates? Sometimes one thinks like this:

Let us say an elderly person thinks about their youth: “I used to be beautiful in such-and-such a way. Alas! Now look what has happened to me,” and thus develops an attachment to that past form. This is called *nandirāga* (delight and lust). Terms like *nandi* (delight), *rāga* (lust), and *chanda* (desire) are presented as synonyms of *Taṇhā* (Craving)—words equivalent to craving. Thinking of the past, they create a regret or a desire for it and suffer, saying, “We no longer have this now.” Next is the opposite side, which is about the future. They form future aspirations: “I must become someone with great physical beauty, a beautiful person, a strong person,” and thus remain clinging to thoughts and wishes regarding the future. That is what was meant by “before” and “after”—regarding the past five aggregates and the future five aggregates.

Regarding the present five aggregates, what is currently here is also grasped as a self. They say: “This form is myself; this is my soul. There is a soul in form, form is in the soul, form is possessed of a soul.” In this way, they regard this form as a self, as “me”. This is how one develops attachment to the present form. Now, as described here, what is indicated is that the Arahant has freed themselves from those conceptualizations. For such a person, there is no attachment to the past five aggregates, nor are there any aspirations for a future five aggregates. The attachment and desire for the present five

aggregates have been abandoned. For this very reason, they are *akiñcana* (possessionless / having nothing).

The meaning of the word *akiñcana* is "owning nothing". Usually, when we say "owning nothing", we think of material wealth and so on. In the Dhamma, it is presented much more deeply. *Kiñcana* means "something" or "anything". Greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) are designated as *kiñcana* (obstructions/possessions/attachments). Therefore, where greed, hatred, and delusion are absent, there is *akiñcana*. What is the reason for this? For us, a thing becomes "a thing" either because we like it, or because we are opposed to it, or because we are deluded by it—having a curiosity or doubt about what it is. It is through greed, hatred, and delusion in this manner that things in the world become "things" to us. If we take *kiñcana* deeply, "anything" refers to those three: greed, hatred, and delusion. Thus, because the Arahant is freed from them, they are *akiñcana*—owning nothing. Likewise, they are *anādāna*. *Ādāna* means "grasping" or "holding"—the nature of clutching. *Anādāna* means they do not grasp at any of those things either.

This is how the liberated mind is expressed in this verse. Now, we must indeed pay special attention to what was said here about the "middle" (the present). Meditators practicing insight (*vipassanā*) know that past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are "past", meaning they have gone by. It is easy to realize that they have gone by. Sometimes, one spends a little time thinking about past things, but then realizes "this is no longer here". Even if future thoughts arise, one can sometimes escape them. "Future" means what has not yet come—things that have not arrived. But the present is the deepest point, the hardest place to grasp.

If we apply this to the practice of mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), some lay devotees when starting the practice send their minds out in anticipation of the incoming breath. Or, after the exhalation goes out, they send the mind out following that exhalation. However, teachers have instructed us not to send the mind to the past or to the future, but to anchor the mind at the point where the inhalation and exhalation make contact—such as the nose or the upper lip. That is what is meant by *parimukhaṃ satiṃ upaṭṭhapetvā* (establishing mindfulness in front). Even in the canonical discourses, it is mentioned that when sitting down for *ānāpāna*, one should not watch where the breath comes from in the distance, nor should one chase the breath after it has gone.

Ordinary people usually regret while thinking about the past, letting their minds run after the past, and they wish for the future. What results from this is a loss of mindfulness. The Buddha constantly reminds us that we have to reach this truth through the present moment. Therefore, we must anchor the mind in the present. Ancient teachers give two similes regarding *ānāpānasati* to demonstrate this point.

Nowadays, the methods of sawing wood are very different. In the past, logs were placed on a trestle and sawn using a two-handed saw. If the person sawing the wood directs their eyes toward the other person or toward the two ends of the saw, they will make a mistake. Instead, to do it correctly, they must focus their attention right at the point

where the log is being cut—exactly where the saw teeth make contact—without letting the mind drift to the far ends. Similarly, it is stated regarding *ānāpānasati* that the breath must be anchored at the tip of the nose or near the upper lip.

Another simile describes pushing a swing. The person standing in the middle often directs their eyes this way and that. However, what actually needs to be done is to anchor the eyes in the middle, without directing them this way and that. While swinging, there is no need to specially watch the two ends. It is just like that. Yet, the mind is tempted to send the eyes toward those two ends. Similarly, in *ānāpānasati*, it is when the mind is anchored in the middle that one catches the point of contact, which is the *ānāpāna-nimitta* (the sign of breathing). From that point onward lies the progress of insight (*vipassanā*). It is from there that one can elevate to insight the elemental nature (*dhātu*) or the subtle heap-like nature within the wave of breath, thereby attaining liberation (*vimutti*). We can understand this discussion of the "middle" in that manner through the medium of a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

In that Dhamma discussion, there was a certain shortcoming in the question asked by the lay devotee Visākha. We are obliged to present that question here at least briefly. Indeed, there is insufficient time to present that entire Dhamma dialogue. The question we intend to bring out now is precisely the one where Theri Dhammadinnā said, "You have overstepped the limit of asking questions." Visākha, the lay devotee, was asking about pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). In Pali, it is stated as *sukha, dukkha, adukkhamasukha*, meaning pleasant, painful, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant. Pleasant feeling and painful feeling are at the two extremes. In the middle lies neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. Neither-painful-nor-pleasant means neutral feeling. Let us think for a moment. People in this world are riding a seesaw between pleasure and pain. When pain comes, they seek pleasure to escape that pain. But then, that pleasure is also not permanent (*anicca* - impermanent / inconstant). Theri Dhammadinnā spoke about this as well: underlying pleasant feeling is lust, the underlying tendency of lust (*rāgānusaya*). Underlying painful feeling is the underlying tendency of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*), which is hatred (*dosa*). Next, underlying the neutral feeling called *adukkhamasukha* is ignorance (*avijjā*) or non-knowing. Why? Because the neutral feeling is not realized by the ordinary mind; it is only recognized by a meditative mind. Worldly beings remain between those two: pleasure and pain, pleasure and pain. They keep rolling along, saying, "Pain and pleasure constantly turn." Thus, ordinary worldly people have no regard for the middle in this way, because they lack sufficient mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and understanding.

Even the ancient achievers of absorptions (*jhānas*) and sages (*rishis*) who understood this, developed their meditative powers and gradually approached that neutral state of *adukkhamasukha*, which the ordinary world calls equanimity (*upekkhā*). The attitude of equanimity exists near the middle of that neither-painful-nor-pleasant seesaw, and they remained there. But how is it explained next? Theri Dhammadinnā says that the counterpart of pleasant feeling is painful feeling, and the counterpart of painful feeling is pleasant feeling. There is a constant, mutual relationship between those two.

However, underlying neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is the non-knowing of ignorance (*avijjā*), a failure to understand. Once this is understood, that neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling turns into a form of happiness. As long as delusion remains, the peaceful and sublime nature of neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is not understood. When realization arises, neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is directly experienced as an extremely valuable experience, far superior to the coarse, rough pleasure and pain of worldly pleasures. For those achievers of *jhānas*, by the time they reach the fourth *jhāna*, *upekkhā* (equanimity) becomes pure.

Next, when viewed through insight (*vipassanā*), it is revealed that underlying neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling are ignorance and non-knowing. When ignorance is removed, true knowledge (*vijjā*) arises, which is realization. It is through that knowledge that liberation (*vimutti*) comes. Because of liberation, there is extinguishment, Nibbāna. It was when Theri Dhammadinnā declared this that the lay devotee Visākha asked: "What lies beyond Nibbāna?" That was when Dhammadinnā said: "O lay devotee, you have questioned beyond the limit." Let us strive to understand this matter. The Buddha showed that we must abandon attachment not only to past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), not only to future Preparations, but also to present Preparations. This is accomplished through insight—by practicing insight with a well-concentrated mind.

The more one contemplates subtly, the more one understands that this existence is something that is constantly wearing away, constantly breaking apart. Existence means progression, rolling on. Indeed, what is thought of as "the present" is something that is constantly rolling on, like a flowing river. Thus, one cannot find a stable footing here. Yet, the tendency to seek a stable footing is what exists in the world. What is that stable footing? It is the notion "I am" (*asmi*).

Even if everything else is absent, there remains the concept of "I am", assuming that "I" exist. In Dhamma language, this is called the conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*). At the stage of Non-returner (*anāgāmi*), the lay devotee Visākha did not recognize the subtle defiled nature of this *asmi-māna*. That is why he asked what lies beyond Nibbāna. But the Buddha points out here that even this *asmi-māna*, this "I am", is merely a conceit—just a measurement. This happens because of the changes in the Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that are changing subtly and extremely rapidly in the present. It is like a section of a flowing river. Therefore, for that understanding to arise, one must see it with wisdom (*paññā*); one must see it through insight (*vipassanā*).

Mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration (*samādhi*) support this. When one contemplates the Preparations of *nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form) in that manner, even what was taken as the "present" is seen to change extremely rapidly. This is just like swordplay. Indeed, if we use a simile, the entire existence of life is like a sword fight. Our living is entirely a continuous battle with Māra (Death/the Evil One).

Let us take a brief simile. A person who holds only a sword is fighting another person who also has a sword. In this fight, both attacking and defending are done with the sword. Both attacking and defending are done with the sword. Then, how rapid is this

sword fight? This swordplay? Life is exactly like that. Whether we look at the inhalation and exhalation, or look at our efforts to maintain this life, there is a sword fight being waged with Māra. We take the blows dealt by Māra on one side, while hitting back at Māra, trying to defeat him. This is what is found in every single breath. This is what is found in every life-effort. When we seem to be winning that sword fight, that is when the pride of youth arises in us. We think we have won. As we watch, the body grows. "Now, death is nowhere near me"—that is where it appears as though the sword is winning. But when middle age is passed and illnesses arrive, it is then that the inability, the aging, and the helplessness in the swordplay are realized.

To describe this event in modern terms, what happens during our youth? New cells are born faster than the dying cells; so they say in medical science. But as we age, when Māra wins, the rate of regenerating cells decreases, and thus the body wears away. In short, what is here is a stream of arising and passing away, and this stream of arising and passing away constantly exists within this body built from food and drink. However, this stream of arising and passing away is not grasped by the mind. Instead, due to the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), it takes it as one solid thing, grasping: "This is me." Leave alone that, even a photograph that is taken is thought of as "This is mine." Such is the delusion that exists. It is due to this delusion that there is attachment to these things. The point where this attachment ceases is called revulsion (*nibbidā*), cessation (*nirodha*). Weariness with *saṃsāra* (disenchantment) is produced by that aforementioned vision.

If at any point, contemplation with mindfulness and concentration is correctly applied to those respective Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), perhaps through a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), then indeed one begins to see how these rapidly arise and cease. It is also through the mind that it gradually dawns that there is nothing here even to be taken as "I am". In the middle, too, there is nothing. Therefore, what was called *akiñcana* is the non-attachment toward them. When weariness with *saṃsāra* arises, there is nothing to be taken as greed, nothing to be taken as hatred, and nothing over which to be deluded. The realization arises that here there is entirely and solely a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*).

Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) mean a heap of preparations or constructions. What is here is a heap of continuously occurring preparations. Thus, within that heap of preparations, one sees the nature of *Anattā* (Not-self). The Three Characteristics—*Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *anattā*—are seen. As impermanence (*aniccatā*) is realized deeper and deeper, the painful nature involved in building and compiling these is realized. The very construction of Preparations is *dukkha*. That is why it is said: *saṅkhārā paramā dukkhā* (Preparations are the supreme suffering). The deepest, most subtle suffering in the world is these Preparations; that is why Nibbāna is presented as the stilling of all Preparations.

This preparation is done through ignorance (*avijjā*). Ignorance means the feeling of "I" and "mine". As long as the feeling of "I" and "mine" exists, various Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are made, preparations are constructed. Every single one of those

preparations breaks apart extremely rapidly. In insight (*vipassanā*), impermanence (*aniccatā*) is first manifested to the meditator as arising and passing away—coming and going, coming and going. In the meditation on mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), when contact is made at the touch-point at the tip of the nose, if attention (*manasikāra*) is well-applied, one understands how these waves of breath break apart extremely rapidly. They arise and break. In the end, what remains through that attention is only subtle contacting; there is no grasping (*upādāna* - grasping / holding / fuel).

This is mentioned in the Dhamma: *phussa phussa vayaṃ passaṃ evaṃ taṃ virajjati*. This means: contacting again and again, seeing their passing away, and it is precisely by seeing their passing away in that manner that fading of lust (*virāga*) arises, weariness (disenchantment) arises. When one sees every single one of these wearing away, there is nothing to grasp. When that which was previously taken as one solid thing due to the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) breaks apart, there is no place to grasp. In ordinary worldly people, there is the grasping called handling (*parāmāsa*). Instead, in insight (*vipassanā*), there is comprehension (*sammasana*). One watches how they arise and pass away at that very spot. That is what was meant by *phussa phussa* (contacting again and again). The moment there is contact (*phassa* - contact), it is gone.

To use a simile, what is done at those police checkpoints? They do not chase after those who have passed, nor do they look back. They remain right there. They do not look back at those who have already gone. But they thoroughly inspect those who arrive at the checkpoint; they engage in maximum scrutiny. Exactly such a thing is done in insight (*vipassanā*). One does not run after past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), nor does one chase after future Preparations. Instead, one contemplates the present Preparations at that very spot with subtle insight. It is then that their true nature becomes manifest. Just as whatever is hidden is caught at that checkpoint, as insight develops, one realizes: “Haven't we been playing this game with Māra all this time?”

There is another excellent story relevant to this, found in a series of questions asked by a monk named Rādha. In those questions, one can see the same pattern as the questions asked by the lay devotee Visākha. On one occasion, Ven. Rādha came to the Buddha and asked: “Venerable Sir, it is said, 'Māra, Māra.' Who is this Māra?” Then the Buddha declared: “Form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—these themselves are Māra.” What is the reason for this? If there is death or dying due to something, if there is a concept of 'one who is dead' or 'one who dies,' that is it. Thus, because form exists, where form is taken as a single thing, there is dying—the concept that “form is dead”. It is the same regarding feeling. According to the Buddha's definition, there is no other Māra here. There may be other concepts of Māra, but in relation to this question, the Buddha showed: “Rādha, look at form itself as Māra,” because it is form itself that is said to die. What is dead is also form. Feeling is the same, perception is the same, Preparations are the same, and consciousness is the same.

Thus, through that concept of Māra, we can realize that the effort to maintain each of these is like a battle with Māra, similar to the swordplay described earlier. We try to

protect form carefully; that is a battle with Māra. We try to maintain the pleasant feelings (*vedanā*) we like; those too are battles with Māra. When one understands at some point that all of these, when actually looked at, are like a heap of waves moving extremely rapidly, or like a river flowing on, that is Right View (*sammā-dassana*). In the end, even in this discourse, the Buddha tells Ven. Rādha: "If someone sees form as Māra, sees feeling as Māra, sees perception as Māra, sees Preparations as Māra, and sees consciousness as Māra—that is Right View." This is the Buddha's word.

Next, Ven. Rādha asks: "Venerable Sir, what is the purpose of that Right View?" "Right View is needed for revulsion (*nibbidā*) toward *saṃsāra*." *Nibbidā* means weariness/revulsion toward *saṃsāra*. It is called "Right" (*sammā*) View because it assists in revulsion. In modern times, people call other things "good". Why is this called "Right" View? Because it assists in revulsion. Seeing form as Māra, seeing feeling as Māra, seeing perception as Māra, seeing Preparations as Māra, and seeing consciousness as Māra assists in one's revulsion toward *saṃsāra*. Then he asks, what is that Right View for? "Why should one feel revulsion toward *saṃsāra*?" Ven. Rādha asks this as well. "Revulsion toward *saṃsāra* is needed for dispassion (*virāga*), which is non-attachment." Without non-attachment, one cannot escape this *saṃsāra*. One cannot escape the suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra* while maintaining attachment to *saṃsāra*. One wants to escape from *saṃsāra* and suffering, yet one also has attachment to *saṃsāra*. How can that be done? It cannot be done. That is why the Buddha says that revulsion toward *saṃsāra* is necessary.

Thus, as we have been explaining, Right View is needed for revulsion toward *saṃsāra*. Revulsion toward *saṃsāra* is needed for dispassion (*virāga*), which is non-attachment. What is dispassion needed for? Dispassion is needed for liberation (*vimutti*), for release. Release from what? It is by going along grasping this five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) that one suffers for a long time in this *saṃsāra*. One must let go of this. How does one let go of it? Does one throw it away physically? No. One is holding onto this with the mind. Grasping (*upādāna* - grasping / holding / fuel) means that holding by the mind. We hold onto these—form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness—as *upādāna* because of our *Taṇhā* (Craving) for them. Various words like *nandi* (delight) and *chandarāga* (desire-and-lust) are used as synonyms for craving. In whatever word it is expressed, there is a grasping due to craving. This grasping is done by the mind.

Thus, it is by the mind that these attachments arise. It is by the mind that one is bound. Therefore, it is by the mind itself that one must be liberated—that is liberation (*vimutti*). Then, dispassion (*virāga*) means non-attachment. To put it another way, the colors of those things that appeared beautiful until now have faded; the paint of that beautifully attractive form has run. When insight (*vipassanā*) arises, even in a very beautiful form, that paint runs. The paint on other things runs as well. The realization comes that they have no value. Thus, from that dispassion comes liberation. Next, from liberation comes extinguishment, Nibbāna. But, just as the lay devotee Visākha asked, Ven. Rādha also asks: "What is Nibbāna for?" Then the Buddha says: "Rādha, now you have overstepped

the limit of questioning. There is nothing beyond Nibbāna. Nibbāna is the culmination of this holy life (*brahmacariya*) in the Sāsana; everything ends with Nibbāna." What is the reason for this? Why was it said so?

Usually, many people think of Nibbāna as "a thing". They think of it as a different world, uttering beautiful sentences like "attaining eternal peace in the deathless, great Nirvāṇa of everlasting bliss," believing there is some place where the dead go and gather. That is the concept they hold. Let us think a little about this word "extinguishment" (*nivīma*). When we explained the word *akiñcana*, we said that those three—lust (*rāgā*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*)—are what are called "things". It is because of those things that everything becomes a sign (*nimitta*) to us. When looking around with lust, things that were not signs before can become signs to us. When looking around with hatred, things we did not notice before begin to appear as signs. There are endless things to cling to when lust arises. There are endless things to clash with when hatred arises. There are endless things over which to be deluded—running after curiosity and perplexity—when delusion arises.

Now understand why lust, hatred, and delusion are called *kiñcana* (obstructions/possessions/attachments)—why they are called "anything" or "something". You, lay devotees, know how everyone runs after fancy fashions popular among the youth for a short time. Then, as soon as a different fashion arrives, those previous ones fade away. Their paint runs out, their value drops, and eventually, they cannot even be sold—all those fancy things. From that, we can understand that lust, hatred, and delusion are the real "things" in the world. Other things are merely symbolized by them. There is what we call a symbol. Taking something as a beautiful thing, as a valuable thing, is a symbol of lust—that is greed. If most people covet it, then it becomes a highly valued item that can be sold at a high price, praised by everyone.

Let us look at what a gem is. In the final analysis, a gem is also something like a piece of charcoal. Yet, the world highly regards it. What is gold? The value of all such things is connected to our greed. It is the same regarding hatred; when our hatred arises, we clash with anything. Delusion is the same; if there is some strange, unknown thing, a miraculous thing, we stand with our mouths open, staring at it because looking with just our eyes is not enough. You, lay devotees, have heard of the fires shown by the Buddha: they are *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decay/aging), and *maraṇa* (death). Thus, if the existence of this *saṃsāra* is those three fires, what is extinguishment, Nibbāna? It is the extinguishing of those fires. Once the fire is extinguished, what else is needed? While burning in the fire called suffering (*dukkha* - suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress), one says: "This is suffering." It was to eliminate that suffering that the Buddha preached this Dhamma.

During the Buddha's time, the Brahmins made various accusations against the Buddha. The idea held by the Brahmins was that there is something called a self, there is an eternal existence, there is a state of Brahma—those who held a firm view of self. They accused the Buddha's teaching of being annihilationist (*uccheda*), a destruction, and accused him of being an annihilationist. The Buddha said: "They accuse me of something

I did not say. What I declared then, and what I declare now, is only suffering (*dukkha*) and the cessation (*nirodha*) of suffering." If suffering is the existence of *saṃsāra*, if it is suffering, if holding onto these five aggregates is suffering, then it is when these five aggregates are abandoned that there is happiness.

That is what is called the bliss of Nibbāna. If we take the simile of the fire, the bliss of Nibbāna experienced in this very life is the point where that fire is extinguished. That very story of the extinguishing of the fire is what we remind you of on many occasions. The word *Upādāna* (Grasping) or clutching is often used for firewood and so on. When a fire spreads, whatever it grasps, whatever it clutches, burns away. We do not realize this. We may have a lot of wealth. When we go on a shopping trip, in accordance with our desire, by the time we return, we do not have even a single cent; all the money is gone. It went to that fire. It is just like that here; we must realize that due to greed, hatred, and delusion, not only this body but everything captured by our thinking gets caught in that fire and burns away. That is what this *saṃsāric* existence is. If at any point those aforementioned fires are extinguished within, that very extinguishment is Nibbāna. That is the supreme peace, a peace to be realized in this very life. There is nothing beyond that. Why is it said there is nothing beyond?

When speaking of *saṃsāra*, the Buddha declared that if someone has *Taṇhā* (Craving) at the moment of death, whether regarding their household members or anything else, they might be born even as a hungry ghost (*peta*). Thus, there is a grasping because of that craving. That grasping is done by the mind. Indeed, after death, the physical body is cremated or buried. However, that grasping mind has clutched. That clutching goes as a rebirth into a mother's womb or elsewhere. Therefore, *saṃsāra* is a certain distorted, perverted state brought about by craving and *Upādāna* (Grasping). Thus, the Buddha shows how to calm this right here.

That is what has been explained so far. Although the five aggregates we grasp are taken as five heaps, by realizing that each of these is constantly breaking apart, when one deeply develops the insight into arising and passing away, the breaking up of everything is seen. This is called the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). In a highly alarming manner, it appears to the insight-practitioner that the speed of breaking up is far greater than the speed of arising. It is at that point that a deep weariness (revulsion) arises. How can we maintain something that is constantly breaking apart eternally, day after day? Therefore, if it is breaking apart, it is not for grasping, but for letting go. Letting go is what must be done. There is no substance in it, no core. That is what is presented in the Dhamma regarding Nibbāna by three terms: *animitta* (signless), *appaṇihita* (desireless/undirected), and *suññata* (void/empty).

Animitta means the absence of signs. Where there is greed, a sign is caught; where there is greed, something becomes a thing. Where there is hatred, a sign is caught. Where there is delusion, a sign is caught. Where greed, hatred, and delusion are absent, there are no signs for the mind. As signs keep coming, the mind runs after those signs. The moment a sign comes to the mind, the mind runs after that sign. Because of this, it sometimes becomes exhausted, whether through greed or hatred. Thus, the wondrous

state of liberation without signs is what is indicated here by the word *animitta*. Next, *appaṇihita*: *praṇidhi* means aspirations or desires. There exist various kinds of aspirations. Being unable to fulfill those aspirations, people sometimes ruin their lives, carrying them over to the next life as well. Yet, there is never any satisfaction. Thus, when one sees the defects in those aspirations and at some point frees the mind from them, at that moment, there is no aspiration either.

Next, *suññatā*. Void or empty means there is no substance in these; there is no core of self. There is nothing unchanging here. If we use the seesaw simile, what was done by Āḷāra Kālāma, Uddaka Rāmaputta, and others was like philosophers or meditators who, exhausted by riding the seesaw between pain and pleasure for so long in *saṃsāra*, came to the point where the plank rests on the log and took a small break. They were experiencing a subtle pleasure of neither-painful-nor-pleasant (*adukkhamasukha*) through subtle meditative states (*jhānas*). However, the Buddha went even beyond that. The Buddha showed that underlying these, there is grave ignorance (*avijjā*) and delusion (*moha*). What is that? It is precisely that conceit "I am" (*asmi-māna*). It is on the basis of the conceit "I am" that everyone rides this seesaw. Thus, if at any point that too is removed, there is no longer a problem. That is why Nibbāna is called *avedayita-sukha* (pleasure unfelt).

For many, it is a great puzzle why this happiness is called *avedayita-sukha* (unfelt pleasure). For us, we call a feeling (*vedanā*) "happiness". However, Ven. Sāriputta pointed out on one occasion that there is happiness even where there is no feeling. Ordinary worldly people think that if there is happiness, there must be a feeling. The Buddha declares that *avedayita-sukha* is a state freed even from feeling. Feeling exists as long as that conceit "I am" (*asmi*) exists—as long as the wedge is there. Therefore, the state freed from feeling, freed from the five aggregates entirely, is supramundane happiness (*lokuttara-sukha*). It is described as a peaceful bliss.

Thus, in the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*), the Arahants detach from their bodies and the world, and establish a wondrously peaceful bliss that is void (*suññata*), signless (*animitta*), and desireless (*appaṇihita*), without taking any sign whatsoever. If they pass away into final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*) from that state, there is no future rebirth, because there is no sign, no desire, and no substance. Wherever a sign was taken, wherever a desire or aspiration was formed, wherever some place was regarded as having substance—right there, rebirth is obtained, whether in a mother's womb, an animal's womb, or in the realm of hungry ghosts, or in a place like hell, depending on that thought-clutch. Then, just as it is said: *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā* (mind precedes all mental states, mind is their chief, they are mind-made), everything exists according to this mind. Mind is chief. Therefore, we must indeed protect the mind. It is through the mind itself that we construct these sufferings and travel through this *saṃsāra* for such a long time. Thus, liberation (*vimutti*) also lies right there. That is what the Buddha has shown us here.

The very Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) we mentioned at the beginning is what is present here as well. Those who ran after pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) ran toward the

extreme of devotion to sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*), as described in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Seeking liberation and searching for an end, they spent lives of luxury. There was no end to that either. Next, another group, believing that to eliminate *Taṇhā* (Craving) one must inflict pain on the body, went along the path of self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*), inflicting terrible suffering. The Buddha showed that both of these are extremes. Thus, he showed the Middle Path.

We return once again to the Noble Eightfold Path. In the Noble Eightfold Path, Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is indeed the very first step in eliminating the underlying tendency of ignorance (*avijjānusaya*). In Dhammadinnā's analysis of the Dhamma, it was also stated that underlying the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling called *adukkhamasukha* is ignorance (*avijjā*). When ignorance is removed, true knowledge (*vijjā*) emerges. Where knowledge emerges, there is liberation (*vimutti*). Where there is liberation, there is extinguishment (Nibbāna. Thus, in this Noble Eightfold Path starting with Right View, it is the question of the "middle" that is put into action. The two extremes have been abandoned. It is through establishing neutral feeling (*vedanā*) and developing a neutral mind, and thereby practicing insight (*vipassanā*), that we can escape from this *saṃsāra*.

Some of the things explained so far may appear profound. These were declared because they will be of assistance to meditators (*yogāvacaras*). On a valuable Esala Full Moon Poya day like today, we presented a concept of the Middle Path found in discourses such as the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* from another perspective. You, lay devotees, should take advantage of these and, in this age of decline of the Buddha's dispensation, strive hundreds or thousands of times to realize the liberation from *saṃsāra* that you hope for in this very life. If this Dhamma sermon has helped you develop the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), then taking refuge in them, and with the support of noble friendship (*kalyāṇa-mittatā*), may you gain the strength and power to realize the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahatship, and thereby escape the suffering of *saṃsāra*! Strive with this aspiration. Furthermore, may your relatives and all beings from Avīci hell to the Akanistha heaven who wish to rejoice in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, by so rejoicing, realize the supreme deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! Striving with this aspiration, recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #158

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.116)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Acaritvā brahmacariyaṃ, aladdhā yobbane dhanaṃ,

Jiṇṇakoñcā'va jhāyanti, khīṇamacche'va pallale.

Acaritvā brahmacariyaṃ, aladdhā yobbane dhanaṃ,

Senti cāpātikhittā'va, purāṇāni anutthunaṃ."

From:

Dhammapada Verses 155 and 156 (Jarā Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha constantly reminds us that giving way to heedlessness (negligence) is a cause of decline for both laypeople and monastics alike. Not doing what should be done at the time it should be done, and putting things off, is generally considered heedlessness. In the end, only regret remains for the person who has succumbed to heedlessness. Today, I shall present to you these two verses, which express this matter in a very striking manner, as our sermon topic.

The Buddha preached these two verses at Isipatana in Baranasi, with reference to the son of the Treasurer Mahādhana (Great Wealth). This treasurer's son was born into a treasurer family possessing eighty crores of wealth. Because there was so much wealth, his parents thought, 'There is no need for our son to gather new wealth; there is only the consumption of the existing wealth,' and they did not teach him any arts or sciences. They only taught him music and instrumental playing as a means of entertainment. Similarly, in that city, there was another treasurer family with eighty crores of wealth. A daughter was born to that family. Her parents also taught her only dancing and singing. Then, at the appropriate age, these two were united in marriage.

While living in this manner, the treasurer's son went to the royal palace three times a day for state service. There was a group of profligates (dhūrtas) in that city. In ancient times,

the term "dhūrta" was used to describe those who indulged in misconduct, who were addicted to alcohol, gambling, and chasing women. These drunkard profligates met and discussed: 'If we can get this treasurer's son addicted to liquor, our affairs will be very easy.' What they did was, tying fried meat, salt, jaggery, and other snacks to go with liquor around their waists, they came and sat by the roadside. Watching for the time the treasurer's son would return from the palace, they ate and drank liquor, saying: 'O young master! May you live a hundred years! It is because of you that we are able to eat and drink like this!'

When they blessed him in this manner, the treasurer's son asked the attendant who followed behind: 'What are these people drinking?' The attendant replied: 'It is a certain kind of beverage, master.' Then he asked: 'Is it something very pleasant?' 'What are you saying, master! In this living world, there is no beverage equal to it,' said that man. 'Then, I too shall drink a little of such a thing,' said the treasurer's son, and he began to order and drink it little by little. As soon as those profligates knew that he had formed the habit, they came and surrounded him. Because of this, his ruin began from that day. While drinking and enjoying himself with them, the treasurer's son began to order and spend more than enough for luxury items. Moreover, saying, 'This person is skilled in acting, that person is skilled in gambling,' he began to give them gifts worth hundreds and thousands. Thus, spending wealth without any mindfulness, before long, that eighty crores of wealth was exhausted. When the officials came and informed him of this, he said: 'My wife has eighty crores.' He spent and destroyed that as well in the same manner.

Next, he sold fields, lands, gardens, and household goods to drink and enjoy himself. When this treasurer's son reached old age, those who bought the treasurer's mansion drove them out of the house. These two built a hut-like shelter near the wall of someone else's house and began to live by begging.

While begging in this manner, one day they went to the alms-hall of the Sangha to eat leftover rice. Seeing them being given leftover rice by young novices, the Buddha smiled. When Ven. Ānanda asked the reason for it, the Buddha said: 'Look at this. If this treasurer's son had properly invested his wealth in some industry in his youth, he would have become the chief treasurer of this city. And if he had renounced that wealth and ordained, he had the spiritual potential, the supportive condition (*upanissaya-sampatti*), to attain Arahatship. His wife would have had the capability to become an Anāgāmī (Non-Returner). If he had taken that step and completed it in middle age, the treasurer's son would have become an Anāgāmī, and his wife a Sakadāgāmī (Once-Returner). Even in the final stage of life, in old age, if he had been diligent in investing his wealth in proper industries, he would have become the third treasurer. If he had ordained, he could have become a Sakadāgāmī, and his wife a Sotāpanna (Stream-Enterer).' Thus, it is said that the Buddha uttered these two verses on that occasion, showing how he had destroyed the spiritual potential he possessed for both mundane and supramundane success.

'Acaritvā brahmacariyaṃ, aladdhā yobbane dhanaṃ, jiṇṇakoñcāva jhāyanti, khīṇamacchevapallale.'

'Acaritvā brahmacariyaṃ'—not having lived the holy life, meaning, without practicing the holy life of the Dispensation (*Sāsana-brahmacariya*). Next, 'aladdhā yobbane dhanaṃ'—not having acquired wealth in youth. 'Jiṇṇakoñcāva jhāyanti, khīṇamacchevapallale'—they pine away like old herons standing by a dried-up pond with no fish. One has to grieve in old age like old herons; this is the meaning of the first verse. The next verse is very similar to it.

'Acaritvā brahmacariyaṃ, aladdhā yobbane dhanaṃ, senti cāpātikhittāva, purāṇāni anutthunaṃ.'

Not having lived the holy life, not having obtained wealth in youth, 'senti cāpātikhittāva, purāṇāni anutthunaṃ.' The simile described there is of shooting many arrows from a bow, which gradually loosens and slackens the bow-string. In the end, the strength of that bow is lost. That is the simile given here. Like a bow weakened and disabled due to excessive shooting, those individuals, regretting the past, lie down. If the bow were to think, 'In the past, I had the strength to shoot very far,' similarly, the grieving person thinks, 'Alas, in the past we ate and drank well, did this and that,' regretting the past. This is the idea expressed in that verse.

With reference to this story and the verses, the Buddha presented the value of living by properly balancing the two aspects of income and expenditure, which support the maintenance of lay life. Next, if one thinks about the monastic life, it is the fulfillment of that renunciation. Thus, the consequence of being negligent in both is shown by this story. We see many drawbacks (*ādīnava*) in the story of this treasurer's son.

On one side is the disadvantage of parents not teaching their children the sciences and skills that help them live. They only taught them how to enjoy wealth and seek amusement. Next, this story shows how this treasurer's son fell into the company of drunkards, fell into associating with bad friends (*pāpa-mitta-sevana*), turned toward gambling, and met with great ruin. When we think about the life of a lay devotee, the Buddha has preached many suttas on various occasions to eliminate those causes of ruin and provide paths to progress. You must have heard many of them. A highly renowned discourse is the *Vyagghapajja Sutta*. When the Buddha was residing in the Koliyan country, in the market town named Kakkarapatta, He gave a lengthy sermon in response to a question asked by Dīghajānu, the son of the Koliyans. It is a discourse that helps lay devotees in their daily lives. Dīghajānu, the son of the Koliyans, made his invitation in this manner: 'Venerable Sir, we are laypeople who enjoy sensual pleasures. We live in the lay home with wives and children. We wear Benares silk and use flowers, scents, and perfumes. Please preach to us a Dhamma suitable for achieving our progress in this world and progress in the next world.'

First, the Buddha presented, one by one, the factors that lead to welfare in this world. The four main factors presented for making lay life successful are that one must fulfill

these four Dhammas: *Uṭṭhāna-sampadā* (achievement of persistent effort), *Ārakkha-sampadā* (achievement of protection), *Kalyāṇamittatā* (good friendship), and *Samajīvikatā* (balanced livelihood). What was known as *uṭṭhāna-sampadā* is the achievement of persistent effort—that is, relentless energy. A lay devotee, considering the many responsibilities that arise while leading life, must act with persistent effort (*uṭṭhāna-vīriya*), discarding laziness. It is stated there: if a young man of good family performs any occupation—agriculture, trade, cattle-breeding, state service, or arts—he must be skilled in it. He must not be lazy, and he must have the ability to constantly investigate the paths to progress in the business or occupation he performs. Just as he does those works and is active, he must be a person with organizational skills. These factors are shown as they apply to lay life. Thus, the Buddha has stated that one must generate persistent effort (*uṭṭhāna-vīriya*) in that manner and earn wealth righteously, with the strength of one's arms and through the sweat of one's brow.

It is not to be done unrighteously in any way, nor deceitfully. It is expressed that it must be done through the sweat of one's brow, by one's own strength. The Buddha reminds us that one must also apply protective organization regarding the wealth collected in this manner. As protection in those times, it meant safeguarding the collected wealth so that it is not confiscated by kings, does not fall into the hands of thieves, is not destroyed by fire or water, and does not fall into the hands of unloved heirs. This belongs to *ārakkha-sampadā*.

Next, *kalyāṇamittatā* means a lay devotee must strive to avoid the association of bad friends and cultivate the association of good friends. Good friends are defined there as: if there are young or old people in one's village or market town who are superior in virtue (*sīla*), who keep the virtue belonging to a layperson, and who are developed in the virtues of conviction (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*), one must associate with them. One must discuss with them. The Buddha declared that taking their virtues of *saddhā*, *sīla*, *cāga*, and *paññā* as examples, one must discipline oneself in the same manner. This is the factor of good friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*).

Next, *samajīvikatā* (balanced livelihood) means one must manage the two sides: income and expenditure. The simile given for this is: just as a person holding a scale, looking at the pan of the scale, knows 'this much weight makes the pan go down,' and watches with careful oversight, a layperson, having a clear understanding of income and carefully thinking about expenditure, must control income and expenditure as if weighing them equally. Otherwise, if a person lives a luxurious life in such a way that the expenditure exceeds the income, people who see this will say, 'This person lives like an eater of wood-apples (*udumbara-khādika*).' That simile refers to someone who, seeing ripe wood-apples on a wood-apple tree, shakes the tree. Then, raw, mature, and ripe ones all fall down. He consumes only the ripe ones, and the rest goes to waste. That is the simile. If one lives in that manner, the accusation may come that one is squandering one's wealth and properties like an eater of wood-apples.

Next, if another person, despite having a large income, lives out of stinginess and miserliness without eating or drinking, a rumor will spread in society that he is one who

dies of starvation (*ajaddhumārika*), who dies without eating or drinking. Therefore, without going to either of those two extremes, one must live systematically, weighing them as mentioned, with an understanding of one's income and expenditure. Furthermore, it is shown that while living with the wealth and resources gathered in this manner, the channels of ruin that open up are called *apāya-mukha* (outlets of ruin). Here, *apāya* does not mean the hells and woeful states we usually refer to; here it means the ways in which one's wealth is lost.

As mentioned in this story, they are the four factors: womanizing, drinking, gambling, and bad friendship (*itthidhutta, surādhutta, akkhadhutta, pāpa-mittatā*). In today's terms, profligacy, drunkenness, gambling, and associating with evil companions—these four factors are shown as *apāya-mukha*, or channels to one's ruin. The Buddha gives a simile for this too: there is a large pond. If someone blocks the inlets of water to that pond and opens the outlets, and if it does not rain properly, that pond will dry up very quickly. Similarly, if one opens those channels of ruin and lives falling into negligence, one's ruin will happen very quickly.

Next are shown *āya-mukha* (channels of increase)—that is, the four factors that lead to the increase or protection and growth of the acquired wealth. In fact, they are simply the separation from those previously mentioned vices: not being a womanizer, not being a drunkard, not being a gambler, and the fourth factor, good friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*). Thus, the first factors are abstaining from those things like profligacy, alcohol, and gambling. Fourthly is good friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*)—cultivating good friendship and, following them, developing virtues like *saddhā* and *sīla* within oneself. Showing both the factors that lead to progress and the channels of ruin in this manner, the Buddha spoke in reply to Dīghajānu, the Koliyan son. The Buddha addressed that Koliyan son by his clan name—Vyagghapajja. That is why it is called the *Vyagghapajja Sutta*.

Next, *sampārayika* refers to the welfare and happiness of the next world. Having declared those factors for the welfare of this world, the Buddha declared for the welfare of the next world the very same factors: *saddhā-sampadā* (achievement of conviction), *sīla-sampadā* (achievement of virtue), *cāga-sampadā* (achievement of generosity), and *paññā-sampadā* (achievement of wisdom). These are shown in detail. Briefly, conviction (*saddhā*) is defined there as developing faith in the enlightenment of the Tathāgata, believing in it. It is the pure faith in the nine virtues expressed in the "Itipi so" passage that is called the achievement of conviction. Next, the achievement of virtue (*sīla-sampadā*) is the five precepts, which are considered the permanent virtue of a layperson—abstaining from taking life, taking what is not given, etc.

Next is the achievement of generosity (*cāga-sampadā*). Regarding a lay devotee, it is often described as living in the household free from the stain of stinginess (*macchera-mala*), with a mind open to giving, ready to share, and living as one who is skilled in distributing alms and giving to beggars. In those phrases, letting go (*pariccāga*) is shown. It is indicated that letting go must also be practiced. This is because a person with a stingy mind cannot live lay life happily. The power of letting go often helps to calm

the mind when one's possessions are lost; the achievement of generosity helps in this. Similarly, good friendship is also shown as associating with those of *saddhā-sampadā*, *sīla-sampadā*, *cāga-sampadā*, and *paññā-sampadā*. The achievement of wisdom (*paññā-sampadā*) is defined as a wisdom directed toward insight (*vipassanā*)—a wisdom that penetrates the nature of the arising and passing away of things in the world. Indeed, even in lay life, a lay devotee, living in accordance with the Dhamma, when facing the eight worldly conditions, gains an understanding of this impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature (*anicca-dhamma*), the nature of arising and passing away. This is what leads to the development of wisdom even in laypeople. This is what we have to understand. Even if it is not deep insight (*vipassanā*), to be wise with regard to the matters presented to oneself is to see this arising, passing away, and impermanence / inconstancy (*anicca*).

In this way, the Buddha shows that if one develops those achievements of virtue in this life, one can be reborn in a happy destination (*sugati*) in the next life, and can also quickly bring the *saṃsāric* suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) to an end. Those virtues are expressed in that manner in the *Vyagghapajja Sutta*. Regarding the consumption of alcohol, which leads to the ruin of a layperson and is mentioned in this story, it is discussed in many suttas. Among them, there is a sutta that is highly timely for this era, called the *Dhammika Sutta*. It is actually described as the lay duty (*gihi-vata*)—the practice belonging to a layperson has been preached by the Buddha in it. There too, it is stated that one must abstain from drinking alcohol.

Drinking alcohol is described as something that causes madness and delusion. Moreover, because of alcohol, one commits evil deeds oneself and leads others toward evil deeds. Sometimes, many people might present excuses, saying, 'When I drink alcohol and sleep, it is not a trouble to anyone.' However, in the texts, the minimum consequence is shown as being born insane, mentally deranged, or with weak mental strength in the next birth due to alcohol. In short, it is described there as an *apuññāyatana* (abode of demerit). We are told to abandon this *apuññāyatana*. The use of alcohol is shown as an abode where demerit accumulates. Similarly, in suttas like the *Parābhava Sutta*, the Buddha has specifically declared that womanizing, alcohol, and gambling—all of these cause a person's ruin.

Furthermore, in the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, which is known as the lay discipline (*gihi vinaya*), all of these are shown as things that lead to ruin. Six dangers of drinking alcohol are shown in the *Sigālovāda Sutta*. The first point is that in this very life, one's wealth is destroyed. Next, various disputes and quarrels arise because of alcohol. Next, various diseases occur; alcohol is shown as an abode that produces diseases. Next, a bad reputation spreads in the world about the person who drinks alcohol, as a drunkard. Moreover, while walking on the highway after drinking alcohol, there are times when one even forgets one's clothes; through this, shame and fear (*hiri-ottappa*) are destroyed, and one falls into such ill repute. Finally, it is shown that wisdom (*paññā*) is diminished.

The Buddha shows that even without the intoxication caused by alcohol, beings spend this *saṃsāric* life in this world drowned in other kinds of intoxication (*mada*). These are

described as *yobbana-mada* (intoxication of youth), *āroggya-mada* (intoxication of health), *jīvita-mada* (intoxication of life), and *bhoga-mada* (intoxication of wealth), which exist in the world. The intoxication of youth is the intoxication due to young age; that too is an intoxication. The intoxication of life is the idea, 'I am living; even if others die, I will not die.' The intoxication of health is thinking, 'I will not fall ill'—that too is an intoxication. Next, the intoxication of wealth—one becomes intoxicated with pride regarding the wealth and resources one possesses.

In addition to these kinds of intoxication, when alcohol also joins, this becomes extremely severe. The ultimate result of all of of this is the destruction of one's power of wisdom (*paññā*). The most valuable power a human has is wisdom. The most valuable quality that distinguishes humans from animals is the wisdom within the human. Animals live entirely subject to habit and addiction. If a human also becomes addicted to alcohol like an animal and degrades to an animal level, he falls away from that achievement of wisdom (*paññā-sampadā*). The dangers of drinking alcohol are shown in the *Sigālovāda Sutta*. In this manner, in various places, the Buddha has shown on many occasions that alcohol, as well as gambling, leads one toward ruin without one even realizing it.

Furthermore, when expressing the life of a lay devotee in many suttas like the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, *Dhammika Sutta*, and *Parābhava Sutta*, the Buddha shows that lay progress is not merely economic progress; righteous (*dhārmika*) progress goes along with it. In another very valuable sutta, you may have heard, the Buddha speaks of three kinds of individuals: the blind (*andha*), the one-eyed (*ekacakkhu*), and the two-eyed (*dvicakkhu*). The blind person is described in this way: he does not know the way to acquire wealth he does not have, nor does he see it; he does not see the way to increase the wealth he has acquired. This person does not have the economic eye to see these things. Similarly, he does not have the righteous eye to see good and bad, merit and demerit, wholesome and unwholesome. Such a person is shown as blind.

Next, the one-eyed person is called *ekacakkhu* because he has only one eye. What is the view, the vision, of that one-eyed person? That person knows the ways to earn wealth, righteously or unrighteously, and how to collect wealth. However, he has no understanding of good and bad, merit and demerit. He has the economic eye, but not the righteous eye. In this era too, many people who follow 'positive thinking' hold such views. When speaking about economics, we generally say it is good to acquire money and wealth in any way possible. However, the Buddha always pointed out that it must be wealth earned through one's sweat, through persistent effort (*uṭṭhāna-vīriya*), and righteously (*dhammaladdha*)—wealth acquired in accordance with the Dhamma. It is only wealth acquired in this manner that truly exists as happiness for oneself.

In another valuable sutta that makes this matter clearer, the Buddha on another occasion shows four kinds of happiness (*sukha*) for a layperson. If you reflect carefully on these four kinds of happiness, you will understand that the Buddha does not express progress in the way ordinary worldly people think. The spiritual progress of the individual is present along with it. These are expressed as four kinds of happiness for a lay devotee:

atthi-sukha (happiness of ownership/possession), *bhoga-sukha* (happiness of consumption/wealth), *anaṇa-sukha* (happiness of debtlessness), and *anavajja-sukha* (happiness of blamelessness). *Atthi-sukha* is not merely the fact that one has wealth, but that this acquired wealth is righteous—wealth acquired righteously. For a person who has unrighteous wealth and resources, when he thinks about that wealth, whenever he sees those unrighteously acquired things, what arises is a deceitful mind, a regret—you can understand this.

Usually, when we say *atthi-sukha*, the ability to think, 'I have this and that,' is a great fortune for a layperson. The ability to say, 'All of these are mine—this house is mine, this land is mine, those things are mine,' is considered a happiness for a layperson. However, if while thinking this, one thinks, 'I acquired these in this unrighteous manner, by crushing and oppressing others,' there is no joy there. Then, such a person does not have *atthi-sukha*. It is unrighteously acquired wealth.

That is why the Buddha declared that even *atthi-sukha* is obtained through wealth acquired in accordance with the Dhamma. Monks have *natthi-sukha* (the happiness of not having). To the extent that they do not have, it is a happiness for monks. When considering the ordinary world, for the layperson, to the extent that they have, it is a happiness. The Buddha has expressed these two. This is true. However, even though it is said 'to the extent that they have,' that having is the possession of things acquired righteously. Then, what is *bhoga-sukha*? In the ordinary world, *bhoga-sukha* is the ability to enjoy the five cords of sensual pleasure in a luxurious manner, living luxurious lives. That is what ordinary worldly people identify as *bhoga-sukha*. However, the Buddha identifies it in a more special way. What is *bhoga-sukha*? It is not merely obtaining food, drink, and other necessities of life from the acquired wealth and enjoying them. Along with it, it is performing meritorious deeds. That is where it becomes important. Thus, it is not only living happily in daily life with that acquired wealth, but using that very wealth to gather merits that support the next life. This is shown as the achievement of wealth (*bhoga-sampadā*). Thus, an idea of consumption that transcends the ordinary wealth-concept of the worldly people is expressed. Next, *anaṇa-sukha* is being debtless. The greatest torment in a person's mind is saying, 'I am in debt to such and such people.' Sometimes, people are even driven to commit suicide due to being in debt. If a person can say, 'I owe nothing to anyone,' as a layperson, that is a happiness for him. The Buddha calls this *anaṇa-sukha*.

Indeed, this is a sermon very close to lay life. However, it is not the layperson as thought of by the ordinary world, but the true noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) that the Buddha is describing here. We all know about the lives of great lay disciples who lived during the Buddha's time, who can be taken as role models, such as Citta the Householder and Anāthapiṇḍika. Even though they had immense wealth, they acquired it righteously. And how did they consume it? Just as they enjoyed happiness from it themselves, they engaged in meritorious deeds like giving and generosity. It is seen that they led such successful lives.

Next is shown *anavajja-sukha* (the happiness of blamelessness). That is specifically a spiritual matter. *Anavajja-sukha* is: if a person can generate the feeling, 'I have done no wrong through my mind, body, or speech,' that brings him happiness. When one thinks, 'I lived breaking precepts and destroying virtues in this and that manner,' sometimes it even becomes difficult for a person to sleep because of it. Therefore, *anavajja-sukha* is expressed as an extremely valuable happiness. Sometimes, lay devotees come to us and say, 'Since the time I took the five precepts, I kept these precepts very purely; I feel a great joy.' Then, leading a blameless life is shown as a great happiness for a layperson, as *anavajja-sukha*. In this manner, the Buddha showed even lay life as being inclined toward Nibbāna.

Next, when speaking about the achievement of wisdom (*paññā-sampadā*), you must understand that within wisdom lies that vision of impermanence (*anicca-dassana*). This lay life is actually a life lived within the eight worldly conditions—it is a constant exposure to them. Through them, one gains a certain study, a realization: 'All of these are impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*). Everything I hold as "myself" or "mine" has to be let go of at some point. Even if I do not let them go, they will perish.' Through this understanding, that person gradually draws closer to the Dhamma, closer to Nibbāna.

That is a state which you too are experiencing today. In addition to the permanent five precepts belonging to you daily, by observing the eight Uposatha precepts on Poya days and inclining toward a higher virtue, obtaining some relief from the troubles of lay life, and staying in a secluded place, you draw closer to the noble happiness (*sukha*) shown by the Buddha. *Atthi-sukha* belongs to the layperson in lay life. Seeing the mass of suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) that goes along with *atthi-sukha*, inclining toward a simple life, depending on what another person gives, engaging in sermon-hearing and meditation, and living with a spiritual joy (*nirāmisa-pīti*)—which belongs to the Sangha—this is a way of drawing close to renunciation (*nekkhamma*). That is why these lay devotees, on a day like this, leave aside whatever comforts and luxury items they have at home and spend a day drawing close to the life of the Arahats. The eight Uposatha precepts you have observed are actually an attempt to draw close to the life of an Arahat. Looking at it in another way, it is a rehearsal.

Here, it is not a matter of a layperson suddenly going and ordaining, though there are such people; through that past spiritual potential, one gradually becomes accustomed to that renunciation (*nekkhamma*) through this letting go. You let go of untimely food (*vikāla-bhojana*), you let go of dancing, singing, and instrumental music—all of those. You let go of high and luxurious seats, which are the comfortable things you are accustomed to at home. Letting go of colorful clothes and ornaments, you spent this day to draw closer to the noble *sukha*. Thus, the Buddha showed that a person who lives heedfully can achieve prosperity in both ways.

If we think about the story again, we see that of Prince Siddhattha, it was declared in his childhood that he would either become a Wheel-Turning Monarch or, if he ordained, a Buddha. Similarly, regarding this treasurer's son, the Buddha declared: if in his youth, he had generated the power of renunciation (*nekkhamma*) to let go of that great eighty

crores of wealth and ordain, he could have gone that far—he could have attained Arahatship. If he had renounced in the second stage of life, he could have become an Anāgāmī. If he had renounced in the third stage of life, he could have become a Sakadāgāmī, with the help of the spiritual potential he possessed. Thus, it shows us that if he had developed that power of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), he could have reached such heights. Instead, at the very least, had he performed the industries that should be performed in lay life heedfully, he could have become the first treasurer, the second treasurer, or the third treasurer of that city.

From this, we must reflect on our own lives. As many people say in this modern era, we do not need to exhaust ourselves to become rich instantly because everything is fast-paced. The Buddha has shown two valuable similes regarding wealth gathered righteously. This is also mentioned in the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, showing how a lay devotee should act. We know how bees gather and build a honeycomb. With what diligence and systematic order they build that honeycomb! The result of the honeycomb is also sweetness. There is nothing as sweet as honey. It is something made by exhausting themselves.

Similarly, the termite—termites work night and day, exhausting themselves diligently and cooperatively to build that termite-mound, which is a great creation. Those are the two examples the Buddha shows there.

A lay devotee must also earn wealth righteously, through the strength of his own hands and through the sweat of his brow. The Buddha does not show a method of gathering wealth in any competitive way, by wrongfully pushing others down or destroying them. That is the vision of the one-eyed person (*ekacakkhu*).

Therefore, we must bring to light this valuable vision of the Buddha, which is both economic and righteous. Especially in this era, various kinds of wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) are spreading in the country. We must strive not to be caught by them. Even regarding a day like today, some might think, 'What are these people doing, leaving aside their daily business activities and coming here to isolate themselves?' According to what the Buddha declared, we have to understand this day as a rehearsal for a higher renunciation (*nekkhamma*), which is superior to the happiness found in lay life. Thus, within this letting go is the beginning of removing the vast suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) associated with lay life. Furthermore, the Buddha has shown that it is because of this craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) that one is born again and again in this *saṃsāra*.

Thus, what goes along with lay life is the craving for possessions (*vastu-taṇhā*). Inevitably, that craving for possessions presents itself. To protect one's life and fulfill duties to children, one has to gather wealth. However, each time one gathers, one must understand that a mass of defilements flows in along with it. Just as in a place where there are iron objects, if one does not take them out and clean them from time to time, a pile of rust will remain; similarly, if a person only thinks of amassing wealth and lives stingily without spending anything, it leads to ruin. That person squandering wealth is one extreme; similarly, if some person lives very greedily and stingily, without eating or

drinking himself, without giving to anyone, and without performing meritorious deeds, that too leads to his ruin. In the end, he is reborn in the ghost realm (*peta-loka*), or falls into the animal realm, etc.

The greatest wealth we have is our mind. It is indeed the mind that takes us upward or downward in *saṃsāra*. Therefore, whether lay or ordained, we must understand all of of this as an effort to train the mind. Other things are not so important. The various kinds of problems and troubles that one has to face in a lifetime—everyone has to face them. Similarly, you can also obtain many examples from the events happening in this era regarding the fate of wealth acquired too quickly. If a large building is built on the seashore, it is washed away during the rough seas. As soon as a tsunami comes, it is washed away. In this era, you can understand from that simile how unrighteously gathered wealth is destroyed in a single moment. As a result of the evil deeds committed, the unseen force of kamma operates, and they can be destroyed either by fire, water, or due to various other reasons.

In that manner, a person brings about the destruction of both this world and the next world. Instead, the Buddha showed through the simile of the bee and the termite that one must act righteously, energetically, heedfully, and with persistent effort (*uṭṭhāna-vīriya*). It is not depending lazily on what is received from others. There, one must perform the industries to be done to carry on one's life, diligently and without missing the proper time. In ancient times, laziness was referred to in books as *ussūra-seyyā*—sleeping with one's back turned, insulting the rising sun. There are people who sleep in that manner. What is called *niddā-sīlī* (habitually sleeping) and *sabhā-sīlī* (habitually idling) refers to the same thing.

It is seen that due to various reasons, this habit is gradually increasing in society. Indeed, during the most valuable time of the day, which is the morning, many people are asleep. Such a society does not progress. We must reflect that the Buddha's word is always true. If one wakes up during the valuable time of the day, at the very auspicious dawn (*Brahma-muhūrta*), directs the mind to the duties and meritorious deeds to be done, resolves on a virtue (*sīla*), and starts the day, leading one's life according to that virtue—then, in the manner mentioned, one can draw close to the lives of those great householders who lived in the past, such as Anāthapiṇḍika, Citta the Householder, Ugga the Householder, and Hāliddikāni / Āḷavaka.

We must reflect on building a lifestyle from these stories that supports our sermon-hearing and meditation. Although we speak of Nibbāna, Nibbāna, it is not obtained merely by wishing. We must start the journey from the very place we are. To draw close to the characters of the past, we must strive to correct the shortcomings within this lay life we lead. If we expect wisdom (*paññā*), we must completely discard like poison that alcohol which brings about madness, which is directly opposed to wisdom. Moreover, the Buddha shows that not only drinking alcohol oneself, but also inviting others to drink and inducing others toward it, is a very great demerit. One secret within wrong livelihoods is that it is very easy to increase the number of those addicted to them. Just as those drunkards gathered that treasurer's son, many people strive to cover up the

shortcomings of their misconduct through the power of such a group. That is why alcoholism, profligacy, and vice spread so rapidly in society.

What we see from this story is the dangerous aspect of associating with bad friends. Therefore, the Buddha declared that one must strive to live by associating with those young or old people in one's area who are developed in the virtues of conviction (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*), discussing one's problems with them, and taking them as examples. Even in lay life, path-attainments (*magga-phala*) were achieved by protecting such pure virtue and developing the wisdom of arising and passing away—the wisdom that sees arising and passing away. Lay devotees can realize path-attainments within lay life itself through the meditations they perform. What is Nibbāna? It is the realization of the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*): impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and not-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*). Through these three characteristics, what we clearly see is impermanence / inconstancy (*anicca*). Everything does not remain in the same way. No matter how much we try to maintain them as 'ours' through craving / thirst (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*), they cannot be maintained. It is the same regarding our body. More than external things, our attention during the entire day is directed to our body. Through food, drink, medicine, etc., we must understand the impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature of this body.

We will not be allowed to live decorating this and covering this up. Therefore, we must learn the first lesson through it—impermanence / inconstancy (*anicca*). Through the way these hair, body hair, nails, teeth, etc., change, and by reflecting on the thirty-two parts of the body, one sees arising and passing away. Wisdom develops through that as well. Then, just like one's own body, seeing the arising and passing away, separation through death, and loss of possessions of those associated with oneself—we see all of of these as factors demonstrating the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*). Through every event, we must see this three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) declared by the Buddha. They are called the three marks because they can be seen everywhere in the world. However, they are not visible to us because we do not have the eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*). As the eye of wisdom develops, one begins to see the true nature of life, and it is when it is seen in that manner in the body that one inclines toward renunciation (*nekkhamma*).

Why does one incline toward renunciation (*nekkhamma*)? The Buddha has declared regarding the life of a layperson: 'This is a path of defilement and dust.' Instead, if we look at the true monastic life, it is like an open space for cultivating virtues. That is why one renounces lay life and inclines toward it. In any case, what we ultimately expect is to recognize the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*)—the impermanence / inconstancy (*anicca*) existing in *saṃsāra*, the nature of suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) that arises because we are compelled to constantly prepare and reconstruct them due to that very impermanence / inconstancy (*anicca*), and the inability to take them as 'me' or 'mine' (*anattā*). If one realizes these three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) through the matters presented to oneself on those occasions, it becomes an effort of comprehension as declared by the Buddha.

Therefore, meditation (*bhāvanā*) is not merely sitting in one place and meditating; it is studying and observing the various events of life, the things seen, regarding one's own body as well as others' bodies—what in modern terms is called studying. Even if there is no such study, one must understand something through what one sees; one must recognize these characteristics. By recognizing the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), as a result, a sense of disenchantment (*nibbidā*) with this *saṃsāric* existence arises in a person.

We are very afraid of and dislike the word 'disenchantment' (*nibbidā*). However, it is natural. If we are to be freed from this suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), we must properly understand the state of suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), become disenchanted with it, and develop a turning away from it. It is through that turning away that we can rise higher. Indeed, it is through the maturing of that disenchantment (*nibbidā*) with *saṃsāra* that one lets go of all these worldly pleasures and wealth. In the past, kings left their kingdoms, treasurers left their wealth, and queens and princesses inclined in that manner because, rather than seeing ordinary worldly pleasure as true pleasure, they saw that there is a higher happiness. They saw that a spiritual joy (*nirāmisa-pīti*) can be harvested through renunciation (*nekkhamma*), which is superior to sensual pleasure (*kāma-sukha*). The highest spiritual, unworldly joy is what one experiences supramundane-wise through the realization of Nibbāna in the attainment of fruits (*phala-samāpatti*), etc.

Therefore, you must reflect that you are giving a great example to the world at this moment. Temporarily leaving aside various levels of comfort in your lay lives, you came to this place, resolved on a valuable virtue (*sīla*), and spent a valuable day depending on the food given by others, drawing close to and emulating the lives of the Arahats—those lay devotees who have observed this higher virtue. Furthermore, the Buddha told us to start this journey from the very place we are. Correcting the shortcomings of lay life with the support of this sutta, and without thinking of the targets shown by the Buddha above that as being too far away, if you strive, through the development of virtues like conviction (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*), you can ultimately and gradually incline toward the deep aspect of the Dhamma. Then, bringing forth insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), and through the penetration of the paths and fruits—Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmī, Anāgāmī, Arahat—you must strive to obtain from this sermon the strength to escape all *saṃsāric* suffering / unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) of birth / arising (*jāti*), decay and death / aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, etc., and attain the supreme, deathless Nibbāna!

Through this hearing of the Dhamma, and through the power of the virtues of *sīla* cultivated throughout this day, may you be able to realize that supreme, deathless Nibbāna! May you aspire thus! Also, if there are any beings in this universe, from Avīci hell to the Akaniṣṭha heaven, who wish to rejoice in the merit of this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma hearing, may they, by so rejoicing, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through whatever Bodhi (awakening) they aspire to! May you aspire thus!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #159

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.123)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Na tāvatā dhammadharo, yāvatā bahu bhāsati;

Yo ca appam pi sutvāna, dhammaṃ kāyena passati,

Sa ve dhammadharo hoti, yo dhammaṃ nappamajjati."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 259 (Dhammaṭṭha Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

In this dispensation, the one who is known by the name ‘Dhamma-dhara’ is the person who bears or holds the Dhamma. Generally, the ordinary world considers the state of being highly learned (*bahu-ssuta*)—having a vast store of learning and possessing a wide, comprehensive knowledge of the Dhamma—as the necessary qualification to become a Dhamma-dhara. Be that as it may, today's thematic verse and its corresponding background story reveal that there is a far deeper meaning to the term ‘Dhamma-dhara’. The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Supreme Buddha, delivered this verse at the Jetavana monastery concerning an Elder named Ekudaniya. This Arahat Elder lived alone in the forest. He also had a habit: on every Uposatha day, he would invite the deities and deliver a single verse as his Dhamma sermon. As soon as that single verse of the Dhamma sermon concluded, the deities residing in that forest would raise a great roar of appreciation (*Sādhu*), so loud that it made the entire forest echo.

On one Uposatha day, two monks who were masters of the Three Pitakas (*Tipitakadhara*) visited this Elder's forest hermitage, each accompanied by a retinue of five hundred monks. Upon their arrival, the Arahat Elder welcomed them with great joy and said, "We are indeed fortunate today to have the opportunity to hear a Dhamma sermon from you." Then, those visiting monks asked, "But friend, there is no audience here to listen to a sermon." The Elder replied, "There is, Venerable Sirs. The deities in this forest raise a great cry of *Sādhu* in appreciation of my sermons." Thus, the two

visiting monks agreed to deliver the Dhamma sermon. One monk presented the Dhamma text, and the other expounded upon it. In this manner, they delivered a very grand and extensive Dhamma sermon. However, when the sermon ended, not a single deity uttered a word of *Sādhu*.

So, these two Theras asked, "How is this, friend? Did you not say that the deities shout *Sādhu* when a sermon ends?"

"Indeed, Venerable Sirs. Usually, on the days I deliver sermons, they raise such a cry of appreciation. I know not why they did not do so today."

"In that case, friend, you deliver a Dhamma sermon," they said.

Thereupon, this Arahat Elder took his fan, ascended the Dhamma-seat, and delivered his Dhamma sermon using that same single verse. Just as before, the deities raised a massive roar of *Sādhu*.

At this, a critical discussion arose among the five hundred accompanying monks: "The deities of this forest act with partiality, looking at faces. Our master-monks delivered such a grand sermon, yet they did not even utter a single *Sādhu* or make any sound. But when this old monk uttered just one verse, they raised such a loud cry of appreciation!"

When these monks visited the Buddha at the Jetavana monastery, they related this matter to Him.

Then the Buddha declared, "No, monks, one does not become a Dhamma-dhara merely because one has learned much or preaches much. If a person understands even a single verse of the Dhamma properly, practices it, and realizes the Four Noble Truths—it is him that I call a Dhamma-dhara."

It was to clarify this matter that the Buddha uttered the verse we mentioned earlier:

> *Na tāvatā dhammadharo yāvatā bahubhāsati,*
>
> *Yo ca appampi sutvāna dhammaṃ kāyena passati,*
>
> *Sa ve dhammadharo hoti yo dhammaṃ nappamajjati.*

One is not a bearer of the Dhamma merely because he speaks much. If someone, having heard even a little, touches the Dhamma with his body—that is to say, if he sees it, if he directly experiences and realizes the Dhamma with his body—and does not neglect the Dhamma, that monk indeed is the true bearer of the Dhamma. This is the meaning contained in that verse.

Next, let us look at the verse uttered by the Elder known as Ekudaniya. He is called Ekudaniya Thera because he was a monk who delivered only a single exultation (*udāna*) as his Dhamma sermon. An exultation, dear devotees, is an utterance of joy. A person makes an exultation of joy because they have directly realized the matter of which they

speak. Let us now examine the verse that this Arahat constantly delivered as his Dhamma sermon. What is that verse?

Adhicetaso appamajjato munino monapathesu sikkhato,

Sokā na bhavanti tādino upasantassa sadā satīmato.

Adhicetaso appamajjato: the term *adhicitta* is generally applied to a mind in concentration (*samādhi*). Here, it refers to the concentration of the fruit of Arahatship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*), which is the highest level of concentration. For the sage (*muni*) who possesses that concentration, who is diligent (*appamajjato*), who trains in the paths of the sage (*monapathesu sikkhato*), who is unwavering (*tādī*—a word used for one who is unshakeable and unperturbed in the face of the eight worldly conditions), who is completely peaceful (*upasanta*), and is ever-mindful (*sadā satīmato*)—for him, there are no sorrows. This is the meaning of that verse. For that sage who is endowed with the concentration of the fruit of Arahatship, who dwells diligently, who trains in the paths of the sage, who is unshakeable in the face of the eight worldly conditions, and is endowed with the quality of unwavering stability (*tādī*), there are no sorrows.

Thus, we can understand why the deities raised their cry of *Sādhu* for that exultation of joy. Since that verse described what the Arahat Elder had directly realized, it was deeply meaningful and highly valuable. It was this very fact that the Buddha confirmed: the true value lies in directly realizing the Dhamma. It is there that the quality of a Dhamma-dhara exists. This is indeed a point that is forgotten by the world in this day and age. Usually, both in the past and today, the ordinary world uses the term "Dhamma-dhara" for someone who has memorized the Tipitaka and holds it in mind. With today's technological advances, if someone receives computer training, puts the Tipitaka into a computer, and carries it in their hand, they too are a "Dhamma-dhara". It is very easy to be a Dhamma-dhara in this era! If you carry the digitized Tipitaka in your hand, you are a Dhamma-dhara, for you can retrieve whatever is in it at any moment. But that is not what the Buddha constantly pointed out to us. Seeing is far greater than mere knowing. One can accumulate as much knowledge as one likes. But what is more valuable is seeing, the vision—the internal realization of that Dhamma. That is what the Buddha gave prominence to.

Often, there may be the flavor of sound (aesthetic beauty) in Dhamma sermons. But to receive the flavor of meaning (the essence), that Dhamma must be enriched by directly realizing it through practice (*paṭipatti*) and penetration (*paṭivedha*), which are meditative in nature. Thus, we can understand that the deep meaning of the word ‘Dhamma-dhara’ is holding the Dhamma through direct realization. The Dhamma is not a digitized machine-concept, nor is it something held externally through rote memorization; only the one who has directly realized the Dhamma internally can correctly expound and explain it. No matter how many commentaries, sub-commentaries, word-by-word translations, glossaries, and dictionaries exist, it is only the person with direct realization who can convey a true understanding of that Dhamma to another.

Here, let us specifically highlight the Buddha's declaration regarding the Four Noble Truths. Indeed, in this dispensation, what was originally referred to as the "Dhamma" was none other than the Four Noble Truths. Although the Buddha's teachings contain gradual instructions such as discourses on giving (*dāna-kathā*), virtue (*sīla-kathā*), and so forth, the most valuable Dhamma revealed to the world by the Buddhas themselves is ultimately the Dhamma of the Four Noble Truths. Within this Truth-Dhamma, the profoundly deep phenomenon of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is also embedded. If we were to mention the Four Noble Truths briefly, the Buddha has introduced Himself as an incomparable physician, a master surgeon, a physical physician. The Four Noble Truths are structured exactly in accordance with the principles of this medical science: *Dukkha* (Suffering), *Samudaya* (Origin), *Nirodha* (Cessation), and *Magga* (Path). Dukkha is the disease; Samudaya is the diagnosis/cause of the disease; Nirodha is health (absence of disease); Magga is the treatment, the medicine.

Ordinary people usually think of suffering (*Dukkha*) in simple terms as birth (*jāti*), decay and death / aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death, separation from the loved, association with the unloved, and so forth. Even if a Buddha did not arise to declare this, the ordinary world already knows it. However, the concluding part of the analysis of the Truth of Dukkha is not known to many. Even if they know it, they very easily forget it. What is it? The Buddha has declared: *saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*. In short, the five aggregates of grasping / holding / fuel are suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress. The five heaps of grasping are suffering. Thus, if grasping / holding / fuel is suffering, what is its cause, its diagnosis? It is craving / thirst (*taṇhā*).

The Truth of Origin (*Samudaya-sacca*) is often presented as craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). In some places, it is also presented as the Dhamma of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). That too is meaningful because you know that in Dependent Arising, it is stated: *taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ*—conditioned by craving / thirst is grasping / holding / fuel. Thus, the cause of the disease, which is grasping, is craving. That is why craving is presented as the second truth, the Truth of Origin.

Next is health, the state of being free from disease. That is the diagnosis. The Buddha's method is not to treat the symptoms of the disease, but to treat the very cause of the disease. Thus, the cause of the disease is craving. Nibbāna is the Mind Stilled / Extinction / Extinguishment, which is described as *taṇhakkhayo*—the destruction of craving. The Mind Stilled is right where craving is destroyed. It is not some strange, alien world; it is the cooling, the extinguishment of the burning and distress caused by that disease, just as a leper or a fever-patient is cured of their illness. That is why the term *taṇhakkhayo* is used. Right where craving is destroyed, grasping / holding / fuel (*upādāna*) naturally slips away. There is no need for anyone else to come and push it away. Along with the cessation of craving, grasping is destroyed.

It is this that is directly experienced by the one who realizes the Four Noble Truths for the first time through the path of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-magga*). Because of that very

realization, they fall into Nibbāna. The concentration of the path (*Magga-samādhi*) is called the immediate concentration (*ānantarika-samādhi*). When that path is fulfilled, disenchantment with the five aggregates of grasping arises. When the development of the three characteristics of impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*) taught by the Buddha is brought to its peak, enough to attain the path and fruit, grasping slips away along with the subsiding of craving, and that person falls into the Mind Stilled. It is said that they touch the element of Nibbāna,. In whatever words we describe it, what occurs there is the sublime peace within letting go. It is not a bliss of feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), but a sublime peace—or to put it in another way, the cessation of becoming / existence (*bhava-nirodha*). At that moment, that person directly experiences a wondrous peace of being freed from the world, freed from these five aggregates of grasping. Along with that direct experience, they realize: "It is through this path—the Noble Eightfold Path starting with Right View and ending with Right Concentration—that I reached this." This is how the Four Noble Truths are directly experienced.

It is this very story that is briefly described in many places when defining a Stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*). Even if they are not a great scholar, even if they cannot eloquently recite *avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā* (conditioned by ignorance are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity) like academics do, and even if they are an extremely poor beggar—the Dhamma states that at the moment of direct realization, they directly experience the law of Dependent Arising, its basic principle.

That is why the brief description of a Stream-enterer is: *yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ* ("whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease"). Understand this principle. Here, "whatever" refers to the five aggregates of grasping: the aggregate of form, the aggregate of feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), the aggregate of perception(*saññā*), the aggregate of preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Until then, if they had thought there was a soul or a permanent self residing inside this, the Stream-enterer instead understands: "These are mere heaps, there is a collection here. It is not a solid/compact entity (*ekaghana*). It is not a soul-like entity." When this is let go, at the moment of letting go, even consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is let go. At that moment, that entire heap of grasping / holding / fuel is let go. Through this, they understand that this entire set of five aggregates of grasping, including consciousness, is subject to the nature of arising and ceasing. That is a vital realization—subject to the nature of arising and ceasing. That is what is meant by saying they understood Dependent Arising: "The Noble Method is well-seen with wisdom (*ariyo ñāyo paññāya sudiṭṭho*), well-penetrated (*suppaṭividdho*)." This is how a Stream-enterer is described.

Indeed, this matter is so significant that in modern terms, there are eight titles or qualifications mentioned in the Dhamma regarding a Stream-enterer. What are these eight titles? They are: *diṭṭhadhammo, pattadhammo, viditadhammo, pariyogāḷhadhammo, tiṇṇavicikiccho, vigatakathaṅkatho, vesārajjappatto, aparappaccayo satthusāsane*. Let us try to understand these titles briefly.

Diṭṭhadhammo means one who has seen the Dhamma. This refers to the arising of the Dhamma-eye. Through this, they saw Dependent Arising and also saw cessation, Nibbāna. *Pattadhammo* means they reached the Dhamma. *Viditadhammo* means they understood the Dhamma—in modern academic terms, we could call them a "Dhamma-vedi" (Graduate of Dhamma), though no one seems to use that term today. Today, such titles are given based on academic studies, but they can truly be called a "Dhamma-vedi". *Pariyogāḷhadhammo* means they plunged into the Dhamma, not just skimming the surface but diving deep. *Tiṇṇavicikiccho* means they crossed over doubt. Previously, they had doubts: "Did I exist in the past, or did I not?" and based on the standpoint of "I", they engaged in various arguments. As is mentioned regarding other sectarians, they debated whether they existed in the past or not. Now they realize: "If there was a past, it was just these five aggregates of grasping. If there is a future, it too is nothing but the five aggregates; there is no 'I' or 'person' here." Thus, there is no doubt. *Vigatakathaṅkatho* means "How, how?" has gone—there is no longer any perplexity or questioning of "How, how?". A Stream-enterer does not go around asking "How is this? How is that?". They have understood the matter. Next is *vesārajjappatto*—a very profound word—meaning they attained self-confidence and fearlessness. Finally, *aparappaccayo satthusāsane*: in the Teacher's dispensation, they are independent of others. This is a word with a very deep meaning: without needing another's assistance, they can complete the remaining work of liberation. That is why they are called a *Sekha*—one in training. "Now, I have entered the university proper; hitherto I was in preschool." The simile used for a Stream-enterer is like a log thrown into a river that flows straight to the ocean. Because of the arising of the Dhamma-eye, if they develop it without negligence, they can reach the Mind Stilled in that very life; if not, they will do so within seven births at most. If they receive the specific guidance and help of the Buddha, they can do so even faster. That is what is meant by *aparappaccayo satthusāsane*. What a valuable set of titles!

Now, who received this set of titles in this Dhamma? Was it kings, wealthy merchants, scholars, or those who graduated from the Takkasila University of that era? There is a beautiful story you may have heard before.

Once in the city of Rājagaha, the Buddha was delivering a Dhamma sermon near a street. A man saw a crowd gathered from afar. He thought, "This must be a place where food is being distributed," and approached. "No, it is the Ascetic Gotama delivering a Dhamma sermon. Never mind if I do not get food, I must at least listen to some of the Dhamma," he thought, and sat at the edge of the crowd.

While delivering the sermon, the Buddha scanned the crowd to see who was ready to understand the deep Dhamma. He saw the poor, leprous Suppabuddha. He directed the sermon specifically at him. By the end of the sermon, the leper Suppabuddha directly experienced that fundamental principle: *yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*, and attained the fruit of Stream-entry. In that Sutta, the Buddha bestowed all eight of those prestigious titles upon Suppabuddha the leper! Can you imagine? All eight of those titles were applied to Suppabuddha the leper. This is the true

value of the Dhamma. It shows us that one does not become a Dhamma-dhara through external retention, but through direct realization.

Likewise, the Buddha is the incomparable, supreme surgeon. Those Noble disciples who learned the lesson well from Him took the medicine, cured their own illness, and were thus able to explain it to others. We sometimes use an analogy—though it is not explicitly found in the texts, everyone knows there are four path-knowledges: Sotāpatti, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, Arahatta. Through these four path-knowledges, one reaches the four fruits and realizes Nibbāna,. Likewise, everyone knows there are eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. In terms of a medical analogy, it is like drinking four doses of a decoction made of eight ingredients to attain perfect health. The advice to cure this disease of Saṃsāra can be given in this manner. The Buddha always praised this specialist medical method rather than quack/folk medicine. No matter how many quack doctors there are treating symptoms, if someone can directly realize the Dhamma and, as a specialist, cure the disease of Saṃsāra, it is to that person that the Buddha gave the title "Dhamma-dhara".

There is also a verse in the Dhammapada—I will not recite the whole thing due to lack of time, but you have probably heard it before. The Buddha gives a satirical simile about memorizing the Dhamma without directly realizing it, comparing such a person to a cowherd who minds other people's cows. In ancient India, there were wealthy cow-owners with large herds. The owners could not watch the cows themselves, so they hired a laborer. The hired hand would take the cows out in the morning, feed them grass all day, and count them in the evening to hand them back without any missing. But even though he minded them and fed them all day, he did not get to enjoy the five products of the cow (*pañca-gorasa*): milk, curd, butter, buttermilk, and ghee. The Buddha used this simile to describe one who memorizes and recites the Dhamma without practicing it or directly realizing it. These numerous similes show the immense value of the arising of the Dhamma-eye. Only one whose eyes are opened can open the eyes of others.

This story of the Dhamma-eye is beautifully illustrated in the Māgandiya Sutta.

There, the Buddha used the simile of a man born blind (*jātyandha*) during a Dhamma discussion with the wanderer Māgandiya to inspire faith in him. The wanderer Māgandiya held the wrong view that Nibbāna is physical health. He went around saying, "Health is the supreme gain, Nibbāna is the supreme bliss" (*āroggyā paramā lābhā, nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ*). Through this, he thought Nibbāna meant physical health. The Buddha showed him that the health of this disease-ridden body is not true health. True health is the cessation of the disease of Saṃsāra, the cessation of suffering taught by past Buddhas, which is Nibbāna.

To explain this, the Buddha gave a simile. There are several similes in that discourse, but to mention the relevant one: there is a man blind from birth. He cannot see black or white, red, blue, or yellow. He cannot see the sun or the moon. This man hears someone with eyesight say, "This clean, spotless white cloth is so beautiful, so pleasant." Hearing this, the blind man thinks, "Even though I have no eyes and cannot see it, others can see

me. I must get a good white cloth to wrap around myself." So he goes around searching for a clean, pure white cloth. A deceitful man comes along and says, "Here, this is a white cloth," and hands him a dirty, stained, oil-soiled piece of rag.

The blind man happily wears this rag for a few days. Then, the blind man's relatives—the Buddha describes the details of the relatives and friends—bring a skilled surgeon, a physician complete in both aspects. The physician treats the patient born blind with emetics, purgatives, nasal therapy, ointments, etc., and restores his sight. As soon as the blind man gains his sight, he looks down and sees: "What on earth am I wearing? Oh no, this is a dirty, oil-stained, utterly repulsive rag!" He becomes extremely angry with the deceitful man who cheated him. "All this time, this man deceived me, giving me this and calling it a white cloth!" He might even feel like killing him; he despises it that much.

Having given the simile, the Buddha connects it to the meaning: "Similarly, Māgandiya, if the Dhamma-eye arises in you while I preach the Dhamma, a similar revolution of attitude will take place in you."

Let us look at the elements of the simile. The "white cloth" refers to these five aggregates of grasping / holding / fuel—form, feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception, preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—which he had been holding onto all this time as a self/soul. As soon as the Dhamma-eye arises, he sees: "How troublesome and repulsive this is! It deceived me, didn't it?" Here, it is said, "My own mind deceived me." My own mind (*citta*), through wrong understanding, had been holding onto and clinging to these five aggregates of grasping all this time.

You have heard of *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (the dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body). I thought this existed as a permanent entity. Now, through the insight (*vipassanā*) highlighted by the Buddha, one sees that there is no solid, true, permanent entity here—there is only a constant stream of arising and ceasing, a heap of arising and ceasing, whether we look at form, feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception, preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), or consciousness (*viññāṇa*). That is why this is called a heap of grasping / holding / fuel. It is just a heap of graspings, a heap of attempts to grasp. In the end, nothing is caught. This is what happens. This is the simile for the arising of the Dhamma-eye. Through the arising of the Dhamma-eye, the aggregates of grasping are understood as suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). That realization comes when craving / thirst for them is eliminated.

According to the principle given by the Buddha, by developing insight-knowledges to the highest level through the three characteristics of impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*), seeing them as arising and ceasing, and seeing how they perish—when a deep disenchantment (*nibbidā*) with Saṃsāra arises, at that moment, this is let go. Along with the letting go, one touches Nibbāna; one falls into the Mind Stilled. This is the story of the Dhamma-eye.

We also mentioned that Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is embedded within the Four Noble Truths. In the explanation of Dependent Arising, you may have heard of twelve factors, starting with *avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā* (conditioned by ignorance are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity). These twelve factors connected by conditionality are usually presented as the Dhamma of Dependent Arising. But that is not the core principle. Before listing the twelve factors, the core principle is shown in some places. The Buddha states this principle in a wondrous way:

Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti,

imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati;

imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti,

imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati.

Hearing this, one might feel amazed. Translated into Sinhala, it means: "When this is, this is; with the arising of this, this arises. When this is not, this is not; with the cessation of this, this ceases." Looking at it, it seems like a big riddle.

These things cannot be grasped by logic. That is why the Dhamma is called *atakkāvacara* (beyond the sphere of logic). In logic, if something is one thing, it is that; another thing is different. But here, the Buddha points out a mutual, reciprocal relationship. That is the fundamental meaning of the word *paccaya* (condition/requisite)—mutually. None of these exist in isolation. You have heard the word *paṭiccasamuppāda* many times. In Sinhala, we have to translate it as "dependent co-arising" or "arising because of," not independently.

There is a place where this is clearly illustrated. Once, when the Buddha was preaching on Dependent Arising, Ven. Moliya-phagguna asked several questions. These questions help us grasp the deeper side of Dependent Arising. Having listened to the description of each of the twelve factors, Ven. Moliya-phagguna asked, "Venerable Sir, who touches (makes contact)?" The word *phassa* (contact) is there. The Buddha said, "The question itself is wrong. That is not how the question should be asked. The question should be: 'Conditioned by what is contact?' There is no talk of 'who' or 'whom' here." If the question is asked thus, the answer is: *saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso* (conditioned by the six sense-bases is contact). The six sense-bases are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Contact is because of these six sense-bases.

He does not stop there: *saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso, phassa-paccayā vedanā* (conditioned by the six sense-bases is contact, conditioned by contact is feeling / sensation). There is something striking here. Ven. Moliya-phagguna did not even ask about feeling / sensation (*vedanā*). Yet, the Buddha presents three terms here: conditioned by the six sense-bases, contact arises; conditioned by contact, feeling / sensation arises. What does this show?

We will give a small analogy. Consider a chain. Each link in a chain is connected to the other two links on either side. To recognize it as a piece of a chain, one link is connected to another link on one side, and to another link on the other side. Think of this principle. When Ven. Moliya-phagguna asked about contact—"who touches?"—the Buddha also spoke of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*) which condition contact, and also of feeling / sensation (*vedanā*) which arises conditioned by contact.

Think about this using the chain analogy: what does this show? None of them exist individually. There is a mutual relationship between them. This is how arising occurs. Ven. Sāriputta once expressed this by comparing it to two sheaves of reeds leaning against each other. If you pull one away, the other falls. If you pull the other away, this one falls. The Buddha was the only one to reveal that such a natural law exists in this entire universe. Until then, people were bound by logic and words, building various views: "Everything absolutely exists" or "Nothing absolutely exists". Instead of these extremes, the Buddha declared arising because of conditions—Dependent Arising.

Then, Ven. Moliya-phagguna asked the second question: "Venerable Sir, who feels (experiences) this feeling / sensation?" The Buddha said, "The question is wrong. I do not say there is one who feels." Here too, He gives the correct answer: *phassa-paccayā vedanā, vedanā-paccayā taṇhā* (conditioned by contact is feeling / sensation; conditioned by feeling / sensation is craving / thirst). He did not ask about craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), but the Buddha mentioned it anyway.

Now, recall the chain analogy. Since it had to be said, the Buddha showed that there is a conditional relationship there too. The question was about feeling / sensation (*vedanā*). Feeling / sensation is connected on one side (let's say the left) to contact, and on the other side (the right) to craving / thirst. This conditional connection was highlighted.

Next, he asked a similar question: "Venerable Sir, who grasps?" (*upādāna*). When we say "grasping", people usually think of someone who grasps. But here, there is only grasping. That grasping is due to craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). If there was a separate person who grasps, then when craving arises, that person would have something else to do. But there is no independent entity here. Grasping / holding / fuel (*upādāna*) naturally falls away as soon as craving / thirst, which causes it, is eliminated. That is what needs to be highlighted: cause and condition (*hetu-paccaya*), which is the most valuable part of Dependent Arising.

To highlight this, when asked "who grasps?", the Buddha corrected the question: "Conditioned by what is there grasping?" How does grasping / holding / fuel exist? The Buddha corrects the question first. Then He answers: *taṇhā-paccayā upādānaṃ, upādāna-paccayā bhavo* (conditioned by craving / thirst is grasping / holding / fuel; conditioned by grasping / holding / fuel is becoming / existence). He added becoming / existence (*bhava*), which wasn't even asked. Understand it in the same way: because of craving / thirst, there is grasping; on the other side, grasping is connected to becoming / existence. Where there is craving / thirst, there is grasping; where there is grasping, there is becoming / existence. This is how it should be understood. This is enough on

that. Based on this, we should understand Dependent Arising in pairs. That is what is in the principle *imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti*.

Normally, in comparison, how does the worldly mind reason? "When this is, that is. With the arising of this, that arises. When this is not, that is not. With the cessation of this, that ceases." This is how the ordinary world operates in the realm of logic. But the Buddha, in a wondrous way, uses "this, this, this" (*idaṃ, idaṃ, idaṃ*). Think of this in terms of the chain analogy. If we were to give meaning to this algebraic formulation, the Dhamma says: "Conditioned by ignorance (*avijjā*) are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). With the arising of ignorance, preparations arise. When ignorance is not, preparations are not. With the cessation of ignorance, preparations cease." You can apply this Dhamma principle to any two factors of the twelve.

Thus, the law of Dependent Arising is one thing; its examples are another. We usually memorize the set of examples for convenience. But understanding the underlying core principle is what is important. Counting them like a cowherd counting cows is very easy, and nowadays we have computers to do that. But when it comes to the inner vision, the internal understanding—if someone understands the principle, that is where Dependent Arising is understood and directly realized.

According to the insight instructions given by the Buddha, when a deep disenchantment (*nibbidā*) with Saṃsāra arises through the highest understanding of the five aggregates of grasping, that grasping / holding / fuel slips away from the mind. At that very moment, through the destruction of craving / thirst, letting go occurs naturally. Through letting go, Nibbāna is realized. If the continuation of Saṃsāra in this world is a burning, then Nibbāna is the cooling. It is not an alien world, but right here in this very life (*diṭṭhe va dhamme*). That itself is called the cessation of becoming / existence (*bhava-nirodha*). If existence is grasping—all existence is based on grasping. A person with money is a merchant (*mudalali*); a person with a vehicle is a driver. Everything exists within grasping. (The etymology of *mudalali* might not be exactly that, but we say it according to the ordinary world's understanding). We gain ownership of something based on what we grasp.

Therefore, the Buddha highlights that right where grasping is absent, there is the cooling/extinction which is Nibbāna,. This point about Dependent Arising will be useful to you.

Now, the Dhamma is like a basket passed from hand to hand. What happens over a long period? The words of the Dhamma have a superficial meaning. The Buddha declared that the Dhamma should be preserved *sa-atthaṃ sa-byañjanaṃ* (with meaning and with phrasing/letter). Both meaning and letter must be preserved. If a word is memorized incorrectly, the meaning is also distorted. If the meaning is given incorrectly, the word is also distorted. You can understand this, can't you? That is what is meant by *sa-atthaṃ sa-byañjanaṃ*. The Buddha said the Dhamma is protected by preserving both its meaning aspect (*artha*) and its letter/phrasing aspect (*byañjana*). The letters must be kept unchanged, and the meaning must be correctly retained.

Suppose someone doesn't even know what the Dhamma is saying, or what the meaning of a word is. They heard someone say it, and they write it down based on what they heard. Not just due to lack of language comprehension, but due to other reasons, they misunderstand the word and record it. There, the Dhamma gets marginalized/stifled because they themselves do not understand what is being said. That is why both the meaning aspect and the phrasing aspect are important.

In the past, the preservation of the Dhamma was done by lineages of reciters (*bhāṇaka*). How wondrously! We cannot even imagine it today. There were "single-hearing" (*eka-ssuta*) individuals who could memorize something after hearing it just once. In ancient times, there were people with extraordinary mental capacities that would put modern computers to shame, not only among Buddhists. They could memorize the massive Vedic texts, the Three Vedas. Even sixteen-year-old youths had the capacity to hold everything in memory. But even though that memorization aspect was there, as it passed from mouth to mouth for generations—if a pupil does not understand what the teacher is saying, confusing the aspirated and unaspirated letters (*mahāprāṇa*, *alpaprāṇa*) and adding other things to it, the Dhamma gradually becomes distorted. It becomes distorted to the point where it cannot be salvaged.

That is why the Buddha declared: "This Dhamma must be seen. One must strive to see it." It is through this that the Dhamma is protected. Not only is the Dhamma protected, but that person becomes a true "Dhamma-dhara". Otherwise, as mentioned, even a person holding a computer becomes a "Dhamma-dhara". For this to be preserved, no matter how many glossaries, dictionaries, and sub-commentaries there are, one must see the inside of the Dhamma—what is being declared by it. One must understand the law of the Dhamma. That is what Suppabuddha the leper understood at that level, despite not having much education.

In the past, great Arahats are mentioned who attained Arahatship along with the Four Analytical Knowledges (*patisambhidā*). *Patisambhidā* is a very deep term. It means a deep fourfold understanding of the Dhamma: *Attha* (meaning), *Dhamma* (origin/law), *Nirutti* (linguistic definition/expression), and *Paṭibhāna* (perspicuity/inspiration/analytical acumen). Otherwise, one only grasps the superficial aspect.

For example, if we take suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), the problem before us is suffering—the suffering of Saṃsāra. What is its cause or origin? That is *Dhamma*. So, *Dhamma* is craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), to use an example. The issue before us is the problem (*artha*); the underlying cause, the origin, is *Dhamma*.

Nirutti refers to the words used to explain and clarify this. Even the Buddha provided unique definitions (*nirutti*) for certain words. In discussions with brahmins, He would sometimes say: "You use it in that sense, but I use it in this sense," giving Dhamma-conforming definitions. Some Dhamma-preachers who have developed a special capacity for this are skilled in giving such definitions, a habit developed over a long time in

Saṃsāra. But these truly manifest and become pure at the stage of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*).

Paṭibhāna is usually explained as knowledge of knowledges, but deeply, it should be understood as the power of comprehension—the power of comprehension that comes directly from wisdom, from direct realization.

No one can match the similes given by the Buddha. Those similes are wondrous. The components of the simile and the meaning match perfectly. Even the simile mentioned earlier, when matched with Dhamma principles, is astonishing. Great elders like Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahākoṭṭhita are described as complete in these Four Analytical Knowledges, helping others understand the Dhamma. When a certain matter is presented, they have a complete, clear understanding of it. They know the underlying cause. They know the words to use to resolve it, and the similes and metaphors to apply. All these are perfectly understood. These factors are necessary for the preservation of the Dhamma.

It is also preached: *yo dhammaṃ nappamajjati* ("who does not neglect the Dhamma"). Indeed, when speaking of the Dhamma/Dispensation, it is named in three ways: the dispensation of learning (*pariyatti-sāsana*), the dispensation of practice (*paṭipatti-sāsana*), and the dispensation of penetration/realization (*paṭivedha-sāsana*). *Pariyatti* is learning. *Paṭipatti* is putting what is learned into practice. *Paṭivedha* is ultimately penetrating/seeing through the practice—meaning direct realization of the Dhamma. Thus, *pariyatti* is for the sake of *paṭipatti*, and *paṭipatti* is for the sake of *paṭivedha*. There is a mutual relationship between these three. The Buddha Himself declared that rather than learning much and not practicing it at all, it is better to learn a little and put that little into practice. That is what the Buddha gave prominence to. That is why we said He gave prominence to seeing (realization) over knowing (mere knowledge).

But what if we separate them? We keep *pariyatti* to ourselves, *paṭipatti* to someone else, and we are even afraid of *paṭivedha*! Nowadays, people raise various arguments: "If everyone realizes Nibbāna,, and no one is left in Saṃsāra, this population will die out." Some even ask us such questions. But the Buddha has pointed out that for *pariyatti* to be correctly preserved, it must be put into practice. To practically understand a word or a sentence, one must engage in the practice.

The Buddha's word is indeed for the sake of practice. The Dhamma is a challenge to practice; if the practice is fulfilled, the result is penetration (*paṭivedha*). Penetration means directly realizing it, seeing through it. *Pariyatti, paṭipatti, paṭivedha*—these three aspects of the dispensation are not taken as three separate things. They are all interconnected. A deficiency in one affects the others. The deities praised the Elder's exultation because there is a good lesson there for the preservation of the Dhamma. The two Tipitaka-expert elders delivered a long two-seat sermon, but the deities shouted "Sadhu" for the single-verse sermon. They appreciated it more than the sermon preached with great effort, and the Buddha approved of this.

We must learn something from this. What are we saying here? It is not just a heap of letters, a heap of words. If so, as mentioned, the dispensation would be preserved by digitizing them or writing them on gold plates and storing them. But who is going to read and understand them? Even today, after a few generations, some people distort and interpret certain words of the Karaṇīya Sutta in wondrous ways. This is not just due to a lack of language comprehension, but due to other reasons. They are led to distort because they lack internal understanding, and they do not direct their minds to that side. So, in this computer age, with modern printing facilities, there is nothing to fear about protecting the dispensation. We can print as many books as we want and build libraries to store them. But who is there to understand them? Who is going to benefit from them?

Therefore, we must reflect that the Buddha delivers a valuable lesson for this era too in this sermon. The Dhamma is not a heap of words or a heap of letters. This Dhamma is so deep that after His Enlightenment—we have heard these stories, though some might not believe them—the Buddha was hesitant to preach. "Who will understand this? How will they understand?" It is said that only after the Brahma's invitation did He resolve to preach and give His consent.

This Dhamma is *gambhīro, atakkāvacaro, duddaso, duranubodho* (profound, beyond the sphere of logic, hard to see, hard to understand). It is not easy to grasp. It is extremely deep. But those things that were described as difficult have been made all too easy nowadays. In terms of degrees, everything is passed. One can pass exams in any field of this Dhamma, passing stage after stage. But along with that, the dispensation itself might "pass away"! Because that internal seeing is absent. Along with this, distortion also takes place very rapidly.

Ultimately, what is called a Dhamma sermon is sometimes not the Dhamma at all. Wrong views are not even needed for the decline of the Dhamma. If the meaning of the Dhamma is not grasped, and if one does not intend to practice it or benefit from it, only a mass of ordinary intellectual knowledge is highlighted. Then, one can distort and present it in any way to suit their degrees and obtain them. But there is a dangerous situation there. Understanding this, you must begin where you ought to begin, just as you have done today. That is, established in this valuable virtue (*sīla*), you have engaged to some extent in meditation according to the instructions received today. Speaking of *sīla, samādhi, paññā*, starting with virtue, restraining body and speech, you concentrated the mind through various meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

Moreover, if anything was mentioned in this sermon that supports your insight (*vipassanā*), using that as an aid, it is your own responsibility to protect the threefold dispensation of *sīla, samādhi, paññā* as taught by the Buddha. It is through direct realization that one becomes a "Dhamma-dhara". With that thought, we hope this Dhamma sermon has helped you to arouse those qualities of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) which emerge as spiritual faculties and powers at the moments of the paths and fruits, through the virtue you have kept, the meditation you have done, and the Dhamma you have heard today.

May this merit acquired through hearing the Dhamma, with the help of noble friendship (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), help you to complete your practice correctly, to quickly let go of grasping / holding / fuel this terrifying heap of the five aggregates of grasping, to be freed from the suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of birth / arising (*jāti*), and decay and death / aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness, and to realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna— / Extinction / Extinguishment—through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Sotāpatti, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahatta! May this hearing of the Dhamma be a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for that! Furthermore, if any deities from Avici to Akanitha wish to rejoice in this Dhamma sermon, may they, through that rejoicing, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their preferred Bodhi! Saying "Sadhu", recite this verse:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #160

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.165)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Udakamāhariṃ sīte, sadā udakamotariṃ;

Ayyānaṃ daṇḍabhayabhītā, vācādosabhayaṭṭitā.

Kassa brāhmaṇa tvaṃ bhīto, sadā udakamotari;

Vedhamānehi gattehi, sītaṃ vedayase bhusaṃ?

Jānanti vata maṃ hoti, puṇṇike karontaṃ kusalaṃ kammaṃ;

Parivajjantañca pāpakaṃ.

Yo ca vuḍḍho daharo vā, pāpakammaṃ pakubbati;

Dakābhisecanā sopi, pāpakammā pamuccati."

From:

Therīgāthā (verses 236–239), Puṇṇikātherīgāthā

Dear Listeners,

The view that one can escape the consequences of evil deeds by washing away sins in water was prevalent among the Brahmins during the time of the Buddha. According to this rite known as "purification by water" (*udaka-suddhi*), the Brahmins followed the practice of plunging into water two or three times a day. According to the Noble Eightfold Path declared by the Buddha, this false rite is rejected. Ridiculing this practice of washing away sins, we have chosen as our theme today several verses from a Dhamma narrative, which clearly express how a female disciple of the Buddha guided a Brahmin to the path of Dhamma. These are several verses mentioned in the Therīgāthā of Puṇṇā Therī.

In fact, these verses were spoken by a servant maid named Puṇṇā. If we are to recount the background story, this maid Puṇṇā originally lived in the house of Anāthapiṇḍika the Treasurer. There are many past stories about her. According to them, she appears to have practiced the spiritual path in previous dispensations of Buddhas. It is said that due to extreme pride, she was born in a state of servitude. Now, this servant maid who lived in the house of Anāthapiṇḍika the Treasurer went to the river regularly to fetch water. One day, when she went to the bathing ford, she saw the Brahmin named Sotthiya immersed in the river for the sake of "purification by water," and it was then that she uttered these four verses first. Puṇṇā says:

"Udakamāhariṃ sīte sadā udakamotariṃ ayyānaṃ upajjhayabhītā vācādosabhayaṭṭitā"

— "I, carrying water in the cold season, always plunged into the water, fearing the punishment of my mistresses, tormented by the fear of their verbal abuse."

"Kassa brāhmaṇa tvaṃ bhīto sadā udakamotari vedhamānehi gattehi sītaṃ vedayase bhusaṃ"

— "But Brahmin, of whom are you afraid that you always come and plunge into the water? With trembling limbs, you are seen enduring extreme cold."

Addressing Puṇṇā, the Brahmin says:

"Jānanti vata maṃ hoti puṇṇike"

— "Puṇṇikā, you indeed know this as you ask me,"

"karontaṃ kusalaṃ kammaṃ kata pāpakaṃ..."

— "I am performing wholesome actions while warding off evil deeds. Knowing this well, you ask this question."

Then, to explain further, the Brahmin says:

"Yo ca vuddho daharo vā pāpakammaṃ pakubbati dakābhisecanā sopi pāpakammā pamuccati"

— "Whether it be an elder or a child, whoever commits an evil deed, by bathing in water, he too is freed from that evil deed."

The basic dialogue in this event is revealed through these few verses. The dialogue between these two goes further. Next, Puṇṇā addresses the Brahmin and says: "If, as you say, evil deeds are washed away by plunging into water, then frogs, tortoises, turtles, and other fish living in the water should go to heaven. Their evil deeds having been washed away, they should go to a happy destination (*sugati*)."

"According to your logic, those who slaughter goats, poultry, and fish, as well as thieves, executioners, and others who perform evil deeds, should also be freed from those evil

deeds." Next, she says, "If your evil deeds are washed away by bathing in the river, your merit must also be washed away! Then you would miss out on that merit and lose it." Next, by way of advice, she says, "Brahmin, if you are afraid of evil, then refrain from doing those evil deeds."

At that moment, the Brahmin understood the facts and said, "Puṇṇā, you have set me on the right path when I was on the wrong path. As a teacher's fee, I offer and present these robes to you." Then the servant maid Puṇṇā says, "Keep those robes for yourself. I have no use for them. If you are afraid of evil deeds, do not commit evil deeds, whether in public or in secret. You cannot escape from them even by running away. Indeed, if you do not like Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*), undertake virtues such as virtue/morality (*sīla*) in this Dispensation. Go for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha," she advised. Thereafter, the Brahmin accepted this, and as recounted in that Dhamma story, not only did he take refuge in the Triple Gem, but he later went to the Buddha, asked for ordination (*pabbajjā*) and higher ordination (*upasampadā*), and finally became an Arahant.

At the end of those Therīgāthā, the joyful utterance made by that Brahmin after becoming an Arahant is mentioned in this manner:

"Brāhmabandhu pure āsiṃ"

— "In the past, I was merely a relative of Brahma. Today, indeed, I am a true Brahmin (*saccabrāhmaṇo*)." Furthermore, "I have mastered the Threefold Knowledge (*tivijjā*). That does not mean the Vedas of the Brahmins, but those three knowledges, the three main supernormal knowledges (*abhiññā*) declared by the Buddha, which I have realized. Likewise, I have used the word *nahātaka* (one who has bathed) in its true sense: 'I am one who has washed away all sins and become pure,'" he declared after becoming an Arahant. Hearing that the servant maid Puṇṇā had guided a Brahmin to the path of the Dhamma in this manner, Anāthapiṇḍika the Treasurer is said to have freed the maid Puṇṇā from servitude.

Likewise, it is mentioned in the Dhamma books that this servant maid Puṇṇā was a wise person who became a Stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*) after listening to the *Cūḷasīhanāda Sutta* delivered by the Buddha. Finally, this maid Puṇṇā too, having obtained permission from Anāthapiṇḍika the Treasurer, was ordained in the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha and became an Arahant nun who attained the fourfold analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*). This Dhamma story shows how this female disciple of the Buddha removed from the Brahmin's mind the wrong view that sins can be washed away by bathing, and guided him to the path of Dhamma.

Many such incidents are mentioned in Dhamma literature. Another such incident occurred at one time when the Buddha was residing in Sāvatthī. While Venerable Ānanda was walking for alms, a Brahmin named Saṅgārava was practicing the rite of plunging into water in the same way. Venerable Ānanda requested the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, it would be well if, out of compassion, you would visit the home of this

Brahmin Saṅgārava." The Buddha consented by silence, and the next morning visited the home of this Brahmin Saṅgārava. After sitting on the prepared seat, when the Brahmin approached, the Buddha asked: "Brahmin, is it true that you practice the rite of plunging into water morning and evening?"

When he replied, "Yes, Lord," the Buddha asked, "What benefit do you see in doing so?" Then the Brahmin said, "If I commit any evil deed during the day, it is washed away by going down into the water in the evening, that is, by bathing. The evil deeds committed at night are washed away by going down into the water in the morning." When he said this to the Buddha, the Buddha uttered one deeply meaningful verse:

"Dhammo rahado brāhmaṇa sīlatittho anāvilo

sabbhi sataṃ pasattho yā (yo) have vedaguṇo sināto

anallagattova tarati pāraṃ"

This is a very meaningful short verse. "Brahmin, this Dhamma is a lake, with virtue (*sīla*) as its bathing ford, unpolluted, praised by the virtuous. Those who have bathed in that lake, who are *vedagū*—meaning those who have fully realized the three main supernormal knowledges declared by the Buddha: recollection of past lives, and destruction of cankers, which are known as the Threefold Knowledge (*tiviṭjjā*) in this Dispensation—having bathed in that lake, what happens?" The next line states a valuable idea: *Anallagattova tarati pāraṃ*—they cross over to the other shore with un-moistened limbs. They cross over to the other shore dry. This means that in this Dispensation, the Dhamma is like a lake, or a reservoir, and virtue (*sīla*) is like its bathing ford. When one bathes in this bathing ford of virtue, one can cross over to the other shore of Nibbāna with an un-moistened body." Hearing this verse, that Brahmin gave up his wrong views and became a lay devotee who went for refuge to the Triple Gem, as mentioned in that Dhamma story.

Now, another such valuable instance is mentioned in the *Vatthūpama Sutta* of the Majjhima Nikāya. That sutta was actually delivered by the Buddha to the Saṅgha regarding the purification of the mind. *Vatthūpama*, dear devotees, is a sutta that takes a cloth as a simile. There, the Buddha begins the sutta: "Bhikkhus, if a dyer—in those days, a dyer was one who colors and dyes cloths—if such a person applies red, blue, or yellow dye to a dirty or stained cloth, that cloth will bear a very dirty and soiled appearance. Because that dye is not absorbed well into a pleasing state, the cloth eventually becomes blackish, or discolored. What is the reason for this? Because the cloth is dirty. Even so, bhikkhus, when the mind is defiled, a bad destination (*duggati*) can be expected."

Thus, the defilement of the mind was compared to the dirtiness of the cloth. Just as no matter what color is applied to a dirty cloth, it does not take the color well and the dye does not catch, even so, if the mind is defiled, it leads to a bad destination. Next, the opposite is stated: "If a cloth is clean, free of stains and the like, when a dyer applies dye to it, the dye catches well. That cloth becomes beautifully colored. Even so, when the mind is pure, a happy destination (*sugati*) can be expected."

Next, the Buddha inquires: “Bhikkhus, what are the mental defilements (*upakkilesa*)?” He presents a list of these defilements: covetousness and unrighteous greed (*abhijjhā-visamalobha*), ill-will (*byāpāda*), anger (*kodha*), enmity, envy, conceit, pride, negligence, and so forth—a list of qualities that defile the mind. Next, the Buddha states that when a noble disciple recognizes those defiling qualities and removes them, they develop concentration (*samādhi*) of the mind by practicing meditations such as the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), the recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*), and the recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*). Next, having developed the mind to higher states through the four sublime abodes (*brahma-vihāra*) of loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*), they finally develop insight (*vipassanā*) and attain Nibbāna. The Buddha describes the one who has walked that path of Dhamma and become an Arahant with a special term: *snāto antarena snānena*—"bathed with an internal bath." While those Brahmins perform an external bath by plunging into the river, the Buddha points out how one becomes pure through an internal bath, an inner bathing. From this, you can understand that the purity expected in our Dhamma is not like the external rites and practices of the Brahmins. It is something concerning the inner mind. It is a bathing of the inner self.

At the end of that discourse, it is said that when the Buddha finished speaking, a Brahmin named Sundarika Bhāradvāja, who was nearby, listened to this and asked the Buddha: “Master Gotama, do you go to bathe in those rivers whose names you mentioned?” Then the Buddha showed the futility of it. “Brahmin, by that bathing, the evil deeds of one who has committed them do not wash away. Bathe in this very Dhamma! Next, removing defiling qualities such as greed, anger, and enmity from the mind, walk on this path of Dhamma and bathe in this Dhamma internally!”—thus he advised in several verses. Next, it is said that this Brahmin too, having given up his rite, was ordained under the Buddha, and eventually received higher ordination. Many such incidents are mentioned in the Dhamma.

The terms of virtue (*sīla*), rites (*vata*), and so on, that existed in Brahmin society are also used in this Dispensation. However, recognizing the internal difference between them can be of help to you. A good illustration of this is mentioned in another sutta discourse. You have heard that the final meal of the Buddha before his Parinibbāna was given by Cunda the smith's son (*Cunda Kammāraputta*). Cunda Kammāraputta means Cunda the blacksmith; here we can recognize him as a goldsmith. The first occasion when Cunda Kammāraputta took refuge in the Buddha is described as follows. This Cunda Kammāraputta had a mango grove in the town of Pāvā. On one occasion, when the Buddha visited the town of Pāvā and was residing in that mango grove, Cunda came to see the Buddha, sat down to one side, and the Buddha asked him: “Cunda, whose view or doctrine of purification (*soceyya*) do you accept?”

Then Cunda says, addressing him with respect, “Venerable Sir! The Brahmins of the West, who carry water-pitchers, wear garlands of wet plants, and worship the fire-deity, present a certain view of purification. It is that view of purification that I approve of, that I accept.” Then the Buddha asks, “Cunda, in what way do those Brahmins teach

purification to their disciples?" Then Cunda Kammāraputta says: "Those Brahmins advise their disciples thus: 'As soon as you get up from bed in the morning, first touch the earth. Touch the ground as a method of purification. If you cannot touch the ground, touch fresh cow dung. If you cannot touch fresh cow dung, touch green grass.' This is a mystical method of purification. 'Touch green grass. If you cannot do that, worship the fire-deity. Serving the fire is also something connected to fire-worship. If you cannot do that, perform the sun-salutation. If you do not perform the sun-salutation, then three times a day—not just twice, but as it is said here, morning, noon, and evening, as if there is no other work—one must go to the river and plunge into the water at those three times to wash away sins and become pure.' Six such methods of washing away sins and purifying are shown there."

"Getting up in the morning, one touches the ground. If that is not possible, one touches fresh cow dung. If that is not possible, one touches green grass. Or else, one pays homage to fire. Or else, sun-salutation. If even that is not possible, then three times a day in the river. Then the Buddha says, 'Cunda, the Brahmins' idea of purification is one thing, but in this Noble Discipline (*ariya-vinaya*)—the Noble Discipline means this Dispensation—the idea of purification is quite different.' The Buddha made this statement, leaving room for a question."

Then Cunda, filled with curiosity, asks: "Venerable Sir, please tell me, I wish to know what the idea of purification is in this Noble Discipline." Thereupon, the Buddha declares: "Cunda, according to this Noble Discipline, according to the meaning in this Dispensation..." — first, the Buddha speaks not about purity, but about impurity. *Asoceyya* means impurity. According to the teachings of this Dispensation, there are three types of bodily impurity, four types of verbal impurity, and three types of mental impurity. You can guess what they are even before I say them. Next, the Buddha explains those matters separately.

What are the three bodily impurities? Killing living beings, taking what is not given, and sexual misconduct. Those are the impurities committed bodily, through the body. The impurities committed verbally are lying, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous talk or vain babble. What are shown as those committed by the mind? There is a word used, which means covetousness/unrighteous greed (*abhijjhā*). Not ignorance (*avijjā*), but unrighteous greed. Unrighteous greed is something done by the mind. Ill-will (*byāpāda*) means hatred—the thought of harming others, a mind of malice. Next, the third is shown as wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). Covetousness, ill-will, and wrong view. You may know that these are indeed the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa akusala kamma-patha*) heard of in the Dhamma: three done through the body, four through speech, and three through the mind.

Next, the Buddha declares: "Whether a person who is engaged in these ten unwholesome courses of action performs the purification methods taught by the Brahmins or not, their impurity remains just the same. These are not only impure, but they are things that further produce impurity. *Asuciceva* — a deep idea is expressed there. Those ten unwholesome courses of action are themselves impure, and they are also things that

produce further impurity. Next, the Buddha declares that it is because of these ten unwholesome courses of action that hell, the animal realm, the ghost realm, and other such bad destinations are to be seen. You can understand then, that the Buddha is showing how beings go to hell, the animal realm, and bad destinations due to those very ten unwholesome courses of action."

Next, it is said—and this too can be easily understood—"Cunda, in this Dispensation, there are ten purifications." The word used there is *soceyya* (purification). What are these purifications? Three of the body, four of speech, and three of the mind. The three of the body mean abstaining from killing living beings, etc. It is called *veramaṇī* (abstinence) or *paṭivirata* (abstaining). Abstaining from those three—killing living beings, taking what is not given, and sexual misconduct—is bodily purification. Abstaining from those four verbal misconducts—lying, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous talk—is verbal purification. Next is *abhijjhā*—which is covetousness or unrighteous greed. You know the word greed (*lobha*), but the Buddha shows a separate word: *abhijjhā*, which means covetousness or intense greed. Greed is present to some extent in everyone, but covetousness means desiring another's property, thinking, "O, may what belongs to another be mine!" (*Ahovata yaṃ parassa taṃ mama assa*). "Oh, how good if what belongs to that other person were mine!" That is unrighteous greed, covetousness. It is an intense greedy mind, unrighteous greed, active inside the mind. Next, everyone knows ill-will (*byāpāda*). Thus, turning the mind away from that greed, and turning the mind away from the hatred of ill-will. Thirdly, whereas previously it was wrong view, here it is right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Under the simile of impurity, what was shown was covetousness, ill-will, and wrong view. Next, under purification, what was shown was turning the mind away from that covetousness, turning the mind away from ill-will, and right view. Here, right view does not refer to the Four Noble Truths, but to what you might have heard of as the right view of ten bases (*dasa-vatthuka sammā-diṭṭhi*). That is, the right view that supports the performance of wholesome actions in a mundane sense—that there is fruit and result of giving, there is mother, there is father, there is this world, there is the next world, and so on, which support wholesome deeds. That is what was taken as purification (*soceyya*).

Next, the Buddha declares: "Cunda, these are the ten wholesome courses of action (*dasa kusala kamma-patha*)." What were mentioned earlier were the unwholesome courses of action. These are the ten wholesome courses of action. Now, these ten wholesome courses of action are pure, and they are of a nature that produces purity. It is because of these ten wholesome courses of action that a heavenly world is seen, a human existence is seen, and likewise, it is because of these ten wholesome courses of action that one is born in happy states. This discourse brought to light, through Cunda, a matter so important that we must remember it in our daily lives.

The Buddha pointed out in this manner that the rites of the Brahmins—the belief that one can be freed from evil deeds by purifying the body externally—is merely a belief. The Buddha always gave priority to the mind, and to the mental defilements (*cittūpakkilesa*). Unlike the rites of other religions, this Dhamma is not something to be grasped as a view

(*diṭṭhi*). According to the law of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), here we have a journey towards Nibbāna, where one stage supports another, one supporting another. Nibbāna means the freeing of the mind from all attachments and bonds—liberation (*vimutti*). For that journey towards liberation, certain things are necessary. One cannot progress by abandoning everything at once; if so, it would not be a Middle Path. According to the teaching of the Buddha in suttas like the *Rathavinīta Sutta*, his disciples show us that purification of virtue (*sīla-visuddhi*) is solely for the sake of purification of mind (*citta-visuddhi*). If we express those few words in a language we can understand, the purpose of purifying virtue is to purify the mind. Next, when asked why we purify the mind, the Buddha says that we purify the mind to obtain right vision. We cannot see correctly with an impure mind. Therefore, to straighten our view (*diṭṭhi*), we need purification of mind. *Sīla-visuddhi yāvadeva citta-visuddhitthāya, citta-visuddhi yāvadeva diṭṭhi-visuddhitthāya.* Why do we purify our view? To know the path to be taken and the path not to be taken—for the purification by knowledge and vision of what is and what is not the path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*). It is to distinguish the path to be taken from the path not to be taken that we purify our view.

Next, if asked why we clarify the path to be taken and the path not to be taken, it must be said that it is to walk on the practice (*paṭipadā*), the practice to be undertaken, without doubt or hesitation. It is needed for a certain path of practice. In this way, one supports another. Therefore, knowing the path and the non-path is necessary for us to be doubtless about the practice we must employ—the purification by knowledge and vision of the way (*paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*). Next, the practice must also have an end. Practice is not a journey that goes on forever. Its end is knowledge and vision—it is to bring forth insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) and the like, which support the attainment of Nibbāna. When those insight knowledges emerge, when the true nature of the world is realized as Impermanent / Inconstant (*Anicca*), Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*), and Not-self / Non-self / Unsubstantial (*Anattā*) according to the Three Characteristics taught by the Buddha, there lies liberation (*vimutti*) and Nibbāna. That realization is called "unclinging liberation" (*anupādā-vimokkha*)—for the sake of liberation without grasping anything.

So, here we have such a deeply profound philosophy. Therefore, this is not a journey where one grasps things as views (*diṭṭhi*) like the Brahmins do. It is a journey where one stage supports another.

Now, we have previously mentioned the simile that explains this Dhamma point. When King Pasenadi of Kosala wanted to go from Sāvatthī to Sāketa, at that time relay chariot stations with swift horses were prepared for urgent journeys. So, having mounted a chariot from Sāvatthī, when those horses got tired, another chariot was kept ready at the second station to proceed from there. Leaving that chariot, he would mount the next one.

Going from one to another in this manner, when he finally reached Sāketa, if his friends and relatives there asked him, “Great King, how did you come here?” the King could not say, “I came by the first chariot,” nor could he say, “I came by the second,” nor “I came by the third.”

He could not say he came by the fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh chariot. Yet, he could not say he did not come by any of them either. He would have to tell the whole story: “I started in the first chariot, and at a certain point, I mounted the second chariot, and from that, the third chariot…”

That simile explains a certain deep aspect of this Dhamma. Grasping all these as views is called *parāmāsa*—clinging to views (*diṭṭhi-parāmāsa*). Now, the virtue (*sīla*) in this Dispensation is described as that which is not clung to (*aparāmaṭṭha*). It is not firmly grasped by clinging to it as a view. One understands that one stage supports another. Purification of virtue is solely for the sake of purification of mind; purification of mind is for the sake of purification of view. Going on in this manner, the ultimate end is complete liberation (*vimutti*), without grasping anything—for the sake of full liberation. This virtue does not stop at external factors; they only support one another.

On one occasion, when the Brahmin Māgandiya asked, “What is the purification that you declare in this Dispensation?” the Buddha said: *Na diṭṭhiyā na sutiyā na ñāṇena sīlabbatena'pi visuddhimāha, adiṭṭhiyā asutiyā añāṇā asīlatā abbata no'pi hevaṃ*. The Buddha gives an answer that seems like a great puzzle. “I do not say that purification is attained by view, nor by learning (*suti*) or Dhamma knowledge, nor by listening to sermons, nor indeed by knowledge, nor by virtue and vows (*sīlabbata*); nor yet is it without them—not by non-view, non-learning, non-knowledge, non-virtue, or non-vows.” At first glance, it seems like a contradictory statement. From this, we can see that for the path to Nibbāna, these are things we cannot do with, yet cannot do without. One supports another, but we do not grasp any of them firmly. At that point, the Brahmin thought this Dhamma was mere delusion. But the Buddha declared, “We do not grasp any of these firmly; we only make use of them according to their practical value.” From purification of virtue we proceed to purification of mind, and from purification of mind to purification of view—this natural law (*dhammatā*) is present throughout this Dhamma.

Those of you who study the Dhamma deeply have heard of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Dependent arising means that everything occurs through causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*). It does not mean the idea of "I" and "mine". If we analyze it deeply, it is merely a multitude of causes and conditions. The Buddha brings this point to light on many occasions.

Likewise, the purification of the mind is something that must be done with special effort and exertion. On one occasion, when explaining the Noble Uposatha (*ariya-uposatha*) to Visākhā at the Pubbārāma, the Buddha declared: *upakkameṇa cittassa pariyodapanā*—"the cleansing of the mind is done by effort, by exertion." The Buddha explains this with the simile of cleaning the head. Mentioning the things that existed in those days to clean the head, the Buddha declares that along with the materials that help clean the head, that person’s effort, exertion, and endeavor are necessary. It is by this that the head is cleaned. Likewise, the body is cleaned, and cloths are cleaned—and here, it is not like the soap we have today; the Buddha mentions the things that helped clean cloths in those days, and finally says, *purisassa ca tajjā vāyāmaṃ paṭicca*—"dependent on the

appropriate effort of a person." It is due to a combination of many such factors that even a cloth can be cleaned.

Likewise, it is mentioned that to clean a mirror, applying the materials alone is not enough; one must also make a special effort. Raw gold must also be purified in the same way. Next, the Buddha declares: *upakkameṇa cittassa pariyodapanā*—"to cleanse the mind too, a certain effort, an exertion is necessary." It is not something that happens on its own. Such is the idea found in the Dhamma regarding purification. We have highlighted the qualities of this virtue (*sīla*) on many occasions. Some might say that what appears at first glance in the precepts is like drawing back one's hands and feet—abstaining, *veramaṇī*, being told to refrain from this.

But this idea of refraining is actually something concerning the mind. In the Dhamma, virtue is described as volition (*cetanā-sīlaṃ*) and mental factors (*cetasika-sīlaṃ*)—it is explained as something concerning the mind. It is called the mental factor of abstinence (*virati-cetasika*). Three words are used: *ārati*, *virati*, and *paṭivirati*. Turning away and refraining from those things considered unwholesome or evil deeds is not an external matter; it is of the mind. Therefore, it is through refraining from them that purity arises. That is why the ten wholesome deeds were described as refraining from the unwholesome. That is why the Buddha first recalled those impure things.

In the questions asked by Cunda, he first showed the impurity. Next, to purify it, one must make a certain effort. That is what is called abstinence, *veramaṇī*, *virati*. Now, practicing virtue seems, at first glance, to be merely refraining from certain things. But to refrain, a certain effort is needed. It is through that very strength applied for abstinence, for refraining, that the mind is purified.

There are examples related to this in various other sutta discourses. Just as among the Brahmins, words like virtue (*sīla*) and vows (*vata*) exist in our Dispensation too. But we must understand that according to the law of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), these are not things to be grasped by way of clinging (*parāmāsa*), as views (*diṭṭhi*). These are things used to support one another. The journey towards Nibbāna takes place by depending on a causal arising of conditions. In another place, the Buddha spoke about practices (*paṭipadā*). On one occasion, the Buddha spoke to the Saṅgha about three practices in the world: the practice of indulgence (*āgāḷhā paṭipadā*), the practice of self-mortification (*nijjhāmā paṭipadā*), and the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). The practice of indulgence means accepting that there is nothing wrong with sensual pleasures. You have heard of indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*). It is the grasping of that extreme. Being immersed in the five strands of sensual pleasure is called the practice of indulgence (*āgāḷhā paṭipadā*). Next, in describing the practice of self-mortification (*nijjhāmā paṭipadā*), many rites of other religions, such as those of the Niganṭhas and Brahmins, are mentioned there.

Finally, the story of water-purification by plunging into water is also mentioned there. The practice of self-mortification is explained as expecting purification through severely torturing and heating the body. You have heard of the clearer term for this:

attakilamathānuyoga (self-mortification). So, one extreme is *kāmasukhallikānuyoga*—in place of which this sutta uses the term *āgāḷhā paṭipadā*. In place of the second, it shows *nijjhāmā paṭipadā*—a practice that burns and scorches. That is the extreme of *attakilamathānuyoga*.

Next, the Buddha points out the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). The Middle Path shown by the Buddha is analyzed here not as the Noble Eightfold Path, but the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) are shown there by the name of the Middle Path. For convenience, we usually say the Middle Path is the Noble Eightfold Path. But when putting it into practice, everyone must implement it through the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. The definition the Buddha gave for the Middle Path there was "contemplating the body in the body" (*kāye kāyānupassī*), "contemplating Feeling / Sensation in Feeling / Sensation" (*vedanāsu vedanānupassī*), and so on. Contemplating the body is not something that happens on its own. You know that in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, many words are mentioned, such as overcoming covetousness and grief in the world (*vineyya loke abhijjhā-domanassaṃ*). This is not a simple thing, this contemplating the body. It is not the way ordinary worldlings look at the body.

We must understand something from the description made by this multitude of words. Otherwise, anyone can look at the body; anyone can look at Feeling / Sensation. But here, an effort, a special method, and an exertion are implied in what is done. *Ātāpī* (ardent) does not mean heating the body; it does not mean burning the body, but burning the defilements (*kilesa*). Since ancient times, the word *tapo* has carried the meaning of burning or heating. But the true asceticism (*tapas*) shown by the Buddha is the burning of defilements, not merely burning the body. For among the Niganṭhas, it was believed that happiness can only be obtained through Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*). You know that the Buddha too practiced self-mortification (*dukarakriyā*) before his Enlightenment. In those days, everyone accepted that happiness can only be obtained by inflicting Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*), and through various methods, they brought Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*) to the body and went to the extreme of *attakilamathānuyoga*. In place of that, the Buddha's choice was the Middle Path.

What is this? One must remember this word well. Now, that *āgāḷhā paṭipadā* is one extreme, and *nijjhāmā paṭipadā* is another extreme. Equal to those two is the practice. In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, everyone knows the two words *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* and *attakilamathānuyoga*. Next is the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). But the difference is, it does not end by saying "Noble Eightfold Path" as everyone expects; the Four Establishments of Mindfulness are also shown there. Contemplating the body in the body is not something done merely to recognize oneself or others. Many words are mentioned there: *viharati*—he dwells; *ātāpī sampajāno satimā*. The word *ātāpī* there refers to the energy that burns defilements. Possessing the energy that burns defilements. *Pahitatto* is also a word meaning possessing energy. You have heard of the word *padhāna* (striving). *Padhāna-viriya* means the supreme energy.

There are many words to describe this: *vāyāma* (exertion), *viriya* (energy). The word that describes the supreme energy among them is *padhāna*—the supreme energy. *Pahitatta* means a mind endowed with that supreme energy. *Ātāpī pahitatto*—endowed with the energy that burns defilements, then being supreme, then *satimā*—mindful. Such a multitude of words is used there. *Loke domanassaṃ*—having stilled that unrighteous greed, grief, and other such things in the world, and having suppressed them, one must practice the Four Establishments of Mindfulness.

All of this showed that in the Middle Path, it is not the inflicting of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*) on the body that is expected, but the mind—the purification of the mind by burning defilements, and so forth. Thus, in various suttas, the Buddha has shown the difference between this Middle Path and the practices carried out by the Brahmins, Niganṭhas, and others. The disciples who confused these—not only the disciples of those times, but sometimes Brahmins, non-Buddhists, raised objections on many occasions, saying, "What Master Gotama says is the same as what we say!" But on those occasions, the Buddha pointed out that dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is something unique to this Dispensation, to this Dhamma. Everything operates within causes and conditions.

Accordingly, we can understand from the simile in the *Rathavinīta Sutta* that everything is not purified by the purification of virtue (*sīla-visuddhi*) alone. You know that purification of virtue means the training of body and speech. To support that training, the word *veramaṇī* (abstinence)—we asked you to emphasize it. Abstinence: it is easy to do, but difficult to refrain from. For that, one must make a certain effort. It must also be done with understanding. Then, how is the mind purified within that abstinence? What is meant by saying that purification of virtue is for the sake of purification of mind? Purification of mind, dear devotees, is concentration (*samādhi*). In a deeper sense, purification of mind is the state where the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are removed. Generally, our mind is covered by the hindrances: sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will (*byāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*). By these, the mind's power of one-pointedness, of being concentrated, is covered over. Therefore, you have heard this verse which points to the primary support for removing them:

> *"Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño, cittaṃ paññañca bhāvayaṃ*
>
> *ātāpī nipako bhikkhu, so imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ"*

This is a verse uttered by the Buddha. The practice that helps disentangle this tangle of saṃsāra is shown there. Those who have read books like the *Visuddhimagga* know this verse well. "Established in virtue (*sīla*), the wise man, the person endowed with wisdom, developing the mind and wisdom—ardent and sagacious, he disentangles this tangle." Here, "mind" refers to that concentrated mind (*samādhi-citta*). That is what was called the purification of mind (*citta-pārisuddhi*). Thus, it is only by being established in virtue (*sīla*) that the mind can be concentrated.

Although it is not a simile from the Dhamma, we might have told you on some occasion that if someone expects to attain concentration, the things that obstruct it most are regret and future expectations. These are obstacles to calming the mind and concentrating it. So, on such occasions, one has to calm the mind within a certain boundary. Whether it be the five precepts—let us say someone has broken the training rules of the five precepts throughout their life. But if someone expects to come to the right path, instead of regretting those past actions, the Buddha says to undertake the five precepts.

This is indeed what he said to these Brahmins too. "If you do not like Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*), if you are afraid of those evil deeds, resolve to refrain from them." So, in these virtues and qualities, there are two aspects: resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*) and reflection (*āvarjana*). Resolution means that through undertaking virtue, one makes a resolution in the mind for this period. Today, there is a difference from when you are at home. You made a resolution. To make it easy to bring this to mind, you have that white robe.

Even if you fall asleep for a little while and wake up again, the mind is reminded: "Ah, I am not like being at home; I am wearing white robes and observing the precepts." That is not an external thing. That too is for the mind itself. Next, one takes a certain boundary that helps purify the mind today; even if past matters are not completely gone, a door is closed there, and a resolution is made that from today, a great change will take place in my life.

Some go for refuge to the Triple Gem saying, "for as long as life lasts." "From today, I will protect these training rules. I will protect these principles of virtue." After making that resolution, it is very easy; even if thoughts about the past arise, one can think, "That is not me—or that is the past. Today I am a new man." That is resolution. Next, the fruit of that is reflection (*āvarjana*). Reflection means thinking, "Although such things happened in the past, I do not consume alcohol now." Saying so, a great joy arises. "Now a great change has taken place in me." In this way, joy (*pāmojja*) arises. It is when the mind is joyful that it becomes concentrated. That is how it is shown. That is why it was said that purification of virtue is solely for the sake of purification of mind. Now understand: there, *citta*—the true one-pointed state of the mind is concentration (*samādhi*). Then, as said before, you can understand the connection between virtue and concentration. Therefore, when defining virtue, it is not defined as an external thing, but as something connected with volition—a mental factor (*cetasika*). So, resolution is on one side. Next, because of that, the mind is made joyful.

Though not in the Dhamma, we gave a simile: if someone expects to sit for meditation, they build at least a small platform on which they can sit in a mud pit, by erecting five pillars, or eight pillars, or ten pillars. Through such thinking, one can understand: when we observe such a valuable virtue even for one day a month, we have a good foundation to sit for meditation, saying, "these are the Uposatha eight precepts, the ten precepts." Next, one can calm the mind without trouble; what comes when one looks back by way of

reflection is not what agitates the mind, but what makes the mind happy: “Today I protected these, didn't I?”—and the mind rejoices.

In this way, you must understand. We have summarized this deep matter. The Buddha brought to light in this manner the path of liberation for the world. Otherwise, a human being can never wash away sins in water, or by any other method. The Buddha opened a doorway to that through this virtue (*sīla*). Bringing forth concentration (*samādhi*) through that virtue. Through concentration, one can enter into insight (*vipassanā*). Once the mind is concentrated in such a way that concentration can be developed, by applying the Three Characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) to it, and through that, bringing forth insight knowledges, at a certain point, one obtains the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Stream-entry and so on, and gains the ability to attain Arahantship. Therefore, you can consider in brief: we started with the Brahmins' rite of bathing in water. But leaving that aside, we must try to understand the difference between the Middle Path and that rite, using the points shown here.

So today too, you have given up various activities in your homes and undertaken a virtue such as the Uposatha eight precepts or ten precepts, for the sake of that very purification of mind (*citta-visuddhi*). It is not to have pride or conceit, saying “I observed the Uposatha eight precepts with such a crowd.” It is for your own liberation that you trained your body and speech. Depending on that, if you practiced some meditation, the truths understood by that concentrated mind are what will lead to the paths and fruits at some point.

Thus, we hope that the discourse we presented has been of practical help to you in that regard. Therefore, in this Dispensation of the Buddha, reflecting on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) taught by the Buddha, and on the practical values of the Dhamma, you must strive to make the meditations you are practicing successful.

Therefore, may the virtue protected by you today, the meditation practiced, and this discourse listened to, be a cause and support for you to realize those paths and fruits and to attain the supreme, deathless Nibbāna, which is the end of all saṃsāric Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*Dukkha*) such as Birth / Arising (*Jāti*), sickness, and Decay and Death / Aging and Death (*Jarāmaraṇa*)! If there is any being from Avīci hell to the highest heaven (*Akaniṭṭha*) who expects to rejoice in this merit of Dhamma-sharing and Dhamma-listening, may they, through rejoicing, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna by way of their aspired Bodhi! Recite these verses making this aspiration:

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*”

Pahankanuwa Sermon #161

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.6)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Taṃ puttapasamattānaṃ,

byāsattamanasaṃ naraṃ,

Suttaṃ gāmaṃ mahogho'va,

maccu ādāya gacchati."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 287 (Magga Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

That Buddhahood which took place at the foot of the Bodhi tree of our Buddha was an understanding, and also a certain awakening. A waking up. An awakening from a long, deep sleep of defilements (*kilesa*) in *saṃsāra*. It was because the Buddha first woke up from that long sleep and wished to awaken all of us as well, that on a full-moon poya day of Esala like today, He set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakka*), preaching the Dhamma to the world for the first time.

To awaken the worldly beings sleeping, intoxicated by defilements in the thick darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*) throughout this long *saṃsāra*, is no easy task. It is to generate the great wisdom and great compassion necessary to accomplish this task that the Fully Self-Awakened One fulfilled the perfections (*pāramīs*) for an extremely long period of four incalculable aeons (*asankheyya*) and a hundred thousand cosmic cycles (*kalpas*), giving away His eyes, head, flesh, blood, and so on. If worldly beings, who sleep intoxicated by these defilements, are to awaken, their eyes must be opened in some way or other.

Some, hearing the sound of the virtues and the sound of the Dhamma of the Buddha, came directly to the Buddha, listened to the Dhamma, and awakened by attaining the Dhamma-eye. Others, having awakened somewhat due to various shocks and bitter experiences occurring at different points in their lives, managed to come to the Buddha

and, with the help of the light of His wisdom and the coolness of His compassion, awakened and opened their eyes. In the background story corresponding to the stanza we have chosen as our theme, what is mentioned is such an awakening, which occurred when a person was led to the Buddha through a shock, a bitter experience in life, and awakened with His help.

At that time, in the city of Sāvatthi, there lived a merchant's daughter named Kisāgotamī. She was a woman from a wealthy family. Having married, her first-born child died suddenly during his playful infancy, the crawling stage. The members of that household tried to perform the final rites for this corpse. But this mother, this merchant's daughter, due to her intense attachment and her belief that the child was not dead, did not allow it. Because of her strong attachment to the child, she could not believe that the child had died. Therefore, carrying the child on her hip, she went from house to house asking if there was anyone who could give medicine for this child, or recommend a remedy.

Then, although her neighbors said, "What madness is this? Where is there medicine for a corpse? What medicine?" and even scolded her, she did not understand. One mature and wise man said, "I do not know of a medicine myself. But I know someone who knows the remedy. I know a physician." She asked, "Who is that?" He replied, "There, residing in the Jetavana monastery, is the Teacher, the Buddha. He indeed knows the exact medicine for this." This woman also went to the Buddha and requested, "Please tell me a medicine for my child." She asked, "Do you know a medicine?" "Yes, Gotamī, I know a medicine." When she asked, "What is required for the medicine?" He said, "Only a handful of mustard seeds from a house where no son, daughter, or anyone has died."

This woman then, quickly taking the child, first went to the village near the Jetavana monastery. Going to the very first house, she asked, "Oh, is there some mustard seed to be had for a medicine? Is there a handful of mustard seed?" They said, "Of course!" and quickly ran inside the house to bring some mustard seeds. After they brought it, she asked, "By the way, has any son or daughter or anyone else died in this house?" They replied, "Oh, what are you saying? In this house, the dead are far more numerous. We who are alive are only a few." "Then keep those mustard seeds. This is not the medicine for my child," she said, and went to the next house. In that house too, there were mustard seeds as before. Mustard seeds were common. But a house where no one had died was what could not be found. In this manner, she went from house to house until evening, with the hope that she would find such mustard seeds. When she looked, the people of every single house in the entire village said, "Those who are alive are few; those who have died from this house are far more." Then, she began to reflect gradually: "Why is it that I cannot understand that my child has died? In this entire village, in all these houses, it is only about death." Having thrown the corpse away in the forest, she went back to the Buddha, paid homage to Him, and stood to one side. The Buddha asked, "How is it? Did you obtain the dose of medicine?"

Then this woman said, "In this entire village, the dead are far more than those who are alive. There are indeed mustard seeds, but the required kind of mustard seed is not there." Then the Buddha declared, "That is indeed so, Gotamī; this death belongs to

everyone. It is the natural fate. Those who have not understood this matter correctly—intoxicated by the fortune of children, thinking 'I have sons,' intoxicated by conceit (*māna*), intoxicated by that attachment, and likewise intoxicated by their cattle, wealth, and so forth—continue to live. Māra comes and drags away such a person who is living thus, Death comes and drags them away, just as a great flood sweeping over a sleeping village carries away all the people in that village." Thus He uttered the Dhamma stanza we mentioned earlier.

Taṃ puttapsumattānaṃ,

byāsattamanasaṃ naraṃ,

suttaṃ gāmaṃ mahoghova,

maccu ādāya gacchati.

He uttered this Dhamma stanza found in the *Magga Vagga* of the *Dhammapada*. *Taṃ puttapsumattānaṃ* means that humans generate various kinds of strong attachments, pride, and intoxication regarding their own children, thinking, "My children are beautiful, powerful, strong, and hold very high positions," and so on. That is why it speaks here of *sammattaṃ*, an intoxication. Likewise, in those days, wealth was often measured by the size of one's herd of cattle. That is why cattle are mentioned here.

Because of one's wealth, resources like crops, and the herd of cattle, thinking "I have very healthy cows, a large dairy herd," and so on, one develops pride and intoxication regarding one's possessions in various ways. One forgets that one is to die. When death arrives, that person is overwhelmed by it just as a sleeping village is submerged by a flood. Now, we often hear of such incidents. While people are asleep in the middle of the night, without any warning, a great flood comes and sweeps everything away without leaving even a dog behind. The Buddha expressed through that Dhamma stanza that when Māra comes in such a terrifying situation, that person laments and falls into disaster. Upon hearing this, due to that sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) and that realization, the mother Kisāgotamī was established in the noble fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). Through that first path-knowledge, she realized the great deathless Nibbāna: the Mind Stilled.

Precisely due to that sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) that arose in her, she requested the Buddha to be ordained in this Dispensation (*sāsana*). The Buddha sent her to the nunnery and had her ordained. According to this story, we can see that the Buddha is indeed a physician. Our past poets have also expressed about the Buddha: "He is the physician for the suffering of becoming (*bhava*) that occurs to beings." The Buddha is indeed the physician-teacher for the suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra* and becoming (*bhava*). The same is true of the truth preached by the Buddha. Within the Four Noble Truths is the method a physician adopts regarding a patient. Firstly, the Truth of Suffering is the disease. Next, the Truth of Origin (*samudaya*) is craving (*taṇhā*). That is the source of the disease. A skilled physician treats not the symptoms of the disease, but its source, the cause of the disease. Thus, the cause of this suffering (*dukkha*) is craving

(*taṇhā*). Next, the physician determines whether this craving, this illness, can be cured or not. Health, the state of being free of disease, is the goal. That is Nibbāna: the Mind Stilled. Then, the path that helps to achieve this is the Noble Eightfold Path found in the Dhamma. The very same method is present here in the medical treatment given to Kisāgotamī.

Now, an ordinary doctor would prescribe a medicine only when the medicinal ingredients are brought. Here, the Buddha performed the treatment using the very medicinal ingredient that could not be found! Likewise, this mother stated the child's death as the symptom of the illness. She asked for medicine for the child. But the Buddha gave the medicine to the mother instead. When the medicine was given to the mother, the illness was cured right there. This miracle shown by the Buddha is entirely a miracle of this Dhamma. Here, the Buddha, out of His great wisdom and great compassion, gave Kisāgotamī a medicine in this way through a rare handful of mustard seeds—or rather, a handful of mustard seeds to be obtained from a house where no one had died.

We can see that this medicine actually became a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). It became a theme for meditation. As Kisāgotamī went from house to house, her mind must have gradually turned toward that meditation subject. That is what is called the meditation subject of mindfulness of death (*maraṇassati*). Mindfulness of death means constantly recollecting death. She went to every house inquiring about the story of death while searching for mustard seeds. In the end, what everyone spoke of was the story of death. Consequently, based on this, the understanding arose in her: "In this manner, my child dies, and I too will die; this is the Dhamma-nature (*dhammatā*)." It was because her mind turned toward the mindfulness of death in that way, and a powerful sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) was aroused, that she attained Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*) at that very moment upon hearing that Dhamma stanza of the Buddha, and her mind was even inclined toward ordination.

The meditation subject called mindfulness of death (*maraṇassati*) is a meditation subject highly praised, considered supreme, and extolled by the Buddha. So much so, that on one occasion He addressed the Sangha:

"Maraṇassati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsā amatogadhā amatapariyosānā"

"Monks, this mindfulness of death, this meditation subject of recollecting death, when developed and frequently practiced, is of great fruit and great benefit. It is highly advantageous." Likewise, *amatogadhā amatapariyosānā*: *Amata* means the Deathless state, freedom from death. The word *Amata* (Deathless) is used here to refer to the great deathless Nibbāna: the Mind Stilled.

When we speak of the great deathless Nibbāna, we utter "Sādhu" because in this *saṃsāra* we have been dying over and over again for an infinite period of time. It is freedom from this death that is the meaning of Nibbāna. Thus, the meditation on the mindfulness of death draws us directly toward that Nibbāna called the Deathless state. It

leads us right there. Likewise, *amatapariyosānā*: that journey culminates in Nibbāna itself. On the face of it, this seems like a contradictory statement. By constantly thinking about death, one is freed from death. Looking at it, it seems like a paradoxical statement—how one is freed from death, how one attains the Deathless state, by constantly thinking about death.

In society nowadays, there is vaccination. There is vaccination for epidemic diseases and the like. There are also various medical systems such as homeopathy. In these, they act according to a certain principle, a certain theory. What is that? It is the very pathogen or toxin of a disease that is injected into this body. Through that vaccination, when that pathogen is processed in a specific way and introduced into the body, the body fights against that pathogen and develops an immunity, a disease-preventing capacity. In the exact same way, through the constant contemplation of death, one can be led to the Deathless state, which is freedom from death. According to that principle, we can now understand how Sister Kisāgotamī eventually relied on this mindfulness of death meditation to attain even Arahantship. That story is also mentioned as a background story relevant to another stanza in the *Dhammapada* itself. Sister Kisāgotamī attained the fruit of Stream-entry at the very beginning. The occasion of her attaining Arahantship after becoming a nun is shown there.

How was that? On one Uposatha (poya) day, it was Sister Kisāgotamī's turn to perform the duties of the Uposatha hall, to do the preparations according to the monastic duties. So, Sister Kisāgotamī lit a lamp, stilled her mind, and stood looking at the lamp. While looking at that lamp, Sister Kisāgotamī realized: there is not just one thing here. When we say "lamp-flame", at first glance it appears to us as one single thing. But it is not one; here, lamp-flames seem to ignite and extinguish continuously. It was understood as a series of occurrences. This is a certain deep realization that leads to insight (*vipassanā*) meditation.

When one reflects deeply while looking at these lamps, through that reflection a deep understanding arises. At first glance, every object in this world appears to us as something permanent, as a single unit. It is only when we look with careful attention that we begin to see the vibrations, movements, and changes within it; we begin to see impermanence (*aniccata*). Likewise, this lamp-flame is a series of ignitions and extinctions. This became visible to her. Through that, in relation to the meditation on mindfulness of death she was practicing, the thought arose: "Is it not just like this lamp-flame that human beings are born and die, over and over again? Is it not only those who have realized Nibbāna that are freed from this?"

At that very moment, while residing in His Fragrant Chamber (*gandha-kuṭi*), the Buddha, projecting a light as if He were standing right in front of Sister Kisāgotamī, uttered another Dhamma stanza—another Dhamma stanza currently found in the *Sahassa Vagga* of the *Dhammapada*. In order to further mature Kisāgotamī's insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), He declared: "Yes, Gotamī, those lamp-flames are indeed the lives of these humans. They are born and they die, over and over. Only the person

who has seen Nibbāna is freed from this." Then, showing the value of Nibbāna, He uttered this stanza:

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve,

apassaṃ amataṃ padaṃ;

Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo,

passato amataṃ padaṃ.

He uttered this Dhamma stanza, meaning: "Better is a single day's life of one who perceives the Deathless State than a hundred years of life of one who does not perceive the Deathless State." Having heard that stanza, through the insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) that matured within her mind, Sister Kisāgotamī bypassed the stages of Once-Returner (*sakadāgāmī*) and Non-Returner (*anāgāmī*), and realized the supreme, noble Arahantship, the great deathless Nibbāna: the Mind Stilled.

What are the examples we should take from this story? Many people may have heard this story, but we should look not for the mere flavor of an ordinary story, but for the lesson, the practical example we can extract from all of this for our own lives. Now, let us reflect a little on this account of death mentioned here. What actually took place here? Mindfulness of death as a meditation subject, the meditation on mindfulness of death (*maraṇassati*), means looking at death with a certain unique perspective. It is a contemplation with radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), with wisdom.

Most people do not like even the word "death". If they do tolerate it, they do so regarding the death of others. Many people think of death as something that happens to others for the sake of their own survival. The idea that this is something that belongs to themselves, something that could come upon them at any moment, is absent in most people. But mindfulness of death meditation means that "life is inconstant, death is constant." The feeling that "I do not know when my life will end" must constantly arise. Let us consider the disadvantageous side of not remembering death. Contemplating that death will come to oneself might sometimes be thought of as a nuisance. But the Buddha points it out here as something that must be constantly brought to mind, something to be recollected. Its advantageous side is expressed in the very passage we quoted earlier: it is of great fruit, of great benefit. It is stated here that when this mindfulness of death is developed, when it is cultivated, when it is frequently practiced, it is of great fruit and great benefit, leading straight to Nibbāna.

Instead, let us consider the state of the person who does not recollect death. As described in the first stanza, the person who does not think about death spends their time thinking about their possessions, or their children, their fortune of children, their cattle, and their wealth. How does that person's life pass? That person does not think about wholesome and unwholesome deeds (*kusala-akusala*), of merit and demerit. They do not think of giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), or meditation (*bhāvanā*); they amass wealth whether

through righteous or unrighteous means. They do what must be done for their children, earning unrighteously.

We get to hear about the end of such lives. At the final stage, when confined to their deathbed, they regret. Many who have committed terrible evil deeds (*pāpa-kamma*) end their lives in a terrifying manner at the final moment, in accordance with those evil deeds. It is observed that some people are terrified when dying. Some might think that the fear that arises at death is not common to most. Yet, sometimes we hear that even a person who jumped into a river intending to commit suicide waves their hand the moment they surface, crying, "Oh, please save me!" The world thinks, "But that person jumped because they were tired of life!" Likewise, we cannot see the minds of those who die instantly or suddenly. But indeed, the Buddha has declared that everyone—everyone who is not an Arahant—is afraid of death. No matter how brave or courageous they claim to be, at the final moment, the mind wavers and becomes terrified. Because at the moment of death, one sees where one is going; some sign (*nimitta*) comes to the mind.

Furthermore, because of the craving (*taṇhā*) of wondering "How can I separate from these fortunes of children and wealth that I have grasped, that I am clinging to through craving?", and because of the holding (*upādāna*) which is grasping, a great shock and fear arise in a person. Therefore, no matter how courageous or brave we claim to be, every non-Arahant dies with great mental agitation, intense pain, and distress. Not only that, having died in this way, where do they take birth? Sometimes, due to the attachment to the children in their own homes, they are born in those very homes as frogs, rat-snakes, dogs, or cats. Or else, due to the evil deeds (*pāpa-kamma*) they committed, they are born as demons (*yakkhā*), hungry ghosts (*petā*), or spirits, and trouble their relatives asking for merit. Such situations exist in the world. This is terrifying.

In short, the Buddha has pointed out death as an object of urgency (*saṃvega*). There is a certain momentum that helps one to travel this path of the Dispensation (*sāsana*), this journey to Nibbāna. That is called urgency (*saṃvega*). Just like the speed every vehicle must have, the momentum one must have is urgency (*saṃvega*). If there is no sense of urgency, one delays in engaging in wholesome practices and falls into negligence (*pamāda*). Diligence (*appamāda*) is what the Buddha has pointed out as the path to Nibbāna. Negligence is a surrender to Māra. Therefore, in order not to fall into negligence, one must constantly recollect death—as something extremely close to oneself, as something imminent, not knowing when death will strike. Then, one does not postpone performing meritorious deeds, thinking "I will engage in sermons and meditation only after I grow old and retire." In that way, we can see the disadvantageous side of this.

On the other hand, we must carefully consider what the Buddha declared about the advantages. The person who constantly contemplates death does not postpone giving and meritorious deeds. At whatever stage of life they may be, they reflect on *saṃsāra* according to the word of the Buddha. We have traveled through this *saṃsāra* for an unspeakably long period of time under the conditions of birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), illness,

and death (*maraṇa*). Likewise, in this life, some people say, "We lived well." Yet, they have no understanding of the wholesome and unwholesome deeds (*kusala-akusala*) performed in this infinite past. What does it matter if one lives a good life in this present time, when due to evil deeds (*pāpa-kamma*) committed in the past, one's next birth might be in a bad place? Because of this situation, one must strive to escape swiftly from this *saṃsāra*, from this terrifying state, from this wheel of kamma (*kamma-cakka*).

Having escaped from the wheel of kamma, the Wheel of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakka*) presented by the Buddha is something everyone must set in motion within their own mental continuum (*citta-santāna*). It is by setting that Wheel of Dhamma in motion that one sequentially attains the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship, thereby realizing even Arahantship itself. To be diligent in setting that Wheel of Dhamma in motion, one must bring to the forefront the awareness: "When will my life be destroyed? Life is inconstant, death is constant." Often, similes have been given for this.

For someone who develops the meditation subject of mindfulness of death (*maraṇassati*), deep realizations arise even through the things seen in daily life. For Sister Kisāgotamī, insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) emerged through those lamps. Similarly, for someone who practices mindfulness of death, through a flower that blooms and fades, or a fruit that ripens and falls, or a leaf that drops, and—what is more—through the breath one inhales and exhales, and through a lamp that is lit and extinguished, through all of these, mindfulness of death is recollected. One constantly thinks, "Is my life not just like this?" In the instructions on this mindfulness of death meditation, it is shown how one should think of life: like a dewdrop glistening on the tip of a blade of grass in the morning. In a very short time, as the sun rises, it vanishes. Or like a water bubble that arises during heavy rain and bursts right there and then, this life vanishes. Or like a line drawn on water. Various similes are shown. When one looks at them, they might appear as exaggerations to some, but to the meditator, the impermanence (*aniccatā*) of this life is understood very deeply. The Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*)—impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—are all contained within this mindfulness of death. When contemplating death, very deep realizations arise.

Sister Kisāgotamī attained such a profound understanding through the lamp-flame. When the mind became concentrated on the lamps, what is actually present within that which we take as a single unit called a "lamp-flame"? It is a series of efforts to remain burning. A series of exertions. As long as there is oil and a wick in the lamp, it leaps up and struggles to remain burning, trying to appear as a single lamp-flame. It is the same with this life of ours; if we reflect deeply on the statement "I am living," if we think of of it from the standpoint of insight (*vipassanā*), what is present here? With every single heartbeat, with every breath inhaled and exhaled, with every action performed by body, speech, and mind, what is present here is a series of arisings and passings away. "Living" is also merely an effort to display a life. In truth, what is present here is a series of fabrications, a series of readynings. These are what are called preparations (*saṅkhāra*).

This is a heap of constructions, or rather a heap of fabrications, a heap of makings, a heap of readynings throughout the entirety of life. Thus, up until death, we are making a series of these preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Until death, we strive to live, we make preparations, we make up. But there is no end to this. Who pushes us toward this? It is craving (*taṇhā*). This craving. That is why the Buddha declared that underlying the entirety of *saṃsāra* is craving (*taṇhā*). It was due to her attachment, her intense attachment to her child, that Kisāgotamī could not see the truth. In the same way, because of this craving, taking this series of constantly existing movements, this heap of events characterized by arisings and passings away, as one single thing, we maintain the usage of "I" and "mine". To see this, the Eye of Dhamma must arise. To attain that Dhamma-knowledge called the arising of the Eye of Dhamma, that deep path of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*) and so forth, one must strive to constantly contemplate this mindfulness of death.

We can take another valuable lesson from this story of Kisāgotamī. To bring about a decisive transformation in one's life, a grand thing is not necessary. One need not wait for grand things or wondrous miracles to happen to bring about a life transformation. A grand thing is not required at all. Sometimes, even a mustard seed is enough. To transform Kisāgotamī, a mother who went from house to house carrying a dead child on her hip, into an Arahant nun worshipped by gods and humans, the Great Compassionate Buddha made use of a mustard seed. In the same way, we must think of bringing about a transformation in our own lives through the very things we see and hear in our daily lives. In this day and age, in this era of terror, we hear of this thing called death not occasionally, but daily, constantly. We hear not only of occasional deaths, but constantly of deaths in bulk.

But we must reflect wisely and look at our own minds: is there actually such a thing as mindfulness of death (*maraṇassati*) within us? Is there a mindfulness of death in our minds as described by the Buddha? We hear about death every day. But there is a highly important point here. Even though death is heard of, why is it that mindfulness of death does not arise in a person by that alone? The reason for that is that this radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), this wise reflection, is absent in that person.

In the Dhamma, there are two things: unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) and radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Unwise attention means inappropriate reflection, or rather improper reflection. It is reflecting in the wrong way. Radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means reflecting with wisdom, reflecting in the proper way. What is that inappropriate or improper reflection? If one begins to think of death as something that should be inflicted on others for the sake of one's own survival, or if, without thinking of this *saṃsāra*, one thinks of this life in a short-sighted way, believing "I must destroy others for my own survival," then there is no mindfulness of death there. Instead, one must reflect: "Death is something common to all of us. I do not know when my life in this *saṃsāra* will end." The Buddha has pointed out what actually belongs to oneself, who one's relative is, what one's inheritance is, and who one's refuge is.

It is pointed out as:

"Kammassakā sattā, kammadāyādā, kammayonī, kammabandhū, kammapaṭisaraṇā"

It is kamma (*kamma*) that actually belongs to oneself. It is the wholesome and unwholesome deeds (*kusala-akusala kamma*) one performs that belong to oneself. *Kammadāyādā* means kamma is one's inheritance; when one dies and passes to the next world, what one takes along is not these lands, estates, and money, but the kamma one has performed. Likewise, one's kinsman (*kammabandhū*) is also kamma. One cannot take these relatives along.

No matter what high or low positions one has in this life, it is according to one's kamma that the next birth is received. *Kammayonī* determines and decides where one is born. Next, what stands as one's relative is indeed that state of existence (*ātmabhāva*) in the next life. Thus, when looking at one's saṃsāric existence as a series of states of existence, one's kinsman is indeed that state of existence born according to kamma. Therefore, it is that relative which is carried forward in this *saṃsāra*. If so, we must reflect: the Buddha has pointed out that this wheel of kamma is extremely terrifying. We do not know what kind of past kammas are there. There is no end to exhausting these kammas. One cannot escape this *saṃsāra* even by performing good kammas alone. It is that terrifying. There is no end to it.

Instead, the Buddha pointed out the Wheel of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakka*) to cut through this wheel of kamma. That Wheel of Dhamma is activated through wisdom, through intellect. We must develop that wisdom. We must develop our minds. We must change the way we look at this world. We must change our thoughts and wishes. In the Noble Eightfold Path, what is first shown is Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right vision. That right vision must be established first: that this saṃsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*), and the cause for this is craving (*taṇhā*); and the escape from this *saṃsāra*, the destruction of craving, is Nibbāna: the Mind Stilled. This Noble Eightfold Path consists of eight factors. There is a path consisting of these eight factors: *sammā-diṭṭhi* (Right View), *sammā-saṅkappa* (Right Intention), *sammā-vācā* (Right Speech), *sammā-kammanta* (Right Action), *sammā-ājīva* (Right Livelihood), *sammā-vāyāma* (Right Effort), *sammā-sati* (Right Mindfulness), and *sammā-samādhi* (Right Concentration).

We spoke about physicians just now. Similarly, just like a decoction made of eight medicinal ingredients—or as some physicians say, "boil these eight measures down to one and drink"—the state where the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are boiled down together is what is called the path-knowledge of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*). That Noble Eightfold Path is not to be developed in a superficial, piecemeal fashion in daily life.

If, at some point, Right View is stabilized, and according to that Right View, the thoughts and intentions, the words spoken accordingly, the course of action taken accordingly, the livelihood and life-conduct lived accordingly, the effort made accordingly—the effort to develop the wholesome and eliminate the unwholesome—and the mindfulness and concentration maintained accordingly, are aligned straight within the mental continuum,

that moment is just like a decoction where eight measures are boiled down into one. Realizing Nibbāna is exactly like taking four doses of such a decoction—we explained this using the medical simile. We have received an extremely rare period of a Buddha's appearance (*buddhōtpāda*). We have received a highly rare human state of existence. We must constantly generate a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding this. During periods when no Buddha appears (*abuddhōtpāda*), even kings—not people like us, but great kings—having understood the suffering of this *saṃsāra*, go to the Himalayas and practice asceticism. At most, they might only be able to fly through the air. Even if they perform such feats, they cannot escape from this *saṃsāra*. Why? Because it is not a period of a Buddha's appearance. A Buddha Himself must be present to declare this truth, this path.

That is why, when the Buddha set in motion that Wheel of Dhamma on the full-moon poya day of Esala, Ven. Aññā-Kondañña, among the group of five monks, was established in the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). Next, a vast number of deities (*devas*) and Brahmas in the heavenly realms and Brahma realms, who had been waiting for the appearance of a Buddha, realized Nibbāna. In that way, the appearance of a Buddha Himself is necessary to declare this path to Nibbāna.

Therefore, if we have received a human state of existence capable of listening to the Dhamma and understanding it during such a period of a Buddha's appearance, we must arouse a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) within ourselves. Death, as an object of urgency, supports this. How inconstant is this life of ours! When will it be destroyed? Even though we make various plans for the future, we do not know at which moment this life will be destroyed.

Under such conditions, managing one's thoughts is something left to oneself. It does not matter in what ways the world lives; this goal of Nibbāna should not be put aside. Sister Kisāgotamī gained a deep understanding of death through the incident concerning her child. Now, this is an era in which parents can very easily arouse that thought of death regarding their own children and their relatives. But one must reflect whether one is making use of that thought of death in the proper way. The proper use is to reflect on this terrifying nature of *saṃsāra*, to reflect on this inconstant nature of life, and constantly impress upon the mind: "Our lives, too, will vanish in this manner." For one who reflects constantly in this way, very deep realizations arise from the things seen day-to-day.

This meditation subject is not something to be developed only while sitting in the cross-legged posture. When this is constantly brought to mind daily as something developed and frequently practiced (*bhāvitā bahulīkatā*), great realizations arise. One's education, lack of education, poverty, or wealth—none of these is required. What is needed here is the desire (*chanda*), a powerful earnestness regarding this task. For that earnestness to arise, there must be a powerful conviction (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gem. One must reflect deeply on the promise, the guarantee given by the Buddha. Recalling the statement uttered by the Buddha: "Monks, this mindfulness of death, when well developed and frequently practiced, is of great fruit and great benefit; it leads directly to Nibbāna, it

leads to the Deathless state," one must strive to constantly develop this mindfulness of death meditation.

Therefore, when others talk about news of this kind, one must look inside one's own mind: how should the reaction to this be? One must decide for oneself whether, upon hearing of a death, one ends up with a temporary grief, or with aversion (*dosa*), or with vengeance, or whether one uses this news of death for the development of one's own mind—what we referred to as radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) and unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). One must consider whether one is doing it in the proper way or the improper way. If it is done in the proper way, then indeed it will support one's Nibbāna. It is then that the true benefit is extracted from this life. Reflecting in that manner, these virtuous friends must constantly calculate the accounts of wholesome and unwholesome deeds in their daily lives, not accounts of income. Reflecting on one's own mental continuum, on the daily activities performed through mind, body, and speech, one must constantly examine these accounts.

Now, at this moment, you have undertaken a valuable virtue called *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (virtue with livelihood as the eighth factor). This virtue is the foundation for meditation. Virtue (*sīla*) is not a mere custom. The Buddha has instructed to practice meditation while standing on the foundation of virtue. For any heavy work performed using great strength, the ground on which one stands is always important. Similarly, the Buddha has pointed out that one must establish oneself in this virtue to generate that deep understanding. Therefore, at this moment, according to the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* mentioned, you too must reflect on how your daily life is spent. You must strive to constantly correct those aspects.

At the same time, this flow of thoughts, this meditation, is not some strange, mystical thing; it is developed by constantly contemplating a certain wholesome mind-state. We know how a river is formed by the dripping of water drop by drop. Sometimes, the origin of a river is a few drops of water falling somewhere. When they accumulate, they form a great force, a torrent of water, and flow as a river through streams and brooks into the ocean, making a great sound. Similarly, in our daily lives, even if we say we have no space or time, we must think of utilizing even the brief moments of leisure we get for this. If a person who has practiced a meditation subject strives to turn their mind toward that subject, their mental continuum (*citta-santāna*) will gradually incline toward meditation in daily life.

When one constantly contemplates death as an object of urgency (*saṃvega*), without postponing, one gains the strength to walk diligently on the course of action that helps to destroy the powerful defilements of ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) present within one's mental continuum. Therefore, these virtuous friends should not wait for a great miracle to occur to bring about a decisive change in their lives. This human life we have obtained is extremely rare. Likewise, this period of a Buddha's appearance is extremely rare. We spoke of the lamp just now, we spoke of the lamp-flame; this lamp of the Dispensation (*sāsana*) will not last long. Due to various causes, even this Dhamma

can be destroyed, submerged, and lost. A time when we will not get to hear even a word of Dhamma may arise in the future.

Today, we have been fortunate to hear this Dhamma. Next, even if we do not have as much opportunity for sermons and meditation as during the Buddha's time, we can create some opening, some pause, some leisure, if we make an effort. One must make a strong determination to strive for that. There is some lesson to be taken from every Dhamma discussion to shape one's life. As long as that lesson is not taken, no matter how much one listens to this Dhamma, it is of no use. The Buddha has declared that this Dhamma must be seen within one's own mental continuum. Buddhas are teachers. It has been declared that what must be done must be done by oneself.

Therefore, if at some stage in this life, one begins to practice some meditation subject within one's mental continuum, as one develops it for a week, a month, or a year, gradually a great mental strength, power of concentration (*samādhi*), and deep understanding arise. Amidst the stressful conditions in one's life, amidst this stressful society, the person with Dhamma-realization can lead their life peacefully and calmly. Because of this, thinking wisely, you must make a special determination to integrate, to bring close to your life, this mindfulness of death meditation, as a special resolve to escape from this terrifying suffering of *saṃsāra* (*saṃsāra-dukkha*), which is the supreme fruit of this human state of existence you have obtained.

So far, these virtuous friends, having undertaken the valuable virtue of *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*, have listened to the Dhamma at this moment with stilled minds and conviction (*saddhā*). The benefit of listening to the Dhamma (*dhamma-savanānisaṃsa*) is the multitude of wholesome thoughts that arise within one's mental continuum at that very moment, during the very time of listening to the Dhamma. During this hour, if you had been engaged in other daily activities, unwholesome thoughts would have mostly arisen. But when listening to the Dhamma, a multitude of wholesome intentions (*kusala-cetanā*) arise.

Particularly on those occasions of listening to the Dhamma, a certain conviction (*saddhā*) arises in one's mental continuum. In accordance with that conviction, a certain energy (*vīriya*) arises within the mind to walk on this path of Dhamma. Likewise, if the mind is focused on this listening of Dhamma, a good mindfulness (*sati*) is present. Next, during the time of listening to the Dhamma, a certain concentration (*samādhi*), a state of composure and stillness, arises in one's mental continuum. If one reflects wisely according to the Dhamma, a deep understanding, wisdom (*paññā*), arises. Conviction, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, vīriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*) are the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) we must develop for Nibbāna. Conviction, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom are the powers (*bala*), the strength we must apply for the realization of Nibbāna. Therefore, during this time of listening to the Dhamma, a multitude of extremely peaceful and sublime wholesome thoughts arose in these virtuous friends. Especially, you received the opportunity to deposit those wholesome qualities of conviction, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom within your mental continuum.

As the benefit and blessing of all this, using these as a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*), may you escape from this extremely terrifying saṃsāric suffering (*saṃsāra-dukkha*) consisting of birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), illness, and death (*maraṇa*), and attain the supreme peace of Nibbāna: the Mind Stilled, the highest bliss of extinguishment! Aspire thus. Likewise, may whatever deities and Brahmas who protect the Dispensation (*sāsana*), including the guardian deities residing in this place, who aspire for Nibbāna and wish to escape this suffering of *saṃsāra*, rejoice in this merit of preaching and listening to the Dhamma!

May they, having rejoiced, be comforted by the great deathless Nibbāna through whichever of the three Bodhis (enlightenments) they have aspired for! Share the merit with those deities in this manner. Likewise, if any deceased relatives of yours are in some woeful state of existence (*dugati*) and are hoping to be freed from this *saṃsāra*, may they all rejoice in this merit of preaching and listening to the Dhamma! May those relatives, and likewise all beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who desire merit and Nibbāna, rejoice in this noble merit and bring an end to saṃsāric suffering through the peaceful, sublime, and great deathless Nibbāna! With this aspiration, recite these stanzas to share the merit:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #162

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.74)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Idaṃ pure cittamacāri cārikaṃ,

Yenthacchakaṃ yathākāmaṃ yathāsukhaṃ;

Tadajjahaṃ niggahessāmi yoniso,

Hatthippabhinnaṃ viya aṅkusaggaho."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 326 (Nāga Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

For the driver of any fast-moving vehicle, the ability to control it properly is absolutely essential. If one leaves the vehicle to its own momentum and disregards the steering wheel and the brakes, the vehicle will run off the road and become uncontrollable. If that happens, a great disaster will befall the driver, the passengers in the vehicle, and the pedestrians on the road. It will become clear from today's thematic stanza and its corresponding background story that this same natural law applies to the mind, which runs faster than any vehicle.

A certain faithful lay woman in Sāvatthi ordained her only son when he was at a very tender age. That young novice monk engaged in his duties very obediently, learning the Vinaya in a very endearing manner, performing his duties and rituals correctly, and pleasing the minds of his teachers and preceptors. Since the senior monks realized that he was not only skilled in preaching the Dhamma but could also preach in a sweet and pleasant voice, they gave permission to this young monk to preach as well.

So, every day after finishing the sermon, this young monk would share the merits, saying, "May this merit, this wholesome deed of preaching the Dhamma, belong to my parents." His human parents did not even know that the sermon was taking place, nor that merit was being shared. Human parents cannot rejoice in merits under such

circumstances. However, a certain female *yakkha* (spirit), who had been the mother of this young monk in a past life, would come with *devas* to listen to the Dhamma and rejoice in those merits. Because of this, she received a special status among those *devas* and the *yakkha* community. They began to treat her with great respect, recognizing her as "the mother of Ven. Sānu."

As time went on, as the young monk gradually reached youth, he was overcome by the impulses of defilements and thought of returning to lay life. Dissatisfied with the monkhood, with overgrown hair and nails, and wearing soiled robes, he returned to his home one day without informing anyone. His mother asked, "Why is this? Usually, you arrive either with the senior monks or with the other young monks. Why are you alone today?" Then, Ven. Sānu said, "I have become dissatisfied with the monkhood in this manner. I have developed an attachment to the lay life. I have come to return to lay life."

This lay mother pleaded with him not to abandon the monkhood, pointing out the disadvantages (*ādīnava*) of lay life in various ways. Yet, she could not change the monk's mind. At her wits' end, the lay woman thought, "Very well, let him contemplate and make a decision himself. Please wait, and I will prepare some almsfood for you." She quickly prepared some rice gruel first, and then got ready to wash the rice to cook the almsfood, sitting nearby.

At that moment, the *yakkhi* who had been his mother in a past life directed her mind to see whether the young monk was receiving almsfood and *pindapātha*. Upon looking, she saw that he had gone home and was attempting to disrobe. She thought, "If this young monk disrobes, I too will lose the respect and honor I receive in the assembly of *devas* and the *yakkha* community. I will face great disgrace and shame. I must obstruct his disrobing." Thinking thus, she possessed Ven. Sānu, causing his neck to twist, saliva to drool, and causing him to fall to the ground.

Hearing the young monk fall from his chair, his mother came running, placed his head on her lap, and began to tend to him while crying in fear. The neighbors also arrived and, realizing it was a spirit possession, prepared to perform various sacrificial rituals (*bali*). At the same time, the mother said in great sorrow, "As far as I have heard, virtuous people do not suffer from this kind of demonic affliction. But it seems these *yakkhas* are playing with my son." When she said this, the mother in the *yakkha* form spoke through the possession: "Do not reject Sānu, the disciple of the Buddha. This is the request of the *yakkhas*. If evil deeds are committed, whether unconsciously, openly, or in secret, one will have to suffer their consequences." Having given this advice, she withdrew the possession.

When the young monk opened his eyes, he saw that while he was sitting in the chair earlier, now he was lying on the ground, his mother was crying, and people had gathered around. He did not understand that this was a *yakkha* possession. He asked his mother, "Why are you crying? Why are you crying as if I am dead? Am I not alive?" Then, the lay mother said, "It is not that you are alive. Now you are as good as dead. Leaving the monastic life and living in the household life again is just like being dead; it is with that

feeling that I am crying." The mother advised him further: "Just as one would rescue a valuable item from a burning house, I took my child and ordained him in the Dispensation. To abandon monkhood and become a lay person is like jumping back into a pit of burning embers after being pulled out of a fire." In this way, she explained the disadvantages (*ādīnava*) of the household life in various ways. When the mother advised him repeatedly in this manner, Ven. Sānu decided, "Then, I will not disrobe."

The lay mother was overjoyed and prepared his almsfood. Since the time for his higher ordination (*upasampadā*) had also arrived, she prepared the robes and requisites for him. Ven. Sānu was thus eventually ordained. After his higher ordination, the Supreme Buddha preached a stanza as advice to Ven. Sānu, which we presented as our theme:

Idaṃ pure cittamacāri cārikaṃ,

Yenacchakaṃ yathāsukhaṃ;

Tadajjahaṃ niggahessāmi yoniso,

Hatthippabhinnaṃ viya aṅkusaggaho.

"In the past, this mind went wandering through various objects as it pleased, according to its liking and sweet will. Today, I shall thoroughly restrain it with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), just as a mahout holding a goad tames an elephant in rut."

That is the meaning of the stanza. Thus, by acting in accordance with that stanza, the young monk not only attained Arahantship but also, utilizing his past talent for Dhamma preaching, remained in the monkhood for one hundred and twenty years, performing a great service to Ancient India (*Jambudīpa*) through Dhamma sermons, as mentioned in the texts.

There are many lessons we can draw from this story. Even this young monk, who had been practicing monastic life well and had shown great promise in the Sasana, thought of returning to lay life due to certain impulses that arose with youth. The way those two mothers acted on that occasion is a great example for mothers of today. Normally, if someone returns after leaving the monkhood, some who possess selfish, worldly feelings might say, "Oh, that's very good. Now you can find a job with what you have learned and live a lay life," thus encouraging them to stay in the household life. However, these mothers acted with great faith.

In fact, even though he was her only son, she ordained him in the Sasana with a profound understanding, having realized the disadvantages (*ādīnava*) of the household life. That is a wonderful example. Furthermore, even the mother in her *yakkha* birth—normally, in Buddhist stories, spirit possessions and the like are depicted as obstacles to practicing monastic virtues. However, here, through the *yakkha* possession by his past mother, the "demonic possession" (the impulse of Māra) of Ven. Sānu was expelled. In that respect, another valuable monk was preserved for the Sasana.

Generally, when speaking of the war between *devas* and *asuras*, the *devas* are considered to be on the side of the Dhamma, and the *asuras* on the side of non-Dhamma. However, you, devout lay people, may have heard that *yakkhas* like Āḷavaka, Hemavata, and Sātāgira developed faith in the Supreme Buddha, and some even attained the stage of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*). Not all *yakkhas* are inclined towards unrighteousness in that way. Occasionally, there are those with right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Even here, this female *yakkha*, by rejoicing in the merits of Dhamma sermons, acted with great faith. On this occasion, by employing a certain skillful means (*sammā-prayoga*), she prevented this young monk from disrobing. Thus, this too is a good example for us regarding these Sasana values. The view held in the past regarding renunciation (*nekkhamma*) is clearly expressed here. Its value is such that after abandoning all luxuries and ordaining, returning to lay life is like death. The Supreme Buddha has stated that to disrobe after ordaining is like death. The Supreme Buddha attributed such a deep value to renunciation.

Next, let us look at the stanza uttered by the Supreme Buddha. This is like a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Why? Because here it is presented not as a piece of advice given by the Supreme Buddha, but as self-advice, a command given to the mind by Ven. Sānu himself to discipline his own mind. That is to say, "My mind wandered around as it pleased for so long. Now I will not allow you to wander." That taming is then compared to a mahout with a goad in hand taming an elephant in rut.

A very valuable method is shown there by the Supreme Buddha. We know that even a four-line stanza uttered by the Supreme Buddha is deeply profound in meaning and flavor. Here too, when we contemplate, the fundamental idea is a command given by oneself to oneself, and also a highly valuable concept is expressed through this simile. The mind subjugated by the impulses of defilements is compared to an elephant in rut. There is a period when elephants go into rut. During that period, if the mahout is not exceptionally careful, the elephant will break even iron chains and run wild. Therefore, at that moment, the mahout must be extremely vigilant.

In this Dispensation, three kinds of intoxication (*mada*) inherent in sentient beings are pointed out: intoxication with youth (*yobbana-mada*), intoxication with health (*ārogya-mada*), and intoxication with life (*jīvita-mada*). Intoxication with youth, the intoxication that arises due to being healthy, and then the intoxication based on the conceit of being alive. Out of these, what arose in this young monk was the intoxication with youth. It was something like the intoxication that occurs in early youth. He thought of returning to lay life because of the impulses of defilements. The simile of the elephant in rut fits this perfectly. From that simile of the elephant in rut, one can understand the nature of the mind—how powerful a mind subjected to defilements is.

Taming an elephant in rut is no easy task; it is that powerful. What helps in this is the goad. "*Tadajjahaṃ niggahessāmi yoniso*"—I shall tame this mind with wisdom, just as a mahout with a goad in hand tames an elephant in rut. There, through the word "*yoniso*," we can understand that what is taken as the goad is wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). In this Dhamma, wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is explained as wise reflection.

Unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) means reflecting incorrectly in a way that gives rise to defilements—reflecting ignorantly and inappropriately.

Now, what is compared to the goad here is reflecting wisely. In wise reflection, what exists is looking directly at the behavior of one's own mind, turning completely towards oneself. In ordinary unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), what happens is being enslaved by the object, captivated by the object, and allowing thoughts to persist by giving way to the object. Like running after a mirage, one can never stop it, but finally, with wise reflection, one looks at one's own mind, at the change that has occurred in the mind. Then defilements like greed, hatred, and delusion are caught. It is because of these that the object received such qualities. Just as to a person wearing red-colored glasses everything in the world appears red, and if blue is worn, blue. There is a saying, isn't there, that to a jaundice patient everything appears yellow. In the same way, the manner in which one looks at the world changes due to the impulses of defilements. That is exactly what happened to Ven. Sānu. What helps to pacify that is wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)—reflecting wisely. One directs one's mind properly to see, "What has happened to my mind?" Accordingly, this stanza and these similes taught by the Supreme Buddha must be examined very carefully.

The Supreme Buddha has stated certain principles regarding the taming of the mind in various discourse (*Sutta*) teachings. Among them, there is a highly important discourse in the Middle Length Discourses (*Majjhima Nikāya*) called the *Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta*. The Supreme Buddha has amazingly shown a five-step method to control thoughts when they crash in. Especially for a person trying to calm the mind, a certain thought arises. That thought is an unwholesome thought. When it comes repeatedly, the first method shown by the Supreme Buddha to drive it away is to introduce a wholesome object in place of that unwholesome thought and its object. When one reflects on a wholesome object instead, that unwholesome object fades away. For example, if a certain beautiful sign (*subha-nimitta*) related to lust (*rāga*) comes to mind, one introduces an opposite unattractive sign (*asubha-nimitta*), a meditation sign of unattractiveness.

Or else, if thoughts of hatred (*dosa*) arise, at that moment one introduces loving-kindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*). The sign of loving-kindness is introduced instead. Otherwise, it is sometimes pointed out that those with intense hatred even clash with posts, thorns, etc., in the environment. In such instances, it is suitable to direct the mind to the attention to elements (*dhātu manasikāra*). "What is this? What am I clashing with?" one contemplates. In this way, driving away an unwholesome thought with a wholesome thought. The simile given by the Supreme Buddha for this is sufficient for anyone to remember this matter. Just like a skilled carpenter, when a peg in a piece of wood becomes bent, uses a finer peg than the one pulled out, driving it in with the finer peg to push the other out and uproot it. In that manner, to drive away the unwholesome thought with a wholesome thought, the Supreme Buddha has presented the first principle there through the simile of the carpenter.

There, the Supreme Buddha states that the nature of this mind is so fickle that sometimes this method may not succeed. It might fail. If it is not strong enough, then the

second method is shown. What is that second method? Contemplating the disadvantages (*ādīnava*) of the thought that has arisen. Disadvantage (*ādīnava*) means its fault. "These thoughts have such and such consequences. If I sustain them for long, I will have to suffer those consequences"—thus one contemplates them. When reflecting on them, the power of that thought is broken. One becomes disgusted with the thought and feels like abandoning it.

The Supreme Buddha gives a wonderful simile for this as well: just like a young woman or man who likes to look beautiful, if someone throws a carcass of a snake, a dog, or a human around their neck, they would immediately feel disgusted and try to get rid of it. According to this simile, one is told to look at the defiled thought that has arisen. In that way, one should develop a dislike, a disgust for it—arousing fear, shame, and disgust. Through that, one can then escape from the unwholesome thought. That is the second method. Just as a young woman or man who likes to look beautiful tries to remove a carcass of a human or a dog thrown on their body, one strives to remove that thought. The Supreme Buddha states that even this method may sometimes not succeed.

If that is not strong enough, then the third method is shown. What is that? One tries not to direct mindfulness (*sati*) and reflection towards the thought that repeatedly crashes into the mind. That is to say, normally something comes to mind because mindfulness is applied to it and because it is reflected upon. But here, with effort, one tries not to remember or reflect on it. The simile given there also explains this point: if a person does not wish to see a visual form (*rūpa*) that has appeared before them, they either close their eyes or look away. When a very strong light comes, we suddenly close our eyes, don't we? Or we look to the other side if we dislike it. It is something like that. In that manner, one tries to withdraw one's mind from it—towards another direction, in short, one deliberately redirects one's attention elsewhere. This is explained in further detail as follows.

When such torrents of thoughts crash into the mind, it is explained that a person can do things like this: instead, they perform some simple duty or chore. They direct the mind to a task like sweeping or cleaning up. Gradually, then, the power of those thoughts is suppressed. If one's mind keeps going to that unwholesome object, one gets up and starts some small, simple work. By directing attention to that, the attention going to the original object is naturally withdrawn. That is the third method.

If that too does not succeed, next is the fourth method. One is told to direct the mind to the structure, the root cause of the thoughts that arise. In a way, one investigates, "What is this thought?" We can understand this too from the simile given by the Supreme Buddha. A person, without being aware of it, is walking very, very fast. While walking fast, he suddenly thinks: "Why am I walking so fast? Is there any benefit in this? Why can't I walk slowly?" Thinking thus, he begins to walk slowly. Next, while walking slowly, he thinks: "Why am I even walking slowly? Wouldn't it be better if I stand?" and so he stands. Next, he thinks: "If there is a seat, I can sit down, so why am I standing?" and so he sits down. After sitting down, after a little while, he thinks: "Why am I sitting? I can also lie down. That is an even lighter posture," and so he lies down. This is only a simile.

How do we understand this matter through this? It is by analyzing the thought that arose, looking at it analytically according to its root cause, and gradually suppressing it. Here, as in the simile of abandoning a gross, coarse posture to adopt a subtle posture, one gradually pacifies that thought. One pacifies it gradually. Contemplating "Is this thought really worth thinking about?" one step-by-step reduces its momentum. That is the fourth method.

If even the fourth method does not succeed, and if the thought (*vitakka*) is that powerful, it is then that the Supreme Buddha provides a very powerful step suited for it: the fifth step. There, it is shown as follows: if so, trouble that unwholesome thought with a wholesome thought, push it away, and drive it out. From the simile shown there, one can understand: just as a strong man, catching a weak man by the neck or head, shakes him and completely subdues him, one should seize the unwholesome thought with the wholesome thought, challenge it, suppress it, and defeat it. That is the fifth one. In this manner, the Supreme Buddha has shown five methods of taming the mind in that *Sutta* discourse. Even if one simply remembers these similes, one can understand what should be done in such situations. If one gives way to the very nature of those thoughts and *vitakkas* that crash into the mind, they will become stronger and stronger.

The Supreme Buddha Himself, in another discourse, has revealed a principle He discovered during His days as a Bodhisatta when battling with His mind. There, it is stated in terms of a monk: if a monk repeatedly gives rise to a certain thought, the mind develops a bent, a leaning, a flexibility towards that side. It is said that a flexibility (*namyatāvak*) is created. This is shown for both sides. If one repeatedly thinks of thoughts of sensual desire (*kāma-vitakka*), the mind bends towards sensual thoughts. Thoughts of ill-will (*vyāpāda-vitakka*) mean thoughts of hatred. If one repeatedly thinks thoughts of hatred, a bent is created towards that side. Next, thoughts of cruelty (*vihiṃsā-vitakka*) mean thoughts of harming; if one thinks them repeatedly, a bent is created towards that side. On the other hand, if one thinks thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma-vitakka*), the mind bends towards that side. If one thinks thoughts of non-cruelty (*avihiṃsā*), non-ill-will (*avyāpāda*), or thoughts of loving-kindness, the mind bends towards that side.

However, when thoughts flow continuously without interruption, a certain momentum gathers within them. It is to break this that the Supreme Buddha has shown these five methods. Here, the Supreme Buddha has shown five valuable steps that are important even to modern-day psychologists. As the first effort, the second effort, and so on. Only at the very end must one adopt that most extreme measure. At first, one attempts to expel it, to drive it away, just as the carpenter expels the bent peg using a finer peg.

If that does not succeed, the second step is taken. What is it? One tries to make the mind dislike it. One disgusts it. By creating disgust, fear, and shame, one tries to make the unwholesome sign repulsive. That is what is shown in the simile of the young woman or man. Developing disgust, fear, shame, moral dread (*hiri-otappa*), etc., to drive away that defiled thought. When even that does not succeed, next is what is like boycotting (shunning). As if boycotting that thought, as if saying "I do not want you," one looks to

the other side, or closes both eyes. One closes both eyes to the thought. Like looking away, one directs the mind to another task, thereby breaking its momentum.

When even that does not succeed, next, looking directly at the thought, one investigates its propriety: "What is this thought? Is it something worth thinking about to this extent?" and thus gradually, as in the simile. "Why am I walking fast? Is walking slowly not better?" and so on. Next, if it reaches a state where none of these succeed, it is then that one is told to take that most powerful step. Just as a strong man, catching a weak man by the neck, shakes him and subdues him, the Supreme Buddha has stated that one should challenge the unwholesome thought with the wholesome thought in the same attitude, catching it, shaking it, and suppressing it. That is the idea of restraining (*niggaha*) the mind there. Restraining the mind in that stanza was meant in that sense.

Indeed, the Supreme Buddha has stated that regarding the mind, one must support and exert (*paggaha*) it when necessary. *Paggaha* means supporting and exerting. One must restrain or censure it (*niggaha*) when necessary. *Niggaha* means restraining and censuring. Both are necessary. In times when the mind is down, when sleepiness and such arise, one must encourage it. But if the momentum of thoughts (*vitakka*) is crashing beyond limit, at that time, one must suppress it, one must restrain (*niggaha*) it. Otherwise, if one simply watches where this mind is going, just as was said about the vehicle, if one allows the momentum of the vehicle and leaves it alone, it will eventually end up in a ditch and fall to the very bottom. It is such a situation.

Then, if the mind is something that runs faster than all vehicles, there must be a control over it—a control through some method like virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). If you simply let the mind go as it pleases and just watch, you can imagine what would happen. Some people in this country express such views as well. Thinking it is an easy method, and thinking that is the Buddha's teaching, many are drawn to it. The Supreme Buddha declared: "*Ahaṃ hi kammavādo kiriyavādo viriyavādo*"—"I am a proponent of action, a proponent of activity, and a proponent of energy." I say to be active. I say to exert energy.

There are various other *Sutta* discourse teachings in the Dhamma related to these thoughts and reflections. Let us bring out another one. Now, you, devout lay people, may have heard of the *Girimānanda Sutta*. Indeed, it is also used as a protective chant (*paritta*) during times of illness. In truth, the *Girimānanda Sutta* is not merely a protective discourse. It is a highly valuable *Sutta* that compiles ten meditations in their entirety. Ten meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) are introduced there under the name of "perceptions" (*saññā*). Among them, one meditation subject is introduced by the name of the "perception of abandoning" (*pahāna-saññā*).

This *pahāna* (abandoning) means casting away. There, it is shown as follows: a certain monk—one should understand that although "monk" is mentioned, it refers to any practitioner (*yogāvacara*), whether lay or ordained, who strives to tame the mind—the course of action to be taken by that practitioner, and this perception of abandoning (*pahāna-saññā*) itself is shown as sufficient to lead to Nibbāna. Here, the steps to be

taken regarding an arisen thought of sensual desire (*kāma-vitakka*) are shown in a few words. They are highly meaningful: "*nādhivāseti, pajahati, vinodeti, byantīkaroti, anabhāvaṅgameti*." "*Nādhivāseti*" means: if a thought of sensual desire or some defiled thought arises, what is the first step to be taken? "*Nādhivāseti*"—he does not tolerate it. "*Nādhivāseti*" means he does not tolerate. Next, "*pajahati*"—he abandons it, or discards it. Next, "*vinodeti*"—he dispels it. "*Byantīkaroti*" means he puts an end to it. "*Anabhāvaṅgameti*" means he annihilates it, brings it to complete non-existence.

Let us think of this through a small simile, even if it is not a simile found in the books. An unwanted person has come to where we are. First, we think, "He is not needed here, it's better if he leaves," and we do not tolerate him. We say, "There is no room for you here." But he stays. Then, we firmly tell him to leave, making him go. Yet, if he still remains, we have someone push him far away, sending him all the way to the gate—"*vinodeti*," we dispel him. Next, "*byantīkaroti*"—if necessary, we close the gate so he cannot return. In that manner, the Supreme Buddha has shown here how to systematically discard that thought. This is the practice to be adopted regarding an unwholesome thought. First, one does not tolerate it. One does not give room to it. Even if one does so, if it crashes in, one pushes it away in that manner, or drives it far away, and finally brings it to non-existence. That is how the perception of abandoning (*pahāna-saññā*) is shown. It includes thoughts of sensual desire (*kāma-vitakka*), thoughts of ill-will (*vyāpāda-vitakka*), thoughts of cruelty (*vihiṃsā-vitakka*), and all other unwholesome states. That is to say, if thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of hatred, thoughts of harming, or various other unwholesome thoughts arise in the mind, the Supreme Buddha has shown under the meditation topic of "perception of abandoning" (*pahāna-saññā*) to adopt that very practice.

Furthermore, when explaining the Supreme Buddha's teachings, that which is known as the Four Right Endeavors (*sammappadhāna*) is the very same thing called Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) in the Noble Eightfold Path. A certain energy of the mind, effort, always exists within a human being. Ordinary worldly people apply this mental factor of energy (*viriya-cetasika*), this energy, for their daily activities, such as satisfying worldly needs, studying, and doing jobs. But the Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) shown by the Supreme Buddha is one concerning the mind. To eliminate the obstacles that come to the mind, He shows a fourfold energy. We have recalled this on many occasions. The fourfold effort to be applied for: preventing the arising of unarisen unwholesome states, abandoning arisen unwholesome states, producing unarisen wholesome states, and maintaining and establishing arisen wholesome states—this is known as the Four Right Endeavors (*sammappadhāna*) and as Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*).

Next, if we take this second point: "*uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya*"—for the abandoning of arisen evil, unwholesome states, for their removal. Next, a set of words is shown: "*chandaṃ janeti, vāyamati, viriyaṃ ārabhati, cittaṃ paggaṇhāti, padahati*." "*Chandaṃ janeti*" means one generates a desire, a keen interest, regarding that. To expel those unwholesome states, one first generates an interest, a desire. Accordingly, one makes a certain attempt (*vāyamati*). Next, one arouses energy

(*viriyaṃ ārabhati*). That energy is even more powerful than mere attempt. When saying "*ārabhati*," one arouses energy. Next, although energy is aroused, because there are obstacles that come with it, to remove those obstacles, "*cittaṃ paggaṇhāti*" means one firmly establishes the power of determination in the mind. One determines: "I will not submit to this, I will conquer this somehow." Next, "*padahati*" means the most sublime energy, the supreme endeavor denoted by the word "*padhāna*."

In some places, this is shown as the "four-factored energy" (*caturaṅga-samannāgata-viriya*). The Bodhisatta sat on His final seat for Buddhahood with that kind of determination. Regarding this, it is stated: "*Kāmaṃ taco ca nahāru ca aṭṭhi ca avasissatu, upasussatu sarīre maṃsalohitaṃ*"—"Let only skin, sinews, and bones remain, let the flesh and blood in my body dry up. What can be achieved by human strength, by human energy, by human effort—without attaining that, I shall not relax my energy, I shall not cast it aside." With such firm determination, the Bodhisatta attained Self-Awakening (*Sambodhi*). That is the very method the Supreme Buddha repeatedly recalls to the community of monks, advising them to apply this supreme energy when other methods fail. That is why the Supreme Buddha called Himself a proponent of action (*kammavāda*) and a proponent of energy (*viriyavāda*). To direct that power of energy within a human being along the right path, systematically, orderly, and in a manner suited to the occasion.

Even psychologists have much to learn from this. Furthermore, what is required for all of this is meditation (*bhāvanā*). What is meditation? Meditation is the systematic development of the mind. It is not only the intellectual aspect, but the emotional and affective aspect is also important in meditation. If our intellect is the brain, developing the brain alone is not enough; the heart must also be developed, along with the emotional side. Meditation connects both of these. Thus, developing the body begins with practicing virtues like morality (*sīla*). There, we make a determination to tame body and speech as a practice. For that too, a considerable amount of energy of the kind described earlier is needed—an energy of the mind, not an energy of the body, but an energy of the mind. There, in most instances, it is not about "doing" something, but about abstaining. In that case, to abstain, it is the mind that must be guarded there. If one is told to "do" something, then bodily energy is involved. If we are told to kill an animal, how much effort must we exert? If we are told to steal, how much effort must we exert? Then, the physical energy that ordinary worldly people think of is applied there.

But here, to abstain from it, one must apply a great mental energy (*cetasika viriya*). The mind says, "Do this." Abstaining from it is what is difficult. It is right there that the value of this energy truly emerges. Thus, starting in that manner, going towards concentration (*samādhi*) becomes even more demanding. In that too, it is the endeavor of unifying the mind. Now, these five points we discussed here concern particularly the practitioner (*yogāvacara*) who concentrates the mind. In daily life, wise Buddhist devotees, whether lay or ordained, reflecting on the distress, the distraction, the loss, and the dangers caused to their own lives and to the world by their scattered minds, turn towards meditation because they want to calm this mind, to unify the mind, to keep the mind on

one object. But that is not something easily done. It is not something that can be done while nodding off to sleep. It is not something that can be done through laziness. The Supreme Buddha has stated that a special effort, endeavor, exertion, and dedication (*padhāna*) must be applied for it. What is the reason for this?

For a long time, like water flowing downwards, we have lived in this long Saṃsāra, taking birth (*jāti*) in various hells and places, taking birth in animal realms, *yakkha* realms, and ghost realms (*peta-loka*), taking birth among those with wrong views, subjugated by and obedient to unrighteous impulses and defiled impulses. Then, like flowing water, there are several such flows towards the wrong direction within our mental continuum. In the Dhamma, the Supreme Buddha introduces these with terms such as underlying tendencies (*anusaya*), taints (*āsava*), and floods (*ogha*). These underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) are like what flows underneath. Taints (*āsava*) are what leak out from them; the taints also flow. Next, the floods (*ogha*) are what crash like overflowing water. Like great rivers flowing, you can experience this nature of the mind at times; certain things hidden deep within the mind tell you to do this and that. Some things draw you in so much that you feel you cannot help but do them. At other times, destroying both oneself and others, thinking "it doesn't matter what happens," one gets swept away, subjugated by that great flood (*mahogha*). Being swept away by the great flood means being caught in a great torrent where one does not know where one is going; one simply lets the mind go in that direction. So, if we take that concept of freedom, freedom of thought, and various such ideas, and let the mind go as it pleases, then that is where things go wrong.

In that story about the driver, the driver has a side on the road where he must travel. Next, once he climbs into the vehicle and sits in that seat, there are several controls he must manage. There is a huge responsibility—the lives of those inside the vehicle, and then the lives of those on the road. Disregarding all of that, if the driver drives while drunk? It is just like being drunk if ordinary worldly people get intoxicated. If they think, "There is no use in meditation, there is nothing to tame in the mind, just watching the mind is enough," that is exactly like the driver getting into the seat and letting the vehicle go as it pleases, leaving it to its own momentum.

But the Supreme Buddha shows the gravity of this. This mind, which has run towards the evil, bad side for such a long time, cannot be tamed easily. It is precisely because of its gravity that the Supreme Buddha provides five steps. Otherwise, He could have said it in one step, couldn't He? Through that, we can see to what extent the Supreme Buddha saw reality as it truly is (*yathābhūta*). Because the human mind's inclination towards defilements is so strong, the Supreme Buddha showed it step-by-step. It was at the final stage that He showed the most extreme step. Showing it like catching by the neck and shaking is because of that; it is because it cannot be avoided.

Another point we mentioned here is the word wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). One thing we frequently recall is that the Supreme Buddha compared the aggregate of perception (*saññā-kkhandha*), perception (*saññā*), to a mirage. So here too, when a defiled object is presented—that is, an object of lust or an object of hatred—that object appears to us just as a mirage appears to a deer. One grasps (*upādāna*) it. Next,

submitting to it, one cultivates various types of thoughts according to it. This state of being subjugated by those thoughts is also known as conceptual proliferation (*papañca*). But instead of that, the Supreme Buddha tells us to look backward at that thought, to see: "What are the root causes that gave rise to this thought?" When looking at the end, it is a greed, or a lust, hatred, or delusion that arose in one's own mind. Once that is seen, the attractive nature of the object that caught the mind earlier disappears. That is why the Supreme Buddha has shown wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) there.

Furthermore, there is another matter related to meditation shown by the Supreme Buddha. You all know about mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). Mindfulness (*sati*) means attention and awareness. Mindfulness and clear understanding—the wisdom that goes along with mindfulness. Now, mindfulness here is shown as Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*). In truth, worldly people apply what they call mindfulness to things that actually destroy their mindfulness. Let us say someone applies mindfulness to using weapons—if they are skilled at aiming and shooting accurately, those do not belong to Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*). Those are things that cultivate defilements.

But the Supreme Buddha tells us to direct the mind to this body of ours. Think about this body. Think about the nature of this body. "What kind of thing is this? Is it permanent? Is it beautiful? Is it something that lasts forever? Is it something I can call mine?"—thus contemplating according to the body, which is contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*). Next, consider feelings and sensations (*vedanā*) in the same way. These come and go. Things that arise and cease. Not a single one of them is something to be taken as "I" or as a self (*attā*).

Next, look at this mind as well. The mind too, just like the colored advertising signs on a street, displays various kinds of lights—in red, in blue. In that manner, those colors appear. If, deceived by those colors, we look at them, grasp them, and act accordingly, then we get into trouble. Just like advertising boards, at different times, according to greed, hatred, and delusion, our mind gives certain signals. We are told not to go along with those signals.

Next is the contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*). One looks closely at how these perceptions and thoughts arise. One looks at what lies underneath them. Sometimes, these arise due to hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). One can understand: "This happened due to the arising of these mind-blocking things called hindrances—thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of ill-will, sloth and torpor, doubt and wavering, and the like." In moments when the mind is illuminated, behold, these factors of mindfulness, investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), and so on exist in my mind.

In that way, for one to properly understand the nature of those thoughts arising in one's mind, whether good or bad, is what is called contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*). Thus, in wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), when going according to mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*)—if mindfulness (*sati*) is wisdom, then at the same time, clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) is

mindfulness established in the present moment; that is *sati-sampajañña*. It is being properly aware of everything. What is important is not making others aware, but being aware oneself. At each moment as it comes, one understands: "This is such and such a thing." Through that, delusion is removed. Moreover, because of that very fact, it also becomes apparent that not a single one of these things that arise is permanent (*anicca*).

The Supreme Buddha has given various kinds of instructions to develop that mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). One is shown as a good exercise for someone—especially a meditation practitioner who hopes to tame the mind—to watch feelings and sensations (*vedanā*) as they arise. "This feeling (*vedanā*) arose. Lo, it remained. Lo, it passed away." Feeling and sensation does not exist all the time. Feeling and sensation arises, remains, and passes away. Likewise with perceptions (*saññā*). Various perceptions (*saññā*) arise. When saying perceptions, they can be visual perceptions (*rūpa-saññā*), auditory perceptions (*sadda-saññā*), olfactory perceptions, and so on, referring to the perceptions coming from the six sense bases (*āyatana*). Or else, they are perceptions coming from the body regarding external bases of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and there are also various perceptions arising from the mind itself. Regarding every such perception, one thinks: "Lo, a perception has arisen. It remained. It was removed. It arose, remained, passed away." Through that, one sees impermanence (*aniccatā*).

Likewise regarding thoughts (*vitakka*). One turns to look at the thought. "Here is a thought, a thought that was not there before. Lo, it has newly arrived. How did this arrive?" That thought too remains and passes away. In that manner, one remains aware of the comings and goings of one's feelings and sensations (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), and thoughts (*vitakka*). This is just like sitting by the roadside on a dark night and watching passing vehicles. Let us say, in the dark night, the headlight of a vehicle is seen. Next, making a sound, it rapidly drives past. After that, the tail light is seen. That is all. There is nothing to be grasped from it.

In this very manner, this feeling and sensation (*vedanā*) arises, remains, and passes away. Perceptions (*saññā*) arise, remain, and pass away. Thoughts (*vitakka*) arise, remain, and pass away. To a practitioner (*yogāvacara*) who trains to look at those incoming experiences in such a detached way, it is possible to very quickly develop even those insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). It is said that this especially helps mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), to develop mindfulness and wisdom. Because, being deluded by that object, one turns away from it. In this way, the Supreme Buddha has shown it in various ways. We can then understand: what is this meditation? What is expected from this?

Ordinary worldly people use only an extremely microscopic, a very tiny portion of the powers existing in this mind. Sometimes, one might think that the minds of those who invent amazing new things are highly developed. That is a one-sided development. It has been developed on the intellectual side. Through the medium of various machines and equipment, utilizing them, they go on developing something called science. But beneath it lies ignorance (*avijjā*). Why? Because not a single one of them has brought about

internal development. They are subjugated by greed, hatred, and delusion. That is precisely why they produce those dangerous weapons and the like.

Next, producing various other things related to the fivefold sensual pleasures on a massive scale, subjecting the entire world to commercial concepts, and dragging the entire world down to hell (*apāya*)—all this is done in the name of science. We cannot stop those by merely speaking. They flow as if swept away by a great flood (*mahogha*). But at least two or three people must reflect on this. What goes in the name of science is mostly ignorance (*avijjā*). Various kinds of equipment have been invented to satisfy our needs. We must not become enslaved to that science merely because of that.

That is to say, many are directing themselves towards that side in various ways. This is clearly visible regarding those weapons. Not only that, but to entice and delude humans in relation to the fivefold sensual pleasures, for the purpose of securing their own economic progress, they have used science as a decoy. What is the reason for this? Because those aforementioned virtues do not exist within human hearts. There is no effort to develop those virtues shown by the Supreme Buddha. They do not try to move away from greed towards non-greed (*alobha*). They do not try to move away from hatred towards non-hatred (*adosa*), towards loving-kindness (*mettā*). They do not try to move away from delusion (*moha*) towards wisdom (*paññā*). Until then, only ignorance (*avijjā*) exists within that development. Therefore, only one aspect of the mind is involved; there is only a one-sided development there. We must not be deceived by that. We must not think of everything according to that logic.

Due to the development of science and technology, great conveniences have been provided in our daily lives. We consider this an era where things once done with great difficulty are done very easily. But the mind is not that kind of thing. Having been subjected to the power of defilements for an extremely long time, passing through various dangerous states in Saṃsāra, such as those *yakkha* births, there are habits of Saṃsāra brought along.

This mind travels along those very habits. When one action is performed repeatedly, it becomes a habit. Through that habit, one's character is also built. It is exactly the same with this thought. That is why the Supreme Buddha told us to break this thought as quickly as possible. If it is an unwholesome thought, as soon as it is recognized, one tries to drive it away.

If it does not succeed in the first attempt, then there is the second method. When even that fails, the third method. Now, whether it is a carpenter or a mechanical worker, if the work cannot be done using one tool, they take the next tool. The Supreme Buddha also shows us the taming of the mind in that manner. Then, the other method we can use to assist this in our daily lives is meditation (*bhāvanā*). Each person must practice a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), even a simple one. This is a long journey, but we begin it with a single step.

Likewise, if we practice a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) in our daily lives—let us say it could be loving-kindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*), or recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). A single word. The very word spoken is enough. If it is the recollection of the Buddha, a single word like "*Bhagavā*" or "*Buddho*" is enough. But because it is a wholesome thought, what do we do through reflecting on it repeatedly? During the seconds one applies the thought "May they be well and happy!" in loving-kindness meditation, a thought of hatred cannot arise. Therefore, we have that advantage, if we engage in it continuously.

The Supreme Buddha says that this meditation is also something to be done continuously. Why? Because the principles regarding meditation are shown as: repetition (*āsevanā*), development (*bhāvanā*), and much practice (*bahulīkamma*). One must frequently associate with one's meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), like a good, close friend. Likewise, one must develop it. It must be brought to systematic growth. Without staying in the same place, one must develop it step-by-step, tomorrow being more developed than today—*bhāvanā, bahulīkamma*. Also, one must make an effort to do it throughout the day. As much time as possible must be devoted to it. The more frequently it is done, the more strength that thought receives, and those unwholesome thoughts are suppressed. The value of a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) exists precisely according to these stated principles. The Supreme Buddha has made the world understand this natural law of the mind. There is a certain depth in this.

This mind is not the thought that is seen from the outside. It should not be limited to what the ordinary world calls a civilized city, or to the customs and manners we see externally. Only when one falls into a certain society or joins an institution and begins to associate, does the weakness of those individuals become visible. Although those people have not developed their minds, they wear fine clothes, clothes considered to be the highest fashion in the world; yet what of it? In the end, they appear as puppets. It is a state where one cannot decide whether beasts, *yakkhas*, or ghosts (*petas*) are dwelling inside them. What is the reason for this? Because the world measures by external standards—either by education, or else by degrees, or by external pomp. But the human mind is not something that can be recognized in that way. That is why, even if those who had developed their minds in past Saṃsāra were beggars in this life, living at the very lowest level, if the Supreme Buddha saw that potential, He ordained them, brought them into the Sasana, and led them to Arahantship.

Just like that, we too must contemplate that there is a good side and a bad side to our mind. No one can say, "We have never gone to hell," or "We have never gone to animal births," merely because we are in this human birth now. Therefore, those animal qualities, *yakkha* qualities, and ghost (*peta*) qualities can exist. They can emerge at any moment. If one gives support to them, if one associates with bad friends (*pāpa-mitta*) who encourage them, one too can fall to that level. One can become like an Angulimala. There is nothing preventing our mind from sinking to the level of the highly dangerous individuals well-known in this era, if we receive the association of bad friends (*pāpa-mitta-sevana*).

But the Supreme Buddha shows that likewise, a good side also exists within a human being. One must support that. One must apply great effort for that too. Without that, it cannot be brought out. Flowing downwards is easy. Swimming upstream is difficult. But the Supreme Buddha has shown that a Buddha appears precisely to lead towards a goal that this world deems impossible, a target generally thought to be impossible.

Even before a Buddha appears, why did all the past practitioners (*yogis*) go to the Himalayas to practice meditation? It was to escape from this extremely long Saṃsāra, from this highly dangerous suffering (*dukkha*) of birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and disease, from which no one can escape. The Supreme Buddha has declared that this goal can be fulfilled, this target can be reached, by developing this wisdom (*paññā*) within our very minds. This meditation is the very endeavor of developing that wisdom.

The Supreme Buddha shows that because of ignorance (*avijjā*) and delusion (*moha*), because of not knowing the true nature of the world, the world wanders in Saṃsāra for such a long time. In the entire Saṃsāra, there is no wrong in thinking that one's father and mother are ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). The father is ignorance, and the mother is craving. It is from these two that we have taken birth for a long, infinite time. The Supreme Buddha shows the way to escape from this ignorance and craving. Now, ignorance refers to the intellectual side. Craving refers to the emotional, affective side. That is what we meant by the brain and the heart. Thus, it is according to ignorance, and under the support of ignorance, that craving (*taṇhā*) finds room. Therefore, to eliminate these two, we must make a systematic effort, such as by controlling our feelings and emotions.

It is for that purpose that the Supreme Buddha has brought out such amazing methods. Accordingly, you too must contemplate not letting this life of ours simply slip away; it is only during this rare opportunity, the period of a Buddha's appearance, that we can escape from this Saṃsāra. It is to fulfill the virtues required for that, that you have spent this day today. A large number of you observed the precepts (*sīla*) today. Virtue (*sīla*) is not merely wearing a white dress externally. Within it, there is a certain dedication. Having undertaken several precepts to tame body and speech oneself, one engages in practice as self-discipline. Just like the stanza given by the Buddha to Ven. Sānu, it is a command given to one's own mind. Observing "*Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*"—"I undertake the precept to abstain from taking life"—one guards it.

In that manner, what is done voluntarily by oneself is the powerful effort, the true effort. No one else can do this through external controls. The Supreme Buddha saw that. That is precisely why the Supreme Buddha said:

> *Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ, akkhātāro tathāgatā;*
>
> *Paṭipannā pamokkhanti, jhāyino mārabandhanā.*

"The effort must be made by you yourselves; the Tathāgatas are only teachers. Those who enter upon this practice, and practice absorption (*jhāna*), will escape the bonds of Māra."

Only those who go along practicing absorption will escape this bond of Māra. From this, we see that this work belongs to us.

No matter how many Bodhi Pujas we perform for the Supreme Buddha, or offer prayers, or do other things, He cannot lead us to Nibbāna. Having aroused faith, adding energy to that faith, arousing mindfulness through energy, building concentration through mindfulness, it is only with a concentrated mind that one can see the Three Characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). A mother cannot lead her son to Nibbāna. A son cannot lead his mother to Nibbāna. Each and every person must make the effort themselves. Therefore, without waiting at the final moment until children sit around the bed crying, "Oh, please don't die! Wait until the doctor arrives," wise parents should encourage their children, and just as Ven. Sānu's mother rescued an item from a burning house, everyone must contemplate discarding worldly aims and acting. No matter how much we protect ourselves as families, even a Buddha's power cannot be given to others. Therefore, we must develop this power within ourselves. It is for that purpose that today was spent in virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Therefore, one must contemplate wisely. One should be happy and be encouraged to go further forward. Walking on this path of practice and virtues like morality (*sīla*) which you have commenced, practicing concentration meditation through some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) as much as possible even in daily life, gradually securing the association of admirable friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), and developing insight (*vipassanā*) with instructions through them. Today, through fulfilling these practices, guarding virtue, and practicing meditation—through the accumulation of merit gathered through all of this—let us strive to bring an end to this suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṃsāra. Likewise, if there are any sentient beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akanīṭha heaven who are waiting for Nibbāna by rejoicing in this merit of preaching and listening to the Dhamma, may all of them, by rejoicing thus, be comforted by the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! Reflecting thus, recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #163

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.125)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Na vāyameyya sabbattha, nāññassa puriso siyā;

Nāññaṃ nissāya jīveyya, dhammena na vaṇijaṃ care."

From:

Udāna 6.4: Paṭhamanānātitthiya Sutta

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, reminds us that wisdom (*paññā*) must be utilized to firmly establish faith (*saddhā*) in the correct manner. Faith that is not backed by wisdom can even become blind faith or mere devotion. That is why the Buddha reminds us to always be vigilant about this. Today, we hope to present a sutta discourse that highlights the importance of this matter. The Udāna verse we chose as our theme today was delivered by the Buddha while he was residing in the Eastern Monastery (*Pūrvārāma*) in Sāvatthi. One day, the Blessed One arose from his evening meditation, stepped outside the gate of the Eastern Monastery, and stood there in seclusion. At that moment, King Pasenadi of Kosala approached, paid homage to the Buddha, and sat to one side. Just then, seven matted-hair ascetics (*jaṭilas*), seven Jain ascetics (*nigaṇṭhas*), seven naked ascetics (*acelakas*), seven single-robe ascetics (*ekasāṭakas*), and seven wanderers (*paribbājakas*) walked past that place with long hair, body hair, and nails, carrying loads of monastic requisites.

Upon seeing this, King Kosala immediately got up from where the Buddha was, turned in that direction, clasped his hands in reverence, and declared his name three times, saying, "Venerable sirs, I am King Pasenadi of Kosala." After they had departed, he returned, paid homage to the Buddha, sat down to one side, and said, "Blessed One, if there are any Arahants in this world, or those who have entered the path to Arahantship, these are among them." Then the Buddha said, "Great King, for a layman like you, who enjoys sensual pleasures, lives with wife and children, uses Kāsi silk, perfumes, garlands, and

unguents, and handles gold, silver, and money, it is difficult to know who are Arahants and who have entered the path to Arahantship."

Next, the Buddha presents four principles for recognizing individuals in the world. He states four extremely important points there. "Great King, it is through living together that a person's virtue (*sīla*) is to be understood." The word used there is *saṃvāsa* (living together). *Saṃvāsena sīlaṃ veditabbaṃ*. It is through living together that one can understand another's virtue. And that too, not in a short time, but over a long period; not by being inattentive, but through proper attention; not by one without wisdom, but by one with wisdom. That means one can understand someone's virtue through association. And that association is not for a brief moment, but for a long time. Not mere association, but reflecting deeply, applying the mind properly. Next, having the wisdom to understand it. That is the basic idea. In the same way, the Buddha declares three other matters. Conversation, talking—the word used there is *saṃvohāra*. Through trade/social intercourse/conversation, a person's purity is to be known. And that too, as mentioned before, not in a short time, but over a long period; not by being inattentive, but by being attentive; not by one without wisdom, but by one with wisdom. That is the second point.

Likewise, he states the third point as *thāma*—the strength to endure something in times of adversity, which is referred to as strength of fortitude and effort. One's firm, unshakeable nature to stand ground during severe crises is understood in times of adversity. *Āpadāsu thāmo veditabbo*. And that too, not in a short time, but over a long period; not by being inattentive, but by being attentive; not by one without wisdom, but by one with wisdom. That too can be understood. The fourth point: it is through discussion that a person's wisdom is to be understood. *Sākacchāya paññā veditabbā*. Wisdom can be understood through discussion. And that too, not in a short time, but over a long period; not by being inattentive, but by being attentive; not by one without wisdom, but by one with wisdom. When these four principles, which can be used as golden rules, were declared, King Kosala said, "Marvelous, Venerable Sir, wonderful, Venerable Sir!" and gave an illustration to show the truth of the Buddha's words. Only a short passage is mentioned there, and some interpret it in various ways. It is a matter that has been subject to some debate.

This king says, "Venerable Sir, I have spies. Thieves, cunning thieves. But I employ them as spies. They go to a province in disguise, create divisions, and bring about a situation where the king can conquer it. I only enter those provinces after those spies have gone and created that background. I invade those provinces. But those same spies, at a later time, wash off the dust they gathered during those covert operations, bathe well, apply ointments, shave their beards, dress in white garments, and enjoy the five strands of sensual pleasure here and there in the country." This is all the king said. But there is more to think about: because those spies are loyal to the king, serving the king, no matter how much thievery and villainy they committed, they can appear in society like fine gentlemen. It must have been this recollection that made King Pasenadi say, "What the Blessed One said is true. One cannot understand virtue and such qualities just by seeing them suddenly."

Next, the Buddha uttered a certain verse of solemn utterance (*Udāna gāthā*). That is the *Udāna* verse we highlighted. An *Udāna*, pious devotees, is an utterance of joy. Not always due to mere happiness. Sometimes, if an instruction can be given to the world based on a certain incident, the Buddha utters *Udāna* verses on those occasions too. Because the meaning of those *Udāna* verses is sometimes quite deep, they are not understood immediately. Sometimes they arise in connection with that story. But there is often a meaning in the *Udāna* verse that goes far beyond that. That is the verse we presented as our theme.

Na vāyameyya sabbattha, nāññassa puriso siyā,

Nāññaṃ nissāya jīveyya, dhammena na vāṇijaṃ care.

Let us try to understand these four lines. *Na vāyameyya*: one should not exert effort everywhere. There are places where effort should be exerted, and places where it should not. That is what is indicated here. One should not exert effort everywhere. *Nāññassa siyā*: one should not be another's man. The idea there is that one should not be another's servant, one should not belong to another. *Nāññaṃ nissāya jīveyya*: one should not live dependent on another, subservient to another. The final line: *dhammena na vāṇijaṃ care*: one should not trade in the Dhamma, one should not make the Dhamma a commercial commodity. This is the general meaning if we take it literally.

If we think about each of these in some detail—as we said, verses of this nature have a meaning that extends far deeper than the surface level. In relation to this story, we see that King Kosala had just arrived, paid homage to the Tathāgata, the Fully Enlightened One, and sat down, when those *jaṭilas* and *nigaṇṭhas*, walking in groups of seven, went past and paid respects, and furthermore, he ultimately made a statement suggesting he thought they were Arahants. *Na vāyameyya sabbattha*—King Kosala had the notion that in all places, in every dispensation, there are Arahants. But the Buddha has declared to the monks on certain occasions: "Monks, roar this lion's roar without fear: 'Only here is the first ascetic (*samaṇa*), here is the second ascetic, here is the third ascetic, here is the fourth ascetic. Other dispensations of sectarian teachers are empty of ascetics. There are no ascetics in them.' Roar this lion's roar in this manner." The Buddha declared this to the Saṅgha.

Why is that? The states of the four paths and four fruits—Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship—do not exist among other religions. Yet King Kosala, despite associating with the Buddha for so long, thought of all those *jaṭilas*, *nigaṇṭhas*, *acelakas*, and *paribbājakas* as Arahants. Not only in those times, but even today, there is an era where some people, thinking about peaceful coexistence, argue that all religions say the same thing. Thus, even in this first phrase, we have a lot to contemplate. If we explain this according to the Dhamma, on one occasion the Buddha declared the difference between wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) and right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

The Buddha made a very powerful declaration: *"Micchādiṭṭhiparamāhaṃ bhikkhave vajjaṃ vadāmi"*. "Monks, of all the faults in this world, I say wrong view is the greatest." Why did he say so? The Buddha declared this with reasons. This sermon can be considered in detail for that: "Monks, whatever bodily actions (*kāya-kamma*) a person of wrong view performs, they follow that very view; they become wrong actions. Likewise, whatever verbal actions (*vacī-kamma*) or mental actions (*mano-kamma*) they perform, they all follow that very wrong view they have grasped. Not only that, whatever intention (*cetanā*), aspiration (*patthanā*), resolution (*paṇidhi* - goal/aim) they have, and whatever preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*) they accumulate, they all become characterized by wrong view. They all result in undesired, disagreeable, unpleasant, unappealing fruits, in suffering (*dukkha*) fruits." Having declared so, the Buddha then gives a simile. "Just as, monks, if a neem seed (*kohomba*), a bitter-gourd seed (*karavila*), or a bitter-melon seed is placed in moist soil, whatever soil-nutrients or moisture it draws in, they all result in a pungent, bitter taste and fruit. Why is that? Because the seed is bitter. What is the reason, monks? The planted seed is bitter. In the same way, all bodily actions, verbal actions, mental actions, and all those other things that arise from the seed of wrong view go towards the wrong side. The Buddha clearly declared that they have undesirable retributions."

Then he declares the other side. "Likewise, monks, whatever bodily action, verbal action, mental action a person of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) performs because of that right view, they all follow that very right view. Likewise, whatever intention, aspiration, resolution, and preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*) they generate, they all bring about desired, agreeable, pleasing, pleasant, happy retributions." Then he gives the simile: "Just as when a seed of hill-paddy (*häl*), sugarcane, or grape is placed in moist soil, whatever soil-nutrients or moisture it absorbs or utilizes, they all result in a sweet fruit. Such is the nature of right view. From this, we can understand how one experiences happy retributions."

Next, let us consider the matter of right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) and wrong effort (*micchā-vāyāma*), since it was said *na vāyameyya*—one should not exert effort everywhere. Therefore, before we apply effort, we must know whether this effort is being applied in the right place. Otherwise, no matter how much effort is applied, it is of no use. We have all heard the word *svākkhāta*. It means well-expounded. We refer to the Buddha's Dhamma as well-expounded Dhamma. Regarding other teachings outside of this, the Buddha refers to them as *durakkhāta*—ill-expounded. Next, the Buddha declares: "Monks, in an ill-expounded Dhamma-Vinaya..."—Dhamma-Vinaya, pious devotees, refers to the Dispensation. Someone declares a Dhamma, and at the same time, there is a practice that follows it. Collectively, this can be called Dhamma-Vinaya, or we may take it as the Dispensation. "One who has aroused energy in an ill-expounded Dhamma dwells in suffering (*dukkha*). What is the reason for that? No matter how much energy they exert, there is no fruit from it; that energy is wasted. Therefore, they dwell in suffering (*dukkha*). In an ill-expounded Dhamma, it is the lazy person (*kusīta*) who dwells happily." The lazy person means the indolent one. There is no work to do. So it was better for them not to make an effort, given their situation. "But regarding the well-

expounded Dhamma, it is declared: in a well-expounded Dhamma-Vinaya, the lazy person dwells in suffering (*dukkha*), and the one who has aroused energy (*āraddha-vīriya*) dwells happily." There is the difference. For it is stated in the Dhamma: *āraddhavīriyassa pīti nirāmisā*—to one who has aroused energy in this dispensation, unworldly joy arises immediately. Through that, they proceed to concentration (*samādhi*), and ultimately to the paths and fruits. In this way, too, the difference between right effort and wrong effort is shown.

In an even more striking manner, the Buddha on one occasion illustrated this very point to the Venerable Bhūmija using four similes: that the effort exerted in an ill-expounded Dhamma is futile. It is a somewhat humorous simile. The Buddha presents it in this way: "Monks, if a disciple in a dispensation of eight wrong factors—starting with wrong view, wrong intention, wrong speech, wrong action, and so on—exerts energy, whether they do so with a wish..." "Wish" means desire. "If someone exerts energy in a wrongly expounded dispensation, or with wrong view, wrong intention, leading to wrong concentration, whether they do so with a wish, without a wish, with and without a wish, or neither with nor without a wish..."—this is analyzed in four ways because it is presented logically. "Even if they do so, there is no fruit whatsoever." To illustrate this, he then declares four similes to Venerable Bhūmija. "Bhūmija, suppose a man seeking oil pours sand into a vat, sprinkles it with water, and squeezes it. Whether he does so with a wish, without a wish, with and without a wish, or neither with nor without a wish, he cannot get oil by squeezing sand. That is a futile effort." This is the first simile.

Next, he gives the second simile: "A man seeking milk goes to a young cow and pulls her by the horn. Whether he does so with a wish, without a wish, with and without a wish, or neither with nor without a wish, no milk comes. Squeezing a cow's horn does not produce milk." Then he gives the third simile: "A man seeking butter pours only water into a churn and keeps churning it with a stick. No matter how much he churns, no butter comes." He gives the fourth simile: "A man seeking fire takes a fire-drill..."—in those days, they had fire-making sticks, known as the upper stick (*uttarāraṇi*). They produced fire by rubbing two sticks together. "He takes the fire-drill and rubs it against a wet, water-logged piece of wood. No matter how much he rubs, no fire comes." These are the similes given for futile effort, the similes for futile exertion.

Then, regarding the effort of one with right view, the similes given for ascetics and brahmins who possess right view, right intention, and so on—one can easily imagine the opposite side. "A man seeking oil pours sesame seeds into a vat, sprinkles them with water, and squeezes them. Whether he does so with a wish, without a wish, with and without a wish, or neither with nor without a wish, if he squeezes, oil comes—when sesame seeds are squeezed with water. Next, the second simile can be understood without being told explicitly: from where does a cow's milk come? One must pull the udder, not the horn. If one pulls the udder, whether with a wish or without a wish, milk comes. The third simile: to get butter, one must pour curd, mix it with water, and churn it. The fourth simile: one must rub the fire-drill against a dry piece of wood." Thus, these four similes illustrate this very same point. From this context, we can understand the meaning of the statement, "One should not exert effort everywhere."

Next, why was it said, "One should not be another's man"? Because those cunning thieves, due to their loyalty to the king, commit all those thefts and crimes, and in the end, they bathe well and behave like gentlemen. What aided that behavior was their status as royal officers/men. One should not be subservient to another. One should not be another's man, another's servant. A deep meaning is given there. In the next line, it is said: *nāññaṃ nissāya jīveyya*—one should not live dependent on another. Associating with rulers and kings, one sometimes becomes compelled to perform improper actions. On the other hand, because the king employed those spies, instead of punishing them, he allowed them to roam around the city in that manner. Thus, this highlights the danger of being subservient to another.

The fourth point is somewhat difficult to understand: *dhammena na vāṇijaṃ care*—one should not trade in the Dhamma. The hint obtained from this story is that there were five groups of seven in that crowd: seven *jaṭilas*, seven *nigaṇṭhas*, seven *acelakas*, seven *ekasāṭakas*, and seven *paribbājakas*, walking in single file. There are not many details about the reason for their journey. Perhaps we can imagine that at that time, wealthy merchants and others built halls for various sectarian groups to meet and discuss. On those occasions, gifts and offerings were given to them. We do not know if they were carrying their requisites after receiving such a gift. In any case, this may have been the reason for the Buddha's statement, "One should not trade in the Dhamma." If we contemplate this deeply, we can understand that one should not make the Dhamma a commercial commodity. We can understand this through a discourse the Buddha delivered to Venerable Ānanda regarding a teacher of the Dhamma. The Buddha says, "Ānanda, teaching the Dhamma is no easy matter. A Dhamma teacher should teach the Dhamma having established five qualities within themselves. The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, 'I will speak in a progressive sequence (*anupubbikathaṃ*)'."

You devotees may have heard of progressive discourse (*anupubbikathā*). It consists of talk on giving (*dāna-kathā*), talk on virtue (*sīla-kathā*), talk on heaven (*sagga-kathā*), talk on the danger of sensual pleasures (*kāmānaṃ ādīnava*), and so on. If one only expects personal gain, one might stop at the talk on giving. Instead, it must be done with the intention of leading them all the way to Nibbāna through a progressive discourse. Likewise, *pariyāyadassāvī*—showing the reasons and causes. Not merely talking, but explaining with reasons and causes. Next, *anuddayataṃ paṭicca*—arousing kindness and compassion towards the listeners. Next, *na āmisantaro*—without expecting material gain, without teaching with the thought, "May I receive such and such requisites from this!" Furthermore, it is said that one should teach without hurting oneself or others (without praising oneself and disparaging others). The Buddha on one occasion told Venerable Ānanda that one should teach the Dhamma after preparing one's mind in these five ways. Likewise, at another time, he declared the difference between an impure Dhamma teaching and a pure Dhamma teaching. An impure Dhamma teaching is explained as follows:

Suppose someone thinks before preaching the Dhamma, "Oh, if only these people would listen to my Dhamma! If only they would be pleased, and out of that pleasure, give me

requisites and so forth, how wonderful that would be!" Preaching with such a thought is an impure Dhamma teaching. It is like selling the Dhamma. Next, the pure teaching is declared. What is a pure Dhamma teaching? "This Dhamma is the Blessed One's. It is not mine, it is the Blessed One's Dhamma—well-expounded (*svākkhāta*), visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*), timeless (*akālika*), inviting trial (*ehipassika*), leading onward (*opanayika*), to be personally experienced by the wise (*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*). When I preach this Dhamma, let them listen! Having listened, let them understand! Having understood, let them practice!" Preaching with such a reflection on the nature and truth of the Dhamma, and with kindness and compassion towards the listeners, is indeed a pure Dhamma teaching. From these, we can understand why the Buddha declared, *dhammena na vāṇijaṃ care*. It means not giving prominence to material gain. The Buddha has declared to the monks: *"Dhammadāyādā me, bhikkhave, bhavatha, mā āmisadāyādā"*. "Monks, be heirs to my Dhamma, not heirs to material things." Therefore, one must preach the Dhamma with the intention of being heirs to the Dhamma, not with the thought of gaining the material things that the Buddha received. That is what is contained in those matters.

Next, we mentioned that the Buddha declared four principles like golden rules. Let us look at that next. Those four matters are actually not explained or analyzed in this short sutta. But in other suttas that compile Dhamma matters, such as in the Book of Fours in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha preached these four matters in detail. Therefore, we have the opportunity to say something more about them than the brief mention made earlier.

There, the Buddha preaches all four of those matters to the monks in general. Regarding the point, *saṃvāsena sīlaṃ veditabbaṃ*: "Monks, why was it said that virtue is to be understood through living together?" If someone associates with another for a long period, and does so with proper attention (reflection) and wisdom, they understand: "This person's virtue is broken, punctured, blotched, and stained. This person is unvirtuous." They understand it thus. Through associating with another over a long period with reflection and wisdom, they understand: "This person possesses an unbroken, pure, and clear virtue." That is how it is stated there. Next, the second point is mentioned: *saṃvohārena soceyyaṃ veditabbaṃ*.

That "purity is to be known through social intercourse/conversation" is explained in more detail. Through speaking with another over a long period, one understands: "This person says one thing to one person, another to two people, something different to three people, and something completely different to many people. There is no purity in this person. Their speech is deceptive. This is a deceptive person, an impure person, without principles." They understand it in this way, through associating and conversing over a long period. Similarly, when observing a good person, one gets to know: "If this person says something, they sincerely abide by it in that very manner." Such is the detail regarding that.

Next, the third point about adversity: "It is in times of adversity that a person's *thāma*—their power of endurance, their fortitude—is to be understood." It is stated that when one

is hit by the loss of relatives (*ñāti-vyasana*), loss of wealth (*bhoga-vyasana*), or loss to disease (*roga-vyasana*)... that is, when relatives are lost, pass away, or meet with accidents; when one's wealth and possessions are destroyed by sudden accidents or calamities; or when one faces the calamity of illness. When these arise, this person does not reflect that the world constantly revolves around the eight worldly conditions (*aṭṭha-loka-dhamma*). The world revolves around the eight worldly conditions, and the eight worldly conditions revolve around the world.

Speaking of the eight worldly conditions, the Buddha mentions in several places that these eight worldly conditions consist of gain (*lābha*) and loss (*alābha*), disrepute (*ayasa*) and fame (*yasa*), blame (*nindā*) and praise (*pasaṃsā*), pleasure (*sukha*) and suffering (*dukkha*). *Yasa* and *ayasa* mean having retinue/influence and not having it. Then blame and praise, which everyone knows. Then pleasure and pain/suffering. These four pairs make eight. The Buddha has declared that these eight revolve around the world, and the world revolves around these eight. This is a very unusual saying. Yet this person, instead of realizing that this is the nature of the world, weeps, wails, beats their breast, faints, and falls into such grief. Through this, one can know over a long period of association that this person lacks the quality of fortitude (*thāma*) in times of adversity.

Next, regarding the other person—the good person—when faced with such loss of relatives, disease, or wealth, they reflect wisely: "This is the nature of the eight worldly conditions." Keeping their mind balanced accordingly, they do not fall into weeping, wailing, and fainting. To understand these eight worldly conditions, a simile might be useful, so we will say this: we do not have the ability to give similes like the Buddha. In these times, there is something in children's playgrounds called a Ferris wheel (*kathuru oñchillāva*). Think about a Ferris wheel. Let us say there are seats hanging from eight spokes. Parents go and place their little children on them, and the child sits there without any fear. Why? Because they know that whether it goes up or down, they will not fall. They won't fall upside down. What is the reason? As the seat goes up, it adjusts itself accordingly. In this way, we have to understand—this is a rough simile. If it is appropriate, think of it accordingly. We must think of the eight worldly conditions like a Ferris wheel. That is what the Buddha declared: these eight worldly conditions revolve around the world, and the world revolves around the eight worldly conditions. In this way, we can understand adversity. Sometimes, when we have such weaknesses, we can remind ourselves that the Buddha has declared: *āpadāsu thāmo veditabbo*—it is in times of adversity that we can know whether this strength exists within us or not.

Then the fourth point: *sākacchāya paññā veditabbā*—wisdom is to be understood through discussion. The Buddha gives a very unique simile for this, a subtle simile.

This is how it is shown. First, the Dhamma point is stated. Through discussing with another over a period of time, one understands: "By the way this person brings up points, presents arguments, and responds to questions, it is clear that this person is not wise, but foolish." For this person does not bring forth those deep, peaceful, sublime, beyond-logic (*atakkāvacara*), subtle Dhamma categories that are to be experienced by the wise. Likewise, if this person preaches any Dhamma, they lack the ability to explain it

briefly or in detail, or to analyze and expound upon those matters. Therefore, one understands: "This person is foolish, not wise." Here is the simile given. The Buddha gives a very unique simile here. A man with sight, standing by a lake or a pond, sees a small fish rising to the surface. Let us say it is a *kaṇayā* (dwarf snakehead). A *kaṇayā* comes up. He is watching from a distance. Yet from the way the fish surfaces, the ripples it creates in the water, and the speed at which it comes up, that man with sight understands: "This is not a big fish, it is a small fish." The word *kaṇayā* is not in the original text. For some reason, we used this word as a simile for a small fish. It should be understood as a small fish.

Then he gives the other simile regarding a wise person. Through discussion, one understands: "By the way this person brings up points, presents arguments, and responds to questions, this person is wise." Why? Because they present those deep Dhamma matters, beyond logic (*atakkāvacara*), which are to be known by the wise. Moreover, they are capable of explaining, clarifying, and expounding those Dhamma matters briefly or in detail. Here is the simile for that: A man with sight is watching. While watching, a big fish—let us say a *lūlā* (striped snakehead)—comes up. From the way that fish comes up, the ripples it makes, and the speed of its ascent, that wise man reflects: "This is not a small creature. It is a large fish." It is in this manner that a wise person is to be understood.

If this matter is not understood correctly, one might even mistake the small fish for a large fish. This is something that happens very often in the world. Therefore, we must understand another's wisdom and intelligence through wisdom. The Buddha has given certain indicators to understand this. Why? Because as we said before, if we do not recognize wrong view correctly, and if we do not choose the person to associate with correctly over a long period, sometimes our entire life becomes dark. We have exerted effort in the wrong place. We have chosen the wrong person. Such an understanding comes, and that is why the Buddha has given us these hints to recognize people in the world. Whether lay or ordained, when we live in society, the question that arises is: whom should we associate with? Whom should we not associate with? Whose Dhamma should we accept? And where should we exert effort for our liberation? Everyone has this question. The Buddha has highlighted these matters to help us. We must reflect on them with wisdom.

So we have now highlighted all four of these matters. First, we spoke of virtue. Through that, one who lacks stable principles can sometimes sway their disciples to show that their own practices are correct. Similarly, nowadays, those of other religions, in accordance with the wrong view they have taken and their wrong conduct, direct others to that side, and their followers incline in that very direction. Next, the matter of purity: honesty, adherence to principles, and unshakeableness. These are the basic principles the Buddha has highlighted to recognize these things in society.

Next, to bring out one's stability and fortitude during the loss of relatives, wealth, and disease that come in daily life. Finally, wisdom—it is through discussion. Because in a discussion, especially one in the form of questions and answers, if a person lacks the

strength to participate, the shortcomings in their understanding automatically become clear. But if they have understood them deeply, if they possess those qualities, those matters become further clarified. From the way the fish comes to the surface, the ripples it makes, and its speed, one can understand whether it is a big fish or a small fish. We must contemplate based on this hint. We hear that this is an era where various amazing wrong views are spreading in the Sambuddha Sāsana, an era where the Dhamma is being distorted in astonishing ways. It appears that the Dhamma is being subjected to various distortions not only by external religious forces but also by our own people.

The Buddha has pointed out that there are two factors that help in the arising of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*): *"Dveme, bhikkhave, paccayā sammādiṭṭhiyā uppādāya"*. There are two conditions for the arising of right view. What are the two conditions? The first is the voice of another (*paratoghosa*), and the second is radical attention / wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). *Paratoghosa* means one must get to hear the Dhamma from others. One cannot realize the Dhamma on one's own. One hears or reads the Buddha's Dhamma from someone. That is *paratoghosa*. But right view does not arise merely because of that. What must one do for that? Radical attention / wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). One must reflect wisely.

The word *yoniso* is also something very deep. We generally translate it as proper reflection. The Buddha has given humorous similes to understand what is proper and what is wrong—such as trying to get oil by squeezing sand, or pulling a cow by the horn to get milk. That was done in the wrong place. Instead of pulling from where the milk comes, he grabbed the wrong place. In that way, radical attention / wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means proper, wise reflection. It is through that we can develop right view within ourselves. No matter how much Dhamma we hear, if we accept it merely saying "Sādhu" and "that is good," right view has not arisen. That is blind faith. That is a cause for the arising of the aforementioned devotion, blind faith. One must reflect with wisdom.

In the Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta, the Buddha has preached that for faith to become truly established, or for faith to be perfected, one must walk this path of practice. An elephant tracker, a seeker of elephants, an elephant catcher, upon entering a forest in search of a valuable elephant, sees elephant footprints. But he does not immediately conclude, "This is indeed the kind of elephant I am looking for." Yet he does not abandon his search either. He must go forward to find more evidence. As more and more evidence is found, that faith is confirmed. Finally, when he realizes it himself—at the moment of realizing the Dhamma of Nibbāna preached by the Buddha—he becomes completely certain: "The Dhamma preached by the Buddha is true." This is a truly wonderful Dhamma.

So that faith is helpful initially, as it is necessary for energy. At the end of every sermon, we always remind Buddhist devotees that in developing the Noble Eightfold Path and the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*), five factors are highlighted as spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and spiritual powers (*bala*): faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Especially when attaining noble states like Stream-entry. Faith is needed for energy. Only if one develops proper faith (*ākāravatī saddhā*) can one apply energy in a fruitful manner. Next, based on that, one must arouse mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Therefore, we must strive to walk this path of Dhamma.

We are familiar with the eight factors: right view, right intention, right speech, and so on. But other religions also have their own sets of practices. The Buddha refers to them as wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), wrong intention (*micchā-saṅkappa*), and wrong effort (*micchā-vāyāma*). They also say, "We too have concentration, we too have liberation and knowledge." They too are not idle. But the Buddha shows with causes and reasons that these end in delusion. That wrong knowledge is not knowledge at all; it is ignorance. Wrong liberation is not liberation; it is a false liberation. Therefore, merely having eight factors does not make the efforts of other religions lead to Nibbāna. It does not bring about the true Nibbāna, liberation from Saṃsāra. But in the Buddha's Dhamma, this Noble Eightfold Path is designated by the term "Sammā" (right/rightly/perfect). *Samyak* means inclined to the correct side. If done properly, it ends in right knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and right liberation (*sammā-vimutti*), which is the liberation achieved through the supramundane path-knowledge. This is the path that leads to the liberation of Nibbāna. The Noble Eightfold Path we mentioned here is also known as Virtue (*Sīla*), Concentration (*Samādhi*), and Wisdom (*Paññā*).

The Buddha has declared the qualities of this Dhamma as well-expounded (*svākkhāta*), visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*), timeless (*akālika*), inviting trial (*ehipassika*), leading onward (*opanayika*), and so forth. Because this Dhamma is well-expounded, its results are visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*). It can be seen right before one's eyes in this very life, according to the measure of one's practice. From the moment one enters this Dhamma and fulfills the practice, one realizes to some extent at each point that this is correct. One must enter into it. It is not something to be done merely through words and logic. Thus, the benefits of virtue are understood by the one who guards virtue. The one who develops concentration understands its benefits. In this way, we must understand that because it is well-expounded (*svākkhāta*), it can be seen right before one's eyes in this very life. For that very reason, it is timeless (*akālika*); its results can be seen without delay. It is *ehipassika*—there is a power in the Dhamma, an amazing power, as if saying "come and see." The Dhamma poses a challenge to put it into practice and see. According to this nature of the Dhamma, a person inclines towards it and puts it into practice. The appeal "come and see" (*ehipassika*) can be made without fear because the Dhamma has an acceptable nature, proceeding according to wonderful, matching causes and reasons.

Next, *opanayika* (leading onward) is something even more special. The Dhamma has a nature of leading from one step to the next, drawing one towards the other. That is what the Buddha declares on some occasions:

> *"Sammādiṭṭhissa, bhikkhave, sammāsaṅkappo pahoti.*
>
> *Sammāsaṅkappassa sammāvācā pahoti.*

Sammāvācassa sammākammanto pahoti.

Sammākammantassa sammāājīvo pahoti.

Sammāājīvassa sammāvāyāmo pahoti.

Sammāvāyāmassa sammāsati pahoti.

Sammāsatissa sammāsamādhi pahoti"

It goes on like this, explaining these factors. Especially for a person who has attained right view, right intention arises almost effortlessly according to these natural laws of the Dhamma. Think about it: after the Buddha points out what is good and what is bad in relation to right view, the train of thought of the person who trains themselves accordingly follows that very path. You are familiar with the ten-factor right view (*dasa-vatthuka sammā-diṭṭhi*). That is one aspect of right view, from a saṃsāric perspective. The other side is the deep right view regarding the truth. In any case, once that view is established in the mind, the train of thought that follows it—that is, right intention—arises automatically. Following that right intention, right speech follows. In this way, there is a path of practice within this that systematically aligns through cause-and-effect relationships. One must strive, without thinking that it is impossible. That is why, at the final moment, when Venerable Ānanda was reflecting, "How can we cope? Now that the Blessed One has attained Parinibbāna, this dispensation is leaderless, a dispensation without a teacher," the Buddha said, "Do not think so, Ānanda. Whatever Dhamma I have taught and Vinaya I have laid down, that will be your teacher when I am gone."

According to that, we must think that as long as this Dhamma and Vinaya exist, it is as if the Buddha is still present with us. So no matter what stories there are, based on this Dhamma we have received—in the past, during the Buddha's time, some realized the paths and fruits even without having this much Dhamma. Now we have before us a considerable amount of the Dhamma preached to various individuals according to their character—a vast amount of Dhamma. Actually, we do not need this much to put it into practice. If we have understood the basic parts that are correctly grasped by our mind, we must engage in this work from that point. Only the one who engages in it can reach further understanding at each step, like the person who went in search of the elephant. As for the qualities of this Dhamma: well-expounded (*svākkhāta*), visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*), timeless (*akālika*), inviting trial (*ehipassika*), leading onward (*opanayika*). Then, *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*—that is why it was said: the truth of this Dhamma must be understood by each wise person individually.

Treating this statement of the Buddha as an invitation to put the Dhamma into practice, you too must strive for that. Why did we make such a statement on such a valuable day? In these times, there is an intellectual attitude towards the Dhamma that is limited to various arguments and debates—like trying to capsize ships from the dry land. They try to understand the deep matters of this Dhamma through logic alone. But devotees, as the Buddha has shown, we must build some concentration (*samādhi*) based on virtue (*sīla*). It is with the help of that concentration that insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*)

must be developed. They proceed systematically. Through that insight meditation, on one hand, is the realization of the Four Noble Truths; on the other hand, the realization of the paths and fruits is the moment one personally experiences the three characteristics of impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*). To go towards that, each person must arouse interest. The Buddha has shown the necessary factors for all of this. At the time of his Great Passing (*Mahāparinibbāna*), the Buddha summarized the Dhamma he had preached from direct knowledge throughout his life as the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). The thirty-seven factors of enlightenment, devotees, consist of seven groups. You may have heard of some of them.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*), the Four Right Efforts (*cattāro sammappadhānā*), the Four Bases of Power (*cattāro iddhipādā*), the Five Faculties (*pañcindriyāni*), the Five Powers (*pañca balāni*), the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅgā*), and the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*). When these seven groups are taken together, there are thirty-seven factors.

At the final moment, what the Buddha presented as "the Dhamma I have preached all this time" were these very groups of Dhamma that are to be understood practically by a person. These are not merely objects of the intellect. They are things that can be recognized by putting them into practice. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness is not something to be learned from books alone. The Four Right Efforts is not something that should be limited to books. These are things to be put into action and understood by the individual. When viewed from a practical level, what the Buddha called "the Dhamma" are indeed these thirty-seven factors of enlightenment. Therefore, regardless of book-knowledge, if one engages in the work, one can recognize these thirty-seven. Sometimes, a practitioner (*yogāvacara*), without reading books anew, understands while practicing the meditation subject, "Ah, this indeed is what is being said." In that way, we must develop the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment shown by the Buddha.

These days, many people speak to us about the danger of this Saṃsāra. Thinking only about present life and the calamities and disasters in it, some speak of this Saṃsāra in a terrifying manner. Some say they have understood suffering (*dukkha*). Regardless of whether they have understood it, some even come searching having understood it to some extent. But the Buddha has shown this suffering (*dukkha*) far beyond that. In this extremely long Saṃsāra, for an infinite time, in an even more terrifying manner, we have gone on being born and dying in this Saṃsāra, subjected to the suffering (*dukkha*) of birth (*jāti*), aging and death / decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death. For those who believe the Buddha's word, even hearing such a sutta discourse generates great spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). Now, many devotees seek Nibbāna having generated a spiritual urgency that lasts only for a few days due to a bomb blast or a sudden disaster.

But for devotees who think deeply and regard the Buddha's word as the truth, this is nothing new. We must reflect that that spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) is only our beginning. From that point on, what we must do is apply effort in the correct manner at the correct place. Without trying to milk a cow from the horn, if one exerts effort in a

true dispensation, in the Buddha Sāsana, then, as the Buddha declared, one can experience in this very life the qualities of this Dhamma: visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*), timeless (*akālika*), inviting trial (*ehipassika*), leading onward (*opanayika*), and to be personally experienced (*paccattaṃ veditabbo*). If the Buddha's word is true, we have traveled in this Saṃsāra for a long time, not only as humans but as animals, ghosts (*petas*), demons (*yakshas*), and occasionally as devas and brahmas, exerting futile efforts to satisfy our craving (*taṇhā*). The Buddha declared that this craving (*taṇhā*) cannot be satisfied in that manner. By eradicating the ignorance (*avijjā*) that is the cause of craving (*taṇhā*), we must stop this running after the mirage.

Having made such a determination, through the power of practice engaged in today, and with the help of this Dhamma sermon, may you make the right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) you exert successful. With the help of the association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) and by making your Dhamma listening and meditation successful, may this merit of preaching the Dhamma act as a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for quickly realizing the noble paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship, thereby realizing the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna!

Today, through fulfilling these practices, guarding virtue, and practicing meditation—through the accumulation of merit gathered through all of this—let us strive to bring an end to this suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṃsāra. Likewise, if there are any sentient beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akanīṭha heaven who are waiting for Nibbāna by rejoicing in this merit of preaching and listening to the Dhamma, may all of them, by rejoicing thus, be comforted by the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! Reflecting thus, recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #164

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.145)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Dhīrassa vigatamohassa,

pabhinnakhilassa vijitavijayassa,

Anīghassa susamāhitacetaso,

vuddhasīlassa sādhupaññassa,

Vessantarassa vimalassa,

bhagavato tassa sāvakohamasmi."

From:

Upāli Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya (MN 56)

Dear Listeners,

When we examine how various religions spread across the world, historians today accept without dispute that Buddhism spread in an extremely peaceful and tolerant manner. It was on such peaceful and tolerant principles that the Arahant Mahinda, the son of Emperor Dharmāśoka, acted to establish the Buddha's Sāsana in this island on a Poson Full Moon Poya day like today. How the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, introduced these principles to the world through His own example is clearly shown in various places in the Tipiṭaka literature. The Upāli Sutta, which contains the verse we have chosen as our theme today, is an excellent proof of this.

At a time when the Buddha was residing in the Pāvārika Mango Grove in Nālandā, Niganṭha Nātaputta was also living in Nālandā with a large following of disciples. One day, Dīgha Tapassī, a prominent disciple of Niganṭha Nātaputta, came to see the Buddha, exchanged pleasant greetings, and sat to one side. The Buddha asked this Niganṭha, Dīgha Tapassī:

"Tapassī, how many kinds of deeds does Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta prescribe for committing an evil deed, for the performance of an evil deed?" Then Dīgha Tapassī said: "Venerable Gotama, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta does not use the terminology of 'kamma' (action). He uses the term 'daṇḍa' (rod/punishment)." Then the Buddha asked: "Well, Tapassī, how many kinds of daṇḍa does Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta prescribe for committing an evil deed?" Dīgha Tapassī replied: "Three kinds of daṇḍa."

Here, *daṇḍa* is generally understood in the sense of punishment or an instrument of harm. These are the bodily rod (*kāya-daṇḍa*), the verbal rod (*vacī-daṇḍa*), and the mental rod (*mano-daṇḍa*). Then the Buddha asked: "Are these three rods distinct from one another, or are they one and the same?" He replied, "They are distinct from one another."

Next, the Buddha asked: "Tapassī, of these three rods, which is the most blameworthy (*mahāsāvajjatara*), that is, the one with the gravest fault?" Then Dīgha Tapassī replied: "The bodily rod is the most blameworthy; it is the bodily rod that must be taken as the primary and gravest of faults." To confirm and establish this, the Buddha asked: "Do you say 'bodily rod', Dīgha Tapassī?"

"Yes." "Do you say 'bodily rod'?" "Yes." In this manner, the Buddha confirmed it three times, verifying that this was indeed his true assertion. Now, it was Dīgha Tapassī's turn. Dīgha Tapassī asked the Buddha: "Friend Gotama, how many kinds of rods do you prescribe for committing an evil deed, for the performance of an evil deed?" The Buddha replied: "Tapassī, the Tathāgatas do not use this talk of 'daṇḍa'. The Tathāgatas use the term 'kamma' (action)." "Well then, how many kammas are there under evil deeds?" The Buddha said: "There are three kinds of kamma, distinct from one another: bodily action (*kāya-kamma*), verbal action (*vacī-kamma*), and mental action (*mano-kamma*)."

Then Dīgha Tapassī asked: "Of these three actions, which is the most blameworthy (*mahāsāvajjatara*), the one with the gravest fault?" While Dīgha Tapassī had asserted the bodily rod, the Buddha declared: "Mental action (*mano-kamma*)." Then the ascetic, too, sought to confirm the Buddha's statement, asking: "Friend Gotama, do you say 'mental action'?" "Yes, I say mental action." "Do you say 'mental action'?" In this manner, he confirmed it three times, and then got up and left. He went in search of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. At that moment, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta was discussing with a large lay gathering, headed by his very famous disciple, the householder Upāli. Seeing Dīgha Tapassī coming from afar, he asked:

"Where are you coming from, Tapassī, in the middle of this day?" "I am coming from the presence of Ascetic Gotama." "Was there any conversation or discussion there?" Dīgha Tapassī then related the entire discussion he had had with the Buddha to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta.

Then Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "Excellent, Tapassī! You have well presented your teacher's words. How can that extremely low and insignificant mental rod even be compared to the coarse, gross bodily rod? The bodily rod itself is the most blameworthy.

The gravest faults lie there, not in the mental rod." Thus, he confirmed Tapassī's view. Hearing this, the householder Upāli also said to the Nigaṇṭha ascetic: "Sādhu! Excellent is the way you presented your teacher's view." Next, Upāli asked permission from Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta: "Venerable Sir, if you permit, I shall go and debate with Ascetic Gotama on this matter. If Ascetic Gotama stands firm on what he said, I will pull him back and forth, dragging him around in debate just like a man who grabs a long-haired she-goat by her hair and drags her this way and that."

Not only that, the householder Upāli issued his challenge with three other similes: "In this manner will I defeat Ascetic Gotama in debate." Hearing this, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "Well then, Upāli, go. It is either I or Tapassī who should debate with Ascetic Gotama, but you are the most suitable. Therefore, go." However, Dīgha Tapassī did not agree. Dīgha Tapassī said: "Venerable Sir, it does not please my mind that Upāli should go to meet Ascetic Gotama. Ascetic Gotama is a magician. He knows a converting magic (*āvaṭṭanī māyā*) with which he converts and pulls in the disciples of other sects. Ascetic Gotama knows this converting magic. Therefore, I do not wish for Upāli to go there." But Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "No, under no circumstances will the householder Upāli become a disciple of Ascetic Gotama. If anything happens, Ascetic Gotama will become a disciple of the householder Upāli." Although Dīgha Tapassī warned him three times in this manner, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta dismissed it, saying, "No, no," and sent Upāli on his way.

So, the householder Upāli went in search of the Buddha. Out of some sense of faith or customary respect, he paid homage to the Buddha and sat down. Sitting to one side, he asked the Buddha: "Did Dīgha Tapassī come this way?" "Yes," replied the Buddha. "Was there any conversation between you?" The Buddha then related the entire discussion. Thereupon, Upāli, seeking to start the debate, said: "Ah! Indeed, that is true. How can mental action be compared to bodily action? Bodily action is the most blameworthy. That logic is absolutely correct." The Buddha replied: "Householder, are you prepared to discuss this standing on the truth?" Upāli promised: "Yes, I am."

"Very well, then, if you stand on the truth," the Buddha said, and proceeded to present arguments to refute that view. "Suppose there is a Nigaṇṭha disciple. The Nigaṇṭhas hold the view that there are living beings in cold water. Therefore, they only use warm water. Now, suppose a certain Nigaṇṭha falls seriously ill and needs cold water. However, to preserve his vow, he drinks warm water and passes away. According to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta's view, where would that Nigaṇṭha disciple be reborn?" Then the householder Upāli said: "There is a class of devas called *Manosattā* (mind-bound deities). Such a person is reborn in that realm of *Manosattā* devas. The reason is that his passing away was bound to a mental state." Then the Buddha said: "Pay attention, householder! Your earlier statement and what you have just said do not agree. Why? There you claimed the bodily rod was primary, but here you give supremacy to mental action." Despite this, Upāli said: "Whatever you say, in truth, the bodily rod is the most blameworthy." Upāli did not accept the logic.

Next, the Buddha gave another illustration. "Out of fear of committing even the subtlest harm, Niganṭhas practice the fourfold restraint (*cātuyāma-saṁvara*). While walking, such a Niganṭha accidentally steps on and kills small insects. In such an instance, what kind of kamma does Niganṭha Nātaputta say it is? Is it highly blameworthy?" Upāli replied: "It is not considered highly blameworthy because it was not done intentionally; it was unintentional (*asañcetanika*). Since it happened accidentally, it is not highly blameworthy." Then the Buddha asked: "Well, to which rod does intention (*cetanā*) belong? Does it belong to the bodily rod, the verbal rod, or the mental rod?" Upāli had to admit: "It belongs to the mental rod." Once again, the Buddha said: "Pay attention, householder! Are you not speaking standing on the truth? Does this not contradict what you said earlier?" Then the Buddha presented another illustration.

"Now, this Nālandā is a very prosperous area. It has a large population. Suppose a man comes with a sword and says, 'In a single moment, I will kill everyone in Nālandā and turn them into one heap of flesh.' What do you say, householder? Can a single man with a sword do such a thing?" "Venerable Gotama, he cannot do it. Even if fifty men came, they could not do it." Then the Buddha asked: "Well, suppose a contemplative or brahmin of great psychic power came and said, 'With a single thought of anger/hate, I will reduce this Nālandā to ashes.' Can it be done?" "Oh, indeed it can be done. He could reduce even fifty Nālandās to ashes." Then the Buddha stated again: "Now, pay attention. Does this not contradict what you said earlier?" Here, the Buddha was demonstrating the supreme power of the mind.

Next, the Buddha asked further: "Householder, have you heard of the forests of Kaliṅgāraññā, Mataṅgāraññā, Mejjharaññā, and Daṇḍakāraññā? Have you heard how these became wildernesses?" "Yes, Venerable Gotama. As I have heard, it was done by the mental anger/hate of the sages (ṛṣis)." It is said that the sages, with a mind of anger, destroyed those cities, and subsequently, they became wildernesses. Here, too, the Buddha pointed out: "Now, this does not agree with what you said before." At this point, the householder Upāli said: "Venerable Gotama, I was convinced of this matter by the very first analogy. However, I pretended to disagree because I wanted to hear the Blessed One's brilliant wit and skillful use of metaphors." Upāli expressed this with great faith. There is a passage often found in the suttas where someone declares their faith: "Excellent, Venerable Sir! It is as if one were to set upright what had been knocked down, or to reveal what was hidden, or to show the way to one who was lost, or to hold an oil lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms. Even so has the Blessed One clarified this matter. I go to the Blessed One, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha for refuge. I take refuge in the Triple Gem."

Then the Buddha said: "Householder, householder, it is good to act after careful consideration. For well-known people like you, Upāli, it is better not to make a decision all at once, but to investigate and contemplate further before becoming a disciple." Thereupon, the householder Upāli became even more pleased and said:

"I am even more delighted by this statement of the Blessed One. If other sectarians had converted me, they would have paraded banners around Nālandā, saying, 'The

householder Upāli has become our disciple!' But Venerable Gotama tells me to think and investigate further before taking refuge." Expressing his delight, the householder Upāli took refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha for a second time. Then the Buddha said: "Householder, for a long time, your house has been like a public watering-place or a hall of alms for these Nigaṇṭhas. Therefore, even though you have converted, you should continue to give alms to the Nigaṇṭhas in the future." Thereupon, Upāli was even more deeply pleased that the Blessed One advised him to continue giving alms to the Nigaṇṭhas. "I had heard that Ascetic Gotama says alms should only be given to him, and not to other religionists; that alms should only be given to his disciples, and not to others. But because the Blessed One has instructed me in this way, I am even more delighted." Thus, he took refuge in the Buddha for the third time.

At that moment, the Buddha delivered a progressive discourse (*anupubbikathā*)—as these pious devotees have often heard—consisting of talk on giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and heaven (*sagga*), in accordance with the Buddha's style of teaching the Dhamma. Finally, when the householder Upāli's mind was prepared, the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths. Having heard it, on that very seat, the householder Upāli attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*). Although the Buddha told him to give alms, Upāli said: "I know how to do that." It might not have been exactly as the Buddha had said, but because the Buddha had said it, he would do it. He also explained how he would do it. Having become a Stream-enterer, he paid homage to the Buddha, departed, went to his house, and told his gatekeeper: "Friend, from today, do not even allow those Nigaṇṭhas to enter. Tell them that henceforth, the householder Upāli is a disciple of the Buddha. Do not give them entry. But this door is open to the fourfold assembly: bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, upāsakas, and upāsikās. For the Nigaṇṭhas, this door is closed. However, let them stand outside. If they need alms, bring it and give it to them there." Thus he commanded the gatekeeper.

Meanwhile, Dīgha Tapassī heard that the householder Upāli had become a disciple of the Buddha. He went to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta and told him this news. Yet Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta did not accept it. "I do not believe that. It is more likely that Ascetic Gotama has become a disciple of the householder Upāli, but under no circumstances would the householder Upāli become a disciple of Ascetic Gotama." Then Dīgha Tapassī said: "Very well, then, I shall go and confirm this story." He went towards Upāli’s house.

As he approached the house, the gatekeeper said: "Stand there, Venerable Sir, we will bring you alms. Do not enter." "I do not need any alms," said Dīgha Tapassī, and he departed to return to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. He told him: "The news is true. I went there, and this is what happened." Still, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta did not accept it: "This cannot be." Although told three times, he did not believe it. Finally, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "I will go myself and verify this," and went to the house of Upāli with a large following of Nigaṇṭhas. As they arrived, the gatekeeper said from afar: "Venerable Sir, stand there. If you want alms, we will give it. Do not enter." Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "Very well, tell the householder Upāli that I wish to see him and speak with him a little." When the

gatekeeper went and informed him of this, what did Upāli do? He had a large hall prepared inside the central gateway of the house and ordered seats to be arranged.

After the seats were arranged, the householder Upāli went and sat on the largest seat and told the gatekeeper: "Go and tell them they may enter if they wish." Then Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta entered with his followers. According to what is said, in the past, whenever Upāli saw Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, he would rise from his seat, wipe it, and invite him to sit. But now, he himself sat on the large seat. At this, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta became extremely angry: "Are you mad? Did you not go to debate? And now you have returned caught in his converting magic, caught in his trap of debate!" Thus, expressing severe displeasure, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta insulted him using several crude metaphors. Then the householder Upāli said: "That converting magic is an extremely noble magic. I would be glad if all my relatives and friends were caught in this converting magic. I would be glad if all the laymen, kṣatriyas, contemplatives, and brahmins of this Nālandā were caught in it. If they were caught in this converting magic, it would lead to their long-term welfare and happiness."

Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta had nothing to say in reply. There is a long story about the subsequent conversation with Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta; it did not end there. This householder Upāli was highly skilled in metaphors. On that occasion, he presented a highly sarcastic parabolic story. To relate it in full would take a long time. What was the meaning of that story? It meant that Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta's teaching is suitable only for fools, whereas the teaching of the Blessed Gotama is suitable for the wise. On that occasion, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta asked: "Well, now all the people of this region, including the king, know that the householder Upāli is a disciple of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. Now, whose disciple do you declare yourself to be?" he asked Upāli. Then the householder Upāli rose from his seat, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, and said: "Listen to whose disciple I am!" He then proclaimed the Buddha’s qualities in ten verses containing about a hundred epithets of praise. The very first of those verses is the one we chose as our theme today.

Dhīrassa vigatamo hassa… Dhīra means wisdom—the highly wise. *Vigatamohassa*—one who has dispelled delusion. *Pabhinnakhilassa*—this is a somewhat difficult word—one who has shattered the mental obstructions to concentration (barrenness of mind). *Vijitavijayassa*—victorious, one who has won the battle against the defilements and Māra. *Anīghassa*—one who has destroyed the suffering of defilements. *Susamāhitacetaso*—one whose mind is perfectly stilled and concentrated. *Vuddhasīlassa*—one of mature virtue. *Sādhupaññassa*—one of excellent wisdom. As we explain it: *tassa sāvakohamasmi*—"I am a disciple of that Blessed One." In this manner, he proclaimed the Buddha's qualities through ten verses filled with such profound meanings.

Then Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta asked: "When did you compose so many verses, householder Upāli? When did you do this?" Even then, Upāli gave a simile: "Just as a skilled garland-maker, when presented with a vast heap of diverse flowers, selects and weaves them into garlands as he pleases, so the Buddha has various epithets of praise. I merely collected

them and made this. Who, Venerable Sir, would not praise and honor the one who is worthy of praise and honor?"

It is said at the end of the sutta that because of the jealousy that arose in Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta and the grief of losing his chief disciple, hot blood gushed from his mouth. What we must take from the Upāli Sutta here is the Buddha's attitude. When the householder Upāli first took refuge in the Triple Gem, the Buddha told him to investigate further. He told him not to be in a hurry. Furthermore, He told him to continue giving alms to the disciples of the Nigaṇṭhas. It is there that we find the peaceful, tolerant principle we mentioned. Likewise, what He did there was to give understanding to a wise person, and through that understanding, clarify a matter of Dhamma.

As an additional point, we can extract from this an answer to a question many people ask even today. According to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta's philosophy, bodily action is the most blameworthy, yielding the greatest results. But according to the Buddha's teaching, it is mental action. The analysis of wholesome and unwholesome states in the Dhammapada begins with the famous verse: *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā*... (Mind precedes all mental states, mind is their chief, they are mind-made). From this verse, one can understand how the Buddha gave primacy to the mind, to mind-centric action. Furthermore, in this Dhamma, mental action is taught as something that occurs in accordance with the law of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), and not as a punishment or a vow as the Nigaṇṭhas believed. Thus, the matter of kamma is also an important lesson we can glean from this sutta.

Let us next consider how Arahant Mahinda established the Buddha's Dispensation (Sāsana) in this island of Sri Lanka based on that peaceful and tolerant principle. As we mentioned at the beginning of the sermon, and as these pious devotees have often heard, Arahant Mahinda was the son of Emperor Dharmāśoka. However, in the verse through which Arahant Mahinda introduced himself, we can see that same tolerant principle:

Samaṇā mayaṁ mahārāja, dhammarājassa sāvakā,

Taveva anukampāya, jambudīpā idhāgatā.

He did not come presenting himself as the son of an emperor. He came as a disciple of the King of Dhamma. Furthermore, *taveva anukampāya*—out of compassion for you. He did not come to amass power or plunder anything; "out of compassion for you, we have come from Jambudīpa." In that manner he replied. Likewise, when Arahant Mahinda arrived at Ambastala and met the King, he conducted an intellectual test before preaching the Dhamma. Why? It is stated in various places in the Dhamma: *dhammo ayaṁ duppaññassa*... "This Dhamma is for the wise, not for the unwise." It is not for those lacking wisdom. Indeed, those lacking wisdom are the majority. But this Dhamma is for the wise.

Therefore, as an intellectual test, these pious devotees have heard how Arahant Mahinda assessed the King's wisdom and intelligence through the mango riddle and the relative riddle. To put it briefly, pointing to a mango tree, he asked: "What tree is this?" "A

mango mango tree," replied the king. "Are there other mango trees besides this one?" "Yes, there are many other mango trees." "Are there other trees besides this mango tree and those other mango trees?" "Yes, there are trees that are not mango trees." "Well, are there any other trees besides those mango trees and those that are not mango trees?" "Yes, this very tree." Thus, he arrived right back at the starting point. This is precisely what wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is: the ability to trace back to the very point of origin.

The riddle about relatives was also similar. "Great King, do you have relatives?" "Yes, many." "Are there those who are not your relatives?" "Those who are not my relatives are even more." "Well, is there anyone else besides your relatives and those who are not your relatives?" "Yes, myself." From these answers, we can see that our Sri Lankan ancestors of that time were not foolish; they were intelligent and wise. Therefore, it was only after testing the King's intellect in this manner that the Arahant delivered the Dhamma sermon.

These pious devotees have often heard of the sermon that led the King to take refuge in the Triple Gem: the *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*. Let us examine it. Here we come to another valuable sutta that reveals the Buddha's tolerant and peaceful principles. Due to time constraints, I will explain it briefly, without lengthy elaborations. *Hatthipada* means the footprint of an elephant. Since there are two such suttas, this one is called *Cūla*, meaning the shorter discourse on the footprint of an elephant. The sutta begins as follows:

The Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi was a very wealthy and highly respected figure of that time. One day, as he was driving out of Sāvatthi in a chariot drawn by pure white mares, he met the wanderer Pilotika coming from the opposite direction. Pilotika's ancestral name was Vacchāyana. Seeing him from afar, the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi asked: "Where are you coming from?" "I am coming from the presence of Ascetic Gotama." Then the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi asked: "What do you think, Vacchāyana? Is Ascetic Gotama wise? Is he a man of great wisdom?" "Oh, there is nothing more to say about that. I cannot fathom the wisdom of Ascetic Gotama. Only someone equal to him could describe his wisdom." "Then you praise him in the highest terms, do you not?" said Jāṇussoṇi. Thereupon, the wanderer Pilotika offered an analogy:

An elephant tracker—*nāga* means elephant, and *nāgavana* means an elephant forest. A person who has a good understanding of the elephant forest is called a skilled elephant tracker (*kusalo nāgavanniko*). Now, Pilotika says: "Suppose a skilled elephant tracker enters the forest and sees an elephant footprint that is exceptionally long and wide. Upon seeing it, such a person would immediately conclude, 'This is the footprint of a great bull elephant.' Similarly, when I saw four footprints regarding Ascetic Gotama, I came to the conclusion that Ascetic Gotama is a Fully Enlightened Buddha, the Dhamma is well-expounded, and the Saṅgha is practicing well."

Pilotika describes what these four footprints are. "I have seen highly skilled, wise kṣatriyas—that is, members of royal families—who are extremely adept at debate. When

they hear that Ascetic Gotama is visiting their region, they prepare themselves for debate beforehand. They plan: 'I will ask this question. If he answers in this way, we will counter-argue like this.' Thus, they prepare their arguments. But when they go there and listen to Ascetic Gotama's Dhamma discourse, far from debating or even asking those questions, they ultimately become his disciples. That is the first footprint." Here, Pilotika presents the power of taming wise kṣatriyas as the first footprint of the elephant.

"The second footprint concerns wise brahmins. Wise brahmins are also highly skilled in debate. When they hear the Buddha is coming to their area, they prepare various questions to debate him. But having heard his Dhamma discourse, they are unable to debate or even ask their questions. That is the second footprint. Seeing this, I developed faith in the Triple Gem in that manner. Now, the third footprint: wise householders, too, are highly skilled in debate. They prepare in the same way, but upon hearing Ascetic Gotama's Dhamma discourse, they become his disciples. That is the third footprint. Fourthly, wise contemplatives also go to debate him, but upon hearing his Dhamma discourse, not only do they become disciples, but they also enter the order, receive higher ordination, and ultimately attain Arahantship. In the end, they declare: 'Previously, we claimed to be contemplatives when we were not; we claimed to be brahmins when we were not; we thought we were Arahants when we were not. Now indeed we are true contemplatives, true brahmins, true Arahants.'" Hearing this, the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi developed great faith. He got down from his chariot, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, paid homage to the Buddha three times saying *Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa*, and said: "One day I must see Ascetic Gotama, discuss with him, and engage in conversation." Indeed, as the account goes, he went to see the Buddha that very day. He related to the Buddha the entire conversation he had with the wanderer Pilotika. Thereupon, the Buddha said: "Brahmin, although the wanderer Pilotika said so, the elephant footprint simile is not complete with just that. The correct way to present the elephant footprint simile is as follows," and the Buddha proceeded to explain:

"Just as a skilled elephant tracker enters the forest and sees a long, wide footprint. But that wise tracker—let us use that word *nāgavanika*—does not immediately conclude, 'This is the footprint of a great bull elephant.' Why? Because there are dwarf she-elephants (*vāmanikā*) that have large footprints. This might be the footprint of such a dwarf she-elephant. Therefore, he does not turn back but continues to follow the tracks. He does not jump to a conclusion all at once. As he goes further, he sees other signs. Further along, he sees that the footprints are not only long and wide, but there are also high scrapings on the trees. From this, one might infer it is a tall elephant. Yet, the skilled tracker does not conclude, 'This is a great bull elephant.' Why? Because there are tall she-elephants that can leave such high scrapings. Thinking it could be one of them, he does not make a final decision but goes even further. Following those tracks, he next sees long, wide footprints, high scrapings, and additionally, tusk marks high up on the trees. Still, he does not conclude, 'These are the tusk marks of a great bull elephant, this is indeed the one.' Why? Because there are she-elephants that have tusks—the Buddha has given names to various classes of she-elephants, showing how profound His

knowledge was. Because such she-elephants also exist, the true elephant tracker does not make an immediate decision. He goes further. Finally, he sees high broken branches. Then, indeed, he sees the great bull elephant itself resting under a tree in a clearing. Only when he beholds the great elephant with his own eyes does the tracker arrive at the certain conclusion: 'This is the great bull elephant I was seeking.'"

The Buddha compares this simile to the Dhamma in this way: "When a Tathāgata arises in the world, someone hears His Dhamma, develops faith, and ordains in this Dispensation. Having ordained, he establishes himself in virtue and fulfills the training. He then attains the first jhana. Here, the Buddha refers to the first jhana as a footprint of the Tathāgata (*tathāgatapadaṁ*), a mark left by the Tathāgata, a tusk-mark of the Tathāgata. Yet, even upon attaining the first jhana, he does not immediately arrive at the final conclusion, 'The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well-expounded, the Saṅgha is practicing well.' He goes further. He attains the second, third, and fourth jhanas. Each of these is a footprint of the Tathāgata. Yet, he does not conclude with just that."

"Finally, based on those jhanas, he develops insight. As you have heard, these are the threefold knowledges (*tevijjā*): first, the knowledge of recollecting past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*). Next, the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*). Even when he obtains the knowledge of recollecting past lives, he does not yet conclude, 'This is a fully enlightened Tathāgata.' It is indeed a footprint left by the Tathāgata, but he does not make a final decision on that basis. Even with the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings, he does not conclude. Ultimately, when his mind is liberated from the taint of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), the taint of becoming (*bhavāsava*), and the taint of ignorance (*avijjāsava*), and he directly experiences this liberation, it is then that the journey taken along the Tathāgata's footprints succeeds as if seen with his own eyes. At that moment, the disciple truly concludes, 'The Blessed One is indeed fully enlightened.'"

One must contemplate why such a discourse, out of all the suttas, was presented to the people of Sri Lanka. Arahant Mahinda could have used military force or other means to force faith in the Buddha. Instead, he preached the *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta* to allow wise and intelligent individuals to investigate and examine. This is a highly valuable quality within this Dhamma, within the Buddha's Sāsana. As we said before, Arahant Mahinda presented the Dhamma to this country in accordance with a peaceful and tolerant principle, and this is revealed even through the *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*. Various forces operate in the world regarding religions. As we stated earlier, what stands out among them is this peaceful and tolerant principle. Historians praise it precisely because it is rooted in understanding.

The Buddha points out five things: faith (*saddhā*), approval (*ruci*), oral tradition (*anussava*), reasoned thinking (*ākāraparivitakka*), and reflective acceptance of a view (*diṭṭhinijjhānakkhanti*). These can lead in two different directions. Everyone knows what faith (*saddhā*) is. Approval (*ruci*) is one's preference for something. Oral tradition (*anussava*) is hearing from someone else: "This person is like this." Reasoned thinking

(*ākāraparivitakka*) is arriving at a conclusion by reflecting on external appearances. *Diṭṭhi* (view) is accepting something as correct through logical reasoning. The Buddha declares that these five things can yield two kinds of results. A person may have faith, yet the matter may be false. A person may lack faith, yet the matter may be true. A person may have an approval/preference for something—preference is a personal matter—yet despite having that preference, it may be false. That which one dislikes may turn out to be true. Oral tradition (*anussava*) is what is heard. As the wanderer Pilotika said, one hears a story about someone, about a teacher, or reads it in books. Merely because it is heard, it does not become true. It too can go either way. Reasoned thinking (*ākāraparivitakka*)—it is not suitable to arrive at a conclusion merely by reflecting on external appearances, for that too can go both ways; it can be right or wrong. Merely because something is presented logically through a view, that alone does not make it true. Thus, the Buddha showed that there are two sides, leaving room for wise investigation.

This is precisely what is described as "reasoned faith" (*ākāravatī saddhā*) "rooted in vision" (*dassanāmūlikā*). Reasoned faith is the faith developed by thoroughly investigating matters in accordance with facts and reasons. It is rooted in vision (direct realization). It is for this reason that a Stream-enterer develops unshakable faith. In contrast, the faith of those outside is described like a line of blind men holding hands: the first one does not see, the second one does not see, yet they walk holding onto one another. This Dhamma is not like that. We must recognize the Buddha through the direct realization of the Dhamma. No matter how much is written in books or spoken by others, this does not mean we discard faith; we maintain a certain degree of faith. Yet, we do not arrive at a final conclusion based on that alone, nor do we abandon the journey. We must go forward, just like that elephant tracker. He saw the footprints; they might or might not belong to the great elephant, but he had to go forward. That is entering the path of practice. As one enters the path of practice, the Buddha shows in that sutta how, step by step, the truth of this matter is confirmed for oneself.

Thus, we return to the qualities of the Dhamma. As these pious devotees have often heard: *Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo, sandiṭṭhiko, akāliko, ehipassiko, opanayiko, paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi*. This is a passage everyone recites daily. We have explained these before. *Svākkhāto* means well-expounded. It is teachings that are poorly expounded that people attempt to spread and expand through various improper means. The Buddha has well-expounded the Dhamma and has given permission to investigate it. Investigate it impartially. Examine it with wisdom, and then put it into practice. Through practice, the Dhamma of the Blessed One is *sandiṭṭhiko* (visible here and now). It is not a teaching where one is told, "You will see it later, you will see it in the next life." *Sandiṭṭhika* means in this very world, before one's very eyes, in this present life (*diṭṭheva dhamme*). When speaking of wisdom, *diṭṭheva dhamme* is frequently mentioned. Other religions do not speak of their ultimate goal in this manner; some place it after death, either in a heaven or a brahma world.

But the Buddha points out that the end of this path, Nibbāna—the expected extinguishment—is realized "in this very life, having directly realized it through one's own higher knowledge" (*diṭṭheva dhamme sayaṁ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati*). That is why it is *sandiṭṭhika*. *Akālika* (timeless / immediate) means that to the extent one puts this Dhamma to the test, to that extent it is directly realized. The Buddha explained this term *akālika* even to non-Buddhist brahmins: "Brahmin, when greed arises in your mind, when hate arises in your mind, when delusion arises in your mind, your mind becomes agitated, and because of that, a state of suffering (*dukkha*) arises. Do you know this?" "Yes," they reply. "Well, to the extent that greed is absent, hate is absent, delusion is absent, do you not directly experience the peace that arises there?" "Yes," they say. It is just like that. If we take *akālika* in its deep sense, in the realization of the paths and fruits, it means that the fruit follows immediately after the path in the concentration of immediate succession (*ānantarika-samādhi*). However, *akālika* can also be experienced daily within one's own mind. If there is intense greed, or lust towards someone, or hate, or delusion, and one strives according to the Dhamma through meditation methods to overcome them, then one knows: "Previously when this was present, it was like this; now it is like this." One experiences direct realization right there. That is why it is called *akālika*. Giving results without delay, giving results immediately; that is what is shown as *akālika*.

The term *ehipassiko* (inviting one to come and see) fits perfectly with this elephant footprint simile. "Come and see! Here is the footprint of the elephant!" It was a challenge posed to the elephant tracker. He did not stop there and immediately declare, "This is the great bull elephant I sought." That impartial, middle approach is what is found there. He neither rejected it completely nor accepted it fully. He went further—*ehipassika*. Such is the nature of this Dhamma. When we say "Come and see! Come and see!", it naturally draws us into the path of practice. To directly see whether the Dhamma is indeed well-expounded by the Buddha, and whether the Saṅgha is practicing well, this principle of *ehipassika*—"Come and see"—is crucial. Next, *opanayiko* (leading onwards / leading inward) means it draws one forward step by step. No one else needs to push or give a shove. It is inherent within the Dhamma itself: *opanayiko upanayati*—the Dhamma draws one in, as if calling one forward.

We have pointed out on many occasions how this is demonstrated within the Noble Eightfold Path, where it is beautifully shown in the Dhamma:

> *Sammā-diṭṭhissa sammā-saṅkappo pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-saṅkappassa sammā-vācā pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-vācassa sammā-kammanto pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-kammantassa sammā-ājīvo pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-ājīvassa sammā-vāyāmo pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-vāyāmassa sammā-sati pahoti.*

Sammā-satissa sammā-samādhi pahoti.

It is stated that for one of Right View, as a result of that Right View developing, right intentions—wholesome thoughts—arise. As one develops wholesome thoughts, right speech flows. As right speech flows and one's conduct is aligned with those words, right action (*sammā-kammanta*) is established. When one practices Right Action not just occasionally on a Poya day but daily, it becomes Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). One's very livelihood becomes connected to it. This is not something easily done. As one strives to establish Right Livelihood, without even realizing it, the fourfold right effort (*saṅkhāra*) develops.

These pious devotees are familiar with the fourfold effort: preventing unarisen unwholesome states from arising, abandoning arisen unwholesome states, developing unarisen wholesome states, and maintaining arisen wholesome states. One naturally falls into this fourfold effort. Through mindfulness of these four, Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) develops. When this Right Mindfulness is established so that it remains for a long time through a meditation subject, Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) is attained. Here, too, lies that quality of *opanayiko*. One is drawn from one step to the next. This is something inherent in the Dhamma itself. In this manner, you can further contemplate the "bag of tools" the Buddha left us when He passed away: the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhammā*). Within them lies a wonderful, mutual connection. As one develops the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Right Efforts develop. In developing the Four Right Efforts, one comes to recognize the Four Bases of Power. As one develops the Four Bases of Power, five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) arise within oneself—faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—which were previously unrecognized and absent. Once these spiritual faculties have arisen, utilizing their strengths is what is described as the five spiritual powers (*bala*).

As one continues with these, the factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) fall into place: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), joy (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). When these are properly aligned, it is then that the Noble Eightfold Path comes to be fully established, with each factor linked to the next. This practice, which begins with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness within the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment, culminates in the supramundane path—the supramundane path of the Noble Eightfold Path. Following that supramundane path, the paths and fruits of liberation arise. This, pious devotees, is what is meant by *opanayiko, paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi. Viññūhi* means by the wise; *paccattaṁ veditabbo*—it must be personally realized. This is a Dhamma that must be realized individually, each according to his own wisdom. Therefore, on a day like today, you must contemplate this with wisdom.

We take various external measures claiming to protect the Buddha's Sāsana. But in the end, like an empty bubble, nothing remains within. We pass down this Sāsana of scriptures (*pariyatti-sāsana*) like a basket passed from hand to hand. The same is true of other things. But if someone diligently brings this Dhamma close to their own life, they

will personally realize that the Buddha is indeed Fully Enlightened, the Dhamma is well-expounded, and the Saṅgha is practicing well. Furthermore, through that pure faith, they will provide encouragement to others to follow this Sāsana and enter this path of practice.

Today, on this precious day, we have spoken of these many Dhamma accounts not merely because you like to hear stories. There is something to be taken from them. That is why they were presented in brief. We live in an era where precious time is wasted on various unnecessary things. We must contemplate the word "diligence" (*appamāda*). Tomorrow is too late. Therefore, as taught in this Dhamma, we must be diligent. We must constantly recollect the six sublime qualities of the Dhamma through which the Buddha presented His challenge: *Svākkhāto, Sandiṭṭhiko, Akāliko, Ehipassiko, Opanayiko, Paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi*. This is what is meant by *Dhammānussati* (recollection of the Dhamma). Today, one must resolve to shape one's life accordingly.

Thus, for this length of time on this precious day, you have entered upon the path of practice as a form of practice-homage (*paṭipatti-pūjā*), which helps preserve the Sāsana. Whatever the troubles of your daily lay life may be, at this rare opportunity—when a Buddha's Sāsana has been encountered, when a Buddha's Dhamma is heard—if one does not direct the mind towards the task of crossing over the ocean of saṁsāra, you can imagine what would happen if this moment slips away. Today, while keeping these virtues (*sīla*), you have directed your mind towards meditation as far as possible, and you have also had the opportunity to listen to this Dhamma sermon. By forming noble resolutions regarding your life through this, while being protected by the Sāsana, we urge you to firmly resolve to protect the Sāsana as well.

May you integrate the aspects of virtue, concentration, and wisdom gained through listening to this Dhamma into your lives, and as quickly as possible, before this Dispensation of the Buddha declines, may you end the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra through this practice. May this Dhamma sermon serve as a supportive condition for realizing the noble path-and-fruit realizations of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, leading to the sublime, deathless Great Nibbāna! Furthermore, from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, to whatever extent there are beings who wish to rejoice in the merit of this giving and hearing of Dhamma, through that rejoicing, may they realize the supreme, deathless Great Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! Let us recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #165

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.161)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Sumuttiko sumuttiko,

sāhu sumuttikomhi tīhi khujjakehi;

Asitāsu mayā naṅgalāsu,

mayā khuddakuddālāsu mayā.

Yadi pi idham-eva idham-eva,

atha vā pi alameva alameva;

Jhāya sumaṅgala jhāya sumaṅgala,

appamatto vihara sumaṅgalā'ti."

From:

Verse 43 Theragāthā in the Khuddaka Nikāya (Venerable Sumaṅgala Thera)

Dear Listeners,

Wisely reflecting on the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) within the existence of life is the very first step that directs one towards Nibbāna. The Buddha explained to us that because of the darkness of delusion, which masquerades *Dukkha* as happiness, beings are repeatedly born and die in *saṃsāra*. In order to bring out and consolidate that concept of *Dukkha*, it is necessary to constantly reflect on the nature of suffering within the continuation of life. How a bhikkhu who was about to disrobe and return to the lay life aroused his energy through such reflection and finally attained Arahantship is revealed in the background story of the verses of our theme.

The parents of a child born to a poor family in a certain village near Sāvatthī named him Sumaṅgala. When this Sumaṅgala reached youth, just like his parents, he scraped by a difficult living with farming implements—namely a plow, a sickle, and a spade. On one occasion, when King Pasenadi of Kosala was offering a great almsgiving to the Saṅgha led by the Buddha, Sumaṅgala went there carrying a pot of curd along with the people who brought the requisites for the almsgiving, and he witnessed the honor and hospitality shown to the Saṅgha. Seeing this, he thought: "These bhikkhus wear fine robes, receive good food and drink, and reside in comfortable lodgings. I too should ordain." Having thought thus, he approached a certain elder monk and expressed his desire to ordain. Out of compassion, that elder ordained Sumaṅgala, gave him a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and sent him to the forest. However, after some time, Venerable Sumaṅgala grew weary of this solitary life in the forest and decided to return to lay life. While traveling back to his relatives' village with this intention, he saw on the way farmers in the blazing sun, sweaty and covered in dust, wearing dirty clothes, and working hard with plows and sticks. A great sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) arose in him as he saw how much suffering they undergo just to sustain their lives. Through that very sense of urgency, the meditation subject Venerable Sumaṅgala had previously practiced began to appear to him with great clarity. He went under a nearby tree, sat down, and began to meditate. There, it is subsequently mentioned, he attained the fruit of Arahantship through the successive stages of the path.

After attaining Arahantship in this manner, he uttered a certain verse of joy (*udāna*) summarizing his life's story. That verse of joy is what we have taken as our theme. Indeed, though not highly stylized, a very valuable idea is expressed there. What does Venerable Sumaṅgala declare?

Sumuttiko sumuttiko, sādhu sumuttikomhi tīhi khujjakehi

"Thoroughly freed, thoroughly freed! Well and truly freed am I from three crooked things."

Asitāsu mayā naṅgalāsu mayā, khuddakhuddakulāsu mayā

"From sickles, from plows, and from small spades—from these I am thoroughly freed."

Yadapi idhaveva idhaveva, atha vāpi alameva alameva

"Even though these farming tools are right here, right beside me, yet indeed, enough of them, enough of them!"

Sumaṅgala, jhāyassu sumaṅgala, appamatto vihara sumaṅgala

"Meditate, Sumaṅgala, meditate, Sumaṅgala! Dwell heedfully, Sumaṅgala!"

The final line shows how he admonished himself. Thus, we can see that if one reflects on the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) in this life's existence and arouses a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*), that itself becomes a helper to Nibbāna. You devotees may have heard many

times about the eight bases of urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*) mentioned in this Dispensation: *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decay/aging), sickness, death (thus, *Jarāmaraṇa*—decay and death), the suffering of the plane of misery, the suffering experienced in the past cycle of *saṃsāra*, the suffering to be experienced in the future cycle of *saṃsāra* if one does not attain Nibbāna in this life, and finally, eighthly, the toil of seeking food in this life—the struggle of maintaining a livelihood through employment and so on. From this, we can see that it was by taking support of this eighth base of urgency that Venerable Sumaṅgala, who was about to disrobe, became an Arahant. This is an excellent point for us to ponder. Why? Because, as mentioned earlier, we cover up the nature of *Dukkha* inherent in this life's existence and hold the perception of it as pleasure. Therefore, to uncover this again, we must deeply reflect on their true nature through insight (*vipassanā*).

You devotees have heard about *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). In the Dispensation, the word *saṅkhāra* is often used with the meaning of "concocting" or "constructing". There is a vast range of meanings in this word *saṅkhāra*, such as processing, plotting, preparing, and making ready. A drama, after all, is a delusion of the audience. The dressing up, make-up, and disguises that actors and actresses put on behind the scenes to delude the audience were historically called *saṅkhāra*. In the exact same way, the continuation of our life is a grand masquerade. It is presented to us under various names such as jobs, positions, and titles. Why is all this being done? To put it briefly in old parlance, it is "to save the span of the stomach"—to sustain this belly which is just a span wide. Obtaining this food is the primary matter.

Just like food, laypeople also have to find the other four requisites that support life's continuation: clothing, food, medicine, and shelter. These do not come on their own. Therefore, one has to exert effort for them. How this effort is made can be understood from the Buddha's own words in the Mahā (Dukkhandha) Sutta. The Buddha has pointed out the turmoil and effort made for a livelihood in this world as the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) of sensual pleasures. Consider the immense amount of preparation involved in farming, which was mentioned here as a livelihood. A farmer goes to sleep thinking, "Today's work is done," but already planning tomorrow's work. In this manner, there is an endless series of tasks. These are *saṅkhāras*—preparations—and there is no end to preparing them. It is a mass of endless preparations, a multitude of plottings. This acting is indeed what we perform as *saṃsāra*.

Whether it is farming, cattle-rearing, trade, accounting, civil service, or military service, the Buddha mentions in the Mahā Sutta how much a human being has to toil for it. Suffering from heat and cold, bothered by flies, mosquitoes, and snakes, "*khuppipāsāhi mīyamāno*"—nearly dying of hunger and thirst, one exerts great effort and striving in various occupations. In those occupations, while protecting oneself, protecting one's job, and additionally trying to stand out above others, how much toil does one undergo day and night through a multitude of concerns!

Furthermore, if despite such toil, one's effort somehow becomes fruitless, the Buddha describes the wide range of reactions to that. That person weeps, laments, beats their

breast, swoons, and falls into utter confusion, grieving: "My effort has been in vain; it was of no use." That is one aspect. Next, suppose that effort somehow succeeds. Having succeeded, one accumulates a wealth of possessions. The Buddha then describes the *Dukkha* (Suffering) one undergoes to protect that accumulated wealth.

That person experiences a heap of pain and grief, keeping a heavy load of suffering inside their mind, worrying: "May my acquired wealth and heap of possessions not be confiscated by kings! May they not fall into the hands of thieves! May they not be destroyed by floods or fire! May unloved heirs not take possession of them!" Then, if despite such protection, they are confiscated by kings, stolen by thieves, caught in fire, swept away by floods, or taken by unloved heirs, the Buddha describes their reaction thus: "*Yam pi me ahosi, tam pi me natthi*"—"What I once had, even that I have no more." Such reactions are found in the Buddha's own words. It is in this manner that the Buddha has shown the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) within that existence.

Those of you who own vehicles know that you buy a new vehicle at a great expense. How long does that newness last? Before long, it has to be taken to the garage. Parts have to be assembled and it has to be serviced. The vehicle is run amidst a multitude of other hassles. Thinking of how many troubles arise because of this, the Buddha points to this vehicle of ours, received from Māra, as "*catucakkaṃ navadvāraṃ*"—a vehicle with four wheels and nine openings. What is this vehicle? It is this body. The "four wheels" refer to the four postures. You devotees know them: standing, sitting, walking, and lying down. Within these four postures, in order to maintain this body, we have to take food, drink, and so on. Furthermore, you devotees know what the "nine openings" are. That is the vehicle. So, this vehicle received from Māra also occasionally has to be "garaged" in hospitals, and its parts have to be repaired. Such is the situation. Even if that were not the case, you devotees well know that something called in-breathing and out-breathing occurs within the body. We breathe in, and the breath taken in must be breathed out. That is why the Buddha has pointed to in-breathing and out-breathing as the most subtle level of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). It is the minimal bodily action, designated as bodily formation (*kāya-saṅkhāra*). We know how much effort and pain must be taken just to protect this breath, this wave of breath.

The same applies to food and drink. After taking food, how long does it remain inside this body? The same is true of clothing and the houses used as dwellings. They must be constantly repaired and prepared. The Buddha declares that this very preparation is *Dukkha* (Suffering). In the phrase "*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*" (all Preparations are impermanent), the impermanence of all preparations is fully contained. Thus, this very preparation is *Dukkha*. Within this impermanence, there is change, alteration, and other-wiseness (*vipariṇāma-aññathābhāva*). To analyze further, the mature state which we fancied to be in good condition, without our even knowing it, undergoes change (*vipariṇāma*). It changes in ways we do not expect, becoming otherwise, not remaining as it was. Just as we think, "It is in this state," when we look later, it has become otherwise.

Now, there is a valuable sutta in the Dhamma that illustrates this nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering). It is a deep sutta. We do not intend to discuss all of it, but will mention only a part. On one occasion, Venerable Kumāra Kassapa, who had not yet attained Arahantship, went to the Andhavana forest near Sāvatthī to dwell in solitude. During the night, a certain deity approached Venerable Kumāra Kassapa and uttered a series of riddles in the form of highly astonishing similes. The deity did not give the answers to them. Instead, he said, "No one else can solve these riddles; go and ask the Tathāgata himself." Thus, we will only mention the part where the Buddha solved these riddle-like phrases when they were presented to him, and even of that, only a few, as the rest lead to very deep levels. That sutta is the Vammika Sutta. Devotees, "*vammika*" means an anthill. Everyone knows what an anthill is; it is where cobras and such take up residence. However, it does not belong to the cobra; it is built by termites.

So, what was the first phrase uttered by the deity? Addressing Venerable Kumāra Kassapa, he said: "Monk, monk, this anthill here fumes by night and blazes by day." In Pali terms: "*Bhikkhu bhikkhu, ayaṃ vammiko rattiṃ dhūmāyati, divā pajjālati.*" Next, he says, "Shatter this anthill! Wise man, take a tool and shatter it!" Thus, it goes on as a long story. If we were to explain all of it, it would take hours for you devotees to understand. Let us extract this portion. When Venerable Kassapa asked the Buddha the next morning, the Buddha explained it in this way. The simile given by the deity is as follows: What is the anthill (*vammika*)? This anthill is a name for this very body, which is composed of the four great elements, born of mother and father, nourished on boiled rice and gruel, subject to *Anicca* (Impermanent), and which constantly needs to be maintained by rubbing, massaging, bathing, and cleaning, and is bound to break up and scatter (*aniccauccādana-parimaddana-bhedana*).

Next, he explains why this anthill "fumes by night". Planning without sleep during the night, thinking about the activities to be done during the day—pondering: "Is it better if I do it this way? Is it better if I do it that way? What will happen if I do it like this?"—this planning during the night is "fuming by night". Next, what is meant by "blazing by day"? Having planned like that during the night, it is the engagement in those activities during the day by mind, body, and speech, like a blazing fire. From this too, through the idea of the anthill, its fuming by night, and its blazing by day, the nature of *Dukkha* in our life's continuation is clearly visible. Furthermore, if we contemplate, since every simile has a depth, an anthill is something built with the great toil of termites. Although we perceive it as a single unit, when we see an anthill, because it is extremely strong, some people do not even realize that it was built by termites. This anthill is something built day and night by billions of termites exerting a massive amount of labor. In the same way, this body, which people decorate, show off, and enter into beauty contests to win prizes, claiming "I" and "mine", contains the essence of lorry-loads of rice. When we think of how many beings' help was needed to produce just a single grain of rice, there is no greater foolishness than claiming "I" and "mine" regarding this body. Yet, it is within that delusion that the world remains in *saṃsāra*. This is called *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body). Taking this entire heap as a single unit, taking it as one through

the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), they grasp it through view as: "*Etaṃ mama, eso'hamasmi, eso me attā*"—"This is mine, this I am, this is my self."

And it is on the basis of that form (*rūpa*) itself that *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception (*saññā*), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (consciousness) all arise. You devotees have heard of how these should be reflected upon. The Buddha has stated that if one wishes to attain the fruits of the path, if one wishes to attain the fruits of Stream-entry and so on, whether one is a layperson or a monk, one must reflect on them in eleven ways: as *aniccatō* (impermanent), *dukkhatō* (painful), *rōgatō* (diseased), *gaṇḍatō* (as a boil), *sallatō* (as a dart), *aghatō* (as calamity), *ābādhatō* (as an affliction), *paratō* (as alien), *palokatō* (as disintegrating), *suññatō* (as empty), and *anattatō* (as not-self). The Buddha has declared that we must reflect on all these—not just form, but the others as well—which we fancied as "I" and "mine", in these eleven ways: as *Anicca* (Impermanent), as *Dukkha* (Suffering), as a boil, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as empty, and as *Anattā* (Not-self).

On one occasion, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita asked Venerable Sāriputta which things a virtuous monk should reflect upon. Venerable Sāriputta stated that he should reflect upon the five aggregates of grasping (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*) in those eleven ways, as *Anicca* (Impermanent) and as *Dukkha* (Suffering). By reflecting in this way, it is possible for that monk to realize the fruit of Stream-entry. Next, he asks, "What should a Stream-enterer monk do?" It is the same. In the same way, he should reflect even more deeply on the five aggregates of grasping in those eleven ways. When reflecting thus, that monk attains the state of a Once-returner. Next, he asks, "What should a Once-returner monk reflect upon?" It is the same. He reflects on the very same in those eleven ways. Then, it is possible for that monk to attain the state of a Non-returner. "Next, how does one become an Arahant?" For the Arahant, too, the practice is reflecting in the very same way. Thus, this demonstrates the immense value of reflecting on the five aggregates of grasping (using *Upādāna* as grasping) in these eleven ways.

Not only that, finally he asks a question which is a matter of debate for many, but since it is found in the Dhamma, let us state it: "What does an Arahant reflect upon? What should an Arahant monk reflect upon?" The answer there is highly astonishing. There it is said that for the Arahant, there is nothing further to be done; he has already completed what had to be done. Nevertheless, for the sake of a pleasant dwelling in this very life (*sukha-vihāra*) as well as for mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), he reflects on these five aggregates of grasping in the exact same manner.

Thus, we can see that we must develop this perception—the perception of *Dukkha* (Suffering). For that, we must understand the nature of these *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). If we recollect the similes given for the five aggregates, such as form (*rūpa*), we can understand this to a great extent. Consider how form is compared to a lump of froth. The lump of froth is just like the anthill. *Vedanā* (Feeling) is like a water bubble arising during rain. This must be taken as a heap, not as a single thing. Even this *vedanā* is a heap, not a single entity. Perception (*saññā*) is compared to a mirage. One runs after a mirage because of attachment. *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) are compared to a banana

trunk. The story of the banana trunk contains this very same idea. As soon as one sees a banana trunk, a perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) arises, making one think it is wood with a solid heartwood. The Buddha gives the simile of a man who sees a banana tree for the first time; he cuts it at the top and the bottom, and carries it off, thinking he will split it to make a chair or a table for his house. But when he peels it later, it is just a pile of sheaths. Thus, the way the world grasps things is shown as "compactness"—a dogmatic holding in terms of misapprehension (*parāmāsa*). But the Buddha, instead of that, shows comprehension (*sammasana*)—which is like feeling it out, searching it out with the mind, recognizing them with the mind. This is called reflection. Reflecting wisely in this way is what is called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention).

In terms of *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), seeing things subtly in a way that brings the realization of "not one, but a heap" is what is called insight (*vipassanā*). We do not see the oppressive nature and the repetitive nature of these *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) in our daily lives. As one day ends, another day begins. Within day and night, we take all of this as a new morning, and we do not perceive the aspect of cessation (*nirodha*) in them. We often do not even realize that we have to do this over and over again.

In order to bring out the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) in this constant repetition, the Buddha employed various skillful means on different occasions. There is an excellent story mentioned in the Dhamma about such a skillful means. One day, the Buddha went for alms to the house of the brahmin named Udaya in Sāvatthī. Even though that brahmin had no faith, he filled the bowl and offered the alms. The Buddha returned. On the second day, He went there again. On the second day, too, the brahmin filled the bowl and offered alms. On the third day, He went again. When He went, the brahmin filled the bowl again and said, "This ascetic Gotama is greedy for taste. *Punappunaṃ*—he comes again and again, he comes again and again."

Seizing upon that word, the Buddha delivered a Dhamma sermon consisting of four verses. They were highly unusual verses.

Punappunañceva vapanti bījaṃ, punappunaṃ vassati devarājā;

Punappunaṃ khettaṃ kasanti kassakā, punappunaṃ dhaññamupeti raṭṭhaṃ.

That is the first verse. Again and again they sow the seed, again and again the king of devas rains down, again and again the farmers plow the field, and again and again grain enters the country. Next,

Punappunaṃ yācakā yācayanti, punappunaṃ dānapatī dadanti;

Punappunaṃ dānaṃ datvā dānapatī, punappunaṃ saggamupenti ṭhānaṃ.

Again and again the beggars beg, again and again the donors give, and again and again, having given gifts, the donors again and again go to the heavenly state. That is the second verse. The third verse:

Punappunaṃ khīranikā duhanti, punappunaṃ vaccho upeti mātaraṃ;

Punappunaṃ kilamati phandati ca, punappunaṃ gabbhamupeti mando.

Next, it speaks about cattle rearing. "Again and again they milk the cow." Now, you devotees know that milk does not flow instantly the moment you pull. How many times must one pull? Not only that, the calf also has to be brought near sometimes when the cow holds back its milk. So, that is what is meant by "*punappunaṃ vaccho upeti mātaraṃ*"—again and again the calf goes to its mother. Next, what happens to the calf in going there? Again and again it grows exhausted and trembles. "Again and again the foolish person (*mando*), the dull-witted one, enters the womb."

Next, the fourth verse contains a special meaning:

Punappunaṃ jāyati mīyati ca, punappunaṃ sīvathikaṃ haranti;

Maggañca laddhā apunabbhavāya, na punappunaṃ jāyati bhūripaññо.

So, just like entering the womb, what happens next? Again and again one undergoes *Jāti* (Birth) and dies. Again and again they carry one to the cemetery. Now, what do the last two lines say? "*Maggañca laddhā apunabbhavāya*"—devotees, *apunabbhava* (non-renewed existence) is a name for Nibbāna where there is no rebirth. Having found the path to non-renewed existence, "*na punappunaṃ jāyati bhūripaññо*"—the one of vast wisdom (*bhūripaññо*) does not undergo *Jāti* (birth) again and again. That is all the Buddha declares. By the time He finished uttering these four verses, the brahmin gained a certain understanding, went for refuge to the Triple Gem for life, and became a lay disciple.

Accordingly, it was to bring out that word *punappunaṃ* according to the occasion that the Buddha went to that brahmin's house three times—not because He had nowhere else to go, but to favor the brahmin with the Dhamma. Therefore, we must take these as lessons. This repetitive nature of *Dukkha* is inevitably present in *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). There is a multitude of preparing and renewed organizing that never sees an end. If you ask a person at the moment of death, "Is the work you need to do finished now?" there will still be at least one more thing left. Even if one lives for a hundred years, or eighty-four thousand years, this preparing and renewed organizing never ends. Then, what happens to make it appear to us as if they have ended? There are two things called day and night. "For today, the work is done; it's fine for today." One comes and sleeps. Fine, then tomorrow comes. Then it appears like a new task. Tomorrow is a new morning. Another morning.

Although this is not a story mentioned in the Dhamma, the concept of time that existed among ancient people is revealed in this story from the Rigvedic era. Even though it is a mythological story, we are mentioning it because we can derive something from it. Do not take it as a literal truth. Among them, there is a story like this. You have heard of King Yama. The concept of Yama exists in those texts as well. Yama has a wife named Yamī. When Yama died, Yamī was weeping constantly: "Oh, he died just today! He died

just today! He died this very day! He died this very day!" At that time, a certain Brahma, like a creator Brahma, created the night. This is how they say the night came to be. He created the night. Yamī had been saying, "Today, today," because there was no night. Once the night had passed, Yamī thought, "Ah, he died yesterday. Yama died yesterday." Thus she forgot. You devotees know that such things happen in this world. That is why we speak of these two—day and night. The sun and the moon must be laughing at this multitude of *Saṅkhāra* (preparations) and planning we do. Thus, time passes within a disguise. So even if years, a hundred years, or eighty-four thousand years pass, this spinning does not end.

That is why the Buddha revealed the true nature of these spinnings. That, devotees, is the main subject of insight (*vipassanā*): *samudaya* (arising) and *vaya* (passing away). The two words *samudaya* and *atthaṅgama* (disappearance/setting) are closest to the story of the day. You devotees know the rising of the sun. *Samudaya* also means rising. *Atthaṅgama* means the setting of the sun. Words like *samudaya* and *uppāda* point to the side of the arising of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). Words like *vaya* and *atthaṅgama* point to the side of cessation (*nirodha*).

So, it is those two aspects that the Buddha revealed in every *Saṅkhāra* (formation). If we further analyze "*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*" (all Preparations are impermanent), it breaks down into two. That is why we call them the two petals of impermanence. When impermanence is further developed in meditation, that is what is called the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*). Arising, passing away; arising, passing away. It arises and ceases, arises and ceases. But the world forgets this passing away. It is a new morning. They keep waiting until tomorrow morning. This evening, they forget the side of cessation (*nirodha*). That is why the Buddha has declared:

Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā, ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino;

Nirodhaṃ appajānantā, āgantāro punabbhavaṃ.

Beings who have reached the form realm, and those established in the formless realm, everyone—not just humans, but even devas and Brahmas—because of not understanding cessation (*nirodha*), return again and again to renewed existence (*punabbhava*).

The Buddha brings out this very side of cessation (*nirodha*). Nibbāna is also called cessation (*nirodha*). Thus, the Buddha uncovers for the world this hidden cessation. Just as said in the story of Yamī, once a night passes, it is finished. In this manner, forgetting that cessation, people make a kind of knot. That is what *Upādāna* (grasping/holding/fuel) is—grasping. They grasp only the side of arising (*samudaya*). We have shown this on other occasions through a different simile, which we also brought out in our sermons. The Buddha has compared *Taṇhā* (Craving) to a seamstress (*sibbanī*). What does a seamstress do? Even if we think of a sewing machine today, it works through grasping. The bobbin thread connects as the needle moves. Furthermore, when knitting, there is an eye in the knitting needle too. Indeed, *Taṇhā* is also called an eye/lead: "*bhavanetti*" (the lead to becoming). Thus, this very craving stands as

Upādāna (grasping/fuel) at the moment of death. That craving is never satisfied. The cause for this multitude of preparations is this craving—in the form of craving for sensual pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*), and craving for non-becoming (*vibhava-taṇhā*). The Buddha calls that craving "the seamstress". It can be understood in that way.

Likewise, *bhavanetti* (the lead to becoming). At the moment of death, there is a certain lead. Now, if you devotees cut a slope in a mountain and leave a lead (overhang), it will collapse in the next rain. In the same way, the craving called the lead to becoming has a certain lack. That is why the Buddha declared on one occasion: "*Ūṇo loko atitto taṇhādāso*"—the world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving. There is a certain lack in this world. Even if you ask the richest billionaire in the world, "Is everything fine now? Are you happy? Is it complete? Is everything one hundred percent fine?" they would say, "No, there is some lack." That is it: "*Ūṇo loko atitto*". The world is insatiable, there is no satisfaction; "*taṇhādāso*"—even if one thinks of oneself as a master, whatever one may be a master of, one is a slave to craving. That is what we must understand. Thus, it is because of craving itself that this massive stream of preparations continues.

Now, the reason we do not see it is because through ignorance (*avijjā*), we forget cessation (*nirodha*). Not only us, but even devas and Brahmas remain in this ignorance until a Buddha arises in the world. That is the special task of a Buddha: to show the deep side of impermanence—not merely saying "*Anicca, anicca*", but seeing much deeper. Through suttas like the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, we must go to the deep side. That is what meditators aim for. In the suttas like the Satipaṭṭhāna, there is the phrase: "*samudayadhammānupassī, vayadhammānupassī, samudayavayadhammānupassī*" (contemplating the nature of arising, contemplating the nature of passing away, contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away). This is a puzzle to many. Devotees who put the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta into practice know that the Buddha has shown how to take this body, feelings, mind, and mental objects as objects of meditation under various topics such as contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), and contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*), using breathing, postures, bodily parts, and so forth as meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

Developing them in a way that concentration (*samādhi*) grows, and while progressing through mindfulness, it is through the understanding of clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) that one can go deep into this path. Ultimately, it is said that regarding each of these, one must look at both *samudaya* (arising) and *vaya* (passing away)—to see the side of arising and to see the side of passing away. Let us take in-breathing and out-breathing as an example—mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). It is said to watch how it arises, and to watch how it passes away. Then, the next riddle is that both arising and passing away (*samudaya-vaya*) are also presented together. That is a puzzle to many: dwelling contemplating the nature of arising, dwelling contemplating the nature of passing away, and also contemplating both arising and passing away at once. There is something quite special there.

Right there lies the penetration of this insight (*vipassanā*). The yogi who watches arising and passing away, which is called the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*), as he practices it for a long period and goes deeper and deeper, sees that they break up right then and there. That is called the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). To explain this a bit further, we can understand it like this: the Buddha has stated that prepared things are generally called *saṅkhata* (the prepared/conditioned) in the Dhamma. *Saṅkhata* means prepared or concocted. If we say it in simple Sinhala, they are made-up things. Now, the Buddha points out three characteristics of these prepared things: "*Uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, thitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati*". In every prepared thing, an arising is apparent—which means it can be seen. There is an arising; that is one end. "*Vayo paññāyati*"—a passing away is apparent. And the third one is the deepest: "*Thitassa aññathattaṃ*". Learned scholars translate this in various ways because it is difficult to understand. Devotees, if we think of *ṭhiti* as stability, *ṭhiti* means existing. It is the idea that something exists, persists—*ṭhiti*. *Ṭhiti* carries the concept of staying unmoved.

But what does the Buddha declare? "*Thitassa aññathattaṃ*"—in that which we fancied to be stable, there is other-wiseness. It is changing. This is not just a verbal description. The moment of direct experience (*paccakkha*) is different. Direct experience means that as soon as it arises, one sees: "this arising occurs only to cease." The moment this is deeply understood is called the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*)—it dissolves. The mind grasps at everything, but whatever object the mind grasps dissolves right then and there. That is what is meant by "*thitassa aññathattaṃ*". It is when the other-wiseness of this stability, its changing nature, is directly experienced that one truly enters the path to Nibbāna. In advanced insight, this is designated as the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). Beings grasp everything with the mind. When one realizes that they have grasped with the mind, one sees that each and every object that comes to the mind dissolves. When one sees them dissolving right then and there, a great fear (*bhaya*) arises: "So this is how *Bhava* (Becoming) is constructed! This is what we grasp as existence and life, isn't it?"

Suppose we are traveling along a mountain ridge with precipices on both sides, and we are given a handrail to hold onto. How much fear would arise the moment we realize that every single post of this handrail is rotten? It is exactly like that. Everything is rotten—whatever we grasp. It is through that very fear that the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) of these *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) is subsequently understood.

Why are ignorance (*avijjā*) and *Taṇhā* (Craving) called our father and mother in *saṃsāra*? Ignorance is a hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*). Ignorance covers up like darkness, like a dark night. Craving glues things together. It glues things and presents them as one unit. Just like that anthill mentioned earlier. When we see an anthill, does it ever occur to us—unless we specifically think about it—that this is something built with such great toil over many days by that tiny creature, the termite? Even if we think of that, how many times a day do we remember that this skeletal cage of a body is the essence of lorry-loads of food and drink? That is the kind of thing we have here. Thus, the practitioner of insight

understands this in a highly subtle manner. It cannot be explained to another; that is why it is said: "*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*" (to be experienced individually by the wise). It cannot be put into words; it is a direct realization.

What is that realization for? Why see things as they really are (*yathābhūta*)? The Buddha has clearly declared that without disenchantment (*nibbidā*) towards this *saṃsāra*, one cannot be freed from it.

In this world, the five aggregates of grasping are the world. You devotees know this. What we are grasping is a heap of form (*rūpa*), a heap of *Vedanā* (Feeling), a heap of perception (*saññā*), a heap of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and a heap of *Viññāṇa* (consciousness). In grasping these, as said earlier, one grasps them through *Taṇhā* (Craving) as: "This is mine, this I am, this is my self." Furthermore, as long as one grasps them through the view born of ignorance called *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body), *Bhava* (Becoming) arises for us again and again. Just like the mountain cut leaving a lead (overhang), at the moment of death, that very craving becomes *Upādāna* (grasping/fuel) and a lead to becoming (*bhavanetti*), and one is dropped somewhere according to kamma. It may not be where one wishes. One falls somewhere according to kamma. There, it is a strange world, a new world.

Then, the one born in that new world does not know about this newness. It is just like buying a new vehicle. Perhaps only when it starts to break down does one realize that it has been used for some time. With vehicles, at least there is some such understanding. But until a Buddha arises, we go on for so long constructing skeletal cages of bodies in this very manner, undergoing *Jarāmaraṇa* (decay/aging and death) and sickness in this very manner. That is why it was called a vehicle obtained from Māra. We do not understand this. We do not perceive this until a Buddha reveals it. Suppose a child is born to a family. When a child is born to a new couple, he is a newcomer, a stranger. That child also fancies, "I am a novel newcomer to this world." But that newcomer is the same old traveler who has come for a long time in *saṃsāra*. Yet we do not understand that. It is a mere drama we have enacted within the environment we acquired. That is why life is called a drama. That is why it is called a dream. And that is why the Buddha is called "Buddha"—the Awakened One, and His realization is called "*Sambodhi*" (Self-Awakening).

We must understand that this is not just one dream, nor seven, but an endless heap of dreams. Only the Buddha explained this correctly. Even the yogis of the past who developed higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) and such could see that they had been born thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands of times in *saṃsāra*. But unfortunately, because of *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion), they fancied that a soul/self travels on—that a self is journeying. Due to their attachment to that self, they were born again and again in *saṃsāra*. Only a Buddha reveals that there is no self here. There is no self in form (*rūpa*), no self in *Vedanā* (Feeling), none in perception (*saññā*), none in *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). And finally, He mentions *Viññāṇa* (consciousness). The final trump card is *viññāṇa*. It is this invisible *viññāṇa* that even the brahmins took to be the soul. The

Buddha says that it is a sheer illusion. Even that is an illusion. What is presented as these performances is subsequently designated as *Nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form).

Name (*nāma*) means *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), *Phassa* (contact), and attention (*manasikāra*). It is based on these mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*) that we recognize form (*rūpa*) made up of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). So, only these things exist. The devotee who comprehends *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) understands that within every thought, there is only this much: *Vedanā*, perception, intention, *Phassa*, and attention. And the forms made of the four great elements are the objects of these. Even those things which we think of as elements are conceived by the world as solid "things". But the Buddha points out that since they are recognized through the aforementioned mental factors such as feeling, form-factors (*rūpa-dhamma*) are merely an impingement and a resistance/deformation within a heap of mental factors.

That is a deep matter. Between the two, there is a highly astonishing tangle within and tangle without (*anto-jaṭā bahi-jaṭā*). That tangle is something each person must untangle for themselves. Thus, as one keeps reflecting on *Nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form), one realizes that there is no self here. There is only a heap of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) that arise and cease. Then, when one understands that it is only a heap of arising and ceasing Preparations, the Buddha asks, what is this knowledge of reality (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*) for? It is for disenchantment (*nibbidā*). This word *nibbidā* is nowadays largely pushed to the background. This is because, especially those who intend to teach the Dhamma in foreign countries, paint or whitewash this Dhamma, fearing that foreigners might see it as sheer pessimism.

But on certain occasions, the Buddha has clearly brought out the fundamental principle required to distinguish the Dhamma from what is not Dhamma (*adhamma*). He has shown why something is not the Dhamma: "*N'etaṃ ekanta-nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati*". If something does not lead to absolute disenchantment (*nibbidā*), to dispassion (*virāga*), to cessation (*nirodha*), to stillness (*upasama*), to direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), to self-awakening (*sambodha*), and to extinguishment (Nibbāna, then it is not the Dhamma. Yet, in modern times, what is taught as Dhamma is shaped by fear of those very words. But there is nothing to hide in this Dhamma. The Buddha declared it openly. The Buddha revealed that which other teachers were afraid to say, or failed to understand due to lack of realization. So, that is what we are trying to bring out. Today, Nibbāna is also explained in various ways—as a part of *Bhava* (Becoming), or as a place to go after death. On certain occasions, they have turned it into a "Siyadoris Nibbāna" (a compromised or localized Nibbāna). That is why it is called a "Siyadoris Nibbāna".

Most people think of it as a place one goes to after death. Thus, in the name of Nibbāna, they are actually wishing for *Bhava* (Becoming). But the Buddha pointed to the moment of waking up from this dream. Waking up means realizing there is no self here. Now, fancying that there is a cobra inside that anthill, one is afraid to shatter it. But the deity said, "Sumedha, wise man, take the tool and shatter it!" What is the tool? Noble wisdom

(*ariya-paññā*). So, even though we do not describe in detail how to shatter this anthill with noble wisdom, this much is important. It is only after shattering that anthill that the one designated as the cobra inside is revealed. Who is that? The Arahant.

Thus, an *Anattā* (Not-self) cobra resides inside it. To see that unsubstantial cobra, one must shatter this anthill. But one is afraid to shatter it. This fear of shattering is due to *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion)—the belief that a true self resides within. This Vammika Sutta is an extremely deep sutta. We have merely touched upon it superficially, just enough for someone to contemplate and bring out its meaning further. Now, the deity said to take a tool and shatter it. But when one has shattered it and looks, there remains an Arahant, who, having been freed from the five aggregates of grasping (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*) and all other things, is worthy of the world's offerings. Devotees, "Arahant" means one who is worthy of receiving everything. But the wonder of it is, one becomes worthy of receiving everything only when one has abandoned everything! That indeed is the state we find in this Dhamma.

Therefore, without whitewashing this Dhamma, we have presented within an hour today a tiny fraction of that profoundly deep Dhamma, rarely revealed by Buddhas, through which one can enter a practical path of tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*), realize the path-fruits, and bring an end to this suffering of *saṃsāra*. Taking cue from these signs and pointers, you devotees must experience this practically, *paccattaṃ veditabbaṃ*—to be directly experienced by yourselves. Thus, by the virtue (*sīla*) observed today—virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*) are the core of the Dhamma. If you practiced any meditation with the support of that virtue, and if you can in any way take the matters expressed to that meditating mind as aids to *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) and aids to wisdom, you must make use of them. Trying to attain the liberation from *Dukkha* (Suffering) that everyone hopes for by applying a temporary plaster in some other way will not work. The liberation from the suffering of *saṃsāra* is achieved only in the manner shown by the Buddha.

Therefore, I wish that this sermon may decisively serve as a supportive condition for attaining that liberation from *saṃsāra* through the stages of path and fruit—namely Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship! Furthermore, may all beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akanīṭha heaven rejoice in this merit of sharing and listening to the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through whichever of the three forms of Awakening they aspire to!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #166

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.20)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Dunniggahassa lahuno,

yatthakāmanipātino;

Cittassa damatho sādhu,

cittaṃ dantaṃ sukhāvahaṃ."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 35 (Citta Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The lesson taught and declared to the world by the Buddha, the supreme Teacher of the three worlds, is the taming of the mind. The Blessed One declared that this entire world is led by the mind, and that everyone is subject to the control of the mind. To the Buddha's divine eye, it was visible that the world, burdened with defilements and inclined toward defilements, is being dragged by this mind into the terrifying abyss of *saṃsāra*, the ocean of *saṃsāra*, filled with the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of the planes of misery. Therefore, as the only way, the unfailing path to escape from this *Dukkha* (Suffering), the Blessed One taught the method of taming the mind. Today, we have chosen as our theme a Dhamma stanza containing this very lesson of taming the mind. It is a stanza from the Citta Vagga of the Dhammapada. The background story related to this stanza unfolds as follows:

While the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī, a group of about sixty monks obtained meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from the Buddha to practice until they attained Arahantship. Having obtained these meditation subjects, before the rainy season retreat (*vassa*), they set out to find a suitable place. Passing through villages and market towns, they eventually arrived at a village named Māti, also known as Mātigāma. While they were going for alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*) in that village, a very

faithful female lay devotee (*upāsikā*) named Mātika Mātā (mother of Mātika), who was the mother of the village headman named Mātika, invited these monks to her house. She offered them alms and other requisites with great respect and asked them, "Venerable Sirs, where are you traveling to?" The monks replied, "We are traveling in search of a suitable place." The lay devotee understood these words, in the usage of that time, to mean that they were monks seeking a suitable place to spend the rainy season retreat. Having understood this, she invited them, saying, "Venerable Sirs, please reside at this place for these three months. This will give us an opportunity to observe the Triple Refuge and the Five Precepts, as well as the Eight Precepts on Uposatha days." The monks accepted her invitation. This lay devotee then prepared lodgings (*senāsana*) for the monks to reside in.

While the monks were meditating in this place in this manner, before many days had passed, they gathered together and made an agreement: "We have received these meditation subjects directly from the living Buddha. For ordinary worldly people, the four planes of misery (*apāya*) are like their own home. Since we have not yet freed ourselves from that state, it is not proper for us to remain gathered together as a group like this. We must strive individually, with great effort and diligence, meditating according to our meditation subjects, and attain Arahantship." Thus they agreed. They resolved: "Let us practice our meditation subjects separately, without even two of us standing or sitting in the same place. Except for the times of going for alms and attending to the Elder of the Sangha, let us spend all other times meditating. If any monk falls ill or experiences discomfort, in such an emergency, let him strike the wooden gong (*gaṇḍī*) in the monastery to signal the others." After making this agreement, these monks practiced meditation with great dedication.

Meanwhile, one evening, the lay devotee Mātika Mātā came to the monastery with her servants, bringing some medicinal beverages (*gilanpasa*). Seeing no monks around, she asked someone nearby, "Why are there no monks to be seen?" The person, knowing that the monks had made an agreement to stay apart, replied, "They must be staying separately in their respective places." When she asked, "How can we call them?" he said, "If you strike this wooden gong, they will come." When the gong was struck, the monks arrived separately from their respective places. The lay devotee thought that this separation might be due to anger, some dispute, or discord, and asked the monks, "Venerable Sirs, has there been any dispute among you?"

The monks replied, "There is no dispute. Why do you ask so?" She said, "When you come to my house for alms, you all walk together, but on this occasion, why did you come separately without even two of us walking on the same path?" The monks answered, "We are fulfilling our monastic duties (*samaṇa-dhamma*)." She asked, "What is this fulfilling of monastic duties?" The monks then explained, "Fulfilling monastic duties is like this: we practice the meditation on the repulsiveness of the thirty-two parts of the body. We contemplate the impermanence (*anicca*) of this body. We practice meditation in this manner."

Since she knew nothing about it, the mother asked, "Can we also practice this meditation? Or is this something reserved only for monks?" The monks replied, "Although it is called monastic duties, this Dhamma is something that everyone can practice, without any distinction between lay and ordained." Then she said, "In that case, please teach me this meditation." The monks instructed her on how to meditate. The lay devotee Mātika Mātā went back to her home and started meditating. Before long, even before those monks, she attained the fruit of Non-returning (*Anāgāmi-phala*), along with the five supernormal powers (*pañca-abhiññā*) and the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*). Having attained these, arising from the meditative attainment of the fruit of Non-returning (*anāgāmi-phala-samāpatti*), she examined with her divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) when the monks had attained these achievements. When she looked, she saw that all these monks were still in the state of worldlings (*puthujjana*), and not a single one of them had attained any absorption (*jhāna*) or insight (*vipassanā*). They were living like ordinary people, possessed of defilements such as lust, hatred, and delusion.

Next, she directed her divine eye to see whether these monks possessed the supporting conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*) and potential to attain Arahantship. Upon looking, she saw that they did. However, when she looked for the reason why they had not succeeded, she saw that it was because these monks did not receive other suitable conditions, such as suitable food (*āhāra-sappāya*). With the intention of providing these, this great lay devotee prepared suitable food in her house—meaning food conducive to meditation—invited the monks, and offered it to them to consume as they wished. Since the monks had certain physical needs corresponding to their ailments, by taking food and drinks according to those needs, their physical ailments were dispelled, and their minds became tranquil. Generating concentration (*samādhī*) with those tranquil minds, and then practicing insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), all of them attained Arahantship before the three months of the rainy retreat had passed. Having reached the noble fruit of Arahantship, the monks reflected, "Mātika Mātā has been of great help to us." Afterwards, these monks went to visit the Buddha to report this matter. When they arrived, the Buddha, as was his custom, inquired from the monks about how they had spent the rainy retreat. In response, these monks declared, "We were provided with great comfort because our lay devotee Mātika Mātā prepared suitable food and other requisites for us. Because of those, we were able to realize the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) as we had hoped."

Another monk was listening to this. He thought, "I too must go there." Perhaps he was a monk who expected greater comforts. Thinking thus, he obtained a meditation subject from the Buddha and departed for the village of Mātika. On the way, the monk reflected, "I have heard that this great lay devotee Mātika Mātā has the ability to read the minds of others. Right now, because of the fatigue of the journey, it is somewhat difficult for me to sweep this lodging. Therefore, it would be good if she sent someone to sweep it." Sensing his thought, the lay devotee sent someone to clean the lodging. Next, he thought, "Now it would be good if she sent me a beverage sweetened with jaggery." Sensing that thought as well, the great lay devotee sent him such a beverage.

The following morning, early in the day, he thought, "It would be good if she sent me some good rice gruel along with some delicious food." The great lay devotee sent that too. Next, he thought, "It would be good if she sent some sweets." The lay devotee sent that as well. Then he thought, "It would be great if she would prepare a fine midday meal and bring the alms-food herself so that I could see this lay devotee." The lay devotee saw that thought too with her divine eye. Having the knowledge of reading others' minds, she knew this and arrived preparing the midday alms-food accordingly. Having arrived, she offered the alms-food. When the monk finished his meal, he asked the great lay devotee, "Are you Mātika Mātā?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." Then he asked, "I have heard that you have the power to read other people's minds. Is that true?" The great lay devotee, being very humble, asked, "Why do you ask so?" He replied, "Because you acted according to everything I thought."

The great lay devotee replied in this manner: "There are many monks who know the minds of others." She did not say that she herself knew it. Then the monk said, "I am not asking about others, but about you." At that moment, the lay devotee kindly but with a touch of irony remarked, "Those who do not know the minds of others are the ones who act in this way." At this, the monk was struck with great spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*). He realized his own shortcomings and thought, "Now, a person who is in the state of a worldling (*puthujjana*) thinks both wholesome and unwholesome thoughts. If I think of something improper, this lay devotee will know it, and like catching a thief, I will be disgraced." Then he thought, "I must leave this place." Thinking thus, he departed to see the Buddha.

The Buddha asked him, "Monk, why did you return from that place?" He explained the matter: "I cannot stay there. That great lay devotee possesses such a power. I thought that if I were to think of something improper, she would know it and I would fall into remorse." The Buddha then declared, "No, monk, you must go back to that very place. That is the very place that is suitable (*sappāya*) for you." The monk said he could not possibly go back. The Buddha then said, "In that case, monk, do just one thing: guard your own mind. It is difficult to guard the mind, but even with difficulty, guard your mind. Then your purpose in going will be successful." It was on that occasion that the Buddha uttered the stanza we took as our theme:

Dunniggahassa lahuno, yatthakāmanipātino;

Cittaṃ dantaṃ sukhāvahaṃ.

"Dunniggahassa lahuno..." "Dunniggahassa" means difficult to restrain or subdue. "Lahuno" means having the nature of arising and vanishing rapidly. "Yatthakāmanipātino" means alighting on whatever objects it pleases. Taming such a mind is good. A tamed mind brings happiness (*cittaṃ dantaṃ sukhāvahaṃ*). This is the meaning expressed by this short Dhamma stanza. He declared: "It is good to tame the mind, which is difficult to restrain or subdue, which arises and vanishes rapidly, and which alights on whatever objects it pleases. A mind thus tamed brings happiness."

Having learned this Dhamma stanza, that monk returned to that very place. Having returned, he carried on with his meditation as before. At the same time, the great lay devotee also used her divine eye and her own ability to look into his needs and supported the monk. As a result of this, that monk finally attained the noble fruit of Arahantship. Thus, this story is highly exemplary for us. Especially when we think about this stanza, nowadays, both laymen and laywomen often discourage themselves when it comes to meditation. They think, "This is something we cannot do. This belongs only to the monks. We cannot do it."

But the character of Mātika Mātā is highly exemplary. We see that while she was supporting sixty monks, Mātika Mātā possessed such mental strength that she attained the state of Non-returning and the supernormal powers. Therefore, everyone, especially the lay devotees, should think that they too can do it. Thus, they must generate the perception of capability: "If that mother practiced meditation subjects, we too can achieve something." On the other hand, the character of Mātika Mātā is highly exemplary. Just as she supported the monks materially and spiritually, she also set a great example by penetrating the paths and fruits (*magga-phala-paṭivedha*). Accordingly, the example and the support that the monks received from the lay side helped them in their realization of the paths and fruits. Moreover, Mātika Mātā, very humbly and kindly, taught a good lesson to the monk who was thinking of various unusual things. This is highly exemplary. Just like a mother caring for her son, Mātika Mātā guided those monks to self-discipline and later guided the newly arrived monk as well. In this way, we can draw many examples from this story.

Next, let us look at the stanza. We must contemplate this matter declared by the Buddha regarding the nature of the mind. This is something everyone can experience. Often, when someone begins to think with defilements, more and more streams of thoughts flow accordingly. There is such a nature.

Furthermore, it is very difficult to subdue these thoughts. This means there is a nature in this mind that is difficult to restrain or subdue. Yet, even such a mind must be subdued. One must make an effort, an endeavor. You devotees know that Right Effort (*samma-ppadhāna* / *samma-vāyāma*) is a fourfold endeavor, or right energy and striving, to prevent unarisen unwholesome states, to abandon arisen unwholesome states, to arouse unarisen wholesome states, and to maintain arisen wholesome states, which is cultivated to tame the mind in this way. Thus, with this energy, one must restrain the mind. Ordinary worldly people only know about restraining others, but this is about restraining one's own mind. The Buddha has shown how to restrain the mind that goes towards the side of defilements. That is, the way to subdue defilements. The Buddha has expounded five methods in the Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya. These are five wonderfully practical methods. The similes used to describe them are themselves sufficient, if grasped and retained in the mind correctly, to tame one's mind.

First, the Buddha indicates that if an unwholesome mind connected with the defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion arises in someone—if evil unwholesome thoughts (*pāpaka akusala vitakka*) arise—what should that person do first? In its place, he should direct

his attention to a wholesome object. Let's say a thought of hatred arises; instead, he intentionally arouses a mind of loving-kindness (*mettā*). By intentionally maintaining that mind of loving-kindness, the stream of unwholesome thoughts is broken, its power decreases, and its strength is weakened. The Buddha points to this method as the first method.

To understand this method briefly, the Buddha provides a simile. How does a skilled carpenter or his apprentice remove a peg when it is stuck? Just as a blunt peg is stuck in a piece of wood and cannot be easily removed, when a defiled object falls into the rough mind and gets stuck there, one takes a wholesome object like loving-kindness and knocks the other one out with it. Here, the first method is shown through this carpenter simile. Just as a carpenter drives out a coarse peg with a fine peg, one makes an effort to drive out an unwholesome thought with a wholesome thought. However, the Buddha states that sometimes this method may not work. The unwholesome thought might be extremely powerful. The Buddha acknowledges that such minds exist. What is being explained here is that it is difficult to tame a mind that has wandered with defilements for a long time in this *saṃsāra*. "Dunniggahassa" means that there is a nature in the mind that must be restrained with difficulty, with great effort, and subdued with difficulty.

If that is not sufficient, the Buddha gives a second method. What is the second method? One contemplates the danger/disadvantage (*ādīnava*) of the unwholesome thoughts that arise. "Such an unwholesome thought is flowing into my mind. These are unwholesome thoughts connected with greed, hatred, and delusion. They have dangerous consequences. They have a nature that defiles the mind." Thus, one contemplates their disadvantage. One develops a sense of shame and fear toward them. *Hiri* and *ottappa* mean shame and fear regarding unwholesome deeds; *hiri* is shame, and *ottappa* is fear. One contemplates their disadvantage. The Buddha has illustrated this too with a very simple simile that we can easily keep in mind. What is that simile? "Just as, monks, if a youth or a maiden fond of ornaments were to have the carcass of a snake, or a dog, or a human hung around their neck, they would be filled with loathing and fear, and would strive to get rid of it." Similarly, the Buddha taught us to arouse a sense of disgust and fear toward that unwholesome thought. This is the second method. When contemplating the danger of that unwholesome state, if one generates a feeling as if carrying the carcass of a dog or a snake, it is easy to abandon the unwholesome thought. The Buddha states that by contemplating the danger of evil unwholesome states and arousing disgust in the mind, the flowing stream of unwholesome thoughts is likely to be weakened to some extent. Sometimes, one can be completely freed from it. However, if it is a very grave one—if the unwholesome thought is extremely heavy—it might still persist despite this.

The Buddha then presents a third method. The mind goes to those unwholesome thoughts and objects because of recollection and contemplation. If one recollects or contemplates something, it arises again and again. This is an everyday fact. Since this is something unwanted happening to the mind, what is advised is non-recollection and non-attention (*amanasikāra*). Non-recollection and non-attention. When said generally, this may not be immediately understood. Therefore, the Buddha gives an excellent simile

to clarify this matter. That is: when an unwanted sight comes before you, what you do is either close your eyes or look away. Just like closing the eyes or looking away, so is this non-recollection and non-attention. One deliberately tries to divert the mind from that object. This is the third point. By this means too, some people may succeed in discarding those unwholesome thoughts. But the Buddha states that sometimes even this effort may fail. Then, he provides the fourth method.

What is the fourth method? Briefly, in terms of Dhamma, it is described as directing an inquiring eye toward the construction of that thought—that is, the way those thoughts are put together. "What kind of thought is this? How did it come? How is it structured?" It is like looking closely at a diagram before you. Each of these is a certain strategy. This must be done as a strategy to break the flowing stream of thoughts. Thus, this fourth method is to analyze the thoughts that arise. One examines it and makes an effort to suppress it gradually. One sees its structure, sees the speed of its flow, and then makes an effort to reduce its intensity. This can be understood much better through the simile given for it.

What is the simile? Imagine a man walking rapidly. Perhaps without even realizing it, he is walking fast. While walking fast, suddenly he thinks, "Why am I walking so fast? There is no reason to walk fast. Wouldn't it be better if I walked a bit slower?" Following that thought, he walks slowly. While walking slowly, he thinks, "Why am I walking slowly? Wouldn't it be better if I stood still?" So he stands still. Having stood still, he thinks, "Why am I standing here? Can't I sit down?" So he sits down. Having sat down, he then thinks, "Why am I sitting here? Wouldn't it be better if I lay down?" So he lies down. That is the Buddha's simile. The Buddha gives most wonderful similes.

What does this indicate? Just as a person gradually abandons coarse postures—meaning walking, standing, sitting—and shifts to subtler postures, in the same way, looking at the thought that comes to one's mind, looking at the structure of one's thought and the speed of its flow, one should gradually reduce that speed. This is the Buddha's advice. Thus, through this simile, we can understand that by looking at one's mind with an inquiring eye, one can suppress the flowing stream of thoughts. By suppressing it in this way, one gradually steers the unwholesome side toward the wholesome side. This is the fourth method. Having presented the fourth method, the Buddha then states, "Sometimes even the fourth method may fail. It might not succeed."

Then he presents the fifth method. This fifth method is extremely powerful. That is to say, what needs to be done to suppress that unwholesome thought—this is where the word "subdue" or "restrain" (*niggaha*) is most accurately applied. One must subdue the unwholesome thought by means of a wholesome thought. Relying on a wholesome thought, one beats down, crushes, and obliterates that unwholesome thought with the wholesome thought. It is something like that. The simile the Buddha uses for this is a highly powerful one: "Just as, monks, a strong man might seize a weaker man by the head or shoulders and hold him down, crush him, and beat him down," similarly, taking the wholesome thought as the strong man and the unwholesome thought as the weak man, one beats down and crushes the unwholesome thought with the wholesome

thought, driving it away. In this way, the Buddha showed five methods that must be applied with difficulty to restrain the mind, knowing that this mind cannot be easily controlled.

Each of these is highly practical. These five methods are such that anyone can experience them and experiment with them. The five similes we mentioned are: first, a carpenter or his apprentice driving out a coarse peg with a fine peg. Next, a man or a woman fond of ornaments who, when someone tries to hang a carcass such as that of a dog or a snake around their neck, feels disgust and shame, and gets rid of it; this is contemplating the danger. Then, just as a person who does not want to see a light coming before them might look away or close their eyes, one tries to practice non-attention toward that unwholesome object. If even that fails, one tries to restrain that thought and gradually weaken the stream of thoughts, like the walking man standing still, the standing man sitting down, and the sitting man lying down. Finally, the last simile is like a strong man holding a weak man by the neck or torso and beating and crushing him; driving out the unwholesome thought by means of a wholesome thought.

In this manner, the Buddha shows these five methods as supporting techniques for a monk who is striving to concentrate his mind. Having shown them, the Buddha declares that if any person, any monk, tames his mind by applying these five methods, each in its proper time, then that monk is one who has gained mastery over his thoughts. This means he does not think thoughts he does not want to think, and he can think the thoughts he wants to think. Now, often, even if one does not wish it, there is a nature in the mind where unwholesome thoughts come flowing in. But for a person who has tamed the mind in this way, if he does not want a thought, he can dismiss it very quickly. He can think only the thoughts he wishes to think, the wholesome thoughts.

These are the five methods shown by the Buddha that can be cultivated. This is highly helpful in tranquility meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*). In insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), the Buddha has shown various ways to control these thoughts in an even subtler manner. Especially there, what is used as support is the factor of attention/contemplation (*manasikāra*). Generally, there is a capacity within the mind to understand the things that arise in it. This can be understood through wisdom and discernment. In that way, even in insight meditation—say, for someone who has sat down for mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*)—while doing so, whether it is a form (*rūpa*) one has seen, or a sound, an odor, a taste, a touch, which come through the five external senses, or a thought arising from the mind—what is used as support to nip every object in the bud at the very moment it arises? It is attention/contemplation (*manasikāra*).

If it is a form (*rūpa*), one does not grasp its sign (*nimitta*). One does not go on and on following its beautiful or ugly nature, or the feelings aroused by it, in terms of perception (*saññā*). One briefly notes, "Form, form." One briefly notes, "Sound, sound." Stopping this running nature of the mind in this gradual manner is indeed Nibbāna. When it is said, "Taming the mind is good, a tamed mind brings happiness," taming the mind means stopping the running mind. A term used for the Arahant is *ṭhitacitta*—the stilled

mind, the mind that has reached stability. The ability to stop the mind. Attaining the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship means gaining the power to stop this running mind at those respective levels. Therefore, what supports this is attention/contemplation (*manasikāra*).

Generally, we know that there is something called the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). We know that the aggregate of form (*rūpakkhandha*) is a heap of form. Next, a heap of feeling (*vedanā*) arises in association with it. Then, a heap of perceptions (*saññā*), which are recognitions, arises. Assisted by that heap of feeling, we employ the active energy of the mind, the active energy of the body, and the active energy of speech regarding things we like and dislike, thereby accumulating various kamma. We accumulate preparations/volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*)—a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Next, assisted by this heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), these seeds of kamma accumulated through Preparations are deposited in this mind of ours called consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These are what we have been traveling with for so long in this *saṃsāra*. Therefore, gradually dismantling this accumulated pile of five aggregates—dispersing instead of accumulating—is the path declared by the Buddha in this path of Dhamma.

Due to improper attention, that is, *ayoniso manasikāra* (unwise attention), moment by moment, kamma continues to accumulate, and as a result of the maturation of these accumulated kammas in the mind, we are forced to wander in this *saṃsāra* for an endless period of time. *Ayoniso manasikāra* means that we do not look at the place where these thoughts arise; instead, we look far away. Why does a deer run after a mirage? It runs thinking that the object far away is water. The deer has no awareness that "this appears as water because of these factors: the weakness of my eyes, the heat, or the rising vapor during this hot hour." It only contemplates based on what is far away, applies attention to it, and runs thinking, "I must go there."

Instead, the Buddha highlights *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). We must look at the very place where these arise, where these thoughts and reflections originate. By applying the eye of wisdom, applying attention, and applying radical attention / wise attention to look at it, as ignorance (*avijjā*) is gradually discarded and greed, hatred, and delusion are removed, vision becomes clear. One can understand how they arise. It is in association with contact (*phassa*), with sensory impingements, that a multitude of these thoughts are generated moment by moment. By acting according to those thoughts, acting through body and speech, we go on in *saṃsāra* accumulating kamma for an extremely long time. At some point, such an understanding arises. Thus, radical attention / wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means turning toward the place where defilements or thoughts arise, in order to know it. Through this method of attention, a person eventually realizes that this aggregate of form (*rūpakkhandha*) consists of these bodily cages that we think of as beautiful, ugly, or strong, along with the array of material goods we possess and consume. All of these are constructed from the four great elements (*mahābhūta*): earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). Not a single one of these great elements can be identified separately. These four elements join together to

project and manifest this thing called form (*rūpa*). That is what is called attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*). This body and external things are constructed in association with, and based on, these four elements that we think of as earth, water, wind, and fire; this bodily cage is built upon them. When a correct understanding of this form arises, a capacity is gained to maintain equanimity (*upekkhā*) regarding the feelings (*vedanā*) that arise because of that form.

For a person who has developed equanimity in that way, the accumulation of preparations/volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*)—specifically the energy that accumulates kamma in terms of "I" and "mine" based on the recognitions arising through feelings (*vedanā*)—begins to diminish. As this happens, if one correctly understands the existence of this mind, which is this illusory consciousness (*viññāṇa*), as an illusion, as a deception, such a person does not hold on even to this mind, thinking, "This is my mind." It is in this way that disenchantment (*nibbidā*) toward the five aggregates arises. Then, the Buddha points out that escaping from the five aggregates, escaping from this *saṃsāra*, is not something that can be done by traveling. The Buddha made a most wonderful declaration, unlike any other teacher: "Monks, within this very fathom-long body, endowed with perception and mind, I declare the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world."

That is to say, this world is indeed *Dukkha* (Suffering). Therefore, *Dukkha* (Suffering), preparations/volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and cessation—all of these exist within this very fathom-long body, endowed with senses, perception, and mind. Furthermore, this world continues to exist through the arising of these unwholesome defilements: craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). When these are eradicated—when greed, hatred, and delusion are eradicated, or when ignorance is eradicated—there is this calming. The calming of preparations/volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*) is Nibbāna. What does it mean to have stopped the mind? It means the momentum of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) has been completely stopped; Preparations have been stilled.

Now we can understand: during the rainy season, water falls drop by drop, becomes a canal, a stream, and flows towards the ocean. This stream of thoughts is just like that. Through the specific energy generated in these thoughts, just as a river flows toward the ocean according to its slope, these thoughts lead us to *saṃsāra*. There is a nature that drags us toward the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *saṃsāra*. This thought-energy is what is called preparations/volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), which arises because of ignorance. Therefore, what helps to still all of this is separating from ignorance and arousing the eye of wisdom within understanding. The primary thing to open this up is attention/contemplation (*manasikāra*). It is directing the eye of wisdom to look at the reality of all these things.

Through this, the speed of the stream of thoughts flowing into the mind and the speed of the defilements are gradually suppressed, and at some point, the mind stops. The mind stops because it no longer receives the things that help it to move. This is exactly like the extinguishing of a fire. Nibbāna is a state like the extinguishing of a fire. Or rather, it is the stilling of the momentum of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). It is a peaceful bliss of that

nature. What we call the supreme peace of Nibbāna is a peaceful state that can be experienced right within this mind, a state where one can let go of everything.

Therefore, one should contemplate in that manner. These characteristics declared by the Buddha—"Dunniggahassa lahuno, yatthakāmanipātino"—are things that can be experienced in one's own life. That this mind is difficult to restrain is an obvious fact for everyone, based on the matters that present themselves daily. Thus, the Buddha does not advise us to give up. He shows the first method, and if that does not work, he shows the second method. If that does not work, he shows a series of methods as third, fourth, and fifth. The Buddha indicates that in the final, fifth method, one must restrain those defilements with such great effort, just as a strong man holds down and crushes a weak man.

In that way, that is the method of tranquility (*samatha*). Next, if one makes it one's ultimate goal to apply knowledge and wisdom to realize their true nature through insight (*vipassanā*), one will not be overcome by the momentum of defilements. Instead, one analyzes what is before oneself and looks at it closely. One develops one's eye of wisdom. That is what is meant by the comprehension of preparations/volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). One understands the true nature of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) with the eye of insight.

In that manner, the Buddha points out the path to taming the mind gradually. The primary requirement for this is virtue (*sīla*), which means taming the body and speech. Establishing oneself in virtue (*sīla*) is a support to calm the mind. Now, on this occasion, you have undertaken the eight precepts with livelihood as the eighth (*ājīv-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*) as well as the eight precepts of the Uposatha. What is the purpose of this? This virtue (*sīla*) is the foundation for meditation. The Buddha states that someone who performs a heavy piece of work does so standing on solid ground. One cannot do it standing in the mud. When lifting a heavy weight, like lifting a log or a rock, one must stand on a strong rock or firm ground. If one does it from the mud, one will sink in along with the weight. That is why virtue (*sīla*) is shown as the foundation.

In this Buddha-sasana, virtue (*sīla*) is shown as the establishment, the foundation. Virtue means the taming of body and speech. For this too, one must use the mind. Otherwise, it will not tame itself automatically. Thus, using the mind and applying the strength of determination, one tames body and speech in that manner. When they are tamed to some level, great joy arises in the mind. Remorse is removed. This is not for building up pride thinking "I am virtuous," but through this, a great seclusion (*viveka*) arises in the mind. Within that seclusion, one next makes an effort to calm the mind—concentration (*samādhī*). In trying to gain that concentration, it is then that unwholesome states come crashing in, unexpectedly. It is for such situations that the Buddha has shown the methods in the similes we discussed earlier.

In that way, gradually, without giving up, one must unify the mind through this effort. Unification of the mind is called concentration (*samādhī*). The mind does not remain on one object; it is constantly scattered in association with greed, hatred, delusion, and

various other defilements. By keeping the mind anchored on a single wholesome object—such as the object of repulsiveness (*asubha*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), unattractiveness, recollection of death (*maraṇasati*), and so forth—the mind becomes concentrated. Once it is concentrated, one can directly experience the power of the mind. A concentrated person has a clear understanding of how small a fraction of the mind's power we usually employ in life. It is at such a moment that the full power of the mind can be experienced all at once.

Next, that person directs this wisdom, the eye of discernment, and directs attention, and through this attained concentration, unification, and oneness, investigates the true nature of these phenomena. The true nature of the aggregate of form (*rūpakkhandha*) is that it is something brought about by these four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Feeling (*vedanā*) is something that arises because of contact (*phassa*). Perception (*saññā*) is also something that arises because of contact (*phassa*). Preparations/volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), which are these flowing thoughts, also arise because of contact (*phassa*). Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) refers to the group of mental factors consisting of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*), together with the physical group of earth, water, fire, and air elements; it is based on these very Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) phenomena that this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists. Because of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) exists; because of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists. He understands that this mind has such an illusory nature. In this way, gradually, by understanding the true nature of these five aggregates directly through experience, one becomes able to let go of the five aggregates. Not by any other means. Therefore, the path to all of this is the path of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*) declared by the Buddha. Looked at from another perspective, it is this Noble Eightfold Path.

Accordingly, you devotees must strive to make your ongoing meditation successful. Therefore, make an aspiration: "May the virtue practiced today, the meditation performed, and this sermon heard, serve as supporting conditions for you devotees to realize the paths and fruits, and thereby put an end to the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *saṃsāra* such as birth (*jāti*), aging/decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness, and to attain the supreme bliss of the deathless Nibbāna!" Aspire further: "If there are any beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who wish to rejoice in the merits of this preaching of the Dhamma and hearing of the Dhamma, may they, by rejoicing, realize the supreme deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi!" Aspiring thus, recite these stanzas.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #167

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.108)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Yathā daṇḍena gopālo,

gāvo pāleti gocaraṃ,

Evaṃ jarā ca maccū ca,

āyuṃ pājenti pāṇinaṃ."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 135 (Daṇḍa Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Poson Full Moon Poya day is a day on which we pay tribute on a grand scale to the heritage of the Buddha Sāsana that we received from the great Arahant Mahinda. Today is a day when temples across this entire island, starting from the summit of Mihintale mountain, are illuminated by devotees clad in pure white garments of virtue. This mobilization for the sake of practice (*patipatti*) is extremely valuable. Understanding the ultimate purpose within this practice is even more valuable. The background story that led to the preaching of the verse we have chosen as our theme today reminds us of the importance of this second point.

On a certain Full Moon Poya day, while the Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, was residing at the Pubbārāma monastery, the group of laywomen observing the precepts under the chief lay disciple Visākhā gathered at the monastery. Visākhā, the great lay benefactress, approached the elderly laywomen in that group and asked, "Mothers, why are you observing the eight Uposatha precepts on this Poya day?"

They replied, "We are observing these precepts to be born in the heavenly worlds"—with the expectation of rebirth in heaven. Next, she asked the middle-aged laywomen. They replied, "We observe the eight Uposatha precepts to escape living with co-wives (*sapatnī vāsa*)." Devotees, in India at that time, polygamy was prevalent. When a husband took

several wives, it caused great distress, jealousy, and hatred among the wives. Therefore, some of them made this aspiration.

"We observe these eight Uposatha precepts on this Poya day with the aspiration to escape living with co-wives, which arises from polygamy." Next, she asked the young women, "What is your purpose in this? What do you hope to gain?" Their reply was, "To obtain a son from our very first pregnancy." Next, she asked the young girls—not exactly princesses, but young girls: "Why are you observing these precepts?" They replied, "With the aspiration that we may get married while we are still young."

Bringing these stories along with her, Visākhā took this entire group to the Buddha, and said, "Venerable Sir, these are the kinds of answers I received." Then the Buddha said, "Visākhā, such is the way of worldlings. They only spin around in this wheel of saṃsāra; no one wishes to leap out of it." He then uttered this verse we have chosen as our theme, which conveys the idea that just as a cowherd with a staff in hand drives the cows, so do decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) drive the lifespan of living beings toward death.

Yathā gopālo gāvo pāleti gocaraṃ,

evaṃ jarā ca maccū ca āyuṃ pājenti pāṇinaṃ.

"Just as a cowherd drives the cows to the pasture with a staff, even so do decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) drive the lifespan of beings towards the mouth of death." That is the meaning.

From this story, we can see that the external mobilization of Visākhā's group of five hundred laywomen was highly commendable. However, their internal alignment was apparently not so commendable. Why? Because they were observing these eight Uposatha precepts based on ordinary, mundane objectives related to this saṃsāra, such as household life and marriage. The value the Buddha placed on these eight Uposatha precepts is mentioned in numerous suttas. On certain occasions, addressing the Sangha, he declared: "Monks, the observance of the Uposatha consisting of eight factors is of great fruit, of great benefit, of great splendor, and of great radiance."

"By observing it in what manner, and with what purpose, does this eightfold Uposatha become of great fruit and great benefit?" The Buddha himself raised this question and then explained: "Here, a noble disciple reflects thus: 'As long as they live, the Arahants abstain from destroying life, laying aside the cudgel and the sword; they are modest, full of pity, and dwell compassionate toward all living beings. Today, for this one day and night, I too shall abstain from destroying life, observing this training rule at the very level the Arahants observe it, thereby following and imitating the Arahants. By this, I keep the Uposatha.' In this manner, the Buddha indicates that observing each training rule at the level of the Arahants is the true purpose."

Although we need not discuss each precept individually, there is something that must be specifically mentioned. Devotees who observe the eight Uposatha precepts know that the third training rule, in particular, is not something meant for ordinary lay life. It is the

abstention from unchastity (*abrahmacariya*), which belongs to the practice of the Arahants. That concerns living the holy life (*brahmacariya*). Likewise, regarding abstaining from untimely food (*vikāla-bhojana*): in lay life, one can eat whenever one is hungry, without distinguishing between night and day. But during the eight Uposatha precepts, one observes the training rule of abstaining from untimely food. Next, dancing, singing, music, watching theatrical shows, and beautifying the body are things belonging to lay life. But on this Poya day, one goes to a temple, abstains from these things, and spends the day in renunciation. Similarly, the matter of high and large beds does not apply at home. At home, there are highly luxurious items. Giving those up, one comes to a temple, dresses in simple attire, and lies down on the floor. What is the meaning of this?

Is it because this causes harm to the world? Is it because it causes harm to society? No. There is a much greater purpose in observing these eight Uposatha precepts. What is the idea behind this? When speaking of wholesome deeds (*kusala*), they are spoken of as *saṃvaṭṭagāmī kusala* (wholesome deeds leading to the continuation of saṃsāra) and *vivaṭṭagāmī kusala* (wholesome deeds leading to the ending of saṃsāra). *Saṃvaṭṭagāmī* means wholesome deeds that cause one to spin around in saṃsāra. When performing meritorious acts, many people pray for heavenly wealth, worldly possessions, and the like. *Vivaṭṭagāmī* means the aspiration: "May this lead to my liberation from this saṃsāra, and to the realization of Nibbāna through Dhamma discussions and meditation! May it be a cause for escaping saṃsāra!" Thus, even giving (*dāna*), if done with a *vivaṭṭagāmī* intention—with the intention of escaping saṃsāra, with the disposition of relinquishment—it is then that it becomes of great fruit and great benefit. It is the same with virtue (*sīla*). This is shown on many occasions. Sīla is also classified as *parāmaṭṭha* (clung to) and *aparāmaṭṭha* (unclung). *Parāmaṭṭha* means virtue grasped through craving (*taṇhā*) and views (*diṭṭhi*). This is described as follows: "By observing this virtue, by practicing this vow, may I become a god! May I attain such a status!" It is true that such a state may be gained. But if that is made the primary goal, then the true value of virtue is lost.

The Buddha, to put it briefly, presented this virtue as an opportunity for the lay devotee to reach the gateway of Nibbāna. This is the value, the standard, that the Buddha set for this virtue. Therefore, we only have the right to measure its value upwards, not downwards. That is, if a devotee starts with the resolution, "I shall observe for this day and night these training rules which the Arahants observe for their entire lives," and elevates its value instead of degrading it, then such a devotee will not stop at observing precepts on the Full Moon Poya, but will also observe them on the New Moon (*amāvaka*) and the eighth-day phases (*aṭṭhamī*). Furthermore, some individuals, in addition to those days, take up other days and observe precepts for eight days a month. In the past, some devotees spent four or even eight days a month at temples with those high aspirations. What is the concept behind this? It is the concept of renunciation (*nekkhamma*).

Thus, within this eightfold Uposatha virtue lies the concept of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). The Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddhist is common to both the layperson and the monk. Whether lay or ordained, the Noble Eightfold Path is the Buddhist's path of practice. The thought (intention) of this Noble Eightfold Path is one of those thoughts—indeed, it is the primary thought (i.e., *nekkhamma-saṅkappa*). However, in daily lay life, there is no opportunity to practice that thought of renunciation. Therefore, on Full Moon days, New Moon days, and other special days, devotees gather at temples and try to observe those training rules through a simple life. The effort made there is where the value lies. That is the value.

For those devotees who are weary of the sufferings and tribulations of lay life, and who wish to ordain, this serves as a rehearsal. Developing the eight Uposatha precepts is a primary step toward fulfilling the aspiration of leaving the household life. Instead, aiming for heavenly pleasures or targeting the resolution of everyday lay problems, such as marriage issues, is a degradation of that high standard. It is an undervaluation. Seeing hundreds, thousands, or hundreds of thousands of lay devotees observing precepts on a Poya day is indeed a sight that gladdens the hearts of us Buddhists. That external mobilization is a very valuable spectacle. We can contemplate it and rejoice. However, if a spiritual alignment does not accompany that external mobilization to the same degree, it cannot be said to be of great fruit and great benefit. It lacks that much value and strength. That is why we said that even though something appears good on the surface, we must not forget its ultimate purpose. We must constantly remind ourselves of the ultimate purpose, the value the Buddha attributed to this. But the answers given to the questions asked by the great laywoman Visākhā show that those laywomen held a degraded view of its value. Fortunately, it does not appear that the Treasurer (Anāthapiṇḍika) asked the laymen. Even so, let us imagine: if a Visākhā were to come forward today and ask these laywomen of various age groups why they are keeping these precepts, what kind of answers would we get? Likewise, if an Anāthapiṇḍika were to come and ask these laymen of various age groups, "Why are you mobilizing by the hundreds and thousands to keep these precepts?" what kind of answers would we get? We are not going to say. Devotees must think and answer this for themselves. However, we have to remind you, in accordance with the word of the Buddha, that this is indeed a special opportunity for the lay devotee when we consider the nature of lay life—how full of suffering and tribulation it is.

A mouse trapped in a mouse trap runs extremely fast around the trap searching for the exit. No matter how much it runs, it cannot find the exit. But when it slows down its speed, the exit may become visible. In the same way, like mice caught in a mouse trap, how restlessly is lay life spent! The expectation of observing these eight Uposatha precepts is to create a pause, a temporary cessation, within that busy life. Within that pause, if the lay devotee resolves on a state of virtue at the level of the Arahants, generates joy by reflecting on that virtue, calms the mind, directs it toward some meditation, and then applies the mind to the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattu-satipaṭṭhāna*), then the exit of the mouse trap can be found. Indeed, the exit from this wheel of saṃsāra, the exit of the mouse trap, is the four foundations of mindfulness. For

one who has fallen into this saṃsāra, no matter how much external mobilization there is, one must find this door by oneself. One must find this door for oneself. The door will not open automatically just because of the strength of external mobilization. One must walk the path and open the gateway of Nibbāna, the gateway to crossing over from saṃsāra. There is such a profound meaning, a depth, within this. That is why we specifically reminded you of this. However, we live in an era where the world quickly forgets the internal purpose, even if the external aspects and the outer shell of everything remain. The primary meaning of keeping the eight Uposatha precepts is to be considered as a transitional phase, a step in the gradual transition or transformation from lay life to the ordained life.

Devotees, you may have seen a caterpillar hanging under a leaf of a tree, eating the leaf, and then one day becoming a beautiful butterfly with lovely wings, flying from flower to flower drinking nectar without bruising the flowers. If one can break free from the coarse bonds of wife and children, shatter those heavy chains, take up the bowl and robes, and become a monk—resembling that beautiful winged butterfly—and fulfill that noble purpose, such is the transformation one should envision. To achieve this, we must keep the Uposatha precepts by elevating this highest value in our minds. During the few hours we spend at a temple, away from our homes, we must bring to mind the conduct of the Arahants, and maintain the thought: "To the best of our ability, we are drawing close to them today." If we do so, gradually observing one Poya, two, three, or four, we will finally realize at some point that those coarse bonds of wife and children, which we thought could never be broken, are actually very easy to break. That is the value of the eight Uposatha precepts.

Indeed, when we reflect on each of these eight Uposatha precepts, it is quite wonderful. It is not at the level of the virtue observed daily in lay life. There is a much nobler meaning, a sublime standard here. It is by presenting that sublime standard that we must practice.

Moreover, the very nature of saṃsāra is the difficulty of escaping this wheel. Wandering in the wheel happens almost automatically. There is an amusement ride called a merry-go-round. Parents take a child to an amusement park and place the child on a wooden horse. Amidst band music resembling the fivefold instrumental music, it spins. The child thinks they are actually traveling on this horse. After about three rounds, it stops, but the child does not want to get off. "Another round, another round!" Such is this saṃsāric life. Amidst the five cords of sensual pleasure, amidst that instrumental music, the merry-go-round spins. What is this round? Birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*). That is the round. That round keeps spinning. No one wants to jump out. "Another round, another round!" That is the concept found in the world. However, if a wise person reflects, "I must escape from this fearful saṃsāra," they can use the pause provided by this Uposatha day to support that, by raising in their mind thoughts related to the concept of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). This is not something to be shown off to the world. It is only by understanding the true nature of one's own life and body through the path of meditation that liberation can be attained.

When speaking of this saṃsāra, it is also worthwhile for us to contemplate the deep meaning of the Buddha's verse. At first glance, it seems to be a very simple verse. What is it? Just as a cowherd with a staff in hand drives the cows to the pasture, so do decay and death drive this lifespan. How does this happen? It is difficult to grasp all at once. This verse has been explained in various ways since ancient times. It appears to us that a great multitude of meanings is contained within each small verse. What are decay (*jarā*) and death (*maraṇa*)? How should we understand them in connection with the cowherd? Here, Death (*maccu*), who is Māra, is the cowherd. Next, what is the staff? It is decay (*jarā*). Māra the cowherd drives this lifespan with the staff of decay. How does he drive it? If we explain this through seven stages, we can understand it as follows:

A child born into this world receives the most delicious and nutritious food in the world. What is it? The most delicious and nutritious food is mother's milk. The child receives mother's milk. Next, the safest place in the world is the mother's lap. The child receives the mother's lap. Can the child remain there forever? Is that milk received forever? Can the child stay in the mother's lap forever? No. When a certain period arrives, the milk that flowed for the child dries up. "Drying up" means decay (*jarā*). Just as the body wastes away, the milk dries up. That is decay. The staff of decay has operated. The child is displaced from the mother's lap.

Next, what does the child do? The child moves on all fours, which is crawling. That helpless child then crawls on all fours. Because the child must be kept occupied with something, they are given some toys and dolls. Crawling among them, the child manage with great difficulty to hold onto a coffee table or a chair and stand up. Ah, as soon as the child stands up, see what happens next! Māra then hands over that staff of decay to both parents and teachers. Handing over canes, rods, and sticks of orange and tamarind branches to both parents and teachers, they drive the little child from there to preschool and then to school. That is what decay does next. One cannot stay with toys forever. Next, the student goes to school. By what means is this student driven next? The staff that decay utilizes next is "examinations." Passing exams, they are pushed forward year after year. Conducting exams, this student is passed along and driven forward. Going thus beyond schools and universities, they now fall as young men and women into this complex society.

What has to be said from this point onward must be said with some caution, as devotees might get upset with us. Let us explain it using the cowherd's story itself. When a cowherd is driving cattle, if some cattle cannot be tamed and go astray, what does he do? He yokes them together in pairs as a team. Yoking them as a team, he beats them and drives them forward. Something similar happens in society. Devotees may understand how that is. While the yoked pairs of cattle are driven forward under beatings, a time comes when they get bruised and grow old. They then take pride in being respected for their gray hair. Now it is middle age. Without one's even knowing it, middle age tips over to the other side. Although called a "grown-up" (adult), one cannot remain grown. Next, without one's knowing it, one decays. The stage where that staff operates directly is old age. In the ordinary world, "decay" (*jarā*) refers to old age.

But the Buddha says that decay occurs even within the mother's womb. After coming out of the mother's womb, from the very beginning we mentioned, the staff of decay operates. This is Māra's work. Finally, old age is reached. To compete with the staff of decay, a staff now comes into one's own hand—a walking stick. But decay cannot be driven away with a walking stick. Finally, when this becomes acute, the time comes to pass away (*kālakriyā*). The time to die arrives. What happens next? This body-cage, which was fed, given drink, bathed, adorned, and carried with so much pride—what happens to it in the end? It goes to the pasture. Going to the cemetery, this body-cage finally becomes prey to the worms inside and to the dogs and crows outside.

That, as far as we understand, is the meaning of that verse. Devotees might understand it in even greater detail. To us, it appears in this manner. It is to escape from this condition that the Buddha showed this eightfold Uposatha virtue. If we do not wish to remain in this wheel of saṃsāra forever, but want to escape from it, we must obtain at least a small pause from those activities and processes connected with lay life, and make a special effort. These things do not come automatically. They are not obtained merely through external mobilization. Spiritual alignment must also come in that manner. Indeed, many consider this present era to be one full of calamities (*kāla-vipatti*). Shocking calamities are heard of occasionally and suddenly. Devotees go to sleep well at night, and when they wake up in the morning, they do not know what has happened—terrible, unimaginable calamities occur as temporal disasters. Amidst these, lay devotees who come to meet us often tell us their grievances: "If we had not made a slight mistake, we too would have ordained like you."

Be that as it may, what we consider as temporal calamities are those floods, droughts, famines, and tsunamis that occur occasionally and circumstantially. However, the Buddha considered decay (*jarā*) and death (*maccu* / *maraṇa*) as the true, perpetual calamities (*kāla-vipatti*). There is a fine Dhamma story that serves as a good illustration of this. One day, King Pasenadi of Kosala came to visit the Buddha. This was a frequent occurrence; the King's visits were common. But when he arrived, the Buddha asked him: "Great King, where are you coming from? What have you been doing?" The King replied: "Venerable Sir, I have been busy with those duties of anointed kings who are intoxicated with power, obsessed with the five cords of sensual pleasure, and who rule having conquered the earth." He probably said this with some pride: "I have not come after doing some ordinary work; I have come to see the Blessed One after engaging in those duties belonging to crowned kings."

Then the Buddha immediately presented a simile: "Great King, what do you think? Suppose a trustworthy messenger were to come to you from the East, and say: 'Great King, Sire, I come from the East. There, a massive mountain as high as the sky, like a dark cloud, is rolling forward, crushing and grinding to powder all living beings in its path. Great King, if there is anything to be done, do it!' Along with that, another messenger comes from the West with the same message. Then another comes from the North, telling the same story of a rolling mountain. And one comes from the South with the exact same message." The Buddha is still describing this. Then the Buddha asks:

"Great King, when such messages arrive, when such a terrible disaster destroying human beings has arisen, and human birth is so rare, what is there to be done, Great King?"

King Pasenadi of Kosala replied: "Venerable Sir, what else is there to do except righteous living (*dhamma-cariya*), harmonious living (*sama-cariya*), doing wholesome deeds (*kusala-kiriya*), and performing meritorious acts (*puñña-kiriya*)?" That is all he said: *dhamma-cariya, sama-cariya, kusala-kiriya, puñña-kiriya*. Harmonious living means abandoning unrighteous living; it is connected with virtue (*sīla*). Doing wholesome and meritorious deeds—there is nothing else to do except this. Then the Buddha declared: "Great King, I declare to you, I announce to you: decay (*jarā*) and death (*maraṇa*) are rolling forward, crushing you. That mountain simile was given to represent decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*). Decay and death are rolling forward, crushing you. What is there to be done, Great King?"

Then the King replied: "Venerable Sir, when decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) are rolling forward, there is nothing I can do. When other wars come, crowned kings have their fourfold armies of elephants, cavalry, chariots, and infantry—I am referring to those. Venerable Sir, in the face of decay and death, elephant warfare is of no use. Elephant warfare is futile, cavalry warfare is futile, chariot warfare is futile, and infantry warfare is futile to save me from decay and death. Furthermore, kings have very clever ministers, ministers skilled in conspiracy. They can spy on enemy kings, act in a divisive manner, and employ strategies to conquer those lands. But even through those strategies, we cannot conquer decay and death. We cannot conquer decay and death through conspiracy. Moreover, kings have great treasures hoarded in the earth, vast amounts of wealth. When enemy kings become powerful and we are helpless, we sometimes escape by paying tributes, which is a wealth-war. But we cannot escape by paying tributes to decay and death." King Kosala speaks in this manner. The Buddha also approves: "So it is, Great King. When decay and death are rolling forward, there is no shelter in any of those things." King Kosala concludes with the very same point: "The only shelter in the face of decay and death is righteous living (*dhamma-cariya*), harmonious living (*sama-cariya*), doing wholesome deeds (*kusala-kiriya*), and performing meritorious acts (*puñña-kiriya*). There is no other shelter." From this, we can see that what we consider as calamities are those terrible disasters that suddenly appear in black letters in the newspapers. Ignorance (*avijjā*) considers those as calamities. When a few days pass after such an event, people forget it. That is the very nature of ignorance.

But the Buddha speaks of these eternal laws of nature (*sanātana dharmatā*) as the true calamities. For every living being born in this saṃsāra, from the moment of birth, Māra operates the staff of decay. From that moment, he drives them. Driving them from stage to stage, he brings them to the final place—the pasture (cemetery). Under this condition, it is only after a Buddha is born that the opportunity to escape from this saṃsāra arises. Therefore, we must make every effort to derive the maximum benefit from it. Devotees who speak of calamities, if you reflect deeply, will see that this is not like the temporal calamities we suddenly hear of through the media. Decay and death, which go hand in hand with this body eternally, are the true calamities. None of those aforementioned

forces can fight against this. It cannot be done through armies, conspiracies, or wealth. What must be done is righteous living and harmonious living. To look at it even more deeply, the ultimate result of this must be realized through meditation. We must understand the true nature of this life, the true nature of the five aggregates (*pañca-skandha*). The Buddha, on a certain occasion, describes the reason for our wandering in this saṃsāra for so long in just two words:

"Monks, you and I have wandered and run through this long saṃsāra. How have we wandered? Because of the hindrance of ignorance (*avijjā-nīvaraṇa*) and the fetter of craving (*taṇhā-saṃyojana*)." The hindrance of ignorance covers the true nature of the mind. Next is the fetter of craving. Craving is the bond, the shackle. Indeed, if we look at it in another way, we can say that for all of us in saṃsāra, our parents are ignorance and craving. It is said in one place: *taṇhā janeti purisaṃ*—"craving gives birth to man." Thus, the parents of the entire saṃsāra are ignorance and craving. They are the parents of all of us. Devotees perform the service of ministering to these parents very well. For many, the ultimate goal is to strengthen ignorance and craving. That is the service of ministering to saṃsāric parents, and it is carried out without any lack. But the more it is done, the more suffering (*dukkha*) increases.

Instead of strengthening ignorance, we must create opportunities to thin it out. We must create opportunities to thin out craving (*taṇhā*). It is precisely for this that the Buddha showed these special occasions, such as the eight Uposatha precepts. It is like living close to the Arahants. In the ancient concept, "Uposatha" meant living close to the gods. In our view, it is living close to the Arahants. What does that mean? It is by living close to those who have realized Nibbāna that one can enter the path of Nibbāna. But now, there is ignorance.

Next, we must also reflect on the matter of *saṃvaṭṭa* (rolling on) and *vivaṭṭa* (rolling back). The very nature of this world is to go around in this cycle of birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*). Wholesome deeds leading to the continuation of saṃsāra (*saṃvaṭṭagāmī kusala*) indeed help in obtaining good rebirths in saṃsāra. Those are the meritorious deeds like virtue (*sīla*) that we perform. But if our aspiration is not set on a higher target, we will continue in that very cycle, through heavenly worlds and Brahma worlds, for countless eons. Yet, even in the heavenly worlds, passing away (*cuta*) is the same as dying.

Thus, wherever one is, whether one dies or passes away, within this impermanence (*aniccatā*) of saṃsāra, the beings of this world are immersed in a great mass of suffering (*dukkha*). That is why the Buddha presented the entire saṃsāric existence as an equation of suffering. He showed the entire saṃsāric existence as suffering. Why? Because there is a vast multitude of arisings and passings away here. Because they do not see this multitude of arisings and passings away correctly, these beings, through grasping (*upādāna*) born of craving (*taṇhā*), take them to be real. They regard form, feeling, perception, preparations, and consciousness (*rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa*) as permanent and real. This is due to the absence of insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*).

Because this understanding is not correctly present, they are covered by the hindrance of ignorance (*avijjā-nīvaraṇa*). Ignorance, to put it briefly, is the notion that "there is something." The notion that "there is something" is ignorance. Craving is the notion that "it is not enough." The very result of the notion that "there is something" is the feeling that "it is not enough." That is all there is to ignorance and craving. To understand this correctly, it must be realized through insight (*vipassanā*) according to the law of impermanence (*aniccatā*) taught by the Buddha, that here there is only a vast multitude of arisings and passings away. Due to the limitations of our thinking and our sense faculties, this is not visible to us. It is not visible to our physical eye. Likewise, it cannot be grasped by logical reasoning; it is a Dhamma beyond logical reasoning (*atakkāvacara*). This is visible only to the eye of insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā-cakkhu*). The eye of wisdom must be developed. Through the development of the eye of wisdom, at some point, it is understood that even what is taken as "existing" is only a vast multitude of arisings and passings away. Ultimately, there is only a heap of breakages here. Through that, grasping (*grahaya*) is reduced. To whatever extent ignorance is reduced, to that extent craving is also reduced.

When ignorance is entirely eliminated, craving has nothing to grasp there. It was because we thought "there is something" that we said "it is not enough." Now, instead of the feeling that "there is something," everything is understood as an extremely rapid flow of arising and passing away—this is impermanence (*aniccatā*). In the Dhamma, this is precisely what is called preparations (*saṅkhāra*). It is only a heap of preparations. There is only a transient state of arising and passing away. Through that, craving gradually thins out. That is what the Buddha shows as Nibbāna. What we grasp as existence/becoming (*bhava*), as life, is indeed those transient phases we proudly call "my life," which Māra the cowherd drives, beating them with the staff of decay. We say, "This is my youth, this is my old age."

But what is within this? It is impermanence (*aniccatā*), and the very nature of suffering (*dukkha*) arising from it. Within that nature of suffering, the Buddha highlighted the nature of non-self (*anattā*). There is nothing here to be taken as a self. Taking it as a self is a view (*diṭṭhi*)—one's own grasp of the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). One clings to it and thinks of it as a self: "Form is my self, feeling is my self." This is the train of thought present in the ordinary worldling. The Buddha shows that one cannot escape from this through logical reasoning. One cannot escape through debate. One must begin by establishing oneself in virtue (*sīla*) and restraining body and speech. Today, on this day you have observed the precepts, you possess a much greater tranquility of mind compared to the times you spend at home. To put it briefly, you have stepped away, at least temporarily, from those suffering and tribulations.

Next, you have resolved on a high standard of virtue. While keeping it, when you reflect on it after an hour or two, a great joy arises in your mind: "Today, I am a different person, not only in dress but in my thinking. Living on food offered by others, I spend this day with my mind directed toward the Dhamma and meditation." If one systematically practices a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), more opportunities

arise to concentrate the mind. If one develops mindfulness meditation (*satipaṭṭhāna*) with a concentrated mind, one can realize the true nature of the body as we mentioned: there is only a vast multitude of arisings and passings away here. There is nothing to be grasped as a self. When this is deeply understood at some point, the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)—the force that has been feeding ignorance and craving, which are like the parents of this saṃsāra—can be shattered to a great extent. It is only after that strong dogma of self-illusion is eliminated.

It is by proceeding gradually in this manner that one can realize the Nibbāna shown by the Buddha. Therefore, especially on a day like today, we must reflect: what is this that we consider the Sāsana? Is it just this external mobilization? Is this religion a spectacle, a public display? Is this done to show off to others? No. It is merely an effort to step away from the tribulations of lay life, to gather individually at a temple, and through that train of thought, to draw close to the lives of the Arahants. When we look at the result, it may appear as a spectacle that gladdens the mind. But that is not the purpose. As it is said, *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*—"this Dhamma is to be realized by the wise individually." The effort toward that begins with virtue (*sīla*). It starts first with virtue.

Next, utilizing the comfort of mind brought about by virtue, the joy of having abstained from wrong deeds, and the unworldly joy (*nirāmisa-pīti*), one calms the mind through a subject of meditation. If one's past perfections (*pāramī*) are well matured, when that concentrated mind is directed toward one's own five aggregates (*pañca-skandha*), one understands that here there is complete emptiness (*suññatā*). That is why the Buddha declared that the world is empty (*suñña*). When thinking logically, this may produce a strange fear in a person. The Buddha advised to look upon the world as empty. How is it empty? In the manner we mentioned, there is nothing here to be taken as a self, nothing permanent. There is only a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Within that heap of preparations, there is only the conceit of "I" and "mine." It is because of this very conceit that the world suffers.

But if this is removed at some point, discarding the body becomes like discarding an old garment. In the past, regarding the final passing away (*parinibbāna*) of Arahants, it is mentioned that some Arahants set fire to their own bodies at the final moment. Today, there are separate cremation ceremonies. How did those Arahants set fire to their own bodies? It was not to frighten anyone, as if fasting. When their final moment arrived, they separated the body from the mind, and through the power of concentration, entering the fire-device (*tejo-kasiṇa*), they lit a fire. This was possible because they had attained the power to remove the grasp of "I" and "mine" which they had held throughout saṃsāra. That is the end of saṃsāra. Nibbāna is indeed the final end of this journey of birth and death in saṃsāra. Realizing this in this very life is the peaceful and sublime Nibbāna.

Therefore, devotees who engage in these meritorious acts must reflect on the deep side of this Dhamma, and understand the true purpose, the true value of the concept of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*) within the Noble Eightfold Path. Within this saṃsāra, there are two aspects: saṃsarana (wandering) and nissarana (escape).

Wandering means spinning in the same place. Escaping (*nissaraṇa*) means jumping out of this, like the rolling back (*vivaṭṭa*) we mentioned. A great strength is required for that. Since the beings of this saṃsāra travel under the influence of greed, hatred, and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*), it is only through the wholesome roots of non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion (*alobha, adosa, amoha*) that one can escape from saṃsāra. All qualities of virtue and the like are connected to this.

Devotees must bear in mind that it is only by understanding the true nature of life through insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) in meditation that this saṃsāric liberation can be achieved. The Buddha shows on many occasions that this realization can be attained by some while listening to the Dhamma, if they possess the necessary perfections (*pāramī*) and a highly developed mind. Some attain it while preaching the Dhamma, and some while pondering over the Dhamma. Not everyone may possess that strength.

Even if these seem easy to do, what must be practiced daily is a subject of concentration meditation (*samādhi-kammaṭṭhāna*). Considering a subject of meditation as the most valuable gain in one's life, one must practice and develop it constantly. Without limiting it to this Poya day, a devotee who practices a subject of meditation in daily lay life can derive the true benefit of the Poya day. The entire secret of this saṃsāra lies within our mind. The Buddha has declared that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) spin around each other like a whirlpool. Along with the feeling of "I" in this world, there is "mine." The world spins within these two. If one understands at some point that both the internal and the external are empty, and that in both places there is only a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) from the perspective of meditation, then one escapes.

Thus, this is not something to be learned merely from books, but to be observed closely within one's own life, within one's own body: "This is form, this is the arising of form, this is the passing away of form." The wearing away of this form happens every day in our lives; the food and drink we take, and the in-breaths and out-breaths, are just like that. It is said that every Buddha attained enlightenment by directing the mind to this process of in-breathing and out-breathing—mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). What is within this? What is this breath we call "mine"? Within the in-breath and out-breath, there is that same spinning wheel.

In-breathing means grasping (*upādāna*) some external air, trying to maintain and stop it, but failing; it must be exhaled. That is a natural process. Due to the grasping we develop toward it, we hold onto it. Because of this holding, we then develop the conceit of "I." The entire world is like this. It is like a race. The clung-to (*upādinna*) is this small life coming from the mother's womb, grasped through our own past kamma-forces in saṃsāra. That is the difference between what we call a living being and a tree. A tree does not possess consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Within this living being, there is consciousness. Within this consciousness lies the seed, the secret of saṃsāra. Because of this consciousness, there is the world. Next, there is the internal world taken as "I." This

world is divided on one side. On the other side, there are external things, objects to be preyed upon.

Just like the process of in-breathing and out-breathing in the world, because of the attachment to this body, everything like food and drink is taken inside. When its true nature is understood at some point, there is nothing to be taken as "I" here. There is only a process here. Because of craving (*taṇhā*), because of that desire to run in this saṃsāric wheel and enjoy the five cords of sensual pleasure, we bring upon ourselves a mountain of suffering (*dukkha*). We do not even realize that this suffering is suffering. We only understand that breathing is suffering when we look at an asthmatic patient. When watching an asthmatic patient closely, we see that the only thing that person does is breathe. Because of the intense attachment to life, the asthmatic patient breathes with great difficulty, directing their entire attention to a single breath. But in truth, we are all asthmatic patients.

Living beings (*prāṇīn*) are those who survive on this in-breath and out-breath. Every living being draws in a portion of the atmosphere from the external world and then expels it. This process itself is a great suffering (*dukkha*). That is why a Buddha is born through mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). The secret lies within this. It enters as an in-breath and exits as an out-breath. This process is a great suffering. Although we look at the asthmatic patient's breathing and see it as suffering, in our daily lives we engage in other activities without even knowing whether we are breathing. That is why the Buddha advises us to take a small holiday, a pause from other activities, and direct our mind to the in-breath and out-breath. When the mind is directed to the in-breath and out-breath, it reveals that the breath we took to be "my in-breath, my breath" is actually only a series of waves, a flow of arising and passing away. Then, gradually, instead of the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), which we always mention, the perception of a heap (*rāsi-saññā*) arises. Compactness is grasped through the ignorance (*avijjā*) of not knowing. Gluing it together with the adhesive of craving (*taṇhā*), we take it as one to satisfy our grasping (*upādāna*). To satisfy our desire to grasp, we grasp a breath.

But when mindfulness (*sati*) is well applied to it, we realize that here there is only a process, only a mechanism. The out-breath is also like that. Therefore, the constant repetition of this is a great suffering. The same applies to nourishing and maintaining this body. The multitude of tribulations undergone for that purpose is the suffering of saṃsāra. That is why the Buddha compared the entire existence to suffering (*dukkha*). Indeed, there is nothing in this saṃsāra that cannot be taken as a subject of meditation. To that extent, Nibbāna is present within everything. We can subject a falling leaf, a fading flower, or any part of this body-cage to insight (*vipassanā*) in that manner. Reflecting on the things that became subjects of meditation for the Arahants of the past fills us with wonder. The Buddha, by revealing subjects of meditation suited to the specific thoughts and feelings of weariness toward saṃsāra of various individuals, led them to realize Nibbāna very easily in the past. Thus, we see that there are countless illustrations in the world that show this natural law, the nature of impermanence

(*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). It is only that we do not make use of them. For the meditator with a well-concentrated mind, who has developed a subtle wisdom regarding the world, when a calamity like the ones we mentioned occurs, spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) arises.

A great spiritual urgency regarding saṃsāra, a powerful spiritual urgency and weariness (*nibbidā*) regarding life must arise if we are to turn to the other side. As soon as that weariness arises, sometimes the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala-paṭivedha*) can occur through that itself. Therefore, this phenomenon indeed occurs rapidly. One must make the necessary effort for it. If that effort was not made in the past, one must try to make it in this life. What is it? To understand the world as it is—the impermanence (*aniccatā*) within everything. Bringing these to mind, the devotee who has developed spiritual urgency can raise insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) in such an event, and at some point, realize the noble element of Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship (*arahatta*).

Therefore, devotees must reflect on this without directing their minds to other affairs. Today, you have been able to spend the day close to the lives of the Arahants, close to their thoughts, and close to their conduct. It is by fulfilling these practices that we can make this Buddha Sāsana shine. The message of escaping from saṃsāra is what is primarily present within the Buddha Sāsana. What is external to that is what is often brought forward today. If you too reflect, you will see that to preserve the Sāsana, that deep portion of the Sāsana connected with the Four Noble Truths (*caturāriya-sacca*) and Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) must be preserved. Otherwise, only the outer bark will remain.

Therefore, if you have developed wholesome thoughts that support the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) through the virtue you kept, the meditation you practiced, and by listening to this Dhamma sermon, may the power of those benefits enable you to escape as quickly as possible from all saṃsāric suffering of birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*), and death (*maraṇa*), and may it give you the strength and power to find peace in the noble, deathless Nibbāna! May it be a supportive condition for that! Likewise, if any living beings in this world-system, from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, wish to share in these merits of preaching and listening to the Dhamma, may they all, by sharing in these merits, realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through their own aspired Bodhi! Sharing merits in this manner, make your aspirations.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #168

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.120)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Pamaādaṃ appamādena, yadā nudati paṇḍito,

Paññāpāsādamāruyha, asoko sokiniṃ pajaṃ,

Pabbataṭṭho'va bhummaṭṭhe, dhīro bāle avekkhati."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 28 (Appamāda Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Although the Buddha's Dispensation arose in India (*Jambudīpa*), it took deep root in our island of Lanka. Having considered the future, we generally believe that the great Arahant Mahinda Thera entrusted the grave responsibility of protecting the Buddha's Dispensation to our small island on a Poson Full Moon Poya day like today. However, we must constantly remind ourselves of the ultimate core values of the Buddha's Dispensation. The verse we have chosen as our theme today is directly related to that.

The Blessed One preached this Dhamma verse while residing at Jetavana monastery, concerning the great Arahant Mahā Kassapa. At that particular time, the great Arahant Mahā Kassapa was staying in the Pipphalī Cave in Rajagaha. One day, having gone for alms-round in Rajagaha, he returned to Pipphalī Cave, finished his alms-meal, and projected the light of his knowledge. With his divine eye, he was observing how beings who had fallen into negligence, as well as those who were diligent, pass away from this world and are born on this earth, in water, and so forth.

While the Blessed One was at Jetavana, he wondered: "In what manner of dwelling is my son Mahā Kassapa residing today?" Looking with his divine eye, he saw that the Arahant Mahā Kassapa was observing beings with his divine eye in this manner. Projecting a ray of light, the Blessed One said: "Mahā Kassapa, as you watch, you can see only a very small fraction of passing away and arising (*Jāti*). That is truly the domain of Buddha-knowledge—belonging only to the Buddhas. It is such a complex and profound matter.

For there are countless instances where those born in a mother's womb pass away without even letting the parents know. Such is the extremely marvelous and mysterious nature of passing away and arising (*Jāti*)." However, expressing a certain praise for the dwelling of the Arahant Mahā Kassapa, he uttered the verse mentioned in our theme. In terms of meaning, it says:

Pamādaṃ appamādena yadā nudati paṇḍito...

When the wise person dispels negligence by means of diligence, and ascending the palace of wisdom, sorrowless, looks upon the sorrowing crowd, just as one standing on a mountain—the steadfast, wise individual looks down upon those on the ground, the fools and the ignorant. That is the meaning of the verse.

The word *dhīra* used here is special. According to the Dispensation and the Dhamma, a *dhīra* is one endowed with wisdom. What is described here is not just a physical sight seen with the physical eyes, like someone who climbs a mountain—even today, people climb the Ārādhanā Gala at Mihintale and look around—but this is a vision of knowledge (*ñāṇa-dassana*). It is a vision of knowledge through the divine eye. Today, we have various technological means thanks to physical science. According to modern science, through different instruments and various light media, microscopes magnify unseen things, and telescopes show distant objects like planets. But all of these are done with the physical eye, relying on the physical eye and external light media. The divine eye mentioned here is something special. It is a vision obtained by projecting the light of absorption (*jhāna*). Indeed, on one occasion, the Blessed One explained this light of absorption to the Sangha, asking: "Monks, what is the development of concentration (*samādhi-bhāvanā*) that is conducive to the vision of knowledge?" This is how it is briefly stated:

"Here, monks, a person attends to the perception of light. They resolve upon the day-perception: 'As by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.'" This means that to such an extent that there is no difference between the two, even at night a light is perceived when the eyes are closed. In this way, they develop the perception of light. It is further described: in this way, one develops a luminous mind. That means this luminous mind is not shrouded by anything. One develops an open, uncovered, unobstructed mind that is luminous (*sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ*). This refers to an internally generated light.

In fact, this is the state of the fourth absorption (*catuttha jhāna*). Having stabilized oneself in it, when one directs the divine eye and thinks, "Let me see the beings in hell," focusing that vision on hell, they become visible. Next, taking that base absorption (*pādaka jhāna*) as the foundation and directing the mind to it, when one thinks about the nature of the karma of those beings, that too is understood. The divine eye is such a marvelous thing. It is by relying on this divine eye that one sees hell or heaven. It is specifically mentioned that the great Arahant Moggallāna possessed extraordinary strength in seeing with the divine eye in this manner.

This story speaks of the process of being born and dying. Indeed, when viewed from this perspective, the entirety of *saṃsāra* is like a tragedy—a tragic film. Thus, the great Arahant Mahā Kassapa, in the realization that he had brought an end to birth (*Jāti*) in *saṃsāra*, ascended the palace of wisdom, sorrowless. Here, the "palace of wisdom" must be understood as the Arahant's knowledge that destroys the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*). The divine eye is also a kind of light. It makes it easy to see beings being born here and there, dying in one place and being born in another. However, the underlying principle that governs this is embedded in dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). The understanding of this comes along with what we ultimately call the knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*).

In short, what did the great Arahant who had attained Arahantship watch sorrowless, like a wise, steadfast person standing on a mountain looking down upon the fools below? He watched the sorrowful populace. Because he was freed from it, he was sorrowless. Here, passing away and birth (*Jāti*) were mentioned. Indeed, even in this era, many people talk about this question. Actually, it is not about the intermediate state (*antarābhava*) that we should think about, but rather about the suffering (*dukkha*) of becoming (*Bhava*) and becoming (*Bhava*) itself. However, many scholars today are trapped in the questions of the intermediate state. Our Buddhists are trapped in theories put forward by many Western psychologists, based on psychological evidence, hypnotism, and various artificial devices or media that lead to speculative ideologies. Because of this excessive attention on the intermediate state, they forget about becoming (*Bhava*) and the suffering (*dukkha*) of becoming (*Bhava*). These scholars have no understanding of how to comprehend this matter of birth (*Jāti*) according to the analysis of dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) taught by the Blessed One.

We generally think of the death we see as passing away (*cuti*). But in reality, we do not know how many times we have been conceived and have passed away in a mother's womb in that manner. Today, many people like to take photographs. They take photos of various stages of their lives, from childhood onwards. They might be color photographs, pasted in beautiful albums. If we think for a moment about what our very first photograph is, what indeed is it? The very first form (*rūpa*) that arises in the mother's womb is called the *kalala* form. *Kalala* means mud. We can call it a mud stain. Thus, the mud stain formed in the mother's womb is our first photograph. How many times has this negative of a mud stain been washed away, and for how long, before this final photograph is printed? There is such a state of becoming (*Bhava*). Then, the next question is how this photograph was cast. Indeed, those psychologists we mentioned are those who hold onto the soul-view according to the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). They cannot comprehend this profound matter shown by the Blessed One regarding the relationship of causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*).

What happens here is that when a certain consciousness (*viññāṇa*) slips away from here, before it slips away, a certain vision appears as a sign—in terms of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). That vision is the first image cast in the mother's womb. Based on that image, a grasping (*gahaṇa*) occurs. *Gabbha* (womb) means grasping or holding on.

Thus, a dying being grasps a mother's womb. That grasping can also pass away. That too is through karma itself. Truly, it is because of craving (*taṇhā*) that this prompting arises. In beings who have not eliminated craving (*taṇhā*)—that is, craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*)—because they wish for becoming (*Bhava*), karma shows them a matching place. Because of craving (*taṇhā*), that place is perceived as good. It could be a flame of fire, or even an impure place like a mother's womb, yet it appears as a good place.

So, whatever that image objectified by consciousness (*viññāṇa*) may be, that slipping consciousness (*viññāṇa*) connects there. As soon as it connects, it begins to grow in dependence on the four elements of the mother's body. This is how it happens. At one stage, in a strange way, it takes on bizarre shapes like a tadpole, and finally, it is born as a beautiful child. If each of these stages were photographed, using modern methods available today, indeed, those too should be included in that photo album we mentioned. That is how we must understand it. That image is what supports the continuation of our becoming (*Bhava*).

The Blessed One has shown us how that image can be made to cease. Until one develops a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that does not cast such an image, one goes from becoming (*Bhava*) to becoming (*Bhava*) in this *saṃsāra*. The Blessed One himself has shown this on one occasion when a wanderer named Vacchagotta presented various questions to him. The Blessed One clearly says in the very first sentence: "Vaccha, I say that birth (*Jāti*) occurs only when there is grasping (*upādāna*)—for one who has grasping (*upādāna*). For one who has no grasping (*upādāna*), there is no birth (*Jāti*). Birth (*Jāti*) belongs only to one who has grasping (*upādāna*); when grasping (*upādāna*) is absent, there is no birth (*Jāti*)." Then, as an illustration, he says, "Just as, Vaccha, a fire burns only when there is grasping (*upādāna*), and when there is no grasping (*upādāna*), the fire goes out." They call it fire. What is meant by "something to grab" (fuel) is wood or whatever else helps the fire to burn. Only where there is such fuel/grasping (*upādāna*) does a fire exist. The moment there is nothing to grab, the fire goes out. It is here that the word grasping (*upādāna*) emerges.

From that point, we orient this Dhamma analysis in relation to dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Generally, we have all heard that we are born because of craving (*taṇhā*). The nature of craving (*taṇhā*) is analyzed in various ways. It is said of craving (*taṇhā*): *taṇhā ponobhavikā* (craving that leads to renewed becoming). The word *ponobhavikā* means it produces renewed becoming (*Bhava*), again and again, repeatedly. There is a power within craving (*taṇhā*), thirst, desire, to generate repeated existence. Another characteristic of it is *tatratatrābhinandinī*—finding delight here and there. Craving (*taṇhā*) is very fickle. At one moment it is in one place; at another moment, in another place. That is why it slips away from the mother's womb. It entered a womb, but then it leaped to another place. This is why craving (*taṇhā*) is said to be fickle. It has these two characteristics.

Furthermore, if we are to speak about grasping (*upādāna*), it is that very craving (*taṇhā*) itself which ultimately becomes grasping (*upādāna*) at the moment of death. This is a

very profound matter. Some people have misunderstood this and have fabricated a story about an intermediate state (*antarābhava*). In the very discussion with the wanderer Vacchagotta, Vacchagotta first asks a question like this: "Master Gotama, when a flame is swept away by the wind, what is its grasping (*upādāna*) at that time? Since the word grasping (*upādāna*) has been introduced, what does the flame grasp there?" "Vaccha, I say that the wind (air) is the grasping (*upādāna*) on that occasion, for it is blown by the wind and goes further." Similarly, at the moment of death, it is through craving (*taṇhā*) itself that the catch called grasping (*upādāna*) occurs. Many people have misunderstood this point. This is how the Buddha explains it: "When a being lays down this body and arises in another body, I declare craving (*taṇhā*) to be the grasping (*upādāna*)." It is connected by that. Now, let us take an analogy to understand this.

Let us further consider the Dhamma principles regarding this. We have often mentioned the analogy of the deer. In that context, we usually recollect only the eye. One does not think that the other senses are also a mirage. The Blessed One compared the entire aggregate of perception (*saññā-kkhandha*) to a mirage. What is a mirage? Indeed, it is a complex phenomenon arising due to the four elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). Yet, to the deer, it appears as water, as flowing water. The deer takes its stand on that. Why does it take its stand? Because from where the deer stands, it appears as a mirage (as water). Therefore, let us suppose the deer runs. It runs in expectation of water. With every step it takes in its running, that vision recedes. But it does not know; it does not know that it is receding. It is an illusion shown by the deer's own consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Here, we bring out the connection between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). In short, the explanation given by the Blessed One regarding rebirth can be understood accordingly. The object is perceived by consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in terms of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Now, "Form" (*rūpa*) there refers to the four elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). Due to a certain combination of causes, a shimmering vision arose, which we designate as a mirage. The deer thinks that it is in such-and-such a place; the place it thinks of is one extreme. It distinguishes, saying, "Where I am is different." That very act of distinguishing is consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

The Blessed One has stated that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) always exists in dependence on something. There is no such thing as consciousness (*viññāṇa*) on its own. This is illustrated in the analogy of fire. A fire that burns due to firewood is called a wood-fire. When it burns due to rubbish, it is called a rubbish-fire. When it burns due to straw, it is called a straw-fire. There is no fire on its own. Likewise, there is no consciousness (*viññāṇa*) on its own. Here, therefore, the deer's consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists in dependence on that perception of a mirage. That is one extreme. That extreme is present as the object. If we speak of that object as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), as we said before, Form (*rūpa*) is the combination of the four elements.

Next, how does the deer recognize this as a mirage? It recognizes it through the mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*): feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*),

contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Due to craving (*taṇhā*), a certain feeling (*vedanā*) arises, and the perception (*saññā*) arises that "this vision is water." Thereupon, the intention (*cetanā*) arises with the thought, "If I go there, I can drink some water." Next, going there and in the thought of coming together is where attention (*manasikāra*) lies—the reflecting upon it.

But the closer one gets, the further away everything recedes. This is the nature of the mirage. As the deer runs, it too recedes. Here is the illusory nature of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is said to be an illusion because the objects that come to consciousness (*viññāṇa*) are always receding. Until one sees through it, its true nature does not appear. To see through it means to realize its true nature with wisdom, through the eye of wisdom. That is what the Blessed One brought to light through the vision of dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Why does this appear as a physical form? This needs to be explained further. The ordinary world thinks that these four elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*) exist separately. In this Dhamma, the four elements are described as the four great primary elements (*mahābhūta*).

So, what are the great primaries (*mahābhūta*)? People think that these four exist separately. As we all know, when we say "earth" (*pathavī*), immediately a picture of soil, a stone, a brick, or a mountain comes to mind. When we say "water" (*āpo*), we think of an ocean or a river. A flame of fire comes to mind when we say "fire" (*tejo*). A great storm comes to mind when we say "air" (*vāyo*). But not one of these exists separately. They are mixed everywhere. Thus, none of the four has the strength to stand alone. It is precisely because they lack individual strength that the Blessed One showed them to be void (*suñña*). But the world does not perceive this voidness. Instead, there is a mental fabrication. When "earth" (*pathavī*) is mentioned, a picture arises in the mind, an illustration appears—an illustration of hardness. Indeed, it is based on the quality of hardness that we recognize the element of earth (*pathavī*). The fire element (*tejo*) is recognized through the quality of heat and cold.

That is how they are described when defining the elements. But how does the ordinary world perceive them? As if the four exist separately. So, that is also just the haunting of ghosts (elements/primaries). Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) displays these hauntings. The world is deceived by these hauntings. Within that itself, in dependence on that, mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) exist. It is because of the deer's initial grip of "water" that the rest of the process is activated. Intention (*cetanā*) says, "I must run there and grab this somehow; when I get there, I will catch it." It grasps that perception (*saññā*). Those are mental phenomena. Then, physical phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*) are also void there, and mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) are also void. This very point is illustrated in ancient texts by a certain analogy.

The journey of these two, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), is described there as being like a blind man who can walk carrying a lame man who has sight on his shoulders. The one on the shoulders can see but cannot walk, as his legs are crippled. He points out, "Go this way or that way." Physical phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*) and mental phenomena (*nāma-*

dhamma) cannot go alone either. They proceed by helping each other. It is from those phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that the image of those forms is cast in our consciousness (*viññāṇa*). When "earth" is mentioned, we get a perception (*saññā*) of the ground accordingly. But that is not its true nature. It must be penetrated with wisdom. It is because of the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) that the world perceives it in this way.

Thus, the Blessed One shows that everything must be viewed through the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). The deer has no realization that with every single step it takes while running, it is changing. That is why it is said that due to ignorance (*avijjā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arise. The ordinary world has no understanding of those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) which exist in layers upon layers; they grasp them tightly. The Blessed One compared Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to the trunk of a banana tree. At first glance, the ordinary world grasps and holds onto a banana trunk as something having a core or heartwood. But the Blessed One teaches us to inspect them through insight (*vipassanā*) without grasping tightly. Inspection (*sammasana*) is like stroking. If one gently peels and examines the banana trunk, one understands that it is just a pile of sheaths. But if one grabs it all at once, the impression is that it is something with a core. From this, we see that it is through wisdom that this is understood. What the Blessed One called the "palace of wisdom" is the wisdom obtained when attaining that profound state of Arahantship. It is through that wisdom that the true nature of these elements is understood.

In this era, which gives great prominence to knowledge, the world thinks that "ascending the palace of wisdom" means climbing a multi-story library. Scholars of this era might think that the palace of wisdom refers to ascending a library of many floors. It is not such an accumulation. This wisdom shown by the Blessed One is actually present within us in a subtle way, embedded deep inside. The Blessed One expressed this when describing the light of absorption (*jhāna*), speaking of a luminous mind. It is by directing that luminous mind that the places where those beings reside become visible. But even more wonderful than that is the light of wisdom (*paññā-āloka*).

Regarding that light of wisdom, the Blessed One states: "Monks, this mind is luminous (*pabhassara*). The mind is naturally radiant. But it is covered by visiting defilements (*āgantuka upakkilesa*)—defilements that come from outside. It is soiled by them." The person who lacks knowledge of the Dhamma does not know this. That is why they have no interest in meditation. But the noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) knows that this mind is luminous, luminous within, and that there are only visiting defilements in it. As soon as those impurities are removed, this luminous mind shines forth. To use an analogy for what the person with Dhamma-knowledge does: suppose a copper or brass vessel is covered in rust. One way is to paint over it in layers to make it look beautiful. That is not what should be done properly. As soon as the accumulated rust is removed using certain substances, its natural luster emerges. It is something like that which the Blessed One describes.

The mind has the capacity to spontaneously understand the true nature of the world. But it is covered by defilements. The Blessed One has shown the Noble Eightfold Path as a means of ascending the palace of wisdom. It is a systematic transformation, like climbing a flight of stairs, which must be achieved through systematic effort. We know that to remove rust, a systematic procedure is required. This is briefly mentioned as virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). One has to systematically remove that rust, layer by layer. Only when it is removed does the true luminosity emerge.

Regarding this point about knowledge and wisdom, let us examine the story of Venerable Cūḷapanthaka, which you all have heard many times. The novice monk Cūḷapanthaka could not memorize a single verse even after four months, so his brother monk expelled him, telling him to return to lay life. But the Blessed One stopped him, stroked his head, and gave him a piece of clean white cloth, telling him to rub it while repeating, "*rajo-haraṇaṃ, rajo-haraṇaṃ*" (dirt-remover, dirt-remover). Indeed, as he rubbed it, what happened? It became soiled with sweat. Next, instead of rubbing the cloth, what did he do? He began to contemplate those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Regarding the nature of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), he realized, "Are not all these impermanent (*anicca*)?"

In truth, it is through the contemplation of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that wisdom arises. At the moment he realized their impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature, the Blessed One, seeing the opportune moment, said, "It is not that rust on the cloth you should think about. As soon as the rust of lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) is removed, realization comes." In this way, the true nature of this mind is covered by the rust of lust, hatred, and delusion. Thus, to bring out that truth, it is said, *paññā-pāsādam-āruyha* (having ascended the palace of wisdom). When that truth is brought out, what is seen is the true nature of passing away and birth (*Jāti*).

In the past, there were sages (rishis). Today, such people are very rare. Some yogis who lived before the appearance of the Blessed One could see even hundreds of thousands of past lives. They saw that a certain individual died in one place and was born in another. Yet, the connection was not visible to them. They could not understand how it happened. That is precisely what the Blessed One brought to light through the teaching of dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). This is an extremely subtle matter.

We generally think that after someone dies, something goes from here. Any physical scientist, or certain people who lack the Buddhist outlook, try to explain the idea of someone dying and going to another place through physical laws. Something has to go from here, they think. A strong blow to that argument is mentioned in the Pāyāsi Sutta. Venerable Kumāra Kassapa lived during the Buddha's time and also lived after the Buddha's passing away, as he had a long lifespan. That great Arahant Kumāra Kassapa was foremost in this Dispensation in preaching the Dhamma in a diverse and colorful manner (*vicitra-kathika*).

He had the ability to make things clear to people by giving highly wonderful analogies. This great Arahant Kumāra Kassapa had to engage in a long debate in the city of Setavyā

with a chieftain named Pāyāsi. A chieftain (*rājaññā*) is like a crown prince, an uncrowned king. This king held a wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), a nihilistic view (*nātthika-diṭṭhi*) to the effect that when a being dies, there is no rebirth (*Jāti*), no spontaneous rebirth (*opapātika*), and no fruit or result of karma. In a discussion with Kumāra Kassapa to dispel this view, this chieftain Pāyāsi revealed an experiment he had conducted as an argument. Today, too, people might perform such experiments. What was his experiment?

Let's say his guards bring a subject who has committed some crime to the chieftain Pāyāsi, saying, "Your Majesty, here is a criminal fit for punishment." He then uses that person for his experiment. What does he do? He tells the men to put that man alive into a large pot. Having placed him in the pot, they cover it with a wet hide, seal the mouth with clay so that nothing can escape, and place it on a stove. They put it on a fire, on a hearth. They leave it there to heat up and boil. When he thinks the person must be dead, the chieftain slowly opens the pot to see if the soul (*jīva*) escapes. Surely the soul (*jīva*) must escape to be born elsewhere. But the soul does not escape; it does not come out. Presenting this argument to Venerable Kumāra Kassapa, he says, "Where is it then? The soul should have escaped, but this person died while sealed inside. I did not see any soul escaping. Therefore, I say there is no rebirth (*Jāti*)."

The analogy given by Venerable Kumāra Kassapa on that occasion is very important for our subject. That is why we bring it up. Venerable Kumāra Kassapa asks as a question, "Chieftain, do you remember on certain occasions going to sleep during the daytime? Having gone to sleep, did you dream various dreams? Do you remember dreaming of beautiful parks and lotus ponds?" When he replies "Yes," Kumāra Kassapa says, "Well, on that occasion, the mind had gone out to see those things, the soul (*jīva*) had gone. At that time, did any of your bodyguards—whoever they were, including the women—who were around you while you slept during the day, see your soul (*jīva*) leaving?" "No," he replies.

So what does that mean? What happens at the moment of death is just like what happens in a dream world. It would be good for you pious devotees to contemplate deeply on this analogy presented by the great Arahant Kumāra Kassapa. In the dream world, the object that comes to the mind may be something far away. If, based on that object, someone thinks, "My consciousness (*viññāṇa*) went there," that is where they go wrong. Now, to remind you, we colloquially say, "I saw in a dream that I went to such-and-such a place, and I saw various sights." We say, "I went." Because of this, one thinks that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) undertook a journey at that time. Indeed, in the past, even the brahmins who held the soul-view thought like this—that during sleep, the soul goes out, roams around as it pleases, and returns. What the Blessed One teaches here is not such a thing. According to Buddhist philosophy, the object that comes to consciousness (*viññāṇa*) cannot be connected to the concept of movement in the way the world thinks. Whether the object perceived by the mind is far or near, it cannot be physically or materially connected.

Therefore, according to the Dhamma, we cannot conceive of a soul (*jīva*) leaving after the man inside the pot dies. If that were so, regarding a person born from here in the heavenly world or the Brahma world, to explain it in modern terms, some kind of ray would have to travel from here to connect there. One thinks of such a physical connection. This happens because of thinking in terms of physical laws. Every pious devotee who reads the Dhammapada knows the very first verse: *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā*. There is nothing wrong with thinking that Buddhism begins and ends with that verse, because its meaning is that profound. *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā*. What is the meaning? "Dhamma" here means things. What is objectified by the mind is called things (*dhammā*). That means things. Form (*rūpa*) is objectified by the eye. Sound is objectified by the ear. Going on like this, what is objectified by the mind, the sixth sense, is described there as *dhammā*.

In the Dhamma, the word *dhamma* does not mean the doctrine (teachings) as we usually say, but rather the object. A certain object, the objects that come to the mind. So, what the Blessed One is stating here is that mind precedes everything we consider as a "thing." But if we try to adjust the Dhammapada according to physical science, how would we have to correct it? *Dhammapubbaṅgamo mano*—things exist first, and the mind comes later. But the Blessed One says that the mind precedes, and things (*dhammā*) come later. There is a very profound point here. For it is precisely because it is objectified by the mind that it becomes a "thing."

That is why it is said: *manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā* (all things arise from attention). Everything arises for the mind. It is born in the mind itself; it is mind-centric, mind-rooted. In short, Buddhist philosophy is mind-centric. Accordingly, passing away and birth (*Jāti*) must be explained through a mind-centric analysis, not a matter-centric one. If we go by a matter-centric approach, we go wrong. The soul-perception, the vital-principle-perception is contained within it. What is the nature of the mind? *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*, and not only that, *manoseṭṭhā*—the mind is supreme. Nay, even *manomayā*. Pious devotees know that *manomayā* means mind-made, created by the mind itself. What we call a "real thing" is something created by the mind itself.

This does not reject the account of the four elements. But even those elements, as we know, are great primaries (*mahābhūta*); they are just haunting spirits. It is to these four great primary elements—which cannot stand alone and are void of a self—that we refer as the elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). What the world thinks of as great things are only these hauntings. These primary elements haunt consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as real things. *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā, manomayā*. That is why they are said to be mind-made.

These "things" are what we have fashioned in our minds. Because mind precedes, because mind is supreme, because they are mind-made, if one speaks, acts, or thinks with a corrupted mind, or directs the mind in that way, a mass of suffering in hell is created by them. That is *manomayā* (mind-made). Now, hell and such places do not just exist passively or get created automatically; the Blessed One declared how they arise

according to karma. Next, heavenly worlds and divine mansions are created if the mind is wholesome, if the mind is pleasant—as mentioned in the story of Maṭṭakuṇḍalī regarding divine mansions. No carpenters went and built them there. They are created spontaneously. That is how it is shown according to this Dhamma: *manomayā*. It is a wonderful state.

This is precisely what we said when speaking of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Being mind-centric, those phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), like the vision seen by the deer, are entirely just an image. They are only a delusion, an illusion. But this can be understood directly only when the three characteristics—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—are properly realized. The path to that is called insight (*vipassanā*). The purpose of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) is to deeply understand, to directly realize, the impermanence (*aniccatā*) taught by the Blessed One. When we say impermanence (*aniccatā*), the idea of two extremes arises. What are the two extremes? There is arising, and there is passing away. It is called *udayabbaya*—arising (*udaya*) and passing away (*vaya*). There is an arising and a wearing away. As one constantly contemplates these two extremes, as this process becomes faster and faster, finally a state of penetrating through what we thought of as a "thing" is reached. When a stage is reached where one can see through something, like looking through glass, the state of there being a "real thing" there vanishes. As long as one does not see through it, one takes it to be a thing.

In the Dhamma, there is a certain passage regarding the wisdom gained through insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*): *udayatthagāminiyā paññāya samannāgato ariyāya*. *Udayatthagāminī* refers to this very matter of arising and passing away. It is *nibbedhikā*—a wisdom that penetrates. So, what does the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) do? They first develop that understanding regarding Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*).

Mind (*nāma*) and Form (*rūpa*) do not exist separately. Because of Form (*rūpa*)—as we said in the case of the deer—because of Form (*rūpa*), Mind (*nāma*) exists: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Next, it is in dependence on that Mind (*nāma*) that Form (*rūpa*) is distinguished and recognized. In this way, the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) are connected there as well. There is nothing here that can be taken as a soul, nothing substantial, other than the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). These are just a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). With every single step taken, that vision recedes, but the deer does not understand. That which is not understood by the deer, the truth that has deceived it, the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) gradually brings to light. That is why, wherever the practitioner of insight looks, they gradually see only movements. This is not something fabricated anew. Its true nature had been covered up until now. That nature of movement was covered up precisely by that perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). That is why the Blessed One said that this is a perverted, distorted state (*vipallāsa*).

What we think of as real in the world is completely upside down. To the Blessed One, the world appeared as if standing on its head. That must be why he was at first hesitant even to preach the Dhamma. "Who will understand this?" It is that profound. When one practices insight (*vipassanā*) with good concentration, applying mindfulness in accordance with the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), and sees arising and passing away, the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) is penetrated and shattered. This is directly seen through this insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). True wisdom is what is called *udayatthagāminī paññā*—the very seeing of arising and passing away. As this process gradually becomes faster, instead of what we previously thought existed, we see only a series of movements. Only a series of movements that can be designated as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Only an appearance.

Through that understanding, eventually disenchantment (*nibbidā*) arises, leading to dispassion (*virāga*) and liberation (*vimutti*). The arising of that liberation means the image cast in consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ceases. It was a mud stain in the mother's womb—cast as a mud stain. Whether in a mother's womb or any other place, it is a stain cast in terms of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). But when illuminated by wisdom, when Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is seen through, that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is liberated from it. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) becomes non-manifestative (*anidassana*). No more images are cast in it. After that voidness is understood, a state of mind where earth (*pathavī*) brings to mind the physical ground, or water (*āpo*) brings to mind water, does not arise for that person.

That is why the Blessed One declared that there is nothing to grasp. That is why he said that where there is no grasping (*upādāna*), there is no becoming (*Bhava*). Only where there is grasping (*upādāna*) is there continuation. Where there is no grasping (*upādāna*), there is no continuation. Why does grasping (*upādāna*) occur? Because something is presented as an object matching one's craving (*taṇhā*). For that to cease, that insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) we mentioned must arise. What is done through insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) is the understanding of impermanence (*aniccatā*). The Blessed One stated that impermanence (*aniccatā*) is understood to some extent by the ordinary world. Although people say "impermanent, impermanent" (*aniccaṃ, aniccaṃ*) about everything, the moment it is directly realized comes only in insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). One gradually and deeply understands that "here there is only a mass of arisings and passings away." Then one might wonder, "Where then does this wisdom exist? Does it fall from the sky?" The Blessed One declared that the seed of this wisdom exists within us. It only needs to be developed. What is that? It is mentioned in this Dhamma as the seed of wisdom under the name wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).

Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means reflecting upon something according to how it arises. In short, it is reflecting by looking at this near end. If one reflects by looking at the far end, it only goes further and further, without any stopping. Here, recall the story of the deer again.

Now, the deer is running, thinking only of the water far away. The deer does not understand the reality here—how mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) are projected, or how through feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and intention (*cetanā*) created by the mind, this Form (*rūpa*) is perceived as a real thing. So, the Blessed One points this out as wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). How is its true nature understood? By reflecting on the place from where they arise. The place from where they spring. The deer lacks the understanding that this vision it sees arose precisely due to the delusion within its own mind.

Only when that understanding comes is the delusion that existed up to then realized. The deception regarding it ceases. That is why in this Dhamma, ignorance (*avijjā*) is shown as the root—unknowing. Because of unknowing, a certain preparation is made. Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) mean karma and so forth. Because of them, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) arise, which means dividing them into two. Just as the deer runs endlessly into the distance based on that grip of "I am here, and the water is over there," the journey of *saṃsāra* is also like that. The Blessed One shows that as long as one tightly grasps consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as a soul, grasping it as "my consciousness," one takes the object cast upon it as real, as a real thing, and runs after it with craving (*taṇhā*)—with craving (*taṇhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*). Because of that very Form (*rūpa*) that is cast, the very power derived regarding those four elements is what is called mind-made (*manomayā*).

That is a great wonder. You have heard that things arise in accordance with karma. There is also the word *kammaja*—arising from karma. What is karma? The Blessed One declares: "Karma is intention (*cetanā*)." Intention (*cetanā*) is also a matter of the mind. So, if certain things arise from intention (*cetanā*), it refers to that state of being mind-made (*manomayā*). When speaking of arising from karma, it is the very same point expressed as *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā, manomayā*.

Karma is the collection of wholesome and unwholesome mental impulses generated by the grip of "I" and "mine" arising out of ignorance (*avijjā*). This material world changes in a marvelous way. Although the ordinary world thinks highly of achievements made with hammers and saws, far more wonderful than all of them is the way birth (*Jāti*) occurs according to what is perceived by the mind at the moment of death. Think about it: is it not through the power of karma (*kamma-vegam*) that the *kalala* form cast in a mother's womb develops into a child? We generally think that a mother and father created it. But when we think truly, it is that karma-energy that gives life. You must have heard how much they tried to kill Prince Ajātasattu while he was in the womb? They could not do it because of that karma-energy.

Thus, when viewed in that way, there too lies *manomayā*. The Blessed One brings to light the natural principle of *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā... manomayā*. It is precisely because of this that an end to it can be seen. The division previously held as "consciousness" (*viññāṇa*) is ultimately transcended by the Blessed One through that very wisdom we spoke of. Wisdom means complete understanding, full realization. When full realization comes, one cannot present two extremes in that manner. The grip

taken by the deer was wrong; the grip of "I am here, and the water is there" was wrong. As long as that is present, one runs endlessly. The Blessed One, therefore, declares realization here. Here it is not a running but a stopping—stop and see. What do you stop and look at? At your own five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*).

Concerning this world, we travel from country to country. Moreover, we go in search of other planets. We pursue truth and values along those paths. But the Blessed One showed: "Within this very fathom-long body, endowed with perception and mind, I declare the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." So, this too has to be understood in reliance on the matter we described. Everything happens through the mind itself; the mind is supreme. Therefore, this is a truth that must be seen right here. Until one sees it, until one realizes this matter, one goes from becoming (*Bhava*) to becoming (*Bhava*), playing a part in that tragic, comic, and terrifying drama. This is what is meant by wandering in the becoming (*Bhava*) of *saṃsāra* for an infinite time. Thus, the great Arahant Mahā Kassapa saw that vision through the state of birth (*Jāti*) and rebirth. In dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), it is shown that due to craving (*taṇhā*), the catching called grasping (*upādāna*) occurs. Within grasping (*upādāna*), within the very concept of grasping, there is a grasper and a thing grasped—two extremes. It is precisely because of this that there is existence/becoming (*Bhava*).

Existence/becoming (*Bhava*) is what proceeds according to two extremes. The moment it is measured according to two extremes, it is taken as a "thing," as existence. That running deer thinks, "Now, I am here, and the water is over there." The existence between those two is what is in the deer's running. We must understand that our running is also like that. What do we do throughout this entire life? We run along the objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and mind-objects—that come to these six doors: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, just as that deer ran.

The Blessed One did not describe only what is seen by the eye as a perception (*saññā*), as a mirage. The Blessed One showed the entire aggregate of perception (*saññā-kkhandha*), the whole pile of perception, as a mirage. But we do not realize this. We think only that deer was deceived (shrouded). We must understand that we are all deceived (shrouded) by these. Thus, just like the mirage seen by the eye, the mirage heard by the ear, the mirage smelled by the nose, and the other sensory objects were also shown by the Blessed One as mirages. For as one runs after them, there is no end.

Instead, wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means directing the mind to the place where they arise. We must contemplate what that grip of taking them as "two" is. Because of dividing them as "two," we have an impression that these two clash. A feeling of clashing arises where there is an understanding, a presupposition, of "two." The Blessed One shows that this grip is wrong. All of these are a mass of causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*), and not a single one can be separated. That is also what was said about the elements. Based on the characteristics presented by feeling (*vedanā*) itself, we distinguish them as earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). Next, in dependence on them, those mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) exist. There,

too, is a mutual conditional relationship, proceeding in relation to each other. That is what the great Arahant Sāriputta stated in an analysis of dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) regarding this *saṃsāric* existence—that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) are just like two sheaves of reeds propped up against each other.

Of the two sheaves of reeds propped up against each other, neither can stand alone. If one is pulled away, the other falls. If this one is pulled away, the other falls. The Blessed One explains it in that manner. According to this Dhamma, the entire *saṃsāra* exists because of the mutual relationship with Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). That is why the Blessed One declared that as far as there is any arising in the world, any passing away, aging, and rebirth, every designation and everything is contained within these two. What are they? In dependence on consciousness (*viññāṇa*), there is Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). In dependence on Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), there is consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

What is this Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*)? A Form merely in name. It is not a real Form, is it? The Form seen by that deer is not a real Form, is it? It is a Form merely in name. But we do not think so. We tightly grasp that photograph we spoke of. "This is my form. This is me when I was small. This is me when I was young. This is when I got married. This is when I received these titles and honors"—we keep those forms and grasp them. But all of these are just a series of images. They are simply Forms merely in name. They are just those externally visible hauntings of primary elements.

In terms of ultimate reality, the Buddhas declare that here lies a state of voidness, an emptiness that cannot be grasped as a sign (*nimitta*). Not a single one can arise on its own. It is said that *saṃsāra* arises due to ignorance (*avijjā*), due to wrong grasping. Because of that wrong grasping. But within that power of intention (*cetanā-vegam*), there is a quality of projecting and creating those elements. That pile of projections is what is then called becoming (*Bhava*). However, the Blessed One, having brought to light the suffering (*dukkha*) nature within it, shows an end to it. The end is not found through an accumulation of knowledge. The palace of wisdom is not a multi-story library. It is where this rust is removed. It is a mass of rust accumulated in this *saṃsāra*. The Blessed One has shown how to systematically remove them through systematic effort—through a vast endeavor of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), by means of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). As one removes them, the inherent natural light of the mind emerges, and the true nature of the world is reflected in it. It is seen through that luster. That is the state the Blessed One brought to light.

Therefore, our Buddha's Dispensation consists of these core values. Instead of being trapped in the intermediate states (*antarābhava*) by submitting to arguments presented by Western psychologists who have not eliminated the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), we must understand this becoming (*Bhava*) properly and be stirred by the suffering of becoming (*Bhava-dukkha*). What we have to do is to enter this path of insight (*vipassanā*) that eliminates the suffering of becoming (*Bhava-dukkha*). By

relying on that wisdom called *udayatthagāminī paññā*—the seeing of arising and passing away—and the vision developed by directing the mind to the place of their arising, which is wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), we must achieve our liberation from *saṃsāra* through the light of wisdom generated from within, and understand the natural principles of the world. These valuable portions of the Buddha's Dispensation are increasingly being undervalued and discarded. They are disappearing from practice in this society. Therefore, we must be mindful to protect these core values. That is what is meant by protecting the Buddha's Dispensation.

On this precious day, despite having many other things to do, this pious crowd dedicated the day to practice (*paṭipatti*) and engaged in Dhamma discussions and meditation that support internal vision. That is why this Dhamma sermon was oriented toward insight (*vipassanā*). By wisely reflecting and observing virtue (*sīla*), and also by providing requisites to those who observe virtue, you pious devotees have accumulated further merit. Taking all of that, along with the wholesome energy accumulated through listening to the Dhamma on this occasion as a supportive condition (*upanissaya*), and relying on the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), may you, as quickly as possible—since it is visible that this Buddha's Dispensation is increasingly turning toward the dark side—strive individually to protect the Dispensation from within.

May the mass of merit accumulated so far serve as a supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for the success of this Dhamma practice and meditation! May this be a strength to eliminate your own *saṃsāric* suffering (*dukkha*) through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship! Aspire in this manner. Furthermore, may all those in this universe who wish to rejoice in the merit of this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening, by doing so, realize the noble, great Deathless—the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna—by means of their aspired-for enlightenment (*bodhi*)! Aspire in this way and recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #169

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.135)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Vanaṃ chindatha mā rukkhaṃ,

vanato jāyate bhayaṃ,

chetvā vanañca vanathañca,

nibbānā hotha bhikkhavo.

Yāva hi vanatho na chijjati,

aṇumattopi narassa nārisu,

paṭibaddhamano va tāva so,

vaccho khīrapakova mātari."

From:

Dhammapada Verses 283 and 284 Magga Vagga (The Path)

Dear Listeners,

Leaving the household life and ordaining is generally identified as renunciation (*nekkhamma*). Even if one departs from the household life and ordains, if one remains bound by lay attachments, by home-centered attachments, and remains engaged in household thoughts and desires, there is no true renunciation. Today, we are taking up for discussion two verses and a story that illustrate the subtle nature of these home-centered attachments.

These two verses were uttered by the Blessed One while he was residing in Sāvatthi, with reference to a group of monks who had ordained in their old age. In Sāvatthi, a group of wealthy householders lived in great harmony, engaging in various meritorious acts of giving and listening to the Dhamma. Having reached old age, they too thought, “There is

no benefit in remaining in the lay life; we must ordain." Having obtained permission from the Blessed One, they ordained. However, because they had ordained in their old age, they lacked the capacity to engage in the corresponding studies and meditation (*bhāvanā*). This group built several huts behind the Jetavana monastery and resided there. Moreover, when going on alms-round, they mostly frequented the houses of their former wives and children.

Having gone there and collected almsfood, they would bring it to the house of the former wife of one of those monks—referred to in the texts as *purāṇa-dutiyikā* (former wife)—and sit down. The reason they did so was because that woman was highly skilled in cooking delicious food. She was known as *Madhurapācikā* (the sweet-cook). These monks would assemble at the house of this lay devotee, Madhurapācikā, and consume their meals there, because she provided the delicious flavor-enhancers they desired.

While they were living in this manner, that laywoman suddenly passed away due to an illness. Thereupon, as an expression of their grief, these monks gathered in the hut of the monk who had been her former husband and began to weep and wail, clasping each other's necks, saying, "Our laywoman Madhurapācikā, who cooked such delicious food for us, is lost!" When other monks came from here and there and asked what the commotion was, they said, "This is what has happened to us. The laywoman who prepared and gave us such delicious food is gone. How can we find such a person again?" and they wailed. This story reached the Dhamma assembly.

While the monks were talking about this incident, the Blessed One arrived and, as was his custom, asked, "What were you discussing, monks?" Upon their explanation, he declared, "Monks, not only now, but in the past too, when born in the womb of crows, this monk and his wife were a crow-pair, and when she was swept away by the sea while they were eating sacrificial offerings on the seashore, they exhausted themselves trying to empty the ocean with their beaks and fell into great distress." On that occasion, the Blessed One related the Kāka Jātaka (Crow Birth Story).

According to that story, it is as follows. In the past, when the Blessed One was a Bodhisatta, he was born as a sea deity. The people of that region, as a custom, would bring sacrifices of meat, food, and liquor as offerings to the sea deity and the Nāgas, and place them on the seashore.

While a male and female crow were walking along the seashore, they ate the meat, drank the liquor, became intoxicated, and went to bathe in the sea. The female crow was caught by a wave, swept away, and became prey to a fish. The male crow began to cry out and express his grief.

The rest of the flock of crows also gathered, lamenting, "Alas, our wonderful companion has been dragged away by this terrible ocean! Let us empty this ocean!" Together, they filled their beaks with water and carried it out, trying to dry up the ocean. In the end, when their throats and mouths were parched from the seawater and they were exhausted, the sea deity assumed a terrifying form and drove the crows away. Having related this story, the Blessed One declared: "The couple of the past is the very same

couple today. That flock of crows is none other than these elderly monks. Therefore, monks, as long as one does not cut down the forest of lust, hatred, and delusion, one cannot escape from these…" In this sense, he uttered the two verses mentioned earlier.

When these verses are uttered, their meaning is not immediately clear. It is evident that a deep meaning lies beneath them.

Vanaṁ chindatha mā rukkhaṁ,

vanato jāyatī bhayaṁ

"Cut down the forest, not the tree." Not just the tree, but cut down the entire forest. *"Vanato jāyati bhayaṁ"*—from the forest arises fear, dangers, and hazards.

Chetvā vanañca vanathañca,

nibbanaṁ hotha bhikkhavo

"Monks, having cut down both the forest and the brushwood, be without forest—attain Nibbāna!" In the next verse, it says:

Yāvaṁ hi vanatho na chijjati, aṇumattopi narassa nārisu, paṭibaddhamanova tāva so, vaccho khīrapākova mātari'ti.

"As long as the underbrush of desire of a man for women is not cut down, even to the slightest degree, so long is his mind bound, just like a sucking calf is bound to its mother." This is the meaning conveyed by those verses. When it was said "cut down the forest, not the tree," it indicates that for many, ordaining means merely leaving the household, abandoning lay possessions, and putting on the robes. However, the Blessed One points out here that there is a vast forest of defilements. When speaking of defilements, you lay devotees have also heard that there is a class called underlying tendencies (*anusaya*). It is not only the gross defilements that appear prominent; deep beneath them lie subtle defilements rooted deeply from a long journey in Saṁsāra, where minds have succumbed to lust, hatred, and delusion. These are referred to in our Dhamma as latency / underlying tendencies (*anusaya*).

Therefore, even if one ordains in that manner, various obstacles arise in one's path to Nibbāna. In particular, the obstacle of relatives (*ñāti-palibodha*) is one of them. The obstruction from relatives often becomes an obstacle to monks. Here too, it was because of their attachment to the delicious food of the former wife (*purāṇa-dutiyikā*) that they fell into such grief. On this very point, the Blessed One delivered a highly valuable discourse on one occasion at Kosambī, while residing on the banks of the river Ganges.

The Blessed One saw a great log of wood being swept away by the current of the river. Addressing the monks, he asked: "Do you see, monks, that great log of wood being swept along by the river current?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." Then the Blessed One declared: "Monks, if that log of wood does not drift to this bank, nor to the outer bank; if it does not sink in mid-stream; if it does not run aground on a sandbank; if it is not taken by

human beings, nor by non-human beings; if it is not caught in a whirlpool; and if it does not rot from within—it will tilt, slope, and slide towards the ocean and one day reach the ocean." This is presented as a riddle. "Similarly, monks, if you do not drift to this bank, nor to the outer bank; if you do not sink in mid-stream; if you do not run aground on a sandbank; if you are not taken by human beings, nor by non-human beings; if you are not caught in a whirlpool; and if you do not rot from within, you will arrive at Nibbāna, which is the final consummation of this monk's life. Why? Because right-view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) tilts, slopes, and leads towards Nibbāna."

When this was declared, a certain monk asked the Blessed One: "Venerable Sir, what is 'this bank'? What is 'the outer bank'? What is 'sinking in mid-stream'? What is 'running aground'? What is 'being taken by human beings' and 'being taken by non-human beings'? What is 'being caught in a whirlpool'? What is 'rotting from within'?" Thereupon, the Blessed One compared the simile to its meaning, bringing out the Dhamma principles.

"Monk, in this simile, by 'this bank' I mean the six internal bases (*ajjhattika-āyatana*). The six internal bases are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. To drift to 'this bank' means to take these six internal bases as self (*attā*) and to form an attachment to them. Then, 'the outer bank' means the six external bases (*bāhira-āyatana*)—namely, the objects contacted by the eye, etc.: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and thoughts (*rūpa, sadda, gandha, rasa, phoṭṭhabba, dhamma*). Those are 'the outer bank'. By 'sinking in mid-stream' is meant delight and lust (*nandīrāga*), the nature of being attached. Next, 'running aground' means the subtle conceit 'I am' (*asmi-māna*). The conceit 'I am' is the very subtle pride that exists within a person.

The Blessed One explains 'being taken by human beings' in detail. A certain person, having ordained, lives in association with laypeople (*gihi-saṁsagga*). Association with laypeople means engaging in activities with them, rejoicing when they rejoice, grieving when they grieve, being happy in their happiness, and sad in their sorrow, without equanimity, as a result of that connection. Furthermore, if laypeople have various major or minor tasks, the monk remains occupied with them. Instead of Dhamma study and meditation (*bhāvanā*), he is engaged in the various affairs of laypeople—there is no need to describe these in detail to you, lay devotees—that monk is occupied with such things. This is what is called 'being taken by human beings' (*manussaggāha*). 'Being taken by non-human beings' is explained as a monk who protects the dispensational practices and observes virtue, thinking, 'By this virtue, by this vow, by this practice, I will be reborn in a certain heavenly world,' thus practicing the holy life with a heavenly realm as his goal. Not Nibbāna. Not putting an end to Saṁsāra. That is 'being taken by non-human beings' (*amanussaggāha*).

Next, *āvaṭṭagāho*, 'the whirlpool', means the fivefold sensual pleasures (*pañca-kāma-sampatti*). Falling prey to sensual pleasures is like being caught in a whirlpool. Next, *antopūti*, 'rotting from within', means living a life of immorality, evil, and non-celibacy while pretending to be a monk, though not being one. Living a corrupted, defiled life.

That is 'rotting from within'. If that happens, one cannot reach the final destination of Nibbāna, due to these mentioned obstacles.

At the time of this sermon, a cowherd named Nanda was standing near the Blessed One. This sermon struck Nanda the cowherd so deeply that he said: “Venerable Sir, I shall not drift to this bank, nor to the outer bank. I shall not sink in mid-stream, nor run aground. I shall not be taken by human beings, nor by non-human beings. I shall not be caught in a whirlpool, nor rot from within. Venerable Sir, may the Blessed One grant me ordination and higher ordination in this Dispensation!” The Blessed One said: “In that case, Nanda, go and hand over the herd of cows to their owner.” Nanda was so eager for ordination that he said: “Venerable Sir, these cows will find their own way back out of affection for their calves.” But the Blessed One insisted: “No, Nanda, go and hand over the cattle to their owner and then return.” Obeying this, Nanda went and returned the cattle, came back, received ordination, and by striving with great diligence, soon attained the noble fruit of Arahatship.

Here, many obstacles that exist after ordaining are mentioned, especially *manussaggāha* (being taken by human beings). To explain this further and make it more meaningful, the commentaries have elaborated on various points. In particular, if one ordains in old age, due to the connection to one's family, such a monk is called in the commentaries *samaṇa-kuṭumbika* (a monastic householder). *Kutumba* means family. *Kuṭumbika* means a family man. There is an old Sinhala word, *keḷembiyā*. Thus, he lives as a “monastic householder.” He did not completely break that bond. To illustrate this, the commentaries give a simile: there is a tree on the riverbank whose roots are on land, but its leaves hang over and touch the river. If one lives such a life, engaging in lay activities and doing what one did during lay life, it is equivalent to “being taken by human beings.”

The Blessed One pointed out the subtle obstacles to the ordained life in this manner. Beyond the defilements that appear coarse, gross, and rough externally, there are subtler levels of defilements. It is in this Dispensation of the Buddha that these have been brought to light, and the way to overcome them has been shown. The Blessed One delivered various discourses on different occasions to the monks, giving instructions on how to overcome defilements at those respective levels. A highly valuable discussion on this is mentioned in the Dhamma.

This is a Dhamma discussion between Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja and King Udeni. The discussion took place at the Ghositārāma in Kosambī. When Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja visited Ghositārāma, King Udeni—who was not yet a Buddhist at the time—came and asked Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja the following question. Lacking real faith, he addressed the Venerable One by his clan name, “Bhāradvāja.”

“Bhāradvāja, how is it that young monks with black hair, in the prime of their youth, can live the holy life (*brahmacariya*) for their entire lives? What is the secret to this? What is the reason?” Then Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja declared: “Great King, our Blessed One has delivered this discourse: 'Come, monks, with regard to women who are of the age of your mother, arouse the perception of a mother, arouse the mind towards them as a mother.

With regard to women of the age of your sister, arouse the perception of a sister. With regard to women of the age of your daughter, arouse the perception of a daughter.' Such a discourse has been delivered."

When this was said, the King replied: "Bhāradvāja, the mind is of a very fickle nature. Sometimes, lustful thoughts can arise even towards a mother, a sister, or a daughter. Is there any other instruction delivered by the Blessed One to help these monks complete the holy life?" Thereupon, Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja declared:

"Yes, Great King, the Blessed One has also delivered this discourse: 'Monks, contemplate the body from the soles of the feet up to the hair on the head as foul (*asubha*).' Lay devotees, you know the discourse related to the meditation on foulness (*paṭikūlasaññā / asubha-bhāvanā*) where the thirty-two parts of the body are mentioned; that is presented here as being helpful."

At that, the King said: "Bhāradvāja, for one who has developed virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*), that meditation might take root in the mind. But sometimes, when one tries to contemplate the foul, it might appear beautiful (*subha*). Such confusion can occur. Apart from this, is there any other discourse to help monks live the holy life?"

Then, for the third time, Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja declared: "The Blessed One has also delivered this discourse: 'Come, monks, practice restraint. Be restrained regarding the eye. When seeing a form with the eye, do not grasp its sign (*nimitta*) or its details (*anuvyañjana*). Do not grasp signs and details. Live with the door of the eye-faculty guarded (*guttadvāra*). Close the doors as required for sensory restraint.'" He presented the complete discourse that constantly mentions sense-restraint (*indriya-saṁvara*).

He also explained why one must close them: "In order to prevent the influx of taints (*āsava*) associated with greed and hatred, constantly guard those doors. Close those doors." The discourse on sense-restraint was presented. Hearing this, King Udeni was highly pleased and said: "Bhāradvāja, this indeed is the true reason that helps monks maintain the holy life." Thus, the King expressed his appreciation.

Although this king was a sensualist enjoying royal pleasures, he added his own experience with his harem and made this statement regarding the nature of this Dhamma: "Bhāradvāja, on certain days, when I enter the harem without guarding my body, speech, and mind, without mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), and without sensory restraint, my mind becomes highly overcome by greed. But when I enter the harem with body, speech, and mind guarded, possessed of sensory restraint and mindfulness and clear comprehension, such defilements do not flow into me." Having validated the third point through his own experience, King Udeni praised it highly: "How wonderful, Bhāradvāja, that the Blessed One has delivered such a teaching!" and he went for refuge to the Triple Gem on that very spot. In such instances, the passage in the texts usually reads: "Excellent, Venerable Sir! The teaching of the Blessed One is superb. From this day forward, I go for refuge to the Buddha, the

Dhamma, and the Saṅgha for as long as life lasts." It was on that occasion that King Udeni went for refuge. Whichever way defilements are suppressed, King Udeni connected it to his own personal experience.

Let us consider the latency / underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) we mentioned earlier. In this day and age, various views (*diṭṭhi*) have arisen regarding doctrines like the underlying tendency (*anusaya*), without much concern for the mind. There is a group that thinks, "As soon as we close the five senses, we can conquer these defilements." It is true that the texts speak of six senses. But in some places, it is mentioned that the five external senses are on the periphery, while the mind-faculty (*manindriya*), the sixth, is in the center. There is a statement of the Blessed One: "Monks, the five external senses—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—have their own distinct domains, their own unique pastures. The eye ranges over forms, the ear over sounds, the nose over smells, and so on."

"Having ranged in their respective pastures, whatever pasture they bring back, the mind-faculty (*manindriya*) in the center consumes it all." What is brought by all five is deposited in the mind. That is where the deepest part lies. Therefore, what filters through this vast accumulation gathered over a long time in Saṁsāra are the taints (*āsava*). It is referred to by words such as *āsava* and *anusaya*. Underlying tendency (*anusaya*) means "lying dormant beneath." Defilements have three stages: underlying tendency (*anusaya*), arousal (*pariyuṭṭhāna*), and transgression (*vītikkama*). *Anusaya* is the latent state of defilements, lying dormant as if asleep. *Pariyuṭṭhāna* is the stage of arousal. *Vītikkama* is the stage where they become strong enough to break a precept. The cause of this underlying tendency (*anusaya*) is a collection of saṁsāric habits we have formed through this accumulation. Overcoming them is not easy.

The Blessed One delivered another sublime discourse on one occasion. While residing in the village of Kajangalā, there was a brahmin named Pārāsarī. His student was Uttara. One day, this student Uttara came to see the Blessed One, and after exchanging pleasantries, sat to one side. The Blessed One asked: "Uttara, is it true that your teacher, Pārāsarī, teaches a certain meditation?" "Yes, our teacher teaches a development of the faculties (*indriya-bhāvanā*)." "What is that meditation?" When asked, he replied: "Master Gotama, one does not see forms with the eye, and one does not hear sounds with the ear. This is the development of the faculties taught by our teacher Pārāsarī."

Then the Blessed One remarked: "If that is so, Uttara, then a blind person has developed his faculties, and a deaf person has practiced this restraint. For a blind person does not see, and a deaf person does not hear." The Blessed One did not accept this. Closing the eyes, ears, and nose is not the development of faculties. When this was said, Uttara was silenced, looking down at the ground without a word. But the Blessed One, turning to Ven. Ānanda, said: "Ānanda, the development of faculties taught by Pārāsarī is one thing. But the supreme development of faculties (*anuttarā indriya-bhāvanā*) in this Dispensation is quite another." Then Ven. Ānanda invited him: "Now is the time, Blessed One, to explain this matter."

Thereupon, the Blessed One, using similes, delivers an extraordinarily deep discourse on sensory restraint regarding the six senses. “Here, Ānanda, when a monk sees a form with the eye, there arises what is agreeable (*manāpa*), what is disagreeable (*amanāpa*), or what is both agreeable and disagreeable. Then he understands: 'Now, there has arisen in me what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, or what is both. And that is prepared (*saṅkhataṁ*), coarse (*oḷārikaṁ*), dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppannaṁ*).'” Here, deep terms are expressed: “This is prepared, this is coarse, this is dependently arisen, born of conditions, arisen due to contact (*phassa*). In contrast, he thinks: 'This is peaceful, this is sublime, namely, equanimity (*upekkha*).'” Thus, he quickly removes the agreeable, disagreeable, or both, and rapidly brings the mind to equanimity. This is not as easy as it sounds. But the Blessed One is explaining sensory restraint at the highest level. The similes he gives are truly wonderful.

“Just as, Ānanda, a man with sight might blink his eyes—opening a closed eye or closing an open eye—with such speed, as fast as a blink, he removes the agreeable and disagreeable states regarding the form seen with the eye and brings the mind to equanimity.” Here, the Blessed One used the eye itself as a simile to illustrate restraint of the eye. This is sensory restraint of the eye. In truth, it is the mind that is restrained. Because defilements arise by looking again and again, one establishes sensory restraint. Deeper still, even if one turns the eyes away, if the agreeable and disagreeable attitudes continue, sensory restraint is not complete. There, one applies wisdom (*paññā*): “This is impermanent (*anicca*), dependently arisen, prepared by myself, and coarse. What is peaceful and sublime is equanimity.” He brings the mind to equanimity. Reflecting with wisdom, he removes the agreeable and disagreeable states born of contact through the eye and establishes the mind in equanimity.

That was the simile for the eye. “Similarly, Ānanda, when hearing a sound with the ear, there arise agreeable thoughts, disagreeable thoughts, or both. At that moment, he reflects: 'Now, these have arisen in me. This is dependently arisen, born of conditions, arisen due to contact (*phassa*), and it is coarse and impermanent (*anicca*).' Then he thinks: 'This is peaceful, this is sublime,' and brings the mind to equanimity. Even after the sound has ceased, if that sound continues to echo and re-echo within the mind through agreeable and disagreeable thoughts, a long conceptual proliferation (*papañca*) goes on. Quieting it right there, he brings the mind to equanimity. The simile given for this: just as a strong man might snap his fingers with ease. A finger-snap is done in an instant and produces a brief sound. As soon as the snap is made, the sound is gone. Likewise, for restraint of the ear, the Blessed One gives the sound itself as a simile.

Next, regarding the nose. When smelling an odor with the nose—be it pleasant or unpleasant—and agreeable, disagreeable, or mixed feelings arise, he reflects in the same way: 'This is dependently arisen due to contact (*phassa*), and it is coarse,' and brings the mind to equanimity. The simile for this: 'Just as, Ānanda, if a few drops of water were to fall on a lotus leaf, they would roll off as soon as the leaf is slightly tilted. *Udabindu yathāpi padumapatte*.' Just as dew drops do not remain on a slightly tilted lotus leaf, he removes the agreeable and disagreeable feelings regarding the smell. The lotus leaf

simile is somewhat related to the nose and scent. The Blessed One gave this simile so that it is easy to remember.

Next, regarding the tongue. When tasting a flavor, when agreeable, disagreeable, and other defiled thoughts flow continuously, he reflects in the same way: 'This is arisen due to contact (*phassa*).' Food is not tasty simply by being on the table, nor when brought forward, nor when held in the hand. It is tasty only when it touches the tongue—just for that brief moment. It is due to contact (*phassa*) that flavor arises. But we attribute it to the dish. That is why saliva flows just by looking at the dish. This is the way of the ordinary world. But when practicing mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), one realizes: 'That flavor is neither in the dish, nor in the tongue. It exists only when the two collide.' That is why it is dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppanna*) and prepared (*saṅkhata*). It is a coarse, rough thing. So at that moment, without letting it go further, he brings the mind to equanimity. The simile here is also related to the tongue: 'Just as a strong man might collect a spit of saliva on the tip of his tongue and spit it out without much effort.' Likewise, discarding the craving (*taṇhā*) for flavor, and the agreeable and disagreeable feelings as quickly as possible, is what is called the noble, highest level of sensory restraint (*ariyo bhāvitindriyo*).

Next, regarding the body. When a tactile sensation is felt by the body, and agreeable, disagreeable, or mixed thoughts arise, he reflects: 'It is because the mind went to this contact (*phassa*) that this division into agreeable and disagreeable arose based on pleasure and pain. This is an attitude.' Reflecting with wisdom that equanimity is peaceful while the other is coarse, he brings the mind to equanimity through wisdom. The simile for this: 'Just as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm, or bend his stretched arm.'

You have heard this simile often. How quickly a strong man can bend or extend his arm—just like that. With such speed, he removes the agreeable and disagreeable thoughts arisen through contact with the body and brings the mind to equanimity. Next comes the mind (*manas*)—the aspect of the mind-faculty. This is indeed the deepest part. An object comes to the mind-faculty; it could be something external or something generated from within. When an object comes to the mind, and an agreeable or disagreeable state arises, he understands: 'This is a dependently arisen, coarse thing made by myself through contact (*phassa*),' and quickly brings the mind to equanimity. The simile for bringing the mind to equanimity is also very subtle: 'Just as a strong man drops a few drops of water onto an iron pan that has been heated all day. The drops of water fall slowly, but even before they hit, as soon as they touch the hot iron, they evaporate.' This is to show the rapid speed. Regarding the mind, when the object is removed with such speed, that is when true nobility is spoken of.

This points to something highly valuable regarding meditation. When speaking of Vipassanā meditation, you lay devotees have often heard of attention (*manasikāra*). There are two sides to this attention: unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) and radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Throughout Saṁsāra, we have practiced unwise

attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). Our thinking regarding objects coming through the senses goes further and further. The simile for this, which we often recall, is like a deer chasing a mirage. When the deer sees it, thinking it is water, it runs. It does not reflect with wisdom on how it arose. It does not consider the relationship or the gap between itself and what appears in the distance. Thinking of it as a real thing, it runs and runs without end. That is where unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) lies.

Yoni means the place of origin, the source, the starting point. Without considering that, one takes the distant object firmly and runs after it. That is *ayoniso*. What the Blessed One brings to light is radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Through radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), one understands where it arose. It is neither from this end, nor from that end, but when the two meet. That is what is called contact (*phassa*). Grasping that moment as self (*attā*). Instead of taking it as self, the idea here is to dissolve it at each point. The mind understands that phenomenon (*dhamma*). Instead of thinking about it further, he considers it as dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppanna*) and coarse (*oḷārika*), and brings the mind to equanimity right there.

That is where the underlying tendency (*anusaya*) becomes active. If one succumbs to that underlying tendency (*anusaya*), there arises thought (*vitakka*), and then conceptual proliferation (*papañca*). That means, because of misapprehending the object that came to the mind via contact (*phassa*), one might sometimes succumb to a stream of thoughts like a daydream for minutes. One becomes so absorbed in them that one does not even realize what one is doing. This is conceptual proliferation (*papañca*). To prevent this, rapid attention (*manasikāra*) is necessary. The water drop on the hot iron pan is the simile for this rapid action. When water drops fall on a pan heated all day, you see them fall, but you don't even see the speed of their evaporation. The Blessed One shows that attention must be that rapid. From these points, we can understand that merely restricting sensory restraint or virtue (*sīla*) to the five physical senses is not in accordance with the Dhamma. There is something much deeper in the mind. The sixth sense, the mind-faculty, lies in the center of the five, and we have carried it with us for a long time in Saṁsāra. That is why there is a sleeping, dormant part of these defilements as underlying tendencies (*anusaya*).

On another occasion, the Blessed One asked the monk Mālunkyaputta: “What are the fetters (*saṁyojana*)?” Just as any of us would answer, Ven. Mālunkyaputta replied: “Dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), adherence to rules and vows (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), and ill-will (*vyāpāda*).” Sometimes they are also listed as sensual lust (*kāmarāga*) and aversion (*paṭigha*). These fetters are the bonds that bind us to Saṁsāra. Ten fetters are mentioned as the ten fetters (*dasa saṁyojana*). The first five—*sakkāya-diṭṭhi, vicikicchā, sīlabbata-parāmāsa, kāmacchanda, vyāpāda*—are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya-saṁyojana*) that pull us down to this side. Those that pull upwards, towards the Brahma worlds, are lust for form (*rūparāga*), lust for the formless (*arūparāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). It is said that all ten must be conquered to end the suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṁsāra and to prevent the state of rebirth (*jāti*). Here, we are speaking of

the first five. But the Blessed One did not approve of the answer given, perhaps to clarify a certain misconception held by the monk Mālunkyaputta. The Blessed One declared: “Well, Mālunkyaputta, other sectarians might ask you this question: 'Where is the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) in a tiny infant lying on its back?'”

You lay devotees have heard about the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). The Blessed One declared that an ordinary worldling has a twenty-fold view regarding the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*): form, feeling, perception, preparations, and consciousness (*rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa*). Taking each of these as self: “This is mine, this I am, this is my self.” Either one takes form as self, or thinks there is a self within form, or that form is within self, or that self possesses form. In this way, four modes for each of the five aggregates make twenty views. This is called the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*).

So the Blessed One says: “Mālunkyaputta, other sectarians might say: 'How can a newborn infant have the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)?' *Sakkāya* means the feeling that 'there is a body'. Even that is not present in an infant lying on its back. How can the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) arise? But this is the reason: the underlying tendency of the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi-anusaya*) exists within that child. However small, the underlying tendency carried over a long time in Saṁsāra remains. It is not something arising solely from the external five senses. That is why we say this cannot be resolved by limiting it to the five senses. It is something embedded within mind-consciousness (*manoviññāṇa*) over a long journey in Saṁsāra. Thus, we speak of the underlying tendency of the dogma of self-illusion.”

“Similarly with doubt (*vicikicchā*). An infant lying on its back does not even have the concept of 'things' or phenomena (*dhamma*). So where is doubt regarding the Dhamma? Someone might ask this. Where is doubt in a small child? But the Blessed One speaks of the underlying tendency of doubt (*vicikicchā-anusaya*). The underlying tendency of doubt exists even in that infant stage. That is what later turns into active doubt.”

Doubt (*vicikicchā*) means indecision, skepticism. Adherence to rules and vows (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) means grasping firmly onto precepts and vows, as seen in other religions—like brahmins bathing in water to wash away sins, or observing vows to live like cattle or dogs, believing that suffering (*dukkha*) can be ended through such practices; grasping such wrong views. “How can adherence to rules and vows (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) exist in a small infant? Someone might ask. But the Blessed One declares that the underlying tendency of adherence to rules and vows (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa-anusaya*) exists even within that small infant. The child does not even have the concept of virtue (*sīla*), yet the underlying tendency of adherence to rules and vows remains.”

“Next, regarding sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*). An infant lying on its back has no concept of sensuality, nor does it know anything about sensuality. Yet, the underlying tendency of sensual lust (*kāmarāga-anusaya*), the underlying tendency of sensual desire, exists within that child. Likewise, ill-will (*vyāpāda*), which is hatred. A small child has no concept of 'others'. The infant lying on its back does not even have the

notion of 'this person' or 'that person'. Yet, the underlying tendency of that defilement of ill-will (*vyāpāda-anusaya*), of hatred, exists within that child. From this, we must understand that the Blessed One has brought to light the levels of defilements deposited in the mental continuum over a long period in Saṁsāra. These are what are referred to by terms like *āsaya* (disposition), underlying tendency (*anusaya*), and taint (*āsava*). He declares that as long as these are not eradicated, there is no escape from Saṁsāra. As a method of eradicating them, he advises reducing as much as possible the habit of grasping thoughts that arise regarding what is seen through the eye."

"The ordinary worldling looks at all experiences through the attitude: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self' (*etaṁ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā*). Through this, grasping (*upādāna*) is performed. The five aggregates of grasping (*upādānakkhandha*) are five grasped heaps. They are grasped in the manner mentioned: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self.' It is by thinking of them and treating them in these three ways that they accumulate as grasping (*upādāna*). Therefore, one must constantly develop the opposite attitudes: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self' (*n'etaṁ mama, n'esohamasmi, na me so attā*). These three attitudes are characterized by craving, conceit, and views (*taṇhā, māna, diṭṭhi*). The attitude born of craving (*taṇhā*) is 'this is mine'. Treating it with conceit (*māna*) is 'this I am'. Grasping it as a view (*diṭṭhi*) is 'this is my self'. One might not know what 'self' is, but somehow one grasps it as something permanent: 'This is my self.' A person who has grasped something as fuel/holding (*upādāna*) treats it as his own, as a sign of his self-identity, and thinks of it as the real essence and substance of his entire life. It is through these attitudes of craving, conceit, and views that the underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) are formed, as the Blessed One has brought to light on many occasions."

"So we are told to hold the opposite attitude. To eliminate the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), it means bringing those experiences to equanimity as quickly as possible. In passages discussing feeling (*vedanā*), it is mentioned that the underlying tendency to lust (*rāgānusaya*) lies beneath pleasant feeling (*sukha-vedanā*). Within pleasant feeling, the underlying tendency to lust—which is attachment—operates subtly. Beneath painful feeling (*dukkha-vedanā*), there lies the underlying tendency to aversion (*paṭighānusaya*), which is conflict."

"Sometimes seven underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) are listed. Thus, there are two sides. Beneath pleasant feeling lies the underlying tendency to lust. Beneath painful feeling—because we dislike it and clash with it—lies the underlying tendency to aversion, dormant. Next is the neutral feeling, neither-painful-nor-pleasant (*adukkhamasukha-vedanā*). In the ordinary world, this is experienced by many as a neutral, middle feeling. On one side is pleasant feeling, on the other is painful feeling, and in between lies the neutral state of neither-painful-nor-pleasant. But the ordinary person cannot clearly discern this middle state. Therefore, ignorance (*avijjā*) prevails regarding it."

"Therefore, the Blessed One declares that beneath neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling lies the underlying tendency to ignorance (*avijjā-anusaya*). That too is an underlying tendency (*anusaya*). There is an underlying tendency of ignorance. Ignorance means not

knowing. A subtle form of not knowing operates there. That is why the Blessed One points out that one must emerge from pleasant feeling—leaving behind the underlying tendency to lust beneath it—and from painful feeling—leaving behind the underlying tendency to aversion associated with it. Then, there is the neutral feeling. It is from there that one walks the path to Nibbāna. Beneath neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling lies the underlying tendency to ignorance (*avijjā-anusaya*). To eliminate that underlying tendency to ignorance, one must activate and vitalize the speed of attention (*manasikāra*), the act of reflection. That is why meditators in Vipassanā are told to note every single thing, reflecting on whatever arises right there. According to the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), because everything is impermanent (*anicca*), it exists only for an extremely brief moment. One reflects on it in that moment and lets it go, recognizing its impermanent nature, directly experiencing its impermanence."

"In Vipassanā regarding the six senses, it is by reflecting on whatever arises right there that the underlying tendency to ignorance (*avijjā-anusaya*) is discarded and true knowledge (*vijjā*) arises. Where ignorance is discarded, knowledge remains. Knowledge means wisdom (*paññā*), light. It is through this that one can realize Nibbāna. The Blessed One brought these levels to light. The ordinary world thinks that through the story of the five physical senses alone, this saṁsāric suffering can be ended. Those who hold certain views take this lightly. Especially in this day and age, there are very popular views. There are new methods of achieving these states easily by staying at home, just listening to a couple of sermons, and doing meditation superficially. Some people bring these forward, and many are drawn to them. The reason for this is ignoring the existing underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) and taints (*āsava*)."

"But the Blessed One brings them to light. Even in an innocent child lying on its back, who knows absolutely nothing, those underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) exist. That is what we must contemplate. When we fondle a child, we think, 'Oh, what an innocent child, knowing absolutely nothing.' It is not that the child knows nothing; everything is there inside, asleep, dormant. Just like the child, they are asleep. That is what the Blessed One brings to light. We must contemplate this state. Therein lies the depth of this Dhamma. The Blessed One presented a course of practice suited to this through the development of radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) in meditation."

"In fact, you lay devotees have heard that the more one contemplates with such depth that which the ordinary world regards as self, the more one sees that there are only these phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). These phenomena merely arise and pass away at each moment. There is no place where taking it as 'I' or 'mine' makes any sense. When reflecting subtly, the Vipassanā meditator sees instantaneous changes everywhere. The ordinary worldling does not see this because he ignores the relationship of cause and effect. He is stuck and submerged in that view, like the deer seeing the mirage in the distance and taking it to be water."

"The Blessed One brings to light that nothing exists in isolation. Everything arises out of a vast web of causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*). When considering that web of causes and conditions, none of these has any foundation; not a single one is permanent

(*anicca*). Grasping them as self is futile. It turns out to be futile and empty (*suñña*). It is this that one must realize for oneself. These are stated in books, but no matter how much one memorizes them, it is through actual practice that the meditator, the one who applies himself, must understand. That is why it is said: *paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhī*—to be personally experienced by the wise. The path to this is shown by the Blessed One: undertaking virtue (*sīla*), establishing oneself in Vipassanā, taking up a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and practicing with a concentrated mind. A concentrated mind is a sharp mind. Through that mind, one gains the strength to reflect right there. When reflecting with an alert mind, one sees that nothing remains even for a single moment. Furthermore, the ordinary world is trapped in grasping a 'perception of compactness' (*ghana-saññā*). What appears as compact, as a single unit, is seen by the Vipassanā meditator as a multiplicity."

"Just as looking at a waterfall from a distance, but as one gets closer, the process there is caught in a truly wonderful way as a flow of arising and passing away—bringing the mind to a state where a flow of arising and passing away is seen wherever one looks. It is through that path of Vipassanā that, at some point, a succession of Vipassanā knowledges regarding arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*) is developed. The ordinary saṁsāric being strives to create preparations (*saṅkhāra*). But the attention of the one who hopes for Nibbāna, who hopes to end Saṁsāra, is directed more towards dissolution (*bhaṅga*). Even faster than they arise, they are seen to dissolve; as one's disenchantment with this increases, this vision matures."

"Then, through contemplating the fear and danger in that dissolution, Vipassanā matures at some point. There comes a stage where a certain equanimity regarding preparations (*saṅkhārūpekkhā*) arises. There is no attachment to preparations (*saṅkhāra*), nor any aversion. External things go on, but there is no clinging to them. There is a certain peace there. But going even further, by contemplating through the three characteristics—impermanent, suffering, and non-self (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*)—at some point, as the Blessed One points out, one turns away from the prepared (*saṅkhata*) state to reach the Unprepared (*asaṅkhata*): 'the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation' (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha sabbūpadhi-paṭinissagga taṇhakkhaya virāga nirodha*). This should be the expectation. The prepared state is coarse and rough. The Unprepared (*asaṅkhata*) is what the Blessed One points out as peaceful and sublime. That supreme equanimity is born of the stilling of preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Meditators of tranquility (*samatha*) experience a certain peace within preparations at the level of Jhana, but it is not pure."

"Beyond that, the Blessed One showed the complete stilling of these preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) must be stilled to escape from this ignorance (*avijjā*). For ignorance to be destroyed, wisdom (*paññā*) must arise. When darkness is removed, light arrives. Coinciding with the removal of darkness, there is a light. This is what is referred to in some places as the luminous mind (*pabhassara-citta*): 'Monks, this

mind is luminous, but it is defiled by visiting defilements.' The ordinary person does not know this, which is why they do not turn to meditation."

"But the noble disciple, the meditator, knows well that there is this luminosity of the mind. It is not something hidden beneath, but a potential. Understanding this, one must begin to empty this mind, to remove those defilements in that manner. When that is done, it is the Unprepared (*asaṅkhata*) element, which is Nibbāna. There comes a time when that luminous mind is not seen by the dark, blind world. That is the stage of the cessation of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana-nirodha*). When the cessation of existence/becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) is also realized through the cessation of the sense-bases, it is as if one has died in this very world before actual death, yet without fear. That is why it is called the Deathless (*amata*). The Deathless element (*amata-dhātu*) is indeed this. Therefore, this Nibbāna is not a permanent real world existing somewhere beyond death. One must understand that it is to be experienced right here in this very life, within the mind itself."

"Today, if you have undertaken a valuable virtue (*sīla*), and if you have practiced meditation based on that virtue, and also if you have used this sermon to help fulfill the qualities of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*), may this merit of listening to the Dhamma be a cause for all of us to realize right here in this life that noble, great Nibbāna—the escape from birth, aging, illness, and death (*jāti, jarā, vyādhi, marana*)—as quickly as possible before this Dispensation declines! From the Avīci hell up to the Akanitha heaven, whoever wishes to rejoice in this merit of sharing and listening to the Dhamma, may they, through that rejoicing, end the suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṁsāra by realizing their aspired Bodhi!" With this aspiration, recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"

Pahankanuwa Sermon #170

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.143)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One)

Pali Stanza:

"Ramaṇīyāni araññāni,

yattha na ramatī jano,

vītarāgā ramissanti,

na te kāmagavesino."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 99 (Arahanta Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Blessed One pointed out the forest environment as the most suitable environment for the yogic practitioner (*yogāvacara*) who enters meditation with Nibbāna as his goal. Just as in the Buddha's discourses, the inspired utterances (*udāna* verses) of the Elders and Nun-Elders also praise the bliss of solitude experienced by a yogic practitioner (*yogāvacara*) in a forest environment. The verse chosen as our theme today is also an instructive utterance issuing from the sacred mouth of the Blessed One, showcasing the value of the forest. The occasion for the preaching of this verse is said to be a problem that arose for an alms-gathering monk who, having received a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from the Blessed One, went to meditate in a deserted park.

After his almsround, he went to an abandoned, deserted park and sat in meditation under a tree. At that time, a courtesan of that city—referred to in ancient times as a *nagara-sobhini* (city-beauty), a prostitute—was waiting for a certain man with whom she had made an appointment to meet at a particular spot. He did not arrive. Wandering here and there, she entered that deserted park and saw this monk seated in meditation. Seeing him, she thought, "This too is a man; I must seduce him," and approaching him, she began to display various feminine wiles, clapping and laughing. It was the custom of the Blessed One to constantly observe, from where He sat with His divine eye, those monks who, having received meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from Him, departed

for the forests. Not to mention other instances, it is often mentioned in Dhamma stories that He helped even the Great Venerable Moggallāna as occasion demanded. Here too, the Blessed One saw the absurd behavior of this woman who had come there. Seeing this, from within His Perfumed Chamber (*gandhakuṭi*), He projected a ray of light, appeared before that monk, and uttered this thematic verse, conveying the idea: "O monk, those places where sensualists cannot find pleasure are delightful to those free from passion." It is a short but extremely valuable verse.

"Ramaṇīyāni araññāni, yattha na ramatī jano"

Forests and jungles, of the sort where ordinary people do not find pleasure, are delightful. Why are they delightful?

"Vītarāgā ramessanti, na te kāmagavesino"

Passion-free noble ones develop an attachment to, or delight in, such places. Why? Because they are not seekers of sensual pleasures.

It is said that upon hearing this verse, that venerable monk directed his thoughts in a manner fully aligned with that meditation, attained Arahantship, and went to visit the Blessed One. Thus, from this short story, we can comprehend the meaning presented by the Blessed One in this verse. The delight in the forest that the Blessed One points to here is not the kind of attachment imagined by the pleasure-seekers and aesthetes of the world. The monk did not go for his meditation to a beautiful park where young men and women walk hand in hand enjoying themselves. He went to an abandoned, deserted park. Yet, a disappointed courtesan came there and created that entanglement. However, directing his mind in accordance with the Dhamma, he aroused a delight in Nibbāna and triumphed over that situation.

Based on this matter, there is much for us to reflect upon. The first word of this verse is "delightful" (*ramaṇīya*). When one hears this word, due to its inherent charm and the poetic feelings it evokes, it is difficult for someone even to comprehend the reason why the Blessed One employed that word. This verse clearly demonstrates the difference between the pleasure and attachment (*rati*) experienced by sensualists, and the bliss experienced by passion-free noble ones, or yogic practitioners (*yogāvacara*).

Why is it necessary to say something about this? In the Dhamma, two words are mentioned: *rati* (delight/attachment) and *arati* (dislike/discontent). Sometimes, the word-pairs *rati* and *abhirati* (intense delight), and *rati* and *anabhirati* (non-delight/discontent) are also mentioned. This needs to be explained. The Buddha's advice to a monk is that neither *rati* nor *arati* is good. Here, *rati* refers to sensual delight (*kāma-rati*). Therefore, sensual delight is not good. Similarly, what is meant by *arati*? Dislike or lack of delight regarding higher wholesome qualities (*adhikusala-dhamma*). A monk, therefore, should possess delight in higher wholesome qualities. That "non-delight" (*arati*) means longing for the lay life. That is not good.

This same idea of *arati* is referred to in some places as *anabhirati* (discontent). In the books, we read about dissatisfied monks who are tired of the monkhood and spend their time thinking about the household life, wondering when they can go back home. This is called *anabhirati*. Why? Because *abhirati* is a high-level delight—that is, the delight in higher wholesome qualities, in Dhamma discussions, and meditation. It is due to the lack of this *abhirati* (sublime delight) that one becomes attached to sensual delight (*kāma-rati*). So, we must not confuse the two. When looking at it from the perspective of the Dhamma, *rati* mentioned there refers to sensual delight. *Anabhirati* refers to the lack of delight in higher wholesome qualities. That too is not good. Therefore, it is *abhirati* that we must develop—*abhirati*.

In this concept of *abhirati*, there lies the very same idea of "delightful" (*ramaṇīya*), but in a noble sense. It is the delight in Nibbāna. It is called *nibbānābhirati*—delight in Nibbāna. That is wholesome. Just because the word "delightful" (*ramaṇīya*) is used, one must not think that all of this should be viewed from the perspective of an ordinary aesthete or pleasure-seeker. In the past as well as today, we sometimes hear of people going to these forests, not with bottles of alcohol, but those forest hermitages exist for the bliss of solitude. Three kinds of solitude (*viveka*) are mentioned in the Dhamma: physical solitude (*kāya-viveka*), mental solitude (*citta-viveka*), and solitude from substrates (*upadhi-viveka*). First, physical detachment, *kāya-viveka*, is necessary. Being in the midst of a crowd, known as *gaṇa-saṅgaṇikā* (socializing), often leads to the decline of one's spiritual strength. Therefore, separating oneself from the crowd, at least occasionally, is physical solitude. Next, physical solitude serves as a support for mental solitude (*citta-viveka*), which means removing the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and concentrating the mind. This must be attained in solitude, in silence. The silence of the forest environment and the natural surroundings support this. Finally, *upadhi-viveka* (solitude from substrates) means letting go of these five aggregates of grasping (*pañc-upādānakkhandha*) and experiencing the highest, supreme liberation of Nibbāna in an insight-oriented (*vipassanā*) sense.

Yet, pleasure-seekers who pay little attention to these matters sometimes enter a forest carrying a camera. Then, only the blooming flower is captured by the camera, not the fading flower. The pleasure-seeker's camera never captures the fading flower; it only captures the blooming flower. However, the yogic practitioner (*yogāvacara*) who enters that same forest carrying his subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) captures in his meditative attention (*manasikāra*) not only the blooming flower, but also the fading flower and the falling leaf. Furthermore, the pleasure-seeker has no liking for the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*), or the perception of loathsomeness (*paṭikūla-saññā*) taught in this Dhamma; he finds them utterly repulsive. He does not even want to hear about them. But the yogic practitioner enters those forests bearing those meditation subjects in mind, in order to develop them: attention to foulness, loathsomeness, and the perception of the impermanent (*anicca*).

It is not only the aforementioned pleasure-seekers who misunderstand these matters, but also certain aesthetes of this era who stand behind them. In the Dhamma, especially in the verses of the Elders and Nun-Elders, one finds the word "delightful" (*ramaṇīya*), along with descriptions of nature. Seizing upon these, some aesthetes forget that this Dhamma is a philosophy of dispassion (*virāga*) aimed at escaping *saṃsāra*, which is the very essence of the teaching. Like a greedy child picking raisins out of a cake, they gather the aesthetic portions of those verses and write theses, even doctoral dissertations, on aesthetic appreciation. Yet, this only suppresses the true essence of the Buddha's Dhamma. For what purpose did the Blessed One praise the forest environment? The yogis and yogic practitioners (*yogāvacara*) of the past spent their time with these verses as their background. They saw the impermanent (*anicca*) nature within the natural environment. From the flowing river, the falling leaf—from all of these, they learned something. They did not separate them from the teaching.

The yogic practitioner (*yogāvacara*) does not enter the forest with the distortions (*vipallāsa*) of the ordinary world—which regard the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, the foul as beautiful, the painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant, and the not-self (*anattā*) as self. Rather, he enters carrying the opposing, Dhamma-aligned perceptions. Moreover, while the forest environment, rock caves, and life among wild beasts strike fear into the ordinary pleasure-seeker, the yogic practitioner, with a mind of loving-kindness (*mettā*), experiences a unique bliss in that forest life, uniting with those animals in mind even if not speaking with them in words. Pleasure-seekers cannot understand this, nor is it captured by a camera. We must remind ourselves of these matters because spiritual values are increasingly being swept away by the great flood of worldliness. In order to direct our attention to these things, some valuable stories from the Buddha's life are contained in this literature.

A very valuable occasion is when the Blessed One spent a cold night in the Siṃsapā (Aṭṭeriya) forest on a cattle path in the city of Āḷavī. That morning, the royal prince Hatthaka Āḷavaka, while walking for exercise, entered this forest, saw the Blessed One seated on a bed of Siṃsapā leaves, paid homage, sat to one side, and asked: "Venerable Sir, did the Blessed One sleep in comfort?" The Blessed One replied: "Yes, prince, I slept in comfort. Of those in the world who sleep in comfort, I am one." Then Hatthaka Āḷavaka said: "Venerable Sir, this is a winter night. It is the time of *antaraṭṭhaka* (the cold winter peak), when the snow falls and the cold is most severe. Furthermore, this ground is very rough, trodden by the hooves of cattle. The leaf-bed on which you sit is thin. The leaves on the trees are sparse. The Blessed One’s robes are thin and cold. The wind blowing around, the biting wind (*veramba* wind), is freezing. Yet, the Blessed One says, 'Prince, I slept in comfort. Of those in the world who sleep in comfort, I am one.'"

Then the Blessed One said: "Well then, prince, I will ask you a question. Answer as best as you can. Prince, suppose a householder or a householder's son has a gabled house (*kūṭāgāra*) plastered inside and out, let's call it a large mansion. In it, there is a large couch (*pallaṅka*). To describe it in modern terms, there is a highly luxurious bed with velvet spreads, and pillows and mattresses on both sides. On that bed lies this prince,

this householder. Nearby, a lamp is burning. There are also four attendants to serve his every need. What do you think, prince? Does that householder or householder's son sleep in comfort?" "Yes, Blessed One, he is indeed one of those in the world who sleep in comfort."

Then the Blessed One asks: "What do you think, prince? Could there arise in that householder or householder's son those physical and mental fevers born of lust (*rāga*) that would cause him to sleep in discomfort (*dukkha* - suffering)?" "Yes," the prince had to answer in that instance. Then the Blessed One declares: "If such fevers of lust and physical fevers arise, they have been cut off at the root in the Tathāgata. That is why the Tathāgata sleeps in comfort." In the same way, He asks: "Could there not arise in that householder or householder's son those physical and mental fevers born of hatred (*dosa*)?"

After the prince replies, "Yes," the Blessed One states that in the Tathāgata, those too are abandoned. "And the fevers born of delusion (*moha*)? They too are abandoned." Next, the Blessed One utters an inspired utterance declaring that the Tathāgata always sleeps in comfort. From this, we can understand that external things merely serve as a background for spiritual bliss. Yet, looking only at the exterior, one cannot comprehend this. Many such stories are mentioned in the Dhamma.

There is another such incident regarding the venerable monk Bhaddiya. At the time when the six Śākyan princes, including Anuruddha, went forth into homelessness together, Bhaddiya, who was actually not just a prince but a ruling king of the Śākyan clan, renounced his kingship and went forth. Having gone forth, whether he went to a forest, to the root of a tree, or to an empty place (*suññāgāra*), he would exclaim, "Aho sukhaṃ! Aho sukhaṃ!" The meaning of those Pāli words is, "Oh, what bliss! Oh, what bliss!" Hearing this, a group of monks thought that the Venerable Bhaddiya, having become dissatisfied with the holy life, was reflecting on his former royal happiness and expressing regret, sighing for it. They reported this to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: "Go in my name and tell him that the Teacher calls him." So, he was summoned. Having summoned him, the Buddha asked Ven. Bhaddiya: "Bhaddiya, is it true that whether you go to a forest, to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, you go about exclaiming 'Aho sukhaṃ, aho sukhaṃ'?" "Yes, Venerable Sir." "Why do you say so?" Then Ven. Bhaddiya replied: "Venerable Sir, when I was ruling as king, there were various security arrangements inside the inner palace and outside the inner palace. There were security arrangements inside the city and outside the city. There were security arrangements inside the district and outside the district. Even with all those security arrangements, I lived in constant fear of my life, in terror, agitation, and suspicion. But now, having entered the forest, I live in peace like a wild deer in the woods—in solitude, in bliss, without any fear whatsoever. That is why I exclaim in joy, 'Aho sukhaṃ!'" From this, we can see that Ven. Bhaddiya too was not thinking about royal pleasures, but was using that forest environment to experience the bliss of liberation attained through meditation.

There are many such Dhamma stories. Because ordinary people are very easily drawn away, the Blessed One, on many occasions, demonstrated the value of forest-dwelling not only through advice but also through His own example. A fine instance of this, which occurred not long after the Buddha's enlightenment, is recounted thus: When He traveled to the brahmin village of Icchānaṅgala in the Kosala country, He resided with a group of monks in the Icchānaṅgala forest tract near that village.

At that time, a monk named Nāgita was attending on the Blessed One. The following morning, those brahmin householders heard that the Blessed One had arrived. It was through the well-known formula, "Itipi so bhagavā arahaṃ sammāsambuddho...", that the rumor of a Buddha's arising spread in those days. Hearing this, those brahmin householders, thinking, "It is a great gain for us to see an Arahant," prepared delicious food and drinks, came to the entrance of the forest grove, and were making a great uproar, shouting and clamoring.

The Blessed One asked Ven. Nāgita: "Nāgita, what is this? Who are these people making such a clamor like fishermen? Who are these shouting like fishermen at a fish landing, fighting over fish?" Ven. Nāgita replied: "Venerable Sir, these are brahmin householders who have brought delicious food prepared for the Blessed One and the community of monks. May the Blessed One accept it!" Then the Blessed One said: "Nāgita, I have no need for fame, requisites, and retinue. I do not wish to be entangled with them," speaking in a rebuking tone. Once again, Ven. Nāgita pleaded: "Venerable Sir, please accept it! Wherever the Blessed One goes, a great crowd follows due to His fame. These brahmins and householders have prepared excellent alms." Again, the Blessed One declared: "Nāgita, I have no use for this fame and requisites. If one has the bliss of renunciation (*nekkhamma-sukha*), the bliss of seclusion (*paviveka-sukha*), the bliss of peace (*upasama-sukha*), and the bliss of self-awakening (*sambodhi-sukha*), one would not long for the excrement-like pleasure of gains, honor, and fame." The Blessed One went on to deliver a discourse as an admonition to Ven. Nāgita. The sermon is described in this manner:

"Nāgita, sometimes I see a monk sitting in concentration (*samādhi*) in a village monastery. I think: 'Although this monk is sitting in concentration, before long, either a novice (*sāmaṇera*) or a monastery attendant (*ārāmika*) will come and break his concentration.' Therefore, I am not pleased with the concentration or the dwelling of a monk in a village monastery." Then He says: "But, Nāgita, sometimes I see a monk nodding off in the forest. I think: 'Now this monk will dispel this drowsiness and direct his mind towards the perception of the forest (*araññña-saññā*).' For once one goes to the forest, there is a perception regarding the forest. 'Withdrawing his mind from diversity (*nānatta*), he will apply his mind to the forest-perception—to that perception— and concentrate his mind.' Therefore, even if that monk is nodding off, I am pleased with his forest-dwelling."

He continues: "Furthermore, Nāgita, sometimes I see a forest monk sitting, but his mind is not concentrated. Yet I think: 'Now this monk, in due course, will concentrate his unconcentrated mind and protect that concentration.' I am pleased with that monk’s

forest-dwelling. Next, the Blessed One adds: 'Behold, I see a certain monk sitting concentrated in the forest. I think: "Now this concentrated monk will quickly realize the liberation of Nibbāna and protect that mind." I am pleased with this monk's forest-dwelling.' Next, the Blessed One declares: 'I see a monk dwelling in a village monastery. Gains, offerings, and praise flow to him as a village-dweller. When these arrive, this monk loses his desire for forest-dwelling and secluded dwelling, and being overcome by them, he begins to dwell in villages, market towns, and kingdoms. I find no pleasure in that.'"

"'But sometimes I see gains, offerings, and praise flowing to a forest monk. Dispelling them, he does not succumb to them, but continues to spend his life in accordance with that secluded dwelling and forest-dwelling. I am pleased with that monk's way of life.'" All of this He expressed to the monk Nāgita. The final statement made by the Blessed One is extremely powerful:

"Nāgita, such is my love for forest-dwelling that when I am traveling on a long journey alone, along a solitary path, if I see no one ahead of me and no one behind me, I experience such ease that, not to mention anything else, even easing myself (passing excrement and urine) becomes comfortable for me." This is what the Blessed One is declaring. When I am in a forest environment where no one is visible either in front or behind, I do not have to worry even about such matters. Those activities are highly convenient for me. By this, the Blessed One is demonstrating secluded dwelling and its immense value. We must understand these as spiritual values of the Dispensation (*Sāsana*).

And the very same point presented to us by the Blessed One in connection with that Icchānaṅgala forest grove is what He demonstrated through His own life. On certain occasions, almost suddenly, the Blessed One would declare to the monks: "Monks, I wish to spend three months in seclusion (*paṭisallāna*)." This word *paṭisallāna* is also a highly valuable word in the Dispensation. Many people may not even know it. Practicing *paṭisallāna*—going into secluded retreat—is somewhat difficult. It is like withdrawing from society. The idea is to withdraw for meditation. *Paṭisallīna* means being withdrawn for meditation. So the Blessed One says: "I wish to spend three months in *paṭisallāna*," meaning He wishes to separate Himself from the crowd and dwell in the ease of seclusion for meditation. He further says: "Let no one approach me, except the single monk who brings me alms-food." Let no one else come for the entire three months except the monk who brings alms-food. The Blessed One lived in that manner.

You must have heard of another extremely valuable incident. It is a highly wondrous event. A group of monks in the city of Kosambī quarreled over a minor matter, dividing themselves into factions. Although the Blessed One admonished them, showing examples from various Jātaka stories, they did not accept them. Those monks even used words to the effect of: "We will settle this quarrel among ourselves. Let the Blessed One attend to His own bliss of solitude; we will show our own capabilities." The Blessed One reflected: "This life I spend in the midst of a crowd crowded with monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen, kings, royal ministers, heretics, and disciples of heretics is very difficult for

me. I live in discomfort (*dukkha* - suffering) surrounded by this crowd. Let me go alone into seclusion for a comfortable dwelling."

Without even telling His attendant in His forest monastery at Kosambī, the Blessed One went on His almsround, set His lodging in order Himself, took His bowl and robe, and set out, wandering by stages, eventually arriving at the well-known Pārileyyaka forest. How must the community of monks have felt? Without informing even His attendant, without telling the monks, He took His bowl and robe, walked a considerable distance by stages, and arrived at the Pārileyyaka forest. In that forest grove, known in those days as the Rakkhita forest tract of Pārileyyaka, He sat at the root of a tree. At that time, as a wondrous event, there was another parallel incident taking place.

This incident concerns a certain elephant king who lived in the Pārileyyaka forest, now known as the Pārileyya elephant. Even though it was an animal, we all know that the elephant is far more intelligent than ordinary animals. That elephant too had a train of thoughts similar to the one the Blessed One had: "My living in the midst of a huge herd of elephants, female elephants, and calves is a great hassle. Even if I break off a branch or leaf to eat, the calves come and snatch it away. I do not get to eat clean food. When I go down into the water, the calves come and muddy it, so I cannot even drink clean water. When I bathe and come out of the water, the female elephants rub against my body. This is a great nuisance. Let me also go into solitude." Thus, through some natural law, the Pārileyya elephant entered that forest, saw the Blessed One, and due to some past merit, developed great faith. It is recorded that he attended on the Blessed One in a most wondrous manner. He cleaned the area around the root of the tree, brought water with his trunk, and attended on Him for three months—this is indeed mentioned in the Dhamma.

Even a wild animal experienced oppression at some point due to living in crowded conditions. In the Dhamma, there is such a thing as a comfortable dwelling (*phāsu-vihāra*). Regarding going into solitude, He Himself declares: "I go into solitude, into secluded dwelling as one withdrawn (*paṭisallīna*), seeing two benefits. One is a pleasant dwelling in this very life (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*)." This means that the forest environment is the best place to properly experience the bliss of concentration (*samādhi-sukha*) and the bliss of fruition (*phala-sukha*) attained by the Blessed One. That is one. The other benefit, the other reason, is pointed out as "out of compassion for later generations" (*pacchima-janatā-anukampā*). When we hear "out of compassion for later generations," we might think: "Why? Isn't it a great loss when the Blessed One leaves? Can we imagine a Jetavana monastery without the Blessed One? When the Blessed One departs like that, it might seem as if there is no compassion."

But why was it said to be out of compassion for later generations? It was to set an example for the Dispensation (*Sāsana*). "Later generations" refers to the monks who would join the Dispensation after His passing. It allowed them room to reflect: "The Blessed One had nothing more to do; He had done everything that needed to be done and had fully secured His own liberation. Yet, even the Blessed One, who was complete in every way, went into solitude from time to time. He went into solitude for three

months." It is that example which is meant there. "Compassion for later generations" meant setting an example. He gave an example to the world. Similarly, the Great Arahant Mahākassapa, who was the foremost keeper of the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*) in this Dispensation, observed the thirteen ascetic practices. The Blessed One showed special appreciation and praise for him who observed strict practices such as forest-dwelling (*āraññaka*), alms-gathering (*piṇḍapātika*), and triple-robe wearing (*tecivarika*). All of this served as an example to prevent potential states of decline in the future Dispensation.

In the same way, we must reflect on these trees and plants. We must love these trees and plants; we must plant trees. We all know that three major events in the Blessed One's life took place under a tree: His birth, His Self-Awakening (*sambodhi*), and His final passing (*parinibbāna*). Thus, within a tree, there are many elements that help the world realize the truth. There is much to learn from a tree. In nature, we can obtain a vast array of lessons from a tree. In the ancient verses of the Elders, those like the Elder Tālapuṭa reflected from the perspective of insight (*vipassanā*): "When shall I become like a tree?" Because trees and plants have no consciousness (*viññāṇa*). One might think that trees and plants are far more fortunate than us. The leaves fall, but they do not cry. New shoots appear, but they do not laugh. Flowers bloom, but they do not laugh. Flowers fade, but they do not cry. Thus, these trees and plants live in harmony with nature and the natural environment. From this, the yogic practitioner (*yogāvacara*) can learn many things—the impermanent (*anicca*) nature, the not-self (*anattā*) nature, and also shelter: the shelter provided by a tree.

Not only during the Buddha's time, but even before that, many yogis lived right under trees in the Himalayas because it was easier to realize reality within a natural environment. Instead of the artificial, unnatural, and sometimes anti-Dhamma lives highlighted in society, one can draw out many lessons from nature, from a silent environment, and from the natural lives of wild beasts, to apply to one's own Dhamma studies and meditation.

Furthermore, not to mention anything else, living alone is often shown to support diligence (*appamāda*). The understanding that there is no time to delay within these unstable life affairs helps one walk the path of practice declared by the Blessed One. It is for these reasons, as you all know, that in some discourses regarding meditation such as the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, it is constantly mentioned: *araññagato vā rukkhamūlagato vā suññāgāragato vā* (gone to the forest, to the root of a tree, or to an empty place). Here, *araññagata* means entering the forest in that manner; *rukkhamūlagata* means at the root of a tree; and *suññāgāra* means empty houses. Empty houses are not suitable places for pleasure-seekers. Yet, empty houses—those empty places (*suññāgāra*)—as well as mountains, mountain caves, and even straw-stacks and such places of seclusion, are recorded as places where monks went for secluded meditation.

Why this secluded dwelling? It is to understand the deep portions of this Dhamma. In the Dhamma, regarding wisdom (*paññā*), three levels of knowledge are mentioned: that consisting in learning (*sutamayī*), that consisting in reflection (*cintāmayī*), and that

consisting in mental development (*bhāvanāmayi*). For that wisdom consisting in learning, study, reading books, and memorizing the scriptures (*pariyatti*) serve as supports. Through that, one recognizes the Buddha's word. One understands what must be done. Next, it is not enough for this to merely register in the mind in a general way. One must apply one's mind to it. When one understands it properly, one can arrive at certain conclusions through reflection (*cintāmayi*). This, too, occurs only if done with *yoniso manasikāra* (wise attention). If one begins to think in a distorted manner, as the aforementioned aesthetes do—gathering places where the word "delightful" (*ramaṇīya*) is mentioned in the Buddha's discourses to argue: "The Blessed One has shown the value of this *saṃsāra*. Who are these people presenting distorted interpretations such as meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*)?"—we see such arguments raised in certain articles by modern scholars. Seeing the descriptions of nature containing the word "delightful," some present arguments depicting meditation on foulness, attention to loathsomeness, and so forth as distorted things, as things that should not be practiced. But we must reflect with wisdom. We must apply wisdom consisting in reflection. *Yoniso manasikāra* means reflecting with wisdom. Otherwise, by following mere logic, one can arrive at wrong conclusions based on various other false views and dogmas. Now, even if the understanding obtained through wisdom consisting in reflection confirms to some extent the understanding obtained through learning, in order to directly realize it, meditation is absolutely necessary.

You know that Buddhist meditation has two aspects: serenity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Serenity, in particular, means concentrating the mind. When thinking about concentration (*samādhi*), especially regarding the first absorption (*jhāna*), it is said: *"saddakaṇṭakā jhānā vuttā bhagavatā"* (sounds are a thorn to the absorptions, so said the Blessed One). In the initial absorptions, sound is a thorn (*kaṇṭaka*). A *kaṇṭaka* means a prickle or thorn. That is why the Blessed One mentioned that a certain monk might be sitting in concentration in a village monastery, but someone might come and break it. It can easily be broken due to sounds. That is why those yogis of the past were constantly drawn to those quiet forest areas—because in those forest areas, that bliss of solitude, that silence is present.

Today, we know that you are forced to spend your lives in the midst of a great clamor, not only during the day but even at night. Even if such pleasure-seekers do not visit the ancient forest hermitages, protecting them means not only protecting them from external dangers but also preserving the forest environment itself. In order to protect the aforementioned solitude of the monks who spend their time in those hermitages, wise lay supporters (*dāyakas*) must reflect that support should not be offered through the gains, offerings, and praise of the kind Ven. Nāgita thought of.

In order to preserve those aspects and dimensions of the forest environment praised by the Blessed One as conducive to meditation, merit-seeking lay supporters must also render whatever timely help they can regarding the trees, plants, and surrounding environment, even if not one hundred percent. Furthermore, they themselves must derive benefit from it. For this life is extremely short. Even though we are able to

understand this Buddhas' speech, the word of the Buddha, we keep wishing for an opportunity to delve deep into it. Sometimes that opportunity may not even come. But at our level, even if there is no great forest, we should go under a tree, or under a Bodhi tree, and mentally visualize that Bodhi tree which stood in the center of Gayāsīsa in the great forest, and build up that concept of "the root of a tree" (*rukkhamūla*). For environment is extremely necessary.

Today, there is much talk about environmentalism. It seems there are many environmentalists. Yet, their love for the environment goes only to that physical level we mentioned. There is no spiritual value. If the value of a human being lies in spiritual strength, then what is needed is an environment that helps preserve those spiritual values. We must reflect on that too. We must plant trees and plants. We must protect trees and plants. A forest, a woodland must be protected for those very reasons, by anyone who desires solitude.

Sometimes, the lives in forest hermitages are disturbed by businessmen and brokers coming in search of firewood and such things. These are open secrets in society. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, pleasure-seekers turn those places into hideouts for their meetings—for meetings of defilements (*kilesa*). If you, devout friends, distance yourselves as much as possible from such trends, reflect on the antiquity of ancient forest lands, and take an interest in protecting and preserving the solitude of the monks at least to some extent, it will help preserve the valuable qualities of the Dispensation. Furthermore, using that example as occasion permits, you can also bring forth those concentration qualities into your own lives. Developing that serenity (*samatha*) and then insight (*vipassanā*), you must strive to develop a concentrated mind in accordance with it. *Samāhiṃ, bhikkhave, bhāvetha, samāhito yathābhūtaṃ passati.* "Monks, develop concentration! One who is concentrated sees things as they really are." This is the advice of our Buddha. Those "things as they really are" are what we spoke of: the impermanent (*anicca*) nature, the not-self (*anattā*) nature, and the foul nature. This is the reality, the true nature of everything in the world.

Therefore, if the yogic practitioner (*yogāvacara*) does not get caught up in aestheticism, he strives to develop that understanding. That is what insight (*vipassanā*) means. Seeing only the arising side of the world, thinking only about tomorrow morning, is how this world of worldlings (*puthujjana*) runs this great race. Going round and round on this merry-go-round of *saṃsāra*, seeing only the arising side of the world, they see only the blooming flower and close their eyes to the fading flower. Yet, the Blessed One reminds us that within an eon (*kappa*), within a body (*kaya*), within a day, and within a week, both arising and ceasing operate.

Seeing that is what is called insight (*vipassanā*)—a special seeing. For that special seeing, a concentrated mind is necessary, as explained. Concentration grows by suppressing the thoughts (*vitakka*) brought about by the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). That is what is called "village-perception" (*gāma-saññā*). In the Dhamma, the village-perception is mentioned as a perception of diversity (*nānatta-saññā*). Within a village, there is the perception of diversity. When living in a house, in a village, as you well know,

there are numerous massive entanglements of this era of globalization. These remain inside one's head.

Therefore, one must free the mind from them to some extent if one is to walk the path of the Dhamma. For that, drawing out a concentration theme (*samādhi-nimitta*) given by the Blessed One, even if there is no forest, one must go under a tree in one's home garden, and make an effort to establish concentration even by mentally imagining a forest. Choosing silent times, even with difficulty, one must try, for concentration grows within silence. Next, through that concentrated mind, instead of the farces of the world, instead of the farces of a city, one can see the reality of society, without hiding anything, within such a silent life in a natural environment. One can see the reality of the world—both arising and ceasing. There, too, the Blessed One specifically shows that in this person who has hitherto seen only the side of arising (*samudaya*), there arises a great delight regarding cessation (*nirodha*), regarding Nibbāna; that is what is called *rati*. One must develop a delight in Nibbāna—*nibbānābhirati*. One must develop a delight in cessation (*nirodha*). One must delight in escaping from this *saṃsāra*—escape (*nissaraṇa*). Escape instead of wandering (*saṃsaraṇa*).

For the sake of escape, having developed a concentrated mind as explained, reflect on the existence of natural trees and plants within that very silent environment. This body, which we have fed, watered, and spent money to maintain, will also one day become fertilizer for these trees and plants, will it not? Are these trees and plants not growing out of bodies that have decayed and dissolved into the earth, fertilized by them? Thus, one must see the equality of the four elements (*cattāro dhātuyo*). The four elements outside are earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). This body, this form that we protect with such love, also contains earth, water, fire, and wind.

You have heard that, as pointed out by the Blessed One, hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, and so forth belong to the earth element; urine, feces, saliva, and so forth belong to the water element; inhalation and exhalation belong to the wind element; and the heat in the body belongs to the fire element. In this way, the four elements within the body and the four elements in the external world—in those trees, plants, mountains, and rivers—are identical. That is why the Elders like Tālapuṭa said: "When shall I balance this five-aggregate body and the external trees and plants equally? When shall I weigh them as equal?"

Today, we do not regard them as equal. We do not even grant those trees and plants the right to live. In a heartless manner—it is true that trees and plants do not have minds or hearts, but we destroy them in a heartless manner, sometimes acting with what seems like hatred towards nature, without any compassion for them. Instead, if we reflect: "What is there and what is here is the same. This cherished body will also one day become fertilizer. There is nothing special other than that." Thus, by reflecting humbly in that manner, one can draw out insight (*vipassanā*) even from those things.

When the trees, plants, and other existing things in a forest environment are captured by the eye of insight (*vipassanā*), they yield profound insights that cannot be found in

books or seen by ordinary people. In the past, they brought realization to Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, Great Arahants, and sometimes even to ancient yogis and sages. Although we did not specifically state it as our theme, it is fine to regard this as an eco-friendly discourse of sorts. Yet, this is not merely the environmental struggle as imagined by the world. It has a far more valuable meaning than just protecting the physical environment. We cannot say our life is saved merely because we can breathe. We must reflect on why we breathe. Even if we live for a hundred years breathing well in an environment with a good atmosphere, it is of no use if we fail to realize the ultimate Dhamma declared by the Blessed One through that life.

Let us look again at the meaning of the verse spoken by the Blessed One. *Ramaṇīyāni araññāni, yattha na ramatī jano*. The ordinary world has no liking for environments suitable for solitude. Instead, they seek sensual pleasures and enter them for that. Yet, the yogis of the past, as well as Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Great Arahants, attained the highest spiritual heights within the forest. When we look at a tree, a leaf, or a forest, we must understand: "Here is an excellent environment to draw out the most valuable parts of our spirituality." Just as we protect it, we must also derive as much benefit from it as possible. Sometimes we look at the external world and search for the age of a rock or the soil of a mountain, using archaeological or various physical measurement methods. We conduct research on measurements and standards of things that are thousands or billions of years old—concerning the age of this earth, the age of these rocks. We measure the age of ancient things using various figures representing, in the words of the Buddha, billions of eons. But without being satisfied with that, we must reflect: if this earth grew over such a long period—a long period exemplified by these things—if these rocks, mountains, and rivers grew over such a vast span of time, how many times during that interval have we been born in this *saṃsāra*, not only as humans, but as animals, hungry ghosts (*petas*), demons (*yakkhas*), and hell-beings? That too is a lesson we can draw from the environment. Seeing a massive rock, a scientist might say that it took millions of years for it to solidify and form, and he might stop there. But we must project that onto ourselves. That rock has no consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It grew, indeed. But during that span of time, if the Buddha's word is true, what did we do while being born in this *saṃsāra* throughout that endless time? In the words of the Blessed One, it was *kaṭasivaḍḍhitaṃ*— we multiplied the cemeteries. In other words, we piled up skeletons.

If we condense this and look at it through the lens of the Four Noble Truths preached by the Blessed One, we see that the impermanent (*anicca*) nature of the entire external world, its instability, its changeability, as well as the numerous changes in the internal spiritual world—the Blessed One brought all of these together into a single word: *dukkha*. In Sinhala, it is just two letters, *du-ka*. Thus, what we have to study, what we have to understand, what we have to directly realize, is this very *dukkha*. We all say we understand *dukkha*, but we lack that full comprehension (*pariññā*). When the full comprehension of *dukkha* arises, simultaneously, the craving (*taṇhā*) lying beneath it is understood. Next, everyone knows that abandoning craving is what must be done. *Dukkhaṃ pariññeyyaṃ—dukkha* must be fully understood. Whenever the craving

(*taṇhā*) underlying it arises, it must be removed. Right there, then, lies the cessation of craving, the destruction of craving, which is Nibbāna—that extinguishing.

All of this is contained within the Four Noble Truths. We watch the accumulation of worldly knowledge grow through things like globalization. We wait for scientists to reveal all of these things to us. Yet, what the Blessed One presented to us was not worldly science. The world dwells in ignorance (*avijjā*). What a Buddha brought to light is true science (vision/knowledge - *vijjā*). That is precisely what is found in this Dhamma of the Four Noble Truths. Therefore, we must strive to understand that.

Whether we think of ourselves as individuals or as a group, each must accomplish this for oneself. The things that support this are those three kinds of solitude: physical solitude (*kāya-viveka*), mental solitude (*citta-viveka*), and solitude from substrates (*upadhi-viveka*). Therefore, no matter how much we live in society within our physical environment, we must occasionally seek solitude, find a space to breathe, and incline towards meditation. Next, being energetic through that, and without thinking that these are impossible in this era, one must make some effort to concentrate the mind within daily life. Relying on and associating with a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) like a friend—in accordance with the words *āsevita, bhāvita, bahulīkata* (cultivated, developed, practiced frequently)—one does not go with the world's current. As one gradually inclines towards the Dhamma, parts of that current are naturally abandoned. The yogic practitioner (*yogāvacara*) realizes their tastelessness and vanity. Departing from them, and gradually following what is valuable, when the mind becomes concentrated to some extent, one is able to understand the true nature of the Dhamma.

It is to reach that level of life that you, devout friends, left your homes on this Poya day and undertook a valuable virtue, the Uposatha virtue (*uposatha-sīla*), on this precious day. Resolving to spend at least today in emulation of the lives of the Arahants, and using that virtue as a support, I trust you will make a greater effort than usual in your Dhamma studies and meditation today. Next, it is in order to derive the proper benefits from that concentrated mind through insight (*vipassanā*) that we constantly hold these Dhamma sermons in the afternoon. Therefore, through the Dhamma sermon preached today, you have not only recognized the core values presented by the Blessed One to the world, but you have also understood how we must use our environment to live accordingly.

If you have aroused any wholesome strength (*kusala-sakti*) through the virtue you kept, the meditation you practiced, and this Dhamma you have heard, may that wholesome strength help dispel all obstacles to your meditation, bring near all supportive conditions, and may this merit serve as a supportive condition to end this journey of *saṃsāra* as quickly as possible through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmī*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmī*), and Arahantship, and to find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! May you make this aspiration. And may all beings, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, who wish to rejoice in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through their preferred mode of awakening (*bodhi*)! With this aspiration, let us recite this verse:

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*”

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 1
The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 183)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā

ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa

athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā

yato pajānāti sahetudhammaṁ

Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā

ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa

athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā

yato khayaṁ paccayānaṁ avedi

Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā

ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa

vidhūpayaṁ tiṭṭhati mārasenaṁ

suriyova obhāsayamantalikkhaṁ

– Udāna, Bodhivagga

When phenomena manifest themselves

To the ardently meditating Brahmin

Then all his doubts get dispelled Since he knows the Causal Law

When phenomena manifest themselves

To the ardently meditating Brahmin

Then all his doubts get dispelled

Since he knows the extinction of conditions

When phenomena manifest themselves

To the ardently meditating Brahmins

Dispelling hosts of *Māra* he stands

Like the sun illumining the firmament

Dear Listeners,

The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fortunate One, Fully Enlightened, after his attainment of Enlightenment in the province of *Uruvelā* on the banks of River *Nerañjarā*, remained seated under the Bodhi tree for seven days experiencing the bliss of emancipation. According to the first three discourses of the *Udāna*, the Buddha at the end of the seven days kept attending thoroughly to the Law of Dependent Arising during the three watches of the seventh night. The three verses we brought up as the topic of our sermon today were uttered by the Buddha as paeons of joy (*udāna*) proclaiming that he attended to the Law of Dependent Arising in three ways during the three watches of the night.

Although on the first hearing one might think that all three verses are similar, those who listened carefully would have understood that the second verse differs from the first after three lines by substituting a new line as the fourth. Then in the third verse after two lines, the third and fourth lines say something new. For all the apparent similarity, each verse has a significance of its own in that it describes one of the three ways in which the Buddha attended to the Law of Dependent Arising. It is perhaps due to the specific importance of each of those verses that this discourse collection, the *Udāna*, introduces each of the three verses with the same introductory story.

First of all, let us try to understand the meaning of the verse that comes at the end of the first discourse. Even by getting at the meaning of these three verses, we can get some idea of the Law of Dependent Arising. To begin with, let us form a general idea of the meaning.

'*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhamma – ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa'* 'When phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin' – according to the terminology of this dispensation, the term Brahmin, on occasion, can refer to the arahant or to the Buddha. Here we have to understand it in that sense.

athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā

*yato paj*ā*nāti sahetudhammaṁ*

When those phenomena become manifest to that Brahmin, all his doubts get dispelled because he understands thereby the Law of Causality. This then is the meaning of the first verse.

Now, for the second verse. It begins in the same way. At whatever time phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin (that is to the Buddha), all his doubts get dispelled – '*yato khayaṁ paccayānaṁ avedi*' – since he now knows the cessation of conditions.

And now for the third verse. '*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā – ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa'*– when phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin – then, something new comes up '*vidhūpayaṁ tiṭṭhati mārasenaṁ – suriyova obhāsayamantalikkhaṁ*' – "like the sun illumining the sky, he stands dispelling the hosts of *Māra*. That is, just as the sun dispels the darkness, so he dispels (or exorcises, fumigates) the hosts of *Māra*."

So this is the meaning of the three verses. Let us now try to understand the Law of Dependent Arising with the help of these three verses. The three ways of attention are briefly stated in the three discourses as follows.

During the first watch of the night, the Buddha attended on the Law of Dependent Arising in the direct order and during the second or the middle watch in reverse order. During the last watch, he combined both ways of attending and attended in both direct and reverse order. Now we shall give a clue to the understanding of these three ways of attention.

The first line of the verse says:

'*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā*' – when phenomena manifest themselves. What are these phenomena? The discourse itself explains what they are. Those of you who are acquainted with the Law of Dependent Arising know that it consists of twelve factors. Some even recite the formula in their meditation.

'*Avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā,*

saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṁ,

viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ,

nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanaṁ,

saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso,

phassapaccayā vedanā,

vedanāpaccayā taṇhā,

taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṁ,

upādānapaccayā bhavo,

bhavapaccayā jāti,

jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ, sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti.

Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.'

'From ignorance as condition (arise) preparations; from preparations as condition (arises) consciousness; from consciousness ..... name and form; from name and form ..... the six sense spheres; from the six sense spheres ..... contact; from contact ..... feeling; from feeling ..... craving; from craving ..... grasping; from grasping ..... becoming; from becoming ..... birth; from birth as condition arise decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Such is the arising of this entire mass of suffering.

It is the occurrence of these 12 conditions that is meant by the phrase 'when phenomena manifest themselves'. The 12 factors are called conditions (*paccayā)* because none of them arises by itself. They arise due to causes and conditions. When phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin, his doubts are dispelled. How? The last line gives the answer, '*yato pajānāti sahetudhammaṁ*' because he understands now the Law of Causality. What is called '*Paticca samuppāda*' is actually that norm, that Law of nature. That norm is stated as a formula in four lines. Only the first two came to light in the first sutta.

> *Iti imasmiṁ sati – idaṁ hoti*
>
> *imassa uppādā – idaṁ uppajjati*
>
> Thus:
>
> This being – this comes to be
>
> With the arising of this – this arises.

Now this is the statement of the Law in its direct order. The first sutta deals with the two principles relevant to the direct order. One might wonder why the statement has 'this' and 'this' where we expect to have 'this' and 'that' as 'This being that comes to be'. There is a subtle point involved in this apparently awkward statement. The reason is that if we take up any couple of links in the twelve-linked formula of illustration of the Law conjoined by '*paccayā*', such as for instance '*avijja paccayā saṅkhārā*' (with ignorance as condition preparations), we have to say this being this arises. Only if we are referring to something outside the context, that is outside the couple of links we have taken up, we have to say 'that'. It is important to remember that the 12 links of the formula of Dependent Arising serve to illustrate the first principle:

> This being – this comes to be
>
> With the arising of this – this arises

Let us cite some such illustrations:

> When there is ignorance – preparations come to be

With the arising of ignorance – preparations arise

When there are preparations – consciousness comes to be

With the arising of preparations – consciousness arises

When there is consciousness – name-and-form comes to be

With the arising of consciousness – name-and-form arises

It is this first principle that is called '*sahetudhammaṁ*' – the causal law. The essential thing is to understand the Law as such. But what often happens is to fully ignore it and be satisfied with the rattling off of the 12 links. Some are not even aware that there is a first principle involved.

On the other hand, this discourse begins with that first principle itself, saying that the Buddha attended thoroughly to the Law of Dependent Arising in direct order (*anulomaṁ*).

Iti imasmiṁ sati – idaṁ hoti

imassa uppādā – idaṁ uppajjati

Thus:

This being – this comes to be

With the arising of this – this arises.

Then the illustrations of that first principle are introduced with the conjunctive 'yadidaṁ' – 'namely'.

"Namely:

From ignorance as condition (arise) preparations, from preparations as condition (arises) consciousness, from consciousness … name-and-form, from name-and-form … the six sense spheres, from the six sense spheres … contact, from contact … feeling, from feeling … craving, from craving … grasping, from grasping … becoming, from becoming… birth, from birth as condition arise decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair."

Last of all comes the statement which explains what all this is about:

'Thus comes to be the arising of this entire mass of suffering.'

So the direct order explains the arising of this mass of suffering.

We said that there are three ways of attending. During the first watch of the night, the Buddha attended thoroughly to the arising aspect. That is why the first two lines amounted to saying:

‘This being – this comes to be

With the arising of this – this arises’

It is as an illustration of this fact that the twelve links are stated as summed up by the sentence:

Thus comes to be the arising of this entire mass of suffering. The first verse expresses the same idea.

At the same time, let us try to understand the significance of the third line of the verse.

‘*Athassa kaṅkhā – vapayanti sabbā*’

‘All his doubts get dispelled.’

Now what are these doubts? In order to understand what they are, one has to read the *Sabbāsava Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. The ordinary worldling has doubts and waverings in regard to the three periods of time, past, future and present. As to the past, the ordinary worldling who has not seen, this Law of Dependent Arising is fully immersed in the personality view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) thinking in terms of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ and attends unwisely to the past thus:

‘Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become, in the past? The ordinary worldling sets about, reasoning with the postulate ‘I’.

Similarly, he attends to the future in five ways. This kind of attention is called ‘*ayonisomanasikāra*’ wrong attention or non-radical attention. This is how he attends to the future:

Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future?

How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I become in the future?’ This may sound jocular. But all wordlings are in this jocular position. Then about the present, he attends in six ways which may sound even funnier. ‘Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where will it go? The ‘Being’ here represents the self idea. He is involved in the self-view.

This sixteen-fold doubt gets dispelled by seeing the Norm of Conditionality. That is why the noble disciple, who has understood the Law of Dependent Arising by the Path of Stream winning entertains no doubts of this sort. All those doubts arise because of reasoning in terms of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ based on the personality view. The Buddha has declared that this way of reasoning leads to 62 views. They end up by falling into two extremes. Either they take up the view ‘I exist’ or go on asserting ‘I do not exist’ as regards the future. Thereby, on the one hand they uphold the eternalist view by claiming that they have a permanent soul or on the other hand they go to the annihilationist extreme by asserting that they would be no more after death since the body itself is the

soul. *Brahmajāla Sutta* says that in between these two extreme views there are as many as 62 views. All those views get dispelled even by seeing the arising aspect of the conditions. That is the meaning of the first verse. What we have said so far is gleaned from the first verse. Out of the three modes of attending to the Law of Dependent Arising, the first is the direct mode which is concerned with the arising aspect.

The second verse refers to the way of attending during the middle watch of the night.

'*yato khayaṁ paccayānaṁ avedi*'

'Since he knows the extinction of conditions'

What the second verse says in particular is that the Buddha saw the extinction of conditions. When he attended to the reverse order, he saw that the conditions become extinct, precisely because they arise due to conditions. This fact is summed up in these two statements.

Iti – imasmiṁ asati – idaṁ na hoti

imassa nirodhā – idaṁ nirujjati

Thus:

This not being – this does not come to be

With the cessation of this – this ceases

The word '*nirodha*' (cessation) is introduced with it and the illustration follows:

'*Avijjā nirodhā saṅkhāranirodho,*

saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho,

viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho,

nāmarūpanirodhā saḷāyatananirodho,

saḷāyatananirodhā phassanirodho,

phassanirodhā vedanānirodho,

vedanānirodhā taṅhānirodho,

taṅhānirodhā upādānanirodho,

upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho,

bhavanirodhā jātinirodho,

jātinirodhā jarāmaraṇaṁ sokaparideva dukkhadomanass upāyāsā nirujjhanti.

Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hotī.'

'With the cessation of ignorance, the cessation of preparations, with the cessation of preparations, the cessation of consciousness, with the cessation of consciousness, the cessation of name and form, with the cessation of name and form, the cessation of six sense spheres, with the cessation of six sense spheres cessation of contact, with the cessation of contact, the cessation of feeling, with the cessation of feeling, the cessation of craving, with the cessation of craving, the cessation of grasping, with the cessation of grasping, the cessation of becoming, with the cessation of becoming, the cessation of birth, with the cessation of birth, decay and death, sorrow, lamentation pain grief and despair cease .....'

Then comes the conclusive statement:

'Thus there comes to be the cessation of this entire mass of suffering.' So this is the cessation aspect which is called 'the reverse order' (*paṭilomaṁ*). In this manner both the direct and the reverse order of the Law of Dependent Arising were attended to during the first two watches of the night.

Now for the third watch of the night. Here we have something that goes deeper. How did the Buddha spend the third watch? He combined both the direct and the reverse order in attending to the Law of Dependent Arising. One cannot easily understand the depth of this way of combined attention. It is presented in the discourse by citing all the four clauses of the Law of Dependent Arising together.

This being – this comes to be

With the arising of this – this arises

This not being – this does not come to be

With the cessation of this – this ceases

With this citation the norm of *Paticca Samuppāda* is expressed in full. Then, as the illustration of this norm, both the arising and cessation aspects of the 12 links are giVenerable The formulation in the direct order begins as usual with the words '*Avijja paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṁ'* etc., i.e – 'From ignorance as condition (arise) preparations, from preparations as condition (arise) consciousness' etc, summed up by the statement that this is the arising of this entire mass of suffering. But then comes the highly significant statement '*avijjāyatveva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodho*' – that is 'But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, there comes to be the cessation of preparations' and so on. Though easily overlooked, the 'BUT' here (Note:

avijjāya-<u>tu</u>eva) is of prime importance in assessing the significance of this 'combined attention' as it may be called. The nature of the unimaginably long *Saṁsāra* is such that proverbially we say that there is no beginning to ignorance as the cause of it. But this phrase asserts that all the same, with the remainderless fading away of ignorance, the

other links of the chain, preparations, consciousness, name and form etc. cease altogether culminating in the cessation of the entire mass of *Saṁsāric* suffering. Hence the pivotal significance of ignorance in the formula.

This occurs immediately – not as generally understood in the course of three lives. You know how *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is explained nowadays. With the cessation of ignorance, all the other links up to decay and death cease. This is an extremely deep point that is to say, the combined attention in the 'direct and reverse order'. Even the simile given in this connection has deeper implications.

Vidhūpayaṁ tiṭṭhati mārasenaṁ

Suriyova obhāsayamantaḷikkhaṁ

Dispelling hosts of *Māra* he stands

Like the sun illumining the firmament

It would take one hour to give a full commentary to these two lines. This simile alludes to the change that the Brahmin undergoes as he attends to the direct and reverse order simultaneously. At that moment the Brahmin is dispelling the forces of *Māra*. In fact the word '*vidhūpayaṁ*' rendered literally means 'fumigating' or 'smoking out' as in the case of exorcising demoniac forces by caustic incense. So the allusion is to the Buddha's conquest of *Māra*. The sun illumining the sky is the light of wisdom. The army of *Māra* is the impelling power of thought. Those of you who have read the *Padhāna Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* would know how the Bodhisatta himself has defined the ten armies of *Māra*.

Kāmā te paṭhamā senā

dutiyā arati vuccati

tatiyā khuppipāsā te

catutthī taṇhā pavuccati.

Sense desires is your first battalion

The second is called dejection

Hunger and thirst make up the third

And craving is called the fourth.

According to this definition the ten armies of *Māra* are the thoughts. Sense desires, dejection in regard to the holy life, thoughts about hunger and thirst and craving etc. – all these are distracting thoughts. Now what does this imply? All these thoughts arise due to ignorance. These are the *saṅkhāras* or preparations which make up this world with its pleasures and pains. So at whatever moment one attends both in the direct and reverse

order in an extremely subtle way, thoughts are simply displaced. What does this amount to? In our sermons we have pointed out on many occasions that deliverance is not something that comes in the other world but one that is realizable here and now in the arahant's mind by the subsidence of thoughts. You may have heard that *Nibbāna* is called the stilling of all preparations and the relinquishment of all assets (*upadhi*). This is a reference to the *arahattaphalasamādhi*. '*Avitakkasamādhi*' (thoughtless concentration) and '*avitakkajhāna*' (thoughtless absorption) are also allusions to it.

Now the last mentioned simile is a description of this *arahattaphalasamādhi*. The battalion of thoughts called the army of *Māra* is put to flight when the direct and reverse order of attending is accelerated. Sometimes in our sermons we gave a simile to illustrate this way of combined attention – the simile of sharpening a razor. In sharpening a razor on a whetstone or on a leather strap, the razor blade is moved up, up, up and down, down, down and at the final stage of sharpening the blade has to be moved rapidly up-and-down, up-and-down, up-and-down. Similarly, where both the direct and the reverse order unite 'razor-edge sharp', 'thoughts' can no longer survive. At that moment name-and-form is cut off and consciousness gains freedom as non-manifestative consciousness. The third stage Therefore, is in effect *arahattaphalasamādhi* itself.

So then we have sufficiently explained the three stages. We have here the Law of Dependent Arising as such. We mustn't mix up things. The basic law we have mentioned already – namely what is epitomized in the four lines. That is what is essential. Though many go on rattling off the 12 links they do not know what it is all about. The twelve links are only illustrations.

They are called '*paccayā dhammā*'(conditioned things). What is called '*sahetudhamma*' is the norm – the basic principle we have already mentioned.

> This being – this comes to be
>
> With the arising of this – this arises
>
> This not being – this does not come to be
>
> With the cessation of this – this ceases

Only a Buddha can discover this law. It is such a wonderful thing. Why? Because what up to then was explained in terms of 'I' and 'mine', the Buddha pointed out as a phenomenon that occurred due to a collocation of factors casually conditioned. That is to say, the Law of Dependent Arising.

Let me add this much by way of clarification. Some of you may have heard about the two chief Disciples of the Buddha – Venerable Sāriputta and Moggallāna. As laymen they were called Upatissa and Kolita. These two Brahmin youths were going in search of Truth. Once they went to see a sort of concert called '*giragga samajja*' (hilltop festival). While they were watching the dramatic performances both of them got disgusted before long probably because of their Samsāric maturity. It might have served as a prelude to

them for the realization of the vacuity of the drama of existence. Shortly afterwards Upatissa happened to come across Venerable Assaji, one of the first five disciples of the Buddha. Venerable Assaji was on his alms-round when Upatissa saw him. Impressed by his saintly appearance, Upatissa followed him and after he has had his meal approached him and asked him:

“Who is your teacher? What sort of Dhamma does he preach?”

Venerable Assaji modestly replied:

“I have gone forth only recently. I do not know much Dhamma.”

“I am Upatissa” the other said “I can understand in detail what is said in brief.”

Then Venerable Assaji uttered the following verse.

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā

tesaṁ hetuṁ tathāgato āha

tesañca yo nirodho

evaṁ vādī mahāsamaṇo

Whatever things that arise from causes

Their cause the Tathāgata has told

And also their cessation

Thus teaches the great recluse.

Upatissa became a Stream-winner on hearing the first two lines of the verse. How did he become a Stream-winner? The secret is to be found on the commentary we have given above.

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā

tesaṁ hetuṁ tathāgato āha

Whatever things that arise from causes

Their cause the Tathāgata has told.

With these two lines only the direct order has been explained. But about this many are confused – even the commentators. Things that arise from causes are what we called ‘*paccayā dhammā*’. According to the commentators, however, the cause of things arising from causes is ignorance (*avijjā*). The cause (*hetu*) is not ignorance but the Law of Conditionality itself as we explained above. Upatissa understood that all these are

conditioned as soon as he heard the first two lines. The norm underlying them is what is expressed as 'This being – this arises'.

Since Uptissa was of mature wit, even by the first two lines he understood that whatever that arise from causes and conditions has to cease of necessity. Even before a hint to the reverse order was given, he inferred the norm in full. You may have heard that even when an ordinary person becomes a Stream-winner, the gist of his attainment is given in a short formula – in fact the shortest and purest expression of it – which runs as follows:

Yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ

sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ

Whatever is of a nature to arise

All that is of a nature to cease.

Here we have the basic principle in a nutshell. Whatever arises due to causes and conditions has to cease of necessity. Though Upatissa attained the Fruit of Stream-winning merely by hearing the first two lines of Venerable Assaji's verse, his friend Kolitha attained it only when he heard all four lines. The other two lines are:

Tesañca yo nirodho

evaṁ vādī mahāsamaṇo

And also their cessation

Thus teaches the great recluse.

'Things arisen from causes ('*hetuppabhavā dhammā*') mentioned in the first line refer to the 12 links of the Law of Dependent Arising. All the 12 links are arisen from causes. Their cause (*hetu*) is the basic principle – the law as such. Even if a small child realizes it, he is a Stream-winner.

So let us proceed from there. By now you might have got some idea of it. The 12 links are so many illustrations. What underlies them is the law of conditionality. 'From ignorance as condition, preparations, from preparations as condition, consciousness, and so on'. That is how the formula runs. But that is not all. It is only the direct order. But then the Buddha points out that if ignorance can be made to cease at whatever moment, that is to say, with the dawn of wisdom, preparations, consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres and all the rest of the links cease altogether.

Though we say so, it might not be easy to understand all this. To facilitate understanding deep points, the Buddha has allowed the use of similes. So let us now pass on to the world of similes. But before that there is something worth mentioning in particular. There is a wonderful relationship between consciousness and name and form. Even in the past, many of our scholars have granted the fact that there is a reciprocal relationship between them. This is something the Buddha himself has declared. Even the Buddha

Vipassi had proclaimed that there is such a relationship between consciousness and name and form. That is to say, dependent on consciousness is name and form and dependent on name and form is consciousness. This is where many scholars get stuck – this inter-dependence. If one starts searching from the other end:

'What is the cause of decay and death? Birth. What is the cause of birth? Existence, or becoming'. If one goes on questioning like that and comes up to name and form, on searching further for its cause, one will find consciousness. But then search does not go beyond consciousness, for the cause of consciousness is name and form. Between these two there is an inter-dependence or a reciprocal relationship. This is the crux of the whole problem.

To explain this we have given various similes, such as the Vortex Simile. A current of water tries to run away from the main stream but when its attempt is foiled, it turns back. But on turning back it forgets its relationship with the mainstream. It is like the case of two halves. At whatever moment the cyclic process is complete, it becomes a 'Unit'. There is a similar magical illusion implicit in consciousness. In fact the Buddha has declared that consciousness is comparable to a magic show. The magical effect of this magic show is such that it reflects something. As we all know, a conscious being has the ability to look back – to reflect. This is not a property common to inanimate things like trees and rocks. All conscious beings possess the ability to reflect or retrospect. This reflection can be done rightly or wrongly.

To illustrate these two ways of reflection, we gave a simile – a simple one intelligible to anybody. The simile of a dog on a plank crossing a stream. We have mentioned this quite often. While crossing the stream on a plank over it, a dog looks down in to the water. Seeing a dog there, it either wags its tail in a friendly way or growls angrily. Or else out of curiosity it keeps on looking down again and again. Due to wrong attention it doesn't understand what really happens. The dog thinks that it is looking because it sees. But the truth of the matter is that it sees because it looks. Every time it looks it sees a dog. Consciousness has such a delusive magical quality about it. This is because consciousness has the property of reflecting something. What does it reflect? Name and from. Let me first explain what name and form is before giving other similes.

The term '*nāmarūpa*' (name and form) is variously interpreted by scholars. '*Nāma*' has nothing to do with 'bending' as sometimes explained. The constituents of '*nāma*' are feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phasso*) and attention (*manasikāro*). You may even count these five on your fingers.

Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are collectively called 'Name' (*nāma*). Why are they called 'name'? Generally, we recognize something with the help of a conventional name given to it. But a child gets to know something through feeling. Take for instance the case of a blind man. Isn't it by 'feeling' that a blind man gets to know something? Feeling gives him a 'sign'or perception. Perception gives rise to an intention. Intention directs him to some point of contact. Now that is where contact comes in. Last of all comes attention. There are many critics who question this counting

of feeling as the foremost among constituents of name. As we sometimes pointed out, those who go by the commentarial tradition inadvertently put contact first. Did Venerable Sāriputta make a mistake? Did the Buddha himself go wrong? Definitely not. At this point we have to say something about consciousness.

Venerable Sāriputta clarifies it in the *Mahā Vedalla Sutta*. It is as if Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita gets it clarified for us.

"Consciousness, consciousness, they say, friend, in how far is it friend called consciousness."

('*Viññāṇaṁ viññāṇanti āvuso vuccati,*

Kittāvatā nu kho āvuso viññāṇanti vuccati')

"Knows discriminatively, knows discriminatively, it is in that sense, friend, that consciousness is so called."

Then Venerable Sāriputta goes on to explain what sort of discrimination consciousness is doing. Now listen attentively. What is this basic discrimination?

"This is pleasant' – so one discriminates. 'This is painful' – so one discriminates. 'This is neither painful nor pleasant' – so one discriminates."

("*Vijānāti vijānātīti kho āvuso,*

tasmā viññāṇanti vuccati.

Kiñca vijānāti; Sukhantipi vijānāti,

dukkhantipi vijānāti,

adukkhamasukhantipi vijānāti ...")

So then the very first function of consciousness is the awareness of feeling. That is where consciousness awakens. It is true that even the rubber tree exudes latex when an incision is made on it. But surely we don't say that the tree is weeping. Therefore, the basic function of consciousness is feeling. It is through feeling that the notion of self awakens. Even that fact is clearly pointed out. Once the Buddha asked Ānanda:

"Therein, Ānanda, whoever says this:

"Feeling is not my self. My self is not of a nature of experiencing," he should be asked thus:

"Friend, where there is nothing felt in whatever way, would there be the notion 'Am' (or 'I am')?"

"There would not, Lord"

(“*Tatr Ānanda yo so evamāha” na heva kho me vedanā attā, appaṭisaṁvedano me attāti “so evamassa vacanīyo yattha panāvuso sabbaso vedayitaṁ natthi api nu kho tattha ‘asmīti’ siyāti?”*

“No hetaṁ bhante.”)

Now, that is the reason why feeling is counted first instead of contact. The basic function of consciousness is the discrimination between the three grades of feeling – the pleasant, the painful and the neither painful nor pleasant. As you are seated here , why do you now and then change your posture? Isn’t it because of feeling? So in other situations too. ‘Feeling’ gives rise to ‘perception’. Then comes ‘intention’.

“Never mind listening to the sermon. Let me turn a little.”

That is the intention. Where does the next thought go? To the point of ‘contact’. With that ‘attention’ gets engaged.

I hope you all can now gather what the constituents of ‘name’ (*nāma*) are. Then what is called ‘form’ (*rūpa*)? There again many are confused. Here is the definition of ‘*rūpa*’in ‘*nāmarūpa*’.

‘*Cattāroca – mahābhūtā – catuññañca – mahābhitānaṁ – upādāya rūpaṁ*’

‘The four great primaries and form derived from the four great primaries.’

The word ‘*upādāya*’ in this definition is often mistranslated and misinterpreted. The four great primaries are like four ‘non-descript ghosts’ (eg. ‘*bhūta*’– ghostly being). They can be recognized only with the help of the factors listed under ‘*nāma*’ (name). So ‘*rūpa*’ is in effect ‘*rūpa saññā*’ (perception of form) derived from the four great primaries. Take it that way, for that is how the ‘non-descripts’ become ‘describable’. What we have here is not that ‘matter’ (*rūpa*) the scientists have in mind. To explain this, we coined various definitions:

‘Name in ‘name and form’ is formal name,

Form in ‘name and form’ is nominal form’

Now try to get this clear. What is meant by saying ‘Name’ in name and form is formal name is that it is not the type of conventional name known to the world like ‘clock’ and chair’. It is only the most preliminary or incipient stage in naming, as in the case of a blind man acquainting himself with some object through feeling, perception and the rest of the name group. Then about form in name and form, we said, it is nominal form (or form only in name) in the sense that it is not something existing by itself as known in the world. It can only be known through the constituents of name. As you all know, the earth-element is perceived as hard and soft and the fire-element in terms of hotness and coolness. The four great primaries are recognized by means of the factors on the name side. In fact, it is only a perception of form (*rūpasaññā*). That is why we called it

'nominal form' or 'form only in name'. If one correctly understands 'name and form' he would realize that it is merely a reflection on consciousness. Think for instance, of what comes before the eyes – what falls on the retina. Isn't that the beginning of the camera? It is only a reflection which the brain interprets as beautiful. That is why the Buddha calls perception a mirage.

What appears out there as beautiful is actually not there. That is to say, with eye as a condition it appears beautiful. To one who wears green spectacles, for instance, it would appear green. Consciousness and name and form are inter-related. We use a special term in this connection – one that is found in the discourses, namely '*dvayatā*' (duality). Existence involves a duality. That is what we call '*vaṭṭa*' or vortex. We shall explain it in due course. There is a vortex between supply and demand on which price depends. The interdependence between consciousness and name and form involves the entire world in a vortical interplay.

Think of the cinema world or any other world we are familiar with – the sports world or the cricket world, for instance. First of all let us take the cricket world. Now what happens in the cricket world? The poor bat and ball become alive only when the two teams confront each other. Isn't that so? The rules of the game, and the prospect of winning represent 'name' in this case. The cricket world is sustained by the delusion with which the two teams take their stand on the two sides. That is the duality involved in this case.

Now think of the cinema world. It exists between the scenes on the screen and the audience. The darkness of ignorance provides the necessary background. In the case of the cricket game, the two teams forget their friendship in the heat of competition. That is the background of ignorance. Preparations arising out of that ignorance sustain the cricket-match, that is bodily verbal and mental preparations. Hopes and disappointments are bound by rules and regulations of the game. In the cinema world also, the background of darkness ironically highlights the delusion created by the make-up of actors and actresses. When one is enjoying a film-show, one is unaware of that background of darkness. One forgets that the scenes appear beautiful due to the darkness around. This gives us a clue to the significance of the darkness of ignorance. That is why the simile of the movie is helpful in understanding the Law of Dependent Arising. That is not a simile we have introduced. The Buddha himself has given the simile of the movie, though of course not in the modern sense. In the cinema world within the darkness of ignorance, preparations go on in the mind of the cinema fan with which he experiences joys and sorrows. In this way, we can create any number of worlds. As you turn the pages of a newspaper, you pass through several such worlds. Each world has its own 'namefactors' and 'form-factors'. The illusion of life goes on within a succession of such worlds.

Let us take another simile to illustrate another aspect of this illusion – the simile of the chess game. The basic hint for what I am going to tell you, I borrowed from a certain story about a Zen master. Some of you may have heard of Mahāyāna Buddhism. As it went on spreading, one section became apprehensive of the trend towards excessive

philosophizing and began to lay emphasis on concentration and insight. That section came to be known as Zen Buddhists. Zen masters are a strange lot. Sometimes they would train their pupils by giving them insoluble riddles called 'koans'. It is said that while grappling with the puzzle they attained enlightenment. This sudden enlightenment they called 'Satori'. So this is the background. Now I shall tell a story – whether it be true or not – is instructive all the same.

There was a Zen master who was very stern. He used to train his pupils by extremely stern methods. One day he ordered two of his pupils to play a game of chess without losing. In the story I read, no names are giVenerable But I shall give two meaningful Sinhala names to the two pupils. One is Ajith ('invincible') the other is Sumith ('good friend'). Now the Zen master orders Ajith and Sumith to play chess imposing a strict condition.

"You must play without losing. Whoever loses I shall behead?"

Both knew that the teacher meant what he said – as he stood sword in hand. So these two obedient pupils took up the challenge in mortal fear and started the game while the teacher stood nearby with a raised sword.

As the game went on, before long invincible Ajith reached a point where it was obvious that with two more draws he would be the winner. Sumith – the good friend that he is, though terrified resigned himself to his fate without malice. However, Ajith, moved by compassion for his good friend, knowingly made a false draw in a spirit of self sacrifice. With the next draw, Ajith, who could have been the winner, would lose his head and Sumith would win – but lose his friend. Now what will the Zen master do? Will he cut off Ajith's head and keep his word – honest and truthful as he is?

Well, this is what he did. He bent down and swept the chess board clean. That was the end of the game. You might think that it was a 'tame-draw' with no winner or loser. But it seems <u>both</u> Ajith and Sumith emerged winners for the story ends with this enigmatic sentence:

'Both of them attained Satori!'

But how? No explanation was given in the book I read. Granted that it is a true story, let us try to understand how such a thing is possible. Invincible Ajith sacrificed his life for his friend. Sumith with an air of resignation was ready to accept the inevitable so that his friend would survive the fatal game. So they both were prepared to '<u>Let-go</u>'. The chess board was their WORLD. Their existence (*bhava*) in the chess-world was due to grasping (*upādāna*). The prospect of winning was for them, a question of life and death. When they both sacrificed their lives, the 'Let-go' was complete. But neither of them had to die. Only 'Death' had to die, as they both gained insight into 'Deathlessness' (*amata*). How did it happen? When the Zen master swept the chess board declaring the game 'null and void' both pupils realized the delusion they were in. It was as if they woke up from a

dream. The dream was the existence in a world of chess fully involved with the pieces. So it seems, by means of a game of chess in which no one won or lost, this tactful Zen master gave his pupils an insight into the Law of Dependent Arising – the secret of bondage and release.

One might think that such wonderful techniques of training are found only in Zen Buddhism. But that is not so. I shall tell you a similar story in our own tradition which perhaps you have already heard but not fully understood. It is about the acrobat Uggasena alluded to in the Dhammapada and related in detail in its commentary. It seems Uggasena was so skillful as an acrobat that he could stand balanced on a sixty – cubit bamboo pole. One day when he was performing in the midst of a crowd, the Buddha while on his alms-round came to the spot with Venerable Mahā Moggallāna. At the Buddha's request Venerable Moggallāna challenged Uggasena to display his acrobat feats. The latter in response made a number of circling leaps into the sky and stood up right on the bamboo pole precariously balanced. Then the Buddha uttered the following riddle verse which embodied a challenge similar to the one the Zen master had made.

Muñca pure

muñca pacchato

majjhe muñca bhavassa pāragū

sabbattha vimuttamānaso

na puna jātijaraṁ upehisi.

Let go what has gone before

Let go that which comes after

Let go thy hold on the middle as well

Thus with mind released in every way

Thou comest never more to birth and decay.

Here the words '*pure*' and '*pacchato*' stand for the temporal past and future. But for the acrobat precariously balanced, they are suggestive of the spatial 'before' and 'behind'. Likewise, '*majjhe*' temporally means 'the present' but for the acrobat it could ironically refer to his risky spatial stance on the bamboo pole. So here we have something like a 'Koan'. However Uggasena with his *saṁsāric* maturity in wisdom, backed by his literally 'one-pointed' concentration on top of the bamboo pole, took it as a challenge for insight. The last two lines gave the necessary hint. That was enough. He attained Arahanthood then and there, came down from the pole and worshipped the Buddha.

So there too we have an instance of a subtle topic of meditation being presented as an insoluble riddle. Here again the question of duality comes up. Past and future is a duality like victory and defeat. By the way, regarding that story about winning and losing, there

is a beautiful verse in the *Sukha Vagga* (Chapter on Happiness) in the *Dhammapada*. As we saw, it was for winning that Ajith and Sumith played chess. Both of them realized the mass of suffering involved. They understood that birth, decay and all the rest of suffering are dependent on grasping. The *Dhammapada* verse is a beautiful summary of this idea.

Jayaṁ veraṁ pasavati

dukkhaṁ seti parājito

upasanto sukhaṁ seti

hitvā jayaparājayaṁ

Victory breeds hatred

The defeated lies in sorrow

Happily lies the tranquil one

Giving up victory and defeat

Victory and defeat both have to be given up. That is what Ajith and Sumith finally realized. The duality of victory and defeat is sustained by ignorance as in the case of a cricket match. How many have gone crazy about it? It is the same in regard to films and teledrama. That is why the Buddha declared that all worldlings are insane. We don't like to be called mad. But the truth is that ignorance makes one forget, like darkness in the case of the film show. It is the darkness of ignorance that sustains the two teams in the sports world. The two teams with their respective well-wishers create their own worlds productive of hatred and malice.

So you should understand that the formula of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is not something to be by hearted and rattled off meaninglessly. You must try to grasp the deep meaning behind the statement of the formula in direct and reverse order. Let us try to understand why it is said that '*saṅkharā*' or preparations arise due to '*avijjā*' or ignorance. The term '*saṅkhārā*' itself has connotations of deception or spuriousness. In the Indian society in the past, it was associated with the 'make-up' and other preparatory activities of a drama. They could be bodily, verbal or mental. This applies to the cricket game as well. The magic show of consciousness is kept up by those *saṅkhāras*. Confroning consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in an inter-dependent partnership, there is name and form (*nāmarūpa*), that is feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention together with the four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air and form derived from them. The deepest point in *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is traceable to this interplay between consciousness and name and form. That is what we called the vortex. If all goes well, you might get the opportunity to hear more about the vortex next time.

For the present, just understand this much. *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as interpreted by many nowadays is divisible into three lives, with ignorance and preparations as the past, becoming, birth and death as the future and the intervening eight links as the present.

Immediately, with the cessation of ignorance, preparations cease and along with it the consciousness. The cessation of consciousness is something like a subsidence or appeasement. One might mistake cessation of consciousness to be death itself.

That is not the case. It is the cessation of that conditioned or 'made–up' (*saṅkhata)* consciousness. What comes up then is the 'non-manifestative consciousness' (*anidassana viññāṇa*). This is an aspect of the Dhamma that had long remained neglected. There is a consciousness that is freed from name and form. It is a subsidence or appeasement which Arahants experience. It is within the conditioned consciousness that the worldlings are entrapped and bound.

This consciousness is six fold. The visual world, the auditory world and so forth. The Buddha has defined the world with reference to the six sense-spheres. As a matter of fact the so called world is the world of the six fold sense-sphere. It is not the world that modern scientists frame up. Now even they are becoming aware of their shortcomings in understanding. There is only a visual world, an auditory world, an olfactory world a gustatory world a tactile world and lastly a mental world. Let us not forget that the six sense-spheres are dependent on name and form. So the division, the bifurcation, the duality is maintained down the line as internal and external (*ajjhatta – bahiddhā*). Eye is the internal sphere and forms the external sphere. Both are made up of the four elements. But greater value is attached to the internal – to this conscious body ('*saviññāṇaka kāya*'). It is the perception that this conscious body chases that the Buddha called a mirage. One simply goes on watching scenes on the 'eyescreen' and listening to the 'ear-drum'. That is the 'cinema' and the 'music' we enjoy. The Buddha pointed out to the world for the first time that it is due to the ignorance or 'not – knowing' at the moment of touch in the case of all sense-spheres, that feeling, perception and all the rest of it flow in. As a result of it beings keep running round and round in the cycle of existence (*bhava*). It was probably the difficulty of explaining it to the world that made him ponder over the Law of Dependent Arising in the direct order, in the reverse order and in the direct-and-reverse order. He must have thought how difficult it is to present it to the world through the medium of language. It is so deep as a Dhamma.

Therefore, you should not take it lightly as a mere jumble of words but apply it to your own lives and tread the path of Dhamma. The path is morality, concentration and wisdom. There is no other path to understand this Dhamma in all its depth. Whoever in the past had understood this Dhamma – be they arahants, laymen or laywomen, they all accomplished it through morality, concentration and wisdom. It is the same today too. Therefore, it is not, as some believe, attainable through haphazard methods – though we spoke about instantaneous realization.

Whatever it may be, the Law of Dependent Arising is one thing and its illustration another, as far as the twelve – linked formula is concerned. When you get down to the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* you will understand how the Buddha has made known the distinctions between the internal and the external and arising and ceasing. To those who had developed insight in their *Saṁsāric* past like Uggasena, the Buddha could impart

instant enlightenment. But you must not think that all are similarly gifted. So you should make a genuine effort with that aim, making a start from morality itself.

Today you have made a good start. Most of you have observed the higher precepts. I hope you have spent the day fruitfully in meditation and the like. I do hope and wish that this sermon too would be useful to you in your insight meditation and help you realize your noble aspirations. Whatever, beings there be, from the lowest hell '*avīci*' to the highest Brahma world '*Akaniṭṭha*' – may they all rejoice in this insightful sermon! May it conduce to their attainment of *Nibbāna*! May you all realize those high attainments in this very life!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 2
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 184)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Kuto sarā nivattanti

kattha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

kattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī

tejo vāyo na gādhati

ato sarā nivattanti

ettha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

ettha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

– Sara Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, S.

Wherefrom do currents turn back

Where whirls no more the whirlpool

Wherein does name and form

Get cut off with no trace left

Where water, earth, fire and air

Are unplumbed and find no footing

Herefrom do currents turn back

Here whirls no more the whirlpool

Here it is that name and form

Get held in check with no trace left

Dear Listeners,

The Fully Enlightened Buddha made known to the world that *Saṁsāric* existence is a cyclic process in that it is a going the same round again and again. That indeed is the true meaning of the term '*saṁsāra vaṭṭa*'. The two significant words '*saṁsarana*' and '*nissaraṇa*' are also suggestive of a going round and an exit from the vicious circle – the release. When one keeps going round and round for an inconceivably long period of time, one tends to build up a tension or an impulse to continue the process. That is what makes it extremely difficult to get out of the cyclic process. What the Fully Enlightened One proclaimed to the world through the Law of Dependent Arising is the cause of this cyclic process and the way of getting out of it.

The two verses we have taken up as the topic of our sermon today, also deals with these two aspects of running round (*saṁsarana*) and exit from the round – the centripetal and the centrifugal aspects. These two verses are found in the *Devatā Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. The first verse embodies a deep Dhamma question raised by a deity in the Buddha's presence. The second verse has the Buddha's answer to it. Let us try to get a general idea of the meaning of the two verses.

Kuto sarā nivattanti

kattha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

From where do currents turn back? Where does the whirlpool not whirl?

kattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

Where does name-and-form get cut off without residue?

This is the question posed by the deity, and here is the Buddha's reply:

Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī

tejo vāyo na gādhati

Where water and earth, fire and air find no footing.

ato sarā nivattanti

It is from there that currents turn back.

ettha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

It is here that the whirlpool does not whirl.

ettha nāmañca rūpañca asesaṁ uparujjhati

It is here that name and form get cut off without residue.

You all might have understood that these are two riddle verses. It seems the most important word in the two verses is '*vaṭṭa*' – 'round'. The word '*vaṭṭa*' also has the sense of turning round or going round. Here the turning round is that of water currents. That is why we brought up a simile of a vortex in our explanation of the Law of Dependent Arising. It is not something contrary to the Buddha's teaching. But unfortunately, if you look up the standard Canonical translations in Sinhala for the meaning of this riddle verse, you will find something like this:

'*Kattha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati*' – 'Where does Saṁsāric rain not rain?' This talk about rain obfuscates a deep aspect of the Law of Dependent Arising. On this subject, we have spoken a lot in our sermons. In our last sermon too, we referred to the simile of the vortex. Today, I shall explain it in detail.

Let us try to understand how a whirlpool or a vortex comes to be formed. The mainstream of water in a river usually flows downwards. But some runaway current of water, rather pervertly or arbitrarily tries to run against the mainstream. It is trying to do something impossible. So after going a little way, it clashes with the mainstream, gets thrown off, turns round and pushed on by the mainstream, makes a vain attempt to go forward. Due to this vain attempt, which every time gets foiled, a whirlpool or a vortex is formed with the passage of time. As if because it fails to go forward, it starts moving downward in a revolving fashion due to the resulting tension. It goes on digging towards the bottom deeper and deeper until an abyss is formed. As you know, where there is a whirlpool, there is an abyss. Along with the formation of an abyss, something else happens. A vacuum is created on the surface water by the funnel-like churning motion downward. To fill this vacuum the whirlpool develops a dangerous power of attraction. That is why a swimmer is always apprehensive of a whirlpool. It attracts whatever that comes within its orbit. This power of attraction is comparable to grasping (*upādāna*) if the vacuum it tries to fill is craving (*taṇhā*). This peculiar behavior of a whirlpool makes it a centre of activity – a Unit. Wherever there is a whirlpool in a river, one can point it out as a 'here' and a 'there'.

If we take this whirlpool or vortex in a metaphorical sense, we can interpret its formation this way:

The nature of the world is impermanence. But beings have in them four perversions:

Perception of permanence in the impermanent

Perception of beauty in the repulsive

Perception of happiness in the painful

4. Perception of self in the not-self.

Because of the ignorance (*avijjā*) represented by the four perversions, some impelling force of preparations (*saṅkhārā*) moves forward. Where it fails to go forward, it turns

round and as we have already explained, gives rise to a whirlpool or vortex. It is the preparations that sustain the vortex.

So then the role of ignorance and preparations can explain the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form, which we compared to a vortex. Very often, we had to point out that name-and-form has to be understood differently and not as it is explained nowadays. To put it briefly – 'name' in name-andform is only a formal name and 'form' in name-and-form is only a nominal form. Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are the factors on the mental side with which the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air are recognized. That is why they are collectively called name. By that recognition, a 'perception of form' comes up, which in effect is a form only in name. So this vortex is something spurious. In fact, even the term '*saṅkhārā*' has connotations of spuriousness or deceptiveness, as for instance in its association with the drama. The motive force of preparations aroused by ignorance keeps up the vortical interplay between consciousness and name-and-form. In our last sermon, we pointed out with illustrations like the chess game and the dog on the plank, how the activity of the vortex gives rise to a duality which sustains the illusion of existence. In short, the vortex gives a perverted notion of an actual existence. That is what we meant by a 'here' and a 'there' giving a false impression of existence in a flowing river. Through those similes, we tried to present the basic facts underlying the Law of Dependent Arising.

In drawing out the implications of this simile further, let us not forget that the Buddha compared consciousness to a magical illusion. Consciousness has the quality of reflection as in the case of water. Because of its quality of reflection, name and form are reflected on it. The world takes it to be real. Mistaking it to be an actual name and an actual form is the beginning of all the confusion. We described this bifurcation into two sides as a competition with the chess game and the cricket match as illustrations. As a simple illustration, we gave the simile of the dog on the plank which it seems, has now become popular among preachers.

More recently, we gave another simile which many would relish. It is about the handsome Greek youth Narcissus borrowed from Greek literature. Narcissus had never seen his own face. One day while wandering in a forest, he bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing his own face as a reflection, he imagined an angel in the water and tried to embrace her. Because of the ripples, he kept on repeating his vain attempt and finally pined away and died. We gave this simile to show that the interplay between consciousness and name-and-form is something similar.

Then how can one liberate oneself from this predicament? That is the problem before us now. This is not a problem we have introduced ourselves. There are a number of discourses preached by the Buddha himself which mention this inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form (*aññamañña paccayatā* – mutual conditionality). The way of freedom from this vortex is clearly portrayed in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*. In that discourse our Buddha relates how Vipassi Buddha in the distant past attained Buddhahood. He did not go through a period of rigorous austerities like our Gotama

Buddha. Instead, when the time was ripe for his attainment, he used radical attention to understand by stages the Law of Dependent Arising. Starting from the very end, he went on tracing the causes for existence until he came to the mutual conditionality between consciousness and name-andform. Briefly stated, his way of attending proceeded as follows:

'Given what, does decay and death come to be? Conditioned by what is decay and death?'

As you all know, decay and death is the last among the twelve links. This is the way of radical attention or '*yonisomanasikāra*'. The meaning of the term '*yonisomanasikāra*' should be properly understood. To analyze the word:

'*yoni*' means the matrix or the place of origin. So '*yonisomanasikāra*' is attention by way of the matrix – the point of origin. In short, it means reflection as to the causes and conditions. First of all, he thought:

'When what is there does decay and death come to be? Dependent on what is decay and death? Then it occurred to him:

'When birth is there, decay and death comes to be. Dependent on birth is decay and death.'

In the same way, he directed radical attention further and thought:

'When what is there does birth come to be? Dependent on what is birth? When existence is there does birth come to be. Dependent on existence is birth.' This is because birth is the beginning of existence. Only when there is a concept of existence, can there be a concept of birth. Then he thought:

'Given what does existence come to be? Dependent on what is existence?' And he understood:

Given grasping does existence come to be, dependent on grasping is existence.

Going by the same mode of radical attention, he thought of the condition for grasping and found craving and likewise the condition of craving to be feeling, condition of feeling to be contact, condition for contact to be the six sense-spheres. What is called six sense-spheres is sometimes spoken of as twelve spheres. Then one has to understand by it the six internal spheres, that is the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind and the six external spheres, that is the forms, the sounds, the smells, the tastes, the tangibles and the ideas. Taken as pairs, they are the six spheres of sense. It is because of these spheres that contact comes to be. Then he thought:

'What being there does the sixfold sense-sphere come to be? What is the condition for the sixfold sense-sphere?' It occurred to him then:

'When name-andform is there does the six-fold sense-sphere come to be. Nameand-form is the condition for the six-fold sense-sphere.' Going further, he thought:

‘What being there does name-and-form come to be? What is the condition for name-and-form?’ He understood that it is when consciousness is there that name-and-form comes to be, that consciousness is the condition for name-and-form. Then he pondered:

‘What being there does consciousness come to be? What is the condition for consciousness?’ He realized that it is when name-and-form is there that consciousness comes to be, that name-and-form is the condition for consciousness. With that he was convinced of the inter dependence of these two links.

It is said that at this point it occurred to the Bodhisatta Vipassi:

‘Paccudāvattati kho idaṁ viññāṇaṁ nāmarūpamhā. nāparaṁ gacchati.’

‘This consciousness turns back from name-and-form. It does not go to another.’

This is how he aroused the knowledge of the arising nature of things. On reaching that point in his radical attention, it occurred to him:

This consciousness does not go beyond name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form is consciousness and dependent on consciousness is name-and-form. From there he reflected back:

Dependent on name-and-form is six sense-spheres, dependent on six sense-spheres contact, dependent on contact, feeling, dependent on feeling, craving and so on ending with the conclusion:

This is the arising of this entire mass of suffering. This, then, is the arising aspect of suffering. With that understanding, it is said, that the Bodhisatta Vipassi exclaimed:

‘*Samudayo, samudayo*’

‘Arising, arising’

At this juncture, the Bodhisatta Vipassi is said to have made an utterance of joy as we get in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* in the case of our Gotama Buddha.

‘*Cakkhuṁ udapādi ñāṇaṁ udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi*’

‘The eye arose, the knowledge arose, the wisdom arose, the science arose, the light arose.’

That is as regards the arising aspect.

Along with it, the Bodhisatta Vipassi attended to the cessation aspect and that too starting from the end.

‘When what does not exist does decay and death not come to be? With the cessation of what does the cessation of decay and death come about? And he understood:

‘When there is no birth, decay and death does not come to be; with the cessation of birth comes cessation of decay and death.’ I hope you all can understand the reverse order in the same way. ‘When what does not exist does birth not come to be? With the cessation of what does the cessation of birth come about? When there is no existence, birth does not come to be; with the cessation of existence comes cessation of birth. Likewise, when grasping ceases existence or becoming would cease. When craving ceases, grasping would cease. When feeling ceases, craving would cease. When contact ceases, feeling would cease. When the six sensespheres cease, contact would cease. When name-and-form ceases, the six sense-spheres would cease. When consciousness ceases, name-and-form would cease. When name-and-form ceases, consciousness would cease. With this, again, he reached the point at which the inter-relation between consciousness and name-andform became obvious. Then the Bodhisatta Vipassi is said to have uttered this highly significant statement.

‘*Adhigato kho myāyaṁ vipassanā maggo bodhāya*.’

‘The way of insight to awakening has been aroused by me.’

This clearly indicates that the Law of Dependent Arising which in our tradition has been almost relegated to the limbo is directly relevant to meditation and helpful for enlightenment.

After understanding the cessation aspect, the Bodhisatta Vipassi exclaimed that the way of insight has been aroused because it is the decisive aspect in regard to insight. The reason is that along with the cessation of name-and-form, the six sensespheres cease and with that contact, feeling and craving also cease. Thus the entire mass of suffering comes to cease. What comes after this is only the following information:

The Bodhisatta Vipassi, with the help of this mode of insight reflected on the rise and fall of the five aggregates of grasping as follows:

Thus is form, thus its arising, thus its passing away.

Thus is feeling, thus its arising, thus its passing away.

Thus is perception, thus its arising, thus its passing away.

Thus are preparations, thus their arising, thus their passing away.

Thus is consciousness, thus its arising, thus its passing away.

Finally, it is said that having contemplated on the rise and fall of the five aggregates, before long, he attained Enlightenment.

We can form some idea of the way of reflection in insight meditation by this account. What is meant by the contemplation of the rise and fall (*udayabbaya*) is the contemplation of the arising and ceasing nature of phenomena. In contemplating on arising and ceasing, the question of causes and conditions comes up as a matter of

course. As we mentioned the other day, according to discourses like *Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta,* the cause and condition for form is the four great primaries, namely, earth, water, fire and air. The cause and condition for feeling is contact. The cause and condition for perception is contact. The cause and condition for preparations is contact. But the cause and condition for consciousness is name-and-form. We can infer that the Bodhisatta Vipassi in his contemplation of rise and fall of the five aggregates of grasping, reflected lastly on consciousness and thereby became acquainted with name-and-form. As the radical attention on name-and-form became sharper and sharper, he realized the cessation of preparations and attained enlightenment.

From our analysis of this discourse, it should be obvious how important the Law of Dependent Arising is. Generally, we talk only about the Four Noble Truths. But from this episode, it is clear that when one examines the causes and conditions of consciousness, one would hit upon name-and-form. Let me elaborate a little on this point. However much we explain, it seems there are many who cannot budge an inch from the traditional interpretation. So often, I have pointed out with special reference to the Buddha's own definition found in the discourses that the factors on the 'name' side in name-and-form are feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. It is with the help of these five that we recognize the four elements, earth, water, fire and air in terms of hard and soft, hot or cold, and so forth. That is why it is called *rūpasaññā* (perception of form). Those five factors are called name only in a formal sense. Primarily, recognition is not by 'name' in the conventional and linguistic sense. But by means of feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Some confuse the issue by arguing that contact has to precede feeling. However much we point out with quotations, they insist on putting contact first. Let me explain it in such a way that at least you all would not forget.

Please stretch your right hand if you can. Now stretch out the fingers. I am going to give you an exercise to drive out sleepiness if any. Now stretch your palm. Alright, start counting your fingers. 'One', what is the finger you bend? Is it the thumb?

Isn't it the little finger? This is how I call the small but mischievous little finger – 'Feeling'. Then comes number Two – the ring finger where you wear the signet ring. Well, call it 'Perception'. Now for number Three. Bend the decisive middle finger, prominent and intrusive. See how it digs into your palm. Let us call it 'Intention'. He is the one who calls the waiter and silences a meeting. You do your work when 'intention' steps in. Number Four is the index finger, fussy and busy all the time. You may dub it 'Contact'. What comes last as Number five? The THUMB – 'standing apart but approachable to the rest' as lexicons define it. Take it as 'Attention'. So have this 'at your finger tips', this definition of 'Name'. When you clutch your fingers, the one nearest to your thumb (that is Attention) is the index finger (that is CONTACT). Well, that is why I prefer the original sutta definition of '*nāma'*. Of course, these similes are not found in the discourse. I brought these up only for clarification. Now, after this, at least you all, dear listeners, must not doubt the Buddha-word regarding '*nāma*' in '*nāmarūpa*'.

To impress you further on this point, let me say something more. There may be in this audience lawyers and other knowledgeable persons who know more about legal matters.

I have heard that there is provision for such a tactic as this in legal affairs. Sometimes a case of murder or theft comes up in the law courts with no one to give evidence. When there is no evidence, the accused has to be discharged. In such circumstances our legal system has provision for a tactic like this. Suppose there are five persons accused in a case of planned theft of a very serious type. But no one comes forward to give evidence. In such a situation, the judge can give pardon to one of the alleged culprits under the oath:

"You must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Thereby that culprit is persuaded to give evidence holding nothing back. Now mind you, the Buddha himself resorted to such a "middle path" tactic.

The magical illusion of consciousness is an insoluable problem. This problem, which no one in the world not even the seers, could solve, the Buddha successfully solved through his 'Middle Path'. It is to illustrate this mode of solution that I employ this simile. I don't know much about law, but this much I know. So let me explain now. We identified THUMB with ATTENTION. He is the guy, who in the guise of non-radical attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) led us up the garden path and brought us all this long way in *Saṁsāra*. He has dubious relations with the little finger (feeling), the ring finger (perception), with the middle finger (intention) and above all, with the index finger (contact). As a matter of fact, he is closely associated with the fussy and busy index-finger. The Buddha understood that out of the whole 'bunch', the biggest even in size is the THUMB (Attention). He is the guy who as 'non-radical attention' planned the whole crime. So what did the Buddha do? He converted 'nonradical attention' into 'radical attention' insisting on the confession of 'the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth'. That is how the Buddha adjudicated this mysterious case of consciousness.

To put all this in a nutshell, let us go back to 'the-dog-onthe-plank'. That dog keeps on looking down into the water because of non-radical attention. If it suddenly understands "It is not that, I look because I see, but that I see because I look, it will no longer go on looking."

Then there is the story of Narcissus we have cited in our books. In fact, we gave a revised version of that story about the handsome Greek youth Narcissus. In the original story, it is said that he fell in love with the reflection of his own face in the pond, mistaking it to be an angel's, and sacrificed his life for the imagined angel and that a flower nearby his dead body was named after him. That was all. But we revised the story and made a 'Buddhist version' of it. We 'resurrected' the youth and got him to realize the fact that it is his own reflection that he is in love with – that he is 'seeing' because he 'looks'. But this is only our 'post-script' to the story. If that youth had actually aroused that radical attention, he could have become a Stream-winner. Well, all this is to show that attention is the most important factor. That is why, with the change from non-radical attention to radical attention, everything became clear to the Buddha.

Let us pass on to another story. Some of you might not like those Greek stories. Well, we have our *Jātaka* stories. Among the *Jātaka* stories there is one called *Ummagga Jātaka*

– a fairly long story. There we have an interesting and instructive story titled ‘The gem problem’. I shall try to relate it in brief.

‘King Vedeha of *Mithilā* was informed that there is a gem in the pond by the city gate. The king asked his senior-most advisor Senaka to procure it. He went there and looked into the pond. True enough there was a gem, so he got the people to empty the pond to get it. But they couldn’t find the gem. Then he ordered them to dig out the mud but all in vain. However when the pond got filled again, the elusive gem was still there. Again and again he got the people to empty the pond but no one could trace it. At last, he reported the matter to the king who then entrusted that duty to his youngest advisor Bodhisatta Mahosadha. Wise as he was, Mahosadha, as soon as he looked into the pond, understood that it is only a reflection and that the gem must be in the crow’s nest on the palm tree by the pond. In the presence of the king who also came there, he got a bowl full of water immersed into the pond. A gem was visible there too.

“Where then is the gem?” asked the king.

“It is in the crow’s nest up there, Lord”, replied Mahosadha and got it down for the king.’

So this is a good illustration for non-radical attention (*ayonisomanasikāra*). Senaka imagined a gem in the pond and dug out the mud. To Bodhisatta Mahosadha’s wisdom-eye, it appeared only as a reflection on water. By the way, there is a certain detail in this episode, which, curiously enough, has a deeper dimension. As you may remember, in the two verses that formed the topic of our sermon, there was the question:

> Wherefrom do currents turn back
>
> Where whirls no more the whirlpool
>
> Wherein does name and form
>
> Get cut off with no trace left
>
> And what was the Buddha’s answer?
>
> Where water, earth, fire and air
>
> Are unplumbed and get no footing
>
> Herefrom do currents turn back
>
> Here whirls no more the whirlpool
>
> Here it is that name and form
>
> Get held in check with no trace left

Now what does this mean?

Where the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air – do not get a footing, that is to say, do not get established, it is from there that the currents turn back. So far in our commentarial tradition, no one could understand the import of the riddle verse and the Buddha's answer to it. Even from the episode we have just related, you can get a clue to it. According to Senaka's 'sight', there was a gem in the pond. Therefore, a gem got established in earth, water, fire and air. But to Mahosadha's 'insight', it appeared merely as a reflection. So there was no need to dig into the pond to find it. Now from that point onwards, let me sidetrack to another discourse which is also relevant to our topic. It is the *Kevaḍḍha Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*.

It is an extremely deep sutta which has puzzled many a scholar. It embodies a wonderful episode which the Buddha relates to a certain householder. According to it, a certain monk whose name is not given conceived a problem which is of the type that modern scientists are concerned with. 'Where do these four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air cease without residue?' He seems to have thought that there must be some place where they completely cease. He did not approach the Buddha to get an answer. Instead, because he had developed psychic powers, went from heaven to heaven seeking an answer to his problem from the gods. They said:

"We do not know. Go and ask those in higher heavens. Passing from heaven to heaven and from Brahma world to Brahma world, finally he put his question to Mahā Brahmā. He was shy to confess his ignorance in the company of Brahmas. So he cautioned that monk to a side and confided:

"I myself do not know the answer. But why did you come all this way? You should have asked the Buddha himself."

Then that monk came back to the Buddha and posed his question:

"Where do those four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air cease without residue?"

The Buddha, however, instead of answering the question as it is, remarked:

"Monk, that is not the way you should put the question. This is how you should word it:

Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī – tejo vāyo na gādhati

kattha dīghañca rassañca – aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

kattha nāmañca rūpañca – asesaṁ uparujjhati.

'Where do water and earth, fire and air find no footing,

Where do long and short – subtle and gross, comely and ugly,

And name and form – get held in check with no trace left?'

First of all, let us try to understand the significance of the Buddha's reformulation of the question.

'Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī – tejo vāyo na gādhati'

Here too we have the word '*gādhati*' ('to find a footing'). 'Where do water and earth, fire and air find no footing?' It is not a question of destruction or complete cessation, but a case of getting not established by 'not finding a footing'. Then there are these significant words too.

'kattha dīghañca rassañca – aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

kattha nāmañca rūpañca – asesaṁ uparujjhati.'

Where do (the distinctions like) long and short, subtle and gross, comely and ugly, and name and form get held in check with no trace left. Instead of the word '*nirujjhati*' (ceases) in the original question, the Buddha introduced the significant word '*uparujjhati*' ('to hold in check'). After reformulating that monk's question in this way, the Buddha gave the following answer which, for a long time, has puzzled the scholars:

viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ

anantaṁ sabbatopabhaṁ

ettha āpo ca paṭhavī

tejo vāyo na gādhati

ettha dīghañca rassañca

aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

ettha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

viññāṇassa nirodhena

etthetaṁ uparujjhati

Consciousness which is non-manifestative

Endless lustrous on all sides

Here it is that water and earth

Fire and air no footing find

Here again is long and short

Subtle and gross, comely and ugly

Here is name as well as form

Are held in check with no trace left

Wherein consciousness comes to cease

All these are held in check therein

Now let us attempt a solution to this longstanding puzzle. The Buddha is declaring that there is something called '*anidassana viññāṇa*' – 'non-manifestative consciousness'. Since we have already told you about the 'Elusive Gem', you can easily guess what '*anidassana*' means. Or else, from the Narcissus story, you can get a clue to the meaning of the term '*anidassana*' (non-manifestative). For Narcissus, deluded as he was, the water in the pond manifested an angel. Had wisdom dawned on him, the manifestation – the angel – would be no more. Consciousness of an angel would have ceased. So also is the case with the Gemin-the-pond, King Vedeha as well as Senaka had a consciousness of a gem. After Bodhisatta Mahosadha dispelled the delusion, their consciousness ceased to manifest a gem, and along with that distinctions, based on earth, water, fire, air, long and short, comely and ugly, relating to the reflection of the gem were gone.

So then this is the meaning of the phrase '*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ*'. What is it that the non-manifestative consciousness does not manifest? Whatever that has to do with the perception of form. Thereby the significance of the pairs of words the Buddha tagged on to that monk's question would also become clear.

'*...dīghañca rassañca aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ*'

'Long and short, subtle-gross, comely-ugly'

All these distinctions are part and parcel with the perception of form. Finally, it is said that name-and-form are held in check without residue. That is by way of summary.

But then, what is the meaning of the last two lines?

'*viññāṇssa nirodhena – etthetaṁ uparujjhati*'

'With the cessation of consciousness, all these are held in check.'

What is meant is the cessation of the '*abhisaṅkhataviññāṇa*' ('the specifically prepared consciousness'). In other words, it is the deluded consciousness (e.g., the 'gemconsciousness' or the 'angel-consciousness').

Whatever pertains to the '*abhisaṅkhata-viññāṇa*' comes to cease in that all lustrous consciousness (*sabbatopabhaviññāṇa*). When light comes from all directions, consciousness becomes non-manifestative ('*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ anantaṁ sabbatopabhaṁ*').

Let us go back to our simile of the film-show. When a beautiful film-star appears on the screen, one might be tempted to go and embrace her, like Narcissus. The unreality of all

what appears on the screen is understood when the cinema hall is fully illuminated. Only the screen is there. The scenes are gone. When Bodhisatta Mahosadha 'enlightened' them on the point, the King and Senaka understood that there is no gem in the water. All these are clues to the meaning of the phrase '*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ*'. Consciousness becomes 'non-manifestative' when it is endless and lustrous on all sides. What is the lustre? Wisdom is the lustre. We have pointed this out on many occasions. Some people seem to think that the Buddha compared wisdom to a lustre or light only in a metaphorical sense. But that is not so. The Buddha's sermon on lustres (*pabhā*) is a very powerful one.

'*Catasso imā bhikkhave pabhā. Katamā catasso?*

Candappabhā, suriyappabhā, aggippabhā paññāpabhā.

Imā kho bhikkhave catasso pabhā.

Etadaggaṁ bhikkhave imāsaṁ catunnaṁ

yadidaṁ paññāpabhā'

'Monks, there are these four lustres. What four? The lustre of the moon, the lustre of the sun, the lustre of the fire, the lustre of wisdom. These, monks, are the four lustres. Of these four, monks, this is the highest, namely, the lustre of wisdom.'

All this time people took this declaration lightly. It is through this lustre of wisdom that this illusory magic show is exposed for what it is. If name in name-and-form is formal name and form in name-and-form is nominal form, it is dependent on such a spurious name-and-form that the six-fold sense-sphere bifurcates into two teams – eye and forms, ear and sounds etc. and then, it is as a result of the interplay between these two teams that we get a world. That is why the Buddha defined the world in terms of the six sense-spheres. The entire world is to be found within this duality. Last of all comes the duality of mind and mind-object. It is within this world of the six-fold sense-sphere that all those 'things' that we take seriously, cease. Some people are scared of the word '*suññatā*' (voidness). But one cannot help it. That is why the Buddha compared it to an awakening from a dream. The worldlings are in a dream world. If things seen in a dream are no longer there when one wakes up, there is no point in lamenting. Things non-existing are seen as non-existing. That is the 'knowledge-of-things-as-they-are' (*yathābhūtañāṇa*). The Truth came to light in the light of wisdom.

Regarding name-and-form, there are many significant references well worth quoting. For instance, there are these two lines which convey something deep:

'*Taṁ nāmarūpasmiṁ asajjamānaṁ*

akiñcanaṁ nānupatanti dukkhā'

‘That one untrammeled by name-and-form

And possessionless – no pains befall’

Not to get entangled in name-and-form is equivalent to owning nothing. Then there is nothing to get attached to. There is also this revealing declaration:

‘*Anattani attamāniṁ*

passa lokaṁ sadevakaṁ

niviṭṭhaṁ nāmarūpasmiṁ

idaṁ saccanti maññati’

‘Behold the world with all its gods

Fancying a self where none exists

Entrenched in name-and-form it builds

The conceit:

‘This is the truth.’

Like Narcissus, like Senaka, the world has got entrenched in name-and-form. That is what the Buddha is pointing out to us. The lustre or light we spoke about is not like any form of light known to modern science. It is within this darkness, then, that the forms we see with our eyes and take to be real exist. That is why the Buddha compared all perceptions to a mirage.

Let me say something more to the same effect. There is an important discourse on duality we had discussed earlier too. It centres round the following highly significant verse:

‘*Yo ubhante viditvāna*

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

so‘dha sibbanimaccagā’

This verse, actually found in the *Tissametteyya Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* is so deep in meaning that, according to the *Anguttara Nikāya*, already during the Buddha’s life time, monks cited it and gave six different interpretations to it in a sort of symposium.

Rendered simply, the verse conveys the following idea:

'Whoever, having known both ends, with wisdom, gets not attached to the middle, him do I call a Great Man. It is he who has gone beyond the seamstress.'

We have given a long commentary to this verse already.

Out of the six interpretations, two are relevant to our topic today. So we shall limit our discussion to those two. The common feature in all the six interpretations is the positing of two things as the two ends with something at the middle. The two ends are supposed to be stitched up ignoring the middle by a seamstress.

In one of the two interpretations we propose to discuss, one end is '*nāma*' (name), the second end is '*rūpa*' (form) and the middle is '*viññāṇa*' (consciousness). Just see, many scholars in defining '*nāma*' insist on including consciousness also in it. It is utterly wrong. The analysis of '*nāmarūpa*' in our commentarial tradition is contrary to the Law of Dependent Arising. Here it is clearly stated that 'name' is one end and 'form' is the other end and that 'consciousness' is in the middle. Craving is the seamstress. What does she do? She ignores the existence of consciousness in the middle and stitches up name and form, making one forget that the very distinction between name and form is due to consciousness. All this shows what a deep understanding those monks had even about one verse where present day scholars get stuck. Six monks gave six different interpretations to the same verse and the Buddha ratified all of them, specifying, however, that he himself had the first interpretation in mind when he uttered that verse. It seems that all the six interpretations are topics of meditation. So now we have dealt with one of them.

Well, there is another meditation topic like that. Only these two we are mentioning, as they are relevant to our theme. According to this particular interpretation, one end is the six internal sense-spheres. The second end is the six external sensespheres. As we have already explained the six internal spheres are the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. The six external spheres are their objects, the forms, the sounds, the smells, the tastes, the tangibles and the ideas. They are on either side and again consciousness is in the middle. But craving puts the knot. Just as in the case of name and form, craving stitches them up into a knot ignoring consciousness. So also in the case of the sense-spheres, for instance, eye and forms are separated and craving, the seamstress, stitches them up ignoring consciousness which is in the middle.

Sometimes the difference between consciousness and wisdom is pointed out in the discourses. Their respective functions are also clarified. One such clarification is:

' . . . . *paññā bhāvetabbā – viññāṇaṁ pariññeyyaṁ*'

' . . . . wisdom is to be developed – consciousness is to be comprehended.'

In fact the development of wisdom is for the purpose of comprehension of consciousness. As wisdom develops, the nature of consciousness is understood. Now, what does this mean? To understand the nature of a magic show as it is, is to be free from its spell. That is 'the end' of the magic show. It is the same with the delusion about

the cinema-screen or the T.V. screen. When wisdom comes up, consciousness goes down. That is the implication of the phrase '*viññāṇassa nirodhena*'– 'with the cessation of consciousness'. Now you can understand what the cessation is. It is like the cessation of the 'angel-consciousness' of Narcissus and the 'gem-consciousness' of Senaka.

That monk thought that there is some place where the four great primaries cease completely. The Buddha, however, held that what matters is the perception of form derived from the four great primaries – that it is a case of grasping (*upādāna*). It is not a destruction of the four great primaries. If one takes '*rūpa*' in the materialistic sense, like modern scientists, one cannot understand the deeper implications of these verses. What we have before us is a question of release from this vortical interplay – from the meaningless running in the same circle.

Between name-and-form and consciousness, worldlings keep running round and round in vain. We spoke about an abyss. You can understand this abyss in relation to the whirlpool we have described. It is to fill the vacuum arising out of the abyss that craving and grasping step in with the result the Five Aggregates get accumulated. That is like the flotsam and jetsam that the abyss attracts and engulfs. All these implications go with our simile of the vortex. But if one interprets the term 'vortex' as rain, all these deep meanings have no place. The point at which the currents turn back is the full understanding of the vortex. With that, the whirlpool of that individual 'whirls no more'. He cannot be traced anymore. The whirlpool or the vortex of the Arahant has ceased. But there is nothing to lament. The whirlpool was in the water. The mainstream too is a body of water. So what has actually ceased is only a pervert notion of existence.

Just see, when we interpret these verses in this way, there are some who call it nihilistic. Even the Buddha was branded a 'Nihilist' by the Brahamins. In the body of water flowing downwards, there was a pervert formation called a whirlpool or a vortex as a result of a runaway current. Even Buddhas and *Pacceka Buddhas* have been so many *Saṁsāric* runaway water currents. After a vain vortical interplay for aeons and aeons, if through wisdom their name-and-form comes to an end, currents will never flow for them again. You can now understand what sort of a deep Dhamma the Buddha has presented to us through this vortex simile. The delusion is seen through by the light of wisdom. That is the path of insight Bodhisatta Vipassi followed.

It was when the radical attention (*yonisomanasikāra*) became razor-edge sharp that wisdom dawned on him. That is precisely why there is this significant phrase in that same discourse:

'*yonisomanasikārā ahu paññāya abhisamayo*'

'Through radical attention, there was the understanding through wisdom'

So then, radical attention is the seed of wisdom, and also its harbinger.

Well knowing this innate capacity of 'Attention'– the 'THUMB' – the Buddha gave him free pardon for the nonce. There is no other way to solve this Saṁsāric riddle. But one thing. When 'Attention' began exposing the inside story of the plot, confessing his own complicity in it as non-radical attention, something like 'catching-the-thief-red-handed' happened in the end. I shall tell you the whole story later. Why do we say it is like 'catching-the-thief-red-handed?

Because it is due to this guy 'Attention' that every 'thing' in the world becomes a 'THING'!

'*Manasikāra sambhavā sabbe dhammā*'

'All things have attention as their origin'

Everything originates from attention. Attention is the discoverer of 'the thing'. All things are rooted in interest ('*chandamūlakā sabbe dhmmā*'). There is a very important discourse bearing on this topic which we might have mentioned earlier. The special significance of attention lies in the fact that it makes a 'thing' what it is. That is why the 'THUMB' is so important. To anyone in this world 'a thing' becomes 'the thing' only when his attention picks it up. Isn't that so? Just think about it. Setting aside all your problems, you all are now listening to this sermon. But as soon as you go home, problems crop up again. How? Your attention went there. Attention picks up the problems. When a problem comes up, it is 'the thing' for you. But it is 'nothing' for your neighbour. Your problem has made it 'the thing' for you. Although 'Attention' was granted free pardon, when he confesses his part in the plot, it becomes obvious that he is the biggest thief. It is as if he is caught redhanded. What is that he has stolen? 'THE THING' – the 'mind object' ('*mano-dhammā*'). 'Mind and mind objects' constitute the most formidable dyad of all. The other dyads, like eye and forms, ear and sounds, are simple. The subtlest point is where the mind strikes the 'mind-object' (*dhamma*). That is the most elusive object. What is it that we call 'what comes to my mind?' Let me quote from the first verse of the *Dhammapada*, as usual:

'*Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā*

manoseṭṭhā manomayā'

'Mind is the forerunner of mind objects

Mind is their chief – they are mind-made'

These two lines are found in the two opening verses of the *Dhammapada*. Until the Buddha came on the scene, everyone thought that things exist in themselves and that mind comes later.

The Buddha, however, pointed out to the world that 'mind' comes first and 'things' come later. Not only that. '*Manomayā*'.

'Things' are mind-made. That 'gem-in-the-pond' was mindmade,

The angel of Narcissus was mind-made. The Buddha proclaimed to the world this nature of phenomena.

Modern scientists should ponder over the Buddha's comparison of all perceptions to a mirage. Not only the scientists but some of our silly people also take up their viewpoint. That is not science but nescience. If the scientists get a hint to the correct direction, they might understand that they have got stuck somewhere. It is because they started from the wrong end. In the last analysis, they will have to grant the fact that 'things' originate from attention ('*manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā*'). In the final reckoning, 'attention' is found to be the culprit. What is the reason for attention? Interest (*chanda*). In the same discourse, it is said that 'all things are rooted in interest' (*chandamūlakā*). Interest is the lightest shade of craving (*taṇhā*). That is why the Buddha preached that interest is also the root of the Five Aggregates of grasping. The word *chanda* has the sense of 'liking' or 'wanting'. It is because of '*chanda*' that Narcissus saw an angel and the King saw a gem. So one can understand why the Buddha has preached that in order to attain emancipation, ignorance and craving must be done away with.

We have to kill our Saṁsāric 'mother' and 'father'. Craving is the mother and ignorance the father whom we have to kill according to a riddle verse in the *Dhammapada* (*mātaraṁ pitaraṁ hantvā* – having killed the mother and the father). We have come all this long way in *Saṁsara* because of the 'hindrance' (*nīvaraṇa*) of the father and the 'fetter' (*saṁyojana*) of the mother. That in short is the secret of the vortex. Interest is that lightest shade of craving, which comes in almost unknowingly. If you try to keep track of your thoughts, you will find that suddenly a thought breaks in as from nowhere. But if you are sharp enough, you will realize that in some subtle way as if in a dream a need or a wanting surfaces. As soon as it arises, it becomes 'the thing'. There is a lot to be said on this point. I have put it in brief. If there is merit in you all and life in me, perhaps you will get the opportunity to listen to some more sermons like this.

So from what little we have told you, you might understand these things – though scholars may not – since you are now on higher precepts and in a meditative state of mind. We invite you to open up for yourselves the path of insight and realize your higher aspirations. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma realm, may they all rejoice in our sermon! May the merits in rejoicing conduce to the fulfilment of their higher aims! May you too as soon as possible in this very dispensation of the Buddha, understand the Four Noble Truths through knowledge of the Law of Dependent Arising and attain the Deathless Ambrosial *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 3
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 185)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Ekamūlaṁ dvirāvaṭṭaṁ

timalaṁ pañcapattharaṁ

samuddaṁ dvādasāvaṭṭaṁ

pātālaṁ atarī isī

– Ekamūla Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, S.

With but one root and turning twice

With triple stain and arenas five

The ocean with its eddies twelve

The quaking abyss – the sage has crossed

Dear Listeners,

In order to understand properly the Law of Dependent Arising, one has to have a deep insight into the inter-dependence between consciousness and name-and-form. In the last two sermons we compared this inter-dependence to a whirlpool. The deepest point in a whirlpool is the abyss. The riddle verse we have taken up today as the topic of our sermon, has a reference to an abyss. Let us examine whether there is any connection between the Law of Dependent Arising and this abyss.

This is a riddle verse that is found in the *Devatā Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. It seems that a certain deity has put together and presented seven factors in the Dhamma metaphorically as a sustained simile in this verse. First of all, let us try to get the literal (apparent) meaning of the verse. '*Ekamūlaṁ dvirāvaṭṭaṁ*' Having one root and with two turnings round. '*Timalaṁ pañca pattharam*' With three stains and five expanses. '*Samuddaṁ dvādasāvaṭṭaṁ*'– the ocean with twelve whirlpools. '*Pātālaṁ atarī isī*' – 'The abyss the sage has crossed.'

Only this difficult riddle verse is found there in that context without any clue to its meaning. The commentary gives some meanings at random. Though it appears as a

difficult verse, the similes alluded to in it are to be found elsewhere in the discourses. To begin with the abyss itself, there is a discourse by the same name in the *Vedanā Saṁyutta* of the *Saḷāyatana Vagga* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. There the Buddha says:

'Monks, this is a synonym for painful bodily feelings, namely, the abyss.'

('*Sārīrikānaṁ kho etaṁ bhikkhave dukkhānaṁ vedanānaṁ adhivacanaṁ yadidaṁ pātāloti*')

So you all now know what the abyss is. Then as for the ocean, that too, we can understand by an open hint in the *Samudda Sutta* in the same section of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

'Cakkhu bhikkhave purisassa samuddo. Tassa rūpamayo vego, Yo taṁ rūpamayaṁ vegaṁ sahati, ayaṁ vuccati bhikkhave atari cakkhusamuddaṁ saūmiṁ sāvaṭṭaṁ sagāham sarakkhasaṁ tiṇṇo pāragato thale ṭiṭṭhati brāhmaṇo.'

'The eye, O monks, is the ocean for a man. It has the force of waves of forms. Whoever endures that force of forms, he, O monks, is called one who has crossed the eye-ocean with its waves, whirlpools, seizures, and demons – the Brahmin who has crossed over and stands on dry ground on the further shore.'

Now what does this mean? The eye is called an ocean for a man. In that ocean, there are the waves of forms. Whoever is able to withstand the force of those form waves, is called the Brahmin who has crossed over this eye ocean with its waves, whirlpools, seizures and demons and stands on the dry ground having gone beyond. The reference here is to the Arahant.

The discourse goes on to give the same description in regard to the other sense spheres – namely, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind, calling each of them an ocean for a man to cross over. The objects of the six senses are called waves. This is an instructive discourse for those meditators whose meditation topic is the six sense spheres. In the eye ocean there is the force of form waves. If one gets swept away by them and gets drawn into the whirlpool, one is seized by the form demons. So also in the case of the ocean of the ear. Here the idea of waves is quite apt. One is carried away by sound-waves, gets drawn into the whirlpool and is seized by the sound-demons. It is the same with the other senses inclusive of the mind. In the case of the mind, it is the thought-waves. That is a concept relevant to insight meditation. The force of thought-waves develops into breakers which sweep us aloft and drag us into the whirlpool to be seized by the demon. This is by the way, but the important point is the explanation of the sustained simile of the ocean.

Then what about the eddies? We need not go in search of other discourses, since it is already implicit here. The word '*sāvaṭṭa*' (with eddies) qualifying the ocean can be taken as an allusion to the concept of the twelve eddies. Since the discourse speaks of six oceans, how are we to count twelve eddies in the six oceans? Worldlings regard each of

the six senses as well as their respective objects as 'self'. That is why, for instance, there is the admonition to regard them as 'not-self' (*anattā*), in developing *anattasaññā* (perception of not-self) as a meditation subject. (e.g., *cakkhuṁ anattā, rūpaṁ anattā* – eye is not self, form is not self.) For instance, in the case of the eye, waves keep circling round the eye as well as its object, before one gets drawn into the whirlpool. So much for the twelve eddies. What, then, are the five oceans (*pañcapattharaṁ*)? In the *Māradhītu Sutta* of the *Sagāthaka Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, we read:

'*pañcoghatiṇṇo atarīdha chaṭṭhaṁ*'

'Having crossed the five floods, he has here itself crossed the sixth as well.'

This is a reference to the Arahant. The five floods are the five arenas or expanses of sense-pleasures. Sense pleasures spread over the arenas of the five senses (*pañcapattharaṁ*) and in so spreading incur three stains (*timalaṁ*), a reference to which can be traced to the *Dutiyasamudda Sutta* in the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta*.

'*yassa rāgo ca doso ca avijjā ca virājitā so imaṁ samuddaṁ sagāhaṁ sarakkhasaṁ saūmibhayaṁ duttaraṁ accatari.*'

'He in whom lust, hate and ignorance have been made to fade away, has crossed this ocean, so hard to cross – the ocean with its seizures, demons, and the danger of waves. This, again, is a reference to the Arahant.'

Just see how all these fall into place. So you may take lust, hate, and ignorance as the three stains.

Then there is the term '*dvirāvaṭṭaṁ*', 'double-turning' or 'turning between two things'. These too we can understand through *Salla Sutta* in the *Vedanā Saṁyutta*. In that Sutta, there is this statement about the 'untaught worldling' (*assutavā puthujjano*).

'So dukkhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno kāmasukhaṁ abhinandati. Taṁ kissa hetu ? na bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano pajanāti dukkhāya vedanāya nissaraṇaṁ aññatra kāmasukhā.' 'He, on being touched by painful feeling, delights in sensual pleasures. Why so? Monks, the untaught worldling does not know a stepping out from painful feeling except sensual pleasures.'

Because he doesn't see an exit from painful feeling other than a recourse to sensual pleasures, the ordinary worldling keeps on turning back and forth between pain and pleasure. That is why we call it a see-sawing between these two extremes due to ignorance about the neither painful nor pleasant (neutral) feeling at the middle. That is to say, for him, ignorance underlies the neither painful nor pleasant feeling, while the latencies to lust and hate underlie pleasant feeling and painful feeling, respectively.

Therefore, these three 'stains' keep on growing in him. So much for the 'turning twice' in the riddle verse.

Last of all we come to 'the one root' (*ekamūlaṁ*). Now, what is this 'one root'? That too, we can understand in the light of the *Phassamūlaka Sutta* ('Rooted in contact') in the *Vedanā Saṁyutta*. There we find the following declaration by the Buddha:

'Monks, there are these three feelings that are born of contact, rooted in contact, caused by contact and arisen from contact. What three? Pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neither painful nor pleasant feeling.'

The clue we need is already there in the title of the Sutta (*phassamūlaka*). All feelings have contact as their only root (*ekamūlaṁ*).

Although we have offered the above explanation, the standard commentary of the text which nearly everyone relies on gives a different interpretation to this riddle verse. We shall cite it too for the sake of those of you who prefer to follow it. We explained from 'the abyss' upwards whereas the commentator explains from 'the root' downwards. Now this is how the commentator explains the term '*ekamūlaṁ*'. The root causes for the Saṁsāric existence of beings are ignorance and craving. However, for some reason or other, the commentator opts for craving as the root in this context. So remember, according to the commentary, the 'one root' is craving. Then '*dvirāvaṭṭaṁ*' or 'turning between two things' is explained as the alternation between the eternalist view and the annihilationist view, for the world is said to be turning round between these two extremes. The five arenas are the five-fold sense pleasures as we also have explained. The three stains are said to be lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) whereas in our explanation ignorance (*avijjā*) figures as the third stain. The ocean (*samudda*) is taken to be craving. The twelve eddies are explained as the twelve internal and external sense spheres, which tallies with our interpretation. But then the abyss is said to be craving itself.

So it seems according to the commentary, three out of the seven similes of the riddle verse are to be interpreted as references to craving. You should consider whether the commentarial interpretation is plausible. According to it, the root is craving, the ocean is craving, and the abyss is also craving. Here is a riddle verse with a sustained simile. But the commentary seems to have gone off at a tangent, missing its true significance.

The most important term that emerged from our discussion is '*phassamūlaka*'– 'rooted in contact'. It is suggestive of the immense significance of contact. Out of the discourses dealing with the question of contact, the one that brings us the deepest analysis is the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* of the *Digha Nikāya*. So let me now sidetrack to that discourse.

This *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* is of fundamental significance like the *Satipaṭṭhana Sutta* and, even like it, was preached at the township of *Kammāssadamma* in the *Kuru* country. By way of introduction it is said that once when the Buddha was staying at *Kammāssadamma* in the *Kuru* country, Venerable Ānanda approached him and said:

"It is wonderful, Venerable Sir, it is marvellous, Venerable Sir, how deep the Law of Dependent Arising is and how profound it appears! All the same, Venerable Sir, it appears to me as clear and clear."

The Buddha's response was this:

"Do not say so, Ānanda, do not say so. This Law of Dependent Arising is deep and it appears profound. It is through not understanding and not penetrating this Dhamma that this progeny has become a tangled skein, matted like a bird's nest, interwoven like *muñja* and babbaja grass, unable to pass beyond states of woe, bad bournes, downfall and the round of birth and death."

From there onwards, the Buddha, like a teacher explaining a deep point to a pupil, clarifies some deep aspects of the Law of Dependent Arising to Venerable Ānanda who is the Treasurer of the Dhamma in this dispensation. As a matter of fact, *Mahā Nidāna Sutt*a is considered by many as an extraordinary and profound discourse. Anyway let us try to understand it without undue fears.

To put it in brief, this discourse has something special to say about contact, which is the point we are concerned with. We have already mentioned that 'name' in name-and-form comprises feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention and that 'form' in name-and-form amounts to the perception of form derived from the four great primaries– earth, water, fire and air. In this discourse, the Buddha explains to Venerable Ānanda, step by step, the mutual relationship between name-and-form on the one hand as well as the mutual relationship between name-and-form and consciousness on the other. The discourse proceeds in the form of a catechism. But for facility of understanding, I shall try to present it in a simplified way.

To begin with, let me draw your attention to the special significance of the discourse. As we have mentioned earlier, the traditional way of analysis of the Law of Dependent Arising which many follow at present, is to start from '*avijjā*' or ignorance. However in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* we discussed the other day, the first two links '*avijjā*' and '*saṅkhārā*' are not mentioned. In this discourse too, those two links do not find mention. Instead, what is highlighted here as the basic and most important, is this inter-relation between name-and-form and consciousness. Generally, in reciting the formula of Dependent Arising we are used to the following order:

'Dependent on ignorance, preparations, dependent on preparations, consciousness, dependent on consciousness, nameand-form, dependent on name-and-form, six sense spheres, dependent on six sense spheres, contact, and so on.'

That is to say, between name-and-form and contact we expect to get six sense spheres. But apparently this discourse makes no mention of six sense spheres. Instead, it has a reference to eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, bodycontact and mind-contact. Therefore, one cannot say that the six sense spheres are fully omitted from this discourse. Contact is explained with special reference to the six senses, which makes good the apparent omission. The most important feature of this discourse is the exposition of the inter-relation between '*nāma*' (name) and '*rūpa*' (form). The other day we explained that '*nāma*' refers to what pertains to the question of recognizing

something. There are two aspects in contact or '*samphassa*', namely, the impact and the recognition of the impact. In this concern, the Buddha explains an extremely subtle point to Venerable Ānanda catechetically.

I shall try to give the gist of that detailed explanation whereby the Buddha convinces Venerable Ānanda step by step of the rationale of his explanation. The conclusive statement amounts to this:

"If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which the name group (*nāmakāya*) is designated were absent, there would not be manifest any verbal impression (*adivacana samphassa*) in the form-group (*rūpakāya*). You had better bear in mind that there are two significant terms which keep recurring in this discourse, namely, '*adivacana samphassa*' and '*paṭigha samphassa*'. It is these two terms that have puzzled many scholars. In connection with the concept of contact, we find the Buddha mentioning these two unusual terms in this discourse. Out of those two, '*adivacana samphassa*' can be easily explained, since we have associated the term '*nāma*' with 'naming'. '*Adivacana*' is a word connected with the linguistic medium. '*Adhivacana, nirutti, paññatti*' (synonym terminology, designation) are part and parcel of the linguistic medium. They are helpful in explaining something. So with this concept of contact, there is an aspect of recognition. That is what '*adhivacana samphassa*' (verbal-impression) means. Then there is also the 'impact aspect' to denote which the term '*paṭigha samphassa*' (resistance-impression) is used. It is to show how these two have a mutually reciprocal relationship that the Buddha first of all declares – as we have stated above – that if all those modes etc. by which the name-group is designated were absent, there would not be manifest any verbal impression in the formgroup. That is to say, no verbal impression about the form-group is possible, if not for the name-group. Then the Buddha goes on to give the converse. If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which the form-group is designated were absent, there would not be manifest any resistance impression (*paṭigha samphassa*) in the name-group.

Those of you who listened attentively might understand this. If I may give a simile, contact is like the Siamese twins born to the parents 'Name' and 'Form'. This is because for the full understanding of contact both the verbal impression offered by the name group and the resistance impression offered by the form-group are essential. That is as far as the animate world is concerned and not with regard to the inanimate world. In the animate world, an impact is understood with the help of the constituents of 'name'– feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. What is called 'form' is the four great primaries which provide the scaffolding for the nomenclature– namely, earth, water, fire and air. A resistance too has to come in. On an earlier occasion, we gave as a simile the case of a blind man going and striking against a block of ice. He would come back with a perception of earth. Supposing when he goes there for the second time, the block of ice is melting. He would come back with a perception of water. Next time he goes there, it is boiling. He would return with a perception of fire. If he goes again when it is evaporating, he might come back with a perception of air. The worldling gets acquainted with the four elements like that blind man and proceeds to name them according to his impressions. Whatever it is, a resistance has to come in.

So then, from the characteristics proper to the namegroup, the form-group gets recognition, and from the characteristics proper to the form-group, the name-group encounters resistance. But the Buddha goes on to add something more to complete the picture.

“If, Ānanda, all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which there is a designation of both name group and form group were absent, would there be manifest either any verbal-impression or any resistance-impression?”

“There would not, Venerable Sir.” replies Venerable Ānanda.

Lastly he asks the question which decides the issue:

“And if, Ānanda, all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which there comes to be a designation of nameand-form were absent, would there be manifest any contact?”

“There would not, Venerable Sir.”

These, then, are the four conclusions. Firstly, it is said that if there were no characteristics proper to the name-group, there would not be a verbal impression on the form-group. Secondly, if there were not the characteristics proper to the form-group, there would not be any resistance impression on the name-group. Thirdly, it is said that if the characteristics by which both namegroup and form-group are designated were absent, there would be neither a verbal impression nor a resistance impression. Fourthly comes the culminating conclusion:

If there were no name-andform there would be no contact.

Then the Buddha goes on to point out another important fact, namely, the mutual relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. This is the deepest point. Here too the Buddha questions Venerable Ānanda, convincing him step by step of the point at issue. He puts the questions in such a way that Venerable Ānanda has to reply in the negative. Now this is how the Buddha points out that the presence of consciousness is a necessary condition for name-and-form.

“If, Ānanda, consciousness were not to descend into the mother’s womb, would name-and-form be left remaining?”

“No, indeed, Venerable Sir.” replies Venerable Ānanda.

Now let us digress a little. Some of those western psychologists speak only about consciousness. They never speak of name-and-form. Everybody is talking about the moment of death these days. There is so much pep talk about NDE and ADE. But what the Buddha tells us is that before the dying moment, name-and-form is already sketched out in a mother’s womb. If consciousness does not go there and join it, name-and-form would not grow. In other words, without the support of consciousness, name-and-form would not remain in the mother’s womb. The next question the Buddha puts to

Venerable Ānanda is that, having descended into the mother's womb, if consciousness slips out for some reason or other, would nameand-form grow up and get born into 'this state of existence' (*itthatta*)? The reply, as usual, is in the negative. The object of the last thought is '*nāma-rūpa*' which is indicative of the next birth. It makes an imprint in the mother's womb, like a light shade of the mind but until consciousness goes and joins with it, there is no animation. Even if consciousness unites with it and animates it, if it slips out during the period of pregnancy, an apparent miscarriage will result. Instead of a child, a lifeless ball of flesh will come out, because consciousness has slipped out due to some karmic reason. Consequently, no being will be born out of that '*nāma-rūpa*' into 'this state of existence' or '*itthatta*'.

When Venerable Ānanda understood this point, the Buddha proceeds to put another question to him.

"If, Ānanda, the consciousness of a boy or a girl were to get cut off at the young age itself, would name-and-form come to growth and maturity?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

Another important fact comes to light by this question. What is generally known as "*nāma-rūpa*" in the world is that which is activated by consciousness–which latter is taken for granted as it is invisible. But if consciousness slips out after the birth of a child, it is no longer reckoned as *nāma-rūpa*. It is only a dead body.

Having convinced Venerable Ānanda of these three corroborative facts, the Buddha finally draws the conclusion in a very emphatic tone:

"*Tasmātihānanda, esova hetu, etaṁ nidānaṁ esa samudayo esa paccayo viññāṇassa yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ*"

"Therefore, Ānanda, this itself is the reason, this is the cause, this is the origin, this is the condition for name-and-form, namely, consciousness."

Thereby the Buddha convinces Venerable Ānanda of the fact that there can be no name-and-form in the absence of consciousness.

Then he shows that the converse is also true just by one sentence:

"*Viññaṇaṁ va hi Ānanda nāmarūpe patiṭṭhaṁ nālabhissatha api nu kho āyatiṁ jātijarāmaṇa dukkhasamudaya sambhavo paññāyethāti*"

"And if, Ānanda, consciousness were not to get a footing on name-and-form, would there be manifest an arising of birth,

decay, death and suffering in the future?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

“Therefore, Ānanda, this itself is the reason, this is the cause, this is the origin, this is the condition for consciousness – namely, name-and-form.”

This amounts to saying that if consciousness does not get a footing in name-and-form, there is no state of existence. There is no question of birth again. What the Arahants have done is to bring consciousness to such a state where it gets no footing on name-and-form. In other words, it is the state of unestablishedconsciousness (*appatiṭṭhita viññaṇa*).

Having thus clarified the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form, the Buddha now makes a very strange declaration of extraordinary depth summing up this mutual relationship in the context of Saṁsāric existence.

“*Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā uppajjetha vā, ettāvatā adhivacanapatho ettāvatā niruttipatho ettāvatā paññattipatho ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena*”

“In so far only, Ānanda, can one be born or grow old or die or pass away or reappear, in so far only is there any pathway for a verbal expression, in so far only is there any pathway for terminology, in so far only is there any pathway for designation, in so far only is there any sphere of wisdom, in so far only is there a whirling round for a state of ‘thisness’, that is to say, as far as name-and-form together with consciousness.”

The full significance of the whirling round for a designation of this existence (*ettāvātā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthataṁ paññāpaṇāya*) emerges from this declaration. This is the standard quotation asserting the validity of our simile of the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form (*nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena*). It is because of this whirling round, this vortex, that even a designation is possible. The entire problem of existence is traceable to this vortex and its solution through wisdom is also within this and not outside it. Even the price of an article is dependent on the whirling round of supply and demand. Likewise, it is between these two that is name-and-form and consciousness – that all concepts of a being in existence are at all possible.

Perhaps our explanation of ‘*phassa*’ or contact might not be clear enough for many of you. As usual, let me digress into the world of similes for further clarification. When we speak of contact in the sentient or animate world, the idea of two things automatically comes in because consciousness discriminates between two things. But what about the insentient or inanimate world? If we throw heavily one big stone on another, even if the other gets cracked, it will not complain. There is no ‘clash’. But supposing you accidentally collide with another while walking on the pavement in a rush hour, there could easily be a clash – verbally or even physically. There we see clearly a case of verbal impression (*adhivacanasamphassa*) and resistance impression (*paṭighasamphassa*), unlike in the earlier instance of inanimate objects. There was no ‘clash’, no offence or defence between the two stones.

Let us take up another simile. That is one which carpenters will understand easily. Suppose a carpenter is going to join two planks of wood to fix up a door. He might ask his apprentice to see whether the two planks properly touch each other. Strictly speaking, lifeless planks cannot 'touch'. But the concept of touch is attributed to it in mechanical parlance in various branches of technology. Mechanics even infuse life into the tools and machines they work with. I am told that there is 'someone' inside the computer too. Our delusion of self makes us attribute life into the inanimate objects also. The age of animism and anthropomorphism is not yet over. There was no clash when the two stones collided. But there was a clash when two pedestrains collided. This is enough for one to understand the two aspects of '*phassa*'– '*adhivacanasamphassa*' (verbal impression) and '*paṭighasamphassa*' (resistance impression). The recognition aspect is not there in the case of inanimate objects. But our primitive animistic instinct prompts us to attribute 'contact' and 'touch' to lifeless objects around us and arbitrarily infuse life into them.

The question of contact (*phassa*) brings us to an extraordinary feature of the Buddha's teaching which marks it off from all other religious teachings in the world. No other religious teacher could go beyond contact. In the *Brahmajāla Sutta,* the Buddha dismisses all the 62 views with a brief but meaningful phrase '*tadapi phassa paccayā*'– 'that too is dependent on contact.' The implication is that the Buddha went beyond contact. How did he accomplish this? By his understanding of the Law of Dependent Arising. This itself reveals the special significance of the Law of Dependent Arising. But there are many who call in question our interpretation of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* by quoting a discourse which has an allusion to the descent into the womb.

The discourse they adduce in support of the commentarial three-life interpretation is the *Titthāyatana Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. The special significance of that discourse is that it relates the Law of Dependent Arising to the Four Noble Truths.

"*Channaṁ bhikkhave dhātūnaṁ upādāya gabbhassa avakkanti hoti. Okkantiyā sati nāmarūpaṁ nāmarūpa paccayā saḷāyatanaṁ. Saḷātanapaccayā phasso. Phassaphaccayā vedanā. Vediyamanassa kho panāhaṁ bhikkhave idaṁ dukkhanti paññapemi. Ayaṁ dukkhasamudayoti paññapemi. Ayaṁ dukkhanirodhoti paññapemi. Ayaṁ dukkhanirodhagāmini paṭipadāti paññapemi*"

"Depending on the six elements, monks, there is a descent into the womb. When there is a descent, there is nameand-form. Dependent on name-and-form, the six sense spheres, dependent on the six sense spheres, contact, dependent on contact, feeling. To one who feels, monks, I make it known thus:

'This is suffering. This is the arising of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering. This is the path leading to the cessation of suffering.'"

Now what are the six elements? Earth, water, fire, air, space and consciousness. Those of you who have read the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* would remember how the Buddha begins his sermon to Pukkusāti.

"*Chadhāturo ayaṁ bhikkhu puriso*"

"Monk, this man is made up of six elements."

That means, man is a bundle of six elements, not four. The Sutta in question also begins with the words "*channaṁ bhikkhave dhātūnaṁ upādāya*"

"monks, depending on the six elements?"

That is to say, if there is a grasping of the six elements before the death of a person, '*gabbhassa avakkanti hoti*' there is a descent into a womb. Since the presence of consciousness is already implied, here we have the same story of interdependence between name and form. This passage is misinterpreted by many scholars and preachers as canonical evidence in support of the commentarial three-life interpretation of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. All what the Sutta passage in question asserts is that if one grasps the six elements, that is to say, as long as these elements are not made to fade away as stated in the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta*, there is a descent into the womb. '*Okkantiyā sati nāmarūpaṁ*'. When there is a descent of consciousness into the womb, one can speak of name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form, there is the six sense spheres. Dependent on six sense spheres, contact; and dependent on contact, feeling. Feeling is taken as the turning point to the Four Noble Truths '*Vediyamānassa bhikkhave idaṁ dukkhanti paññapemi*'. It is to one who feels that I make known 'this is suffering' etc. The formula branches off towards the Four Noble Truths, leading to the cessation of suffering. In this way, the law of Dependent Arising is conjoined to the Four Noble Truths.

All this shows the immense importance of the Law of Dependent Arising. There are many instances where the fundamental significance of the Law of Dependent Arising is highlighted. Once Venerable Sariputta brings up a quotation from the Buddha himself to emphasize the importance of the Law of Dependent Arising:

"*Vuttaṁ kho panetaṁ bhagavatā yo paṭiccasamuppādaṁ passati so dhammaṁ passati; yo dhammaṁ passati so paṭiccasamuppādaṁ passati*"

"This has been said by the Fortunate one:

'He who sees the Law of Dependent Arising sees the Dhamma. He who sees the Dhamma sees the Law of Dependent Arising.?"

If this is so I wonder how many are there who actually know the Dhamma. It seems according to the words of the Buddha that no one can claim to know the Dhamma unless he has understood the Law of Dependent Arising.

In the same connection, there is a very powerful peroration by the Buddha asserting in no uncertain terms the cardinal significance of the Law of Depdendent Arising. Even the tone of that declaration is so impressive that I shall try to quote it in full.

'*Katamo ca bhikkhave, paṭiccasamuppādo? Jātipaccayā bhikkhave jarāmaraṇaṁ. uppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ ṭhitā va sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā. Taṁ tathāgato abhisambujjhati abhisameti abhisambujjhitva abhisametvā ācikkhati deseti paññapeti paṭṭhapeti vivarati vibhajati uttānīkaroti passathāti cāha*'

"What, monks, is Dependent Arising? Conditioned by birth, monks, is decay and death. Whether there is an arising of Tathāgatas or no arising of Tathāgatas, that element does persist, that stability of the Dhamma, that norm of the Dhamma, the specific conditionality. That, the Tathāgata awakens to, and intuits into. Having awakened to it and intuited into it, he explains it, preaches it, proclaims it, reveals it, analyzes it, elucidates it, and says 'Behold'."

This declaration shows the greatness of the Buddha as a peerless teacher in that he explained, analyzed and elucidated such a deep Dhamma in a way that we can understand and see for ourselves in our experience. The specific conditionality between any two links of the formula is called *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as evidenced from the following quotation:

"*avijjā paccayā bhikkhave saṁkhārā, yā tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā ayaṁ vuccati bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo*." "Conditioned by ignorance, O, monks, are preparations. That suchness therein, that invariability, that not-otherwiseness, that specific conditionality–this, O, monks, is called Dependent Arising."

All these declarations make it clear that this specific conditionality is an invariable law true for all times whether the Tathāgatas arise or not. This is a lion's roar proclaiming the greatness of this eternal law.

Having come across such a Dhamma, we should not shrink from it, saying that it is too deep for us to understand. Without understanding it, one cannot be a Stream-winner. That is why even the poor leper Suppabuddha, when he became a Stream-winner, is said to have got the insight into the Law of Dependent Arising. Nowadays a meditator has to get a certificate from the meditation centre as proof of his attainment. All that was not necessary in the past. The sum total of the insight of a streamwinner is expressed in the following words:

'*Yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*'

'Whatever is of a nature to arise, all that is of a nature to cease.'

As we explained the other day, the underlying principle of the Law obtains between any two links. One must understand the difference between the Law and its illustrations. There is a lot of confusion in this regard. The Buddha would cite just two links as in this instance–'*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*'(conditioned by ignorance are preparations) –and emphasize the invariability of this Law, or else he would say '*jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ*'(conditioned by birth is decay and death) and assert the eternal validity of

the Law implied by it. What is required is the seeing of this Law in one's experience and not the recitation of the formula. To break up the formula into three parts as applicable to three lives is to make the confusion all the more confounded–and this despite the fact that Dhamma is declared to be 'visible here and now' (*sandiṭṭhiko*) and 'timeless' (*akāliko*). It is with reference to this life itself that the Buddha presented the solution to this problem of suffering. There is no need to refer ignorance to a past life. Many scholars are puzzled by the nonmention of ignorance in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*. Apparently, both *avijjā* and *saṁkhārā* are missing in these two discourses. But all the same, they are implicit there in the discussion of Paṭiccasamuppāda. The non-understanding of the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form itself is '*avijjā*'. The going round, the whirling round resulting from that ignorance is sankhārā. So then one cannot say that those two links are overlooked. The *Mahā Nidāna* or the great cause in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* refers to the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form. There is so much talk these days about the consciousness of a person at death. But very few talk about name-and-form. The Buddha has clearly explained the inter-dependence of these two in his sermons on Dependent Arising. It is a case of a vortex or a whirlpool.

Then what about the freedom from this state of affairs? In the verse which forms the topic of this sermon, it is said that the sage has crossed the abyss –'*pātālaṁ atarī isī*'. What is the significance of this statement? We have explained that the abyss refers to the painful bodily feelings. Bodily pain is the deepest inescapable aspect of suffering. But the arahants have come out even from that abyss. On an earlier occasion, we described how Venerable Dabba Mallaputta, an arahant, set fire to his own body at the moment of *parinibbāna*. It is not a case of rash selfimmolation. That was after he attained to *Arahattaphala Samāpatti*. The extraordinary feature of that concentration is that while in it one is free from all feelings. It is a well-known fact that *nibbāna* is called *avedayita sukha* (unfelt bliss). Once when the Venerable Sāriputta declared "Friends, this *nibbāna* is bliss! Friends, this *nibbāna* is bliss?"

Venerable Udāyi asked him:

"What bliss is there, friend, where there is no feeling?"

His reply was "This itself, friend, is the bliss therein–the fact that there is no feeling!" This is because all three grades of feeling– pleasant, painful and neither painful nor pleasant– are reckoned as suffering in the last analysis.

Crossing the abyss or to get over painful bodily feelings is to attain to that concentration peculiar to arahants. While in that state, the mind is said to be '*animitta*' (signless), *appaṇihita* (undirected) and '*suññā*' (void). Alternatively, it is called *appatiṭṭhita viññāṇa* (unestablished consciousness). Earlier, we spoke of consciousness getting established in a mother's womb. It is then that the concept of a "person" is valid. But the highest aim of this dispensation is to reach that state where consciousness does not get established. That is freedom. That is the emancipation of the mind.

This emancipation of the mind is presented in various ways in various discourses. Now that we have mentioned about the six elements, let us briefly examine how the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* approaches the problem of emancipation. Here we are given a method of making the elements fade away (*virājeti*) from the mind–a sort of erasing from the mind. How can one erase them? These elements are there because of measuring. In our writings about meditation on elements, we have pointed out with special reference to Venerable Sāriputta's sermons, that earth, water, fire and air are drawn on our minds due to experiences obtained through name-and-form. It is a case of measuring. To do away with this measuring, Venerable Sāriputta recommends an elemental meditation. Head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth etc., represent the internal earth-element. It is the same with the external earth-element in point of solidity. Compared with the larger earth element outside, the internal earth-element is puny and insignificant. By constant reflection on those lines, the mind is made to get disenchanted with the earth-element, thereby making it fade away from the mind. It is a mind liberated from the four elements that does not take birth in a mother's womb. On the other hand, so long as the grasp on the six elements is there, there is a descent into the womb as mentioned above. Having grasped the six elements or depending on the six elements, there is a descent into the womb. Only so long as there is a grasp on these elements, can one speak of a birth in a mother's womb. Along with birth goes the whirling between the two.

That is why we spoke of a vortex on an earlier occasion. A vortex can be recognized only so long as there is a whirling round. If one stretches one's arm towards the open sea saying 'there, there', others cannot guess 'where' he means unless there is a vortex. Where there is a vortex, one can point out a spot in the sea. Similarly, every being is a Saṁsāric vortex. In the previous sermon, we explained how a vortex is formed and how it ceases. Let us try to understand this formation of a vortex from another point of view. As you know, there is a word in common usage in referring to the body, namely, '*upādinna*'. This is a term variously interpreted by scholars. '*upādinna*' means 'what is grasped'. It actually refers to that which is grasped at the dying moment–the 'grasped par excellence', so to speak. That is what we try to protect at all costs. Isn't it the tiny speck of 'mud' (*kalala*) in the mother's womb– that foetus which we grasp as the first thing in this life? We grasp it with such tenacity that it is called '*gabbha*' or '*garbha*' (skt). Its growth inside the womb is not simply due to the mother's care and caution. It is largely due to the tenacious 'grab' of the child. All this is because of the whirling round between consciousness and name-and-form. What we call 'beings' are so many whirlpools in the ocean of *samsāra*. This organic body as 'the grasped par excellence' (*upādinna*) represents that which has been grasped as internal from the four elements outside. All our efforts are directed towards the protection of this organic combination of elements. The disturbance of the humours is also symptomatic of our struggle to preserve this organic combination intact. That clash on the pavement gives a hint to the danger of possessing this conscious body. Birth, decay, disease, death and all the abysmal pains arise out of this Saṁsāric vortex. That is why the Buddha told Venerable Ānanda:

‘It is through not understanding and not penetrating this Dhamma that this progeny has become a tangled skein matted like a bird’s nest, interwoven like *muñja* and *babbaja* grass, unable to pass beyond states of woe, bad bournes, downfall and the round of birth and death.’

This tangled problem the Buddha successfully solved by pointing out that there are two aspects of contact called *adhivacanasamphassa* and *paṭighasamphassa*. He also pointed out that in relation to contact there are two things:

name and form and that there is a mutual relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. Finally, he showed how consciousness is made non-manifestative. In our earlier sermons we pointed out that name-and-form is like a reflection on consciousness. It is like a blind man’s impression of a block of ice he strikes against through feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Worldlings arouse greed, hate and delusion based on that impression, making the tangle all the more tangled. With this body born of one’s past kamma, one breaks the five precepts, comes into conflict with the world just for the sake of protecting this body and goes on amassing defilements thereby precipitating a continuity of the vortex. But what did the arahants do? They aroused wisdom in regard to the interrelation between consciousness and name-and-form, since in the last analysis that is the proper sphere for wisdom as the term ‘*paññāvacaraṁ’* in that key passage implies. If one rightly understands that interrelation through the path of practice outlined by the Buddha and frees the mind from the four primaries earth, water, fire and air as well as from feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention, one attains to that state of emancipation of the mind known as *anidassana viññāṇa* (non-manifestative consciousness) or *appatiṭṭhita viññāṇa* (unestablished consciousness). This is the end of ‘*bhava*’ or Saṁsāric existence which the Buddha has made known to the world.

So then ‘*bhava*’ does not mean a place of existence as the world is prone to believe. It is an existence dependent on grasping (*upādāna*). There is another term used to indicate this kind of ‘*bhava*’, namely, ‘*itthatta*’. This term too is a problem to many. ‘*Itthaṁ*’ means ‘in this way’. ‘*Itthatta*’ is thisness or ‘this state of existence’. ‘*Itthatta*’ is in conflict with ‘*aññathābhāva’* (otherwiseness). ‘Thisness’ is all the time turning into ‘otherwiseness’.

This is the tragedy of existence – ‘*itthabhāvaññathābhāva*’ which the Buddha lays bare in the following verse in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*.

Taṇhādutiyo puriso dīghamaddhāna saṁsaraṁ

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ saṁsāraṁ nātivattati

‘The man who has craving as his partner (lit, ‘second’) and keeps going round for a long time, does not transcend this *saṁsāra* which is an alternation between ‘thisness’ and ‘otherwiseness’.’

The worldling allied to craving who keeps wandering in *Saṁsāra* for a long time cannot get beyond the duality of 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'. The moment he grasps a state of existence as a 'thisness', it becomes subject to otherwiseness. This is what is called impermanence, the inexorable tragedy of the conceit of existence. Life is a vain struggle to withstand 'otherwiseness'. It is the vortex that sustains '*itthatta*' and the vortex is the outcome of ignorance and craving. From another point of view, it can be attributed to the four perversions (*vipallāsā*). Impermanence is the nature of the world. But there is a perception of permanence in the impermanent. Also, there is a perception of beauty in the repulsive, a perception of pleasantness in the painful, and a perception of self in the notself. The vortex is kept up by these four perversions. Having followed the Noble Eight-fold Path and developed concentration and insight into the three characteristics– impermanence, suffering and not-self, one gets dejected with the five aggregates of grasping and attains emancipation. One can experience that non-manifestative (*anidassana*) state of consciousness. Thereby one would be fully convinced of the fact that '*bhava*' has ceased here and now. Because of that conviction, one is no longer 'qualified' to be born since name-and-form has slipped out. It is in view of this possibility of freedom from rebirth that the Buddha addressed the following question to Venerable Ānanda in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*.

'*Viññāṇaṁ va hi Ānanda nāmarūpe patiṭṭhaṁ nālabhissatha api nu kho āyatiṁ jātijarāmaraṇadukkhasamudaya sambhavo paññāyethā*.'

'*Nohetaṁ bhante*'

'If, Ānanda, consciousness were not to get a footing on name-and-form, would there be manifest an arising of birth, decay, death, and suffering in the future?'

'No, indeed, Venerable Sir.'

So then, you have listened to an analysis of a very important discourse today–the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*. It is only by way of introduction that we brought up the *Ekamūla Sutta*. You should not regard all this as mere academic stuff meant for scholars. We invite you to make use of this knowledge of the Law of Dependent Arising in your practice with the aim of understanding the Four Noble Truths.

It seems today also as usual many of you have observed the higher precepts. Others too have listened to this sermon which is directed towards *Nibbāna* established on some precepts. May you all strive on diligently to attain the goal in this very life! Whatever beings there are from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they all rejoice in this sermon. May it conduce to the attainment of their aspirations! May they all realize the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 4
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 186)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Antojaṭā bahijaṭā

jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā

taṁ taṁ gotama pucchāmi

ko imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño

cittaṁ paññañca bhāvayaṁ

ātāpī nipako bhikkhu

so imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

Yesaṁ rāgo ca doso ca

avijjā ca virājitā

khīṇāsavā arahanto

tesaṁ vijaṭitā jaṭā

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca

ettha sā chijjate jaṭā

– Jaṭā Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, S

A tangle within and a tangle without

The world is entangled with a tangle

About that, O! Gotama, I ask you

Who can disentangle this tangle

The wise one established in virtue

Developing concentration and wisdom

That ardent and prudent monk

It is he who disentangles this tangle

In whom lust as well as hate

And ignorance too have faded away

Those who are influx-free – the arahants

It is in them that the tangle is disentangled

Wherein both name and form

Resistance and the perception of form

Are cut off without any residue

It is here that the tangle gets snapped.

Dear Listeners,

The Fully Enlightened Buddha has preached to Venerable Ānanda in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* that this entire progeny has got entangled like a tangled skein and get reborn again and again in woeful realms due to non-understanding the Law of Dependent Arising. In our last sermon we explained with reference to the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* how name and form are inter related and how name and form and consciousness are mutually dependent upon each other. Today we have chosen as our topic four verses which serve as a prelude for a further elaboration of the same discussion.

First of all, let us try understand the meaning of these verses. These verses are found in the *Sagāthaka Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. The first verse presents a question which a certain deity put to the Buddha. The next three verses constitute the Buddha's answer to it. The general meaning is as follows:

Antojaṭā bahijaṭā jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā

There is a tangle inside and there is a tangle outside. The progeny is doubly entangled.

taṁ taṁ gotama pucchāmi ko imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

I question you Gotama, about that. Who will disentangle this tangle?

The answer given by the Buddha in the first verse amounts to this:

Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño cittaṁ paññañca bhāvayaṁ

The wise man having established himself on virtue, developing concentration and wisdom – (‘*citta*’ signifies concentration)

ātāpī nipako bhikkhu so imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

That monk who is ardent and prudent – it is he who disentangles the tangle.

Then the Buddha adds something more to the explanation:

Yesaṁ rāgo ca doso ca avijjā ca virājitā

Those ones in whom lust, hate and ignorance have been made to fade away –

khīṇāsavā arahanto

tesaṁ vijaṭitā jaṭā

Those influx-free arahants – it is in them that the tangle is disentangled.

Then for the fourth verse:

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca

ettha sā chijjate jaṭā

Where name and form as well as resistance and the perception of form are cut off without residue, it is here that the tangle gets snapped.

Out of these four verses, perhaps many of you are familiar with the first two, because the commentator, Venerable Buddhaghosa has made them the basic topic for his treatise *Visuddhimagga*. But it seems the last verse is the most abstruse.

In our last sermon we explained how 'form' gets a verbal impression through recognition given by 'name' and how 'name' gets a resistance impression by the impact offered by 'form'. We mentioned in our last sermon that 'contact' is a combination of these two.

In short, 'name' and 'form' are intertwined like a tangle by their respective characteristics. As far as we can see, this is the tangle within (*antojaṭā*). The Buddha has pointed out in detail that 'name and form' and consciousness are mutually interrelated. This is the tangle without (*bahijaṭā*). Although we explain it this way Venerable Buddhaghosa gives quite a different interpretation of the two terms in his commentary to the *Jaṭā Sutta*. He takes *jaṭā* to mean 'craving' (*taṇhā*). According to him '*antojaṭā*' (tangle within) is craving for one's own requisites and '*bahijaṭā*' (tangle without) is craving for others' requisites. Alternatively, he suggests as a second interpretation, craving for one's own body is the tangle within and craving for another's body is the tangle without. He goes on to advance a third interpretation also. According to it, the six internal sense-spheres is the tangle within and the six external sense-spheres is the tangle without. This is how Venerable Buddhaghosa explains the two cryptic terms.

Venerable Buddhaghosa takes '*nāma'* to be a collective term for the four immaterial aggregates; feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness (*vedanā, saññā, saṅkhārā, viññṇaṁ).* But last time I got you all to count your fingers and be sure of the Buddha word that '*nāma*' stands for the five constituents:

feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Consciousness has no place in the definition of '*nāma*'. But just see.

All those who go by the commentarial tradition assert that '*nāma*' means the four immaterial aggregates. It is all wrong. Having defined '*nāma*' that way, the commentator takes up '*saññā*' for comment. According to him '*patighasaññā*' means '*kāma bhava*' (that is 'the sensual sphere'), and *'rūpasaññā*' means '*rūpa bhava*' (that is the Realm of form) and when these two are mentioned the formless Realm or '*arūpa bhava*' is already implied. This is how the line '*paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca*' is explained in the commentary. And then, as to the place where the tangle gets snapped the commentator says that on arriving at *Nibbāna* the tangle is snapped. That is all the commentary has to say. But we must point out that by the very mention of the words '*paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā*', it is obvious that we have to understand this question of the 'tangle' in the light of the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*.

Today there might be in this crowd those who were not present to listen to our last sermon. To facilitate their understanding of what I am going to say and also to refresh the memory of those who were present the other day. I wish to recapitulate the dialogue between Venerable Ānanda and the Buddha. Even the method of explanation the Buddha adopted in regard to Venerable Ānanda in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* is extraordinary. Venerable Ānanda approaches the Buddha and says:

“It is wonderful Venerable Sir, it is marvelous Venerable Sir, how deep the Law of Dependent Arising is and how profound it appears. All the same, Venerable Sir, it appears to me as clear and clear”

The Buddha’s response to it was:

“Do not say so Ānanda, do not say so. This Law of Dependent Arising is deep and it appears deep.”

And then the Buddha, like an expert teacher catechized Venerable Ānanda, step by step, getting him to respond rather rhetorically in the negative. Usually, an obedient pupil is only too eager to ‘YES’ the teacher. But the Buddha addressed his questions to Venerable Ānanda in such a shrewd way, that the latter had to think deeply and come out with the same emphatic negative answer throughout:

‘*No hetaṁ bhante’* – ‘No indeed Venerable Sir’

Unlike in reading a book, in listening to a sermon, it is difficult to follow the entire catechism step by step. So the other day we gave a summary of the procedure by which the Buddha convinced Venerable Ānanda of the mutual relationship between ‘*nāma’* (‘name’) and ‘*rūpa*’ (‘form’) in four statements.

First of all, let us try to make some sense out of those four statements. ‘*Nāma*’ has to be defined not with reference to the four aggregates as the commentary says. Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are the constituents of ‘*nāma*’. What is meant by ‘*rūpa*’ is actually ‘*rūpa saññā*’ – ‘perception of form’. It is based on the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air, none of which can stand alone or be recognized per se. They can be known only through the constituents of the name group. Now the first conclusive statement of the Buddha which Venerable Ānanda accepts through conviction amounts to this:

“If all those modes characteristics, signs and exponents by which the name group is designated were absent, there would not be manifest a verbal impression (‘*adhivacana saṁphassa*’) in the form group.”

‘*Adhivacana*’or synonym is a word representative of the linguistic medium, like *paññatti* (designation) and *nirutti* (terminology). So what is meant by the above statement is that there could be a recognition of the form group only through the constituents of name such as feeling and perception.

Then the second statement gives the converse:

“If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which the form group is designated were absent, there would not be manifest a resistance-impression (‘*paṭigha-samphassa*’) in the name group.”

That is to say, if there were no characteristics proper to the form group based on earth, water, fire, and air, there could be no resistance impression in the name group (ie. feeling, perception etc.). One cannot speak of resistance if there is no 'form'. The other day we gave a simile of a blind man to illustrate this. The commentary also makes use of a simile of a blind man in connection with '*nāmarūpa*'. But that is not the one we brought up. Suppose a blind man goes and hits against a huge block of ice. He would come back with a perception of earth. Next time he goes there, it is melting. He would come back with a perception of water. By the time he goes there again, it is boiling and he would perceive the fiery element already at a distance. Finally, when it is evaporating, he might get the perception of air through it. In the same way, the blind worldling recognizes the 'non-descript' four great primaries with the help of feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. We gave this simile just to show the mutual relationship between name and form. They are inextricably intertwined.

Now comes the third conclusive statement which drives home the point.

"If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which a name-group and form-group are designated were absent, there would not be manifest either a verbal-impression or a resistance-impression."

Here the Buddha has adopted a very subtle way of argument. Firstly, it is said that the presence of one is a necessary condition for the other to exist. Then it is said that in the absence of both, there would be neither a verbal impression nor a resistance impression.

The fourth statement is all the more conclusive:

"If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which name and form is designated were absent, there would not be manifest any contact."

So, it seems according to the Buddha, there is no contact ('*phassa*'), where there is no name and form ('*nāmarūpa*'). Just think about this. One might be tempted to question its validity. Because name implies feeling, perception and intention, one can ask:

"Well then, are we to assume that trees and stones have no contact?"

We gave a little simile to explain this. While rolling a stone, if it goes and strikes against another hard enough to make a crack on it, there will be no retaliation. That is the way with the inanimate world. But if two pedestrians collide with each other on a pavement in a rush hour, there would be a 'clash'. In the case of inanimate objects, 'contact' is something we attribute to them.

In the inanimate world, there is no place for the concept of touch or contact. It is only something we attribute or superimpose. To clarify this point further, the other day, we gave the simile of a carpenter. When a carpenter is joining two planks to fix up a door, he might have to speak of the two planks as 'touching' each other. Think of the way a forest

fire starts. In a hurricane two trees go on rubbing against each other until fire comes up. But there is no feeling, perception or intention in them.

In the *Sutta Nipāta* there is a discourse called *Kalahavivāda Sutta* (Discourse on quarrels and disputes). It is entirely in verse and unfold in the form of a dialogue. The opening question is:

'*kuto pahūta kalahā vivāda*' – 'Whence do quarrels and disputes arise?' By way of answer, a whole chain of causes is given towards the end of which there is the following question:

"*Phasso nu lokasmiṁ kuto nidānā"*

"What is the cause of contact in this world?"

The reply is:

"*Nāmañca rūpañca paṭicca phasso*"

"Depending on name and form arise contact."

Those two pedestrians quarreled and disputed because they had name and form. That was not the case with the two stones. Actually, contact is something peculiar to the animate world where there is consciousness. So then, name and form are intertwined by their modes, characteristics, signs and exponents. This is the tangle within (*antojatā*).

Then let us see what 'the tangle without' (*bahijatā*) is. In regard to that too, we can put into four conclusive statements the gist of the catechism the Buddha addressed to venerable Ānanda. First of all, the Buddha asks:

"Ānanda, if consciousness were not to descend into a mother's womb, would name and form be left remaining in the mother's womb?"

The question of 'remaining' implies that name and form has already gone there. To ask whether name and form would be left remaining in a mother's womb if consciousness were not to go there, is to grant that somehow name and form is already there. Now, how does that happen?

What we are going to say from now onwards could be of interest to those intellectuals who keep on dabbling with questions relating to consciousness, name and form and rebirth. Here too, we shall give some sort of illustration by way of clarification. Supposing a patient who has just undergone a serious operation in a hospital is engaged in a struggle between life and death. He might see some sign of his future birth – say, in some mother's womb – in a critical moment. But suppose the doctors manage to save his life. Afterwards he might say that he went somewhere while he was in the coma. It is only

a half-truth. It is not that he actually went there –only a sign of that place became an object for his consciousness. Name and form has gone there for a moment but consciousness was held back. This fact is borne out by the following rhetoric question of the Buddha. "Ānanda, if consciousness having descended in to the mother's womb, were to come out, would name and form be born in to this state of existence?"

"No indeed Venerable Sir."

From this it is clear that if despite the doctors' attempts the patient died, his consciousness would join that mental object (name and form) because we have already pointed out that the relationship between consciousness and name and form is a whirling round as in the case of a whirlpool. Think of a flexible rubber-band for instance. It can get elongated if it is pressed down at one point and stretched away with tension. The moment the other end is pressed down and the former released, it would go and 'join' the latter to form a new centre. In the same way consciousness gravitates towards its object – *nāmarūpa* – at the moment of death. However, as you all know, sometimes parents expect a child, but what comes out in the end is a still born grotesque form of a child. The reason is that due to some karmic force, consciousness has slipped out. This is the situation the Buddha points out as the second possibility.

This fact is clarified further by the third question:

"Ānanda, if the consciousness of a boy or a girl were to get cut off at the young age itself, will name and form come to growth and maturity?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

Even after the birth of a child if consciousness gets cut off name and form would not grow. Only a corpse will be left there.

When Venerable Ānanda granted that point, the Buddha draws the final conclusion.

"Therefore, Ānanda, this itself is the reason, this is the cause, this is the arising, this is the condition – for name and form

– namely consciousness."

This is an emphatic assertion that consciousness is a necessary condition for name and form. Then the Buddha goes on to point out that, as far as the concept of existence is concerned, consciousness has to be accompanied by name and form, but if somehow or other, consciousness does not get established on name and form, the whole problem of existence is solved.

"If Ānanda, consciousness were not to get a footing in name and form, would there be manifest an arising of birth, decay, death and suffering in the future?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

The gist of the whole discussion can be given in two sentences. The consciousness of a non-arahant is an established consciousness (‘*patiṭṭhita-viññāṇa*’). The consciousness of an arahant is an un-established consciousness (‘*appatiṭṭhitaviññāṇa*’). Usually, in the case of an individual, consciousness is established on name and form. But there is a possibility of an unestablished consciousness where all the problems of birth, decay, death and suffering would cease. That is the consciousness of the arahant which is free from name and form. Now you all can understand the meaning of the last verse.

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca asesaṁ uparujjhati

paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca ettha sā chijjate jaṭā

“Where name and form as well as resistance and the perception of form are cut off without remainder, it is here that the tangle gets cut off.”

The ‘tangle-within’ between name and form as well as the ‘tangle-without’ between name and form and consciousness are all cut off. ‘Where’ refers to that ‘*Nibbānic mind*’. In an earlier sermon we spoke of a ‘non-manifestative consciousness’ (‘*anidassana-viññāṇa*’). That is the state of an arahant’s consciousness when he has attained to the concentration of the Fruit of Arahanthood (*arahattaphalasamādhi*). His consciousness does not manifest name and form. That unestablished consciousness (‘*appatiṭṭhita-viññāṇa*’) is sometimes qualified by the three terms. ‘*appatiṭṭhaṁ, appavattaṁ, anārammaṇaṁ* (not established, not continuing, object-less). To one who has attained that state there can be no rebirth.

As a rule, name and form and consciousness are found inter-related in the case of Saṁsāric beings. But the Buddha declared in one sentence that there is an exception to the rule. If somehow or other consciousness could be made to get unestablished on name and form, birth, decay, death and all the rest of suffering would come to an end. If this much is clear, let me give a little more explanation about the concept of rebirth and the significance of the established consciousness.

In this connection, there is a very important discourse in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* by the name ‘*Cetanā Sutta*’. There the Buddha presents the point in question in a way that appeals to reason. It is presented in three short paras. The point at issue is the question as to how consciousness gets a footing – how consciousness gets established at the moment of death. In fact, it is an attempt to show us the connection between two lives. First of all, the Buddha declares to the monks the following statement:

“*Yañca bhikkhave ceteti yañca pakappeti yañca anuseti ārammaṇaṁ etaṁ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmiṁ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti hoti.*”

“Monks, what one intends, what one mentally constructs, whatever lies latent in him, that becomes an object for the stationing of consciousness. There being an object, there comes to be an establishment of consciousness. When that consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is the production of future renewed existence.”

In the second passage the Buddha makes the following declaration:

"*No ce, bhikkhave, ceteti no ca pakappeti, atha ce anuseti ārammaṇaṁ etaṁ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmiṁ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti hoti.*"

"If monks, one does not intend and one does not mentally construct but one still has a latent tendency, this becomes an object for stationing of consciousness. There being an object, there comes to be an establishment of consciousness. When that consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is a production of future renewed existence."

There is something peculiar here. One does not intend nor does one mentally construct. The question very often raised is how one can think or intend in the case of one's instantaneous death. Though there is no intention or mental construction, there is that latent tendency. That is enough as an object for the establishment of consciousness. So there is still the possibility of rebirth in the future. This is the gist of the second statement.

In the third statement there is an allusion to arahanthood.

"*Yato ca kho bhikkhave, no ceva ceteti no ca pakappeti no ca anuseti, ārammaṇaṁ etaṁ na hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe asati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti tadappatiṭṭhite viññāṇe avirūḷhe āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti na hoti"*

"But monks, when one does not intend and does not construct mentally and does not have a latent tendency, there is no object for the stationing of consciousness. When there is no object, there is no establishment of consciousness. When consciousness is not established and does not come to growth, there is no production of future renewed existence."

This passage gives a hint to the deliverance from the cycle of births and deaths. If at the moment of death one has neither an intention nor a mental construction nor a latent tendency, then there is no object for the stationing of consciousness. When there is no object, there is no question of rebirth. Here again, we have a distinction between the established consciousness and the unestablished consciousness.

Sometimes the Buddha points out the relation between one's last thought and the next birth.

"Monks, having encompassed a mentally corrupted person's mind with my own mind, I understand that if this person were to die at this time, he would be deposited in hell as if brought there. What is the reason? Because of the corrupted mind, he gets reborn in hell."

To some extent, it is like a latency.

Then the Buddha shows the other side.

“Monks, having encompassed a mentally pleased person’s mind with my own mind, I understand that if this person were to die at this time, he would be deposited in heaVenerableas if brought there.”

This reminds one of the story of Maṭṭakuṇḍali. Even though he had not done any meritorious deed, the last thought moment qualified him for rebirth in heaVenerable All this shows the power of one’s last thought. Even the shade of a thought is enough to bring about rebirth. That shade becomes a ‘photograph’ when conjoined with consciousness. We brought this up because it is relevant to the question of rebirth which everybody is talking about.

Let us consider another aspect of the same problem. The passage of consciousness is the talking point these days. Particularly, the western psychologists who are in the grip of the personality-view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) whenever they speak about consciousness have an idea of it as a monolithic whole. They know nothing about name and form. They interpret consciousness as something jumping from one birth to another. This is not a recent development. The fallacy is pre-Buddhistic. Even in the *Upanishads* of the Brahmins rebirth is explained with the simile of the leech. Think of the way a leech moves from place to place. This is because they conceived of consciousness as a self or soul. According to them rebirth is transmigration from place to place. But in our Dhamma as we pointed out existence is always a whirling round as in the case of a vortex or a whirlpool. How is this vortex formed? Dependent on consciousness is name and form and dependent on name and form is consciousness (*viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṁ nāmarūpapaccayā viññāṇaṁ*).

With the help of this idea of inter-relation between consciousness and name and form, the Buddha broke the tenacious self-view which had prevailed till then. It is not a case of just one thing. It is a turning round between two things as in the case of a vortex. In this connection there is a certain declaration by the Buddha which is very often misinterpreted.

“*Nāhaṁ bhikkhave aññaṁ ekadhammampi samanupassāmi yaṁ evaṁ lahuparivattaṁ yathayidaṁ cittaṁ, yāvañcidaṁ bhikkhave upamāpi na sukarā yāva lahuparivattaṁ cittaṁ.”*

“Monks, I do not see even one other thing which turns round so quickly as the mind. So much so, monks, it is not easy to give a simile to show how quickly the mind turns round.”

Some Buddhist sects use the simile of a turning-round of a fire brand (‘*aḷātacakravat*’) to depict the rapidity of thought. But that is not what is meant by the above declaration. Between consciousness and name and form, there is an extremely rapid process of

grasping an object and letting go of it only to grasp another. Think of every moment of our conscious life. How quickly our minds shift from one object to another.

There is another discourse which supports this interpretation:

"*Varaṁ bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano imaṁ cātummahābhūtikaṁ kāyaṁ attato upagaccheyya natveva cittaṁ.*

Taṃ kissa hetu? Dissatāyaṁ bhikkhave, cātummahābhūtiko kāyo ekampi vassaṁ tiṭṭhamāno, dvepi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, tīṇipi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, cattārīpi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, pañcapi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, dasapi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, vīsatipi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, tiṁsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, cattārīsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, paññāsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, vassasatampi tiṭṭhamāno bhīyyopi tiṭṭhamāno. Yañca kho etaṁ bhikkhave vuccati cittaṁ itipi mano itipi viññāṇaṁ itipi taṁ rattiyā ca divasassa ca aññadeva uppajjati aññaṁ nirujjhati.

Seyyathāpi bhikkhave, makkaṭo araññe pavane caramāno sākhaṁ gaṇhāti taṁ muñcitvā aññaṁ gaṇhāti:

taṃ muñcitvā aññaṃ gaṇhāti, evameva kho bhikkhave yamidaṁ vuccati cittaṁ itipi mano itipi viññāṇaṁ itipi taṁ rattiyā ca divasassa ca aññadeva uppajjati aññaṁ nirujjhati."

"It would be better, monks, for the uninstructed worldling to take as self this body composed of the four great primaries rather than the mind. For what reason? Because this body composed of the four great primaries is seen standing for one year, for two years, for three, four or five or ten years, for twenty, thirty forty or fifty years, for a hundred years or even longer. But that which is called thought and mind and consciousness arises as one thing and ceases as another by day and by night.

Just as a monkey roaming through a forest grabs hold of one branch, lets go of it and grabs another and then lets that go and grabs still another, so that which is called thought and mind and consciousness arises as one thing and ceases as another by day and by night."

The point of the discourse is that there is no justification whatever for taking mind as one's self. The phrase '*aññadeva uppajjati aññaṁ nirujjhati*' – 'It arises as one thing and ceases as another' has a very deep meaning. A clue to its meaning is found in the simile of the monkey. It gives a hint to the rapidity of the process of grasping and letting go. In the same way, consciousness grasps name and form (its object) incessantly. The incessant inter-relation between consciousness and name and form is what is meant by the term '*lahuparivattaṁ*'. In fact, the literal meaning of '*parivattati*' is 'to turn round'. This turning round is between consciousness and name and form – the vortical inter-play which sustains the conceit of existence. That same inter-relation which goes on during one's lifetime is instrumental in bringing about one's rebirth. Consciousness does not decide the issue by itself. Name and form has to come in. The simile of the leech is misleading. There is a discourse which shows that during the Buddha's time too, there

were disciples who were influenced by this 'leech-explanation' of rebirth. It is the *Mahā Taṇhāsaṁkhaya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

In that Sutta it is said that a monk called Sāti went round misrepresenting the Buddha declaring that the Buddha had made the following statement regarding the question of rebirth.

"*Tadevidaṁ viññāṇaṁ sandhāvati saṁsarati anaññaṁ* "This same consciousness keeps running and wandering in *Saṁsāra* by itself without anything else."

The other monks remonstrated with him as follows:

"*Mā evaṁ āvuso Sāti avaca, mā bhagavantaṁ abbhācikkhi. Na hi sādhu bhagavato abbhakkhānaṁ. Na hi bhagavā evaṁ vadeyya. Anekapariyāyena hāvuso Sāti paṭiccasamuppannaṁ viññāṇaṁ vuttaṁ bhagavatā:*

aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavoti."

"Friend Sāti, do not say so. Do not misrepresent the Fortunate One. The Fortunate One would not say so. For in various ways, friend, the Fortunate One has stated consciousness to be dependently arisen. Without a condition there is no origination of consciousness."

Despite all this criticism, Sāti did not give up his wrong view. Then the monks reported the matter to the Buddha who summoned Sāti to his presence and questioned him. Sāti maintained the same standpoint that it is the same consciousness that runs and wanders in *Saṁsāra* by itself without anything else.

Then the Buddha asked:

"What is that consciousness, Sāti?" and Sāti replied:

"Venerable Sir, it is that which speaks and feels and experiences here and there the result of good and bad actions."

Sāti's reply brings out the typical Brahmin viewpoint represented by the simile of the leech. The Buddha rebuked him calling him a vain man (*moghapurisa*) asking him:

"To whom have you known me to teach the Dhamma in that way? Have I not stated in various ways consciousness to be dependently arisen, with the words 'without a condition, there is no origination of consciousness."

Then the Buddha goes on to explain to the monks this dependently arisen nature of consciousness, giving a very effective simile to illustrate it.

"Monks, dependent on whatever condition a consciousness arises, it is reckoned by that particular condition. A consciousness that arises dependent on the eye and forms is reckoned as eye-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the ear and sounds is reckoned as ear-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the

nose and odours is reckoned as nose-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the tongue and flavours is reckoned as tongue-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the body and tangibles is reckoned as body-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the mind and mind objects is reckoned as mind-consciousness. Just as monks, a fire is reckoned by the particular condition dependent on which it burns – a fire that burns dependent on logs is reckoned as a log-fire, a fire that burns dependent on faggots is reckoned as a faggot-fire, a fire that burns dependent on grass is reckoned as a grass-fire, a fire that burns dependent on cowdung is reckoned as a cowdungfire, a fire that burns dependent on chaff is reckoned as a chafffire, a fire that burns dependent on rubbish is reckoned as a rubbish-fire – even so a consciousness that arises dependent on the eye and forms is reckoned as eye-consciousness…… a consciousness that arises dependent on mind and mind-objects is reckoned as mind-consciousness.

It seems, then, that dependent on whatever condition (*yaññadeva paccayaṁ paṭicca*) a consciousness arises, it is reckoned by that particular condition. There is no consciousness in the abstract as the consciousness. It is always specific as a consciousness, even as there is no fire in the abstract as the fire. It is always specific as a fire. This simile strikes at the root of the animistic concept of a primordial fire. This revelation by the Buddha, though worded simply, revolutionizes the entire course of Indian thought. This is the marvel of the Law of Dependent Arising.

But then, what has happened in our own tradition? As you all know, in the majority of books now available for you to read, the position has gone topsy-turvy. It is as if we have retraced our steps to the Vedantic philosophy, without being aware of it. Both Buddhists and non-Buddhists are talking about a consciousness that keeps jumping from one existence to another. They are unaware of the significance of the deepest point of the Law of Dependent Arising which the Buddha has proclaimed, namely, the mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. That is the vortex of existence. Like the vortex in a river, it is indeed the deepest point. That is probably why the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* was so named.

Truly it is the *Mahā Nidāna* – the Great Cause. Name and form themselves are inter-related. It is not something compact. There is no 'form' without 'name and there is no 'name' without 'form'. That is why we identified it with the cryptic 'tangle-within' (*antojatā*). Likewise, we identified the inter-relation between consciousness and name and form with the 'tangle-without' (*bahijatā*) because when it comes to the question of rebirth, consciousness is 'here' and name and form is 'there' – in the mother's womb. However, name and form has to have consciousness to complete the picture of a new existence.

So then wandering in *Saṁsāra* is not like the movement of a leech. On the other hand, it is something like the stretching out of a flexible circular rubber-band when pressed down at one point – as we have already explained. As soon as it is released at this end, it will go and join the far end, if it is pressed down at that end also. Or else one can understand it as the change of the centre of the whirlpool. What we call our existence has at its centre

this organic body we had grasped inside the mother's womb. Once born, we reach out for the objects of the six senses, somewhat like an octopus. However far the 'octopus' extends its 'suckers' they come back to this organic body because that is 'the-grasped-par excellence'. But when the time comes to abandon this body, consciousness gravitates towards its object already grasped (ie. *nāmarūpa*). The phrase '*imasmiñca saviññāṇake kāye bahiddhā ca sabbanimittesu*' – (In this conscious body and in all external signs) gives a hint to this same inter-relation. This conscious body is what comes out of the mother's womb as a result of that gravitation towards the '*nāmarūpa* object'. But once born, it pursues the objects of the senses as before. It is the same seething whirlpool. Only the centre – the rallying point – has changed. That is why it is called 'the established consciousness' ('*patiṭṭhita viññāṇa*'). The difficult thing is the putting an end to this process. The deepest point is Therefore, the vortex between consciousness and name and form.

There is an extremely important sutta in this connection where Venerable Sāriputta explains the mutual interdependence between consciousness and name and form with a very effective simile. It is the *Naḷakaḷāpa Sutta* in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. Once, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying at the Deer park in *Isipatana*. One evening Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita, after his meditation in seclusion, approached Venerable Sāriputta and asked a question relating to *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

"Friend Sāriputta, is decay and death created by oneself or is it created by another or is it created both by oneself and by another or has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another?"

Venerable Sāriputta replied:

"Friend Koṭṭhita, decay and death is not created by oneself nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and by another, nor has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another. But with birth as condition, decay and death comes to be."

Some of you might think it amusing to say that birth is the condition for decay and death, but this is the mode of conditionality. This is the starting point for analyzing *Paṭicca Samuppāda* from the very end. Decay and death is the last link and birth is the condition for it. Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita asks:

"Friend Sāriputta, is birth created by oneself or is it created by another or is it created both by oneself and by another or neither by oneself nor by another?"

Venerable Sāriputta answers in the same way rejecting the tetralemma and showing that existence (bhava) is the condition for birth.

You had better remember that this is the procedure in radical attention (*yonisomanasikāra*). Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita poses the same tetralemma regarding existence and Venerable Sāriputta rejects it and points out that grasping

(*upādāna*) is the condition for existence. I hope you can understand the sequence of question and answer. The condition for grasping is craving, the condition for craving is feeling, the condition for feeling is contact, the condition for contact is the six sense spheres. Now be prepared. We are now approaching the crux of the problem.

Having disallowed Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita's tetralemma about the six sense spheres, Venerable Sāriputta says that name and form is the condition for the six sense spheres. Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita puts the same question regarding name and form – as if he is ignorant of it. Actually, we do not know whether he is posing all these questions for his own sake or on our behalf, because both these venerables are veterans in the Dhamma. Well, whatever it is, this is the four cornered question regarding name and form.

"Friend, Sāriputta, is name and form created by oneself or by another, or both by oneself and by another or has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another?"

"Name and form, friend Koṭṭhita, is not created by oneself nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and by another, nor has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another but with consciousness as condition, name and form comes to be."

"Friend Sāriputta, is consciousness created by oneself, or is it created by another, or is it created both by oneself and by another or has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another?"

"Consiousness, friend Koṭṭhita, is not created by oneself, nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and another, nor has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another but with name and form as condition consciousness comes to be."

So you see, to the question regarding the condition for name and form, the answer is consciousness and to the question as to the condition for consciousness, the answer is name and form. Now we are at the crux of the problem. Dramatically enough, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita recapitulates Venerable Sāriputta's apparently contradictory statements in a rhetoric way.

"Friend Sāriputta, you yourself told me just now that consciousness is the condition for name and form but now you are telling me that name and form is the condition for consciousness. How am I to understand what you mean?"

But Venerable Sāriputta says:

"Well then, friend, I will make up a simile for you, for some intelligent people here understand the meaning of a statement by means of a simile."

So this is how the stage is set for the highly significant and memorable simile of the 'Two-Sheaves of-Reeds' to come out.

“Just as two sheaves of reeds might stand supporting each other, so too with name and form as condition consciousness comes to be and with consciousness as condition name and form comes to be. With name and form as condition the six sense spheres come to be, with the six sense spheres as condition contact ..... Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

If, friend, one were to remove one of these two sheaves of reeds, the other would fall and if one were to remove the other sheaf, the first would fall. So too, with the cessation of name and form comes the cessation of consciousness, with the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name and form, with the cessation of name and form comes the cessation of the six sense spheres, with the cessation of the six sense spheres, the cessation of contact.....Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

According to this simple but profound simile, the interdependence between consciousness and name and form is like that of two sheaves of reeds standing one supporting the other (*aññamaññaṁ nissāya ṭiṭṭheyyaṁ*). When name and form falls consciousness falls, when consciousness falls name and form falls, when name and form falls, the six sense spheres fall and along with it, contact falls, feeling falls, craving falls, grasping falls, existence falls, birth falls, decay and death and all the rest of it falls.

Imagine for a moment that the consciousness sheaf of reeds is standing on your left side and the name and form sheaf of reeds is on the right and leaning on the name and form sheaf of reeds stand the six sense spheres and the rest of the twelve links. The crucial point is the removal of the consciousness sheaf of reeds, with which name and form is removed. That is to say, with the cessation of name and form consciousness ceases. Cessation of consciousness is not tantamount to death. It is the state of ‘*anidassana viññāṇa*’ – Non-manifestative consciousness. Since that Non-manifestative consciousness does not manifest name and form, the six sense spheres also cease, as well as contact, feeling and all the rest of it. This is an extremely deep point in this Dhamma. You should try to understand this now. I wonder why our commentarial tradition has fully ignored this subtle point all this time. What we have already said about the vortex is implicit in this simile of the two sheaves of reeds. Just consider why Venerable Sāriputta did not choose for his simile two blocks of solid timber with pith. He probably wanted to insinuate voidness (*suññatā*) by opting for pithless reeds. The common term for reed and bamboo in Pali is ‘*tacasāra*’. It means:

‘having the bark itself as the pith’. The reed is hollow inside. It has no pith It is the same with sheaf of reeds. The insinuation is that consciousness is not something solid and compact. It is only a heap. The deluded world takes it to be a monolithic whole. Name and form is also a heap. That is what the insight meditator understands as he progresses in meditation. The net result of it is insight in to the not self-nature of phenomena. The meditator understands all this as impermanent, suffering and not-self.

The rapidity of the arising and ceasing of name and form is also implied. The inter-relation between name and form and consciousness is extremely rapid. That is the true

meaning of '*lahuparivattaṁ*'. Existence is a conceit which tries to sit pretty on this inconceivably rapid mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. Venerable Sāriputta has pointed out how the cessation of existence is brought about. When he revealed this fact, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita came out with a memorable eulogy as a joyous utterance.

"It is wonderful, friend Sāriputta. It is marvelous, friend Sāriputta, how well this has been stated by Venerable Sāriputta.

We rejoice in the Venerable Sārioutta's statement on these thirty six grounds. If friend, a monk preaches the Dhamma for the purpose of revulsion towards decay and death, for its fading and cessation, he can be called a monk who is a speaker on Dhamma. If a monk is practising for the purpose of revulsion towards decay and death, for its fading away and cessation, he can be called a monk practising in accordance with Dhamma. If a monk through revulsion towards decay and death, through its fading away and cessation, is liberated by non-grasping , he can be called a monk who has attained *Nibbāna* in this very life."

"If friend, a monk preaches the Dhamma for the purpose of revulsion towards birth ……. existence ……. Grasping ……. craving ……. feeling…….contact……. the six sense-spheres ……. name and form ……. consciousness ……. Preparations ……. ignorance, for its fading away and cessation, he can be called a monk who is a speaker on Dhamma. If a monk is practising for the purpose of revulsion towards ignorance, for its fading away and cessation, he can be called a monk who is practising in accordance with the Dhamma. If a monk, through revulsion towards ignorance, through its fading away and cessation, is liberated by non-grasping, he can be called a monk who has attained *Nibbāna* in this very life."

This eulogy voiced by Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita has a practical value. That is why we quoted it in full. The thirty-six grounds are made up by multiplying the twelve links of the formula by the three points of eulogy concerning the preaching of the Dhamma, the practicing of it and liberation through it. This is clear illustration of the pragmatic value of the Law of Dependent Arising. If one rightly understands each of the twelve links in the context of conditionality and breaks the chain at that point, the entire chain is broken. However, the most crucial point, the '*Mahā Nidāna*'– The Great Cause – is the inter-dependence between name and form and consciousness.

Well then, let me wind up for today. We have dealt with this topic in four sermons so far, because this aspect has remained hidden for some reason or other. That is why so many wrong views have come up.You had better give thought to this aspect without complaining that it is too deep. Of course, the Dhamma is deep, as the Buddha himself has said. There may be many here who wish to attain *Nibbāna* after seeing the Buddha. The other day we quoted the memorable words of the Buddha.

"*Yo paṭicca samuppādaṁ passati so dhammaṁ passati. Yo dhammaṁ passati so paṭcca samuppādaṁ passati*"

“He who sees the Law of Dependent Arising, sees the Dhamma and he who sees the Dhamma, sees the Law of

Dependent Arising.”

Similarly, when Venerble Vakkali was always gazing at the Buddha’s body, the Buddha dismissed him saying:

“What is the use of looking at this putrid body, he who sees the Dhamma sees me. (*Yo dhammaṁ passati, so maṁ passati.*) So, dear listeners, if some of you wish to see the Buddha and attain *Nibbāna*, see this Law of Dependent Arising. *Nibbāna* is there, and the Buddha is there.

Well, enough for today. Perhaps all this came out through some inspiration. I am not sure whether you will get the opportunity to hear more about these things. Try to make use of what you have already heard. Today you have taken the higher precepts and spent the day in meditation. You had better remember these precious admonitions in the Dhamma and try to shape your lives accordingly. If you have any wrong views, get rid of them. It is only when you take up right view and having followed the path of practice, reach the goal of *Nibbāna*, that you realize the true value of those precious admonitions. May you all derive whatever inspiration possible from this sermon for your progress in your meditation, and be able to realize in this very life the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*! Whatever beings there are, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they all rejoice in this sermon! May it conduce to the attainment of their higher aspirations! May they all realize the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 5
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 187)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Akkheyyasaññino sattā

akkheyyasmiṁ patiṭṭhitā

akkheyyaṁ apariññāya

yogamāyanti maccuno

Akkheyyañca pariññāya

akkhātāraṁ na maññati

tañhi tassa na hotîti

yena naṁ vajjā na tassa atthi

– Samiddhi Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, S.

Beings are aware of what can be named

They take their stand on what can be named

By not fully understanding what can be named

They come back to go under the yoke of Death.

He who fully understands what can be named

And thinks not in terms of one who speaks

For such things do not occur to him

That by which they speak, that is not for him.

Dear Listeners,

The teacher of the three realms, the Fully Enlightened Buddha, has revealed to us, through the Law of Dependent Arising, that a good many of the problems, controversies, debates and disputes in the world arise from linguistic conventions. The problem of *Saṁsāra*, which is the biggest problem, is also due to it. On this first full

moon day of the newyear, we have taken up as the topic of our sermon, two verses relating to that aspect of linguistic usage.

These two verses are found in the *Samiddhi Sutta* of *Sagāthaka Vagga* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. There is an interesting introductory story to these two verses which has a flavor of Dhamma in it. When the Buddha was staying at the *Tapoda* monastery in *Rajagaha*, Venerable Samiddhi woke up at dawn and went to the hot springs at *Tapoda* to bathe. Having bathed in the hot springs and come out of it, he stood in one robe drying his limbs. Then a certain deity, who was exceedingly beautiful, illuminating the entire hot springs, approached Venerable Samiddhi and standing in the air addressed him in verse:

Abhutvā bhikkhasi bhikkhu

na hi bhutvāna bhikkhasi

bhutvāna bhikkhu bhikkhassu

mā taṁ kālo upaccagā

Not having enjoyed, you go for alms, monk You do not go for alms, having enjoyed. Having enjoyed, monk, you go for alms Let not the time pass you by.

'*Abhutvā bhikkhasi bhikkhu*' – Monk you have come to this monkhood which is dependent on alms not having enjoyed the fivefold sense-pleasures. '*na hi bhutvāna bhikkhasi*' – Not that you have come to monkhood after enjoying the sensepleasures. '*bhutvāna bhikkhu bhikkhassu*' – Monk, go to monkhood having enjoyed the sense-pleasures. '*mā taṁ kālo upaccagā*' – Do not let the best time for enjoying sensepleasures – that is youth – pass you by. Here is an invitation that goes against the Dhamma and here is the reply Venerable Samiddhi gave to it.

Kālaṁ vo'haṁ na jānāmi

channo kālo na dissati

Tasmā abhutvā bhikkhāmi

mā maṁ kālo upaccagā

I do not know the time of death

Hidden is the time – it is not seen

That is why I go for alms without enjoying

Let not the opportune time pass me by

'*Kālaṁ vo'haṁ na jānāmi*' – I do not know when I have to die, '*channo kālo na dissati*' – The time of death is hidden from me – it is not seen. '*Tasmā abhutvā bhikkhāmi*' –

Therefore, I have come to monkhood without enjoying sense-pleasures. '*mā maṁ kālo upaccagā'* – With the thought:

'let not the opportune time for monkhood pass me by.' The deity's advice was not to let the time for enjoying sense-pleasures, that is youth, pass by. What Venerable Samiddhi says is that youth is the proper time for striving as a monk, since one cannot do it in decrepit old age.

But the deity did not give up his attempt to mislead Venerable Samiddhi. He came down and standing on the earth said:

"Monk, you have gone forth while young with a lad's black hair, endowed with the radiant youth, without having dallied with sensual pleasures. Enjoy human sensual pleasures, monk, do not abandon what is directly visible in order to pursue what takes time ('….*mā sandiṭṭhikaṁ hitvā kālikaṁ anudhāvī*.') Venerable Samiddhi's rejoinder is exemplary.

"Friend, it is not that I abandon what is directly visible and run after what takes time. For the Fortunate One has said that sensual pleasures involve time, are full of suffering and full of despair and that the danger in them is still greater. Visible here and now is the Dhamma, immediate, inviting one to come and see, leading one onwards, to be personally experienced by the wise."

And then the deity asks:

"But how is it monk, that the Fortunate One has said that sensual pleasures involve time, full of suffering, full of despair and that the danger in them is still greater? How is it that this Dhamma is visible here and now, immediate, inviting one to come and see, leading one onwards and to be personally experienced by the wise?"

But the Venerable Samiddhi said:

"Friend, I am newly ordained, a new-comer in this Dhamma and Discipline. I cannot explain in detail. There is that Fortunate One dwelling at the Tapoda monastery in Rajagaha. You had better approach him and question him on this point. As he explains it to you, so you should bear in mind."

However, the deity says:

"Monk, it is not easy for me to approach that Fortunate One. He is always surrounded by other deities of great influence. If you go and question on this matter, we too will come to hear the Dhamma."

Venerable Samiddhi agreed to the request and approached the Buddha and related the whole incident. That deity also was present. Then the Buddha addressed the above two verses to that deity.

Akkheyyasaññino sattā

akkheyyasmiṃ patiṭṭhitā

akkheyyaṁ apariññāya

yogamāyanti maccuno

These words might sound strange to some of you. If we go by etymology, *√khyā* in '*akkheyya*' means 'to tell' and '*akkhāna*' is 'tale'. '*akkheyyaṁ*' is Therefore, 'what has to be told'. It can also mean 'what can be named' or verbally conveyed. The perception of beings is based on the 'nameable'–

('*akkheyyasaññino sattā*') They take their stand on what is named or expressed – (*akkheyyasmiṃ patiṭṭhitā*). Not having fully understood the nameable – (*akkheyyaṁ apariññāya*) they come back again to go under the yoke of Death – (*yogamāyanti maccuno*).

Akkheyyañca pariññāya

akkhātāraṁ na maññati

tañhi tassa na hotîti

yena naṁ vajjā na tassa atthi

Then the other side of the position is given which is relevant to the arahant. Having fully understood the nameable for what it is (*akkheyyañca pariññāya*), He does not conceive of a speaker – (*akkhātāraṁ na maññati*). If the limitations of language are correctly understood, one does not take seriously the subjectobject relationship. Such imagining is no longer there in him (*tañhi tassa na hotîti*). Not for him is that by which one may speak of him (*yena naṁ vajjā na tassa atthi*). That means, the arahant has transcended linguistic limitations.

Having uttered these two verses, the Buddha, as if challenging the deity's powers of understanding, said – "*Yakkha*, if you understand, say so."

Sometimes in the discourses, even for deities and gods, the word '*yakkha*' is used. It is not to be taken as a derogatory term here. Even the *Sakka* is sometimes called a '*yakkha*'. Anyway the deity confessed that he could not understand in detail what the Buddha has said in brief and asked him to explain it in detail. As if to tease him, the Buddha uttered another deep verse.

Samo visesī athavā nihīno

yo maññati so vivadetha tena

tīsu vidhāsu avikampamāno

samo visesīti na tassa hoti

He who conceives himself equal, superior or inferior

Might thereby get involved in debate

But to one unshaken in the three grades of conceit

A fancying as equal or superior does not occur.

Equal (*samo*) superior (*visesī*) and inferior (*nihīno*) are the three grades of conceit. Whoever conceives in terms of these grades will dispute over them. But he who is unshaken by these three grades does not think in terms of equal or superior. With this verse as explanation, the Buddha again repeated the challenge:

"*Yakkha*, if you understand, say so."

The deity confessed that he still cannot understand and begged the Buddha once more for a detailed explanation. The Buddha responded by uttering a longer verse which goes even deeper than the previous one.

Pahāsi saṅkhaṃ na ca mānamajjhagā

acchecchi taṇhaṁ idha nāmarūpe

taṁ chinnaganthaṁ anīghaṁ nirāsaṁ

pariyesamānā nâjjhagamuṁ

devā manussā idha vā huraṁ vā

saggesu vā sabbanivesanesu

He cast off reckoning, no conceit assumed

Craving he cut off – in this name and form

That bond-free one – from blemish and longing free

Him no gods or men – in their search could ken

Searching here and beyond – in heavens and in all abodes.

The verse sums up the accomplishments of an arahant. '*Pahāsi saṅkhaṃ'* – he has given up reckoning. As we once explained, *'sankhā'* is literally, 'number.' We pointed out that the numeral is the most basic or primary ingredient in a linguistic medium. You may have seen how dumb people converse counting on fingers. So we may call it a 'reckoning' – a term denoting a characteristic of language in general. An arahant has given up 'reckoning' – that is, he does not go by it. '*na ca mānamajjhagā'* – he does not take up conceit. '*acchecchi taṇhaṁ idha nāmarūpe*' – he cut off craving in this name and form.

We have pointed out that 'name' is not 'bending' as traditionally explained but that it is a collective term for feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention through which we get an idea of 'form' (*rūpa*) based on the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air. Worldlings are attached to this name and form but the arahant has cut off that craving. Having severed that bond (*'taṁ chinnaganthaṁ'*), he is free from blemish and desire (*'anīghaṁ nirāsaṁ'*). Gods and men searching for the object of an arahants mind, cannot locate it in heavens or in other abodes.

With this profound verse, the Buddha repeated the challenging words:

"Yakkha, if you understand, say so."

This time the deity himself utters a verse in which he claims to give the detailed explanation of what the Buddha has preached in brief.

Pāpaṁ na kayirā vacasā manasā

kāyena vā kiñcana sabbaloke

kāme pahāya satimā sampajāno

dukkhaṁ na sevetha anatthasaṁhitaṁ

Let one not do any evil by word or by mind

Or else by body anywhere in this world

Giving up sense pleasures, mindful and fully aware

Let one not form ally with suffering bound up with woe.

With that, the episode ends. One might wonder why the Buddha addressed such deep verses to the deity. It may be that the Buddha wanted to impress the deity of the depth of this Dhamma since the latter made light of it by trying to mislead Venerable Samiddhi. Whatever it is, these verses are highly significant in revealing the Buddha's attitude to language. Let us try to analyse the meaning of these verses.

'*Akkheyyasaññino sattā*' – The perception of the worldlings is language-oriented. '*akkheyyasmiṁ patiṭṭhitā*' – They rely heavily on language. They are unaware of the limitations imposed on language by grammar and syntax. The subject-object relation is part and parcel of the linguistic medium. But the worldlings take it seriously. '*akkheyyaṁ apariññāya – yogamāyanti maccuno*' – by not fully understanding the nature of language, they come again and again to go under the yoke of Death.

On a previous occasion, while talking about *'nāma-rūpa'* (name and form) we brought up the simile of the dog on the plank. Later we improved on that simile by relating the story of Narcissus. The handsome Greek youth Narcissus who had never seen his own

face, while roaming in a forest, bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing the reflection of his own face in the water, he imagined it to be an angel's, and fell in love with it. After a vain attempt to embrace it, he pined away and died by the pond. 'Narcissism' as a term for self-love, now found in the Dictionary, is reminiscent of that Greek youth. The sum-total of the 'nameable' is found in name and form of which beings are conscious and on which they take their stand. By not understanding fully name and form, beings go under the yoke of Death. Take for instance the case of a wealthy man. What is the self-love that comes up at the moment of his death? "How can I part with this house and property? How can I leave behind my wife and children?"

That is the name and form he grasps – the reflection of his own self. In that grasping there is a longing for another birth.

"Oh! Give me a chance to fulfill my desire!"

"There you are" says *Māra*, and gives him not exactly what he wants but what he deserves according to his *Kamma*. So he comes back to his own house either as a rat, a snake or as a frog. Or else he comes back to sit on his own chair as a dog. That is how one takes one's stand on the nameable – (*'akkheyyasmiṁ patiṭṭhitā')*. Worldlings are involved in an inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. They are not aware that name and form is only a reflection. That is what the Buddha makes known to the world. If one takes one's stand on name and form, one comes under the yoke of Death.

There is another reason for our choice of this particular topic for today's sermon. You might remember that in a previous sermon we discussed at length an extremely important discourse which our commentarial tradition has not taken seriously – namely, the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*. We showed how the Buddha explained to Venerable Ānanda, the inter-connection between name and form as well as the inter-relation between name and form and consciousness. Although we quoted the highly significant passage in which the Buddha sums up that exposition, we could not explain it the other day. It is with the aim of paving the way for a discussion of that passage that we brought up the above two verses, as the topic today. First of all let me cite that passage in full.

"*Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā uppajjetha vā, Ettāvatā adhivacanapatho, ettāvatā niruttipatho ettāvatā paññattipatho ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññānena*."

"In so far only, Ānanda, can one be born, grow old or die or pass away or reappear, in so far only is there a pathway for verbal expression, in so far only is there a pathway for terminology, in so far only is there a pathway for designation, in so far only is there a sphere of wisdom, in so far only is there a whirling round for a designation of thisness, that is to say, as far as name and form together with consciousness."

Now for an explanation – here the Buddha is telling Venerable Ānanda that one could be said to be born, to grow old or die or pass away or reappear, that there is a pathway for verbal expression or terminology or designation, that there is any scope for wisdom and a whirling round for designating a thisness – all these are traceable to a connection between name and form and consciousness. The range of wisdom extends as far as consciousness and name and form.

The most important declaration is that there is a whirling round for a designation of 'this-ness' ('*ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati îtthattaṁ paññāpanāya*'). We have explained earlier the meaning of the term *itthatta*. '*Itthaṁ*' means 'this'. So '*itthatta*' is 'thisness'. It stands for 'the state of this existence.' Therefore, the phrase in question means that there is a whirling round for designating this state of existence. You had better recall the simile of the vortex. Only when there is a vortex or a whirlpool in the ocean, can one point out a 'there' or 'here'. In order to explain this whirling round between two things, we cited the change of prices in the market based on supply and demand. In fact, all forms of existence are traceable to an inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. This, then is the Samsāric vortex.

When we see how a whirlpool in the sea or in a river draws in the flotsam and jetsam around it, we point it out saying 'There' or 'Here.' Likewise we call a heap of grasping – a 'livewhirlpool' – a Person. The 'first person' is of course 'I myself.' 'You are' the 'second person,' and 'He, over there' is the 'third person.' At least there has to be the latent conceit 'Am' ('*asmimāna*') to justify 'Existence'. With the recognition of this 'Person', the entire repertoire of grammar and syntax falls into place. Here '<u>I</u>' am, yonder '<u>you</u>' are and there '<u>he</u>' is. This is the basic framework for grammar. The Buddha points out to us that it is because we are enslaved by the grammatical super-structure that we cannot understand *Nibbāna* and put an end to *Saṁsāra*. But if one reflects deeply, one would discover that the grammar itself is the product of ignorance and craving. Because of these, the worldlings get enslaved to linguistic usages. They do not understand the pragmatic purpose of linguistic usage. They think that the grammar of language conforms to the grammar of nature. The Buddha, on the other hand revealed to the world that language is merely a convention of limited applicability.

Let me mention another point that is relevant to this subject. Once a deity raised a question in the Buddha's presence regarding a doubt which even some of you might entertain. It is worded in the form of a verse but we shall give the gist of it. He asks why the arahants who have accomplished the 'TASK' still go on using such expressions as 'I say' ('*ahaṁ vadāmi*') and 'they tell me' ('*mamaṁ vadanti*'). Is it because they still have conceit (*māna*) in them? The Buddha explains that the arahant has given up bonds of conceit but that he uses the worldly parlance only as 'a way of speaking'.

'*Loke samaññaṁ kusalo viditvā*

vohāramattena so vohareyya'

Being skillful in knowing the worldly parlance

He uses such expressions merely as a convention

Not only the arahants but the Buddha himself uses such words as 'I' and 'mine' only by way of convention. So you may understand that the fault is not in using worldly conventions, but in being unaware of the fact that it is merely a convention. It is due to the ignorance of this fact that all logicians, philosophers and scientists have got stuck in the 'WORD' and created a lot of confusion for themselves and for others to languish long in *Saṁsāra*.

There is a wonderful maxim made known by the Buddha which throws more light on this hidden aspect of language. The term '*akkheyyasaññino*' (lit, 'percipient of the expressible') reveals the close connection between perception and linguistic convention. The worldlings are in the habit of taking in perception. This perception has a connection with linguistic usage. The Buddha draws our attention to this fact with the following declaration, which is like a maxim. "*vohāravepakkāhaṁ bhikkhave saññaṁ vadāmi. Yathā yathā naṁ sañjānāti tathā tathā voharati evaṁ saññī ahosinti.*"

"Monks, I say perception has as its result linguistic usage. In whatever way one perceives, just in that way one makes it known saying:

'I was of such a perception.'"

The word '*vipāka*' implicit in the expression '*vohāravepakkāhaṁ*' is not to be confused with '*kammavipāka*' or karmic result. It only means that perception matures into linguistic usage. In whatever way one perceives, so one makes it known. One does not stop at perception. There is an urge to express it – to make it known to others. There comes in the need for language. The way one conveys it to others is:

"I was of such a perception" or "I was percipient in this way."

One is already involved by saying so. In our writings we have explained the term '*papañcasaññāsaṅkhā*' as 'reckonings born of prolific perception.' Through prolific perception worldlings get caught up in language. '*Saṅkhā*' as reckoning includes not only numerals but linguistic usage as well.

It is very important to understand the connection between perception and linguistic usage. This understanding helps us to solve the problem of existence ('*bhava*') which is apparently insoluble. When it is said that perception gives rise to linguistic usage, one can ask whether it is possible to be free from the bane of perception. There are some discourses which, until recently have escaped the serious attention of scholars where it is said that the arahants, when they are in the attainment called the 'fruit of arahanthood' are free from all perception. Whatever there is in the world that could be regarded as an object of perception, from all that they are free while in that supramundane state. There are quite a number of discourses describing that extra-ordinary attainment. For instance in the *Sandha Sutta* we find the Buddha explaining to Venerable Sandha the nature of that *Samādhi*. Within the context of a simile about an excellent thoroughbred of a horse,

the Buddha calls an arahant 'an excellent thoroughbred of a man' ('*bhadro purisājāniyo*') and describes the nature of this concentration. It is said that in him the perception of earth, water, fire and air as well as other perceptions are not there.

There are many who raise the question whether materiality is fully negated and only mind is asserted in this Dhamma. We gave a certain simile to illustrate the correct standpoint. Suppose a blind man in his groping hits against a block of ice. He might come back with a perception of earth in it. When he approaches it the next time it is getting heated and he would come back with a perception of fire. By the time he goes there again it has melted and he returns with a perception of water. When he goes there for the fourth time it is evaporating and he brings back a perception of air. To make this simile meaningful we may compare the worldling to that blind man. The four great primaries (*cattāro mahābhūtā*) cannot be recognized as they are because they are always found as a combination. They can be distinguished only according to their intensity by means of constituents of the name group – feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Because of the feeling of hardness at the collision, that blind man got a perception of earth in the block of ice. That way name and form are inextricably interwoVenerable That we called the 'tangle-within' (*antojaṭā*). The 'tangle-without' (*bahijatā*) is the interrelation between name and form and consciousness, for which the doting on his own image by Narcissus is an illustration. The entire Samsāric puzzle is traceable to this vortex of existence.

How does word and concept aggravate this situation? The worldling, like that blind man, thinks that there is a 'thing' called 'earth', a 'thing' called 'water', a 'thing' called 'fire' and a 'thing' called 'air'. Surely, can one deny these 'things'? In the *Sandha Sutta* there is a complete list of such 'things', a perception of which is not there in the attainment of the Fruit of Arahanthood – the Realm of Infinity of Space, the Realm of Infinity of Consciousness, the Realm of Nothingness, as well as the seen, the heard, the sensed, and the cognized. Existence as a whole has ceased. Whatever perception there is characteristic of existence, whatever object of the mind there can be, from all that, that 'thoroughbred of a man' is free while in the *Arahattaphala Samādhi*.

The way the Buddha winds up that sermon is highly significant. Having said that the excellent thoroughbred of a man does not meditate ('*na jhāyati*') on any of the possible objects of concentration, the Buddha emphatically asserts in the end that he does meditate (*jhāyati ca pana*). Now comes the impressive final declaration.

"*Evaṁ jhāyiñca pana sandha bhadraṁ purisājānīyaṁ saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā ārakāva namassanti. Namo te purisājaññā namo te purisuttama yassa te nābhijānāma yampi nissāya jhāyasīti.*"

Sandha, the thoroughbred of a man thus meditating

the gods with Inda, with Brahmā and with Pajāpati

even from afar bow down saying:

Homage to you, O thoroughbred of a man

Homage to you, most excellent of men

For what it is on which you meditate

That we can never comprehend"

This is the marvel of a Dhamma that transcends the world. The Buddha has presented this transcendental Dhamma through the *Arahattaphala Samādhi* (concentration of the Fruit of Arahanthood). This is none other than the experience of the cessation of existence (*bhavanirodha*). It is, at the same time the cessation of the six sense spheres (*saḷāyatananirodha*). All the six sense spheres are rendered inactive. It is within these six that all the turmoil of the world goes on. During that extraordinary concentration, the existence has ceased. It is in fact a reverting to an experience already gone through at the attainment of arahanthood. That is why we pointed out that the arahants are not reborn by virtue of the fact that their last thought is this cessation of existence:

'*Bhavanirodho nibbānaṁ.' Nibbāna* is the cessation of existence. The arahants experience the taste of *Nibbāna* while in this paradoxical *Samādhi*.

All this shows that this is an extraordinary Dhamma. The question of language is also implicit in the solution offered. When the mind is fully liberated from perception, it is completely free from objects. We have earlier mentioned the terms used with reference to the emancipated mind – '*appatiṭṭhaṁ, appavattaṁ, anārammaṇaṁ*.' That mind is not established anywhere, It has no continuity or existence and it has no object. '*Bhava*' or existence has ceased. The realization of cessation is itself the Deliverance. That is *Nibbāna* – not anything else. There is a lot of controversy among scholars regarding *Nibbāna*. Some would even call our interpretation Nihilistic.

Let me Therefore, bring up something special from this point onwards. In an earlier sermon we have already mentioned what the Buddha had said about consciousness. The nature of the consciousness of an arahant and the emancipation meant by *Nibbāna* can be understood in the light of what we have discussed so far. If we are to clarify further in terms of the simile of the vortex, it is as if the vortex has ceased. As a matter of fact, this simile of the vortex or the whirlpool is not something we have arbitrarily introduced. It is there in the discourses as a word of the Buddha, but the commentarial tradition has ignored it. Commentators have not understood its true significance. There is a very important verse in the *Udāna* that can be quoted in support of this. It comes as a paean of joy uttered by the Buddha in praise of Venerable *Lakuṇtakabhaddiya* who was an arahant.

acchecchi vaṭṭaṁ

byagā nirāsaṁ

visukkhā saritā na sandati

chinnaṁ vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

esevanto dukkhassa

The whirlpool he cut off and reached the Desireless

Streams dried up flow no more

The whirlpool cut off whirls no more

This itself is suffering's end.

He cut off the whirlpool or vortex. That is to say, the whirling around between consciousness and name and form has been cut off. Thereby he reached the Desireless (*byagā nirāsaṁ*). The current of water is dried up and flows no more. The whirlpool thus cut off no more whirls. And this itself is the end of suffering.

Supposing a whirlpool in the ocean comes to cease. As long as there is a whirlpool we can point out a 'here' and a 'there', 'this place' and 'that place'– or personifying it, 'this person', and 'that person'. But once the whirlpool has ceased, all these words lose their point of reference. Now there is only the wide expanse of the ocean as it was before the whirlpool came in. That 'foolish' current of water went in search of permanence in an impermanent world. It was a perversion, pure and simple. If at any point of time that current of water got dried up there is no whirlpool or '*vaṭṭa*' anymore. This is the whole story going by the '*vaṭṭa*' terminology. But strangely enough the commentators brought in some other kind of '*vaṭṭa*' to explain *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. They speak of '*kamma vaṭṭa'*, '*kilesa vaṭṭa'* and '*vipāka vaṭṭa*' (kamma-round, defilement-round and resultround). They have fully ignored the most important story of the round. You all can now form some idea about *Nibbāna*, about the arahants mind, and about the objectless mind.

Because of this charge of Nihilism let me touch upon another aspect of the problem. While discussing *Mahā Taṇhāsankhaya Sutta* in the previous sermon, we said that the Buddha had compared consciousness to a fire. As you know there are six consciousnesses – eye-consciousness, earconsciousness and so on inclusive of mind-consciousness. The Buddha has pointed out that each of these consciousnesses is like a specific fire dependent on a specific type of fuel. For instance consciousness dependent on eye and forms is eye-consciousness. It arises only in dependence and not otherwise. Apart from that there is no consciousness either in the eye or in forms. Because of eye and forms arises eye-consciousness. Because of ear and sounds arises ear- consciousness and so on. What is the simile that the Buddha has given to illustrate this point? A fire that burns dependent on logs is called a log-fire, a fire that burns dependent on faggots is called a faggot-fire and a fire that burns dependent on chaff is called a chaff-fire. There is no abstract fire. It is always a specific fire. The Buddha compared the six kinds of consciousness to six kinds of fire. There is no independent consciousness to be called 'the consciousness'. Whatever has arisen due to causes and conditions has, of necessity, to cease when these causes and conditions are not there. It is when all the six

consciousnesses, namely eye-consciousness, earconsciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, bodyconsciousness and mind-consciousness, cease that there is deliverance which is also called:

'*viññāṇūpasama*' (appeasement of consciousness). As you all know, it is compared to the going out of a lamp as we find in the famous verse in the *Ratana Sutta*.

Khīṇaṁ purāṇaṁ navaṁ natthi sambhavaṁ

Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṁ

Te khīṇabījā avirūlhicchandā

Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyampadīpo

Extinct is the old, nothing new to arise

Detached in mind as to future existence

They of extinct seed with no desire to sprout

Go out like this lamp – those Prudent Ones.

The verse figuratively conveys the situation at the last moment of the life of the arahants. '*Khīṇaṁ purāṇaṁ*' – All past kamma is finished. '*Navaṁ natthi sambhavaṁ*' – There is no arising of new kamma. '*Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṁ*' – They are detached in mind as to future existence. '*Te khīṇabījā*' – Their consciousness seed is extinct. '*Avirūlhicchandā*' – Therefore, no desire can sprout forth in them. '*Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyampadīpo*' – The prudent ones get extinguished even like this lamp.

The simile of the going out of a flame comes up again in the '*Upasīva māṇavapucchā*' in the *Sutta Nipāta*.

Accī yathā vātavegena khitto

atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ

evaṁ muni nāmakāyā vimutto

atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ

Like the flame thrown off by the force of wind

Goes to its end and comes not within reckoning

So the sage when released from the name-group

Goes to its end and comes not within reckoning

'*Accī yathā vātavegena khitto*' – just as a flame thrown off by the force of wind. '*atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ*' – goes to an end and cannot be reckoned as gone somewhere . '*evaṁ muni nāmakāyā vimutto'* – even so the sage released from the name-group. '*atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ*' – comes to his end and cannot be reckoned or predicated.

Upasīva is puzzled by this verse and implores the Buddha to explain further.

Atthaṁgato so udavā so natthi

Udāhu ve sassatiyā arogo

taṁ ve muni sādhu viyākarohi

tathāhi te vidito esa dhammo

Has he reached his end, or does he not exist at all

Or else is he eternally hale – not ill

That to me explain well, O'sage

For this Dhamma as such is known by you

Upasīva is asking reverentially whether that sage has gone to the end or whether he does not exist any more or else is eternally free from disease. Now the Buddha clarifies it further in the following verse with which the discourse ends. But unfortunately many scholars are confused over the grand finale.

Atthaṁgatassa na pamānamatthi

Yena naṁ vajju taṁ tassa natthi

Sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu

Samūhatā vādapathāpi sabbe

Of one who has reached his end – no measure is there

That by which they may speak of him – that is not for him

When all objects of mind are rooted out

Rooted out too are all paths of debate

The Arahant who has reached his end is beyond reckoning. He cannot be measured. Name and form is that by which others may speak of him, but that he has given up. When all objects of the mind which were listed above are eradicated, all pathways of debate and controversy such as the dilemma and the tetralemma of the logicians are rendered ineffective. Logic is imprisoned between 'is' and 'is not'. Dhamma is beyond the

pale of logic (*atakkāvacaro*). It is like the fire extinguished. This is an extremely clear-cut answer. But scholars have confounded the issue.

However, some Buddhist philosophers have correctly understood this position. *Aśvaghosa*, both a philosopher and poet, has beautifully presented this simile in his Sanskrit epic *Saundarānanda*.

Dīpo yathā nirvṛtiṁ abhyupeto

naivāvaniṁ gacchati nāntarīkṣaṁ

diśāṁ na kāncit vidiśāṁ na kāñcit

snehakṣayāt kevelameti śāntiṁ

Evaṁ kṛtī nirvṛtiṁ abhyupeto

naivāvaniṁ gacchati nāntarīkṣaṁ

diśāṁ na kāncit vidiśāṁ na kāñcit

kleṣakṣayāt kevalameti śāntiṁ

Even as the flame of a lamp when it goes out

Goes not to the earth nor to the firmament

Not to any direction nor to a sub-direction

By exhaustion of oil only reaches appeasement

So too the accomplished one when gone to extinction

Goes not to the earth nor to the firmament

Not to any direction nor to a sub-direction

By extinction of taints only reaches appeasement

When the flame of a lamp goes out by the exhaustion of oil, one cannot say that it has gone to the earth or to the sky or to any direction or sub direction. All one can say is that it has got extinguished. The term '*kṛtī*' stands for an arahant who has done his task (*katakaraṇīya*). He cannot be traced after his final attainment of *Parinibbāna* even like the flame of the lamp.

So it seems that although we started with *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as our topic, it automatically leads to a discussion of *Nibbāna*. As a matter of fact, *Nibbāna* cannot be understood without a knowledge of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Therefore, let me add a special message at this point that could be helpful to those who listen to these sermons. Twenty years ago when I was at Meethirigala Nissarana Vanaya, I happened to deliver thirty

three sermons on *Nibbāna* to the group of meditating monks there. After a number of years the Dhamma Publications Trust of Colombo (D.G.M.B) published those 33 sermons in eleven volumes. An English translation also came out in seven volumes called "Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled."

The audio trust in Kandy (D.S.M.B) circulated those sermons and their translation in C.D. s and through its website all over the world. In those sermons on *Nibbāna*, we had occasion to say something on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as well. However, now a new series titled 'Pahan Kanuwa Paṭicca Samuppāda Sermons' is just coming up. This is the fifth sermon. I do not know how many sermons would make up this series. Let time decide it. Though the topic of the series is *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, we cannot help discussing *Nibbāna* as well.

There is an episode which clearly shows the connection between these two topics. You may have heard that the Buddha after his enlightenment reflected on the depth of this Dhamma. It is said in *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* that after comprehending this wonderful Dhamma which is so profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, the Buddha wondered how the worldlings can understand such a Dhamma. It occurred to him then that there are two truths which it is hard for the worldlings to see, namely, specific conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) or Dependent Arising (*Paṭicca Samuppāda*) and the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the extinction of craving, detachment, cessation *Nibbāna*. It is because worldlings are confined within linguistic conventions that they cannot understand the links of the formula of Dependent Arising. They are imprisoned by logic and compelled to assert 'is' or 'is not' – absolute existence or absolute non-existence. But the correct position is otherwise.

We have clearly pointed out what the basic principle of the law of Dependent Arising is.

> This being – this comes to be
>
> With the arising of this – this arises
>
> This not being – this does not come to be
>
> With the cessation of this – this ceases.

Here itself is the transcendence of logic (*atakkāvacara*). Logic wants us to say 'yes' or 'no' to the question of existence. But this is what the Buddha says. Worldlings find it difficult to take it in. They think that when an arahant finally passes away, he could be located somewhere. In this Law of Dependent Arising, there is a direct order and a reverse order. In the direct order we have the nature of *Saṁsāra* as-it-is. Venerable Sāriputta became a stream-winner already as the ascetic Upatissa, when he heard only the first two lines of the verse uttered by Venerable Assaji.

> *Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā*
>
> *tesaṁ hetuṁ tathāgato āha*

Whatever things that arise from causes.

Their cause the Tathāgata has told.

Upatissa inferred by it, that if something arises from a cause, it has of necessity to cease when the cause ceases. The last two lines are on *Nibbāna*.

Tesañca yo nirodho

evaṁ vādī mahāsamano.

And also their cessation

Thus teaches the great ascetic.

If a problem is properly understood the solution is also in it. The direct order of the Law of Dependent Arising is the statement of the problem. The reverse order gives the solution. It is very difficult for the worldlings to understand that they are incarcerated between 'is' and 'is not'.

Given ignorance, a series of conditioned phenomena come to be. With the cessation of ignorance they cease to be. There is an extremely important discourse which highlights these distinctive features of the Dhamma. Let us briefly touch upon it for the present. It is the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. A monk, *Kaccānagotta* by name, approaches the Buddha and says:

"Venerable Sir, 'Right View', 'Right View' it is said. In what way Venerable Sir, is there right view?"

You may have heard various definitions of right view.

Here is something peculiar:

The Buddha says:

"*Dvayanissito khvāyaṁ Kaccāna loko yebhuyyena atthitañceva natthitañca.*

Lokasamudayaṁ kho Kaccāna yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya passato yā loke natthitā sā na hoti.

Lokanirodhaṁ kho Kaccāna yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya passato yā loke atthitā sā na hoti."

"This world, Kaccāna, for the most part depends upon a duality – upon the notion of existence and the notion of non-existence. For one who sees the arising of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of non-existence in regard to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of existence in regard to the world."

Here the Buddha points out that the world is resting on the two extreme views of existence and non-existence. Then this is how the Buddha shows us the middle way. For one who sees the arising of the world as it is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of non-existence. To the insight meditator who sees the arising aspect of the world, the notion of absolute non-existence does not occur. And to the insight meditator who sees the cessation aspect of the world, the notion of absolute existence does not occur. The world is holding on to the two dogmatic views of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. But the Buddha avoids this absolutism. *Paticcasamuppanna* means arisen in dependence on causes and conditions. The world is incessantly arising and ceasing. But the worldling resting on the notion of the compact due to craving and grasping, tenaciously believes that a thing exists absolutely. If absolute existence is one end the other end should be absolute non-existence, tantamount to annihilation. But as we sometimes pointed out, if anything is lost, it is only the ignorance that 'there is something' and the craving that 'there isn't enough.' That is all. There is nothing to lament. This is precisely why Gotama Buddha as well as Vipassi Buddha made known their realization with the words:

"*Samudayo samudayoti kho me bhikkhave pubbe ananussutesu dhammasu cakkhuṁ udapādi ñāṇaṁ udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā udapādi āloko udapādi.*

. . . . *nirodho nirodhoti kho me bhikkhave pubbe ananussutesu dhammasu cakkhuṁ udapādi ñāṇaṁ udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā udapādi āloko udapādi*."

"Arising, arising – thus monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light.

. . . . Cessation, cessation – thus monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light."

The process of arising and cessation is going on all the time, but the worldling has taken up the wrong view called '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' (personality view) misconstruing the whole group to be existing (*sat* + *kāya*). Because of that view they are imprisoned by the limitations of language and logic which rest on the duality of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. Not only the ordinary worldling, but the worldly philosopher as well as the modern scientist has got stuck there. Not being satisfied with the dilemma, the philosopher has created a tetralemma to make the confusion worst confounded. But the Buddha has transcended all these by this Dhamma which is *atakkāvacara* ('not moving within the sphere of logic'). He transcended logic the moment he gained the insight into the incessant arising and ceasing. He understood that it is not possible to take a definite stand on 'is' or 'is not'.

Let me give a simple illustration for your easy comprehension – a simile I gave in my sermons on *Nibbāna*. I suppose you all like similes. Sometimes behind a shop window or in a showroom they display a 'magic-kettle', from which water flows non-stop into a basin under it. The kettle never goes empty nor does the basin overflow. That is the

magic. The secret is that there is a hidden tube which conducts the water back into the kettle. Well, take it that the world itself is a 'Magic-kettle'. The process of arising and ceasing is going on all the time even within our bodies. So also in the world outside. World systems go on arising and ceasing – expanding and contracting (*vivaṭṭa* and *saṁvaṭṭa*). This is the profound truth the Buddha has revealed to the world. But the worldlings committed and limited as they are by 'personality-view' and enslaved as they are by perception, by language and logic, come again and again under the yoke of Death ('*yogamāyanti maccuno*').

Well, enough for today. I hope you will bear with me if some explanations appeared too deep. But you need not complain like that deity. Perhaps when the sermon comes in a form of a C.D. you can absorb it quietly. I take it that you all have spent the day observing higher precepts in a meditative atmosphere with *Nibbāna* as your aim. I wish this sermon too will help you realize your noble aspirations. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma-world, may they all rejoice in our sermon. May the merits accrued by that rejoicing conduce to the fulfilment of their higher aims!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 6
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 188)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Jāti maraṇa saṁsāraṁ

ye vajanti punappunaṁ

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ

avijjāyeva sā gati

avijjā hayaṁ mahā moho

yenidaṁ saṁsitaṁ ciraṁ

vijjāgatā ca ye sattā

nāgacchanti punabbhavam

– Dvāyatānupassanā S. Sn.

Those who go on wandering again and again

Alternating in saṁsāra between birth and death

Are involved in a change from thisness to otherwiseness

Which is merely a journey of ignorance

This ignorance is the vast delusion

Whereby for long this saṁsaric journey has gone on

But those that have come by knowledge Come back never again to repeated birth.

Dear Listeners,

What is called 'life' is the period between birth and death. What is called '*Saṁsāra*' is the alternation between birth and death. We have taken up as the topic of our sixth sermon on Dependent Arising two verses that highlight the connection between these two.

The two verses are found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. In the brief introductory story of this discourse which embodies a lot of deep points in the Dhamma, one can sense an intense fervour of the Dhamma. You had better form a

mental picture of a moonlit night at *Pubbārāma* in *Sāvatthi* on a full moon day when the Buddha is seated in the open air surrounded by the congregation of monks. Having surveyed the company of monks with the Buddha-eye as they were seated quietly with rapt attention, the Buddha started a deep sermon with this prologue.

"Monks, whatever skillful contributory mental states there are, that are noble and effectively leading up to enlightenment, if there are any persons who question about the justifiable purpose of listening to them, they should be told:

"It is just for the purpose of knowing as it is the dualities in this Dhamma. And what would you call a duality?

'This is suffering – this is the arising of suffering. This is one mode of contemplation.

This is the cessation of suffering – this is the path of practice leading towards the cessation of suffering. This is the second mode of contemplation.'

And therein, monks, of a monk who thus dwells diligently zealous and ardent, rightly contemplating the dualities, one of two results maybe expected – either full comprehension in this very life or if there is any residual clinging, the fruit of nonreturning."

After this initial exhortation, the Buddha uttered four verses pertaining to the Four Noble Truths.

Then again addressing the company of monks, the Buddha said:

"Monks, if there are any who put the question 'Could there be another mode of contemplating correctly the duality?' – they should be told:

'There is', and how?

'Whatever suffering that originates all that is due to assets' – this is one mode of contemplation.' But with the utter fading away and cessation of assets there is no origination of suffering – this is the second contemplation."

You had better note that what is here called '*assets*' or '*upadhi*' are the five aggregates of gasping we have deposited in this long *Saṁsāra*. So according to the Buddha the cause of the entire mass of suffering is the five aggregates of grasping. So much so that with the remainderless fading away and cessation of these assets there is no origination of suffering.

In the same way this discourse introduces as many as sixteen modes of contemplation. The special feature is that each mode of contemplation is introduced with the supposition that there are those who question the possibility of another mode of contemplation. Firstly the Buddha describes the topic under consideration in prose and then gives three or four verses concerning its importance as a mode of contemplation. We do not propose to discuss fully all the topics raised in this long discourse but the

special significance of this particular sermon preached by the Buddha is that at the end of it all the sixty monks who listened to it attained arahanthood extirpating all influxes. It is such an important discourse.

It is the third mode of contemplation given in this discourse that we have taken up as the topic of our sermon today. Now this is the statement in prose with which the Buddha introduces the verses relevant to the topic.

'*yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti sabbaṁ avijjā paccayā,*

avijjāyatveva asesavirāga nirodhā natthi dukkhassa sambhavo.' Whatever suffering that originates all that is due to ignorance, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, there is no origination of suffering."

It is after this declaration that the Buddha utters the two verses forming our topic.

'*Jāti maraṇa saṁsāraṁ – ye vajanti punappunaṁ*

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ – avijjāyeva sā gati'

"Those who keep wandering again and again in this *saṁsāra* which is an alternation between birth and death tantamount to a 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness', are involved in a journey which is merely a perpetuation of ignorance."

'avijjā hayaṁ mahāmoho – yenidaṁ saṁsitaṁ ciraṁ

vijjāgatā ca ye sattā – nāgacchanti punabbhavam'

"Ignorance is the great delusion due to which one has wandered long in this *saṁsāra*. Those beings that are endowed with knowledge do not come back to repeated existence."

I wish to discuss these two verses in some detail. Let me cite at length a certain highly significant discourse which I touched upon briefly the other day, namely the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. I shall give it in some detail so that even those of you who were not present the other day could easily follow it. This is how the discourse begins.

A monk named *Kaccānagotta* approaches the Buddha and asks him:

"Venerable Sir, Right view, Right View it is said. In how far Venerable Sir, does one have right view? " The Buddha replies:

"Dvayanissito kho ayaṁ Kaccāna loko yebhuyyena atthitañceva natthitañca"

"*Kaccāna*, this world for the most part, rests on a duality, namely existence and non-existence."

Then he proceeds to proclaim a wonderful middle path.

"*Kaccāna* to one who sees as it is with right wisdom the arising of the world, the view of non-existence about the world does not occur, and to one who sees as it is with right wisdom the cessation of the world, the view of existence about the world does not occur."

The reference here is to the two views of eternalism and annihilationism.

Then the Buddha goes on to say that this world for the most part is given to approaching, grasping and entering into views (*upaya upādanā-abhinivesa vinibandho*). But if one does not approach, grasp and take one's stand upon that tendency to approaching, grasping and that mental standpoint with the idea:

'This is myself', then one would not doubt nor waver about the fact that it is only suffering that arises and only suffering that ceases. He would have a knowledge of it which is not dependent on another. With this the Buddha gives the reply to *Kaccāna's* question saying:

"In so far *Kaccāna,* has one right view."

In conclusion he says by way of explanation:

"Sabbaṁ atthīti kho Kaccāna, ayaṁ eko anto. Sabbaṁ natthīti ayam dutiyo anto. Ete te Kaccāna ubho ante anupagamma majjhena Tathāgato dhammaṁ deseti:

avijjāpaccayā saṅkharā saṅkharāpaccayā viññāṇaṁ,....., evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti. avijjāyatveva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho, ... evametassa kevalassa dukkhakhhandhassa nirodho hoti."

"Everything exists' – this, O *Kaccāna*, is one extreme. 'Nothing exists' – this, O Kaccāna, is the second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes *Kaccāna*, the Tathagatha preaches the Dhamma by the middle:

"Depending on ignorance preparations, depending on preparations consciousness, ... this is the arising of this whole mass of suffering. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance (comes) the cessation of preparations, with the cessation of preparations, cessation of consciousness, ... thus is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering."

You all are familiar with the middle path as expounded in the '*Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*' – namely the Noble Eightfold Path which avoids the two extremes of indulgence in sense pleasures and self-mortification. Now this *Kaccāna Sutta* is also a sermon preached by the Buddha. Here the concept of the middle path is the avoidance of the two extreme views 'Everything exists' and 'Nothing exists'. What does this middle way amount to? The Law of Dependent Arising.

As we mentioned earlier, the formula of Dependent Arising has a direct order and an indirect order. In the direct order the formula begins with 'Depending on ignorance, preparations, depending on preparations consciousness and so on and ends with the statement:

Thus is the arising of this whole mass of suffering. In the indirect order the formula begins by saying that with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of preparations, with the cessation of preparations the cessation of consciousness, ... , and concludes with the declaration:

Thus is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. You had better note the significance of the direct order and the indirect order. Thereby the Buddha evolves a middle path between the above two extreme views. Talking about the middle path, all this time we are used to identifying the middle path with the Noble Eightfold Path. You had better understand the reason for it.

It is true that the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* preached to the group of five monks is undoubtedly the very first sermon and as such a great discourse. But there is a particular reason which inspired it. Those five monks entertained doubts about the Buddha's enlightenment because he gave up the austerities of self-mortification. That is why the Buddha adopted that mode of presentation of the Noble Eightfold Path as the avoidance of the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. All the same the Law of Dependent Arising is implicit in that discourse. The reason for the point of emphasis was the necessity of convincing them.

Unfortunately, however, our commentarial tradition has not taken sufficient cognizance of this aspect of the middle path. Owing to that, quite a number of very important discourses on *Nibbāna* have remained obscure. A lack of appreciation of the Law of Dependent Arising, or the middle path between 'is' and 'is not' views is responsible for this neglect. As we pointed out earlier, that spontaneous utterance of the Buddhas, namely, 'arising, arising' 'ceasing, ceasing,' soon after their realization, sketches out the middle path between those two extremes in that it is a reflection of the incessant process of arising and ceasing going on in the world.

On various occasions we have brought up important discourses relating to this particular middle path. One such popular but abstruse discourse is the '*Bāhiya Sutta*'. The middle path implicit in the *Bāhiya Sutta* is not understood by many who read it. Let us recollect it. *Bāhiya Dāruciriya* was an ascetic with a high degree of *samsāric* maturity. He had meditated on his own and reached a stage which he took to be arahanthood. A certain deity had pointed out to him that it is an overestimation and directed him to the Buddha. With an intense eagerness he came to see the Buddha. By that time the Buddha was on his alms round, and in all haste *Bāhiya* begged him to preach the Dhamma. For some reason or other the Buddha refused the request twice but upon the third insistent request came out with a wonderfully brief and cryptic sermon which begins with this initial injunction:

"Tasmātiha Bāhiya evaṁ sikkhitabbaṁ diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṁ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṁ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṁ bhavissati viññāte viññātamattaṁ bhavissati. Evañhite Bāhiya sikkhitabbaṁ."

"Well then *Bāhiya*, thus should you train yourself:

'In the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard there will be just the heard, in the sensed there will be just the sensed, in the cognized there will be just the cognized.' Thus should you train yourself."

Then the Buddha outlines the final outcome of that training.

"Yato kho te Bāhiya diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṁ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṁ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṁ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṁ bhavissati, tato tvaṁ Bāhiya na tena, yato tvaṁ Bāhiya na tena, tato tvaṁ Bāhiya na tattha, yato tvaṁ Bāhiya na tattha, tato tvaṁ Bāhiya nevidha na huraṁ na ubhayamantarena esevanto dukkhassa."

"And when, to you *Bāhiya* there will be in the seen just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the sensed just the sensed and in the cognized just the cognized, then *Bāhiya* you are not 'by it'. And when *Bāhiya* you are not 'by it', then *Bāhiya* you are not 'in it'. And when *Bāhiya* you are not in it, then *Bāhiya* you are neither here nor there, nor in between. This itself is the end of suffering."

The implication is that at whatever time one stops short at the seen and takes it only as a seen and not something seen, and likewise in the case of heard, only as a heard and not something heard, in the sensed only as a sensed and not something sensed, and in the cognized only as a cognized and not as something cognized, that is to say, there is no imagining a 'thinghood', then one would not be thinking in terms of it. One would not imagine 'by it' ('*tena*') in the instrumental sense or 'in it' ('*tattha*') in the locative sense. As we said earlier, the problem of *Saṁsāra* lies hidden in the linguistic medium. For instance in the case of a seen, when one takes the concept of a chair in the substantive sense there will be 'by' or 'with' the chair as well as a positing of 'in the chair' or else, if one does not stop short at the heard but imagines a 'music' in it there will be a 'by music' and an 'in music'. Thereby one takes a standpoint and tacitly identifies oneself with it. On the other hand, if one does not take such a standpoint, one is neither 'here' nor 'there' nor 'in between the two'. A middle exists relative to two ends. When one is free from the two ends and does not take a stand in the middle saying 'this is myself' as stated in the '*Kaccānagotta Sutta'* one would win to the conviction that what arises is only suffering and what ceases is only suffering. That itself is the end of suffering.

Then there is another brief but highly significant sutta in the same text – *Udāna*. It is a sermon specifically dealing with *Nibbāna* (*'Nibbāna patisaṁyutta'*) which the Buddha addressed to the monks. That sermon too appears rather cryptic and riddlelike in its formulation. It is worded as follows:

Nissitassa calitaṁ

anissitassa calitaṁ natthi

calite asati passaddhi

passaddhiyā sati nati na hoti

natiya asati āgati gati na hoti

āgati gatiyā asati cutūpapāto na hoti

cutūpapāte asati

nevidha na huraṁ na ubhayamantarena

esevanto dukkhassa.

The first two words are probably familiar to you by now:

'*Nissitassa calitaṁ*'. The word '*Nissitassa*' might remind you of the term '*dvayanissita*' (resting on a duality) in the *Kaccāna Sutta* discussed above. '*Nissita*' has the sense of 'resting on', 'leaning on' or 'being attached to'. To one who rests on the duality of eternalist view and annihilationist view, there is unsteadiness (*calitaṁ*). If you are leaning on something, when it moves or shakes you have to move or shake with it. This is the basic principle the Buddha puts forward first of all. Then he gives the converse of that statement:

'*anissitassa calitaṁ natthi*.' To one who does not rest or lean on something, there is no unsteadiness or shaking. As it is said in the '*Kaccānagotta Sutta'*, if one does not lean on extreme views by going the middle way, there is no unsteadiness (*'anissitassa calitaṁ natthi'*). When there is no unsteadiness, there is calm ('*passaddhi'*). When there is calm there is no inclination or bending (*'passaddhiyā sati nati na hoti'*). Understood deeply, it means the absence of craving. Where there is no inclination there is no coming and going (*'natiya asati āgati gati na hoti'*). When there is an inclining, there is a possibility of falling somewhere – a possibility of 'coming and going'. When there is no coming and going there is no question of death and rebirth (*'āgati gatiyā asati cutūpapāto na hoti'*). When there is no death and rebirth there is neither a 'here' nor a 'there' nor in between the two (*'cutūpapāte asati nevidha na huraṁ na ubhayamantarena'*). This itself is the end of suffering ('*esevanto dukkhassa*').

Here too we find the question of linguistic conventions coming in. As we have already mentioned the knotty problem of *Saṁsāra* can be traced to linguistic conventions which we ourselves have created. Language and logic are transcended in this Dhamma. That is why it is called '*atakkāvacara*' ('not moving within the sphere of logic'). It grasps neither the two extremes nor the middle. This is the training which culminates in *Nibbāna*.

We put forward these ideas more or less as a commentary to the two verses in question. Let us now turn our attention again to these two verses.

'*Jāti maraṇa saṁsāraṁ – ye vajanti punappunaṁ*

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ – avijjāyeva sā gati'

Here we have two peculiar terms:

itthabhāva aññathābhāva – 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'. What is called 'birth' and 'death' is tantamount to an alternation between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'. Just ponder over this statement. So this alternation is merely a journey of ignorance. It is not someone's journey. Only a journey of ignorance. Therefore, ignorance is a vast delusion ('*mahā moho*') as stated in the second verse. However the two most important terms are '*itthabhāva*' and '*aññathābhāva*'.

As you might recall, while discussing *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* we happened to mention that the Buddha in his questioning of venerable Ānanda step by step about the mutual relationship between consciousness and name and form posed the following question:

"Ānanda if consciousness having descended into the mother's womb slips out, will name and form get born into a state of thisness ('*itthatta*')?"

There we came across the term '*itthatta'*; '*Itthatta'* is none other than *'itthabhāva'* just as *'nānatta*' is a synonym for '*nānābhāva*'. Granted that '*itthatta*' means '*itthabhāva*' we can gather something about it from the above reference itself. So it is only so long as consciousness and name and form are found together in a mother's womb, that we can expect the birth of a child. As we happened to mention in that context, if consciousness slips out only a ball of flesh would come out of the womb. It is only when these two continue to be together that a child is born into this world as a 'thisness'. This is because when the new born child looks around, he finds himself born into a world of six sense spheres. From his point of view it is a 'thisness'. Therefore, thisness is equivalent to 'birth'. Otherwiseness is his journey towards 'decay and death'. So then, 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness' is an inseparable pair. The worldling tries to separate birth from death and keep back birth and reject death. But this is an impossibility. It is an inseparable pair.

So it is clear that thisness (*itthabhāva*) is birth. The moment one grasps something as 'THIS' giving it a 'thingness' it starts becoming otherwise. He comes under the inescapable law of impermanence. Therefore, '*itthabhāva*' and '*aññathābhāva*' are tantamount to 'birth' and 'death'. The alternation between them in *Saṁsāra* is merely a journey of ignorance (*'avijjāyeva sā gati').*

There is an important discourse which brings out the implications of the two terms '*itthabhāva*' and '*aññathābhāva*'. Although we happened to discuss it earlier too, we take it up again because it is relevant. Soon after his enlightenment the Buddha as he was seated cross legged under the *Bodhi* tree in *Uruvelā* on the banks of River *Neranjarā,* arising from his concentration after seven days, surveyed the world with his Buddha-eye

and uttered this verse as a paean of joy. It is a powerful utterance showing how deeply he reflected on the pathetic condition of the world.

ayaṁ loko santāpajāto phassapareto – rogaṁ vadati attato

yena yenahi maññati – tato taṁ hoti aññathā

This grief-stricken world given over to contact

Speaks of a disease in terms of a self

Whatever 'thing' he thinks 'in terms of'

Thereby itself it turns otherwise.

In the introductory part of this discourse it is said that the Buddha in surveying the world with his Buddha-eye, saw beings stricken with grief due to various burning sensations born of lust, hate and delusion and uttered this verse. The world is griefstricken and enslaved by contact ('*santāpajāto phassapareto'*) and calls a disease or a nest of diseases (that is the body) a self ('*rogaṁ vadati attato').* What happens as a result of taking this nest of diseases as a self? Now comes a significant statement:

yena yenahi maññati – tato taṁ hoti aññathā:

whatever one thinks in terms of, thereby it turns otherwise. The newly born child thinks 'I am in this world' and with that very thought the germ of impermanence takes over and that itself is the beginning of turning otherwise or change.

Then the Buddha goes on to explain what happens as a result of this 'minding' (*maññanā*).

'*aññathā bhāvī bhavasatto loko*

bhavapareto

bhavamevābhinandati

yadabhinandati taṁ bhayaṁ

yassa bhāyati taṁ dukkhaṁ

bhavavippahānāya kho panidaṁ

brahmacariyaṁ vussati.'

The world attached to becoming

And given over to becoming

Though becoming otherwise

Yet delights in becoming

What it delights in

Is a cause for fear

And what it is scared of

Is suffering itself

But for abandoning that becoming

Is this holy life lived.

This is an extraordinary analysis of the predicament the world finds itself in. The nature of the world is to become otherwise due to the inexorable law of impermanence. But the world (that is the worldlings) is attached to becoming and given over to becoming (‘*Attathābhāvī bhavasatto loko bhavapareto*’). It Therefore, delights in becoming (‘*bhavamevābhinandati*”). The very fact that it delights is a fear – a dread (‘*yadabhinandati taṁ bhayaṁ*’). What is fearful or dreadful is suffering (‘*yassa bhāyati taṁ dukkhaṁ*’). Then comes the solution to the problem:

It is for the abandoning of becoming that this holy life is lived (‘*bhavavippahānāya kho panidaṁ – brahmacariyaṁ vussati*”).

Just ponder over this paradoxical situation. It is in the nature of becoming to become otherwise. But the worldling is attached to and given over to becoming. In fact it delights in becoming which itself is a cause of fear. What it is apprehensive of, is suffering bound up with the inexorable law of impermanence.

Then the Buddha makes this significant declaration:

“Whatever recluses or Brahmins spoke of release from existence by means of existence, I say that they are not released from existence.

Whatever recluses or Brahmins who spoke of a stepping out of existence by means of non-existence, I say that they all have not stepped out of existence.

All this suffering arises due to assets. By the destruction of all grasping there is no arising of suffering.”

A peculiar word came up in this discourse namely,

‘*maññati*”. Earlier too we called ‘*maññanā’* a ‘minding’ – a ‘thinking’ – in terms of:

It is a fancying – in other words caused by ignorance. Once born into the world the child fancies itself to be a mannikin. Parents take it to be their own child – this combination of name and form and consciousness. Whether it likes it or not there is growth which in effect is decay. The Buddha speaks only of birth decay and death – not of any growth as

such. From birth itself change takes over. That is to say from birth itself there is a progress towards decay and death. The world is imprisoned within this duality. That is what the Buddha calls suffering. Scholars suggest all sorts of etymologies for the word '*dukkha*'. We in our own way suggested a certain etymology in our *Nibbāna* sermons. '*Duh*' means with difficulty or hardship and '*kha*' means bearing up. So '*dukkha*' means though with difficulty one bears up. Though one bears up it is difficult.

Let me give a simple simile as an illustration. In fact I gave a simile of a 'serpent circle'. I borrowed the idea from a cartoon I saw in my boyhood. The cartoon had three cages or 'windows'. The first cage showed two serpents – say, a cobra and a viper – trying to swallow each other. In the first cage the viper's tail is shown to be in the cobra's mouth while the cobra's tail is in the viper's mouth. The second cage showed that the cobra has swallowed half of the viper and that the viper has swallowed half of the cobra. That means now we have a 'serpent circle'. Try to guess what could be in the third cage. Let us for a moment think that the cobra has swallowed the viper. Then the viper is not visible. If the viper has swallowed the cobra, the latter would not be visible. Whatever it is, the third cage only showed a few short lines in the centre suggestive of a "VOID".

But is it a possibility? can they successfully swallow each other? It is a possibility only in the realm of logic – never in the world of reality. So the actual situation in the world is as represented by the second cage – the 'serpent-circle'. It is a conflict – a deadlock. The cobra has to bear up somehow though it is difficult to do so. It started swallowing but cannot finish it. Same with the viper's attempt to swallow the cobra. Though it is difficult both have to bear up. Though they bear up, it is difficult. They are in a fix!

Well, this is our predicament too. You talk about income and expenditure. It is a similar attempt to swallow up – whether at state level or household level. Husband and wife are in conflict with regard to income and expenditure. 'Income' tries to swallow up 'expenditure' and 'expenditure' tries to swallow up 'income'. In economics there is the risk of inflation. Between supply and demand there is another 'serpent-circle'. Just think about the society at large-institutions and the like. 'Duties' try to swallow up 'rights' and 'rights' try to swallow up 'duties'. The result is strikes. What about our in-breath and out-breath and our blood circulation? It is the same conflict everywhere. This is the suffering. But the world refuses to understand this precarious situation for what it is. Instead it goes on craving for existence – for birth again and again.

It craves for birth but abhors death. This is the tragicomedy before us.

Talking about this liking for birth and disliking for death, let us bring up a little simile in the form of a parable. However much we explain this deep point some of you might not grasp it. But when it comes in the form of simile it is easily understood. Let us take one from the village life itself.

Simple *Siyadoris*, the habitual drunkard, suddenly dies. Usually in the case of a sudden death, a post-mortem is held. But before the formal inquest there is a tendency in the village to hold many informal inquests. First of all let us consult the venerable chief monk. His verdict is that his lay-supporter, *Siyadoris* died because he could not keep the

fifth precept (that is abstinence from intoxicants). Now let us ask the village school master. His opinion is that this premature death is due to illiteracy. What does the Member of the Parliament say? He would put it down to abject poverty due to misgovernment by the ruling party. Let us ask the wife of the dead man who was at his bedside at the time of the death. She might say that her husband died because he could not breathe. What is the coroner's verdict? It states that the death is due to chronic cirrhosis. But all these are partial truths.

If we ask the Buddha he would say that *Siyadoris* died for the simple reason that he was born!

There you are laughing – but that is the fact. Of course you might say "You don't have to tell us that. We know tha?"

But that is precisely what has to be told. That is what the world does not KNOW!

You may recall what we pointed out in our discussion of the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*. When we analyse the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula these days we usually begin with the first two lines:

'*aviijjā paccayā saṅkhārā'* ('dependent on ignorance preparations'). It is very easy for us now. But how did the Buddha lay bare this most wonderful truth for the first time?

It is through radical attention ('*yonisomanasikāra*'). *Yonisomanasikāra* means attending by way of the source or matrix. Therefore, not only our *Gotama* Buddha, but also Vipassi Buddha before him aroused the knowledge of Dependent Arising by attending to 'decay and death' upwards. We have already explained these things. For instance the Bodhisatta Vipassi asked himself:

'kimhi nu kho sati jarāmaraṇaṁ hoti, kim paccayā jarāmaranaṁ.'

When what is there (or "what being there") does decay and death come to be Dependent on what is decay and death?

Then it occurred to him:

'jatiyā sati jarāmaraṇaṁ hoti, jatipaccayā jarāmaranaṁ.'

'When birth is there, decay and death come to be, Dependent on birth is decay and death.'

Just see. There is nothing to laugh about it. Until then the world had not understood it. The worldlings only think up excuses for it. That is why they ask why a Buddha has to come and tell us that. But the Buddhas arouse the knowledge of this basic reason because they want to put an end to *samsāric* suffering. Worldlings are not concerned with radical solutions to the problem of suffering. Whether he observed the five precepts or not *Siyadoris* would die. Whether he is literate or illiterate he would die. Whether he held his breath or released it he would die. Whether he had cirrhosis or not he would die.

But if *Siyadoris* had put and end to birth, he would not have died.

To refresh your memory a little more – now you can make sense of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula because radical attention starts from the very end. Then the Buddha asked himself:

'*kimhi nu kho sati jāti hoti. kimpaccayā jāti.*'

'When what is there does birth come to be? Dependent on what is birth?' And it dawned on him through wisdom:

'bhave kho sati jāti hoti, bhavapaccayā jāti'

'When becoming is there does birth come to be.

Dependent on becoming is birth'

So you can infer that the condition for birth is becoming or existence and likewise the cause and condition for becoming or existence is grasping because what you grasp that you are; the condition for grasping is craving since you grasp because of craving; the condition for craving is feeling since you crave because of feeling; the condition for feeling is contact because where you contact there you feel; the condition for contact is the six sense spheres since you contact because you have six sense spheres. The condition for the six sense spheres is name and form. Now we come to that deep point which we discussed earlier too. The condition for name and form is consciousness and then there is that crucial 'turning-back'. The condition for consciousness is name and form. The process of questioning through radical attention stopped at the point of this mutual conditionality ('a*ññama*ñña *paccayatā*').

'nāmarupāpaccayā viññāṇaṁ

viññāṇapaccayā nāmarupāṁ'

Dependent on name and form is consciousness

Dependent on consciousness is name and form.

Although questioning stopped there the very ignorance of this mental conditionality itself is *avijjā* or ignorance and the consequent fumbling or groping about in that darkness is *sankhārā* or preparations. This is what we tried to illustrate by various similes – the delusion arising out of the duality. The tragic self-love of Narcissus is the best example. But the Buddha discovered the secret of this vortical interplay – namely, Dependent Arising ('*Paṭicca Samuppāda*'). That he accomplished through radical attention ('*yonisomanasikāra')*.

So you may understand that this discourse which is regarded as deep reveals that Dependent Arising or *Paṭicca Samuppāda*' is a middle path. It is due to a lack of understanding of this fact that many find it difficult to understand that the cessation of

becoming is *Nibbāna*. We might have to take up for discussion several other deep discourses to clarify this aspect of the Dhamma.

Then there is what is called '*maññanā*' (lit. minding, thinking in terms of or imagining). Let us take up a short discourse to acquaint ourselves with this term and to clarify further the alternation between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness' ('*itthabhāva*' – '*aññathābhāva*'). We pointed out that *maññanā* is an imagining. According to what the Buddha has pointed out to us we are living in a mirage of our own making. The mirage is mind-made. To reveal this fact to us he brings up a strange parable – the parable of Vepacitti in *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. It is a parable which conveys something extremely deep. The Buddha presents it to the monks as if relating an incident which actually happened in the past. Quite often in the discourses we find an allusion to a battle between gods (*sura*) and demons (*asura*). In this particular contest it is said that in the battle between gods and demons, demons lost and gods won. The gods bound Vepacitti, the king of demons in a fivefold bondage neck, hand and foot and brought him into the presence of *sakka* – the king of gods. The Buddha says that the bondage of Vepacitti has a peculiar mechanism about it. When Vepacitti thinks:

'Gods are righteous and demons are unrighteous, I will remain here in the *deva* world' with that very thought he finds himself released from the fivefold bondage and enjoying divine pleasures. But as soon as he thinks:

'gods are unrighteous and demons are righteous. I will go back to the asura world' he finds himself bound again in that fivefold bondage. The point here stressed by the Buddha is that the bondage is 'mind-made'. In summing up the Buddha says:

'Evam sukhumaṁ kho bhikkhave Vepacitti bandhanaṁ. Tato sukhumataraṁ mārabandhanaṁ'

"So subtle, monks, is the bondage of Vepacitti but more subtle still the bondage of *Māra*."

The bondage of Vepacitti is subtle as it is connected with the mind. But it seems the bondage of *Māra* is subtler.

Now comes the highly significant statement:

'maññanmāno kho bhikkhave baddho mārassa amaññanmāno mutto pāpimato.'

"Imagining monks, one is bound by *Māra*, not imagining one is freed from that evil one."

Then the Buddha goes on to explain what this imagining is:

‘asmīti bhikkhave maññitametaṁ

ayamahamasmīti maññitametaṁ

bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

na bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

rūpī bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

arūpī bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

saññī bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

asaññī bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

nevasaññīnāsaññī bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

maññitaṁ bhikkhave gando,

maññitaṁ rogo,

maññitaṁ sallaṁ.

Tasmātiha bhikkhave,

“amaññitamanena cetasā, viharissāmāti”

evañhi vo bhikkhave sikkhitabbaṁ.’

‘(I) am’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘This am I’ – this is an imagined

‘I should be’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall not be’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall be one with form’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall be formless’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall be percipient’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall be non-percipient’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall be percipient nor non-percipient’ – monks, this is an imagined

Imagining monks, is a disease, imagining is an abscess, imagining is a barb.

Therefore, monks you must tell yourselves:

"We will dwell with a mind free from imaginings".

Thus must you train yourselves.

So here are nine ways of imagining. The first imagining is (I) am. We cannot help using 'I am' according to rules of grammar. But that itself is something imagined. That is not enough. We have to say 'This am I' identifying ourselves with one or the other of five aggregates. But that again is something imagined. So also is the assertion 'I shall be' or 'I shall not be'. Similarly even the Brahmas are bound since 'I shall be one with form' and 'I shall be formless' are imaginings. Whether one thinks 'I shall be percipient' or 'I shall be non-percipient' it is an imagining. So also the see-sawing 'I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient'.

Having thus shown that the entire range of existence rests on imaginings, the Buddha declares:

'Imagining is a disease, an abscess, a barb and advises the monks to dwell with a mind free from imaginings. This is the moral behind the parable of Vepacitti's bondage. That is why we pointed out that delusion is ingrained in the linguistic medium. But we cannot afford to reject it altogether. That is precisely why even the Buddha uses it but without grasping.

The other day, while discussing the simile of the whirlpool we said something about 'that place' and 'this place' or 'here and there'. Corresponding to that we have the three 'persons' – "I am" the first person 'here you are' the second person in front of me and 'he' over there is the third person. That is the grammatical structure. There are verbs that go with the three persons. 'Am', 'are' and 'is'. According to the Buddha all these are part and parcel of the disease of imagining. The world is imprisoned by language and logic. The Buddha on the other hand offered us a Dhamma that transcends logic. That in short is the middle path implicit in the law of Dependent Arising. I wonder whether you remember our simile of the magic-kettle. It is not something found in books. It is based on a little bit of experience in my young days. While on a shopping round we once watched a continuous flow of water from a kettle into a basin behind a shop window. The kettle never got empty nor did the basin overflow. We later learned that a hidden tube conveyed the water from the basin back into the kettle. The world is also such a magic-kettle.

'*Samudayo samudayo*' (arising, arising) – there is an incessant process of arising, '*nirodho, nirodho*' (ceasing, ceasing) there is an incessant process of ceasing. But the worldling ignores the ceasing aspect and emphasizes the arising aspect in order to hold on to the personality view ('*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*'). Just ponder over the etymology of the term '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*'. '*Sat*' means 'existing' and '*kāya*' means 'group'. It is because we take the entire group or the heap as existing that we insist on proving an identity which we do not have in reality. We have our identity cards. How can there be an identity if the nature of the world is otherwiseness ('*aññathābhāva*'). Forgetting about this fact we assert saying

‘This is me’ not only our present form but even the beautiful photographs taken in our childhood or at our wedding. That conceit is implicit in the stance ‘Am’. The perception of the compact (‘*ghana saññā*’) is already there. The world forgets that there is an incessant process of arising and an incessant process of ceasing. This process defies language. When we say ‘River flows’ there is only a process of flowing. But when we give it a name, say River *Kelani*, then we presume that it is the river that flows. So also is the fluxional nature of this body. Which is concealed. Only a Buddha points it out to us. Though our commentators failed to notice it, some Buddhist sects highlighted the fact that the middle path which avoids the two extremes is *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. They give it prominence. This does not mean that we accept everything in those Buddhist sects. Some called it ‘*Sunyatā*’. The important point to note is that there is an incessant arising and ceasing which transcends logic because logic is based on the duality of existence and non-existence – on ‘Is’ and ‘Is not’. Even the four-cornered logic the tetralemma – moves within this same duality. In place of this the Buddha introduced the law of Dependent Arising with its philosophy of incessant arising and ceasing summed up in the exclamation ‘*Samudayo Samudayo – Nirodho nirodho*.’

Let us reflect a little more on this imagining ‘I am’. How does it come in? There is an important discourse which explains it for us. Once venerable Ānanda tells his fellow monks ‘Friends when we were newly gone forth venerable *Punna Mantāniputta* was very helpful to us. He gave us an admonition like this ‘*Ānanda, upādāya asmiti hoti no anupādāya*’. Ānanda the notion ‘I am’ occurs in-dependence not without dependence. That is to say, due to grasping and not without grasping. So the notion ‘I am’ occurs due to causes and conditions – not fortuitously.

Then venerable Ānanda reiterates the words of venerable *Punna Mantāniputta* :

‘*Kiñca upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya*

Rūpaṁ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya

Vedanaṁ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya

Saññāṁ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya

Sankhare upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya

Viññāṇaṁ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya’.

Dependent on form arises (the notion) ‘I am’ – not without dependence

Dependent on feeling arises (the notion) ‘I am’ – not without dependence

Dependent on perception arises (the notion) ‘I am’ – not without dependence

Dependent on preparations arises (the notion) ‘I am’ – not without dependence

Dependent on consciousness arises (the notion) ‘I am’ – not without dependence

So it seems that the notion 'I am' is fostered by grasping or *upādāna*.

Then venerable *Puṇṇa Mantāniputta* gives a wonderful simile. It is a deep simile which you may ponder upon.

Just as Ānanda, a young woman or a young man who likes adornment looking at the reflection of her or his face either in a clean mirror or in a bowl of clear water would be seeing depending on it and not without depending, even so Ānanda depending on form arises (the notion) 'I am', not without depending. Depending on feeling arises (the notion) 'I am', not without depending. Depending on perception arises (the notion) 'I am', not without depending. Depending on preparations arises (the notion) 'I am', not without depending. Depending on consciousness arises (the notion) 'I am', not without depending. It is when one grasps the mirror that one sees one's form reflected on it. Now think of what happened to Narcissus. Because he had never seen his face as soon as he saw the reflection of his face in the water he imagined an angel in the pond. The notion 'I am' is the result of a similar reflection. The reflection in the mirror does not reveal what is inside the entrails. It only shows the external form. That is what the world prides on as self.

One grasps not only form but feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness as well. The Buddha has clarified to us why each of them is called a group (*khanda*). On a previous occasion too we explained the significance of the word '*khanda*' in *pañcupādānakhanda* (the five groups of grasping). The Buddha has given us an elevenfold analysis of each of the 'groups'. For instance in the case of form, the formula runs as follows:

'*yaṁ kiñci rūpaṁ atītānāgata paccuppannaṁ ajjhattaṁ vā bahiddā vā oḷārikaṁ vā sukumaṁ vā hīnaṁ vā panītaṁ vā yaṁ dūre santike vā sabbaṁ rūpaṁ*', *etc.*

"Whatever form, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all form.., etc."

This elevenfold analysis is recommended for insight meditation to eradicate the conceit of self.

Let us try to clarify for ourselves the significance of this analysis. '*yaṁ kiñci rūpaṁ atītānāgata paccuppannaṁ'* – 'whatever form whether past, future or present' – even the past form is prided on as 'my own'. That beautiful child in your photo album you claim with pride:

'This is me'. So that is your past form. What about the 'future' form. When you are getting ready to go for a wedding you do a lot of 'make-up' before the mirror and ask yourself:

'How would I appear there?' That is your 'future form', you have already grasped. '*ajjhattaṁ vā bahiddā vā'* – 'internal or external'. You grasp not only your form but forms you see outside. '*oḷārikaṁ vā sukumaṁ vā'* – 'whether gross or subtle'. '*hīnaṁ vā*

paṇītaṁ vā' – 'inferior or superior'. '*yaṁ dūre santike vā sabbaṁ rūpaṁ'* – 'whether far or near'. Every one of the five groups is an 'aggregate' of these eleven modes. A person 'deposits' his experiences in life according to these eleven modes. This applies not only to one's present life but to one's entire *samsāric* past. This is the 'bedrock' of *samsāric* experience which influences one as a 'latency' ('*anusaya*').

So then we have before us a stupendous *samsāric* problem of the highest order. But we are not going to blame language for it. Language is of our own creation. After we created it we fell under its spell. That is what we pointed out in our discussion of the term '*papañca*'. We alluded to the legend about the resurrected tiger. Three experts in magic while going through a forest saw the scattered bones of a tiger. One magic worker showed his skill by assembling them into a skeleton. The second one gave it flesh and blood. The third one infused life into it. The magically resurrected tiger sprang up and devoured all of them. Our language and logic worked a similar tragedy on us. We have been imprisoned by language and logic in this *Saṁsāra*. That is why we said in an earlier sermon that the complications in *Saṁsāra* are traceable to linguistic conventions. That is not with the idea of stigmatizing it. In fact we cannot help using it. Even the Buddha had to use it. As the grand finale of the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* comes the following highly significant statement:

'Itīmā kho Citta lokasamaññā lokaniruttiyo lokavohārā lokapaññattiyo yāhi Tathāgato voharati aparāmasaṁ'

"*Citta,* these are worldly conventions, worldly expressions, worldly usages, worldly concepts which the *Tathāgatha* makes use of without grasping"

The *Tathāgatha* makes use of them but does not grasp them. That should be the aim of following this Dhamma. Therefore, it is from the misconceptions ingrained in the linguistic medium that we have to get free from. That can be accomplished only through insight and wisdom. By continuously seeing the arising and ceasing nature of phenomena in one's experience with insight we can extricate ourselves from these misconceptions and that too each one by himself.

So I think this is enough for today. It seems we are delving deeper and deeper into this Dhamma. But you shouldn't get disheartened. These sermons may not be as palatable as popular versified sermons. But it is here that we have the quintessence of the Dhamma. As we once told you if you wish to attain *Nibbāna* after seeing the Buddha, see *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. If you see *Paṭicca Samuppāda* you see the Dhamma and whoever sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha. So when you see *Paṭicca Samuppāda* you see both the Buddha and the Dhamma. You had better reflect wisely on these words.

I suppose you spent the day in meditation established on higher precepts. Today you had the opportunity to listen to a sermon which is particularly relevant to insight meditation. Making the best use of it in your meditation, I hope you all will put forth your best efforts to escape this terrible *Saṁsāra*. May you all be able to attain in this very life supramundane states and the bliss of the deathless *Nibbāna*. Whatever beings there

be from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world may they all rejoice in our sermon. May the merits accrued by that rejoicing conduce to the fulfillment of their higher aims!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 7
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 189)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Anattani attamāniṁ – passa lokaṁ sadevakaṁ

niviṭṭhaṁ nāmarūpasmiṁ – idaṁ saccanti maññati

yena yena hi maññati – tato taṁ hoti aññathā

taṁ hi tassa musā hoti – mosadhammaṁ hi ittaraṁ

amosa dhammaṁ nibbānaṁ – tadariyā saccato vidū

te ve saccābhisamayā – nicchātā parinibbutā

– Dvayatānupassanā S. Sn.

Just see a world with all its goods

Fancying a self where none exists

Entering into name and form

It builds the fancy – 'Ah! This is the truth'!

In whatever way one fancies of a thing

Thereby itself it turns otherwise

And that itself is the falsity in it

Falsifying by nature – the puny thing.

But Nibbāna unfalsifying as it is

Noble Ones knew as the truth

And they by their understanding of the truth

Are hungerless and fully appeased.

Dear Listeners,

The Fully Enlightened Buddha has revealed to us that the worldlings are bound to *Saṁsāra* due to the conceit that there is a self where there is no self. The fancying or imagining caused by conceit is called '*maññanā*.' The release from this imagining which takes name-and-form as the truth is the release from the bondage of *Māra* – that is to say *Nibbāna* itself. Today we have taken up as the topic of our sermon three verses which declare this truth. These three verses also are found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. In our last sermon, we introduced this discourse as one that instils an intense fervor of the Dhamma. As the word '*dvayatā*' in the title of the discourse indicates this sutta analyses sixteen topics of Dhamma in the form of dualities. Here the Buddha analyses in sixteen ways the eternal law of bondage and release in a way that reminds us of the direct and the indirect order of the law of Dependent Arising.

Today we have taken up for comment the three verses pertaining to the fifteenth mode of contemplation of dualities. As an introduction to those three verses the Buddha gives this prose description of the fifteenth mode of duality.

'*yaṁ bhikkhave sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamanabrāhmaniyā pajāya sadevamanussāya idaṁ saccanti upanijjhāyitaṁ tadamariyānaṁ etaṁ musāti yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṁ – ayaṁ ekānupassanā*'

"Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as 'This is true' by the world with its gods, *Māras* and *Brahmas* with its recluses and *Brahmins*, that by the Ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as 'That is false.' This is one mode of contemplation."

And then the second mode of contemplation is introduced as follows:

'*yaṁ bhikkhave sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamanabrāhmaniyā pajāya sadevamanussāya idaṁ musāti upanijjhāyitaṁ tadamariyānaṁ etaṁ saccanti yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṁ – ayaṁ dutiyānupassanā*'

"Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as 'This is false' by the world with its gods, *Māras* and *Brahmas* with its recluses and *Brahmins*, that by the Ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as 'That is true.' This is the second mode of contemplation."

Having thus presented the two modes of contemplation, the Buddha, as he did in the case of other contemplations, declares that if any monk, rightly contemplating in this way, dwells diligently, ardent and zealous, one of two fruits may be expected by him:

knowledge of arahanthood in this life itself or if there is any residual clinging, Non-returnership. The Buddha declares that this particular contemplation is so highly beneficial. It is after this declaration that the Buddha summed it up in these three verses.

Anattani attamāniṁ – passa lokaṁ sadevakaṁ

niviṭṭhaṁ nāmarūpasmiṁ – idaṁ saccanti maññati.

See the world with all its gods entertaining a conceit of self where there is no self. Having entered into or entrenched in name and form, it loves to fancy:

'This is the truth.' With that the Buddha is stating the condition of the world and then he says:

'*yena yena hi maññati – tato taṁ hoti aññathā taṁ hi tassa musā hoti – mosadhammaṁ hi ittaraṁ*' "In whatever way one fancies a thing thereby it becomes otherwise. That itself is the falsity in it – the puerile deceptive thing that it is."

Then the third verse:

'*amosa dhammaṁ nibbānaṁ – tadariyā saccato vidū te ve saccābhisamayā – nicchātā parinibbutā*' "*Nibbāna* is unfalsifying. That the wise ones knew as the truth. And they by their understanding of the truth being hungerless are fully appeased."

So from these words of the Buddha, it is clear that the entire world including gods and *Brahmas* are caught by this bondage of *Māra*, due to fancying by taking name and form to be real. This fact is borne out by the parable of Vepacitti we brought up in our last sermon. Just briefly remind yourselves of what we have related the other day. The Buddha once addressing the monks related the age-old legend of the battle between gods and demons. He said that demons lost and gods won in this particular battle and the gods bound Vepacitti, the king of demons, in a five-fold bondage (that is neck, hand and foot) and brought him before *Sakka*, the king of gods. This bondage had a peculiar mechanism about it. If Vepacitti thought:

"Demons are unrighteous, gods are righteous, I will remain in the deva world", he would find himself freed from that bondage and enjoying heavenly pleasures. But if he happened to think:

"Gods are unrighteous, demons are righteous, I will go back to the *Asura* world", then he finds himself bound again in that fivefold bondage. After stating that, the Buddha goes on to say:

"So subtle monks, is the bondage of Vepacitti but more subtle still the bondage of *Māra*."

And then he explains what this bondage of *Māra* is. The Buddha declares that even the basic postulate of existence, namely, the notion '(I) am' is an imagining ('*asmīti bhikkhave maññitametaṁ*'). There the Buddha mentions a ninefold imagining. The notion '(I) am' is an imagining. 'This am I' is an imagining. 'I shall be' is an imagining. 'I shall not be' is an imagining. 'I shall be one with form' is an imagining. 'I shall be formless' is an imagining. 'I shall be percipient' is an imagining. 'I shall be non-percipient' is an imagining. 'I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient' is an imagining. Thus the entire gamut of existence extending up to the realm of neither

perception nor non-perception, including the Sensuous Realm, the Realm of Form and the Formless Realm is the range of imagining. Having declared that existence as a whole is bound up with imagining, he says in conclusion:

"Imagining monks, is a disease, imagining is an abscess, imagining is a barb (*'mañ̃ñitaṁ bhikkhave rogo, mañ̃ñitaṁ gaṇḍo, mañ̃ñitaṁ sallaṁ')* and advises the monks to dwell with a mind free from imaginings (*'amañ̃ñitamanena cetasā')*.

By means of the five constituents of name, that is to say, feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention, the worldlings take hold of the four great primaries, namely, earth, water, fire and air and due to self-love, enact a drama of Narcissistic affection best exemplified by the story of Narcissus itself, which we brought up several times. The handsome Greek youth Narcissus who had never seen his own face, while wandering in a forest, bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing the reflection of his own face he mistook it to be an angel's and tried to embrace her. Every time he tried, the ripples foiled his attempt. If we bring this story in line with the point at issue, as soon as the worldling imagines a 'thing', it turns otherwise. To fancy a 'thing' is called 'thisness' and the 'ripples' of impermanence is its 'otherwiseness' or change. For instance now we take this clock as a 'thing'. When it goes out of order, it turns in to otherwiseness. If we had not taken it as a 'thing' but as part of a heap of rubbish, such a situation would not have arisen, because there is no fancying. That is only by way of illustration. Through all this the Buddha puts across to us the truth of impermanence. In our last sermon we presented a deeper analysis of this truth. It is a very powerful sermon. Soon after his enlightenment, the Buddha surveyed the world with his Buddhaeye and seeing how beings are afflicted with lust, hate and delusion, came out with an inspired utterance which is a wonderful blend of prose and verse. Let us quote a portion of it.

ayaṁ loko santāpajāto phassapareto

rogaṁ vadati attato

This anguished world given over to contact

Speaks of a disease in terms of a self

And then he says:

yena yenahi mañ̃ñati

tato taṁ hoti añ̃ñathā

Whatever one thinks in terms of

Thereby it turns otherwise

Now comes the extraordinary statement:

'Aññathābhāvī bhavasatto loko bhavapareto

bhavamevābhinandati

yadabhinandati taṁ bhayaṁ

yassa bhāyati taṁ dukkhaṁ

bhavavippahānāya kho panidaṁ

brahmacariyaṁ vussati.'

The world attached to becoming, given over to becoming

Though becoming otherwise yet delights in becoming

What it delights in is a cause for fear

What it is afraid of is suffering itself

For abandoning this becoming

Is this holy life lived.

What is called existence has in it the nature of turning otherwise. To that existence which has the nature of turning otherwise, worldlings are attached. They are enslaved by it and they delight in it. But that delighting is dangerous and fearful. Why? Because the existence they take as a 'thisness' is turning otherwise. It is inevitable. So this is the actual situation in the world. That is why the term '*maññanā*' is of so fundamental an importance in this Dhamma.

"Well, then" one can ask "where lies freedom?" we said that in imagining or fancying one conceives of a 'thing'. We all know that there are six senses. The five external senses are eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. When the objects taken in by these five senses reach the mind, they take on a different mould. All objects of the mind are called '*dhammā*' – 'things'. So you may note first of all that the problem concerns those things that come to the mind. About this 'thing' which is the object of the mind, there is a highly significant discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, namely *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*. It is probably because of its fundamental importance that those *arahants* who held the First Council placed this discourse as the very first in this discourse collection. But unfortunately nowadays teachers when they teach this book to their pupils ask them to skip the first sutta and start from the second. They say that this is so abstruse that even those who listened to it could not understand it. But we wish to point out that this discourse is like the basic alphabet to the understanding of the philosophy of this entire Dhamma. Why do we say so? Because this *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* reveals the basic pattern of all 'things' that occur to the mind (*mūlapariyāya*).

Let us now describe the way this discourse is presented. It has a very brief introduction. The Buddha seated under a *Sal* tree in the *Subhaga* forest in the *Ukkaṭṭhā*, addressing the congregation of monks preached this sermon presumably because he wanted to bring up a very important subject. He introduces the subject with this exhortation:

"Sabbadhamma mūlapariyāyaṁ vo bhikkhave desissāmi. Taṁ sunātha sādhukaṁ manasikarotha bhāsissāmi."

"Monks, I shall preach to you the fundamental mode of all things. Listen to it. Attend to it well, I shall preach."

What is meant by 'the fundamental mode of all things' is this:

There is a certain mode according to which all phenomena occur to our mind. It is this basic mode that is found in grammar. Within this linguistic usage, all phenomena that occur to the mind present themselves according to some grammatical pattern. In regard to that grammatical pattern this *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* analyzes the respective attitudes of the average worldling uninstructed in the Dhamma, of the monk who is a learner not attained to arahanthood, of the *arahant* and of the Fully Enlightened One – the *Tathāgata*. But we can boil it down to three attitudes since the attitude of the *arahant* and of the Buddha are essentially the same. Because the *Tathāgata*, the Fully Enlightened One proclaimed this Dhamma as the teacher, he is in a category by himself. But for all practical purposes his attitude and that of the *arahant* are the same. So we are now going to analyze this discourse based on those three attitudes. We have already mentioned that this discourse describes the attitude of the worldling towards the grammatical pattern in usage in the world, the attitude of the learner training in this Dhamma and the attitude of the arahant. To represent all objects of the mind regarded as 'things' the Buddha lists 24 dhammas. It is not a complete list of all possible dhammas, but a fair representation of them as instances. They may be summed up as follows in brief. Firstly, the four great primaries:

earth, water, fire and air, then the eight classes of beings:

namely beings, gods, *Pajāpati*, *Brahmā*, the Radiant Ones, the Lustrous Ones, the *Vehapphala Brahmas*, the Overlord. Then the four formless realms:

the realm of infinite space, the realm of infinite consciousness, the realm of nothingness, the realm of neither perception nor non-perception. Then the sum-total of sense-experience:

the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized. And finally, the concepts of unity, diversity, universality and *Nibbāna* (*ekattaṁ, nānattaṁ, sabbaṁ, nibbānaṁ*).

Having thus introduced 24 mind-objects (*dhammā*) The Buddha describes the different attitudes of the above three classes towards each of them. When we give one instance you all can understand the rest of it. Out of the four primaries given first, let us take earth.

This is how the attitude of the uninstructed average worldling towards it is described. He perceives earth as earth – even as the deer perceives water. Having thus perceived earth as earth (‘*paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito saññatvā*’) he imagines an earth (‘*paṭhaviṁ maññati*’). There we find that *maññanā* coming in. Then he imagines:

‘In the earth’ (‘*paṭhaviyā maññati*’). He imagines ‘from the earth’ (‘*paṭhavito maññati*’). He imagines ‘earth is mine’ (‘*paṭhaviṁ meti maññati*’). He delights in earth (‘*paṭhaviṁ abhinandati*’). Then the Buddha asks:

‘Why is that?’ (‘*taṁ kissa hetu?*’) and gives this explanation:

‘It is because it has not been comprehended by him’ (‘*apariññātaṁ tassāti vadāmi*’).

Then about the learner (*sekha*) who has not attained *arahanthood* this is what comes in the discourse:

‘*paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito abhijānāti*’. In this case it is not *sañjānāti* (perceives) but *abhijānāti* that is understands through higher knowledge. Through his attainment of the Fruit of the Path, even for a split second he had an experience of the Truth. As if by a streak of lightening in a dark night, he had a glimpse of *Nibbāna*. Thereby he got an understanding which is of a higher order than mere perception. He has understood the true state of affairs though it is short of full comprehension. About him, this is what is stated in the sutta:

‘*paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito abhijānāti*’. He understands earth as earth. And then:

‘*paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito abhiññāya*’ – having understood earth as earth – now comes a peculiar expression:

‘*paṭhaviṁ mā maññi, paṭhaviyā mā maññi, paṭhavito mā maññi, paṭhaviṁ meti mā maññi, paṭhaviṁ mā abhinandi.*’ The use of *‘mā’* here is a big puzzle for the commentator. But it is the prohibitive particle in *Pāli* language. You may have heard the dictum:

‘*mā nivatta abhikkama*’ – ‘Do not turn back, go forward.’ However, the commentator goes off at a tangent here. He says that this particle conveys the idea that the noble disciple neither imagines nor does he not imagine. This is not the reason for this peculiar usage. The learner (*sekha*) is that noble disciple who is still training. Though he has higher knowledge beyond mere perception, he has not yet attained full comprehension (*pariññā*).

So he has to constantly remind himself to refrain from imagining, drawing inspiration from the higher knowledge he has won.

‘*paṭhaviṁ mā maññi*’ etc. means

‘Do not imagine earth as earth,

Do not imagine in the earth,

Do not imagine from the earth,

Do not imagine earth is mine,

Do not delight in the earth.'

Why? Because he has yet to comprehend ('*pariññeyyaṁ tassāti vadāmi*').

This is an injunction for self-training.

Well then, that is as far as the noble disciple who is a learner is concerned. Now as for the attitudes of the *arahant* and the *Tathāgata*, we said that they are the same. For Instance, this is what is said about the arahant:

'*paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito abhijānāti, paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito abhiññāya, paṭhaviṁ na maññati, paṭhaviyā na maññati, paṭhavito na maññati, paṭhaviṁ meti na maññati, paṭhaviṁ nābhinandati.'*

That is to say, the *arahant* as well as the Buddha has the following attitude towards the concept of earth. The *arahant* by virtue of his higher understanding of earth has seen its voidness. He does not imagine earth as earth, he does not imagine 'in the earth', does not imagine 'from the earth', does not imagine 'earth is mine', does not delight in the earth.

We said that there are 24 concepts listed. With regard to each of them the same mode of imagining is given in detail. What is said in particular about the *Tathāgata*, the Fully Enlightened One is that he is the teacher who revealed this Dhamma. In conclusion, the Buddha says:

'*nandi dukkhassa mūlanti iti viditvā bhavā jāti bhūtassa jarāmaranaṁ*' – 'Having known that delight is the root of suffering. From becoming, birth and to the one born there is decay and death.' That is why there is no delighting in any of those concepts. '*Nandi dukkhassa mūlaṁ*'. Delighting is the root of suffering. It is by delighting that an existence comes to be, and that existence is turning otherwise. That is the beginning of suffering. Birth, decay and death and all the rest follow.

By way of explanation of this discourse we may cite the simile of the deer and the mirage. We have brought up this simile quite often. The deer imagines water in the mirage and runs after it. But if a person knows that it is not water but some seasonal phenomena, even if he thinks at first sight that it is water, he tells himself:

'No, no this can't be water' and trains himself. One who has full comprehension does not have to advise himself because he has perfect knowledge. The commentator has confounded the whole issue. He cannot appreciate the fact that it is a step of training. But confusion is worst confounded when he comes to explain the last of all twenty-four concepts – namely *Nibbāna*. When it is said that one should not delight in *Nibbāna*, quite understandably the question comes up:

"If we don't delight in *Nibbāna* how can we attain it?"

That may be the reason why the commentator says that *Nibbāna* here mentioned is not our *Nibbāna* but the concept of *Nibbāna* in other religious systems. With this observation the commentator makes an attempt to vindicate our *Nibbāna* despite the fact that the Buddha has here leveled an attack on linguistic usage as a whole. But it is a vain attempt because as long as one goes on imagining in terms of *Nibbāna* as 'in *Nibbāna',* 'from *Nibbāna'* and so on and as long as one delights in the concept of *Nibbāna,* one cannot attain it. Some of you might take it as an awkward position. We all look forward to attain *Nibbāna*. So if we cannot delight in *Nibbāna*, what else can we delight in? This is the problem for commentators too. But here we have something deep concerning linguistic usage. To explicate it a little let us give an illustration from the history of this dispensation.

In an earlier sermon too we have mentioned to you in brief, some incident recorded in the annals of the history of Buddhism. After the Buddha's demise, when the time came for the holding of the First Council, Venerable Mahā Kassapa Mahā thera was faced with a problem in selecting five hundred *arahants* for the recital of Dhamma and *Vinaya*. It was Venerable Ānanda who had committed to memory the entire Dhamma. But he had not attained arahanthood yet. Therefore, 499 *arahants* were selected at first. They were in a dilemma whether to take in Venerable Ānanda or not. However, at last they decided to take him on the ground that he is incapable of being influenced by prejudices. It is said that on the day before the Council the *arahants* reminded Venerable Ānanda of his obligation saying:

"Friend, tomorrow is our Council. It does not behove you to attend it as a non-arahant. Be diligent." Those of you who have passed examinations would remember how much you have crammed when you are reminded that tomorrow is the exam. Similarly, Venerable Ānanda too made a firm determination to put forth his best efforts. It is said that he determined thorough mindfulness in regard to the body (*kāyagatāsati*) and spent the greater part of the night in the promenade pacing up and down mindfully. Probably due to tiredness, in the last watch of the night, he thought of taking some rest, and went and sat on his bed. He was going to lie down, his feet were raised from the floor and his head had not reached the pillow yet, and in the interim his mind was released from all influxes and he attained arahanthood.

Various explanations are given about this extraordinary illumination between two postures. The commentator says that Venerable Ānanda thought:

"Now I am striving too hard. Let me balance my spiritual faculties."

That can't be the reason. There is a subtle psychological norm involved here. Now for Venerable Ānanda, the concept *'Nibbāna'* appeared as a 'certificate' to enter the Council. That is to say, for him '*Nibbāna'* was something like a certificate. The word '*Nibbāna*' which stands for 'giving-up everything' became a 'thing' to be grasped.

"I must attain *Nibbāna*. It is beneath my dignity to attend the Council as a *nonarahant*."

There itself is conceit and restlessness due to overexertion. He imagined *Nibbāna* to be a 'thing' and that implies ignorance as well. That is why he could not attain *Nibbāna* after all that striving. But then, what happened at that particular moment? He had already determined on strenuous effort in all four postures. So if he had lied down on bed he would have continued to put forth strenuous effort. But there is something called 'posture-junctions'. Most probably he had reckoned without them. However, at that interim instance of bending his body to lie down, he suddenly became aware of an 'interval'. In that INTERVAL it might have occurred to him:

"Oh! I have made a 'THING' out of *Nibbāna! Isn't it a term for giving up everything? So why am I struggling?"*

In that moment of realization he realized *Nibbāna* and became an *Arahant*. That is our explanation.

On an earlier occasion too in the course of our sermons, we gave various similes by way of explanation. Even if you are driving in a hurry when you come to the cross-roads junction, you have to slow down. Likewise Venerable Ānanda found a brief interval at a 'posture-junction'. That is probably how he attained *Nibbāna*. So there is nothing to take delight in '*Nibbāna',* because to do so is to perpetuate the subtle notion of "I" and "mine".

But still you may have doubts. So let us bring up an illustration from our village life. Our National New Year Day is drawing near. Isn't that so? Now among the New Year festivities, there is a game called 'Blind man cracking the pot.' Though we have no pots here we shall give a simile somewhat closer to it. You all have seen the artistically painted words on the wall at the far end of this hall. '*Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ*' (*Nibbāna* is Bliss Supreme). After all isn't that our aim? *Nibbāna* is the supreme bliss and *Nibbāna* is over there on the wall. Now supposing I blindfold a young *upāsaka* in this crowd and ask you all to get to a side to make way for him and ask him to turn towards that *'Nibbāna'*. Of course he cannot see it as he is blindfolded. Then I ask him to do as I say. 'Take a step towards it. Take another step .... another step .... another step'. You all are now watching. He comes up almost against the wall, step by step. But he doesn't see it. And then I say:

'Take another step!' What happens then? When he lifts his foot he finds that he has to turn back! This is a simile for you to ponder over. '*Sankhārā*' or preparations have been associated with the simile of the pot. If you can understand this, perhaps you can crack the pot of *Sankhārā* and attain *Nibbāna*. The moral behind our simile is that *'Nibbāna'* as a term is a target not to be 'grasped' but to be 'seen through'. It is a question of penetration. At last you have to 'let-go' of it and free the mind of imaginings about it.

What do we mean by 'turning back' at the last step? You may recall the lesson we taught by getting you to count on your fingers, while explaining the five representatives of 'name' in name and form (*nāma rūpa*). The five fingers are feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention (*vedanā, saññā, cetanā, phassa, manasikāra*). 'Contact' is the nearest to 'attention' even as the index finger is to the thumb. Contact as the index finger is the trouble-maker. The index finger (contact) is always fussy and busy with the

THUMB (attention). So let us now pay more attention to this attention (*manasikāra*). We have analyzed it in various ways while discussing the middle-path tactic by which the Buddha discovered the magical illusion behind consciousness. There we made use of a certain simile. Sometimes in courts of law, a case of murder or theft would come up with no one to give evidence. When there are no other witnesses, there is provision for making one of the alleged culprits the crown witness to get the whole story out. We pointed out that the Buddha had to do a similar thing. Out of the five representatives of name (*nāma)* it was 'attention' (*manasikāra*) who brought us all this way in *Saṁsāra* in the guise of 'nonradical attention' (*ayoniso-manasikāra).* It is due to this wrong attention that the deer keeps running after the mirage imagining water 'over there'. Now the Buddha converted this non-radical attention to radical attention (*yoniso-manasikāra).* What does '*yoniso'* mean? '*Yoni*' is matrix or place of origin and '*yoniso*' means 'by way of the place of origin'. So '*yoniso-manasikāra'* could be rendered by the term 'radical-attention'. The Buddha asks us to turn back and pay attention to the source or origin. The deer ran after the illusion of water misled by prolific conceptualization or '*papañca*'. The worldling is in the same situation. With the change over to radical attention, the meditator lets go of '*papañca*', cuts off '*vitakka*' (thought), gives up '*saññā*' (perception), frees himself from the grip of '*vedanā'* (feeling) and finally comes back to '*phassa*' (contact).

That is the moment you are up against the wall!

If we analyze the word '*manasikāra*', '*manasi*' means 'in the mind' and '*kāra*' is 'doing'. So '*manasikāra*' is an activity within the mind. As a matter of fact, it is this 'guy' '*manasikāra*' who is responsible for the conspiracy that is *Saṁsāra*. '*Manasikāra*' is an activity going on in our mind. We do not understand it as it is. The object used for this activity 'within the mind', we put before it. But the actual state of affairs the Buddha has made known to us through the maxim in the two opening verses of the *Dhammapada*.

> *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*
>
> *manoseṭṭhā manomayā*
>
> 'Mind-objects have mind as their forerunner,
>
> mind is their chief.
>
> They are mind-made.'

The worldling thinks otherwise. He argues from the other end. If he writes a *Dhammapada* he would put it the other way around. '*Dhammapubbaṅgamo mano.*' 'Mind has mind-objects as forerunners.' But the Buddha points out that the mind is the forerunner and that things are mind-made (*manomayā).* Venerable Ānanda finally realized that the term '*Nibbāna'* is mind-made – that it is only a target symbolic of complete relinquishment. You may have heard a number of terms denoting *Nibbāna*:

'*Sabbasaṅkhārasamatho Sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṁ.*' The stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction.' Any one of these terms is sufficient to denote that attainment.

Now '*Sabbasaṅkhārasamatho'* means the stilling of all preparations. To think 'I must somehow get this certificate of *Nibbāna* as a qualification to go to the Council' is a *saṁkhāra* – a 'preparation.' The thought 'I must go' is also a preparation. So then preparations are not yet stilled. '*Sabbupadhi paṭinissaggo'* (relinquishment of all assets) – The thought:

'I must take this bundle of five aggregates and get it seated at the council' shows that all assets are not relinquished as yet. Craving is also implicit in such a wish. *Nibbāna* implies a letting go of everything – an extinction. But the worldling grasps it as a term. That is why we say that the world is steeped in the delusion inherent in the linguistic medium.

The Buddha has clearly pointed out to us this deluding trait in linguistic usage. But our commentators as well as many Buddhist sects have not fully understood his enlightened vision regarding language. Due to that lack of understanding, they inclined to the same self-view. But here we highlighted the role of 'attention' (*manasikāra*). The object for the mind is '*dhamma*' (the 'thing'). In this context the mind-object is '*Nibbāna'*. What happens with the sudden realization that it is only a word? Mindconsciousness immediately goes down 'object-less'. We have already said that consciousness by definition is a discrimination between two things.

Now if the 'mind-object' is seen as something created by the mind itself (*manomaya*), how can one discriminate between two things?

Simultaneous with the realization that what had so far appeared as the object of the mind is 'mind-made', there comes a moment of non-discrimination. Mind-consciousness ceases then and there.

Try to understand this deep point. Granted that consciousness is a discrimination between two things, the moment that the deer becomes conscious of water in a mirage, it thinks:

'There is water over there and I am here'. That means there is a gap – an 'in between the two.' So now we come back to the same story of 'two ends and the middle'. Where there are two ends there is a middle. The deer thinks:

'Here I am and water is there. Once I pass through the intervening gap, I can reach that water'. That is the way the world thinks. The object is given precedence. It is projected when one thinks:

'I am here and the object is there.'

However, the Buddha points out to us quite a different way of thinking – not the imagining or fancying a 'thing' as implied by '*maññanā'*. To hark back to the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta,* the worldling makes a 'thing' out of 'earth' (*paṭhavi*). Not only earth, water, fire and air but all the 24 concepts listed there under the heading '*Sabbadhamma mūlapariyāya'* (the basic mode of all things) are not to be taken as objects for '*maññanā'* – not even gods, beings, *Pajāpati* and *Brahmā*. The Buddha tamed even *Bhramā Baka* who boasted of his permanence. Simply because of their long life-span Brahmas entertained the conceit:

'We are eternal.' The ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya went through the necessary discipline within a very short time. He was able to stop short at the 'seen' in the seen. But we do not stop there. Instead we make (for instance) a 'chair' out of the seen so that we can sit on it. Similarly, we do not stop short at the 'heard' but make a music out of it. That way we make a 'thing' out of our sensory experience. It is due to this conceiving of 'things' that we linger long in *Saṁsāra*. As soon as we imagine a 'thing', the ripples of impermanence take over. The inexorable consequence is the 'turning otherwise'. There lies the tragic end of this drama of existence.

The moment one makes a 'thing' for oneself, it starts becoming 'another thing'. As in our illustration of the love scene enacted by Narcissus, throughout *Saṁsāra* we have been grasping something or other with self-love at the last moment of our life. That is the reason for the perpetuation of mutual interdependence between name and form and consciousness inside a mother's womb. But then one can ask again:

"If I cannot take delight in *Nibbāna*, what is the use of it?"

It may even seem useless to attain *Nibbāna*. If it is not good to delight in *Nibbāna* after all the trouble we take to attain it, one can ask:

"What is the purpose in attaining it?"

A deity named Kakudha also had the same problem, according to a discourse in *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. When the Buddha was dwelling at the Deer Park in the *Añjana* forest, a deity named Kakudha approached him in the night and asked:

"Recluse, do you rejoice?"

The Buddha retorted:

"On getting what, friend?"

Then the deity asked:

"If that is so, recluse, do you grieve?"

"On losing what, friend?" asked the Buddha rhetorically.

"Well, then, recluse, you neither rejoice nor grieve?" said the deity and the Buddha affirms it saying:

“That is so friend”.

The deity was also curious to know whether the Buddha is dissatisfied with the monk’s life as he is sitting all alone, now that he says that he neither delights nor grieves. The Buddha responds with an instructive verse:

Aghajātassa ve nandi

nandi jātassa ve aghaṁ

anandī anigho bhikkhu

evaṁ jānāhi mārisa

Joy is for him who is stricken with grief

And grief is for him who becomes joyful

But as for a monk – friend know this as a fact

He is neither joyful nor does he grieve.

What the Buddha means by this, is the bliss of equanimity free from joy and grief. In fact, as you know, *Nibbāna* is even called ‘*avedayita sukha*’ – a bliss free from feeling since all three grades of feeling are in the highest sense reckoned as suffering. Even from this brief comment you may understand that *Nibbāna* is not something to be grasped. It is only a target to reach – not to be grasped. In one’s striving for it, at last one reaches a stage which is something like a going ‘topsy-turvy’. The ultimate realization is a sort of turning upside down. That is why even the non-returner (*anāgāmin*) is said to have attachment and delight in the Dhamma (*dhammarāga dhammanandi*) as a residual taint to be eliminated. It is true that he has ‘*Nibbāna*’ uppermost in his mind. But there is a subtle attachment to it that prevents him from ending *Saṁsāric* suffering here and now, and gives him rebirth in the Pure abodes (*suddhāvāsa*) by that very attachment and delight (‘*teneva dhammarāgena tāya dhammanandiyā …’).*

That attachment and delight is the last thing to be given up since the Buddha has declared that this Dhamma is only for the purpose of crossing over and not for grasping (‘*nittharanatthāya no gahaṇatthāya*’) even like a raft. Similarly, the Buddha has preached that by those who fully understand, even good things (or mind-objects) have to be given up, what to say of bad things (‘*Kullūpamaṁ vo bhikkhave dhammaṁ desitaṁ ājānantehi dhammāpi vo pahātabbā pageva adhammā*’). Now ‘*Nibbāna*’ as a term is something pertaining to ‘*dhamma*’. Even that has to be given up at some juncture. The reason is that we use language only out of some practical necessity. It is not something to be ‘grasped’. The moment we grasp it, we get into difficulties. This is the gist of what the Buddha has pointed out to us.

There is a certain depth in all what we tried to put across with the help of similes. There are some discourses which show that after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha, Venerable

Ānanda was highly esteemed by monks and nuns so much so that when they attained Arahanthood they went and informed it to him. There is a particular discourse which reveals this fact very clearly. Once Venerable Ānanda addressing the monks at *Ghositārāma* said that those monks and nuns who declare their attainments of Arahanthood in his presence, do so according to four normative factors. The path of practice they have followed comes under one or the other of the following four modes.

'*Samathapubbangamaṁ vipassanaṁ bhāveti.*'

Develops insight preceded by calm (or serenity) and as one goes on practicing insight meditation like this, the supra-mundane path arises and by following it one abandons fetters and latencies thereby attaining arahanthood.

'*Vipassanāpubbangamaṁ samathaṁ bhāveti.*'

Develops calm preceded by insight. By this method too, a monk or nun can do away with the fetters and latencies and attain arahanthood.

'*Samathañca vipassanañca yuganaddhaṁ bhāveti.*'

Develops both calm and insight together like yoked bulls pulling together. By that method also one can accomplish the task.

The fourth method is very peculiar and its true significance is a problem to many scholars.

In this context, Venerable Ānanda brings up the case of a monk whose mind is in conflict due to restless thoughts ('*... bhikkhuno dhammuddhacca viggahita mānasaṁ hoti*'). But then he says:

"There comes a time when his mind becomes settled within – gets one pointed and concentrated."

It is then that the supra-mundane path arises, which he successfully follows to attain arahanthood.

It is very likely that here Venerable Ānanda is speaking out of his own experience. He had hit upon a special method (by fluke!). The usual mode of practice is classified under three headings:

Developing insight preceded by calm.

Developing calm preceded by insight.

Developing both calm and insight together like yoked bulls pulling together.

The fourth method which has remained a problem, most probably exemplifies Venerable Ānanda's own attainment. Because of his restless thoughts regarding the attainment as a qualification for attending the Council, he could not attain arahanthood. But there came a time when his mind got settled – at that posture-junction between sitting and lying down. This exceptional method he learnt by a happy accident, shows the depth of this Dhamma.

We are taking pains to explain all this because quite a lot of misconceptions and wrong views about *Nibbāna* are rampant in the world today due to a lack of understanding of the depth of this subject. In fact, I think the *Brahmins* of the Buddha's time knew more about what the Buddha was speaking of than many Buddhist scholars today. Those *Brahmins* knew full well that the *Nibbāna* preached by the Buddha had nothing in it to bolster up the craving for existence – that it meant the cessation of existence. Only thing, they viewed it as tantamount to annihilation. That was their mistake. According to the Buddha there is no real self or soul to be annihilated.

This is all what the Buddha proclaimed:

"Formerly as now, I make known a suffering and its cessation ("*Pubbe cāhaṁ etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññapemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṁ*.")

This much we pointed out. What remains to be abandoned last of all is the basic postulate of existence, namely that lingering notion – that conceit (I) Am. There is a significant discourse in the *Khandha Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, which reveals the subtleness of the path from non-returnership to arahanthood. On a former occasion too we brought it up. It is the *Khemaka Sutta*. It records a sequence of events as follows.

A group of Elder monks were dwelling at *Ghositārāma* in *Kosambi*. A monk named Khemaka who was sick, was dwelling at *Badarikārāma* in *Kosambi* itself. Those Elders asked a monk named Dāsaka to go and inquire about the health of that sick monk. When Dāsaka went and inquired, Venerable Khemaka told him that he is seriously ill and that pains are increasing. When Venerable Dāsaka brought that news, the Elder monks asked him to go there again and ask Venerable Khemaka whether he regards any of the five aggregates of grasping – form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness – as "This is mine, This am I and this is my self". Venerable Dāsaka did as he was instructed and Venerable Khemaka answered:

"Friend, in regard to these five aggregates of grasping I do not look upon any one of them as mine or myself, but I am not an influx free *arahant*. I have the notion 'I am' in regard to these five but I do not look upon any of them as "This am I".

When Venerable Dāsaka went and reported Venerable Khemaka's explanation to the Elders, they were still puzzled and sent back Venerable Dāsaka to get further clarification. This time, on hearing Venerable Dāsaka's request for clarification Venerable Khemaka said:

“Enough friend, Dāsaka, what is the use of running up and down, get me my walking stick. I will myself go and see those Elders.”

So he went with his walking stick to the Elders and explained:

“What I said is true, I am not an *arahant*. But this is my position. I do not see any of the aggregates as mine. But I have a residual subtle conceit (I) am, a subtle desire as (I) am.

Then he gives a simile:

“Just as, friends, there is smell in a blue or red or white lotus, whoever says that the smell comes from the petal or from the colour or from the filament, is he speaking rightly?”

“No friend”

“Then how can one explain it rightly?”

“One has to say that it is the smell of the flower. That is all one can say about it.”

“Even so, friend, I do not see any of the aggregates as myself. However there is in me a subtle conceit as (I) am.”

Though there is that conceit, he illustrates the subtleness of the five higher fetters of a monk who has cut off the five lower fetters by the above simile of the smell of the flower. Then he says as that monk who is a non-returner goes on attending to the rise and fall of the five aggregates, there comes a time when even that residual conceit gets worn out. Then he gives a simile for it.

Someone has a dirty cloth. He gives it to the washerman to clean. They clean it with some soap-like substance and return it to the owner. Though the cloth is now clean, it has the odour of the substance used to clean it. The owner puts it away in his wardrobe for the time being. But after some time even that odour is gone. In the same way, by constant contemplation of the five aggregates with insight even that residual conceit is eradicated and one attains arahanthood. The extraordinary thing about this reasoned explanation by Venerable Khemaka is that on hearing it, all the sixty monks who listened to him became *arahants* and he himself attained arahanthood by intuiting into his own insightful explanation.

There is such a subtle aspect in this question of language in the context of *Nibbāna*. We do make use of the linguistic medium like that cleaning agent. We often use the couple of words relative and pragmatic to describe the Middle Path principle involved. In the Buddha’s Middle Path, there is neither an absolute negation nor an absolute affirmation. Instead there is a systematic procedure of choosing and using with an awareness of relative validity. Sometimes the Buddha would sum up a discourse with this grand finale epitomizing the basic principle underlying his extraordinary middle path technique.

“*Iti kho bhikkhave dhammāva dhamme abhisandenti*

dhammāva dhamme paripūrenti apārā pāraṁ gamanāya."

Though we say:

"I am going from this shore to the farther shore" in the end, there is no talk about an "I".

According to the Buddha, what we have in this dispensation is just this:

"Thus, O' monks, mere phenomena flow into other phenomena, mere phenomena fulfil other phenomena for the purpose of passing from the not-beyond to the beyond."

So we have now given you some deep points to ponder – all relevant to the Law of Dependent Arising. Just think about the depth of the constituents of name and form – what we told about '*manasikāra*' or attention. It is a doing within the mind (*manasikāra*). What the Buddha has presented in the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* is a list of those 'things' pertaining to that attention. If you don't adjust your viewpoint in accordance with Right View, you are setting off on a path not towards *Nibbāna* but opposite to it. Therefore, I hope you all will make use of this sermon for adjusting your viewpoint. We shall be presenting more facts on Dependent Arising in this series from various sources. We happened to quote several times the dictum:

"He who sees Dependent Arising sees the Dhamma."

You had better remember it and take heart to tread this path of Dhamma. To clarify these points for yourselves, you should constantly dwell on the impermanence of the five aggregates. As you go on doing it, you can proceed on the path of insight provided you have a clear understanding of name and form. Mere listening is not enough. You should apply these teachings to your own lives. The five aggregates are there with you. Not somewhere else. With radical attention you should always attend to your 'ins' and 'outs' seeing their rise and fall (*udayabbaya*) as keenly as possible. You should understand the aggregates for what they are. That is what is known as 'knowledge of things as they are' (*yatābhūtañāna*).

I hope you will find this sermon too helpful to your meditation. May you all be able to develop both calm and insight drawing inspiration from this sermon backed by the precepts observed and the meditation done today, and attain the goal of your endeavours in this very life. Whatever beings there are from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they rejoice in our sermon! May the merits acquired thereby conduce to the fulfilment of their higher aims!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 8
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 190)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Rūpā saddā rasā gandhā

phassā dhammā ca kevalā

iṭṭhā kantā manāpā ca

yāvatatthīti vuccati

Sadevakassa lokassa

ete vo sukhasammatā

yattha cete nirujjhanti

taṁ tesaṁ dukkhasammataṁ

Sukhanti diṭṭhamariyehi

sakkāyassuparodhanaṁ

paccanīkamidaṁ hoti

sabbalokena passataṁ

– Dvayatānupassanā S. Sn.

Forms, sounds, smells

Tastes, touches, ideas

All what they deem desirable

Charming pleasing things

Of which they claim 'it is'

As far as their claim extends

The world with its gods is agreed

That these are pleasant things

And wherein they surcease

That's unpleasant indeed say they

As bliss the Noble Ones have seen

The curb on self-hood bias Behold in contrast is their vision

With that of the entire world.

Dear Listeners,

The objects of the six senses – the eye, the ear, the nose, the body and the mind – namely, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and ideas, are regarded by the world with its gods as really existing and pleasant. But Noble Ones consider that place where these things that the world takes as real and pleasant cease itself, as pleasant. Today, we have taken up three verses expressing these two contradictory viewpoints. These three verses deal with the sixteenth contemplation of dualities found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. In two previous sermons we explained to you two contemplations of dualities in this *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*. As in the other two, in this contemplation of dualities we are going to discuss today, the contrast between the worldling's point of view and the view point of the Noble Ones is explained. First of all, the Buddha declares this fact in prose as follows:

"Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as:

'This is pleasant' by the world with its gods, Māras and Brahmas, with its recluses and Brahmins, that, by the ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as:

'That is unpleasant'. Then the opposite viewpoint is stated:

"Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as unpleasant by the world with its gods, Māras and Brahmas, with its recluses and Brahmins, that, by the ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as:

'That is pleasant'. Having presented these two modes of contemplation, the Buddha, as he did in the case of the other contemplations, declares that if any monk, rightly contemplating in this way, dwells diligently, ardent and zealous, one of two fruits may be expected by him:

knowledge of arahanthood in this life itself or if there is any residual clinging, non-returnership. It is after this declaration that the same fact is presented in a set of verses out of which we have quoted the first three. First of all, let us try to understand the meaning of these three verses.

Rūpā saddā rasā gandhā

phassā dhammā ca kevalā

iṭṭhā kantā manāpā ca

yāvatatthīti vuccati

Forms, sounds, tastes, smells, touches and ideas that are considered desirable, charming and pleasant – whatever they speak of as existing,

Sadevakassa lokassa ete vo sukhasammatā

The world with its gods has agreed to call them pleasant

yattha cete nirujjhanti taṁ tesaṁ dukkhasammataṁ

And where ever these six objects cease, that, they are agreed to call unpleasant.

But then comes the statement:

Sukhanti diṭṭhamariyehi sakkāyassuparodhanaṁ

But it has been seen by the Noble Ones that the cutting off of the Five Aggregates of Grasping which is called 'Personality', is the bliss.

paccanīkamidaṁ hoti sabbalokena passataṁ

But this vision of the Noble Ones is in contradistinction to that of the worldlings.

This is what is conveyed by these three verses. In fact the same idea is carried further in the four verses that follow. Those of you who have listened to our earlier sermons might remember that when we were introducing the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* for the first time, we said that this is a discourse which vibrates with a powerful fervour of the Dhamma. Rather than taking up the other verses one by one and paraphrasing them, I think it is better to give at least a foretaste of that Dhamma fervour through a set of English verses with which we summed up the content of those verses in one of our books:

Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, ideas,

All what they deem desirable charming pleasing things

Of which they claim:

‘it is’ – as far as their claim extends

The world with its gods is agreed that these are pleasant things

And wherein they surcease – that’s unpleasant indeed, say they

As bliss the Noble Ones have seen

the curb of selfhood bias

Behold in contrast is their vision

with that of the entire world

What others spoke of in terms of bliss

that as woe the saints declared

What others spoke of in terms of woe

that as bliss the saints have known

Behold a Norm so hard to grasp

baffled herein are ignorant ones

Murk it is to those enveloped

as darkness unto the undiscerning

But to the good wide open’ it is

as light is unto those discerning

So near and yet they know not

Fools! Unskilled in the Norm

By those who are given to lust for becoming

By those who are swept by the current of becoming

By those who have slipped into Māra’s realm

Not easily comprehended is this Norm

Who else but the Noble Ones deserve

To waken fully unto that state

By knowing which, being influx-free

Tranquil *Nibbāna* they attain.

In an earlier sermon we dealt with the 15 contemplation of dualities. There too we came across two viewpoints which are diametrically opposed to each other. To refresh our memory let us cite them in brief:

“Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as:

‘This is true’ by the world with its gods, *Māras* and *Brahmas* with its recluses and *Brahmins*, that by the Ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as:

‘That is false’.

“Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as:

‘This is false’ by the world with its gods, *Māras* and *Brahmas* with its recluses and *Brahmins*, that by the Ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as:

‘That is true’.

In the course of that sermon we pointed out that the worldlings take name and form which is a reflection on consciousness to be real and true but that the Ariyans point it out as unreal and false. You all know that what comes after name and form in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula is six sense-spheres. Now this sermon will deal with whatever that pertains to the six sense-spheres. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and ideas pertain to the six sense-spheres. What is known as the six sensespheres comprise eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind and their respective objects – forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and ideas. Worldlings regard them as pleasant and where they cease as unpleasant. But the Ariyans regard them as unpleasant and where they cease as pleasant. Where do these six sense-spheres cease? Is it in another world? They cease in *Nibbāna* which is regarded as the cessation of the six sense-spheres. *Nibbāna* is in fact defined as the realization of the cessation of the six sensespheres.

So it is the very realization of the cessation of the six sense-spheres that is called *Nibbāna* and not something in another world. The state of that realization Ariyans regard as pleasant – as happiness. It is something that can be realized here in this world. Many present day scholars might have doubts about this. However much we write and preach on this there are many who cling to the ‘Simple Simon’ view of *Nibbāna* (‘*Siyadoris Nibbāna*’ as we nick-named it). For them it is some non-descript state of existence after death. There is a very important discourse which can be cited in support of the fact that *Nibbāna* is none other than the cessation of the six sense-spheres. It is the *Kāmaguna Sutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* found among the Connected Discourses on the six sense-spheres (*Saḷāyatana Samyutta*). That discourse includes among other

things a riddlelike pronouncement by the Buddha which comes out as an abrupt exhortation. It runs as follows:

"Tasmātiha bhikkhave se āyatane veditabbe yattha cakkhuñca nirujjhati rūpasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe, yattha sotañca nirujjhati saddasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe, yattha ghanañca nirujjhati gandhasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe, yattha jivhā ca nirujjhati rasasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe, yattha kāyo ca nirujjhati phoṭṭhabbasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe, yattha mano ca nirujjhati dhammasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe se āyatane veditabbe"

'Therefore, monks, that sphere should be known wherein the eye ceases and the perception of forms fades away; wherein the ear ceases and the perception of sounds fades away; wherein the nose ceases and the perception of smells fades away; wherein the tongue ceases and the perception of tastes fades away; wherein the body ceases and the perception of tangibles fades away; wherein the mind ceases and the perception of ideas fades away – that sphere should be known, that sphere should be known.'

You might be amazed to hear this exhortation. Here the Buddha is repeating a certain phrase over and over again. The phrase:

'*se āyatane veditabbe'* is equivalent to 'taṁ *āyatanaṁ veditabbaṁ'* ('se' '*veditabbe' – Māgadhisṁ*) which means:

'that sphere should be known'. Strangely enough, the Buddha is emphatically asserting with the repetitive phrase 'that sphere should be known, that sphere should be known.' What sort of a 'sphere' is that? A sphere wherein eye ceases and the perception of forms fades away, that sphere should be known. Likewise 'that sphere wherein the ear ceases and the perception of sounds fades away'. You can understand the rest in the same way – with regard to the nose, tongue, body and finally, mind. The last mentioned is the most intriguing. 'That sphere should be known wherein mind ceases and the perception of ideas fades away – that sphere should be known, that sphere should be known'. But now comes a strange incident. After making this riddle-like exhortation the Buddha got up from his seat and retired to his dwelling. This is a clever ruse that the Buddha adopts to afford an opportunity to his pupils to get a training in exegesis.

Then the monks who listened to the sermon discussed among themselves:

"Now the Fortunate One having made a concise utterance has got up from his seat and entered his dwelling without explaining its meaning in detail. Who will explain it for us in detail? Then it occurred to them:

'this Venerable Ānanda has been praised by the Fortunate One so often and is highly esteemed by other monks. What if we approach him and ask him to explain this brief saying? So they went to him and requested him to do so. After some modest hesitation he agreed and gave the following commentary in just a few words:

"*Saḷāyatananirodhaṁ kho āvuso bhagavatā sandhāya bhāsitaṁ*."

"Friends, it was uttered by the Fortunate One with

reference to the cessation of the six sense spheres."

In this context even the commentary grants that the cessation of the six sense spheres is *Nibbāna*. That was all what Venerable Ānanda said in assent to the request for a commentary. From this we can conclude that *Nibbāna* was called '*Saḷāyatana nirodha*'(the cessation of six sense-spheres). The fact that the attainment of the six sense spheres has been emphatically asserted as a 'sphere' in this particular context is exceedingly important. This will serve as valid evidence in support of our interpretation of the following much vexed discourse on *Nibbāna*.

In the *Udāna* there are a number of discourses on *Nibbāna* out of which one in particular has puzzled our commentators as well as modern scholars. It runs as follows:

"*Atthi bhikkhave tadāyatanaṁ yattha neva paṭhavī na āpo na tejo na vāyo na ākāsānañcāyatanaṁ na viññānañcāyatanaṁ na ākiñcaññāyatanaṁ na nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṁ nāyaṁ loko na paraloko na ubho candimasuriyā. Tatra pāhaṁ bhikkhave neva āgatiṁ vadāmi na gatiṁ na cutiṁ na upapattiṁ appatiṭṭhaṁ appavattaṁ anārammaṇamevetaṁ. Esevanto dukkhassa*."

"There is, monks, that sphere wherein there is neither the sphere of infinity of space, nor that of infinity of consciousness, nor that of nothingness, nor that of neither – perception – nor – non-perception, wherein is neither this world, nor a world beyond, nor moon, nor sun. There, monks, I declare is no coming, no going, no stopping, no passing away and no arising. It is not established, it continues not, it has no object. This indeed is the end of suffering."

Now this is that discourse. Let us try to understand it.

"*Atthi bhikkhave tadāyatanaṁ*",

"There is monks that sphere."

It is just here that the scholars get stuck. They interpret this sphere as some kind of realm attainable after death. From the discourse we have already discussed, you must have understood that the cessation of the six sense spheres itself has been emphatically asserted by the Buddha as a 'sphere'.

But let us delve deeper in to this discourse. After declaring that there is 'that sphere', the Buddha goes on to describe what sort of a sphere it is.

"There is monks, that sphere wherein (*yattha*) there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air. That means the four primaries that are said to be there in a world are not to be found in this sphere. Also the immaterial states – namely, the sphere of infinity of space, the sphere of infinity of consciousness, the sphere of nothingness and the sphere of

neither – perception – nor – non-perception are not there. This world and the other world too are negated. So too the sun and the moon. All this sounds very strange. That is why everybody is puzzled. Then there is also something deeper. The Buddha declared that there is no coming, no going, no stopping, no passing away and no arising in this particular sphere.

Finally, he makes known the nature of that sphere by three terms:

Not established (*appatiṭṭhaṁ*),

not continuing (*appavattaṁ*),

and objectless (*anārammaṇaṁ*).

He sums up by asserting that this itself is the end of suffering (*esevanto dukkhassa*).

For quite a long time, in fact for centuries scholars have been trying to interpret this passage. They have literally turned this passage inside out in search of a solution but in most instances their interpretation was in terms of a non-descript realm with no sun or moon. But we pointed out that if mind ceases in that sphere and perception of mind objects also cease how can sun and moon be there? Even this much, those scholars could not understand, since due to craving for existence the world tends to interpret *Nibbāna* as some sort of after death state. However from the foregoing it is clear enough that the cessation of the six sense spheres itself is *Nibbāna*. Be it noted that this is a sermon specifically dealing with *Nibbāna* (*nibbānapaṭisaṃyutta*). The Buddha says conclusively that this itself is the end of suffering. It is in *Nibbāna* that suffering ends, certainly not in a non-descript realm. Whatever it is, this particular discourse is of cardinal importance. From here onwards we shall string up relevant discourses from here and there like pearls in a necklace for you all to get a clearer understanding of this problem.

Let us now take up a discourse which also appears as a riddle. Once the Buddha addressing the monks said:

"*Nāhaṁ Bhikkhave gamanena lokassa antaṁ ñātayyaṁ daṭṭhayyaṁ pattayyanti vadāmi. Na ca panāhaṁ appatvā lokassa antaṁ dukkhassa antakiriyaṁ vadāmi.*"

"Monks, I do not say that it is possible by travelling to know and see and reach the end of the world. Nor do I say that without reaching the end of the world there is an ending of suffering."

Here again we have something of a riddle – a paradox. You all might think of the end of the world as some place one can reach by travelling. But the Buddha is telling us that by travelling one cannot reach the end of the world but on the other hand one cannot make an end of suffering without reaching the end of the world. After this declaration too the Buddha got up from his seat and entered his dwelling as before. Again the monks were puzzled and approached Venerable Ānanda to get an explanation. This time at their request he gave a fairly long commentary to the Buddha's declaration. However it

amounted to a redefinition of the term ‘world’ according to the Noble One’s Discipline (*ariyassa vinaye*).

“*Yena kho āvuso lokasmiṁ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī ayaṁ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko*”

“Friends, that by which one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world in regard to this world, that in the

Noble One’s Discipline is called a ‘world’.”

The two words ‘*lokasaññī*’ and ‘*lokamānī*’ are noteworthy

in this definition.

Then Venerable Ānanda himself raised the obvious question and offered the explanation:

“*Kena cāvuso lokasmiṁ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī*”

“By what, friends, does one have a perception of the world and a conceit of the world?”

“*Cakkhunā kho āvuso lokasmiṁ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī*”

“By the eye friends, one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world.”

Likewise by the ear, by the nose, by the tongue, by the body and by the mind, one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world. It is that perception and that conceit which in this Dhamma is called the world. From this it should be clear to you all that according to the Noble One’s discipline, the six sense spheres themselves are the world. Now from here onwards we shall draw your attention to another discourse which we had discussed earlier too but because of its relevance to this particular series on Dependent Arising, we shall bring up again. It is the *Rohitassa Sutta*. This discourse is so important that it occurs in two discourse collections, namely *Saṁyutta Nikāya* and *Anguttara Nikāya*.

This is how the discourse begins. Once when the Buddha was staying at the *Jetavana* monastery at *Sāvatthi* a deity named Rohitassa visited him in the night and asked the following question:

“Where, Venerable Sir, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, is one able by travelling to come to know that end of the world or to see it or to get there?”

The Buddha replies:

“Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, one is not able by travelling to come to know, to see or to reach.”

When the Buddha said this much the deity praised the Buddha with these words of approbation.

“It is wonderful Venerable Sir, It is marvellous Venerable Sir, how well said it is by the Fortunate One” and then went on to relate the whole story of his past life.”

“In times past, Venerable Sir, I was a seer, Rohitassa by name, son of Bhoja, gifted with such psychic power that I could fly through the air and so swift, Venerable Sir, was my speed that I could fly just as quickly as a master of archery, well trained, expert, proficient, a past master of his art, armed with a strong bow, could without difficulty send a light arrow far past the area coloured by a palm tree’s shadow; and so great was my stride that I could step from the eastern to the western ocean. In me Venerable Sir, arose such a wish as this:

I will arrive at the end of the world by walking. And though such Venerable Sir, was my speed and such my stride and though with a life-span of a century, living for a hundred years, I walked continuously for hundred years, except for the times spent in eating, drinking, chewing or tasting or in answering calls of nature and the time I gave way to sleep or fatigue, yet I died on the way without reaching the end of the world. Wonderful is it, Venerable Sir, marvellous is it Venerable Sir, how well said it is by the Fortunate One.”

“Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say one is not able by travelling to come to know or to see or to arrive at.”

It is at this point that the Buddha comes out with a momentous declaration while granting Rohitassa’s approbation:

“Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old or die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, one is not able by travelling to come to know or to see or to arrive at. But neither do I say, friend, that without having reached the end of the world there could be an ending of suffering. It is in this very fathom long physical frame with its perceptions and mind, that I declare, lies the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to the cessation of the world.”

Unfortunately, the commentator is silent on this momentous declaration. Even western scholars wonder why the commentator is silent about it. The only reason we can think of is the fact that by then the concept of *Nibbāna* as an after death state has already won acceptance in scholastic circles. They were not prepared to grant the possibility of *Nibbāna* as purely an experience here in this world. That is why in our writings we highlighted this deplorable situation by a trenchant translation of a few lines from the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* as an eye opener.

Nivutānaṁ tamo hoti – andhakāro apassataṁ

satañca vivaṭaṁ hoti – āloko passatām iva

santike na vijānanti – magā dhammassakovidā

Murk it is to those enveloped

As darkness unto the undiscerning

But to the good wide open it is

As light is unto those discerning

So near, and yet they know not

Fools unskilled in the Norm.

'The light' is the light of wisdom. 'So near' means within this fathom long body with its perceptions and mind. Suffering and its cessation are to be found within this fathom long body. That itself is the world. The world and suffering are congruent. The world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to the cessation of the world are all found here, according to the Buddha. Only the light of wisdom is lacking in the worldlings to see this. The world thinks that the objects of the six senses are the bliss or name and form is the bliss. But the Noble Ones are saying that where they cease is the bliss. To hark back to the topic of our *Nibbāna* sermons, which is also the meditation topic for Recollection of Peace (*upasamānussati*):

"Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ panītaṁ yadidaṁ sabbasaṁkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho Nibbānaṁ."

'This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely, the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction.'

It is that same peaceful, excellent state which the worldlings cannot even think of – the stilling of all preparations. All what pertains to the six sense-spheres are preparations. So here is the stilling of them all (*sabbasaṁkhārasamatho*). The five aggregates of grasping are the assets built up through the six sense spheres, and here is their relinquishment (*sabbupadhipaṭinissagga*). All the aforesaid objects of the senses are the involvements for craving and this is its destruction (*taṇhakkhayo*). That itself is detachment (*virāgo*) and cessation (*nirodho*). The cessation of the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana nirodha*) is also implicated. Whether you call it cessation of suffering (*dukkhanirodho*), the cessation of the world (*lokanirodho*), or the cessation of the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana nirodho*), it is the same. Finally comes that extinction or extinguishment of the conflagration. We are told that the worldlings are unable to understand this state. Though it is 'so near' they do not know it. Why is that? The reason is stated in the last two verses of this discourse:

Bhavarāgaparetehi bhavasotānusārihi māradheyyānupannehi nāyaṁ dhammo susambudho

Ko nu aññatramariyehi padaṁ sambuddhumarahati yaṁ padaṁ sammadaññāya parinibbanti anāsavā

Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, VV 764-765 *Sn.*

By those who are given to lust for becoming

By those who are swept by the current of becoming

By those who have slipped in to Māra's realm

Not easily comprehended is this Norm

Who else but the Noble Ones deserve

To waken fully unto that state

By knowing which being influx-free Tranquil *Nibbāna* they attain.

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It is as if the Buddha is exclaiming with a tinge of compassionate fervour. This is the true state of affairs. This is the truth. However the world is not prepared to accept it. So at first sight there is such a wide gap, such a disparity. But what the Buddha is telling us is that if a monk rightly contemplating this disparity, dwells diligently and zealously devoted to the path of practice, he will either become an arahant or a non-returner. So this is not an idle declaration meant to arouse cheap curiosity among scholars and intellectuals. It is to explain to those monks who are training on this path of practice, what the truth is and what the un-truth is, what the bliss is and what suffering is, that the Buddha has revealed the wide gulf between the two viewpoints. Because we are all the time quoting from Pali Suttas you all might get tired of these sermons. So let us bring up same illustration as usual.

It is a sort of fable from village life which perhaps you already know and which you might recall as I go on relating.

'Gamarāla' (the legendary 'man-about-village') is going to hold a devil-dance at his house. As he is getting ready for it dark clouds gathered threatening a torrential downpour. So *'Gamarāla'* and the troupe of devil-dancers entered a huge gourd-shell and the devil dance started inside the thick shell of the gourd. Then it rained in torrents inundating the whole village. But blissfully unaware of it, the gourd-shell with its inmates got swept into the canal, and from the canal to the stream, and from the stream

to the river and from the river to the sea. Once in the sea a shark swallowed it. Then the shark got caught in a net thrown by sea-going fisherfolk. A crowd from a wedding house going in search of fish bought the shark. They took it to the kitchen of the wedding house where they cut open the shark. And then – 'believe-it-or-not' – out stepped *Gamarāla* and the devildancers to the tune of the tom-tom:

'*Denna-denā-deno*'! The dance was still going-on.

Now what is the moral behind this age-old legend? Neither *Gamarāla* nor his troupe of devil-dancers knew what was happening to the gourd-shell. Why did we bring up this legend? Just to show that all worldly philosophers and all modern-day scientists – these '*Gamarālas'* and 'devil-dancers' – are holding their 'devil-dance' inside this gourd-shell of the six sensespheres. In their 'blissful-ignorance' they are not even prepared to grant that there is something outside it. They could not reach even the outskirts of that gourd-shell with their space-craft. We haven't heard yet that they at least reached the lowest heaven – '*Cātummahārājika*'.

So this is the situation in the world. But the Buddha has made known a supra-mundane sate called the cessation of the six sense spheres. Why is it called 'supra-mundane'? It means 'gone beyond the world.' If the world is the six sense-spheres, there must be a state that goes beyond the six sense-spheres and that is '*Nibbāna*' – the experience of the cessation of the six sensespheres. That itself is the end of suffering. Why is it that the worldlings cannot understand this much? It is because they are given to 'lust for becoming' and are swept by 'the current of becoming'. They desire existence in the name of *Nibbāna*. For them *Nibbāna* is some sort of existence. As we sometimes sarcastically put it, it is that *'Siyadoris' Nibbāna'* or 'Simple Simon *Nibbāna*' which is eternally charming – some after death state that everyone likes to get. But that is certainly not the kind of *Nibbāna* the Buddha had made known to the world. In the discourse on the Noble Quest (*Ariyapariyesana Sutta*), it is said that the Buddha hesitated to preach the Dhamma because it is difficult for the world to understand it. If *Brahmā* Sahampati had not invited him to preach we would not have had the opportunity to hear it.

As we mentioned earlier too, when reflecting on the depth of this Dhamma, it occurred to the Buddha that there are two things which the worldlings delighting in and attached to existence find it difficult to understand. One is the Law of Dependent Arising or specific conditionality which we analyzed in various ways such as 'This being – this arises.' This is the middle way between and above the two extremes of absolute existence and absolute non-existence summed up in the couple of terms, '*samudayo samudayo* and *nirodho nirodho*' – ('arising arising' – 'ceasing ceasing'). Even that much is difficult for the world to understand. The fact that there is an incessant arising and ceasing is the first thing that the world cannot easily understand. Then the second thing is as the Buddha puts it in the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*:

'*sabbasaṁkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho Nibbānaṁ.*' – 'The stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the

destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction.' This, too, is something the world cannot understand.

In the Law of Dependent Arising there are these two aspects, namely, arising *('samudayo'*) and ceasing (*'nirodho'*). The world is always on the *'samudaya'* side. Worldlings keep jumping from 'arising' to 'arising' ignoring the 'ceasing'. In fact they are apprehensive of the ceasing aspect. They do not wish to see it. But it is in cessation that deliverance lies. The Buddha has stated this fact on many occasions.

'Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā

ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino

nirodhaṁ appajānantā

āgantāro punabbhavaṁ'

'Those beings that go to realms of form

And those who are settled in formless realms

Not understanding the fact of cessation

Come back again and again to existence'

This is the situation in the world but then:

'Ye ca rūpe pariññāya

arūpesu asaṇṭhitā

nirodhe ye vimuccanti

te janā maccuhāyino.'

'Those who having comprehended realms of form

Do not settle in formless realms

Are released in the experience of cessation

It is they that are the dispellers of Death.'

However those who have comprehended form do not get settled even in the formless. Being released in the experience of cessation they dispel death. Now that we have

brought up the folk tale of the devil-dance inside the gourd shell let us turn our attention to a simile that also has some connection with the fisherman's net. It is a simile made use of by the Buddha himself in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. That is a discourse which all Buddhist scholars are familiar with since it happens to be the very first discourse in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. As a matter of fact, it has been counted as the first discourse in this discourse collection because of its cardinal importance. As we had mentioned earlier too, whatever views that are in the world and whatever views that could arise in the world are caught in a supernet (*Brahmajāla*) thrown by the Buddha in this discourse. There are sixty two views enumerated there which comprehend all possible speculative views. The list of sixty two is all inclusive and nothing falls outside of it. There is an extremely important point which is often overlooked by the scholars. The Buddha rejects every one of those views with just three words of a deep significance which recur throughout this discourse.

What are they:

. . . . . '*tadapi phassa paccayā . . . . . tadapi phassa paccayā . . . . . tadapi phassa paccayā*.'

. . . . . 'that too is due to contact . . . that too is due to contact . . . . that too is due to contact.'

After citing a particular view the Buddha invalidates it with the phrase '*tadapi phassa paccayā*' – 'that too is due to contact or dependent on contact'

How is it invalidated? Why is it regarded as the criterion? The answer is to be found in the Buddha's conclusive statement in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. It is extremely important as it reveals the inherent flaw or fault in 'contact' (*phassa*).

". . . . . *sabbe te chahi phassāyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisaṁvedenti. Tesaṁ vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṁ, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti*."

". . . . . They all experience by continually contacting through the six sense-spheres. And to them, dependent on feeling (there is) craving, dependent on craving, grasping, dependent on grasping, becoming, dependent on becoming, birth, and dependent on birth decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair arise."

In summing up, the Buddha bundles up all the views enumerated inclusive of those proclaimed by ascetics with higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) and psychic powers and refutes them with the above conclusive pronouncement. All those view holders derive their experiences on which they base their views by continually contacting through the six senses. By repeatedly contacting they are affected by feeling (*paṭisaṁvedenti*).

Thereby they are caught up by the Law of Dependent Arising with the result they are subject to repeated birth and consequent *Saṁsāric* suffering.

What can one infer from this powerful declaration? The Buddha has gone beyond this state called 'contact' (*phassa*).

If all the sixty two views are invalidated on the grounds that they are dependent on contact, the Buddha has transcended that stage. As a matter of fact, that is what the understanding of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* means. To understand *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is to be free from its snare.

Now this might appear as a riddle. It is due to the nonunderstanding of Dependent Arising that one is drawn into the vortex between consciousness and name and form. We have told you about Narcissus and about the dog on the plank across the stream. What Narcissus had done, we all have been doing throughout our *Saṁsāra* – that is to say trying to embrace our own shadow. What is the shadow? Name and form. It is due to contact that one gets involved in it. That is a deep point. But then, we have yet to mention that simile we alluded to. The Buddha sums up his sermon with the simile of a fisherman's net. It is a wonderful simile.

"Monks, just as a fisherman or a fisherman's apprentice were to go down into a small pool of water with a finely woven net. It would occur to him:

"whatever sizeable creatures there are in this small pool, all of them are caught in this net. When they come up, they come up attached to this net, they come up included in it, caught up well within the net, even so all those recluses and Brahmins who assert various views are caught in this super-net of 62 views."

The simile is highly significant. When a finely woven net is thrown over a small pool, fishes when they try to escape it by coming up are caught in the meshes. What is the fine mesh that holds back all view holders in the Buddha's super-net? The recurrent phrase:

'*tadapi phassa paccayā*' – 'that too is dependent on contact.'

As we said earlier, all the 62 views are dependent on contact. Try to understand the depth of this simile given by the Buddha. Like that fisherman's finely woven net, the Buddha's net of 62 views is capable of netting in all the speculative views in the world. All those view holders whether they be the legendary '*gamarālas*' and their devil-dancers or the modern scientists and philosophers, are well within this net. As the phrase '*phussa phussa paṭisaṁvedenti*' implies, they all owe their experiences to 'CONTACT'. When they can't see with the naked eye, they make use of a microscope or a telescope. But isn't it again resorting to contact? When they can't understand at once with the mind, they resort to logic and reasoning. It is mind-contact all the same.

However far they travel or speculate, they cannot reach the end of the world. They are still held well within the gourd shell. The very last sentence in that passage which repudiates the entire gamut of views, is the grand finale which solves the whole issue.

"*yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayañca atthagamañca assādañca ādīnavañca nissaraṇañca yathābhūtaṁ pajānāti, ayaṁ imehi sabbehi uttarītaraṁ pajānati*"

"In so far, monks, as a monk understands as they are, the arising, the going down, the satisfaction, the peril and the stepping out in regard to the six sense spheres, this monk has by far a higher understanding than all these (view-holders)."

One may take 'monk' mentioned above as denoting the arahant. This monk who understands as they are the arising, the going-down, the satisfaction, the peril and the stepping out (*samudaya, atthagama, assāda, ādīnava, nissaraṇa*) of the six spheres of sense contact has a knowledge far superior to that of all view-holders.

In referring to the Buddha's deliverance too, the above five aspects are mentioned. One might think that the Buddha is always experiencing the Fruit of Arahanthood – No. He has attained that synoptic vision. He understands how the six spheres of sense contact arise and how they go down – as if seeing the sun-rise and sun-set. He understands the satisfaction characteristic of the six sense spheres as well as the perils inherent in them. When the Buddha is partaking of food his tastebuds are in working order – not that they are inactive. He sees beautiful forms with his eyes. Only that he is not attached to them. He is aware of the satisfying aspect as well as the perilous aspect. Last of all comes the stepping-out (*nissaraṇa*). This is what concerns us in particular here. That is to say – the attainment to the Fruit of Arahanthood, which is the proper range for the arahants.

The state of that attainment has been described in many places in the discourses. It is often worded in paradoxical terms. Therefore, scholars are puzzled and instead of understanding it properly, speak of a *Nibbāna* that comes as an after-death state. Even the western scholars go astray in interpreting them. Just see what a delusion they are in. Right view is lacking in them. We have taken pains to clarify the correct position. As the Buddha has stated, the world is not prepared to accept the Law of Dependent Arising. They turn a blind eye to its most important aspect of cessation (*nirodha*). They keep on jumping from arising to arising ignoring the cessation aspect. That is why it is said that worldlings are always on the *samudaya* (arising) side. The Ariyans see the *nirodha*. For them it is the truth and the bliss.

Let me say something more about contact. Now it is a discourse of a different type. A Brahmin named *Uṅṅābha* once came to see the Buddha. The way he addressed the Buddha shows that he had no respect for the Buddha. He says:

"Good Gotama, there are these five senses which have different ranges, different pastures and which do not partake of one another's pasture of objects. What are they? The eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the body. Good Gotama, for these five senses which have their different ranges, different pastures, and which do not partake of the objects of one another's pasture, what is the resort, who is it that partakes of, the objects of their different pastures?"

What *Uṅṅābha* means is that every sense faculty has its own particular range of objects. For instance, the eye can only see forms. It cannot hear sounds. The ear can hear but cannot see. They have their own pastures and cannot trespass on other's pastures. *Uṅṅābha* is curious to know the resort of all these five senses. He is asking whether there is someone who can partake of all objects received through the five senses. He must have been thinking of a soul (*ātman*) as the one who enjoys all those objects. But the Buddha says that the mind is the resort and that it is the mind which partakes of all those sense objects ('. . . *mano paṭisaraṇaṁ mano ca nesaṁ gocaravisayaṁ paccanubhoti*'). Whatever objects that come through the five external senses are received by the mind. The mind partakes of them.

Then the Brahmin asks:

"What is the resort of the mind?"

The Buddha replies that 'Sati' or mindfulness is the resort of the mind. *Uṅṅābha's* next question is:

"What is the resort of mindfulness?"

The Buddha says:

"The resort of mindfulness is Deliverance."

Then the Brahmin asks:

"What is the resort of Deliverance?"

The Buddha's answer is:

"The resort of Deliverance is *Nibbāna*."

But the Brahmin has yet another question:

"Good Gotama, what is the resort of *Nibbāna*?"

Then the Buddha corrects him with these words:

"Brahmin you have gone beyond the scope of the question. You were not able to grasp the limit of questioning. Brahmin, this Holy life is to be lived in a way that it gets merged in *Nibbāna*, that it has *Nibbāna* as the Goal and consummation."

Then the Brahmin was pleased and rejoicing in the Buddha's words worshipped him and left. But the discourse records something extraordinary. It is said that as soon as he left, the Buddha told the monks that the Brahmin attained the Fruits of the Path while listening to the exposition. There is something deep involved here. As far as we can guess it has something to do with the philosophy of the Brahmins. For them the five external senses are all powerful. Above them stands the mind and above mind there is

intelligence. Above intelligence there is the soul. This is the hierarchy in the Hindu tradition as recorded in the

Bhagavadgītā. But according to the Buddha instead of a soul there is mindfulness (*sati*) as the resort of the mind.

Here is something highly significant. Why has the Buddha declared the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*) as the direct way (*ekāyano maggo*) leading to *Nibbāna*? The resort of the mind is mindfulness. We happened to mention on an earlier occasion that all things originate from attention (*manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā*). The world thinks that the object of the mind is something far away. That is why we gave the simile of the cracking-of the-pot in our last sermon. When you come close to *Nibbāna* you have to give up even the concept of *Nibbāna*, just as one has to turn back when one finds oneself up against the wall. The final realization comes with the understanding that the 'thing' (that is the object of the mind or the 'mind-object') is produced by the mind itself. You may recall the occasion we gave you an exercise in folding your fingers so that you will have our definition of '*nāma*' (name) at your fingertips. We had to do all that because some critics questioned our definition of 'name' in name-and-form. We got you to count on your fingers as an illustration of the five constituents of name – feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Attention is the 'thumb' and nearest to it is contact – the index finger. We have mentioned above that all the objects of the five senses flow in and accumulate in the mind and that the mind partakes of them. 'Mind' partakes of them only after converting them into 'things' (*dhammā*). Forms, sounds, smells, tastes and touches are all converted into 'things'. What converts them into 'things' is attention ('*manasikāra*' – lit. 'doing-in themind'). That is why we brought up various similes to explain this deep point. To solve this difficult case of the magical illusion of consciousness – 'this criminal case' against *Māra* – the Buddha adopted a Middle Path tactic. He gave crown pardon to the alleged culprit No 1. '*manasikāra*' (attention) who committed the crime with his gang – '*vedanā*' (feeling), '*saññā*' (perception), '*cetanā*' (intention) and '*phassa*' (contact). The 'accused' *manasikā* or attention had committed the crime in the guise of '*ayoniso-manasikāra*' (that is as non-radical attention). The Buddha made him the crown-witness on condition that he gave evidence as 'radical-attention' (*yoniso manasikāra*).

Now as for radical attention, it has to play its role within mindfulness. That is why in the field of insight, radical attention is regarded as the seed of wisdom. What we have in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*) is the journey of radical attention with mindfulness as its companion. The course of the journey lies through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Right Endeavours, the Four Bases for Success, the Five Faculties, The Five Powers, The Seven Factors of Enlightenment to culminate in the Noble Eightfold Path for attaining *Nibbāna*. That is why the Buddha said that mindfulness is the resort of the mind. So then, the resort of the mind is mindfulness. If that mindfulness as Right Mindfulness (*sammā sati*) is properly directed, the crime perpetrated by this alleged culprit also becomes fully exposed. Finally, not only the other four culprits but the biggest culprit 'manasikāra' or attention is also found guilty. As we mentioned in an earlier sermon, it is as if a thief is caught 'red-

handed'. What is it that was stolen? The 'THING'. The 'thing' or mind-objects which is 'mind-made' (*manomaya*) – a fake product of the mind. This is the clue to the entire Saṁsāric riddle. Worldlings think that 'things' exists in themselves. Now, we come back to the opening verse of the *Dhammapada*.

'*Manopubbañgamā dhammā*

Manoseṭṭhā manomayā'

'Mind is the forerunner of mind objects

Mind is their chief – they are mind-made'

If a worldling writes his '*Dhammapada*' he would begin with the words:

'*Dhammapubbañgamo mano'*

'Mind has mind objects as forerunners'

That is why we asked that boy to go towards the wall so that he will have to turn back at the last step. When one turns back with radical attention one will realize that chasing the object of the mind is like running after a mirage, which is senseperception itself. The Buddha, on the other hand, asks us to turn back with radical attention. That is why, as we pointed out in discourses like '*Mahāpadāna Sutta*' the *Bodhisatta* discovered the Law of Dependent Arising by reasoning from the very end, asking himself "what is the cause of decay and death?"

In '*yonisomanasikāra*' (attention by way of the source or matrix) one has to come back to the source from where one already is. What one discovers last of all is that the 'witness' himself is the biggest culprit! The crime he committed is the concoction of a 'thing'. That is why in the end even the perception of mind objects fades away (*dhammasaññā ca virajjati*). You may recall now the statement:

'*mano ca nirujjhati dhammasaññā ca virajjati*' – 'mind too ceases and the perception of mind-objects fades away.' When a sense faculty ceases its object also has to cease. What was said in the verses forming the topic of this sermon is a description of the realization of *Nibbāna*. In other words, it is the realization of the cessation of existence (*bhavanirodha*). So, then the cessation of existence is not something to be experienced in another realm. It is a realization here and now. That itself is the highest truth (*paramaṁ saccaṁ*). That itself is the supreme bliss (*paramaṁ sukhaṁ*) – as it is said '*Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ'* (*Nibbāna* is the supreme bliss).

Well, then you may understand that what we have said within this hour might require a long commentary. However, you should try to grasp whatever you can. What we wish to point out is that this is not some intellectual stuff to satisfy the curiosity of philosophers or scientists. You should try to assimilate whatever is helpful for your practice. As the Buddha has said, whoever dwells diligently reflecting on the gap between the two contemplations ardent and zealous, overcoming defilements would pass from the

mundane to the supramundane level. The mundane level if it has such vicissitudes is false. The truth is here in the supramundane. One has to understand that what the world takes as bliss is itself the truth of suffering, and that *Nibbāna* is the bliss supreme as is evident from that Recollection of Peace which formed the topic of our *Nibbāna* sermons:

"Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ sabbasaṁkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho Nibbānaṁ"

"This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction."

The cessation of contact is also implicit in this. Even as depending on eye and forms eye consciousness arises, mind consciousness arises dependent on mind and mind-objects. When mind consciousness arises due to mind and mind consciousness there is a discrimination between mind and mindobject. With that separation, proliferation (*papañca*) sets in. But if one sees consciousness as a dependently arisen phenomenon, as a fact of experience and not as a mere logical inference, there is no room for proliferation. What is the final conviction that comes when radical attention is razor-edge sharp? That the object of the mind is mind-made (*manomaya*). Along with that conviction, consciousness ceases because thereby it is made ineffective. It has nothing to do. Since consciousness is the very discrimination between the two, how can there be a discrimination when the true state of affairs is seen? As we pointed out in our 'Magic of the Mind', when the secrets of the magic show are exposed, the magic-show ends. That is why it was said:

"Murk it is to those enveloped – as darkness unto the undiscerning

But to the good wide ope' it is – as light is unto those discerning"

You had better get the gist of what we have said so far. The most important thing is what we have highlighted in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. Worldly philosophers and scientists have formulated various views. All those are dependent on contact (*phassa paccayā*). But the Buddha proclaimed a supra-mundane experience which falls outside the gourd-shell of the six sense spheres. It is in this transcendental experience that birth, decay, death and the entire mass of suffering ends. That is why the Buddha summed up with the words:

"*esevanto dukkhassa*".

This itself is the end of suffering.

Making use of the practical aspect of our sermon today and helped by the precepts you keep and the meditation you do, may you all be able to attain that deliverance from *Saṁsāra* in this very life through the paths to Stream-winning, Oncereturnership, Non-returnership and Arahanthood. Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they all rejoice in our

sermon! May the merits accrued thereby conduce to the fulfilment of their highest aim – the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 9
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 191)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Yo ubhante viditvāna

Majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

sodha sibbanimaccagā

– Majjhe S. A.

He who having known both ends

Gets not attached at the middle with wisdom

Him I call a Great Man

He has gone beyond the seamstress here.

Dear Listeners,

It is on a Vesak Full Moon day like this, that the Fully Enlightened One, the Teacher of the Three Worlds realized the Deliverance from repeated birth in *Saṁsāra*. Through the understanding he achieved along with Full Enlightenment, he discovered the secret of Saṁsāric existence. He understood that for an incalculable period, beings in the world have been wandering in *Saṁsāra* hindered by ignorance and fettered to craving. We have chosen as the topic of our ninth sermon on Dependent Arising, a verse with a deep meaning that helps one to dispel ignorance and break free from the fetter of craving. This verse which according to the *Pārāyaṇa Vagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, was preached by the Buddha to the Brahmin youth Tissa Metteyya, was so deep in meaning that when the Buddha was dwelling at *Isipatana* in Benares, a group of monks there, made it the topic for a Dhamma discussion as evidenced by the *Majjhe Sutta* in the *Anguttara Nikāya*. A group of elder monks gathered at the assembly hall and in the course of their Dhamma discussion, took up this verse as the topic for a sort of symposium. This is how the topic was introduced:

"Friends, this was said by the Fortunate One in the Metteyya question of *Pārāyaṇa Vagga*.

Yo ubhante viditvāna Majjhe mantā na lippati taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti sodha sibbanimaccagā

He who having understood both ends, does not get attached at the middle with wisdom, him I call a Great Man. He has gone beyond the seamstress here."

Having cited the verse, they extracted four questions out of it.

"What friends is the first end?

What is the second end? What is the middle?

Who is the seamstress?"

The four questions resemble a topic for a symposium. When these four questions were put forward one Venerable Thera offered the following explanation:

"Contact, friends, is one end, arising of contact is the second end, cessation of contact is the middle, craving is the seamstress, for it is craving that stitches up for the birth of this and that specific existence."

After giving this explanation, he goes on to say:

"In so far friends, does a monk understand by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge, comprehend by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding. Understanding by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge, comprehending by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding, he becomes an ender of suffering in this very life."

That is to say, this verse is in itself a meditation topic that takes one as far as Arahanthood. The term for higher knowledge is '*abhiññā*' and the term for full understanding or comprehension is '*pariññā*'.

Then a second Venerable Thera offers his opinion.

According to his point of view the past is one end, the future is the second end, the present is the middle and craving is the seamstress. He too sums up the depth of the verse in the same words as the other Thera.

A third Venerable Thera gives a different interpretation. For him one end is pleasant feeling, the second end is unpleasant or painful feeling and the middle is neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling. Craving is again the seamstress.

A fourth Venerable Thera opines that one end is name, the second end is form, the middle is consciousness and the seamstress is craving.

A fifth Venerable Thera puts forward the view that the one end is the six internal sense spheres, the second end is the six external sense spheres, consciousness is the middle and craving is the steamstress.

A sixth Venerable Thera is of the opinion that one end is *sakkāya* – a term for the five aggregates of grasping (lit. the existing body), the second end is the arising of *sakkāya*, the middle is the cessation of *sakkāya* and the seamstress is craving.

When six explanations had come up in this way one monk made this suggestion:

"Now that we have explained the verse according to our abilities, let us approach the Fortunate One and report our discussion. In whatever way the Fortunate One explains, so shall we bear it in mind."

Approving that suggestion, they all went to the Buddha and after reporting the discussion in full, asked:

"Venerable Sir, whose words are well spoken ('*Kassa nu kho bhante subhāsitam*?'). The Buddha replied:

"Monks, what you all have said is well said from some point of view or other, but that for which I preached that verse in the *Metteyyapañha* is this:

and quoting the verse in question, the Buddha explains:

"Monks contact is one end, and the arising of contact is the second end, the cessation of contact is in the middle, craving is the seamstress for it is craving that puts the stitch for the birth of this or that existence.

In so far Monks, does a monk understand by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge and comprehend by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding, understanding by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge and comprehending by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding, he becomes and ender of suffering in this very life."

From this we can see that the Buddha's explanation happens to coincide with the interpretation given by the first speaker at the symposium. However the interpretations given by the other five monks are also correct. From this we can see how profound in meaning this cryptic verse is. It may be that the six

Theras presented their own meditation topics through these interpretations. The common feature of these six interpretations is that the seamstress is identified with craving.

Let us now turn our attention to craving. Why is craving called the seamstress? Craving has a number of nicknames. It is called the 'glue' (*lepa*) or the 'sticker' (*visattikā*). In such discourses as the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* this seamstress craving has been given a number of titles. By the way, since *taṇhā* happens to be in the feminine gender the idea of a seamstress is quite apt, and those titles are like her qualifications.

'*yāyaṁ tanhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatratatrābhinandinī*'. She is the one responsible for bringing about rebirth (*ponobhavikā*) accompanied by delight and lust

(*nandirāgasagatā*) delighting now-here, now-there (*tatratatrābhinandinī*). Notoriously licentious as she is, this flirting trait of delighting now here, now there helps the seamstress in putting stitch after stitch in rapid succession as in the case of a sewing machine. The net result is the sewing together of two folds. Though this may sound as an anachronism, the sewing machine is a good illustration of the role of the seamstress. As soon as the needle goes down, the shuttle hastens to put the stitch. So the epithet 'seamstress' is quite apt since craving puts together the two ends ignoring the middle, even as the sewing machine stiches the two folds in sewing.

Let us now try to clarify for ourselves the characteristics of craving with reference to the six interpretations. First of all, we may take up the first interpretation which was approved directly by the Buddha himself. According to it, one end is contact, the second end is the arising of contact, the middle is the cessation of contact and craving is the seamstress. What can we understand by saying that contact is one end? Now as for contact, it is customary for the world to think of one who contacts, when the word 'contact or touch' comes up. For instance, one might say 'it touched my body' or 'I touched it'. We come across something to that effect in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* where Venerable Moḷiya Phagguna asks the Buddha:

'Who is it Venerable Sir, that touches?' The Buddha disallows the question with the words '*na kallo pañho*' – 'not a proper question.' There the Buddha says:

'I do not say one touches' and instructs Venerable Phagguna to understand the occurrence of touch as a dependently arisen phenomenon. The correct mode of understanding according to the Buddha is:

'*saḷāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā*' – 'Dependant on the six sense spheres is contact and dependant on contact is feeling'. So it seems that what happens due to contact, the world attributes to a person because of the 'personality-view' (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*). The phrase '*yo ubhante viditvāna*' means 'he who having understood both ends'. By understanding correctly both ends, with wisdom one does not get attached at the middle. The correct understanding of contact is in the way the Buddha has pointed out:

'*saḷāyatana paccayā phasso*' – 'Dependant on the six sense spheres is contact.'

'Arising of contact' (*phassa samudaya*) is a question that goes even deeper. It is not easy for one to understand how contact arises. We get a clue to its understanding from the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. On previous occasions too, we may have explained to you in various ways the exposition by Venerable Mahā Kaccāna of the workings of the six sense spheres. There he says;

'*cakkhuñcāvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ. Tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso. Phassa paccayā vedanā ....*'

'Friends, depending on eye and forms arises eyeconsciousness. The concurrence of the three is contact. Dependent on contact, feeling .....'

Therein the words:

'*cakkhuñcā paṭicca rūpe uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ*' are noteworthy. The two words '*paṭicca*' and '*uppajjati*' reminds us of the term '*paṭicca samuppāda.*' It seems then that the arising of eye consciousness itself gives a clue to the understanding of the Law of Dependent Arising. Even consciousness is dependently arisen. The world takes consciousness to be self. But the Buddha points out that eyeconsciousness arises depending on eye and forms. For a further clarification of this point one has to turn to the exposition given by Venerable Sāriputta in the *Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta*. Usually, we think that if something comes before our eyes we ought to see it. But that is not exactly the case. Venerable Sāriputta tells us that something subtle is involved in a perceptual situation.

First of all, in order to see, the eye must be in working order. Even if the eye is unimpaired and forms come within the visual range, still the eye consciousness does not arise.

The third requirement is expressed with an unusual phrase:

'*tajjo samannāhāro*'. *'Tajjo*' means 'born thereof', that is to say 'specific'. '*Samannāhāro*' has the sense of coming into proper 'focus'. But that focussing is part and parcel of that particular perceptual situation. It is not a focussing directed from elsewhere.

So then, simply because the eye is intact, one does not see. Even if forms come within the proper range, one does not see.

The third essential factor is what is called 'tajjo samannāhāro'. The focussing or the 'bringing together' implied by '*samannāhāro*' is 'born of that' (*tajjo*), that is the perceptual situation itself. That means it is conditionally arisen. It seems, Therefore, that even eye consciousness arises due to causes and conditions. This is something the worldling is not prepared to accept. Instead he brings in the idea of a self.

Venerable Mahā Kaccāna goes on to say something more. '*cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso*'

'Depending on eye and forms arises eye consciousness, the concurrence of the three is contact'.

Now, what is the 'three'? The eye, forms and eyeconsciousness. It is not proper to count eye, forms and eyeconsciousness as 'three' because the third is the outcome of the other two. But the world doesn't see it because of ignorance. Just try to understand this. Depending on eye and forms eye-consciousness arises, but it is by putting the three together that the situation called 'contact' comes to be. That means contact is something 'made-up' – something 'prepared' (*saṅkhata*). It is by forgetting or 'ignoring' the fact that

consciousness is dependently arisen, that one puts together 'the three' to make up contact. So at whatever moment the dependently arisen nature of consciousness is seen as a matter of experience that contact ceases then and there.

Well, that is the cessation of contact, what prevents its occurrence? Craving. It stitches together contact and the arising of contact without allowing the worldling to see the cessation that is in the middle. One can see it only with keen insight. It is by seeing penetratively the impermanence of contact, that one gets the ability to see its cessation. Since this is the first interpretation which tallied with the Buddha's own explanation, we discussed it at length.

Let us now take up the second interpretation. According to it, one end is the past, the second end is the future and the middle is the present. There too it is craving that puts the stitch. The best illustration is found in the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* which we had discussed earlier too. There we get the following instructive lines:

Atītaṁ nānvāgameyya

Nappatikaṅkhe anāgataṁ

Yadatītaṁ pahīnaṁ taṁ

appattañca anāgataṁ

paccuppannañca yo dhammaṁ

tattha tattha vipassatī

Let one not trace back the past

Or yearn for the future – yet to come

That which is past is left behind

The yet-to-come is unattained

And that which is present he discerns

With insight as and when it comes

The advice is not to run after the past nor to have expectations about the future because the past is gone and the future has not come yet. Even the present has nothing in it to hold on to when one sees it with insight. That is to say, as insight gets keener and keener, one finds nothing to grasp there. But what craving does is to stitch up past and future ignoring the present. On a previous occasion, we cited a highly significant verse in that connection based on the story of the acrobat Uggasena. That verse the Buddha addressed

to Uggasena as he stood on top of the sixty-cubit bamboo pole, served as the meditation subject for him to attain arahanthood.

Muñca pure muñca pacchato

Majjhe muñca bhavassa pāragū

Sabbattha vimutta mānaso

Na puna jātijaraṁ upehisi

Let go what has gone before

Let go that which comes after

Let go thy hold on the middle as well

And get well beyond all existence

Thus with mind released in every way

Thou comest never more to birth and decay

As soon as he heard that verse, the acrobat Uggasena attained arahanthood even as he stood on top of the bamboo pole. He stood balanced on the bamboo pole having given up thoughts of the past and the future. It was for him a very critical moment. The middle is the present moment. To let-go of the middle is to give up the present. To the acrobat who has given up thoughts of the past and future to stand precariously balanced with concentration, it is easy to let go of the present. What the seamstress craving keeps doing is to tempt us to forget the present and hold us confused between memories of the past and dreams about the future. Instead of it, if one gets used to attending to the present preparations then and there, at the peak of insight meditation, one can by-pass the seamstress and win freedom.

Now as for the third interpretation, the pleasant feeling is one end, the unpleasant feeling is the second end and the middle is the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling. There too, craving is the seamstress. What is her job there? The Buddha says that the uninstructed worldling when touched by painful feeling, delights in the pleasant feeling because he doesn't see an escape from it other than sense pleasures. On a previous occasion when we were discussing this problem we said that the ordinary worldling is 'see-sawing' between pain and pleasure ignoring the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling in the middle. The Buddha puts across to us this truth in another way saying that what underlies pleasant feeling is the latency to lust, what underlies unpleasant feeling is the latency to hate and that what underlies neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling is the latency to ignorance. That is why generally the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling is slurred over and ignored. It is by exploiting this ignorance that the seamstress craving puts the stitch between pleasant feeling and unpleasant feeling.

However, the Buddha shows us a way out through insight here too by a peculiar analysis. He says that the counterpart of pleasant feeling is painful feeling and the counterpart of unpleasant feeling is pleasant feeling. But between these two, at the fulcrum of the see-saw, there is ignorance as the counterpart of the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling. Luckily, the counterpart of ignorance is knowledge, the counterpart of knowledge is deliverance and the counterpart of deliverance is *Nibbāna*. So instead of the 'dead-end' between pain and pleasure the Buddha points to a way out at the middle that goes deep. For deliverance, one has to delve deeper at the middle. In removing the ignorance underlying the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling, one hits upon knowledge. In other words, to give up ignorance is to arouse knowledge. Along with knowledge comes deliverance leading to *Nibbāna*. Exploiting the ignorance of the worldling of this exit at the middle, craving lures the worldling into an endless 'see-sawing' between pain and pleasure. So then here too, in order to bypass the seamstress, one has to have insight directed on the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling and understand it in the light of preparations (*saṅkhārā*) and attain deliverance. That is as far as the third interpretation is concerned.

Now for the fourth interpretation. Once again we are at a deep point. One end is name (*nāma*), the second end is form (*rūpa*) and the middle is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is a telling argument against the popular definition of *nāma* as the four immaterial aggregates – feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness. The aggregate of 'form' is taken as 'form' (*rupa*) in name and form (*nāmarūpa*). The fact that this popular definition is utterly ill founded is clearly revealed by this fourth interpretation since according to this interpretation consciousness comes in between name and form, it can in no way be included under name. Besides, we have quoted the words of the Buddha as well as of Venerable Sāriputta in support of the fact that feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are the five constituents of name and that form is tantamount to the perception of form based on the four primaries as amenable to the constituents of name. In fact once we got you to count on your fingers so that you will have the constituents of name literally at your finger tips. On several occasions we pointed out that name in name and form is formal name and form in name and form is nominal form. Now what does the seamstress craving do? She makes one forget about consciousness and stitches up name with form. The deer runs after the mirage imagining it to be over there. It thinks the form it sees is real.

In this connection we brought up another simile – the story of the Greek youth Narcissus. Handsome Narcissus who had never seen his own face while roaming in a forest bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing the reflection of his face in the water he imagined an angel in the pond and made a vain attempt to embrace her and pined away and died by the pond. Here too Narcissus was deceived by the seamstress craving. This is an apt illustration of '*nāmarūpa*' since the five factors of name can be clearly understood through it. Now, feeling is the love or lust giving rise to the 'perception' of an angel prompting an intention to look again and again and there is an apparent 'contact' to sustain 'attention'. But as it was non-radical attention or '*ayonisomanasikāra*' Narcissus was deluded enough to think that he looked because the

‘angel’ appeared, but the truth is that an angel appeared because he looked. So he imagined an angel in the pond. Consciousness also has a reflective quality like that of water. That is the magical illusion about it. Psychologically, it makes ‘reflection’ a possibility. Reflection invites attention. Wrong or non radical attention creates delusion but radical attention enables one to understand the delusion. Here we can clearly see that consciousness is in the middle between name and form.

All this conclusively shows that in no way can consciousness be included in name (*nāma*) as traditionally explained. In order to bypass the seamstress craving with her tactful stitching up, one has to have a proper understanding of the nature of consciousness. Only when one understands the magical illusion in it, can one attain freedom from name and form (*nāmarūpa*).

The interpretation advanced by the fifth Venerable Thera has as the two ends the six internal sense spheres and the six external sense spheres. There too the middle is consciouness.

The sixth interpretation refers to a ‘*sakkāya*’ which means the ‘five aggregates of grasping’, since the Buddha has said that ‘*sakkāya*’ is a synonym for these five. The one end according to this interpretation is ‘*sakkāya*’ or personality and the second end is ‘*sakkāya samudaya*’ or arising of personality and the middle is ‘*sakkāya nirodha*’ or cessation of personality. It is due to not seeing the cessation of personality that beings keep on arousing the notion of personality. Worldlings are always on the *samudaya* (arising) side. The seamstress craving hastens to put the stitch under the veil of ignorance. What helps to eradicate ignorance is the perception of impermanence. By developing it one comes to understand all these as ‘preparations’ (*saṅkhārā*). It is easy enough to understand the impermanence of past preparations. It is also not so difficult to understand the impermanence of future preparations. But what is difficult is the understanding of the present preparations. The fact that the perception of impermanence is helpful in winning freedom is clearly revealed by the story of the Arahant Venerable Adhimutta. When he was going through a forest, a bandit chief caught him and was about to kill him as a human oblation. He addressed the bandit chief in some verses which are highly insightful.

He says:

‘Na me hoti ahosinti

bhavissanti na hoti me

saṅkhārā vibhavissanti

tattha kā paridevanā’

It does not occur to me ‘I was’

Nor does it occur to me 'I will be'

Mere preparations get destroyed

What is there to lament?

The next verse is all the more meaningful in the light of the simile of the seamstress.

Suddhaṁ dhamma samuppādaṁ

suddaṁ saṅkhāra santatiṁ

passantassa yathābhūtaṁ

na bhayaṁ hoti gāmaṇī

To one who sees as it is

The arising of pure preparations

And the sequence of pure preparations

There is no fear O! headman

'Seeing as it is pure preparations – that is to say, influx free preparations – arising and ceasing as a process of pure preparations, there is no fear, O! headman.'

If we bring this in line with the simile of the sewing machine, while the sewing is going on the shuttle may run out of its load of cotton. Then the needle will pierce through one fold giving a semblance of contact to the second fold but as it comes up there is no stitch, though the cloth has moved forward. There has been a cessation in the middle as there was no grasping. Craving puts the knot so long as there is grasping. That is why the Buddha says that there is deliverance when there is no grasping. Apparently stitching goes on and there seems to be a seam, but there is no seam. To go deeper into this simile of the sewing machine, we may say that what happens during the period an Arahant is in the *Arahattaphala-samāpatti* (attainment to the Fruit of Arahanthood) is similar to what we have already said about the sewing machine. His 'shuttle-free' mind is experiencing the cessation of existence. It is free from TIME and SPACE. It is 'time' and 'space' that 'prepare' this world – which is a 'prepared' (*saṅkhata*).

So then, as soon as grasping ceases this mind is free from the shackles of Time and Space. The needle goes down but there is no stitch. When there is no grasping there is no Death. What helps one to attain this Deathless is insightful attention directed on preparations (*saṅkhārā*). They have to be seen then and there with razor-edge sharp attention. Whether it is the name and form or the sense spheres there are these two ends and the middle. The world is imprisoned in the middle. The true state of affairs comes to light in the course of insight meditation. To understand the two ends the perception of

impermanence has to be developed. The personality view (*sakkāyadiṭṭi*) has to be done away with in order to see preparations as and when they come up with keen insight.

To non-radical attention contact appears as something done by a person. But when one arouses radical attention it is seen as a phenomenon arisen due to causes and conditions. In that understanding craving loses its hold on the mind.

Craving seeks to stitch up the two ends with the help of the notion of the compact nurtured by the perception of permanence. The two ends could even be contact and the arising of contact. The worldling is said to be on the 'arising side' because he cannot see the cessation of contact. But at the peak of insight meditation generally known as the 'knowledge of breaking up' (*bhaṅgañāṇa*) one sees cessation at each and every touch, as it is said:

'*phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ*'

'touch after touch seeing how it wanes'

The Buddha is telling us that deliverance comes by seeing the fact of cessation. Venerable Nandaka explains the same fact to the nuns. He asks them:

'If the six internal sense spheres and the six external sense spheres are impermanent how can consciousness arising out of them could be permanent?' Their response to that question is:

'*Tajjaṁ tajjaṁ bhante paccayaṁ paṭicca tajjā tajjā vedanā uppajjanti.*

Tajjassa tajjassa paccayassa nirodhā tajjā tajjā vedanā nirujjhanti'

'Venerable sir, due to each and every specific condition each and every specific feeling arises. With the cessation of each and every specific condition, each and every specific feeling ceases.'

As one goes on directing penetrative radical attention to preparations, one comes to understand that each contact is specific (lit. 'born thereof' – '*tajjo*'). The eye is impermanent and forms are impermanent and consciousness arising out of them is also impermanent. As the perception of impermanance develops by accelerating attention, one comes to understand this state of affairs. Thereby the skill in attending to preparations then and there grows. In non-radical attention the notion of mine prevails. But in radical attention one is able to discern the process of arising and ceasing of preparations. By way of a simile, what happens at the peak of accelerating attention can be compared to the rapidity of parry and thrust of the sword in duelling. If one wields radical attention with such rapidity holding *Māra* at bay, one can see the present preparations as and when they come up. That is what is meant by the phrase '*tattha tattha vipassati*' ('seeing with insight then and there') in the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta*. As we said earlier, it is easy enough to understand what is past as past and what pertains to the future as future. But the present poses the biggest problem to the worldling. The present seems to be real. But to one who has developed the perception of impermanence

by accelerating attention, in deep insight meditation the present crumples up then and there giving rise to dejection. It is as if while walking along a precipice with two steep slopes (that is Past and Future) on either side one is clutching on to a fence for safety. But as one proceeds one gets to know that the fence is rickety. The fence is present preparations.

As a matter of fact, attention is kept up through these preparations. However, it dawns on him at last that even these preparations are brittle. That is what gives rise to dejection. This is the middle path in insight shown by the Buddha. The instruction is to go on attending to these as preparations. But as one goes on attending, there comes a stage when they are seen to be breaking up at a dreadful rate. With that comes the knowledge of breaking up (*bhaṅgañāṇa*). At the start the understanding of impermanence is in terms of seeing the rise and fall. As that understanding deepens, one tends to see the falling more prominently and with it the cessation aspect reveals itself.

As soon as the cessation aspect becomes clear, a fear arises as the first reaction because what one is holding on to is breaking up. The question may come up:

'What should be done in such a situation?' Nothing other than deepening the insight into impermanence to such a level that one realizes the reason for that fear – namely the mis-taking of those fragile preparations to be one's own. The only solution is to let-go of the notion of I and mine with regard to them.

In fact all these interpretations when regarded as meditation topics, have to do with the perception of impermanence. On the one hand the line '*yo ubhante viditvāna*' – 'He who having known both ends' refers to the two ends. To understand the two ends is to see their impermanence. Ignorance becomes active through the notion of the compact – that is through the perception of permanence. If instead of it the meditator constantly attends to their impermanent nature, the understanding comes when they appear as name and form that everything is of a nature to arise and cease. When greater attention is directed towards the cessation aspect of preparations, their breaking up appears all the more vividly giving rise to the series of insight knowledges such as *bhaṅga* (breaking up) and '*bhaya*' (fear) leading on finally to what is called '*anupadā parinibbāna*, perfect extinction through not grasping. Since existence depends on grasping (*upādāna paccayā bhavo*) cessation of existence (*bhava nirodha*) comes with the giving up. Though craving as the seamstress puts the knots, if the mind is set in such a way as to by pass the seamstress, there is deliverance.

There is one discourse which clearly shows that for birth in this and that existence craving itself becomes the grasping. It is the *Kutūhalasālā Sutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. There the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta puts forward a certain simile to the Buddha which became the subject for a controversy on '*antarābhava*' or 'intermediate existence'. Vacchagotta asks the Buddha what acts as the grasping (*upādāna*) when a flame thrown off by the wind travels even far – probably in the case of a forest fire. The Buddha says that at that time the flame has wind as the grasping. Vacchagotta's next question is when a being abandons this body and approaches a particular body, what is

the grasping involved in it. The Buddha answers that craving itself is the grasping at that time. By misunderstanding this passage, some cite it as an argument for an intermediate existence between death and rebirth. This is definitely not a case of intermediate existence. It is craving that puts the stitch for this and that existence as it is stated after every one of the six interpretations in the explanatory note. The episode of Vacchagotta offers us a clear illustration of this phenomenon. At the moment of death, craving itself serves as the grasping (*upādāna*). If one has not abandoned grasping during one's life time, at the moment of death craving prompts a desire for another existence because one is holding on to name and form. On the other hand, if one has given up the attachment to the five aggregates of grasping, then there is nothing to be grasped as a future existence.

With regard to the Five Aggregates of Grasping known as '*sakkāya*' a certain monk once asked the Buddha a peculiar question. He asked whether the Five Aggregates of Grasping and grasping mean the same thing or whether grasping is something apart from the Five Aggregates of Grasping. The Buddha says that the Five Aggregates of Grasping and grasping do not mean the same thing nor does grasping exist apart from the Five Aggregates of Grasping. But whatever desire and lust (*chandarāga*) there is in the Five Aggregates of Grasping, that is the grasping therein. So the advice of the Buddha is to get rid of the desire and lust for the Five Aggregates of Grasping. Once that is given up there is no possibility of a birth into a future existence. The conviction that no future existence is possible is received in the attainment of the Fruit of Arahanthood. The experience of the cessation of existence (*bhavanirodha*) can be compared to the seamless sewing we described above. The needle goes down piercing the two folds as the machine goes into action but there is no seam. This is the miracle of the arahant's 'shuttlefree mind', where grasping is no more. What everyone is grasping can be boiled down to the five groups – form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness. The term 'group' is defined as eleven-fold in each case, namely:

past, future, present, internal, external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near. We grasp these groups in these eleven ways. They are embedded in our memory as 'This is my form, this is my feeling' etc.

If at any time the desire and lust for these five groups are abandoned, then at the moment of death there will be no grasping. Not only at the moment of death, but even during the lifetime too when the arahant is in his attainment to the Fruit of Arahanthood, he experiences Deathlessness. It is like death but there is no fear because attachment is no more. That is the Ambrosial Deathless (*amata*) – the deliverance from existence. During that attainment name and form, which is the sum-total of existence, does not occur. The mind is emancipated.

The world is imprisoned within the six sense-spheres or in name and form – within spatial and temporal limitations. Consciousness is based on a duality – '*Dvayaṁ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti*' – 'Monks, depending on a dyad consciousness arises.' Even consciousness arises depending on two things. Consciousness ceases on seeing their impermanence. The cessation of consciousness is the stilling of consciousness. Consciousness by definition is the discrimination between two things.

The deer runs forward taking the mirage it sees in the distance to be water. What impels it to run towards it, is craving the THIRST. At every step the deer thinks it is coming closer to water. But the mirage recedes. The Buddha has preached that not only what appears to the eyes but objects of all the six senses keep on receding the more we approach them. But the world does not understand it. Instead craving prompts:

'It is over there. Go further.'

What craving does is to put the knot under the veil of ignorance, kept up by the perception of permanence. Whether it be the past and the future or name and form, all the time craving keeps on putting the knot. The world doesn't see the workings of the preparations. Instead it grasps the personality view with the thought:

'This am I, This is mine'. Due to that grasping – that *upādāna* – they get pushed on from existence to existence. That is what is called the 'Saṁsāric journey'. What happens at the moment of death is not different from what is happening at this moment. Just as at this moment the mind keeps grasping this and that object, so also at the time of death since the lust for existence is there, one grasps the object presented to the mind by one's *kamma*. That is why craving itself is said to be the grasping (*upādāna*).

From all this it appears that all the six Elder monks have presented meditation topics leading to arahanthood. Out of them it is the first one that the Buddha directly approved. The world finds itself held between contact and the arising of contact. With its partiality for the arising aspect, it forgets about the cessation. Craving puts the knot blindfolding the worldling. Likewise, the world leans on the past and the future. It revels in memories of the past and dreams about the future, ignoring the present. The world is see-sawing between pain and pleasure without seeking release through the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling. Between name and form it is entangled like Narcissus who tried to embrace his own reflection on water unaware of the magical illusion of consciousness in the middle. Similarly, between the six internal spheres and the six external spheres there is a duality that ignores consciousness which is in the middle. Lastly comes the question of '*sakkāya*'. The cessation of the Five Groups of Grasping is not seen and due to that they go on accumulating. The Buddha points out that if one sees the impermanence of the eye, the forms, the consciousness and the rest, the five Groups get diminished. Impermanence has to be seen then and there to prevent that accumulation. The two terms '*upacaya*' and '*apacaya*' are used in this connection. '*Upacaya*' is accumulation and '*apacaya*' is effacement. As the phrase '*tattha tattha vipassati*' indicates by seeing with insight the impermanence then and there, one can attain deliverance.

Yo ubhante viditvāna Majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti sodha sibbanimaccagā.

'*Mahāpurisa*' (Great Man) refers to the arahant. To understand the impermanent as well as the suffering fraught and not self nature is the higher level of understanding called '*abhiññā*'. The perfection of that understanding is '*pariññā*' – full comprehension. The stream-winner has higher understanding and he attains full comprehension on

attaining arahanthood. This verse succinctly presents the course of training leading to arahanthood. Whether it be the Five Groups of Grasping or the six spheres of contact or name and form, by constantly reflecting on their impermanent, suffering fraught and not-self nature, one can realize the state indicated by this verse.

The Buddha has proclaimed the path to deliverance from *Saṁsāra*. As we have mentioned, ignorance is like the father and craving is like the mother to beings in *Saṁsāra*. Hindered by ignorance and fettered to craving beings keep running round. The Buddha has offered the solution to this Saṁsāric problem in the form of the Three Signata – impermanence, suffering and notself. Seeing everything as not-self with insight if one liberates the mind from this condition by passing the seamstress craving, one can realize the cessation of existence here and now. That is why the dictum goes '*Bhavanirodho nibbānaṁ*' – 'Cessation of existence is *Nibbāna*.'

You should seriously consider why the Buddha has declared that beings have wandered in *Saṁsāra* for an incalculable period because of ignorance and craving. The verse we have discussed also says that if one understands the two ends and with wisdom does not get attached at the middle, by passing the seamstress one can attain deliverance. Getting whatever help you can from this sermon for your meditation, you should put forth your best efforts to attain deliverance from this *Saṁsāra* by realizing the Fruits of the Path to Stream-winning, Oncereturning, Non-returning and Arahanthood. We wish you all success in that endeavour.

Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they all rejoice in our sermon. May the merits accrued thereby conduce to their highest aim – the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 10
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 192)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Lobhajaṁ dosajaṁ ceva – mohajaṁ cāpaviddasu

yaṁ tena pakataṁ kammaṁ – appaṁ vā yadi vā bahuṁ

idheva taṁ vedanīyaṁ – vatthu aññaṁ na vijjati

Tasmā lobhañca dosañca – mohajaṁ cāpi viddasu

vijjaṁ uppādayaṁ bhikkhu – sabbā duggatiyo jahe.

– Devadūta Vagga A.

'In the case of an ignorant one, whatever deed born of greed, hate or delusion done by him, be it little or much, has to be experienced here itself – there is no other site for it.

Therefore, let the wise monk, arousing knowledge, give up deeds born of greed, hate and delusion and all bad bournes'

Dear Listeners,

Poson Poya day is, for the Buddhists of this country, a day, which arouses a great enthusiasm in the Dhamma. Due to the establishment of Buddha's dispensation in this country by the mission of the arahant Venerable *Mahinda Thera* and his group of monks, King *Devānampiyatissa* and the inhabitants were able to build up a vision of life in accordance with the Right View. They formed a correct vision of values regarding good and bad, skilful and unskilful and merit and demerit.

By taking up two verses pertaining to that philosophy of life as the topic of our tenth sermon on Dependent Arising, we hope to present this sermon as a *Poson* sermon befitting the occasion. These two verses are found in the *Devadūta Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. Even from the first paragraph of that discourse the relation between *kamma* and the Law of Dependent Arising is made clear.

This is how the Buddha begins the discourse:

"Monks, there are these three causes for the arising of deeds. What are the three?

Greed is a cause for the arising of deeds.

Hate is a cause for the arising of deeds.

Delusion is a cause for the arising of deeds."

Then the Buddha says:

"Monks, whatever deed that is done with greed, born of greed, caused by greed, arisen from greed, wherever his selfhood is born, there that deed ripens, where that deed ripens, there he experiences the result of that deed either in this very life or in the next birth or in any subsequent birth."

A similar pronouncement is made in regard to deeds born of hate and delusion. Then a certain simile is given as an illustration.

"Just as, monks, when seeds unbroken, not putrid, not affected by wind and sun, and capable of sprouting and well stored up, are sown on a good field well prepared, if the rain also comes down in plenty, then those seeds, monks, will come to growth and plenitude, even so, monks, whatever deed that is done with greed..... hate..... delusion wherever his selfhood is born, there that deed ripens. Where that deed ripens, there he experiences the result of that deed either in this very life or in the next birth or in any subsequent birth."

We can see that this simile about seeds has some relation between cause and effect. Then about skilful deeds the following pronouncement is made.

"Monks, there are three causes for the arising of deeds. What are the three? Non-greed is a cause for the arising of deeds. Non-hate is a cause for the arising of deeds. Non-delusion is a cause for the arising of deeds.

Monks, whatever deed that is done with non-greed, born of non-greed, caused by non-greed, arisen from non-greed, when greed is gone thus is that deed abandoned, uprooted made like a palm tree divested of its site, made non existent incapable of arising in the future."

The same is said about deeds born of non-hate and nondelusion and then a simile is given as an illustration.

"It is as if, monks, in the case of seeds unbroken, not putrid, not affected by wind and sun, capable of sprouting and well stored up, a man were to burn in a fire and having burnt it in a fire reduce them to ashes, and having reduced them to ashes blow off in a strong wind or get it swept away in a swift-flowing current of a river and thereby, monks, would those seeds be abandoned, uprooted, made like a palm tree divested of its site, made non-existent and incapable of arising in the future, even so, monks, whatever deed that is done with non-greed..... nonhate..... non-delusion..... when greed is

gone……. when hate is gone…… when delusion is gone thus is that deed be abandoned, uprooted, made like a palm tree divested of its site, made nonexistent and incapable of arising in the future."

The meaning of this peculiar simile is that deeds done with non-greed are exhausted with the ending of greed. Why is that? Because the net result of deeds done with non-greed is the ending of greed itself. Similarly, deeds done with non-hatred get exhausted with the complete ending of hate. So also deeds done with non-delusion get exhausted with the complete ending of delusion. What we have here is the norm of rise and fall. Though it seems simple enough, there is something deep involved here. Deeds done with greed, hate and delusion germinate like seeds on getting rain. In fact, craving, in some contexts is compared to rain. As a synonym, for craving "*sineha*" signifies moisture. Beings in *Saṁsāra* go on with greed, hate and delusion given the rain or moisture of craving. Then the results of those deeds have to be experienced, either in this very life, or in the next birth, or else in subsequent births. But the roots of skilful deeds, namely non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion behave differently. For instance deeds done with non-greed get exhausted with the ending of greed. They are abandoned, uprooted and destroyed. It is as if someone, instead of sowing seeds, which could germinate, were to burn them, reduce them to ashes and blow off against the wind or throw into a swift flowing river. When the Buddha gives a simile, it is thorough and conclusive.

Here we have something deep. This *Saṁsāra* goes on due to greed, hatred and delusion. What we call skilful deeds – namely those born of non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion – are those that we make use of for putting an end to *Saṁsāra*. In the last analysis they conduce to our deliverance from *Saṁsāra*. There too we have something like the norm of arising and ceasing. Now let us take up the moral law of deeds (*Kamma*). Here we propose to discuss *kamma* from the point of view of the Law of Dependent Arising. *Nibbedhikapariyāya Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya* is a discourse revealing some highly significant aspects of the moral law of *kamma*. There the Buddha gives a six fold analysis of '*Kamma*' (deeds).

"Monks, *kamma* should be understood, the source and origin of *kamma* should be understood, the diversity of *kamma* should be understood, the result of *kamma* should be understood, the cessation of *kamma* should be understood, the way of practice leading to the cessation of *kamma* should be understood.

Having presented these six topics, the Buddha himself analyses them one by one. The analysis given to the first topic '*Kamma* should be known' is one that you all are familiar with.

"Cetanāham bhikkhave kammaṁ vadāmi. Cetayitvā kammaṁ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā."

"Monks, intention, I say, is *kamma*. Having intended one does *kamma* by body, by word, by mind."

This definition of *kamma* in terms of intention has quite a deep dimension in meaning. We can connect it with the analysis of Dependent Arising we have presented earlier. For the benefit of 'new comers' in this crowd let us mention it in brief. While analyzing name and form we brought up a certain simile. We compared the constituents of name to the five fingers of our hand. Feeling is the little finger, small but mischievous. Perception is the ring finger both popular and notorious. Intention is the middle finger prominent and intrusive. Contact is the forefinger, fussy and busy all the time Attention is the thumb standing apart but approachable to the rest. It is with these five members of the name group that we get hold of what constitutes "form".

Here too, it is the prominent and intrusive intention that the Buddha has called *kamma*. Of course it must be confessed that the simile of the five fingers is not found in the discourses.

Whatever it is, our comparison of intention to the 'prominent and intrusive middle finger' seems quite apt. As a matter of fact it is at the stage of intention that the notion of self becomes prominent and intrusive – and has to pay for that intrusion. Then the second point the Buddha has stated is the source and origin of *Kamma*. According to the Buddha, the source and origin of *Kamma* is contact. Just see, there again our simile is meaningful. We compared contact to the fore-finger fussy and busy all the time. It is the most proximate cause for the origin of *kamma* because next to it is 'attention' – the THUMB. It is attention that is instrumental in a change of focus from one thing to another. Those of you who have listened to our earlier sermons might remember our Narcissus simile. Narcissus was tempted to embrace his own reflection in water at the stage of intention. Then came contact and attention. Whatever it is, the Buddha has stated that contact is the source and origin of *kamma*.

Then comes the third point – the diversity (*vemattatā*) of *kamma*. This is explained as follows:

"There is monks, that *kamma* which has to be experienced in hell, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the animal realm, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the realm of ghostly beings, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the human world, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the deva world."

The diversity shown is according to the place where *kamma* has to be experienced. Then the result of *kamma* is said to be threefold.

"Monks, I say that the result of *kamma* is of three types:

in this very life, in the next birth, or in a subsequent birth."

The fifth point – the cessation of *kamma* is explained briefly:

"Monks, the cessation of contact is the cessation of *kamma*."

This is understandable. Since the origin of *kamma* is contact, its cessation has to be with the cessation of contact itself. Lastly comes the way of practice leading to the cessation of *kamma*. It is said to be the Noble Eightfold Path. In this way there is a six-fold analysis given in that context.

There are many other discourses on *kamma* some of which we will bring up as we go on. Now according to the doctrine of the *Nigaṇṭhas* there are three types of *kamma* – namely bodily *kamma*, verbal *kamma* and mental *kamma* out of which they give first place to bodily *kamma*. But according to the Buddha mental *kamma* takes precedence. It is clearly stated in the *Upāli Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* where the Buddha tells *Dīgatapassi* – the disciple of *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta* that mental *kamma* is more serious. One can understand the reason for it even from the first verse of the Dhammapada:

Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā

mano seṭṭhā manomayā

manasā ce paduṭṭhena

bhāsati vā karoti vā

tato naṁ dukkhamanveti

cakkaṁ va vahato padaṁ

Mind is the forerunner of mind-objects

Mind is their chief – they are mind-made

If with a mind corrupt with hate

One speaks or does an act

Then suffering trails him close behind

Like the wheel the ox that draws the cart.

The primacy of the mind is emphasized in the Dhamma whereas the *Nigaṇṭhas* give first place to the body. Because of this primacy of the mind, if one speaks or acts with a corrupt mind, one has to suffer the consequences. Morally culpable deeds are by definition intentioned. It is because the *Nigaṇṭhas* did not recognize the relevance of intention that they went to the extreme of self-mortification. The reason for the Buddha's Middle Path is the identification of *kamma* with intention.

Another important discourse portraying the results of *kamma* is the *Devadūta Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. As you may have heard it is a discourse preached as a sermon by the Venerable Arahant Mahinda in *Anuradhapura* to acquaint the people of this island with the dreadful consequences of evil deeds.

In that discourse the Buddha first of all analyzes the way in which beings are born in various realms according to their good and bad conduct. There he mentions heavenly realm, human world, the realm of ghostly beings, the animal realm and lastly hell. However it is about the hell that the Buddha describes in particular in this discourse. The Buddha gives a vivid description of the terrible suffering undergone by beings in various hells. That is probably why the Venerable Mahinda preached this discourse to the people of this country. The sutta instils moral dread of this *Saṁsāric* existence. On a Poson Full moon poya day like this we should call to mind such instructive teachings of the Buddha.

Generally such discourses like *Cūla Hatthipadopama Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, which also was preached to the people of this country by Venerable Arahant Mahinda have an appeal to the intellect. But we should consider why he thought of preaching a discourse like *Devadūta Sutta*. He probably wished to wean the people's minds from evil and turn them towards the good and skilful according to the word of the Buddha.

Another important discourse worth mentioning in this context is the *Cūla Kammavibhaṅga Sutta* preached by the Buddha to the Brahmin youth, Subha. There the pre-eminence of *kamma* and its pervasive influence on the lives of beings in *Saṁsāra* is brought out. Subha, the Brahmin youth asks the Buddha why there is a diversity among human beings. He says:

'Some human beings are short-lived, some are long-lived, some have many ailments, some have few ailments, some are ugly, some are comely, some are inferior, some are superior, some are poor, some are rich, some are low-born, some are high-born, some are unwise, some are wise.' He asks the Buddha the reason for this disparity. Then the Buddha comes out with the famous dictum on *kamma*.

"Kammassakā, māṇava, sattā kammadāyādā kammayoni kammabandhu kammapaṭisaranā. Kammaṁ satte vibhajati yadidaṁ hīnappaṇītatāya."

"Young man, beings are owners of their *kamma*, they have *kamma* as their inheritance, *kamma* is their origin, *kamma* is their relative, they have *kamma* as their resort. *Kamma* differentiates beings as inferior or superior."

'Kammassakā':

What one can call one's own is *kamma*.

'*Kammadāyādā':*

What one inherits is one's own *kamma*.

'*kammayoni':*

The place of one's birth is also decided by *kamma*.

'*kammabandhu':*

Kamma is one's true relative.

‘*kammapaṭisaranā’:*

Kamma is one’s resort in *Saṁsāra.*

Kamma is also responsible for the distinction as high or low among beings.

Therefore, the Buddha has recommended the constant reflection of this pervasive influence of *kamma* as a means to refrain from misconduct in the *Ṭhāna Sutta* as follows:

> “*Kammassakomhi*
>
> *kammadāyādo*
>
> *kammayoni*
>
> *kammabandhu*
>
> *kammapaṭisarano.*
>
> *Yaṁ kammaṁ karissāmi kalyānaṁ vā pāpakaṁ vā tassa dāyādo bhavissāmi.”*

“I am the owner of my *kamma*. I am the inheritor of my *kamma*. *Kamma* is my matrix. *Kamma* is my relative. *Kamma* is my resort. Whatever *kamma* I do whether good or bad I will be its inheritor.”

Though it is stated like that there is in this Dhamma a way of freedom from *kamma*. On the other hand *Nigaṇṭhas* or Jains had an extreme view of *kamma*. They held that everything is due to past *kamma*. (*Sabbaṁ pubbekatahetu*) and put down all pleasures and pains one experiences now to things done in the past. Therefore, they advocated self-mortification as a means of paying off past *kamma* – a way of practice called ‘*nijjarā’* – ‘wearing out’; They also observed rigorous vows and ascetic practices in order to prevent accumulation of new *kamma*. The Buddha sometimes interrogated the *Nigaṇṭhas* and refuted their views. He asked whether they can keep an account of *kamma* so far ‘paid off’ and ‘to be paid off’, thereby proving that the wanton infliction of bodily pain on oneself is meaningless.

In fact, there were other extreme views on *kamma* in the contemporary society. They were sometimes put forward within the framework of a tetralemma or four-cornered logic. Some – like the *Nigaṇṭhas* – held the view that all pleasure and pain one experiences is of one’s own making (*sayaṁ kataṁ sukhadukkhaṁ*). Some others said it is done by others (*paraṁ kataṁ sukhadukkhaṁ*). Yet others combined these two views and said that it is done by both oneself and others (*sayaṁ katañca paraṁ katañca sukhadukkhaṁ*). Still others rejected both self agency and external agency and asserted that pleasure and pain one experiences is of fortuitous origin. (*adhicca samuppannaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ).*

The Buddha rejected all four types of view and introduced the correct view by declaring that *kamma* is dependently arisen (*paṭicca samuppannaṁ).* As he sometimes put it:

"*Kim paṭicca*? *Phassaṁ paṭicca".*

"Dependent on what? Dependent on contact."

So the correct position is this. It is not a case of selfagency nor of external agency nor both nor neither but due to contact (*Phassaṁ paṭicca).* The term '*paṭicca'* represents *paṭiccasamuppāda* and negates the idea of fortuitous origin fairly and squarely. (Cp. The two terms: *adhicca-samuppanna* and *paṭicca-samuppanna).* That is why the Buddha concludes:

"Monks the cessation of contact is the cessation of *kamma*."

Now we are going deeper and deeper. But in the traditional analysis of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* an unfortunate trend is seen though it cannot be compared to the *Nigaṇṭha* view.

As you know there are 12 links in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula. In the *Visuddhi Magga* and other later works these 12 links are divided into three periods of time in the analysis of *Paṭicca Samuppāda.* Ignorance and preparations are said to belong to the past. The eight links – consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres, contact, feeling, craving, grasping and becoming are included in the present. Birth and decay and death are referred to the future. The attempt is to prove that consciousness has arisen from a past cause. We have already shown that this explanation is untenable.

The most important point in the formula is the vortex between consciousness and name and form. Even from the Buddha's analysis of the Law of Dependent Arising in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, the term *saṅkhāra* is defined in a way quite different from later definitions of the same term. Later analysis interpreted *saṅkhāra* as equivalent to *kamma*. But that is not the way the Buddha explained *saṅkhāra* in that context. He says:

"Katame ca bhikkhave saṅkhārā? tayoṁe bhikkhave saṅkhāra. Kāyasaṅkhāro, vacīsaṅkhāro, cittasaṅkhāro. Ime vuccanti bhikkhave saṅkhāra."

"And what, monks, are preparations? Monks, there are these three preparations. Body preparation, speech preparation, thought preparation. These, monks, are called preparations."

It is noteworthy that in this definition, the term *saṅkhāra* is used in the singular as *Kāyasaṅkhāro* (body preparation)*, vacīsaṅkhāro* (speech preparation*)* and *cittasaṅkhāro* (thought preparation). These three are defined in the Dhamma as follows:

Body preparation – in breath and outbreath

Speech preparation – thinking and pondering

Thought preparation – perception and feeling

So then in the *Vibhaṅga Sutta* where the Buddha defines each of the twelve links, the term *saṅkhāra* is defined as threefold. In breathing and out breathing cannot be taken as *kamma* that prepares another birth. Likewise thinking and pondering generally rendered as initial and sustained thought as well as perception and feeling are not reckoned as *kamma*. In fact whoever is wishing to put an end to existence (*bhava*) has to appease them. That is why they are called preparations.

Another instance of misinterpretation is the definition of consciousness. In the *Visuddhi Magga* and other later treatises consciousness is defined as 're-linking consciousness' (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*) resulting from so-called '*saṅkhāras*' interpreted as past *kamma*. In other words it is supposed to be the outcome of past ignorance and preparations. Such an interpretation is unwarranted since the Buddha himself has defined consciousness as being sixfold in that particular context, in the *Vibhaṅga Sutta*.

"Katamañca bhikkhave viññāṇaṁ. Chayime bhikkhave viññāṇakāyā. Cakkhu viññāṇaṁ sotaviññāṇaṁ ghānaviññāṇaṁ jivhāviññāṇaṁ kāyaviññāṇaṁ manoviññāṇaṁ. Idaṁ vuccati bhikkhave viññāṇaṁ."

"And what, monks, is consciousness? Monks, there are these six groups (lit. bodies) of consciousness. Eyeconsciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongueconsciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness. These monks are called consciousness."

Since *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* are defined as above by the Buddha, by no means can they be referred to the past. We have pointed out that all the twelve links pertain to the present.

Of course one may ask:

"Well then where do ignorance and preparations come in? That we have already explained. The very non-understanding of the mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form is itself ignorance. The activity sustained by that ignorance is preparations. To go back to our parable of *Narcissus* – that Greek youth Narcissus who imagined an angel in the reflection of his own face in the water, was tempted to embrace it again and again by that ignorance – that murk of delusion. So also are the worldlings. What we have in ignorance and preparations is the background or setting. The crucial point however, is the vortex between consciousness and name and form – that vortical interplay or mutual inter-relation. That is something pertaining to the present. That precisely, is why it is possible to put an end to suffering here and now by experiencing the cessation of becoming or existence. We mentioned all this in particular because there is some confusion in explaining *kamma* in the context of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* by attributing it to something in the past.

However one can still raise a question regarding the significance of what are called '*puññābhisaṅkhāra*, *apuññābhisaṅkhāra* and *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra* and their relevance to *saṅkhāra:*

In that context, what is called '*abhisaṅkhāra'* are special preparations, that is to say, specially performed *kamma*. In the former context, *saṅkhāra* referred to such activities as inbreathing and out-breathing which are like the 'bedrock' of *saṅkhāras*. But here what is called *abhisaṅkhāra* are volitional preparations where intention comes in. *Puññābhisaṅkhāra* are meritorious special preparations, *apuññābhisaṅkhāra* are demeritorious special preparations and *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra* are imperturbable special preparations, which have to do with the meditative absorptions – which bring about rebirth in Brahma worlds. Of course these three forms of preparations are also the outcome of ignorance, but by dispelling that ignorance in this very life those forces of preparations are stilled. These special preparations are kept up by egotism. All in all, *kamma* is dependently arisen. Our aim should be the cessation of *kamma*.

The path of practice leading to the cessation of *kamma* is the Noble Eightfold Path. As you know the Right View in the Noble Eightfold Path is the Four Noble Truths of suffering, its arising, cessation and the path to that cessation. But there is another Right View called '*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*' – the Right View that has *kamma* as one's own. It is the Right View which has ten points (*dasa vatthuka*) namely:

gifts, donations and offerings are not worthless. There is fruit and result of wholesome and unwholesome actions. There is this world and there is the next world. There is mother, there is father. There are in this world recluses and Brahmins of right practice who have by themselves understood and realized both this world and the next and are able to explain them. This Right View of ten points is called '*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*' because in the context of *Saṁsāra,* this is the view which helps beings to avoid rebirth in bad bournes and win rebirth in heavenly realms.

That view which asserts just the opposite of these ten points is called a pervert view. You all can guess what it is like. It says for instance, gifts, donations, and offerings are worthless; there is no fruit or result in wholesome and unwholesome actions. There is no this world no next world and so on.

The term '*kammassakatā'* has a deep meaning. It means 'taking *kamma* as one's own'. This is where 'the prominent and intrusive middle finger' (that is intention) has to pay with responsibility for his prominence and intrusion – to hark back to our simile of the five fingers. Due to that prominence and intrusion one may do merit or demerit or attain *jhānic* states. From a supramundane 'point of view' even the high *jhānic* attainments of *Āḷāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta* are of no account. That is why the Buddha left them with dejection. Deliverance from *Saṁsāra* is not to be found in *puññā – apuññā* and *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra* (meritorious, demeritorious and imperturbable special preparations). However they have their relevance in *Saṁsāra*. One should give up what is demeritorious and develop the meritorious and above all the imperturbable. They are useful for the development of the mind. But for deliverance from *Saṁsāra* there is only

the Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, Supramundane Noble Eightfold Path. You mustn't confuse the two views.

Some intellectuals dismiss the '*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*' as irrelevant and say that there is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father and so on calling it '*suññatā*' or voidness. That is going to an extreme. The Buddha calls it a pervert view. Worldlings if they blunder end up in hell. If one trains in the view that is based on the recognition of one's responsibility for one's deeds, one could at least get rebirth in heavens because one knows the results of good and evil and trains accordingly. But in the last analysis all these are preparations. Therefore, the final aim should be the release from preparations.

As we pointed out our aspiration should be the cessation of becoming – *bhava nirodha*. In the journey towards that cessation of becoming, the Buddha had to take a Middle Path.

The Right View which takes *kamma* as one's own (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi)* has its place in that Middle Path. He did not go to an extreme to approve a pervert view like Annihilationists who even went to the extreme of self-indulgence. As the Buddha proclaims in the *Devadūta Sutta* he could see beings getting reborn in heavens and hells according to their *kamma* as if someone standing between two houses would see human beings entering and leaving those houses. So if that is the position it cannot be contradicted. That is the situation in the world.

It is due to that condition in the world that the Buddha recognized the relevance of a Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own. We should now pay attention to this aspect too because some have confused issues. Of course from a deeper perspective what is helpful in attaining deliverance is the Noble Eightfold Path. It is based on the view that this is an entire mass of suffering. There is no question of oneself or another. But in truth that vision arises only at the moment of the Supramundane Path. Although it comes in to some extent even before it, only at the moment of the Supramundane Path moment it rightly surfaces. We brought up these deeper aspects to show that the analysis of the twelve links according to the three periods of time is incorrect and that *kamma* is conditionally arisen. (*Paṭicca Samuppanna)* Since *kamma* is conditionally arisen release from *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is tantamount to release from *Saṁsāra*.

Kamma is dependently arisen due to not seeing the Law of Dependent Arising. Therefore, to see it is to be free from it. In other words, the wrong course of action is the result of not seeing the inter-dependence between consciousness and name and form. Comprehension of it dispels the darkness of ignorance. In short, in the light of wisdom the vanity of that course of action is realized.

This then, is the supramundane freedom – the deliverance from *Saṁsāra*. As far as this Middle Path is concerned, it is obvious that the Buddha avoided both extremes, namely that of the *Nigaṇṭhas* and that of the Annihilationists. The Middle Path shown by the Buddha is extraordinary in that it implies the twofold Right View to enable beings in

Saṁsāra to avoid bad bournes and get rebirth in heavens and gradually to leave behind both hell and heaven and attain final deliverance from *Saṁsāra*. On one side there is the Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own and on the other there are the Four Noble Truths that lead one out of *Saṁsāra*.

There are a number of discourses in which the Buddha has preached about *kamma*. There is for instance, a very important sutta which shows the connection between *kamma* and views with an instructive simile. He declares that in the case of a person with a wrong view, whatever bodily, verbal or mental *kamma* he performs follows the pattern of the wrong view he has taken up and accepted, and whatever intention, aspiration, determination and preparations he has (*yā ca cetanā yā ca patthanā yo ca paṇidhi, ye ca saṅkhārā*) all those things will conduce to unwelcome, unpleasant, disagreeable, unwholesome and painful consequences because the view is evil. Then the Buddha gives a simile for it that you can easily understand.

When a margosa seed or a *kosātakī* seed or a bitter pumpkin seed is planted on wet ground, whatever essence of earth or essence of water it absorbs, all that will conduce to bitterness, gives a bitter fruit. Similarly in the case of one who has taken up a wrong view, whatever bodily, verbal or mental *kamma* he has, all that produces a bitter and unpleasant result. On the other hand, in the case of a person who has right view, all his bodily, verbal and mental *kamma* – all intentions, aspirations and determinations he has, all that gives a sweet fruit and brings happiness. The simile given in that case is:

Just as a sugar-cane seedling, a sweet paddy seed or a grape seed when planted on wet ground whatever essence of earth or essence of water it absorbs, all that gives a sweet fruit. This shows the importance of the correctness of views. That is why we should always try to avoid wrong views and going to extremes. From the worldly point of view that Right View which takes *kamma* as one's own is helpful in the context of *Saṁsāra*. But when one is thinking of transcending the world what is helpful is the Noble Eightfold Path. Then there is no reference to persons. No talk of oneself or another. Just a whole mass of suffering. What is called the Five Aggregates of grasping is a mass of suffering. The cause of it is craving. The aim is the cessation of craving. The path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path. One should not mix up the two types of Right View. The Buddha has pointed out both because they pertain to the Middle Path. That is as far as views are concerned. There are many deep discourses on this subject, which are not easily understood.

On one occasion the Buddha addressing the monks, said:

"Monks, I shall preach to you the new and old *kamma*. What, monks, is old *kamma*? The eye, monks, is old *kamma* specially prepared (*abhisaṅkhātaṁ*) and specially intentioned (*abhisañcetayitaṁ)* which should be known as something to be experienced. (*'vedanīyaṁ daṭṭabbaṁ')*. So also are the other senses – the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. That means the senses are the product of our own *kamma*. Then what is called 'new *kamma*' is what one performs now by body speech and mind. So it is a fact that this being with his senses is produced by *kamma*. But one has to get free even

from these senses that are the product of *kamma*, sometime or other. It is that freedom that on several occasions we pointed out as something realizable here and now. In the end when describing the attainment of the Fruit of Arahanthood, it is said that the eye ceases and the perception of forms fade away, the ear ceases and the perception of sounds fade away and so on. Even the six senses which are produced by the force of our intentions and *kamma* generated in *Saṁsāra* can be made to cease in this very world. It is an experience of cessation realizable here and now. That is what has been called the cessation of the six sense spheres (*'saḷāyatana nirodha')*. By seeing it as a fact of experience the arahants realize a state of freedom from all the six senses that are made up or prepared by *kamma*. Through it one can understand what is called the release from the prepared (*saṅkhāta),* which in other words is '*asaṅkhāta'* – the Unprepared.

The Buddha has pointed out that beings have *kamma* as their own (*kammassakā)*. Because of the responsibility for one's actions which is the result of ignorance and craving, one has to suffer the consequences. That is a norm common even to Buddhas and Arahants. As you all know, even Venerable *Mahā Moggallāna* had to undergo the result of a bad *kamma* he had committed in the distant past by killing his parents. This body is the product of our *kamma*. As a way of saying we call it the work of *Māra*. It is as if *Māra* has given us this body with a curse:

'you suffer!'; That is why in explaining what 'old *kamma*' is the Buddha said:

"cakkhuṁ bhikkhave purānaṁ kammaṁ abhisaṅkhataṁ abhisañcetayitaṁ vedaniyaṁ daṭṭhabbaṁ"

"The eye, monks, is old *kamma* specially prepared and specially intentioned which should be known as something to be experienced."

The eye, for instance, is something given to us 'to suffer', though we take pride in our eye. That is what the Buddha is telling us. Just think of one who has no eyes – a blind man deprived of vision. Or take the case of a person with only one eye. See how much they suffer. So also are the other senses. These are the results of our *kamma*. But we have to transcend them. It is for that purpose that we need the Noble Eightfold Path.

Then there are the three kinds of 'preparations' (*saṅkhārā)* –

body preparation (*kāyasaṅkhāro),*

speech preparation (*vacīsaṅkhāro)* and

thought preparation *(cittasaṅkhāro*).

Why are in-breathing and out-breathing regarded as a body preparation? It is because they prepare the body. No one can be blamed for breathing in and breathing out. However ignorance and craving are hidden beneath them. That is why every Buddha is said to have attained Buddhahood through Mindfulness of Breathing. There is something wonderful about it. Worldlings even entertain absurd views of self by taking it as '*prāna*'

the principle of life. But the Buddha pointed out that this process of in-breathing and out-breathing which is an illustration of arising and ceasing is itself a suffering. Worldlings are ignorant of it. They are sometimes not even aware that they are breathing. They take it for granted. Only the outward activities which we called '*abhi-saṅkhāra'* – 'special preparations' they take seriously. That is what appears prominently like that fraction of the iceberg visible above the surface. Like the vast portion submerged is the above mentioned body-preparation (*kāyasaṅkhāro).* In-breathing and out-breathing are *kāyasaṅkhāro* in the sense that they prepare the body for activity. Similarly thinking and pondering are *vacīsaṅkhāro* – speech preparation. There is far more thinking and pondering going on within a person than what comes out in speech. In fact, '*vitakka-vicāra'* can be regarded as sub-vocal speech. It is after a good deal of thinking and pondering that one breaks into speech. That again is like the submerged portion of an iceberg. That is a 'preparation for speech'.

Then there are the perceptions and the feelings, which prepare our thoughts and intentions. In the final reckoning they also have to be conquered. They have to be appeased or stilled. As you may have heard, when one is developing meditative absorptions one has to calm down thinking and pondering at some stage. Then he finds even breathing troublesome and calms that too. And finally he has to calm down perceptions and feelings. That is what the Buddha revealed to the world by the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings. Until then the worldlings found their progress blocked by perceptions and were unable to make a breakthrough. That was due to egoism – the notion of 'I' and 'mine'. The Buddha showed the way to deliverance through the cessation of perceptions and feelings. It seems, Therefore, that there is a subtle level of preparations which escape our attention. It is incorrect to limit the meaning of '*saṅkhāra'* to *kamma* as such.

The term '*saṅkhāra'* has quite a broad meaning. There are many who interpret the term to mean only *kamma*. But there is a subtle nuance of the term which goes deeper than the implications of *kamma*. That is 'bhava *saṅkhāra'* – the preparations pertaining to existence. They tend to perpetuate existence. In the last analysis even perceptions and feeling are preparations which have to be calmed down. All these the Buddha understood as preparations. Within the dictum:

'*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā'* (All preparations are impermanent) which we take lightly the entire Dhamma is included. All these are a heap of preparations. Not only the *kamma* that is outwardly visible. Even the underlying layers of in-breathing and out-breathing, thinking and pondering, perceptions and feelings have to be calmed down to attain that state of 'the stilling of all preparations' ('*sabba saṅkhāra samatha').*

On the one hand the Buddha has pointed out to beings in *Saṁsāra* the way of moulding their courses of action without involvement in wrong views so as to avoid rebirth in bad bournes and with Right View to get reborn in heavenly realms. On the other hand he has also pointed out the Noble Eightfold Path for transcending both good and evil and winning freedom from the entire heap of preparations. In the latter case it is not a question of persons. It is only a question of this whole mass of suffering. Internally or

externally, it is just a case of suffering. What underlies it is craving. The cessation of craving itself is *Nibbāna*. And the path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path.

There is a wonderful discourse which describes that state of perfect stilling. There Venerable Sāriputta says:

"Ānanda, when the body is there, due to bodily intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain. When speech is there, due to verbal intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain. When mind is there, due to mental intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain – all conditioned by ignorance."

But he points out that with the remainderless cessation of ignorance, neither the body nor the speech nor the mind will be there.

"..... avijjāyatveva asesavirāganirodhā so kāyo na hoti yam paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. Sā vācā na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. So mano na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ.Khettaṁ taṁ na hoti, vatthuṁ taṁ na hoti, āyatanaṁ taṁ na hoti, adhikaranaṁ taṁ na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ."

"..... But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, that body is not there owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That speech is not there owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That mind is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That field is not there, that site is not there, that base is not there, that reason is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain."

Now what does this mean? It is by taking this body as a unit – as my body – that all pleasure and pain arise. We do not understand it as a heap. We take the whole heap as a unit. We do not have an insightful understanding of it as a heap. By taking it as a unit, there is that experience of pleasure and pain. It is the same in the case of speech. Speech involves language. All depends on the meanings we attribute to a language. Supposing we go on scolding a person who doesn't know any language, with a smile on our face. However much we scold him, he wouldn't know that he is being scolded. It is according to the meanings we infuse into some words we use that we experience pleasure and pain. So long as there is speech, in relation to the speech, we experience pleasure and pain. Isn't it the same with what we call the mind? A flux of thoughts that arise and cease we have grasped as a unit called 'the mind' with our personality view ('*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*'). There comes a time when even that mind ceases. It is as long as we have this mind that we suffer. So it seems this discourse has an extremely deep meaning.

Here is a journey towards the cessation of existence. All the same, we should try to understand why the Buddha has declared that beings in *Saṁsāra* tend to drift towards two extremes – self-indulgence and self-mortification. There is the view of eternalism on one side and the view of annihilationism on the other. If by taking dogmatically the idea that there is a self one holds on to the view that suffering is of one's own making (*sayaṁ kataṁ dukkhaṁ),* there is no possibility of deliverance.

Due to that view of self one will go on in *Saṁsāra*. If on the contrary, one puts down suffering to fortuitous origin and forgets one's responsibility one will get reborn in hell. The Buddha avoided both these extremes and proclaimed the Noble Eightfold Path as the Middle Path. While discussing the Noble Eightfold Path we mentioned the Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi)* because it brings out a deep point. In ordinary life worldlings are living with the two sections oneself and others. Therefore, if one through selfishness acts under the influence of the three roots of evil greed, hate and delusion one will end up in hell. Instead of it the Buddha recommends a course of action which is conducive to one's own welfare (*attahita*) as well as to the other's welfare (*parahita*).

Now in the case of virtuous deeds such as observing the moral precepts we see that criterion of taking care of ones own and another's welfare. One may like to kill beings for food or for revenge. One may like to steal. But the Buddha disapproved of it as it means harm to another. Thinking of the society at large the Buddha has pointed out that what is 'skilful' (*kusala*) in such contexts is whatever that is beneficial to both sides. The term '*kusala'* is often misunderstood and misinterpreted. The basic meaning is to be skilful. That 'skill' – so long as one is in *Saṁsāra* – is in avoiding rebirth in miserable realms and in getting reborn in heavenly realms. But to be skilful in the highest sense of the term is to give up both merit and demerit (*puññapāpapahīna*) and get beyond *Saṁsāra* for good. So then the term '*kusala'* has a deeper dimension of meaning than *'puñña'* (merit). Generally both terms are used together in some contexts. For instance in some discourses we find the terms '*puññābhisandā' and 'kusalābhisandā'* (streams of merit and streams of the skilful) used more or less like synonyms. However out of the two terms '*kusala*' is of greater influence and intrinsic worth than *'puñña'*. It is directly connected with the mind.

We started with the roots of the skilful and the unskilful. The roots of the unskilful are greed, hate and delusion. The roots of the skilful are non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion. But have you ever heard of 'roots' of merit and demerit. Is there anything like that? There you are. Now you can understand the essential difference between '*puñña'* and '*kusala'*. '*Kusala'* or skilful has a direct relation to the mind.

The two words '*puñña'* and *'pāpa'* have been used from ancient times to denote deeds with pleasant and unpleasant results. The ten ways of making merit which you are familiar with namely liberality, morality, meditation, dedication of merits, rejoicing in merits, rendering service, honoring, preaching, listening to Dhamma and straightening of one's views – all these are reckoned as ways of making merit. But what is reckoned as skilful are the ten skilful deeds which apparently are negative in formulation for the most part. What is unskilful are killing, stealing, unchastity, lying, slandering, harsh speech, frivolous talk, avarice, ill-will and wrong views. What are called skilful are the abstention from killing, from stealing, from unchastity, from lying, from slandering, from harsh speech, from frivolous talk, non-avarice, non-illwill and right view. In the case of unskilful what is difficult is abstaining. But one has to be skilful in abstaining.

The very distinction between the ten meritorious deeds and the ten skilful deeds shows the difference between '*puñña'* and '*kusala'*. As we mentioned above from the standpoint of the supramundane level, the highest '*kusala*' is to be skilful enough to transcend even the subtlest preparations that perpetuate existence – that is to say not only merit and evil but also in and out breathing, thinking and pondering, perception and feeling. The Buddha made known to the world a wonderful state of cessation of existence in the attainment to the Fruit of Arahanthood in which all that is prepared (*saṅkhata)* even eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are made to cease.

In this age many wrong views about *kamma* are rampant in the world. People are thinking of big things but ignore *kamma*. In fact it is the intellectual approach that is holding sway in the world. Because of this intellectualism there is a neglect of such topics as *kamma* which tendency will eventually pave the way to hell. Venerable Arahant Mahinda did not preach only the *Cūla Hatthipadopama Sutta*. He also preached the *Devadūta Sutta* to arouse fear about *Saṁsāra* in the minds of the people. Venerable Mahinda Thera described to our people the dreadful sufferings in hell, which the Buddha had seen with his divine-eye, in order to acquaint them with the distinction between good and bad in conduct. In an age like this you should make it a point to ponder over these things.

Although this is the tenth sermon in our series of sermons on *Paṭicca Samuppāda,* we dealt with the topic of *kamma* because today happens to be the Poson Poya Day. So on this hallowed day you had better take in whatever that is conducive to the future of the dispensation of the Buddha as well as to your own *Nibbāna* out of this sermon. If by any chance you have any wrong views, if instead of the Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own you entertain some pervert or distorted view, you should do well to rectify them. Or else if you have any doubts about the Four Noble Truths, which is basic to the Noble Eightfold Path, try your best to dispel them in the light of this sermon.

We wish that this sermon will help you to understand the Middle Path preached by the Buddha and encourage you all to develop virtue, concentration and wisdom. May that skilful kammic force enable you to attain deliverance from this dreadful *Saṁsāra* as soon as possible. Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they all rejoice in our sermon! May the merits accrued thereby conduce to the fulfillment of their highest aim – the Deathless Nibbāna!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 11
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 193)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā

ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino

nirodhaṁ appajānantā

āgantāro punabbhavaṁ

Ye ca rūpe pariññāya

arūpesu asaṇṭhitā

nirodhe ye vimuccanti

te janā maccuhāyino

Kāyena amataṁ dhātuṁ

phusayitvā nirūpadhiṁ

upadhipaṭinissaggaṁ

sacchikatvā anāsavo

deseti sammāsambuddho

asokaṁ virajaṁ padaṁ

– Itivuttaka Tika Nipāta

Those beings that go to realms of form

And those that are settled in formless realms

Not understanding the fact of cessation

Come back again and again to existence

Those who having comprehended realms of forms

Do not get settled in formless realms

Are released in the experience of cessation

It is they that are the dispellers of death

Having touched with the body the deathless element

Which is free from all assets

And realized relinquishment of assets

Being influx-free the perfectly enlightened one

Proclaims the sorrowless taintless state

Dear Listeners,

The Four Noble Truths, which the Fully Enlightened Buddha proclaimed to the world on an Esala Full Moon Poya day, is a wonderful teaching the world has never heard before.

Suffering, its arising, the cessation and the Path to it – all these Four Noble Truths are based on the norm of Dependent Arising. Therefore, on this Esala Poya Day we have chosen as the topic of our eleventh sermon, in this series of sermons on Dependent Arising, the Noble Truth of Cessation. We have taken up three verses which declare that this truth of cessation is something that the world has never heard. Among the Threes of the *Itivuttaka* these three verses are introduced with this statement:

'*Vuttaṁ hetaṁ bhagavatā vuttaṁ arahatāti me sutaṁ*.'

– 'I have heard that this was said by the Fortunate One, the Worthy!' What was said is mentioned in brief as follows:

'*Rūpehi bhikkhave arūpā santatarā*

arūpehi nirodho santataroti'

"Monks, more peaceful than Realms of Form are the Formless.

More peaceful than the Formless Realms is Cessation."

Then comes the brief introductory note:

"This fact the Fortunate One uttered. Therein it is said thus:" and then those three verses are giVenerable Let us try to get at the meaning of these verses.

'*Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā*' – Whatever beings there are that go to Realms of Form. '*Ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino*' – and whatever beings that are in Formless Realms. '*nirodhaṁ appajānantā*' – Not understanding cessation. '*āgantāro punabbhavaṁ*' – come back again and again to existence.

'Ye ca rūpe pariññāya' – But those who having comprehended the nature of forms. '*arūpesu asaṇṭhitā*' – do not get settled in Formless Realms. '*nirodhe ye vimuccanti*' – and are released in the cessation. '*te janā maccuhāyino*' – They are the dispellers of death.

'*Kāyena amataṁ dhātuṁ – phusayitvā nirūpadhiṁ*' – Having touched with the body the Deathless Element that is assetless, '*upadhipaṭinissaggaṁ – sacchikatvā anāsavo*' – And being influx free, realized the relinquishment of assets, '*deseti sammāsambuddho – asokaṁ virajaṁ padaṁ*' – The Fully Enlightened One preaches the sorrowless taintless state.

Poṭṭhapāda Sutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya* is a highly significant discourse which clearly portrays the ideas expressed in those three verses. The introductory episode is as follows:

When the Buddha was dwelling at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthi, the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda was staying at *Mallikārāma* built by Queen Mallikā for ascetics of other sects, together with hundreds of wandering ascetics. One day the Buddha set out in the forenoon on his alms round and it occurred to him:

"It is too early for me to go for alms in the city of Sāvatthi. What if I were to meet the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda in *Mallikārāma."*

Then the Buddha turned in the direction of *Mallikārāma* and as he was approaching, Poṭṭhapāda saw him from afar and silenced his crowd saying that the Buddha liked silence.

When the Buddha came there, Poṭṭhapāda welcomed him with the compliment:

"Venerable Sir, it is a long time since you have done us the favor of paying a visit" and offered him a high seat. Seated on it the Buddha asked him what sort of a talk they were engaged in when he came in as an interruption. Poṭṭhapāda simply replied:

"Venerable Sir, let that talk be. That is not the type of talk which is not rare for your reverence to hear." and raised a topic which he considered more important.

"In days past, Venerable Sir, among recluses and Brahmins of various sects assembled in the hall for discussing moot-points, a talk arose concerning the cessation of higher levels of perception (*abhisaññānirodha*). The topic of discussion was:

‘How does the cessation of higher levels of perception come about?’ When that topic came up, some put forward the view:

“Without a cause or condition a man’s perception arises and ceases. At the time it arises, one is percipient. When it ceases, one is not percipient.”

This is how some explained the cessation of higher levels of perception. Then another said:

“No, no. That is not the way it happens. Perception is a man’s self. It comes and goes. When it comes, one is percipient. When it goes one is nonpercipient.” Then a third interposed:

“No no. That is not the way it happens. There are recluses and Brahmins of great psychic power and influence. They insert perception into a man and withdraw it. When it is inserted, he is percipient, when it is withdrawn he is non-percipient.”

Then a fourth objected:

“No no. That is not the way it happens. There are deities of great psychic power and influence. They insert perception into a man and withdraw it. When it is inserted he is percipient, when it is withdrawn he is non-percipient.”

Having given a report of that discussion Poṭṭhapāda said:

“And then Venerable Sir, I remembered the Fortunate One with the thought:

‘If only the Fortunate One, the Well-gone One were here who is proficient in those issues! The Fortunate One is knowledgeable in the cessation of higher levels of perception’.”

And then Poṭṭhapāda formally invited the Buddha to explain it with the words:

“Venerable Sir, how does cessation of higher levels of perception come about?”

Before presenting the Buddha’s answer to this question, let me mention something that enhances the relevance of the Buddha’s sermon. It was a time when yogins of India in their spiritual quest found themselves in a dilemma. They had reached the highest level in the development of perception. There were some who had attained the *jhānic* level of neither-perception-nornon-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). You may have heard of the two teachers our *Bodhisatta* prince *Siddhattha* approached after his renunciation namely *Ālāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta*. Out of them, *Ālāra Kālāma* had attained the Formless Realm of Nothingness. (*Ākiñcaññāyatana*) and *Uddaka Rāmaputta* had attained the Realm of Neither-perception-nornon-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). But our *Bodhisatta* aroused both those *jhānic* levels as soon as the two teachers uttered a few words about them and even as they were offering equal status as teachers he left them with the thought:

“This is not the way to *Nibbāna*.”

From this we can infer that those yogins were in a problematic situation. The dilemma they were in is briefly mentioned in the *Pañcattaya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* as follows:

"*Saññā rogo saññā gaṇḍo saññā sallaṁ, asaññā sammoho. Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ nevasaññānāsaññaṁ.*"

"Perception is a disease, perception is a boil, perception is a dart, and absence of perception is delusion. This is peaceful, this is excellent, that is to say neither-perception-nor-non-perception."

They understood the limitations of perception – that it is a disease, a boil, a dart. But on the other hand, to give up perception according to them – is tantamount to delusion. So for the nonce, they found a solution in the intermediate position – neither-perception-nor-non-perception. In an earlier sermon we compared it to a see-sawing. In short those yogins were seesawing between perception and non-perception. It was in such a context that the Buddha was confronted with this problem. Let us see how he tackles it.

First of all, the Buddha tells Poṭṭhapāda*:*

"If any recluses and Brahmins had said that perception arises in a man without any cause or condition, they have blundered at the very outset.

Then the Buddha declares the conclusion that accords with the Dhamma.

"*Sahetuhi Poṭṭhapāda sappaccayā purisassa saññā uppajjantipi nirujjhantipi.*"

"For*,* Poṭṭhapāda*,* it is due to causes and conditions that a man's perceptions arise and cease."

Now comes a highly significant statement which embodies a first principle. You all had better bear it in mind. It comes up again and again like a refrain in a song throughout the Buddha's disquisition that follows. This is it:

"*Sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti,*

sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti"

"Through training some perceptions arise,

through training some perceptions cease."

Having presented that first principle, the Buddha himself offers to substantiate it with the explicatory question:

"*Kā ca sikkha?*"

"What is that training?"

Since the long account that follows is very often met with in the discourses, we shall only give the gist of it.

A *Tathāgata*, Fully Enlightened, arises in the world and preaches the Dhamma which is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, having realized through higher knowledge the nature of the world as it is, in the world with its gods, Maras, Brahmas, recluses and Brahmins.

A householder or a householder's son listens to that Dhamma, arouses faith in it and goes forth in the dispensation.

Having gone forth, he becomes endowed with virtue, senserestraint, mindfulness and full awareness and contentment. With that he goes into solitude and cleanses his mind of the five hindrances – avarice, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, worry and remorse and doubt. Even from there one can see how the Law of Dependent Arising works in the mode of approach to the First *Jhāna*. That monk, as he reflects on the fact that the hindrances are abandoned within him, rapture arises. He subdues it and experiences joy. Due to his joyous mind, the body becomes tranquil. With the tranquil body, he experiences happiness and in that happiness his mind gets concentrated. About that monk, the Buddha says this much. Secluded from sense pleasures and unskillful mental states, he attains to and abides in the First *Jhāna* which is accompanied by thought applied and sustained with joy and bliss born of seclusion. In him, the former perception of sensuality ceases and the subtle but actual perception of joy and bliss born of seclusion is there at that time. And then the Buddha citing this as an illustration of the above first principle, makes the following declaration:

> "*Evampi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti,*
>
> *sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti*"
>
> "Thus it is that through training some perceptions arise
>
> and through training some perceptions cease."

Then the approach to the Second *Jhāna,* briefly stated, is as follows:

When that monk attains to the First *Jhāna* again and again, he realizes that some *Jhāna* factors are gross. First of all thoughts, initial and sustained, are found to be gross and he calms them down and attains to the Second *Jhāna,* which is accompanied by joy and bliss born of concentration. About that monk the Buddha says that in him the former subtle perception of joy and bliss born of seclusion ceases. Instead of it the subtle perception of joy and bliss born of concentration arises. Then again the Buddha comes out with the refrain-like corroborative formula:

"*Evampi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti*"

"Thus it is that through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease."

And then the Third *Jhāna* is attained by getting rid of joy which is felt to be gross and by arousing a bliss of equanimity. About him it is said that the former subtle perception of joy born of concentration ceases and in its place a subtle perception of bliss born of equanimity arises of which he is now conscious. Then that monk abandons both bliss and pain and having already done away with happiness and unhappiness arouses the Fourth *Jhāna* which is free from both pain and bliss and has pure mindfulness of equanimity. In him, it is said that the former subtle perception of bliss of equanimity has ceased and the subtle perception of the absence of pain and bliss has arisen.

Again the same refrain-like formula comes up.

"Thus it is that through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease."

Then the way of going beyond Spheres of Form is giVenerable That monk by transcending perceptions of form, putting an end to perceptions of resistance and not attending to perceptions of multiplicity takes up the sign – 'space is infinite' and attains to the Sphere of Infinity of Space. In him, the perception of Form that he earlier had, ceases and the subtle perception of Infinity of Space arises. He becomes one with a subtle perception of bliss in the Sphere of Infinity of Space. Thus through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease.

Transcending the Sphere of Infinity of Space, that monk makes that consciousness which was directed to space itself the object and develops the Sphere of Infinity of Consciousness. And in him the former subtle perception of the Infinity of Space ceases and the subtle perception of the Infinity of Consciousness arises. He becomes one with the subtle perception of bliss in the Sphere of Infinity of Consciousness. Thus some perceptions arise through training and some perceptions cease through training.

Then he transcends the Sphere of Infinity of Consciousness and developing as the meditation object, the idea 'There is nothing', attains to and abides in the Sphere of Nothingness. And in him the former subtle perception of Infinity of Consciousness ceases and the subtle perception of the Infinity of Nothingness arises. Thus through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease.

Now comes a turning point at this stage. The Sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is too subtle to be made the base for developing insight. The Sphere of Nothingness is regarded as the central spot from which one turns either towards the Sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception or towards the attainment of Cessation of Perceptions and Feelings. But as mentioned above, until the advent of the Buddha, ascetics of other sects were not aware of this latter possibility. Instead they were see-sawing between perception and non-perception. The Buddha now goes on to describe how a monk in this dispensation makes the breakthrough.

"Poṭṭhapāda, when a monk in this dispensation is aware of his perception, he passes from one level of perception to another and gradually touches the peak of perception

called '*saññagga*' – which is a term for the Sphere of Nothingness. As he stands there at the peak of perception it occurs to him:

"To go on intending is bad for me. It is better for me not to intend. ('*cetayamānassa me pāpiyo acetayamānassa me seyyo*'). And he weighs pros and cons thus:

"If I were to go on intending and engage in specially preparing ('*āhañceva kho pana ceteyyaṁ abhisaṁkhareyyaṁ*') these perceptions would cease and other grosser perceptions would arise. Then he makes a decision which it is not possible for one in an ordinary level of perception to make. It is worded as follows:

> "*yannūnāhaṁ na ceva ceteyyaṁ nābhisaṁkhareyyaṁ*"
>
> "What if I were not to intend and specially prepare"

And in accordance with that decision he neither intends nor prepares specially ('*so na ceva ceteti na abhisaṁkharoti*').

Now the Buddha explains what happens to the monk who carries out that crucial decision.

"As he does not intend and prepare specially, those perceptions cease and other grosser perceptions do not arise. He touches cessation ('*So nirodhaṁ phusati*'). Finally the Buddha sums up the whole account with this sentence:

> "*Evaṁ kho Poṭṭhapāda,*
>
> *anupubbābhisaññānirodhasampajāna-samāpatti hoti.*"

"It is in this way, Poṭṭhapāda that the attainment with full awareness to the gradual cessation of higher levels of perception comes about"

The long compound which marks the grand finale of this extraordinary discussion might need analysis. '*Anupubba*' means gradual or by stages. '*Abhisaññā*' we have already explained as higher levels of perception and *ābhisaññānirodha* is cessation of those higher levels of perception. '*Nirodha-sampajānasamāpatti*' means the attainment to the cessation with full awareness. By the way, the term '*anupubba*' merits a little comment, as it is a very important term in this dispensation. You may have come across the phrase:

'*anupubbasikkhā anupubbakiriyā anupubbapatipadā*.' In this dispensation there is a gradual training, a gradual course of action and a gradual treading of the path. The term '*anupubba*' (gradual) reminds one of the Law of Dependent Arising. Just think of a flight of steps. Like that by gradual stages, proceeding by stage to stage in the higher levels of perception, a monk in this dispensation gradually arrives at the cessation of perceptions and feelings.

Now that you are familiar with the constituents of 'name' in name-and-form ('*nāmarūpa*') that is to say feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention, you may

note that the problem of yogins till then was how to get rid of feelings and perceptions. They were unable to give up perceptions for fear of falling into delusion. What is the reason? They were clinging to preparations. (*saṅkhārā*). In the context of name-and-form preparations appear as intention (*cetanā*). So this is the crucial point. That monk when he took the extraordinary decision:

"Let me not have intentions or preparations" was ready to give up even intention. Form is already gone and out of the constituents of name, feelings, perceptions and intentions are made to cease by that decision.

So what is there to 'contact'? Cessation itself.

This is enough for you to understand the difference between the philosophy of those preBuddhistic yogins and the philosophy behind the Law of Dependent Arising with its Middle Path approach. At the end of this wonderful disquisition the Buddha asks Poṭṭhapāda*:*

"What do you think, Poṭṭhapāda? Have you ever heard of an attainment with full awareness to the gradual cessation of higher levels of perception like this?"

"No, indeed Venerable Sir."

After that Poṭṭhapāda raises a number of questions. Let us take them up one by one.

The first question is:

"Venerable Sir, does the Fortunate One make known one peak of perception (*saññagga)* or does he make known several peaks of perception?"

To this question the Buddha gives a very strange answer:

"Poṭṭhapāda*,* I make known one peak of perception as well as several peaks of perception."

Then Poṭṭhapāda asks:

"How is it, Venerable Sir, that the Fortunate One makes known one peak of perception as well as several peaks of perception?"

"In whatever way one touches cessation, in that way I point out a peak of perception. Thus it is Poṭṭhapāda that I point out one peak of perception as well as several peaks of perception. As far as we understand this is how it should be understood. There is in the Dhamma a conclusive statement as follows:

'*yāvatā saññāsamāpatti tāvatā aññāpaṭivedho*.'

'As far as is the range of attainments of perception, so far is there a penetration into full understanding.'

It means there are as many possibilities of penetration into arahanthood as there are attainments of perception. That is to say, the possibilities of reaching cessation through insight and realizing *Nibbāna*. Not only through attainment of cessation by gradual stages but through any one of the *jhānic* attainments (except the eighth) one can reach the peak of perceptions by ending intentions (*cetanā*) and special preparations (*abhisaṅkhārā*) mentioned above. That is how the Buddha's answer should be interpreted.

Then Poṭṭhapāda asks a second question:

"Venerable Sir, does perception arise first and later knowledge or knowledge arises first and later perception? Or else do perception and knowledge arise simultaneously?"

To this question the Buddha gives a straightforward answer:

"It is perception, Poṭṭhapāda that arises first. Knowledge arises later. Through the arising of perception is the arising of knowledge. And he understands. It is through this specific condition that knowledge has arisen in me."

Here too, the commentator is in doubt and quotes several interpretations given by various teachers.

According to our understanding, this is how the above subtle statement has to be explained.

Now what was the problem in regard to perception that the yogins were grappling with? For them perception was some sort of a 'bug-bear'– a mystery. They either took it as self or as some mysterious thing which someone else infused into them from outside. It was the Buddha who blasted the myth. Let us examine the implications of a certain term recurring in this discourse. That pregnant term is '*sakasaññī*' – 'with one's own perception' or 'percipient of oneself' It occurs in the decisive phrase:

"*Yato kho Poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu idha <u>sakasaññī</u> hoti…..*" – When Poṭṭhapāda a monk in this dispensation is percipient of oneself….

There is in this sutta the mention of the term '*sampajañña*' – full awareness; So from the very beginning a monk is accompanied by '*sati-sampajañña*' – mindfulness and full awareness. Then there is no place for mystic concepts, for mystery mongering with a 'self' or 'soul'; instead from moment to moment he is proceeding in accordance with the Law of Dependent Arising. There is nothing to grasp. It is like climbing a flight of steps. All along it is the story of perception and knowledge of perception. For instance if you read this discourse you will come across the two highly significant phrases:

'*vivekaja pītisukha sukhumasacca<u>saññā</u> hoti*' 'There is subtle and factual perception of joy and bliss born of seclusion.'

'*vivekaja pītisukha sukhumasacca<u>saññī</u> hoti*'

'…. He is percipient of the subtle and factual joy and bliss born of seclusion.'

So the two terms '*saññā*' *and* '*saññī*' used by the Buddha side by side are highly significant. Perception arises and one is aware of that perception. It is that awareness of perception ('*saññī*') that has to be understood as knowledge ('*ñāna*') in this context. It is not the case that perception has arisen and the monk is unaware of it. Because he has full awareness ('*sampajañña*') he gets to know it. That is the knowledge. But the commentator goes on dabbling with conflicting views of teachers. The issue is clear enough.

Well, the Buddha has answered that question too. But Poṭṭhapāda has yet another question – a serious one at that. He asks:

"Venerable Sir, is perception a man's self or is perception one thing and self something else?"

Now this is a tricky question the type clever lawyers go on asking. Poṭṭhapāda here brings in a self as from nowhere.

Why? Because he still has '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' or 'Personality View'. He was probably disappointed that the Buddha's disquisition made no mention of a self. That is why he dragged in the question. Such questions put one in a dilemma. If you give a categorical answer, you get into difficulties. Take for instance a case like this in the law courts. A driver who has never taken intoxicants appears before the judge, but a lawyer wants to get him to admit that he has taken drinks. If the lawyer asks him sternly "Say 'Yes' or 'No'. Are you still drinking or have you stopped it?" – the man would be in a fix. Whether he answers 'yes' or 'no' he would get caught in the lawyer's trap. Poṭṭhapāda's question is also of the same type. But the Buddha didn't get caught. Instead he counter questioned Poṭṭhapāda*:*

"What do you mean by 'self', Poṭṭhapāda?"

The Buddha asked Poṭṭhapāda for a definition of the word 'self' because he himself has no conception of a self or soul. In discourses like *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, he called the concept of a 'self' an entirely foolish idea. ('*kevala paripūro bāladhammo*') which the world is clinging on to.

The commentator reprimands Poṭṭhapāda for dragging in a self with a pungent simile. He says as if a pig, after it has been bathed clean and anointed with perfumes goes back and plunges into a pit of excreta, Poṭṭhapāda*,* in spite of the fact that he has been bathed and anointed with perfumes in the form of a subtle sermon emphasizing the three characteristics, went back and plunged into the same cesspit of self view. But the Buddha as if to retrieve him counter-questioned him. Poṭṭhapāda*,* what do you mean by 'self'?

Some questions admit of a categorical answer but some do not. Sometimes you have to get the question clarified by the questioner himself. Such questions are called '*paṭipucchāvyākaranīya pañha*' – questions that have to be answered after counter-

questioning. This is such a question. Now Poṭṭhapāda gives a definition of the word '*attā*'.

'Venerable Sir, I have the concept of a self that is gross and has form made up of the four great primaries and consuming food taken in mouthfuls. In short it means this body as it is. Now the Buddha says:

'Poṭṭhapāda, if that is the self you are speaking of, then perception is one thing and self something else. Then he gives the reason.

"The perception I am speaking of is of this nature. Some perceptions arise and some other perceptions cease. (*aññā va saññā uppajjanti aññā va saññā nirujjhanti*). There is something deep in this statement. It means 'perceptions arise as one thing and cease as another because they are subject to otherwiseness every moment. Take for instance the case of one attaining the First *Jhāna*. The perception that was there at the moment of attaining is not the same by the time it is transcended for it undergoes change by the training (*sikkhā*). That is to say, one level of perceptions arises, another level of perceptions ceases. There is no place for a self or soul in that explanation. When that definition is invalidated Poṭṭhapāda comes out with another definition.

"Venerable Sir, I mean a self that is mental replete with all limbs major and minor with senses intact. That in effect is their concept of *Jhānas* with Form (*rūpajjhāna)*. Then the Buddha says:

"Poṭṭhapāda, even if your self is of that description, perception is one thing and self is something else. When that attempt also fails, Poṭṭhapāda puts forward yet another definition of self:

"Venerable Sir, I mean a self that is formless and consisting of perception."

But the Buddha dismissed that too, saying:

"Even if your self is formless and consisting of perception, still the position is that perception is one thing and self another."

Finally Poṭṭhapāda in his exasperation asks:

"Is it possible Venerable Sir, for me to know whether perception is a man's self or else perception is one thing and self another?"

Poṭṭhapāda, however, is disappointed when the Buddha replies:

"It is difficult for you to know whether perception is a man's self or else perception is one thing and self another, since you are of a different view with different convictions, with different predilections, practicing elsewhere under other teachers."

When even that attempt failed Poṭṭhapāda as a last resort asks:

"If that is so Venerable Sir, may I know whether the

world is eternal – this alone is true all else is false?"

Those of you who have read our books must have come across the ten questions known as Unexplained Points with which the Buddha was confronted by many but which the Buddha laid aside as unexplained (*avyākata*). In our earlier sermons we have explained why the Buddha laid them aside. Now Poṭṭhapāda comes out with that questionnaire. Briefly stated, they are as follows:

First, a dilemma. Is the world eternal? Is the world not eternal? Next comes another dilemma. Is the world finite? Is the world infinite? Then another set of two questions which again poses a dilemma:

'Life-principle ('*jīvaṁ*' – a term suggestive of Soul or self) is the same as body. Life principle is one thing and body another.' Then comes a tetralemma a four-cornered question:

'Does the *Tathāgata* exist after death? Does the *Tathāgata* not exist after death? Does he both exist and not exist after death? Does he neither exist nor not exist after death?' The tetralemma seeks to 'corner' the answerer into granting one or the other of possible alternatives. But the Buddha could not be cornered by dilemmas and tetralemmas. He rejected the questionnaire in toto every time he was confronted with it and refused to give a categorical answer. He simply laid them aside ('*avyākata ṭhapita*') because they were ill-founded. In this instance too, his response to every one of those ten questions was:

"It has not been explained by me Poṭṭhapāda."

Then Poṭṭhapāda asks:

"Venerable Sir, if that is so, is there anything you have explained categorically?"

And the Buddha says that he has categorically explained the four propositions.

"This is suffering. This is the arising of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering. This is the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering – that is to say, the Four Noble Truths."

Poṭṭhapāda, however, seemed satisfied with that explanation and with the assent:

"That is so, Fortunate One. That is so, Well-gone One" ('*Evametaṁ Bhagavā, evametaṁ Sugatha*') relieved the Buddha from the barrage of questions and the Buddha left on his alms-round. As soon as he left, the crowd of wandering ascetics got around Poṭṭhapāda and chastised him with verbal pricks, saying:

"This Poṭṭhapāda approves of everything Recluse Gotama says. He doesn't seem to have answered any one of the ten questions categorically."

Poṭṭhapāda rejoined saying:

“I also don’t see any of those questions answered categorically. But Recluse Gotama lays down a true and factual path of practice, a statute of Dhamma, a norm of Dhamma. When Recluse Gothama is laying down a true and factual path of practice, a statute of Dhamma, a norm of Dhamma, how can I, as an intelligent man, not approve of the well-spoken words of Recluse Gotama as well-spoken.

That phase of the discussion ends there. The sequence of events from there onwards is recorded in the discourse as follows.

After two or three days, Citta Hatthisāriputta (Son of an elephant trainer) and the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda came to see the Buddha.

The first thing Poṭṭhapāda came out with was a report of what happened after the Buddha had left the other day.

“Venerable Sir, soon after the Fortunate One departed that day, they got around and gave me a shower of verbal pricks.”

When he had reported all what had transpired, the Buddha said:

“Poṭṭhapāda, all those wandering ascetics are blind. They lack vision. Only you are the one with vision. There are, Poṭṭhapāda, Dhammas that I have preached and laid down non-categorically and there are also Dhammas I have preached and laid down categorically. The former refers to the ten Indeterminates and the latter refers to the Four Noble Truths. Then the Buddha goes on to relate some of his own experiences with recluses and Brahmins in regard to the question of views of a self.

There are some recluses and Brahmins who declare and entertain such a view as this:

‘*Ekantasukhī attā hoti arogo parammaraṇā*’ – After death, self is of unmixed bliss and healthy’ I approach them and ask:

“Is it true you declare and hold on to such a view as this?”

They say,

“Yes”.

Then I ask them:

“Do you dwell knowing and seeing a world of unmixed bliss?”

They reply “N?”

I ask them:

“Have you for one night or for one day, for half a night or half a day experienced an all-blissful self?”

They say “No”.

I ask them,

“Do you have that knowledge to declare,

“This is the path, this is the practice for seeing with one’s own eyes an all-blissful world?”

They say “No”.

I ask them:

“ Have you heard the voice of deities reborn in an allblissful world who go on saying:

“Friends, be well-established on the path, be uprightly established on the path for seeing with your own eyes a world all-blissful for we on our part, friends, with such a practice are reborn in an all blissful world?” They say,

“No”.

Then he asks Poṭṭhapāda*:*

“What do you think Poṭṭhapāda when that is the position, does not the assertion of those recluses and Brahmins turn out to be baseless?”

A peculiar word ‘*appāṭihīraka*’ is used in that context, which we have rendered by baseless:

It means an assertion that lacks proof or evidence to substantiate it. The Buddha himself gives two similes to illustrate the connotations of the word.

The first simile is about a beauty queen “Suppose a man goes about saying:

“I like and love the beauty queen of this province.”

Others ask him:

“ Good man, do you know of what clan she is?”

He says,

“No”.

“Do you know her name?”

He says,

“No”.

“Do you know whether she is tall or short or black or grey or brown?”

He says “No”.

“Do you know in what village or town she is?”

He says:

“No”.

And then others ask him; “So you like and love a beauty queen whom you do not know or see?”

After giving this simile the Buddha asks:

“What do you think Poṭṭhapāda*?* In that case does not that man’s talk turn out to be baseless (*appāṭihīraka*)? Poṭṭhapāda says:

“Indeed that is so Venerable Sir.”

Comparing it to the undemonstrable assertion of those recluses and Brahmins, the Buddha gives another simile to convince Poṭṭhapāda of the absurdity of it.

“Supposing a man is building a staircase at the four cross-roads for climbing into a mansion. People ask him:

“Good man, that mansion for which you are building this staircase do you know in which direction it is – whether in the East or West or North or South? Whether it is tall or short or medium-sized? He says “No”.

Then they tell him:

“Well then, good man, you are building a staircase for a mansion you do not know or see.”

He says,

“Yes”.

Giving this simile the Buddha asks Poṭṭhapāda again:

“What do you think Poṭṭhapāda? In that case, doesn’t that man’s talk turn out to be baseless? “Indeed that is so, Venerable Sir” replies Poṭṭhapāda.

Having thus invalidated the soul theories of those recluses and Brahmins the Buddha now explains the concept of *Jhānas* in this dispensation with the help of a peculiar term ‘*attapaṭilābhā*’ (acquisition of self). Instead of the term ‘*attā*’ the Buddha brings in the concept of ‘*attapaṭilābhā*’. He says:

“*Tayo kho’me* Poṭṭhapāda *attapaṭilābhā oḷāriko attapaṭilābho manomayo attapaṭilābho arupo attapaṭilābho*.”

Poṭṭhapāda*,* there are these three acquisitions of self, (namely), the acquisition of a gross self, acquisition of a mental self, acquisition of a Formless self. They are defined with the

same words as in the earlier discussion on self but they are not presented as states of a self but as acquisitions (*paṭilābhā*). The gross acquisition of self is qualified with the words '*cātummahābhūtiko*' (made up of four great primaries) and '*kabaliṅkārāhārabhakkho*' (consuming food taken in mouthfuls). The mind-made (*manomaya*) acquisition of self is described with the words '*sabbaṅgapaccaṅgī ahīnindriyo*' (replete with all limbs major and minor, with senses intact). The Formless (*arūpa*) acquisition of self is described with the term '*saññāmayo*' (consisting of perception).

So these are the three acquisitions (*paṭilābhā*). Let us try to get at the nuances of this term '*paṭilābhā*' (lit. 'profit'). For acquiring something you have to follow some course of action. In this context, what is the course of action? The 'training' (*sikkhā*). It is to indicate that these states are the outcome of some training that the Buddha introduced this term on this occasion.

Where Poṭṭhapāda and other ascetics used the term '*attā*' (self) to explain these *Jhānic* states, the Buddha used the term *attapaṭilābhā*' because they are to be attained through some training. Now here is a revolutionary change in outlook. These three acquisitions of self (*attapaṭilābhā*) are given the same standard definitions. The first one is '*oḷāriko rūpī cātummahābhūtiko kabaliṅkārāhārabhakkho*' (gross, has form, is made up of the four great primaries, consuming food taken in mouthfuls). The second, is '*manomayo sabbaṅgapaccaṅgī ahīnindriyo* (mental, replete with all limbs major and minor, with senses intact). The third is '*arupī saññāmayo*' (formless and consisting of perceptions).

But the Buddha didn't stop with redefinition. He declares now:

"Poṭṭhapāda, for the abandoning of the acquisition of the gross self, I preach the Dhamma by practicing according to which your defiling mental states would be abandoned, purifying mental states would be developed and you would by yourself realize with your higher knowledge the perfection and fulfillment of wisdom here and now and abide in it."

You may now recall what I have told about '*saññāgga*' – the peak of perception. Even from the First *Jhāna* or from Formless (*arupa) Jhānas* one can attain *Nibbāna* provided one develops insight based on them. Then the Buddha tells Poṭṭhapāda that he preaches the Dhamma for the abandonment of all three types of acquisitions of self (that is gross, mind made and formless) or *attapaṭilābhā*. Thereby one attains to the perfection of wisdom here and now.

After the Buddha had answered Poṭṭhapāda's questions to his satisfaction, Citta Hatthisāriputta comes out with his questions. In fact his questions go deeper into the subject of '*attapaṭilābhā*' introduced by the Buddha. He asks:

"Venerable Sir, at the time there is the gross acquisition of self, is the mental acquisition of self and formless acquisition of self false (*moghā* – lit. empty) at that time? Is the gross acquisition of self alone real for him at that time?

Venerable Sir, at the time the mental acquisition of self is there, is the gross acquisition of self and the formless acquisition of self false at the time? Is only the mental acquisition of self real for him at that time?

Venerable Sir, at the time, the formless acquisition of self is there, is the gross acquisition of self and the mental acquisition of self false at that time? Is only the formless acquisition of self real for him at that time?"

The Buddha's answer brings out quite a deep aspect of the whole problem of self. He says:

"*Citta*, at the time the gross acquisition of self is there, it is not reckoned ('*saṅkhaṁ gacchati*' – lit. go into reckoning) as mental acquisition of self. It is not reckoned as formless acquisition of self. At that time, it is reckoned only as the gross acquisition of self."

He applies the same criterion to the other two acquisitions of self. At the time the mental acquisition of self is there, it is not reckoned in terms of the other two. Similarly when the formless acquisition of self is there, it is not reckoned as any of the other two, but only as formless acquisition of self.

Here the Buddha is trying to draw the attention of Citta to the problem of confusing the three periods of time – quite a deep point at that. To drive home the point, the Buddha poses the following questions to Citta.

Now Citta, if people ask you " Were you in the past – not that you were not? Will you be in the future – not that you will not be? Are you now – not that you aren't? What will you say in reply?"

Citta says:

"Venerable Sir, if they question me like that, I would answer:

I was in the past – not that I wasn't. I will be in the future – not that I will not be. I am now, not that I am not."

Then the Buddha asks:

"If they ask you Citta, that acquisition of self you had in the past, is that acquisition of self alone real and the future acquisition of self false and the present acquisition of self also false? Whatever acquisition of self you will have in the future, is that alone real and the other two false? Whatever acquisition of self you have now that alone is real and the other two false?"

Then Citta says:

"Venerable Sir, if they ask me that, I would reply:

Whatever acquisition of self I had in the past, at that time that acquisition of self alone was real and the other two false. Whatever acquisition of self I will have in the future at that time that acquisition of self alone will be real and the other two false. Whatever acquisition of self I have now, only that acquisition of self is real and the other two false at that time."

Then the Buddha completes the analogy saying:

"Even so Citta at whatever time the gross acquisition of self is there, at that time, it is not reckoned as mental acquisition of self nor as formless acquisition of self. At that time it is reckoned only as gross acquisition of self. So also in the case of the other two.

The illusion in the world which was the reason for the self view is the idea that the past and the future exist even as the present. In short, the confusion of the three periods of time. It is this myth that the Buddha is trying to explode. He does it with the following wonderful homely simile which is sure to help you understand this deep point.

"Just Citta, as from the cow comes milk, from milk curd, from curd butter, from butter ghee, and from ghee cream of ghee, at the time it is milk, it is not reckoned as curd, nor as butter, nor as ghee, nor as cream of ghee. At that time it is reckoned only as milk. Similarly, when it is curd, it is reckoned as curd, not assuming that there is milk in it or that there is ghee which is yet to come is hidden in it."

I shall give you a little story, a sort of parable found in Western literature to help you understand this point. A miserly man had a goose that lays a golden egg everyday. He thought of getting today itself the eggs that she will be laying tomorrow and the days to follow. He split it open and was disappointed. It is a similar fallacy to think that future exists or that past exists. These are only worldly usages. Simply because milk can become ghee in the future it is wrong to think that already there is ghee in it.

After giving this simile as an illustration of what he had told about the three acquisitions of self (*attapaṭilābhā*) the Buddha sums up the discussion with the following memorable statement:

"*Itīmā kho Citta lokasamaññā lokaniruttiyo lokavohārā lokapaññattiyo, yāhi Tathāgato voharati aparāmasaṁ*."

"For these, Citta, are worldly appellations, worldly expressions, worldly usages, worldly designations which the *Tathāgata* makes use of without tenacious grasping."

It is due to tenacious grasping of these that all the confusion has arisen. We ourselves agree to give names to those various stages of milk preparations and then we go on wondering whether milk is found in curd or butter in curd. Indian philosophy with its involvement in soul theories was caught up in this confusion. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* there is a theory of five selves encased in concentric shells. (*pañcakoṣa*) such as the '*annamaya*' and '*prāṇamaya*' (made-of-food, made-of-breath). This confusion about the three periods of time gave rise to dogmatic views of self.

The momentous declaration of the Buddha quoted above shows that he regarded all those concepts as mere worldly appellations, worldly expressions, worldly designations, which he used but did not grasp tenaciously. It is by that tenacious grasping that self-created problems of cause and effect arise. Whether the cause preceded the effect or whether the effect is already embedded in the cause. It is noteworthy that in a standard work on linguistics written by two modern scholars, the milk simile of the Buddha is quoted expressing their surprise that 2,500 years ago the Buddha has revealed a truth which is enough to awaken modern semantic philosophers today."

After this powerful declaration by the Buddha, Poṭṭhapāda confessed faith in him with great fervour.

"It is marvelous Venerable Sir, it is marvelous Venerable Sir, even as one were to set upright what had been overturned or reveal what had remained hidden, or tell the way to one who has lost his way or hold up an oil-torch in the darkness, so that those with eyes may see. So has the Fortunate One, in many ways declared the Dhamma. Venerable Sir, here I go for refuge to the Fortunate One, to the Dhamma and the Order of monks. Let the Fortunate One accept me as a lay-follower who has gone to him for refuge from today as long as life endures. Then Citta Hatthisāriputta, with a similar confession of faith went to his refuge and even begged for the going forth and higher ordination. He did go forth and was given higher ordination. Not long after his higher ordination he went into solitude and with diligent and ardent endeavor attained arahanthood.

So that is how the discourse ends. But in the remaining few minutes let me clarify whatever knotty points there could be in our explanation.

Regarding the three significant terms we brought up, there is an important discourse which mentions them in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* – namely *Niruttipatha Sutta*. There the Buddha pointedly deals with the confusion caused by mixing up the three periods of time. It begins with these words:

"*Tayome bhikkhave niruttipathā adhivacanapathā paññattipathā*." – "Monks, there are these three pathways of linguistic usage of synonyms and of designations."

The Buddha says that these three should not be mixed up and cites them separately. For instance, as regards the aggregate of form he says:

"Whatever form, monks that is past ceased, transformed 'it was' is the reckoning ('*saṅkhā*') appellation or designation. It is not reckoned as 'it is', or it will be. In the same way the reckoning used for any form that is future, the reckoning is 'it will be', and not 'it was' or 'it is'. Likewise the reckoning for any form that is present is 'it is' and not the other two. The Buddha says the same thing about each of the other four aggregates. He declares that whatever wise recluses and Brahmins there were, there will be and there are, have not, will not and do not mix up these three periods of time. Whatever is past is gone. It is a delusion to think that it exists. Whatever is future has not come yet. It may exist only when it comes.

It is in view of that tendency in mixing up, that the Buddha introduces the term '*attapaṭilābhā*' – 'acquisition of self'. A special phrase is used in that connection – '*tasmiṁ samaye*' (at that time). That is highly significant as a term for specification. For instance when there is the formless acquisition of self the other two acquisitions of self do not come in.

There too the Buddha warns against mixing up the three periods of time. It is by such a 'mixing up' that the Personalityview ('*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' – lit. 'existing body view') has arisen. However language is not to be blamed for it. It is the fault of man's defilements. The 'father' and the 'mother' are to be blamed. Who is the father? Ignorance. Who is the mother? Craving. The hindrance of ignorance with its notion of the compact, covers up the perception of the heap in the world and presents it as a 'thing'. Craving with its glue pastes the heap together. Thereby the worldling is made to think that the body exists so that it clings to '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' ignoring the extremely rapid process of change going on within the body. So also in the case of other things. It is here that the self-view lies hidden. The purpose of this *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta,* Therefore, is to expose this fallacy. It is a wonderful discourse. Poṭṭhapāda as well as Citta Hatthisāriputta*,* are asking the same question which we ourselves would have asked had we not known the Dhamma. It was the same problem that blocked the progress of the yogins. They reached some high level of spiritual development, but they mystified it. They never thought that it is brought about by causes and conditions as shown in this discourse. Instead they attributed it to some non-descript soul or self or else they thought that some agent is manipulating perception. Why were they unable to extricate themselves from perception? Because they had not recognized '*Saṅkhārā*' or preparations. The most distinctive feature of the Dhamma proclaimed by the Buddha is the recognition of the part played by *Saṅkhārā* – a term that is integral to the Law of Dependent Arising. Even in making that extraordinary decision, the monk was directing his attention to *saṅkhāras*.

"*yannūnāham na ceva ceteyyam nacābhi-sankhareyyam*" – "What if I were not to intend and specially prepare?"

He was keen on getting free from intentions and preparations. He has been clinging on to intentions and preparations all this time. A simile given in the *Visuddhimagga* comes in useful here.Suppose there is a broad stream of water and no bridge to crossover. One way to get across is to hang on to a creeper hanging down from a tree on this side and go on swinging until enough momentum is gathered just to be well above the other bank. As soon as you can see the other bank below you when you look down, you have to let-go of the hold on the creeper-daring the drop. Otherwise the creeper would swing you back. That is why the Buddha compared this Dhamma to the raft. This simile smacks of the same technique.

Meditation for serenity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) is only a creeper to hang on like that. After you have built up sufficient momentum by swinging holding on to it, you must letgo. But you are scared of the THUD. That is why until the Buddha showed the way to do it, yogins went on 'see-sawing' with the dilemma "to-be or not-to-be" in the ethereal plane of neither perception nor non-perception because of their soulprejudice.

They were scared of losing the 'I'. The Buddha showed them that there is no 'I' to suffer the 'thud' through this novel concept of '*sikkhā*' or training. To hark back to the wonderful refrain:

> '*Sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti*'
>
> "Through training some perceptions arise, through
>
> training some perceptions cease!"

It is the Law of Dependent Arising that blasts the view of self or soul. From beginning to end this discourse vibrates through and through with the Law of Dependent Arising. This is a marvelous discourse. So you had better bear in mind every one of the similes you have come across. Remember the breaking of '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' or personality view is not something that happens with an audible sound. By assiduously developing insight on the Five Aggregates of grasping somehow or other you realize the vanity of grasping and let-go. Actually it is not that you let-go with an effort. It is an effortless letting –go in spite of yourself – so to say. What you touch by that letting-go is 'contact with cessation' ('*nirodhaṁ phusati*'). One awakens from the Cessation of Perceptions and Feelings into *Nibbāna* – to Arahanthood. Why? Because on arising from the cessation of Perceptions and Feelings one is aware of the 'signless' ('*animitta*') 'unestablished' ('*appaṇihita*') and void ('*suññata*'). That is the awakening from the THUD on the other bank. If one has attained the Cessation of Perceptions and Feelings, one invariably awakens from it to *Nibbāna*. Why so? Because wisdom is the End. With it one wins to the conviction; 'Exhausted is birth, lived is the Holy Life, done is what had to be done!'("*khīṇā jāti, vusitam brahmacariyaṁ kataṁ karaṇīyaṁ*").

Well then, this is enough for you all. If life endures I might be able to expatiate in sermons to come. On this memorable *Esala Poya* day within this hour we have said something on the Law of Dependent Arising on which the Four Noble Truths are founded. If you can imbibe anything useful for the development of your serenity and insight meditations from this sermon, please do so and put forth your best efforts to win deliverance from this dreadful samsāric suffering and by going through the Fruits of the Paths to Stream-winning, OnceReturning and Non-returning realize the deathless *Nibbāna*!

Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they rejoice in our sermon! May the merits accrued thereby conduce to their realization of the highest aim – the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 12
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 194)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*' 'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Cirassaṁ vata passāmi – brāhmaṇaṁ parinibbutaṁ

appatiṭṭhaṁ anāyūhaṁ – tiṇṇaṁ loke visattikaṁ

– Oghataraṇa Sutta, Saṁyutta Nikāya.

It's long since I see a Brahmin who has attained *Nibbāna*

Crossing over the sticky craving without stopping and without struggling.

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha has on many occasions compared the crossing over of *saṁsāra* to a crossing over of the four floods. He taught the world the Middle Path as the technique of overcoming the four floods, namely lust (*kāma*), becoming (*bhava*), views (*diṭṭhi*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). We see the emphasis given to *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Law of Dependent Arising even in this Middle Path. Therefore, we have selected a verse on crossing the floods as the topic for this twelfth discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. This verse is found in the *Oghataraṇa Sutta*, the first sutta in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. This is how it goes.

When the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana Monastery in Sāvatthi, a certain deity called on the Buddha one night and respectfully stood on a side. He had a question to ask.

"*Kathaṁ nu tvaṁ mārisa oghaṁ atari*?" "How, friend did you cross over the flood?"

The Buddha replied,

"*Appatiṭṭhaṁ khvāhaṁ āvuso anāyuhaṁ oghaṁ atariṁ*"

"Friend, without stopping, without struggling I crossed the flood."

Unable to grasp the implication of this statement the deity asked for further clarification. 'How exactly did you, friend, cross the four floods?"

Then the Buddha explained "Friend, whenever I stopped, I sank. Whenever I struggled, I got swept away. Therefore, I crossed over without stopping and without struggling."

The deity uttered this verse in praise of the Buddha, venerated him and vanished.

Now let us take up this verse for discussion.

'Cirassaṁ vata passāmi - brāhmaṇaṁ parinibbutaṁ'

It's long since I see a Brahmin who has attained Extinction, *Nibbāna*

appatiṭṭhaṁ anāyūhaṁ - tiṇṇaṁ loke visattikaṁ

It's long indeed since I see a Brahmin who has attained *Nibbāna* by crossing over the sticky craving called '*visattikā*' without stopping and without struggling.

The earlier reference to a forceful flood will not be a problem to you because it is common knowledge that if we stop having gone a little way, we get drowned. If we struggle we would get swept away. Only a systematic middling effort will take us across. Similarly the Buddha has offered a Middle Path in this Dhamma, for crossing over the four floods, lust (*kāma*), becoming (*bhava*), views (*diṭṭhi*) and ignorance (*avijjā*).

Let us take them one by one for discussion. The flood of lust comes first. Ascetics and Brahmins contemporary of the Buddha had presented two extreme types of solutions for crossing the floods. As you have often heard about, they are *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* and *attakilamathānuyoga* (indulgence in sense pleasure and self mortification). Ascetics such as Pakudha Kaccāyana, Makkhalī Gosāla and Ajita Kesakambalī, who belonged to the group of six heretics ignored the significance of wholesome and unwholesome actions and their resultant effects. They were critical of this theory. They disregarded the idea of a "this world and a next world".

They presented the theories of *ucchedavāda* (annihilation) *nāstikavāda* (nihilism) or *ahetu appaccayavāda* (causeless conditionless fortuity). This resulted in more and more people inclining towards *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* (indulgence in sense pleasures). If there is no next world, and no results in good and bad actions, the only alternative is selfindulgence. Although this idea is not mentioned in the suttas, the Chārvākins of later origin taught this view which is embodied in a Sanskrit verse familiar to many.

Yāvat jīvet sukhaṁ jīvet

ṛṇaṁ kṛtvāpi ghṛtaṁ pivet

bhasmī bhūtasya dehasya

punarāgamanaṁ kutah

Even today we hear young people expressing this idea "Let us enjoy ourselves as long as we live."

"*ṛṇaṁ kṛtvāpi ghṛtaṁ pivet*"

"Drink ghee even if you run into debt."

Ghee was recognized as an expensive drink those days.

bhasmī bhūtasya dehasya punarāgamanaṁ kutah

How could a charred dead body return?

That was one type of philosophy.

The other aspect was self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*) taught by Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta, as you may have heard about. Rejecting both clothes and food, this group followed extremely strict vows. What was their philosophy? *Pubbekata hetu.* There are past actions, the results of which have to be paid off. New kammas should not be accumulated. They followed a code of torturous vows for that purpose known as *attakilamathānuyoga*.

These were the two extremes. In fact as you may have heard, the Buddha himself once followed self-mortification, until realization dawned on him. After renouncing the luxurious life of royalty, the Buddha entered upon the other of extreme socially approved life of self torture. The *Mahāsaccaka Sutta* records how he realized after six years of self torture, its uselessness in achieving his goal. With this conviction he searched for a more effective path. Gradually it dawned on him how he entered the first *jhāna* under the cool shade of a rose apple tree at a ploughing ceremony of his father. Recalling this incident, he questioned himself "Why should I fear comforts (*sukha*) as long as they are free of sense pleasures and evil mental states?"

"*Kiṁ nu kho ahaṁ tassa sukhassa bhāyāmi yaṁtaṁ sukhaṁ aññatreva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi*?" Finally, motivated by this reasoning, he entered upon the Middle Path. Here I would like to mention briefly that those who accepted self-indulgence, by their 'stopping' (in the flood) actually sank into hell. Those who took up self-mortification, struggled through self torture. It did not lead them to enlightenment either.

The Buddha taught the *Ariya Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga*, the Noble Eightfold Path which steers clear of those two extremes, and is known to you as the Middle Path. One cannot at a glance identify the Law of Dependent Arising, *Paṭicca Samuppāda* concealed within the Eightfold Path. But the *Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* offers the following explicit clarification of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* within the Eightfold Path.

Sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṁkappo pahoti

Sammā saṁkappassa sammā vācā pahoti

Sammā vācassa sammā kammanto pahoti

Sammā kammantassa sammā ājīvo pahoti

Sammā ājīvassa sammā vāyāmo pahoti

Sammā vāyāmassa sammā sati pahoti

Sammā satissa sammā samādhi pahoti

Sammā samādhissa sammā ñāṇaṁ pahoti

Sammā ñāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti

This shows how beautifully each factor is closely linked with the other. When I explain one, you can easily understand the rest.

"*Sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṁkappo pahoti*"

Right thought dawns on him who has the right view. Right thought gives rise to right words. Right words give rise to right action. In this way the Middle Path is amazingly linked with each other. That itself is the Middle Path.

A superficial glance at the Middle Path does not reveal the Law of Dependent Arising within. One may argue that there is not even a reference to *Paṭicca Samuppāda* in the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana Sutta* which we all regard as of prime importance. If that is so, how did Venerable Aññā Koṇdañña describe his attainment of *Sotāpanna* (Stream Entrant) as the realization of the vision that 'Whatever is of the nature of arising, all that has the nature of ceasing' (*Yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*)? It follows the norm found in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. We have often explained to you that whatever has the nature of arising, all that is of the nature of ceasing. It is clearly evident in the Eightfold Path which begins with the fourfold truth. It closely follows the pattern of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

Now that we have touched on the subject, let us see how the Buddha highlights other aspects of the Middle Path. The Jains by giving up clothes and food, followed a path of extreme selfmortification. In contrast to it, the Buddha allowed the monks the use of the four requisites (*paccaya*). Even the word *paccaya* has the idea of 'dependent on'. The monks depended on the four requisites in order to fulfill their objectives. The ordinary laymen, the worldly people use them for sheer enjoyment. But you may have heard that the monks always reflect on the purpose behind the use of the requisites when using each of them.

Taking food as an example, monks reflect on the purpose of eating

"*Neva davāya na madāya, na maṇḍanāya, na vibhūsanāya*".

This food is not for enjoyment, nor for pride, nor for adornment, nor for beautification.

"*Yāvadeva imassa kāyassa ṭhitiyā yāpanāya vihiṁsūparatiyā brahmacariyānuggahāya.*"

"Only for the purpose of maintaining this body, for its sustenance, to prevent possible harm through hunger, as a support for holy life".

It is interesting to note here that the requisites rejected by the Jains, were converted into objects of meditation by the Buddha. You may have heard that the monks contemplate on the four elements (*dhātu*) found in their food as '*dhātu manasikāra'* (attention on elements).

Let me explain the general idea behind it. This food is made up of the four elements. The pure food becomes impure as it enters this repulsive body. This becomes a very effective subject for meditation. You can see what an amazingly practical Middle Path the Buddha has taught. On the one hand, one avoids the extreme of self-indulgence, and does away with the idea of eating for embellishment. On the other hand, the process of eating is converted into a subject for meditation, instead of totally condemning food.

Another important factor attracts our attention. The ideal qualities of a monk and a meditative layman are simplicity (*appicchatā*) and contentment (*santuṭṭhi*). Yet another quality of a monk is *viriya* – effort, not to be wasted in practicing vows of self torture, as in Jainism, but to strive to cultivate the factors in the Middle Path in a balanced way called '*viriya samatā*'.

Now it is clear that the Buddha highlights Dependent Arising or *Paṭicca Samuppāda* in his Middle Path, and also deviates sharply from the two extremes. That is my brief explanation of the *kāmogha*, 'the flood of lust'.

The next is *bhavogha*, 'the flood of becoming'. In the second *Nipāta* of the *Itivuttaka*, there is a *sutta* that discusses *bhavogha* in detail.

"*Dvīhi bhikkhave diṭṭhigatehi pariyuṭṭhitā devamanussā olīyanti eke atidhāvanti eke."*

Obsessed by two views, monks, are gods and human beings. Some of them lag behind, some overreach. Both these tendencies are described as "*bhavārāmā bhikkhave devamanussā bhavaratā bhava samuditā."*

These gods and men take delight in becoming, are attached to becoming, take pride in becoming. When the Dhamma is being preached for the cessation of becoming, they are not pleased with it. They fall back. They are displeased. The Buddha's teaching based on the Middle Path, for the cessation of becoming does not appeal to the eternalists who have grasped the soul theory. Generally those who like becoming, dislike the cessation of becoming. They get drowned in the flood of becoming. They sink in the current of becoming. Their grip on the 'soul' prevents them from striving for an escape.

There is another group called the annihilationists, developing a revulsion towards becoming. ("*Bhaven'eva kho pana eke aṭṭiyamānā harāyamānā"*). They treat this body as the soul and reject the idea of a life beyond death. That is an overreaching. This is called '*vibhava*'. They go to the other extreme by denying re-becoming. They are those who overreach.

Here I would like to repeat a simile I had given earlier, though it is not found in the text. Some run forward hoping to step on their own shadow like little children who do it for

fun. Of course they never succeed in doing so. Some others are scared of the shadow and try to run away from it, but on turning back, see the shadow right behind them. Now the two extremes are like that. The Buddha has proclaimed his Middle Path avoiding these two extremes. What did the Buddha do? Having referred to those two extremes with the words '*olīyanti eke'* (some lag behind) and '*atidhāvanti eke'* (some overreach), as the third alternative the

Buddha declared '*cakkhumanto va passanti*' (only they do see who have eyes to see). This is how he really presents it.

"*Dvīhi bhikkhave diṭṭhigatehi pariyuṭṭhitā devamanussā olīyanti eke atidhāvanti eke cakkhumanto va passanti."*

The third factor '*cakkhumanto va passanti*' means 'only those with eyes, see'. What does he mean by it? The two earlier groups of extremists were gripping on '*bhava*' (becoming). Discarding them, the Buddha introduced a new word '*bhūta*'.

Bhūta means, what has arisen. You might recollect this word in connection with the phrase '*yathābhūta ñāṇadassana*' 'knowledge and vision of things as they are'. Therefore, the Dhamma does not go to the extreme of existence as eternalists do. Nor does it go to the extreme of destruction of existence as nihilists. Instead, seeing what is arisen as 'arisen' is called '*yathābhūta dassana*' (vision of things as they have arisen). If the simile of the shadows is brought in here, it is like understanding the shadow as a shadow. One who understands shadow as shadow will not run after it nor will he run away from it in fear.

The shadow is a simile for *nāmarūpa* (name-and-form) as we have mentioned earlier.

You have already heard me use the simile of the dog on the bridge and the simile of Narcissus, in order to explain the Buddha's teaching on *ogha* 'floods' and *bhava* 'becoming'. He has also explained how *viññāna* or consciousness regarding which people had many rigid theories, is interdependent with *nāmarūpa*. We have referred to this shadow of *nāmarūpa* many a time. The Buddha avoided that extreme since he saw the shadow as the shadow. There too, we find a Middle Path.

Let us take up *diṭṭhogha* next. I am sorry we have to be very brief since there are four *oghas* to deal with. As I have mentioned earlier, it has been discussed in the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*. Let me mention in brief its background because of its relevance to this question. Venerable Kaccānagotta once approached the Buddha and asked "To what extent does *sammādiṭṭhi* (right view) become *sammādiṭṭhi*?"

'Right view' had been given various suitable interpretations on various occasions, particularly by the Buddha and Venerable Sāriputta. But they are not contradictory to one another.

As the occasion demanded, here the Buddha explained *sammādiṭṭhi* as follows.

"*Dvayanissito khvāyaṁ kaccāyana loko yebhuyyena atthitañceva natthitaṁ ca*"

‘Kaccāyana, the worldlings for the most part rest on two extremes.’ *Dvayanissita* means holding on to a dyad. What are they? *Atthitā* ‘Is’ (everything exists) and *natthitā* ‘Is not’ (nothing exists). The world either says everything is or nothing is. Then the Buddha explains the Middle Path in his dhamma.

“*Lokasamudayaṁ kho kaccāyana yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya passato yā loke natthitā, sā na hoti*”.

When one sees with wisdom, the nature of constant arising in the world, the view of non-existence does not occur. Then he explains the other aspect.

“*Lokanirodhaṁ kho kaccāyana yathābūtaṁ sammappaññāya passato yā loke atthitā sā na hoti*”.

When one sees as it is with wisdom, the nature of ceasing in the world, the view of existence (*atthitā*) does not occur. Just think about it. It is amazing. The world is constantly arising and ceasing. Some are caught up in the extreme view that the world really is or the world does not exist. What the Buddha says is that when one sees as it is with wisdom that the world is constantly arising, the extreme view that “The world is not” loses its hold on him. On the other hand when one sees as it is with wisdom, that the world is constantly ceasing, the extreme view that “The world is” fades away. When one sees with wisdom the nature of arising of the world, the extreme of non-existence disappears. When one observes the nature of ceasing in the world, the extreme view of existence of the world disappears.

Now the Budhha explains what lay between the two extremes.

“*Ete te ubho ante anupagamma*”.

Without approaching either of these extremes,

“*majjhena tathāgato dhammaṁ deset?”*

The *Tathāgata* takes a Middle Path in preaching the dhamma.

This Middle Path is the teaching on the Law of Dependent Arising that we have discussed so far.

Then he explains the Middle Path beginning with “*Avijjā paccayā saṁkhārā*” as you may have heard. Dependent on ignorance are preparations etc. and finally he explains how the five aggregates of grasping which is suffering, arises. He shows how with the cessation of ignorance, all that suffering ceases. So it is a philosophy of a Middle Way. Arising and ceasing. How the entire mass of suffering arises and then how it ceases.

The Buddha in this manner rejects both extremes. When both views of existence and non-existence are given up, what remains there, is a question of suffering. The notion of the soul is shattered then and there. Instead of a soul what actually exists is a problem of suffering, and its cessation. That is the Middle Path implied there. That means there is

only the arising and ceasing or *samudaya* and *vaya*, free from the extreme views of existence and non-existence. As we have earlier mentioned, here too one might wonder why these facts are not found in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. But we know that in the Noble Eightfold Path, what is shown as the right view is suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path leading towards it. Within these four truths, is found a right view, which avoids the extremes of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. Although many cannot comprehend it, right view begins right from the Middle Path shown by the Buddha. In fact we can treat the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* as a concise commentary on the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.

I would like you to think deeply on this point. A superficial glance at the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* might make one think that the Law of Dependent Arising is missing there. But what we wish to point out is that *sammādiṭṭhi* embodies the Middle Path of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. It should be clear that there is no absolute existence or absolute non-existence. Instead, there is an arising and a ceasing dependent on causes and conditions. If at all, what arises is an entire mass of suffering, and what ceases is an entire mass of suffering. Towards the end of the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, the Buddha further explains that those who hold and cling to the aforementioned extreme views, thereby conceive an idea of a soul. The eternalists believe in an eternally present soul while the nihilists imagine that the body is the soul. The reason for this is their taking up a rigid stand point, their firm grip on a view.

The Buddha on the other hand proclaims right vision showing that where there is no grasping of a view, what arises is only suffering and what ceases is only suffering,

"*dukkhaṁ eva uppajjamānaṁ uppajjati, dukkhaṁ nirujjhamānaṁ nirujjhati*".

That is why one who has this vision entertains no doubt or uncertainty regarding the past or the future. If at all, what had been there in the past was only these five aggregates of grasping. So will it be in the future. He realizes that there is nothing worthwhile here, but only suffering. With regard to that suffering what the Four Noble Truths imply is that very Middle Path.

Generally when we speak of the Middle Path, we are not aware that *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is implicit in it. It is to pinpoint that fact, that I say all this. In fact the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* serves as a concise commentary to the Right View in the Noble Eightfold Path.

So we have pinpointed that the Buddha offered a Middle Path to cross over the flood of sensuality (*kāmogha*) and he offered a Middle Path to cross over the flood of becoming (*bhavogha*). Moreover he offered a Middle Path to cross over the flood of views (*diṭṭhi ogha*). Rejecting both extreme views of existence and non-existence, he brought out the fact of suffering in the guise of arising and ceasing.

"*dukkhaṁ eva uppajjamānaṁ uppajjati, dukkhaṁ nirujjhamānaṁ nirujjhati*"

'What arises is only suffering, what ceases is only suffering'. There too Dependent Arising is highlighted.

Now we come to the *avijjogha*, the flood of ignorance. This might sound unusual. Ignorance is here treated as a flood. This is the most difficult of the four to comprehend. The *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* expounded by Venerable Sāriputta provides an explanation as to why the Buddha called it a flood. In fact we come across several definitions of the term *sammādiṭṭhi*, at different levels. They are not contradictory to one another. They all are correct from different perspectives.

Here is one of them,

"Monks, if a noble disciple understands ignorance (*avijjā*) its arising, its ceasing and the path leading to its cessation, even to that extent he is one with Right View, *sammādiṭṭhi*.

"*Avijjaṁ ca pajānāti, avijjā samudayaṁ ca pajānāti, avijjā nirodhaṁ ca pajānāti, avijjā nirodhagāminī paṭipadaṁ ca pajānāt?"*

A knowledge of these four is sufficient for *sammādiṭṭhi*. What is called ignorance (*avijjā*) in that context? It is already analyzed as "*Dukkhe aññāṇaṁ, dukkhasammudaye aññāṇaṁ, dukkhanirodhe aññāṇaṁ, dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya aññāṇa?"*

Ignorance of suffering, ignorance of its arising, ignorance of its cessation and the ignorance of the path leading to its cessation. That is ignorance.

Then what is the arising of ignorance? How does ignorance come about? That is the crux of the problem. A surprise awaits us here.

"*Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo*".

It is with the arising of influxes that ignorance arises. This causes confusion in those who analyze *Paṭicca Samuppāda* because what precedes is ignorance. They presume that ignorance has no root cause but is simply present and other factors arise from it. Here is the solution to the problem. On behalf of the Buddha,

Venerable Sāriputta explains "*Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo, āsava nirodhā avijjā nirodho*".

With the arising of influxes ignorance arises. With the cessation of influxes ignorance ceases.

The '*avijjā nirodhagāminī patipadā*' or the path that leads to the cessation of ignorance is none other than the Noble Eightfold Path.

From here onwards, I have something special to tell you.

Perhaps you have already heard or even read the *Sabbāsava Sutta,* which appears as the second discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It explains how one could restrain all the influxes. That is why this *Sutta* enjoys so much recognition. Herein it gives influxes as the cause of the 'arising' of ignorance.

This particular term *āsava* is not easy to explain. It has been given different interpretations. We often resort to examples and similes to facilitate understanding. Let us take the term *ogha* (flood) to denote a body of flowing water. When speaking about a body of flowing water, we are not bothered about it. We are unharmed because it is just flowing downwards. Suppose we get down into this rapidly flowing body of water with the idea of crossing it. How would we feel about it then? Then, we feel it as flowing forcefully towards us. That is the obstacle we have. So far, we had seen it flowing away. Once we get into it to cross over we see it as **flowing towards us**. That is the basic idea of *āsava* or influxes.

The *Sabbāsava Sutta* speaks of seven ways in which influxes flow in. This is an extremely profound discourse. But let me condense it for our purpose. The Buddha begins his explanation as follows:

"*Sabbāsava saṁvara pariyāyaṁ vo bhikkhave dhammaṁ desessāmi*"

'Monks, I shall teach you a way to restrain all influxes.'

'*Saṁvaro*' means restraint. You may be familiar with the term '*indriyasaṁvara*' 'sense-restraint'. Then the Buddha says:

"*Jānato ahaṁ bhikkhave passato āsavānaṁ khayaṁ vadāmi, no ajānato no apassato*"

'I declare that the extinction of influxes should be done knowing and seeing – that is with awareness and wisdom'. The Buddha himself asks and answers the question Knowing what? Seeing what? What are the two helpful factors for the restraint of influxes?

We have often mentioned the importance of understanding the *ayoniso manasikāra* and *yoniso manasikāra*. These are the two factors that help one to restrain the influxes. The Buddha's advice is to understand *yoniso manasikāra* and *ayoniso manasikāra* correctly with their specific characteristics. To put it in simple language, *ayoniso manasikāra* means unsuitable, wrong, disorderly, contemplation with a wrong approach. *Yoniso manasikāra* means to drive at the origin or the cause of a thing and understand it correctly.

Incorrect contemplation as well as correct contemplation should be clearly understood for the purpose of taming the influxes. Earlier I mentioned that seven types of *āsavas* are discussed in this *sutta*. Let me introduce them to you first.

"*Atthi bhikkhave āsavā dassanā pahātabbā*"

'Monks, there are some influxes that should be abandoned through vision (*dassanā*). That is the first group. Another group has to be abandoned through restraint (*saṁvarā*). The third group has to be abandoned through utilizing (*paṭisevanā)*. Some others are removed through endurance (*adhivāsanā*). The fifth group is expelled through warding off or avoiding (*parivajjanā*). The sixth group has to be got rid of through *vinodanā*, dispelling. There seems to be a closeness between the fifth and the sixth. *Parivajjanā* and *vinodanā* appear to have some closeness in meaning. Let us understand *parivajjanā*

as avoiding, shunning or keeping away. *Vinodanā* is eliminating through dispelling. It will be clear when you listen to my explanation. The seventh method is eliminating by developing – *bhāvanā*. *Dassanā pahātabbā, saṁvarā pahātabbā*, *paṭisevanā pahātabbā, adhivāsanā pahātabbā, parivajjanā pahātabbā, vinodanā pahātabbā* and lastly, *bhāvanā pahātabbā*. This is a fascinating *Sutta* with subtle meaning. Some have even confounded the facts in it.

Now, let me explain them as time permits. First let us discuss "*dassanā pahātabbā*".

The Buddha speaks of influxes that should be eliminated through vision. But there are certain people in the world who resort to wrong ways of attention, for instance recluses and Brahmins of the past. What is this unsuitable method of attention? Certain people presume that a person called 'I' really exists. With that presumption they go on asking themselves in terms of the three periods of time. Regarding the past they have fivefold doubts.

"Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? Who was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become in the past?"

Regarding the future too they go on attending on the fivefold questions. Will I be in the future? Will I not be in the future? What will I be in the future? How will I be in the future? Having been what, what will I be in the future? Regarding the present they would think, Am I now? Am I not now? Who am I? How am I? Where has this being come from and where will it go? Taking the proposition I as the subject, as a permanent individual and indulging in irrelevant contemplation, they finally end up in the extreme 'I have a soul' or in the other extreme 'I do not have a soul'. They are both extremes. That is the result of unwarranted contemplation, placing 'I' on a pedestal. It ends up in *ayoniso manasikāra*. People are engulfed in doubt very often regarding the past 'Was I? Wasn't I?' The Buddha explains that the noble disciples who have the right vision, are not obsessed by such doubts since they think in terms of suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to cessation.

When the mind is fashioned according to the four noble truths, such doubts do not arise. If at all, there would have been only the five aggregates of grasping (*pañca upādānakkhandā*) in the past, and the future will hold out only suffering. Therefore, there exists only suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to cessation. The Buddha ascertains that if the mind is cultivated (developed) in accordance with the four truths the inevitable result would be the arising of the *Sotāpanna Maggañāṇa* (the wisdom of the Stream Entrant) wherein the first three fetters- *sakkāyadiṭṭhi, vicikicchā* and *sīlabbataparāmāsa* (view of self, doubt and clinging to rites and rituals) are expelled. We can see that *dassanā pahātabbā* refers to the controlling of the first three *saṁyojanas*. If the mind is cultivated in accordance with the four truths, one can eliminate them. That is the explanation to "*dassanā pahātabbā*"

Let us now discuss "*saṁvarā pahātabbā*" elimination through restraint. This is closely associated with *indriya saṁvara*, restraint of the senses. Here, the Buddha uses the

term '*paṭisaṁkhā yoniso*' one of his stunning stock of meaningful words. *paṭisaṁkhā* means scrutinizing with wisdom. After the noble disciples identify the difference between *yoniso manasikāra* and *ayoniso manasikāra*, they conduct themselves carefully as befits the occasion. The Buddha in trying to explain the rewards of practicing them and evils of neglecting them, uses another phrase, *āsavā vighātapariḷāhā*, which means the influxes that cause exhaustion and burning.

Giving an example the Buddha explains thus. If the eye is not guarded well, various lustful influxes are likely to sweep in. They could arouse the lust dormant within. They could bring about *vighāta pariḷāha,* exhaustion and burning within. One should scrutinize oneself with wisdom (*paṭisankhā yoniso*), and restrain one's eye. Since our subject is restraint of the senses, this procedure applies to the other senses as well, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Why does the Buddha emphasize restraint? If restraint is lacking those tiresome oppressive influxes come flooding in. That is all about *saṁvarā pahātabbā*.

Next comes *paṭisevanā pahātabbā*, elimination through utilizing. The Buddha refers to the use of the four requisites here. We mentioned earlier that the *Niganṭhas* discarded food and clothes, claiming they could thereby become free of craving. But the Buddha shows that the use of the four requisites – robes, alms food, shelter and medicine is essential for maintenance of life. All four are absolutely essential in order to avoid the discomfort and hardship that would otherwise crop up. The Buddha had experienced it when leading a rigorous life. One has to follow the Middle Path here. The reflection on food goes as "*paṭisaṁkhā yoniso piṇdapātaṁ paṭisevāmi*".

I shall partake of my alms food reflecting with wisdom. Next comes the purpose "*Neva davāya na madāya na manḍanāya na vibhūsanāya*" – not for delectation or gratification or adornment or beautification but simply to sustain my life. Now we are told how to convert this into a subject for meditation. The use of essential requisites in life, without which one would have to experience discomfort and hardship has been permitted, because the body has to be maintained at least for the worthy cause of crossing the *saṁsāra*. But they must be used reflecting wisely as a source of meditation. With the use of the four requisites, lustful thoughts of lay life may flood in. They have to be minimized through simplicity (*appiccatā*) and contentment (*santuṭṭhi*). That is *paṭisevanā* or utilizing.

Adhivāsanā pahātabbā comes next, elimination through endurance. It simply means that, meditators have to endure cold, heat, physical ailments, insects or even severe pain. Why endure? Otherwise exhaustion and burning will add up to his already unbearable pain. Take an example. Unable to bear up the pain of a wound, we shout and yell. This shouting and yelling will only add up to the pain. Enduring without reacting to problems, brings us closer to *Nibbāna*. That is why the Buddha has taught us to endure "*adhivāsanā pahātabbā*. Even criticism has to be endured. It helps in controlling the influxes.

Parivajjanā pahātabbā follows next, elimination through avoiding. Although this is treated very lightly by some, the Buddha attaches great importance to avoiding risks, threats to our lives and blemish to our conduct. One must not have confidence when confronted with wild animals like elephants, horses, cattle and dogs, trusting in one's power of meditation. A monk must not frequent questionable places or develop friendship with people with bad reputation. Reflecting wisely a monk must avoid any situation that would affect his spiritual life adversely.

The next restraint *vinodanā pahātabbā* is perhaps more familiar to you. It appears in the *Girimānanda Sutta* as *pahāna saññā*. Since *pahāna* appears in all these seven factors, the term *vinodanā* is used to express the idea of *pahāna*. It means removing. What must be removed? This is how it is clarified. A noble disciple or a monk,

"*uppannaṁ kāmavitakkaṁ nādhivāseti pajahati, vinodeti, byantikaroti anabhāvaṁ gameti*" does not tolerate any lustful thoughts that arise, but discards them, removes them, terminates them and eradicates them. Here *vinodanā pahātabbā* means the elimination of *kāma vitakka* (thoughts connected with lust), *vyāpāda vitakka* (thoughts connected with ill-will), *vihiṁsā vitakka* (thoughts connected with harm) and the resultant evil thoughts immediately. Those are the influxes that have to be controlled by removing.

The next and the last is *bhāvanā pahātabbā*. These are influxes that have to be eliminated through mind development. This refers to the development of the seven *bojjhañgas* or enlightenment factors. I am sure you are familiar with them. *Sati, dammavicaya, viriya, pīti, passaddhi, samādhi* and *upekkhā*. Each of these has to be developed in an environment of seclusion (*vivekanissitaṁ*),dispassion (*virāganissitaṁ*), cessation (*nirodhanissitaṁ*) and relinquishment (*vossaggapariṇāmiṁ*). It must not be forgotten that *paṭisaṁkhā yoniso*, wise reflection runs through each of these steps like a web.

The *Sabbāsava Sutta* introduces a process of eliminating the influxes (*āsavas*) in seven ways. They all lead to the same goal.

"*Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo āsava nirodhā avijjā nirodho.*"

When influxes arise, ignorance arises. When influxes cease, ignorance ceases. This statement caused confusion. Many wondered from where ignorance came into the scene. Now it is clear that influxes give rise to ignorance. Due to *ayoniso manasikāra* incorrect contemplation, influxes arise and already arisen influxes increase. Due to *yoniso manasikāra*, correct contemplation, the already arisen influxes cease and no new ones arise. That shows how rewarding *yoniso manasikāra* is.

Finally we can arrive at the conclusion that the ultimate purpose of the *Sutta* is *avijjā pahāna*, elimination of ignorance. Influxes have the nature of flowing in, every moment. As mentioned earlier watching the water flowing forcefully, while seated on the river bank, one cannot guarantee that one could swim across it in a straight line. No one

could. One has to swim while allowing the water to flow. That is similar to the Middle Path, the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Each step is linked to the next.

Let me now summarize today's discourse as time permits. By way of summary let me quote a wonderful statement made by Venerable Ānanda in praise of the Buddha's technique of explaining the path.

"*Nissāya nissāya bhante, Bhagavatā oghassa nittharaṇā akkhātā*."

The method the Buddha has advocated in order to cross the great flood is *nissāya nissāya*. It means manipulating (improvising) one thing after the other, but not clinging to any. It is a technique of proceeding systematically forward, step by step.

You may have heard of crossing the floods by means of *saddhā*.

"*Saddhāya tarati oghaṁ*."That kind of crossing has to be undertaken with balanced effort *viriya samatā*.

Once a youth called Kappa questioned the Buddha regarding the crossing of the flood.

Majjhe sarasmiṁ tiṭṭhataṁ, oghe jāte mahabbhaye

jarā maccu paretānaṁ, dīpaṁ pabrūhi mārisa

tvañ ca me dīpam akkhāhi, yathāyidaṁ nāparaṁ siyā

Friend, those marooned in the strong floods,

threatened by decay and death

are stranded in the lake

Show the island to them

since there is no other, please

show the island to me.

Responding to Kappa's request to show the refuge to those caught up in the strong floods, the Buddha gives an amazing reply.

"*Akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ - etaṁ dīpaṁ anāparaṁ*

Nibbānamiti taṁ brūmi - jarā maccu parikkhayaṁ"

Akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ means not possessing anything, not grasping anything. This is a reference to *Nibbāna* the highest goal. Nothing called mine and nothing to grip, getting washed away makes no difference.

"Possessing nothing, not desirous of grasping anything, where birth and death ceases is this island called *Nibbāna*." Kappa inquired what island is found beyond the floods. It

does not correspond to any attractive island in our imagination - or rather the *Nibbāna* of *Siyadoris* (that is Simple Simon Nibbāna). The Buddha explains "Possesing nothing and grasping nothing. None other than that. I call it *Nibbāna*."

The Buddha finally winds up saying "Decay is decayed and death is dead"

"*Jarā maccu parikkhayaṁ*".

If there is nothing possessed how can there be decay? If there is nothing grasped, how can there be death? "*akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ*".

Please try to reflect deeply on the implication of this fascinating account. *Nibbāna* is merely a name. That alone is the island.

If there is nothing to protect, there is nothing to be washed away. If there is nothing grasped, again there is nothing to be washed away. That is why the Buddha calls it *Nibbāna*. The final result of crossing over the flood is "*akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ etaṁ dīpaṁ anāpara?"*

Possesing nothing, grasping nothing. This is the island and no other. We explained '*jarā maccu parikkhayaṁ'* as 'where decay has decayed and death is dead'.

Friends, we have attempted to condense this story of crossing over the floods into one hour. Treating *kāma* (lust), *bhava* (becoming), *diṭṭhi* (view) and *avijjā* (ignorance) as one forceful flood, our challenge is to cross over this *saṁsāra*. There lies before us a very delicate Middle Path to tread, possessing nothing, grasping nothing, leaning against nothing, but carefully working one's way one step to the next to reach the final goal.

The path "*paṭipadā*" with each step leaning towards the other, or each step supporting the other is condensed in the Dhamma into three words:

'*anupubba sikkhā, anupubba kiriyā* and *anupubba paṭipadā*'. It involves a gradual process of disciplining, a gradual process of training and a gradually ascending path. The *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is well incorporated within this path, as it was mentioned earlier.

"*Sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṁkappo pahoti*".

Right thinking dawns on him who holds right view and proceeds up the ladder gradually.The Buddha's clarification of the path in order to cross over the strong flood of *saṁsāra,* avoiding the two extremes is praiseworthy indeed. He has made clear what our destination is like after crossing. It is not another birth, or an extraordinary world as we imagine. That destination is where the desire to possess and the desire to grasp anything in the floods have been totally relinquished.

I have attempted to briefly explain a subject that deserves more elaborate treatment. I believe you are regular listeners of my discourses. I advise you to make use of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* and other related topics, in your attempts at meditation. Today you have made a good start with the practice of *sīla*. From now onwards follow the Dhamma path

of *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā* and utilize this knowledge for the advancement of your *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation. I hope this discourse will contribute to some extent, towards your attempt to attain the Paths and Fruits of *Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi* and *Arahant,* which is called freedom from *saṁsāra*, before the light of the *sāsana* is extinguished.

Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they all rejoice in our sermon. May the merits accrued by that rejoicing conduce to the fulfillment of their higher aims

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 13
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 195)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*' 'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti – sabbaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā

Saṁkhārānaṁ nirodhena – natthi dukkhassa sambhavo

Etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā – dukkhaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā

Sabbasaṁkhāra samathā – saññāya uparodhanā

Evaṁ dukkhakkhayo hoti – etaṁ ñatvā yathātathaṁ

Sammaddasā vedaguno – sammadaññāya paṇditā

Abhibhuyya mārasaṁyogaṁ – nāgacchanti punabbhavaṁ

– Dvayatānupassanā S., Sutta Nipāta

Whatever suffering arises, it is all dependent on preparations.

When preparations cease, the arising of suffering ceases.

Knowing the evils of suffering dependent on preparations,

with the stilling of all preparations, unobstructed by perceptions, that is the way suffering ceases.

Thus, knowing this as it is,

The wise, endowed with correct vision and well versed in knowledge,

realizing this as it is, overpowering the bonds of Māra,

do not go into another birth.

Dear Listeners,

Sabbasaṁkhāra samatha or the stilling of the preparations, stands foremost in the phrase that declares the peaceful excellent nature of *Nibbāna*. It is the *saṇkhāras* or preparations that take the first plunge into the endless misery of *Saṁsāra* in the darkness of ignorance. Therefore, it is clear that an intensive and an extensive clarification of the cluster of interpretations of the Law of Dependent Arising is essential. To venture into that subject we have chosen three verses in the

Dvayatānupassanā Sutta of the *Sutta Nipāta*, as the title for the 13 discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Since this *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* was the topic of three earlier discourses, I am sure you remember the technique, the pattern the Buddha followed. The speciality about this Sutta is that the Buddha has followed a technique of duality, a dual contemplation in clarifying the dhamma.

This is how the Buddha presents the problem about the *saṇkhāras* (preparations) to the monks.

"Monks, if a question arises as to whether there is another method of practicing dual contemplation, do affirm that there is. Let me explain how it can be done.

"*Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti - sabbaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā. Ayaṁ ekānupassanā.*"

One method of contemplating is that whatever suffering arises, it is entirely dependent on *saṁkhāra*.

"*Saṁkhārānaṁ ceva asesa virāga nirodhā, natthi dukkhassa sambhavo.*"

With the total detachment and cessation of preparations, suffering ceases. That is the second method of contemplation. These two methods have been explicitly clarified by the Buddha in the three verses I recited earlier.

Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti -sabbaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā

Saṁkhārānaṁ nirodhena - natthi dukkhassa sambhavo

Whatever suffering arises, it is all dependent on preparations. When the preparations cease, the arising of suffering ceases.

Etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā - dukkhaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā

Knowing the evils of suffering dependent on preparations, *Sabbasaṁkhāra samathā - saññāya uparodhanā*

Evaṁ dukkhakkhayo hoti - evaṁ ñatvā yathātathaṁ

With the stilling of all preparations, unobstructed by perceptions, that is the way suffering ceases. Thus, knowing this as it is,

Sammaddasā vedaguno - sammadaññāya paṇditā

The wise, endowed with correct vision and well versed in knowledge, realizing this as it is,

Abhibhuyya mārasaṁyogaṁ - nāgacchanti punabbhavaṁ

Overpowering the bonds of Māra, do not go into another birth.

That is the meaning of the verses.

Coming back to our subject *saṁkhāra*, we see it occurs as the second factor in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, following *avijjā*. You know we have many a time repeated *avijjā paccayā saṁkhārā, saṁkhāra paccayā viññānaṁ, viññāna paccayā nāmarūpaṁ, nāmarūpa paccayā saḷāyatanaṁ* and so on. The Buddha has himself given a clarification of the term *saṁkhāra*, in the *Vibhanga Sutta*, in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

"*Katame ca bhikkhave saṁkhārā. Tayo me bhikkhave saṁkhārā. Kāya saṁkhāro, vacī saṁkhāro, citta saṁkhāro"*

Monks, what are the preparations? There are three, preparations of the body, speech and mind. Remember they are in the singular. There is yet another clear analysis of these terms in the *Cūla Vedalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. We meet Arahant Therī Dhammadinnā making a comprehensive analysis of them in reply to lay disciple Visākha's questions. He wished to know what exactly is meant by *kāya saṁkhāra*, *vacī saṁkhāra*, *citta saṁkhāra*.

Arahant Therī Dhammadinnā explained,

"*assāsa passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāyasaṁkhāro, vitakka vicārā vacī saṁkhāro, saññā ca vedanā ca citta saṁkhāro."*

Let me give the meaning.

"Friend Visākha, inhalation and exhalation are the preparation of the body, reasoning and deliberation are the preparation of speech. Perception and feeling are the preparation of the mind."

Again the layman Visākha questions,

"Noble lady, how do inhalation and exhalation be the preparation for the body? How do reasoning and deliberation be the preparation for speech?

How do perception and feeling be the preparation for the mind?"

Then the Arahant Therī had to explain further.

"*Assāsa passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāyikā ete dhammā kāya paṭibaddhā. Tasmā assāsa passāsā kāyasaṁkhāro.*"

"Friend Visākha, inhalation and exhalation are physical and bound to be associated with the body. They are Therefore, the preparation of the body."

Then she continues.

"*Pubbe kho āvuso visākha, vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchā vācaṁ bhindati. Tasmā vitakka vicārā vacī saṁkhāro.*"

Here she explains something special.

“Friend Visākha, first, one reasons out and deliberates. Then expresses in speech. Therefore, reasoning and deliberation are the preparation of speech.”

Then she continues,

“*saññā ca vedanā ca āvuso visākha cetasikā. ete dhammā cittapaṭibaddhā. tasmā saññā ca vedanā ca citta saṁkhāro.*”

Perceptions and feelings are mental phenomena. They are associated with the mind. Therefore, they are the preparation of the mind.

Now let us explore the implications behind these words.

According to the accepted theory of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, consciousness leading to another birth is fashioned by *saṁkhāra* or preparations. But, this reveals something more fantastic. You know that your breathing does not take you to the Deva world or to the lower realms. Respiration is not considered as an action – *kamma*. But inhalation and exhalation provide the rehearsal for the drama of becoming. You know that inhalation and exhalation establish the first contact with the atmosphere, at birth. They represent the subtle act of grasping. Similarly, they make the last effort at death. Let me explain this with the help of a simile. Imagine an iceberg in the ocean. What you see is only one tenth of it. Nine tenths are hidden below the sea level. Similarly, the wholesome and unwholesome deeds we consider as greatly significant are merely the visible section. The nine tenths that lie below is inhalation and exhalation. Remember I said just now that breathing does not drag you to hell. But if you take a deep breath and deal a mighty blow on someone with a rod, you’ll definitely end up in hell. What I want you to understand is that our breath is similar to the invisible portion or the rehearsal of the drama of becoming.

Next *vitakka vicāra*, reasoning and deliberation in speech are similar. It was specifically mentioned that before a word is uttered *vitakka* and *vicāra* are activated. We see that the word ‘rehearsal’ is ideally applicable to this process as well. The mind dwells on the word by way of reasoning and deliberation before it is uttered, similar to decorating the stage before the drama begins. Lying beneath the words are the invisible preparation called *vitakka vicāra* – reasoning and deliberation.

Now look at *saññā* and *vedanā* – perception and feeling – as the process of preparation for thought. Thought, according to the Buddha is more fascinating than a painting – *cittañ̃eva cittataraṁ*. But that thought is prepared by perception and feeling. Therefore, the thought is essentially a preparation, a planning, a rehearsal.

What serves as the background for this rehearsal? It’s *avijjā* ignorance. *Avijjā paccayā saṁkhārā*. It is familiar to you but let’s go back to *Vibhanga Sutta* for further explanation. How does the Buddha interpret *avijjā* – “*dukkhe aññāṇaṁ, dukkha samudaye aññāṇaṁ, dukkha nirodhe aññāṇaṁ, dukkha nirodha gāminiyā paṭipadāya aññāṇaṁ*.” In brief, it is ignorance of the four Noble Truths. *Aññāṇaṁ* means

ignorance. That is the background. The rehearsal is done in this dark background, by inhalation and exhalation, reasoning and deliberation, perception and feeling.

Now, for what purpose is this rehearsal? Let us find out.

Saṁkhāras (preparations) are followed by *viññāna* (consciousness). *Viññāna* is followed by *nāmarūpa* (name-andform). We have already discussed *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa* at length. Certain books, when discussing *paṭicca samuppāda*, talk of a *paṭisandhi viññāna*, consciousness leading to a birth. But the Buddha has defined *viññāna* as six-fold.

"*Katamaṁ ca bhikkhave viññāṇaṁ? Cakkhu viññāṇaṁ, sota viññāṇaṁ, ghāna viññāṇaṁ, jivhā viññāṇaṁ, kāya viññāṇaṁ, mano viññāṇaṁ*."

Consciousness was explained this way, as six-fold. We have on an earlier occasion given the analysis of *nāmarūpa*, in Venerable Sāriputta's words. In the Buddha's words, this is how it is defined;

"*Katamaṁ ca bhikkhave nāmarūpaṁ? saññā, vedanā, cetanā, phasso, manasikāro. Idaṁ vuccati bhikkhave nāmaṁ. Cattāro ca mahābhūtā catunnaṁ ca mahābhūtānaṁ upādāya rūpaṁ. Idaṁ vuccati bhikkhave rūpaṁ*."

"What monks is nameand-form? Perception, feeling, intention, contact and attention – this is called name. The four primaries and the form that arises with a grip on the primaries – this, monks, is called form."

That's the explanation. The words of the Buddha.

As we earlier remarked contact or *phassa* cannot be brought forward. We have compared the five-fold factors of *nāma* to the five fingers, although later interpretations varied.

"*Cattāro ca mahābhūtā catunnaṁ ca mahābhūtānaṁ upādāya rūpaṁ*." This means the perception of *rūpa* arises in accordance with the four elements, that is, with a grip on the four elements. On either side of *rūpa* are *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa*. The vortex or whirlpool that we have often referred to, is also found between these two. The drama of becoming is also manifested between them.

This can be well explained as *aññamañña paccayatā – mutual interdependence*. The bodily preparation (*kāya saṁkhāra*) the verbal preparation (*vaci saṁkhāra*) and the mental preparation (*citta saṁkhāra*) are shown as only the rehearsals for this interdependence. The final outcome of the interdependent drama between *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa* is the preparation of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañca upādānakkhanda*). We have drawn many a comparison such as the game of draughts, the game of cricket etc. to illustrate the dual nature of *viññāna*. Becoming (*bhava*) is dependent on the performance between these two teams, and an apparent continuity is thereby prepared. The final outcome of this process is the accumulation of the fivefold aggregates of grasping.

Following the identification of consciousness as two-fold, the six sense spheres begin to function as a duality. And within the six sense spheres are produced the preparations that weave the web of becoming.

It is very significant that *cetanā*, intention is included among the five-fold *nāmadhamma* – constituents of name. The meditative yogins prior to the Buddha had already realized that respiration was suffering, that reasoning and deliberation (*vitakka vicāra*) were suffering, that perception and feeling were suffering. Although they had no clear idea of *saṁkhāras* or the background of ignorance, through the attainment of *Jhānas* they became aware of the coarseness of preparations. As a result they were playing a game of see-saw, as I have already mentioned. According to the Buddha, there are six kinds of pacifications. You will understand them as I explain. What are the six?

Speech is pacified in him who enters the first *Jhāna*. Reasoning and deliberation is pacified in him who enters the second *Jhāna*.

Joy is pacified in him who enters the third *Jhāna*. Respiration is pacified in him who enters the fourth *Jhāna*.

Perception and feeling are pacified in him who enters the attainment of cessation of perceptions and feelings.

Finally, it is said that lust, anger and delusion are pacified in the monk whose influxes are extinct.

These six steps of pacification – *passaddhi* – are mentioned in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. The contemporary meditators of the time had attained the pacification of speech, reasoning and deliberation as well as inhalation and exhalation through *jhāna* practice, but were unable to move beyond that. Freeing themselves from perception – *saññā* – was a problem, a challenge. We referred to it as a game of see-saw.

Their highest attainment *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana* the realm of neither perception nor non-perception is explained in the *Pañcattaya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* as follows:

> *"saññā rogo, saññā gaṇḍo, saññā sallaṁ, asaññā sammoho etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ nevasaññānāsaññaṁ."*

They realized that *saññā* is a disease, a wound, a dart but the absence of *saññā* is delusion. It was not possible to relinquish it. That's why they were playing a game of see-saw. They held on to *nevasaññā nāsaññā*, an excellent peaceful position, *santaṁ paṇītaṁ,* which is neither perception nor non-perception.

What is found beyond *nevasaññā nāsaññā* I have discussed it, if you remember, drawing facts from *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* which holds an amazing store of facts. It records how some ascetics and Brahmins asked the Buddha for an explanation of *abhisaññā nirodha*. The Buddha said it is the stage where even *cetanā* is given up.

Why was there a confusion regarding *abhisaññā nirodha*? I wonder whether you remember I explained it earlier.

Natthi kiñci conveys the idea that 'there is nothing' (nothing exists). These ascetics with their yearning for becoming, saw *natthi kiñci* as referring to some 'thing'. They made a samāpatti out of it, which took them to Brahma worlds with an unlimited life span. They could not attain anything beyond this due to ignorance of preparations - *saṁkhāras*.

Let us see what the Buddha has to say regarding this mental state. *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* has a valuable statement as follows;

A monk who attains *ākiñcaññāyatana* thinks

"*cetayamānassa me pāpiyo, acetayamānassa me seyyo. Yannūnāhaṁ na ceva ceteyyaṁ na cābhisaṁkareyyaṁ ti.*"

Using *cetanā* (intention) at this stage is not correct. I shall refrain from *cetanā*. *Cetanā* is a gross mental state. With the determination to avoid *saṁkhāras* finally he attains *saññā vedayita nirodha*.

Let me explain this with the simile of the five fingers, though it was not used by the Buddha. The last finger stands for feeling (*vedanā)*. The fourth finger represents perception (*saññā)*. The stubborn middle finger is intention (*cetanā)*. With the pacifying of *cetanā* that is bringing the middle finger under control, one experiences *nirodha* (cessation) which is not a 'thing'. *Nibbāna* is signless ('*animitta*'), undirected ('*appaṇihita'*) and void ('*suññāta*'). It is the furthest end of the three signata – impermanence, suffering and not-self.

When you arise from the attainment of cessation – *nirodha samāpatti* – your attention is focused towards the signless state (*animitta*), the undirected state (*appaṇihita*) and the void state with no soul, no continuity (*suññata*). This is the special message from the Buddha to the world, the significance of which was unknown to the meditators of the time. You could remember this mental state as *Vimokkha*.

Since preparations – *saṁkhāras* – is our main topic, let us discuss it further depending on the time available. *Saṁkhāra* which we compared to the hidden part of the iceberg, is used here in the singular. In this background called *saṁkhāra* there is a drama of becoming between consciousness *viññāna* and nameand-form *nāmarūpa*. We have used similes such as the game of draughts, and the game Narcissus played with water. The ultimate outcome of this drama is the accumulation of the five aggregates of grasping.

Now we come to a significant aspect of the five aggregates of grasping. There is reference to *saṁkhāra* in the aggregates but used in the plural as *saṁkhārā*. This is the point that misleads us. It is also the most intricate point in our effort to understand *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. The end result of the activity of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is the five aggregates of grasping. You know ignorance means the ignorance of the four Noble Truths. Due to

that ignorance, preparations such as inhalation and exhalation are activated. It is followed by another step where, instigated by ignorance and the delusion of consciousness, a duality arises – *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa*. This is followed by a drama. As the final outcome of the drama, a multitude of forms appear. A multitude of feelings appear. A multitude of perceptions appear. A multitude of preparations appear. A multitude of consciousness appear. It is important to understand them as prepared preparations – *saṁkhata saṁkhārā*. It is in the plural.

The Buddha has offered a clarification to the preparations – *saṁkhārā* – found in the five aggregates of grasping.

"Katame ca bhikkhave saṁkhārā? Chayime bhikkhave cetanā kāyā. rūpa saṁcetanā, sadda saṁcetanā, gandha saṁcetanā, rasa saṁcetanā, phoṭṭhabba saṁcetanā, dhamma saṁcetanā."

How does the Buddha explain *saṁkhārā* in the context of *pañca upādānakkhandha*? Not the same interpretation as in *vacī saṁkhāra*. '*cetanā kāyā*' means a mass of intentions.

Intentions are of six kinds. *Rūpa saṁcetanā* is intention based on form. *Sadda saṁcetanā* is intention based on sound. You can understand the rest in relation to the six sense bases. Preparations are generated through intention. They are called *saṁkata saṁkhāra*. They are intentionally prepared.

We know that inhalation and exhalation, reasoning and deliberation, perception and feeling can be compared to stage settings. The end result of the drama of becoming performed on the stage is the five aggregates of grasping. The *Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta* sheds enough light to clarify this matter. To explain the coming together and the falling apart of the five aggregates of grasping, it uses the terms *upacaya* and *apacaya*. The Buddha takes the six *āyatanas* – sense bases one by one. The eye, the form, the consciousness resulting from those two, the contact that arises and its resultant feeling. Unless this process is understood clearly as it is, it might lead to conflict, delusion and result in the arising of the five aggregates of grasping. One may fall into the deception of believing "this is my form, this is my feeling, this is my perception, these are my preparations and this is my consciousness."

The *Khajjanīya Sutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* deals with this subject at depth very clearly. The Buddha begins the Sutta as follows; "Monks, among ascetics and Brahmins, whoever recalled their past births, they did so basing their recollection on the five aggregates of grasping or at least one aggregate." What the Buddha means is that their insight into the past births is not clear enough. They see a mass of forms that belong to the past. They identify the forms as "I".

They conclude "In the past I was".

In recalling the past, in bringing the past births back to memory, certain forms come to one's view and thinks "In the past I was".

The same process takes place regarding *vedanā* (feeling) and other aggregates. We can see here the *saṁkata* pattern.

The Buddha then proceeds to give an amazing analysis of each word. *Rūpa*, we said, is an aggregate of grasping (*upādānakkhanda*) *upādāna* means a mass or cluster in one's grip. As we often remind you, the ordinary worldling has the notion of compact. Within the view of self (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*) this notion of substance is apparent. Let us break up the term *sakkāya diṭṭhi*. '*Sat*' means 'there is'. '*Kāya*' is a 'bundle' (collection). With this notion of 'There is a bundle' one attempts to establish one's identity as "I am".

What is *rūpa*? It is only a collection. It is the same with the other aggregates.

Next, let us discuss the similes associated with the *khandhas*. Form (*rūpa*) is like a cluster of foam. Feelings (*vedanā*) are like bubbles. Perception *saññā* is similar to a mirage. Preparations are compared to the banana trunk. Consciousness is like an illusion. Why are these called *saṁkata saṁkhāra*? They are deceptive. These similes bring out their deceptive nature. At a distance a cluster of white foam appears like a stone. It reveals itself only if you look at it scrutinizingly at very close quarters. *Rūpa* is similar to foam but an ordinary man of the world will not be able to see through *rūpa* (form). Similarly, feeling is comparable to a bubble of water floating in mid-air. When it bursts (breaks) one realizes it is nothing more than a bubble. Feeling is only a mirage. You realize a mirage is an illusion only when you chase after it. You have to keep peeling to the centre of the banana trunk to realize it has no hard core. Such is the nature of *saṁkhāras*. Only with penetrative wisdom could one realize that *viññāna* is a magical illusion.

These similes were given by the Buddha to enable the meditators to realize the intricate nature of the subject at depth, but the ordinary people are not prepared to accept it.

The Buddha offers a very interesting etymological interpretation of the words *rūpa*, *vedanā* etc.

"*kiñca bhikkhave rūpaṁ vadetha?*" Monks, what is called *rūpa*? "*Ruppatīti kho bhikkhave tasmā rūpanti vuccati*".

Monks, it is *rūpa* because it hurts, is oppressed. Then comes a further analysis.

"*kena ruppati, sītena pi ruppati, jighacchāya pi ruppati, pipāsāya pi ruppati, ḍaṁsamakasa vātā tapa siriṁsapa samphassena pi ruppati*."

This *rūpa* or body, by what is it oppressed? By cold, heat, hunger, thirst, flies.

By *ruppati*, the Buddha meant that *rūpa* is a boil. One's attention is drawn towards the body when one is oppressed by cold, heat, hunger etc. This interpretation of '*ruppati*' as 'oppressed by' has a very deep meaning.

Next *vedanā* is explained as *vediyati*. It means one feels, one experiences. That's not a complicating word. What does one feel? One feels happiness, unhappiness and neither

happiness nor unhappiness. *Saññā* means *sañjānāti*. Perceives, identifies. What is perceived (identified)? In terms of colours, blue, red, yellow, white. That is how *saññā* is explained. Now comes the introduction to *saṁkhāra*. It is extremely deep in meaning. The Buddha's technique of explaining *saṁkhāra* is different.

"*Kiṁ ca bhikkhave saṁkhāre vadetha. Saṁkataṁ abhisaṁkarontī ti saṁkhārā*."

"Monks, what is meant by *saṁkhārā*? A special preparation of the prepared."

Abhisaṁkaronti here means, making a special preparation. *Saṁkhāra* also has the idea of preparing. *Abhisaṁkāra* means special preparing. Here we must remember that the Buddha explains *saṁkhāra* in his discussion of *pañca upādānakkhandha* as "*saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharontī ti saṁkhārā*".

That is 'a special preparation of the prepared.' The Buddha called the body an abscess. When afflicted by cold, heat hunger, discomfort, our attention is drawn towards it.

Then comes another intricate question about *saṁkhāra*.

"*Kiñca saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharontī*?"

"What preparation is specially prepared?"

Rūpaṁ rūpattāya saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharontī ti. Form is prepared into form by a process of specially prepared preparation. In a similar manner, *vedanā* feeling is prepared into feeling by a process of specially prepared preparation.

"*Vedanaṁ vedanattāya saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharontī*."

The third one *saññā* has to be understood in a similar manner. The most wonderful interpretation is given to *saṁkhāra. Saṁkhāre saṁkhārattāya saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharontīti saṁkhārā. Saṁkhārā* or preparations are so called because preparations are prepared into prepared form by a process of special preparation.

Then comes consciousness,

"*viññāṇaṁ viññāṇattāya saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharonti*".

"Consciousness is formed into consciousness by a process of specially prepared preparation."

This explanation of the Buddha is enough proof of the importance of *saṁkhāra*.

All the *saṁkhāras* that come under these four categories are transformed into prepared form – specially prepared form. In that case all the people live within the 'prepared' state. *Saṁkhata* means prepared but the ordinary people do not understand it due to the perception of the compact or *ghana saññā*. The purpose of giving those similes such as 'a mass of foam', 'a mirage' etc., was to clarify the perception of the compact.

We came across some important words such as *cetanā*, *saṁcetanā*, *saṁkhāra*,*abhisaṁkhāra*, *saṁkhata* and its opposite *asaṁkhata*. Let's study them. *Cetanā*. Going by its etymology, it means adding up. Adding together. Think of feeling – vedanā – arising in you when a sense organ meets the sense object. It is followed by perception. With perception there is a tendency to add up everything. That is *cetanā*, intention. We said that *cetanā* is stubborn. Then comes *saṁcetanā*. *Saṁcetanā* arises as *rūpa saṁcetanā*, *sadda saṁcetanā*, *gandha saṁcetanā* and so on. In *rūpa saṁcetanā*, form is treated as a thing and a process of adding up takes place. In *sadda saṁcetanā* sound is treated as a thing and *cetanā* or adding up takes place accordingly. Understand the others in the same way. That's why the Buddha explained the term *saṁkhāra* as *saṁcetanā* in relation to *pañca upādānakkhandha*.

"*cha ime bhikkhave cetanā*".

There are six intentions, *kāya cetanā* (bodily intentions) such as *rūpa saṁcetanā*, *sadda saṁcetanā* and so on. Now we have given a brief account of *saṁcetanā*.

We have already discussed *saṁkhāra* or preparation. Those who are interested in Indian literature and history know how stage make-up is done before a drama. To those who watch the modern tele-dramas, 'make-up' is nothing new. Such is the change brought about by make-up, that even the actor cannot be identified. That deception is indicated by the term *saṁkhāra*. So we see that drama actors make full use of the *saṁkhāra* technique. The kitchen is another place where *saṁkhāra* or preparation is done before food is brought to the table. That preparation is called *saṁkhatiyo*. The term '*susaṁkhata'* is used for a well prepared meal. Once placed on the table, it is totally unidentifiable. There lies deception. The term *saṁkhāra* has this quality of deception within it. '*Saṁkhata*' is the word used to indicate things prepared for deception. They are totally misleading.

Then the term '*abhisaṁkhata*' means specially prepared. Beneath this superficial meaning *abhisaṁkhata* has a deeper meaning. Let us try to explore it. These different interpretations are all expressed in the suttas. *Pabbajjābhisaṁkhāro* indicates the urgency one feels for ordination. One's impatient urge for ordination. *Gamikābhisaṁkhāro* refers to one's anxiety to undertake a journey. The keenness to start on it is so strong that, one's wish is somehow fulfilled.

In the *Pacetana Rathakāra Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha uses an ideal simile in a discourse. This etymological analysis is based on that simile. The carpenter of King Pacetana built two wheels. He let one roll forward. When a wheel is made to roll forward, it is given some momentum.

This is how it is described "*yāvatikā abhisaṁkhārassa gati tāvatikaṁ gantvā ciṁgagulāyitvā bhūmiyaṁ papati."*

As long as the infused force lasted, the wheel rolled forward, twirled and collapsed on the ground. Here, we are interested in the term *abhisaṁkhāra*. It conveys the idea of

momentum, urgency, impatience. That is exactly why the term *abhisaṁkhāra* is used in discussing *kamma*.

Kāya saṁkhāraṁ abhisaṁkharoti, vacī saṁkhāraṁ abhisaṁkharoti, mano saṁkhāraṁ abhisaṁkharoti. It's here that the serious problem of the resultant aspect of actions come in – *kamma vipāka*. *Cetanā* or intention plays a major role here. We have mentioned that mere breathing does not pave the way to hell. With reference to wholesome and unwholesome actions, the three terms used are *puññābhisaṁkhāra*, *apuññābhisaṁkhāra* and *āneñjābhisaṁkhāra*.

Puññābhisaṁkhāra consists of the preparatory force to prepare another birth in the deva worlds and the human world. A pleasant birth. *Apuññābhisaṁkhāra* on the other hand prepares the environment for birth in hell.

The third one, *āneñjābhisaṁkhāra* is more complex in meaning. *Āneñja* means steadfast, unshakable. It is closely associated with the *jhānas*. It is interesting to note that unshakability is also a moving force. I shall explain it with a simile. You know how to spin a top. You wind the thread round it, jerk it and let go. The force enables it to spin round remaining in an erect position. The top stands erect but keeps spinning round. It is similar to being born in formless spheres – *arūpa loka* – and continuing to live for aeons and aeons. They experience the results of the *jhānas* they have attained, like the never ending twirl of a top. You can now understand how terrifying the *saṁkhāras* are. Although one never committed unwholesome actions, one has to take birth in a Brahma sphere and keep spinning endlessly. That is *āneñjābhisaṁkhāra*.

Consider these important facts. They indicate the fearfulness of preparations. The Buddha has always emphasized the fearful nature and the sorrowful nature of these preparations.

"*Jigacchā paramā rogā, saṁkhāraparamā dukhā, etaṁ ñatvā yathābhūtaṁ - Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukkhaṁ*.

This too has come under discussion in an earlier discourse. *Jigacchā paramā rogā*. Hunger is the most severe of illnesses. Modern medical men will not agree with this statement. Today what are called 'diseases' are those severe deadly diseases now known. But even if all those diseases are cured, what will endure is hunger. It has been called the disease that makes you groan. Hunger makes you groan automatically although you are healthy. That's why hunger is the most serious of diseases. *Jigacchā paramā rogā*.

Saṁkhāraparamā dukhā. That statement too has a deep meaning. We grieve over the superficially manifested physical ailments. The story of the spinning top suggests how deep rooted the problem is. *Saṁkhārā paramā dukkhā* means, suffering originated by preparations continue, even after all the other sufferings are allayed, that it is the furthermost of sufferings. The top spins by the force of preparations. *Saṁkhāras* activate the continued becoming. *Saṁkhāraparamā dukhā*. *Etaṁ ñatvā yathābhūtaṁ* – If one realizes this as it is, *Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukkhaṁ – Nibbāna* is the highest bliss. At the

very outset we pointed out that the very first words expressing the peaceful excellent nature of *Nibbāna* were 'stilling of all preparations' – '*sabbasaṁkhāra samatho*'. Can you imagine how deep it is?

In order to free oneself from continued existence, wholesome and unwholesome preparations and specific preparations have to be stilled. Inhalation and exhalation have to be stilled. Reasoning and deliberation have to be stilled. Perception and feeling have to be stilled. The ordinary people, infatuated by desire for becoming, cannot comprehend this message. This subject is discussed in detail in the *Saṁcetanā Sutta* of the *Catukka Nipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. It simply takes us by surprise "*kāye vā bhikkhave sati, kāyasaṁcetanāhetu, uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. Vācāya vā bhikkhave sati, vacīsaṁcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ, mane vā bhikkhave sati, manosaṁcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ avijjāpaccayā va.*"

Let us try to simplify this to our level. *Kāye vā sati*, means there being a body, due to specific preparations of the body, there arise happiness (pleasant feelings) and suffering within. There being speech, due to intentions based on speech (words, language, vocal usage) there arise happiness and suffering within. If we consider mind to be something existing, there being mind, due to intentions based on mind, happiness and suffering arise within. One prepares these preparations for oneself, and others too prepare them and pass them to you. One experiences the happiness and suffering intentionally or unintentionally. Then the Buddha explains the more interesting and more important part of the story '*avijjā paccayā va*'. It is due to ignorance that we take the body to be real, speech to be real and mind to be real.

Then the Buddha explains it in the reverse order.

"*Avijjāyatveva asesa virāga nirodhā so kāyo na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ, sā vācā na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ so mano na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukha dukkhaṁ.*"

This is a fantastic statement, a revelation. With the complete cessation of ignorance, the body ceases to be. Speech ceases to be and mind ceases to be. Whatever happiness and suffering arose dependent on those three, they cease. The Sutta ends this way "*khettaṁ taṁ na hoti, vatthuṁ taṁ na hoti, āyatanaṁ taṁ na hoti, adhikaraṇaṁ taṁ na hoti, yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ dukhadukkhaṁ.*"

"Whatever field there was, whatever ground there was, whatever land there was, whatever reason there was, dependent on which suffering arose within, that is no more."

That is how suffering is brought to an end. This explanation enlightens us on the deeper implication of *saṁkhāra* . They play their part first as a rehearsal, and then assist in the drama of becoming, and finally act as the specific preparations for another birth. Such is *saṁkhata*.

There are certain verses that confuse most people. Here is one;

Sabbe saṁkhārā aniccāti

Yadā paññāya passati

Atha nibbindatī dukkhe

Esa maggo visuddhiyā

Considering all preparations as impermanent, if one realizes it with wisdom, one would be disillusioned about suffering. That is the path towards purity.

The second verse begins with "*sabbe saṁkhārā dukkhāti yadā paññāya passati*".

If one realizes through insight that all preparations are suffering, that is the path to purification. The third verse poses a problem to everybody with "*sabbe dhammā anattāti yadā paññāya passati*." The problem is the use of the term '*dhammā*' instead of '*saṁkhārā*'. The first verse says "All preparations are impermanent".

The second verse says "All preparations bring suffering".

The third verse says "All *dhammas* are essenceless".

That is the problem. We have explained *dhammā* as mind objects or 'things'. According to our ancient teachers, *Nibbāna* is not a 'thing' but it has been misinterpreted as a 'thing'. The *Mūla Pariyāya Sutta* which deals with this subject is beyond the understanding of many. Some tend to misinterpret *saṁkhata* (prepared), *asaṁkhata* (non-prepared) and *Nibbāna* as *asaṁkhata dhamma* or *asaṁkhata dhātu* – a nonprepared 'thing', which has resulted in a lot of confusion. But what really is *asaṁkhata*? It is the cessation of preparation.

This point is further explained in the verse "*saṁkhārāṇaṁ khayaṁ ñatvā akataññūsi brāhmaṇa.*"

If one can understand the elimination of preparations as described in the *Dhammapada*, then the state of *asaṁkhata* (non-prepared) referred to as *akata* becomes clear. To make it more lucid, take the pattern woven on this mat. If the pattern is taken as a solid object the mind may get attached to it. If one takes a penetrative look at the straws illusively woven this way and that, the mind can detach itself from the pattern. *Asaṁkhata* – non-preparation is similar to that. The danger here lies in considering even *asaṁkhata* as a 'thing'.

In the statement '*sabbe dhammā anattā ti*', *Nibbāna* is also included. When we think of *Nibbāna* as the goal we wish to reach, it takes the form of an object for the mind. I hope it is clear to everybody. It has to be taken as an object to the mind. But in the end, if *Nibbāna* is treated as a 'thing', we will be misled like the ancient *yogis*.

'*Natthi kiñci*' or 'There is nothing' is mistakenly understood as a reference to a thing. If *Nibbāna* is also treated as a thing, one can enter *Saṁsāra* again. This is a subtle point in

the Buddha dhamma. *Asaṁkhata* must be correctly understood. The verse "*anekajātisaṁsāraṁ*" ends with *visaṁkhāragataṁ cittaṁ taṇhānaṁ khayamajjhagā*. Here the phrase *visaṁkhāragataṁ cittaṁ* is very significant. The mind once dominated by preparations is now free of them. The mind is liberated. That is why it is said that the moment intentions (*cetanā*) and specific preparations are abandoned, one experiences *nirodha* – cessation. There is yet another important phrase that describes *Nibbāna*, from another perspective.

"*Viññānaṁ ca anabhisaṁkhacca vimuttaṁ*."

The consciousness (*viññāna*) of an ordinary person is prepared, *saṁkhata*. But if the mind is liberated from the specific preparations of name-and-form, we have a special term to describe that mind, *anidassana viññāna*. It is the consciousness that does not display any name-and-form, and is totally liberated. *Anabhisaṁkhacca vimuttaṁ* also refers to the same state of mind. Similarly, *asaṁkhata* simply means to emancipate oneself from the *ghana saññā* or the perception of the compact, and begin to see through the perception of a cluster.

I would like to draw your attention to another point, at this juncture. Earlier I pointed out to you that the word *saṁkhāra* is used in the singular as *kāya saṁkhāro*, *vacī saṁkhāro* and *citta saṁkhāro*, but with reference to *kamma*, it is used in the plural. For example *kāya saṁkhārā*, *vacī saṁkhārā* but *mano saṁkhārā* instead of *citta saṁkhārā*. This may be slightly confusing. We have told you that the three preparations – inhalation and exhalation, reasoning and deliberation, and perception and feeling – make up the underneath layers. But they encroach the top layer when *mana* gets recognition, that is when the mind receives objects (*dhamma*) for thought. The moment these objects or *dhammā* are treated as 'things', *cetanā* or intention arises. It is the objects that flow into the mind that activate the stubborn middle finger.

Let us now arrange everything in its proper order. First we used the three words *kāya saṁkhāro*, *vacī saṁkhāro* and *citta saṁkhāro* with reference to the three types of preparation. If we move on to the topic of *kamma*, *kamma* that prepares the ground for another birth, the terms used are *kāya saṁkhārā* (in the plural), *vacī saṁkhārā* and instead of *citta saṁkhārā*, the third is *mano saṁkhārā*. Why? When the sense objects grasped by the sense faculties reach the mind, they are transformed into 'things'. *Chandamūlakā āvuso sabbe dhammā*. All dhammas have desire (*chanda*) as their root. These are complicated points, although we try to summarize them. You know *saṁkhāra* is a term with deep implications.

Beneath *saṁkhata* or 'the prepared' runs an undercurrent of *taṇhā,* craving. These are the words of the Buddha.

"*Avijjā samphassajena bhikkhave, vedayitena phuṭṭhassa assutavato puthujjanassa taṇhā uppaṇṇā tatojo so saṁkhāro.*"Craving (*taṇhā*) arises in ordinary worldly people, who are afflicted by ignorance. Preparation or *saṁkhāra* is born out of this craving. Think of respiration for example. You may give up everything but you cannot give up

breathing. It's called the most elementary level of grasping. You know how hard a person gasps for breath at death. That shows that becoming is dependent on the three subtle preparations. The external factors come in later, and continue to follow from birth to birth. The fundamental force that helps in preparation is *taṇhā*, craving. The preparation done in the darkness of ignorance is three-fold, *kāya saṁkhāro*, *vaci saṁkhāro, citta saṁkhāro*. The third preparation *citta saṁkhāro* becomes a *mano saṁkhāra*, a preparation of the mind, when it assumes a gross state, when it becomes a prepared. With the mere arising of feeling and perception, there is no accumulation of *kamma*. That is called *mano saṁcetanā*. You know the first two verses in the *Dhammapada*.

As the last point in the talk, we have come to the first two verses of the *Dhammapada*.

Mano pubbaṁgamā dhammā

Mano seṭṭhā manomayā

Manasā ce paduṭṭhena

The subject discussed here is the mind – *mana*. The mind takes the responsibility, being in the forefront of mental objects – *dhammā*. Wholesome or unwholesome intentions *cetanā* are activated at this point. *Kamma* is thus accumulated.

Try to understand all the points we discussed today. We talked about *saṁkhāra*, *abhisaṁkhāra*, *cetanā*, *saṁcetanā*, *saṁkhata and asaṁkhata*. The summary of the talk is contained in these words. You can now understand the significance of the Buddha's words "*Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti - sabbaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā.*"

But it is not a very popular statement.

It is very amusing to see that the most fascinating (interesting)

'song' in the Buddha's teaching is the last thing we hear on earth.

Aniccā vata saṁkhārā

Uppāda vaya dhammino

Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti

Tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho.

To tell you the truth, my first impulse was to begin this discourse with this verse. But I knew you would walk out on hearing it. That's why I brought it out last.

"*Aniccā vata saṅkhārā*" is one of the most profound verses. But it has faced the same fate as the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Both have been reduced to the level of a pumpkin among the funeral rites. But you can see that this verse carries a message at its very depth.

Aniccā vata saṁkhārā – uppāda vaya dhammino – Impermanent are all preparations. They are of the nature of arising and passing away.

Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti – They arise and cease. *Tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho* – Their pacification is bliss.

Now let's enrich this treasure of a verse with another Buddha word.

Aniccā vata saṁkhārā

Uppāda vaya dhammino

Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti

Tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho.

That is all the verse says, but let us expand on it. In the *saṁkhāras* referred to in the above verse, from inhalation and exhalation to the more gross preparations called *abhisaṁkhāra*, the nature of arising and ceasing is evident.

"*Uppāda vaya dhammino*".

But there occurs a more revealing exposition of *saṁkhata*.

"*Tīṇimāni bhikkhave saṁkhatassa saṁkhata lakkhaṇān?"*

Monks, three main characteristics are seen in preparations that have been prepared. What are they? "*Uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, ṭhitassa aññathattaṁ paññāyati."*

An arising is visible, a cessation is visible. Furthermore,

"*ṭhitassa aññathattaṁ*" '*ṭhiti*' means 'being' "continuing".

While being, (while continuing) a change is visible. We saw that *saṁkhāra* has only an arising and ceasing. But regarding *saṁkhata* there is an arising, a passing away and an otherwiseness of the (apparently) static. The Buddha explains '*ṭhitassa aññathattaṁ*' – 'a turning otherwise of the apparently static state' – what is mistakenly seen as 'being, continuing, enduring' undergoes change. The essence of the problem lies hidden there.

Now let us understand what is called *asaṁkhata dhātu*. You have heard that *asaṁkhata* refers to *Nibbāna*. This is how it is described.

"*Tīṇimāni bhikkhave asaṁkhatassa asaṁkhata lakkhaṇāni*".

In the non-prepared state three non-prepared characteristics are to be found. What are the three? Arising is not found, cessation is not found, a change of an apparent static state is not found. With the cessation of consciousness, with the cessation of name-and-form, with the cessation of six sense spheres, everything ceases. There is no possibility of

arising and ceasing again. That is the point we tried to drive in, through our sermons on *Nibbāna*. A sphere or *āyatana* is mentioned. Many did not understand the use of the term *āyatana* here. In this sphere, there is no going. There is no coming. There is no being. There is no continuing. There is no anything.

That is the explanation to *asaṁkhata*. We have tried our best to put across as much as we could within one hour. Try to digest them well. Try to understand them from diverse perspectives. What do I mean? All these years you have been listening to the conventional interpretation of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* where *saṁkhāra* (preparations) are supposed to prepare a *paṭisandhi viññāna* (a consciousness leading to another birth). Now you know it is not correct. It has two meanings, within the terms *saṁkhāra*, *abhisaṁkhāra saṁkhata*.

The purpose behind our explanation is not to argue or challenge, but merely to put the listeners into correct view. Meditation cannot proceed on misconceived views. Try and maintain the perfectly correct understanding in order to continue on this journey.

You have observed the valuable precepts and spent the day in meditation, as usual. You have developed awareness and mindfulness. You must also apply to your meditational practices, the contents of this discourse which will lead you to insight. Make the determination to attain the four stages on the path to emancipation, before the light of the Dhamma goes out.

Whatever beings there are, from the lowest to the highest state of existence, who wish to share in the merits of listening to this discourse, may they accomplish their aspirations and attain the peace of *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 14
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 196)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Idaṁ jātu vedagu – idaṁ jātu sabbaji

idaṁ jātu apalikhataṁ – gaṇḍamūlaṁ palikhaṇinti

This is the perfect mastery of the Veda

This is called victory over all

This is the extraction of the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted

– Uddaka Sutta, Saṁyutta Nikāya

Dear Listeners,

Any person with an inquiring eye could see that all activities pertaining to the continuum of life of beings in *Saṁsāra* take place within the six sense spheres. The internal sense spheres, namely the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are referred to as *saḷāyatana* in the teaching of the Law of Dependependant Arising. These six internal sense spheres coordinate with the six external sense bases that is external objects, sound, smell, taste, body contact and mental objects (*dhamma*). They attract the worldlings towards the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form.

We have chosen as the topic for this fourteenth discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* a verse from the *Uddaka Sutta* of the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. On a certain occasion the Buddha addressing the monks recalled a certain past incident.

"Monks, UddakaRāmaputta used to declare thus:"

"*Idaṁ jātu vedagu – idaṁ jātu sabbaji*

idaṁ jātu apalikhatam – gaṇḍamūlam palikhaṇinti"

Let's go through the meaning first. '*Idaṁ jātu vedagu*' means "This is the perfect mastery of the *Veda*."

"*idaṁ jātu sabbaji*" means "This is called victory over all."

"*Idaṁ jātu apalikhataṁ - gaṇḍamūlaṁ palikhaṇinti*"

“This is the extraction of the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted.”

After uttering this verse the Buddha makes an unusual remark.

“Monks, although Uddaka made this joyous utterance, it is only a monk in this dispensation who is qualified to do so.”

Then he proceeds to reinterpret this puzzle-like verse.

“Monks, how does one gain mastery over the *Vedas*? “*Yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayañca atthagamañca assādañca ādīnavañca nissaranañca yathābhūtaṁ pajānāti, evaṁ kho bhikkhave bhikkhu vedagu hoti*.”

“To the extent a monk realizes with wisdom, the six spheres of contact as they really are, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, to that extent, he will have mastery of the *Vedas*.”

The second question is then taken up.

“Monks, how can one become a *sabbaji*, one who is victorious over all”? Then comes the explanation, similar to the first one.

“*Yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayañca atthagamañca assādañca ādīnavañca nissaranañca, yathābhūtaṁ viditvā anupādāya vimutto hoti.”*

He who realizes with wisdom the six spheres of contact earlier mentioned, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, and will attain release with total detachment, such a person is *sabbaji*, a man who is victorious overall.

“Monks, how can one say that the root of the abscess so far unextracted, has now been extracted?”

This is a more puzzling statement than the earlier two.

“Monks *gaṇḍa* or abscess is a synonym for the body composed of the four primaries earth, water, heat and wind, born of mother and father, composed of gross food, inheriting the quality of impermanence, having the nature of rubbing, massaging, breaking up and scattering”

“What, monks, is the root of the abscess (*gaṇḍamūla*)?”

The root of the abscess is a synonym for craving.

“Monks to what extent can you say that the root of the abscess has been extracted? If a monk has eliminated craving, uprooted it, destroyed it like an uprooted palm, reduced to a state of non-arising, such a monk can be called one who has extracted the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted.”

According to this explanation offered by the Buddha, we see that *vedagu* is a term borrowed from the Brahmins. From a religious point of view it means a person who has reached mastery over all knowledge. According to the specific interpretation of the Buddha, surpassing all knowledge means the perfect realization of the fivefold activity of the six sense spheres. Similarly victory over all refers to the above mentioned perfect realization of the sense spheres accompanied by the perfect release from all clinging towards them. It is by now clear that both "Mastery over all" and "Victory over all" must be understood in relation to the six sense spheres.

Since we have been referring to '*sabba*' – 'all', I would like to introduce to you the *Sabba Sutta* of the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* for the purpose of supportive proof. *Sabba* means all.

Once the Buddha addressed the monks and said "Monks, I shall explain to you 'all'. Listen to me carefully."

"*Kiñca bhikkhave sabbaṁ? Cakkhuñca rūpāca, sotañca saddā ca, ghānañca gandhā ca, jivhā ca rasā ca, kayo ca phoṭṭhabbā ca, mano ca dhammā ca.*"

"The eye and external objects, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and body contacts, the mind and mental objects. This is called 'all' – '*sabba*'. Following this explanation the Buddha offers an amazing challenge as follows; "*Yo bhikkhave evaṁ vadeyya*."

Monks if anyone were to say thus,

"*Ahametaṁ sabbaṁ paccakkhāya aññaṁ sabbaṁ paññāpessāmi*" I disprove of that *sabba*, and declare another *sabba* in its place."

"Monks, that would amount to nothing more than foolish prattling. If questioned he would be dumbfounded. Why? Because he has no understanding of the subject."

The Buddha thus confirms the meaning of *sabba*.

We come across another similar explanation in the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* itself. Venerable Samiddhi approaches the Buddha with a question.

"*Loko loko ti Bhante vuccati, kittāvatā nu kho bhante loko vā assa lokapaññatti vā ti.*" "Lord, reference is made to a world, a world. To what extent is there a world or the manifestation of a world?" The Buddha replies as follows; "*Yattha kho Samiddhi atthi cakkhu, atthi rūpā, atthi cakkhuviññāṇaṁ, atthi cakkhuviññāṇā viññātabbā dhammā, atthi tattha loko vā lokapaññatti vā.*"

Since the detailed explanation of the other senses is similar to that of *cakkhu*, let us confine our explanation to *cakkhu*. You will understand the rest.

"Samiddhi, wherever an eye is present, and external objects are present, visual consciousness is present, phenomena that should be known through eye consciousness are present, there exists a world or the manifestation of a world."

This is followed by the description of other sense organs and lastly the mind.

“Samiddhi wherever a mind is present, mental objects are present, mind consciousness is present, phenomena that should be known through mind consciousness are present, there exists a world or the manifestation of a world.”

Now, he explains the reverse of it.

“Samiddhi, wherever the eye does not exist, external forms do not exist, eye consciousness does not exist, phenomena that should be known through eye consciousness do not exist, there exists neither a world nor the manifestation of a world.”

This explanation indicates that there is a state where the six sense spheres become non-existent.

Let us now change over to a *Sutta* we have often referred to earlier, the first *Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. It’s the *Brahmajāla Sutta* that casts a net over sixty two views by way of rejecting them. After a critical review of these views the Buddha says that whatever views exist then, whatever views existed in the past, and whatever views may arise in the future, can be categorized under these sixty two views. Then the Buddha has some interesting comment to make about the formulators of these views.

“Monks, all those ascetics and Brahmins who hold views under these sixty two categories, …. to quote the Pāli words “*sabbe te chahi phassāyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisaṁvedenti.”*The different views they declare are based on various sense contacts they experience through the sense spheres.

What is the outcome of formulating views based on feelings gained through sense spheres? *Vedanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādānaṁ, upādāna paccayā bhavo, bhava paccayā jāti, jāti paccayā jarā maraṇa soka parideva*.”

To them, from feeling as condition there arises craving, from craving as condition there arises grasping, from grasping as condition there arises becoming, from becoming as condition there arises birth, from birth as condition there arises decay, death, grief, lamentation. Since all these views have sprung up from feelings generated through contact with sense spheres, the ascetics and Brahmins who profess them are led from feeling to craving, from craving to grasping, from grasping to becoming. You see, they have no escape from *Saṁsāra*.

Next the discussion turns towards the identification of the real monk. In defining the term *vedagu* as ‘one who has mastery over all’ ascetics and Brahmins have based their interpretation on views. But the Buddha’s declaration is founded on a different footing.

“*channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayaṁ ca atthagamaṁ ca assādaṁ ca ādīnavaṁ ca nissaraṇaṁ ca yathābhūtaṁ pajānāti. Ayaṁ imehi sabbeheva uttarītaraṁ pajānāti.”*

At any time in my dispensation a monk who understands with wisdom, the six bases of contact as they really are, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, he far excels those others in his wisdom."

That is how the Buddha explains the word *vedagu*.

The discussion about *Saḷāyatana* continues further. There is another *Sutta* similar to the *Sabba Sutta* mentioned earlier. On this occasion the Buddha takes the monks by surprise by addressing them thus:

"*Dvayaṁ vo bhikkhave desessāmī*"

Monks I will teach you 'two'. What are the two?

"*Cakkhuñceva rūpā ca, sotañceva saddā ca, ghānañceva gandhā ca, jivhāceva rasā ca, kāyoceva poṭṭhabbā ca, manoceva dhammā ca*."

Each internal sense organ is stated together with its external sense object, the eye with forms, the ear with sounds, the nose with smells, the tongue with tastes, the body with body contacts and the mind with mental objects.

Here too the Buddha's challenge vibrates:

"This is the 'two'. Anyone who says there is another 'two' apart from this, is only jabbering away like a fool. He cannot prove it."

It is further confirmed by the *Dvayaṁ Sutta* as well.

In this discussion about *saḷāyatana*, we made reference to *saḷāyatana nirodha*."

We have time and again explained in our discourses, that *Nibbāna* means the release from the six sense spheres in this world itself. It is the same as *nissaraṇa*. Now you see that cessation of the six sense spheres – *saḷāyatana nirodha* – is attainable within this life. That realization dawns within the *Arahatphala samāpatti*. *Nibbāna* is really the attainment of that *samāpatti*.

Now I wish to switch over to another *sutta* to continue my explanation . After the evening retreat Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita came to meet Ven Sāriputta one day. He asked him a very complicating question indeed. "Friend Sāriputta, *channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ asesa virāga nirodhā atthaññaṁ kiñci?*"

"At the total cessation of the six spheres of contact, is there anything else left?" Venerable Sāriputta rejects the question altogether by saying "*māhevaṁ āvuso*"

"Do not ask thus."

But Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita pursued his questioning.

“At the total cessation of the six spheres of contact, isn’t there anything else left?” Venerable Sāriputta’s response was the same as earlier.

The third question was a combination of the first two questions. Is there and isn’t there anything else left? That alternative was also rejected by Venerable Sāriputta. The final question was “At the total cessation of the six spheres is there anything that neither exists nor non-exists.”

Venerable Sāriputta again said “*māhevaṁ āvuso.”*

Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita plainly asked him “Friend, how can I understand what you say?”

Now comes Venerable Sāriputta’s explanation. If one says that at the total cessation of the six sense spheres of contact there is something left, it would amount to – here he uses an unusual word – *appapañcaṁ papañceti*. I have explained this word *papañca* on earlier occasions to you. ‘*Appapañcaṁ papañceti*’ means using linguistic jargon in an inappropriate place. Seeing it at depth, it is proliferating or arguing where argument must not take place.

The question whether there remains anything at the total cessation of the six sense spheres is in itself flawed. So are all the dilemmas and the quadrilemmas. They are all proliferations of theorists, as we have often reminded you.

That is why Venerable Sāriputta rejected them all as irrelevant. All four aspects of the argument are labeled as ‘*appapañcaṁ papañceti*’, ‘proliferating where proliferation must not take place’.

And finally he concludes by saying “*Yāvatā āvuso channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ gati, tāvatā papañcassa gati. Yāvatā papañcassa gati, tāvatā channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ gati.*”

“Friend, as far as the six sense spheres reach, that far the proliferation reaches. As far as the proliferation reaches, that far the six sense spheres reach.”

“*Channaṁ āvuso phassāyatanānaṁ asesa virāga nirodhā papañcanirodho papañcavūpasamo.*”

“Friend, with the total cessation of the six sense spheres, proliferation ceases, proliferation pacifies.”

Papañcanirodha is a synonym for *Nibbāna*. Proliferation is impossible where the six sense spheres have ceased. We can see this *sutta* is extremely enlightening although it is deep.

In order to delve a little deeper into the subject, I wish to recall another *sutta* very briefly for our purpose. At the end of a discourse the Buddha once spoke thus to the Monks.

"*Tasmātiha Bhikkhave, se āyatane veditabbe yattha cakkhuñca nirujjhati, rūpasaññā ca virajjati. se āyatane veditabbe, yattha sotañca nirujjhati saddasaññā ca virajjati*." It goes on in a similar strain. I shall explain the first. You must try to understand the rest.

"Monks, Therefore, this sphere should be understood, this sphere which is very unusual. The eye is extinct there. Perception of external forms fade away. The ear is extinct. Sounds fade away. The nose is extinct. Smells fade away."

He continues until he winds up with "*mano ca nirujjhati, dhammasaññā ca virajjati."*

The mind is extinct. Perception of cognizable objects fade away. Thereby the Buddha finally firmly establishes the fact that "this sphere must be understood, this sphere must be understood."

After this brief admonition, the Buddha leaves the assembly and withdraws to the monastery. He left his statements unexplained. The monks thought "The Buddha left us steeped in an unexplained puzzle. Perhaps we could seek a clarification from Venerable Ānanda who has been often complimented by the Buddha for his lucid explanations."

When the puzzle was presented to Venerable Ānanda, he though reluctantly, responded thus.

"Well, let me give my brief comments to the problem, the way I understand it:

Saḷāyatana nirodhaṁ kho āvuso bhagavatā sandhāya bhāsitam."

"Friends, the Buddha has spoken with reference to the cessation of the six sense spheres."

Earlier we have explained that *saḷāyatana nirodha* is a synonym for *Nibbāna*. Here the Buddha refers to the cessation of the six spheres as a special *āyatana*. This has often posed a problem to the scholars.

It is now clear that crossing over this world is the extinction of the *saḷāyatana*, the six sense spheres. It is a state where one acquires mastery over all. There are many more references to this attainment in the texts. On one occasion, two giant tuskers in wisdom, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita and Venerable Sāriputta, accost each other over a very subtle doctrinal issue. You must understand that their discussions are done solely for our benefit. Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita questions.

"The *saṁyojanas* or fetters are bonds. Is the eye bonded by external forms, or are external forms bonded by the eye? Is the ear bonded by sounds, or are sounds bonded by the ear? Is the nose bonded by the smells or are the smells bonded by the nose?" He goes on and lastly asks "Is the mind bonded by cognizable objects or are cognizable objects bonded by the mind?" Venerable Sāriputta's response was as follows; "No friend, the eye is not bonded by external forms, neither are forms bonded by the eye. The ear is not bonded by sounds, neither are sounds bonded by the ear. But if lustful sensuality arises dependent on those two, that is the bond."

Next in order to illustrate this point, he cites an example.

“In case, friend, a black ox and a white ox are tethered by the same chain, one cannot say that the black ox is bonded by the white ox or the white one is bonded by the black one, which statements are both inapplicable. The bond is the chain between them. Similarly friend, the eye is not bonded by forms, neither are external forms bonded by the eye. The bond is the lustful sensuality that is generated between the two. The bond is attachment.”

Let me bring in another episode by way of a simile. I know you like stories. This was related to a group of monks on a certain occasion.

“Monks, one evening, a certain tortoise crossed the river, and was going in search of food. At the same time a fox was also walking about in search of food. The tortoise saw the fox at a distance and withdrew his limbs and head into the shell. He lay there as good as dead. The fox too saw the tortoise and kept guard by him hoping to snatch off a limb the moment one comes out. But the tortoise continued his vigil, remaining perfectly still. The fox was compelled to give up hopes and depart.

Next comes the comparison.

“Monks, remember that Māra is keeping constant vigil over you just like that fox, hoping to break in through your eye, or to break in through your ear.”

The Buddha teaches the technique of guarding oneself from the Māra. He brings in the secret of restraining one’s senses, as he often does.

“*Cakkhunā rūpam disvā na nimittaggāhī hoti, nānubyañjanaggāhī hoti*.”

“Monks, on seeing an external object do not take in its characteristics or occupy yourself with its attributes.”

The two terms *nimitta* and *anubyañjana* have to be differentiated. To cite an example, seeing an attractive form is *nimittaggāhī*, being drawn towards it, observing more attributes that make the form attractive is *anubyañjana*. That is *nimittaggāhī* and *anubyañjanaggāhī*. Here the Buddha tries to explain the results of getting attracted to form and searching for more of its attractive attributes. It generates influxes and leads one to deterioration.

“If monks, you keep the six doors closed, Māra will withdraw defeated.”

Due to that restraint of the senses, one could avoid committing evil actions through the six sense doors, like the tortoise who keeps his limbs withdrawn.

Next see the beauty of that simile converted into verse by the Buddha.

Kummova aṇgāni sake kapāle samodahaṁ bhikkhu manovitakke anissito aññamaheṭhayāno parinibbuto na upavadeyya kañci Just as a tortoise withdraws his head and limbs into its shell, a monk withdraws into himself against the mental

reflections that are generated by the five sense bases – with the eye chasing behind visual objects and the ear chasing behind auditory objects etc. He keeps guard over the sense bases. Then '*anissito aññamaheṭhayāno*' he does not lean against anything and '*na upavadeyya*' does not blame anybody, does not harass anybody. '*Parinibbuto*' He attains extinction.

Here we see that with reference to sense restraint the Buddha has taught the path leading to cessation or the total departure from the six sense spheres. When we touch on *saḷāyatana*, the topic of contact crops up. Since we have referred to the spheres of contact when discussing the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, I think the following *sutta* will be of interest to you, though deep in meaning.

The monk Moḷiya Phagguṇa asked the Buddha "*ko nu kho bhante phusati*?" "Lord, who is it that touches?" This monk, due to his notion of self, seems to imagine there is a person who touches. The Buddha replies,

"I do not say there is anyone who touches. Had I said so, your question would have been relevant. But since I do not say so, your question should be "*kimpaccayā nu kho bhante phasso*?"

The Buddha corrects the question Moḷiya Phagguṇa had asked.

"Dependent on what is contact Sir?"

It is not appropriate to refer to 'anybody' touching.

"And my answer would be *Saḷāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā*."

"Dependent on the six sense spheres is contact. Dependent on contact is feeling."

Feeling being a new topic for Moḷiya Phagguṇa, he got hold of it for further probing.

He questioned "*ko nu kho bhante vedeti*?" Who is it Lord, who feels?"

Again the Buddha replied,

"I do not say a person feels. Had I said so, your question would have been relevant. Since my statement is different, your question is inapropriate. This is how you should have questioned me.

"*Kiṁpaccayā nu kho bhante vedanā*?" Conditioned by what, Lord, is feeling? If you put the question in that form, I would answer thus:

Phassa paccayā vedanā, vedanā paccayā taṇhā."

The Buddha introduced a term hitherto unspoken of that is *taṇhā*. Being in a questioning mood, Moḷiya Phagguṇa's immediate response was "Lord, who is it that craves?".

This is the Buddha's reply:

“I do not say that anyone does the craving. The appropriate question would be “*Kiṁ paccayā nu kho bhante taṇhā*?” and the Buddha continues in his own style “*vedanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādānaṁ.”*

Concealed within this style of replying is something amazing. Please try to understand its significance. I shall explain it with a simile. Imagine an artist who wishes to draw a link in a chain. If he draws only one solitary link, identifying it would be difficult, don’t you think? He has to at least draw half of a link on either side, for the chain to take shape. Now I hope you understand why the Buddha added an extra link which Moḷiya Phagguṇa did not inquire about. It is to make him realize that this is a chain.

Saḷāyatana paccayā phasso”

‘Dependent on the six sense spheres contact comes to be’. The Buddha did not stop at that. He introduced *phassa paccayā vedanā*. I am sure you understand that the Buddha very effectively introduces the Law of Dependent Arising at each link. He overstepped the valid answer by annexing *vedanā* to his explanation. Venerable Moḷiya Phagguṇa got caught up in it. The Buddha led him on to *tanhā* and finally to *upādana*. Ultimately it shows that, whatever we speak in day to day usage, the Buddha firmly makes explicit the depth of the reality of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. No one does the contacting. From *saḷāyatana* arises contact, *phassa*. From *phassa* arises feeling – *vedanā*. So it continues. You see what an important *sutta* this is.

If we were to go deeper into the subject, I am reminded of an occasion where a group of monks relate an experience of theirs to the Buddha. “Lord, certain ascetics and Brahmins in other sects ask us “For what purpose do you lead the higher life under the Buddha? What is the aim of your renunciation? Then Lord we reply like this ‘We have renounced for the realization of *dukkha*, suffering. Our aim is to understand *dukkha*.’ Lord, in replying so, are we speaking in accordance with your teaching, or are we contradicting you? We have come to you for clarification.”

The Buddha replies,

“Well done monks. Your replies are perfectly correct. Suppose they ask you what this *dukkha* is that you wish to realize, then you must reply as follows.”

To put it in English “The eye is suffering, material forms are suffering. Eye consciousness is suffering. Eye contact is suffering, all the feelings both pleasant and unpleasant that arise through eye contact are suffering.”

You have to understand the other sense spheres similarly. You know quite well that under the four Noble Truths, the five aggregates of grasping are referred to as *dukkha*. Here the Buddha explains *dukkha* in terms of *saḷāyatana*, instead of the *pañca upādānakkhandha*. It exposes the nature of suffering with the six sense spheres.

There are several *sutta*s of this nature that try to reveal the impermanent nature of the *saḷāyatana*s. One is the *Dutiya Dvayaṁ Sutta* which closely follows the *Dvayaṁ Sutta*

we discussed earlier. There the Buddha declares "*Dvayaṁ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti.*"

Monks the consciousness arises dependent on two. It does not arise without a cause. Two come together to give rise to consciousness.

"*Cakkhuṁ ca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu viññāṇaṁ.*" Dependent on the eye and the visual object, there arises visual consciousness. In a similar manner, the ear and sound give rise to auditory consciousness. Each consciousness is dependently arisen. It goes to prove that always "arising takes place dependent on two."

The next important statement is "*tiṇṇaṁ saṁgati phasso*".

The implication here is quite deep. Let us discuss it now. The eye consciousness arises depending on the eye and the material object. Not being aware of this dependent nature, not being able to understand it, the moment it is treated as 'three' it becomes contact. Based on the eye and form, there arises eye consciousness. But at this point if it is treated as three,

"*tiṇṇaṁ saṁgati phasso*" then, contact arises. This is a very deep aspect of *phassa*, contact. We usually say "somebody touched" in ordinary language, being ignorant of reality as it is. But here it is specifically explained that contact does not arise devoid of a dependent cause. We have repeatedly reminded you that an unspecified *viññāna* does not arise just as a fire does not arise without a dependent cause. If it is consciousness, it has to be either eye consciousness, or ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness or lastly mind consciousness. But you must remember, neither of these is stored up somewhere. They arise with the coming together of two. That is where the '*dvayaṁ*' interpretation comes in. That alone is the secret in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Fire never arises on its own independently. Whatever causes a fire, that fire is identified by that name. A fire caused by paper or firewood or straw or paddy husk is identified each by the dependent cause. Similarly, a consciousness caused by the eye and the material form coming together is identified as *cakkhu viññāṇa*, visual consciousness.

But due to ignorance, or foolishness, if one does not heed the fact that eye consciousness arises dependent on those two causes, and treats everything as 'one', he would see 'contact' as real, and give chase behind the illusory image. The eye is here, the material form is there. He runs after the mirage. This explains a very deep aspect of consciousness.

Now we have explored several aspects of the useful topic *saḷāyatana*. We told you at the outset that one has to know the dependent causes of arising in order to get a perfect understanding of the *saḷāyatana*. So also one has to know their cessation, their satisfaction and perils. Then comes *nissaraṇa* or stepping out of the attraction towards *saḷāyatana*.

Next, I wish to discuss with you a very important *sutta* called the *Saḷāyatanika Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It can be considered as the most important discourse on the six sense spheres. Here you find the Buddha doing a comparative analysis. On one side is the ordinary worldling who understands the six sense spheres at his mental level, and the satisfaction and perils that he experiences. On the other hand a person who has a realistic vision of the *saḷāyatana*, being convinced of the temporary nature of enchantment and the inherent unpleasantness, obtains release from them. This is how the Buddha commences his comparison.

"*Cakkhuṁ bhikkhave ajānaṁ apassaṁ yathābhūtaṁ rūpe ajānaṁ apassaṁ yathābhūtaṁ cakku viññāṇaṁ ajānaṁ apassaṁ yathābhūtaṁ*" and he goes on. Let's study the meanings.

"*jānaṁ passaṁ*" means knowledge and vision. Not having knowledge and vision of the true nature of the eye as it is and external objects as they are – 'as it is' must be understood with regards to impermanence – not seeing the impermanence, not seeing the eye consciousness as it is, which is the outcome of those two, and not seeing eye contact as it is, and not seeing the resultant pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings, as they really are, one develops attachment towards the eye – "*cakkhusmiṁ sārajjati*" – to the external objects, to the eye consciousness, to the eye contact and to the pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings resulting from eye contact. Now you can understand the entanglement of the worldlings with the six spheres. Did you notice that the clinging runs into the mind as well? Unable to understand the mind wisely as it really is, one gets attached to the mind, the mental phenomena that the mind focuses on, the mind consciousness, mind contacts and feelings arising thereof.

Then the resultant perils of this process are discussed "*tassa sārattassa saṁyuttassa sammūḷhassa assādānupassino viharato āyatiṁ pañcupādānakkhandhā upacayaṁ gacchanti.*"

That worldling, due to his ignorance, firmly clings to, and gets bound to the above mentioned sense spheres, sense objects and the resultant consciousness, so that caught in the deception of apparent pleasure, he gets into deep trouble.

"*Āyatiṁ pañcupādānakkhandhā*" he accumulates the fivefold aggregates of grasping, again. As a result of gripping the temporary mass of phenomena that pass by, one develops the fivefold aggregates of grasping. Then its perils are explained.

"*Tassa kāyikā pi darathā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi darathā pavaḍḍhanti. Kāyikā pi santāpā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi santāpā pavaḍḍhanti. Kāyikā pi pariḷāhā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi pariḷāhā pavaḍḍhanti. So kāyadukkhampi cetodukkhampi paṭisaṁvedeti.*"

These are the perils he has to experience. His physical distresses increase. His mental distresses increase. His physical pains increase. His mental pains increase. His physical

burnings increase. His mental burnings increase. He experiences a mass of physical and mental grief. This explanation deals with the worldly aspect. Now look at the opposite aspect.

"*Cakkhuñca kho bhikkhave jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ rūpe jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ cakkuviññāṇaṁ jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ, cakkusamphassaṁ jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ.*"

Thus continues the account. If one were to see the eye as it really is, which means to see the impermanent nature of the eye, and the physical objects as they really are, and see the resultant eye consciousness as impermanent in its very nature, and also the eye contact, and feeling as they really are, such a person – such a monk – who disciplines himself in this dispensation, seeing the perils of the sensory activity, undergoes this wonderful change.

Tassa pañcupādānakkhandā apacayaṁ gacchanti. The five aggregates of grasping diminish in him. Compare this with the worldling. Every experience is accumulated in his mind. He accumulates the relevant material objects as his own aggregate of form, and the feelings as his own heap of feelings. This is what leads him on in *Saṁsāra*. But the disciplined monk, in contrast, sees impermanence then and there. Nothing remains as residue.

Therefore,

"*apacayaṁ gacchati*" they are gradually exhausted. Here *upacaya* and *apacaya* stand for *Saṁsāra* and *Nibbāna* respectively. The Buddha attempts to illustrate how the mind inclined towards *Nibbāna* disciplines itself to wipe out the five aggregates of grasping. Then the Buddha goes on to describe the result thereof.

"*Tassa kāyikā pi darathā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi darathā pahīyanti. Kāyikā pi santāpā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi santāpā pahīyanti. Kāyikā pi pariḷāhā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi pariḷāhā pahīyanti. So kāyasukhampi cetosukhampi paṭisaṁvedeti.*"

"His physical distresses diminish. His mental distresses diminish. His physical pains diminish. His mental pains diminish. His physical burnings diminish. His mental burnings diminish. He experiences immense physical and mental happiness. Then the Buddha delves deeper into this discipline. A monk who disciplines himself thus, finds himself progressing unbelievably fast on the Noble Eightfold Path. I wish to remark that this *sutta* will be of immense help to those who meditate on the *saḷāyatana*.

Then the Buddha proclaims the final result of this training.

"*Yā tathābhūtassa diṭṭhi sāssa hoti sammādiṭṭhi.*"

"If such a disciplined monk holds a view, that will definitely be the right view."

This refers, not to the ordinary *sammādiṭṭhi* that we talk of, but is the very path, right view at its deepest level. If such a monk holds an intention, it is the right intention. If he

makes an effort, it is always a right effort. If he has awareness, it is a correct awareness. If he attains any concentration, it is bound to be the right concentration. Now did you notice that only five links in the Noble Eightfold Path are discussed here.

Now the Buddha explains why three items were left out.

"*Pubbeva kho panassa kāyakammaṁ vacīkammaṁ ājīvo suparisuddho hoti.*"

A monk who undertakes this strenuous discipline, at the very outset dispels all gross impure tendencies which have no place in the path to *Nibbanā*. He is beyond lowly talk and action. He is pure in word, action and livelihood – *Sammā vācā, Sammā kammanta, Sammā ājīva*. At the higher level of the path he concentrates on right view, right intention, right effort, right awareness and right concentration – *Sammā diṭṭhi, Sammā saṁkappa, Sammā vāyāma, Sammā sati, Sammā samādhi*. Now the Buddha takes us further up the path. The monk who develops the Noble Eightfold Path in this manner attains purity of mind.

"*Tassa evaṁ imaṁ ariyṁ aṭṭhañgikaṁ maggaṁ bhāvayato cattāropi satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Cattāro sammappadhānā bhāvanā paripūriṁ gacchatnti. Cattāro iddhipādā bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Pañca pi indriyāni bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Pañca pi balāni bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Sattapi bhojjhañgā bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti*."

This is a very clear explanation of how one perfects the thirty seven Factors of Enlightenment through this disciplinary training. In the process of practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, the fourfold mindfulness or *satipaṭṭhāna* develops spontaneously. So does the fourfold right effort, the four psychic powers, the four faculties, the five powers and the seven factors of enlightenment. This is a description of the transcendental stage or the Supramundane stage.

The Buddha speaks further of the monk who has perfected himself thus far.

"*Tassime dve dhammā yuganaddhā vattanti samatho ca vipassanā ca*."

"In him, these two factors, namely calm and insight prevail like yoked oxen."

Two oxen yoked to a cart have to step together. Similarly, you have heard I am sure as *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditators, that one attains concentration through calm and the three signata – *tilakkhana* – through insight.

There are three methods one could follow. After practicing *samatha*, one could proceed to practice *vipassanā*.

"*Samatha pubbaṁgamaṁ vipassanaṁ*."

Or else practice *vipassanā* first and then *samatha*.

"*Vipassanā pubbaṁgamaṁ samathaṁ*."

There is yet another method.

"*Samathaṁ ca vipassanaṁ ca yuganaddhaṁ bhāveti.*"

That is 'pulling together' like two oxen yoked to a cart. Both *samatha* and *vipassanā* develop "yoked together".

Now the Buddha reveals the final result of this exertion.

"*So ye dhammā abhiññā pariññeyyā, te dhamme abhiññā parijānāti. Ye dhammā abhiññā pahātabbā, te dhamme abhiññā pajahati. Ye dhammā abhiññā bhāvetabbā, te dhamme abhiññā bhāveti. Ye dhammā abhiññā sacchikātabbā, te dhamme abhiññā sacchikaroti.*"

Whatever mental factors have to be comprehended through higher knowledge, he comprehends them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be eliminated through higher knowledge, he eliminates them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be developed through higher knowledge, he develops them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be realized through higher knowledge, he realizes them through higher knowledge.

The Buddha then proceeds to explain these *dhammas*. What should be comprehended are the five aggregates of grasping. What should be eliminated are ignorance and craving. What should be developed are calm and insight – *samatha* and *vipassanā*. What should be realized and perfected are the wisdom of Arahanthood and emancipation through Arahanthood which are known by the terms *vijjā vimutti*. This is a wonderful *sutta* that deals with different methods applicable in practicing the path to *Nibbāna*.

It is clear that there are several methods to attain *Nibbāna*, depending on the object of meditation. Some may realize the impermanence of the five aggregates of grasping through the meditation of the three characteristics. Some may meditate on the primary elements. Some may meditate on impermanence in life through the medium of the six sense spheres. Finally, all this converge (add up) to reach the summit. Last of all, *samatha* and *vipassanā*, like two oxen yoked to a cart, 'pull together' in the final phase. Three factors in the Noble Eightfold Path having been already eliminated, the remaining five are eliminated during this final phase. It is the transcendental Noble Eightfold Path that is referred to here. Misconduct through word, body and livelihood become inapplicable here, as they have been already wiped out. When the meditator's mind functions on a transcendental level, only the other five factors become active. The Buddha explains how one could reach the final goal of *vijjā vimutti phala*, through the analysis of the six sense spheres. When referring to impermanence, I am reminded of several more *sutta*s that may confirm this position.

Once the Buddha addresses the Monks and declares "*Cakkhuṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī, rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvīno cakkhuviññāṇaṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī.*"

The eye is impermanent, subject to change and subject to 'otherwiseness'. They are the three sides of impermanence.

"It is impermanent" is an incomplete statement. Due to its impermanent character it is subject to change. Finally become 'otherwise' or different from what it was. This same description is applicable to material objects and also to visual consciousness. They are impermanent, subject to change and becomes 'otherwise'.

Now comes a question based on this discussion.

"Monks, how can a permanent thing arise from an impermanent thing? If the eye is impermanent, if material objects are impermanent, how could eye consciousness become permanent? The eye contact resulting from eye consciousness is also impermanent. The experience that arises dependent on eye contact is also impermanent. The purpose of this explicit description is to drive the point home. The entire statement "*aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī*" is repeated at every point. Everything is *calā ceva, vayā ca, aniccā, vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino*. Here several terms are used to stress the character of impermanence, such as 'quivers', 'withers', 'impermanent', 'subject to change', 'has the character of otherwiseness'. Somebody wishes to see some object well. But the moment he looks, both the object and the eye undergo a swift change, although we are unaware of this change. They quiver. That's why they are called 'movies'. Unable to understand the fast quivering nature, one establishes oneself on the perception of compact and tries to grasp material 'objects'.

"I saw this form with my own eye. It is the very same form."

It is not easy to understand the change it undergoes every moment. In this manner the Buddha makes explicit the nature of change everywhere. This is the second *Dvayaṁ Sutta* in the *Saḷāyatana Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, which is of immense help to meditators on impermanence. It winds up as follows:

"*calā ceva, vayā ca, aniccā, viparināmino*"

"they quiver, wither, has the nature of impermanence and change."

It is invisible to the physical eye. It is visible only to the eye of wisdom.

As the meditator on vipassanā reaches higher and higher, he begins to see through the world as 'totally different' to what others see. The *Thera Theri Gatha* has recorded amazing objects of meditation, such as a flowing stream, a fire. He who has constantly cultivated the nature of impermanence will see impermanence in everything. The fallen leaf, the blossoming and fading flower is impermanent. That impermanence is very strong.

At times the Buddha has declared "*Anicca saññā bhikkhave bhāvitā bahulīkatā sabbaṁ kāmarāgaṁ pariyādiyati sabbaṁ rūparāgaṁ pariyādiyati sabbaṁ bhavarāgaṁ pariyādiyati sabbaṁ avijjaṁ pariyādiyati samūhanti*."

A thorough training in the perception of impermanence results in total elimination of the attachment to sensuality. The passion for material objects, the yearning for becoming, ignorance and finally the subtle conceit of self are totally eradicated. The Buddha has spoken so much in praise of the development of the perception of impermanence, that he has once remarked "It is incorrect to say there are two paths to *Nibbāna* because they all converge at the summit."

One has to practice either the Four Foundations of Mindfulness or the perception of impermanence. This point is confirmed in the *Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta*. However, there is no contradiction here because both serve the same purpose. At a superficial glance, we see one disciplining oneself in Four Foundations of Mindfulness following the accepted methodology.

He follows this one and only path until he realizes *Nibbāna*. That is the accepted method. But we see that impermanence is also declared as the path.

"There are two paths to gain control over defilements. One is the development of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the other is the development of the perception of impermanence."

The latter serves as a strong support in developing the spiritual qualities such as the fourfold *satipaṭṭhānas*, and the four methods of right effort *sammappadhāna*. Everything that the Buddha has taught about impermanence is so amazingly relevant in the process of spiritual training. We have discussed here only a limited amount of that wealth of information.

We must understand that the Buddha uses a variety of comparisons to emphasize the importance of *saḷāyatana*. *Vedagu* refers to the Arahant. *Triveda* is not the three *Vedas* of the Brahmins but the *tevijjā* Arahants are endowed with that is the knowledge of recollecting previous births, the knowledge of the divine eye, the knowledge of the elimination of influxes – *pubbe nivāsānussati ñāna, dibba cakkhu and āsavakkhaya ñāna*. The entirety of *tevijjā* comes under the purview of *nissaraṇa* or stepping out mentioned under six sense spheres. The earlier ascetics and Brahmins unfortunately missed this aspect of *nissaraṇa*. Neither did they understand the origin of *saḷāyatana*, the six sense spheres. It was the Buddha who proclaimed that a *vedagu* is found only in his path, and so is all spiritual perfection. The *Mahā Saḷāyatana Sutta* in particular, emphasizes the teachings of *saḷāyatana*, as we see. Although my discourse is brief, I have tried to direct all my explanations towards the practice of meditation. I hope it will be helpful to you.

The doctrine of impermanence proclaimed by the Buddha is of immeasurable importance. Everything is included within it. On the other hand, everything in the world takes place within these six sense spheres. We cannot realize it because we are running after a mirage. The day we realize this truth, all problems will dissolve.

I think it is enough for today. You should read or listen to this topic of meditation more often, internalize it and put it into practice with determination. It will help you to tread

the Buddha's path to *Nibbāna* as far as possible. The Buddha has clarified the direct path to *Nibbāna* or *vijjā vimutti*. Today we tried to expand your knowledge on the *Saḷāyatana*, in this series of discourses on *Paticca Samuppāda*. We hope to discuss the other topics if time permits, later.

I wish you would reach the path of *Dhamma* without delay, with the help of this series of talks. May you acquire the strength, determination and power to fulfill the requirements in perfecting the path and attaining fruition as *sotāpanna sakadāgāmī anāgāmi* and *arahant*. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭha*, may they all rejoice in this insightful sermon. May it be conducive to their attainment of *Nibbāna*! May you attain *Nibbāna* in this very life!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 15
The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 197)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Tesaṁ phassaparetānaṁ

bhavasotānusārinaṁ

kummaggapaṭipannānaṁ

ārā saṁyojanakkhayo

Ye ca phassaṁ pariññāya

aññāya upasame ratā

te ve phassābhisamayā

nicchātā parinibbutā

– Dvayatānupassanā S. Sn.

To them that are fully given to contact

And are swept by the current of becoming

To them that tread the wrong path

Destruction of fetters is far away.

But they that fully understand contact

And with full comprehension are attached to appeasement

It is they that by the understanding of contact

Are hungerless and fully appeased.

Dear Listeners,

The Dhamma that the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the fully Enlightened Fortunate One placed before the world is one that goes against the current. That Dhamma which flows against the pervert and narrow current of becoming is the massive body of water called '*Dhammasota*' that takes one towards the cessation of becoming. The worldlings caught up in the current of becoming go on revolving in this Saṁsāric whirlpool. The Noble Disciple who has fallen into the Dhamma current reaches *Nibbāna* which is called the cessation of becoming. The turning point between these two is contact.

Therefore, we have chosen as the topic of this 15th sermon, two verses on contact found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. Since we used as the topics of a number of earlier sermons, verses from this *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta,* you all might remember the style of preaching followed by the Buddha in that discourse. Introducing various items of Dhamma which incline to two sides and distinguishing their arising aspect and the cessation aspect is the style of preaching in this discourse. Now the two aspects of contact the Buddha first of all introduces to the congregation of monks with this statement in prose. "If there are those who ask whether there could be another mode of contemplating the dualities, they should be told:

'There is.' How could there be? 'Whatever suffering that arises, all that is due to contact.' This is one mode of contemplation. With the remainderless cessation of contact, there is no arising of suffering. This is the second mode of contemplation."

Having made this declaration, the Buddha goes on to state the benefits of practicing this contemplation of dualities.

"If a monk dwells diligently and ardently combatting defilements in accordance with this contemplation, one of two fruits could be expected of him; Either full comprehension here and now or if there is any residual clinging, non-returnership.

It is after this declaration that the Buddha uttered those two verses.

"*Tesaṁ phassaparetānaṁ*

bhavasotānusārinaṁ

kummaggapaṭipannānaṁ

ārā saṁyojanakkhayo

Ye ca phassaṁ pariññāya

aññāya upasame ratā

te ve phassābhisamayā

nicchātā parinibbutā"

"For them who are fully enslaved to contact and moving along with the current of becoming, who are on the wrong path the cutting off of the bonds of becoming namely the destruction of fetters, is far away. But they that have comprehended contact and take delight in the appeasement through knowledge born of realization, verily it is they by their higher understanding of contact are hungerless and fully appeased."

I hope to give a special sermon today based on these two verses because this happens to be a significant day marking the end of the rains-retreat of the Sangha on which they hold the Vinaya act called *Pavāraṇā* – namely the Full Moon day ending the rains-retreat. Due to other reasons too I thought of presenting this sermon at a more practical level – though other sermons also are meditation topics. So let me request you all from this point onwards to listen attentively to what is being said from word to word and sentence to sentence. Speaking about contact, First of all I must mention something I had already brought out with reference to the very first discourse in the *Dīgha Nikāya* – namely *Brahmajāla Sutta* – that is to say, the fact that the Buddha dismissed all the sixty two wrong views listed there with a very brief phrase.

Now, what is that significant phrase? '*Tadapi phassa paccayā*' – 'That too is due to contact.' Similarly towards the end of that discourse, the Buddha declares a statement like this with reference to the recluses and Brahmins who proclaim those views:

'*sabbe te chahi phassāyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisaṁvedenti*'

'They all go on experiencing through the six sense-spheres by contacting again and again.'

Then the consequences of it are also mentioned. Because of that feeling they get craving, and due to craving, grasping, due to grasping, becoming, due to becoming, birth and due to birth, decay and death and all the rest of suffering. What does it mean? As stated in the first verse all recluses and Brahmins who took up those sixty-two views are enslaved by contact, caught up in the current of becoming and fallen on the wrong track. Therefore, they have not attained freedom from the fetters of becoming. Finally the Buddha proclaims what sort of Dhamma he preaches. About the monk who has attained arahanthood in this dispensation, it is said that he is one who has reached full appeasement by five kinds of understanding about the six sensespheres. What are they? As we mentioned in a previous sermon, the understanding of the arising, going down, satisfaction, misery and stepping-out in regard to the six sense-spheres – that is to say, *samudaya*, *atthagama*, *assāda, ādīnava* and *nissaraṇa*. This is the distinctive quality of this dispensation in regard to contact. From here onwards we shall take up a number of discourses to clarify further the phenomenon of contact. Now you had better take this as a pilgrimage – a pilgrimage to *Nibbāna*. With that idea uppermost in your minds please try to listen attentively to this sermon during this hour.

I need not mention this in particular for you know well enough about the twelve linked formula of Dependent Arising. In that formula beginning with '*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*' – 'dependent on ignorance, preparations' – this is how contact comes to be mentioned:

'*.....saḷāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā*' – 'dependent on the six sense-spheres, contact, dependent on contact, feeling.' But the deepest philosophy of contact is presented to us with the utmost clarity by the *Madhupiṇḍika* ('Honey ball') *Sutta* which is rich in its flavour of meaning like a ball of honey. On previous occasions we have discussed in full this *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. If we are to bring up what is relevant to this context, the venerable *Arahant* Mahā Kaccāna who was placed foremost among those disciples who are capable of expounding at length what is preached in brief, is seen explaining a brief utterance of the Buddha at the request of the company of monks. This sentence occurs in that explanation:

"*....cakkhuñcāvuso, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ, tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso*"

This statement presents a very profound philosophy.

'*cakkhuñcāvuso, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ*'

'Dependent on eye and forms arises eye-consciousness.'

Then comes the phrase:

'*tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso*'

'The concurrence of the three is contact.'

If you reflect on this deeply, you will discover an extremely knotty point – a subtle one at that. Now remember, here the two words '*paṭicca*' and '*uppajjati*' came up. This is a clear indication that the Law of Dependent Arising is concerned with the arising of consciousness. Because of eye and forms arises eye-consciousness. But once it arises, worldlings, because of their delusion, because of their ignorance, count them as three. It is not really justifiable to count these as three. Why? It is because of the eye and forms that consciousness arose. We have explained what eye-consciousness is. The nature of consciousness is the very discriminating as two things. Until consciousness arises there is no idea of eye and form as two things. It is when consciousness arises that one gets the idea:

'This is my eye and there is that form.'

That is why we say that the gap – the interstice – between the two is consciousness. But due to non-understanding one counts eye, forms and consciousness as three. It is when one imagines them as three, that contact arises. From there onwards it is all delusion. That is why we call contact the turning point. Now that regarding contact we spoke of two things and a gap, let us now turn to a powerful discourse we had discussed on various occasions – namely the *Majjhe Sutta* among the 'Sixes' of *Anguttara Nikāya*. First of all let me mention the introductory story for those who do not know about it.

When the Buddha was dwelling at *Isipatana* in *Benares*, a group of Elder monks gathered in the assembly hall after the alms-round and initiated a Dhamma discussion – in modern parlance it may be called a symposium. What was the point at issue? A question to this effect came up in the Dhamma discussion. The Fortunate One has preached in the *Metteyya Pañha of Pārāyaṇa* the following verse:

Yo ubhante viditvāna

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

sodha sibbanimaccagā

Having taken up this verse, they extracted four questions as the subject for their symposium. What are they? Let me first explain the meaning of the verse. '*yo ubhante viditvāna*' – 'He who, having understood both ends', '*majjhe mantā na lippati*' – 'does not get attached to the middle with wisdom', '*taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti*' the Buddha is saying:

'Him I call a great man' – Why? '*sodha sibbanimaccagā*' – 'Because he has bypassed the seamstress in this world.'

So out of this cryptic verse four points are elicited as questions:

'What is the one end mentioned in this verse? What is the second end? What is the middle? Who is the seamstress? To these four questions, six Elder monks put forward six interpretations. They seem to be wonderful meditation topics. Let me bring up only what is relevant to the context. Relating to the question of sense-spheres the interpretation given by the fifth Elder monk is this:

'One end is the six internal sense-spheres, namely eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. The second end is the six external sense-spheres – forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, ideas. The middle is consciousness and the seamstress is craving. Talking about seamstress, nowadays there could be skilled seamstresses in the garment industry. But this seamstress can beat them all because she has three special qualifications, namely:

'*ponobhavikā*' – she puts the stitch for the next birth. '*nandirāgasahagatā*' – she has delight and attachment and '*tatratatrābhinandinī*' – she delights now here now there. It is that seamstress who puts the knot between the two ends ignoring the middle. Consciousness which is in the middle has arisen because of those two. But ignoring that fact the seamstress craving puts the stitch to those two ends. For instance it stitches up eye and forms.

The story of stitching up eye and forms, we have mentioned on various occasions. If we are to give a simile, one that is easily understood is the mirage. In short the Buddha has compared the entire aggregate of perception to a mirage. When we say 'mirage' we have in mind only the eye and forms. But the comparison of the entire aggregate of perception

to a mirage is a very deep dictum. However in this context, for simplicity's sake, let us take the question of eye and forms. Most of you know what a mirage is, but let us briefly remind ourselves about it. There is a Sanskrit word for the mirage – namely '*mṛgatṛsṇikā*' which means a sight that arouses craving and thirst in a deer. At times when there is a drought there is an appearance in the distance which resembles flowing water. The deer imagines water in it.

What is its stance? 'I am here and water is there. I am here and water is there.' Though it tells itself 'I am here and water is there' with every step it takes it is taking its eye with it. Still it goes on telling:

'I am here, water is there.' What it imagines to be water also recedes.

Now that is the nature of the mirage. It is an endless pursuit. The mirage is deceptive. What perpetuates that deception is the magic-like delusion in eye-consciousness. The deer keeps running unaware of the gap mentioned above. It is ignorant of the intervening space. Due to that delusion the deer runs and gets wearied. The Buddha has pointed out that not only the deer but the entire world of living beings is deluded like it by this mirage of perception. It is this seamstress 'craving' who is playing this subtle trick. It is said that this seamstress puts the knot. How can one get free from these knots. A clue to that release is found in this verse itself.

'*Yo ubhante viditvāna – majjhe mantā na lippat*', '*mantā*' means wisdom.

You might say:

'But we don't have wisdom. It is something that dawns on arahants automatically.'

You must not say so. The seed of wisdom is there in every one of us. It is '*yonisomanasikāra*'– radical attention.

'*Yonisomanasikāra*' is a very powerful word in this dispensation – particularly for insight meditators. But unfortunately we have to mention that in the commentaries we do not get a clear explanation of it. It is explained as '*upāya manasikāra*' (skillful attention) and '*patha manasikāra*' (attention according to the path). We call it 'wise attention' for convenience's sake. But there is a great depth in it. '*Yoni*' means the place of origin – the matrix. Therefore, '*yonisomanasikāra*' means 'attention by way of the place of origin'. Already you can guess what the place of origin is. It is contact (*phassa*) that we called the turning-point. That is why in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* we found the dictum:

'*tadapi phassa paccayā*' ('That too is dependent on contact'). It seems for some reason or other that fact has not come to light so far. Contact is what seems to be the place of origin. So attending by way of the place of origin is *yonisomanasikāra*.

From here onwards we have to give various similes. There is a game called 'table-tennis'. Well, let us call to mind this game. What we call the Ping-Pong ball and the two rackets are the paraphernalia required. There is a short net in the middle of the T.T table. What

is the procedure in this game? The ball that the player on the other side spins with his racket, has to be returned to the other side by the player on this side before it falls to the ground. Now for easy comprehension of our simile let us call the player on the opposite side Māra. The player on this side is the meditator. Take it as a table tennis game between Māra and the meditator. There is no 'racketeer' like Māra. Just call to mind the nuances of the term 'racket' in the society. We have come all this way in *Saṁsāra* because we got caught in Māra's racket. Now we are going to beat Māra. Even to beat him, the meditator has to take up the racket. What does the incompetent or unskillful player do? When the player on the other side sends the ball to this side he lets it bump off and with difficulty returns it bending his body this way and that way. He cannot go on like that. He will be the loser before long. On the other hand the competent one keeps standing straight and returns the ball to the other side as soon as it touches his side of the table. He does not allow it to bump off. You had better take this 'bumping off' itself as a simile for '*papañca*' – conceptual proliferation. In the context of the Dhamma, this 'bumping off' is comparable to *papañca*. Not to give way to '*papañca*' is attending then and there without allowing thoughts to bump off. What is the 'then and there'? The point of contact – '*phassa*'. So attending then and there to the point of contact is like returning the ball to the other side as soon as it touches this side. You have to do it with extreme rapidity. It is one who does it very rapidly that in the end beats Māra. Māra will have to throw away his racket.

Let us take up another simile. It is not a game but a fight.

We are now going back to the age of sword-fights. Not only in Sri Lanka but in countries like England they used the sword both for offence and defense. They had a sword hung on the belt. When two such persons fall out, one challenges the other to come for a fight and draws the sword from the scabbard. Sometimes the fight would go on as a duelling. With no shield to protect oneself, a parry and thrust would go on with the sword. Just think about it. How rapidly should one wield the sword in order to be the winner. One has to be prepared to ward off every blow of the opponent. We gave both these similes to show how rapidly one has to go on attending. Whether it is the racket or the sword, one has to accelerate attention to the utmost. Since we gave the simile of the table-tennis game as a practical illustration, let us assume that Māra is sending a 'form-ball'. As soon as the 'form-ball' comes, without allowing it to 'bump off' into '*papañca*', one should turn it to the opposite side. How does one do it? What is the racket used on this Buddha side? '*anicca, anicca*' – 'impermanent, impermanent.' Māra may send the ball again. But with this '*anicca*' racket we turn it to the other side. We gave this simile to acquaint you with '*aniccānupassanā*' – 'contemplation of impermanence.'

On an earlier occasion too we mentioned in passing a very powerful sermon on the contemplation of impermanence. In the *Saḷāyatana Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* there are two discourses with the same title '*Dvayaṁ*'. Last time we discussed one of them. Now what is relevant to the present context is the second '*Dvayaṁ*' *Sutta*. This is how the Buddha begins that discourse:

"*Dvayaṁ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti.*"

‘Monks, depending on a dyad consciousness arises.’ “*Kathañca bhikkhave dvayaṁ paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti.*”

‘How, monks, does consciousness arise depending on a dyad?’ “*Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ.*”

‘Depending on eye and forms arises eye consciousness.’ Then comes a series of significant words.

“*Cakkhuṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī, rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino.*”

‘Eye is impermanent, changing and turning otherwise. Forms are impermanent, changing and turning otherwise.’ Then it is said:

“*Itthetaṁ dvayaṁ calañceva vayañca aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī.*”

‘Thus this dyad is unstable, liable to pass away, impermanent changing and turning otherwise.’ That is not all.

“*Cakkhuviññāṇaṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī.*”

‘Eye consciousness is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.’ “*Yopi hetu yopi paccayo cakkhuviññāṇassa uppādāya……*”

‘Whatever condition there is for the arising of eye-consciousness, that too is impermanent.’ Then the Buddha poses a question to the monks:

“Monks, how can something that arises due to a condition that is impermanent, be permanent?”

If the conditions are impermanent, how can eye-consciousness arisen depending on them be permanent? There are three terms used to denote the collocation of these three factors:

“*tiṇṇaṁ dhammānaṁ saṅgati sannipāto samavāyo*” – The concurrence, assemblage, togetherness – that is what is called ‘contact’. Then comes the statement:

“*Cakkhusamphassopi anicco vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī.*”

‘Eye contact too is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.’ Then again the question is posed:

How can eye contact arisen due to impermanent conditions be permanent?

Now comes a significant declaration:

“*Phuṭṭho bhikkhave, vedeti, phuṭṭho sañjānāti, phuṭṭho ceteti.*”

'contacted, monks, one feels, contacted one perceives, contacted one intends.' Keep in mind, then:

The origin and matrix of feeling, perception and intention is contact itself. It is not without reason that we stated that '*yonisomanasikāra*' or radical attention is attending mentally to the point of touch. In conclusion it is said that all these things are unstable, passing away, impermanent and changing otherwise:

"*itthetepi dhammā calā ceva vayā ca aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino.*"

This is the wonderful presentation of the contemplation of impermanence by the Buddha. With that background you can now understand that whether it is the racket or the sword, what matters is the speed of directing attention. It is at the moment one has accelerated the speed of attention to the utmost, that one can understand the secret of that mirage. We have now said enough about the eye. There are six. So then, let us turn our attention to the ear. I hope to explain that too with similes. Let me mention first of all that I have to hark back to the *Majjhe Sutta*, when speaking about every sense sphere. According to the exposition in the *Majjhe Sutta,* this is what is stated about the ear. Ear is one end, sound is the second end and ear consciousness is in the middle. The seamstress as usual is craving. What does this seamstress do? She puts the stitch on ear and sound ignoring earconsciousness. In this case too accelerating attention is what is helpful. I would like to give a simile to illustrate the acceleration of attention. It may be a little unconventional.

As you know, there is an insect like a beetle, about two inches in size living on the trees which we call '*Rähäyyā*' (English. 'cicada') That creature starts a music around 4 o'clock in the afternoon. When one '*rähäyyā*' gives the start, others join in the chorus. It is an extremely rough music irritating the ear. If you bear with me I shall imitate it:

'R-R-R.....R-R-R-R-R.....R-R'

Sometimes I wonder whether it is called '*Rähäyyā*' because it teaches us how to roll our 'R's. Of course I do not know the etymology of the word. *Rähäyyā*'s music is a big disturbance to our meditation for calm and serenity (that is '*Samatha*') because it digs into the ear. But it reminds us that there is something called the 'ear-drum'. The most wonderful musical instrument in the world is the ear-drum. *Rähäyyā* reminds us of the fact that we have an ear-drum. Though it is our 'enemy' in '*samatha*', we can make it our 'friend' in '*vipassanā*' (Insight-meditation) if we use radical attention with mindfulness (*sati*) and full awareness ('*sampajaññ*a'). Between two 'R's (R....R) there is *Nibbāna*, if one focusses one's attention there. Only if you get caught in the 'knot' of the seamstress craving that it becomes a rough and irritating music. At last you will realize that it is only a concatenation of 'R's. According to the terminology of insight meditation, we may say, one can leave behind the 'perception of the compact' (*ghanasaññā*) and arouse the perception of the heap (*rāsisaññā*) if one directs one's attention then and there with mindfulness and full awareness. So after all, *rähäyyā* is an insect that gives us a meditation-topic for *Nibbāna*, though apparently it is a disturbance to calm.

I must confess, I forgot to mention one thing when speaking about the eye. All the similes I gave about the eye are gross when compared with the simile given by the Buddha in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*. It is the last discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It is a wonderful discourse which the Buddha addressed to Venerable Ānanda. We may say, that the quintessence of that discourse is the supreme and incomparable development of sense faculties (*anuttarā indriyabhāvanā*). It is illustrated with a number of similes. The simile that the Buddha had given there with reference to the eye beats all our similes regarding the acceleration of attention. The simile is:

As quickly as a man with vision opens his eyes and closes them and closes the eyes and opens them, one should exercise radical attention with regard to forms coming before the eyes. So for the eyes, the Buddha has aptly given a simile based on the eye.

When it comes to the ear, he gives a simile about the ear itself. Just as a strong man snaps his fingers with perfect ease so quickly, should one attend to a sound. By the way, the snapping of the fingers is often taken as an indication of a moment (*khaṇa*). The Buddha says that on hearing a sound a monk might be pleased or displeased or have a mingling of both but that he should immediately get rid of them and bring his mind to rest in equanimity.

Then we come to the nose. There too, if we go back to the *Majjhe Sutta*, nose is one end, smell is the second end and nose consciousness is in the middle. The seamstress craving ignores the middle and puts the stitch. When we smell something, we actually take in the air bearing the odour. If it is a pleasant smell we take it in with attachment. Air is the bearer of smell.

There is a story in the *Sagāthaka Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* regarding attachment to fragrant smells. In the *Kosala* country a forest dwelling monk was living in a hut in the jungle. One day on returning from his alms-round he went down into a pond and eagerly smelt a lotus flower. A forest deity saw it and accused him as a thief of fragrance. The monk in defense said:

“How can you call me a thief of fragrance? I didn’t pluck the flower or take it away.”

But the deity said:

“You are here purifying your mind. So, even a slight fault appears as a serious one.”

The monk confessed his guilt and thanked the deity for pointing it out. So, it seems even intentionally smelling a flower is a defilement. The delusion of the mirage is perpetuated in doing so. One imagines that the fragrance is in the flower.In regard to the tongue ‘*Majjhe Sutta*’ says:

Tongue is one end, taste is the other end and tongue-consciousness is in the middle.’ When it comes to tasty things it may be ice-cream or a piece of instant chicken. What happens as soon as one sees the ice-cream or the piece of chicken? Saliva flows into the tongue. Saliva is the bearer of taste just as air is the bearer of smell. Saliva gets ready to

receive the taste. So, one greedily gulps down the tasty thing. The craving for taste is so powerful that the Buddha has recommended the meditations on elements and loathsomeness to combat it. He declares that one who is greedy will never awaken his heart (to *Nibbāna*). '*Rasataṇhāya gadhito hadayaṁ nāvabujjhati*."

Sometimes he gives a simile that makes one shudder when reflecting on it. In the *Nālaka Sutta* of *Sutta Nipāta* when describing the path of practice befitting a *muni* (sage), he mentions it in brief:

'*Khuradhārūpamo bhava*.' – 'Be one who has the simile of the razor-edge in mind.' The simile about the razor-edge given by the Buddha is as follows:

A razor-blade is smeared with honey. To one who is greedy the razor-blade is given to lick. Can he do it without cutting his tongue? That is a simile which arouses fright in the greedy. Taste is such a subtle craving. Why does the Buddha give us such a frightful simile? Because he has conquered the craving for taste. Even the other arahants cite the example of the Buddha.

"*Rasapaṭisaṁvedī kho pana so bhavaṁ Gotamo āhāraṁ āhāreti no ca rasarāgapaṭisaṁvedī*."

The Brahmin youth Uttara once observed:

"Experiencing taste that Venerable Gotama partakes of food but he is not one who experiences an attachment to taste."

The tastebuds of the Buddha are as acute as ours. They do not go inactive with the attainment of Buddhahood. But he has no attachment to taste. Nowadays people cannot understand this wonderful fact.

This means that there is *Nibbāna* even at the tip of the tongue. A meditator can realize this to some extent while taking food with mindfulness and full awareness. So after all, the taste is neither in the tongue nor in the 'instant-chicken'. It is only at the 'instant' the tongue and the instant-chicken come together that the flavour becomes active. Now that we have spoken of saliva, just see how aptly the Buddha has given a simile for it. When speaking about the eye, he gave a simile that befits the eye and in speaking about the ear, one that befits the ear. Now see how apt the simile about the tongue is. Just as a strong man with the greatest ease gathers a bit of saliva at the tip of the tongue and spews it out, so quickly should a monk, as soon as the attachment to taste has arisen, free his mind from likes and dislikes and bring it to rest in equanimity.

Let us now take up the question of body and tangibles. In this connection too the *Majjhe Sutta* says that the body is the one end, the tangible is the second end and body-consciousness the middle. There too it is precisely due to body and the tangible that body-consciousness arises. But the seamstress craving stitches up the two. You had better remember all these similes. That is why I cautioned you to listen attentively. It is here that what we actually call 'contact'(*phassa*) comes. That is why the Buddha called it

a ‘nutriment’ (*āhāra*). He pointed out that there are four kinds of nutriments (*cattāro āhārā*) which sustain beings. The first is the gross or subtle food taken in morsels (*kabaliṅkāra āhāra*). The second is contact (*phassa*). The third is intentional thinking going on in the mind (*manosañcetanā*). The fourth is consciousness (*viññāṇaṁ*). It leads to a very deep dhamma disquisition. But there too the simile the Buddha has given for contact is one that makes one shudder. It is found in the ‘*Puttamaṁsa Sutta*’. Without relating the whole story we shall give only the simile.

There the Buddha uses the term ‘*niccammā gāvī*’ – literally ‘the cow that has been skinned.’ But we have to understand by it not a cow that is fully skinned to death – only that in some parts of its body skin has come off. The Buddha is here speaking about such a cow. He says that if that cow stands near a wall, creatures in the wall would eat the flesh. If it stands near a tree, creatures in the tree would eat into the wound. If it goes down into water, creatures living in the water would eat into its body. If it stands in an open space, birds would peck at its wounds. Wherever that cow stands, creatures there would eat into it. Just ponder over the depth of this simile. How do we experience the pleasure of bodily contact? What is next to contact is feeling. You had better reflect on this statement:

There is a difference between the feeling experienced <u>with</u> the skin and the feeling experienced <u>without</u> the skin. Suppose we have an open wound. Let alone other soft things, a velvet cloth is extremely soft to the touch. When a velvet cloth touches the wound, do we get a pleasurable feeling? What has happened now?

Let us add a post-script to this simile. The Buddha has compared the entire body to a wound. If the whole body is a ‘wound’, what could be the skin? The skin is the ‘bandage’ on it. It is to decorate this bandage that worldlings, especially females, are spending so much. To ‘paint’ the bandage and make it fashionable, females in particular take a lot of pains. When a tiny scratch occurs the pleasure of touch is gone. I need not give you instances. Just reflect on the difference between the feeling with the skin and without the skin. So the simile of ‘*niccammā gāvī*’ (skinned cow) given by the Buddha is extremely profound.

Let us now revert to the simile given by the Buddha with reference to the feeling of touch in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*. It concerns the reaction to the feeling of touch. He even gives a formula to show how quickly a monk should dispel a liking or a dislike or a mixture of both on experiencing a touch sensation. He gives an insightful formula to be used in bringing the mind to rest in equanimity. A monk should reflect:

‘Here is a liking, a disliking or both arisen in me. But that is something prepared, gross and dependently arisen. This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely equanimity (*….tañca kho saṅkhataṁ oḷārikaṁ paṭiccasamuppannaṁ. Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ upekkhā*’). In fact, that principle is applied to every sense faculty. With reference to the body this is the simile given in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta* to illustrate the rapidity of bringing one’s mind to ‘*upekkhā*’ or equanimity:

‘As quickly as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or bend his outstretched arm.’ This simile often occurs in the Buddhist scriptures with reference to the speed with which one who has psychic powers ‘disappears’ from one place and appears at another place. So in speaking about the body, the Buddha has taken a simile from the body itself.

Now we come to the mind. It is with the idea of saving time for dealing with the mind that I dealt with the other senses in brief. Mind is the knottiest point in the stitch of the seamstress craving. It is the last ‘trump’ of Māra. That is where all beings in the world including the scientist and the philosopher has got stuck. There too, to begin with, let us take up the ‘two ends’ of the *Majjhe Sutta*. Mind is one end. The other end is mind-objects (*dhammā*). One who puts the knot between them is the seamstress craving. We have to explain a very deep point in this connection.

Let us hark back to the term ‘*manasikāra*’. In the Pāli language the etymology of the word is:

‘*Manasi*’ is in the locative case – that means ‘in the mind’ and ‘*kāra*’ is ‘doing’. So ‘*manasikāra*’ is suggestive of some ‘doing’ in the mind. That ‘doing’ in the mind inadvertently we direct towards some object. That is a very deep point. Now that we have mentioned the word ‘*manasikāra*’ let us bring in another discourse we came across earlier too. We have already discussed it. When I mention its title those of you who had listened to it earlier would easily understand – namely *Kimmūlaka Sutta*. That also is a very wonderful discourse.

The Buddha asks the monks:

“How, monks, would you reply if wandering ascetics of other sects raise a set of questions like this?” the monks confess:

“We do not know how to reply. Would the Fortunate One himself tell us the answers.”

What is noteworthy is that the Buddha himself presents the set of questions. That indicates how important and how deep the questions are. Now the Buddha repeats the set of questions and says:

“If they question you, you had better give these answers.”

We have discussed that discourse earlier. So in this context we shall take up only the first three questions that are relevant.

“*Kimmūlakā āvuso sabbe dhammā*?”

“What, friends, is the root of all things?”

“*kiṁ sambhavā sabbe dhammā*?”

“What is the coming up of all things?”

“*kiṁ samudayā sabbe dhammā*?”

“What is the arising of all things?”

The answer to the first question is:

“*Chandamūlakā āvuso sabbe dhammā*.”

“Interest, friends, is the root of all things.”

We defined ‘*chanda*’ as the lightest shade of craving. In fact it is so light that it is hardly recognizable. According to the traditional way of explanation “craving is bad but the desire for the skillful (*Kusalacchanda*) is alright.”

But even that has to be given up. That is why it is said in the Dhamma

“*Chandaṁ nissāya chandaṁ pajahatha*”

“Depending on desire give up desire.”

It is a wonderful Middle Path. In the final reckoning even that has to be abandoned. The desire for the skillful is good. One cannot do without it. The desire for calm and insight must be there. But there comes a time to give it up as well.

That shows the fact that ‘*chanda*’ which we rendered by ‘interest’ is the root of all things. Just think why a problem comes to our mind as if from nowhere. It is ‘interest’ however subtle it may be. But it comes up. What finds or discovers it is attention – ‘*manasikāra sambhavā*’. It arises from ‘contact’ – ‘*phassa samudayā*’. I do not know much about the computer but as far as I can see, all the above three are found in the computer. We spoke of ‘*chanda*’ (interest), ‘*manasikāra*’ (attention) and ‘*phassa*’ (contact). Out of these, ‘*chanda*’ is the ‘mouse’. As you know, the mouse works unseen – stealthily. One cannot even see it working. When the mouse is active what happens? The ‘cursor’ starts running. That is attention. So ‘interest’ is the ‘root’ – the ‘mouse’, which works stealthily. What does it do stealthily? It sets the ‘cursor’ working. What does the cursor aim at? The ‘menu’ – that is *phassa* – ‘contact’. It is from there onwards that one ‘enjoys’ what is ‘dished up’ by the computer. We gave this analysis to make the explanation as practical as possible.

So then it seems ‘interest’ is the root of all things. Until the Buddha pointed it out, the world was unaware of it. Every time we conclude a deep disquisition by citing two simple verses which everyone knows. Let us recall them – at least the relevant portion. ‘*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā – manoseṭṭhā mano-mayā*’. All this time the commentarial tradition had interpreted it differently. As we pointed out in explaining the line ‘*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*’, out of the two terms ‘*mano*’ (mind) and ‘*dhammā*’ (mind-objects) on either side, mind comes first as the ‘forerunner’ (*manopubbaṅgamā*). ‘*Manoseṭṭhā*’ – the mind-objects have mind as their chief. Not only that, ‘*manomayā*’ – the mind-objects are ‘mind-made’. That is why there is that word with its peculiar etymology:

'*manasikāra*' (lit. doingwithin-the mind) that is attention. We were not aware that an object of the mind is of mind's own making. So then it seems that all this gimmick is carried on with something made by the mind itself. Just see how subtle the knotty stitch of the seamstress craving is. It is by accelerating the speed of attention as in the table-tennis game, that one can catch up with it. The secret of attention (*manasikāra*) is discovered by accelerating 'radicalattention' (*yoniso-manasikāra*). That is to say by attending promptly – then and there. This is something almost 'unimaginable'.

There comes a time when the place of origin of a thought comes to light. There is in fact a couple of lines of a verse in a certain discourse which even the commentaries do not explain correctly:

'*Disvā āyatanuppādaṁ – sammā cittaṁ vimuccati*.' 'Having seen the arising of sense-spheres – the mind is well released.' What is meant by saying that if at any time one sees the arising of the sense-spheres, the mind is emancipated? The arising of the sense-spheres occurs at a speed hardly discernible.

With extreme rapidity, the 'give-and-take' process goes on between the mind and the mind-object. Everyone thinks that the mind-object stands before the mind, for one can argue:

'How can we think without an object?' But from the etymology of the term '*manasi-kāra*', one can understand that the mind-object itself is mind-made. That is why we say '*manomayā*'. At whatever occasion one comes to understand it, the magic-show of consciousness gets exposed. It is this magician – this juggler – who creates this confusion. What we find in this magic-show is the mind and its object which is of its own making. In the final reckoning it amounts to the same problem of the deer and the mirage. Only when one accelerates radical attention to the utmost, one comes to understand it as it is.

We need not give a simile of our own. Any simile we can give falls far below the mark when compared to the simile given by the Buddha with reference to the mind.

"Suppose, monks, a man lets fall two or three drops of water into an iron-cauldron heated all day long. The dropping of those water-drops is slow but their drying up and evaporation is instantaneous."

Just try to visualize it. You let two or three drops of water to fall from above into an intensely heated iron-cauldron. If you watch the drops as they fall, you fail to see them drying up.

In this simile we seem to get a hint to what is happening between mind and mind-object. But even that if a meditator realizes by accelerating radical attention, he has seen the arising of sense-spheres – how the two come together and consciousness arises. To see the arising of consciousness is to see the Law of Dependent Arising:

"*Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ*."

Note the significance of the two words:

'*Paṭicca uppajjati*' – Depending on eye and forms arises eye consciousness. The Buddha has preached that consciousness is a magic show. That is why it is said:

'*Majjhe mantā na lippati*'. Gets not attached at the middle with wisdom. '*Yo ubhante viditvāna*' – 'He who having understood both ends.' Why does one who understands both ends has no attachment to the middle? Because he has wisdom. He has discovered the magic of consciousness. We have so often said that if one sees the interior of a magic show the magic is no more for him. It happens at the above mentioned occasion. It is then that radical attention or '*yoniso manasikāra*' which we called the 'seed' of wisdom bears its fruit as wisdom itself. In that wisdom, consciousness has no place. That is why it is said '*paññā bhāvetabhā viññāṇaṁ pariññeyyaṁ*' – 'wisdom has to be developed, consciousness has to be comprehended.' In order to comprehend consciousness wisdom has to be developed. At the peak of the development of wisdom, the secret of consciousness is exposed. It is exposed at the above mentioned moment. The arising of sense-spheres is seen then and there. Along with the seeing of the arising of sensespheres, their cessation becomes obvious, since whatever that has arisen has to cease. That is the realization of cessation (*nirodha*). Then, there is that peaceful and excellent *Nibbāna* as expressed in the memorable formula, beginning with '*Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ*' (This is peaceful, this is excellent.) etc.

The question now comes up about the object of the mind – dhamma. We said that a meditator cannot do without it. There is a very important discourse which is relevant to the discussion of that point – namely, *Alagaddūpama Sutta*. In that discourse the Buddha has given the simile of the raft. He declares:

"*Kullūpamaṁ vo bhikkhave dhammaṁ desissāsi.*"

"Monks, I will preach to you a Dhamma which is comparable to a raft."

A man going on a long journey comes across a great expanse of water. There is no ferry boat or bridge. Since there is no other alternative he collects some branches from here and there, binds them together with creepers and improvises a raft. With its help and making an effort with his hands and feet, he gets across to the farther shore. Once he gets to the other shore, he no longer needs the raft. So he sets it adrift in the water. Drawing the moral from this parable the Buddha says:

"*Kullūpamo mayā bhikkhave dhammo desito nittharaṇatthāya, no gahaṇatthāya.*"

"I have preached the Dhamma with the simile of the raft just for crossing over, not for grasping."

In the same connection he says:

If one has understood this simile, even those things that have to do with Dhamma have to be given up. What to say of things on the side of Adhamma – that is those contrary to the Dhamma.

If I may allude to another simile for you to understand this moral in brief, I have already discussed the simile of the seven relay-chariots in the *Rathavinīta Sutta*. It is a simile resembling the modern relay-race. King Pasenadi of *Kosala* has some urgent business in *Sāketa* and seven relay-chariots are arranged for him. Because horses get tired the king dismounts from the first relay- chariot and mounts the second relay-chariot. Likewise from the second to the third and from the third to the fourth and so on and finally arrives at *Sāketa* by the seventh chariot. It is after getting down from the seventh chariot that he settles his business. The simile given is an illustration of the sequence of the seven purifications. The purification of virtue is purposeful as far as purification of the mind, purification of the mind is purposeful as far as purification of view and in this way seven purifications are mentioned. The seventh is purification by knowledge and vision but even that has to be given up because perfect *Nibbāna* is without clinging (*anupādā parinibbāna*). This is very wonderful. In no other religious system you find anything like this. Giving up itself is *Nibbāna*.

It is to explain this that we used two terms in our sermons and books, namely 'pragmatic' and 'relative'. Because it is pragmatic we make use of it, because it is relative we give it up. Now I am going to give you a new simile of a type you had never heard before. As you know, there are relay-races. In this race I am going to describe, there are two teams – Māra team and the Buddha team. We are not concerned with the participants of the Māra team. In the Buddha-team there are four runners. In a relay race they make use of a baton to be carried and passed on. The baton has to reach the winning-post for a team to win. Runner No 1. starts running. He runs in self-sacrificing spirit. He runs with all his efforts, panting all the way. On reaching the second runner he successfully hands over the baton to him but himself falls dead. His partner does not look back to see whether his friend is dead but runs in the same spirit putting forth his best efforts. He runs and runs panting and passes the baton to the third and falls dead. The third in the same spirit and with the same vigour runs and passes the baton to the fourth but falls dead. The fourth likewise runs in the same spirit with all his might to reach the winning-post. There he hands over the baton to the judge and himself falls dead. Who gets the prize? Who won the race? Is the 'baton' the winner? There is no one to receive the prize. Take it that *Nibbāna* too is something like that.

Everyone seems to have the problem of 'self' and 'not-self' ('*attā*' and '*anattā*').

Who attains *Nibbāna*?

The Buddha has said in repudiation:

"These Brahmins are leveling at me a false charge of preaching annihilation."

We are also accused of it because of our sermons highlighting the Buddha-word. But this is how the Buddha answers the charge of preaching annihilation:

"Formerly, as well as now I point out only suffering and the cessation of suffering".

"*Dukkhameva uppajjamānaṁ uppajjati dukkhaṁ nirujjhamānaṁ nirujjhati*." "What arises is only suffering and what ceases is only suffering."

There is no question of persons at all. If so there is nothing to lament. Those who lament it are doing so because of ignorance.

Well then, if you all have come with me in this pilgrimage, the destination is the mind. But of course one can reach it through any of the six senses. That is why we said that there is *Nibbāna* even at the tip of the tongue, provided the meditator properly directs radical attention. Some ancient episodes can be true up to a point though there are exaggerations in the commentaries. It is said that in the past in such sacred cities like *Anuradhapura* and *Mihintale* there is no seat in the monasteries seated on which some monk had not attained arahanthood while partaking of porridge at dawn by reflecting wisely on food. By practicing it regularly as soon as one discovers the secret at the tip of the tongue, one directly comes to the mind. Finally one arrives at the mind. Whatever is amassed through other senses at last boils down to mind and mind-objects. That is where insight reaches its peak. If one discovers that secret the magic-show of consciousness is exposed then and there. Wisdom is perfected and the journey ends. The Buddha team has won, and the Māra team has lost.

Now that, dear listeners, you have listened attentively to what we have said, try to bring victory to the Buddha team. Don't think that you go somewhere on attaining Arahanthood. Don't expect a 'Simple Simon' ('*Siyadoris*') *Nibbāna*. Try to boost up the Buddha team taking the cue from those dead runners. So that is the illustration for the Four Supramundane Paths and Four Fruits. Try to recognize the four runners. I wish to wind up now.

Out of all sermons given so far this is probably the most practical. Please make the best use of this sermon. May the merits of listening to this sermon conduce to your attainment of *Nibbāna* here and now! Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they, with the help of this sermon with its meditation topics, attain the highest aim – the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 16
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 198)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Sukhaṁ vā yadi vā dukkhaṁ – adukkhamasukhaṁ sahā

ajjhattañ ca bahiddhā ca – yaṁ kiñci atthi veditaṁ

etaṁ dukkhanti ñatvāna – mosadhammaṁ palokinaṁ

phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ – evaṁ tattha virajjati

vedanānaṁ khayā bhikkhu – nicchāto parinibbuto

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta.

Dear Listeners,

Attainment of Nibbānic peace by overcoming saṁsāric suffering is generally considered as the aim of the Buddhist spiritual path. The problem of misery and happiness invariably reminds us of *vedanā*, feeling. The above two verses with a deep philosophical interpretation of feeling, which are chosen as the topic for this 16th discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Law of Dependent Arising, provides an ideal introduction to our discussion on the significance of feeling as revealed in the twelve links of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

These two verses in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, were uttered by the Buddha in order to emphasize the significance of the duality of arising and ceasing. In several of our previous discourses on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, this *sutta* provided the key to our explanation. In the present context too the relevance of the above two verses is established by the Buddha's remark:

"Monks, if someone inquires whether there could be another mode of contemplating dualities, you must reply in the affirmative. How is it possible? Whatever suffering arises, all that is dependent on *vedanā* – feeling. That is one mode of contemplation. With total cessation and detachment from feeling, suffering ceases. That is the other mode of contemplation.

Monks, if a monk applies himself to the (*dvayatānupassanā*) twofold method of contemplation without delay, with undeterred effort at cleansing of defilements (*kiḷesa*)

he may expect to attain either Arahanthhood, or the stage of Non-returner, *Anāgāmi* in case his clinging is not totally extinct."

The Buddha uttered the above two verses following this explanation.

Now let us find out their meanings.

Sukhaṁ vā yadi vā dukkhaṁ – adukkhamasukhaṁ sahā ajjhattañ ca bahiddhā ca – yaṁ kiñci atthi veditaṁ

Whatever feelings one experiences, either pleasant, unpleasant or neither pleasant nor unpleasant, internally or externally,

etaṁ dukkhanti ñatvāna – mosadhammaṁ palokinaṁ

Realizing their deceptive and breakable nature,

phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ – evaṁ tattha virajjati

Seeing their waning at every sense contact, there arises disenchantment,

vedanānaṁ khayā bhikkhu – nicchāto parinibbuto

With the elimination of feeling, the monk overcomes the hunger for craving and attains extinction.

That is the meaning of the two verses. It is clear that all feelings, according to the Buddha, pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant, lead to suffering due to their deceptive breakable nature and their total cessation amounts to extinction (*Parinibbāna*).

Now let us try to understand 'feeling' (*vedanā*) as found in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Law of Dependent Arising. You are familiar with the twelve links of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* such as *avijjā* and *saṅkhāra*. Among them *vedanā* is described as '*Phassa paccayā vedanā*, *vedanā paccayā taṇhā*'. I have once mentioned that for the clarification of any particular link, the two links before and after it have to be put in place. To give a simile, in order to illustrate one link in a chain, the two links on either side must be visible at least in part. In this case *phassa* and *taṇhā* are the links on either side of *vedanā*, which need special mention here. In the previous discourse we discussed *phassa*, which was given a six-fold analysis by the Buddha, such as *cakkhu samphassa*, *sota samphassa* etc. Similarly, *vedanā* is six-fold as *cakkhu samphassajā vedanā*, *sota samphassajā vedanā*, *ghānasamphassajā vedanā*, *jivhā samphassajā vedanā*, *kāya samphassajā vedanā* and *mano samphassajā vedanā*. '*jā'* means arising. Therefore, *cakkhu samphassajā vedanā* means feelings arising from (born of) eye contact. The others are the ear contact, nose contact, tongue contact, body contact and mind contact. The deepest implications on *vedanā* are brought out in the *Cūlavedalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.By way of introduction to this discourse, I wish to quote a part of it. Visākha, an *anāgāmi* lay disciple, seeks explanation to a series of complicating questions

from the nun Dhammadinnā, an Arahant *Therī*. She tackled them in an expert manner. We would like to quote the last few questions and answers which were based on *vedanā*.

"Venerable Lady, how do you classify *vedanā*?"

"Friend Visākha, *vedanā* is threefold, pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant. *Sukhā vedanā*, *dukkhā vedanā* and *adukkhamasukhā vedanā*."

"Can you please explain what they mean?" (Visākha pretended not to know what they meant.)

"Whatever pleasant feeling is experienced physically or mentally, it is *sukhā vedanā*. An unpleasant physical or mental experience is *dukkhā vedanā*. Whatever physical and mental feeling is neither pleasant nor unpleasant is called *adukkhamasukhā vedanā*."

"Venerable lady, what is pleasant about a pleasant feeling? and what is unpleasant? What is pleasant about an unpleasant feeling and what is unpleasant? What is pleasant about a neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling? and what is unpleasant?"

"Friend Visākha, a pleasant feeling is pleasant only as long as it lasts. Its change is unpleasant. *Ṭhitisukhā viparināma dukkhā*. An unpleasant feeling is unpleasant only as long as it lasts. Its change is pleasant. *Ṭhitidukkhā viparināma sukhā*. A neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling is pleasant if surveyed with wisdom. It is unpleasant if surveyed without wisdom."

"What is the latency (*anusaya*) underlying a pleasant feeling? What is the latency underlying an unpleasant feeling? What is the latency underlying a neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling?"

Before we quote Arahant Therī Dhammadinnā's reply to this question, let me explain the term *anusaya* in case it is unfamiliar to some. In discussing *kilesa*, we come across three stages, the dormant stage called *anusaya*, the awakening (activating) stage called *pariyuṭṭhāna*, and the active stage that violates a precept called *vītikamma*. Our present discussion is on the *anusaya* stage. The *Therī*'s reply is as follows:

"Friend Visākha, the latency that lies hidden underneath a pleasant feeling is lust (*rāgānusaya*). The latency that lies hidden underneath an unpleasant feeling is anger (*paṭighānusaya*). The latency that lies hidden underneath a neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling is ignorance (*aviijjānusaya*)."

"Venerable Lady, is the latency of lust found underneath every pleasant feeling? Is the latency of anger found underneath every unpleasant feeling? And is the latency of ignorance found underneath every feeling that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant?"

"No friend Visākha. Lust is not found underneath every pleasant feeling. Anger is not found underneath every unpleasant feeling. Ignorance is not found underneath every feeling that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant."

This position is further explained when the *Therī* answers Visakha's questions that follow.

"Venerable Lady, what must be eradicated in the case of pleasant feelings? What must be eradicated in the case of unpleasant feelings? What must be eradicated in the case of feelings neither pleasant nor unpleasant?"

"Friend Visākha, in the case of pleasant feelings, the latency of lust must be eradicated. In the case of unpleasant feelings, the latency of anger must be eradicated. In the case of feelings neither pleasant nor unpleasant, the latency of ignorance must be eradicated."

"Venerable Lady, must the latency of lust be eradicated in every instance of pleasant feelings? Must the latency of anger be eradicated in every instance of unpleasant feelings? Must the latency of ignorance be eradicated in every instance of feelings neither pleasant nor unpleasant?"

"No friend Visākha. *Anusayas* need not be eradicated in the case of every pleasant feeling or unpleasant feeling or every feeling that is neither pleasant or unpleasant."

With this brief reply the *Therī* presents an unusual description introducing three very special situations.

First and foremost a monk who deviates from lustful thoughts and unwholesome thoughts and immerses in seclusion with reflection and investigation (*vitakka vicāra*) attains the first absorption endowed with joy and ease (*pīti sukha*). The latency of lust is absent here although joy and ease are present. That is a very special mental state.

Secondly the Buddha declares something special about anger '*paṭigha*':

A meditative monk entertains a longing, a yearning to speedily attain the noble emancipation through *Arahatphala Samādhi*, which is signeless (*animitta*) undirected (*appaṇihita*) and void (*suññata*), which the noble arahants attain and continue to abide in. The longing to attain that spiritual state is identified in the Dhamma as *nekkammasita domanassa*, dejection within renounced life and not *gehasita domanassa*, dejection within lay life. Dhammadinnā Therī declares that underneath this dejection no anger is found. That is a very special situation. Only a yearning prevails that the spiritual state has not yet been acquired, but no anger prevails.

The third factor is then explained. A certain monk who keeps aloof from pleasant and unpleasant feelings attains the fourth absorption which has only feelings that are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. No latency of ignorance is found underneath it. That is a special situation.

Followed by this explanation, the lay disciple Visākha comes up with an out of the ordinary question.

> Venerable Lady, what is the counterpart of pleasant feeling?

This term needs explanation. Think of a coconut or something similar that has two halves. *Paṭibhāga* means the counterpart. Now let's get back to the questions and answers.

Venerable Lady, what is the counterpart of pleasant feeling?

Friend Visākha, the counterpart of pleasant feeling is unpleasant feeling.

Then, what is the counterpart of unpleasant feeling?

The counterpart of unpleasant feeling is pleasant feeling.

This answer establishes a relationship between the two. Then, what is the counterpart of feeling neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

The counterpart, Friend Visākha, is ignorance (*avijjā*).

This answer is also unusual. The questioning continues.

What is the counterpart of *avijjā*, ignorance?

The counterpart is *vijjā*, knowledge.

What is the counterpart of *vijjā*, knowledge?

The counterpart is *vimutti*, emancipation.

What is the counterpart of *vimutti*?

The counterpart of *vimutti* is *Nibbāna*, extinction.

What is the counterpart of *Nibbāna*?

Friend Visākha, unable to restrain yourself from questioning, you are overstepping the boundaries. Higher life of *Brahmacariya* ends with *Nibbāna*, extinction. That is the end. Your question is erroneous.

But I am sure you can see, when you go deep into this subject, that the worldlings exist between pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Emancipation on the other hand arises in mid position called neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

Now we know the counterpart of pleasant feeling is unpleasant feeling, and the counterpart of unpleasant feeling is pleasant feeling. But the feeling neither pleasant nor unpleasant goes deeper. When ignorance that lies hidden is dispelled knowledge dawns. When knowledge is dispelled, emancipation dawns, and *Nibbāna* emerges. Everything ends there. There is another valuable *sutta* relevant to this subject in the *Vedanā Saṁyutta* named *Salla Sutta*. Here the Buddha directly calls a person ignorant of the Dhamma as an illiterate common man. Afflicted with unpleasant feelings he desires for sensual pleasure. What is the reason for this? Being illiterate and worldly, he can visualize no other escape from misery than through sense pleasure. He is totally ignorant

of feelings that are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. In an attempt to clarify this point on an earlier occasion, we remember bringing out the simile of a seesaw. A ride on the see-saw is similar to the ride on the head of a coconut frond which was a game of long ago. We see the ordinary worldlings ride the see-saw between joy and misery. They are not aware of the neither pleasant nor unpleasant position in the center. Only the noble disciple who dedicates himself to the serious practice of contemplation on feeling according to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, is capable of identifying the neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling. The worldlings on the run between the two extremes know nothing about the mid-position.

This point is well illustrated in the commentary with the simile of deer footprints. On a stretch of flat land there was a rocky plateau. A deer used to walk across it leaving footprints on the bare land but no trace on the rock. The feeling neither pleasant nor unpleasant is similar to the rocky plateau. Emancipation lies there, although the worldlings are not aware. Emancipation is found concealed. Talking of the two extremes and the middle, I would like to switch on to *Majjhe Sutta* again for clarification, as we have done earlier. First let me give a summary of the *sutta* for the benefit of the new-comers.

When the Buddha was residing at Isipatana in Benaris, a group of *theras* (senior monks) while relaxing after the mid-day meal, initiated a dhamma discussion. They selected a riddle-like verse with subtle meaning from the *Metteyya Pañha* in the *Sutta Nipāta*, and sitting in conference as it were formulated four questions for interpretation.

Yo ubhante viditvāna

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

sodha sibbanimaccagā

Knowing the two ends, he who with wisdom

refrains from attachment to the middle,

I call him a great man (*mahā purisa*)

who transcends the seamstress in this world.

The four questions formulated were What is the first end? What is the second end? What is the middle? Who is the seamstress? Six senior monks contributed their deep interpretations which were even suitable as objects of meditation. When presented to the Buddha he approved all six as correct. Here, we will discuss the third interpretation, as it is the most relevant to us.

"One end is pleasant feeling. The other is unpleasant feeling. In the middle is the feeling neither pleasant nor unpleasant. The seamstress is craving."

This makes it clear that the ordinary worldling runs between pleasure and pain driven by craving. Craving ignores the middle position and keeps tying knots with the two extreme ends. On the sly, she conceals 'neither pleasant nor unpleasant' feelings and keeps tying up the two ends. It is similar to the ride on the see-saw totally ignorant of the emancipation in the middle.

Now let's go into another relevant *sutta*, the *Phassamūlaka Sutta* in the *Vedanā Saṁyutta*. The Buddha begins as follows "Monks, there are three feelings".

To quote the Pāli statement

"*Tisso imā bhikkhave vedanā, phassajā phassamūlakā, phassanidānā, phassapaccayā*".

'Monks, Feelings are of three types whether arisen from contact, rooted in contact, founded on contact or conditioned by contact. What are they? Pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant'. The Buddha further clarifies how they arise. 'Monks, a contact conducive to a pleasant feeling, generates a pleasant feeling".

That contact is referred to as '*tajjaṁ*' a word which has to be broken up as *tat+ja*. *Tajja* means 'born of that' 'arisen from that'. When a contact which gives rise to a pleasant feeling ceases, the resultant pleasant feeling ceases. The Buddha stresses this fact with reference to unpleasant feelings as well. '*dukkhavedaniyaṁ bhikkhave phassaṁ paṭicca uppajjati dukkhā vedanā*'. Dependent on contact which generates an unpleasant feeling there arises an unpleasant feeling. With the cessation of that contact, the unpleasant feeling ceases. The same applies to feelings neither pleasant nor unpleasant. With a contact conducive to the generation of a feeling neither pleasant nor unpleasant, such a feeling is generated. With the cessation of such contact, the resultant feeling ceases.

The Buddha gives an ideal simile in order to explain contemplation on feeling, *vedanānupassanā*. 'Monks, just as heat is generated by rubbing two pieces of wood together, that heat disappears then and there, when the two sticks are taken apart'. Here the word *tajja* is used.

"*Yā tajjā usmā sā nirujjhati*".

The heat that arises by rubbing ceases then and there. Heat is generated by rubbing. By separating the two sticks, it cools. The message conveyed here is very deep. The Buddha has brought it up as a very important theory regarding *vedanānupassanā*. Here, in the *Phassamūlaka Sutta,* the Buddha declares it in poetic Pāli words, which can be easily commited to memory, as follows.

"*Tajjaṁ tajjaṁ phassaṁ paṭicca tajjā tajjā vedanā uppajjanti. Tajjassa tajjassa phassassa nirodhā tajjā tajjā vedanā nirujjhanti*".

Let us see its meaning. We can translate *tajja* as 'specific'. Then the statement would be roughly converted into English as 'Depending on each different contact, each specific feeling is generated. With the cessation of each different contact, each specific feeling

ceases'. That is the general idea. You have to understand the implication of *tajja*, which has a very specific meaning.

Generated by different contacts, feelings arise. With their disappearance, feelings vanish. Contemplation on feeling rests on this reality. The ordinary worldlings are unable to see impermanence. They ignore the middle. They always lean towards the 'arising' aspect. With reference to this, let us discuss the first interpretation in the *Majjhe Sutta*. Out of the six interpretations the first one on contact will help us here. It was the first to be approved by the Buddha as well. He said he too meant this interpretation, when uttering the verse although the other interpretations are also correct. What then is the first interpretation? Contact (*phassa*) is one end. Arising of contact (*phassa samudaya*) is the other end. It is not easy to grasp this. The middle is the cessation of contact (*phassa nirodha*). Now think what the seamstress does. She always sews the two opposite ends of the cloth, avoiding the middle. So are the worldlings who always live between contact and the arising of contact. Each time one contact fades away, they manoeuvre another to take its place. They never see the cessation in the middle. What does the seamstress craving (*taṇhā*) do? As in the simile of the two sticks, the Buddha says, if feeling arises dependent on contact, feeling should cease when contact ceases. But the worldlings are inclined towards origination. When one disappears, the stage is set for others to appear immediately. The implication here is deep, since it is suggestive of the perception of impermanace (*anicca saññā*). The term *tajjaṁ* can be grasped through *yoniso manasikāra* or seeing as it is with true insight. You must keep this in mind.

Depending on different contacts, different feelings arise. With the cessation of these different contacts, those feelings cease.

I think much has been said about contemplation on feeling, (*vedanānupassanā*). Let us remember as beckground knowledge the similes the Buddha gave for each of the five aggregates of grasping. Many of you are aware of them. Physical form is a cluster of foam. Feeling is a bubble. Perception is an illusion. Preparations are a banana stump. Consciousness is a deception. They all suggest impermanence, lack of solidity, lack of essence. Take the above simile given for feeling, for further contemplation. 'Monks, rain coming down on water in large drops in the summer, causes bubbles to rise and break up fast. They arise and break up. A wise man will look at it as it is, and see its essencelessness. It ceases then and there. It ceases then and there'. That is the simile the Buddha gave to demonstrate the emptiness of feeling. Please retain it at the back of your mind.

Now let us go into a very special discourse among the *suttas*, with reference to contemplation on feeling, (*vedanānupassanā*), called *Nandakovāda Sutta*, in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It's a unique one. This is the background in brief. The Buddha was once residing at *Jetavanārāma*. According to a rule of discipline, senior monks were expected to give a fortnightly advisory talk to the nuns. On this particular day, Therī Prajāpatī Gotamī too dropped in, to remind the monks of the talk. The monks informed the Buddha that it was Nandaka Thera's turn to advise the nuns. But, he showed

reluctance until the Buddha himself made a request. He approached the nunnery *Rājakārāmaya* and addressed the anxiously waiting nuns. He said at the outset that the discussion would take the form of a question and answer session. Whenever necessary they should clarify their doubts by questioning him. The discussion began with the usual subject of *tilakkhana*, the three characteristics, beginning with the internal sense organs.

'Sisters, is the eye permanent or impermanent?'

'Impermanent, Venerable Sir'.

'That which is impermanent, is it pleasant or unpleasant?'

'Unpleasant, Venerable Sir'.

'That which is impermanent, unpleasant and subject to change, is it worthwhile calling it I and mine?'

'Definitely not, Venerable Sir'.

The other internal sense organs the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind were also discussed through a similar series of questions. The nuns concluded their answering by saying 'Venerable Sir, we had already realized through noble wisdom the impermanence of all six internal sense spheres'.

The next series of questions was about the external sense objects.

'Sisters, is the physical form permanent or impermanent?'

'Impermanent, Venerable Sir'.

In a similar manner the nuns were questioned about sound, smell, taste, contact and cognizable objects. Again they concluded their answering by saying that they had already realized the impermanence of the six external sense objects through their noble wisdom.

The third series of questions was on the six *viññāṇa*s, the six types of consciousness.

'Sisters, is eye consciousness permanent or not?'

'It's impermanent, Venerable Sir'.

The series of questions was as above, to emphasis the quality of impermanence. At this point too, the nuns declared that they had already realized it.

Now this *sutta* offers us three wonderful similes. That I think makes this *sutta* invaluable. This is the first one:

'Sisters, there is a kindled oil lamp. The oil in it is impermanent. The wick is impermanent. The flame is impermanent. So is the light. But if someone were to say that the oil, the wick and the flame are impermanent, but the light is permanent, would you agree?'

‘Definitely not, Venerable Sir, because if the oil, the wick and the flame are impermanent, the light produced by them is bound to be impermanent’.

Here the nuns spontaneously came out with the Buddha’s theory

“*tajjaṁ tajjaṁ phassaṁ*”.

They answered in unison as follows.

“*Tajjaṁ tajjaṁ bhante paccayaṁ paṭicca tajjā tajjā vedanā uppajjanti. Tajjassa tajjassa paccayassa nirodhā tajjā tajjā vedanā nirujjhanti*”

‘Venerable Sir, the reason is that different feelings arise dependent on different contacts. With the cessation of these contacts, the feelings cease’.

Paccaya or conditions here refers to *phassa* or contact, although the *sutta* doesn’t say so. We are compelled to believe that the nuns were not listening passively. For example, if they had continued to sit throughout in one posture, they would have experienced physical pain. They may have contemplated on *vedanā* in conformity with the discourse. That is why perhaps they answered in unison “*Tajjaṁ tajjaṁ*”,

“With the cessation of different contacts, the relevant feelings cease.”

Here the fundamental theory emerges, which is then applied to the simile as follows.

If someone says the internal sense spheres such as the eye, the ear and the nose are impermanent but the feelings that arise thereof such as happiness and pain are permanent, is that statement correct? It was in relation to this question that the similes were brought in. the simile of the oil lamp refers to the impermanence of internal sense spheres, the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Now the Thera presents his second simile.

‘Sisters, think of a huge tree. The roots are impermanent. The trunk is impermanent. The foliage is impermanent. The shadow is impermanent. If someone were to say that the root, the trunk and the foliage are impermanent, but the shadow is permanent, would you agree?’

‘No Venerable Sir. If roots, the trunk and the foliage are impermanent, the shadow has to be impermanent as well.’

‘Sisters, in the same way if the six external sense objects, physical form, sound, smell, taste, physical contact and cognizable objects are impermanent, the resultant pleasant feelings, unpleasant feelings and feelings neither pleasant nor unpleasant are bound to be impermanent’

To prove this argument the Buddha’s theory is cited

“*Tajjaṁ tajjaṁ bhante paccayaṁ paṭicca tajjā tajjā vedanā uppajjanti. Tajjassa tajjassa paccayassa nirodhā tajjā tajjā vedanā nirujjhanti*”.

With this logical argument most probably realization dawned upon the nuns regarding the cause – effect relationship although not mentioned in the *sutta*. The third simile is more peculiar.

'Sisters, a butcher or his assistant, slaughters a cow, and skins it with a very sharp butcher's knife. It is delicately done without damaging either the flesh or the skin. Only the nerves that joined the skin to the flesh were severed. He then expertly covers the body with the skin and says 'There you are. The cow is there just as she was. No difference whatever'. Do you think that statement is correct?'

'Certainly not, Venerable Sir. The nerves are severed between the skin and the flesh, with a butcher's knife'.

'Yes sisters. It is the simile I cited. Now I shall give you the interpretation. The flesh within the skin stands for the six internal sense faculties. The skin is compared to the external sense objects. The nerves that join the two, represent passion for lust, *nandirāga*.

Dear listeners, *nandirāga* is a synonym for *taṇhā* (craving). *Nandi* is to take delight in. *Rāga* is attachment. *nandirāga* is compared to the nerves that join the flesh and the skin of the cow together. Once the nerves are severed, the cow though apparently the same, is not really the same. The skin merely lies spread over the flesh.

Now I want you to recall some facts I stressed in the previous discourse. With reference to the Buddha's sensitivity to taste it is said

"*Rasa paṭisaṁvedi bhagavā hoti, no ca rasa rāga paṭisaṁvedī*".

He is sensitive to taste but not attached to taste. Let us interpret the simile of the cow on these lines. The nerves were severed by means of *Nibbāna*. The nerves are compared to passion for lust, *nandirāga*. *Nandirāga* is a synonym for craving. These nerves need not be cut off. It's the passion for lust that has to be eliminated. Finally, what is the butcher's knife? It is a synonym for noble wisdom. Noble wisdom is used, for the delicate job of severing the cow's flesh from the skin. Only the nerves are severed leaving the false appearance that the body is intact. But there is a difference, the difference between worldly and transcendental. You must try to understand it. Try to apply it to the simile of a drop of water on a lotus petal.

Nandaka Thera, before concluding the discourse, briefly touched on the seven Factors of Enlightenment *bojjhangas*, that is, mindfulness, investigation of Dhamma, effort, rapture, repose, concentration and equanimity.

'Sisters, if one disciplines oneself in each of these seven Factors of Enlightenment with *Nibbāna* as the goal, one is certain of Arahanthood. What does 'with *Nibbāna* as the goal' mean? The specific terms used are '*viveka nissitaṁ*', founded on seclusion, '*virāga nissitaṁ*', founded on detachment, '*nirodha nissitaṁ*', founded on cessation, '*vossagga parināmiṁ*', maturing in total relinquishment. They all stand for *Nibbāna*.'

‘Sisters, now the time is up. You can leave.’

The nuns rose respectfully and proceeded to meet the Buddha. They stood by after venerating him. He then dismissed them saying briefly ‘Sisters, you may go’. Then the Buddha addressed the monks. ‘Monks, the *Cātuddasa* is the 14 day. The *pañcadasa* is the 15 day. Looking at the moon on the 14 day many will not notice that the moon is not fully visible, though really it is not. Similarly, here the Buddha makes the simile clear – the five hundred nuns were gladdened by Nandaka’s discourse but their expectations were not fulfilled. Then he advised the Venerable Nandaka to repeat the same discourse, the following day. If technology had been as advanced as it is today the task would have been simple. Venerable Nandaka was asked to repeat word to word the entire discourse, the following day.

This second day’s account is recorded briefly in the text. Venerable Nandaka, after the mid-day meal, entered the nunnery and repeated the discourse word for word, in the form of questions and answers, and finally said ‘Sisters, that’s all for today’. The nuns, as on the previous day met the Buddha, and were given permission to leave. Once they left, the Buddha addressed the monks and cited his simile again. ‘Monks, looking at the moon on the 15 day, many people have no doubt whether the moon appears full or not. It’s full without doubt.

Similarly, the nuns are not only gladdened but their expectations are fulfilled. Their ultimate objective has been realized. The final statement in this account is amazing. Of these five hundred nuns, the nun who acquired the lowest spiritual attainment is *Sotāpanna*, that of stream winner. At the end of the first hearing of the discourse, there were no spiritual attainments but on the following day, the lowest attainment was *Sotāpanna*. It indicates that contemplation of feeling or *vedanānupassanā* as explained in the statement “*tajjaṁ tajjaṁ*” is the force underlying it.

I wish to now introduce to you a dangerously critical *sutta* in the *Māra Saṁyutta*. Take care. Even certain educated people have misinterpreted this and insulted the Dhamma. Some have even committed suicide through misunderstanding. Although it has caused a lot of confusion, this *Godhika Sutta* touches the Dhamma at its depth. This is how it goes. When the Buddha was residing in Rajagaha, the monk Godhika lived in a cell on the slope of the *Isigili* rock. Striving hard in meditation he attained a worldly state of concentration or *samādhi* called ‘*sāmayika ceto vimutti*’. Due to some mysterious reason as his mind touched on the *samādhi*, it slipped away. He made the highest effort again and again but for the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth time the *samādhi* slipped away. In deep disappointment he decided to commit suicide by severing his neck.

This is how the text records it. The Māra, reading this thought of Venerable Godhika, approached the Buddha with a show of deep reverence and said ‘Great Hero, a disciple of yours who is a *Sekha* (*Sotāpanna*) is planning to commit suicide. Please prevent him’. This request is very unusual of Māra. It reveals his shrewdness. Strange enough, at this very moment Venerable Godhika cut off his neck with a sharp weapon. Seeing this, the Buddha gives a very unusual reply.

"*Evaṁ hi dhīrā kubbanti – nāvakaṁkhanti jīvitaṁ,*

samūlaṁ taṇhaṁ abbuyha – Godhiko parinibbuto"

Instead of criticizing the monk he praised him.

"*Evaṁ hi dhīrā kubbanti*", 'That is how the wise men act'.

"*nāvakaṁkhanti jīvitaṁ*", 'They have no expectations in life'.

"*samūlaṁ taṇhaṁ abbuyha*", 'extracting craving at its very root'

"*Godhiko parinibbuto*", 'Godhika has attained *parinibbāna*'.

This story invites criticism. Let us see what followed. The Buddha informed the monks of this unusual incident and together with them climbed *Kālasilā* rock in *Isigili* to see the monk. At a distance they saw that the monk's neck was completely severed from the body. They also observed a smoky cloud floating in all ten directions.

The Buddha explained the mystery behind it,

"Monks, can you see that smoky cloud floating about? That's Māra trying to detect where Venerable Godhika's consciousness is established".

Finally what the Buddha disclosed was surprising

"*Appatiṭṭhitena viññānena Godhiko parinibbuto*",

'The Venerable Godhika attained *parinibbāna*, his consciousness unestablished'.

Let us explain the above statement. Those of you who have read our discourses on *Nibbāna* know that this reference is to the mind that wanders in continuous existence *Bhava*. The ordinary worldling is one who is forever grasping, forever pulling at. In *Pañca upādānakkhanda, upādāna* means grasping, grasping the five heaps of aggregates. A man grasping for life on his death bed is engaged in a tug-of-war with Māra or death. Death tries to pull him out of this life. The man, holding on to dear life pulls in the opposite direction. Now that's exactly what the shrewd Māra wishes for. He suddenly lets go saying 'Have it'. The unfortunate man falls back into continuous existence. Existence leads to birth. Birth has in store a package of birthday gifts such as decay, disease and death. That is the result of not letting the rope go at the moment of death. Holding on means victory to Māra. What is the benefit of letting go as Venerable Godhika did? This point is too subtle even for erudite westerners to understand. Too subtle. At the moment of death, Venerable Godhika lets go not only craving but also feeling which craving accompanies. Cutting off one's neck is unbelievable. Due to some hidden spiritual strength in him he was unable to retain the *samādhi* which he attained six times over. Perhaps he wished to practice insight meditation with the help of the *samādhi*, failing which he was determined to practice it simultaneously with the *samādhi*. Unbelievably bold, wasn't he?

Ultimately he seems to have succeeded. These are extremely disputable points. We have heard that certain monks misinterpreting this incident, committed suicide. Some are foolhardy. Those who think 'I have no more prospects in life' 'My health has deteriorated' or 'I wish to be physically stronger' and wish for a future life, easily get caught to Māra. It's essential to let go of everything. Some have attained *Nibbāna* even while being impaled, by letting go. You have heard perhaps of such stories in the commentaries, though somewhat superfluous. A monk in the grip of a tiger, gradually attained each stage of spiritual development with each attack and finally attained *Nibbāna* when his heart was being attacked.

To get back to our serious discussion, *vedanānupassanā* or contemplation on feeling is a very effective object of meditation. We sometimes call it a strenuous path to *Nibbāna*. Everyone is reluctant to practice it. But if you practice it correctly, victory is certain. Let's take another simile. In horse racing, the final stage is so uncertain that an instant camera decides the winner. The most unexpected horse may win. What Venerable Godhika did was similar to that. But anyone who believes, cutting off one's neck is a shortcut to *Nibbāna*, he is certainly on the wrong track. Some have tried it out, unfortunately. On the other hand some may be critical of this story ignorant of the fact that *vedanānupassanā* underlies it.

This subject needs serious thinking. Imagine the tug-ofwar with Māra at the moment of death. What do the ordinary worldlings do? They think of sensuality in the presence of unpleasant feeling. They wish for *Deva loka* or the comforts at home. Māra lets go his firm grip saying 'Have it'. What Venerable Godhika did was quite the opposite. He let go when Māra was pulling with his might. We can imagine Māra*'s* plight when he crash-landed on his back. That's the lesson we learn here.

It would be beneficial, I think, to discuss the experiences of a *vipassanā* meditator, at this point. One of the main obstacles a meditator faces, is sitting in cross-legged position for long. Some cannot sit for more than thirty minutes at each sitting. Soon they reach the climax. That is the right moment to recall the fourfold effort practiced by the Buddha.

Kāmaṁ tacoca nahārū ca aṭṭhi ca avasissatu sarīre upasussatu maṁsa lohitaṁ, yaṁ taṁ purisa thāmena,

purisaviriyena, purisaparakkamena pattabbaṁ na taṁ apāpuṇitvā viriyassa santhānaṁ bhavissati

Let the skin nerves and the bones remain. Let the flesh and blood dry up. I shall not lay down my effort until I attain that stage which has to be attained through unshaken manly energy, manly vigor, manly strength. With unshaken determination as demonstrated above, if a meditator takes his mind off the meditation object, to apply firmly on the pain saying 'Let it break to pieces. I don't care', that effort will strengthen the Enlightenment Factors (*bojjaṇga*). You might sweat as a result. But haven't we had more bitter experiences in life?

Putting up with unbearable pain unmoved, some meditators, even laymen, though without our advice, have tried out this method and have had strange experiences. The pain burns the meditator beyond the bearable point and suddenly turns cool and feels like concrete. Then one could sit for hours. Awareness develops under the circumstances which at the same time, introspection on feeling develops, the meditator comes to realize that feeling is not one solid unit but a cluster similar to a cluster of rain drops. He also realizes that he revolted against pain taking it to be one unit whereas he now sees each streak of pain revealing the true nature of name-and-form. Dear listeners, each streak of pain reveals the true nature of name-and-form. Finally, to use two terms I often repeat, the perception of the compact, *ghaṇa saññā* fades away allowing the perception of cluster or *rāsi saññā* to emerge. There lies introspection. The worldling lives within the perception of the compact. He sees things as a complete whole. Through meditation one realizes the plurality of everything, true to the Buddha's simile of a cluster of bubbles, arising and breaking. It takes one, deep into *vipassanā* , insight meditation and in fact, if applied correctly, one could firmly establish oneself in *samādhi*, awareness and even attain arahanthood while in that seat by means of *vedanānupassanā*, contemplation on feeling. That's why ancient books contain such stories as that of the monk in the tiger's grip. It's important to remember this topic is of practical importance to meditators. It's well worth taking Venerable Godhika as an example, not in the negative but in the positive aspect. It is not an invitation to commit suicide but an invitation to eliminate craving. Only an invitation to eliminate craving. In this discourse something practically useful to meditators cropped up. When we discussed feeling, contact and *taṇhā* automatically came into the scene.

From today's discourse if you got any inspiration, any courage to continue with your meditation practice, we will feel satisfied. If you give importance to *vedanānupassanā* in your daily meditation instead of casting it aside as only appropriate for the educated, you can go far. You can sit and practice awareness longer and also attain a *samādhi*. Through insight meditation you could attain transcendental paths and fruits and even attain Arahanthood in this very life.

If you wish to cross over the *samsara*, before the lamp of this dispensation goes out, I do wish you would make use of the objects of meditation we explained in this discourse. The lamp of the dispensation is about to go out. If you want release from repeated births and deaths, it's worth practicing them even at the risk of your life as Venerable Godhika did. We wish 'May you soon attain release from continued existence'. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell '*Avīci*' to the highest Brahma world '*Akaniṭṭha*' may they rejoice in this discourse. May it conduce to their attainment of *Nibbāna*. May they attain the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 17
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 199)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Taṇhā dutiyo puriso – dīghamaddhāna saṁsaraṁ

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ – saṁsāraṁ nātivattati

etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā – taṇhā-dukkhassa sambhavaṁ

vītataṇho anādāno – sato bhikkhu paribbaje

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

'Worldlings undertake the unending journey of births and deaths in a mad pursuit that holds no gratification' – revealed the Buddha. They do not realize the misery in the samsaric journey due to the foolish expectation of encountering contentment. Craving is the tempting force in hiding, which creates a false shadow of contentment. We hope to discuss the significance of craving, (*taṇhā*), as relevant to the subject of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Law of Dependent Arising, taking the above two verses as the topic of the seventeenth discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, because they well demonstrate the worldling's samsāric journey with *taṇhā* as the partner. The two verses are found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. We have explained to you the style of presentation in the *sutta*, through several discourses on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. It presents the different topics of the Dhamma one by one in a way conducive to contemplation as a duality. This is how the Buddha introduces the duality of craving.

"Monks, if someone inquires whether there could be another mode of contemplating dualities, you must reply in the affirmative. How is it possible? However much misery arises, all that is conditioned by craving. This is one mode of contemplation. With the complete detachment and cessation of craving, suffering ceases to arise. This is the second mode of contemplation. Monks, a monk who trains himself well in this duality of contemplation applying strenuous effort to burn out the defilements, can hope to realize one of these two spiritual attainments, either Arahanthood in this very life or in case any residue of grasping is left over, the stage of Non-returner (*Anāgāmi*). At the end of this account the Buddha recited the two verses selected as our topic.

Taṇha dutiyo puriso – dīghamaddhāna saṁsaraṁ

The man wandering long, with craving as his partner

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ – saṁsāraṁ nātivattati

Does not transcend this *saṁsāra* which is an alternation between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'.

Next he declares:

etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā – taṇhā dukkhassa sambhavaṁ

Seeing the evils of craving which generates misery

vītataṇho anādāno – sato bhikkhu paribbaje

Let the monk conduct himself mindfully with craving dispelled and grasping abandoned.

When discussing the topic craving, *taṇhā*, we must recall how *Paṭicca Samuppāda* deals with it. You all know the 'Law of Dependent Arising' with twelve links.

"*Vedanā paccayā taṇhā*, *taṇhā paccayā upādanaṁ*" from feeling as condition arises craving, from craving as condition arises grasping. You have to remember right along, the two links on either side of craving.

Craving is sixfold in the Buddha's analysis in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda Vibhaṇga Sutta* of the *Vibhaṇga Saṁyutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. They are based on the six sense objects as craving for physical form, sound, smell, taste, physical contact and mental objects.

The most popular and the most heard of interpretation is found in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Those listeners who chant or listen to parittas know well, that the Buddha in the interpretation of the Four Noble Truths, analyses the origin of suffering in relation to craving. We have often emphasized that statement for your benefit.

"*Yāyaṁ taṇhā ponobhavikā nandirāga sahagatā tatratatrābhinandinī seyyathidaṁ kāma taṇhā, bhava taṇhā, vibhava taṇhā."*

This craving is *ponobhavikā*. It has the inherent nature of causing repeated birth. *Nandirāga sahagatā* – Delights in and attaches to lust. *Tatratatrābhinandinī* – takes delight here and there. Those are the three characteristics of *taṇhā*. Then come the three types of craving *kāma taṇhā*, *bhava taṇhā* and *vibhava taṇhā*. *Kāma taṇhā* is craving for the five sense pleasures. *Bhava taṇhā* is in short, the longing for the soul to continue forever as the eternalists advocate. *Vibhava taṇhā* on the other hand is the craving to cease existence as nihilists teach. That is how craving is classified in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.

Now I wish to introduce to you something that calls for serious thinking. The Buddha in the *Titthāyatana Sutta* of the *Tika Nipāta* in the *Anguttara Nikāya* proclaims these words.

"*Katamaṁ ca bhikkhave dukkha samudayaṁ ariyasaccaṁ*?"

"Monks, what is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering?"

Do you think it's craving? You are mistaken. The Buddha says it's the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* consisting of twelve links. *Avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*, *saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṁ*, *viññāṇa paccayā nāmarupaṁ* etc. This is sure to pose a problem to many. Are the Buddha's statements contradictory? In one place he says suffering is conditioned by craving. In another place it's *Paṭicca Samuppāda* with its twelve links. How do we clarify this? Why didn't the Buddha speak of craving in connection with suffering? It is simple logic that if there is a mother, a father has to be present somewhere. You all know that. Similarly the father is revealed through the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* Dhamma.

I shall now explain it to you. In the earlier discourses on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* I have repeatedly stressed the fact that the important point here is not *avijjā* but the inter-relation between *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa*. It is this inter-relatedness of conditions that was referred to as the vortex. It's the central spot in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Then what is *avijjā* or craving? I think it will be more lucid if I put it this way.

In the blindness called ignorance, with the darkness of preparations, a process of groping takes place. During this groping, two things get caught within one's grip, consciousness, and name-and-form, *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa*. They have an interdependent relationship. But the worldlings being unable to see this connection, always treat them as two. As a result there arise greed (*lobha*), anger (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), attachment, clashes and deception and many more problems. We have given many a simile to illustrate this situation, so it suffices to touch on them in brief. The simplest simile of the dog on the bridge appears in "Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled".

A dog walking across a bridge sees its own shadow in the water and believing it to be another dog will react by wagging its tail or growling or staring inquisitively. That illustrates greed, anger and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*). We have modernized it using an ancient Greek mythical story. It has appealed to many. Narcissus the Greek youth who had never seen his handsome face in a mirror, saw its reflection in a pond as he bent towards it. Assuming it to be a goddess in the water, he spent several days in a futile effort to hold her in his arms and ultimately sacrificed his own life. He was not aware that it was his own reflection.

We have brought out many more similes to show the misconception of duality. We hope you remember in the first discourse, the game of draught between Ajith and Sumith which terminated in utter confusion. In the same way, in the game of cricket that you know so well, the moment two teams are formed, the original inter-relatedness is forgotten. Then there is the simile of the cinema. The worldlings are not capable of understanding this interdependent origin of things, due to its subtle nature. Ven Sāriputta has expertly demonstrated it using the simile of two bundles of reeds. Two bundles of reeds maintain their upright position supported by each other. When one is pulled out of position, the other is bound to fall. Interdependent origination is exactly

like that. They are not one, and neither are they two. We have to refer to a simile from folk lore as the last resort in explaining this intrinsic relationship.

If consciousness is questioned “Who are you?” it would answer “Please ask name-and-form”.

If *nāmarūpa* is questioned “who are you?” it would reply “please ask *viññāṇa*”.

They are so closely inter-related. The worldlings cannot grasp this subtlety and hence the division into two teams. It should be now clear that *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa* are closely inter-dependent.

Now see whether you can agree with me here. It’s name-and-form that is divided into six sense spheres. They are activated by craving (*taṇhā*), to function as craving for physical form, craving for sound, craving for smell and so on. Eye consciousness arises through eye and physical form coming together. Forgetting this truth the eye runs in pursuit of form, the ear in pursuit of sound. This apparent duality creates the deception of the five aggregates of grasping instigated by *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (anger) and *moha* (delusion). This analysis may not correspond to what appears in certain books. Commentators attempt to find the root cause of ignorance, which I think is a futile attempt. Ignorance is the father. In other words, the duality of consciousness and nameand-form springs up through preparations in the background of ignorance. The worldlings pick it up as a duality. Craving begins to function from this point. The Buddha proves this in several places such as the *Samiddhi Sutta* when he says “*acchecchi taṇhaṁ idha nāmarūpe.”*

Cut off craving towards this name-andform. It is this name-and-form that divides itself into six sense spheres. We think this explanation is sufficient because there is no contradiction here. In certain places where the Buddha talks of the Law of Dependent Arising the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering is directly identified as the Law of Dependent Arising.

What we have been discussing is the background of craving. To put it in brief what *Paṭicca Samuppāda* depicts is nothing more than the background of craving which is ignorance. It changes into a vortex and conceals the inter-relationship from the worldlings. The worldlings always live imprisoned between two ends, two extremes, which create attachments, friction and illusion. The final result is suffering, or the weaving of the five aggregates of grasping.

In the discourse on the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha specifically referred to craving as the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering. Even when talking of the cessation of suffering, he did not refer to ignorance.

“*Tassā yeva taṅhāya asesa virāga nirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo*”

The total detachment and destruction of craving is called the cessation of suffering. At this point one may ask “Where is ignorance?”

In the earlier mentioned *Titthāyatana Sutta*, the cessation of suffering is explained through the reverse order of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

"*Avijjāyatveva asesa virāga norodhā saṁkhāranirodho.*"

With the cessation of ignorance each of the other links cease to be. In fact the most detailed analysis of the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering is found in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Here the Buddha exposes the place where *taṇhā* arises and where it remains hiding, in the following words:

"*sā kho pana esā taṇhā kattha uppajjamānā uppajjati, kattha nivisamānā nivisati.*"

This is presented in the form of a question.

Before I proceed further, I want to point out to you that *taṇhā* is a feminine gender noun, in Pāli. It's useful to know this, because the term 'mother' is used in this context. Some *suttas* say "*taṇhā janeti purisaṁ*."

Craving gives birth to man. Craving is the mother.

"*Sā kho pana esā taṇhā…*" if translated in conformity with the gender rules in ancient Pāli grammar – though an accurate English translation is not possible – it would appear as follows.

"That this lass craving, in taking birth, where will she take birth?"

Another important point, dear listeners, is the correct rendering of '*nivisamānā*' into English. The idea of "lying under, hiding or creeping under" is implied here. So let's take it as 'lying in hiding'. Then the Buddha's question would be "That this lass craving (*taṇhā*), in taking birth where will she take birth?

In lying in hiding where will she lie hiding?"

Now comes the Buddha's reply' "*Yaṁ loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ etthesā taṇhā uppajjamānā uppajjati. Ettha nivisamānā nivisati*".

Please remember that '*piyarūpa'* here means 'delightful in nature'. '*Sātarūpa'* means 'agreeable in nature'. Since this reference is to the place where birth takes place, whatever is delightful in appearance and agreeable in appearance, that is where craving takes birth and lies in hiding.

Next the Buddha proceeds to analyze this position.

"*Kiñca loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ*?"

What is delightful and agreeable in this world? The answer consists of a long list which begins with:

"*cakkhuṁ loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ etthesā taṇhā uppajjamānā uppajjati ettha nivisamānā nivisati.*"

"The eye is delightful and agreeable in this world. Therein is craving born. Therein craving lies concealed."

In this manner the Buddha talks of the six internal sense spheres, the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Then he proceeds to list the six external sense objects, physical form, sound, smell, taste, touch and mental objects. I hope you can understand them, though I have listed them in brief. They are all delightful and agreeable to the worldling so that craving takes birth in them and lies in hiding.

That is not all. The six-fold consciousness that arises due to contact between each pair such as the eye-consciousness, *cakkhu viññāṇa* the ear consciousness *sota viññāṇa* and so on are delightful and agreeable to the worldling. There too craving arises and lies in hiding. Then the Buddha points out that the six sense contacts eye contact, ear contact, nose contact, tongue contact, body contact and mind contact (*cakkhu, sota, ghāna, jivhā, kāya and mano samphassa*) are also delightful and agreeable so that craving can arise and wait in hiding. So also the six feelings generated through six sense contacts (*samphassajā vedanā*) are also delightful and agreeable. Next comes *saññā* or perceptions such as the perception of form, the perception of sound, the perception of smell and so on. This is followed by the six intentions *saṁcetanā*. Worldings like to think of the intention of physical forms, sounds, smells, tastes etc. as delightful and agreeable There too craving arises and waits in hiding.

Next comes an amazing statement from the Buddha.

"*Rūpataṇhā loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ etthesā taṇhā uppajjamānā uppajjati.*"

Worldlings are delighted by craving for physical form (*rūpataṇhā*). They are comforted by it. They are delighted by craving for physical form, craving for sound, craving for smells, craving for taste, craving for physical contact and craving for mental objects. This reveals the unbelievable truth that there is craving within craving, *taṇhā* within *taṇhā*. *Taṇhā* is born within itself and lies in hiding. Can you believe it? The next list is under *vitakka* or reflection. Reflection on physical form, *rūpavitakka* is enticing. So is investigation of form, *rūpavicāra*. The ten-fold analysis of craving with reference to its arising and lying in hiding is found in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Then the Buddha explains how the cessation of craving is brought about. I shall put it briefly to you. I am confident you can follow the entire procedure.

"*Sā kho panesā taṇhā kattha pahīyamānā pahīyati, katta nirujjhamānā nirujjhati.*"

Where does that *taṇhā* cease? Where does *taṇhā* get eliminated? Where craving arises, there it ceases.

"*Yaṁ loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ etthesā taṇhā pahīyamānā pahīyati. Ettha nirujjhamānā nirujjhati.*"

A lengthy and descriptive analysis is given in this manner on the cessation of craving in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Let us now move on to the *Majjhe Sutta* in the *Ekaka Nipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. In our discussion on craving or *taṇhā*, this *sutta* is of great relevance to us. We have discussed it several times because we are compelled to draw on its content when talking of craving. You will remember it when I tell you its background. Once when the Buddha was residing at Isipatana Deer Park in Benares, a group of Senior Monks, after the mid-day meal sat in conference in their conference hall. Their main topic was a verse from *Metteyya Pañha*, a discourse of the Buddha.

Yo ubhante viditvāna

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ bhrūmi mahā puriso'ti

sodha sibbanimaccagā.

Knowing the two ends, he who with wisdom refrains from attachment to the middle, I call him a great man who transcends the seamstress in this world.

Based on this verse four questions were formulated. What is the first end? What is the second end? What is the middle? Who is the seamstress? Six senior monks addressed the assembly and gave six different interpretations.

The first interpreter presented his view as follows. The first end is contact (*phassa*). The second end is the arising of contact. The middle is the cessation of contact. The seamstress is craving. Here he explains how craving functions.

"*Taṇhā hi naṁ sibbati tassa tasse'va bhavassa abhinibbattiyā*."

"Craving stitches him on to repeated births."

That is why craving is called the seamstress.

To state the other interpretations in brief, the second monk said "The first end is the past, the second end the future and the middle is the present. The seamstress is craving."

We too can agree with this argument, watching how our thoughts work, running between the past and the future. We are not even aware of the existence of a present. That's because craving keeps tying up the ends. The third interpretation suggests pleasant feelings as one end, painful feelings as the second end, the feelings that are neither pleasant nor painful as the middle and the seamstress of course *taṇhā*, craving. Here too we are so engrossed in the two ends, we are hardly aware of feelings that are neither pleasant nor painful. In the fourth, name (*nāma*) is one end. Form (*rūpa*) is the other. In

the middle is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Here again the seamstress is craving who keeps stitching together the two ends, name-and-form. What is the fifth interpretation? The internal sense spheres eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind constitute one end. The six external objects, physical form, sound, smell, taste, physical contact and cognizable objects form the other end. In the middle is consciousness. Craving, playing her role as the seamstress ties up the two ends, ignoring the middle. The sixth and final interpretation gives the view of self (*sakkāya*) or the five aggregates of grasping as one end. The other end is the arising of the view of self (*sakkāya samudaya*) or the arising of the five aggregates. The middle is the cessation of the view of self. Craving is the seamstress in this sixth interpretation as well, who keeps tying up the knots every moment, taking care that the cessation of *sakkāya diṭṭhi* and its arising, is impossible. These interpretations give ample proof of the vicious activity of *taṇhā,* craving.

We have occasionally used the sewing machine as a modern simile to explain the behavior of *taṇhā*. Each time the needle goes in, the thread of the shuttle ties a knot. Tying knots is a specific characteristic of craving. *Tatratatrābhinandinī nandirāgasahagatā* are words that well demonstrate the function of the needle, piercing into the machine, tying a knot and coming up and repeating the process. *Majjhe Sutta* well describes the ruthless behavior of craving.

I would like to discuss this topic from yet another angle, using another expression in the same verse, since I am very particular that you understand it clearly.

"*Taṇhā dutiyo puriso dīghamaddhāna saṁsaraṁ itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ saṁsāraṁ nātivattati.*"

The true nature of this *saṁsāra* is summarized as something found between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'. Let me explain it. Think of a being taking birth here from somewhere, let us say from the animal world. This baby seeing things, hearing sounds around him, he develops the notion 'here' followed by the idea of 'thisness' or *itthabhāva*. From the moment thisness is established, it keeps changing into 'otherwiseness', or *aññathābhāva*.

It is an amazing thing. The nature of '*bhava*' (becoming) – what is called *bhava* – is something that happens due to grasping. Whenever a being grasps – clings to – something, impermanence begins to function from that moment. Explaining this subtle point is no easy task. Try to comprehend it yourself. We have explained before that only subsequent to arising of a 'thing' that it becomes 'otherwise'. When something becomes a 'thing', from that point onwards it starts to change. I shall give a simile though not a perfect one. Think of buying a toy from a toy shop for a little baby. Paying for it adds more value to it. What they have brought home has its own nature or 'thisness' – *itthabhāva*. The moment the little one breaks it, it changes into 'otherwiseness' – *aññathābhāva*. From then onwards it begins to change. The notion of a 'thing' with its particular characteristics is called '*maññanā*'. It means to assume something to be a 'thing' with its own identity. From then onwards it begins to change.

The Buddha, immediately after his enlightenment has proclaimed as follows:

"*Aññathābhāvī bhavasatto loko bhavapareto bhavamevābhinandati*"

The worldling attached to *bhava* – continuous becoming – which has the nature of otherwiseness, and overcome by *bhava*, delights in it. It is the seamstress craving who instigates the worldling. For example, imagine you lost something. Craving would say "Don't worry. There is another one beyond. Have it."

It expresses what is implied by *tatratatrābhinandinī, taṇhā ponobhavikā*. *Ponobhavikā* is not merely suggestive of the moment of death. It takes place every moment. *Punabbhava* apparently means the next birth. But every moment something becomes a 'thing' or a 'this'. It keeps changing. Due to this change, it is discarded and another 'thing' is grasped. Another 'thing' is grasped. This grasping is done through craving, which lies in hiding. This process is referred to as *tatratatrābhinandinī*, the fact that the beings wander in *saṁsāra* between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'. This happens not only from life to life and birth to birth but also within a lifetime. This change is extremely subtle. I have given you these details to enable you to understand *itthabhāva* and *aññathābhāva*.

There are several meaningful verses in the *Taṇhā Vagga* of the *Dhammapada,* that expand on this subject but unfortunately the meanings of some verses are lost to us. Anyway let us discuss one verse for our purpose.

Tasiṇāya purakkhatā pajā

parisappanti sasova bādhito

saṁyojana saṁgasattā

dukkhamupenti punappunaṁ cirāya

Here is its meaning.

Tasiṇā is a synonym for *taṇhā* – craving.

"*Tasiṇāya purakkhatā paj?*"

The human race placed in the forefront by craving "*parisappanti sasova bādhito*" like a rabbit entrapped in a snare. What happens to the humans? The commentary says *parisappanti* means frightened. Frightened like a rabbit in a snare. This interpretation overlooks a very valuable implication referred to here. Why was the rabbit taken as simile? It can leap far. Think of a rabbit with its hind foot caught in a noose. Ignorant of the confronted plight it leaps far. Then realizing the perilous situation, it leaps in all directions but is hopelessly caught. Similar is the noose of craving. *Saṁyojanasaṁgasattā* – stuck in the bond of sticky craving.

"*Dukkhaṁ upenti punappunaṁ cirāya*" – humans are gripped by suffering repeatedly for long. In short, unless one attains the stage of Non-returner, even though born in Brahma world, one is destined to return here, due to the trap of craving.

This verse in the *Dhammapada* which you are quite familiar with, emphasises how strong the fetter of craving is.

Yathāpi mūle anupaddave daḷhe

chinnopi rukkho punareva rūhati

evampi taṇhānusaye anūhate

uppajjati dukkhamidaṁ punappunaṁ

"*Yathāpi mūle anupaddave daḷhe*" – When the root is uninjured and firm, *chinnopi rukkho punareva rūhati* – even though the tree is cut down, grows again and again.

"*Evampi taṇhānusaye anūhate*" – similarly as long as the latency of craving is not eliminated,

"*uppajjati dukkhamidaṁ punappunaṁ*" – this suffering arises again and again.

This verse reveals the strength of craving. It's not different from the plight of the rabbit. I am not trying to include everything in this discourse. I am only trying to bring out the hidden meanings of these valuable verses, which have not been given their due.

Now let us look at another aspect of *taṇhā* as given in another *sutta*. we have explained how conditioned by craving, grasping (*upādāna*) arises. In some places craving itself plays the role of grasping. I would like to cite an example from *Kutuhalasālā Sutta* of the *Saṁyutta Niyāka*, which has been subjected to much criticism. To put it in brief, the *Paribbājaka* Vacchagotta visited the Buddha and made a critical comment. He said the six teachers such as Pūranakassapa, Makkhalī Gosāla and Ajithakesakambalī, when their ordinary followers die, reveal their destinations and also when their spiritually developed disciples pass away, reveal their destinations as well. But the Recluse Buddha reveals where ordinary followers are born, but is silent about the next birth of his disciples with the highest spiritual attainment. The Buddha only utters the phrase:

"*Acchecchi taṇhaṁ vāvattayī saṁyojanaṁ, sammā mānābhisamayā anta– makāsi dukkhassa*."

Even the Buddhists of today do not know what Vacchagotta knew about the Buddha. This statement is about the emancipated person.

"*Acchecchi taṇhaṁ*" – cut off craving.

"*Vāvattayī saṁyojanaṁ*" – reversed the hooks of bonds.

"*Sammā mānābhisamayā antamakāsi dukkhassa*" – comprehending pride correctly, expelled suffering. That is what the Buddha says about the emancipated person after death. Vacchagotta puzzled by this explanation, confesses his doubt, his confusion. The Buddha says he well understands Vacchagotta's confusion and explains his position as follows.

"*Saupādānassa khvāham vaccha uppattiṁ paññapemi no anupādānassa*."

I disclose the birth of him who grasps, not of him who is detached. The Buddha then gives a simile.

"Vaccha, just as a fire,

"*saupādāno jalati.*"

Here the fire is a *saupādāno* fire, which needs an explanation. *Upādāna* is used in Pāli to mean fuel. A fire burns only when it grasps some sort of fuel, such as wood. The Buddha here explains that a fire burns "*saupādāno*" only by grasping a fuel,

"*no anupādānassa*" not without a fuel.

That is the simile of the fire. This simile prompts Vacchagotta to pose another question.

"Friend Gotama, if a flame (*acci*) is carried far by the wind, what would you say is the fuel – *upādāna*?"

You can imagine a forest fire, where the wind could carry a flame to a tree far away. That is the simile here. The Buddha replies that the wind is the fuel. We refer to this as

"caught by the wind."

The flame was definitely 'caught by the wind' and carried afar. This reply instigates Vacchagotta to ask an unusual question.

"Friend Gotama, if a being lays down this body and enters a certain other body, what then would you point out as the fuel?"

This *sutta* words it as "*aññataraṁ kāyaṁ anuppatto hoti.*"

'*Aññataraṁ*' here means 'a certain'.

"A being reaching (entering) a certain other body, lays down this body" means he gives up this body and reaches another. The Buddha specifically states that craving is the fuel in that situation. This shows how forceful the functioning of craving is. But unfortunately, Dear listeners, due to misinterpretation of this simile and this paragraph, the modern readers understand this as '*antarābhava*' – a period of existence between death and next birth.

We have often explained in our books that the theory of interim birth is unacceptable. How did this misconception come about? One reason is the misinterpretation of the simile. Here Vacchagotta questions, not regarding the gap between two existences, but regarding the passage from one existence to the next. There is also a very intricate language problem visible here. In the process of the Buddha word passing from one generation to the next generation, confusion regarding phrases and words occurred. Sometimes the version in one written copy differed from another. Those who profess the theory of *antarābhava* read '*anuppatto*' which means 'reached' as '*anuppanno*' which means 'not born'. *Anuppatto* means the opposite of *anuppanno*. These theorizers explain their position thus.

A being lays down the body. Did he enter the next birth? No, not yet. '*anuppanno*' 'not born'. What is the grasping during this gap? That is their interpretation. But I have emphatically pointed out the special word '*aññataraṁ*' that occurs here. It means 'a certain'. We use this adjective always with something existing, not with something non-existant. If we select something really existing and use the word *aññaṁ* before it, it is correct.

This is a very subtle point. But why go so far? It's clear that Vaccha questions how one birth leads to another. These theorizers, imagining that there is a time gap between the two, have in the recent past continuously argued that an interim birth exists. They have not understood the *suttas* correctly.

One thing is clear however. The Buddha confirms that craving itself is the grasping at the moment of death. It can be proved with several examples. A synonym for craving is '*bhavanetti*'. *Netti* is a projection, a point that juts out. *Bhavanetti* – 'bent' is another term used. During a rainy season like this, somebody levels a strip of high ground leaving a projection at the top. With a shower of rain that projection would collapse. Similarly, the projection in continuous becoming is craving. Why so? Because there is a shortcoming, a possibility to collapse. '*ūno loko atitto taṇhādāso*'.

In this world there is always a flaw, a shortcoming to be seen. '*atitto*' no contentment. *Taṇhādāso* – a slave to craving. *ūno loko atitto taṇhādāso* is a statement in the *Raṭṭhapāla Sutta*. The worldlings always find shortcomings. Even a millionaire would complain he is short of something or the other. '*Atitto*' means never gratified. *Taṇhādāso* means a slave to craving. In this sense craving is called *bhavanetti* because craving alone is sufficient to create continuous existence. Due to the presence of that projection '*netti*', one is bound to fall into existence somewhere. That itself explains why the Buddha referred to craving as grasping. This statement contains not one or two but several important facts.

Next let us talk about the cessation of craving. The term used to describe *Nibbāna* on certain occasions is '*taṇhakkhaya*'

"*taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho Nibbānaṁ*."

The very ceasing of *taṇhā* is treated as *Nibbāna*. It's the very ceasing of *taṇhā*, craving. Many educated people are confused by this. They argue if craving means 'wishing for' something, wishing for *Nibbāna* is also craving.

There is a *Sutta* that offers a solution to this problem.

When Venerable Ananda was residing at Ghositārāma in Kosambi, a certain Bhikkhunī sent a man to say that she was seriously ill and wished to meet him. Venerable Ananda accepted the invitation. As he was approaching the nunnery, she lay down on her bed fully covered, with a hidden intention. Venerable Ananda, seeing through this lowly behavior, delivered an effective discourse to suit the occasion. Thanks to the nun's unseemly plan, we are rewarded with a valuable discourse.

Let us first listen to four statements which conveys the essence of the discourse.

Āhārasambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo āhāraṁ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo.

taṇhāsambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo taṇhaṁ nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā.

mānasambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo mānaṁ nissāya māno pahātabbo.

methūnasambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo

methūneca setughāto vutto bhagavatā.

Then follows an analysis of each statement by Venerable

Ananda. First let us understand their meanings.

"*Āhāra sambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāy?"*

Sister, this body has arisen based on food,

"*Āhāraṁ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo*."

Food has to be eliminated through food.

Taṇhā sambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo."

This body has arisen based on craving.

"*Taṇhaṁ nissāya taṇhaṁ pahātabbo*."

Craving has to be eliminated through craving. This sounds rather contradictory. Then he says

"*Māna sambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo*."

Sister, this body arises based on conceit. But conceit has to be eliminated through conceit. The final statement seems rather queer.

"*Methuna sambhūto bhagini ayaṁ kāyo*."

Sister, this body arises through sexual intercourse. Here the phrase '*methunaṁ nissāya*' does not occur. It says '*methuneva setughāto'*. That bridge has to be pulled down. All relations have to be severed. That is the approach suggested with reference to sex.

Now Venerable Ananda goes into detail taking one statement at a time.

"*Āhārasambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo*."

That can be understood easily. Food is essential. One cannot go into total starvation like the Nigaṇṭhas. A monk partakes of food contemplating as follows; "*Neva davāya, na madāya, na maṇdanāya"* etc. It is known as '*ñāṇa saṁvara'*, restraint through wisdom. One partakes of food, contemplating on food. It turns out to be meditation. We have time and again reminded you that eating is not a game, not a source of entertainment. It's merely for maintenance of the body so that higher life could be fulfilled. Such a monk, says Venerable Ananda, will eliminate food eventually.

Next is '*taṇhā sambhūto*' which is rather difficult to grasp. Venerable Ananda explains it as follows. A certain monk comes to know that a certain bhikkhu attained Arahanthood, through destruction of influxes. This monk thinks "When will I be able to become an Arahant like that monk?"

A wish, a yearning arises in him. We admit that it is craving. But inspired by that wish, that yearning, he strives hard and becomes an Arahant.

Mānasambhūto is also somewhat similar. A certain monk comes to hear that a particular bhikkhu known to him had become an Arahant. The monk's thoughts are given in a peculiar phrase.

"*Kimañga pana aham*?"

Why can't I? It shows conceit. Perhaps this Arahant monk was uneducated or belonged to a low caste.

"If he can, why can't I achieve it?" is an expression of conceit. But this conceit might pave the way to Arahanthood.

The fourth statement was handled very briefly without explanation. Venerable Ananda only said "*Methuneca setu ghāto vutto bhagavatā*."

What he said about *methuna* is not similar to what he said about the earlier three. He advocated the breaking off of all connections. Thoroughly embarrassed, the nun, jumped off the bed, fell at the feet of Venerable Ananda and apologized for her disgraceful suggestion due to her foolishness and unwholesome thoughts. Through her foolishness and evil thoughts, we were rewarded with a useful *sutta*. Although we look at it positively, certain Buddhist sects have taken undue advantage of it by misinterpreting the statement. The *Tantrayāna* sect took it as "*Methunaṁ nissāya methunaṁ pajahati*".

Methuna is abandoned through *methuna*. These are indecent trends not worth discussing.

I am reminded of another incident centered round Venerable Ananda, again at Ghositārāma in Kosambi, which sheds light on the same topic. One day a Brahmin named Uṇṇābha enquires of the Venerable Ananda "For what purpose do you practice celibacy (higher life) under the Ascetic Gotama?"

Being a non-Buddhist, he questioned out of curiosity. Venerable

Ananda's reply was "*chanda pahānattha?"*

We practice the disciplines of higher life in order to dispel desire (*chanda*). The second question was,

"Is there a path of discipline laid down to dispel desire?"

The reply was purposely given with the intention of arousing more critical inquiry.

"Yes. The path is the four bases of success – *iddhipādas*, desire, resolution, will and investigation."

Most probably you have heard of them. *Chanda* is described as

"*chanda samādhi padhāna saṅkhāra samannāgataṁ iddhipādaṁ bhāveti*."

Basing his effort on the contemplation of desire, a monk develops *iddhipāda*. It implies that desire can be eliminated by developing *iddhipāda*. It is a contradictory statement inviting criticism. Naturally, the Brahmin retorted,

"*chandeneva chandaṁ pajahissatīti netaṁ ṭhānaṁ vijjati*."

'Desire is dispelled by desire itself' is an impossibility. Venerable Ananda gives a simple simile to clarify the situation.

"Brahmin, do you admit that you had a desire to visit the monastery, but it vanished on arrival here?"

"Yes friend."

Do you admit you had some resolution to visit the monastery but it vanished on arrival here?"

"Yes friend."

Do you admit you had the will to visit the monastery but it vanished on arrival?"

"Yes friend."

“Do you admit you had a sense of investigation when arriving at the monastery but it vanished on arrival?”

“Yes friend.”

Similarly, Brahmin, a monk following the path of discipline with the support of the four *iddhipādas*, attains total destruction of desire, which is his goal. When the aspiration of a worldling is accomplished, more aspirations crop up. Goals in the life of a worldling are all created by craving. They help to multiply craving. But here, what is the goal? *Nibbāna* which is a synonym for the elimination of craving (*taṇhakkhayo*). The effort directed towards the destruction of craving, ends at achieving the goal. We have on earlier occasions given you various similes to clarify this point. Then the critics cannot say that the desire to attain *Nibbāna* is also desire. We have to face facts. Here we see the Middle Path in action. We have explained it in diverse ways such as the simile of crossing a current. The fundamental characteristics of the Middle Path are pragmatism and relativity.

Even what is harmful is not totally discarded but utilized to achieve the goal. To give an example, the Niganṭhas gave up food altogether and even untied the knot of their robe. They walked about naked. The Buddha, with the experience he went through, always avoided the extremes. He introduced contemplation, through which the Middle Path was made a reality. Contemplation became an essential feature in it. *Saṁsāra* or continuous existence is such that, crossing the current of *saṁsāra* calls for extreme caution. That is exactly why the Buddha resorted to the middle path.

“*Taṇhaṁ nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā*” is perfectly applicable in this context. *Taṇhā* craving is abandoned by means of craving. The difference lies there. With regard to worldly goals, when one is achieved, when one is realized, another crops up. But *Nibbāna* terminates everything.

What is *Nibbāna*? It is not something like Siyadoris’s *Nibbāna –Nibbāna* of Simple Simon. ‘*Taṇhakkhayo*’ means the destruction of craving. In the discourse on the Four Noble Truths, the arising of suffering is illustrated by ‘*taṇhā ponobhavikā*’. Cessation of suffering was illustrated by “*tassāyeva taṇhāya asesa virāga nirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo*.”

It speaks of nothing but the destruction of craving.

At the same time, remember the question asked by Vacchagotta Paribbājaka. In talking of the birth of the emancipated person, the Buddha used the most appropriate term ‘*Acchecchi taṇhāṁ*.’ He cut off craving. ‘*Vāvattayī saṁyojanaṁ*.’ Reversed the hooks of fetters (*saṁyojanas*). These fetters are fixed one to the other like the railway compartments connected to one another by hooks. Reverse the hooks and they are disconnected. Try to understand the fetters as similar. Hooks or bonds of rebirth are turned backwards. Another phrase that adds depth to this idea is ‘*sammā mānābhisamayā*’. It gives the reason for endless births. The final target is the destruction of *māna*, conceit. It is the final attack on Māra’s *asmimāna* or conceit of self.

In other words the pride of self as "I am" is the subtle attachment to continuous becoming. Those who have read the Dhamma will know, that after the attainment of *Anāgāmi* (Nonreturner) one is born in the Brahma world, because the conceit of self still remains. Concealed within the fivefold fetters such as passion for worlds of form, passion for formless worlds, conceit, agitation and ignorance, there is self-pride in a very subtle form. That too has to be eliminated. I have been trying to emphasize the significance of craving, which is treated as the mother.

There seems to be some confusion regarding the connection between the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* and craving. That's why some people, like the Hindus our Pāli commentators, keep guessing what the root cause of ignorance is. It is an unnecessary attempt. Let us understand it this way. The groping that takes place in the darkness of ignorance is called *kāya saṁkhara*, *vacī saṁkhara* and *mano saṁkhara*, that is the preparation of the body, speech and the mind. In this process of preparation, there arises *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa*, (consciousness and name-andform). These are the two forces we referred to as the vortex. The worldlings unable to understand their inter-dependent nature take a firm stand, mistakenly seeing something to grasp in the form of subject-object. This is what activates in *upādāna* or grasping. To facilitate better understanding of this position, let me recall the simile of the mirage which I have often referred to. Imagine a row of posts fixed far apart on a flat land. The deer imagining there is water, runs upto the first post, then upto the second and the third, and so on. This is the deception which we call *taṇhā ponobhavikā* or craving that leads to continuous existence. Craving is the force that pushes beings forward. All this should make you realize the depth of the Buddha's Dhamma. It is an amazingly rewarding dhamma, if you have the correct vision of the goal. Many people understand *Nibbāna* to be another birth. When explaining the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, we have emphasized that the speciality about the Dhamma is that one has to terminate the entire mass of suffering as the final goal. The attachment to continuous birth and the very notion of becoming has to be eliminated, or else it will persist even after the attainment of a Non-returner (*Anāgāmī*). Such is the subtlety of the dhamma.

Now Dear Listeners, I hope you will support your meditation with what I have explained, particularly in seeing the negative aspect of craving as the Buddha has taught us. If you are aware of the conditions under which craving arises and ceases, you can definitely reach the spiritual attainment described as "*taṇhakkhayo virāgo, nirodho Nibbānaṁ*."

I want you to put this discourse into practical use in improving your meditation and religious practices, so that you could attain the different stages of the path and the peace of *Nibbāna* in this very life. Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭha*, may they rejoice in this discourse and may they attain the peace of *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 18
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 200)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Upādāna paccayā bhavo – bhūto dukkhaṁnigacchati

jātassa maraṇaṁ hoti – eso dukkhassa sambhavo

tasmā upādānakkhayā – sammadaññāya paṇḍito

jātikkhayaṁ abhiññāya – nāgacchanti punabbhavaṁ

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

Religious teachers from ancient times have introduced various theories and views in an attempt to reveal the secret of continued existence. Some even attempted to hand over the responsibility of existence to gods and Brahma. The Buddha, disproving all these theories and views disclosed that grasping (*upādāna*) is the root cause of existence as clearly explained in the Law of Dependent Arising, (*Paṭicca Samuppāda Dhamma*). We have chosen as the topic of this 18 discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, two verses that shed light on our subject. These two verses are also from the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*, of the *Sutta Nipāta* which has already provided us with suitable topics for several discourses on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. I have explained its style of presentation on earlier occasions. It is a *sutta* where the Buddha makes a very impressive analysis of the duality of arising and ceasing, surveying it from different angles. This is how the Buddha introduces the two aspects – arising and ceasing – with regard to grasping – *upādāna*, which is a link in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

"Monks, if someone enquires whether there could be another mode of contemplating dualities, you must reply in the affirmative. How is it possible? Whatever pain arises, all that has grasping as condition. This is one mode of contemplation. With the total detachment and cessation of grasping, pain ceases to be. This is the second mode of contemplation. A monk who practices the dual technique of contemplation striving hard to burn out the defilements (*kilesa*) with vigilance, can expect one of these two rewards, either Arahanthood in this very life or the attainment of Non-returnership in case a trace of grasping remains as residue."

The above two verses were uttered to clarify that point.

Upādāna paccayā bhavo – Continued existence called *bhava*, depends on grasping called

upādāna bhūto dukkhaṁnigacchati – The born, experiences suffering

jātassa maraṇaṁ hoti – Death comes to the born

eso dukkhassa sambhavo – This is the origin of suffering

tasmā upādānakkhayā – Therefore, through the destruction of grasping

sammadaññāya paṇḍito – The well informed wise men

jātikkhayaṁ abhiññāya – realizing the extinction of birth

nāgacchanti punabbhavaṁ – will not seek birth again.

That is the meaning of the two verses. Let us try to first understand the term *upādāna*. Many of you know the position of '*upādāna*' in the Law of Dependent Arising.

"*Taṇhā paccayā upādānaṁ, upādāna paccayā bhavo*".

We have mentioned on earlier occasions that when making an analytical study of any one of the links of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the two links on either side have to be taken into account. Then conditioned by craving is grasping, conditioned by grasping is continuous birth. In the analysis of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Buddha explains the significance of grasping through the question-answer method.

'*Katamañca bhikkhave upādānaṁ*?', What is grasping? '*Kāmupādānaṁ*', grasping of sense pleasure, '*diṭṭhupādānaṁ*', grasping of views, '*sīlabbatupādānaṁ*', grasping rules of morality and views, '*attavādupādānaṁ*', grasping of the notion of self.

This term *upādāna* also deserves some thought. The prefix '*upa*' gives the general idea of closeness, 'coming near', sometimes explained as '*upeti upādiyati*', 'reach close and grip'. In fact the implication here is to continue to grip firmly. Gripping not with the hands but with the mind. Now, when discussing *upādāna*, you are automatically reminded of the often mentioned topic *pañca upādānakkhandha*, the five heaps of grasping – *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* (physical form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness). These are the five heaps we reach and grip.

'*Etaṁ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā*'

'This is mine, This am I, This is myself'.

The *Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* refers to a certain moonlit night when the Buddha allowed the monks to ask him questions. A monk on this occasion asked two questions about *upādāna* and *upādānakkhandha*. What is the root cause of the five aggregates of grasping? *kiṁ mūlakā*? The Buddha replied "*Ime kho bhikkhu pañcupādānakkhandā chandamūlakā*".

Chanda or desire is the root of the five aggregates of grasping. The term *chanda* embodies the idea of *taṇhā*. *Chanda* is wish. Now comes his second question, which seems complicating at a glance.

"Venerable Sir, is *upādāna* the same as *pañca upādānakkhandhā* or are they different?"

The reply is "Monk, grasping and the five aggregates of grasping are not identical. Nor are they altogether different from each other. If there is any desire towards the five aggregates of grasping, that is called grasping."

Dear listeners, you must remember that the lustful desire towards the aggregates is the quality of grasping within it.

Now let us find out what *bhava* means in '*Upādāna paccayā bhavo*'. The general meaning is existence. But on hearing the word, many think of different worlds such as the world of sensuality, the world of form and the formless world. The connection between becoming (*bhava*) and the mind is not clear to many. That perhaps is the reason why Venerable Ānanda once asked the Buddha,"*Bhavo bhavo ti bhante vuccati. Kittāvatā nukho bhante bhavo hoti*?"

"Venerable Sir 'Existence existence' they say. To what extent can it be called existence?"

Then the Buddha replied as follows " Ānanda, in the absence of a *kamma* (action) that could carry its results into a sensual sphere or a sensual world (*kāma dhātu*), is sensual existence possible?"

Here *kāma dhātu* refers to a world of sensuality. Venerable Ānanda replies "No Venerable Sir".

Then the Buddha explains his position using some unusual terms "*kammaṁ khettaṁ*, *viññāṇaṁ bījaṁ*, *taṇhā sineho*".

Kamma is the field, consciousness is the seed, craving is the moisture.

The consciousness of beings who are overwhelmed by ignorance and tied down by craving, tends to seek birth in a sensual world. Now it's clear that birth in a sensual world takes place in a field called *kamma* with *viññāṇa* as the seed when the moisture of craving is available. Venerable Ānanda's second question was somewhat similar to the first, though based on a world of form. The Buddha explains 'Ānanda, in the absence of a *kamma* that could carry its results to a world of form (*rūpa dhātu*), is existence of form possible?' 'No Venerable Sir'. Here the explanation is similar to that of the earlier question. For beings overwhelmed by ignorance, and tied down by craving who seek birth in a world of form, *kamma* provides a field with *viññāṇa* as the seed and craving as the moisture. Apply this same explanation regarding birth in a formless world (*arūpa dhātu*). Existence in a formless world is possible only if a *kamma* conducive to such a birth is present. In short, in the analysis of the Law of Dependent Arising, the Buddha refers to existence as threefold, existence in the world of sensuality, (*kāma bhava*) in the world of form (*rūpa bhava*) and in the formless world (*arūpa bhava*).

Now we have discussed "*Bhava*".

What do you think is *bhūta* in "*Bhūto dukkhaṁ nigacchati*?"

A *bhūto* is one who has come into existence.

"*Upādāna paccayā bhavo – bhūto dukkhaṁnigacchati*", One who falls into continuous existence, one who enters continuous existence – he is referred to as *bhūta* – he experiences pain, suffering. How? Herein you must remember that contained within *bhava*, both birth and decay-death are found. These two inherent features birth and decay-death (*jāti, jarā-maraṇa*) are thereby proved.

"*bhūto dukkhaṁnigacchati*" implies that a person who comes into existence, has birth and decay-death, which are an inseparable pair yoked together. Every religious teacher has attempted to remove decay and death from birth, to create an external birth. The Buddha has confirmed the impossibility of such a position in the *Salla Sutta*.

"*Nahi so upakkamo atthi yena jātā na mīyare, jarampi patvā maraṇaṁ evaṁ dhammāhi pāṇino*"

There is no devise whatsoever by which a born person can avoid death. Death is certain even after decay. This makes it clear that *upādāna* (grasping) has existence within it. Grasping is suggestive of existence. If grasping is suggestive of existence, the idea of birth, decay and death are also obvious. That is why the above verse winds up with '*Eso dukkhassa sambhavo*'. That itself is the arising of suffering. That is the positive aspect. The other verse suggests '*Tasmā*' Therefore, with the total destruction of grasping, '*sammadaññāya paṇḍitā*' the wise with right understanding '*jātikkhayaṁ abhiññāya*'. This is an unusual phrase, which we will explain now. '*jātikkhayaṁ abhiññāya*' means seeing the destruction of birth, the non-existence of birth, with wisdom par excellence, *nāgacchanti punabbhavaṁ* – do not seek rebirth again.

Due to this series of discourses on the Law of Dependent Arsing, we were compelled to talk of a direct order procedure and a reverse order procedure. Now you are familiar with it by reading and listening to it often. This is how the direct order begins:

Avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṁ, viññāṇa paccayā nāma rūpaṁ. It ends with "*Jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandassa samudayo hoti*".

Although the entire process has not been mentioned here, we can see that conditioned by birth, there arise decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering and dejection. In this manner the entire mass of suffering arises. That is the Law of Dependent Arising, in direct order, which reveals that dependent on birth, there arises the entire mass of suffering, decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair.

How do we look at this in the reverse order?

'*Avijjāyatveva asesa virāga nirodhā*'. With the total destruction, detachment and cessation of ignorance, '*saṅkhāra nirodho*' preparations cease. '*saṅkhāra nirodhā viññāṇa nirodho'*, with the cessation of preparations consciousness ceases. '*viññāṇa nirodhā nāmarūpa nirodho'*, with the cessation of consciousness, nameand-form cease. It goes on till the last link. '*Jāti nirodhā, jarāmaraṇa soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyāsā nirujjhanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandassa nirodho hoti*.' This is the reverse order.

"With the cessation of birth, it is obvious that decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering and dejection also cease. In this manner, the entire mass of suffering comes to an end."

But Dear Listeners, we have come across an unusual discourse, delivered by the Buddha himself, which suggests the possibility of attaining *Nibbāna*, through the direct order alone. It is the *Upanisa Sutta* of the *Abhisamaya Saṁyutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. Most educated westerners, who dislike the negative quality in the discourses on causality, seem to prefer this *Upanisa Sutta*, which follows the direct order adding up link by link and finally ending up in *Nibbāna*. The simile used here is the same as what is found in any other discourse on Dependent Arising. This is how it goes "Just as, Monks, a shower of rain with piercing rain drops pours down on a summit of a hill and the water takes a downward course along the slopes filling rugged crevices, and small ditches, and when they overflow, the small holes and when they overflow, the large holes and when they overflow, the rivulets and large rivers and finally fills the great ocean, in the same way monks,...?"

Supported by this illustrative simile, the Buddha proceeds to explain the links of the Law of Dependent Arising. Please try to remember the links even though not familiar with the meanings.

"*Evameva kho bhikkhave, avijjūpanisā saṅkhārā. saṅkhārūpanisaṁ viññāṇaṁ, viññāṇūpanisaṁ nāmarūpaṁ, nāmarūpūpanisaṁ saḷāyatanaṁ, saḷāyatanūpaniso phasso, phassūpanisā vedanā, vedanūpanisā taṇhā, taṇhūpanisaṁ upādānaṁ, upādānūpaniso bhavo, bhavūpanisā jāti, jātūpanisaṁ dukkhaṁ.....*"

Now follows, from there onwards, a process that even you may prefer.

"*Dukkhūpanisā saddhā, saddhūpanisaṁ pāmujjaṁ, pāmujjūpanisā pīti, pītūpanisā passaddhi, passaddhūpanisaṁ sukhaṁ, sukhūpaniso samādhi, samādhūpanisaṁ yathābhūtañāṇadassanaṁ, yathābhūtañāṇadassanūpanisā nibbidā, nibbidūpaniso virago, virāgūpanisā vimutti, vimuttupanisaṁ khaye ñāṇaṁ*."

This account is very unusual, because it follows only the direct order. The reverse order is inapplicable here. The turning point between the two processes is *Dukkha*, suffering. At this juncture, I wish to critically comment on the Sinhala translation of the *Tipitaka*, where the Pāli word *upanisā* has been convieniently replaced by *paccaya*, thereby denying Sinhala readers the full significance of this special word *upanisā*.

The *Upanisā Sutta*, when translated, would appear as follows. Even without a knowledge of Pāli, one could notice its special quality. The earlier *sutta* was worded as followed,

"Dependent on ignorance arises preparations, Dependent on preparations arise consciousness."

But this *sutta*, translated grammatically would appear as follows.

The second part follows the same pattern.

In association with suffering (arises) confidence (*saddhā*)

In association with confidence (arises) delight (*pamoda)*

In association with delight (arises) joy (*pīti*)

In association with joy (arises) serenity (*passaddhi*)

In association with serenity (arises) ease (*sukha*)

In association with ease (arises) concentration (*samādhi*)

In association with concentration (arises) knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūta ñāṇadassana*)

In association with knowledge of things as they are (arises) disenchantment (*nibbidā*)

In association with disenchantment (arises) detachment (*virāgo*)

In association with detachment (arises) emancipation (*vimutti*)

In association with emancipation (arises) wisdom of extinction (*khaye ñāṇa*)

I hope my listeners have got at least a general idea of the grammatical problem here. The translation appears different because what is conveyed here is peculiar. Let me try to give you a general idea. You know that the term *paccayā* in this twelve links of the Law of Dependent Arising is repeated without any change. *Avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṁ* etc. But the term *upanisa* is declined with the subject it qualifies keeping to case, gender and number. Those of you who know grammar, will agree that an adjective will take the case, gender and number of the noun it qualifies.

"*Avijjūpanisā saṅkhār?"*

Therefore, will have to be translated as 'Preparations exist in association with ignorance'. *Avijjā* is a feminine gender noun in Pāli.

"*Saṅkhārūpanisaṁ viññāṇaṁ*" has to be translated as 'consciousness exist in association with preparations'. *Saṅkhārā* is in the plural in Pāli.

'*Vedanūpanisā taṇhā*' has been translated in the feminine gender in grammatical Sinhala, although an identical version is not possible in English. I wish to draw your attention to an unknown aspect of the term '*upanisa*', though it is used often. You have heard of '*Upanissaya sampatti*'. *Upanisa* means 'in close association with'. Why the Buddha used the term *upanisa* instead of *paccayā* is a problem.

In order to clarify that point, I wish to quote as a brief commentary, the *Nibbedhikapariyāya Sutta* in the sixth *Nipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. This *sutta* holds within it several valuable facts about the Dhamma. The Buddha addresses the monks in one place as follows "*Katamo ca bhikkhave dukkhassa vipāko*?", 'What is the consequence of suffering?'. A person oppressed by suffering, overwhelmed by suffering will grieve as a consequence, will become feeble, lament and beat his chest and finally '*sammohaṁ āpajjati*' will fall into total delusion. There is another aspect. Instead of crying and lamenting overwhelmed by grief some may react in a different way.

"Bahiddhā pariyeṭṭi āpajjati, ko ekapadaṁ dvipadaṁ jānāti imassa dukkhassa nirodhāyāti."

He directs the searchlight outwards. 'Who knows a line or two to help me cease this suffering?' Here the Buddha summarises this situation into an amazing theory "*sammoha vepakkaṁ vāhaṁ bhikkhave dukkhaṁ vadāmi pariyeṭṭhi vepakkaṁ vā*"

" Monks, I declare two reactions to suffering, either total delusion (*sammoha*) or search

(*pariyeṭṭhi*)."

You may have now tuned in to the drama of Paṭācārā or Kisā Gotamī. Both reactions are involved here. Imagine the plight of Paṭācārā who lost her husband, her two sons and her parents, and was driven into a state of lunacy. She was humiliated and beaten on the roads. An unknown noble friend directed her to the world's greatest and noblest friend. The outcome was that she became an Arahant Therī.

Kisā Gotamī's drama was not different either. A mad woman who walked the roads, seeking for medicine for her dead child on her shoulder. She was ridiculed though not beaten up. An unknown noble friend directed her to the Buddha. The mad walk finally ended up in Arahantship. It's clear now that 'delusion and search' are both present here. Then why is the word '*vā*' (*vepakkaṁ vāhaṁ…*) used here. It gives an alternative. *Paccaya* has a specific idea.

"*Jāti paccayā bhikkhave jarāmaraṇaṁ*",

"*Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ, anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ ṭhitā va sā dhātu."*

Those are examples. 'Decay and death have birth as the only condition. Whether Buddhas are born or not, this law persists unchanged. But the Buddha declared that suffering has two consequences or results. Either one would fall into delusion or one would fall into a search outside.

Dear listeners, we have often fallen into the first of these two tracks, the reason being the absence of a noble friend. The search for a person who knows 'one or two lines' to direct us will be futile, until and unless a Buddha appears. That has to be well understood. The stories of Paṭācārā and Kisā Gotamī prove that the ordinary worldling's reaction to suffering is delusion. Lying hidden underneath it one may discover an *upanissaya sampatti* a kammic force which is visible to a Buddha though hidden from us.

In this context '*upanisā*' conveys the idea of 'relying on' or 'in association with'. Two possible results are seen in association with the experience of suffering. One is delusion. The other is search. The positive results of the search have already been mentioned. It is an upward path of purification where suffering (*dukkha*) leads to confidence (*saddhā*). Confidence leads to delight (*pāmojja*). Delight leads to joy (*pīti*). Joy leads to serenity (*passaddhi*). Serenity leads to ease (*sukha*). Ease leads to concentration (*samādhi*). Concentration leads to knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūtañāṇa dassana*). It leads to disenchantment (*nibbidā*).

Disenchantment leads to detachment (*virāgo*). Detachment leads to emancipation (*vimutti*). Emancipation gives rise to the wisdom of extinction (*khaye ñāṇa*) or the wisdom to understand everything. Most educated westerners prefer this explanation which leads you on a positive track.

A certain erudite person of modern times named this discourse as the circular Law of Dependent Arising. It is called circular because it follows the direct order to the end instead of using the direct order and the reverse order. Even though many are familiar with the *Upanisa Sutta*, the subtle difference between '*paccaya*' and '*upanisā*' is hardly recognized, as a result of which even translations have treated both words as identical. You must understand that '*upanisā*' has an alternative implication. That is why this *sutta* says. 'In association with ignorance…' instead of 'Dependent on ignorance…', which suggests a definite result based on conditionality.

Assuming that the *Upanisa Sutta* clarifies the difference clearly, let us understand the final result of this path. What was the final attainment of those Arahant Bhikkhunis? The cessation of birth (*Jātikkhaya*). If grasping gives rise to existence, and existence gives rise to birth and decay-death, we have to eliminate birth. There is no other alternative but the elimination of birth. That is called '*Jātikkhaya*'. A great many humans who promote and love existence, dislike extinction (*Nibbāna*) for that reason. It becomes the *Nibbāna* of 'Siyadoris' (Simple Simon). You cannot bargain for birth totally free of decay-death. Elimination of birth is the only solution to the misery that follows.

How could birth be eliminated? By eliminating grasping.

It is the stage which is totally free of craving, desire and lust. You can understand the significance of this *sutta*, from whichever aspect you scrutinize it. Then let us look at it from another angle. We just now said that one comes to know through highest wisdom, the total eradication of birth (*jātikkhaya*). How is that possible? How can one know that

birth has been totally wiped out? The Buddha has been able to, for some reason, declare that there will be no more rebirth for him.

"*Natthidāni punabbhavo*".

Similarly Arahants are referred to as 'eliminated birth' '*khīnā jāti vusitaṁ brahmacariyaṁ*'. The problem is, how are we to know whether birth has been eliminated? The solution to this problem will also clarify the *suttas* that deal with the profundity of *Nibbāna*. The *Ajāta Sutta* in the *Itivuttaka* provides an ideal solution to our problem. First make yourselves familiar with it in Pāli:

"*Atthi bhikkhave ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṁkhataṁ – no ce taṁ bhikkhave abhavissa ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṁkhataṁ nayidha jātassa bhūtassa katassa saṁkhatassa nissaraṇaṁ paññāyetha.*"

This declaration invites for deep contemplation. The Buddha emphasizes the existence of something, which the worldlings never ever thought of. You will understand it as we translate the statement.

"*Atthi bhikkhave ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṁkhataṁ*",

'Monks, there exists a state unborn, unsprung, undone, unprepared.'

"*no ce taṁ bhikkhave abhavissa ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṁkhataṁ*",

'if such an unborn, unsprung, undone, unprepared state was non-existent,

"*nayidha jātassa bhūtassa katassa saṁkhatassa nissaraṇaṁ paññāyetha*",

'it would be impossible to declare the security of a state unborn, unsprung, undone, unprepared, attainable in this birth itself.

Then the Buddha declares the same statement in the positive order.

"*Yasmā ca kho bhikkhave atthi ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṁkhataṁ, tasmā jātassa bhūtassa katassa saṁkhatassa nissaraṇaṁ paññāyatī ti.*"

'Monks, since there exists an unborn, unsprung, undone, unprepared state, there is a release from the born, sprung, made, prepared state.'

Now we must understand why the Buddha repeated it, emphasizing the negative and the positive points of view. The ordinary worldling is unable to imagine the existence of such a state. That is why we highlighted it in our series of discourses on *Nibbāna*. The worldling is unable to comprehend it due to his craving for existence. What is expressed here is the cessation of birth through the cessation of continuous existence which the Arahants experience with the attainment of *Phala Samāpatti*. As they transcend the world, they experience that continuous existence is dependent on the six aggregates, and their cessation leads to the cessation of continuous existence. The final mental state of the Buddha and the Arahants is the fruition of this realization.

Based on this realization, *Nibbāna* is called '*tāṇaṁ*, *lenaṁ*, *dīpaṁ*, *saraṇaṁ*, *parāyaṇaṁ*' a protection, a cave, an island, a refuge, a support. Whenever the Buddha and the Arahants are in a relaxed state of mind they dwell on the elimination of existence (*bhavanirodha*) described as '*Bhava nirodho Nibbānaṁ*'. If existence is a fire its elimination is the extinction of the fire. The mind firmly established in this state, far removed from the excitement of the world, cannot be disturbed even by thunder. What is the nature of the mind at that time? The truth has been realized. The end of birth has been attained. The continuous existence having been eliminated, birth too is ended. Decay and death are thereby terminated. This truth has been realized. That is the quality of the mind free from continuous existence.

The following verses in the *Itivuttaka* effectively condenses the ideas expressed above.

Jātaṁ bhūtaṁ samuppannaṁ – kataṁ saṇkhatamaddhuvaṁ

jarāmaraṇasaṇghātaṁ – roganiḍḍaṁ pabhaṇguraṁ

āhāranettippabhavaṁ – nālaṁ tadabhinandituṁ

Tassa nissaraṇaṁ santaṁ – atakkāvacaraṁ dhuvaṁ

ajātaṁ asamuppannaṁ – asokaṁ virajaṁ padaṁ

nirodho dukkhadhammānaṁ – saṁkhārūpasamo sukho

Here is its meaning. It gives a realistic description of the world.

Jātṁ bhūtaṁ samuppannaṁ – born, sprung up, dependently arisen.

kataṁ saṇkhatamaddhuvaṁ – made, prepared, short lived.

jarāmaraṇasaṇghātaṁ – bonded by decay and death.

roganiḍḍaṁ pabhaṇguraṁ – a nest for sickness, perishable.

And what is the nest made up of?

āhāranettippabhavaṁ – born of craving for food.

nālaṁ tadabhinandituṁ – not fit to take delight in.

Tassa nissaraṇaṁ santaṁ atakkāvacaraṁ dhuvaṁ – departure from this called *Nibbāna* is peaceful, beyond reasoning and enduring.

ajātaṁ asamuppannaṁ asokaṁ virajaṁ padaṁ – unborn not dependently arisen, free from grief and attachment.

nirodho dukkhadhammānaṁ – ceasing of all factors of sorrow.

saṁkhārūpasamo sukho – stilling of all preparations is bliss.

What is remarkable is that any verbal account about *Nibbāna* begins with the term *saṅkhārasamatho*, stilling of preparations.

For instance, '*Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ sabba saṅkhārāsamatho sabbūpadhi paṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virago nirodho Nibbānaṁ*.' That is clear proof that with the cessation of preparations, all that is associated with it inclusive of existence ceases, because existence is dependent on preparations. I would like to make a comment here. Unfortunately, many have misinterpreted the term *asaṁkhata*. Instead of understanding it as a state free of preparations, it is treated as a 'thing'. The 'unprepared' has become a world. Even *Nibbāna* has been converted into a world. A transformation has taken place within the Dhamma. That is why we have tried to explain to you, the implication of *asaṁkhata*, the unprepared. That realization is called '*anidassana viññāṇa*', a state of consciousness which does not display name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*), which represents the entire world. This mental state too had been misinterpreted as a world. We have attempted to clarify in our discourses on *Nibbāna*, particularly in some of our recent discourses, that *anidassana viññāṇa* is not a world but a realization attainable through the cessation of continuous existence (*bhava*). As further clarification I would like to point out something unforgettable.

On the front cover of the book *Paṭicca Samuppāda* just out from the press, you see two bundles of bambo, one leaning against the other, so dependently that if one is pulled out the other falls. This demonstrates the mutual dependency (*aññamaññapaccayatā*) between consciousness and name-and-form, as explained by Venerable Sāriputta. With reference to this we have brought out as an analytical explanation, a very deep and valuable *sutta* called *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*.

The Buddha's declaration of mutual dependency (*aññamaññapaccayatā*) between consciousness and name-andform based on dependent arising, is condensed in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* as follows.

"*Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā upapajjetha vā. Ettāvatā adhivacanapatho, ettāvatā niruttipatho, ettāvatā paññattipatho, ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ, ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena.*"

This is its translation, 'Ānanda, to this extent does a person's birth or decay or death or departure or rebirth takes place'. Next he deals with another aspect. 'To this extent is a path of attribute (*adhivacana*) a path of etymology (*nirutti*) a path of manifestation (*paññati*) displayed'. Concealed within these three words is the secret of language and logic. Only to this extent is it possible to express a path of attributes, a path of etymology and a path of manifestation. Furthermore the Buddha says '*ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ*' 'To this extent does wisdom reach'. This means that wisdom can reach in between name-and-form and consciousness but not beyond.

Next comes an explanation as to why the simile of the vortex was used. *Ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena*'. 'Ānanda, to this

extent does the vortex whirl, for the continuity of existence, that is as long as name-and-form together with consciousness.' We too have referred to the simile of *vaṭṭa*, the vortex to clarify this point. It is not our own creation but a simile hidden among the *suttas*. The vortex whirls only as long as name-and-form goes with consciousness. One can take birth, go through decay-death, pass away and seek birth again only as long as name-and-form twirls with consciousness. Only to that extent can language and logic hold sway over beings. Only to that extent can wisdom penetrate. It cannot go beyond. Only to that extent does the entire vortex (or whirlpool) of existence (*saṁsāra*) whirl.

The two words referred to above are the most significant, that is name-and-form and consciousness. '*nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena*'. We have attempted to emphasize the significance of this duality by using similes such as Narcissus and that of the dog on the bridge. Inability to understand this mutual dependency *aññamaññpaccayatā* is at the very root of delusion. In popular games such as cricket or draughts you see a clear division into two sides without understanding the mutual dependency of one on the other. This inability to understand it, leads to a process of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) between name-and-form and consciousness that results in the six sense spheres. Here too the presence of duality is significant such as the eye and physical form, ear and sound. We have discussed this on earlier occasions. This process goes through contact, feeling, craving and ends up in suffering.

This is the secret hidden behind the statement 'Ānanda, to that extent does the undercurrent spin, for the continuity of existence, that is as long as name-and-form spins with consciousness'. Whenever one realizes this relationship and break them apart, suffering ends. I am sure you remember how the Bodhisatta Vipassi contemplated on the Law of Dependent Arising in the reverse order "*Kiṁ paccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ*?"

'Dependent on what is decay-death?' 'Birth', '*Jāti*'. In this manner he proceeded until he saw that name-and-form, *nāmarūpa* is dependent on consciousness, *viññāṇa* and consciousness is dependent on name-and-form. He couldn't proceed further because the secret key to the solution lay there. Due to the ignorance of the mutual dependency between these two, the view of self (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) or the view of 'I' arises. Ignorance paves the way for a division into two camps, two teams. An ideal example is the game of chess between two good friends Ajith and Sumith, who challenged each other over a game. What takes place in this world is similar. Narcissus assumed his own shadow to be a goddess. That explains the notion of self, *sakkāya diṭṭi*. Now you can understand this delusion arises between these two, name-and-form and consciousness. It is absolutely essential to realize with wisdom that name-and-form is substanceless. It is a mere shadow. That is why we did an etymological study of these terms. 'Form' in 'name-and-form' is a 'nominal form', it is a form only in name. 'Name' in 'name-and-form' is a formal name. It is an apparent name. Here, name does not refer to the accepted names used in this world, but the five qualities of name called feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*) and attention (*manasikāra*). It is a formal name given to name. Let us understand it as only a fomal name. Form (*rūpa*) here refers to the created notion of form in association with the four great primaries (*mahābhūta*).

That's why we call form 'nominal form'. This game takes place within the illusion of consciousness due to the inability to identify the two. Two camps have been formed in *saṁsāra* as 'self and others', as 'myself and the world'. The root cause lies hidden there. The *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* has been named so because it reveals these underlying facts regarding the primaries.

Now let us discuss how to attain its realization. Instructive verses are found here and there for this purpose. The *Muni Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* is one such example although it has not drawn much attention.

Saṅkhāya vatthūni pamāya bījaṁ

sinehamassa nānuppavecche

sa ve muni jātikhayantadassī

takkaṁ pahāya na upeti saṁkhaṁ

This verse is extremely deep in meaning. It discusses the qualities of a *muni*, an Arahant. This jewel of a verse uttered by the Buddha, extremely deep in meaning, describes a sage (*muni*) an Arahant. *Saṅkhāya vatthūni*, here *vatthūni* means land or a field. Try to recall what helped the *viññāṇa* to establish itself. '*Kammaṁ khettaṁ, viññāṇaṁ bījaṁ, taṇhā sineho*' ' if beings blinded by ignorance, tied by craving seek birth in a world of sensuality or a world of form or a formless world, *kamma* serves as the field, consciousness as the seed and craving as moisture.

This idea is condensed in '*saṅkhāya vatthūni pamāya bījaṁ*', correctly identifies the field and the seed of consciousness. '*sinehamassa nānuppavecche*'. He refrains from watering it. He identified the field correctly and he identified the seed correctly. So he waters it no more. Then what is the result?

'*sa ve muni jātikhayantadassī*'. He indeed is the sage who has seen the cessation of birth.

'*takkaṁ pahāya na upeti saṁkhaṁ*'. The term *takka* reminds us of *atakkāvacara*. '*takkaṁ pahāya*' given up reasoning. '*na upeti saṁkhaṁ*' seeks no recognition.

Here a special comment is necessary to clarify this phrase.

The worldlings do not recognize Arahants. What is the reason? Worldlings recognize people with assets (*upadhi sampatti*) such as the possession of land, houses, designations or vehicles. The Buddha and the Arahants have given up the five assets called the aggregates of grasping (which they had been carrying all the way through *saṁsara*) and as a result they are not reckoned (or taken seriously) by the worldlings.

'*takkaṁ pahāya*' too suggests a deep meaning.

The '*avyākata vatthu*' or the 'undeclared topics' seem to baffle many. We have earlier discussed four points out of the ten undeclared topics. They deal with the position of a *Tathāgata* after death. Not only the religious philosophers of that time but even the educated class today are baffled by the Buddha's silence regarding such popular topics. Educated westerners say that it revealed the Buddha's ignorance. But the true position was, Dear listeners, that the Buddha and the Arahants were beyond all limitations of logic. Language and logic restricted by dilemma and quadrilemma are incapable of penetrating the after-death position of the Buddha and Arahants. The four questions are mitigated by the misconception of a 'personality or a soul' after death.

This is how the Buddha rejects them. 'It cannot be said that a *Tathāgata* is' after death, or is not. Nor can it be said that he is both, 'is' and 'is not' or he is 'neither is' nor 'is not'. Please try to understand this subtle point. It is not possible to say 'yes' or 'no' to these four positions. Neither can you confirm the four positions wholesale or reject them altogether. As such '*saṁkhaṁ na upeti*', 'comes not within reckoning' is the best description of this post-*parinibbāna* position.

References made regarding the deep qualities of the Buddha in certain *suttas* are amazing. They are not empty sayings imposed on him. Here is an impressive one,

"*Rūpasaṅkhā vimutto kho tathāgato gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho seyyatāpi mahāsamuddo*."The *Tathāgata* is beyond reckoning by form. He is free from the qualities of form, having given them up. He carries a form which he has not grasped. For this reason, the world finds it too deep a concept to realize. *Gambhīro*, deep. *Appameyyo*, immeasurable. *Duppariyogāho*, difficult to penetrate. *Seyyathāpi mahāsamuddo*, like unto the great ocean. The reason for comparing it to the ocean is that it is beyond understanding, beyond grasping through logic. We know that logic functions within the limitations of consciousness and nameand-form. A break-through reveals the sphere unattainable through logic. *Atakkāvacaraṁ dhuvaṁ* means beyond reasoning and stable. Logic is unstable but the worldlings dwell within the framework of logic. Since the Buddha has surpassed the worldly characteristics of form he is called '*rūpa saṅkhā vimutto*'. Although it sounds amazing I can't help remarking here that the Arahants are the least recognized – ignored in the world due to the absence of expected qualifications. The world is reluctant to find out what *Nibbāna* is. Because of their craving for continuous existence they lean on logical reasoning. This problem is most serious among the educated westerners. The statement '*rūpa saṅkhā vimutto kho Tathāgato*' explains the reason. He is beyond reckoning by form. '*saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu*' the knowing of the *veda* (wisdom) does not yield to reckonings. Now you can understand the depth of the simile in the verse. '*saṅkhāya vatthūni*', An Arahant understands the true nature of the field, '*pamāya bījaṁ*' he understands the deceptive nature of the seed of consciousness. '*sinehamassa nānuppavecche*' and he prevents the rain of craving supplying moisture, '*sa ve muni jātikhayantadassī*' he is the sage who sees the cessation of birth. This idea is found in several places in the *Sutta Nipāta*.

Here is another statement about the sage in the *Sutta Nipāta*.

"*Yo jātamucchijja na ropaye – jāyantamassa nānuppavecche*."

'*jātaṁ ucchijja*' – uprooting what is born. '*na ropayeyya*' – refrains from planting. '*jāyantamassa nānuppavecche*' – abstains from supplying water to what is growing. Arahants live but do not nourish life. They do not accumulate any *kamma*. This explains the "state of release", described in several *suttas*. To put it in brief the Arahant with correct understanding prevents the seed of consciousness growing in the field of *kamma*, nourished by the moisture of craving, thereby putting an end to existence.

Let us condense this idea further.

"*Upādāna paccayā bhavo – anupādā parinibbānaṁ*", 'existence is dependent on grasping. Detachment brings extinction'. Many get caught up here because *Parinibbāna* reminds them of the *Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*. *Parinibbāna* does not refer to the 'death' of the Buddha or an Arahant. It refers to the moment the Buddha or an Arahant attains fruition of Arahanthood experiencing the cessation of existence, and the cessation of birth. Those who have a confused notion regarding this, have distorted even very clear *suttas*. Let me give you an instance of a clear *sutta*. This is an occasion the Buddha talks of himself.

Tiṇṇo so bhagavā taraṇāya dhammaṁ deseti santo so bhagavā samathāya dhammaṁ deseti danto so bhagavā damathāya dhammaṁ deseti parinibbuto so bhagavā parinibbānāya dhammaṁ desetī

If we attempt translating verbally it will cause confusion. Let us proceed carefully.

'*Tiṇṇo so bhagavā taraṇāya dhammaṁ deseti*',

Having crossed over, the Fortunate One teaches the Dhamma for others to cross over (the ocean of *saṁsāra*)

'*santo so bhagavā samathāya dhammaṁ deseti*',

Having attained peace the Fortunate One teaches the Dhamma for others to attain peace.

'*danto so bhagavā damathāya dhammaṁ deseti*',

Having restrained himself the Fortunate One teaches the Dhamma to restrain others.

The last sentence goes as

'*parinibbuto so bhagavā parinibbānāya dhammaṁ desetī*',

If *parinibbuto* means passing away, how could he teach the Dhamma? '*parinibbuto bhagavā*' means 'free from the world' 'free from everything worldly'.

Then the line reads 'Having released himself from the world, the Fortunate One teaches the Dhamma for the release of others'.

Please remember that *parinibbuto* means the total isolation of the Buddha or the Arahants from the world by entering the mental state of *Arahat phala samāpatti*. In that state they do not even hear the thundering. If one is unable to realize in this very life that one's existence has been totally eliminated, doubt will remain. Doubt is ignorance. That means ignorance has not been totally eliminated.

The most precious word in the Buddha's teaching crops up here. '*Diṭṭheva dhamme*', In this very birth. Many people try to evade this word. In this very birth, one can attain the cessation of existence following the Buddha's teaching. No other religious teacher has been able to show the path to cease existence, in this very birth.

The Buddha has shown the way to cessation of birth, cessation of decay-death, cessation of suffering. Which explains the '*jātikhayantadassī*', '*khīnā jāti*', '*natthi dāni punabbhavo*'. They testify to the fact that the Buddha had no more births. He had reached the highest stage, *Phalasamāpatti*. So had the Arahants. The ordinary worldlings are unable to understand this discontinuity of the relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. They can only see the continuity of the physical form and the natural functioning of the five senses. The Buddha and the Arahants live their lives, they partake of food but the release they attained (*vimutti*) continues, though not visible. It is the release *vimutti*, that becomes their refuge at the last moment.

Today we were compelled to speak in a forceful tone. The reason is, many have distorted the Dhamma, due to lack of penetrative understanding. Dhamma has been converted into a path that promotes continuity of existence. The educated class here as well as abroad are responsible for it. We have done our best in clarifying misconceptions. I am sorry I have to state facts.

Dear Listeners, this is enough for today. I wish to remind you to adopt yourselves to the Buddha word,

"*Sammoha vepakkāhaṁ bhikkhave dukkhaṁ vadāmi pariyeṭṭhi vepakkaṁ ?"*

I declare that the outcome of misery is twofold, either delusion or search. The search can be fulfilled only during a period the

Buddha's message survives. Suffering causes delusion endlessly in *saṁsāra*. Kisā Gotamī, Paṭācārā and many others overwhelmed by misery found the doors of *Nibbāna* open to them because the supreme friend (*kalyāna mitta*) the Buddha, showed the way. His path began with '*dukkhupanisā saddhā saddhūpanisaṁ pāmojjaṁ*' Misery gives rise to confidence, confidence leads to delight and proceeded on the positive track.

I want you to realize the value of this present moment and put it into practical use. This discourse may have appealed to some but irritative to some. Anyway I hope you will understand the Dhamma, realize the importance of *Diṭṭhevadhamme* (in this life itself) clarify any doubts and make the determination to tread the path of positivity even though you may be immersed in misery. We wish you would realize the four paths and fruits of purity through the perfection of your meditation, inspired by the precepts

followed, meditation practiced and the discourses you have listened to, before the lamp of the Dhamma is extinguished. Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭa*, may they rejoice in this discourse and may they attain the peace of *Nibbāna*.

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 19
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 201)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti sabbaṁ āhāra paccayā

ahārānaṁ nirodhena natthi dukkhassa sambhavo

Etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā dukkhaṁ āhāra paccayā

sabbāhāraṁ pariññāya sabbāhāramanissito

Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya āsavānaṁ parikkhayā

saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

Life of beings is dependent on food. But concealed within food is found craving which increases the misery of existence. As a result, the Buddha was compelled to present to the world an extraordinary vision based on nutriment. Full expression is given to this vision in three of the verses in the *Dvayatanupassanā Sutta* in the *Sutta Nipāta* which I have selected as the topic of this 19th discourse on the Law of Dependent Arising.

In several of our earlier discourses we have drawn your attention to the style of presentation in this *sutta*. To state briefly, it is a style of presenting facts for the contemplation of the nature of arising and ceasing. In this context the Buddha presents, for the first time, the method of dual contemplation on nutriment with regard to arising and ceasing aspects. He introduces it as follows:

"Monks, if someone inquires whether there could be another mode of contemplating dualities, you must reply in the affirmative. How is it possible? Whatever suffering arises, all that has nutriment as condition. This is one mode of contemplation. With the total detachment and cessation of grasping towards nutriments, suffering ceases to be. This is the second mode of contemplation. A monk who practices this dual technique of contemplation, striving hard to burn out the defilements (*kilesa*) with vigilance, can expect one of these two rewards, either Arahanthood in this very life or the attainment of a non-returner in case a trace of grasping remains."

The above three verses were uttered to clarify this point further.

Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti – sabbaṁ āhāra paccayā

Whatever suffering arises, all that is dependent on nutriment.

ahārānaṁ nirodhena – natthi dukkhassa sambhavo

With the cessation of nutriment, there is no arising of suffering.

Etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā – dukkhaṁ āhāra paccayā

Knowing the consequences of suffering dependent on nutriment

sabbāhāraṁ pariññāya – sabbāhāramanissito

With complete understanding of nutriment, with detachment towards nutriment

Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya – āsavānaṁ parikkhayā

With the perfect understanding of health, through the elimination of influxes

saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho – saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu

The Arahant who has the threefold higher knowledge and is firmly established in the Dhamma, does not come into reckoning.

The vision on nutriment presented in these three verses is extremely deep. The *Āhāra Sutta* of the *Āhāra Vagga* in the *Āhāra Saṁyutta* found in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* presents a totally different attitude towards nutriment than that of the ordinary world. This is how the Buddha explains it to the monks:

"*Cattārome bhikkhave āhārā bhūtānaṁ vā sattānaṁ ṭhitiyā sambhavesīnaṁ vā anuggahāya. Katame cattāro? Kabaliṁkāro āhāro oḷāriko vā sukhumo vā, phasso dutiyo, manosañcetanā tatiyā, viññāṇaṁ catutthaṁ.*"

"Monks, there are four types of nutriments available for the maintenance of beings born, and for the welfare of those seeking birth. What are they? Material food either gross or soft, that can be made into lumps. Contact is the second. Mental intentions is the third. Consciousness is the fourth."

The root cause for all four, according to the Buddha is craving.

"*Ime ca bhikkhave cattāro āhārā taṇhā nidānā taṇhā samudayā taṇhā jātikā taṇhā pabhavā.*"

"These four types of nutriments have craving as the root cause, craving as the reason for arising, craving as the place of origin and craving as the place of birth."

We come across another amazing account on this subject in the simile of 'the flesh of a son' in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta*. Although we have made general references to it earlier, I hope to analyse it now in direct reference to the Law of Dependent Arising. In this discourse on the "flesh of a son" capable of arousing intense emotions, the Buddha presents some valuable facts, as good as objects of meditation, in condensed form.

Let me first quote the Buddha word as it is.

"Monks, imagine a couple who enters a desert track with their only loving son, equipped with a small quantity of simple requirements. Halfway through, finding their food exhausted the couple confidentially surveying their plight decided to kill the son. They killed their only son, made an edible preparation of the flesh and the fleshy bones and managed to traverse the rest of the journey. Had they not killed the son, all three would have perished. But as they ate the meat, being overpowered by intense grief they beat their chests lamenting "Where is our only son."

At the end of the narrative the Buddha asked the monks a question.

"Monks, what do you think? Did those parents consume their only son's flesh as a sport or enjoyment? For strength or appearance or adornment?"

"Certainly not" replied the monks.

"Monks, did not the parents consume the flesh of the child, merely to cross over the desert?" (make note of the term merely).

"Yes Venerable Sir" responded the monks.

The fable ends there. Now the Buddha sets about to drive home the hard facts related to food.

"Monks, gross food has to be treated as illustrated in the simile. It has its rewards. A deep understanding of gross material food, partaken of in lumps, is equal to an understanding of lust in relation to the five-fold sensuality. The noble disciple who grasps this fact of reality will attain the fruit of a Non-returner. He will not return to this world."

That is the Buddha's teaching.

At this point, we are compelled, though reluctantly, to expose the immature childish story replaced by the commentator which underestimates the significance of the Buddha's message. What did the man and wife traversing the desert do when they ran out of food? They sat down under a particular tree with few leaves and had a confidential discussion. The husband said,

"We have no more food. It is not possible to provide for you by farming or trade. The only possible solution is for you to kill me, and reach your destination, with the child."

Then the wife replied,

“I am unable to earn a living in this desert by an occupation such as weaving thread. So I suggest that you kill me, and cross the desert with the child.”

To this the husband responded,

“The child will not survive if the mother is dead. The only obvious alternative is to kill the child and feed on the flesh until we cross the desert. If we survive we have the possibility of getting another son. Agreeing to this plan, the mother sent the son to the father.

Recalling the trouble he went through, in order to bring him up, the father refused to kill him, and sent him back to the mother.

Thinking of the innumerable prayers offered to the gods and the pain she bore for ten months, the mother couldn’t kill the son. The boy walking between the mother and the father continuously – but mind you under that tree with few leaves – fell down dead. Then the parents after much lamenting and grieving, fed on the flesh.

Do you notice how the sensitivity found in the Buddha’s story has been revised in the second? I would like to add my comments here. Those who read the Dhamma and the *Vinaya* today in Sinhala hear of this childish story only. Can you see how the Buddha’s teachings are undermined? Perhaps the commentators feared that the earlier story would encourage parents to kill their children. But the Buddha’s intention was to show how dangerous the desire for food taken as a whole can be. The idea here is very deep indeed. In case you, my listeners, too have your doubts, let me annex another simile here.

You may have perhaps read the Buddha’s simile on *Dhātumanasikāra* (attention on the primaries) about a butcher. A certain butcher or his apprentice slaughteres a cow, slices it and sells it at a crossroad. Nobody thinks of the flesh in terms of a cow. Similarly, says the Buddha, a meditator should survey his own body by dissecting into the four elements earth, water, fire and wind. Thereby the Buddha doesn’t encourage slaughter of animals. It is only a simile. A butcher is a merciless person who slaughters, cuts into parts and sells cattle with cruelty. The Buddha’s advice was to dissect the body one loves into the four elements as an object of contemplation. That is the message behind the simile.

Another doubt crops up regarding the simile of the son’s flesh. Since vegetarianism and meat-eating are common subjects for discussion today, one might misundestand this as an approval of meat-eating. The sole purpose of the simile here is to expose the danger concerning food in general. When discussing this topic once, I said if a grain of rice on our plate could speak, it would pour out the painful experience of misery in its life. With the introduction of agrochemicals that terminate thousands of insects, the grain of rice will not only complain but shed bitter tears, if it was possible. On the whole, food is a source of unhappiness. The purpose of the above simile was to bring about disillusionment regarding gross or delicate food, partaken of in lumps whether with or without meat. It must not be misinterpreted. I will touch on this again later.

Let us move on to contact as nutriment (*phassāhāra*).

“How, Monks, must contact as nutriment be understood? Imagine a cow with infected skin? (*niccammā gāvī*?”

The reference is not to a totally skinned cow in the slaughter house but to a cow with exposed wounds due to skin infection. If this cow stands by a wall, insects there would attack the wounds. If she rests under a tree, the insects on the tree would attack her. If she gets into the water, insects in the water would harass her. In an open area, animal life associated with the sky would inflict pain on her.

Wherever the cow is, she has no escape.

“That is how ‘contact nutriment’ should be understood” says the Buddha. If correctly understood, it’s advantages are many. First it gives a profound understanding of the three aspects of feeling (*vedanā*) as pleasant, painful and neither pleasant nor painful. If a noble disciple reaches this level of understanding, nothing more remains for him to do. He becomes an Arahant. The Buddha reveals the strength of feeling (*vedanā*) as an object of meditation.

Considering the depth of the simile, I would like to offer a brief commentary here. We know that feeling is dependent on contact. Bodily contact rests entirely on the soft skin, as we all know. Let’s imagine we have a wound on the right arm. A slight rub on the left arm with a velvet cloth brings immense comfort but the same impact on the right arm will cause the arm to be withdrawn with pain. Condensing and simplifying the statement of the Buddha, one could say he is comparing the pleasant feeling on the skin and the painful feeling on the raw flesh. In the ultimate sense, the skin is a mere bandage round a wound. If the entire body is a wound, a disease, and an ulcer, the skin is the bandage, as taught in the contemplation of impurities (*asubha bhāvanā*) as *gaṇḍabhūto, roga bhūto, vaṇa bhūto*. This subject of meditation leads one to disillusionment regarding contact and the attainment of *Nibbāna*. That is the nutriment of contact.

The next is mental intentions as food (*mano saṁcetanā āhāra*). How Monks should the food of mental intentions be identified?”

Another simile is given here deep in meaning. There is a pit of burning embers as deep as the height of a man. It emits no smoke or flames. A man who longs to live but fears death, longs for enjoyment but fears pain, approaches this pit. Two strong men grip him by his arms and drag him towards the pit. Although he is physically drawn towards the coal pit, his intention (*cetanā*), his aspiration (*patthanā*), his resolve (*paṇidhi*) is bent away from it. He wriggles about but is dragged on. That is the simile. Next the Buddha applies it to the subject.

“Monks, that is how mental intentions should be understood. The noble disciple who has the full understanding of the nutriment of mental intentions, will attain full realization of the craving for sensuality, the craving for existence and the craving of annihilation (*kāma taṇhā, bhava taṇhā, vibhava taṇhā*). To him who reaches this level of purity, Arahanthood is certain.

Here too a short commentary seems necessary. What is the painful nature of mental intentions? Here is an example. We have to find the money tomorrow to settle a heavy loan. Can we fall asleep relaxed tonight? We might toss and turn in bed and our thoughts might torment us. Mental intentions (*mano saṁcetanā*) will drag us away forcibly. Here is another example. The deer runs after the mirage due to craving. Due to craving for water. It runs due to the deception there is water. It keeps running. Although too exhausted to keep running, it drags itself forward, prompted by craving. Watching the behaviour of mental intentions, one can understand the nature of craving. I think that is enough about *mano saṁcetanā*.

The last one, nutriment of consciousness is the most subtle of the four.

"Monks, how would you understand the nutriment of consciousness? (*viññāṇa āhāra*). This is the simile giVenerable "The ministers or the executioners catch hold of a criminal and present him before the king for the final verdict. In the morning, the king orders that a hundred stabs be inflicted on him with a sharp knife (known as *aḍayaṭi*). At noon the king is informed that the criminal was still alive. A repetition of the punishment is ordered. Again in the evening another round of hundred stabs was inflicted on him. Now the Buddha questions the monks,

"Monks, what do you think? Does this man who is inflicted with three hundred stabs a day with a sharp knife, experience pain? "Why not Venerable Sir? Even a single stab would definitely bring pain and distress on him."

The simile ends there. The Buddha says "That is how, Monks, the nutriment of consciousness should be understood. A thorough understanding of the nutriment of consciousness will lead to the understanding of name-and-form. The noble disciple who reaches this level of understanding has nothing more to do. That is the nutriment of consciousness, the most difficult to comprehend. No one likes to treat consciousness as misery. In place of the *aḍayaṭi* story a simple but modern illustration will make this clear.

TV addicts face continuous attacks from morning till night not with the *aḍayaṭi* of ancient times but – If I may coin a new word to suit modern times – with the 'ad'-yati blows leveled against them by the business executioner of the commercial world.

Here is another illustration. When you enter a street at night, electric bulbs in some business places keep winking so as to draw our attention, and to tempt us through subtle devices. The worldlings cannot realise the misery within this, due to the presence of consciousness. We have come through *Saṁsāra* suffering severe *aḍayaṭi* blows but totally ignorant of name-andform, the mischief-maker behind it. The meditators have to understand the rest through meditation. He who realizes fully the functioning of the nutriment of consciousness, attains Arahanthood.

Let me emphasize another aspect on the subject of nutriments. Life depends on nutriments. We cannot do without it. What follows is deep. You know the Buddha spent six years of physical torture. The Niganṭhas advocated self-mortification as the only way

to happiness. Self-mortification was the most favoured path both among the ascetics and Brahmins. So naturally, the Buddha too went to its extreme until he collapsed by fasting. Through trial and error he realized the only solution to suffering was the middle path.

We have discussed earlier a *sutta* that discusses the middle path, which we wish to touch on briefly. Once a certain Bhikkhunī, instigated by hidden evil intentions, invited Venerable Ananda on the pretext of listening to a discourse. Venerable Ananda, reading her mind, delivered a discourse based on four sub-topics. The first topic is very much relevant to us.

This is how it is presented.

"*Āhāra sambhūto bhagini ayaṁ kāyo. Āhāraṁ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo*."

"Sister, this body is made up of nutriment. With the help of nutriment, should nutriment be eliminated."

It is a puzzling statement but the middle path lies therein. Venerable Ananda gives a brief explanation as to how nutriment can be instrumental in eliminating nutriment. You listeners are familiar with these facts. Monks are advised not to avoid food totally but to contemplate while partaking of food. With a clear perspective of the purpose of eating, it has to be converted into a subject of meditation through the restraint of wisdom (*ñāṇa samvara*). A monk when partaking of food, contemplates as follows with wisdom.

"I partake of this food not for enjoyment or strength or adornment or beautification (*paṭisaṇkhā yoniso, neva davāya, na madāya, na maṇḍanāya, na vibhūsanāya*) – merely (*yāvadeva*) – for the maintenance of this body (*imassa kāyassa ṭhitiyā*) – for survival (*yāpanāya*) – to refrain from destruction to life (*vihiṁsūparatiya*) – for the fulfillment of higher life (*brahmacariyānuggahāya*). I shall thus dispel the pain of hunger and prevent the arising of any future pain by overeating (*iti purāṇaṁ ca vedanaṁ paṭikankhāmi, navañca vedanaṁ na uppādessāmi*). In this journey of life, I shall deviate from wrong, being frugal in food and other requirements (*yātrā ca me bhavissati*).

To this noble quest in life, meditative monks add a subject of meditation. Its purpose is indicated as follows; "This food is merely a speck of the elements (*dhātu mattako*). It is a preparation consisting of earth, water, heat and wind. Taken in terms of elements it is clean but after entering this putrid body (*imaṁ pūtikāyaṁ patvā*) it becomes extremely repulsive (*ativiya jigucchanīyo jāyati*). This statement includes both subjects of meditation, contemplation on the elements and the repulsiveness of food. That is how food is converted into a subject of meditation.

Finally contemplation on the elements leads to emptiness (*suññatā*). This mere speck of the elements is essenceless (*dhātu mattako suñño*).

This almsfood is subject to conditionality. The individual partaking of it is not a being or a living entity, but an essenceless speck of the elements. This almsfood which is not loathsome becomes extremely repulsive after entering this body.

Yathāpaccayaṁ pavattamānaṁ dhātumattamevetaṁ yadidaṁ piṇḍapāto. Tadupabhuñjakoca puggalo dhātumattako nissatto nijjīvo suñño. Sabbo panāyaṁ piṇḍapāto ajigucchanīyo. imaṁ pūtikāyaṁ patvā ativiya jigucchanīyo jāyati.

This almsfood as a requisite is nothing but a speck from the elements. He who partakes of it is not a being or a living thing but a mere empty speck of elements. This almsfood though clean would become extremely repulsive, once inside the foul body.

This clarifies how one realizes the void (essencelessness) through contemplation on the elements. Contemplation on repulsiveness leads one to disillusion, letting go. Freedom from food, elimination of food is suggestive of the dispelling of craving. There lies the Middle Path. The *Sabbāsava Sutta* further clarifies this point. As we proceed in life we encounter certain things we can neither manage with nor without. The Buddha realized that food is one such requirement. The middle path has to be followed regarding food. Instead of rejecting it altogether, one partakes of food perfectly aware of its limitations, (*mattaññū*) with *Nibbāna* as the goal. Many other similes can be cited that are extremely effective in causing disillusionment towards food.

Khuraṁva madhunālittaṁ and *khuradhārūpamo bhava* are two wonderful similes mentioned earlier. A man fond of honey is offered a generous dose of it spread on a razor blade. He cannot enjoy it without risking his tongue. This simile helps to eliminate the greed for taste. Partaking of food is similar to applying medication on a wound (*vaṇasssa ropanatthāya*) and lubricating the axle of the cart (*akkhassabbhañjanaṁ yathā*) are two similes that clarify the place of food on the path to *Nibbāna*. Food is not a source of pleasure but an essential commodity to carry the five aggregates across the desert of *Saṁsāra* safely, not different from oiling the axle of a wheel. The simile of the son's flesh is also applicable here, although it stirs the emotions as well. The Buddha explains the repulsive nature of food inside the body and the importance of adopting the middle path with regard to food.

It is further explained in such *suttas* as the *Ogha Taraṇa Sutta*. If a person, on getting into a river with a strong current, to cross over, stops there without moving, he will sink. If he wriggles about, he'll get washed away. Wriggling is compared to self mortification, or rejecting all food. Stopping is compared to self indulgence, or endless consumption of food. Avoiding both these extremes, one should eat only what is required for survival.

'*Mattaññū hohi bhojane*.' Know your limit when eating. Venerable Sarīputta's advice to meditative monks is to refrain from eating the last four or five mouthfuls of food so as to drink enough water.

"*cattāro pañca ālope abhutvā udakaṁ pive*."

This gives ease and lightness for meditation. By means of various similes, the middle path regarding food has been always emphasized. The topic of food is so important that, the first of the ten questions asked at the higher ordination of novice Arahant Sopaka was based on food. You may have heard of it, perhaps.

"*sabbe sattā āhāraṭṭhitikā*."

Although this is subject to ridicule today, a deep understanding of this will lead to dejection, detachment and cessation which leads to *Nibbāna*.

In the *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* we meet Venerable Sāriputta analyzing 'right view' in its diverse aspects, one after the other in response to the inquiry "Do you know yet another analysis?"

According to one mode of analysis, based on the pattern of the four truths, if a monk has a comprehensive understanding of nutriment, the arising of nutriment, the cessation of nutriment and lastly the path leading to the cessation of nutriment, that alone can arouse correct view in him, and practice the four truths regarding nutriment meaningfully. Nutriment is of four kinds, gross material food consumed in lumps, contact nutriment, nutriment of mental intentions and nutriment of consciousness. Understanding them at depth is to understand the misery associated with nutriment. The nature of craving underlying it represents the second Noble Truth. Cessation here stands for *Nibbāna*. The path is the middle path called '*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*' or the restraint through wisdom, or in other words, partaking of food wisely reiterating its purpose as an object of meditation.

The last verse touched on a very profound aspect of the topic "*Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya – āsavānaṁ parikkhayā saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho – saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu*".

Lets go through its meaning again. *Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya* – We partake food in order to maintain health. But the implication in this line is deeper than that. It refers not merely to physical health but enduring health which is *Nibbāna*.

"*ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya*" understanding good health well,

"*āsavānaṁ parikkhayā*" through the destruction of influxes,

"*saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho*" well established in the dhamma,

"*saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu*" – *vedagu* refers to an Arahant endowed with three-fold knowledge, and not a Brahmin learned in the three Vedas.

"*saṁkhaṁ nopeti*" is not reckoned. An Arahant is 'Not reckoned' is a complicating concept which deserves some thought. Then let us discuss it at this point.

There is another *sutta* called the *Atthirāga Sutta* that mentions the four types of nutriments with a subtle simile. To begin with, the Buddha explains the four types of nutriments. Then three very significant words are introduced. If a disciple has passion (*rāga*) towards nutriment, pleasure (*nandi*) towards nutriment and craving (*taṇhā*)

towards nutriment, its consequences are pointed out. If someone has passion, pleasure and craving towards, let us say, gross food which is made into lumps for eating, the consciousness gets established and strengthens itself. Many are interested in the secret of rebirth, an intricate subject. If passion, pleasure and craving are present towards nutriment, the consciousness towards nutriment gets established and strengthens. From then onwards the process of *Paṭicca Samuppada* is activated. Wherever consciousness gets established and grows, name-and-form activates itself there. Wherever name-and-form is established preparations are activated. Wherever preparations are established, there '*āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti*' another existence takes place. Existence gives rise to birth, decay, death. This is a very subtle point to grasp. This process is described in relation to gross food (*āhāra*), contact (*phassa*), mental intentions (*mano saṁcetanā*) as well as consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Attachment, pleasure or craving towards either of these four types of nutriments, leads to existence (*bhava*) with the consciousness well established there. It is followed by name-and-form (*nāma-rupa*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*) and then birth takes place.

The subtleness in this account is centered round the simile used by the Buddha "Monks, if a dyer or a painter were to paint on a smooth board or a wall or a cloth, using a rusty red, yellow or light red paint – now read the rest carefully – in the same way is created a figure of a male or a female, with details complete. (Now connect what was said). If at this point attachment, pleasure and craving are present towards nutriment, another birth is possible. Similar to a film reflected on a screen, the figure of the male or the female that seeks rebirth is registered on the foetus in the mother's womb which we call the muddy patch. The Buddha discusses this at depth as if he was painting a picture. At this stage the three defilements passion, pleasure and craving (*rāga*, *nandi*, *taṇhā*) add a certain hue to the consciousness. That is what we call name-and-form. In brief it is a form in conformity with the name reflected on the consciousness. This is made explicit by the simile of the painter. This process takes place as long as the three-fold nutriments of consciousness ie passion, pleasure and craving last. A person excessively fond of food, may perhaps be born as a worm or a pig. It happens due to attachment to food. This illustrates the interrelatedness between consciousness and name-and-form.

The simile of the painter symbolizes defilements. The Buddha then deals with the opposite tendency with a deeper significance, which is a mystery to many.

"If one has no passion or pleasure or craving towards the four types of nutriments, ?"

Here the Buddha brings out an amazing simile.

"Monks, there is a pavilion with windows on the north, south and east. When the sun rises, Monks, where will the sun's rays fall?

"On the western wall, Venerable Sir."

"If there was no wall on the west?"

"In that case, on the earth, Venerable Sir."

“If there was no earth?”

“On the water, if there was no earth.”

“Well, if there was no water?”

“In that case, Venerable Sir, the sun’s rays will not be established anywhere.”

The word used here is ‘*appatiṭṭhita*’ – ‘not established’.

Can you see how deep its significance is.

“Venerable Sir, if the sun’s rays do not fall on the wall or the earth or on the water, then it is not established” – ‘*appatiṭṭhita*’. We have earlier introduced the term ‘*anidassana viññāṇa*’ – non-manifestative consciousness. In the absence of passion, pleasure or craving, consciousness is unable to establish itself. In explaining the meaning of *anidassana*, the simile of the painter suggests a mental state where there is nothing to be seen, to be revealed. We have explained this position based on a simile in the *Kakacūpama Sutta*. Here too, the question answer method is used.

“A man appears with some colour paints and a brush and declares that he would paint a picture in the sky” says the Buddha.

“Monks, do you think it is possible?”

“No Venerable Sir. It is not possible because ‘*ayaṁ hi bhante ākāso arūpī anidassano*’, this sky is formless, and is not capable of showing or revealing anything. This is a subtle point many cannot understand. We have discussed the significance of ‘*anidassana viññāṇa*’ in the discourses on *Nibbāna*.

Viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ – anantaṁ sabbato pabhaṁ

ettha āpo ca paṭhavi – tejo vājo na gādhati

ettha dīghañca rassañca – aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

ettha nāmañca rūpañca – asesaṁ uparujjhati

viññāṇassa nirodhena – ettetaṁ uparujjhati

This verse remained an unresolved mystery for ever so long. Some interpreted it as a peculiar world. We have pointed out that the consciousness is there – *viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ* – but the released consciousness (*vimutta viññāṇa*) does not reflect name-and-form. Next, it discusses the characteristics of nameand-form. ‘*Anantaṁ*’ – as in the simile where there was no place for the sun’s rays to fall. It is similar to that. *Anantaṁ sabbato pabhaṁ – ettha āpo ca paṭhavi – tejo vājo na gādhati*. In this *viññāṇa* the four elements earth, water, fire and wind can have no footing. Why? Contemplation on the

four elements have brought about disillusionment. If this idea is attached to the story of rebirth discussed earlier, it would appear as follows. If the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) does not clasp the four elements firmly, gives up attachment towards them, then "*ettha āpo ca paṭhavi – tejo vājo na gādhati*." – the four elements have no place in the consciousness.

On the other hand, if earth, water, fire and wind are present, the notion of long and short is present. Now think of its applicability to the painter. '*ettha dīghaṁ ca rassaṁ ca*'. Otherwise the concepts of 'long-short' would be inapplicable. *Subhāsubhaṁ* – beautiful or repulsive would also be inapplicable. As mentioned in the story, the figure of a man or woman is drawn with all the details. As long as *rāga*, *nandi* and *taṇhā* (passion, pleasure and craving) are present, the human figure acquires its relevant colours automatically. The paint here is lust. But in the consciousness that is released, called *anidassana viññāṇa*, nameand-form does not reflect itself. The verse *viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ* is extremely deep in meaning as you can see. Finally it says "*ettha nāmañca rūpañca asesaṁ uparujjhati*".

Name-and-form is totally cut off here.

"*Viññāṇassa nirodhena*" – with the cessation of consciousness. The implication behind this phrase is not understood by many. This is not a reference to the prepared and specially prepared consciousness. By consciousness we mean the consciousness that is accompanied by name-andform. The worldlings do not know of the other consciousness which is identified as the 'ceased consciousness' – '*niruddha viññāṇa*'. How does it cease? It has no foundation or object. That is what is described as "*appatiṭṭhaṁ anārammanaṁ*" in talking of an Arahant's mind. you may have heard that the void state is referred to as "*animitta*" – signless, '*appatiṭṭhita*' – not established, '*suññata*' empty and void, devoid of self. It is this void state that is emphasized. In support of this position, here are two verses from the *Dhammapada*.

Yesaṁ sannicayo natthi – ye pariññāta bhojanā

suññato animitto ca – vimokkho yesa gocaro

ākāseva sakuntānaṁ – gati tesaṁ durannayā

This verse too is deep in meaning. '*Yesaṁ sannicayo natthi*' – they have no accumulated load, '*ye pariññāta bhojanā*' – understood the intricacies of nutriment, '*suññato animitto ca vimokkho yesa gocaro*' – whose pasture ground is void, signless, has the nature of release. Nutriment is not their prey. Realizing the void inherent in nutriment, the Arahants conduct themselves with ease in their signless essenceless pastures. The path they traverse is not visible.

"*Ākāseva sakuntānaṁ gati tesaṁ durannayā*" – Like the path taken by the birds in the sky, the course taken by the Arahant's mind is untraceable, due to its signless, unestablished nature. Deities and Brahmins venerating the Arahants say they are unable to trace the object of the mind of the Arahants who have attained the Arahant *phala*

samāpatti. The main thing emphasized here is the void (*suññato*) and signless (*animitto*).

The verse that follows emphasizes the above facts.

Yassāsavā parikkhīṇā – āhāre ca anissito

suññato animitto ca – vimokkho yassa gocaro

ākāseva sakuntānaṁ – padaṁ tassa durannayaṁ

The qualities of the Arahant who has destroyed all influxes stated here are similar to those in the above verse. Those who have well comprehended the four types of nutriments will know that the path taken by the Arahant is untraceable because it is signless (*animitta*) and is undirected (*appaṇihita*). Now you understand why the Arahants are called "*saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu."*

Those Arahants do not come into reckoning means, the worldlings do not recognize them. Once, the Brahmin youth Uttara, the pupil of Brahmin Brahmāyu curious to know how the Buddha partakes of food and in order to examine his conduct, followed him for seven months like a shadow. The outcome of it, an amazing account of the Buddha's daily routine is given in the *Brahmāyu Sutta*. The Buddha partakes of food contemplating on the eight factors beginning with "*neva davāya, na madāya*".

The most amazing revelation is that the Buddha is "*rasa paṭisaṁvedī bhagavā no ca rasa rāga paṭisaṁvedī* ."

He is aware of taste. His taste buds are active but there is no lust for taste. The reason is that his consciousness is void (*suñña*) and signless (*animitta*).

Dear Listeners, you must clearly understand that according to these two amazing verses, understanding the significance of nutriment at its depth does not imply giving up nutriment altogether. It is the elimination of craving and lust for nutriment that is required. Unless one reaches this stage, the ordinary mind gets established somewhere by the force of craving, whether we expect it or not. A film is produced either in a mother's womb or elsewhere. Everyone gets stuck there.

"*Āyatiṁ punabbhavo*."

Another existence takes place here if consciousness and name-and-form go together. If the consciousness is removed, no name-and-form arises there. Even while the person is living, if the consciousness has released itself from the name-and-form, he does not seek a goal at death. The simile of the pavilion illustrated the mind that is signless. The sun's rays had no place to establish itself, whether on the wall or on the earth or on the water. Can you understand how deep the vision regarding nutriment is in the Dhamma? A correct understanding of nutriment, its arising, its cessation and the path to the cessation of nutriment corresponding to the Four Noble Truths, the final result would most certainly be Arahanthood. There is nothing more for him to accomplish. Dear

listeners, considering the above facts, please treat this discourse as a subject for meditation. You must not put it away as too deep. It is true that the Dhamma is very deep. But if you train your mind on the lines of radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) the attainment of paths and fruits (*magga phala*) is not far away.

Today you have established yourselves on a higher *sīla* and disciplined your mind in meditation.

Not only the monks, but all those involved in meditation, contemplate on the nutriments. If this contemplation is correctly perfected, it certainly leads to paths and fruits in the Dhamma. I wish this discourse would be instrumental in the attainment of spiritual heights of *Sotāpanna* (Stream Entrant), *Sakadāgāmi* (Once-returner), *Anāgāmi* (Non-returner) and *Arahat* (Emancipation) and cross over this dreadful *Saṁsāra*. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭha*, may they rejoice in this discourse, and may they attain the peace of *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 20
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 202)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Ye me pubbe viyākaṁsu

huraṁ gotama sāsanā

iccāsi iti bhavissati

sabbaṁ taṁ itihītihaṁ

sabbaṁ taṁ takkavaḍḍhanaṁ

nāhaṁ tattha abhiramiṁ

Tvañca me Dhammaṁ akkhāhi

taṇhānigghātanaṁ muni

yaṁ viditvā sato caraṁ

tare loke visattikaṁ

Idha diṭṭhasutamuta viññātesu

piyarūpesu Hemaka

chanda rāgavinodanaṁ

Nibbānapadamaccutaṁ

Etad aññāya ye satā

diṭṭhadhammābhinibbutā

upasantāva te sadā

tiṇṇā loke visattikaṁ

– Hemaka Sutta, Sutta Nipāta.

Those who explained to me before

Outside the dispensation of Gotama

All of them said:

'So it was and so it will be'

But all that is so-and-so talk

All that is productive of logic

I did not delight therein

But now to me, O! Sage

May you proclaim a Dhamma

That is destructive of craving

By knowing which and mindfully faring along

One might get beyond the world's viscosity

The dispelling here in this world

Of desire and lust for pleasant things

Seen, heard, sensed and cognized

Is *Nibbāna* that slips not away

Knowing this they that are mindful

And are fully appeased here and now

Are always calm and composed

They have crossed the world's viscosity.

Dear Listeners,

The uniqueness of the Law of Dependent Arising discovered by the Fully Enlightened One is the presenting of a solution to the Saṁsāric problem in the present itself. Until then, religious teachers in the world went on searching for a solution by entwining past and future with logic. In this well-preached (*svākkhāta*) Dhamma what becomes obvious by the other qualities like '*sanditthika*' (can be seen here and now) '*akālika*' (timeless) '*ehipassika*' (inviting one to come and see) '*opanayika*' (leading one onwards) and by the

term often used '*diṭṭheva dhamme*' (in this very life) is that solution in the present. Today we chose as the topic for the twentieth sermon on Dependent Arising, the *Hemaka Sutta* of the *Pārāyana Vagga* in *Sutta Nipāta* in order to turn your attention to this unique quality. Paraphrased, this is the meaning of those verses.

'*ye me pubbe viyākaṁsu – huraṁ gotama sāsanā'*

Those, who, outside the dispensation of Gotama explained to me before –

'*iccāsi iti bhavissati*'

Said so 'it was', 'so it will be'

'*sabbaṁ taṁ itihītihaṁ*'

All that is 'so-it-was', 'so it was' talk

'*sabbaṁ taṁ takkavaḍḍhanaṁ*'

All that is productive of logic.

'*nāhaṁ tattha abhiramiṁ*'

I did not delight in it.

'*Tvañca me Dhammaṁ akkhāhi taṇhānigghātanaṁ muni*'

But may you preach to me the Dhamma that destroys craving, O! Sage.

'*yaṁ viditvā sato caraṁ tare loke visattikaṁ*'

Having understood which and faring mindfully, one can cross over from world's viscosity.

'*Idha diṭṭhasutamuta viññātesu piyarūpesu Hemaka*'

In regard to pleasant things seen, heard, sensed and cognized here in this world, O Hemaka.

'*chanda rāgavinodanaṁ Nibbānapadamaccutaṁ*'

The dispelling of desire and lust is the state of *Nibbāna* that does not slip away.

'*Etad aññāya ye satā diṭṭhadhammābhinibbutā*'

Knowing this, those that are mindful and fully appeased here and now.

'*upasantāva te sadā tiṇṇā loke visattikaṁ*'

Are always calm and composed and they have crossed over the viscosity in this world.

In a previous sermon we happened to mention that according to the exposition in the *Visuddhimagga* that is now accepted, out of the twelve links the two links ignorance and preparations (*avijjā saṅkhārā*) are reckoned as belonging to the past, the last two links, birth, decay-and-death as belonging to the future, and the eight links in the middle, consciousness, nameand-form, six sense-spheres, contact, feeling, craving, grasping and becoming (*viññāṇa*, *nāma-rūpa, saḷāyatana, phassa, vedanā, taṇhā, upādāna, bhava*) as belonging to the present. If we accept that exposition – that interpretation – what the Brahmin youth Hemaka had stated as a charge against other religious systems, the explaining as 'so it was' and 'so it will be', that is to say the 'so-and-so' charge could be levelled at our Dhamma as well. But, dear listeners, this is not a 'so-and-so' Dhamma. This is something unique. In support of his interpretation, Venerable Buddhaghosa, the author of *Visuddhimagga*, gives a twenty-fold analysis of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* made-up of groups of five:

Atīte hetavo pañca idāni phalapañcakaṁ Idāni hetavo pañca āyatiṁ phalapañcakaṁ

Five causes were in the past

Now there is a fivefold fruit

Now there are five causes

Which will have in future a fivefold fruit.

In the past there were five causes. In the present there are the five fruits. There are five causes in the present of which there will be five fruits in the future. What are these five causes? Ignorance, preparations, craving, grasping and becoming. What are said to be the five fruits in the present? Consciousness, nameand-form, six sense-spheres, contact and feeling. Then again the five present causes are said to be ignorance, preparations, craving, grasping and becoming and the five fruits are consciousness, name-and-form, six sense-spheres, contact and feeling. By this analysis the wonderful inter-connection between the twelve links which is called '*idappaccayatā*' (specific conditionality) is breached.

We have already explained to you all that the basic principle of the Law of Dependent Arising obtains between any two consecutive links of the formula. That is to say:

> This being – this comes to be
>
> With the arising of this – this arises
>
> This not being – this does not come to be
>
> With the cessation of this – this ceases.

The law holds good between any pair of links. It cannot be broken. It cannot take in additional things. Any two links are wonderfully interconnected. It is reinforced by the significant phrase '*yā tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā*' – 'That

suchness, that invariability, that not-otherwiseness therein is the specific conditionality.' The Buddha has thus confirmed that connection. We have to point out that by the analysis in the *Visuddhimagga* that basic principle is violated.

Not only that. Venerable Buddhaghosa speaks of three rounds or 'vaṭṭas' – namely, '*kilesa-vaṭṭa*' (the round of defilements), the '*kamma-vaṭṭa*' (the round of action) and '*vipāka-vaṭṭa*' (the round of result). But, dear listeners, we have pointed out to you in our explanation of the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* that the '*vaṭṭa*' interpretation that is actually relevant to the Law of Dependent Arising is that between consciousness and nameand-form. We have cited on several occasions a very deep section of the Buddha's sermon that confirms it. On this occasion too let me quote it for the benefit of those who are new-comers.

"... Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā uppajjetha vā, ettāvatā adhivacanapatho ettāvatā niruttipatho, ettāvatā paññattipatho ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya, yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena."

"In so far only, Ānanda, can one be born or grow old or die or pass away or reappear, in so far only is there any pathway for verbal expression, in so far only is there any path way for terminology, in so far only is there any pathway for designation, in so far only is there any sphere of wisdom, in so far only is there a whirling round of pointing out a 'this-ness' – that is to say, as far as name-and-form together with consciousness"

In this exposition we have birth, decay and death and all the rest of it. Nothing is lacking. Venerable Sāriputta, the foremost in wisdom, presents this more clearly through a very simple simile in the *Naḷakaḷāpa Sutta* in answer to a series of questions raised by Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita. It is a wonderful simile.

"Just as, friend, two sheaves of reeds are made to stand one supporting the other at the top, so consciousness stands with name-and-form as condition. And then with name-and-form as condition there are the six sense-spheres, contact, feeling, craving etc. Out of these two sheaves of reeds, if one is drawn, the other falls down. If the other is drawn, this will fall down. In the same way the cessation aspect is explained as follows:

With the cessation of consciousness, the cessation of name-and-form occurs and along with the cessation of name-and-form, six sensespheres, contact, feeling, craving, grasping and the rest of it falls. Just try to visualize this:

Out of the two sheaves of reeds, suppose the one on the left is the consciousness sheaf of reeds. The one on the right side is the name-and-form sheaf of reeds. A number of other sheaves of reeds are leaning on the name-and-form sheaf of reeds. All those would fall if the name-and-form sheaf of reeds falls. Now you can understand why this is called '*sandiṭṭhika*' (visible here and now) '*akālika*' (timeless) and '*ehipassika*' (inviting one to come and see). There is no need to bring in three periods of time into the interpretation of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula.

Now that we have said all this about the exposition in *Visuddhimagga*, let us go on to another point. Out of the above mentioned mutual interdependence, even as a corollary of it, something called a duality (*dvayatā*) comes up. We have made use of the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* in selecting topics for a number of our sermons. As you may recall, there is a duality of arising and ceasing (*samudaya-nirodha*). There is another duality of internal – external (*ajjhatta-bahiddhā*). It is these two dualities that you come across throughout the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. We have spoken about the two phrases '*iti ajjhattaṁ vā kāye, bahiddhā vā kāye*' (whether in the internal body or in the external body) and '*samudayadhammānupassī vā vayadhammānupassī vā*' (either seeing the arising nature or the passing away nature). This is the duality. But our *Theravāda* tradition has not recognized this term. It has not come up in the traditional exegesis. However we pointed out its importance. There are two discourses in the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* by the same titled '*dvayaṁ*' (dyad). In one *Dvayaṁ Sutta* we find the Buddha addressing the monks and saying:

"monks, I shall preach to you about a dyad. What is the dyad? Eye and forms, ear and sounds, nose and smells, tongue and tastes, body and tangibles, mind and mind-objects. This is the dyad."

Then the Buddha declares a very striking challenge:

"If someone says I will reject this dyad and make known some other dyad, it will only be a vain boast. When questioned he would not be able to make good his boast. And furthermore, he would come to vexation."

Just see, all that is about the duality. In the other '*Dvayaṁ*' *Sutta* this is how it comes up:

"*Dvayaṁ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti.*"

"Consciousness, monks, arises depending on a dyad."

"*Kathañca bhikkhave dvayaṁ paticca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti.*"

"How monks, does consciousness arise 'depending on a dyad?"

"*Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ.*"

"Depending on eye and forms arises eyeconsciousness."

Then the Buddha makes another declaration.

"*Cakkhuṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī, Rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino.*"

"Eye is impermanent changing and becoming otherwise. Forms are impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise."

Then he goes on:

"*Itthetaṁ dvayaṁ calañceva vayañca aniccaṁ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvi.*"

"Thus this dyad is unstable, passing away, impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise."

Just understand in brief that the question of the two is resolved through the teachings on impermanence. There is another significant discourse that corroborates, the 'internal-external' part of the implications of *dvayaṁ* or dyad. There is in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* a discourse titled '*Bālapaṇdita Sutta*' – not to be confused with the '*Bālapaṇdita Sutta*' of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. Let us bring up a section of that discourse:

"*Avijjānīvaraṇassa bhikkhave bālassa taṇhāya sampayuttassa evāyaṁ kāyo samudāgato. Iti ayañceva kāyo bahiddhā ca nāmarūpaṁ. Itthetaṁ dvayaṁ. Dvayaṁ paṭicca phasso saḷevāyatanāni yehi phuṭṭho bālo sukhadukkhaṁ paṭisaṁvediyati etesaṁ vā aññatarena.*"

"Monks, to the fool hindered by ignorance and fettered to craving, this bodyhas come up. Thus (there is) this body and name-and-form as external (to it). Thus there is this dyad. Depending on the dyad there is contact and the six sense-spheres, contacted by which or by any one of them, the fool experiences pleasure and pain."

That would suffice as far as the significance of the dyad is concerned. Now let us pass on to the two words '*hetu*' and '*paccaya*'. During the Buddha's time those two words were used in every discourse as synonymous. Whenever the question comes up as

'*Ko hetu ko paccayo*' – 'what is the cause, what is the condition?' – the answer is one. There are no two answers. There is a delightful discourse titled '*Mahā Puṇṇama*', which has as its setting a moonlit night out in the open air. The Buddha is seen answering questions raised by the monks.

One monk strangely enough, rattled out five questions one after the other.

"Venerable Sir, what is the cause, what is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of form?

What is the cause what is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of feeling?

What is the cause what is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of perception?

What is the cause what is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of preparations?

What is the cause what is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of consciousness?"

Now the Buddha is answering:

"The four great primaries is the cause, the four great primaries is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of form.

Contact is the cause, contact is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of feeling.

Contact is the cause, contact is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of perception.

Contact is the cause, contact is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of preparations.

Name-and-form is the cause, name-and-form is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of consciousness."

What we need to glean from this quotation is the fact we had pointed out – namely that the two words were used synonymously in the discourses. But, dear listeners, it is evident that in the literature handed down as treatises – that is to say, in the '*pakaraṇa*' literature – a semantic change, an undesirable change of meanings has occurred. First of all, let me give an instance of it. In the section called '*Parikkhā Vibhaṅga*' in the Nettippakaraṅa, '*hetu*' and '*paccaya*' are distinguished as two words. This is how it comes up:

"*Dve dhammā janayanti hetu ca paccayo ca*'

'Two factors 'bring forth' ('*janayanti*') something – cause and condition.'

Out of them cause is said to be the special factor (*asādhāraṇo hetu*) and condition is said to be the common factor (*sādhāraṇo paccayo*). An illustration is also giVenerable In the case of a germinating seed, the seed is called the cause and conditions are earth and moisture. Then is summing up *Nettippakaraṅa* says:

"*Iti sabhāvo hetu parabhāvo paccayo. Ajjhattiko hetu bāhiro paccayo. Janako hetu pariggāhako paccayo. Asādhāraṇo hetu sādhāraṇo paccayo.*"

In defining the two words it says, *hetu* or cause is intrinsic nature (*sabhāvo*) and *paccaya* or condition is extrinsic nature (*parabhāvo*). Here we find an unusual semantic twist. '*Sabhāva*' (Skt. *svabhāva*) is a word used in general for 'nature'. Now it has become a technical term. So '*sa-bhāvo*' is intrinsic nature. '*Parabhāvo*' is extrinsic nature. Just see what a distortion it is. For the birth of a sapling or a seedling the seed is said to be the cause (*hetu*) and other things such as earth, water, fire and air are conditions (*paccaya*). But from the verses uttered by Selā Therī it seems that all the three factors – seed, earth and moisture are essential. Then '*ajjhattiko hetu*' – cause is internal '*bāhiro paccayo*' condition is external. Then again, '*janako hetu*' – cause is what brings forth or gives birth – '*pariggāhako paccayo*' – condition is what helps or contributes to it.

Now we cannot help saying something about the *Paṭṭhānappakarana* too. When we come to it, we find the number of 'conditions' (*paccayā*) increasing up to twenty four. In the attempt to show the connection between thoughts, twenty four conditions are listed. The first among them is called '*hetu*' but not in the sense we mentioned above. So it seems at last '*hetu*' (cause) became one of the '*paccayas*' (conditions). To add to the confusion now the scholars are at pains trying to establish the 'identity' of the two conditions '*anantara*' and '*samanantara*' because the definition given to both happens to be the same. So this is the situation. Anyway, we do not wish to labour the point. Let us now pass on to '*Paṭisambhidāmaggappakaraṇa*. When we come to it we find a similar semantic change. This is how the two words '*hetu*' (cause) and '*hetusamuppanna*' (arisen from a cause) are explained in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*:

"*Avijjā hetu saṅkhārā hetusamuppannā, saṅkhārā hetu viññāṇaṁ hetusamuppannaṁ*."

According to this interpretation, out of the twelve links, the one that precedes a link is the cause from which that particular link is arisen. But we have pointed out with reference to the first two lines of the verse '*ye dhammā hetuppabhavā – tesaṁ hetuṁ Tathāgato āha*' that what is called '*hetu*' is not ignorance or any other link but that basic principle of

'*idappaccayatā*' (specific conditionality) – 'This being – this arises' etc. We have also shown that as for '*hetusamuppanna*' each of these twelve links is arisen from a cause. Ignorance and other links are illustrations of the principle. This fact is further borne out by the qualification sometimes mentioned about a Stream-winner (*Sotāpanna*) that he has clearly seen the cause as well as things arisen from the cause ('*hetu ca sudiṭṭho hoti hetu samuppanne ca dhamme*').

But an even clearer proof of this fact – as we earlier pointed out – is the declaration made by the Buddha showing the distinction between the Law of Dependent Arising (*Paṭicca Samuppāda*) and things dependently arisen (*paṭicca samuppannā dhammā*). It is a momentous declaration.

> "*Jātipaccayā bhikkhave jarāmaraṇaṁ.*
>
> *Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ*
>
> *anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ*
>
> *ṭhitā va sā dhātu*
>
> *dhammaṭṭhitatā*
>
> *dhammaniyāmatā*
>
> *idappaccayatā*".

"Dependent on birth is decay and death. Whether there be an arising of *Tathāgatas* or whether there be no arising of *Tathāgatas*, that elementary nature, that orderliness of the Dhamma, that norm of the Dhamma, the specific conditionality does stand as it is."

What corroborates the inter-connection between birth and decay is the norm that holds good whether there be an arising of Tathāgatas or there be no arising of Tathāgatas. That elementary nature 'stands as it is' – '*ṭhitā va sā dhātu*'. That is the 'suchness' which cannot be changed – '*tathatā*'. That specific conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) is *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. 'Things dependently arisen' (*paṭiccasamuppannā dhammā*) are the twelve links beginning with 'ignorance'. They all are '*hetusamuppannā*'. Every one of them is impermanent (*aniccaṁ*), prepared (*saṅkhataṁ*) and dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuppannaṁ*). All this shows that an undesirable semantic change has occurred with the passage of time in regard to the Law of Dependent Arising.

There are enough instances in the discourses to prove that the twelve linked formula of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* has been presented as an answer to questions of extremists which are of the dilemma type. The world rests on a duality (*dvayanissita*) – the question of two things. Either 'it is' or 'it is not'. Either 'it exists' or 'it does not exist'. Either 'everything exists' or 'nothing exists'. Either it is 'one's own doing' or 'another's doing'.The worldlings are immersed in such a duality (*dvayatā*). When such Brahmins come and raise questions, particularly in the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, the Buddha pointed out that such questions with two ends rest on a duality ('*dvayanissita*').

"*Sabbaṁ atthīti kho Kaccana ayaṁ eko anto. Sabbaṁ natthīti ayam dutiyo anto. Ete te Kaccāna ubho ante anupa– gamma majjhena Tathāgato dhammaṁ deseti:*

avijjāpaccayā saṅkharā ...(etc.)"

"(To say) 'Everything exists', Kaccāna, is one extreme. 'Nothing exists' – this is the second exrteme. Without going to both extremes, Kaccāna, the Tathāgata preaches the Dhamma by the middle:

Dependent on ignorance, preparations ... (etc.)"

Without going to both extremes the *Tathāgata* brings up the twelve linked formula of Dependent Arising. In that exposition both the direct (*anuloma*) and indirect (*paṭiloma*) orders are giVenerable I hope you all can follow. Firstly, the direct order beginning with '*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*' (Dependent on ignorance, preparations). Then the Buddha follows it up with the indirect order, '*avijjāyatveva asesa virāganirodhā*.....(etc).' (But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance.....etc.). Between these two we find '*samudaya*' (arising) and '*nirodha*' (ceasing). One cannot say something absolutely exists or absolutely nothing exists.

There is an 'arising' and a 'ceasing'. It is that norm that is called Dependent Arising or '*Paṭicca Samuppāda*'. Not only that. Sometimes a tetralemma beginning with 'one's own doing' (*sayaṁ kataṁ*) 'another's doing' (*paraṁ kataṁ*) and so on as well as six dilemmas were presented to the Buddha but he answered them with the twelve linked formula.

There are many who do not know why the Buddha puts forward these twelve links as his answer. Why does he do so? In it there is the solution in the present. It lays bare the structure of the problem. What is the structure? Within the background of ignorance, preparations arise. It is these preparations that keep up the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form. The outcome of that vortical interplay is bifurcation within the six sense-spheres as internal and external.

Now comes up the story of the 'dyad' (*dvayaṁ*) – eye and forms, ear and sounds etc. That is why we illustrated the mutual interdependence (*aññamaññ̃a paccayatā*) with reference to the simile of the two bundles of reeds. As a result of the bifurcation as 'internal' and 'external' in the case of the six sense-spheres, the entire story of feeling, craving, grasping, becoming and birth unfolds itself.

Though we explain this way, you might not understand. Now you had better recall the similes we have given while discussing the Law of Dependent Arising. Many of you would follow when it comes in the form of similes. We have given various kinds of similes like the cinema and the magic world. Let us take it this way. Suppose there are several worlds. There is the cinema-world. Now that we have spoken of the chess game between Ajith and Sumith, let us call it the gambler's world. Then there is the magic world and the cricket world. There is another world which the dog on the plank represented earlier. Later we presented a more aesthetic simile in the form of the story of Narcissus. Everyone seems to like it. For those who haven't heard it before let me give a summary of it. It is a Greek story we have read. A very handsome Greek youth who had never seen his own face, while wandering in a forest bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing the reflection of his own face there, he imagined it to be an angel's. To embrace the angel he had a vain struggle with the ripples for several days and in the end sacrificed his life for love. That, of course, was self-love. Other affections are no better. We have to call it the world of romance. So we have now a lot of worlds. The cinema-world, the gambler's world, the magic-world, the cricket-world and the romantic world.

Now let us see how in each of these worlds those twelve links of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula play their part. Think of the cinema-world to begin with. When does the film-show actually start? When the entire cinema hall is steeped in darkness. At that moment the eyes get focused on the screen. Then the deluded interplay begins. In that strange world all the 'preparations' of the actors and actresses become meaningful in the darkness. When the interval comes, and lights are turned on, all the variety of colours on the screen fade away. But it is between the screen and the background of darkness that a wonderful world is created with the help of the behaviour of actors and actresses. That is the delusion. Then why does one go to the cinema hall and buy a ticket? To get deluded. What is the reason? The entire world is a world of sensuality. Within this sensual world, there are many tiny tiny worlds which we already named. The cinema world is easily understood.

Then let us take up the magic-world.

The magic-world exists until the magician's subtle tricks are understood. As soon as one discovers them at least by hiding in some corner of the stage, the magic-world is no more. Now what about the gambler's world? We have clearly portrayed it with the help of the chess game between Ajith and Sumith. To put it in brief, that world exists on the chess-board. Those worthless pieces became 'chessmen'. When the Zen master compelled the two friends to play a deadly chess game – a gamble for life – with sword in hand threatening to behead the loser, both of them mutually made up their minds to sacrifice their life for each other. But just at the critical moment of judging the winner and the loser, what did the Zen master do? He bent down and swept off the pieces from the chess board and that was the end of the game. Isn't that enough for you to understand the gambler's world?

Then as for the cricket-world, we need not describe it for you. You all know about it. But this is what has to be pointed out as important. When the two teams get down to the cricketground, the paraphernalia of the game dazzle with life. Players are dubbed with strange names. From then onwards it is all delusion. The cricket delusion is so powerful that in the end some even commit suicide. So that is the cricket-world. Between victory and defeat, all the twelve links are there – even birth and death, grief, lamentation, pain, unhappiness, despair and all the rest of it. Then the world of romance. About that you all know more than we do. There again either it is self-love or love for another. It is that love for each other that make them say:

'Of course the world outside is suffering but when we are together our world is wonderful!' The day that soap bubble vanishes into thin air there is suicide or murder. So that is the world of romance. Remember, in everyone of those worlds, it is the twelve links that come into play.

What is of particular importance is that vortex – '*vaṭṭa*'. The real rallying point is the mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form. It is a very strange kind of delusion. That is why we said, if you ask consciousness

'Who are you?'

it would reply 'Ask name-and-form'.

If you ask name-and-form

'Who are you?'

It would also reply:

'Ask consciousness.'

The two are neither to be reckoned as two nor are they one and the same. There is a delusion involved. That is why we pointed out that what is called '*nāma-rūpa*' is a formal name and a nominal form. It is only a perception of form. But it is in nameand-form that consciousness finds an object. It is here that a world is created. All that happens within the darkness of ignorance. In that darkness of ignorance a preparation goes on. It is that

preparation that in the Dhamma is called '*kāyasaṅkhāro*' (body preparation), '*vacīsaṅkhāro*' (speech preparation) and '*cittasaṅkhāro*' (thought preparation). So much so, as we mentioned on an earlier occasion, in order to escape from the round of existence all those three preparations have to be stilled. Breathing in and breathing out are reckoned as the body preparation ('*kāyasaṅkhāro*'), thinking and pondering are the speech preparation ('*vacīsaṅkhāro*') and perception and feeling are the thought preparation ('*cittasaṅkhāro*'). These constitute the infra-structure of existence. That is why the yogins in the past stilled those preparations. *Nibbāna* is called '*sabba saṅkhāra samata*' – the stilling of all preparations. When all preparations are stilled, that is the end of the whole story. But these are not stilled automatically. It is when the light of wisdom dawns that they are stilled. That is what we call '*anidassana viññāṇa*' – nonmanifestative consciousness. Consciousness ceases, name-andform ceases. In various ways we described it. Whether you call it '*saḷāyatana nirodha*' (cessation of the six sense-spheres), '*viññāṇa nirodha*' (cessation of consciousness) or '*nāma-rūpa nirodha*' (cessation of name-and-form) it is the same. It shows that the Buddha solved this problem in the present itself. This is a wonderful Dhamma- a marvellous Dhamma.

Though we say so, you might wonder why all these facts have not come to light all this time. Neither the commentators, nor the Western scholars could understand such deep *sutta*s like *Mūlapariyāya*, *Madhupiṅḍika*, *Mahā Nidāna* and *Mahāpadāna*. They were relegated to the limbo as abstruse discourses. What is the reason? There must be some reason. What is it? This is the reason, dear listeners. In the history of this dispensation an unfortunate thing had happened at some stage or other. Those extremely deep discourses were branded as '*vohāra desanā*' (conventional sermons) and pushed into obscurity. In their place, other things came to be upheld as deep. The Buddha must have foreseen this predicament for he had made a prophesy that in future such monks would get the upper hand.

"*Ye te Suttantā tathāgatabhāsitā gambhīrā gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatāpaṭisaṁyuttā tesu bhaññamānesu na sussū– sissanti na sotaṁ odahissanti na aññācittaṁ upaṭṭhapessanti na te uggahetabbaṁ pariyāpuṇitabbaṁ maññissanti*."

"Whatever discourses that are preached by the *Tathāgata* that are deep and profound in meaning, transcendental and dealing with voidness, when those discourses are being spoken about, they would not listen to them, they would not lend ear to them, they would not make up their minds to understand them. They would not think it worthwhile learning and mastering them."

This is precisely what came to pass. At present '*vohāra desanā*' or the so called 'conventional teachings' are supposed to have been addressed to simple people like us. You know, there were instances when such discourses like *Bāhiya Sutta* helped the listeners to attain Fruits of the Path or even Arahanthood. But unfortunately for some reason or other those sermons were branded as conventional teachings and relegated to the background. That is the reason for all this confusion.

At present what is called *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is a formula to be by-hearted and recited up and down. It has no other significance. But it is with this formula that the Buddha not only solved the entire Saṁsāric puzzle but presented through it a wonderful principle that lays bare the structure of the Realms of Form and Formless Realms as well as that of the miniature worlds found within this sensuous realm – as we highlighted above. This fact has been ignored all this time. It is because of this ignorance that they went on taking liberties with the two words '*hetu*' and '*paccaya*'. We can't change the Buddha word. If the Buddha has used the couple of words synonymously we have to accept it as it is. Playing with these two words had gone so far that concepts totally foreign to the spirit of the Dhamma came to be tagged on with the passage of time. That is why they went to the extent of bringing in like Brahmins, such concepts as 'one's own doing' and 'another's doing' or interpreting '*hetu*' as intrinsic nature (*sabhāvo*) and '*paccaya*' as extrinsic nature (*parabhāvo*). This confusion is not of recent origin. It has gone on for quite a long time. Our ideas may appear as revolutionary. But I cannot help pointing this out. The truth must come to light even in the face of criticism.

So then, dear listeners, in regard to the Law of Dependent Arising you should pay special attention to what we have said about '*Saṁsāra-vaṭṭa*' (the vortex of *Saṁsāra*) and '*aññamaññapaccayatā*' (the mutual inter-dependence) and the inter-connection between consciousness and name-and-form. The term *viññāṇa* itself is suggestive of two things. '*Vijānāti*' means discriminating as two things. It is due to that very discrimination that name-and-form becomes the object of consciousness. That happens in the darkness of ignorance which makes one grasp at the shadow. Name-and-form is only a shadow or a reflection. That is where the story of the deer and the mirage comes in. It leads to an imprisonment between two things.

"Eye is here, form is over there".

The deer is unaware of the fact that with each step it is taking it is taking its eye along with it. Therefore, it has posited two ends or driven two pegs for itself. The whole world has got caught between these two pegs and created a dichotomy to rest on ('*dvayanissita*'). The Buddha gave a solution to this problem by giving up both extremes not by putting them together nor by compromising with them, but by avoiding both. The solution he gave is the twelve-linked formula of Dependent Arising.

By this solution the Buddha, for one thing, solved the Saṁsāric puzzle. Why did the commentator bring in the question of past lives and future lives into the interpretation of this formula? They could not appreciate the fact that if you understand the present life in *Saṁsāra* correctly the past and the future are already understood. Just ponder over this, dear listeners. Must you go on removing the sheaves of a plantain trunk to ascertain whether the tree has a pith? If you take a sharp sword and cut the trunk in two in the middle, can you not see from the cross-section that it is pithless? That is why a streamrunner (*Sotāpanna*) is said to have seen *Nibbāna*. We have explained earlier that he is said to have seen *Nibbāna* because for a split second he has seen in a flash, the cessation of preparations in the light of wisdom. In one of our *Nibbāna* sermons, we have compared it to the legendary Herculean feat of the soldier Nīla in parting the sea

water with a giant iron bar. If the *Sotāpanna* has had that flash of insight, he has discovered the secret of *Saṁsāra* to that extent. Of course all fetters to existence are not broken by that initial insight. That realization is gradual but it is because of this insight into the truth that he is irreversibly inclined to *Nibbāna*. He has thereby won the assurance of *Nibbāna*. He has had a glimpse of the true state of affairs which is none other than the Law of Dependent Arising. 'This being – this comes to be'.

Nowadays when speaking about that attainment there are many who go on asserting:

"We keep our precepts unbroken. We are already '*sotāpanna*'."

That is not the criterion. One has to see the norm of the Dhamma couched in the phrase:

'*Yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ – sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*' –

'whatever is of a nature to arise – all that is of a nature to cease.'

Through that insight one has seen the norm of arising and ceasing. He has for a moment experienced the cessation of consciousness. Consciousness is what one grasps at last. By seeing its cessation he has understood the nature of arising and ceasing of the entire Five Aggregates. It is by that insight into the truth that he is inclined to *Nibbāna*. He is irreversible. By that much alone a stream-winner is great. Of course he has to proceed further. The Buddha has pointed out that it is when one directs radical attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*) that there is, this breakthrough.

I have now said enough about *Nibbāna*. About this series of sermons I have to say something more. I have shown that there has been some historical evolution in the interpretation of the Law of Dependent Arising. These sermons might give rise to all sorts of criticism. So I would like to mention that there is a history for this little series of sermons too. Though it is something personal, let me tell you about it. About 20 years ago, when I was at Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya, my revered teacher, the Most Venerable Mātara Srī Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera, once when I saw him in his '*kuṭi*' invited me to deliver a series of sermons on *Nibbāna* to the meditative Sangha there as they had some problems in understanding it. He even said that the sermons should be taped. But my first response, with a simile, was that if I came out with what I have to say, I would be the target of heavy criticism. But the next day he encouraged me with a wonderful guarantee.

"You had better mention in the sermon itself that I invited you to give these sermons."

It is because of that guarantee that you had the opportunity to listen to the series of sermons on *Nibbāna* and read the '*Nivane Niveema*' volumes (that is, 'Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled' series in 7 volumes). If not for that these things would have continued to remain concealed under the sands of time. I came to know that those who had a myopic eye for the *Nibbāna* series twenty years ago, are now showing a deep interest in it.

In the meantime, some suggested to me the feasibility of writing a book on Dependent Arising. But instead of writing a book, I thought it easier to deliver a series of sermons to you all because you have already listened to more than a hundred of my sermons. I had

the confidence that you would not get up and go complaining that the sermons are too deep. That is why I started this series of sermons. But one thing, dear listeners, a preacher's mode of presentation adapts itself to the level of understanding of the audience. Twenty years ago, I addressed those *Nibbāna* sermons to the meditative *Saṅgha* of Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya. Some of the similes I gave in those sermons are now well known in the country. But in these sermons addressed to a village audience I gave similes direct from village-life – even rustic ones. I suppose it does not detract our respect for the Dhamma. Please try your best to understand this deep Dhamma through them. It is because of the depth of this Dhamma that the Buddha hesitated to preach it at first – that Brahmā Sahampati had to bend his knees to propitiate and invite him to preach.

We have already mentioned on an earlier occasion that there are two things in this Dhamma that are considered exceptionally deep. As it is said in *suttas* like *Ariyapariyesana,*

"*Duddasaṁ idaṁ ṭhānaṁ yadidaṁ idappaccayatā paṭicca– samuppādo*".

"This is something difficult to see, namely the specific conditionality – the Dependent Arising."

It is not easy for the worldlings immersed in defilements to see the Law of Dependent Arising. So also the cessation (*nirodha*) which is *Nibbāna*. That too is difficult for the world to see. It comes with the cessation of preparations. Instead of that, the worldlings are steeped in the craving for existence or becoming (*bhavataṇhā*), all speculative views come ancillary to it. This dispensation is threefold as Precept, Practice and Penetration (*pariyatti, paṭipatti, paṭivedha*). Out of these the first to suffer from neglect was Penetration. Then Practice too gradually went down. In the end only Precept remained. So the intellectuals came to the forefront. From there onwards, it was the age of commentaries, treatises and compendia. It happened not only in our Theravāda tradition, but in other sects as well. It is said that eighteen sects sprang up even before the lapse of a hundred years from the Buddha's passing away. Not only that. Each sect had its scriptural heritage – cartloads of books. It was rarely that one with discernment took the trouble to make sense out of them.

Therefore, you must not rest satisfied merely with listening to these sermons but make an effort to understand them. Don't be discouraged thinking:

'We are worldlings without that wisdom to understand such things.' The Buddha has pointed out the seed of wisdom – that is, 'radical attention' (*yoniso manasikāra*). We all have that in us to some extent or other. I have shown it by the 'simile of the five-fingers'. I shall repeat it for the benefit of the new comers. Up to now they explained the constituents of '*nāma*' in *nāma-rūpa* differently giving first place to '*phassa*' or contact. I gave the simile of the five-fingers – feeling (*vedanā*) the little finger, perception (*saññā*) the ring finger, intention (*cetanā*) the middle finger, contact (*phassa*) the index-finger and attention (*manasikāra*) the thumb. Out of these taking 'attention' as the

thumb we pointed out with the help of a simile of a case of murder or theft how a judge gives crown pardon to an alleged culprit when there are no witnesses and gets the whole mystery out through him. The Buddha had to do a similar thing because this Saṁsāric problem is so difficult to solve since consciousness is a magician's trick.

That is why the Buddha gave 'attention' out of the five constituents of name (*nāma*) free pardon and made him the crown witness. But he was made to give an oath of speaking the truth as if warning him.

"You are the guy in the guise of '*ayonisomanasikāra*' (non-radical attention) who committed this Saṁsāric crime with the other four guys plotting for the murder of all beings from beginningless times. At least now you had better be '*yoniso*' (radical)."

That was the beginning. We have shown what happens when '*yoniso manasikāra*' reaches the climax of its development. It is with the help of this radical attention that one understands feeling as feeling. You should think why in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* there are the apparently awkward phrases like '*Kāye kāyānupassī*' (contemplating body in the body) and '*vedanāsu vedanānupassī*' (contemplating feeling in feeling). When one gives evidence under an oath one cannot help coming out with the truth – feeling as feeling, perception as perception, intention as intention. But one thing. In the end the culprit – the biggest culprit – is found guilty through his own confession. He is caught by his talk about the 'thing' – '*manasikāra sambhavā sabbe dhammā*'. All 'things' are found out by 'attention'. That is the deepest point. Mind finds out a thing by means of '*manasikāra*'. As we already mentioned, out of the five members on the '*nāma*' side namely, feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention – attention is the 'thumb'. It is the 'thumb' with the complicity of the other four fingers is carrying on this 'gangmurder'. He has the closest connection with contact (the indexfinger). We have identified the five fingers. Of course this is not a part of the Buddha's teaching. I gave this simile only for clarification of issues involved.

So then take it that we all have the ability to arouse '*yoniso-manasikāra*'. Get it awakened. It is then that there is the dispelling of the four perversions (*vipallāsā*). In place of the four perceptions so far pursued, namely the perception of permanence (*niccasaññā*), the perception of the pleasant (*sukhasaññā*), the perception of beauty (*subhasaññā*) and the perception of self (*attasaññā*), one begins to develop the perception of impermanence (*aniccasaññā*), the perception of suffering (*dukkhasaññā*), the perception of repulsiveness (*asubhasaññā*) and the perception of not-self (*anattasaññā*) according to the method of contemplation taught by the Buddha. That is the great revolution in one's way of attention. Then the world one sees is far different from the above mentioned worlds. This is a Dhamma that penetrates through the world. Gradually, the perception of the compact (*ghanasaññā*), which made one posit two ends, gets liquidated through the contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*). What happens with that liquidation? The perception of the heap (*rāsisaññā*) emerges. One begins to see a thing as a heap. Thereby the contemplation of impermanence goes deeper. One sees the flux of arising and ceasing. It culminates in disenchantment or disgust (*nibbidā*). In this Dhamma '*nibbidā*' is the key to *Nibbāna*. There is such a norm

of Dhamma in this teaching. Supramundane Paths and Fruits cannot be realized through by-hearting the Dhamma or by getting certificates. You have to get down into the practice proper. It is to those who had practiced deeply in this Dhamma in past births like Bāhiya, that the Buddha preached very brief sermons like 'In the seen – just the seen.' It may not apply to everybody. You have to start from the 'nursery' itself. That is why virtue, concentration and wisdom have to be developed. Backed by them gradually one comes to realize those Supramundane attainments. It may be a miserable leper like Suppabuddha. If he came to the Buddha with the correct Saṁsāric maturity, he could realize immediately on hearing the Buddha's sermon that norm of the Dhamma enshrined in the dictum:

'*yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ – sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*' – 'whatever is of a nature to arise – all that is of a nature to cease.'

It is the insight based on the Five Aggregates of Grasping which in effect is the insight into the Law of Dependent Arising.

The Buddha has proclaimed this regarding the Law of Dependent Arising.

"*Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ ṭhitā va sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā*."

"Whether there be an arising of the *Tathāgatas* or whether there be no arising of *Tathāgatas*, that elementary nature, that orderliness of the Dhamma, that norm of the Dhamma, the specific conditionality does stand as it is."

About this Law of Dependent Arising, the Buddha has used such words of affirmation like '*tathatā avitathatā*, *anaññathatā, idappaccayatā*' – 'That suchness therein, the invariability, the not-otherwiseness, the specific conditionality.' When one sees this norm as a fact of realization – instead of saying 'impermanent – impermanent' – one begins to see the flux of arising and passing away. This is the path outlined in this Dhamma. Therefore, this series of sermons is not meant for the scholar to pass exams and get degrees. Think of the purpose of these sermons – their practical aspect.

But what has been happening all this time? A basket was simply handed down without examining what is in it.

"Our teacher has said this. We must not go beyond it. Our commentators have explained like this. We must not think beyond their explanations."

A vast delusion has gone on for a long, long period getting hold of the brains – lay – and monk – alike. Ignoring those extremely profound discourses, they ran after other things (I won't say what they are). But the truth is here. Worldlings do not see it. We had to say in our *Nibbāna* sermons too, that a path of Dhamma overgrown for a number of centuries, had to be cleared up. On this occasion too it has to be reiterated. We showed the inter-relation between name-and-form and consciousness in both aspects of arising and ceasing. The world is always on the '*samudaya*' side (arising side). 'Though there is

nightfall today, there is a dawn tomorrow.' That is their way of thinking. They do not like even to think of '*nirodha*' (cessation). That is why we gave various similes. The seamstress craving stitches up those two ends, but it is when one sees the middle that there is a release. Now that we have mentioned about those two ends, let us hark back to that wonderful verse preached by the Buddha:

'*Yo ubhante viditvāna*

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

sodha sibbanimaccagā'

'He who, having understood both ends, does not get attached to the middle with wisdom, him I call a great man. He has gone beyond the seamstress here.'

Six interpretations were given for this verse. But out of them, let me now mention a few. Pleasant feeling is one end. Painful feeling is the other end. The middle is neither painful nor pleasant feeling – which is the middle that no one is interested in. the six internal sense-spheres is one end. The six external sensespheres is the second end. Consciousness is the middle. It is due to the magic trick of consciousness that those two ends are separated. Then again, 'name' is one end and 'form' is the other end. It is through ignorance of the fact that consciousness is in the middle that many scholars go on explaining 'name' and 'form' like materialistic scientists. The term '*rūpa*' is interpreted as in physics. But we have pointed out that what we have here is only a 'perception of form' (*rūpasaññā*). It is with the help of the constituents of the name group that form is recognized. That is the basics for any consciousness. '*Rūpa*' cannot be understood by such materialistic analysis. You can't change this Dhamma into an atomistic study. One has to see what actually is here. How can one see it? Certainly not through instruments. One can do it only through radical-attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). It is for that virtue, concentration and wisdom are required. This is what we presented through our sermons.

Therefore, you should not think that these are too abstruse for us. Some are even scared of the term '*Paṭicca Samuppāda*'. They would say:

'That is something even the author of *Visuddhimagga* could not understand. So how can we do it?' That seems to be the general attitude. But the truth is here in the discourses which they underestimate as too simple conventional teachings (*vohāra desanā*). It is in such under-rated discourses like *Mahā Nidāna* and *Mahāpadāna* that the true explanation of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is found. One has to intuit into the meaning without getting involved in words. Of course all these are worldly conventions. There are the path ways of synonyms and terminology. Every vortex revolves round with the synonyms and terminology proper to it. Think for instance about the cricket world. As you know, it has its own ways of synonyms and terminology. It is within that environment that the cricket craze goes on. That is what gives rise to an '*itthatta*' or a level of existence. Birth, decay

and death go with it. Regarding that too there is a very wonderful discourse which we have already discussed. Let me now mention it in brief.

"*Kāye vā bhikkhave sati, kāyasañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. Vācāya vā bhikkhave sati, vacīsañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. Mane vā bhikkhave sati, manosañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ avijjāpaccayā va.*"

To put it simply – "When one has taken for granted that there is a body, due to intentions about the body there arise inward pleasure and pain. When one takes for granted that there is speech, due to verbal intentions there arise inward pleasure and pain. When one takes for granted that there is a mind, due to mental intentions there arise inward pleasure and pain.

Finally, it is said:

'*avijjā paccayā va*' – all conditioned by ignorance."

But then it goes on to say:

'*avijjāyatveva asesa virāganirodhā so kāyo na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ sā vācā na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ so mano na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ.*'

'But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, that body is not there owing to which there arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That speech is not there owing to which there arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That mind is not there owing to which there arise for him inward pleasure and pain.' Then it is said in affirmation:

"*Khettaṁ taṁ na hoti, vatthuṁ taṁ na hoti, āyatanaṁ taṁ na hoti, adhikaranaṁ taṁ na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ.*"

"That field is not there, that site is not there, that base is not there, that reason is not there, owing to which there can arise for him that inward pleasure and pain."

That field, that site, that base, that reason which sustained all those are not there once ignorance ceases. That is what we tried to point out in various ways.

Well, everything comes to an end. When I started this series of sermons, I expressed my misgivings – as I did in the case of *Nibbāna* sermons – whether I would live long enough to complete the series. However, I survived the series. So I would like to wind up with a transference of merit. Whatever merit that accrued by my efforts to clean up a path of Dhamma overgrown for centuries, may it be rejoiced over by my departed parents who brought me up, teachers who gave me the vision of knowledge, and lay-supporters who helped keep his frail body alive. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they too rejoice over that merit! May it conduce to their

attainment of Deathless *Nibbāna*! In this series of sermons I made use of various sections of the discourses. So let this floral garland of sermons woven out of the well-preached Dhamma flowers culled from the garden of profound discourses be a humble offering at the foot of the Dhamma shrine which received honour and worship from the Buddha himself!